

## Work starts on 'gateway' to Charleston's WestEdge development

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Plans to build apartments, offices and shops closer to the city's medical district have been floated for years, but for more than a decade, the idea of mixing a research park with a retail corridor remained elusive.

Those plans are now moving closer to reality.

City officials, developers and Medical University of South Carolina administrators formally broke ground Thursday on a nine-story building that will eventually make up the public face of the WestEdge development just above Spring Street.



The building - named 10 WestEdge - is one of three that are now underway for the 22-acre development that's intended at once to draw new talent to the medical university and to bring a sense of cohesion to the mix of hotels, office buildings and fast-food joints north of its campus.

Together, they make up the first wave of construction on the plot of land bounded by Spring, Lockwood Drive, Fishburne Street and Hagood Avenue, which could see about a dozen new buildings go up over the next 15 to 25 years. The three buildings and a new road connecting them represent an investment of about \$300 million and about a quarter of the development's eventual scope, said Michael Maher, CEO of HPF Inc., the nonprofit overseeing development of the site.

Work began along Fishburne this spring on 99 WestEdge - an apartment complex and parking garage - and that should be done next fall. But the two latest buildings, which will be closer to Spring, strike at the project's ambitions.

They'll include apartments, restaurants and a swimming pool with Ashley River views, and they'll mix office space and a life science technology accelerator as well as a Publix supermarket.

Dr. David Cole, MUSC's president, said he was hopeful that the new mixed-use development would help lure researchers and students to the university and biomedical companies to its back yard. As part of that effort, the S.C. Research Authority - the state's high-tech economic development agency - is in talks to open an incubator for startups in one of the buildings.

They'll also make up the most visible portion of the development as commuters pass by on Highway 17 and Spring Street, said John Long of South City Partners, one of the firms developing the project.

Construction on what he called "the gateway to WestEdge" is scheduled to wrap up in the fall of 2018, but more projects are expected to follow as the new district fills in.

