

## Oakland's Cathedral Building goes upscale

Valerie Fahey, Special to The Chronicle

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The Oakland Federal Building, built in 1914, is located at the intersection of two of Oakland's main thoroughfares: Broadway and Telegraph. The nearby downtown architecture, including City Hall, Old Oakland, The Rotunda, the former I. Magnin store, the Paramount Theatre and the Fox Theatre, evokes the glory days of Oakland's storied past.

This iconic Oakland high-rise has now been converted into full-floor luxury condominiums.

The Federal Realty Building was designed by architect Benjamin Geer McDougall. It was renamed the Cathedral Building in 1969 because of its churchlike spires and design.

The stunning architecture is Gothic Revival, a movement that began in 1840s England due to the flexibility and strength of cast iron over stone. This gem is considered one of the best examples of Gothic Revival in the United States and was the first Gothic high-rise west of the Mississippi River. It was added to the National Registry of Historical Places in 1979.

It has been brought into the 21st century with New York-style full-floor condominiums, with nothing less than celestial touches. From its ornate Gothic exterior to the palatial elevator lobby with wood molding, marble floors, period fixtures and pediments, the experience speaks of a more glamorous era. It's yet another experience about downtown Oakland that can surprise visitors who haven't visited in years, or haven't ever been there at all.

Andrew Brog of Brog Properties purchased the Cathedral Building in 2005 and has spent the last couple of years restoring the landmark. Brog adopted the Cathedral moniker in converting it to a mix of residential and commercial condos costing up to \$1.1 million, with office space on floors one through six, and condos on floor seven through 14. As with many older buildings, there is no 13th floor.

Perched at the nexus of Telegraph, the flatiron-shaped building has spectacular views down Broadway from either end of the building. Although each unit is unique in terms of windows and use of the open-space floor plan, there are similarities.

Floor seven features windows all the way out to the prow point of the building. Floor eight features a roof-top deck. Floor 14 has its own mezzanine level plus private stairs to a rooftop deck encompassing the top of the entire building.

Oakland's Uptown neighborhood is clearly transitional but a lot of great stuff is in the works - the Fox Theatre renovation is nearing completion, Flora restaurant opened down the street (same owners as the wildly popular Dona Thomas on Telegraph), and rumor has it that Ozumo is opening a wine bar in the basement/first floor of the Cathedral.

One downside is the lack of on-site parking, but with BART's 19th Street station just 1 1/2 blocks away, who needs a car? It is California, after all, so Brog expects buyers to make use of one of several parking garages within a block or two - at low Oakland rates, not pricey San Francisco or Manhattan ones.

The building already has two buyers, and the five remaining flats range from an 11th floor 1,476-square-foot home with two bedrooms and two baths, to a 2,100-square-foot, three-bedroom, two-bath condo with media room and the aforementioned rooftop deck. Prices start at \$699,000 for the 11th floor and top out at \$1,095,000 for the three-bedroom unit.

### **Downtown experience**

Compared with other urban-living options, the Cathedral Building is likely to appeal to people who want a distinctive, showcase downtown experience at about half the price of a similar San Francisco property. "There are a lot of people who want an urban lifestyle in the East Bay" says Andy Read of Caldecott Properties, which markets the building. "The Cathedral Building is walking distance to shops, restaurants, theaters and BART, everything you need."

Whole Foods is nearby and there's a wonderful farmers' market in Old Oakland on Fridays, the restaurant and shops of Jack London Square are within walking distance, and the new Uptown development of upscale apartments is bringing in more people, and more of a clean and quiet neighborhood atmosphere. The Uptown will also include 9,000 square feet of retail space and a new 25,000-square-foot park. According to sources, it is about 60 percent leased, which should bring live bodies to the neighborhood during the evening hours.

There's a lot inside as well. With soaring ceiling, the full-floor aspect enhances the sense of boundless space. The drama begins with the elevator opening to your very own private foyer. Each full-floor flat is accessed by secure elevator entry that opens to a foyer, and marble stairs lead to each flat. Only keyed access or a buzz from the occupants allow visitors or owners to gain access to each unit's foyer and front door.

Once you open the doors, expansive views span one end of the flat to the other.

Unit 14, the bilevel penthouse, has a private roof deck above the spires with unparalleled 360-degree views. In this stunning, 2,100-square-foot condo, the front door opens to a T-shape hall with the vertical leg leading to the kitchen and the horizontal leg leading to the master suite and second bedroom.

The U-shape kitchen has a large island with Absolute black granite countertop, Bosch stainless steel appliances and natural cherry cabinetry. A large pass-through gives the chef a wide-angle view from the kitchen to the adjacent dining area and the living room. The openness of the combination dining and living room seems more spacious with windows on three sides. Behind the kitchen is the laundry room. All of the units have hardwood maple floors, Grohe faucets, Kohler sinks and tubs and an in-unit Bosch washer/dryer.

The master bedroom is behind the kitchen and is reached by a short hallway to the left of the front door. The second bedroom is to the right of the front door. Either bathroom can be entered from the hall as well as from the bedrooms, allowing for a maximum sense of privacy and a great separation of space.

A walk-in closet separates the sleeping area from the master bathroom, which has marble countertops, white Carrera marble tile, his-and-hers sinks, and a separate shower stall. Up the stairs is the third bedroom, which is also the media room. Although the sunlight streams in from the glass door to the rooftop deck, this space is

essentially windowless and would be a great place to screen new releases or watch the classics. With a comfy chair it would also make a great study or place for your very own garage band to hang out and practice. The deck has enough room for a round table and four chairs, barbecue and even a hammock.

### **Ceilings 14 feet high**

All of the units have 14-foot- high ceilings and fiber-optic Internet connections. Homeowner dues are \$450 a month, and include fire and liability insurance, common area and exterior maintenance, garbage, water and reserves. The walkable neighborhood is a big attraction, but commuters appreciate being 1 1/2 blocks from BART's 19th Street station, which is three stops from San Francisco's Embarcadero Station - a 15- to 20-minute commute, tops. Highway 24 and Interstates 580 and 980 entrance ramps are just a few blocks away.

### **Cathedral building**

**City:** Oakland

**Developer:** Brog Properties

**Architect:** Phil Banta

**Base price:** \$1,095,000

**Square footage:** 2,100

**Bedrooms:** 3 or media room

**Bathrooms:** 2

**Monthly fee:** \$450 and include fire and liability insurance, common area and exterior maintenance, garbage, water and reserves.

**Sales office hours:** Sundays, 2 to 5 p.m. and by appointment

**Address:** 1615 Broadway, Oakland

**Phone:** (510) 594-2400

**Web:** [www.cathedral-building.com](http://www.cathedral-building.com)

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