

**Eric, a Southern California resident, decided he'd had enough of being a road warrior.**

For eight years, Eric and his wife, Suzanne, had lived in a cozy suburban community west of downtown Los Angeles. They had raised their daughters in a remodeled 1970s tract home and made many friends in the community.

Things started to change four years ago when Eric was promoted to senior managing director of a prominent real estate company. The new position meant he could no longer work from home most of the week, but would have to come into the downtown Los Angeles office. Eric found himself driving nearly 80 miles a day and stretching his workday to 12 hours, counting the four-hour daily commute, depending on the traffic. "I would go to work early in the morning, come home, have dinner and fall asleep on the couch. Then, do it all over again," Eric says. "My wife and I thought, 'There's more to life than this.'"

The couple, in their mid-50s, decided they had to do something different, but at first were reluctant to move to downtown Los Angeles. "I worked there more than 30 years ago," Suzanne says. "You would never have dreamt about living downtown at that time. You did your job and left to go home. It just wasn't a place to live."

Recently, however, the couple found that downtown LA has developed into a new kind of living experience, and they decided to make the move. "We sold the house and wound up renting an apartment," Suzanne says. "We just loved living downtown, so we bought a condo at Ten50."

## DOWNTOWN DEMAND

Shorter commutes, high-tech job growth and a desire to be close to entertainment centers are just some of the reasons that a growing number of people are moving to city centers. And developers are responding by building apartments and condominiums in many areas, including the West Coast cities of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland and Seattle.

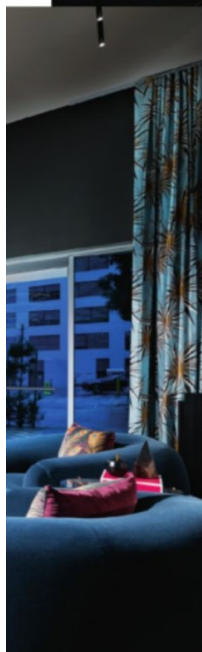


# WEST COAST

FROM LOS ANGELES TO SEATTLE,



*Clockwise from upper left: The Ten50 development in Los Angeles includes amenity-rich condominiums, a central location and a beautifully appointed lobby.*



FACING PAGE: CHRISTOPHER MAYER (2); THIS PAGE: BLUE STEEL

At Ten50, a 25-story high-rise development in the South Park neighborhood of Los Angeles, Eric and Suzanne have access to concierge services, a community lounge and workout spaces. The building, which even boasts a drone landing pad for future package deliveries, sold out quickly. The couple enjoys the sixth-floor area that offers a yoga deck, pool and spa. They've hosted barbecue parties, and Eric has held meetings in the business center. They live only a few blocks from their daughter's apartment, and also are close to restaurants, clubs and L.A. Live, a \$2.5 billion entertainment and sports center on the southern edge of the city's downtown.

The L.A. Live development includes the Staples Center sports arena, where they can watch the NBA's Los Angeles Lakers and Clippers play, and also catch the NHL's Los

Angeles Kings. There is the 7,000-seat Microsoft Theater, the Grammy Museum, a large nightclub, a variety of restaurants and a 54-story JW Marriott hotel. L.A. Live surrounds a 40,000-square-foot outdoor plaza that has been called the "Times Square of the West."

"In the past 10 years, downtown LA has changed dramatically," says Gregg Nelson, principal at Trumark Urban, developer of Ten50, and of The Pacific, a 76-unit luxury condominium building in San Francisco. "Downtown LA is a very vibrant community now, with hotels, restaurants, retail and entertainment options. The urban environment has become the biggest amenity."

That is certainly true for Eric and Suzanne, who dine out most nights, trying new restaurants and attending concerts and exploring nightspots, outings that they rarely made in

# URBAN LIVING

CITY CENTERS ARE IN DEMAND // By M. Sharon Baker



**“We can walk to the movies or go to concerts or games—everything is very close.” —Mehdi**

the suburbs. “It’s like we’re dating again,” Suzanne says.

They’ve also made new friends while walking their dog, a 95-pound Leonberger named Kahlua.

“No one knows L.A. Live has a dog park,” Eric says. “We will be walking the dog and run into people we know, which in the midst of this huge city makes it feel like a smaller community.”

## A PEARL OF A NEIGHBORHOOD

Feeling like they are part of a community is what has kept Wendy and Mehdi living in the Pearl District in Portland, Oregon. The couple, who own the hair salon Tribe Hair Studio in the district, north of downtown Portland, moved to the neighborhood years ago, after they realized they were driving from the suburbs to hang out, visit art galleries and try new restaurants.

