

# Construction runs around the clock on Norfolk's future hotel and conference center

- By Katherine Hafner  
The Virginian-Pilot
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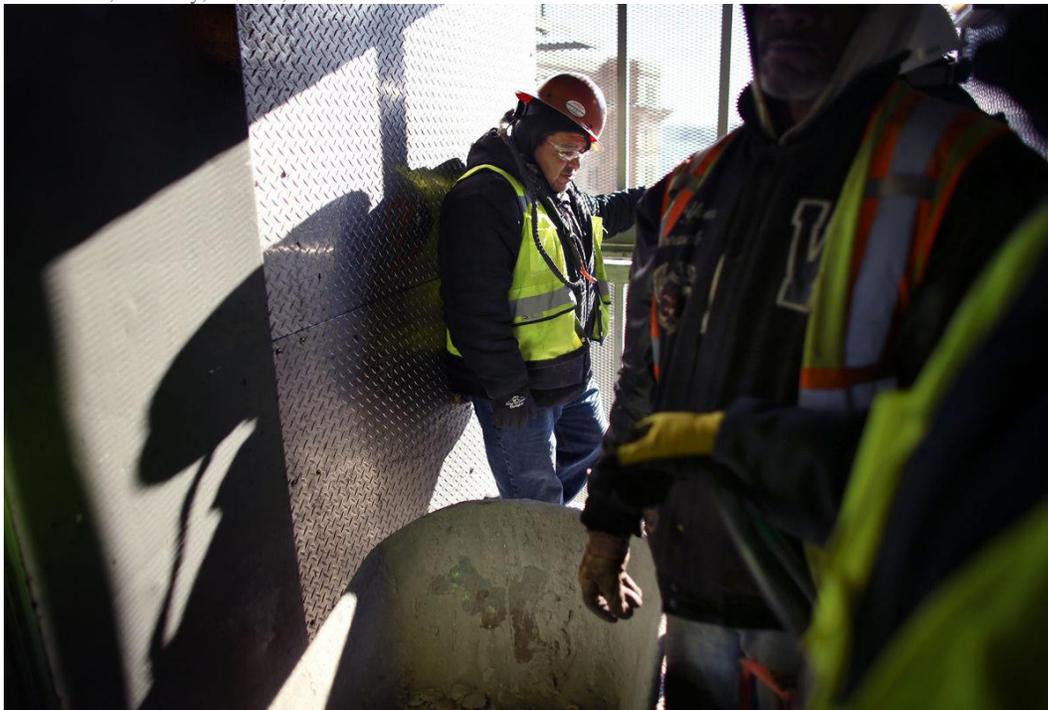
- Stephen M. Katz | The Virginian-Pilot

Construction workers install glass on the curtain wall of the atrium of The Main, Norfolk's future hotel and conference center, Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2016.



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A construction worker readies the glass framing for the curtain wall of the atrium of The Main, Norfolk's future hotel and conference center, Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2016.



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Construction workers ride the lift to the upper floors of The Main, Norfolk's future hotel and conference center, Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2016.



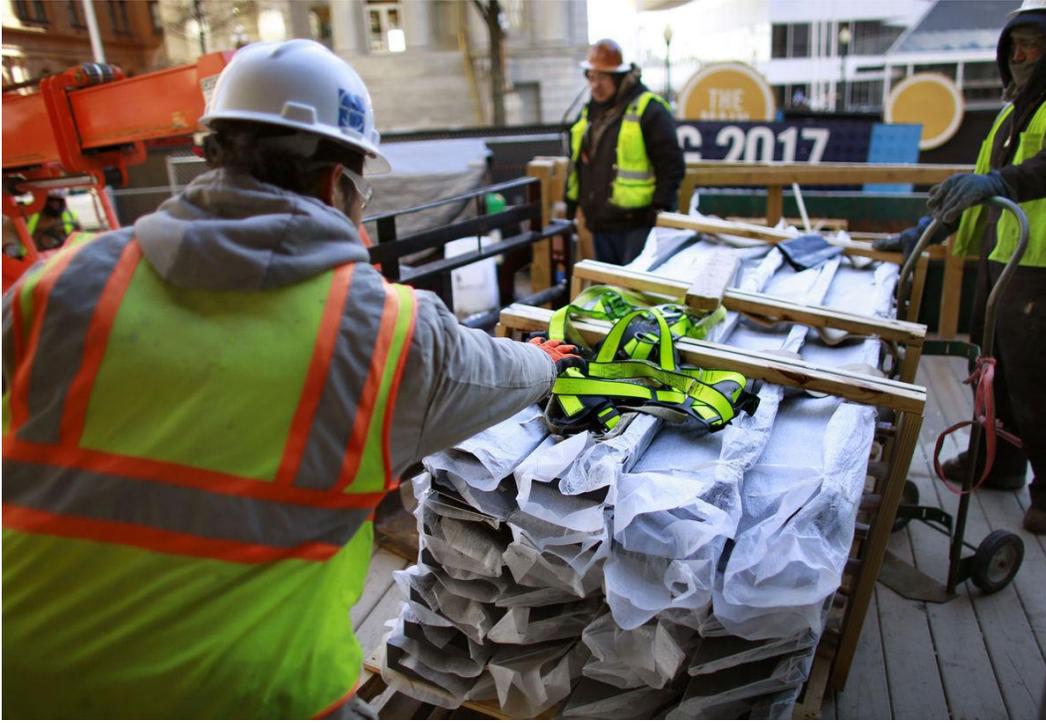
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Jason Potts, an electrician with Watson Electrical, works on the wiring of a guest room on the sixth floor of The Main, Norfolk's future hotel and conference center, Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2016.



