

- ▶ myDJC
- ▶ Breaking News
- ▶ Traffic
- ▶ Business
- ▶ Construction
- ▶ Real Estate
- ▶ Buzz
- ▶ Tom Kelly
- ▶ People/Companies
- ▶ Events
- ▶ Upcoming Projects
- ▶ Foreclosures
- ▶ Bidding/RFPs
- ▶ Leases & Tenants
- ▶ A & E
- ▶ Environment
- ▶ Machinery
- ▶ Technology
- ▶ Weekend
- ▶ Special Issues
- ▶ Public Notices
- ▶ Credit
- ▶ FBO/CBD
- ▶ Classifieds
- ▶ Misc. Services
- ▶ Advertising
- ▶ Place a Legal Ad
- ▶ Directories
- ▶ Subscribe/Renew
- ▶ Reprints and Web Links
- ▶ Editorial Calendar
- ▶ Contact Us



March 22, 2005

Weber to design Opus/Samis tower

Opus plans to acquire the Second Avenue site from Samis next summer when construction begins.

By [JOURNAL STAFF](#)

Yesterday officials of Opus Northwest and Samis Land Co. confirmed plans to develop what they say will be the tallest residential high-rise in Seattle.

The 36-story condominium is proposed for the west side of Second Avenue between Pike and Pine streets. A surface parking lot and the Green Tortoise Hostel now occupy the parcel.

The development will include a station for the monorail, according to the developers.

Plans submitted to the city indicate there will be about 250 units.

Opus will develop the tower with assistance from Samis Land Co., a subsidiary of the Samis Foundation. Opus plans to acquire the property from the Samis Foundation next summer when construction is scheduled to begin.

Before construction, however, the developers will need a contract rezone or code change, according to a memo from a City Council staff member to Council President Jan Drago. The current zoning allows for buildings no taller than 240 feet. Samis and Opus are planning a 400-foot tower.

Mayor Greg Nickels has proposed rezoning some areas of downtown, including the area where Samis and Opus plan to develop their project, to allow taller buildings. The goal is to increase density to combat sprawl.

But the Mayor's Office has yet to send the legislation to the council, and council members have said it could take months to discuss before voting on it. A spokesperson for the Mayor's Office has said the goal is to send the height and density legislation to the council next month.

Samis and Opus "want to proceed anyway so they need a text amendment," says Michael Jenkins, a senior land-use planner for the city. He said city planners will recommend to the council whether to OK the amendment. He added it's hard to predict when that recommendation will reach council members.

The tower will be one story higher than the current tallest residential building, Continental Place Condominium Tower, four blocks north of the Opus and Samis project.

Weber + Thompson Architects is designing the new project. Details have yet to be finalized, but officials of Opus and Samis say the profile will be narrower than most downtown towers and grow increasingly slim in the upper stories. This will provide good views, have less impact on other buildings' views, and allow more daylight at street level, the developers say.

It was not clear Monday if the developers have hired anyone to market the condos.

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