

Here's a peek inside the new 27-story skyscraper transforming Durham's skyline

By Chantal Allam, [The News & Observer](#), January 25, 2024



A glassy 27-story skyscraper set to transform Durham's skyline is now as tall as it's going to get.

Despite occasional rain and stormy clouds hovering above, construction crews this week completed the final floor of [The Novus](#), the high-rise development at 400 W. Main Street in the Five Points district, one of the city's most bustling commercial corridors.

The project's developer, Durham-based [Austin Lawrence Partners](#) (ALP), celebrated the milestone with a traditional "topping out" ceremony Thursday morning, where some 300 workers signed the last structural beam. They'll later raise it into place, finishing the building's frame.

Plans call for the building to house 54 luxury condominiums, 188 rental units and 22,000 square feet of ground-floor retail.

The building isn't expected to be complete until 2025. But already, 36 of the 54 available condos have sold, Zach Prager, ALP's director of investments, told [The N&O](#).

"We've gotten a lot of local buyers," he said. "People who live in the region and want to live in downtown Durham."

Surrounded by dozens of restaurants and bars, The Novus sits on the wedge of land between Main Street and Morris Street, backing up against the Downtown Loop. It replaces the South Bank building that stood on the site for nearly 50 years before being demolished in 2022.

[Online listings](#) show most units still available are priced above \$1 million. The priciest is listed at just under \$4 million.

Amenities will include putting greens and golf simulators, spaces to work remotely, a pickleball court, an outdoor movie theater and a dog park, plus pools, hot tubs and steam room.

Preleasing for the apartments will begin in mid-2024, Prager said. The lineup for retail tenants remains undecided. "[Once] we start delivering the space later this year, that will help with getting those deals over the line," he said.

In this post-pandemic era of hybrid work and [sky-high office vacancy](#), many locals hope the project will boost foot traffic downtown.

"Given that we don't have office workers, we're now reliant on our residents who are living in and around the downtown area," said

Nicole Thompson, CEO of [Downtown Durham Inc.](#), who attended the ceremony. “More residents means more people visiting and patronizing our small businesses.”

[A skyscraper, high-rise condos and more: 6 developments changing the face of Durham.](#)

Durham’s changing skyline

The Novus is Durham’s second 27-story building downtown.

ALP also built the first — [One City Center](#) — in 2018.

That’s about the limit of stories that modern builders can fit under the downtown core’s 300-foot height limit. Builders must seek out a variance if they wish to go taller.

Durham’s third 27-floor building — the new downtown YMCA — is being redeveloped by Chapel Hill’s East West Partners. It’s slated to break ground later this year.

Jane and Greg Hills, the husband-and-wife team behind ALP, began investing in Durham in 2011. (Greg Hills graduated from Duke University in 1976.)

Their firm is also behind the Unscripted Hotel Durham, revamping one of the city’s most iconic buildings — the former Jack Tar Motel.

New York City-based real estate investors Global Holdings Management Group has partnered to finance The Novus.

Construction partner Samet Corp. has posted the [project’s jobsite](#) on EarthCam, and is providing public updates with a virtual town hall.