



A Note from the Founder: The Architecture of Connection

“Great design doesn’t just build the future—it honours the past, creating spaces that evolve alongside us.”

Welcome to the May 2026 Issue of Forma The Magazine.

As I look at the stories we’ve gathered for this edition, a powerful theme emerges: rebirth and connection. Our built environment is in a constant state of beautiful evolution, and as designers, architects, and creators, we are tasked with bridging what was with what will be.

In this issue, we explore what it means to breathe new life into forgotten structures. From honouring Montreal’s industrial past to transforming a historic fire station into a vibrant centre stage at La Caserne and restoring a century of sunlight to Toronto’s historic Palm House, we see firsthand how spaces can hold on to their heritage while stepping boldly into the modern day.

But design is also deeply personal—it dictates how we connect across every stage of life. We take you inside spaces where families gather, exploring Joan Company Interiors' latest Kingsway build, and look at how Taktik Design is thoughtfully redefining community and dignity in senior living at Cloria. We also continue our conversation about urban housing and gentle density, looking at how Toronto’s Montrose sixplex manages to blend in seamlessly while building up.

Beyond the spaces themselves, we are looking inward at the people and practices shaping our industry. We examine why the design world needs to break the "classroom bubble" and prioritize hands-on practice, and we shine a spotlight on the inspiring creative vision of Margaret Brosnan. Alongside these stories, we celebrate the intersection of form and function with Luminaire Authentik’s new Forma collection.

To everyone who reads, contributes, and shares in this vision—thank you. As you turn these pages, I invite you to look a little deeper at the human stories woven into the brick, light, and landscapes of these projects.

Let’s continue to shape the future, together.


Giuseppe Gutta
Founder, Forma The Magazine

Page 04

Vivre 2:
The Story of New Life into Montreal's Industrial Past

Page 09

Competitions by Buildner

Page 10

Inside Toronto's Montrose Sixplex: Blending In and Building Up

Page 14

The Rebirth of Toronto's Historic Palm House: A Century of Sunlight

Page 20

Where Family Gathers:
Inside Joan + Company Interiors' Latest Kingsway Build

Page 24

Taktik Design is Redefining Senior Living at Cloria

Page 29

Luminaire Authentik's New FORMA Collection

Page 30

Blueprint of a Life:
Margaret Brosnan

Page 33

Competitions by Terraviva

Page 34

Practice Before Practice:
Why the Design Industry Needs to Break the Classroom Bubble

Page 36

From Fire Station to Center Stage:
The Rebirth of La Caserne

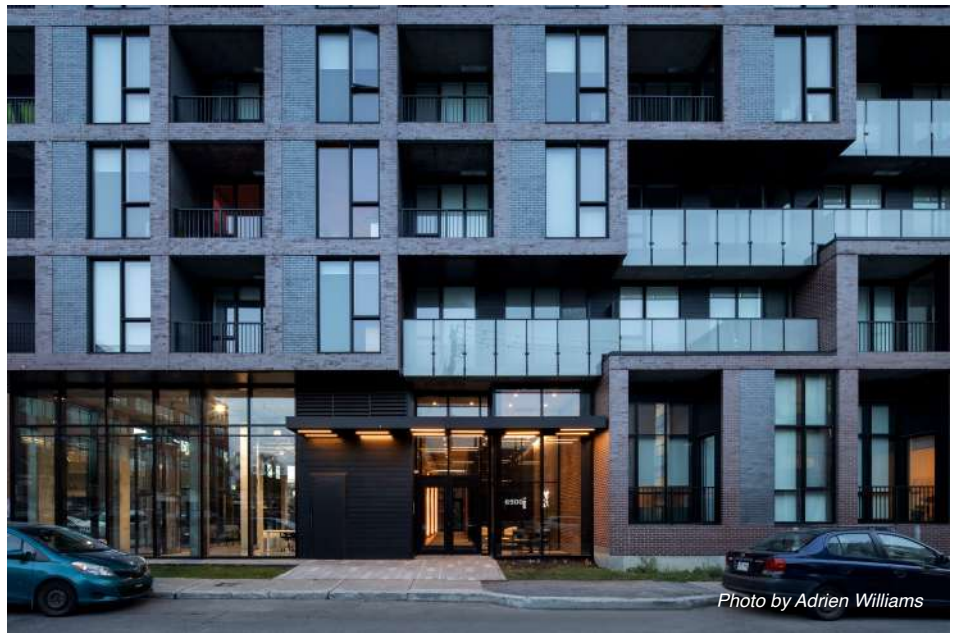




Vivre 2: The Story of New Life into Montreal's Industrial Past

Project by ACDF Architecture

In many cities, former industrial districts are rapidly transforming into modern residential communities. While these redevelopments often inject new energy into forgotten areas, they can also erase the history and character that once defined them. In Montreal's Outremont neighbourhood, however, a new project called Vivre 2 demonstrates that urban growth need not come at the expense of identity.



Designed by ACDF Architecture, Vivre 2 is located in the Atlantic sector of Outremont, near the Université de Montréal's new campus. This site was once part of a heavily industrialized area filled with rail yards and warehouses, which had been disconnected from the surrounding city for decades. With the opening of Thérèse-Lavoie-Roux Street, the district has gradually evolved into a more connected and livable urban space, creating opportunities for thoughtful redevelopment.



