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Program marking the 10 anniversary of the Gateway Building was attended by individuals instrumental in accomplishing the construction of the region's foremost transit center. From left, Laurie Fox and Tony Gonzales, the interior design team from ACG Environments, now HNTB; Thomas Verti, President of Charles Pankow Builders, Ltd., the building's construction contractor; Marvin Holen, chairman of the SCRTD Board that authorized construction, former SCRTD Board Member Gordana Swanson; Brian Soto, director of General Services, and Nick Patsaouras, former chairman of the SCRTD Board and president of the building project corporation.



### 10-year Anniversary

### Metro Headquarters Builders Look Back with Pride

- Building helped unite two separate agencies
- USG complex called 'A legacy to the city'
- [What's next](#) for the Headquarters building?

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Sept. 16, 2005) Ten years ago Thursday, after two years of construction that would begin the transformation of a former industrial site into a bustling transit center, the first Metro employees began moving into their new headquarters building at Union Station Gateway.

For former SCRTD employees, who had survived years in a dilapidated jumble of buildings on the fringe of Skid Row, the building was a marvel. For former LACTC employees, it was a move to a newer building, but one away from the central downtown location of their

Patsaouras Plaza is named after former SCRTD Board Chairman Nick Patsaouras. His effort is commemorated with a sculpture in the north end of the turnaround.

headquarters at 7th and Figueroa.

For both groups, perhaps, the building represented a permanent fusing of two once separate agencies now united as one.

During Thursday afternoon's ceremony, which also featured the ceremonial cutting of a "birthday" cake on the Plaza, those who built the new Metro headquarters looked back at the challenges they faced and their accomplishment, and were pleased with what they saw.

Nick Patsaouras, who chaired the building project corporation and for whom the bus plaza is named, recalled the pressure put on the agency either to rent downtown space or, at least, not to build at Union Station.

### **'Thriving intermodal transit center'**

But, he said the determination to complete the \$145 million complex at its current location was the correct decision and sparked "a thriving intermodal transit center."

"In a few years," he said, "the MTA will burn the bond certificate and will reside here for generations to come. It's a legacy to the city...that will stand the test of time."

Marvin Holen, chairman of the SCRDT Board that authorized construction, declared, "This is a building of beauty and function, located in the right place. Not to have built it...would have diminished the treasure that is Union Station."

"It was built with very great care for taxpayer money and it's a landmark building for Los



## **Building Blocks**

An impressive amount of materials and labor went into the construction of the 26-story Metro Headquarters, Patsaouras Plaza and the East Portal, a complex calculated at more than 2 million square feet:

- 1,000-plus workers employed during construction.
- 430,000 cubic yards of earth removed from a 4-story deep excavation.
- 150 million gallons of water at a rate of 18,000 gallons per hour pumped from the excavation for almost a year.
- 3,000-plus concrete columns and beams manufactured on-site.
- 26 million-plus pounds of steel reinforcing bars.
- 19 million pounds of structural steel.
- 200,000 cubic yards of concrete.
- 25 types of stone from 8 countries used in the lobby.
- 500,000-plus special British bricks for the Plaza roadway.

And, said Tom Verti, president of Charles Pankow Builders, the project was built on-time and on-budget with no claims or delays. "What you'd call the project of a lifetime."

## **Icing on the Cake**

Angeles," he added. "Everyone is proud of it."

Acting as master of ceremonies was Brian Soto, director of General Services, who helped shepherd the Headquarters building through from construction to move-in and continues to oversee its operation and maintenance.

**'Holding up great'**

"After 10 years of being occupied, the building is holding up great," he said following the ceremony. "The employees who work in it and who maintain it seem to really enjoy it."

The most significant change Soto recalls from the building's original plan is the conversion of what was to have been a restaurant on the southeast ground floor to space for an HR employment office, Records Management and the Security Department.

The most exciting moment, Soto says, was the spectacular January 2001 fire that damaged a portion of the roof and caused water damage to some 25th floor executive offices. "It was a slight setback, but we were able to get back on track and since then we've had no problems."

What's next for the Metro Headquarters building?

**Consolidation, new carpeting**

Soto plans to consolidate some departments whose offices are spread over several floors of the building. He hopes to get capital funds to replace the 10-year-old carpeting in the next couple of years, and some major equipment will have to be replaced.

The cafeteria also will see some mostly food quality and aesthetic upgrades when the new food vendor takes over next month.

During his remarks in closing the ceremony, Soto thanked a number of employees who were involved in the construction phase: Robin Blair, Michael Holguin, Michelle Jackson, Velma Marshall, Phyllis Meng, Siu Ming Siu, Steve Noonan, Kelly Patton, Joe Sanders and Gary Spivack.

"Ten years ago today," said Soto, "the move-in was certainly a challenge, but with the employees' incredible teamwork, the task was



Marvin Holen, Gordona Swanson and Nick Patsaouras cut a cake decorated with an overview photo the Gateway Transit Plaza at the time of its completion.

Slices from six large cakes, including this "ceremonial cake" with an aerial view of Metro Headquarters, were placed on tables in the Plaza for VIPs and employees to enjoy following Thursday's 10th anniversary event. Made by special request, they ranged from strawberry and carrot to chocolate mousse and even angel food for those with dietary needs. "The cake is excellent," said Human Resources Supervisor Scott Lloyd. "I guess you can say it's the icing to the cake of the ceremony."

-- From Perry Williams

Photos: Gayle Anderson

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