

Symphony House

By Monica Schultes, P.E.

The Symphony House was selected for an Award of Merit in Mid-Atlantic Construction's Best of 2007 program. The building was recognized in the category of High-Rise Residential. Mid-Atlantic Construction focuses on the people, projects and trends that affect the design and construction community in that region.

The residents of the Symphony House on South Broad Street in Philadelphia are truly at home with the arts.

Symphony House, which opened in 2007, rises 32 stories from one of the city's premiere cultural districts, treating residents to a level of a luxury reminiscent of the high style and elegance of the 1920s. High ceilings, dramatic setbacks, Mansard roofs, marble and granite grace the living areas, while an attached three-story Broadway-style theater offers residents live, professional entertainment.

The tower itself features an array of amenities including an upscale restaurant, outdoor café, grocery store, 60-foot swimming pool, two fitness centers, wine storage facility, an outdoor sundeck and a club room.

Carl Dranoff of Dranoff Properties, Symphony House's developer, is noted for his track record of renovating historic properties and converting them into luxury residences. For this prominent \$125-million condo tower, just steps from the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, Dranoff wanted to create a classic design that was distinctive, yet would also blend with the character and tradition of nearby structures along

Philadelphia's Avenue of the Arts.

The challenge, of course, was to identify methods and materials that blend a variety of aesthetic options, the adequate management of resources, and an economic incentive to use. For Symphony House, precast concrete provided part of the solution.

"Symphony House incorporates the cutting-edge technology of tomorrow, resulting in a 21st century building that far exceeds today's standards in construction, energy-efficiency, security and comfort," Danoff says. "Its building systems are state of the art."

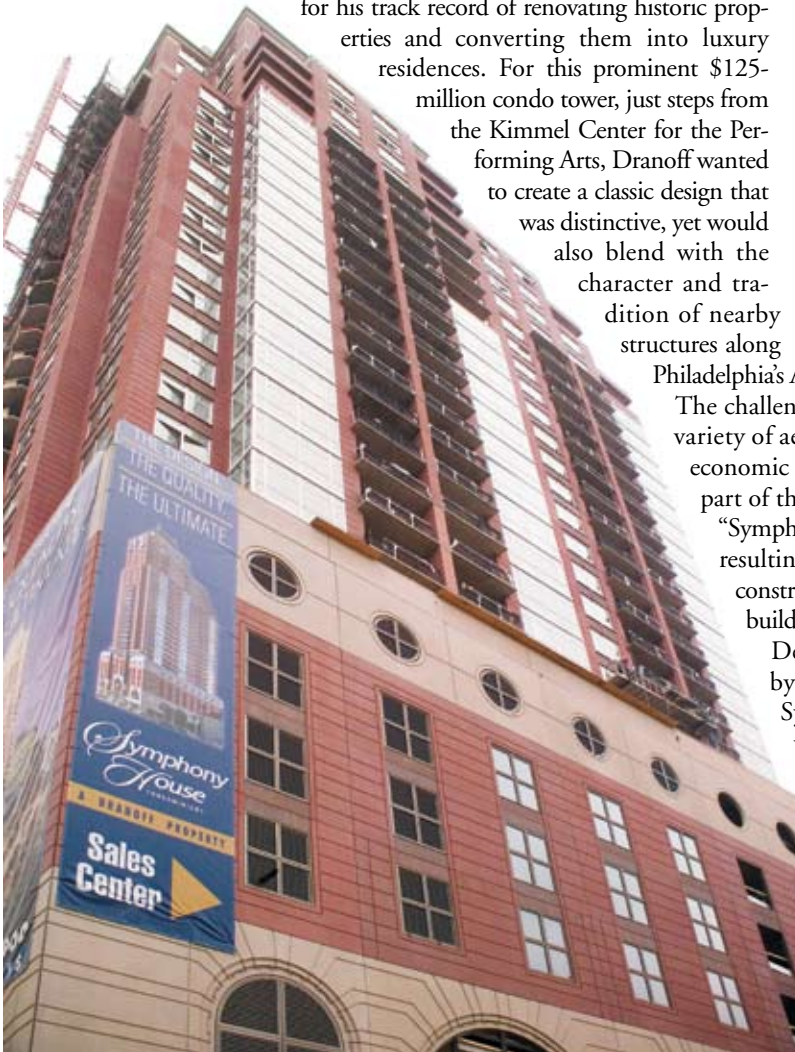
Designed by Bower Lewis Thrower Architects and constructed by a joint venture of L.F. Driscoll Co. and Intech Construction, Symphony House includes eight levels of parking clad in conventional precast panels.

The project's 24 residential floors are clad in lighter-weight architectural cladding that uses 50 percent less concrete than conventional panels. High Concrete Group, LLC of Denver, PA, provided the exterior panels, which were manufactured under quality controlled factory conditions and shipped ready for erection.

The lighter-weight panels were more easily accommodated by the crane – even at the more distant corners of the building. In addition, the lower-weight panels reduced loads on the floor slab and the rest of the reinforced concrete structure.



For the 24 residential floors of Symphony House, the developer chose light-weight architectural precast concrete panels.



