

March 12, 2008

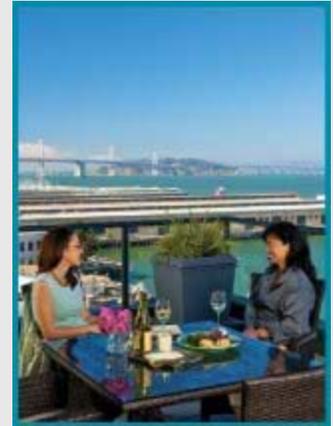
Holy Architecture And Full-Floor Condominiums In Oakland Batman!



It's across the bay, but we do love the building. Built in 1913 and designed by Benjamin Geer McDougall, the 14-story Oakland Federal Building is a shining example of the Gothic Revival movement.



Renamed the Cathedral Building in 1969, the building is [now going condo](#) with the first six floors commercial and the top eight full-floor residences with prices ranging from \$895,000 for the 1,476



urban waterfront

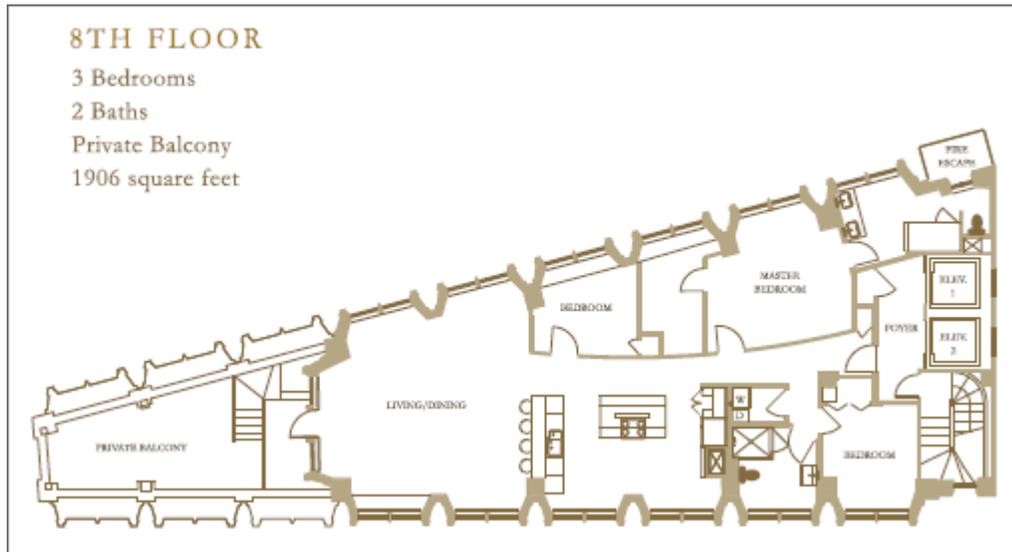
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square foot 11th floor to \$1,300,000 for the 2,016 square foot 14th.



And while the finishes are just okay, and there isn't any parking, we're suckers for the skin deep beauty and bones. Now if only the ceilings we just a little bit higher...

· [The Cathedral Building, 1615 Broadway, Oakland](#) [cathedral-building.com]

First Published: March 12, 2008 4:12 PM

Comments from "Plugged In" Readers

I work in this area, love the exterior of this building. I have to say I'm disappointed by the very bland interiors. Also, I don't think there is any parking, and the neighborhood is sketchy. It's a great building to look at, though, and at some point the area will improve...

Posted by: Snark at March 12, 2008 4:53 PM

The balcony is amazing. Just curious, what would this unit go for if this building were in San Francisco north of Market in the financial district? Too bad about the limitations on parking.

Posted by: anoncondoshopper at March 12, 2008 5:06 PM

yeah, that does look like a cool building. if there is no parking, i'm having a tough time with the pricing. snark is right--though i don't think the neighborhood is bad, there is definitely an edge to it. it is very close to bart which is cool, but i'm not sure where the closest grocery store is. the deck and the amount of space is very cool though the exteriors do look "safe."

anoncondoshopper--a 1400+ sq foot place with a big balcony like this in FiDi would cost over a million (probably a good deal over a million), but honestly, these seem to be priced a bit high for the location...

