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A Pre-Cast Plaza

A 7-Story Apartment Building Is a First for Sacramento

By Greg Aragon

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Plaza Lofts, a \$47 million, 353,000-sq.-ft. loft-style apartment building, is being built with a pre-cast, hybrid moment-frame system, more commonly seen in large-scale commercial buildings. The frame will allow for residents to view activity on J Street from floor-to-ceiling windows.

Construction on downtown Sacramento's new \$47 million Plaza Lofts—which is being built on a lot that has been vacant for 15 years—has moved into the sitework and foundation stage.

Project principals said Plaza Lofts is the first structure in Sacramento to be built using a pre-cast concrete, hybrid moment-frame system, more commonly seen in large-scale commercial buildings. West Sacramento-based Clark Pacific was contracted by general contractor Turner Construction to do the pre-casting for the project.

"This frame system has been demonstrated through testing to have superior performance to a conventional cast-in-place concrete frame," said Mick Wilson of Culp and Tanner, the Sacramento-based structural engineering firm working on Plaza Lofts.

The 353,000-sq.-ft. building is sprouting along J Street, between Eighth and Ninth streets. When it is completed in December 2005, the elegant seven-story building will feature 225 stylish lofts perched above 21,000 sq. ft. of ground-floor retail/restaurant space (no retail tenants have signed leases yet) and three levels of above-grade



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and subterranean parking, with 302 spaces.

Wilson said the building will be able to handle large drifts while experiencing minimal damage because the 8-year-old system was designed with a post-tension, self-righting mechanism. The system's pre-stress design has enough pre-compression to maintain an upright position after the

ground stops shaking from a major seismic event, he said.

Developed by Los Angeles-based CIM Group, Plaza Lofts will consist of 74 studios, 57 one-bedroom and 94 two-bedroom apartments. The units range from 550 sq. ft. to 1,360 sq. ft. and will rent for approximately \$1.85 per sq. ft. >>



Site work is under way at Plaza Lofts in Sacramento (larger photo courtesy of Turner Construction Co; smaller photo of site sign by Elaine Johnson Hesse).

Amenities will include 10-ft. ceilings, hardwood floors, stone countertops, stainless-steel kitchen appliances and open floor plans.

Rob Wurl, CIM's project director, said that the developer hopes to attract a cross-section of the community, including young professionals and state and government officials who might need temporary residence.

"We think there is a pent-up demand for this project," Wurl said. "It is being built to reinvigorate the downtown and make it a 24-hour city."

Architect Carl C. Lubawy, studio leader with the project's architect, LPA Sacramento Inc., said the pre-cast system allows for large amounts of glass to be used on all residential units. Each apartment will have floor-to-ceiling windows that will bring in natural light, air and views of downtown. Many units will have up to 30 ft. of glass in the main living areas.

The precast beams and columns will feature various levels of sandblasting and reveals, creating a pattern that will coincide with the pattern of the glass.

"We see [this] as an opportunity that will set this building apart from all other residential buildings that have been built in Sacramento," Lubawy said.

The windows—supplied and installed by Sacramento-based Bagatelos Architectural Glass Systems—incorporate accents of translucent and tinted glass set among the fixed and operable units that will create a Mondrian-like pattern on the entire facade.

"The challenge has been for the facades of the building to avoid being monotonous and out of scale with the surrounding buildings," said Curtis Owyang, design principal with LPA. "The opportunity, however, is to create very unique apartments with generous amounts of natural light, air and views." <<



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