

ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

Rogers and Marvel Hitting Their Stride

The New York architects recently won the bid to design a condo-hotel building on the Brooklyn waterfront.

By Fred A. Bernstein

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Twenty years ago, when Jonathan Marvel and Rob Rogers founded Rogers Marvel Architects, they decided to forego the route taken by many young Manhattan firms—designing residential and commercial interiors—preferring, Marvel says, “to cut our teeth on New York City’s bricks and mortar.” They negotiated a city contract to oversee repairs to schools, libraries, and armories, which were jobs that left little room for design. “It wasn’t very glamorous work,” he says.

image courtesy Rogers Marvel



Rogers Marvel has designed a 550,000-square-foot building that steps back from the Michael Van Valkenburgh-designed Brooklyn Bridge Park.

But decades of careful attention to the city’s infrastructure have begun to bring Rogers Marvel its quotient of glamorous work. The firm recently was chosen to design the condominium and hotel building that will overlook Brooklyn Bridge Park and provide a projected \$3.3 million per year for park maintenance.

Marvel, who lives just two blocks from the park, and Rogers designed a 550,000-square-foot building (with 160 condos—that portion of the building will be called Pierhouse—and some 200 hotel rooms) that steps back from the Michael Van Valkenburgh-designed park; they are hoping to make sections of its façade from the same white granite used to build the Brooklyn Bridge. The selection of Rogers Marvel required the tacit approval of

Van Valkenburgh, the commissioner of design and construction David Burney, and planning commissioner Amanda Burden, among many others.

Last year, the firm entered the Brooklyn Bridge Bridge Park competition with Toll Bros., the suburban homebuilder that has become increasingly active in cities. Starwood Capital, the hotelier, entered the competition separately, but later ditched its team members—Bernheimer Architecture, nArchitects, and Alloy Development— and joined the Toll Bros. group.

Rogers Marvel had already satisfied the residential developer with its plans for a single-loaded corridor building, giving each condo park views. The addition of Starwood, which will operate its part of the building under its 1 Hotel brand, required adjustments to the hotel portion of the project, including “warming up” its exterior with more wood than in the initial design, and strengthening its connection to the park, says Marvel, the principal in charge of the project.

For Rogers Marvel, the Brooklyn Bridge Park victory came on the heels of another big win: In May, the firm (working with PWP Landscape Architecture) was selected to design the Constitution Gardens section of the National Mall, a project that has yet to be funded. And in June, the McCarren Park pool complex, a Robert Moses masterpiece in Williamsburg, reopened after an extensive renovation by Rogers Marvel. The firm’s ability to repurpose the 75-year-old buildings at McCarren was a testament to the structures’ durability and flexibility, Marvel says. “That makes you realize how important it is to design a building that can be reused and recycled.”

He says he hopes to do that at Pierhouse and 1 Hotel, with ground floor spaces that will be able to adapt if the desolate stretch of Furman Street behind the building morphs, as Marvel expects it will, into a lively commercial strip.