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Structure to tower over LoDo

Developers of 1800 Larimer tout energy-efficient design of 22-story office high-rise

By John Rebchook, Rocky Mountain News

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Westfield Development Co. plans a \$150 million, 22-story, 500,000-square-foot office tower at the edge of lower downtown.

The 1800 Larimer building, the first new high-rise office building downtown since 1999 Broadway opened in the mid-1980s, will be the most energy-efficient high-rise in downtown Denver, said Rich McClintock, president of Denver-based Westfield.

The building is expected to receive a silver LEED, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, rating from the U.S. Green Building Council. The council today is ending its three-day Greenbuild 2006 conference at the Colorado Convention Center, which attracted more than 12,000 people.

"If it is not a sustainable building, it is outdated," McClintock said.

Increasingly, companies are demanding that their office space be in a LEED-rated building, which not only lowers utility bills for them but increases worker productivity, he said.

The building will include numerous energy saving features, including a subfloor air distribution system; 9-foot, 6-inch floor-to-ceiling windows; a state-of-the-art health club for tenants; and almost a half-acre parklike environment on a terrace 20 feet off the ground.

"It just made sense to us to only 'condition' the air around people, rather than the entire volume of space, especially as tenants demand higher ceilings," said Don Slack, executive vice president of Westfield. "Basically, we're cooling two-thirds of the space we would with a conventional system. And an added benefit of the system is that the tenants can manually control the temperature immediately around them."

The architect is Denver-based RNL Design. In addition to the blue and grey glass facade, a design feature will be a 30-foot high "wall of water" inside the lobby. The lobby will have trees inside and immediately outside a large glass wall.

Tom Clark, executive vice president of the Metro Denver Economic Development Corp., said he is courting a Fortune 500 company, which is considering moving its headquarters to either Denver or two East Coast cities.

"If they choose Denver, they want a building in the LoDo area," Clark said. "And it is important for them to be in an energy-efficient building."

McClintock said that the overall office vacancy rate in LoDo is about 5 percent but in Class A buildings it is 2 percent.

There are about a half-dozen office buildings planned for LoDo, but McClintock isn't worried about competition.

He notes the site is a block from the Ritz-Carlton hotel under construction, two blocks from the Tabor Center and Coors Field, and four blocks from Denver Union Station.

It also is on the route of a future circular bus system that will serve downtown and Denver Union Station.

Construction will start in the spring with an opening in 2009. He already is close to inking deals with some tenants that will take at least 20 percent of the building. They're speaking with law firms, energy companies, financial institutions and others.

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