They recently upgraded from an artist-loft condo in another building to a two-bedroom unit with a large deck at the Vista North Pearl Condominiums, which is just four blocks from their hair salon. “We’ve really seen a lot of changes in the area,” Wendy says. “It used to be more industrial and very rustic here, but now the Pearl is very up-and-coming. We chose the Vista because it has an incredible outside space, and for its community and neighborhood. We can see the bridges and the Willamette River from our deck—the view is great.”

The couple, in their 40s, like to walk their two Yorkies,

Ava and Scarlett, in The Fields Park, which is next to The Vista. They also enjoy the complex’s proximity to area shops and businesses, including Ovation Coffee & Tea, and grocery stores such as New Seasons Market, Trader Joe’s and Whole Foods Market. The Vista is so centrally located that the couple rarely have to drive.

“In the summer, I can ride my bike to our salon, which is just five blocks away,” says Mehdi. “It takes me seven minutes to walk there. Everything is very close.”

Marilyn Andersen, principal broker at Hoyt Realty Group, the real estate company selling the Vista, says the north end of the Pearl District’s residential area has three city parks within a six-block radius, as well as restaurants, boutiques and art galleries. A nearby streetcar provides easy access to entertainment, including to Providence Park, the home of the Portland Timbers of the MLS. The Vista is also less than a mile from the Moda Center where the NBA’s Portland Trail Blazers play and many concerts and events are held.

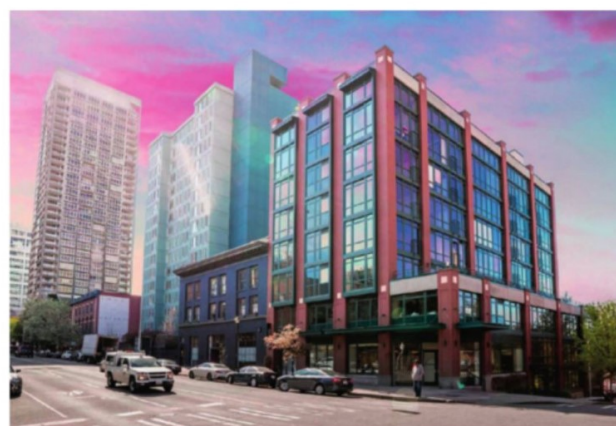
“The Pearl District has become one of Portland’s more desirable neighborhoods because of its easy lifestyle and rich cultural experiences,” Andersen says.

## REDEFINING DOWNTOWN

In the Puget Sound area, the city centers of Seattle and Bellevue have been experiencing their own boom in job growth and housing development. Not too long ago, downtown Seattle was known for various high-tech startups and a few midsize technology firms. Most of the rapidly growing tech companies, including Microsoft, had located on the

*Portland’s Vista North Pearl Condominiums development offers views of the Willamette River and is located near area shops, grocery stores, restaurants and entertainment.*





**“We’re finding many people prefer to live in the city, near light rail or within walking distance to their jobs.” —Dean Jones, CEO and president of Realogics Sotheby’s International Realty.**

east side of Lake Washington in cities such as Bellevue and Redmond.

Then came Amazon. In 2007, the technology company announced plans to move its operations from South Seattle to South Lake Union. The move sparked an ongoing building boom in downtown Seattle.

Between 2010 and 2018, the downtown area added an estimated 252 buildings and more than 13 million square feet of office space, according to the Downtown Seattle Association. Amazon is expected to soon have a total of between 55,000 and 60,000 employees housed in 50 buildings in downtown Seattle within easy walking distance from each other, according to the Downtown Seattle 2020 Report from Realogics Sotheby’s International Realty. In addition to Amazon, Facebook and Google each have about 5,000 employees in the Seattle area, with many of them filling towers in the city center.

Seattle and surrounding cities are experiencing a new urbanization trend, says Dean Jones, CEO and president of Realogics Sotheby’s International Realty. “We’re finding many people prefer to live in the city, near light rail or within walking distance to their jobs.”

Just a few decades ago, Seattle didn’t support much downtown housing, with a lack of apartments and condominiums and little infrastructure, such as grocery stores. While that has changed, and Seattle has been building more high-rises in recent years, the city’s rapid construction has not kept pace with the demand to buy a home in the downtown area, Jones says. “Over the last decade, Seattle’s population grew by 138,000, to 747,300 residents, but only 38,000 housing units were added,” says Jones, citing statistics from his firm’s Downtown Seattle 2020 Report.

