



Vertical living is no longer a concept that draws perplexed looks. No one has to sell Houstonians on the advantages of the high life, especially not in the wake of Hurricane Harvey. A flurry of high-rise openings over the last few years made power players from River Oaks to Katy aware of the benefits of this lock-and-leave urban lifestyle. Now, a new wave of buildings is raising the stakes — a spectacular view and valet parking is no longer enough. Houston's new cloud-huggers must stand out to make their mark. These next-gen buildings will change how the city looks at the sky.

BY CHRIS BALDWIN

A NEW GENERATION OF ULTRA-AMBITIOUS HOUSTON HIGH-RISES AND MID-RISES RAISES THE CEILING ON THE SKY-HIGH LIFESTYLE.

When it comes to high-rises, most people tend to look up — to gawk at a building stretching toward the clouds. It's instinctive to imagine what life must be like, swaddled in a cocoon of sky-high luxury, literally above it all — this sense of looking up and being able to escape is powerful and almost primal.

Hines director **William Elser**, however, knows it's often just as important to look down the hall. These seemingly innocuous corridors can set a tone for a tower — which is really, if one thinks about it, supposed to be a home first. “That's one of the first things Mr. Hines looks at when he tours a building,” Elser says, referencing **Gerald Hines**, founder, chairman and still very active 91-year-old visionary for the company that bears his name. “He looks down the hallways. It can't look institutional.”

Therefore, Elser and the rest of the team orchestrating the development and build of the **Southmore**, a new 24-story Hines high-rise in the Museum District, made sure that its hallways are not simply long rows of doors. Instead, doorways are recessed, the lighting is muted, and fresh outside air is pumped in.

This kind of attention to detail marks the next wave of high-rises now transforming Houston's skyline — and our way of life. Why does every little detail matter so much now? “It's certainly an arms race,” says Hines director **David Haltom**. “Our competitors are putting out some high-quality product, too, and we need to stay ahead.”

Haltom, who shepherded the newly opened **Aris Market Square** — Hines'

32-story downtown tower — to completion, knows the lines have been drawn. Now it's “May the best towers win.”

Sitting in his own old-school offices near the Galleria, developer **Marvy Finger** notes the escalation with a sense of nostalgia. In many ways, Finger is the godfather of the modern high-rise in Houston, with his then-audacious **One Park Place** heralding a new era with its 2009 opening. “The demands are so much greater from people who live in these buildings now,” he says. “People expect much more. Everyone wants to live in a Class A building [the highest rated]. People who used to live in a Class B building won't accept anything but Class A amenities. Whatever you do, it had better be special in some way.”

The Power of Distinction

Customization rules in this next wave of buildings. No project embodies this more than **The Sophie at Bayou Bend**. This six-story, 39-residence condominium from **Jacob Sudhoff** and **Mirador Group** architect **Jerry Hooker**, offers near-complete customization — which is vital, considering most of its future residents are accustomed to living in nearby elaborate private homes.

When one power couple considered buying at **The Sophie** (a \$1.6 million-and-up proposition), they said they'd only do it if they could have a wine cellar with room for 2,000 bottles. Sudhoff and Hooker had it built into one of the residences. To Hooker, this is the way special buildings should be done — and it's a change long needed in Houston. “All too often, especially in Houston,” Hooker says, “you'll get this decked-out

lobby and a cool façade, but then inside, it's like a generic prison.”

The Land-Hunt Pressure

Finding a prime swath of land for such ambitious developments has become so difficult that making a mistake is not an option. The power brokers behind this new generation of high-rises know that many of these projects are their one shot to get it right.

Hines had to make nine separate land purchases to cobble together a space for **Aris Market Square**. By Elser's calculations — and he's one of Hines' numbers guys, as data driven as any sabermetrics-obsessed baseball GM — the site secured for Hines' **Southmore** high-rise, across from **Asia Society**, is one of only two that could have worked for such a tower in the Museum District. Developer **Jacob Sudhoff** relentlessly, and fruitlessly, pursued a **Rice Village** site for years before taking over a stalled project and reimagining it as **The Moderne**. “There are no do-overs,” Sudhoff says. “We're not going to find a spot like this in **Rice Village** again.” In other words, the pressures centered around this new wave of buildings is intense.

Veteran developers **Robert Bland** and **Derek Darnell** of **Pelican Builders** see **The Wilshire**, a 17-story high-rise in the shadow of **River Oaks District**, and **The Revere at River Oaks**, a nine-story building that caters to **River Oaks** empty nesters, as legacy-type projects. “I really do think these are the best buildings we've ever done,” Bland says. They'd better be. In this next wave of showcase buildings in Houston, expectations are sky-high.

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**RESIDENCES AT
LA COLOMBE D'OR**

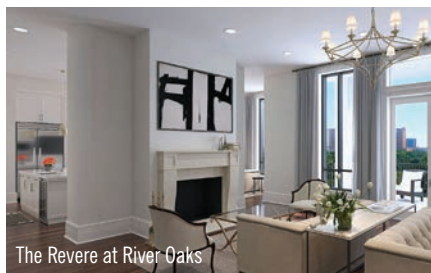
Developer: Hines
Address: 3410 Montrose Boulevard
Completion Date: 2020

Hines may have only been in the multi-family residential segment for six years, but no one can say the company hasn't jumped in full force. Besides having opened both Southmore and Aris high-rises, Hines is taking on a new 34-story tower with 285 luxury apartments that will be connected to the historic La Colombe d'Or hotel. Developed in a joint venture with Steve Zimmerman and sons Dan and Mark, long-time owners of the historic 1923-era La Colombe d'Or, The Residences at La Colombe d'Or will attach to the hotel via an art gallery. The outdoor plaza with fireplace and a second 14,000 square feet of green space make this an exceptional — and historic — high-rise project.

