

## Innovative Design in Los Angeles

### The Situation

Across the nation, multifamily construction is on the rise. With younger generations waiting longer to purchase single-family homes, people are renting longer – and they're seeking properties that offer sophisticated design, modern amenities and features that will improve their overall quality of life.

Nowhere is this shift more prevalent than southern California, where the population density continues to grow. Los Angeles neighborhoods, like the fast-rising South Park district, are being revitalized with eye-catching, sustainable designs like the WREN project, a \$144 million, 362-unit multifamily community that has transformed the local skyline with two seven-story wood-framed buildings.

### The Challenge

With no shortage of renters, multifamily housing developers in Los Angeles are looking to build taller without sacrificing the quality of design. When designing the WREN complex, Togawa Smith Martin (TSM) architects was challenged to create a signature design statement that met the owner's 195 unit/acre density requirement.

*Their smartest design choice? Incorporating an innovative double-podium design that could support five levels of wood-framed structure.*

### The Final Result

WREN is the epitome of innovative design, quickly becoming the city's first Type III double-podium design. To achieve this goal, developers worked with the city of Los Angeles to modify the existing building code to allow multiple podium levels. With the adoption of the 2015 International Building code, WREN paved the way toward the future, making it easier for developers to specify wood in upcoming projects.

This project has earned rave reviews from the owner, tenants, city officials and the design community. The amenity-filled complex was nearly 20 percent leased at opening. Full occupancy was expected within a year. WREN is merely the first of a six-building 1.2 billion community plan that will ultimately add over 2,000 high-quality rental units to the South Park district.

### Differentiating with Wood

The challenge for wood framed buildings in high seismic zones is incorporating large glass areas while still providing sufficient shear walls. Larger window openings create structural complexity, so the TSM team worked closely with structural engineers to determine the minimal length of shear wall required at each floor. Any area not required for shear wall was used for windows. The structural characteristics of wood were blended to create an aesthetically pleasing open grid on the exterior of the building. Wood proved to be the architect's best friend in developing WREN.

Additionally, the buildings are protected by a full NFPA 13 fire sprinkler system. The wood levels above the podium are split into five zones with three-hour fire walls. By providing the sprinkler system, the wood portion of the building was able to increase in height from four to five stories.



*"Wood is a forgiving material, especially during the construction phase, since it allowed us to quickly resolve unexpected issues in the field without compromising our original design."*

*Jay Zapata, AIA, LEED AP BD+C and Architect at TSM*