

Street-smart architecture

Regina Street sets stage for inspired placemaking

BY KARL KESSLER

Waterloo Region's building boom has brought highrises to our downtowns and acres of two-storey housing to the edges of our cities. Ever-present construction zones and towering cranes silhouetted against the sky promise more to come.

We build, knowing we are creating the fabric of our future cities. But our built environment is more than infrastructure – it's our habitat. And yet too often our new buildings draw fire for being poorly designed, uninviting, out of place; too infrequently do they inspire delight and make us feel welcome.

One exception is the unassuming pair at 8 and 10 Regina St. N., Waterloo. Designed by Graham Whiting and built by a skilled local crew between 1998 and 2001, it's the design of the site as a whole, and what happens there each day, that elevates the architecture to great placemaking.

The three-storey, masonry-clad buildings are scaled for the neighbourhood and well built, but understated. Spanning the entire front is a generously deep forecourt of flourishing native trees and shrubs, a gesture to the street, and an appealing, shaded gathering place for patrons of the ground-floor café, Seven Shores. There's a small parking lot, but many arrive as pedestrians or cyclists. A front driveway planned for delivery vehicles holds bicycle racks instead.

This is smart architecture, putting people and street life at the centre of design.

Karl Kessler, Doors Open Waterloo Region



PHOTOGRAPHY • TOMASZ ADAMSKI

A man in a white t-shirt with his arms crossed, showing a hairy chest. The background is a plain, light color.

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