



Trendy Towers

Modern shapes and mixed materials define mid- and high-rise design
By Jennifer Popovec

Source: Multifamily Executive
Date: January 2006

TRENDY TOWERS

Modern shapes and mixed materials define mid- and high-rise design.

High-rise living is increasingly attractive to young professionals and empty nesters, and residential towers are popping up all over the United States. Developers are designing their projects to appeal to these residents, who prefer buildings that offer edgy, contemporary architecture and unique amenities. "Young professionals and empty nesters are choosing homes that let people know they're young and trendy," says Mark Humphreys, CEO of Humphreys & Partners Architects, a Dallas-based firm that is working on about \$2.5 billion worth of multifamily development.

By Jennifer Popovec

INDUSTRIAL STRENGTH: Located in downtown San Diego, the seven-story Fabermet is clad in corrugated metal and pre-cast concrete to complement its neighbors at Miraflores Park.



REAL-LIFE LESSONS

An architect mulls how to build a hurricane-proof high-rise.

The devastation that Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma brought to the shores of the United States is forcing some design professionals and developers to stop and think about ways to make their residential high-rises "hurricane proof." "The emotion of what's happened to some of these people is what's driving us," says Mark Humphreys, CEO of Dallas-based Humphreys & Partners Architects, adding that hurricane-resistant buildings will be more attractive to buyers.

Two of Humphreys' condominium towers in Gulfport, Miss., survived Katrina with minimal damage, Humphreys says. The 14-story buildings, dubbed Legacy, were built over code, he says, meaning that they were designed to stand up to 150 mph winds. Still, Humphreys' Orlando office is working to improve the design.

The key to withstanding Category 4 and 5 storms, Humphreys says, is smarter site planning and better materials. Specifically, buildings near the coast need to be raised at least 25 feet above sea level to get out of

the way of a hurricane's storm surge. "The storm surge is the number one hazard, so we are raising finished floor levels and raising grades to the building," he explains.

Moreover, Humphreys' new projects feature artificial sand dunes in front of the towers. "The sand dunes can break the wave before it hits the building," he notes. Additionally, the building must be built of strong exterior material such as pre-cast concrete and include windows systems that need to be a level or two above code.

Within the building, Humphreys has suggested creating a "hurricane room," which is a common area similar to a tornado shelter.

Humphreys also recommends that owners invest in a large generator that is located on the property so residents will have power in the event of a large or particularly lengthy storm.

"All the pain that people are feeling—we can make a difference because we have the ability to building structures that can withstand hurricane-force winds," Humphreys says.

