

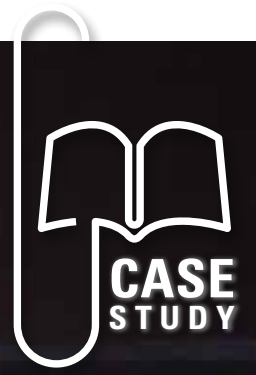
ELEVATING THE ART OF PARKING

The Z revolutionizes and revitalizes parking and mixed-use development in Detroit.

By Jim Ketai

The Bedrock Real Estate Services team is on a mission to revitalize Detroit by creating jobs, excitement, and opportunity. The short-term results we have achieved since 2011 are noteworthy: 40 properties, including several historic skyscrapers, have been acquired, and more than 100 businesses have been recruited to downtown Detroit. There is presently such tremendous momentum that office space and residential units are filling quickly, and as a result, the demand for convenient, state-of-the-art parking, retail, and restaurants is growing rapidly.







After an extensive site selection and project feasibility process were completed, we decided in the fall of 2012 to build a one-of-a-kind, 540,000-square-foot, 10-story, mixed-use building. Upon completion, the development would create 34,000 square feet of specialty retail space along with 1,300 much-needed parking spaces. The iconic structure would zigzag from the corner of Broadway and East Grand River to the corner of Library Street and Gratiot Avenue, occupying what had previously been two separate surface parking lots. Based on its bold shape, the development was aptly named the Z. Construction began in November 2012 and was completed on a fast track basis just 13 months later. Despite unusually severe weather and other unforeseen conditions, the complex project was delivered on time and within budget.

A New Benchmark

This was Bedrock's first ground-up development project, and our team put forth tremendous energy to establish a new benchmark for future retail/parking developments in terms of sustainability, advanced technology, outstanding amenities, and a spectacular venue for public artwork. In other words, this was a model for the truly world-class destinations Bedrock

is committed to creating while reshaping Detroit as the premier downtown in the Midwest—where people can live, work, and play.

We selected Detroit-based Neumann/Smith Architecture to lead the design of the Z in conjunction with parking consultants Rich and Associates Inc., based in Southfield, Mich. Colasanti Construction Services Inc. and Sachse Construction served as construction managers of the project, and Kerkstra of Grandville, Mich. fabricated the precast components for the structure.

This highly experienced team worked closely with us from the outset, which was exceptionally important given our goal of creating a mixed-use development that was a complete departure from the norm. We did not want the Z to be another holding cell for cars. Because it enabled the team to take an unconventional design approach and eliminate potential problems early in the process, our collaboration was a key factor in the outcome of the project: an aesthetically pleasing, visually compelling, and cost-effective development that met all of our long-term objectives.

Neumann/Smith's design inspiration for the Z was based on a bold geometric "picture frame" façade, clad with architectural precast panels to minimize the scale of the 10-story structure. Dramatic, glass-enclosed stairwells and glass-backed elevator towers at each corner provide enhanced wayfinding and safety for visitors. Additionally, the bottom of the precast double tees within the garage were painted white to maximize visibility on all levels. Unlike many other parking structures in the city, the Z is bright, airy, and inviting throughout.

Engaging the Community

The ultimate success of the Z will come to fruition with an eclectic mix of engaging local shops, eateries, and services on the street level of the structure along both Broadway and Library streets. Approximately 17,500 square feet of flexible space is located on either side of the Z to total 35,000 square feet. All of the storefronts will be stylish, unique, and individually designed to create an intriguing aesthetic on both





The Z is visually stunning inside and out, drawing people in just to see its walls.





sides in keeping with Detroit’s evolving new street activation, which is a key element in Bedrock’s long-term placemaking vision.

The Z is an exciting new addition to Detroit’s Library Square District. This area is being redesigned to become an important pedestrian gateway into a comprehensive downtown experience. In addition to bringing new life to this district with the Z, the adjacent Detroit Public Library and YMCA are slated for improvements that include the conversion of Library Street into a pedestrian plaza to host many of its organizations’ cultural and outdoor events. Street vendors and live performers throughout the Library District will bring additional creative energy and activity to the retail shops, restaurants, and services at the Z. Also, the future development on the former Hudson’s Department Store site will provide a huge draw for local retail tenants when it is developed over the course of the next several years.

Once we finalized the intriguing design of the structure, including its artistic abstract façade and striking LED lighting, we went to work on the most demanding and exciting aspect of the development process—creating another “must see” destination in our city. In conjunction with Library Street Collective, a neighboring fine art gallery located next to the Z, we developed a plan to attract internationally renowned street artists to transform the interior walls of the structure into a series of 130-foot-long public murals.



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A total of 27 artists were commissioned from around the globe to participate in the Z art project. The artwork is remarkably diverse: In one mural inspired by a lazy day in the tropics, a giraffe takes a nap in a windowsill; in another mural meant to symbolize Detroit’s rebirth, a tiger chases a baseball. There is one amazing image after another, awaiting visitors around every corner.

Along with the wow factor created by the amazing murals, a wide variety of other gems were also incorporated in the Z. The garage is filled with advanced technology and convenient amenities that include:

- Efficient LED lighting throughout the exterior and interior of the structure.
- Digital entrance sign messages that can be customized to showcase specific events.
- Electric vehicle charging stations.
- Ticketless/cashless payment. Customers entering the Z do not need to hold a ticket or fumble with cash. Upon entering and exiting the garage, visitors simply swipe a credit card.
- Modern parking validation that allows Bedrock and retail tenants in the Z to forward QR codes to their visitors’ smartphones to validate parking.





Twenty-seven artists from around the world created the property's murals.

- Lighting in glass-backed elevators that changes color between levels to cue visitors to their floors and add animation to the overall experience.
- Security cameras and call-for-assistance stations that are linked to 24/7 security monitoring.

The Result

We have heard that people are coming from near and far to experience the Z. Visitors say that this isn't just another place to park, but a unique destination where they can feel Detroit's amazing new vibe. In the evening, the entire building glows thanks to the creative use of the LED lighting system. One visitor summed up their experience like this: Shouldn't all parking garages receive this much attention?

Downtown Detroit's population is growing every day, as new startups are launched and other companies move downtown. As the number of people who work in the central business district increases, the demand for parking and more places for workers and visitors to eat and shop increases. The Z development will fulfill this pent-up demand in a one-of-a-kind environment that makes people feel alive and energized. So what are you waiting for? Come and see the Z!