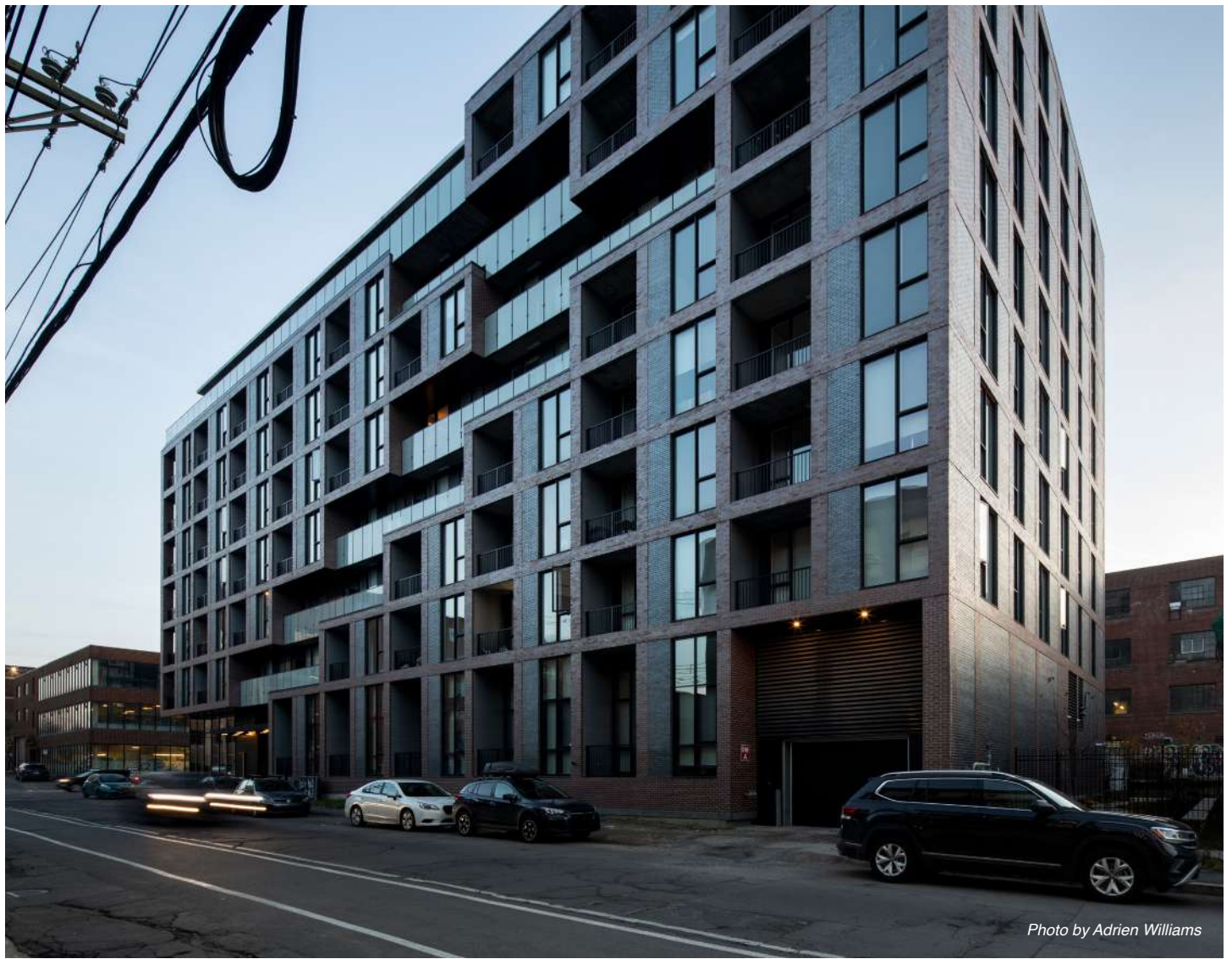


Photo by Adrien Williams

"The reconversion of such a sector should never be a blank page, but rather a dialogue between the before and the after. It's about listening to the soul of the place—its history, its scale, its textures—and understanding what makes it unique. Only then can we add a new building that is coherent with this identity, enriching the genius loci, rather than diluting it."

Maxime Frappier, the project's lead architect.

Project Team

Architecture/Interior Design: ACDF Architecture

Civil and Structural Engineering: GENIMAC

Mechanical/Electrical Engineering: Équipe SP

Landscape Architecture: BC2

General Contractor: Presti

Rather than replacing the area's industrial heritage with a generic residential building, the architects chose to celebrate the neighbourhood's past by incorporating elements such as an industrial-style grid and a clay brick façade that directly reference Montreal's historic industrial architecture.



While the building references the past, its design remains distinctly contemporary, with features like diagonal glass and transparency that meet modern expectations for light and openness. This balance shows how Vivre 2 integrates modern amenities while respecting and enhancing the area's industrial character. One of the project's most innovative design choices is found at street level. Rather than isolating shared amenities on the rooftop, Vivre 2 positions communal spaces along the laneway at ground level. This strategy fosters interaction among residents and transforms previously overlooked alleyways into active, people-oriented spaces.

Vivre 2 continues the vision introduced in Vivre 1, an earlier project by the same architectural firm located nearby. Together, these developments demonstrate how residential density can be added to former industrial districts without erasing their identity. Instead of treating redevelopment as a blank slate, the project embraces the idea that architecture should respect and build upon the stories already embedded within a place. Emphasizing heritage preservation here helps readers feel connected to Montreal's history and proud of its ongoing evolution.

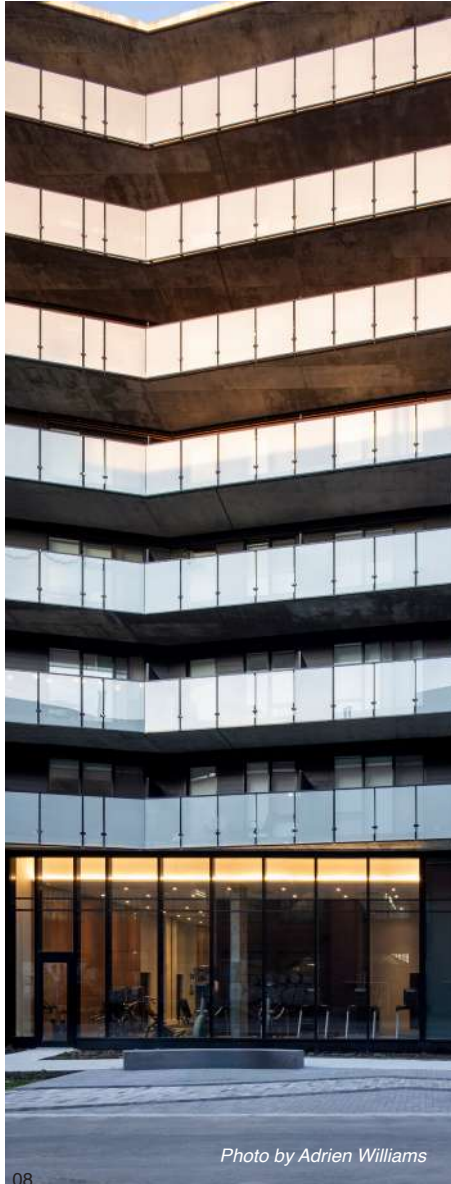


Photo by Adrien Williams



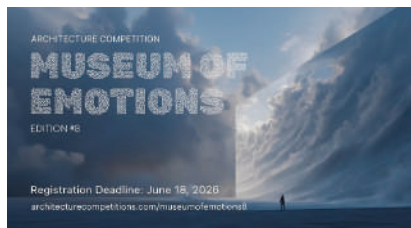
Photo by Adrien Williams



Photo by Adrien Williams

"In the realm of modern urban revitalization, balancing historical preservation with high-density development is a formidable challenge. Too frequently, new construction erases the rich vernacular of a neighbourhood in favour of sterile structures. However, ACDF Architecture's Vivre 2 project in Montreal presents a masterful exception, offering a compelling blueprint for intelligent city planning. Vivre 2 distinguishes itself through a profound respect for the district's industrial heritage. The facade's brilliant utilization of dual-toned clay brick pays homage to traditional factory frameworks. Concurrently, the striking diagonal glass "cut" ascending the structure provides what the architects aptly term an "architectural breath." This element successfully mitigates the building's visual mass, infusing it with contemporary dynamism. Yet, the project's most transformative achievement lies in its urban choreography. By subverting the convention of isolated rooftop amenities and instead situating communal spaces on the ground floor to face the back alleyway, the architects have activated a historically neglected zone. This ingenious spatial arrangement fosters genuine community interaction, promotes natural surveillance, and enhances neighbourhood vitality. Ultimately, Vivre 2 stands not merely as a residential complex, but as a highly sensitive, human-centric paradigm for the future of urban living."

The Editorial Team at Forma



The **Museum of Emotions** competition requires designing two contrasting exhibition halls—one positive, one negative—using only architecture to evoke feelings. This "silent" contest forbids text, relying on scale and light, with a **€10,000 prize fund**. **Register by June 18, 2026**, and **submit projects by July 20, 2026**.



The **Mujassam Watan Challenge #8** invites designers to create landmark sculptures for two Saudi Arabian sites: a high-speed highway gateway and a coastal pedestrian waterfront. Open to all, it features a **€50,000 prize fund**. **Register by July 23, 2026**, and **submit projects by August 27, 2026**.



The **Re:Form – New Life for Old Spaces #3** challenge invites designers to reimagine neglected structures like storefronts or garages into sustainable, functional environments. Open to all, it offers a **€10,000 prize fund**. **Register by September 10, 2026**, and **submit projects by October 12, 2026**.



The **Pavilion Atlas 2026** competition challenges creators to design a conceptual pavilion that captures a nation's unique, modern soul without using clichés. Open to all, it offers a **€20,000 prize fund**. **Register by September 16, 2026**, and **submit projects by October 19, 2026**.



