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Greystar Thinks The World's Tallest Modular Tower Points The Way To Solving Housing Crises

05 February 2018 Mike Phillips, Bisnow London



Courtesy of Greystar

101 Georges St., the world's tallest modular building.

Greystar is a big believer in modular construction, so much so that it has agreed to buy the world's tallest modular building.

The multifamily and student accommodation giant teamed up with European private equity firm Henderson Park to buy 101 Georges St., a 546-unit multifamily scheme in Croydon, South London.

The development will comprise two towers of 44 and 38 storeys, 135 metres high. It will be manufactured 94 miles away, driven piece by piece via standard articulated lorries and reassembled on site.

Greystar has a development pipeline of around \$2.8B in London, and around \$550M of this is being built via modular construction methods.

These methods can provide more certainty for developers, are great for the environment, and play a big role in cutting the housing shortage being experienced in big cities across the world, according to Managing Director of Investments Troy Tomasik.

He said using modular methods meant the time needed to build 101 George St. would be two years, as opposed to an estimate of four years using traditional methods.

The closely controlled factory process means the construction will produce 80% less waste, requires fewer workers and provides greater certainty on costs and time. "It produces massively less waste because it is manufactured in a controlled environment," Tomasik said. "It doesn't affect the local community and neighbouring sites.

It's also a safer working environment." The joint venture bought the project from Tide Construction, with whom Greystar has worked on three previous modular projects.

Now that the funding is in place for the scheme construction will commence imminently. The project is using the modular construction technology of a company called Vision Modular Systems.

The building can be so tall because it still uses a steel frame and concrete core, but with all elements manufactured offsite. Some modular constructions techniques use wood or lack that steel frame, so are more suitable for low-rise buildings.

All elements including plumbing, wiring and finishes are put in place in the factory, and then individual rooms or even whole apartments are transported to the site and assembled. "When you go to the factory you will see tradesmen fitting bathrooms and laying tiles," Tomasik said.

He said modular construction should not be associated with low-quality buildings. "Because the materials aren't exposed to the elements as much we think the final product is a higher quality," he said. "There are systems out there which are cheaper and lower quality, but we are focusing on higher quality."

Indeed, 101 George St. is looking to include all the amenities associated with higher-end buildings. A podium level at the base of the building connecting the two towers will feature a gym, co-working space, an artist's studio and parcel delivery facilities.

Tomasik said modular construction methods can be good for developers, but good for cities too. "It's not right for every development, but it can help give developers certainty on costs and time," he said. "Also, we are focused on helping to solve the housing crisis in London.

That crisis has a huge scale and we're focused on using all types of delivery to help solve that crises as fast as possible."