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Four Seasons Boosts Denver's Skyline

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All-Season Luxury

Four Seasons Hotel & Residences puts its elegant stamp on Denver

By Kelly Davidson

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The 45-story, hotel-and-residence tower on 14th Street in downtown Denver's theater district is the fourth-tallest building in the city.

Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts is banking on its new property in Denver's theater district to buck the downward trend that many hotels around the country have fought during the recession.

Scheduled to open in October, the \$350-million, 45-story Four Seasons Hotel and Private Residences Denver, developed by 1111 Tower LLC, will add 240 hotel rooms to the city's inventory, along with 102 for-sale residences. Residents are expected to take occupancy at the end of August.

The Toronto-based hotel operator will run the hotel and manage the residences. The hotel will be the chain's first in Denver and the only five-star accommodations currently in the city.

"We've been through the worst of times for building this project and been able to avoid some of the pitfalls that other projects have faced," says Chris Norton, 1111 Tower project director.

Construction of the combination hotel and residences began in September 2007, at the onset of the recession when many construction projects along the Front Range came to a halt. Developers had hoped to break ground on the project in 2005, but it took longer than

expected to work out the financing and contract details.

The poor economic climate paid off. The project's bottom line benefited from lower materials costs and the fact that the major trades and subcontractors had few, if any, other projects competing for their time.

"This job became that much more important to all of the trades because they didn't have other jobs to run off to," Norton says. "Years ago, everyone would have had to schedule this job around others, but this project was everyone's top priority, and the work reflects that."

The project put 38 subcontractors to work—most of them local. At the project's peak, more than 550 workers were onsite.

Geography Lesson

Despite several design changes, Confluence Builders of Denver, the project management firm, kept the project on budget by working closely with the design team to resolve potential issues before construction began.

"We didn't have to value-engineer as dramatically as we might have had to in the past," says Tim Walsh, owner of Confluence Builders and its project >>

The Four Seasons Hotel & Residences boasts high-end finishes with stone-and-wood accents set against an earthtone palette. (Photo by Terry Shapiro)



The 45-story tower adds 240 hotel rooms to Denver's inventory, along with 102 for-sale residences. (Photo by Terry Shapiro)

Construction began in September 2007 and put 38 local subcontractors to work. At the project's peak, more than 550 workers were onsite. (Photo by Terry Shapiro)

director. "We were able to maintain the original design concept and finishes without sacrificing the budget."

Materials and fixtures came from around the world.

"Tracking all the bits and pieces was certainly a good lesson in world geography," says Dan Macintosh, project manager with general contractor Swinerton Inc. of Denver. "Coordinating the orders and deliveries definitely presented some unique challenges."

In several cases, shipments were held up at customs, lost in transit or delayed by weather. Some materials had to be re-ordered because their condition did not meet the project's standards.

Even with the repeated holdups, Swinerton managed to stay on schedule by working with subcontractors to resequence the project as issues arose. Swinerton relied on building information modeling to avoid conflicts and coordinate the mechanical design with major trades.

The general contractor also held regular meetings with residents and business owners near the downtown site at 14th and Arapahoe streets.

"A good working relationship with the adjacent owners was instrumental in keeping the fast-paced schedule," Macintosh says. "Unfortunately, there is no quiet way to construct a building of this nature, but we tried to lessen the nuisance as much as possible."

To minimize road closures and traffic

disruptions, a central pumping system was put in place for the frequent concrete deliveries. More than 83,000 tons of concrete were used for the project.

International Design Team

Coordinating the design required some extra effort. Carney Burke Logan Architects (formerly Carney Architects), of Jackson, Wyo., led the project design, collaborating with Dallas-based HKS Inc. Consulting on the mechanical and electrical engineering design was Toronto-based Rybka, Smith and Ginsler Ltd., now part of the Ontario-based MMM Group.

"In today's economy, it's difficult to do projects of this nature and realize the level of quality necessary to meet the high standards of the hotel operator and the financial considerations of the developer," says John Carney, principal, Carney

Burke Logan Architects.

"At a time when other projects were falling apart, our team came together. There was a constant effort among everyone to tweak the design to make it work for all parties," he says.

One of the key concessions came early on. The preliminary concept called for a 65-story building that integrated the adjacent Hotel Teatro. However, due to financing and contractual complications, the project was scaled back to a stand-alone, 45-story tower.

Many Amenities

The hotel and condo project is the fourth tallest building in the city and the tallest cast-in-place building in the state.

The reinforced concrete structure rises from a three-story podium. The base includes retail shops, a lobby lounge and bar, signature restaurant and more than

16,000 sq ft of meeting space, including a 5,000-sq-ft grand ballroom.

A full-service spa with a 2,354-sq-ft fitness center and a pool occupy the third floor. Below street level, two floors accommodate 249 parking spaces, as well as the engineering, mechanical and electrical rooms. The lower 16-floor portion of the building houses the hotel, while the remaining upper floors accommodate the private residences with one-, two-, three- and four-bedroom floor plans.

