



Value Engineering Pays Dividends for T. Barras

By Mandi Lindsay

Value engineering has won FCA member T. Barras Framing Co. Inc., and general contractors Breslin Builders the Metreon Lofts project on the northwest corner of Fort Apache and Flamingo roads. In fact, T. Barras Framing Co. Owner Tony Barras was able to save owners Flamingo Point Partners, LLC a considerable amount simply by using his company philosophy, 'Educate the owners and architects by offering the best building practices for the best value to achieve the ultimate product.'

Barras said, "After review of the initial plans, we noticed the structural engineer called for the use of engineered wood products, however our team recommended a change to shorter studs enabling the use of Douglas fir 2x4's and 2x6's which are significantly more cost effective than engineered wood products and maintains the integrity of the architect's building design intent."

This sound business philosophy coupled with Barras' historical working relationship with Jack Breslin certainly aided the competitive edge for this often-paired team of industry constructors.

Another bonus to using the services of Barras' framing company includes his disdain for change orders.

"I'm not a change order kind of guy. Change orders waste my time, the general contractor's time and the owner's time. I prefer to show all value engineering up front and abolish the time intensive orders at the project's onset,"

Barras said. "I also strongly believe in the practice of negotiating the lowest price directly instead of the more commonly-used lowest bid process. This enables me to pick my clients instead of them picking me."

Barras admits this is his company's first mixed-use experience and he is enjoying the challenges associated with the 110,000-plus square foot, mostly wood but some masonry and structural steel, structures. The masonry is used for structural purposes since portions of the exterior are constructed of split-faced exposed block.

"The height factor coupled with minimal space on this project command a strong emphasis on our safety plan," said Barras.

A few changes to enhance site safety include utilizing crane services to maneuver materials as opposed to the more commonly used forklift, utilizing skilled laborer to sheathe exterior walls prior to erecting the exterior partitions, plus installing all of the steel manufactured staircases prior to framing.

Barras has 45 workers onsite to frame his portion of the \$33 million loft project which includes two, five story residential buildings each building offering 12 - 1,800 square foot lofts and 2 - 3,000 square foot lofts in addition to four additional retail and office space buildings. Two retail/office buildings will be three stories and the other two are constructed as single story. Retail tenants ready to move in and start operations for the scheduled June completion date include Sammy's Woodfired Pizza, Fed Ex Kinko's and Einstein Bros. Bagels. Purchase of one of Metreon's residential units also buys one a free membership to the Las Vegas Athletic Club and "an intimate urban experience." Although this is Barras' largest framing project to date with his seven-year-old company,

T. Barras Framing, he is no stranger to the commercial framing industry in southern Nevada. Barras hails from the state next door, yes, he is a California boy. Barras arrived in the desert in 1991, where he worked over the next year for 11 different companies as a piece worker. His last employment leap that year, led him to the doorstep of Breslin Builders.

"Instantly, I knew this was the company for me. Breslin Builders possessed top-notch integrity and offered only the finest quality workmanship and value to his clients and with loyalty for his best sub-contractors, still does," said Barras. "It was with Breslin that I performed my first commercial framing job, after that, I was hooked, commercial framing was clearly my destiny."

After a year with Breslin Builders, Barras was so esteemed by management that the entire framing division was turned over to his care. Barras spent the following nine years in this capacity with Breslin until Jack Breslin encouraged Barras to acquire his own license, his own framing company.

“Jack Breslin has been an inspirational mentor over the years, but particularly during the time I was getting started on my own. Seven years later, I am happy as a lark,” Barras said.

T. Barras Framing has grown since its inception in 2001 from a very small commercial framing firm to a solid mid-size firm. With great support from his dedicated and long term employees incorporates team membership, T. Barras Framing is currently working for five other general contractors at this time. Even with all of the work at hand, Barras also finds time to utilize his construction knack to meet the needs of certain Las Vegas charities. Barras has built a Las Vegas Rescue Mission, in collaboration with his industry contacts, and is currently underway on a chapel for Salvation Army.

Las Vegas is on the lookout for future innovations by T. Barras Framing