



RAIN
48°F

Lifestyle

weather sponsored by



[Comment on this story.](#)

'Urban pioneers' settle LA's downtown
Friday, May 12, 2006

By PAUL CHAVEZ

LOS ANGELES — The streets downtown have for decades resembled a ghost town after dark and on weekends as people scattered to their homes across this sprawling city.

A new wave of "urban pioneers," however, are trying to change that. Nearly 20,000 new apartment and condominium units are expected to be built in downtown Los Angeles by 2015, and developers hope it will turn this desolate downtown into a West Coast version of Manhattan.

In a city where the car is king, that might be a tall order, but high gas prices are already encouraging some people to look for alternatives. And lofts in converted warehouses and newly built condominiums are looking more attractive in an overheated housing market.

The first set of new urban dwellers say they don't have a local supermarket or movie theater and don't feel completely safe on the streets at night -- but they're betting nonetheless on the future of downtown.

A REAL PIONEER

Advertisement

Opening Weekend \$8 Special
June 10-11 "Everyone's A Kid Again"
Trains depart at 11:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m. for a 1 hour 30 minute round trip ride

[Harried hair n](#)

[Military vetera war against of related diseases](#)

[Weber Grill ov profess love](#)

[Smithsonian's exhibit comes Canton](#)

[Briefs](#)

[SENIOR ACTIV](#)

[HELPFUL HINT planning ahead reduce your m day stress](#)

[DEAR ABBY: F fate belongs in hands](#)

[FAMILY DOCT helps those w restless legs](#)

[Social lites](#)

[Design solutio aging populati](#)

Special Forms

[Anniversary F](#)

[Engagement F](#)

[Wedding Form](#)

[Weddings By I Planner Form](#)

- Search
- Local
- Obituaries
- Sports
- Lifestyle
- Financial
- Ohio
- Opinion
- AP Travel
- Entertainment
- News Elsewhere
- Rep Columnists
- Lottery
- Photo Gallery
- Newspaper Info
- Subscribe
- Advertise
- The Times-Reporter
- The Independent

ADVERTISING DIRECTORIES

Best Bites





Registered Users

E-mail

Password

Sign In

Non-Registered
Users Click Here

Lost Password?

Jordan Katnik, 25, was the first resident to get keys last month at Elleven, a 13-story high-rise condominium that was the first new residential tower built downtown since the 1980s.

"Three years ago when we signed up to have this place, you could actually see people dealing and doing drugs in the alleyways in front," said Katnik, who with his partner bought a two-bedroom unit for \$700,000. "There were rampant homeless people and you never saw people out. It was pretty much a desolate area."

Katnik has seen signs of improvement since then and expects more to come.

He's particularly looking forward to the new Ralph's supermarket that should be built by next year and the \$1.7 billion "L.A. Live!" project a few blocks away across from the Staples Center, which will include a hotel, theater, multiplex, museum and restaurants. Until then, Katnik said he has to drive out of downtown for groceries and into Hollywood to watch a flick.

"You already see some little things like people walking their dogs and you don't see people selling drugs around here," Katnik said. "It's still somewhat isolated, but it's also fun. You can take a lot of pride in being involved in something new. I don't mind the construction and working toward the goal that five or 10 years will bring."

NO CARS?

In a serious pioneering move, residents at Elleven will have access to the car-sharing Flexcar program that will give residents hourly or daily access to a hybrid car without having to own one -- essentially unheard of in car-obsessed Los Angeles.

New residents will get a free one-year membership and \$100 in free usage -- about 10 hours worth of driving. Cars can be rented for \$10 an hour, or \$50 a day.

Amy Arroyo, 39, of Puerto Rico, already has stopped driving because her office is less than two blocks away from her new home. Arroyo was the interior architect of Elleven and its under-construction sister building called Luma. She and her partner just moved into a two-bedroom corner unit at Elleven.

"It's silly to drive, don't you think?" Arroyo said. "We try to never drive anywhere."

The avid cyclist on weekends even takes the Amtrak train to Santa Barbara -- about 90 miles up the coast -- and then pedals all the way back.

DARK SIDE OF DEVELOPMENT

Swanky new developments are causing concerns about the other

residents of downtown: the poor. The downtown boom has been occurring on the fringes of Skid Row, which has one of the highest concentrations of homeless people in the country.

A January report by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority estimated that nearly 2,000 people live in homeless shelters in the 52-block Skid Row area while another 1,674 sleep on the streets. About 10,000 live in flophouses.

The Los Angeles City Council unanimously approved a one-year moratorium on Wednesday banning the conversion or demolition of about 240 flophouses in Skid Row -- housing of last resort for poor families, drug addicts, disabled people and the mentally ill. The moratorium is designed to give city leaders time to figure out how to encourage gentrification and reduce crime and blight downtown, while preserving affordable housing.

"I have personally seen a hotel close down and illegally evict everyone," said Linda Valverde, a community organizer with the homeless outreach group Los Angeles Community Action Network. "We gathered people who are in wheelchairs and living on the street afterward when this residential hotel closed down."

Valverde said she became addicted to prescription drugs and alcohol after the 1999 murder of her son and has been living in the Harold Hotel, a single-room occupancy hotel.

"It's been a difficult road for me. ... This is why downtown means so much to me," she said. "It has given me back my life."

READY TO BECOME PIONEERS

Teresa Wang, 25, and Melissa Lopez, 27, are about to become first-time home buyers with their new place at Elleven.

They had a walkthrough of their unit planned this week, but it was delayed at the last minute and rescheduled for next week.

"We're bummed out," Lopez said.

"We're sick of waiting," Wang said.

Andy Bishop, 36, who lives in the Mount Olympus section in northern Hollywood, guesses that he'll have to endure some hardships -- like going out of his way for daily tasks -- for about two years after he moves into Elleven.

"L.A. Live will be a good resource," Bishop said. "I like the fact that you can walk to places in that area, potentially."

He's also looking forward to the \$1.8 billion Grand Avenue redevelopment effort in the northern part of downtown. World-renowned architect Frank Gehry has designed a pair of glass-curtained skyscrapers and clusters of shopping and dining areas that will be cornerstones for the project near the Gehry-designed Disney Concert

Hall.

"It will really dramatically alter the landscape and being there to see the growth and be part of it in a way is a pretty exciting proposition," Bishop said.

Wang and Lopez have adjusted to downtown already because they are living in a condo owned by Lopez's cousin.

"We're young, we want to live in a developing area and want to live in the city while we can," Wang said. "We think it's going to be good."

Paul Chavez is an asap reporter.

Want to comment? Sound off at <mailto:soundoffasapap.org>.

[Section](#)
[Index](#)

Rep Readers' Choices

Would you recommend this story to other readers?

not at all [1](#) • [2](#) • [3](#) • [4](#) • [5](#) highly

[Repository Staff Contacts Page](#)

[Printer Friendly Version of This Story](#)

Your e-mail address:

required

Mail this story to:

required

Short Note:

[E-mail This Story Now](#)

The Repository
500 Market Ave. S.
Canton, OH 44702

This page was created May 12, 2006
©2006 The Repository
Have a question and/or comment about this site?
E-mail the webmaster at: webmaster@cantonrep.com

Mai
Clas
Circ