

Architects tour Pearl Brewery as it evolves into ‘green’ complex

By Rachel Stone, Express-News Business Writer

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Architects visiting San Antonio on Thursday as part of the convention of the American Institute of Architects were treated to a tour of the Pearl Brewery and were among the first to hear details of the next phase in the site’s ongoing redevelopment project.

A mixed-use project is under construction at the L-shaped full-goods warehouse on the northwest side of the 1880s brewery grounds, tour guide and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) consultant Alison Rivernburgh said.

Silver Ventures, the San Antonio-based investment company that is redeveloping the old brewery north of downtown, is planning offices, retail space and a restaurant on the west side of the two-story “L.” The north side will be two-story live/work apartments, where artists can work in studio space on the ground floor and live on the second floor. The goal is to keep rent low enough that artists can afford to live there.

“That’s something they really didn’t have to do because you could easily get very high rents for this location,” Rivernburgh said.

The 59,000-square-foot project, which could be finished next year, will have “green” features not normally seen in San Antonio, including solar grids covering its roof. Rivernburgh said the solar energy project will be the biggest in Texas when it’s complete, providing enough solar energy to provide all the building’s electricity.

Silver Ventures wants to create a public display that would update continually and showcase how much energy the solar grids are generating.

The warehouse building, like the other redeveloped structures at Pearl Brewery, also will have cisterns to collect rainwater and condensation for reuse in landscaping.

Convention tour groups also took in the Pearl Stable, a meeting and reception space that opened last year on the site, as well as the Aveda Institute and the Center for Foods of the Americas, which opened in 2005.

Architects on the tour gave the urban reuse project glowing reviews.

“It’s extremely imaginative,” said Rex Ball of Tulsa, Oklahoma. “The landscaping is exceptional. It’s so simple and minimal that people probably don’t even notice it, but it adds so much.”

He added that the drum-shaped stable is like a piece of sculpture at the development’s center.

“They’ve hired top-notch architects so it’s really spectacular,” said Fay Logan of SNS Architects and Engineers in Montvale, New Jersey.

The Pearl Brewery has been a “passion project” as well as a business venture for the developer, said Jonathon Card, an architect with Lake/Flato Architects, which has helped redesign some of the Pearl Brewery buildings.

Lake/Flato is designing the brewery's master plan.

"It's really a case study in the best you can do," Logan said.