



Architecturally Distinctive

# URBAN PROJECTS That Rock!

by Mona Branting  
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left to right - Mark Friedman, Randy Boehm, Glenn Sorensen and Michael Heller

4dudes in a cow town, they're not. Four innovative and smart urbanites, pulling together to reinvent the dulled Sacramento mid-town area, they march like the Earp brothers & friends, to face the challenges of stagnant tradition and conformity.

Although, on occasion, Sacramento has been called a cow town, those days are just about gone. The hard working partners of LoftWorks are totally bent on bringing Sacramento up to par with other US metropolitan hot spots like New York, Los Angeles and Chicago. This all pertains to buildings, of course, as the sharpshooters in this story are developers.

At first sight, Glenn, Mark, Michael and Randy, look like ordinary men in the best years of their lives. Upon closer inspection, they emerge somewhat less ordinary. ... in a good way, mind you!

Let us introduce: Glenn Sorensen, President, Sutter Commercial Properties, Mark Friedman, President, Fulcrum Capital, Michael Heller, President, Heller Pacific and Randy Boehm, President, Walsh & Forster, Inc.

We meet the visionaries at Michael Heller's latest project: the Mayflower movers' former storage warehouse on 20th Street, between "J" and "K" Streets. It's called M.A.R.R.S. (Midtown Art Retail & Restaurant Scene) and looks very fab and empty, save for a lot of construction material yet to be used to complete the offices and retail spaces available for lease.

Glenn and Michael are active Vespians. Both of them are often seen riding their Vespas around town. Three Vespas were bought when the first lofts opened in 2003 - these were used in the photo shoots for the LoftWorks website (loftworks.biz). Two are contemporary Vespas - Glenn's blue and Mike's white.

Glenn, being an especially big fan of the Vespa culture in midtown/downtown, also had a beautiful white vintage Vespa (1963) that he sold when downtown's original scooter dealer moved to Key West, FL, a year ago.

While Randy, Michael, and Mark have all taken the matrimonial vows, Glenn still hangs as one of the most eligible bachelors in Northern California. He thinks he'll get married in the next few years.

Mark is married to his best friend and they have three boys (17, 14, 9). His wife is an Assistant Professor at the UCD Med School, specializing in Autism research and fun to be with, he says.

Michael Heller is an alumnus of Jesuit High School. He has a new wonderful wife, Evelyn, two cool dogs, cool parents and a blessed life!

"My remarkable parents, age 84 and 92, enjoy good health and live in Sacramento. That's a big reason why I live here, too," says Glenn Sorensen, the 3rd "second generation" Sacramento developer.

Randy Boehm is from Portland, OR, married with kids as well. Randy is relatively new to Sacramento, but feels the same way about the City as the others. When it comes to Historic Rehabilitation, they agree, they are all cut from the same cloth.



Bistro 33



Mikuni

They are jocks. Michael Heller Jr. enjoys sports, particularly tennis and golf, and is an avid Sacramento Kings and San Francisco 49ers fan and season ticket holder. Glenn, the surfer, spends a few weeks in Santa Cruz every August, and has surfed internationally, when on vacation, for the past 20 years. Off the board, he likes open water swimming in the ocean, and swims to Alcatraz a few times a year!

They love art. Mark's office could double as a gallery of contemporary art, and he's an avid collector. Michael sits on the Board of Directors of the Crocker Art Gallery. Glenn makes ceramic sculptures. His most recent work ranges from coffee table sized herds of horses to life-size women in evening dresses.

Michael is an active volunteer at Shriners Hospital in Sacramento, and Glenn created art cars for Burning Man, four years in a row.

"My favorite "album" right now is Equilibria, by Sabrina Malheiros from Brazil - great female vocalist singing in Portuguese," says Glenn Sorensen, although he's been heard admitting to being a Burt Bacharach-fan...

Randy is the President of Walsh & Foster, and the more private type, with experience performing rehabilitations on a number of historical buildings in Portland, as well as up and down the Pacific Northwest coast. Randy has transformed warehouses into lofts, sleepy hotels into thriving resorts and industrial space into prosperous retail centers. These transformations are unique because of their ability to work within the building's constraints, providing innovative ideas while adhering to historic conservation.

#### The lofts stuff

We visited a few tenants (restaurants, offices, and a couple of loft dwellers), and were struck by how designs and decorations were all conforming to the buildings themselves. It looks like the tenants either got inspired by the look of the space for decor decisions, or their lease fine print says the interior design has to look "cool."

What are the regulations for the tenants, regarding enhancements and interior design?

