



L.A. real estate company restores Thatcher building

By Ryan Carter

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PASADENA - The French Quarter is back - well maybe a small fraction of it.

The Los Angeles-based IDS Real Estate Group recently completed its \$1-million restoration of the historic Thatcher building, which houses the Thatcher Medical Center.

The revamp of the two- and three-story New Orleans Colonial-style building comes two years after IDS bought it with an eye toward restoration, said David Saeta, the Los Angeles firm's vice president.

"When we bought it, we saw an opportunity to restore it to its original luster, and restore it to a standard that not only the doctors who operate their practices in the building could be proud of, but one the city could be proud of."

The site stretches along Green Street, from Mentor to Catalina Avenue.

Nine months of restoration work included importing French Quarter exterior lighting; creating a fountain courtyard on Green Street; new perimeter landscaping; considerable exterior and interior improvements; energy upgrades; and a gallery of photos of the building from the Pasadena Historical Society's archives.

Some of the archives for the Thatcher building go back to 1948, when the MacNeil Construction Co. built the structure. The result of that construction - at a cost of \$1.2 million at the time - was a 73,500-square-foot facility comprising two wings of two and three stories, built in 1962 and 1948.

Saeta pointed to an office suite that still has a fireplace, as part of the uniqueness of the building. But IDS officials also touted what they called the center's focal point: the brickwork courtyard that connects the east and west wings. French Quarter light posts, with benches and a central fountain, along with perimeter balconies and ornamental wrought irons railings overlook the courtyard.

Local preservation advocates are impressed by the results.

"It's a wonderful building," said Sue Mossman, executive director of Pasadena Heritage. "It's unusual for Pasadena ... the Thatcher is a unique design in our architectural vocabulary."

Restoring it adds to its draw and to the aesthetic of the local business environment,

in which there is an emphasis on restoration, she said.

The vintage building and its restoration were also opportunities to serve the local medical office market, IDS officials said.

Thirty tenants - mostly medical and dental practices - now occupy the building, which is almost full, Saeta said.

And despite the poor economy, IDS officials were buoyed by the need to serve an aging population, with an increasing demand for medical services. Those demographics fit well into the vision the firm has for the future of the building, Saeta said.

Others besides tenants are also finding uses for the revamped structure, he said. Local families are using it as a backdrop for taking holiday card photos, he said.

IDS has built or restored three other buildings in Pasadena, including a mid-century modern restoration of the 80 South Lake Avenue Building.

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