The **Underbridge #2** architecture competition challenges global designers to transform the neglected spaces underneath bridges into innovative, sustainable, and affordable housing. Open to all, it offers a **€8,000 prize fund**. **Register by September 17, 2026**, and **submit projects by October 19, 2026**.

Looking for a **design challenge?**

The clock is ticking! Every month, we round up exciting **BUILDNER COMPETITIONS** with approaching deadlines. What are you waiting for? Grab your sketchbook and register before time runs out!

Think you've seen it all?

Scan to unlock the full lineup.





Inside Toronto's Montrose Sixplex: Blending In and Building Up

Project by Gabriel Fain Architects

Photo by Félix Michaud

As Toronto continues to face increasing housing demands, the Montrose Sixplex offers a thoughtful alternative to conventional urban development. Designed by Gabriel Fain Architects, the project explores how higher-density housing can be integrated into established residential neighbourhoods without disrupting their character. Instead of creating a large, imposing structure, the design emphasizes maintaining the scale and rhythm of the surrounding streetscape while providing much-needed rental units.

Located near Bickford Park, the modern residential development comprises six rental units spread across multiple structures on a compact urban lot. The project includes a street-facing multiplex paired with two laneway suites positioned at the rear of the property. This thoughtful setup helps the development feel more seamlessly connected to the existing historic neighbourhood.

Project Team

Architect: Gabriel Fain Architects

Interior Design: Unison Group

Construction Management: Reside Properties

Architecturally, the buildings draw inspiration from nearby homes through features like pitched rooflines, balanced proportions, and simple yet refined details. The exterior design has a quiet presence that blends seamlessly into the residential environment while offering a modern interpretation of urban housing.

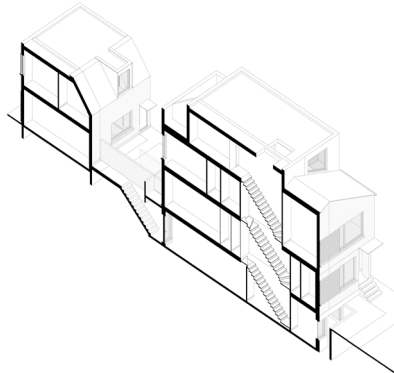


Image by Gabriel Fain Architects



Photo by Félix Michaud



Photo by Félix Michaud



Photo by Félix Michaud

The Montrose Sixplex exemplifies the idea of “gentle density,” an approach that introduces additional housing while respecting the identity of existing communities. Rather than focusing on maximizing height or scale, the project emphasizes livability, integration, and long-term sustainability. As Toronto adapts to evolving zoning policies and increasing population growth, developments like this demonstrate how cities can expand housing options without sacrificing neighbourhood charm. The project serves as a model of how thoughtful architecture can tackle urban challenges while preserving a sense of familiarity and community.



Inside the residences, the interiors are designed to feel open, comfortable, and closely connected to the outdoors. Expansive sliding glass doors allow natural light to fill the spaces while reinforcing the link between indoor living areas and private outdoor spaces. Natural materials, warm finishes, and clean, modern details contribute to a calm and welcoming atmosphere. The layouts focus on both functionality and comfort, creating homes that are practical for daily life while maintaining a refined contemporary aesthetic.

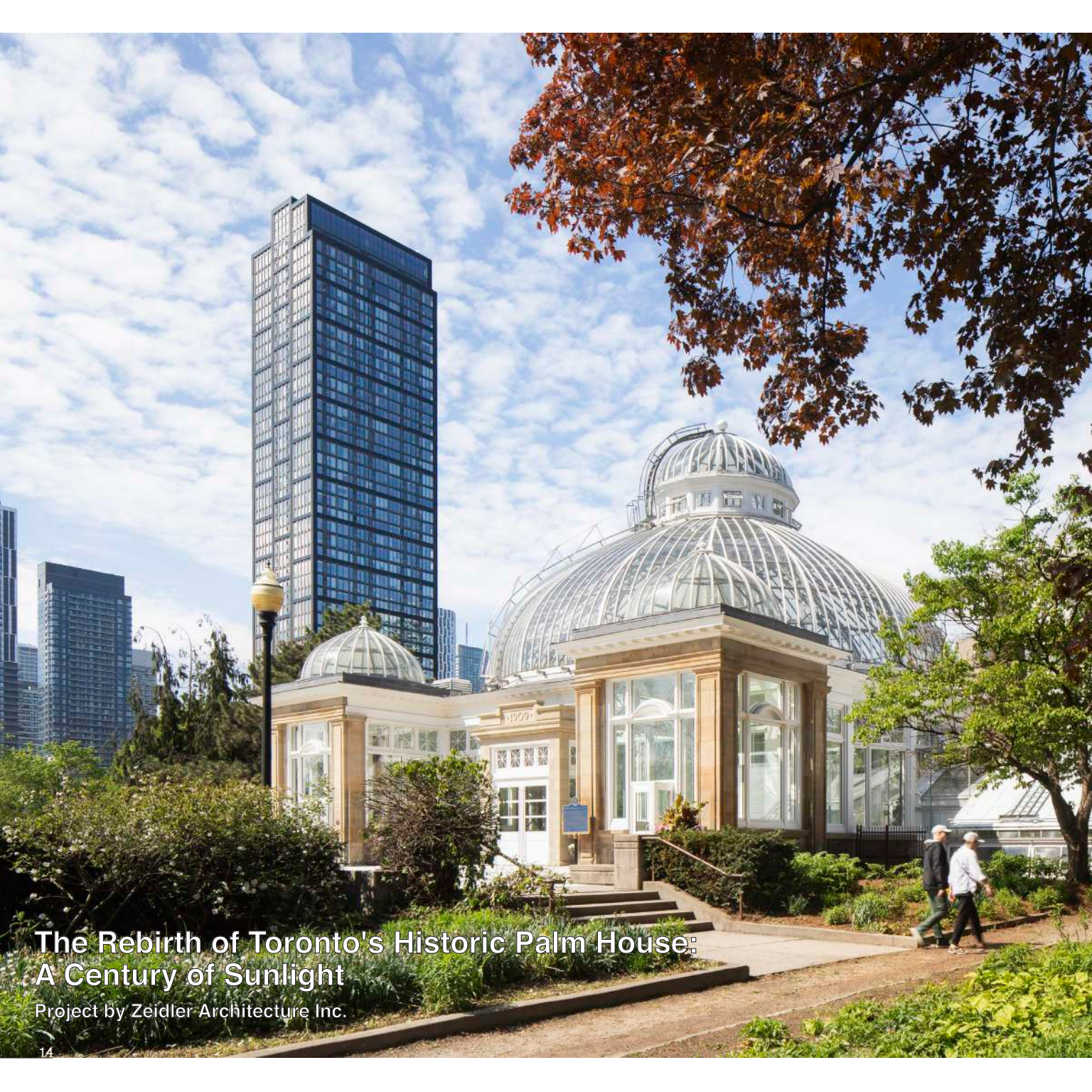


The Montrose Sixplex exemplifies the idea of “gentle density,” an approach that introduces additional housing while respecting the identity of existing communities. Rather than focusing on maximizing height or scale, the project emphasizes livability, integration, and long-term sustainability. As Toronto adapts to evolving zoning policies and increasing population growth, developments like this demonstrate how cities can expand housing options without sacrificing neighbourhood charm. The project serves as a model of how thoughtful architecture can tackle urban challenges while preserving a sense of familiarity and community.



