

Tuesday, September 4, 2018

Makers Quarter debuts district's 1st office building



Photo courtesy of Makers Quarter

Block D is the first speculative, multi-tenant office tower to be built downtown in more than a decade.

By Mark Armao

The development team behind the budding innovation district known as Makers Quarter recently completed Block D, the first speculative, multi-tenant office tower to be built downtown in more than a decade.

With flexible layouts, sustainable features and circulation routes designed to spur collaboration, the roughly 60,000-square-foot building will serve as a prototype for office concepts that the developer, L2HP, plans to implement on the district's future office projects.

Block D has already attracted a pair of office tenants that will take up four full floors of the building, which is set to open in October.

As the unveiling of 265 apartments at Broadstone Makers Quarter draws near, the developers' sights are set on having the district's first cluster of residential, retail and hospitality uses open for business. The hope is that the neighborhood's new offerings will propel demand for more office space as the district matures, said Mary Pampuch, who is part of the development team.

During the past two years, the area bounded by Broadway, F Street, 14th Street and 17th Street has seen the opening of Punchbowl Social - a dual restaurant and entertainment concept - and 10 Barrel Brewing Co., as well as several smaller spaces aimed at attracting design-minded creative individuals and entrepreneurs to the district.

"We've created a live-work-play environment out there, so I think that's going to help us as we move forward to promote more office and retail uses," said Pampuch, who serves as executive vice president and COO of Lankford & Associates, which forms part of the L2HP partnership along with general contractor Hensel Phelps and HP Investors.

Block D contains five floors of office space, each with open-layout floorplates that can be customized according to each tenant's needs. L2HP recently announced the addition of the building's first two office tenants: Basic Agency and Spaces.

San Diego-based Basic Agency is a creative design and branding agency that counts Nike, Under Armour and Beats by Dre among its clients. The company recently signed a lease on Block D's fifth floor layout.

Pampuch said Basic will open its new headquarters in the 10,300-square-foot space in October.

More than half the building will be occupied by Spaces, a Netherlands-based workspace provider. The co-working company, which is undergoing a substantial growth spurt, will occupy the second, third and fourth floor, as well as a private lobby entrance.

"I anticipate that having Spaces in that building is going to facilitate a lot of interest from its tenants in the next office building that we're going to build just south of Block D," Pampuch said.

Spaces expects to open in early 2019.

Block D, which also contains 4,500 square feet of retail and restaurant space on the ground floor, is more than 70 percent pre-leased, Pampuch said.

Designed by BNIM, the building has lighting and ventilation systems intended to reduce the building's energy needs through both cutting-edge techniques and conventional approaches.

The unfinished concrete frame will give thermal mass to the structure, allowing it to stay cool during the day and retain heat at night - reducing heating and cooling needs. Glass garage-doors and sliding metal panels on each floor will enable users to control the amount of light and air getting into the building, Pampuch said.

Because of the building's north-south orientation, the building "allows for a really good pass-through of the prevailing winds in downtown San Diego," Pampuch said. "You can open the garage doors and have the breezes coming in and have an indoor-outdoor conference."

Along certain portions of the façade, mechanized blinds will allow for enhanced shading control. The building is equipped with sensors that allow it to monitor the heat gain in the building and adjust the blinds accordingly, Pampuch said.

"The building can run the system or it can be run by the tenants themselves, depending on the conditions they want for their space," she said.

Atop the structure, a 174-kilowatt photovoltaic array will generate electricity for the office portion of the building.

"These features are all going to work together to get us to a Net Zero Energy [rating] and hopefully a LEED Platinum certification," Pampuch said.

The mixed-use office building represents the first step toward the nearly 1 million square feet of office space planned for Makers Quarter.

The project that likely will be the next to break ground in Makers Quarter is dubbed Block F, and it will contain both residences and 50,000 square feet of office space.

"We're looking forward to getting going on our next multi-use building and our projects coming after that, but we're very excited about the fact that we finally have a quarter out there," Pampuch said. "We've got housing, entertainment and office, so it's truly become the live-work-play environment that we're trying to create. We're pretty happy about that."

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