The Tallest 20 in 2020: Predictions vs. Reality

In the first edition of the 2012 Journal, CTBUH published a Tall Buildings in Numbers study titled Tallest 20 in 2020: Era of the Megatall—The Projected World’s Tallest 20 Skyscrapers in the Year 2020. Now that we have arrived at the second edition of 2020, we look back on the fates of each of the buildings predicted to be the tallest in existence this year—and those that actually did make the list. This report serves as a companion to the research paper beginning on page 44, which provides more background. For an interactive version, and a link to the original article, visit skyscrapercenter.com/tallest-in-2020.

The 20 Tallest Buildings in 2020

In this graphic, the 20 tallest buildings in 2020 are shown in the foreground, while the skyline that was originally predicted in 2012 is shown in gray in the background.

Three of the 20 buildings on the original 2012 list were not completed as planned, due in part to aviation restrictions after the projects had already begun. If each building had been constructed in sequence, the Tallest 20 in 2020 would have taken 126 years to complete.

The Burj Khalifa began life as the “Grollo Tower”—a 1990s development concept, originally proposed for Melbourne, Australia.
What Happened to the 2012 Predicted Tallest 20 Skyline?

While the timeline below shows the progress of each building between 2012 and 2020, some buildings completed prior to 2012.

Key:
1. Completed, current rank
2. Under Construction
3. Proposal

In 2012, South Korea was predicted to have three of the world’s tallest buildings by 2020. Instead it has only one—but Lotte World Tower, Seoul, is the world’s fifth-tallest building.

The Goldin Finance 117 tower was modeled after a walking stick.

The sum of heights of the actual 20 Tallest Buildings in 2020 is 10,452 meters, compared to 11,953 for the 2012 projection.