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Reinvention of downtown Sunnyvale moves ahead with three new projects

Housing highrise and office towers reach key construction milestones



(Gensler)

Two office buildings at 250 South Taaffe in downtown Sunnyvale, with The Martin apartment complex in the background, concept.

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Archway at the lower levels of The Martin, a 12-story, 479-apartment residential tower at 250 South Taaffe Street in downtown Sunnyvale, concept. (Heller Manus)

SUNNYVALE — A quest to reinvent downtown Sunnyvale is pushing ahead with major progress to construct and complete three new big projects that would add homes and offices to the city’s urban core.

The projects will add hundreds of homes in a residential tower as well as two office buildings on a site bounded by South Taaffe Street, West Washington Avenue, South Murphy Avenue and West McKinley Avenue, the latest components of the Cityline neighborhood that is emerging next to Sunnyvale’s traditional downtown.

Cityline is a yearslong mixed-use project that is being crafted on a site about three blocks from the Sunnyvale Caltrain station by an alliance of real estate firms Hunter Partners and Sares Regis Group of Northern California.

Hunter Partners and Sares Regis executives are hoping the mixed-use elements of Cityline will enable people to engage in the often-touted live, work and play dynamic in downtown Sunnyvale, even in the face of all the uncertainties about returning to the office in the coronavirus era.

“We can offer people all of the opportunities they are looking for,” said Deke Hunter, president of Hunter Properties. “As people start to come back to the office, as they live downtown, as they take transit, this project can provide all of that.”

Cityline arrives at its latest benchmark this week with the official installment of the topmost elements, also known as “topping off,” for the two office buildings and the residential tower at 250 South Taaffe Street in downtown Sunnyvale.



Under-construction buildings in the Cityline development at 250 South Taaffe Street in downtown Sunnyvale, May 2023. Redwood Square, a large gathering area that features redwood trees, is visible in the center of the image. (George Avalos/Bay Area News Group)



The Martin, a 12-story, 479-apartment residential tower at 250 South Taaffe Street in downtown Sunnyvale, concept. (Heller Manus)

The newest residential complex in Cityline is being called The Martin, a 479-unit, 12-story housing highrise that is part of this latest phase of the development. Jeff Smith, director of development for Sares Regis Group of Northern California, is hopeful that The Martin will achieve the same success as prior housing components in Cityline.

“We have already leased up the first two residential projects in Cityline,” Smith said. “We got them leased up in record time. Downtown is coming alive with all of the people who are living here.” The first two housing developments added about 300 housing units to downtown Sunnyvale, he said.



Evening view of an office building at 250 South Taaffe in downtown Sunnyvale, concept. (Gensler)



The Martin, a 12-story, 479-apartment residential tower at 250 South Taaffe Street in downtown Sunnyvale, concept. (Heller Manus)

The project's placement of homes near office buildings could address some of the new realities of a hybrid workplace model, the real estate executives said.

"We know people will be working from home one or two days a week," Smith said.

To improve the chances of a vibrant street scene where the new housing tower will sprout, the residential project will include 29,000 square feet of ground-floor retail.

The on-site amenities for the housing tower include a pool and spa, an outdoor club-level deck, state-of-the-art fitness centers, a sky lounge on the 11th floor and a rooftop deck totaling 3,000 square feet.

"The Cityline project adds another dynamic dimension to our vibrant downtown," Sunnyvale Mayor Larry Klein said.



Office buildings at 250 South Taaffe in downtown Sunnyvale, concept. (Gensler)

Among the early success stories of the effort to dramatically transform downtown Sunnyvale: Whole Foods Market and an AMC movie theater have joined Target as the commercial anchors of the revamp, along with new housing, restaurants and retail.

“Whole Foods is doing very well, and the AMC movie theater is one of the best performers for the movie chain on the West Coast,” Hunter said.



Residential tower that is now under construction at 250 South Taaffe Street in downtown Sunnyvale, May 2023. (George Avalos/Bay Area News Group)

The obstacles include the reality that the return to in-person office work has been uneven after people became used to remote employment and Zoom videoconferences due to the coronavirus-linked business shutdowns.

“In the post-COVID environment, it’s very important to design offices to get people out of the workspace and outside,” said Josh Rupert, director of development for Hunter Partners. “People will be able to walk out to terraces next to their offices.”

The two seven-story office buildings that are now under construction at Cityline each total 280,000 square feet of office, flexible space and retail sites, for a combined amount of 560,000 square feet.

“These new towers really represent the office of the future,” Hunter said.