

MOGAVERO ARCHITECTS

The Lofts at Fort Visalia Grand Opening

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By: Madeline Linn



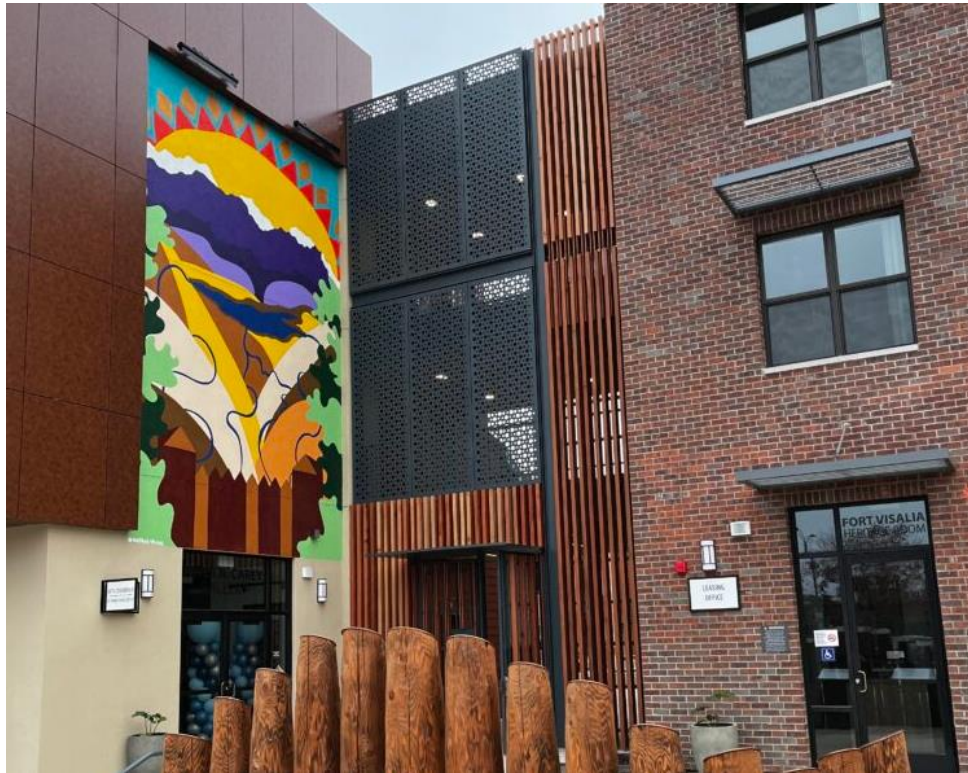
Self-Help Enterprises and Mogavero Architect's new 80-unit multifamily affordable housing complex, The Lofts at Fort Visalia, opened on December 7th. The grand opening celebration included an incredible reception that attracted community members, new residents, artists, historical society members and many stakeholders who had a hand in bringing to life this much-needed affordable housing community to the City of Visalia.

The Lofts, located at 340 East Oak Avenue, are situated on the site of the first building in Visalia, the Fort, built by early settlers in the region. The historical significance of the site and the importance of preserving its integrity was essential to both the Visalia Historical Society and the development team. Prior to construction, the site was radar scanned and excavated for potential historic remnants. More Recently, the Arts Consortium of Visalia and My Voice Media Center had been occupying the site, both of which, along with the Historical Society, would be included in the reimagined Lofts at Fort Visalia.

While no official artifacts of the early days at the Fort were found, the Mogavero team was motivated to honor the historical influence of the site. Thus, the design and materials selection were thoughtfully curated to reflect this narrative. For example, the team paid homage to the Fort by integrating a sculptured log wall at the main entrance. This log wall is an artistic interpretative piece, retelling the past and mimicking what once stood.

Considering the site's more recent history as an active creative and exhibit space for the Consortium, there was a strong emphasis on maintaining their influence. Artists' lofts and studio spaces have 11-foot ceilings, to take advantage of natural light. An art walk along the street with

elevated terraces allows for open house events on special occasions. In addition, there are two large murals within the courtyard space that speak to both the artistic and historical significance of the complex. The goal was to create an inclusive community where artists and residents commingle and celebrate the sense of community and belonging.



The Historical Society of Visalia was an incredible resource throughout the project. Not only did we strive to encapsulate the Fort's history within the design, but a museum space was also set up to provide the group with an opportunity to display original tellings of the past. A diorama of the original fort, historic photos of that time and information about the town of Visalia are housed here.

The Lofts is a precedent-setting development for Visalia, spanning almost an entire city block and fully immersed in the downtown landscape, pointing a way forward for the whole region. Thank you to Self-Help Enterprises, the Historical Society of Visalia and the Arts Consortium of Visalia for helping us bring our vision to life, it was an honor to be a part of the team.