Posted by: [garrett](#) at March 12, 2008 5:26 PM

Before buying at The Infinity, we looked very hard at this building. It's an amazing building with great floor plans. The living areas in particular are quite spacious. The architect who designed the interiors (including the gracious curved walls) is well known locally and has completed some great homes in the Oakland Hills (ironically I'm forgetting his name). The full floor aspect is very appealing - elevator opens to your private foyer. The developer, Andrew Brog, is a very straight-up guy with a good vision. He had done quite a few buildings in NY/Brooklyn. See:

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The area is clearly transitional but a lot in the works - Fox theatre renovation nearing completion, Flora restaurant opened down the street (Same owners as Dona Thomas), supposedly Ozumo is opening a wine bar in the basement/first floor of this building. In the end we wanted to be in SF versus Oakland. Also, we were a bit nervous about buying at the high-end price point in the neighborhood. The Cathedral Building is worth a look.

Posted by: recentinfinitybuyer at March 12, 2008 5:32 PM

I work in downtown Oakland and can tell you that anybody who is hoping for improvement better have at least a 10 year plan. Downtown Oakland seems to be in a gentrification holding pattern for the most part with the exception of a few spots of hope. In addition, there are several new construction condo developments in various forms of distress in the area (see last week's Chron for a story about an auction at 8th and Broadway property). Across the street from the Federal Building is Citywalk which halted its construction before basic framing was even completed. I imagine this is what Phoenix, Vegas and South Florida look at all day long.

Posted by: mktwatcher at March 12, 2008 5:41 PM

I totally love this building. I recommend you look at each floor plan because there are some really interesting spaces.

But Oakland has major problems right now at the very tippy-top of an economic cycle and I would not want to be living there in an urban pioneer zone to experience the bottom.

A friend bought last year near the Grand theater and the lake, supposed to be a good area. But when I come and visit, she runs outside and makes me park in her garage so it I am not on the street.

Posted by: redseca2 at March 12, 2008 5:52 PM

Awesome building, too bad it is in Oakland. The area sucks at night and with no parking you'll need to watch your back once the street figures out there are wealthy people living in the building. I do not think you will see any major improvements in Oakland until they get a handle on the crime which won't be for a long, long time. Too bad since Oakland has great potential.

Posted by: anonosaur at March 12, 2008 5:58 PM

Bummer on the parking. I'd say this place would go for at least \$2M to \$2.5 north of soma and perhaps up to \$3M. Full floor spaces command a nice premium. I like this place a lot.

Posted by: eddy at March 12, 2008 6:16 PM

I have friends who've lived at 4th & Main in Los Angeles for several years-- the developer there bought up about 6 buildings close to each other and turned them all into lofts, including rentals, along with a garage and hired a couple of security guards. Over 4-5 years it's totally transformed the area, which is basically skid row. This is a model Oakland could follow, using the great old buildings on Broadway.

Posted by: snark at March 12, 2008 7:51 PM

There are several parking garages convenient to this building. Low monthly rates are the rule. Compared to many of the rather dated or drab options this is likely to appeal to people who want a downtown Oakland experience.

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This area is really not that bad, but it depends on your tolerance. BART is only a short walk away. The architecture of this building is amazing and those decks are incredible. This is a unique building, so exactly what might be considered comperable is hard to say.

Posted by: Mole Man at March 12, 2008 7:59 PM

"Compared to many of the rather dated or drab options this is likely to appeal to people who want a downtown Oakland experience"

Believe me...no one wants a 'downtown Oakland Experience'...it's a shame..it's a nice building though but living there with a Target on your back isn't a positive lifestyle choice.

Posted by: Pablo at March 12, 2008 8:05 PM

It's a fabulous and unique building, and the area is certainly no sketchier than much of SOM, the Mission, or the mid-market areas (and even Hayes Valley). The nabe has changed dramatically in the last year and will continue to with the opening of the Fox, several new restaurants and cafes soon to open, and more housing (which will eventually be filled). I walk through this area routinely on my way home from Club One (one of the nicest gyms in the bay area) and can assure you I don't "have a target on my back." If I could afford this particular "downtown Oakland experience" I'd consider it over some cookie cutter condo/loft SOM. SF chauvinists need to get some perspective...

