

# Puget Sound Office Market

# Office Market Activity Slows amid Economic Concerns

#### **Current Market Conditions**

The Puget Sound office market saw worsening conditions over the first quarter of 2023, following a bumpy 2022. Large layoffs in the tech sector has led to right-sizing exercises by major tenants and, consequently, a spike in sublease availability. At the same time, the layoffs and resultant shift in the power dynamics between employers and employees have emboldened some companies to tighten in-office requirements. Market activity has slowed as major employers remain focused on right-sizing exercises for both staff and office footprints, and future demand remains unknown.

The region experienced negative 772,742 square feet of absorption; the vacancy rate rose to 12.5%, up 70 basis points for the guarter, with direct vacancy at 11.6%. Availability in the region stands at 20.4%, up 190 basis points over the guarter and 430 basis points year over year.

## **Leasing Activity**

A total of 1.3 million square feet of space was leased during the first guarter of 2023, an improvement from the 1.0 million leased the guarter prior, but still a 36.7% decrease year over year. There remain 3.8 million square feet of active tenant requirements in the region, a 52.5% decrease from the same period last year. The active tenants are focused on smaller footprints and flexible terms, with many opting for sublease space.

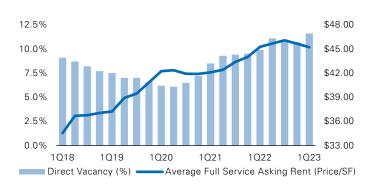
Average asking rents for available space decreased 1.0% over the quarter, to \$45.22/SF. Effective rents have begun to favor tenants as concession packages increase, a trend that is expected to continue as more available space is added to the market.

#### Sublease Availability

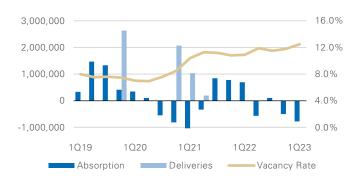
Sublease availability, which had nearly recovered to pre-pandemic levels by April of 2022, has steadily risen again over the last 12

Market Summary						
	Current Quarter	Prior Quarter	Year Ago Period	12-Month Forecast		
Total Inventory (SF)	130.4M	130.6M	130.4M	<b>↑</b>		
Vacancy Rate	12.5%	11.8%	10.9%	1		
Quarterly Net Absorption (SF)	-773K	-501K	699K	1		
Average Asking Rent/SF	\$45.22	\$45.66	\$45.25	<b>→</b>		
Under Const. (SF)	8.8M	8.6M	7.5M	1		

#### **Asking Rent and Direct Vacancy Rate**



# **Net Absorption v New Construction & Overall Vacancy**





months. The availability rate currently stands at 4.6%, the highest it has been since the first guarter of 2021, and is expected to increase over the coming quarter as more companies have already announced plans to give up space. High concentrations of sublease space are common during economic downturns; monitoring this metric in the short term will provide insight into the direction of the market.

#### **Capital Markets**

Slowing leasing fundamentals paired with higher borrowing costs due to the current interest rate environment continues to put downward pressure on office values. There continues to be limited liquidity for office in the financing markets and few buyers and sellers willing or able to bridge the bid-ask gap to complete sales. This is exemplified by the recent low trade volumes - sales volume for the first guarter of 2023 totaled just \$102.7 million, a fraction of the \$1.8 billion in sales seen in the first quarter of 2022. In the most notable sale of the quarter, Gateway One in Bellevue, a stabilized suburban office asset, traded for \$34.5 million, or about \$300/SF.

#### **Downtown Seattle Overview**

The Downtown Seattle submarket was hit the hardest during the pandemic and continues to struggle with high vacancy rates. During the first quarter of 2023, the submarket saw a total net absorption of negative 519,872 square feet. Average asking rents in Downtown Seattle were \$47.28/SF, down 1.7% year-overyear. Total vacancy increased to 15.8%, up 100 basis points from the previous quarter.

