



# Vaughan City Hall

by Dan O'Reilly

**W**ith its distinctive 10-storey clock tower, the soon-to-be-completed \$84.3-million, 280,000-square-foot Vaughan City Hall signifies the rapid transformation of the municipality from a rural area to an urban-style community.

Designed by Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg Architects (KPMB) and constructed by general contractor Maystar General Contractors Inc., it will replace an adjacent administration building that will eventually be demolished.

"Vaughan has grown into a major urban centre and now we have an award-winning City Hall that will be a source of civic pride for many years to come," says Mayor Linda Jackson.

Slated to open this fall, the building, which will achieve a proposed LEED Gold certification, will anchor a 24-acre civic square that will ultimately consist of a resource library, a reflecting pool/skating rink and public gardens.

The civic-centre-style campus will also be home to an 84-unit affordable housing complex, adjacent to the new Vaughan City Hall, with ties to regional transit links.

It was KPMB's "precinct-style" proposal which set it apart from several other submissions in a design competition held a few years ago, says Peter Berton, partner, + VG Architects, the City's professional advisor on the project. Most of the other design proposals contained one major building.

That concept was inspired by the traditional Ontario town planning where a city hall, civic square, market and cenotaph define an identifiable civic precinct, says KPMB associate and project architect Goran Milosevic. "But it also draws from the tradition of the European square, or piazza," he says, "where architecture is used to define flexible central spaces for meeting and celebration."

Because of the effort invested into the competition, the basic framework of the design was in place and only a few minor alternations were required to the exterior and massing of the building after KPMB was selected, adds Milosevic. There was significant close work and collaboration with the City staff to fine-tune the internal operations of the building.

One milestone change was the decision to raise the bar to LEED Gold instead of the original target of Silver. "As we started to develop [the design] we were so close to Gold, and felt that the Civic Centre should stand as an example of civic leadership in the environmental sphere and the decision was made to target a LEED Gold status."

Achieving LEED Gold will be obtained through an array of features including a high performance building envelope, solar shading strategies, a number of green roofs and central atrium spaces which will draw fresh air into the building and reduce its reliance on mechanical systems.

The building's clock tower will be a readily identifiable symbol which will reinforce its role as a community gathering point. At the same time, the design team also had to ensure that the building did not overwhelm adjacent residential communities, says Milosevic.

It is for that reason the portions of the building closest to those communities have been restricted to three and two storeys. Shaped in an L-configuration, it is comprised of three sections, each of which focuses on a central atrium that draws daylight deep into the middle of the building, he says. "Even on overcast days, there will be a minimal need of artificial lighting."

A building automation system designed by Stantec

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**- GORAN MILOSEVIC  
KPMB ASSOCIATE AND  
PROJECT ARCHITECT**





Consulting Inc. enables the windows within the atria to open under favourable conditions and allow fresh air into the building. Large glazed areas in the atriums are also fitted with motorized blind systems which automatically lower if the light or glare is too harsh, says Milosevic.

Manually operated windows along the perimeter of the building also allow the employees to have some control over their environment. The building automation system will indicate to building occupants when the optimal time is to open the manually operated windows.

As well, on each floor there are literally scores of manually and automatically operated floor diffusers which can be opened to take advantage of the conditioned air circulating below the 700-millimetre-high raised floors. Wiring, power and data lines are also carried through the access floors.

“There has been an effort to provide

the building occupants with some level of individual control over their environmental conditions,” explains Milosevic.

A major priority in the design and construction was the use of natural, renewable and low-emission materials that would contribute to user comfort. Some of those materials include corn fibre panels, North American white oak for much of the interior wood panelling and granite clad exterior walls in the council chambers. The overall structure is concrete slab and circular columns with flared capitals.

From the perspective of Maystar General Contractors Inc., building the concrete structure has been the most demanding part of the job, says Wayne Garrett, vice-president of construction.

“It is just a big, complicated project,” says Garrett on the myriad challenges, which include constant watering of the site to limit dust migration to the adjacent homes and existing Civic Centre.

Almost 50 subcontractors have worked on the building since construction started in March 2007, and about 120 tradespeople and labourers were on site at the peak of the project in early August, he says. As those crews push to complete the last remaining work, conceptual planning for the civic square’s second and third phases is taking place.

At the heart of the square will be a public garden and park designed by Vancouver-based Phillips Farevaag Smallemberg. It will naturalize, as much as possible, the area’s original ecology with a mix of native trees and naturalized vegetation to minimize water and maintenance requirements.

While the dream of a fully mature and serviced civic square will take a few more years to complete, the construction of the new City Hall marks a major turning point, says city manager Clayton Harris. “The City Hall reflects the characteristics that define our city: namely, innovation, service and environmental stewardship. It represents an exciting step forward in a city already recognized for its quality of life, business opportunities and economic prosperity.” ■

#### LOCATION

2141 Major Mackenzie Drive  
Vaughan, Ontario

#### OWNER

City of Vaughan

#### ARCHITECT

Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg  
(KPMB)

#### PROFESSIONAL ADVISOR

+ VG Architects

#### GENERAL CONTRACTOR

Maystar General Contractors Inc.

#### STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT

Halcrow Yolles

#### MECHANICAL CONSULTANT

Stantec Consulting Inc.

#### ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT

Mulvey & Banani International

#### LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Phillips Farevaag Smallemberg

#### BUILDING ENVELOPE CONSULTANT

BVDA Façade Engineering Ltd.

#### TOTAL BUILDING AREA


280,000 square feet

#### TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST

\$84.3 million




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Proud to be part of the Vaughan City Hall project and we thank Maystar General Contractors Inc. and C/S Construction Specialties.

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Birmie Electric would like to thank our partners on the West Orillia Sports Complex including EllisDon, PBK, Architects, IBEW LU 1739 and the City of Orillia. A special thank you to all the men and women who with their time and energy helped deliver this building on time, under budget and most importantly, without any serious injuries to any workers!

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