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Featuring New Urban
 Homes in the Seattle
 Downtown Core.

DOWNTOWN LIVING

Centers of attention

Showrooms, preview homes set the stage for the new look of downtown

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 Contributing writer

While it's true that a picture may say a thousand words, only immersion in the actual setting can paint the greatest accuracy, evoking the fullest passion.

That's why teams of builders, designers and artists behind downtown Seattle's newest choices in condominium living welcome guests to elaborate preview centers – often with full-scale model homes, complete with anticipated views and amenities – to place guests in the vivid panorama within the heart of the city.

This weekend – months before successful buyers ever cross the threshold into their eventual condominium – a variety of new and existing showrooms are ready to demystify the questions surrounding urban living, and clarify the vision and character each individual condominium tower will offer.

Part entertainment and part education – with a strong dose of thrill added for good measure – these showrooms are setting the stage for the new look of downtown.

“For many of our buyers, it's a big first step walking into one of these showrooms,” says downtown Seattle real estate marketing specialist Heather Trostle. “Many of our guests hadn't thought much about downtown living before. This way, they can see not only the cabinets, the flooring and the finishes in the presentation center, but they can also look at the surrounding neighborhood and say ‘I can really see myself here.’”

Interactive exhibits, personalized and guided tours-by-appointment, and stylish examples of the myriad of details and finishes in these urbane showrooms are changing the way



Presentation centers for downtown's condominium communities are designed to help guests experience a home like they would in the real building.

people look at living in downtown Seattle.

“When you go to buy a single-family house, you can walk in, touch the countertops, really feel like you're living there,” says Vulcan Real Estate marketing manager Alison Jeffries. “In the past, pre-sales in condominiums may have felt like a huge leap of faith – but sales centers have changed that. People now say ‘my home doesn't exist yet, but I can walk in here and see what it is I'm buying.’”

The variety of personalized and explore-at-your-own-pace tours within the city's many condominium

preview centers are part of the reason homes in downtown Seattle's condominium towers are completely sold weeks, even months, before they open.

Here are a few that depict the variety of living choices downtown:

ESCALA PRESENTATION CENTER

Reservation lists are filling quickly for select, private tours that will begin with the early 2007 debut of the 12,000-square-foot ESCALA Presentation Center, filling the entire

second floor of downtown Seattle's Centennial Building at Fourth and Stewart streets.

The centerpiece here is a 2,600-square-foot, full-scale model showcasing the interior and exterior finishes planned at ESCALA, a 30-story Midtown tower expected to be the city's largest residential tower. The model seeks to dazzle guests with views afforded by the 280 luxury condominium homes slated at the southeast corner of Fourth Avenue and Virginia Street, says ESCALA

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Centers of attention ...

marketing specialist Stacy Jones, vice president at Realogics.

"This is designed to help guests experience a home like they would in the real building and to fully appreciate the grandeur of ESCALA," according to Jones.

"This is not a typical model home experience," says project co-developer Eric Midby. "At ESCALA, semi-private escalators lead to each home, so when a potential buyer enters the elevator leading to the Presentation Center, it opens on the other side to a hallway which very closely represents a hallway leading to the front door of your home."

Jones and Midby predict the re-creation of a spacious 500-square-foot ESCALA view terrace will be a highlight among guests. "Seattle just loves to be connected to the outdoors," says Jones. "The ESCALA Presentation Center is going to blow people away with our terraces. These are full areas where you can relax or entertain on your own expansive outdoor space."

FIFTEEN TWENTY-ONE SECOND AVENUE PREVIEW HOME

Personalized, by-appointment-only tours of the Fifteen Twenty-One Second Avenue Preview Home extend beyond the luxury of this 38-story building – and reach out to the entire Pike and Pine neighborhood.

That's because "this is not only about their home, but of the entire downtown neighborhood," according to William Justen, founder of the real estate consulting/development firm behind the 141-condominium home project. "We make a point of showing off the blocks immediately around them because we want them to know what's happening in downtown Seattle."

Yet five floors above the city, within Pine Street's Olympic Tower, the Fifteen Twenty-One Second Avenue Preview Home and Design Center is an urban escape. It begins with meticulous acoustical designs, floor-to-ceiling windows, and elegant 9-foot ceilings, and reflects the artistic styling of Susan Marinello Interiors.

Justen's wife, Sandy, one of the preview center's community sales associates, says at least two hours are reserved for each client's introductory visit, because "we want to ensure a high level of service and attention."

