



New life nears for historic Globe Mills building in Alkali Flat

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Ignoring a sign that warned "Keep out – dangerous building," about 30 people walked into the old Globe Mills in Alkali Flat last week.

All were welcomed by waiting attendants who requested they each sign a waiver of liability releasing the hosts from responsibility in case of a mishap.

The main host was Michael F. Malinowski, the architect whose blueprints are turning the historic mill into 146 stylish rental units at 12th and C streets.

After more than two years of construction, the \$40 million project is about 90 percent completed, with 115 of the units destined as affordable senior apartments and 31 as market-rate lofts.

Proud of the ongoing development, Malinowski organized a hard-hat tour for special guests.

In his welcoming remarks, Malinowski explained that walking through the complex would indeed be hazardous.

"Your challenge is to see what there is to see and not get hurt," he said, jokingly adding:

"I encourage you to attend our grand opening, which shall be sometime later."

That, of course, is when the real story will unfold – sometime this summer.



But Malinowski's hour-long preview tour was breathtaking in itself, in more ways than one.

Little by little, the guests climbed a series of concrete staircases to the mill's fifth floor, taking in panoramic window views along the way.

Punished by the climb, some slowed to catch their breath amid the dust and construction materials.

Highlights included visits to aerie dwellings that have been completed, except for, among other things, installation of carpeting and other household appliances; heart-stopping glimpses from above into now empty, towering grain silos, and what will be the majestic lobby for the market-rate units.

The lobby is at the base of a five-story shaft that for many years was filled with grain.

The lobby's ceiling has a maze of cut-off chutes through which the grain rained down, onto the grain-processing plant.

Each chute will be converted into a light fixture, a special chandelier.

"The lobby is where people will get their mail," said Malinowski, of Applied Architecture Inc. "This is where people will meet other people."

According to Malinowski, the complex had four mills – one for barley, one for cereal, one for flour and one that was called the cleaning mill.

The barley mill, built in the late 1890s, was the oldest of the four.

"It was four stories of rotted wood and had to be torn down" as part of the demolition that continues today, Malinowski said.

"We tried to save it for many, many months but it could not be saved," he said.

The space formerly occupied by the barley mill is earmarked for an outdoor plaza with open-air seating.

Guests taking the tour included the project's lead developer, Cyrus Youseffi, and co-developer Skip Rosenbloom.

If everything goes as planned, the project will be completed by the end of June, Youseffi said.

"We're hoping for a grand opening in July or August," Youseffi added.

Also along for the preview was Alkali Flat resident Bruce Booher, who fought for the preservation of the 50,000-square-foot mill complex, which ceased operations in the 1960s.

"In 1995, after the mill was damaged by a (multiple-alarm) fire, the Sacramento City Council was moving to tear it down," Booher said. "I spoke to the council, urging it to preserve this historic building."

He added: "So now, 13 years after I told the city it could be renovated, I have walked through the building to see the progress. The wildest dreams I had in 1995 don't come close to what they've been able to achieve here."

In Booher's opinion, the entire development team, including the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency, deserves praise for a job well done.

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