

# New luxury hotel rises alongside SLC's Union Pacific Depot. Get an early peek inside.

Owners say they expect to benefit from “new energy and vitality” of a sports and entertainment district destined for downtown.



(Francisco Kjolseth | The Salt Lake Tribune) The new Asher Adams Hotel takes shape next to the historic Union Pacific Depot in Salt Lake City on Friday, May 10, 2024.

By Tony Semerad

| May 16, 2024, 5:00 a.m.

The extraordinary feat of grafting [a new luxury hotel](#) onto Salt Lake City's historic Union Pacific Depot at the western edge of downtown is almost finished.

Folks developing what will be called the [Asher Adams](#) say the new 225-room boutique hotel at The Gateway is on track to open in mid-October. It will include an ambitious

overhaul and adaptive reuse of the iconic former rail station as a vintage front for the hotel's eight-story guest tower tucked behind.

A recent hard-hat tour saw crews with Okland Construction working on final finishes for what will be the city's first Marriott Autograph Collection hotel, notable for its careful renovation of the station as well as how its themes and designs draw inspiration from the rail hub's past.



(Asher Adams Hotel) Rendering of a view westward of the Union Pacific Depot, with the soon-to-be completed Asher Adams visible behind it. A curved 225-room portion of the luxury hotel dovetails with a renovated version of the historic depot, adaptively reusing the station for a grand lobby, reception areas, walkways, common spaces, eateries and bars and some of its deluxe suites.

“Everything that we do is going to incorporate that story,” Nancy Clayton, director of sales and marketing for Asher Adams, said as she walked the depot’s revamped Grand Hall. “Once this is converted into a full-fledged hotel, a lot of the travelers will never have been in this space, so it’s really going to be a wild moment for them.”

Named for two cartographers who first charted rail routes through the West, Asher Adams will have a signature ground-floor restaurant, Rouser, as well as a pastry shop, two bars — including one with a second-floor view — and finely appointed guest rooms spread through the new and remade older portions of the intertwined buildings.

## ‘The rest is history’



(Asher Adams Hotel) An early rendering of the revamped Grand Hall of Salt Lake City's historic Union Pacific Depot, shown as part of its adaptive reuse in the soon-to-open Asher Adams, an autograph 225-room hotel at The Gateway. The image does not include a lobby bar, to be called Little Nugget, moved to the hall since the rendering was completed.



(Francisco Kjolseth | The Salt Lake Tribune) The Union Pacific Depot in Salt Lake City is temporarily used for storage as the new Asher Adams Hotel begins to incorporate the historic space on Sunday, Sept. 17, 2023.

The station's main hall will serve as part of the hotel's grand entrance, reception and lobby areas. Situating the curved guest tower just west of the depot, meanwhile, has also created new spaces for courtyards and gathering areas between the two structures, both indoor and outdoor.

The sandstone depot's marquee "Union Pacific" electric sign and company shield beaming nightly on South Temple will remain in place, complemented by a new, sleek "Asher Adams" sign beneath it.

Crews have preserved and refurbished original design elements in the station's well-known Grand Hall, originally built in 1908, including its mosaic tiled floors, murals and stained-glass windows. There will be a new bar in the hall area, dubbed Little Nugget, along with ample spots to socialize.



(Francisco Kjolseth | The Salt Lake Tribune) Original stained-glass details will remain as the new Asher Adams Hotel is incorporated into the historic Union Pacific Depot in Salt Lake City on Sunday, Sept. 17, 2023.

Marketing for the hotel at South Temple and 400 West focuses on business travelers and tourists, emphasizing the draw of classic experiences as opposed to simply a sense of place. “The rest,” according to the hotel’s motto, “is history.”

Areas in the new hotel such as Desert Wind and Pioneer are named after well-known trains from the era, while its main restaurant, according to Clayton, will key off the use of coal that once powered Union Pacific’s locomotives.



(Francisco Kjolseth | The Salt Lake Tribune) A thoroughfare from the Union Pacific Depot in Salt Lake City will connect to the Asher Adams Hotel as work continues on Tuesday, May 7, 2024.

