

NEWS



Construction begins on The Central, formerly Orange Station, in St. Pete's EDGE District

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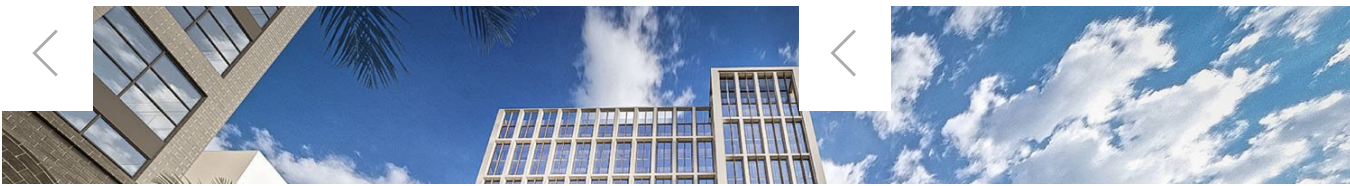
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The Central's Public Plaza

Ellison Development



porters

On Wednesday, Ellison Construction began construction on The Central, previously named Orange Station, at **1301 Central Avenue**.

The Central will feature an upscale Marriott hotel and the city's first new Class A office space in decades. Also included will be workforce apartments, retail space, and a 548-space parking garage that will be open to the public.

The 2.1-acre project is a joint venture of J Square Developers, DDA Development, Ellison Development, and Backstreets Capital, LLC, who have collectively worked on several other St. Petersburg developments including **The Salvador, St. James Townhomes, and The Nolen**.

"We're absolutely thrilled about partnering with Mayor Ken Welch and the City of St. Petersburg to craft a development that honors its rich history while also meeting the demands of its future," said Ellison Development CEO Casey Ellison.





A CEREMONIAL GROUNDBREAKING WAS HELD TODAY FOR THE CENTRAL, A NEW MIXED-USE PROJECT COMING SOON THE ST. PETERSBURG'S EDGE DISTRICT | ST PETE RISING

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The 15-story hotel will be from Marriott's Autograph Collection. In addition to a bar and flagship restaurant concept, the hotel is expected to offer meeting and conference rooms, multiple event spaces, state-of-the-art fitness facilities (which will be open to the public via memberships), a multi-level theater, and a rooftop pool.

The 12-story office tower will contain 125,000 square feet of Class A office space, which represents the first Class A office space constructed in downtown St. Pete since the 1980's.

"Class A Office Space is a very broad category," says Ellison. "What we're going to offer is not only high-end finishes and the latest technology. It will be highly amenitized and driven by the lessons we've learned in the hospitality space. It'll be ideal for employers that are looking to entice their teams to come back to the office."

The Central will also contain 14,000 square feet of ground-level retail fronting Central Avenue and 1st Avenue North.

A public plaza at the east end of the project has been envisioned as a community gathering space with cafe's, shopping, and more.

Ellison said the group is close to announcing a food and beverage operator that will occupy a portion of the project's retail space.

THE CENTRAL WILL BE CONSTRUCTED AT 1301 CENTRAL AVENUE, THE FORMER SITE OF ST. PETERSBURG POLICE HEADQUARTERS | [GOOGLE MAPS](#)

The public plaza will also be home to a monument designed by nationally renowned local sculptor and painter Ya La'Ford to honor "The Courageous 12," the 12 Black St. Petersburg police officers who successfully sued the city in the 1960s to gain the same rights as their white counterparts.

The monument's funding agreement is up for approval at tomorrow's City Council meeting.

Lorna Taylor, CEO of Premier Eye Care, has donated \$150,000 towards the cost of the public art piece.

"Together, we honor St. Petersburg's past while forging a fresh era of progress and inclusivity. This groundbreaking isn't just about new buildings; it symbolizes our city's resilience post-pandemic, pays tribute to the Courageous Twelve through public art, and addresses critical needs with workforce housing and residential spaces," said St. Petersburg Mayor Ken Welch.

On 1st Avenue North, The Central will have a seven-story, 42-unit workforce apartment building, previously named The Wye. The units will be reserved for residents earning 120% of the area median income (AMI).

"Workforce housing is a critical need for the city and the diversity of housing options at The Central will meaningfully contribute to the stability for many residents and families," Ellison added.

The workforce housing, which is connected to the parking garage, will be the first project to rise at the site, Ellison said to *St. Pete Rising* in a conversation after the event.



The Courageous 12 Monument

Ya La'Ford



It has been a long and winding road for The Central. The development group **initially bid** for the site several years ago in a request for proposal (RFP) process spearheaded by then-mayor Rick Kriseman.

The project, which is estimated to cost \$200 million, has been redesigned **several times** over the years, most recently in 2023.

The plan initially included a 61-unit luxury condominium component – The Residences at Orange Station. The base of the building also featured 50,000 square feet of Class A office space.

However, the team scrapped plans to build the condos due to a lack of needed financing.

The project was renamed The Central as it's in the heart of the city and the plans have greatly evolved since its inception, Ellison said.

The Central is expected to be completed by spring 2026.

 Veronica Brezina /  0 Comments

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