“As urban centers grapple with an ongoing housing crisis, Gabriel Fain Architects offers a masterclass in gentle densification with Toronto's Montrose Sixplex. Completed in 2026, this six-unit rental project embodies a sophisticated architectural restraint that is remarkably refreshing. Rather than imposing an out-of-scale structure on an established neighbourhood, the design succeeds through deep contextual sensitivity. It seamlessly integrates multi-unit housing while highly respecting the streetscape's rhythm and historic character. Editorially speaking, this quiet elegance prioritizes community cohesion over architectural ego. The project proves that density needn't be disruptive, offering a beautiful, sustainable blueprint for the future of “missing-middle” housing.”

The Editorial Team at Forma



The Rebirth of Toronto's Historic Palm House: A Century of Sunlight

Project by Zeidler Architecture Inc.



Photo by Adrien Williams

For over a century, the Palm House at Allan Gardens has been a valued Toronto landmark and community gathering space. Its glass dome, tropical gardens, and classic architecture have offered generations respite from the city. After extensive restoration, the greenhouse again welcomes visitors, strengthening its role as a vibrant, accessible urban oasis.

The Palm House was completed in 1910. A fire in 1902 destroyed a previous conservatory on the site. Designed by City of Toronto architect Robert McCallum, the structure was inspired by the grand botanical glasshouses of Europe, especially London's conservatories. Its distinctive 16-sided dome, framed by steel and covered in thousands of glass panes, soon became one of the city's most recognizable features.

After over a century of exposure to the elements and aging infrastructure, the Palm House needed major restoration.



Photo by Adrien Williams

Project Team

Design and Executive Architects: Zeidler Architecture Inc.

Heritage Architect: Architects Rasch Eckler Associates Ltd. (AREA)

Structural Engineer/Glazing: Read Jones Christoffersen Ltd. (RJC)

Mechanical + Electrical Engineer: The HIDI Group Inc.

Contractor: HRI Group

Inside the conservatory, visitors are surrounded by palms, orchids, banana plants, ferns, and rare greenery. Highlights include the towering Canary Island Date Palm and the vibrant collection of blooming bromeliads. The striking Traveller's Palm is a favourite for photography. Fragrant jasmine vines and lush cycads add to the diversity and beauty. Sunlight fills the space, creating a warm, humid environment that offers an escape from the city. Allan Gardens is both a botanical haven and a valued retreat for families and the community.



Photo by Adrien Williams

The restoration preserved the building's historic character and updated essential systems for sustainability and safety. These improvements made the Palm House safer, more accessible, and environmentally friendly. Teams reinforced the steel framework, replaced damaged glass, improved ventilation, and restored architectural details that had been lost or altered.



A key achievement was reopening the original eastern entrance, which had been closed since the 1950s. This work restored the Palm House's intended design. Visitors now experience the symmetry and openness that McCallum envisioned.



Today, the renewed Palm House combines historic character with modern updates. The restored dome brings natural light into the conservatory and highlights the tropical collections. The revitalized structure maintains Edwardian elegance, creating a brighter, more welcoming environment.



Photo by Adrien Williams



Photo by Adrien Williams

Allan Gardens is important to Toronto's social and cultural history. The site has hosted civic gatherings, demonstrations, cultural events, and community celebrations. It has served as a key public meeting place for generations.

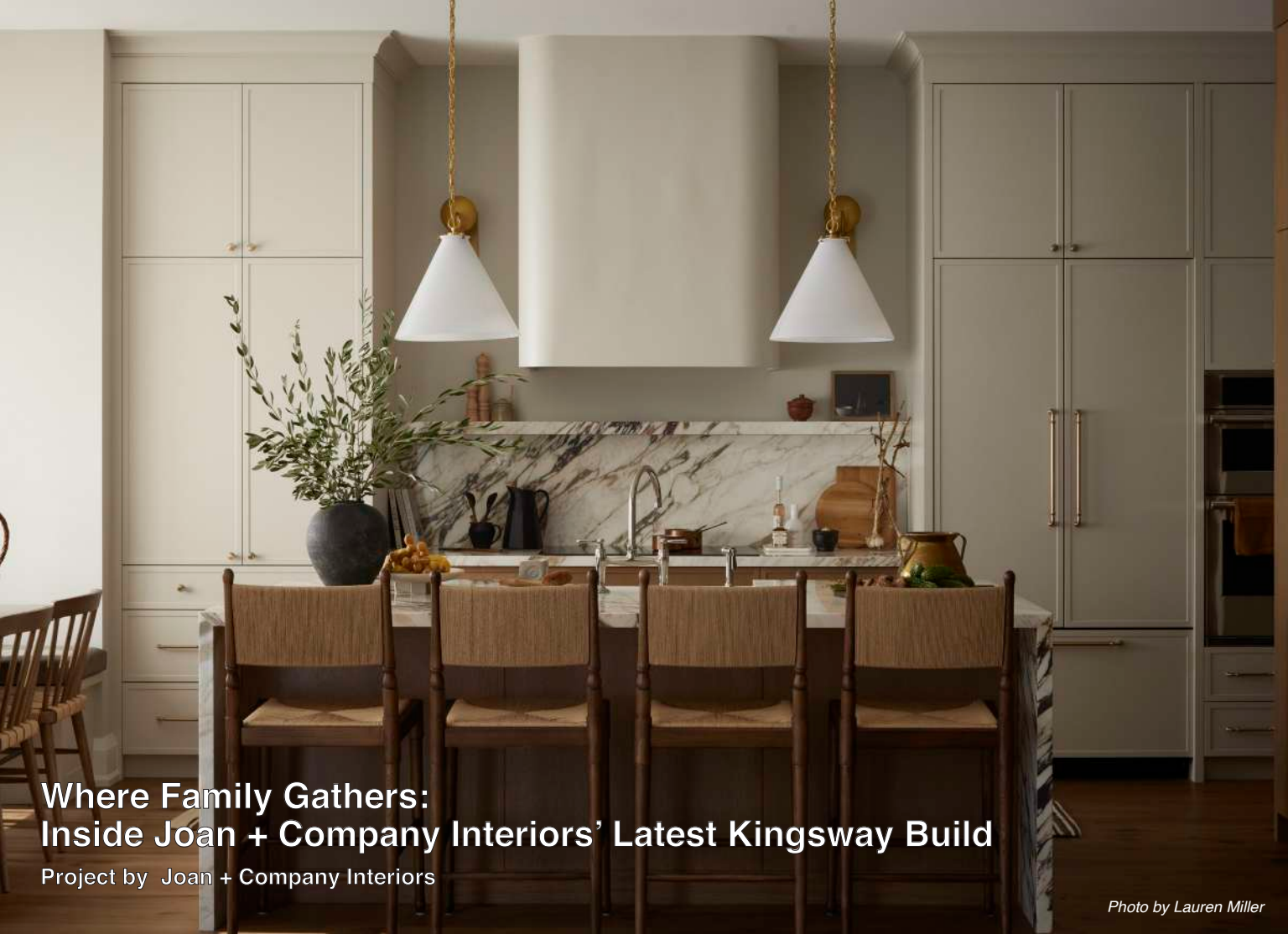
With restoration complete, the Palm House begins a new chapter as both a heritage site and an essential gathering place. Its revitalization strengthens Toronto's cultural landscape and ensures future generations can connect, relax, and find inspiration within its gardens.

The Palm House is open to visitors year-round. Admission is free. The conservatory is generally open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., including weekends and most holidays. The building is wheelchair accessible, and accessible washrooms are available on site. Visitors are welcome to explore at their own pace, and group tours can be arranged by contacting the facility in advance.



