

## **Highline and the Downtown Melbourne Scene**

Even with monthly rents starting at \$1,500 for a studio at the eight-story Highline apartment complex taking shape in downtown Melbourne, Michael Ayers predicts, "I will be surprised if it doesn't fill up immediately" — serving as a catalyst for developers to build additional modern housing projects nearby.

**"I think this is really great for these aerospace companies like [Harris](#) and [\(Northrop\) Grumman](#) and Embraer that are recruiting these younger millennial-Generation Z workers,"** said Ayers, president and chief executive officer of the Melbourne Regional Chamber.

**"These young workers, part of what they're attracted to is a lifestyle and a culture. And they want these types of settings where you can work, live and play all in the same area. When they get home from work, they can park their car and walk down the street and have a coffee, or go out for a drink, or go get dinner, or run to the store,"** Ayers said.

"This is exactly the type of project that Melbourne's needed for years. So it's really exciting to see it finally coming online," he said.



The \$31 million Highline complex may open for tenants in early May, said Libby Shipps, property manager.

**Considered a high-rise by Space Coast standards, the 96-foot building overlooking New Haven Avenue will house 171 studio, one- and two-bedroom apartments. Monthly rents will start at \$1,500, and units will range from 713 to 1,086 square feet (not including balconies).**

Shipps hopes to launch a property website by the end of October, then start accepting tenant applications in January. Already, she said more than 320 people have already contacted Zimmerman Development, the South Patrick Shores developer, about renting a unit.

"We've had an overwhelming amount of people interested. I have a lot of people from Grumman, a lot of people from Boeing, Harris Corp., even as far out as the Cape," Shipps said.

"Which is really quite shocking, that I would get interest from the Cape. But people are so excited about the downtown living. So I will be working closely with those people as well," she said.



This artist's rendering depicts the eight-story Highline development, featuring 171 apartments at the former Melbourne High site on New Haven Avenue. (Photo: Courtesy of Caribeño Architectu)

Downtown Melbourne qualifies as a U.S. Housing and Urban Development low- to moderate-income area. However, the Highline project is spearheading a skyline-shaping building boom:

- **A tower crane soars over the future site of the \$42 million Hotel Melby, an 11-story Tapestry Collection by Hilton boutique hotel.**

Construction has triggered lane closures on Waverly Place and Strawbridge Avenue flanking the property, behind Meg O'Malley's Restaurant & Irish Pub. The hotel may open by the end of next year.

- Just north of downtown, a second construction crane is helping shape the twin 100-foot Paramount Riverfront Condominiums on U.S. 1, just north of Hibiscus Boulevard.

• In July, the Melbourne City Council unanimously approved a site plan for a six-story [Aloft hotel](#) at the old SunTrust Bank property, across New Haven Avenue from Hell 'n Blazes Brewing Co.

A Highline groundbreaking ceremony took place in June 2018. The complex is replacing the long-vacant Melbourne High that operated as a high school and elementary school from 1926-75. The former downtown landmark fell to the wrecking ball in 2014.

This week, workers on scaffolding applied stucco to the east and west Highline exterior walls. Nearby crews bustled with interior build-out, installing plumbing, wiring and air conditioning-heating systems.

Dozens of windows awaited installation in the parking lot. Lumber, piping and coils of tubing laid piled in assorted spots across the building.

Wearing a white hard hat, Marcos Mozdzen stepped onto the second-story swimming pool deck as construction workers buzzed about.

"This is probably the funnest part of the whole project — the gathering place for all the tenants," said Mozdzen, an officer with [Caribeño Architectural Group](#). The Eau Gallie firm designed the urban-styled structure.

"You're going to have a fire pit with a concrete bench around it. You're going to have two summer kitchens set up along this wall: two barbecues. And then you're going to have a pool enclosed in pavers," Mozdzen said, motioning about.

"It's going to have a whole bunch of planters. It's going to look great. There's going to be two shaded aluminum structures with sails. So if you want to catch some sun, you can. If you don't, just step under the shade," he said.





**An artist's rendering of an apartment inside the Highline complex under construction in downtown Melbourne.** (Photo: Caribeño Architectural Group)

Shane Burgman moved to the Space Coast from Virginia Beach in 2011. He is founding chairman of 321 Millennials, and he works as a sales partner with the Carpenter/Kessel Homeselling Team at Dale Sorensen Real Estate.

"I've seen a vast change in the downtown scene. Being an established downtown, they always talk about infrastructure. They talk about restaurants, places to have some fun. And the other component to that algorithm is the housing situation," Burgman said.

"Once you start moving the rent to \$1,500, \$2,000 a month, in Brevard that's the higher echelon of what people are paying. They're definitely targeting a certain demographic, and it's probably all these transplants from the West Coast or from other corporations, whether it's the Lockheeds, the L3 Harris," Burgman said.

"They're targeting people that are making \$60,000 to \$70,000 on the low side," he said.

In a January FLORIDA TODAY interview, Ember & Oak ownership cited Highline as a key catalyst in their \$2 million investment to launch the fine-dining steakhouse. Crews are also

renovating the 1.5-acre former Baptist church property in Highline's shadow, which houses Painting with a Twist.

Melbourne City Hall planners launched an updated downtown parking map and valet service this summer to help motorists navigate public lot closures at the Highline and Hilton construction sites. What's more, the Aloft hotel will eliminate parking at the grassy SunTrust lot, which the city has leased as a public lot since 2009.

Per contract with City Hall, Zimmerman Development will reconstruct the adjacent public parking lot off Melbourne Avenue with 175 spaces, new asphalt, landscaping, lighting and a pedestrian walkway leading past the Henegar Center to New Haven Avenue.

The Highline project will include two parking levels with 220 spaces for tenants and guests. A yet-unspecified ground-floor restaurant with patio seating will also face New Haven Avenue.

*Neale is the South Brevard watchdog reporter at FLORIDA TODAY.*