



# The Breithaupt Block

by LAURIE JONES

**S**teeped in industrial history, The Breithaupt Block in Kitchener-Waterloo's downtown core is a unique combination of old-world building sturdiness and new age technology with the primary tenant in the 225,000-square-foot, two-building complex being Google.

"Kitchener-Waterloo is a German-settled town and before the war, the town was named Berlin," says Jason Martin, partner with Robertson Simmons architects inc. "There is a lot of German heritage and Mennonite settlements in the area, and many of the street names are German. The three buildings of this project are on Breithaupt Street, hence the project is called The Breithaupt Block."

The first building in the cluster of many on Breithaupt Street was built in 1904. "Other buildings were added on over time and the most recent building was done in 1954," says Craig Beattie, founding partner, Perimeter Development Corporation. "Perimeter acquired the lands and buildings in late 2009. At that time our vision focused on the fact that it was good real estate located in the heart of Kitchener-Waterloo. From a very basic high-level standpoint, location was the most important part and we could tell the buildings had great bones. Even though they were in pretty rough shape, and we inherited over 1,200 tonnes of old machinery from the auto parts manufacturing company that had been a previous tenant; we knew we could work with it."

Part of that work included making a deal with a specialized recycling company in Brampton, Ontario to remove the equipment. This took a full year to complete and get the empty building back to clean walls. "Then in late 2010, we did a joint venture with Allied Properties REIT, one of the largest owners of brick

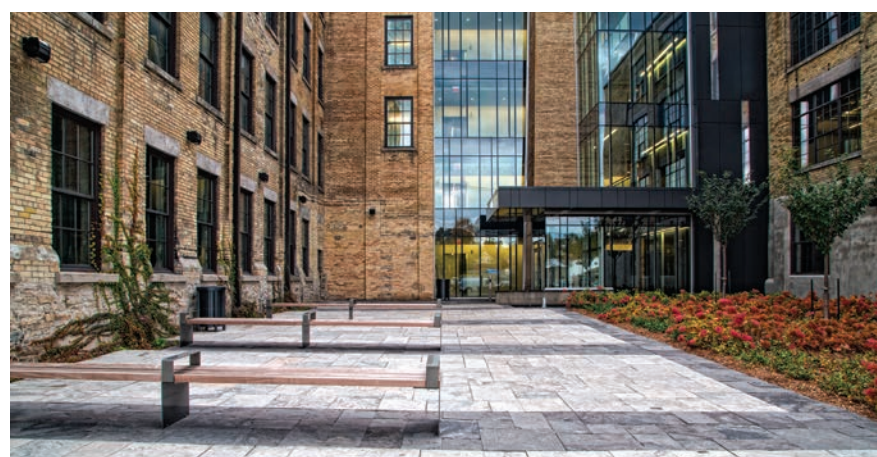
and beam office spaces in Canada," says Beattie. "They acquired a 50 per cent interest in the project from us and have been great partners ever since as both partners share similar visions for doing quality work."

The development team moved forward on the first four-storey, brick-and-beam building, doing sand blasting and selective demolition to prepare for modern day office layouts. "Once that work was done, we started to rebuild. We included a new entrance lobby, mechanical and electrical systems, elevators, washrooms and other work that took the building fairly well along so prospective tenants could see what the finished product might look like. At that point, we were able to start the leasing process," says Beattie.

"After securing approximately 35,000 square feet of office leasing with other clients, we began discussions with Google. They had a large requirement of space that dovetailed with finishing off a lot of the four-storey brick building. They ended up taking almost 200,000 square feet," Beattie adds.

Around the time Perimeter started talks with Google, they had just put the finishing touches on some designs for the front two-storey building in the complex. "We always had a vision of doing a high-profile building that would be the entrance to the Kitchener downtown core," Beattie explains. "We wanted to explore adding some height to the existing building to have a stronger design impact. We worked with Robertson Simmons to look at various options including one-storey, two-storey and three-storey designs. Eventually we settled on the three-storey addition that was most striking to us."

The chosen design has more than created a strong impact for the area with the addition of a three-storey glass addition on the heritage industrial



base. "We put a reveal or beltline at the third floor level, then the two-storey glass box above was a reinterpretation of a typical Class-A office building to make it a little more exciting," says Martin. "The plan also includes a glass bridge between the old brick building and the new building. The bridge connects the fourth floor of the old building to the third floor of the new

complex." The basement level was raised to allow access for the creation of 54 underground parking spaces.

