

SUGARCUBE BUILDING: MODERN MIXED-USE BUILDING REFERENCES HISTORIC NEIGHBOR

Do you think it's important for new buildings in historic districts to be sensitive to the buildings already there?

The SugarCube Building, built in 2008, is named in reference to its historic neighbor, The Sugar Building, home of the Great Western Sugar Company, constructed in 1906. It was designed to fit into the Lower Downtown Historic District with its exterior elements. The SugarCube is a modern ten-story structure; a building-within-a-building, with retail on the first floor, offices on floors two through four and residential apartments on floors five through ten.

Structure

The building is grayish brick, wrapped by two lower structures in blond brick, and it bears contrasting colors to delineate different sections of the building. The building garnered approval from the Lower Downtown Historic Guidelines and Review Committees for its fusion of historical context and current design, development and economic criteria (Voelz Chandler). The six-story portion on the 16th Street Mall wraps around the base in a way that relates specifically to the wrapping of the adjacent Sugar Building's ornamental façade around the corner. The transition between commercial office and residential spaces at the top of the fourth floor is marked by deeper setback of operable glazed windows within the 16th Street masonry façade. The 16th Street façade in turn references one of the mid-bands within the façade of the Sugar Building.

The top of the parapet of SugarCube is set at a height that aligns with the underside of the upper cornice of the Sugar Building. The roof of the masonry base buildings on the 16th Street Mall and Blake Street provide generous outdoor terraces for residential units on the 5th and 7th floors. The upper floors (five through ten) are set back from the facades with smooth cladding to match the changing sky color. The setback also allows for balconies to punctuate the facades.

Architect

The building's architect, KPMB Toronto, is a Canadian architecture firm founded in 1987 by Bruce Kuwabara, Thomas Payne, Marianne McKenna and Shirley Blumberg. It is headquartered in Toronto, where the majority of their work is found. Aside from designing buildings, the firm also works in interior design. American projects include the Walgreen Drama Center for the University of Michigan, Sprague Memorial Hall for Yale University and the Goodman Theatre in Chicago. KPMB's current work includes projects for Princeton University, Orchestra Hall for the Minnesota Orchestra in Minneapolis and the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University (KPMB Toronto).

Lower Downtown Historic District

The Lower Downtown Historic District was created by the enactment of a zoning ordinance by Denver City Council in March 1988. The resolution's intent was to encourage historic preservation and to promote economic and social vitality in Denver's founding neighborhood at a time when it still held significant historic and architectural value. The status granted by this special designation provided protection to the community's archivable resources and to the 120 contributing historic structures that remained after roughly 20% of Lower Downtown's buildings had been demolished through Denver

Urban Renewal Authority policies in the 1960s and 1970s. LoDo's historic district ordinance includes zoning that restricts building height and encourages mixed-use development. It stipulates strict design guidelines for rehabilitation and new construction (Voelz Chandler, 2013).

References

Voelz Chandler, M. 2013. *Guide to Denver Architecture*. Denver: Fulcrum Group.

KPMB Toronto. Retrieved from <http://www.kpmb.com/>.