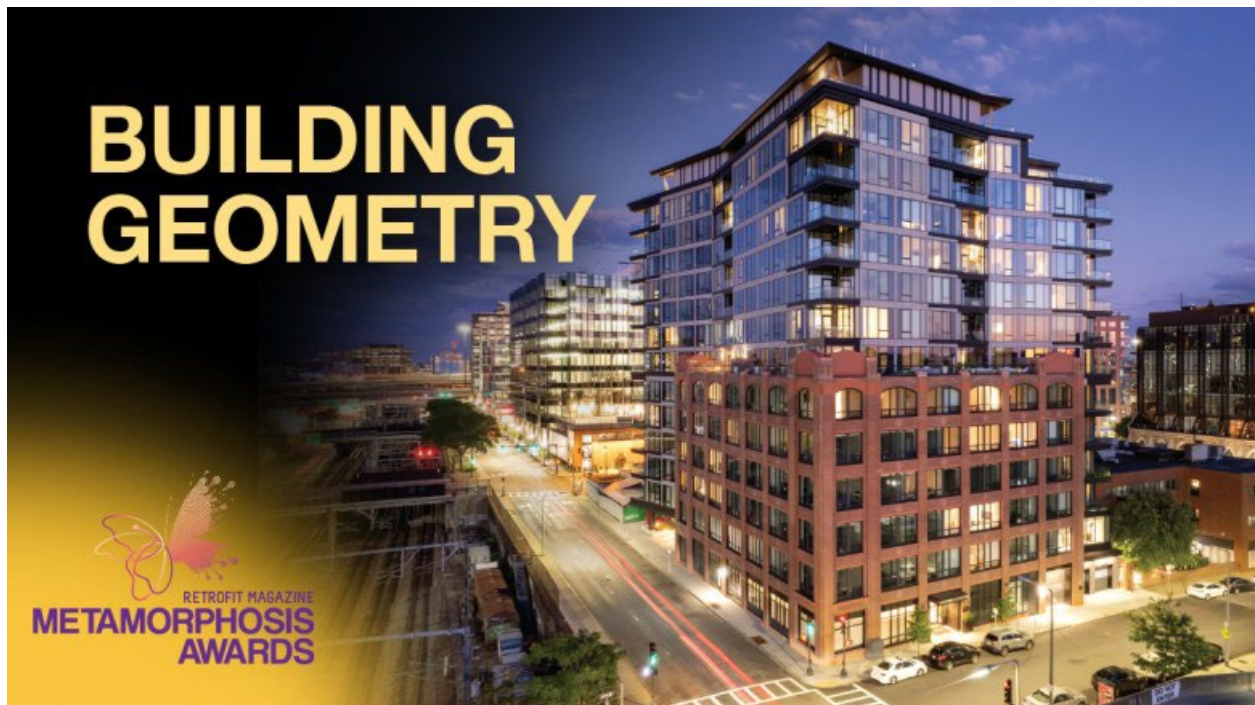




In Boston, a Bold Addition Enhances an Existing Building's Look without Imitating It

TOPICS: 100 Shawmut | Glass And Steel Addition | The Architectural Team



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NOVEMBER 6, 2023

1st Place, Addition

Cities derive their identity and sense of place largely from their architecture. This is particularly true of historic cities, such as Boston. Attention is typically focused on landmark buildings associated with historic events or those best examples of the ornamented past. Often forgotten or thought of as expendable are the workaday industrial or office buildings or indigenous residential building forms that collectively create the fabric that gives historic cities their character and distinguish one neighborhood from the next.

The existing structure at 100 Shawmut, a 6-story Craftsman-style daylit garment factory and warehouse built circa 1915, was just such a building. The site is located in the northwest corner of a section of Boston now known as the Ink Block, a collection of contemporary high-rise office and residential towers, which transformed a formerly industrial area. The new neighborhood is vibrant and attractive but interchangeable in character with any contemporary urban neighborhood in any number of American cities.

This is why The Architectural Team Inc., the designers for the redevelopment of the 100 Shawmut site, resisted some voices in the architectural community that suggested yet another tear-down. The existing building was, the designers believed, a familiar local icon, an important punctuation of the easterly termination of the Ink Block and a gateway marker to the low-rise residential neighborhoods of the historic South End.



NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

When Davis, the developer, proposed site redevelopment, preservation and reuse of the existing building was not necessarily a consideration. In fact, Davis' track record of sophisticated and contemporary new development would suggest a tear-down and continuation of the new and forward-looking architecture of the Ink Block to the east.

