

## Drive by the Sunloft Center and look up

Surprise — not only are all four floors of the Sunloft Center, downtown's biggest building, completed, but the architectural elements that are going to give the building a distinctive smalltown feel and look are currently being added.

I parked across the street in the old Punta Gorda Mall parking lot last Wednesday to take a photo of the top of the Marion Avenue elevation, intending to call Martin and Ann Schulz of Florida Insel Properties, the local representatives of European developer Franz Hartl, who are marketing the building's condominiums, to get an update.

Two days later (she must have read my mind), Ann called and asked me if I would like to take a tour of the building with Punta Gorda Fire Department employees who were taking a class on building construction.

The answer, of course, was yes. Getting dirty at construction sites is one of the main excuses I use for not wearing long pants and a tie to work. To paraphrase the familiar U.S. Marine Corps television commercial, getting dirty is part of being a Punta Gorda Herald editor.

After arriving, I asked Lt. John Briggs why the firefighters were there.

He replied, "We're doing a class at the fire station on building construction, and this place has some of the newest construction techniques in town."

He also reassured me the department's new high-tech ladder truck should have no trouble reaching the 59.25-foot-high roof elevation.

I had no clue what Punta Gorda Construction Management construction superintendent Doug Quick was explaining to the firefighters most of the time, but I sure enjoyed the trip, especially to the fourth-floor condos and the rooftop. The view from both levels was spectacular, particularly if you enjoy looking at the bridges or our famous Punta Gorda sunsets over the harbor.

The 15 condos, according to Martin, will list from \$580,000 to \$989,000 based on size and view, and reservation deposits already have been placed on six of them. Floor space ranges from 1,500 square feet to 2,200 square feet. There are two bedroom, two and one-half bath units, while the three bedroom units have three and one-half baths. For more details and floor plans, visit [www.sunloftcenter.com](http://www.sunloftcenter.com).

"It's the lifestyle we are marketing," Martin said, referring to the units' downtown location. "You can't really compare these to other condos around here."

Standing in one of the units with a view of the water and seeing the downtown amenities spread out below, my immediate thought for a marketing slogan was "downtown Punta Gorda at your feet."

Another story up, standing on the roof, the view was even more spectacular. I couldn't resist shooting today's cover photo through a hole in one of the triangular facade elements. There's no better place in town to admire the way the U.S. 41 bridges soar over the bay (or is it the river?).

You may be wondering what's happening with the two large retail spaces on the ground floor planned for restaurants. Through its office and retail marketing partner, C.B. Richard Ellis, the Sunloft team is in the hunt for tenants for an upscale restaurant for the large space on the Taylor Street side.

"We're looking to build on what the River City Grill and Turtle Club did for downtown," Ann said. "We want something similar."

As for the smaller space on the quieter Sullivan Street side, Martin thinks a breakfast place would be a perfect addition for downtown.

They are soliciting residents' input; give them a call at 941-505-0482 if you have any ideas.

I talked to C.B. Richard Ellis marketing rep Enn Luthringer about Sunloft's restaurant space, and he said he has several interested parties and letters of intent.

Naturally, he couldn't give me any names while negotiations are going on but did say one was a bistro-style Mediterranean place from up North and another a wine and tapas place.

"There is lots of interest from the Northeast in general," he said. Lots of prospects are coming down from there; I had one from New Jersey last week."

Luthringer said prospective tenants love the style and mixed-use features of the building.

It should be no surprise, given the rapidity of construction on the Sunloft Center, that construction is on schedule. Quick said the garage should be completed by Christmas, when a topping out party is under consideration. The entire building should be finished in May.

He attributes the speed of construction to lining up good contractors for the job, especially Pre Stress Construction Systems and Southwest Concrete.

"We're very happy with all our people," he said.

You'll soon have an opportunity to see how the building is going to fit in with downtown's historic architecture. Work is scheduled to start on the stucco facades this week, with the brick and tabby (shell) facades going on soon after the stucco is completed.

"I can see it finally coming together," Ann said.

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**HERALD PHOTOS BY GORDON BOWER, [pgherald@sun-herald.com](mailto:pgherald@sun-herald.com)** Martin and Ann Schulz, left, admire the view from the roof with construction superintendent Doug Quick.



The view up the main entry on West Marion Avenue is as spectacular as the view down from the roof.



Punta Gorda Construction Management Construction Superintendent Doug Quick goes over a construction detail with a class of Punta Gorda firefighters.



The facade elements along the roof line are made of formed concrete with rebar.



The roof of the Sunloft Center offers a great view of the rapid restoration of the old courthouse across Taylor Street.