

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR



Scott L. Melnick

Have you ever wondered what makes a project worthy of winning an award? I had to shake my head after reading a recent article in a notable structural engineering magazine whose headline promised information about an "Award Winning U.C. Santa Cruz Core West Parking Structure."

The building's cantilevered framing system certainly made it interesting. But to me, the project's outrageous \$19,988/stall price tag eliminated any consideration of the project as award-worthy. As the projects in this month's issue illustrate, the cost of parking structures more typically range from \$6,000 to \$12,000 per space, depending on location and project complexity. And while a cantilevered frame certainly increases the cost, there are notable examples of steel parking structures with remarkable cantilevers that don't exceed the typical price range (stop by SMI Steel's booth at this year's NASCC and ask Billy Milligan for the low-down on the amazing structures with which he's been involved).

Steel isn't always the first material that comes to mind when designing parking structures, but frankly, it should be. Due to their fewer, more slender members, steel-framed structures often allow for more parking spaces, enhanced safety, and a more open and attractive appearance. And steel's flexibility makes it well suited for in-fill projects and the expansion of existing parking structures. With steel, you get all this for an equal or or better price than other systems.

So why don't we see more steel-framed parking structures? The biggest sticking point has always been corrosion. But this is really a red herring. First, today's coating systems, whether paint or galvanizing, readily provide 30+ years of service life with minimal maintenance. More importantly, a potentially worse corrosion problem exists in reinforced concrete. When water and salts leach through the

concrete, the rebar can corrode—a problem that is more difficult to detect and to remedy than a similar problem in a steel-framed structure.

If you're interested in more information on steel parking structures, the best place is the Steel Conference. This year's North American Steel Construction Conference is scheduled for Baltimore from April 2-5. Among the nearly 50 technical sessions is one on "Designing and Building Steel Parking Structures."

For more information on the conference, please visit www.aisc.org/nascc. The Steel Conference is a once-a-year opportunity for design and construction professionals to learn how to apply the latest engineering, fabrication, detailing and erection techniques to everyday work. Of special interest this year is a keynote address by Louis Geschwindner, AISC's Vice President of Engineering and Research, on the upcoming new steel building specification; a new six-hour tutorial on stability; and a four-hour short course on correcting/preventing common design and construction problems.

In addition, the Steel Conference offers sessions on such topics as: designing for snow load; steel castings in architecture and engineering; fire engineering issues; solving floor vibration problems; design-build & EDI; cambering and forming of steel; steel deck design; the new AISC Certification Building Standard; estimating; employee retention; crisis management; HSS-to-HSS connections; risk management and insurance; and the selection of efficient connections.

And if that is not enough, the Conference also includes an extensive trade show with more than 130 exhibitors of the latest steel design and construction products.

Hope to see you in Baltimore!

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