

collaborative architecture

BY CHERYL MAH



4th Street SE Underpass

As architectural firms deal with shifts in the design and delivery process, programmatic and financial constraints and ever-changing client expectations, the need for collaboration and partnerships has never been more relevant.

Bill Marshall, founder and principal of Marshall Tittlemore Architects (MTA), believes a big part of the firm's success is its willingness to partner with other firms to deliver world class work.

"The diversity of our portfolio is a product of both MTA's project work plus the partner-

ships we've pursued over the last 12 years with firms throughout Canada, the U.S and Europe. It allows us to bring international expertise to bear on our cities and urban settings — to bring new ideas, vitality and form to our setting," says Marshall. "These collaborations are extremely productive and allow both teams to share and grow their respective talents."

MTA has partnered with notable firms such as Bing Thom, HOK, RTKL, HKS, SHL, Cornerstone Planning, Broadway Malyan and MacLennan Jaunkalns Miller Architects to create diverse and award winning projects.

"These partnerships are remarkable opportunities to invite dialogue — to generate a very pluralistic set of architectural ideas and pull them into our local setting. It allows mid-size firms like ours to punch above our weight class and achieve higher product deliverables in all aspects," says Marshall.

Partnering with clients is equally as important to ensure their vision and goals are fulfilled. MTA works closely with clients to carefully interpret their objectives from a programmatic, financial and schedule perspective as well as how a new development will contribute to its community.



SAIT parkade garage

“Every building has a unique set of design opportunities,” he says, describing the design process as a long journey that requires mutual confidence between the client and the design team. “Our architecture and solutions respond to each unique settinghighly influenced by the place and the way the building should respond.”

Having contributed to Calgary’s architectural landscape for more than three decades, Marshall developed an early understanding of how architecture needs to respond to each site’s unique characteristics and context.

“When I came to Calgary, the early part of my career was spent in the re-development and transformation of resort communities like Banff and Canadian Pacific’s heritage mountain hotel properties, the Banff Springs Hotel and the Chateau Lake Louise. It really transformed my understanding of how architecture and setting could be combined into one,” says Marshall, who has brought that same sensitivity of context and fit to the firm’s urban design portfolio.

Born in Toronto, Marshall grew up in a large family of eight where he was always encouraged to explore the world and learn about it. His many travels at an early age shaped an appreciation for architecture.

“I became quite engaged in architecture through my travels and had a remarkable opportunity of being in many places in my younger years that really helped to shape my appreciation of not only architecture but the history of public space making and vitality of urban form,” recalls Marshall.

He attended the University of Toronto, attracted by its emphasis on architecture as well as urban design and planning and “how each contributes to each other.” For Marshall, it helped shape a fundamental appreciation of the integration and interaction between urban design and architecture.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Architecture in 1979, Marshall began his career working with Harbourfront in Toronto which involved the urban redevelopment of the waterfront lands that is today almost fully developed.

In 1981, he moved to Calgary and worked for different firms before joining Carruthers and Associates in 1983, focusing on resort development in the Canadian Rockies. In 1988 he became a principal and formed Carruthers Marshall and Associates (CMA).

He established his own practice in 1993 (Marshall and Associates) and continued to enjoy substantial growth through resort development planning, hospitality and urban design work in the Canadian Rockies and the B.C. mountain areas serving both public and private sector clients.

Recognizing diversity would be key to continued success, the firm expanded its expertise into the urban setting and began undertaking more projects in Calgary and Edmonton. Tom Tittlemore joined the firm in 2000 to form what is known today as MTA.

The firm has since grown to a multidisciplinary team of 42 people with four principals located in two offices: one in Calgary and the other in Edmonton. Marshall says MTA



functions as one office from the two locations with collaborative teams working within four studios: Living, Learning, Workplace and Wellness.

