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REAL PROPERTY

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The Non-Condo Boom

Downtown San Diego is awash with construction, just not for new homes

For years now, San Diegans have been fixated on the condominium development phenomenon, daily counting cranes and escrow closings. With only four condominium projects under construction (all nearing completion), it is time to look around and see what else is going on.

Join us on a tour of Downtown. Let's start at the new and very handsome 1,200-room Hilton next to the Convention Center. Pretty classy place. Leaving the Hilton, you can't quite yet cross over the new futuristic pedestrian bridge that leads you to East Village. It is reminiscent of Sir Norman Foster's collection of bridges that look like either flying sailfish or skybound harps. It is under way and will be a welcome addition to the local public architecture and provide a safe route from the reasonably priced parking garage (next to the Hilton) across Harbor Drive to Petco Park.

In East Village, a rather amazing number of new projects are under way. Since few folks wander east of the ballpark, you might not know that there are at least a dozen major projects under construction. With almost no publicity, San Diego City College is building its new 88,000-square-foot Career Technology Center at 16th and C along with a 694-space garage. Carrier Johnson is the architect.

Also in the educational vein, work has begun on the eight-story Thomas Jefferson School of Law on Island between 11th and Park. The school will be moving from its old and inadequate digs in Old Town.

With virtually no fanfare, Hensel-Phelps is completing the 210-room Indigo Hotel at 10th and Island. The Indigo is a prototype of the Intercontinental Hotel Group. It should open this year, as will the 239-room Marriott Courtyard at Sixth Avenue and J Street in the Gaslamp Quarter.

In the market-rate apartment category, Hanover is in the midst of constructing the



This futuristic \$26 million pedestrian bridge will cross Harbor Drive, connecting the bayfront to the East Village.

163-unit Strata at Ninth Avenue and Market Street. It is being touted as the most luxurious rental property in Downtown San Diego. We'll find out in early 2010.

OliverMcMillan has recently completed the 208-unit Lofts at 707 Tenth Ave. (and is leasing up very well), and is in planning for a 118-unit eight-story project at 11th Avenue and G Street. With more apartments to come.

On the affordable side of the ledger, Affirmed Housing is under way with a 23-story, 229-unit tower known as 1050 B (formerly the beloved Burger King site — will the aroma linger on?). The San Diego Housing Commission has almost completed the 275-unit Studio 15 project at 15th and Imperial avenues. Wakeland Housing is now constructing a 78-unit project called Parkside at Island and 14th avenues. And Father Joe is under way with a 136-unit 12-story tower at 16th Avenue and Market Street.

Last, but far from least in the affordable category is the high-rise 250-unit workforce housing project at Ninth Avenue and Broadway by Bridge Housing with Highland Partnership handling the construction. Not quite ready to break ground, it's well along in the planning stage.

Leaving East Village, we jump over to

Little Italy, where Jonathan Segal has designed and is building a stunning contemporary six-story office building called "The Q." No doubt the classiest architecture in that neck of the woods, it's a Ferrari in a Fiat neighborhood.

Also in that part of town, the Feds are scheduled to break ground on a 475,000-square-foot Richard Meier-designed courthouse on the site of the old Hotel San Diego. Groundbreaking is rumored for June as the money begins to spill out of our nation's capital. With the infrastructure funds flowing lavishly from D.C., we may even see the next four

major public projects get under way: the new City Hall, the new state office building, the 700,000-square-foot new courthouse complex and the Navy office building.

Also, Irvine Co. is in advanced planning for its 700,000-square-foot, 34-story office tower at 880 West Broadway. Just pocket change for Irvine, but a big deal for Downtown.

As for condominiums, there probably won't be any new towers started until at least 2012 unless some smart developers can figure out how to latch onto some of that \$800 billion tsunami coming our way.

Meanwhile, Downtown San Diego isn't patiently waiting for condominiums. It's blossoming with a myriad of new educational, commercial and residential construction, several hundred million dollars' worth — all part of making Downtown San Diego a better place to live.

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