

First Skyscraper in 20 Years to Open in Los Angeles

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Los Angeles is set to reach new heights next week. Gensler today (Feb. 12) announced the Feb. 16 opening of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel & Residences Los Angeles and JW Marriott at L.A. LIVE, a 5.6 million-sq.-ft. pedestrian oriented district. The 54-story mixed-use skyscraper, which is located adjacent to the STAPLES Center and the Los Angeles Convention Center and currently pursuing LEED Gold certification, is the first high-rise to grace the downtown city area in 20 years.

The building's design expands horizontally as it rises, accommodating for the larger space requirements of the Ritz-Carlton on the upper floors. Each hotel showcases an outdoor deck—one in the JW Marriott on the fourth floor with a 1,000-person capacity and one in the Ritz-Carlton on the 26th floor. An 80,000-sq.-ft. conference center, accessible via skywalk, features a 26,000-sq.-ft. ballroom.

Sustainable features include water-efficient fixtures and landscaping and solar-reflecting surfaces on the roofs to reduce heat.

Externally, the building is adorned with varying glass types—colored transparency, reflectivity, and ceramic frit pattern—to lend an artistic vibe to the structure, while shifting away from the uniform reflective glass that is traditionally employed for multiuse buildings. The colored pattern helps to distinguish between the two separate hotels, as well as the living rooms and kitchens of the residential units, and also helps to conform the building to meet California's strict energy requirements that mandate a maximum of 60 percent transparency.

Due to the city's strict seismic codes, Gensler incorporated a performance-based design that called for steel plate shear walls rather than traditional concrete. The thinner frame allowed for added interior square footage, while the lessened weight allowed Gensler to expand the project by four stories from the original design and increase the overall project value by about \$8 million.

The tower, which won the 2008 Mixed-Use Award from the Los Angeles Business Council, is a positive beacon for the region. As a part of the new entertainment, restaurant, and retail offerings from L.A. LIVE, a decline in convention bookings has already reversed in anticipation of the new hotels, and officials estimate an influx of \$360 million to the local economy.

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