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# First phase of transformative, \$110M Bala Cynwyd project opens

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Progress is being made at a \$110 million mixed-use development that has the potential to transform Lower Merion's Bala Village.

The first apartment building has been completed and another one is underway. Both are part of a bigger plan Cross Properties is executing along Union Avenue and Bala Avenue and dubbed the NoBa District.

The Kelly, a four-story, 140,000-square-foot building with 109 apartments, is perched on a hill at 10 Union Ave. has just a few renters that have moved in. The project also a 167-vehicle parking garage. It is the first of three phases of NoBa and at build out, it will have a total of 258 apartments, 350 parking spaces, 10,000 square feet of retail space and 7,000 square feet of coworking space.

The second phase is underway across the street from the Kelly. That building is called the Grant and involves the construction of a building with 66 apartments and the coworking space.

The third phase, called the Mayer, is schedule to get underway during the next 60 to 90 days along Bala Avenue. It will have 83 apartments. "That's going to be more complicated," said [Kevin Michals](#), managing partners at Cross.



NATALIE KOSTELNI

The Grant, an apartment complex under development, and the Kelly, an apartment building that has been constructed as part of Cross Properties' NoBa District in Bala Cynwyd.

The Mayer will involve tearing down several structures along the 200 block of Bala Avenue, a dense commercial corridor, and constructing a new building. That project is expected to take about 18 months to complete.

Its 10,000 square feet of retail space will be turned into a food hall with six to eight restaurants. Cross bought a liquor license for that space and it will apply to the multiple eateries. There will also be indoor and outdoor dining, which will help activate Bala Avenue.

Bala Avenue sits between City and Montgomery avenues and has become a focus for Lower Merion. For some time, it needed improved lighting, connectivity and landscaping as well as ways to make it more pedestrian friendly. The City Avenue Special Services District helped improve those issues but it still lagged.

Several properties were dormant and cast a pall over the area. The theater closed in 2014 and dampened further activity the street had experienced over the years.

Around 2017, Cross Properties began to focus on Bala Avenue. The real estate company had hoped to buy the theater as part of its plans to revitalize the area and had borrowed names from Hollywood for each of its projects. The real estate company kept the names even though it wasn't able to strike a deal to buy the theater. It ended up buying and assembling 15 properties to make way for NoBa.

Cross Properties has completed three other apartment projects in that general area — the Palmer in Wynnewood, the Square in Ardmore and the Dane just over the boarder in Philadelphia. Like many communities, Lower Merion has seen an influx of new apartments in recent years.

**Natalie Kostelni**

Reporter

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