The exterior façade features a simple palette of precast concrete, metal panel, structural glazing and operable windows. On the upper floors, balconies for each of the private residences shape the glowing silhouette. The tiered crown of the building tops out at 565 ft, with a spire-like antenna extending above that for a structural height of 641 ft. >>

14th Street Makeover

By Kelly Davidson

After years of planning, construction of the long-awaited 14th Street capital improvements will begin in the fall.

The plan to enhance the corridor has been in the works since 2005, when Denver (city and county), the Downtown Denver Business Improvement District and the Downtown Denver Partnership began discussions with area property owners.

High-profile construction and renovation projects, including the Four Seasons Hotel and Residences, the Spire Building and the Hilton Garden Inn, were a major catalyst for the streetscaping initiative, says John Desmond, vice president of urban planning and environment for the Downtown Denver Partnership.

"All of the activity pushed the public and private sectors to work together and assess the need for, and the value of, enhancing the 14th Street corridor," Desmond adds.

With the design finalized, work is slated to begin in November with completion expected by early 2012. However, the start

date may be pushed back until January to lessen the impact on holiday-related events and business.

Bidding for the streetscaping project will open this summer, with contractor notice-to-proceed due in early fall.

The overall cost of the project is \$14 million, with area property owners contributing \$4 million through a voter-approved levy and the remaining \$10 million coming out of the Better Denver Bond Program, created in 2007.

The project covers the 12-block stretch along 14th Street between Market Street and Colfax Avenue, with a half-block on either side at the cross streets off 14th Street.

The goal is to create a pedestrian-friendly destination that encourages outdoor seating and ground-floor shopping, capitalizing on the flow of foot traffic from the Colorado Convention Center, Denver Performing Arts Center and hotels and condominium complexes in the area.

New York-based Parsons Brinckerhoff Inc., a global planning and engineering firm, directed the design. It collaborated with a team of local consultants, including studioINSITE, a specialist in master planning, and CRL Associates Inc., a public policy firm.

"This is a place-making project, but unlike

most transit-oriented projects, our focus is not on the automobile but rather on pedestrians and bicyclists," says Mike Harmer, project manager and senior engineer with the city of Denver.

Work includes widening sidewalks and adding a dedicated bicycle lane while still retaining on-street parking on both sides. Traffic lanes will be reduced from three to two, with exceptions in where additional lanes are necessary for peak-hour traffic.

Approximately 150 new trees will be planted along both sides of the street, and, where possible, existing trees will be preserved. Flush-mounted accent lighting and banner light posts will illuminate new concrete sidewalks, which will feature a scoring pattern and sandblasted accents.

Other improvements include flower planters, new trash receptacles, better wayfinding signage, crosswalk bulb-outs, decorative street corner monuments and bike racks.

Construction is set to begin shortly after the grand opening of the Four Seasons Hotel and Residences. To minimize the disruption to the corridor and property owners, construction will be limited to no more than three blocks at any given time, Harmer says. ■



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In addition to residents-only amenities such as a private fitness center on the 17th floor, residents have access to hotel amenities and services, including 24-hour room service, housekeeping, nightly bed turndown and in-residence spa treatments. (Photo by Terry Shapiro)

High-end Finishes

Designed by Bilkey Llinas Design of West Palm Beach, Fla., the hotel boasts a sleek interior with stone-and-wood accents set against an earthtone palette. Guest rooms

feature high-end finishes, including underlit glass sinks, glass-walled rain showers, and in some suites, a freestanding tub in front of a picture window.

In each private residence, 400-sq-ft

Four Seasons Hotel & Residences

Denver

\$300 million

Owner: 1111 Tower LLC

Project/Construction Manager: Confluence Builders

General Contractor: Swinerton Inc.

Architects: Carney Architects, HKS Inc., Clausen-Chewning Interior Design

Among the Subcontractors: AI Glass, Concrete Foundations and Flatwork, Encore Electric, Gallegos Corp.

balconies and wall-to-wall windows capitalize on mountain or city views. Three design schemes by Atlanta-based Clausen-Chewning Interior Design reflect the contemporary colors, patterns and textures of the Colorado landscape.

In addition to residents-only amenities such as a private fitness center on the 17th floor, residents have access to all the hotel amenities and services, including 24-hour room service, housekeeping, nightly bed turndown and in-residence spa treatments.

The asking price for the smallest of the residences—a 997-sq-ft, one-bedroom unit—starts at \$895,000. One of the two penthouses—a 6,100-sq-ft, two-level, four-bedroom unit with mountain views—sold for \$10 million. The second penthouse—a 5,600-sq-ft, two-level, three-bedroom unit with city views—sold for \$7.9 million.

Sales of the private residences have been slower than originally projected, with only 52 of 102 residences under contract as of June.

“We had hoped to be 70% sold out before construction wraps up in August, but the market is quiet,” Norton says. “We fully expect sales to accelerate once the hotel is open and people can tour the property.” <<

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