While low office occupancy has heavily impacted the Central Business District, the life science sector has buoyed other surrounding clusters, most notably South Lake Union. In the largest lease transaction of the quarter, Bristol Myers Squibb signed a renewal at 400 Dexter totaling 267,350 square feet. The Ballard/University District cluster also saw leasing activity during the quarter. Brooks Sports pre-leased the under-construction 35

**Availability** SUBLEASE v. DIRECT AVAILABILITY (SF) 25,000,000 50.0% 20.000.000 40.0% 15,000,000 30.0% 10.000.000 20.0% 5,000,000 0.0%

Sublease % of Total

■ Direct Sublease —

Stone. The 112,700-square-foot building will expand the footprint of its headquarters, as the company will continue to occupy its existing space at 3400 Stone Way N.

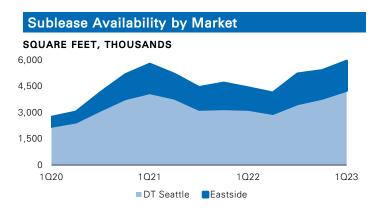
#### **Eastside Overview**

The Eastside submarket, though more resilient than Seattle in recent cycles, has not been immune to the effects of tech layoffs and hiring freezes. The submarket saw a total net absorption of negative 159,669 square feet. The overall vacancy rate was 6.5% for the first guarter of 2023, up 50 basis points from the previous quarter and 130 basis points year-over-year. Average asking rents for available space decreased to \$49.09/SF, down 1.4% over the quarter, but still up 0.3% year over year.

Like Seattle, the cluster most impacted by major employers downsizing has been the Bellevue CBD, while other surrounding clusters remain more stable. Like Lake Union, the Bothell/Kenmore cluster benefits from a growing biotech presence, and the vacancy rate in the area is expected to decline in the coming quarters as leases for Sana Biotechnology and lonQ commence. In the largest lease transaction of the quarter, Connections WA signed for 66,483 square feet in the Kirkland 405 Corporate Center in Totem Lake.

#### **Future Outlook**

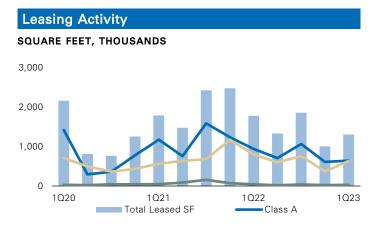
In the short term, more spaces could be coming to market as a result of tenants downsizing, though leased space should become more densely occupied as companies gain leverage over employees for return-to-office mandates. Asking rents may continue to soften slightly with the influx of available space and easing inflation. Despite rising vacancy, the current rate remains far below the historical peaks of 16.6% seen following the Global Financial Crisis, and 15.1% following the dot-com bubble and 9/11. Though economic conditions in 2023 are expected to remain volatile, the Puget Sound market has historically fared better than most office markets during times of economic downturn.

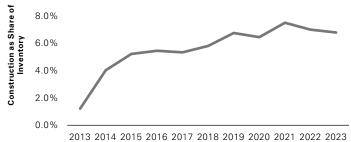


Select Lease Transactions					
Tenant	Submarket	Building	Type	Square Feet	
Bristol Myers Squibb	Lake Union	400 Dexter	Renewal	267,350	
University of Washington	Ballard/U-District	U-District Station Building	Direct	133,002	
Brooks Sports	Ballard/U-District	35 Stone	Direct	112,700	
Connections WA	Totem Lake	Kirkland 405 Corporate Center	Direct	66,483	
Karr Tuttle	Seattle CBD	Columbia Center	Expansion	40,437	
Radiant Logistics	Renton/Tukwila	Triton Towers Two	Expansion	27,797	
Seattle's Union Gospel Mission	Renton/Tukwila	Triton Towers Two	Direct	19,242	

Select Sales Transactions						
Building	Submarket	Sale Price	Price/SF	Square Feet		
Gateway One	Suburban Bellevue	\$34,500,000	\$300	115,661		
Parkside Office Building	Renton/Tukwila	\$11,110,000	\$225	49,300		
Park East	Renton/Tukwila	\$8,600,000	\$214	40,126		

