

Portland developer brings chaos theory to Pearl District

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Patrick Kessi has taken an asymmetrical route to development. His first major project, the fast-developing 937 Condominiums in the heart of Portland's Pearl District, represents an asymmetrical development for the assiduously planned neighborhood.

The design of the 16-story, 114-unit condo tower that's squeezed on two sides by the Brewery Blocks and the north Pearl District takes its cues from the naturally occurring fractals and organic chaos of the world, according to Kessi

"Everything we're doing, from a development perspective, is a little unconventional," he said.

It's an ambitious project says Kessi, and not just for the fact that it's slated for completion in September.

At 30, the developer looks barely older than the 20-year-old who started buying properties near his college, the University of Portland, so his friends wouldn't get evicted.

He learned the business of developing a property by doing different aspects of it, even jobs he wasn't especially good at, like fixing plumbing.

In the decade since his first building purchase, he's added to his real estate portfolio, buying land and properties and then building or converting them into condominium projects. His first "large project" was the modern-looking Thurman Street Lofts, on which he first teamed with his current development partner Geoff Wenker.

Wenker brought construction expertise to the partnership.

But Kessi says his and Wenker's idea for 937 Condominiums came from nature – the shapes, shades and chaos of the natural environment. It was also important that the project be sustainable, and it is currently tracking three points above a gold rating in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program.

"What we're trying to do is avoid a recollection of style," said Mack Selberg, lead architect on the project for Ankrom Moisan Architecture. "And yes, that's very difficult to do."

The reason it's difficult, he says, is because there are traditional patterns and design elements that refer to historical styles, but he and John Holmes, the building's exterior architect for Holst Architecture, wanted to get away from those elements.

"We use the word 'chaos,' but it's actually a very calm building," Selberg said.

The building's windows, for example, are organized to appear as design elements that repeat randomly throughout the building. The brick façade is designed to look like a skin holding the bones of the building together. The balconies are encased in what Kessi describes as Poinot noir-hued glass, circling the building and stacking vertically at seemingly random intervals. At night, the glass will be backlit to create a strong evening presence along the city's expanding skyline.

Names have been attached to these design standards, Selberg says, including "biomimicry" – the imitation of organic life.

For Kessi, who of his own volition admits that he was a rather sub-par landlord back during his college days, says his future may not be as chaotic-seeming as his building. His next project, he says, will "depend on whatever the next challenge is."

DESIRABLE
LOCATION



Dan Carter/DJC

Patrick Kessi is on the last stretch of development for his 937 Condominiums, co-developed with Geoff Wenker, which are slated to complete construction in September.



Dan Carter/DJC

With windows that alternate in shape at seemingly random intervals and odd-stacked patios, the 937 Condominiums project takes its inspiration from the irregularities of nature.