

Diamond Schmitt reveals design for Ottawa library and archives

<https://dsai.ca/news/diamond-schmitt-reveals-design-for-ottawa-library-and-archives/>

OTTAWA – A unique partnership between municipal and federal institutions is the catalyst for an innovative facility designed by Diamond Schmitt Architects and KWC Architects that will rise on a prominent site in Ottawa. The design was revealed at a ceremony today.

The Ottawa Public Library and Library and Archives Canada Joint Facility combines the shared resources and passions of these partner institutions to create an inspiring place for gathering, learning and discovery.

“This coming together of library and archives advances the evolution of centres of knowledge and culture and presents new opportunities to access a rich and diverse national collection,” said Gary McCluskie, Principal, Diamond Schmitt Architects. With exhibition and collections space, reading rooms, creative centre, children’s area, a genealogy centre and café configured around a large town hall, the new facility will be a welcoming home for the stories of Ottawa residents and all Canadians.

Just as this partnership is a unique pairing, the design process itself represents an unprecedented public co-design process that asked residents, Indigenous communities, and Canadians from coast to coast to provide input and comment at every stage of design.

“The reveal of the design of OPL-LAC Joint Facility illustrates the power of connections between institutions and the contributions of more than 4000 people who came together to inspire all aspects of the design, inside and out,” said City Councillor Tim Tierney, Chair, Ottawa Public Library Board.

At four public workshops and with online feedback, major themes included creating an accessible, iconic destination, a place to spend time, not be merely transactional, with views, connection to nature and have a multitude of offerings and a mix of quiet and vibrant spaces.

The building’s design draws from Ottawa’s rich history and natural beauty with a dynamic form reminiscent of the nearby Ottawa River; the stone and wood exterior reflect the adjacent escarpment and surrounding greenspace on the western edge of downtown. The windows, top floors and rooftop offer unparalleled views of the Ottawa River and Gatineau Hills in Quebec.

“The location at a cultural crossroads of a route that traces the three founding peoples – French, English and Indigenous – underscores the spirit of confluence in the building’s design and the possibilities for these memory institutions in a modern facility to advance the Canadian story,” said Donald Schmitt, Principal, Diamond Schmitt Architects. The UK-based Jason Bruges Studio was named ‘Artist on the Design Team’ and will further express the sense of engagement and connection through public art installations.

A very high standard of environmental sustainability – a minimum LEED Gold rating – is targeted and was rated highly among the public’s recommendations. Inspire555 is the name of the ongoing public consultation process; it’s a nod to the building’s future address of 555 Albert Street and a complete summary of the report can be viewed at: www.inspire555.ca

The joint facility has a \$193-million budget and a total 216,000 square feet over five floors. It is expected to open in 2024.

Here is a link to a video of the design.

Diamond Schmitt Architects (www.dsai.ca) has an extensive portfolio of cultural and academic facilities, commercial and residential projects as well as recreation and performing arts centres. Current projects include the Ingenium Centre, designed to protect and showcase Canada's national science and technology collection in Ottawa; the re-imagination of David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center in New York, and Robarts Common at the University of Toronto.