

Air Studio

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Whistler Community Church

Design Narrative, Revised March 2020

The Whistler Community Church aims to be a cherished contribution to the Whistler community reflecting the vision of the Church and creating a space for inclusion, diversity, learning, and worship. The building is designed to respond to its context and work with Whistler's spectacular natural environment to enhance the experience of worshippers and visitors to the building, as well as the community and its context.

Scale and Form:

The form of the building responds both to the mountain terrain of the region within which it is located but also to the tradition of church forms. In deference to the neighbouring residences, the north side of the building takes on a scale that is harmonious and sympathetic, with a height of 4 meters. From here, the roof rises upward, opening up views of Whistler and Blackcomb Mountains from the Fellowship Hall on the south east of the site. The largest roof peak is at the height of the Church's sanctuary space. The sloping roof cantilevers outwards along the south and eastern facades, creating covered exterior space and at grade building access. The roof pitch directs rain and snow towards the rear of the building, away from the major circulation and entrance ways.

Size and Siting:

Located at 7226 Fitzsimmons Road North, in a primarily residential neighbourhood between White Gold and Spruce Grove, the proposed site is relatively flat and largely cleared of natural vegetation save for several mature trees at the western part of the site.

The proposed church has a gross floor area of nearly 800 square meters, contained on one level. The site coverage is relatively minimal compared with the large site area of 6952 square meters. The church is positioned to the front of the site, leaving the rear of the site largely open.

Visitors approach the site from Fitzsimmons Road North. An adjacent sidewalk and vehicular entry guide visitors to the South facing entrance. The front of the Church is planted with lush foliage which is informed by the general nature-based aesthetic of Whistler Municipality and surrounds, including carefully curated native species and site-appropriate plantings. A traditional cross has been incorporated into the window at the Church's foremost high corner point. Both pedestrian and vehicular traffic will likely notice this symbol as they pass the entryway. Whistler Community Church signage is integrated into the facade.

Plan and Layout:

Interior spaces have a variety of functions and experiential aspects. The Fellowship Hall, central foyer and Sanctuary are designed to be flowing and flexible, providing space for approximately 250 visitors at a time. The Fellowship Hall has generous views to the mountains and the roof is sloping to open up to this vista, enabling those celebrating events to also enjoy the spectacular landscape of the region. From the Sanctuary, the views are framed to the mountain and treetops from the high windows at the front of the space. Other windows to the exterior at eye level are screened so that light enters in a controlled manner but distractions are minimized.

At the heart of the Foyer/Sanctuary/Hall space is a Community Kitchen, designed to cater events for the Church community itself and the Whistler community at large. Classrooms and a Multi-Purpose Room are centralized and adjacent to the classrooms is an office for employee use on a regular basis.

In terms of basic practical considerations, ample covered and uncovered exterior space is provided for groups to congregate, converse, and gather, including several benches integrated into the architecture and bike racks to ensure that any visitors/ members with mobility issues have access to the site.

Exterior Materialization:

Materials are key in terms of working to create a non-verbal conversation between the site itself (including the finished Church and surrounding landscape) and the community at large. To realize this concept, the façade of the church is finished with an LKMe custom metal profile system. Made of steel, the custom profile design reflects mountain forms and their shifts and patterns. Light and shadow ripple as they move across the surface of the building profile, producing shifting and visually interesting effects throughout the day. The patterning intensifies as light and shade move toward the peak of the structure, adding further drama and engagement.

Landscape and Environment:

The landscape of the church is intended to participate in the ecology of the area and facilitate a harmonious integration into the residential neighbourhood which it serves. The church is located at the front of the site, and adjacent to it is the dropoff with the bike parking integrated at the closest location to the door.

All parking, including accessible parking, is located along the circulation and to the back of the site. It is intended that there is a basketball court space which doubles as parking if required and which can be used by the community when it is not in use (generally most of the week).

There will be an open lawn play area between the building and parking which provides a safe and pleasant exterior recreation space for the building and also helps maintain nature type views from the Fellowship Hall. The landscape here supports the interior/exterior relationship between the south and east of the building.

The existing vegetation on site is a blend of emerging and volunteer grasses, small conifers and Cottonwood. The proposed landscape is intended to blend and make use of existing grasses and volunteer vegetation. It preserves the perimeter vegetation as well as the newer areas of volunteer vegetation closer to the homes at the North of the site. The vegetation on the North is meant to buffer between the neighbours on the north but is lower to prevent the blocking of the views from these homes. Native shrub planting along the driveway will help to screen homes to the south.

The front area facing Fitzsimmons Road North will be a hydroseeded with taller grasses to blend with a foundation planting comprising grasses and perennials. The front planting blends into a proposed bioswale / rain garden. The planting is interspersed with Birch & Mountain Hemlock trees.

Access and Parking:

Vehicular access to the site is located within an existing Easement. The required amount of parking has been accommodated.

Overall, our architectural design was informed by the specific needs of the site, in terms of location, community integration, and goals and needs of the client.

End of statement.

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