

ADVERTISEMENT

MAKE SURE YOU SPECIFY MATERIALS  
WITH 25 YEARS OF PROVEN PERFORMANCE.

[LEARN MORE](#)

**GP** Georgia-Pacific  
Gypsum  
Building Reputations Together™

Hanley + Ausubel  
**ARCHITECT**  
THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

## Community Projects

Posted on: June 6, 2011 | From: [ARCHITECT June 2011](#)

# Hamilton Farmers Market and Central Public Library

Hamilton, Ontario, Canada/RDH Architects and David Premi Architects

By: [Caia Hagel](#)

[Launch Slideshow](#) 



[Hamilton Farmers Market and Central Public Library](#)

[Play Slideshow >>](#)

When Rounthwaite Dick and Hadley Architects (RDH) and David Premi Architects (dp.Ai) took on the renovation of and addition to the uniquely conjoined Hamilton Farmers Market and Central Public Library, in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, they had the task of creating a dialogue between two very different and seemingly unrelated public spaces. The farmers market has been operational on the downtown site for 150 years, but the two typologies have been sharing their awkward fate since 1980, when a new building went up and the library moved in.

“The building itself was challenging to work with,” says Tyler Sharp, an associate at RDH and the project designer. “It was a mass of dilapidated Neo-Brutalist concrete that offered little opportunity for structural modification.” His solution was to strip the building back to its skeleton, and clean, restore, and polish the surface of the original structure so that existing floor slabs and air ducts became functional aesthetic features. A new LED-lit glass façade joins the library and the market with a common skin; the social programs of each entity can now operate in dialogue with one another.

Occupying the northeastern end of the building, the split-level farmers market sprawls simultaneously downward to a lower level and upward to the slightly elevated ground floor. The architects rearranged the stalls, and added a glass elevator, glass stairs, and a continuous retractable glass vestibule (with street-level cafés and food stalls that invite the outside in).

The ground floor of the public library floats above the market and is separated by a glass partition, which is a fire-rated partition that blocks market noise while allowing views to the street and cityscape beyond. “The resulting open space elevates the people and the material in all sectors; they provide the color in the program like in an art gallery or a museum,” says chief librarian Ken Roberts.

“Functionally, the openness and visibility of the plan makes it a unique and expressive environment that is highly legible to the user,” David Premi, partner at dp.Ai, says. “Very minimal signage and wayfinding is required for visitors to remain oriented.”

The new glass façade—an energy-efficient double-glazed envelope that stretches the length of a city block—reflects the overarching aim of combining two typologies and inner and outer urban spheres in a single contemporary building. At street level, the low-iron, ultra-clear glass zeroes out so that the interior floor meets the exterior sidewalk in seamless transition. Color-changing LED fixtures programmed with a predetermined display pattern are integrated into the curtainwall system; the light moves in a slow pulse that mimics the indicator light on a sleeping MacBook. While the farmers market is rife with the colors of food, flowers, and shoppers, the ground floor of the library is alive with technophiles, and the films and artworks projected onto three holographic-filmed glass walls are visible from outside at night. The overall effect “feels like walking through an iPod Touch. It reflects the Apple lifestyle,” says Roberts.

Technology looms large in the library, where a radio frequency identification system of self-check-in and -checkout obviates the need for traditional check-in desks; after being returned, books and other materials proceed via a conveyor belt down a glassed-in ramp and into the basement where they are sorted into bins. A new efficient no-software computer system has allowed the library to increase ground-floor computer terminals to 50, filling the space with a high-tech hum.

The heaviness of the concrete ceiling, walls, and floor is diminished by their polished finish and by a dimmable indirect lighting system that harvests daylight and reflected light. Elements such as a fireplace in the information commons and an aquarium in the children’s section—which boasts a recycled rubber floor and custom canary-yellow chairs—create an inviting living-room-like feel. All of this has helped increase circulation twofold. “People stop and talk, people stay all day,” Roberts says, delighted. “People say ‘I’ll meet you at the library.’ ”

---

## Project Credits

**Project** Hamilton Farmers Market and Central Public Library, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

**Client** City of Hamilton; Hamilton Public Library

**Design Architect** RDH Architects, Toronto—Bob Goyeche (partner); Tyler Sharp (associate, project designer); Cara McKibbin, Bunty Sambhi, Scott Waugh (project team)

**Prime Consultant** David Premi Architects, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada—David Premi (partner); Sam Garagello, Magdalena Kieslowski (project team)

**Mechanical/Electrical/Structural Engineer** Group Eight Engineering

**General Contractor** Kemp Construction

**Lighting Designer** Group Eight Engineering

**Size** 59,471 square feet

**Cost** \$13 million CAD (\$13.29 million U.S.)

## Materials and Sources

**Acoustical System** Decoustics [decoustics.com](http://decoustics.com)

**Appliances** Sub-Zero [subzero.com](http://subzero.com)

**Concrete** LaFarge [lafargenorthamerica.com](http://lafargenorthamerica.com)

**Exterior Wall Systems** Ferguson Nuedorf Glass [fnglass.com](http://fnglass.com)

**Fabrics and Finishes** Ferguson Nuedorf Glass [fnglass.com](http://fnglass.com)

**Flooring** Compass Flooring [compassfloor.com](http://compassfloor.com)

**Furniture** Ital Interiors [italinteriors.com](http://italinteriors.com); Capellini [www.cappellini.it](http://www.cappellini.it)

**Glass** Ferguson Nuedorf Glass [fnglass.com](http://fnglass.com)

**Lighting-Control Systems** Philips Color Kinetics [colorkinetics.com](http://colorkinetics.com)

**Lighting** Philips Color Kinetics [colorkinetics.com](http://colorkinetics.com); Metalumen Manufacturing [metalumen.com](http://metalumen.com); Phillips

Lighting [lighting.philips.com](http://lighting.philips.com)

**Seating** Ital Interiors [italinteriors.com](http://italinteriors.com); Capellini [www.cappellini.it](http://www.cappellini.it)

**Wayfinding** Gottschalk and Ash [gplusa.com](http://gplusa.com)

**Windows, Curtainwalls, and Doors** Ferguson Nuedorf Glass [fnglass.com](http://fnglass.com)

## Related Articles

- [Watsonville Water Resources Center](#)
- [More Cupcakes](#)
- [House of Air](#)
- [Making the Ideal More Real](#)
- [Bryan Bell, AIA](#)

[All Related Articles](#)

## Related Topics

- [Community Projects](#)
- [Interiors](#)
- [Lighting](#)

## Subscribe to ARCHITECT Newsletters