

The Wall Street Journal

What's Brewing in the Real Estate Market Big Walls, Big Crane

October 30, 2002

During the past few years, so-called concrete tilt-up office buildings became popular, particularly in Silicon Valley, for the speed and low cost of their construction.

Most of those buildings -- where the concrete walls are poured and allowed to harden, and then are tilted up to form the structure — only rose two stories, due to the engineering challenges and costs associated with building higher concrete structures. But in Sacramento, Calif., a four-floor, 120,000-square-foot concrete tilt-up building is under construction. Four concrete slabs — each about 60 feet tall, 30 feet wide and 14 inches thick, and weighing 72 tons — are being hoisted up off the ground over three days this week to construct the walls of the fourth office building in the Crown Corporate Center.

Located only about 100 feet from the intersection of two busy freeways, the building needed a soundproofing system. "This was the most cost-effective way to go" to mitigate the freeway noise, says Neal Cordeiro of DPR Construction Inc., which is building the project. "The sheer mass of the concrete . . . is a great sound-deadening device and less expensive" than any other soundproofing system.

And even at this height, this is still a speedy way to build. By tomorrow, says Mr. Cordeiro, "we'll go from having no walls, to having all the walls up." A special 300-ton crane was brought in to tilt up the slabs. "The crane was so big," Mr. Cordeiro says, "that it had to be brought in on 12 flatbed semi trucks."