

Ball lets history guide him with new venture

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Robert Ball, the developer who turned some of Portland's best-known industrial buildings into some of its hippest new residences, is building his first new-construction project.

The Wyatt, a 15-story condominium in construction at Northwest 13th Avenue and Marshall Street, is a new building that reflects Ball's history with, well, history.



Ball

For the Wyatt, the developer recycled bricks from an old building removed from the construction site and took care to design a building that wouldn't overshadow its beloved neighbor, the Bridgeport Brewery.

And in a city that frowns on sky-bridges and other structures above streets, Ball succeeded in gaining permission to reinstall the brewery's iconic trestle, once used as a walkway and access point for the railroad tracks that ran below.

The city transportation department typically prefers to avoid overhead structures, but agreed after Ball asked the state office of historic preservation to write a letter advocating for the trestle.

It is being repaired and will be reinstalled, but will be strictly for decoration. The trestle is the building's logo as well. The Wyatt even takes its name from a piece of history. Ball named the building for a friend, former U.S. Rep. Wendell Wyatt, a Republican from Oregon.

"I wanted something that meant something," he explained.

The Wyatt, one of at least five residential projects under construction in the Pearl District, is tracking for a November move-in date for residents. So far, about 50 of its 245 units are sold or reserved.

It's a slower market than the overheated days of 2005, when The Wyatt was launched.

In 2005, buyers lined up outside sales offices to reserve whatever they could get their names on. Today's buyers are taking time and coming back again and again before committing, Ball said.

The Wyatt is priced at \$400 to more than \$500 a square foot, with prices comparable to the asking prices for resale units in Pearl District.

Ball said he's pleased with the rate of sales and says he would start the project again today given the chance. Bordered by Bridgeport Brewery on one side and a future Safeway grocery store on another, The Wyatt occupies one of the expanding Pearl District's hottest corners.

But the prime location required special attention. Ball talked to neighborhood leaders about what they wanted at the corner and was told not to overwhelm the brewery with a giant block of a building. The architect, Fletcher Farr Ayotte, designed a building that steps away from the brewery, preserving air space around the historic site.

The design, featuring red brick, black windows and details such as decorative cornices and lintels, is winning praise from neighbors and real estate professionals alike.

"It's a nice-looking building. I like the appearance of it," said John Cooper, principal broker with Portland Condos LLC. The Wyatt is visible above the Street-



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The Wyatt takes shape against the Pearl District skyline.

car Lofts from his window.

Cooper agreed the market has slowed, but noted that the inventory of for-sale condominiums has returned to normal after being overheated.

In addition to residential units, The Wyatt will have about 11,000 square feet of retail space. Thom Brockmiller, principal broker with Gray and Associates, is representing the space to prospective tenants.

In the two months since Andersen Construction topped out the building when workers installed the 15th floor, interest in the corner has picked up, Brockmiller said.

Construction of Lovejoy Station, which will include a Safeway, has started across Marshall Street, bringing more attention to the district.