

Sky House I and II

Washington, DC

Residential Multi-Family – Renovation

A side effect of the urban renaissance is that Washington, DC is running out of space for housing. Here, a new trend is forged to convert office buildings to residential use. A pair of 12-story towers was initially designed as the headquarters of the EPA, flanking the former Waterside Mall. Now, 4th Street SW has been extended through the mall site and the towers are mixed-income luxury flats (25% of the units are set aside for low-income residents).

Stripped to its concrete structure, the precast skin of the building was replaced with glass and metal panels, creating white beacons on the skyline visible for miles around which, at a neighborhood level, the buildings are now a refreshing new chapter in its history of modern interventions. The lower floors of the office buildings were smaller than the upper levels (the 3rd floor cantilevered out); this available space was infilled with new structure to create a single wall plane and maximize the unit yield.

One design challenge was the depth of the building: 125' versus a typical multifamily building in the 60-70' range. Boxcar units with inboard bedrooms, enlivened and lightened by transom windows and large rolling doors, were employed, and wall-to-wall glass in the kitchen/living area creates a dramatic sense of openness. Another technical issue was the need to run multiple plumbing and HVAC risers through the residential walls while the locations of post-tension strands in the slab varied from floor to floor; careful x-raying of the slabs and hand chipping for precise verification was followed by strategic small shifts in partition locations to minimize impacts on the structure.



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Sky House I and II: Photos



Before



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