



LOCATION
937 Progress Avenue, Toronto, Ontario

OWNER/DEVELOPER
Centennial College

PROJECT MANAGER
Knightstone Capital Management Inc.

ARCHITECT
Diamond Schmitt Architects

CONSTRUCTION MANAGER
FRAM Building Group

STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT
Read Jones Christoffersen Ltd.

**MECHANICAL/
ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT**
ABLE Engineering

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
Baker Turner Inc.

TOTAL SIZE
353,500 square feet

TOTAL COST
\$92 million

Centennial Residence and Culinary Arts Centre

by SUSAN PEDERSON

Fiftieth birthdays call for making a big splash, and drawing attention to oneself. That's just what Centennial College is doing this year, as it celebrates "the big 5-0" with the completion of the Centennial Residence and Culinary Arts Centre – the biggest build in the College's history. The building doesn't just make a big splash, it is literally putting the College on the visual map for everyone who passes by.

"When you are driving along Highway 401, this building, along with the library [completed in 2011] really stands out, and serves as a branding and a billboard for the College, which is appropriate this year," notes Paul French, director of communications with Diamond Schmitt Architects. "There are a lot of eyeballs on those buildings every day, whereas before you really couldn't see much of the campus from the highway."

Closer up, there's a lot to see inside the LEED Silver certified quadrangle, which is a unique and happy mix of student housing, learning space, offices and public spaces. For starters, eight interactive classrooms; three culinary arts labs; two baking and pastry arts labs (including a commercial bake lab); plus offices and workspaces for 50 faculty and staff facilitate day-to-day learning activities.

A fully functioning 90-seat restaurant that is open to the public, an event centre with a capacity for 600 guests, and a tasting room allow students to hone their restaurant and event skills in a real-life setting. Add to that a 742-bed student residence, a Grab and Go shop where residents can buy snacks and drinks produced in the culinary labs, and you've got yourself a veritable micro-community, all under one large, impressive roof (much of it green).

"It's absolutely incredible," says Joe Baker, dean of hospitality, tourism and culinary arts. "We have designed this new facility to be an experiential learning ecosystem where we are able to provide a hands-on learning environment so students are well

prepared when they graduate. It is really 21st century learning, and it goes beyond so much more than the technical skills. It is entirely focused on what the industry needs from our grads, including soft skills like teamwork and resilience."

The community benefits from this experiential learning even before students graduate, through The Local Café and Restaurant, thus named with the vision of becoming the local hangout for the nearby community, and beyond.

Students who reside here full time will have fantastic spaces to hang out as well, with each floor featuring communal kitchens; open, themed lounges; a cinema lounge; library and quiet study areas, as well as a yoga or meditation lounge.

"Our goal was to create residences that would elevate the students living experience, and this facility accomplishes that," says Branka Gazibara, project architect with Diamond Schmitt Architects. "The requirements are very different between the culinary program, classrooms, Event Centre and student residences, and this required close collaboration between the client, users, consultants and construction managers to make sure that all requirements are met."

Acoustic insulation adds a critical layer of separation between spaces where people live, relax and work, and spaces where they play. In addition, a separate, secure entrance to the residences, with separate elevators, ensure restaurant or event attendees never mistakenly run into late night study groups or bump into students running from the fitness centre to their room.

Graham FitzGerald, structural consultant, was happy to take on the structural challenges that came with the multi-use building. With ceiling height maximized in the conference centre and labs, and an efficient design on the student residences, the approach was to keep things simple, using long span



structural steel for the larger column-free spaces, and flat plate concrete construction on the residential floors.

"The transitions in layout of the spaces did make for some structural challenges," FitzGerald says. "The four large student lounges in the four corners of every floor features creative use of exposed concrete elements. In addition, transfers of specific structural shear walls were carefully co-ordinated to create open teaching spaces on the lower levels while ensuring earthquake resistance of the overall building structure."

"The kitchen labs mechanical requirements were quite substantial, so there was a dedicated mechanical room on the lower level, in addition to a main plant at the top of the building. As a result, the amount of mechanical co-ordination with the structure was more involved compared to a conventional residential building."

High-efficiency glazing and highly insulated walls and roofs will improve energy performance throughout the building, along with its green roof and water-saving features. But

the grass in the courtyard gets its hue not from nature, but from the artificial turf installed in the space. "The courtyard doesn't get a lot of sunshine, but we wanted to provide students with a lawn area," explains Deanne Christie, landscape architect with Baker Turner Inc. "Artificial turf has evolved to such a point that even the thatch looks like thatch. As a whole it is maybe a bit coarser, but there are other benefits, such as draining and drying quickly. The rest of the plant pallet was easy to work with."

A Feng Shui consultant ensured a harmonious relationship between the elements inside and out, but it also doesn't hurt that events centre patrons on the top floor will look out onto a panoramic view of Lake Ontario and the city. In fact, the first, and likely the most significant party will be celebrated in October, as the College celebrates its 50th birthday.

Baker adds, "What do you do when you have finally finished building a big, beautiful \$90 million dollar home? You throw a big party and invite 1,000 of your closest friends." **A**