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Hope soars for Oakland's Cathedral Building units

Developer brings \$1.3M condos to market

San Francisco Business Times - by [Blanca Torres](#)

If vintage Gothic architecture doesn't grab buyers' attention, maybe the roomy white Carrera-marbled bathrooms or the expansive view of Oakland and the Bay will help seal a deal or two.

While many Oakland developers worry about unloading hundreds of available condos, Andrew Brog believes his newest project to hit the market, the Cathedral Building, could sell out within a few weeks.

"I have seven units to sell," Brog said. "You either want this kind of unit and can afford it or you don't."

The project, a former federal building turned mixed-used development, offers potential owners high-end finishes in unusual triangle-shaped flats. Floors are divided between retail on the ground level, commercial condos from floors two to six and residential condos from the seventh to 14th floor. The residential units are priced from the high \$800,000s to \$1.3 million while the commercial condos are priced between \$940,000 and \$1.2 million.

The floor plans vary between 1,500 and 2,100 square feet and are two or three bedrooms with two baths. Some floors feature loft or outdoor deck space.

"A lot of the marketing we're doing is going after creative types, artists and people from San Francisco," said Andy Read, the building's broker and co-owner of Caldecott Properties based in Oakland. "This is the type of product that exists in San Francisco, but this building is for half the price."

More than 1,400 condos sit on the Oakland market, according to a report from Mark Co., a real estate marketing firm based in San Francisco. The report also states that since the beginning of the year, 35 condos had sold in Oakland for an average price of \$434,801, a 9 percent drop compared with 2007's average selling price of \$475,614.

"People told us we were crazy to build units so big because most of the Oakland condo market is for first-time buyers," Brog said. "We're going after a more affluent person."

The condo market is saturated, but luxury units, especially in the Uptown neighborhood, are hard to find, said Scott Harrison, an East Bay realtor with Prudential California Realty.

"(Brog) picked a building with style and picked a location that's unique," he said.

The Cathedral Building's units feature sleek white walls, numerous windows, high ceilings, natural hardwood floors, cherry wood kitchen cabinets and Bosch appliances.



The building, located at 1615 Broadway in Oakland, was built in 1913 as the Oakland Federal Building and was later renamed the Cathedral Building because of its Gothic exterior marked by pointed towers, steep gables and arched windows. Its odd shape comes from the angle formed where Telegraph Avenue splits from Broadway.

Since most of Oakland's other Gothic-style buildings have been torn down, the Cathedral Building has a spot on the National Registry of Historic Places.

"We try to take an old building and mix modern elements in it," Brog said. "The idea was to make something that doesn't exist."

Brog said he modeled the units after luxury apartments typical of Park and Fifth avenues in New York, where people can step off an elevator to their own floor and do not share walls with any neighbors. The other characteristic he wanted to emphasize was open space with lots of natural light.

After years of developing luxury lofts in New York City, Brog decided to come West and is now based out of Los Angeles, but does all of his work in Oakland. He bought the Cathedral Building for \$3 million in 2005 and has spent \$7 million on the renovations. He also bought two other properties around the same time, which he turned into the Marquee Lofts and Golden Bridge Lofts. All three projects are redevelopments in up-and-coming areas close to BART such as the Uptown neighborhood near the city's downtown.

"I get Oakland," Brog said. "Oakland is gritty, no question about it, but it's getting softer."

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