

## High-rises shooting up along Wasatch Front suburbs

By Rosemary Winters  
The Salt Lake Tribune  
Salt Lake Tribune

Article Last Updated: 04/14/2008 09:35:47 AM MDT

Four new Salt Lake City skyscrapers will shoot up in the next three years, fleshing out the skyline and backing up the hype about "downtown rising."

Even more stunning?

The suburbs are following the capital's lead, hatching their own plans to grow up - literally.

From South Salt Lake to Lehi, developers are dreaming of elevated towers unlike any seen before outside of Utah's urban core.

An Orem-based developer recently unveiled plans to plant three 30-story office and condo towers in "downtown Sandy." In South Salt Lake, a proposed "urban village" could sprout a 27-story-plus residential high-rise.

Lehi stands to land the state's tallest building with renowned architect Frank Gehry's vision of a 450-foot five-star hotel. Currently, the tallest building in Utah County is the 12-story Spencer W. Kimball Tower at Brigham Young University in Provo.

Granted, these projects will take huge amounts of financing and favorable market conditions to be built to the promised heights - if at all. But like "downtown rising," there's now the possibility of "suburbs soaring."

"It's a little awe-inspiring to be honest," says Nick Duerksen, Sandy's assistant community-development director. "It's something we knew would happen some day in Sandy" but didn't expect for at least another decade.

Of course, some will rue the arrival of suburban skyscrapers no matter when they come or where they are.

"There will be those who think it's too tall," Duerksen says. "They might not like the architecture, sure, just like there will be people who think it's the prettiest thing they've ever seen."

Brenda Case Scheer, dean of the University of Utah's College of Architecture and Planning, calls early drawings of The Proscenium's three towers "fantastical and fun," but wonders if that height is "necessary" or "ideal" in Sandy. Such density in suburbs, she says, could spawn "traffic nightmares."

"I'd rather see three 10-story buildings because I think that's an appropriate scale," she says. "Utah definitely has a lot of room for development, [but] we do want to do it in [environmentally] sustainable ways."

Proscenium's builders plan to go for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification for all their buildings - except the towers, which will generate some of their own energy through wind turbines.

Along with these suburban and urban high-rises, a number of mid-rises also are sprouting, including a 10-story Zions Bank building and an 11-story office tower on Provo's University Avenue. In Ogden, plans for the 14-story Midtown Village hotel are on hold while the developer lines up funds. And a 13-story Embassy Suites hotel slated for Pleasant Grove has been nipped to nine stories.

Murray reached new heights last fall with the opening of the 15-story Intermountain Medical Center.

The tall trend could be a sign of the burgeoning populations in the Salt Lake and Utah valleys, each expected to double in 30 and 50 years, respectively, and of dwindling pieces of prime commercial real estate.

"Land has reached a value where it's cheaper to go taller than wider," Duerksen notes.

And there are certainly bragging rights to being among the elite few to break the skyline - although developer Brandt Andersen's Gehry-designed, 450-foot-tall hotel in Lehi is the only building planned to top the 426-foot LDS Church Office Building in downtown Salt Lake City to become the state's tallest.

Steve Aste of Utopia Station Development Corp. had plotted a 27-story condo tower at 2200 S. Main St. as the centerpiece of South Salt Lake's Market Station - until he heard downtown's City Creek Center will have one that's 32 floors.

"Then mine's 33," he says, only "half joking."

Aste's tower is in Market Station's second phase, which could begin in 2011 if economic conditions are right. The height of the skyscraper will vary depending on market demand, Aste says. Plans for the entire \$500 million project, which will be built in phases, call for 850 housing units.

Add those to the 750 condos promised in the LDS Church's City Creek Center and 600 more proposed at Sandy's three-towered

Proscenium, and there could be a glut. Big chunks of those are expected to go on the market around the same time in 2011.

Currently, 646 condos sit on the market in Salt Lake City, South Salt Lake and Sandy, says Jillinda Bowers, president of the Salt Lake Board of Realtors. Condo sales in the area dropped by 26 percent in 2007 from the previous year.

"There's some competition out there in the condo market," she says. "What's really driving [sales] right now is affordability," as in less than \$175,000.

Housing in Market Station will start at \$190,000, but in Sandy, condos are expected to range from \$300,000 up to \$5 million penthouses. City Creek Center has not yet released price ranges for its housing, but Bowers predicts they will be around \$300,000.

New offices - 250,000 square feet are planned at Market Station and 800,000 square feet are plotted at The Proscenium - also would face similar challenges in today's market. Sandy has an 11 percent vacancy rate of Class A office space compared with a 4 percent rate in downtown Salt Lake City, according to a CB Richard Ellis report released last week.

"Out south, I just am afraid that they could be reaching a point where they're going to be overbuilt," says Marty Plunkett, the real estate firm's vice president of office properties. "Historically, we haven't seen anything near that tall in the suburbs."

But maybe when the economy climbs, so will the architecture in the 'burbs.

*[rwinters@sltrib.com](mailto:rwinters@sltrib.com)*

Market Station

South Salt Lake

**Height:** One 27- to 33-story tower

**Status:** Possible opening in 2011

The Proscenium

Sandy

**Heights:** Three 30-story towers

**Status:** Possible opening in 2011

Close Window

Send To Printer