

TAPAN MUNROE  
Global Village

## Energy's future needs efficiency

**E**NERGY independence is a national as well as an economic security problem.

In recent months, discussions about our energy future has ranged from offshore oil drilling, and generating electricity from nuclear, solar, wind, geothermal, to the use of biofuels for autos. We have also discussed heroic ideas such as giant satellites collecting sunlight and beaming the energy to earth as microwaves and flying turbines capturing the wind from jet streams to generate electricity.

What has been absent is a discussion of energy efficiency. This is an obvious strategy for dealing with our energy crisis, which is not just a supply problem, but also a demand problem.

Prior to the 1970's, the conventional wisdom was that energy and the economy always grew in lockstep. In the aftermath of the 1973-74 oil price shock, this relationship was broken. This resulted from a cut back in oil and energy consumption and implementation of public policies that encouraged efficiency and conservation.

For several decades California has been the poster child of energy conservation. Today, the state consumes less energy on a per-person basis than any other state. Since 1974 the per-person consumption of energy in the state has remained unchanged, while for the U.S. it has increased by 50 percent in the same period.

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WALT MOSSBERG  
Personal Technology

## AMD, Intel compatible

**Q.** If I buy a PC with an AMD processor instead of an Intel one, will I run into any compatibility issues with common software like Vista or Office 2007?

**A.** No, as long as the AMD processor, and/or its accompanying graphics and other chips, called a "chip set," are rated as being able to handle the graphics in the version of Vista you are buying. Each chip company makes some low-end models that handle certain tasks more slowly than their mainstream or top-of-line models. And gamers are often particular about which chip sets they buy. But, in my experience, roughly comparable AMD and Intel processors and chip sets are equally compatible with common software like Office and Windows.

**Q.** I have been using the Netscape Web browser for years. I am interested in shifting to using the Firefox browser. How do I transfer my extensive list of book marks from Netscape to Firefox?

**A.** Firefox will import your Netscape bookmarks automatically during the installation process, just as

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**ONLINE:** For a bit of history and more photos of the Cathedral Building, go to [ContraCostaTimes.com/business](http://ContraCostaTimes.com/business)

# Sky-high livin'

Bathroom with a view



A bathroom on the 10th floor of the Cathedral Building condominiums has a view of downtown Oakland.

Location, location, location



The historic 1914 Cathedral Building is one of the only Gothic Revival style buildings west of the Mississippi.

Living history



One of the finished condos on the 10th floor has several large windows that look out onto downtown Oakland.

## Luxury condos rise in Oakland landmark

By Eve Mitchell  
STAFF WRITER

**A** LITTLE BIT of Manhattan's Park Avenue has arrived here in the form of seven luxury, full-floor condominiums housed in a landmark flatiron design skyscraper built in 1914.

Or Brooklyn West as project developer Andrew Brog likes to think of Oakland's up and coming Uptown District neighborhood. The area is undergoing a revival, with several new restaurants opening in the last year or two and the restoration of the nearby Fox Theater almost complete.

"When I get out of the (19th Street) BART station, it's urban. I spent 40 years of my life in New York City. So to me it was comfortable. You walk down the street and it's a little gritty. I understand it. The buildings are beautiful and there's energy and the weather is great and it's a good location. Everything reminded me of Brooklyn," said Brog, who first thought

about building luxury condos in San Francisco but changed his mind when he saw Oakland.

The building is a familiar landmark in the city. Over the years, the triangular-shaped structure has been referred to as the Flatiron Building, a name that derives from the elegant skyscraper resembling the shape of a flat iron.

The Cathedral Building is one of two flatiron design buildings in Oakland. The other one is the First National Bank Building, a short distance away at Broadway and San Pablo Avenue. Several flatiron design skyscrapers were built in American cities in the early part of the 20th century.

The building has also been called the Wedding Cake Building in addition to the Cathedral Building. Its original name, the Federal Realty Co. Building just didn't take off.

While Oakland may share some similarities with Brooklyn, the Cathedral Building condos are meant to evoke the kind of luxurious flats found on Manhattan's Park Avenue. And unlike new-from-the-