Posted by: Oaklander at March 13, 2008 9:20 AM

I agree with Oaklander. I live in SOMA and consider this area of Oakland nicer in some respects than SOMA. There's a wonderful farmer's market in Old Oakland on Friday's, plentiful transportation, the restaurants of Jack London Square are nearby, there's a huge new project of upscale apartments/condos being developed at the Fox theatre and it's relatively clean and quiet. I've walked through there many times late at night visiting friends in the area and have never felt threatened.

Posted by: mow at March 13, 2008 9:57 AM

Wow, I've got to say I'm somewhat surprised by some of the comments regarding the area. I used to live in Adams Point, (north of the Lake), just a few short blocks from this building back in 2000 (when it was far less gentrified) and thought it felt safer than SoMa and used to walk to BART late at night all the time. Having said that, a few blocks can make a big difference, and this area isn't as nice as Adams Point proper (or the Grand Lake Theatre district).

Posted by: fluffy at March 13, 2008 10:56 AM

"I live in SOMA and consider this area of Oakland nicer in some respects than SOMA."

I would rather walk through SOMA anyday than this part of Oakland at night. I feel that in Oakland you are prey while in SF it's more of just normal city crime. In Oakland you always being hunted. Don't get me wrong, I love the east bay, but the crime and lack respect for life and property in Oakland is just sad.

Posted by: anon at March 13, 2008 11:19 AM

"I would rather walk through SOMA anyday than this part of Oakland at night."

Odd. I've never quite understood how people have preconceived notions of areas such as this and downright unjustified paranoria. I've been "hunted" in SOMA and have been prey on an occasion or two. Crime is crime. If you're hunted in Oakland, you're hunted in San Francisco or any other city for that matter.

If you've see the crime stats for this neighborhood you'll know it's not a high crime area.

That said, it's a beautiful building and it's wonderful its being preserved instead of torn down.

Posted by: mow at March 13, 2008 4:58 PM

I used to volunteer for a non-profit directly across Telegraph from this building. The company was in the Latham Building. The area is probably one of Oakland's most rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods. There's been a ton of progress just in the last three years in this area.

Quite a few eating establishments have opened up near the Cathedral Building in the past few years (Cafe Van Kleeef, Flora, Cafe Madrid, Luka's Taproom to name a few.)

Also, Forest City Enterprises is currently constructing "The Uptown." It is 665 units of condominiums, 9000 sq. ft. of retail and a new 25,000 sq. ft. park. It is slated to open in late 2008. However, with the poor economy who knows how well they'll sell.

During the day, the neighborhood is fine. At night it can be a little sketchy. My hope is that the uptown complex acts as a catalyst for this neighborhood. The neighborhood is on the cusp of being really nice, but like others said it'll take some time.

Posted by: AthleticsFan at March 13, 2008 7:49 PM

I am suprised at many of the responses. I am from NYC where I lived in a loft that now goes for \$3 million dollars and I parked three blocks away and paid \$450 a month for parking. So being able to park in three garages that are 50 feet away and to pay \$150 a month is a steal. Downtown Oakland is an urban area and it is on the cusp of exploding. People on the street are the catalyst and cure of all of the urban ills like crime. Forest City is building 1400 rental units which will be completed in 2008. That will eventually place 2,000 people on the streets. The city of Oakland is spending over \$60 million dollars in restoring the Fox theatre. That will bring people and restaurants to the uptown area. These people will come from Montclair and Piedmont which will alter the area in a major way. The uptown district will become with the Grand and Marquee Lofts projects and a few others, downtown Oaklands first real concentrated neighborhood. This will cause the retail to explode. A Whole Foods is already opening in this neighborhood. Others will follow. It takes someone from outside the area to see this momentum. It has swung too far to ever return to the days of the 60-90's. The next swing is prosperity where people will not want to drive due to high oil prices and long commutes, but will want to walk and take public transportation and experience urban living like NYC, Chicago, Boston, Washington, San Francisco. If you are from around here you will be sceptial because you have heard this story before. You will miss the boat. The Cathedral Building is arguably one of the most beautiful buildings in the worls. The units have the highest end finishes of any units in Oakland. Where else in the Bay area can you buy a condo where you are the only unit on the floor. these units would go for up to \$3,000,000 in San Francisco and the owner of this unit will be able to get to Market street to work faster than someone who lives in Pacific Heights.

Posted by: [andrew](#) at March 19, 2008 6:23 PM

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