However, Davis recognized The Architectural Team's argument that this site was different: The existing structure on the site was different; it played an important urban-design role in neighborhood identity. Nonetheless, an addition was required because the building could not provide sufficient square footage to support the new residential program and, from an urban-design standpoint, the development of lots to the east had changed and increased the scale of Herald Street. Something more substantial was called for at the corner, which an addition would provide.

Incorporating the existing historic structure into the design represented an opportunity to distinguish it from its contemporaries to the east while the extreme visibility of the site from the Massachusetts Turnpike presented an opportunity to showcase the architectural sophistication with which the client was associated. The challenge was how to preserve and reuse the existing building, as well as combine it with a modern, dramatic and eye-catching addition—a pairing that would honor the past while reflecting the future.

Simply repeating the form and fenestration of the existing structure, perhaps with some minor modification to subtly distinguish the new from old might have been a default approach to such an addition—an approach that might interpret any addition as an outgrowth of the existing building. However, such an approach would lack the dramatic visual impact for which the location called. Instead, the solution developed a clearly contemporary glass and steel skin—the massing of which intentionally deviates from the orthogonal geometry of the 1915 building.

The addition is vertical and horizontal, tripling the square footage of the original structure. With the vertical addition of seven new floors over the existing 6-story building, plus an architecturally integrated mechanical penthouse, the combined 14 stories continue the height of the new neighborhood to the east.

The geometry of the addition creates angles which, when seen from the street, accentuate its perspective and make its profile more dramatic, providing a striking contrast between the old and new textures. The 1915 building, now framed in glass and steel stands out in a way it didn't previously. The delicacy of the glass and steel addition is likewise enhanced by its juxtaposition to the muscular brick façades of the 1915 structure. While each provides a foil to the other, they are also subtly, mutually referential with the façade of the new construction overlain with a simple rectangular window grid echoing the façade organization of the existing.

MASTER PLAN

Aside from imagery, massing and textural considerations, 100 Shawmut was designed as the first phase and a key component in a three-parcel masterplan for the city block in which it sits. Approvals for the massing of the other two parcels—one the site of a future Chinese Evangelical Church and the other a future 300-unit affordable housing and retail development—were sought and obtained along with approvals for the 100 Shawmut site. Together, the design of the three buildings provide a system of pedestrian promenades across and through the block linked to an interior public landscaped open space and sculpture garden.

Although the project did not seek federal historic tax credits, the zoning process required approval by the local historic commission, which was particularly concerned that any addition avoid blurring the reading of the 1915 structure, particularly its parapet profile. Such concerns were greatly alleviated by the contrast provided by the contemporary skin and geometry of the addition.

Some selective demolition of the existing structure was required to accommodate and idealize the residential building geometries, though such demolition is not visible from any public way. The vertical addition is supported by steel columns threaded through the 6 stories and basement of the existing building with a new concrete stair and elevator core providing lateral stability. Replacement windows in the 1915 building were designed such that vertical mullions could receive interior partitions to accommodate unit space planning.

The redevelopment of the 100 Shawmut Avenue site and the 1915 historic building, which occupies it, provided 138 new residential condominium units and 111 parking spaces. The architectural solution combines a contemporary new-construction addition with the adaptive reuse of an early 20th century manufacturing building in a way that celebrates both in the contrast of architectural expressions.

PHOTOS: Ed Wonsek unless otherwise noted

“Phenomenal addition that encompasses a building that otherwise would have been landfilled. The envelopment of the original building was intentional throughout all aspects of this addition. The views of the building and from the building make a dramatic impact.”

— *Elicia Feasel, preservation project manager, H.G. Christman Construction, Metamorphosis Awards judge*

Retrofit Team

METAMORPHOSIS AWARD WINNER and ARCHITECT: [The Architectural Team Inc.](#)

DEVELOPER: [Davis](#)

INTERIOR DESIGNER: [Embarc Studio](#)

GENERAL CONTRACTOR: [Suffolk](#)

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: [Copley Wolff](#)

CIVIL ENGINEER: [Howard Stein Hudson](#)

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: [McNamara Salvia](#)

MEP/FP ENGINEER: [WSP](#)

ENVELOPE CONSULTANT: [Simpson Gumpertz & Heger](#)

GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER: [McPhail Associates](#)