



Camrose City Hall

by NATALIE BRUCKNER-MENCHELLI

To say the old Camrose City Hall in Alberta was past its prime is an understatement. "It was around the mid 2000s that we started to notice a lot of foundation issues on the 1940s part of the building and discovered water leaking in. We did an environmental testing survey and in 2007/2008 we quarantined off a portion of the basement. We found black mould in the walls. We ended up retrofitting an old boardroom into a staff area and moved a few staff members to the Fire Hall to free up the space. If staff needed to go into the east portion of the basement they had to get a full body suit," explains Jeremy Enarson, director of engineering, City of Camrose.

For a number of years City Council debated over whether to refurbish the existing building, move to a new location or build a new structure on the existing location. It was eventually decided that the best option would be to bulldoze the existing 1940s building and its 1970s extension and build a new, bigger City Hall on the same site.

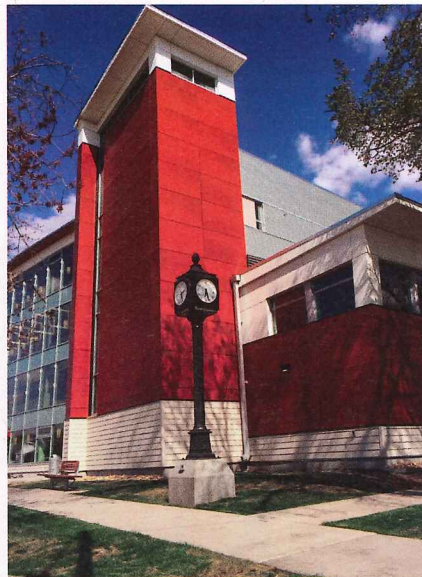
Plans were finalized in 2012, but before construction could begin the original building had to be cleaned of hazardous materials such as asbestos prior to the demolition. "Excavation was interesting as we discovered the remains

of an outhouse underneath the nearby parking lot and some foundations of an old house," says Mike Mackinnon, project manager at Bird Construction.

"Poor subsurface conditions, a high water table, and the high weight of a multi-storey structure required this building to be founded on footings as opposed to piles," explains Nils Hahn, project engineer at Read Jones Christoffersen. "Drilled concrete piles were not considered feasible due to a significant sand stratum below the site. Driven steel or concrete compaction piles were dismissed during the preliminary design process as being too disruptive to the largely residential neighbourhood surrounding Camrose City Hall."

"A slurry top mix sealed the earth creating a stabilized platform and footings were then placed on top," adds Mackinnon.

The focus during the design of the building was to create an almost timeless element to City Hall to ensure the facility would accommodate staff growth over the next 30 years. Manasc Isaac Architects Ltd., with the support of City Council, designed a 38,750-square-foot rectangular structure consisting of four storeys, with three floors completed and the fourth floor being shelled in for future use.



LOCATION
5204 - 50 Avenue, Camrose, Alberta

OWNER/DEVELOPER
City of Camrose

**ARCHITECT/ELECTRICAL/
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT**
Manasc Isaac Architects Ltd.

GENERAL CONTRACTOR
Bird Construction

STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT
Read Jones Christoffersen Ltd.

MECHANICAL CONSULTANT
Clark Engineering

TOTAL SIZE
38,750 square feet

TOTAL COST
\$17 million



"The cost of building the fourth floor and the parkade was an incremental increase," says Enarson. "To do that down the road would have been very costly, so City Council was extremely forward-thinking when it came to the future needs of the building."

Keeping in mind that the City wanted to create a warm, inviting space, Manasc Isaac Architects designed a concrete and steel building with a large glass facade that stretches along the entire south wall. This allows the public to see right into the building and offers a sense of transparency.

"The glass facade also brings in a lot of natural light and will utilize the sun

to help heat the building in the winter, while allowing excess heat to be vented off in the summer through operable windows near the top of the atrium," says Enarson.

In fact, the louvred operable windows are connected to a Building Management System that automatically opens the windows if the interior gets too hot and shuts them if rain is forecast.

The structure itself is long and narrow, stretching east and west and features a steel roof and two towers bookmarking the building. "The exterior is also constructed with a rain-screen system that puts the vapour barrier and insulation on the outside

of the building. This is a far more efficient way to seal the building and also prevents air leakage," adds MacKinnon.

On the east side of the building is the Council Chambers. "In this area, the roof features Westdek, a type of glulam wood product manufactured by Western Archrib, over top of sloped steel beams. The Westdek provides both the architectural ceiling finish and acts as the structural element to support the roof loads. Westdek is also featured on the front entrance canopy, which is a free-standing steel structure," explains Hahn.

Projected parking demands now and in the future for this facility were identified and so the building has underground parking for about 27 cars and 51 parking stalls outside. "This was an important step for the City Hall facility and helps ease the parking outside," says Enarson.

Head inside one of the two main entrances and you are greeted by a four-storey atrium with a feature staircase that further evokes the feeling of transparency. Again materials inside were chosen with lifecycle in mind. "The main floor consists of slab and beam construction, with shallow beams to limit the overall excavation depth for the parking garage," explains Hahn. "The upper concrete floors are of two-way



slab construction, which creates a flat soffit for a clean architectural look. A widely spaced column grid was used to permit a flexible, open office layout."

MacKinnon adds that a raised access floor system was used where the mechanical and electrical elements can

be found, and that the interior also features operable walls to accommodate further expansion.

"While this project was challenging from the outset, we were fortunate to work with a very good team," says MacKinnon. "We had worked with

Manasc Isaac Architects on a previous City project [City of Calgary Emergency Operations Centre]. Building on this success, the City, structural, mechanical and electrical teams all worked together successfully to bring this significant project to fruition." **A**

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