

July 25, 2025



Our Town by William Kelly: Partial opening of West Palm Beach's Nora District set for September

 **JULY 25, 2025**

The Nora neighborhood is rapidly taking shape in a former warehouse district north of downtown West Palm Beach, not far from Palm Beach's northern doorstep.

Short for "north of railroad avenue," Nora is a \$1 billion redevelopment designed as a walkable community where people can live, work and play.

The dining, shopping and residential district is the largest planned redevelopment in West Palm Beach since CityPlace opened in October 2000. Located near the entrance to the Flagler Memorial Bridge, Nora spans 40 acres between North Quadrille and Palm Beach Lakes boulevards, and from North Dixie Highway to the Florida East Coast Railway tracks.

Nora will offer restaurants, shops, wellness centers, townhomes, a large apartment complex and a boutique hotel with a large ground-floor restaurant and a rooftop bar and dining overlooking the Intracoastal Waterway.

Plans call for 160,000 square feet of retail with a hospitality focus, including fitness, lifestyle and multiple brand concepts, said Ned Grace, co-founder and managing partner of NDT Development. NDT is

developing Nora in partnership with Place Projects, developer of Miami's Wynwood, and Wheelock Street Capital.

The main retail corridor, North Railroad Avenue, is surfaced in cobblestone and stretches past a collection of 13 buildings, including nine renovated for adaptive use and four new structures designed to complement the older ones.

Grace said it's a charming departure from the cookie-cutter approach to large-scale developments more often seen in Florida.

"This project was so interesting to us because you have the architectural significance of these 1920s buildings, so no two buildings look alike," he told the Palm Beach Civic Association during a July 21 tour of the site.

The first round of shops – a juice bar, bagels, ice cream, a hair salon, and more – is on track to open on a to-be-announced date in September.

The 201-room hotel, still under construction at the north end of the street, is scheduled to open in October 2026.

Offices, condominiums and single-family homes are also in the works, Grace said.

"The entire area just south of Palm Beach Lakes Boulevard will be completely reimaged, with approximately two million square feet of vertical development made up of apartments, condos, office, structured parking, and potentially more hotel [space] as well," he said.

NDT is a developer of the high-end White Elephant hotel, formerly the Bradley Park Hotel in Palm Beach.

Grace said interest in the Nora site began around 2018 when the developers spotted an opportunity to create a "restaurant row" in what was then an under-invested area. That idea blossomed into the ambitious mixed-use concept taking form today.

"We think this will be the commercial destination for the north end of the city," Grace said. "This should be a regional attraction from [Interstate] 95. We will pull the downtown [central business district] traffic ... in addition to that, we're the closest retail destination to Palm Beach island."

Nora's residential development will soon begin and take five or more years to complete.

Grace said the project will generate thousands of jobs for the local economy. He said Nora should also help alleviate the traffic problem in Palm Beach.

"In general, we think we'll pull traffic into this area, which should be good for Palm Beach island," he said.

Palm Beach Town Councilman Lew Crampton agreed, saying Nora will help ease traffic while giving Palm Beach residents another option for an evening on the town.



"I think it's a tremendous development for Palm Beach because the Nora project is going to feature a whole set of attractive clubs and restaurants," Crompton said. "As West Palm Beach develops its own curated attractions, the pressure will come off of Palm Beach to fulfill all those entertainment needs."

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