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[Commercial Real Estate](#)

## Xcel Energy's new Denver HQ designed to stand out amid RiNo construction boom

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The T3 building was designed to play into Denver's love of nature.

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### Story Highlights

- Xcel Energy moved its Colorado headquarters into a new building this summer.
- The T3 RiNo building uses a sustainable material in its design.
- The office space is designed to fit into a rapidly changing neighborhood.

[Xcel Energy Inc.](#) moved its Colorado headquarters from downtown Denver to the River North Art District this summer, taking up all of the office space in the six-story T3 RiNo building.

The largest subsidiary of Minneapolis-based Xcel Energy and the main power company for the Denver-metro area, Xcel Energy Colorado committed to [a 15-year lease in the building](#) at the end of 2023, before T3 was fully built.

T3 is a mass timber build designed for sustainability with the purpose of standing out amid the construction boom in RiNo over the last few years, according to Michael Hensley, a principal at Pickard Chilton, the architecture studio responsible for T3.

RiNo is in the process of changing from an industrial area to a mixed-use district where people live, work and enjoy activities. Major projects like luxury building [One River North](#) have been completed, and the first phase of the [Denargo Market reimagining](#) was unveiled earlier this year. Almost exclusively new residential and retail buildings now line Brighton Boulevard near music venue Mission Ballroom, which opened in 2019.

Hensley calls the choice to build with timber the North Star of the T3 project, both in terms of originality compared to other buildings going live in RiNo and the nature-centered focus of the build at 3500 Blake St. Mass timber has a smaller carbon footprint than other construction materials like steel or concrete.

"We could have actually built a bigger building with the zoning using traditional construction methods, but as they started looking at what they wanted to do with this project, the timber, they felt, was going to be something that would differentiate it from its neighbors and make it more special," Hensley said of the decision to use timber.

The development team for T3 included Hines, McCaffery and La Caisse.

T3 stands for timber, transit and technology to highlight the building's architecture, location and high-tech building systems. The building includes 222,000 square feet of Class A office space and 19,000 square feet of retail space on the ground floor.

Hensley says the design team knew RiNo's urban fabric was changing rapidly, so the building was designed to be able to fit many uses and evolutions of the area.

"We were able to work with the design and the floor plates and keep flexibility in mind so that, depending on how the neighborhood evolved, who the tenants might be, it can accommodate a variety of users," Hensley said. "Fast forward today, the [development team] had that foresight, and I think they were right on because, despite the challenges of leasing, the project leased very quickly. The timber was a great part of that as well."

The energy company's lease at T3 includes the entirety of the office space in the property. Along with sustainability in design, the property includes workspaces with exposed wood, open layouts, 12-foot ceilings, three stories of underground parking and many outdoor terraces.

Xcel moved in this July, as the company's previous lease at 1800 Larimer St. had expired in June.

When Xcel first confirmed plans to move to T3, July 1 was a tentative moving date dependent upon on the build's level of completion. Hensley said the mass timber design is part of what kept the build on schedule.

"There's a speed and efficiency in the construction process, because it's a kit of parts and you manufacture everything in advance to a high level of precision," Hensley said. "When you actually are on the construction site, the parts and pieces go together more quickly, and it's a much cleaner construction process, which translates in savings in time and the construction process."

According to Xcel spokesperson Michelle Aguayo, the move has been a success.

"Our coworkers are enjoying T3 and the RiNo community in the historic Five Points neighborhood," she said in a statement. "We are experiencing benefits important to our coworkers — from more parking and proximity to the RTD light rail system to using the design of the building maximizing collaborative workspaces."

According to Pickard Chilton, the timber structure sequestered 4,210 tons of carbon dioxide, which amounts to a 38% reduction in product-stage embodied carbon compared to conventional office buildings.

Hensley added that health, wellness and a connection to nature were woven into the project.

"We really wanted to create a lot of outdoor spaces," he said. "We have a series of carvings that step up the building and create a series of terraces on all sides of the building that then provide opportunities for tents to go outside and enjoy the fresh air. The other part that was really important was maximizing views: the Rockies views, to downtown views, to just the general extent beyond the site."

All the timber was sourced from supplier Nordic Structures and manufactured by Chantiers Chibougamau in Québec, Canada, according to Pickard Chilton. The building has already received numerous awards, including the 2024 NAIOP Colorado Development Deal of the Year and a 2025 CoStar Impact Award for Commercial Development of the Year. Along with T3, Pickard Chilton designed the skyscraper at 1144 15th Street in downtown Denver, which opened in 2018.

According to Hines, there is no update on retail leasing for the ground floor.

<https://www.bizjournals.com/denver/news/2025/10/02/xcel-energy-t3-rino-new-building-architecture.html>