In February 2015, Mike Woodland and Claudia Schaaf were named as new principals of the firm. Woodland directs and leads the Edmonton office and Schaaf leads the workplace studio in Calgary. Marshall and Tittlemore remain hands on with projects, focusing on the front end to establish the direction for projects. Marshall’s role also includes leading business development, training and mentorship.

While the firm has undertaken projects across Canada, most are located in Alberta. Current projects include the new Hilton



Hilton Garden Inn & Homewood Suites

Garden Inn & Homewood Suites, Stadium Shopping Centre and the recently completed Highlands Branch Library and Amica's Aspen Woods, a resort inspired retirement community.

"The 320 room Hilton is using some very innovative technologies for building skin composition and is one of the first buildings in Alberta, if not Western Canada, to use modularized bathroom units. The units will be lifted up and plugged in floor by floor from the exterior," he says.

The desire to create meaningful, memorable, and sustainable places has guided the firm's work at all scales from private residences and senior housing, to academic, health-care and civic buildings, to urban and master planning.

"Within every project there exists unique design opportunities to be explored ... special moments that allows even a simple building to become quite special and exciting," says Marshall.

Great examples are the award winning SAIT (Southern Alberta Institute of Technology) Polytechnic Parking Garage and the University of Calgary Downtown Campus which both employ unique skin solutions.

Completed in 2009 in collaboration with Bing Thom, the SAIT parkade is built into an existing hillside and features a pixelated metal screen on the east and south facades to facilitate ventilation and daylighting. The changing sunlight on the metal screen effectively reflects the Alberta prairie sky to create a stunning piece of public art.

Similarly, the design of the University of Calgary downtown Campus building, a total re-purposing of an older 1960s six storey building frame, has been totally transformed with the incorporation of a dynamic, kinetic

facade to create visual interest in an otherwise utilitarian structure.

"One of the big feature elements of the University building is the parkade skin which is made up of over 4,800 individual stainless steel panels that flutter in the wind like a sequin dress," describes Marshall.

Another unique product is the use of Zinc shingles to create a sinuous curvilinear facade. "I'm especially proud of the building simply because we are taking an old building and turning it into something special," he says.

Marshall cites the new East Village 4th Street SE Underpass (with its use of state-of-the-art LED lighting systems) as another example of how careful design can create unexpected excitement in urban infrastructure. "People remark how much fun it is to drive through the underpass. It's a playful, fun piece of urban design."

MTA's commitment to innovation and high quality design is enhanced by emerging technologies such as Building Information Modelling (BIM).

"We made a conscious effort two years ago to adopt BIM and it's an ongoing learning process," notes Marshall. "BIM has contributed remarkably to how we can integrate the skill sets of multiple disciplines simultaneously as well as to create a platform for the integration of firms working in remote locations."

But he also stresses BIM is not ideal for all projects, "The application of BIM should be carefully considered at the beginning of projects to determine whether the project really demands the application of BIM."

Integrated Project Delivery (IPD) is also a huge opportunity for the industry to design and construct better quality buildings while minimizing the inherent risks in the building process.

The desire to create meaningful, memorable and sustainable places has guided the firm's work at all scales...

"We remain current on all building delivery methodologies and are working in combination with the construction industry to figure out better ways to deliver products to the market," says Marshall, adding the firm is currently involved in two projects using IPD.

As for the future of design in Calgary, Marshall believes it will continue to improve with the profession raising the bar which in turn will allow the public to recognize the value of good architecture.

"We have an enthusiastic set of design professionals in the city and as more great architectural design starts to emerge it throws down the gauntlet to others to take up the challenge to do equally good work," he says. "I'm very excited by a new generation of young architects who are starting to see how we can reinterpret the city and create great places not only to live in but to work in and enjoy indoors and out."

While retirement is still years away for the 60-year-old, he says the firm is proactively succession planning.

"The transition of the firm has been undergoing now for several years. Tom and I would both like to see the firm continue to grow in the hands of the emerging young associates and the incoming new principals," says Marshall. "We're entering a time when we will see a lot of retirement and transition. It will be one of the biggest challenges for design firms." □