“The revitalization of Toronto's Allan Gardens Palm House perfectly balances preserving history with smart modern upgrades. I love how the architects kept the 1909 Edwardian charm intact while integrating modern tech—like the laminated glass dome to manage summer heat without losing that signature glow. It's brilliant that they even sourced sandstone from the same original quarry to repair the stonework! Rebuilding the historic east entrance and making it completely barrier-free is a huge win, ensuring this downtown sanctuary is accessible to everyone. The fact that they kept it open to the public during the \$11-million construction proves how vital this green oasis is to Toronto. Winning the Lieutenant Governor's Award is incredibly well-deserved. This project beautifully shows that historic spaces aren't just relics of the past, but living, breathing parts of our cities that deserve a second act.”

The Editorial Team at Forma



Where Family Gathers: Inside Joan + Company Interiors' Latest Kingsway Build

Project by Joan + Company Interiors

Photo by Lauren Miller



Photo by Lauren Miller

Located in Toronto's Kingsway neighbourhood, this newly completed home by Joan + Company Interiors beautifully combines comfort, elegance, and practicality, making it appealing to both prospective buyers and industry professionals. The residence merges timeless style with functional living, creating inviting, well-organized spaces that showcase its high-end features and family-friendly suitability.



Photo by Lauren Miller



Photo by Lauren Miller



Photo by Lauren Miller

A calming palette of neutral colours, warm wood tones, and textured materials flows throughout the home. These elements create an atmosphere that feels relaxed yet refined. Large windows fill the interiors with daylight, brightening each room and strengthening the connection to the outdoor landscape. Layered lighting, custom furnishings, and carefully selected finishes add depth and character to the spaces while maintaining a clean and uncluttered appearance. The result is a home that feels polished but never overly formal.

The finished project reflects the understated elegance often associated with the Kingsway neighbourhood. Instead of relying on bold statements or temporary trends, the design emphasizes craftsmanship, balance, and lasting quality, inspiring confidence in the home's beauty and value. The atmosphere feels refined and connected to the surrounding community.



Photo by Lauren Miller



Photo by Lauren Miller

Spaces built around daily life were carefully planned to support both family interaction and personal downtime, making the home ideal for family living. Open-concept areas promote gathering and entertaining, while smaller, quiet spaces offer privacy and relaxation, emphasizing its family-oriented design. The layout was planned to support both family interaction and personal downtime. Open-concept areas encourage gathering and entertaining, while smaller, quieter spaces provide opportunities for rest and privacy.

“Our client is a lifelong learner and entrepreneur. We wanted the snug to reflect that spirit, warm, grounded, and purposeful. It’s where calm meets curiosity and where focus feels effortless”

Joan MacAlpine, founder and principal designer of Joan and Company Interiors.



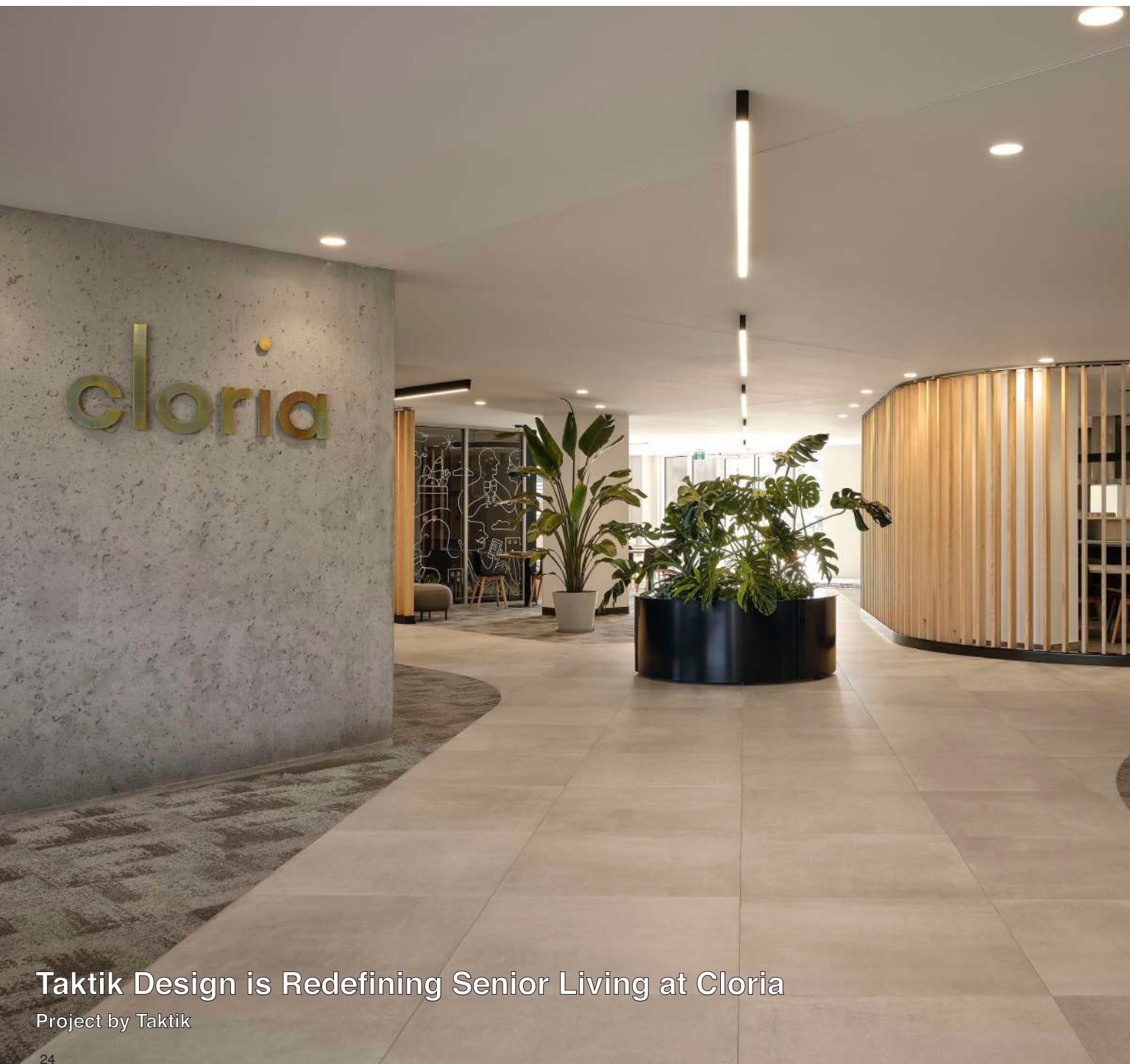
Photo by Lauren Miller

Every room serves a purpose, ensuring the home functions smoothly without compromising visual appeal. More than simply a beautiful house, the residence was designed to support meaningful moments and everyday living. Joan + Company Interiors successfully created a space where functionality and timeless style exist together, resulting in a home that feels both sophisticated and genuinely lived in.



“The Kingsway built by Joan + Company Interiors is absolutely stunning! I love how they perfectly balanced that elevated, timeless look with the actual durability a growing family needs. The natural light flowing from the south-facing backyard makes the whole space feel incredibly warm and inviting. I’m especially impressed by their dedication to the finer details—going the extra mile to custom engineer those brass thresholds in the front hall really shows their commitment to quality over taking the easy way out. Also, the “snug” reading room is such a thoughtful touch for quiet moments. It genuinely feels like a home that’s exceptionally beautiful, yet perfectly ready to be lived in!”

The Editorial Team at Forma



Taktik Design is Redefining Senior Living at Cloria

Project by Taktik



Photo by Maxime Brouillet

Cloria in Beloeil, Quebec, transforms the idea of retirement living with Taktik Design's vision. By prioritizing independence, comfort, and social connection, Cloria offers vibrant interiors and lively shared spaces that inspire residents to stay active and connected.

