



At MOTO, a panelized light frame wood wall system allowed each level to be framed in about a week and the entire project in less than a month. Photo: Ryan Gobuty

# WOOD: REINVENTING MULTIFAMILY STYLE AND CONSTRUCTABILITY

Who says multifamily building design has to be predictable? MOTO Apartments is a masterclass in Type V podium ingenuity delivered on a tight budget, right down to the pre-built wall panels, horizontal massing, and cedar soffits.

You can't blame passing motorists and pedestrians for wondering about that cool-looking building on the corner of 8th Avenue and Sherman in Denver's trendy Capitol Hill neighborhood.

What's with the striking original art? The industrial-chic metal cladding? Or the offset floor-by-floor horizontal stacking? This six-story, 82,000 SF structure could be a hip, buzzy boutique hotel.

Tenants at MOTO Apartments can only smile. The mixed-use development includes a four-story, 64-unit wood-framed apartment

community over a two-level concrete podium housing an above-ground parking garage and two ground-floor retail spaces. In many respects, MOTO Apartments (short for "middle of town") is a classic Type V podium structure built to the developer's density and budget requirements.

## Contextual, Neighborhood-Friendly Design

However, in aesthetic respects, it's anything but Podium Design 101. MOTO represents architectural ingenuity that honors context and

'of a place' design. "From a design standpoint it was an exciting challenge for us to take a familiar typology and do something new, interesting, and contextual with it," says Nick Seglie, AIA, LEED AP, senior designer at Gensler, the firm that designed MOTO.

The exterior opts for a horizontal aesthetic, unexpected for Type V buildings. The cantilevered, stacked floors play with mass, creating a dynamic offset look that suits the fashionable neighborhood. A passerby looking up discovers warm cedar soffits, a natural



MOTO's cantilevered, stacked floors play with mass, creating a dynamic offset look that suits the fashionable neighborhood.  
Photo: Ryan Gobuty



Warm cedar soffits are a natural counterpoint to the raw concrete base and industrial vibe of MOTO's metal panel cladding.  
Photo: Ronnie Leone

counterpoint to the raw concrete base and industrial vibe of the metal panel cladding.

## One Month to Frame

The spirit of innovation carried over to construction, too. The project contractor recommended pre-built wall panels and BCI flooring and ceiling joists as a way to accelerate construction, reduce material waste, and eliminate rain-day downtime. The architect and developer quickly agreed to the proposal.

"Speed is really the most surprising feature of a pre-built strategy," Seglie says. "It took about one week to frame-up each floor. The entire building was framed in less than a month." Wall panels and BCI joists arrived at the job site on a just-in-time basis, perfect for a tight urban site.

## Meets Code

"Permitting from the City of Denver code officials went well, Seglie said. "It was a smooth process. We received good collaboration from the City."

The interior sprinkler system complied with the NFPA 13 standard. "We even sprinklered all the balconies because of the cedar soffits. The tongue-and-groove soffits were treated with a Firestop sealant that also doubled as a clear sealer." Fire doors and smoke curtains at the elevator lobbies are interior features.

## Winning Decision

Overall, wood played an instrumental role far beyond the structural elements and soffits. Wood was specified for the trellis and pool deck railings. The pine slab doors were made from trees killed by the Mountain Pine Beetle

and reclaimed veneer pine. "Wood has lots of benefits. It's easy to work with. It's fast. Wood is often less expensive. We use it as a finish material as much as possible for its warmth," Seglie explains.

The developer is delighted by MOTO Apartments on several fronts. First, it was delivered on time and budget. Second, the continuing financial success of the property ratifies the developer's decision to go bold with aesthetic.

Seglie says, "That's the story of this project. I think many people get single-minded about this typology. With a little forethought, you can do a lot more with it than people expect."

**Developer:** Elevation Development Group

**Architect:** Gensler

**Structural Engineer:** Monroe & Newell Engineers, Inc.

**General Contractor:** PCL Construction

**Timber Supplier:** Foxworth Galbraith Lumber Company