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THE PALLADIO AWARDS



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Winners of the 2002 Competition

Commercial & Civic Architecture: New Design & Construction WINNER: FRAZIER ASSOCIATES

Project: NEW PARKING GARAGE, Staunton, Va.
Architect: FRAZIER ASSOCIATES, Staunton, Va.
Structural Engineer: BLUE RIDGE DESIGN, Winchester, Va.
Civil/Site Engineer: HURT & PROFFITT, Lynchburg, Va.
Contractor: MATHERS CONSTRUCTION, Waynesboro, Va.

PARKING TAKES A TURN FOR THE BETTER

Recently designated as one of America's Distinctive Dozen Communities by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Staunton, Va., is steeped in tradition. When its citizens decided that they needed a new downtown parking lot, they turned to Frazier Associates, a local architectural firm with a history of revitalizing Main Streets. The result was a structure that looks like a grand building on one side and a series of historic facades on the other — just the ticket for this historic community.

Nestled in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, Staunton has a rich architectural legacy of Victorian and classical styles. Unfortunately, the major gateway to the downtown historic district was a surface parking lot surrounded by vacant or under-utilized buildings. In creating a new parking building for this site, the challenge for Frazier Associates was to make the utilitarian extraordinary: to design a structure that could relate to the architectural character of the location, yet still provide over 250 parking spaces for visitors coming to the historic districts. Beyond respecting the historic character of downtown, the building's design goals included creating a visual gateway into Staunton; integrating with adjacent development; and providing storefronts to reinforce the streetscape.

The inclusion of the community in the design process was critical to the project's success. Frazier Associates formed a project committee which included city officials and built a consensus as they moved forward, making presentations to historic-preservation-commission meetings as well as to the city council. The firm also did historic research to determine the character of nearby buildings, including heights, materials, and facade organization. A 3-D video and computer renderings showed the proposed design within the context of the streetscape environment.



The new parking garage was designed to fit in with the other historic buildings in this area, which has been designated one of America's Distinctive Dozen Communities by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The garage sits between a historic commercial district and an area slated for redevelopment. (Photo by Frazier Associates)

"In the past, architects designed beautiful buildings for visitors to arrive in ... somehow that didn't get translated to parking garages, and people grew accustomed to parking in these ugly utilitarian buildings," says Kathy Frazier, AIA, designer and principal-in-charge. "The question we asked ourselves is, 'Why can't we make a parking garage beautiful and celebrate the arrival sequence like we used to with train stations?'"

The result is a new 100,000-sq. ft. building that provides 277 parking spaces on five levels, yet blends with the neighborhood in many ways. It looks like a series of storefronts on the New Street (west) facade and a grand historic building on the south side. Designed to make a major civic gesture in the tradition of classical public buildings, it presents dramatic arches with distinctive metal grillework to welcome visitors driving into the area.



With its striking arches, the building makes a grand civic gesture in the tradition of classical public buildings. The location is a gateway to two historic districts in Staunton, Va. (Photo by Jason Hottel Photography)

On the west elevation, the building is anything but monumental. Modulated into seven sections to look like a series of turn-of-the-century storefronts, it provides retail space on the ground level. Pedestrians strolling by would have no idea that there's an enormous parking lot inside. "Along the west elevation, we infilled the spaces between the spandrels to create window openings with vertical proportions," says Carter Green, AIA, project manager.



Retail space is located on the street level of the west elevation, hiding the fact that there's an enormous parking garage in the building. The modulated structure gives the impression of a series of several smaller buildings, rather than one large space. (Photo by Jason Hottel Photography)

"Monumentally scaled architecture has been traditionally used for our civic buildings, like city halls, libraries, and train stations," Frazier points out. "Therefore, we used the large arches on the gateway entry. The storefronts on the west elevation are scaled down to relate to adjacent historic retail buildings."



During the evening, the garage is lit up to welcome visitors to the area. The arched side of the building was designed to resemble railroad stations that used to welcome visitors to a city. (Photo by Jason Hottel Photography)

Completed in September of 2001, the \$4.3-million building was under construction for 12 months. The structural system is made of precast/prestressed concrete with field-applied architectural cladding. This cladding consists of three types of brick, and architectural precast to create the facade design. Like the great railroad stations of the past, this new parking garage blends in with the historic district and also welcomes visitors to the downtown area in a grand fashion. Perhaps one of the more significant contributions of this project is that it has moved parking-garage design into a new and more elegant category, along with other civic structures, instead of being considered as only plain, ordinary buildings.

Visit Frazier Associates' Website at www.frazierassociates.com

See details about the restoration in the May/June 2002 issue of *Traditional Building Magazine*.

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