The team shared the design for the building with Google, who was in the process of securing space in the other buildings, and they decided to make an even bigger commitment by leasing the entire front building, which was close to 100,000 square feet, says Beattie.



#### LOCATION

25 and 51 Breithaupt Street, Kitchener, Ontario

#### OWNER/DEVELOPER

Perimeter Development Corporation / Allied Properties REIT

#### ARCHITECT

Robertson Simmons architects inc.

#### CONSTRUCTION MANAGER

Zehr Levesque Inc.

#### STRUCTURAL/CIVIL CONSULTANT

MTE Consultants Inc.

#### MECHANICAL CONSULTANT

DEI & Associates Inc.

#### ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT

Rombald Inc.

#### LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Roth Associates

#### LEED CONSULTANT

MMM Group Ltd.

#### TOTAL SIZE

225,000 square feet

#### TOTAL COST

\$48 million

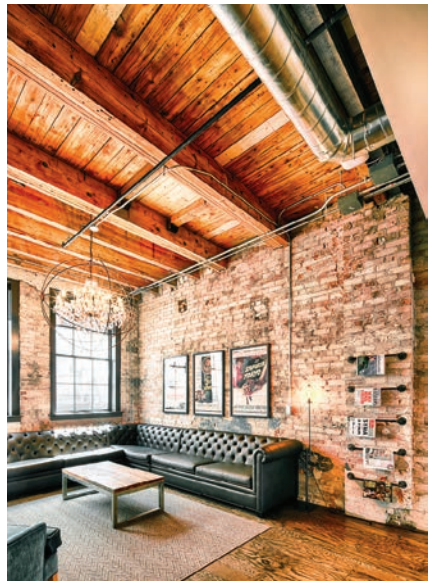
Not only was the new building noticed by residents of the city and tenants, The Breithaupt Block won Office Development of the Year at the NAIOP REX Awards in Toronto, recognizing leadership and innovation.

“In the final phase of the project, the wow factor is the building’s curtainwall with all of the angles and slopes,” says John MacDonald, senior project manager, Zehr Levesque Inc. “It’s a complicated glass box and the way the light hits the building, depending on the time of day, totally changes the look of the structure. It’s quite remarkable in that way. That was the most challenging part of the building, but also what sets it apart from anything else in this area.

I don’t know of any other buildings that have such an interesting exterior facade. The structure for this building’s facade gave us the CISC Ontario Steel Design Award for sustainability.”

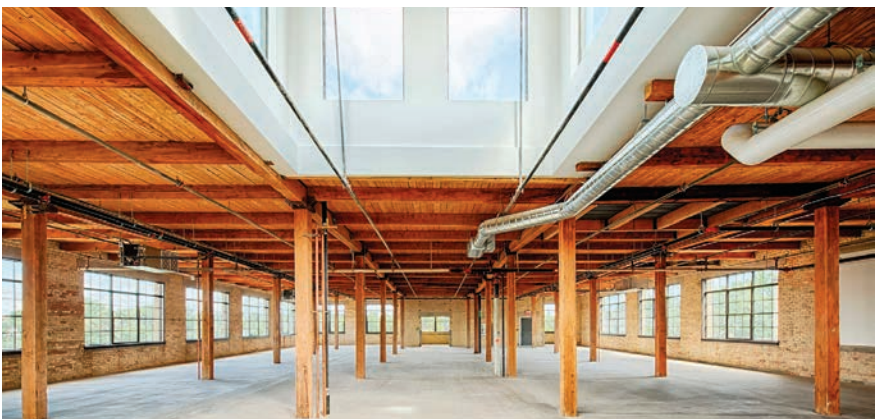
The structural steel for the building was supplied and erected by CISC Ontario member ACL Steel Ltd.

The addition of ACM panels and the choice of brick create a stunning exterior to the LEED Gold building. “The glass building was built to Google standards with high-end mechanical and electrical,” says MacDonald. The Google spaces are known to have slides, basketball courts, climbing walls and a fully staffed commercial



kitchen, and we anticipate interesting finishes in the glass building as well.”

Beattie says that after they did some of the initial renovations they participated in a doors open event for Heritage buildings that opened The Breithaupt Block to the public. “We had a lot of previous workers from the auto parts company come by to take a look. They were completely blown away. For most of the guys, the last time they were in the building it was a greasy old facility with massive machinery. To see it with a clean, cool office space was quite amazing for them.” **A**



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