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## Solera soars to new heights in sustainability

by Jennifer Hayes

Zocalo Community Development is scaling new heights with its second LEED-certified multifamily development.

The Denver-based firm has broken ground on Solera, the first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design-certified for-rent high-rise in the Rocky Mountain region.

"By building Solera as LEED-certified – our second LEED, mixed-use project after the sold-out RiverClay Condos – we not only deliver a building that has greater enduring value and is healthier for tenants and the environment, but we increase demand in Denver for sustainable building practices and materials, thereby stimulating the local economy and increasing the likelihood that others will adopt similar sustainable development methods," said David Zucker, LEED AP and principal with Zocalo Community Development.

Adjacent to the Ballpark Neighborhood in downtown Denver, Solera is designed to achieve LEED Gold certification when completed in June 2010 and at a cost of only 2 percent more than noncertified high-rise residential properties.

The 11-story building at 1956 Lawrence St. will comprise 120 apartment units above structured parking and 5,200 square feet of ground-level retail space.

The studio, one- and two-bedroom units, which vary from 600 to 1,150 sf, will feature a variety of sustainable finishes, said Chris Achenbach, AIA, and principal with Zocalo.

Apartments at Solera will include monitoring systems that provide residents feedback about their energy uses. As well, apartments will feature recycled quartz counter tops and islands;

high-efficiency lighting; Energy Star appliances; upward of 20 percent locally produced materials; dual-flush toilets and low-flow water fixtures; ceiling fans in bedrooms; low VOC paints, flooring and carpeting; front-loading washers and dryers; and balconies in most units.

Solera also will include a 99 percent-efficient boiler, solar photovoltaic electric production from a roof-mounted photovoltaic array, roof deck, bike parking ratio of one space per unit, bike maintenance room, blown cellulose insulation and a white roof through TPO roofing, which reduces the heat intake.

As well, the building will include occupant-sensor lighting in the common areas and parking garage, an extensive recycling program and solar shading on the exterior, added Achenbach.

Other amenities include a podium deck, coffee-shoplike feel in the lobby to encourage interaction among residents, an exercise room and, potentially, carpool and car-sharing opportunities for the community three blocks from Coors Field and four blocks from light rail and the 16th Street Mall.

Sustainability and green practices also extend to the construction waste in the building of Solera. The development and construction services company, which also is the general contractor for the project, will recycle its construction waste.

During the building of RiverClay, 30 percent of the construction waste, including dry-wall, cardboard, metals, asphalt and concrete, was recycled and the firm looks to grow that percentage with Solera, said Achenbach.

Principal Real Estate Investors is the equity investor on the project, designed by



*Zocalo Community Development is under way on its 120-unit Solera development, which is designed to achieve LEED Gold certification when completed in June 2010.*

architect John Gagnon of JG Architects. Financing for construction of Solera was provided by Guaranty Bank. YRG Sustainability, Rocky Mountain Institute and Enermodal all consulted on the development of Solera.

Solera's retail space, which is divisible, is being marketed by Kelly Greene of David Hicks & Lampert Brokerage to a tenant or tenants that connects with the type of resident at Solera. As well, the space allows the retail tenant(s) to have the opportunity to add its own solar production.

Leasing at Solera is anticipated to begin in January.

"There are very few projects like this," added Achenbach "Solera stands apart and offers a unique product. It's great to be able to make money doing the right thing."

Zocalo's RiverClay was the region's first LEED-certified multifamily development. In April, Zocalo Community Development was recognized by the Environmental Defense Fund for its solar photovoltaic program, which allowed owners at the RiverClay condo project to create electricity from roof-mounted solar panels – a first in the United States for an urban core project.

The program offered condo buyers lower interest rates if they elected to buy a condominium equipped with solar panels. Zocalo will extend the concept of its solar program to Solera's renters.

Zocalo Community Development is looking to additional LEED-certified projects, including affordable housing and LEED Existing Building office projects.▲