

NAME OF PROJECT: General Block

ADDRESS: 65-69 7A Street NE

SUBMISSION CATEGORY: Urban Architecture

OVERVIEW

General Block is a sensitively scaled, architecturally significant neighbourhood commercial destination in Bridgeland. Its fine grain retail bays host a curation of three of Calgary's most beloved local businesses: Village Ice Cream, Phil & Sebastian and UNA Pizza. These bays integrate with a people-centric public realm and landscape design that offers varied places to sit and relax, drawing visitors into the commercial spaces from both the 1 AV NE Main Street and Murdoch Park.

CONTEXT SENSITIVE, HUMAN SCALED DESIGN

General Block embodies a human-scaled design approach, reinforcing the intimate and eclectic scale of the Bridgeland neighbourhood. The built form at two storeys is meant to blend with adjacent built forms and is responsive to challenging site topography. The commercial frontage and streetscape interface are active, fine grain, and scaled to maximize opportunities for human connection. General Block has been designed to celebrate the historic aesthetic of the surrounding community, with the use of brick detailing that grounds the retail floor. Contemporary features including a second storey clad in lightly stained wooden fins, the application of arched building forms, and a colourful public mural on the north elevation work together to break down the perception of mass and to evoke a light and playful feeling that welcomes visitors. General Block supports incremental change in Bridgeland by maintaining a mix of uses that are context-appropriate and add value to this diverse neighbourhood. To maximize utility and function, site size and topography are effectively leveraged to create innovative solutions to internal circulation, parking, loading, waste, and recycling.

NEIGHBOURHOOD RETAIL AND OFFICE SPACE

General Block provides a landmark architectural expression that is home to a collection of small, high-quality local shops that serve community residents and visitors alike. It seamlessly integrates local Calgary institutions into the array of retail options available in the Bridgeland neighbourhood. The building also facilitates a range of users through the provision of small-scale office space on the second floor. This creates opportunities for business to locate closer to the heart of Bridgeland and contributes increased employment diversity.

ACTIVE PUBLIC REALM

The creation of an activated, well-connected public realm was at the forefront of the design process for General Block. The development extends and seamlessly connects the building's active commercial frontage to a high-quality public realm and the adjacent Murdoch Park. General Block embraces the urban fabric and physical form of the Bridgeland neighbourhood by activating pedestrian connections along 7A Street NE to Murdoch Park and second floor amenity spaces. The transition to General Block's second level – a set of wide steps and nearby café seating – are designed to create a unified public realm that's easy and inviting, with varied places to sit in the sun or shade, gather and enjoy the sights and sounds of this vibrant community.