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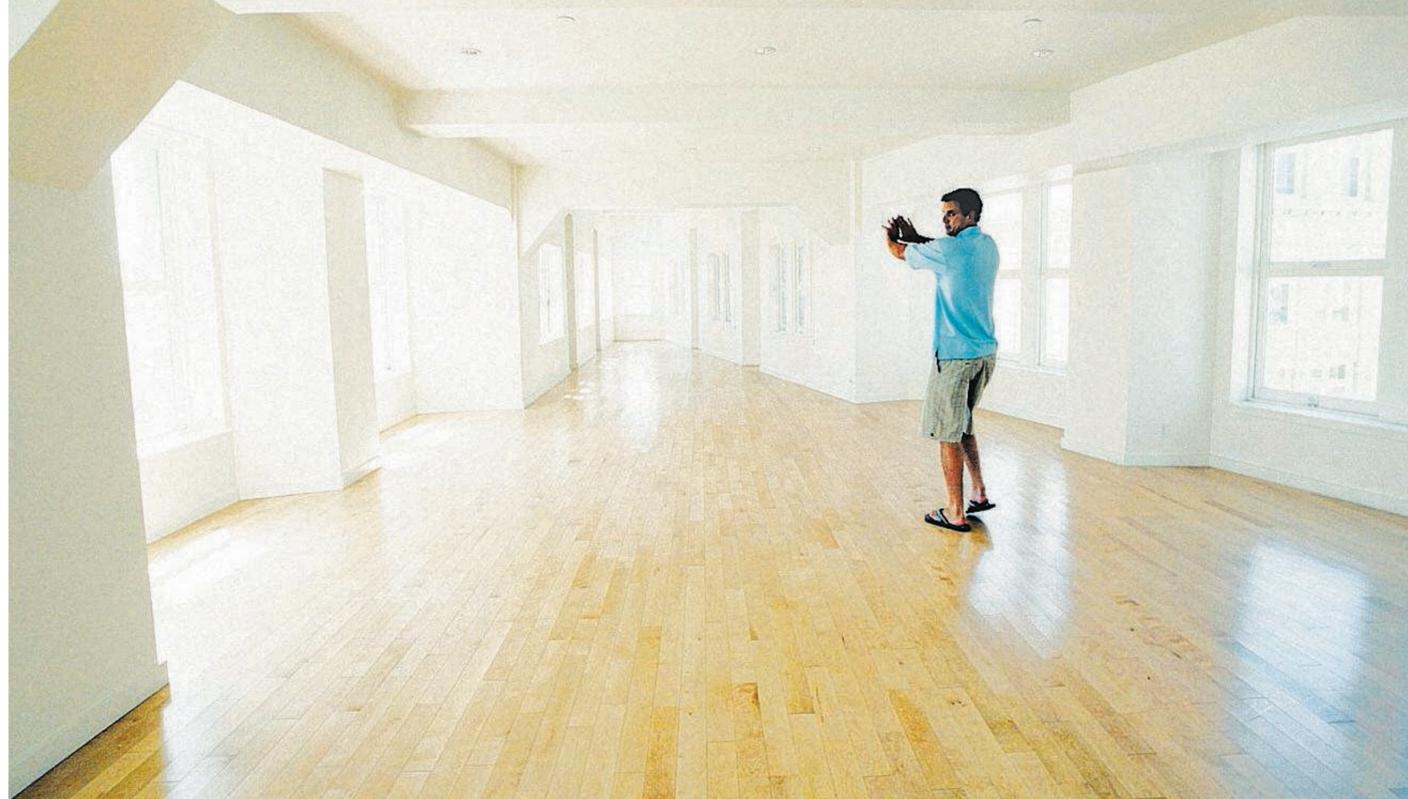
Located on a wedge-shaped parcel of land between Broadway and Telegraph Avenue, the spacious units have two or three bedrooms and range from 1,476 square feet to 2,016 square feet. All have private entrances and feature luxury finishes that include hardwood maple floors, white walls and huge windows that offer stunning views. They are priced from the high-\$800,000s to \$1.3 million. That's far higher than the median sales price for new condos in Oakland. In July 2008, the median sales price for new homes, which in Oakland is mostly condos, was \$350,000, or 25.7 percent lower than a year ago, according to DataQuick Information Services.

Brog is not discouraged that he is selling condos at a time when the market is in a slump.

"It's not entry-level stuff... We're getting people coming in from Montclair and Piedmont," he said in describing where some potential buyers live now who have ex-

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ground-up condo projects, Brog restored an existing skyscraper that is on the National Register of Historic Places.



ANDY READ of Caldecott Properties shows an expansive seventh floor condominium in Oakland's 1914 gothic skyscraper, the Cathedral Building.

LAURA A. ODA/MEDIANEWS

## Condos

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pressed interest.

Two of the condos are under sales contract since Caldecott Properties of Oakland began marketing the property in early August.

Three years ago, Brog purchased the 14-story Cathedral Building, the first Gothic Revival skyscraper to be built west of the Mississippi, for \$3 million. He spent about \$7 million to transform the former office building into condos on the top seven floors and six commercial condos on the lower floors.

Designed by architect Benjamin Geer McDougall, the steel-frame structure was completed in 1914. The building was eventually renamed the Cathedral Building in 1969 due to its arched windows, mansard roof and pointed spires. Ten years later it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places under the name of the Federal Realty Co. Building.

