

## The High Life

**Boomers and Yuppies Head for Homes Where the Lights are Bright**  
by Jamie Huish Stum

One night, it's a Jazz game. The next, it's the Utah Symphony. The weekend brings some shopping at The Gateway and dinner at a trendy eatery, all without once getting in a car. Drawn to the accessibility of an urban lifestyle, Utahns are snapping up condominiums to be in the middle of it all in downtown Salt Lake City.

"Inherently, people are drawn to downtown," says Steve Akerlow, broker with downtown development firm The Newport Group. "People like to be where all the action is."

### Everything's Waiting For You

Though other areas of the residential real estate market are softening, developers insist the condo market in Salt Lake City remains vibrant.

"Downtowns have a solid following," Akerlow says. "There are people who just want to live downtown; they don't want the yard, they don't want the hassle of maintaining a house, they're two or three minutes from work and they don't have to deal with traffic."

Developer Richard Gordon recently finished the first phase of the Westgate Lofts project at 300 West and 200 South. Besides draping a banner over a balcony, Gordon says he never did any advertising, yet his first phase sold out and reservations are already coming in for the second phase and penthouses.

For some, the thought of swapping a home on a half acre for apartment 4C may seem like an expensive step backward. Prices for Westgate's penthouses approach \$1 million. A 920-square-foot space at Westgate goes for about \$350,000, roughly the same price as a 3,000-square-foot, three-bedroom, three-bath home in Sandy, or a 5,000-square-foot, four-bedroom, three-bath home in West Jordan, according to the Multiple Listing Service.

But many downtown residents feel the bucks and smaller space come with perks. A trip to the grocery store, the office, restaurants and shopping areas can mostly be done on foot or within TRAX's fare-free zone. Accessibility to the arts, entertainment options and sports are also a huge enticer, developers say.

"You look at the type of services, enter-tainment and lifestyle options that people have downtown and they're really much greater than they were, and they're going to get better over the next three to five years," says Warren Lloyd, president of Lloyd Architects and director of the Utah chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

The residential component of the incoming City Creek Center development will attract additional full-time residents, says Chris Corroon, residential marketing consultant to the City Creek Center development team. Current plans include about 750 residential units for sale and for rent.

"Our aim is to create a downtown neighborhood that many will enjoy calling home," Corroon says.

### Townies

But who actually lives at these swanky addresses? Professionals use process of elimination to pinpoint a demographic.

"First, we know who it's not," Lloyd says. "It's not families with younger school-age children. It's everyone from young couples who this is their first or second home to professionals up toward semi-retired or flexible."

Though the traditional downtown buyer has been a young, urban professional, the appeal of a maintenance-free home is growing among empty-nesters, says Babs De Lay, principal broker with downtown real estate brokerage Urban Utah.

"Their children have gone off to school in the last couple of years and they no longer need a five-bedroom home with a big yard," De Lay says. "They'd rather be downsizing and want a lock-and-leave property that they can come and go as they want."

Bruce Conrad and his wife traded a five-bedroom house in Orem for an 830-square-foot condo in the Westgate Lofts last year. With his office located at The Gateway, Conrad was tired of long hours on the road and decided he was ready to walk to work.

"I've really enjoyed it," he says. "I can come home when I need to during work for lunch or a nap or whatever. We've also enjoyed being near events at the EnergySolutions Arena."

### Old, Green and Trendy

Sustainability in design and materials is defining downtown units, says Lloyd. Combining seamlessly with the exposed architecture of a loft, green materials provide a sleek, modern look that hits the environmentally friendly mark.

The Citiview Condos, developed by The Newport Group, are showcasing the trend. In the process of being built at 325 North and 300 West, the 45 units will range from 860 square feet to 1,900 square feet and boast fabulous views of downtown, Akerlow says. To obtain Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, Citiview developers are designing the units' interiors with recycled granite countertops, bamboo flooring and higher efficiency HVAC systems.

"People are really much more environmentally sensitive now; they want to feel like they're making a contribution, whether it's living in a green house or cutting back on emissions," Akerlow says. "That's what makes a lot of these downtown projects so appealing to people."

The Marmalade project at 500 North and 300 West earned recognition as a LEED Neighborhood Development Pilot Project, which incorporates green building and growth principles into neighborhood designs. The project offers 90 condominiums and townhomes in a mixed-used setting.

Salt Lake is also rediscovering housing stock in conversions of historical build-ings, Lloyd says. Downtown residents have embraced authentic, urban surfaces and industrial materials. Original brick walls, cement flooring and open ductwork provide character and originality to a structure, he says.

"People are willing to live with exposed pipes to have a sense of authenticity rather than live in a sheetrocked box," Lloyd says.

When developing the Westgate Lofts, Gordon converted a 99-year-old structure into a 56-unit project that will include a rooftop garden and a private park between buildings. Common areas feature apple green walls, sealed concrete floor and skylights.

"This was a warehouse space, then we had offices in here, now we're converting it back to warehouses and calling them homes," Gordon says.

Downtown resident Mikelle Mabey has lived at Westgate for about six months. As a medical equipment representative, she says she loves her proximity to Salt Lake Regional Medical Center and LDS Hospital as well as being able to walk to The Gateway. Mabey also liked being able to customize her unit.

"I did mine all open with no walls," she says. "It's easy to maintain and close to everything. It's just a couple blocks from so much."