

# Bellevue Towers puts Bellevue on the map of sustainable cities

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The \$438 million Bellevue Towers project is changing Bellevue's skyline, and by bringing Portland-based developer Gerding Edlen to the region, it is also changing the city's environmental reputation.

Mike Brennan, director of Bellevue's Development Services Department, said this is the most prominent green building in the city and the first multifamily high-rise that has gone for LEED certification in Bellevue. Bellevue Towers is shooting for LEED gold.

Bellevue Towers will be complete in April though many residents will begin moving in soon.

The 42-story North Tower and the 43-story South Tower are located on the corner of 106th Avenue Northeast and Northeast Fourth Street. Together they have 1.5 million square feet of space: 539 condos, 17,000 square feet of retail, and underground parking. Prices range from just below \$500,000 to \$9 million for the penthouse.

Mulvanny G2 Architecture designed the podium and Portland-based GBD Architects designed the towers. The contractor is Hoffman Construction of Portland.

Gerding Edlen is known nationally for its work, but the firm had never done a project in the Seattle area.

Mark Edlen, managing principal at Gerding Edlen, said the company liked what it saw in Bellevue five years ago. "We saw it really emerging as



**Bellevue Towers will be complete in April though residents will begin moving in soon. So far, 190 of the 539 units have sold. Prices range from just below \$500,000 to \$9 million for the penthouse.**

Image courtesy Gerding Edlen

an urban center and really felt the timing was right to introduce a very, very high quality sustainable high-rise mixed-use product."

## What's so green?

Phil Beyl, principal in charge of the project with GBD, said Bellevue welcomed an aggressive approach to sustainable design. "We've been able to bring to Bellevue an elevated level of sustainability that now I think has raised the bar quite a bit higher..

and that's very exciting."

Bellevue Towers is designed to be 32 percent more energy efficient than the national ASHRAE baseline, thanks to an energy-efficient glass facade and daylighting. It has low-flow plumbing fixtures, dual-flush toilets, a rooftop garden between the buildings and an efficient condensing boiler.

Renee Loveland, sustainability manager for Gerding Edlen, said the building integrates luxury and sustainability. People often think sus-

tainable living means making sacrifices, but Loveland said this shows, "You can still have the comfort and quality of experience that you would otherwise have and yet be more gentle with your environmental footprint."

Beyl said the site's small footprint made it tough to balance the large program of uses along with an iconic exterior and a homey interior. He said designing from the inside out helped.

Services in the building will encourage residents to inter-

act. There will be large community spaces, a community gym, video rooms and three restaurants that are set to open in July: Purple Cafe and Wine Bar, Barrio and Bliss. Loveland said the building will also help make downtown Bellevue more lively.

Brennan is hoping that's the case. Downtown Bellevue, he said, is by far the city's fastest growing neighborhood. "It has just been in the last five years that the lights really started coming on at night in downtown Bellevue. Really, the big driver is the number of people moving to the downtown core."

## **190 condos sold**

Bellevue Towers isn't immune to the economic troubles. Though the project opens fully in April, only 190 units have sold.

Brennan said it is taking more time for new space to fill in Bellevue, but eventually people will come. "It's happening at a bit of a slower pace than was initially anticipated."

Edlen said the long timeline of projects like Bellevue Towers makes it hard to plan accurately. It has taken four and a half years to get permits, design and build the project. "You put in a lot of effort and a lot of resources and you don't really know the results for at least a couple of years."

But Edlen said the economic crisis also means people are paying more attention to issues like energy use. Two years ago, he said his firm was telling people about the project but in the last four months more people have been asking about its green features.

"If you squint really hard through the current economic climate that we're in, we think it's really perhaps our time," he said. "Perhaps our day is here."

Gerding Edlen has based its business model on the idea that even though some of its green techniques cost more, the investment now will pay off later when the rest of the market catches up. Despite the economy, the developer is continuing to push the envelope. Edlen said his firm is in the early stages of developing a 200-foot-tall "living building" in Portland that will produce all the energy it needs. If all goes as planned, construction could begin in 2010.

Gerding Edlen dedicates a portion of its annual budget to research. This year, Edlen said the team is trying to figure out how to design buildings that produce all their own energy. But the team is also looking at connecting buildings' infrastructure to share resources and getting buildings to contribute on a community scale, such as treating

sewage from adjoining buildings, for example.

Gerding Edlen plans more work in the Puget Sound region because it's a natural market for the kind of projects the developer wants to do.

"We love the market," Edlen said. "... We have such an indigenous advantage as it pertains to sustainability."

The development firm said Bellevue Towers should be the largest LEED-certified residential project in the Northwest. The South Tower is also the tallest structure in Bellevue, including site elevation.

Other project members include KPFF, structural engineer; David Evans and Associates, civil engineer; McKinstry, mechanical engineer; Cochran, electrical engineer; Walker Macy, landscape architect; Lennar Urban and ScanlanKemperBard, equity investors.

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