THE REVERE AT RIVER OAKS

Developer: Pelican Builders
Address: 2325 Welch
Completion Date: 2019

Pelican Builders' Robert Bland envisions this 32-unit luxury mid-rise as Houston's version of a Park Avenue palace. Architecture and interiors are classic. It's designed by Kirksey Architecture as an iconic building, with fireplaces and 11-

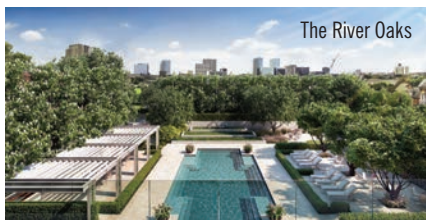


The Revere at River Oaks

foot ceilings standard in all units. Expansive white walls, rather than the floor-to-ceiling-glass approach of many Houston high-rise buildings, appeal to serious art collectors. Like a number of next-wave buildings, The Revere is geared toward attracting current Houstonians rather than transplants. "We expect that the majority of our residents will come from a five-mile radius from the property," Bland says. These are apartments built for people used to living in very large homes. The smallest units measure in at 2,621 for the Brentwood unit to more than 4,000 square feet for the Inverness plan.



The Revere at River Oaks



The River Oaks

THE RIVER OAKS

Developer: Richard Leibovitch, Arel Capital

Address: 3433 Westheimer Road
Completed Date: Early 2018

When the mailroom's been obsessed over — and made into "the best mailroom in all of Houston, maybe anywhere," in developer Richard Leibovitch's words — you know the \$10 million penthouses and garden townhomes will be showstoppers. With this high-rise, which converted rather than demolished the 17-story River Oaks Luxury Apartments that stood on this land, the anticipation is real. "This is my baby," Leibovitch says. "We've done a number of buildings in New York, but this is truly special. This is the one where I'm going to come back in 50 years and say, 'We built that.'" Designed by EDI International and Rottet Group, with landscape architects McDugald-Steele, and marketed by Sudhoff Companies, the building has a staggering 13,229-square-foot penthouse, with another coming in at 6,541 square feet; three-bedroom garden residences; and one-, two-, and three-bedroom tower apartments.



The Sophie at Bayou Bend

THE SOPHIE AT BAYOU BEND

Developer: Stolz Partners
Address: 6017 Memorial Drive
Completion Date: Fall 2018

Even the building's name is a nod to sophistication — the driving force of architect Jerry Hooker's (Mirador Group) vision that's inspired by icons ranging from Chanel's little black dress to the classic New York apartment houses of Rosario Candela and Robert Stern. But the most striking feature of The Sophie is that every residence has a private outdoor living space with its own summer kitchen, grill and fireplace, some as large as 1,000 square feet. "This is certainly the first condo project in Houston, and maybe anywhere, where everyone has a private outdoor living space," Hooker says. "These are 42 custom homes."



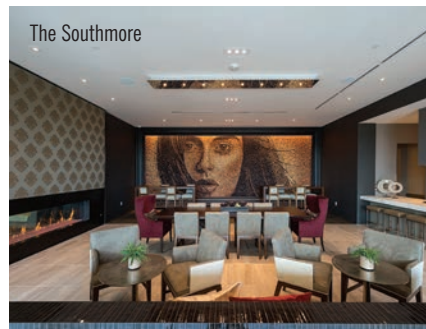
The Sophie at Bayou Bend

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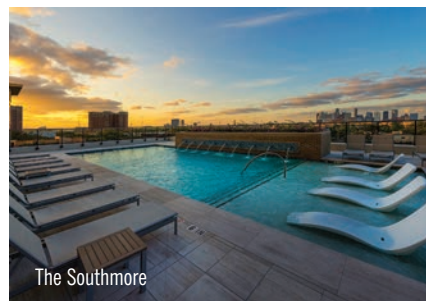
THE SOUTHMORE

Developer: Hines
Address: 5280 Caroline Street
Completion Date: Open now

To say no expense was spared on this 24-story tower, which takes design cues from its stunning Asia Society neighbor, is an understatement. Hines spent more than a million dollars just to make sure its parking garage is hidden behind a limestone façade. Italian cabinetry is standard (as it is at Hines' Aris), and wraparound floor-to-ceiling windows and corner glass give many units dramatic views of the city on three sides. A 10,000-square-foot private Japanese-style park keeps things green and minimal, and there's also a sports lounge with shuffleboard and a poker table. "We wanted to make it a peaceful escape," Elser says. During Hurricane Harvey, the few residents who had moved into the recently opened building and the staff hunkered down in the tower's Screening Room to watch movies on an 80-inch screen. A tenant to fill a 3,000-square-foot ground-floor restaurant is being pursued..



The Southmore



The Southmore