

SKYPER – Interview with Djam Mohebbi-Ahari

Explore the fascinating world of SKYPER together with Djam Mohebbi-Ahari! In our exclusive interview, you'll gain exciting insights into this outstanding landmark building in a prime location. Get a behind-the-scenes look that will pique your curiosity!

You acquired SKYPER in 2021 for various companies within HDI Deutschland AG. What were the key factors behind this decision at the time?

Djam Mohebbi-Ahari:

We favor prime locations with potential and are pursuing our growth strategy by increasing the real estate share in our portfolio.

One significant reason for acquiring SKYPER was, of course, its location in Frankfurt's banking district, one of Germany's key office hotspots with the highest prime rents nationwide and the best office buildings. In a European context, the prime rents here are still relatively moderate.

The Frankfurt market is not solely dominated by financial companies; it boasts a highly diversified tenant mix. The increasing demand from consulting firms, investment managers, and law firms contributes to a consistently high demand for top office spaces.

What features of SKYPER impressed you the most?

Djam Mohebbi-Ahari:

As a landmark building in a prime location, SKYPER is a focal point within the skyline, right in the heart of the banking district. We were also drawn to its flexible floor plans, accommodating both traditional and new-normal layouts (open space, individual offices, flex use), as well as smaller units (starting at around 250 sqm, which equates to four units per floor).

From a sustainability perspective, the existing LEED Gold certification was convincing. We also found the relatively low operating costs, combined with the unobstructed view of the skyline and excellent transportation links, appealing.

Furthermore, from the viewpoint of our asset managers, the building has excellent potential for repositioning. Our due diligence revealed that SKYPER has a very good and expandable technical infrastructure, potential for energy efficiency improvements, and sustainable building operation. This also applies to smart building considerations. We acquired a building with a strong and reputable tenant base with the goal of maintaining and expanding it.

Does SKYPER hold a special position within the owner's portfolio, and if so, why?

Djam Mohebbi-Ahari:

SKYPER is one of the largest single investments in the owner's portfolio and is a real estate investment that we approached with a strict ESG lens. We have in-house expertise in managed-to-ESG.

With the SKYPER transaction, we have entered a scale that can be groundbreaking for our future growth in German real estate. However, apart from climate protection requirements, we will always be guided by the property's risk-return profile as the top transaction maxim.

Are there moments with SKYPER that have personally stuck with you?

Djam Mohebbi-Ahari:

During one of our initial property visits, I had the opportunity to accompany our team to the roof of the building. The unobstructed view from over 150 meters above the city, extending to the Taunus Mountains, on a perfect weather day, was a truly remarkable experience. It's impressive what the planners and builders have achieved here.

"Up without limits" is the SKYPER motto. What message are you trying to convey with that?

Djam Mohebbi-Ahari:

Our goal is to establish SKYPER, which is already well-positioned and equipped, at the forefront of the Frankfurt office real estate market through complementary technical measures and additional tenant-focused offerings. We aim to progressively adapt it to the latest requirements, including ESG and sustainability. Without limits, indeed.

From your perspective, what are the most pressing issues currently affecting the real estate industry?

Djam Mohebbi-Ahari:

Currently, we sense significant uncertainty in the German investment market, particularly in the price discovery phase, driven in part by inflation and interest rate developments. We expect transaction activity to pick up only in the course of 2024, with a corresponding delayed market recovery. Property management also faces significant challenges due to the combination of New Work and remote work. We need to create incentives for tenants and employees to return to offices with enthusiasm and utilize their benefits.

What personally appeals to you about working with properties like SKYPER, and what motivates you?

Djam Mohebbi-Ahari:

We are delighted to have secured this investment in Frankfurt's banking district, demonstrating our commitment to further expanding our capabilities and growth strategy. The quality of the product and its location convinced us. The Frankfurt market is known for its high standards and is one of the most influential economic centers in Europe. The property has all the prerequisites for maintaining a competitive position in a highly competitive environment in the long run.