The best man to explain this phenomenon is Mark Friedman. "This is more a process of inspiration and motivation than regulation. At the outset, we attempt to select tenants that have an appreciation for the value of design. In instances where tenants lack that capacity, we arrange introductions to designers and architects," Mr. Friedman says, in his very sweet way.

This is a guy you'd love to be fired by. That's how nicely he can spin ugly news! I bet the tenant gently guided to designers and architects has no clue it's because of their rotten taste.

"We are not attempting to make everything look the same," Friedman assures us. "Rather, we are attempting to have everyone aspire to and achieve a high level of design. For example, P.F. Chang looks very different from Mikuni, or Bistro 33, but each of the three restaurants is modern, high design."

LoftWorks does take some simple steps to protect the properties from grave fashion faux pas: "We require all tenants to submit plans and drawings to us, for review and approval, prior to any interior construction." Mark continues,



**Loft Dweller**, Paula Lorenzo Tackett CEO of Cache Creek Casino Resort called upon MaryAnne Schickentanz of Carver+Schickentanz in Monterey California to create a contemporary design with clean lines. Paula asked for a romantic environment. She says "It feels like smooth jazz." The designers wanted to compliment the industrial look of the architecture with warm colors and soft textures and ease the L shaped space with curvilinear furniture pieces. All major pieces such as the sofa, island and upholstered headboard wall as well as the bed were designed by Carver+Schickentanz. The Rothko inspired wall treatment was created by Carver+Schickentanz artist Erik Seniska. The rug was custom made by internationally acclaimed rug designer Christopher Farr.



“We look closely at the plans and attempt to offer useful suggestions.” That strategy seems to have been very successful, so far.

The buildings reflect some of the modern, “high-tech” redevelopment of former industrial buildings in New York City, Portland, and San Francisco. Such projects feature a sense of openness - created with high ceilings, lots of window space, and lofts with open living spaces. They were totally missing from the Sacramento scene.

The initial experiment was at 1300 S Street, where Randy Boehm houses the Walsh & Foster offices. The building contains 3,600 square feet of office space and a single 1,200 square foot live/work loft.

In 2001, Heller said to the Sacramento Bee: “People are kind of blown away when they see the loft. I knew we were going to do something cool, but we got passionate and personal about it. We spent more money than we probably should have, but it met all our expectations and then some. The next one will be better yet. This next project (16th & J) will be a landmark in Sacramento — that’s my goal, nothing less.”

The brick-walled, old Pontiac dealership, of recent P.F. Chang renown, realized Michael’s goal. This is the Elliot building. It houses four stories of restaurants, offices and living quarters.

The Elliot Building has won LoftWorks several awards: The 2003 Golden Nugget for Best Renovated Project; the Sacramento Business Journal’s Best in Commercial Real Estate; and, another Gold Nugget Award in 2003 was the Merit Award for Best Mixed Use Project. The American Society of Civil Engineers named it the 2003 Building Project of the Year. The Elliot is a four-story, 30,000-square-foot building with 6,000 square feet of restaurants and stores on the ground level, offices on the second floor and 18 lofts on the third and fourth floors.

F65 is another very distinctive LoftWorks project at the corner of Folsom Boulevard and 65th Street. With a wide range of retail on 35,000 square feet the bottom floor it has eight, two story lofts almost within spitting distance to the Light Rail Station. F65 was the beginning of the transformation of the area near light rail and CSUS, to form what city planners hope will be a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood full of restaurants and shops serving the immediate neighborhood and commuters alike.

Of course there are more building refurbishing in the pipeline, but they are still on the negotiation table and all hush-hush for now. “Suffice it to say,” according to Michael Heller, “that we plan on building amazing and unique projects for many, many years to come.”

#### The vision

Well under way to create their vision of a livelier, more people-friendly mid-town; the LoftWorks team already refers to this section of Sacramento, as “the City’s exciting new Arts & Entertainment district.”

“I would say that we have chosen these types of challenging projects to the detriment of our financial success, to some degree,” says Michael Heller. “This is particularly poignant as we speak, so I would venture to say that it would be nice to see our hard work be more profitable but this is not our overriding goal.”

Mark Friedman lives his message. His company, Fulcrum Property, keeps an office in the Elliot building. He attests to the advantages he’s seen, since moving his office there – like happier staff, resulting in lower staff turnover.

Driven by a desire to elevate Sacramento into a true first-class city, LoftWork partners and friends work to provide creative, imaginative solutions to the housing, business, cultural and entertainment needs of the locals. Another priority is preserving Sacramento’s historical flavor by restoring historical buildings with cutting edge systems and modern architecture. ■



Elliot Building