



9TH AVENUE PARKADE AND INNOVATION CENTER

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The City of Calgary required a downtown parkade to free up multiple lots for development. Understanding the likelihood of the building's future obsolescence, municipal officials also wanted a creative solution that would justify the expenditure now and in the future. And so the clients, Calgary Municipal Land Corporation and the Calgary Parking Authority, asked the collaborative team of 5468796 Architecture and Kasian Architecture, Interior Design and Planning to design a 510-stall parkade that could be easily converted into an office, light industrial or residential building. The project site – adjacent to the new Calgary Library, Calgary City Hall and the Studio Bell, (the National Music Center) – included an unbuildable easement for an underground light rail tunnel, which cuts through the middle of the project site and represents what the city determined was a 20% loss in buildable area.

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The vehicle entrance, with clearances that allow for maintenance of the underground tunnel, is flanked by pedestrian and bicycle entrances and activities such as a basketball court. These activate the frontage along 9th Avenue SE and frame the southern edge of the developing East Village neighborhood. Spherical bollards, colored concrete patterns under foot, and a traffic mirror ceiling ensure the central courtyard is a lively and vibrant place with a distinctive and memorable aesthetic, enriched by additional public amenities including a cafe patio and an outdoor exhibition space.

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The structure is enveloped in a distinctive guard shroud, raised strategically around the perimeter to provide pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular access. The members of the shroud hold a fine-grained mesh that acts as a pedestrian guardrail today, while easily and inexpensively accommodating conversion into residential/commercial suite balconies with no additional work required.

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Halfway into the design process, the client solidified a partnership with Platform, an entrepreneurial hub for the city's burgeoning innovation community. This was the first test of the adaptable design, requiring conversion of the plan into an open and flexible office space that can be easily modified for use by individuals and small and large groups, and occupying the space on an hourly, daily, monthly, or yearly basis. The design team proposed that Platform occupy the first two levels of the building to animate the street frontage. By suspending a light-framed vehicular ramp that cuts through the central courtyard, the vehicular circuit was removed from within the structure. The ramp offers drivers an unexpected user experience and it can be easily removed later if vehicular access is no longer needed.

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The succeeding six levels comprise 280,000 square feet of parking, with light-washed, pedestrian-forward routes and elevated views in all directions. Clear, simple, and single-direction circulation is explained with distinctive wayfinding, created by the architects as an extension of the building design.

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