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EpiCentre begins to take shape

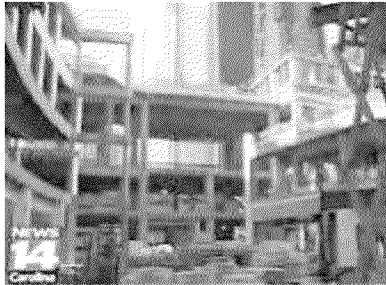
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By: Kate Gaier

CHARLOTTE -- Uptown visitors will have a new place to shop, eat and park.

It may be hard to picture but project developer Afshin Ghazi says uptown's EpiCentre is in its final stages.

"It's exciting. It's been a dream and a work in progress for so long that it's kind of surreal that it's at the finish line now," he said.



Once finished, the \$300 million, 53-story-tall complex will offer retail, restaurants, entertainment venues, office space, 400 condos and a 175-room hotel.

Ghazi says there have been setbacks along the way but the building is almost complete. By January or February, the tower - located at the corner of Fourth and College streets, where the old convention center once stood -- should be filled with bars and restaurants.

With a few more finishing touches, a parking garage is set to open in a matter of weeks, marking the EpiCentre's first completed project.

"Anything we can do to continue to grow our parking inventory, because uptown right now is the tightest office market in the United States," said Michael Smith, president of Center City Partners. "Our vacancy is below 3 percent, that brings a lot of people, a lot of cars."

Once finished, the \$300 million, 53-story-tall complex will offer retail, restaurants, entertainment venues, office space, 400 condos and a 175-room hotel.

"We've turned over our top floors to our respective partners on the hotel and residential side and they've started construction as well," said Ghazi.

Once complete, the EpiCentre is expected to be the second tallest tower in uptown Charlotte.

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