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EDITOR'S NOTE



Watching a tower rise

BY **FOON RHEE** / foonr@newsreview.com



PHOTO BY FOON RHEE

contract that puts the responsibility on them to keep it on track. As with other building contracts, the state can seek damages if a project is inexcusably late; it does not give any bonuses if the work is completed early. The Turner-AC Martin team, which has worked for the state for 45 years, also built the Cal EPA headquarters.

The tower is only part of a construction boom in downtown Sacramento that includes a bevy of

private office, retail and residential projects.

The boom also includes several new state buildings, including an 11-story, 372,000-square-foot office building at 12th and O streets that is scheduled to open in February 2021 for 1,200 employees of Health and Human Services. There's also a new 10-story office building for the Legislature and governor going up at 10th and O streets. Several other major state projects are in the planning phases, including a 1-million-square-foot office campus on Richards Boulevard.

The building spree is a big boost for Sacramento's economy. Besides the construction jobs, it keeps state workers in town.

Downtown is still the region's biggest job center, with a daytime population of more than 100,000, a little more than half of them state and other public employees, according to the Downtown Sacramento Partnership.

While the Golden 1 Center and more nightlife and dining options are drawing people from around the region at night, stores and restaurants downtown still bank on state workers during the day. That becomes clear if you're in the central city on a state holiday, or remember what a ghost town it was on "Furlough Fridays" during the Great Recession starting in 2009.

As much as city officials talk about the importance of diversifying Sacramento's economy, we're still a government town. That's not such a terrible thing. □

From the elliptical machine I use almost every day at the Capital Athletic Club, I have a great view of a hole in the ground being transformed into a new state office tower in downtown Sacramento.

It's like watching a life-size Erector set going up. The pace of construction seemed pretty slow during the winter rains and preparation of the site, which takes up the entire block between 7th, 8th, O and P streets.

But work is picking up. Cranes were installed in early April, a milestone that allowed steel beams to start going up and the tower's skeleton to take shape.

The state Department of General Services, which is overseeing the project, says it is ahead of schedule to open by September 2021.

The 21-story, \$520 million tower is supposed to be super eco-friendly, as well it should be since it'll be the new headquarters of the California Natural Resources Agency. It's billed as zero net energy, will use 50 percent less water than a typical office building its size and will give workers natural daylight and filtered outside air.

The tower will house about 3,400 employees from departments including Conservation, Fish and Wildlife, Parks and Recreation and Water Resources, plus Cal Fire. Besides office space, the 875,000-square-foot building will include a 300-seat auditorium, a 120-space child care center and 6,000 square feet of retail space, including a food court.

The state hired Turner Construction and AC Martin to build the tower under a design-build

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