Due to my background as an architect, I always follow our portfolio developments and plans for reorientation with great interest. For SKYPER, we launched design competitions with renowned architectural firms. Being involved, contributing, and exchanging ideas with our internal and external experts has been and continues to be a personal concern and a great joy for me.

The new owner has held SKYPER in their portfolio for over a year now and has been continuously optimizing the building. What milestones can you report?

Djam Mohebbi-Ahari:

One of our initial measures was expanding the rental space on the 1st and 2nd floors of the SKYPER Villa for one of our top tenants from the SKYPER Tower, as well as the tenant fit-out of approximately 2,300 sqm. The tenant now occupies all office spaces in the Villa, and we completed the spaces on schedule in the summer of 2022.

In spring 2023, we achieved SmartScore pre-certification and WiredScore certification at the highest level – Platinum – for SKYPER, which is not common for existing buildings. This confirms our identified technical development potential at the time of acquisition. This is personally rewarding and motivating for me.

By recently renovating all 17 elevator systems, we have brought the building back to a new construction state in this regard. It's important to us that all our measures contribute to tenant comfort. Therefore, in addition to state-of-the-art technology, we have considered accessibility for people with disabilities and expanded the wireless network coverage from the underground garage to the rental space.

What new features can SKYPER users expect in the coming months?

Djam Mohebbi-Ahari:

In the future, we will be able to offer our tenants a variety of forward-looking solutions. This includes the expansion of electric vehicle charging stations in the underground garage, energy-efficient and demand-oriented room automation, and various smart building applications, to name a few. We aim to meet the needs of our current and future tenants while also aligning with our goals for advanced and sustainable building operations. Necessary upgrades and improvements, such as network and security technology and innovative sensor-driven building automation, are progressing according to plan.

Through a redesigned building entrance, enhanced user comfort in common areas, model offices, and highly flexible rental space concepts, we will create a special experience for our tenants and visitors. Further measures are in the planning stages. Stay tuned. We have also achieved significant milestones in communication with the installation of info screens, QR code placements, a new LinkedIn channel, and a new website.

Expectations for the working environment have evolved over the last 24 months. What qualities make SKYPER particularly attractive to office users today and in the future?

Djam Mohebbi-Ahari:

"The office of the future is a place where bonds with colleagues are strengthened, teamwork can flourish, and as a result, more effective collaboration is possible. The emotional experience is primarily associated with social interaction. Therefore, the office building remains a crucial anchor point for companies. Despite increased mobility, employees need both freedom and a sense of belonging. This shift presents landlords with new challenges regarding the technical equipment of buildings and, above all, the design of office environments. SKYPER meets these requirements now and in the future!

How do you see the overall development of the real estate market in Frankfurt?

Djam Mohebbi-Ahari:

The prime rent in Frankfurt remains at a high level, making it undisputedly the highest compared to other major German office hubs. We see a trend away from peripheral locations, B-locations, and B-properties towards A-locations and A-properties with sustainability aspects. Tenants expect flexible floor plans and higher fit-out standards for their employees, along with excellent transportation links and optimal infrastructure. Institutional investors currently prefer core products and consider taxonomy and sustainability topics as established.

Frankfurt continues to be one of the most professional and demanding office locations in Germany. Some of the existing office towers are aging and may no longer meet the future's demanding needs.

With SKYPER, we will continue to deliver a top product in a competitive market. Up without limits.

What advantages does SKYPER's micro-location offer in terms of access to transportation, public transit, and other infrastructure facilities in Frankfurt?

Djam Mohebbi-Ahari:

SKYPER is excellently connected, easily accessible via all modes of transportation, and has an underground garage with ample parking spaces for tenants. Users can reach a wide range of dining, retail, and cultural options within a 5-minute walk.

What do you engage in when you need to relax?

Djam Mohebbi-Ahari:

My great passions are cooking, enjoying good food, and traveling. I love being by the sea, but I also enjoy nature and mountain hiking. Architecture and design are also personal interests that I pursue whenever I have the opportunity."