Guests, says Justen, are "mesmerized when they view the lighted model" and watch a video production detailing the materials that give buyers personalized choices



New home shoppers in downtown Seattle now benefit from interactive exhibits, scale models, guided tours and special sales galas.

in their finishes.

"Every home here – from the seventh floor to the 38th floor – is a penthouse, and all are finished with the same level of quality," says Sandy Justen. "What guests see here is a progression of such delightful things – from the wood-wrapped portal that creates a strong sense of entry to the motorized shades on the windows to the limestone in the walk-in shower to the tall French doors."

Another exclusive favorite shown at the preview and design center: Fifteen Twenty-One's glass-enclosed room, set along a window wall and finished with satin-finish slab limestone and Italian porcelain tile.

"It surprises guests that it feels so calm, so peaceful here," says Justen. "Most sales centers are right off the street, but when they come into ours, guests have a moment to catch their breath. That's because a home at Fifteen Twenty-One Second Avenue is a retreat, captured above the very active, high-end retail sector of Pine Street."

FOUR SEASONS SEATTLE PREVIEW CENTER

With a private appointment at the ultra-luxury Four Seasons Seattle Preview Center, guests may spend all the time they want sampling tastes of the good life afforded from all of the 36 condominium homes that will eventually look out over Elliott Bay and the renaissance of the Market District.

Months before high-speed elevators begin whisking homeowners to the top 11 floors of this 21-story tower at the southwest corner of First

Avenue and Union Street, guests are welcomed to the Preview Center at Western Avenue and Lenora Street. Inside, sophisticated interior innovations by Seattle's Susan Marinello Interiors reflect the Four Seasons Seattle Private Residences' prestige.

Preview Center guests may enjoy the Four Seasons' concierge and private chef during breakfast, lunch or dinner for up to eight, served in a private dining room. This center also illustrates how each home is designed as an urban retreat for its homeowners, with meticulously selected appointments – from modern fireplace finishes to elegant built-in espresso makers.

"You may choose to cook dinner in your gourmet kitchen – or press zero and have the concierge place your order with the hotel's dining room chef," says John Oppenheimer, chief executive of Seattle-based Columbia Hospitality Inc., and managing partner of Seattle Hotel Group LLC, the group organizing this Four Seasons mixed-use project. Condominiums on the upper levels will share the building and its many amenities with 149 hotel suites below.

"This is just a little glimpse of what living in a Four Season Private Residences is like," Oppenheimer says. "You enjoy all of the same signature services enjoyed by hotel guests. Buyers can imagine their car driving into the valet parking and see themselves sitting on their deck overlooking Elliott Bay."

Oppenheimer also praises the showroom's small-scale dollhouse-like arrangement of each home in the building.

"This allows you to visualize your own home, where it sits in the

building, where you want to place your bed in your bedroom and your furniture throughout your home. This is one of our goals: no surprises. Everything you expect should be taken care of."

GALLERY PRESENTATION CENTER

Early November's grand opening of Belltown's Gallery Presentation Center at First Avenue and Wall Street embraces a concept true to its setting: life equals art.

That's why this former art gallery space is an ideal backdrop to showcase a complete-to-scale one-bedroom condominium with chic patio.

"We've designed exhibits to resemble art hanging in a gallery," says Trostle, who is also the marketing director at Realogics. "It shows off a crisp, clean, more contemporary space than you'll find at other sales center environments. All exhibits are wrapped like pieces of art themselves. The lighting is focused like it would be on a gallery painting. The flooring is polished concrete so there's an industrial gallery feeling."

Exhibits in the presentation center include four palettes of "art movements" – from dark, light or middle scheme tones – reflecting the potential for contemporary finishes in each home. To inspire a sense of living at Gallery, visitors might even work up a sweat visualizing Gallery's on-site fitness facilities or imagine the Supper Club's full catering and dining area.

Another exhibit gives guests a sneak peek at Gallery's exclusive SkyLofts – two-story, one-bedroom-plus-den lofts with soaring 18-foot ceilings and glass window walls which frame views of the Space Needle or Elliott Bay.

Gallery Presentation Center also showcases a smaller scale façade of the building, showing the "very unique architecture of brick, concrete and glass. It's part old Belltown and part new modern design – a first for this neighborhood," says Trostle.

"This presentation center gives buyers the big and small picture of Belltown and Gallery. They get the broad range – and see what's new and what's different – so they fall in love with the neighborhood. Then they see the exterior of the building and the architecture – which is so unique and stylish that they're drawn to this condominium. After that, they discover what's new and what's different – the stylish and unique features – about living in their own home here."