

The Architectural Team Reimagines Historic Boston Warehouse as Distinctive New Residences at 100 Shawmut

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100 Shawmut (Photo: Ed Wonssek)

CHELSEA, MA– The Architectural Team (TAT) announced the completion of 100 Shawmut, a striking new condominium community in Boston’s rapidly evolving South End Landmark District.

Now open, the project adds 138 residential units and public open space in a blend of adaptive reuse and new construction that preserves a locally iconic building and enhances its gateway presence with a dramatic contemporary addition.

Blending housing production with historic preservation, 100 Shawmut offers a useful case study in maximizing density and creating bold new design statements, while retaining the original architectural fabric that provides historic neighborhoods their unique identities.

Restoring Historic Urban Patterns, Urban Markers, and Pedestrian Connections

This imaginative design solution integrates contemporary seven-story glass-and-terracotta addition with the renovation and residential conversion of an existing six-story warehouse. The resulting 232,000-square-foot development, led by developer The Davis Companies, is the centerpiece and first phase of TAT’s three-building master plan that will break up an existing superblock and restore the historical urban pattern of cross-block connections. The three buildings of the master plan site occupy the northern end of this

superblock overlooking the Massachusetts Turnpike, and provide new pedestrian connections between adjoining streets and within the site itself.

Located at the most prominent corner of the master plan site, 100 Shawmut receives significant visual pressure both from the multitude of vehicles passing on the turnpike below, and as the terminus of the long vista of Shawmut Avenue approaching from Boston's Chinatown. While initial development plans considered tearing down the existing brick warehouse and building an entirely new condominium tower in its place, retaining the original structure and incorporating it into a new design was always a central concept for the architects. "Preserving this structure felt important to our team because it serves as a highly visible gateway to the South End," says Michael E. Liu, AIA, NCARB, a senior principal and design partner at TAT. "The building holds a place in the community's collective memory – retaining such recognizable local landmarks is especially important, as more of the area's historic fabric is lost to new building projects. Adapting the property and adding onto it was a way of responding to the needs of an evolving neighborhood without abandoning the architecture that gives it its historic identity."

Once the 100 Shawmut development team committed to preserving the original brick warehouse, TAT's architects devised a creative design for the addition: an L-shaped structure sitting above the original building and wrapping its eastern side. With a noticeable "V" shape, the long leg of the "L" departs from the strict orthogonal geometry of the original building, further distinguishing it from the original structure as well as the surrounding urban context. The shape and form of the addition also significantly expands the project's buildable square footage and allows for more and bigger residential units with terraces, elegantly meeting the development's programmatic goals.

The contrasting geometry, and striking juxtaposition of the existing building's muscular brick-and-concrete form with the sleek glass-and-terracotta addition, also allows each to provide a foil to the other. TAT's addition utilizes substantial setbacks to further accentuate the restored warehouse building's form and profile, and to preserve the existing streetscape along Shawmut Avenue, a primary corridor through the South End.

"Because the site is a literal crossroads between neighborhoods and above the highway, the building plays a unique urban design role," notes Tom Schultz, AIA, NCARB, an associate with TAT who led the firm's work on the project alongside principal Michael Liu. "As a gateway project, we felt it called for a dramatic visual solution. The angled facades of the new construction accentuate the perspective of the views of the building when approached across the bridges from Chinatown and serve as an appropriate marker."

As master planners for the larger three-building superblock site that incorporates 100 Shawmut, TAT also saw a valuable opportunity to make a large swath of the surrounding area more accessible and pedestrian-friendly. The firm created a pedestrian-friendly public plaza and courtyard in the center of the block, accessed via a passageway from the adjacent Shawmut Avenue, Herald and Washington Streets. Once fully realized, the master plan will provide a network of walkways leading to and connecting through the plaza, and significantly improving walkability across the neighborhood.

In addition to the public plaza and courtyard, residents at 100 Shawmut can also take advantage of extensive outdoor amenity areas on multiple levels of the building. Among the outdoor spaces are private balconies included with many units, the top-level penthouses' private terraces, and a shared roof deck with sweeping views of the Boston skyline. A few floors down, a third-floor common terrace set above the internal courtyard provides open areas for socializing and relaxation in a quieter setting. Other amenities, with interiors by EMBARC Studio, include a catering kitchen, a pet spa, an expansive children's playroom, a three-story parking garage, and bike storage.

"As development continues to reshape Boston's South End, thoughtful design solutions like those at 100 Shawmut show it's possible for the neighborhood to respect its past while moving successfully into the future," concludes TAT's Liu. "We're proud to play a part in helping this underutilized site reach its true potential, creating a more vibrant and approachable urban experience for future residents and the broader community alike with attractive housing, robust public space, and preserved historic fabric."

TAT's work at 100 Shawmut is the latest in a long line of adaptive reuse projects with sensitive modern additions for residential, hospitality, and mixed use, including Boston's award-winning Lovejoy Wharf and Uphams Crossing developments, the acclaimed Back Bay Hotel, the 375 Newbury Street commercial property, and The Archer Residences condominiums.

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