Hotel guests, of course, will also have easy access to TRAX and the rest of downtown, as well as The Gateway's 650,000 square feet of dining, retail and event spaces, along with The Depot, the live-entertainment venue continuing to operate at the north end of the hotel.

## **'New energy and vitality'**

When construction began, the Asher Adams project also was touted as another step in revitalizing of The Gateway as a whole by the property's Arizona-based owner Vestar, culminating a yearslong remake of the once-ailing shopping mall into an entertainment, dining and office-based "lifestyle destination."

Now, with another sort of Big Bang development for downtown emerging just across the street, the quirky new hotel perched above The Gateway's Olympic Plaza is taking on an even newer light.

Talks are at a heightened pitch these days after officials with Smith Entertainment Group, owners of the Utah Jazz and a newly acquired National Hockey League franchise, pledged to pump up to \$3 billion into creating a new downtown sports and entertainment district in the urban core.



(Trent Nelson | The Salt Lake Tribune) Mike Maughan of Smith Entertainment Group speaks to the Salt Lake City Council about the proposed downtown sports and entertainment district on Tuesday, May 7, 2024. At right is Salt Lake City Mayor Erin Mendenhall.

Bryan Hill, general manager of The Gateway, said in a statement to The Salt Lake Tribune that the property's owners were "excited to learn about the potential addition" of the new downtown district.

He did not address whether The Gateway's 21 acres were being included in conversations about the new district, saying only that the property "continues to be a vibrant hub for retail, entertainment, dining, hospitality and more" and could potentially benefit from the new district.

"This development," Hill said of SEG's plans, "would not only drive more visitors and foot traffic to our center and Asher Adams, but would also rejuvenate downtown, bringing new energy and vitality to this fast-growing community."

## **From history to luxury hotel**



(Asher Adams Hotel) Rendering of a model guest room in the soon-to-open Asher Adams, a signature 225-room hotel built into Salt Lake City's Union Pacific Depot as part of an adaptive reuse of the historic rail station at 400 West and South Temple.

First called Union Station, the Union Pacific Depot was built in what's known as a French Renaissance architectural style and served for generations as the city's main railroad depot for downtown, connecting with destinations in California and Oregon.

The immense station stretching along 400 West is listed on the [National Register of Historic Places](#) and was donated to the state by Union Pacific in 1989. The Boyer Co., the Salt Lake City-based developer of The Gateway, bought it in 1999 along with other nearby acreage, and the area was launched as an open-air retail mall and residential complex in late 2001.





(Francisco Kjolseth | The Salt Lake Tribune) The new Asher Adams Hotel takes shape at the historic Union Pacific Depot in Salt Lake City on Sunday, Sept. 17, 2023.

Sales tax data shows its retail outlets have lost customers through the years since 2012 with the [opening of the upscale City Creek Center](#) shopping area a few blocks away along Main Street.

[Vestar](#), a privately held owner-operator of nearly 50 retail properties in the West, purchased The Gateway with Oaktree Capital Management in 2016, and [has invested more than \\$100 million](#) in improving its facilities and common areas. The firm has also attracted some major office tenants to The Gateway's converted retail spaces, including the biotechnology company Recursion Pharmaceuticals.

The Asher Adams Hotel is being built by a partnership involving Vestar and two other real estate development companies, The Athens Group and Hatteras Sky.



(Asher Adams Hotel) Rendering of courtyard spaces, hallways and other common areas between Union Pacific Depot and the soon-to-open Asher Adams, a signature 225-room hotel built adjacent as part of an adaptive reuse of the historic Salt Lake City station.

Also based in Phoenix, [The Athens Group](#) specializes in luxury resorts, residences, golf courses and similar recreation amenities, with offices in California, Florida and Utah, according to its website. [Hatteras Sky](#), headquartered in Atlanta, emphasizes adaptive reuses of historic buildings, with a focus on apartment and hospitality developments.

Pivot, a hotel-operating subsidiary of Atlanta-based [Davidson Hospitality Group](#), will manage Asher Adams' day-to-day operations.



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