

'Topping Out' Marks Milestone of Plaza at PPL Center

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Ironworkers "topped out" the steel framework of The Plaza at PPL Center on Wednesday (7/24), marking a significant milestone in the construction of the downtown Allentown office and retail development.

(Photo: NewsCom: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/19981015/PTH025>)

The last steel beam - signed by construction workers and bearing the traditional American flag and evergreen tree - was hoisted to the top of the eight-story building and bolted into place to the applause of workers and a small crowd that gathered along Hamilton Street.

"The Plaza at PPL Center is a tangible indication of PPL's commitment to revitalizing downtown Allentown," said Paul Champagne, president of PPL EnergyPlus. "And, it's a symbol of PPL's bright future in this community." The building will contain seven office floors, and the ground floor will house retail businesses. PPL will occupy six of the seven office floors under a lease agreement with Liberty Property Trust, the building's owner and developer.

The building will be encased in glass and have a dramatic center atrium. It will be set back 85 feet from Hamilton Street, leaving room for a spacious public plaza that will add much-needed open space to the downtown business district. The building was designed by Robert A.M. Stern Architects of New York City in association with Kendall Heaton Associates of Houston, Texas. Construction began in January. The building is expected to be complete in April 2003. It is being built by L.F. Driscoll Co. of Philadelphia.

There are about 2,500 pieces of structural steel in the building's framework. The steel structure weighs 2,200 tons and is held together with 35,000 bolts. The building also contains 260,000 square feet - about 6 acres - of steel floor and roof decking.

The work was done by ironworkers from Ironworkers Union Local 401 in Philadelphia and Local 36 in the Lehigh Valley.

PPL Corporation, headquartered in Allentown, Pa., controls or owns more than 10,000 megawatts of generating capacity in the United States, sells energy in key U.S. markets, and delivers electricity to nearly 6 million customers in Pennsylvania, the United Kingdom and Latin America.

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