"This building is a one-of-a-kind," said Brog during a tour of the property. "Everything

**"This building is a one-of-a-kind. Everything is new except for the bones of the building."**

— Andrew Brog, project developer

is new except for the bones of the building. The exterior, the whole structure remains."

The Cathedral Building was among several architecturally significant buildings built in Oakland after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and before the Great Depression. Many are no longer around.

"It is a wonderful building and I'm glad that it has survived," said Dennis Evanosky, an Oakland resident and historian and co-author of "East Bay Then and Now." Over the years, he visited the building before it was turned into the mixed-used development it is today.

"It was kind of cool. You would expect Philip Marlowe to come out of one of the doors or here comes Sam Spade down the hall," said Evanosky,

referring to the hard-boiled detective fictional characters created by Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett. "It was all very charming. But it wasn't top of the line," he said.

Now it is. While Marlowe and Spade would certainly recognize the building's exterior, the two gumshoes would not recognize the interior space of the luxury condos that have replaced the former offices.

The property is indeed unlike the moderately priced condo projects built in downtown Oakland in recent years, observed Matt Anderson, a partner at Foresight Analytics, an Oakland-based real estate analysis and forecasting firm.

"The other projects are large. In the first place, they've got hundreds of units and they are generally new construction as opposed to a renovated building. (The Cathedral Building) is at a different price point. It's also a more unique project. All they need is seven committed buyers to make it work," Anderson said.

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## Munroe

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The state has been able to accomplish this via a host of regulations and mandates. These include energy-efficient building and appliance efficiency standards. The market economy works. Higher energy prices have encouraged energy conservation in the state. They have also provided strong incentives for the development of renewable energy sources.

The important thing to note is that the state continues to be one of the most prosperous places in the U.S. even though we consume less energy on a per capita basis.

Amory Lovins, who heads the Rocky Mountain Institute and is the author of a book entitled "Winning the Oil Endgame," suggests that we should begin to wean ourselves from oil as a source of energy as soon as possible. This would help us transition into a safer and cleaner energy future.

He concludes that the U.S. could save half of its oil usage via efficiency measures. But energy efficiency alone will not eliminate our oil dependency. The remainder of our energy needs will be taken care of by the use of biofuels and natural gas.

The current global innovation boom plays a prominent role in Lovins' analysis. Unlike the clean-tech boom in the aftermath of the 1970's energy crisis, which was mostly fueled by government money, the current clean-tech boom is mostly funded by private money coming from venture capitalists and angel investors from places like Silicon Valley.

I suggest a modification of

## Mossberg

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it can automatically import bookmarks from other browsers like Internet Explorer, Safari and Opera.

**Q.** Friends who use Macs tell me they have a removable backup device that backs up their entire hard drive, including programs. Is there something similar for PCs?

**A.** You appear to be referring to Time Capsule, which is an Apple hardware product that combines a hard disk and a wireless base station and is meant to work with the Mac's built-in Time Machine automated backup feature. The answer is that there are many backup drives for Windows PCs, and that lots of them work with Macs as well. All the major hard-disk makers sell external hard disks that connect to a PC either directly, or over a network, and which come with relatively simple backup programs. Some of these programs will do complete, automated backups of everything on your PC, including applications. Even Apple's Time Capsule can be used to back up files from Windows PCs, though it doesn't come with Windows backup software, and setting it up for Windows is slightly trickier than doing so on a Mac.

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Lovins' prescription for our energy future. We certainly need to embrace efficiency as one of the important strategies in our energy portfolio which also includes supply-side options such as solar, wind, biofuels, nuclear energy, natural gas and clean coal. However, our prime concern at this time should be getting away from our dependency on foreign oil as rapidly as possible. This can be accomplished via the use of energy efficient technologies as well as the development domestic sources of energy with emphasis on renewables.

The problem is that even when options are available, implementing them is a challenge because they involve "change". Let me illustrate my point by an example of a car that is highly fuel efficient currently being manufactured by Ford Motor. This is a company that many think specializes in gas guzzlers. The sub-compact Ford Fiesta ECONetic 2009 gives 65 miles per gallon, seats five, offers a navigation system and will be released in November 2008. This attractive car that will

be highly competitive with Honda and Toyota, and will be sold only in Europe, according to Businessweek.

Why can't we sell it here? — Because it runs on diesel.

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The reality is that today European diesel autos equipped with the latest anti-pollution technology are cleaner and a third more efficient than gasoline autos. More than 50 percent of autos sold in Europe today run on diesel. In the U.S. only 3 percent of cars run on diesel.

Mercedes Benz, Nissan and Honda plan to build diesel cars for the U.S. market in 2009 and 2010. So why can't Ford build and sell the ECONetic in the US? Better yet why can't Ford build and sell a gasoline version of the car in the U.S.?

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