The design team set out to craft a space that feels like home, not just another retirement residence. Inviting finishes, gentle textures, and contemporary materials like light wood, concrete, and metal come together to create a soothing, uplifting atmosphere.

"The success of the project lies precisely in the fact that it doesn't feel like entering a retirement residence. Of course, we ensured ergonomics adapted to the users by avoiding seating that is too low, but above all, we sought to break free from the aesthetic codes usually associated with this type of environment, in favour of a more contemporary and universal language."

Alexa Adam, interior designer and project manager at Taktik.

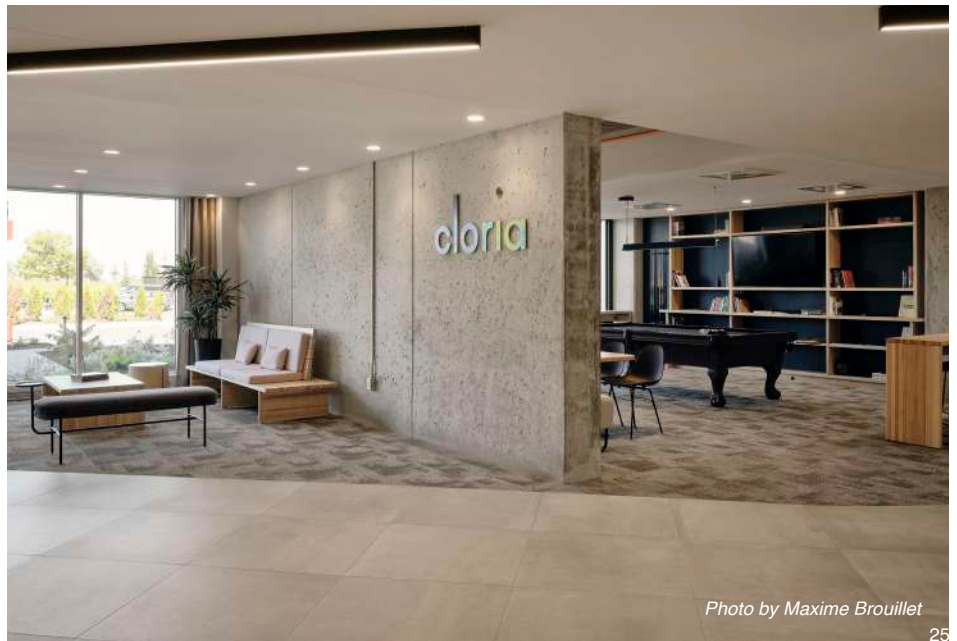


Photo by Maxime Brouillet

"The common spaces support spontaneous activities. Here, residents take charge of community life—there is no programmed calendar of activities organized by the residence."

Alexa Adam, interior designer and project manager at Taktik.

Shared spaces flow into private living areas, nurturing both a sense of belonging and a sense of personal retreat. The setting feels fresh and inviting leaving, behind the outdated look of traditional senior housing.

"In retirement, people want to enjoy life, stay active, and keep moving—and the space reflects these aspirations: living in an environment that supports activity, autonomy, and sociability."

Nicola Tardif-Bourdages, designer, founder, and president of Taktik Design.



Photo by Maxime Brouillet



Photo by Maxime Brouillet

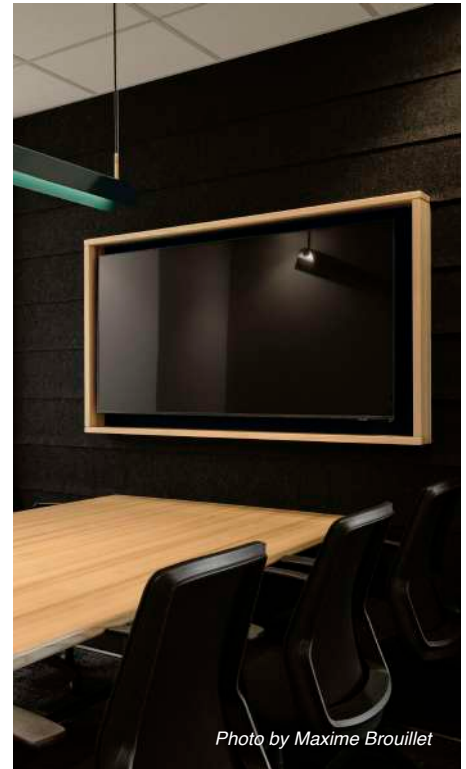


Photo by Maxime Brouillet



Photo by Maxime Brouillet

At the heart of the residence, a central communal area with lush indoor greenery draws people together. Radiating hallways make it easy to explore and spark spontaneous connections among residents.

Residents can unwind in a fireside lounge, gather for friendly games in the softly lit billiards room, or cook and share meals in a welcoming kitchen that feels just like home.

Café-style nooks, cozy lounges, and lively recreation areas invite residents to connect often, weaving a vibrant sense of community throughout daily life. Every detail, from thoughtfully chosen furniture to inviting walkways, supports older adults while preserving a sophisticated, homelike feel.

Cloria leads a new wave in senior living, where residents seek spaces that encourage activity, foster friendships, and nurture well-being, moving far beyond outdated retirement models.



Photo by Maxime Brouillet

Instead of focusing on limitations, the interiors celebrate freedom of movement and self-reliance. The result is a space that blends practicality with elegance, nurturing both comfort and confidence.

Through thoughtful design and contemporary style, Taktik Design has shaped a residence where connection, comfort, and quality of life come first. Cloria is not simply a place to retire; it is a vibrant vision of senior living, centred on activity, dignity, and purpose-filled days.



Photo by Maxime Brouillet



Photo by Maxime Brouillet



Photo by Maxime Brouillet

“We define masterpiece what Taktik Design has done with the Cloria residence in Beloeil! It's so refreshing to see a senior living space that completely ditches the sterile, clinical vibe we are so used to. Instead of feeling like an institution, it genuinely looks like a stylish, modern boutique hotel. The sage green communal kitchen and that gorgeous circular hub are brilliant touches. They don't just look great with that modern mix of concrete, metal, and pale wood—they naturally encourage residents to socialize without forcing rigid, pre-planned schedules. It's all about giving seniors their autonomy and dignity back through design. We need way more of this forward-thinking architecture for older generations.”

The Editorial Team at Forma

Luminaire Authentik's New FORMA Collection



Photo by Luminaire Authentik

Step into a world where structural elements step out of the shadows. Luminaire Authentik's FORMA collection strips away the conventional, transforming exposed wiring, ceiling plates, and mechanical joints into a celebrated postmodern masterpiece. What was once hidden is now the crowning jewel of the fixture's identity.



Photo by Luminaire Authentik

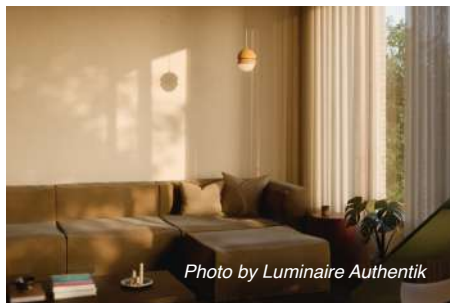


Photo by Luminaire Authentik

FORMA isn't just a lighting fixture; it's a dynamic design concept. With custom glass globes, vibrant finishes, and exposed wiring, it lets you sculpt with light—from subtle accent to sprawling centrepiece.



