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\$71M, 12-story office building begins construction on Charleston peninsula

Downtown law firm to move into new structure

BY WARREN L. WISE WWISE@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

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Morrison Yard, a 12-story office building, is starting construction on Morrison Drive next to the mixed-use apartment development already underway on property formerly owned by the State Ports Authority on the Charleston peninsula. Morrison Drive is in the foreground. Rendering/ASD|SKY

A mid-rise office building is about to take shape on the Charleston peninsula unlike any other in a city that reveres history and architecture.

The \$71 million, 12-story Morrison Yard office structure near the Ravenel Bridge will be slightly nonparallel to Morrison Drive, be built 50 feet in the air on V-shaped pillars amid an open-air plaza and will resemble offset shipping containers, a nod to the site's maritime past.

The previous owner of the nearly two-acre property was the State Ports Authority. The 157,000-square-foot office building will be built during the next 18 months beside a 10-story, 386-unit apartment development of the same name that's already under construction.



A rooftop view of the new 12-story Morrison Yard office building soon to rise on Morrison Drive shows the Ravenel Bridge in the background on the Charleston peninsula. Rendering/ASD|SKY

At 180 feet, the new Morrison Yard addition also will be the tallest office structure on the Charleston peninsula, according to co-developer Jeff Mixson. That distinction previously went to the eight-story, 125-foot, 22 WestEdge building on the opposite side of the peninsula.

One tenant already is lined up to move into the new office building. The regional law firm of Parker Poe Adams & Bernstein will move from Bank of America Place at 200 Meeting St. into the sixth floor once it's completed next year, Mixson said.

Ashley Cooper, managing partner of the Charlotte-based firm's Charleston office, said the decision to move after about 20 years on Meeting Street will allow the practice to design space for new trends and best needs for the legal industry, including more flexible work space and video conferencing capabilities.

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“It shows our commitment to the Charleston market,” Cooper said. “We were open to anywhere on the peninsula, but this was a unique project that met our needs.”



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Another vendor is expected to be announced soon for the penthouse event space with outdoor seating on the 12th floor.

Floors five through 11 will be leasable office space. A four-story parking deck with 395 spaces will be built adjacent to the structure's north side, and two one-story retail buildings will sit along Morrison Drive.

No retail tenants have been lined up yet, but Mixson said the developers plan to coordinate with the nearby apartment owners for a mix of tenants that he hopes will include a restaurant, fitness facility or bank branch, to name a few.



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The office project is a joint venture of Origin Development Partners of Mount Pleasant, The Keith Corp. of Charlotte and Mixson Properties of Atlanta. Construction is expected to be completed by mid-2022.

The building's amenities will include a rain garden, electric charging stations and courtyard. Additionally, elevators and restrooms will be installed along the western side to shield the building from the afternoon sun and help lower air conditioning costs.

The building also is expected to be the first to obtain a designation from the Sustainability Institute similar to the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification.

"It's a very sustainably designed building," Mixson said.

The open-air plaza beneath the structure also has a purpose. It's not only a gathering place, but it also does not obstruct the waterfront view.



A plaza will be built beneath the 12-story Morrison Yard office building coming to the Charleston peninsula. Morrison Drive is on the left. Rendering/ASD|SKY

“The renderings show the courtyards designed specifically so Charleston doesn’t get walled off with development from the harbor,” Mixson said.

A walkway will also connect the office project with the Ravenel Bridge, and daytime office workers will be allowed to park in part of the 375-space parking deck being built next door for the apartments.

“It’s unlike anything else in Charleston,” said Ken Beuley, chief financial officer and director of development for The Keith Corp.

Beuley is convinced workers will return to office environments once the pandemic is over, even if they choose to work from home a couple of days a week.

“I think it will be different depending on what part of the country you live in,” he said. “I think once the vaccine is administered and herd immunity is behind us, there will be less concentration in high-rise buildings and more on those with about 15 stories or less, a benefit to Southern cities.”



REAL ESTATE

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Mixson, too, believes companies will offer more flexibility for employees on where they will work and said there will be less density of people overall in the workplace.

A representative of Origin Development said the development will offer an alternative to office and retail tenants choosing to set up shop at the north end of the peninsula.

“Morrison Yard will transform a forgotten portion of the Morrison Corridor into a vibrant node of activity that will spur economic development and housing opportunities,” Zach Bearden said.

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Warren Lance Wise covers retail, real estate and Charleston International Airport for The Post and Courier. A graduate of the University of South Carolina, he holds nearly 50 local, state and national awards for journalistic excellence.