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With some crews working into the night, construction continues on The Main, Norfolk's future hotel and conference center, Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2016.



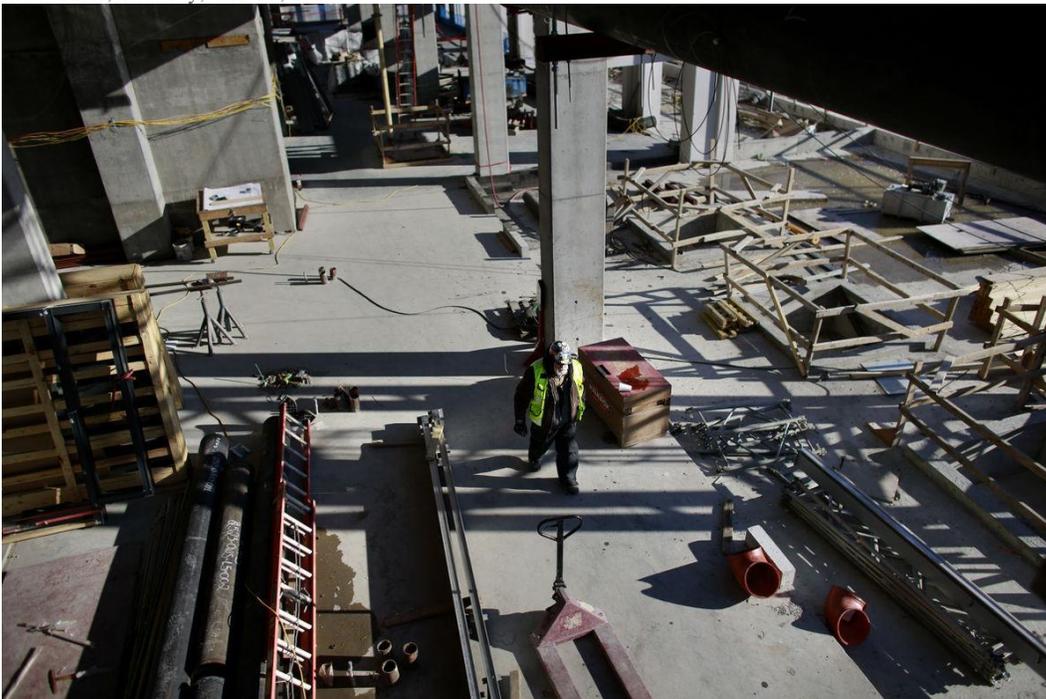
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Construction workers install glass on the curtain wall of the atrium of The Main, Norfolk's future hotel and conference center, Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2016.



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Construction workers ready building materials to be lifted to higher floors of the atrium of The Main, Norfolk's future hotel and conference center, Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2016.



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NORFOLK

The sun shines on the Elizabeth River on a January day, making for a beautiful view from the 10th floor of a new Norfolk hotel.

But the hotel has no walls yet, and the sunny view is filtered through a freight elevator as it carries several workers clad in hard hats and bright vests to where they're laying the groundwork for future guestrooms.

The Main, a hotel and conference center at Main and Granby streets downtown, is set to be completed and [open early next year](#). [According to Pilot archives](#), the city is contributing about \$103 million – more than 60 percent of the total cost of the project, run by developer Gold Key | PHR Hotels & Resorts.

The 23-story Hilton hotel will have 300 guestrooms, two ballrooms, two presidential suites, a bar, an indoor pool, a lounge and more.

Right now, however, the site is alive with sparks and abuzz with the sounds of hammer drills. Construction workers labor around the clock, with one team working 6 a.m. to late afternoon, and another picking up from 6 p.m. to 4 a.m.

Gary Franks, superintendent for W.M. Jordan Co., stands in what will be a queen-size guestroom, currently littered with paint buckets and stray tubes. The frame of a bathtub is in the shadowy corner of what will be a bathroom.

He points to the door to the next room. "This'll be a double queen," he says as what will be a walk-in shower comes into view.

Moving downward level by level, the design of the structure takes shape. Here, a gap in the ground will be an indoor pool and lounge; there, a large space will become a grand ballroom. Everywhere, exposed light fixtures hang from the ceiling and metal studs form

the rooms. As the wind blows through on a blustery day, men borne up by ladders work to install glass window panels.

On the first floor, where workers often pass through on their way in or out, guests will eventually dine at an upscale restaurant and bar.

Puddles are everywhere, but workers don't seem fazed. Anticipating or dealing with the aftermath of weather events is a difficulty, but one they're used to dealing with.

If we were to wait for everything to be dry, you'd never get anything done," said Mike Dubose, project manager for W.M. Jordan. "It's a daily challenge."

Many workers also said the site is a relatively small one, considering all the work that must be done. As a high-rise, it's a big building in a small space. Everyone in the myriad lines of work faces different challenges.

"What's hard is getting the concrete up into the building," says Joe Paciga, who leads the concrete team of around 45.

For Brandon Armstrong, a project engineer who has been on the job for only a couple weeks, the hardest part is catching up.

"When you start out and there are piles on the ground, that's the hardest part. Then you start doing concrete work and that's the hardest part," said Franks, who's been in the business for more than three decades. "It's coordinating it all together. ... It's like a jigsaw puzzle."

The W.M. Jordan folks meet with surrounding businesses once a month and say they haven't gotten many noise complaints.

"We try to frequent local businesses, too," Franks said with a grin. "Jimmy John's, Granby Street Pizza ..."

And amid it all, the deadline is looming just a year away. Says Dubose: “The schedule is the lifeblood of the work.”

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