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Commercial Real Estate

What's keeping this Nashville architect busy? Two words: Luxury hospitality



The Pendry Nashville will rise 30 stories in the Paseo South Gulch development.

PICTURY/SOMERAROAD



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Story Highlights



- Luxury hospitality projects are keeping Nashville's largest architecture firm busy.
- ESa is designing Pendry Nashville and the Nashville Edition hotel, among others.
- Ryan Terrell is design manager at ESa.

Nashville is coming off a significant slowdown in new development, and there's one type of project that's leading the charge: luxury hospitality.

ESa, Nashville's largest architecture firm, is [designing many of the city's](#) newest luxury high-rise projects like [Pendry Nashville](#) and [Pendry Nashville Residences](#), the [Nashville Edition hotel](#) and condo tower and a new Courtyard by Marriott Hotel in the Gulch.

Ryan Terrell, design manager at ESa, says design work for luxury hospitality projects is what has kept them as busy as ever over the last three years despite high interest rates, financing challenges and a shaky economic environment that has posed challenges for other commercial real estate sectors.

Here's why Terrell doesn't see luxury development slowing down in Music City, and what he expects to see in 2026.

How did 2025 defy your expectations?

I feel like it met expectations and a little more. I know people have been talking about post-Covid and this idea of navigating the fog, but things are still moving. Projects that we had in the pipeline post-Covid are coming to fruition.

A good example of that is the Pendry hotel that broke ground this year and is moving along, and a few other hospitality projects. There's hope there. I feel like there's good momentum that we're going to carry forward into 2026.

Nashville saw a pretty significant slowdown in new development in 2022 and 2023. Was the pace of ESA's work affected in a similar way?

Not really, honestly. What's kept us busy is hospitality work. There's no denying it. It's definitely what's in demand right now in Nashville. It's what's kept us the busiest over the past three years.

What other types projects are you keeping an eye on in Nashville?

Bigger picture, it's exciting to see the buzz around East Bank development, especially with [the TPAC renderings](#) that were released not that long ago. You [hear about Oracle](#). We're excited about it, and it's still something we're tracking.

For me, the places I want to visit and what I like to see here in terms of new product type are mixed-use focused neighborhoods. Specifically, Wedgewood-Houston, Germantown, around Neuhoff. I love to see that mix of old and new in carefully curated retail. I think another demonstration of that is Paseo South Gulch. It's good to work with developers who have that vision and are able to execute on carefully curated retail, stuff that feels and is from Nashville, but also tenants that speaks to a larger, national identity in terms of getting [an Equinox](#), a Pendry, but balanced with [Catbird Seat](#) and Maiz de la Vida. I like to see those symbiotic relationships and compromise of taking on the new as Nashville grows but also holding on to what makes it Nashville.

When you're designing projects, what is the city looking for before giving approval?

The [planning department] wants active storefronts. They want active use on the ground level. The box they need to check for us is that the ground level feels open, active, and it's not just a leftover fitness space that checks a box.

You said that hospitality projects are what have kept you busy. Do you expect that to maintain being the majority of your work in 2026?

I think Nashville's pipeline is luxury, and it's still hospitality. It's still for-sale luxury and hospitality – those two things together and separately. For us, in terms of what's going on right now, the [Pendry's under construction](#), the [1221 Grundy \[hotel\] project](#), the Edition hotel.



A rendering of the penthouse living room
DBOX



We typically get the first phone call for these projects. There's stuff being built, but then they're thinking about what's next, and that's one of the more exciting parts of our jobs is to be exposed to the project that early. There are several projects that we have that aren't yet public, but hopefully next year will be announced.

It sounds like you still have a lot of developments to work on, but has the length of the development process changed at all?

That is kind of a moving target. Nine or so years ago, it was a speed that was almost impossible to keep up with. I feel like now, even though projects are still being built, it's taking a little longer to secure the funding from a developer standpoint – that's what's slowed it down a little bit. But it's helped us kind of catch our breath.

What is the first question you want answered in 2026?

For me, it's "What does the city need? What do these neighborhoods really need?" I think with the slowing down of some of these timelines and schedules, it's a benefit for us to really think about what does it needs, what are we hearing from the community groups, from the planning department, from colleagues. I feel like that's something that's in our control, and it's a question we need to continually ask ourselves as the evolution unfolds.