Symphony House, the first major precast skyscraper built in Philadelphia in this decade, brings luxury residences to one of the city's premiere cultural districts.

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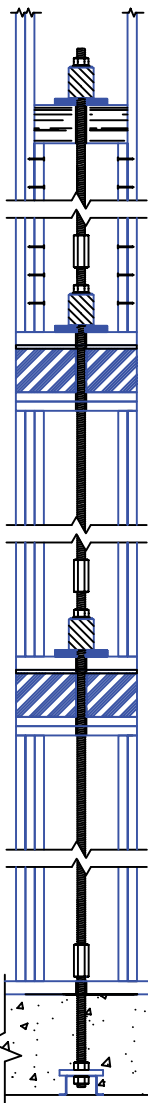
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The seven-inch-thick cladding panels were reinforced with carbon fiber mesh and featured very deep reveals, recessed planes and deep window recesses that helped cast the shade and shadow that enliven the façade. In addition, the building team selected a textured red finish, complemented by smooth brown hued sections and trim.

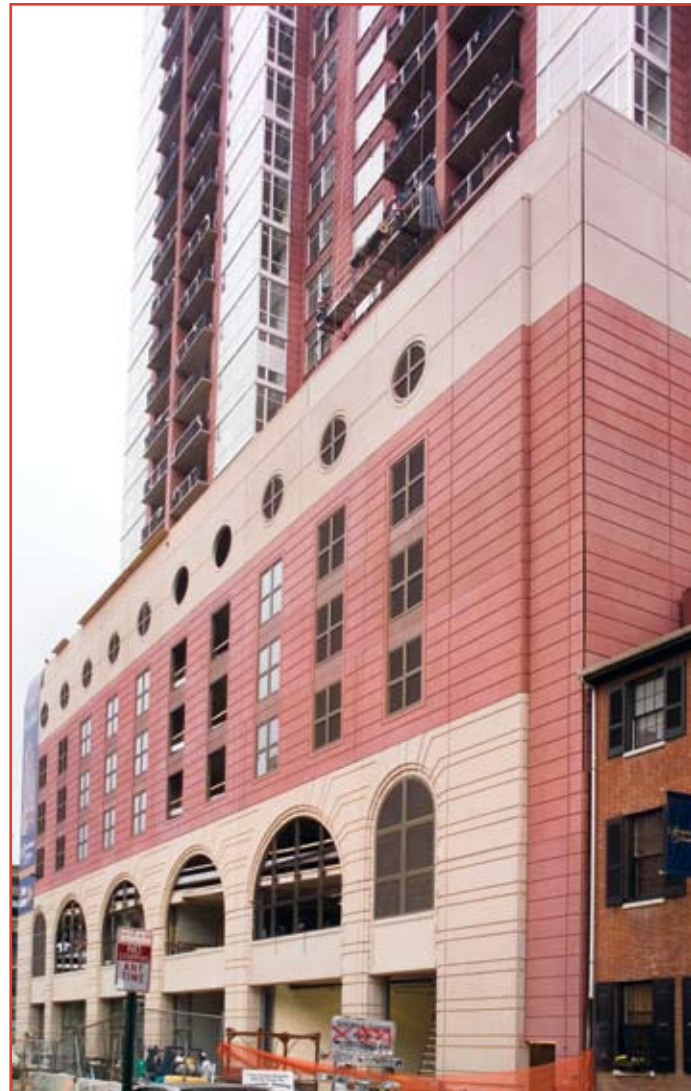
“Precast construction offered us more design options at no greater construction costs,” noted Dranoff. “Plus we stayed on schedule, completing the project in just five months.”

From a performance standpoint, the precast system provides a face-sealed curtainwall to reduce moisture risk. In addition, the insulation in the panels on the residential structure mitigates the chance of condensation-related mold or mildew.

In addition to sheer durability and aesthetics of precast, its insular properties makes the structure less reliant on other means of temperature and noise control, enabling Symphony House to exceed current standards for energy efficiency, construction, sound transmission and comfort.

Symphony House is the first major precast skyscraper built in Philadelphia in the 21st Century. The success of the award-winning Symphony House proves that precast concrete is a viable player on Philadelphia’s Avenue of the Arts and anywhere owners, developers, builders and architects want flexibility of design, speed of construction and cost effective quality.

“Precast panels gave us exactly the look and feel we wanted for the structure and for the prominent urban location,” Dranoff noted. “We really couldn’t have made a better choice.” ■



Precast panels give Symphony House a distinctive design that also blends with the character and tradition of Philadelphia’s Avenue of the Arts.

Monica Schultes, P.E., is executive director of the Mid-Atlantic Precast Association. In this role, she guides the efforts of the organization, which is committed to the growth of precast concrete in that region and to educating the construction community, design professionals and students about the advantages of precast.

Symphony House Project Team

Owner: Dranoff Properties, Philadelphia, PA

General Contractors: Intech Construction, Philadelphia, PA; L.F. Driscoll Co., Bala Cynwyd, PA

Architectural Firm: BLT Architects, Philadelphia, PA

Structural Engineering Firm: Cagley Harman & Associates, King of Prussia, PA

Precaster: High Concrete Group, LLC, Denver, PA