Photo by Luminaire Authentik



Photo by Luminaire Authentik

Rooted in Cowansville, Quebec, Luminaire Authentik brings sustainable luxury to life. By sourcing materials within 30km, the female-founded brand proves that enduring design can flourish locally.



Blueprint of a Life: Margaret Brosnan

For Margaret Brosnan, interior design is about creating homes that are functional and personal, reflecting the real lives of those who live in them.

Her work balances timeless beauty and practicality, creating interiors that radiate warmth and invite effortless living. Brosnan crafts spaces that nurture daily rituals, foster comfort, and inspire togetherness without following fleeting trends.

Creativity has always shaped Brosnan's life. As a child, she imagined projects and transformed spaces into places for people to connect.

Those early experiences shaped her belief in the power of spaces to evoke emotion and connection. Her grandmother, a painter, left a mark with a home filled with art and curated details.

The spirit of that home showed Brosnan that interiors hold memories and personality. She learned meaningful spaces are defined by the stories they tell, not perfection. These lessons guide her philosophy today. Brosnan imagines the feeling of a home before the details are finished. She sees design as more than surfaces and furniture; it shapes how people move, connect, and experience daily life.



Photo by Ash Adams

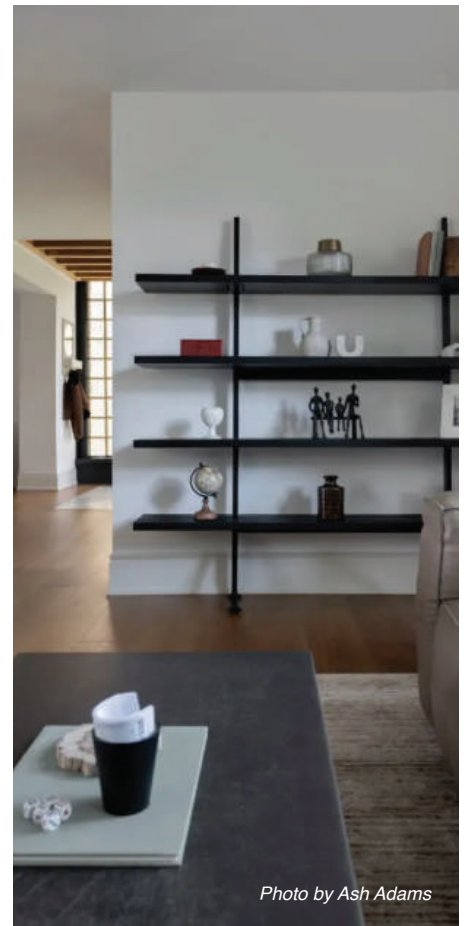


Photo by Ash Adams

Her interiors combine natural materials, soft textures, and clean lines to create calm, welcoming spaces. Light woods, layers, and subtle details add timelessness and warmth. Brosnan avoids excess, focusing on restraint and purpose. Every piece is thoughtful, creating a space that feels unified, serene, and lasting.



Photo by Ash Adams

She oversaw construction, trades, and unexpected challenges. The process was demanding and transformative, expanding her expertise and confidence as a designer. While Brosnan's style is known for timeless simplicity, she begins with functionality. Before choosing finishes, she learns how clients live.



Photo by Ash Adams



Photo by Ash Adams

Kitchens become gathering places, living areas encourage comfort and conversation, and layouts create flow and ease. The result is spaces that feel intuitive and personal, not overly formal or staged. By blending functionality with timeless style, Margaret Brosnan creates interiors that feel inviting and lasting.

What truly sets Brosnan apart is her unique ability to ensure that every home resonates emotionally with its residents. Her interiors are conceived to evolve with families, supporting their changing needs and preserving significance as the years pass—demonstrating an uncommon commitment to long-lasting connection and adaptability.



Photo by Ash Adams



The **Lison Winery** competition invites designers to transform a historic Venetian farm into a contemporary boutique winery. Participants must integrate hospitality and tasting spaces while respecting the site's rural heritage. The contest offers a **€9,000 prize** fund, and the **final submission is June 26, 2026**.



The **Milan Design Loft** competition tasks designers with rethinking a double-height apartment in Città Studi for an architecture student. The project focuses on flexible layouts for studying and socializing. The contest offers a **€8,000 prize** fund, and the **final submission is July 3, 2026**.



The **Urban Toilets** competition invites designers to reimagine public restrooms as innovative, sustainable icons for the modern city. Participants must balance hygiene, accessibility, and architectural quality to enhance the urban fabric. The contest offers an **€8,000 prize** fund, and the **final submission is July 10, 2026**.



The **Nidos de Agua** invites designers to create a floating shelter on Lake Atitlán that harmoniously integrates with the environment. Participants must focus on modularity and water conservation for a unique experience. The contest offers an **€8,000 prize** fund, and the **final submission is September 11, 2026**.



The **Situér Milano** Design Challenge asks creators to conceptualize a cohesive three-piece metal furniture collection. Submissions must perfectly balance creativity with factory feasibility. The contest offers an **€7,000 prize** fund, and the **final submission is October 02, 2026**.

Looking for a **design challenge?**

The clock is ticking! Every month, we round up exciting **TERRAVIVA COMPETITIONS** with approaching deadlines. What are you waiting for? Grab your sketchbook and register before time runs out!

Think you've seen it all?

Scan to unlock the full lineup.





Design education has long separated classroom theory from professional practice. Industry leaders now emphasize that early, hands-on experience is essential for developing future designers. This issue is central to Practice Before Practice, a collaboration between Toronto Metropolitan University, Mason Studio, and HOEM.

The program brings together a select group of upper-year design students each semester, chosen through a portfolio and interview process. Over 12 weeks, students work in multidisciplinary teams on real client projects, guided by mentors from both academia and industry. The curriculum blends studio workshops, site visits, and hands-on fabrication, ensuring participants are exposed to a range of project types, from interiors to product design. The structure encourages close collaboration, allowing students to develop solutions that address real client needs while building their professional skills.

The program introduces students to fabrication techniques and production methods not typically covered in classrooms. For example, students participate in a week-long workshop where they learn to use digital manufacturing tools such as laser cutters and CNC machines to develop prototypes. In one assignment, students collaborate to design and build full-scale mockups of furniture or architectural features for a real client space, selecting materials, managing a set budget, and resolving challenges that arise during construction. By experimenting with various materials and directly engaging in the construction process, students gain a deeper understanding of how ideas are realized from sketch to finished product.

Practice Before Practice represents a significant shift in design education. As the field becomes more collaborative and fast-paced, firms seek graduates who can work across disciplines, communicate effectively, and succeed in real-world environments.

By integrating academic and professional experiences, the initiative creates a new model for design education that emphasizes hands-on participation, mentorship, and direct engagement with the profession.

The program has also led several graduates to secure internships and employment with partner studios, demonstrating the tangible impact of immersive, real-world learning.



Esther Bailey, an interior design student who participated in this experience, says that transitioning to professional practice taught her to balance creativity with problem-solving. She emphasizes that constraints are not restrictions but tools for resourcefulness, and urges students to focus on genuine curiosity rather than forced networking.

Stanley Sun describes "Practice Before Practice" as a strategic business advantage rather than a charity. He notes that established firms often develop "blind spots" by repeating old methods; integrating students disrupts this operational inertia, fostering experimentation and offering a "fresh, creative engine" for the studio.





From Fire Station to Center Stage: The Rebirth of La Caserne

Project by SBTa Inc., Delort and Brochu Architectes



Located in the historic district of Old Quebec, La Caserne has been transformed from a former fire station into a modern cultural hub while preserving its century-old character. Originally built in 1912, the structure once served as an active fire hall before evolving into a contemporary performance venue dedicated to children's theatre and community events. Through careful restoration and modern additions, the project successfully blends heritage architecture with present-day design. The new La Caserne stands ready to inspire the next generation of theatre lovers for decades to come.



