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345-foot building at Centerpoint tops sister high-rise

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Tribune



The first 30-story Centerpoint Condominiums Tower has reached its full height Wednesday afternoon in Tempe.

Tribune



Glen Mitchell(L) Charles Goffnett (middle), and Sharla Hartgraves (right) look out over Tempe and the 30-story Centerpoint Condominiums Tower during a tour of the buildings Wednesday afternoon in Tempe.

Tribune

A 30-story condo tower has become the East Valley's tallest building, nabbing that distinction from a sister tower that set a record of its own just nine months ago.

The second tower of Centerpoint Condominiums in downtown Tempe has reached 345 feet.

By comparison, the first tower is 258 feet. Hayden Butte stands at 332 feet.

Builder Avenue Communities celebrated the milestone Wednesday, trying to convince the public the views are just as grand as what it plans on the ground floor.

The first level will have a trio of restaurants.

The eateries include an on-site winery, a market and a third emphasizing organic food. Avenue principal Ken Losch said he visited 43 projects across the continent and couldn't find any concept that includes as many features as this project.

"We will have people coming from all of the country to see this," Losch said.

The first restaurant will open in September, with all three open by November.

Avenue is still putting the glass shell on the towers and expects condo dwellers can move into the first tower this spring. The second tower is about six months behind.

About 25 percent of the condos in the first tower are reserved, Losch said.

He acknowledged the troubled housing market but said he figures a federal economic stimulus package will boost the real estate market within months.

The restaurants and other amenities - like a pool, two private theaters, in-house spa, demonstration kitchen and full-time resident chef - will make it easier to sell once they're in place, Losch said.

"When this place opens, tell me this place isn't going to sell itself," he said.

Studio and one-bedroom units sell in the mid-300s, and larger units can sell for more than \$1 million.

Two others towers are planned on the site, totaling about 800 condos.

The towers have generated criticism they're too tall or that more density will clog already busy downtown streets.

Tempe architect Stu Siefer said the city hasn't done enough to manage the traffic increased density will bring.

But Siefer, once behind the bulk of downtown redevelopment projects, said he likes the architecture and knows downtown needs residents who will create a customer base to support more stores.

"A downtown is about retail," Siefer said. "What great downtown doesn't have retail?"

Mayor Hugh Hallman has long argued downtown was too reliant on restaurants and nightclubs, which can have short life spans.

Condos will create a permanent base of customers for a more diverse mix of businesses that will make the city's economy more stable, he said.

He noted the towers sit on what had been housing decades ago.

"They're re-creating that neighborhood, that sense of community," Hallman said.



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