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Höweler + Yoon and Sasaki break ground for 212 Stuart St. tower

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Boston, MA Höweler + Yoon and Sasaki celebrated the groundbreaking for the 212 Stuart St. residential tower located in the historic Bay Village neighborhood. The project was carried through the permitting process by Transom Real Estate and is being developed by Greystar Real Estate Partners. The project received approval from the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) in summer 2017 and by the Boston Landmarks Commission in late 2018. The building will be developed on a 7,714 s/f parcel located within the city's "High-Spine".

Sasaki served as the project architect in collaboration with Höweler + Yoon as the design architect. The project will include the construction of a 150,000 s/f 19-story building containing 126 units with two townhouses and retail space on the ground level.

“The design of 212 Stuart St. is rooted in the idea that the tall building operates at multiple scales in the city,” said Eric Höweler, principal of Höweler + Yoon. “When viewed from a distance, the building meets the sky with a distinctive silhouette and participates in the composition of the city’s skyline. When experienced from the sidewalk, the building meets the ground and activates the streetscape in its immediate context.”

The site of 212 Stuart St. is a vacant parking lot between the Bay Village Neighborhood, and the Stuart St. corridor.

“Context, here, is everything,” said Sasaki principal Victor Vizgaitis, AIA. “The entire genesis of the project came from looking for a way to moderate between two markedly different areas of the city.” The narrow building presents two distinct faces that each acknowledge the surrounding neighborhoods: the low rise residential neighborhood to the south, and the mixed fabric of the “High Spine” corridor to the north.

The building massing is broken up into a ‘coursed block,’ organized into discrete blocks of 3, 4, 5, and 6 story packages. The exterior is articulated to emphasize the vertical grain of the building with irregularly spaced opaque panels, alternating with recessed glass infill panels. The vertical panels consist of custom, multi-story precast panels with a concave, scalloped geometry.

“Considering the explicit historical concern in the neighborhood, we studied fluted geometries as a way to express depth and texture on the facade. Fluted columns themselves were constructed by stacking individual sections around a central core,” said Höweler. “This part-to-whole relationship satisfies the drive to maintain historical character, and yet the results are surprisingly contemporary.”

The heavy relief texture of the facade will create a unique optical effect, as well as some self-shading on the eastern and western exposures. Glazing for the residential units takes the form of a multi-story, recessed window wall with spandrel glass between the precast panels.

The penthouse floor is a single-loaded organization with an outdoor amenity deck to the south. The ground floor contains the lobby and retail spaces with storefront glazing facing the northern, more commercial side of Stuart St.. The southern portion of the ground floor consists of two walk-up townhouses accessible directly from Shawmut St. These ‘new neighbors’ respond directly to the existing townhomes across the street and maintain an active residential frontage.

“Townhouses change the character of a tall residential building,” said Vizgaitis. “Particularly when they are well-detailed at their public face and set into a landscape that meshes with the city fabric, the building transforms from anonymous and controlled to something that feels personal and part of the neighborhood.”

Höweler + Yoon is a design-driven architecture practice and creative studio that believes design is an instrument for imagining and implementing change – social, cultural, technological, and

environmental. Founded by Eric Höweler and Meejin Yoon, over the past 18 years they have built a reputation for work that is formally and technologically innovative, socially engaged, and conceptually rigorous. The office is currently working on cultural, institutional and development projects both locally and abroad.

Sasaki has led the design industry for the past 65+ years in bringing together diverse perspectives, blending disciplines, engaging with clients and communities, drawing on history and context, uncovering new ways of thinking and making, and tapping into data and emerging technologies to shape the built environment. From Boston and Shanghai, Sasaki's 300 professionals partner with education, civic, and commercial clients, around the world. Currently, Sasaki is leading the design of a new tower in Boston's Seaport, Boston City Hall Plaza, and the 19-floor interior offices for Akamai Technologies in Kendall Sq. Sasaki's services span architecture, interior design, planning and urban design, space planning, landscape architecture, and civil engineering.

Rendering courtesy of Luxigon

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540