Photo by James Brittain



Photo by James Brittain

Project Team

Architects: SBTA Inc., Delort and Brochu Architectes

Structural/Civil: NCK Inc.

Mechanical/Electrical: Dupras Ledoux Inc.

Scenography: Trizart Alliance

Acoustics: Bouthillette Parizeau

Vertical transportation: JMCI Inc.

Project management: WSP

Artist (1% program): Jean-Robert Drouillard

General contractor: Les Constructions Béland & Lapointe



Over the years, the building has taken on different roles. In the 1990s, it was expanded to house Ex Machina, the theatre company founded by Canadian director Robert Lepage. More recently, the site became the permanent home of Les Gros Becs, a theatre organization focused on performances for young audiences. The redevelopment introduced a 350-seat theatre, rehearsal areas, reading spaces, terraces, and flexible gathering rooms designed for both performances and public events.

Outside, a redesigned public plaza strengthens the connection between the building and the surrounding city. The open gathering space encourages community interaction and provides views toward the St. Lawrence River, transforming La Caserne into more than just a theatre. It now serves as a welcoming cultural destination integrated into the urban landscape. Inside the building, visitors experience a carefully designed sequence of spaces that reveal both the old and new elements of the project. A bright blue entrance introduces a playful atmosphere that reflects the youth-focused mission of the theatre organization. Open staircases guide guests through the interior, while historic windows bring natural light into reading rooms and gathering spaces.

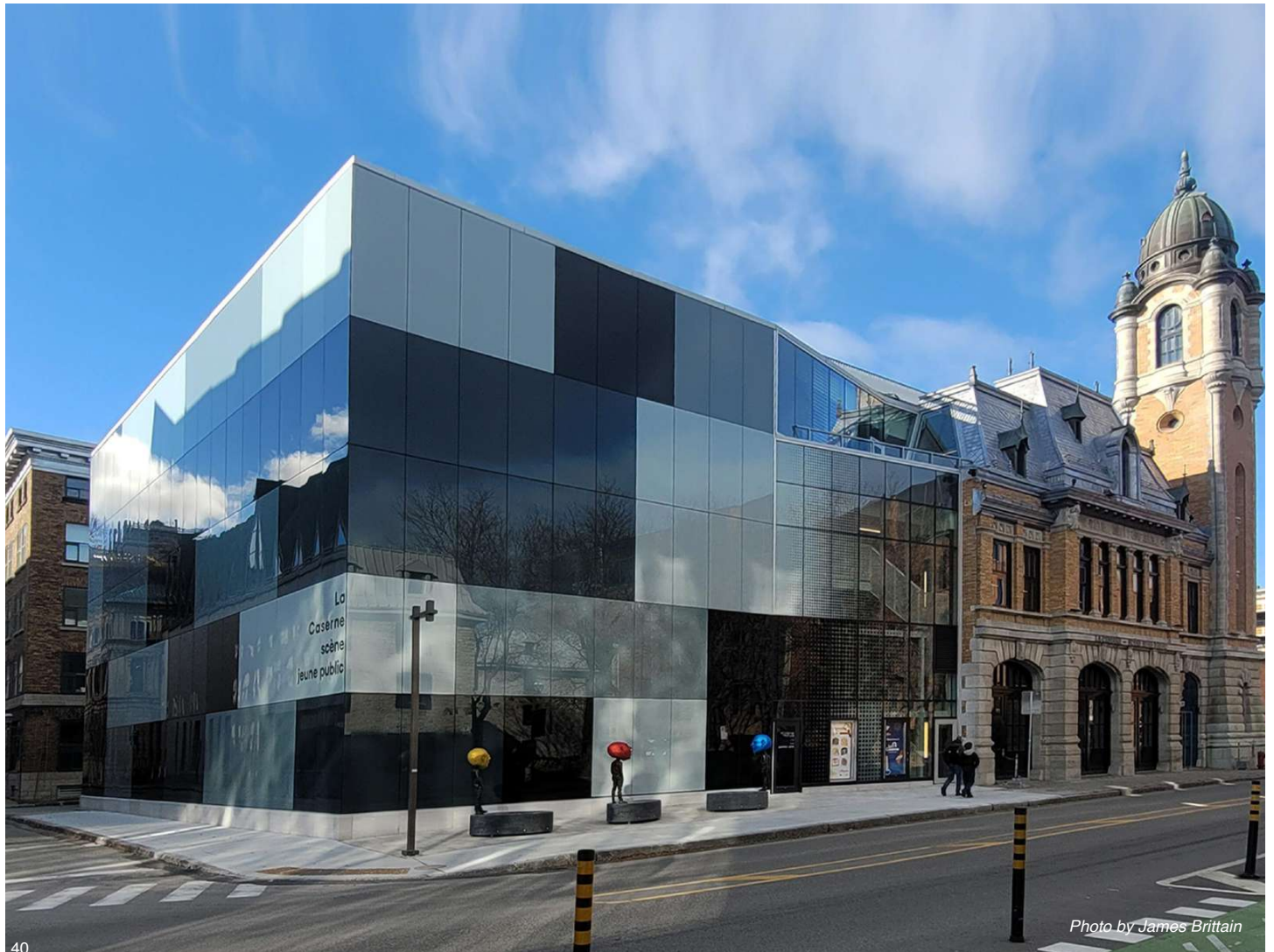


Photo by James Brittain

One of the project's defining features is the balance between historic preservation and contemporary architecture. The original stone fire station and its tower remain the focal point of the site, preserving the building's recognizable identity within Old Quebec. Instead of overshadowing the historic structure, the new additions were designed with restraint. Glass walls, metal details, and clean modern forms create contrast while still complementing the original architecture. Modern energy-efficient systems were added to improve long-term performance while reducing environmental impact.



Photo by James Brittain



Photo by James Brittain

Sustainability also played a major role in the redevelopment. Rather than demolishing the existing structure, the architects focused on adaptive reuse by preserving and reinforcing much of the original concrete and steel framework. Several materials from previous renovations were recycled and incorporated into the new design.



Photo by James Brittain

The material palette throughout the building was chosen to reflect the history of the original structure. Stainless steel surfaces mirror the grey tones of the stone exterior, while copper details reference the warm brickwork of the former fire hall. Wood finishes in the theatre, and upper levels create a warm and intimate atmosphere for visitors and audiences.



Photo by James Brittain



Photo by James Brittain

Today, La Caserne stands as a successful example of adaptive reuse in architecture. The project demonstrates how historic buildings can be transformed to meet modern needs without losing their original identity. By combining restoration, contemporary design, and community-focused spaces, the former fire station has entered a new chapter as one of Quebec City's most vibrant cultural landmarks.



"We absolutely love what they've done with La Caserne! Transforming a historic 1912 fire station into a youth theatre hub is a brilliant concept. They totally nailed the balance between preserving history and modern design. I'm especially impressed by their commitment to "circularity"—reusing the existing concrete, steel, and black granite instead of tearing the past down is so eco-friendly. The interior sounds magical, too. Shifting from mirrored steel on the ground floor to warm copper and wood upstairs creates a playful, inviting vibe for kids. Opening up the street level with a new piazzetta beautifully connects it to Old Quebec. It's a stunning blend of heritage and sustainability that breathes vibrant new life into an iconic landmark!"

The Editorial Team at Forma



FORMA

THE MAGAZINE

The intersection where architecture, design, and innovation meet.

www.formathemagazine.com

