

Despite all the activity downtown over the last few years, the rejuvenation of central Houston has been marked by surprisingly few new buildings. While there has been plenty of residential construction around the city's edges, at the city's core the rebirth has been mainly rehabilitative. Unlike the boom of the late 1970s and early 1980s, when new skyscrapers were the order of the day, the current boom has been primarily identified with breathing life into dead structures such as the Albert Thomas Convention Center and the Rice Hotel. Indeed, were it not for government funded projects such as Enron Field and the Harris County Criminal Justice Center, Houston's skyline at the end of the 1990s would look very much as it did at the decade's beginning. More vibrant, perhaps, but still basically the same.

Class of 2000

As we enter a new century, though, that promises to change. On the boards are four new buildings for downtown: three skyscrapers and the first new major performance hall to be built since the Wortham Center. Yes, one of the three skyscrapers is a government building, but the other two mark the first privately funded office towers to be built downtown since the 1980s. Does this mean a return to the go-go spirit of two decades back? Probably not. Still, this particular Class of 2000 may suggest that as Houston enters the 21st century, a flicker of that spirit remains. ■

1000 MAIN

Main at Lamar

Architect: Gensler/Houston
 Cost: \$150 million
 Projected completion date: July 2002
 Developer: Century Development
 Height: 38 stories
 Square footage: 800,000



Courtesy Gensler/Houston

ENRON BUILDING

1500 Louisiana

Architect: Cesar Pelli
 Cost: \$200 million
 Projected completion date: March 2002
 Developer: Hines
 Height: 40 stories
 Square footage: 1.3 million



Courtesy Enron



Courtesy Houston Music Hall Foundation

HOBBY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

800 Bagby

Architect: Robert A.M. Stern, New York, with Morris Architects, Houston
 Cost: \$85 million
 Projected completion date: Spring 2002
 Developer: Century Development
 Height: 10 stories (with three-story glass-fronted lobby)
 Square footage: 250,000



Courtesy Harris County and PS&L

HARRIS COUNTY CIVIL JUSTICE CENTER

Caroline between Congress and Franklin

Architect: Pierce Goodwin Alexander & Linville
 Cost: \$119 million (includes furnishings)
 Projected completion date: January 2003
 Developer: Harris County
 Height: 15 stories
 Square footage: 650,000