

Parker apartments: less flash, more elegance

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(FFA Architecture and Interiors)

The **Parker apartments** weren't designed to be flashy.

“We like to think of it as elegant and restrained,” said **Karl Refi**, an associate with Portland-based **FFA Architecture and Interiors Inc.**

The 177-unit apartment building at [1415 Northwest 12th Ave.](#) in Portland's Pearl District takes cues from the past, he said. Nearby older warehouses, service stations and machine shops inspired the black-lined windows and an art deco theme, Refi said. The white brick façade pays homage to downtown Portland's historic office buildings, as envisioned by the developer, **Robert Ball**, principal and CEO of Astor Pacific.

“(Ball) has this idea to bring that to the Pearl District, but we had to temper that to make it residential,” Refi said.

The 204,000-square-foot apartment complex has been under construction since January and will be U-shaped with a large central courtyard, Refi said.

“The courtyard will be a really nice amenity for this project,” he said. “It's a pretty large area so we thought about breaking it into a series of intimate spaces.”

Residents can sit and congregate in the courtyard, and have access to fireplaces, barbecues and cement ping pong tables, Refi said. Nearby will be a dog washing and grooming area and a bike repair station, he said.

Feedback from the neighborhood gathered in two public meetings shaped the final design for the six-story building, which takes up a full city block, Refi said. This included keeping in mind a city plan to create green corridor on Northwest Pettygrove Street, he said.

“The public was very adamant not to have any parking or loading space on the green avenue,” Refi said.

FFA also made sure the entrance to the courtyard fit in with a series of loading docks on Northwest 13th Avenue, Refi said. People will be drawn into the courtyard by an elevated outdoor platform that mimics nearby loading docks, but will have bike parking and planters, he said.

“We brought the landscaping onto the loading dock,” Refi said. “We’re sort of blurring the line from the courtyard to the public side.”

Public comments also had a strong influence on the overall aesthetic of the building, he said.

“They also generally encouraged us to up the quality of the materials and make it a very distinctive and distinguished building,” Refi said. “In the first (public) meeting, it hadn’t achieved that art deco design yet ... It got more detailed.”

Most of the building will be white with black accents between the windows and a touch of green tile to accentuate the brightness of the brick, Refi said. These details, along with the projecting bays, will draw the eye up and lengthen the building, he said.

The green tiles will be arranged in a chevron pattern, Refi said. This art deco motif is repeated in metal screens, railings and gates, he said.

An art deco inspiration made sense for the classic look FFA was going for with The Parker, Refi said.

“It just sort of clicked because we’d already latched onto these black and white color schemes,” he said. “We think we’ve done pretty well balancing the forces that were coming in on this project.”