While more construction is in the offing, the demand has resulted in some apartment complexes converting to condominiums, such as The Goodwin, a seven-story, 34-unit building in the heart of downtown Seattle’s Belltown area.

“The timing coordinated with a multibillion-dollar waterfront restoration and revitalization,” Jones says. “Seattle is getting a world-class waterfront like San Francisco’s Embarcadero. The Goodwin looks out to Elliott Bay and the Olympic Mountains. We’ve got gulls, ferries and sailboats gliding by—it’s just a very beautiful waterfront experience.”

## SUBURBAN EXPANSION

The Puget Sound technology boom continues to expand to other area cities, including Bellevue. Home to The Bellevue Collection, a luxury shopping, dining and entertainment destination, Bellevue is located less than 10 miles from downtown Seattle, on the east side of Lake Washington. The city also has gained office towers and residents during the past two decades.

Some of the new housing units have been built by Continental Properties, a Bellevue-based firm since 1977. In

**The Goodwin condominiums building, shown in both pictures above, has a rooftop deck with views of the Seattle skyline. Blu Bellevue, right, is opening later this year, with 135 apartments, a resident lounge and a fitness center.**







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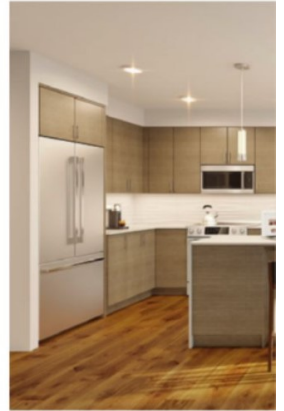
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*Kirkland's Jade Residences condominium development, right, is scheduled to open in Kirkland next year and will offer amenities such as a dog spa.*

recent years, company executives have watched Bellevue grow from 109,569 residents in 2000 to more than 143,000 today. "At least 10 high-rises are either currently under construction or in the permitting stage," says Kyran Hynes, vice president of Continental Properties.

Hynes says Amazon, Facebook and Google are all adding workers in the Bellevue area. Amazon recently announced plans to add 15,000 employees to the city, and even more may be coming in the future.

To help meet the demand for housing, Continental Properties is building Blu Bellevue, with 135 apartment units and 5,000 square feet of retail space adjacent to the 21-acre Bellevue Downtown Park.

The building, which will open this year, has amenities such as a resident lounge, a fitness center and a central courtyard. Blu Bellevue also has a community rooftop terrace with fire pits and views of the park and the rising skyline. "Downtown Bellevue continues to become more livable," says Hynes, who grew up in the area. "We have much more housing, diverse retail and a major restaurant scene. In 2023, we will have light rail that will connect Bellevue not only to Seattle but all the way out to Redmond."

The technology sector's growth has also impacted smaller communities, such as Kirkland. Located north of Bellevue, the mostly residential city had about 48,000 residents in 2010. Today, its

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population has nearly doubled to about 90,000. Part of that boom can be traced to the arrival of Google to the area. The company has purchased Kirkland Urban, an 11.5-acre mixed-use development in downtown Kirkland. With such strong area job growth, housing construction has followed along.

That includes the Jade Residences condominium development, which will feature 136 homes and is scheduled for completion by mid-2021. The project already is 40% sold, says Matthew Van Damm, vice president of new development at Realogics Sotheby's.

One of those buyers is a startup executive named Herry, who, with his wife, Mary, is looking ahead to retirement. With two children in college and another in middle school, the couple, in their 50s, will soon be ready for a change. The Jade development offers them a beautiful, but smaller residence, perfect for empty nesters, and proximity to the areas they enjoy. A major bonus—the Jade boasts a dog spa, the perfect amenity for their two small dogs.

"Our current house is not too far from Totem Lake, and we like the neighborhood and stores," Herry says. "We were looking for a smaller house that would be easier to maintain. The Jade's opening is perfect timing for us." ❧

M. Sharon Baker writes about business in the Pacific Northwest.

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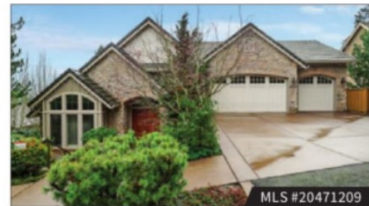
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