Notable Buildings Under Construction					
Building	Submarket	Development Type	<b>Estimated Delivery</b>	Square Feet	
Onni SLU – Towers I & II	Lake Union	Speculative	2024	940,160	
The Eight	Bellevue CBD	Speculative	2024	540,000	
Washington 1000	Seattle CBD	Speculative	2024	526,000	
Four 106	Bellevue CBD	Speculative	2025	480,000	





CONSTRUCTION AS % OF BUILDING INVENTORY

Rate of Development

- Share of Inventory

Submarket Statistics							
	Total Inventory (SF)	Under Construction (SF)	Total Vacancy Rate	Otr Absorption (SF)	YTD Absorption (SF)	Average Asking Rent (Price/SF)	YOY Asking Rent Change (%)
Downtown Seattle	67,625,284	3,895,773	15.8 %	-519,872	-519,872	\$47.28	-1.7%
Ballard/University District	3,248,971	776,125	5.0 %	-2,315	-2,315	\$45.89	-1.3%
Belltown/Denny Regrade	5,715,241	107,776	19.6 %	-80,636	-80,636	\$45.20	-0.2%
Capitol Hill/Central District	1,736,883	-	3.4 %	26,722	26,722	\$44.98	3.7%
Lake Union	11,539,008	2,099,790	7.2 %	14,608	14,608	\$47.57	-8.4%
Pioneer Square/Waterfront	6,284,475	135,866	20.8 %	-48,290	-48,290	\$43.14	-4.8%
Queen Anne/Magnolia	4,205,705	197,216	18.1 %	73,968	73,968	\$40.79	1.3%
South Seattle	2,820,026	53,000	11.4 %	-106,084	-106,084	\$36.58	1.2%
Seattle CBD	32,074,975	526,000	19.0 %	-397,845	-397,845	\$49.84	-2.5%
Eastside	35,390,409	4,939,569	6.5%	-159,669	-159,669	\$49.09	0.3%
520 Corridor	3,191,089	-	8.6 %	6,582	6,582	\$43.07	-2.1%
Bellevue CBD	10,642,171	4,027,300	6.4 %	-168,274	-168,274	\$60.54	1.6%
Bothell/Kenmore	3,103,641	-	8.5 %	4,920	4,920	\$44.22	-3.8%
Coal Creek/Issaquah	1,872,415	-	3.9 %	3,417	3,417	\$40.72	-6.5%
I-90 Corridor	4,916,166	-	10.6 %	-8,580	-8,580	\$45.94	0.7%
Kirkland	2,660,508	57,432	3.7 %	-3,453	-3,453	\$45.71	-1.3%
Mercer Island	420,795	-	7.1 %	-1,136	-1,136	\$42.66	-1.2%
Redmond	3,512,099	-	1.5 %	16,904	16,904	\$43.16	0.8%
Suburban Bellevue	4,157,407	854,837	5.8 %	-12,371	-12,371	\$44.41	-1.1%
Totem Lake	914,118	-	5.7 %	2,322	2,322	\$37.48	-4.4%
Southend	10,896,253	-	14.8%	-58,486	-58,486	\$37.05	0.1%
Federal Way/Auburn	2,973,580	-	11.8 %	-10,699	-10,699	\$27.18	0.0%
Kent Valley	1,610,503	-	6.8 %	-57,314	-57,314	\$30.51	1.2%
Renton/Tukwila	5,129,341	-	21.1 %	11,373	11,373	\$43.56	-2.8%
Seatac/Burien	1,182,829	-	5.6 %	-1,846	-1,846	\$28.38	-4.8%
Northend	7,778,593	-	12.0 %	-80,316	-80,316	\$31.88	-0.2%
Tacoma	8,702,826	-	9.6 %	45,601	45,601	\$29.47	1.0%
Puget Sound Market	130,393,365	8,835,342	12.5 %	-772,742	-772,742	\$45.22	-0.1%

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