

SKY HIGH

# Florida's tallest tower will be a vertical theme park for gravity-defying fun

By SYDNEY FRANKLIN • November 5, 2018



Set within the Biscayne Bay, SkyRise Miami will be the city's new vertical theme park once complete in 2023.  
(Courtesy Arquitectonica)

Florida's soon-to-be tallest building, [SkyRise Miami](#), is on track to becoming the country's sole vertical theme park, complete with a dramatic sloping outer wall that will offer thrill-seekers the option to try gravity-defying stunts. After years of setbacks and legal controversy, the 1,000-foot-tall building—like something straight out of a *Mission Impossible* movie—will tower over the edge of Biscayne Bay by 2023.

According to [Building Design + Construction](#), the project was designed by [Arquitectonica](#) and will begin construction early next year on a small piece of land just outside of downtown [Miami](#). Local firms Berkowitz Development Group and Plaza Construction will lead the build-out alongside a hefty team of partners including structural engineers Magnusson Klemencic Associates, exhibition designers gsmprjct<sup>o</sup>, and engineering consultants Cosentini Associates and DVS.



Featuring attractions like the SkyDrop, SkyPlunge, and Skyglide, the 1,000-foot-tall tower will offer thrill seekers room to fly. (Courtesy Arquitectonica)

Composed of 30,000 tons of structural steel, SkyRise will house several observation decks that will boast unfiltered views of Miami, and will serve as an entertainment and retail complex with restaurants, nightclubs, a ballroom, and boardrooms for rent. Among its many offerings will be the Flying Theater, inspired by the Soarin' ride at Epcot in Disney World, the SkyPlunge for base-jumpers, and the Skydrop, which drops riders elevator-style 540 feet at speeds of up to 95 miles per hour.

SkyRise will also feature a zero-gravity tunnel, a transparent slide that loops outside the building, as well as a clear skydeck that cantilevers off the structure. The facility will be operated by Legends, a sports and entertainment management company owned by the Dallas Cowboys and New York Yankees.



The building features a near 500-foot podium that adds to the dramatic design of the structure. (Courtesy Arquitectonica)

Among the city's handful of mega-projects in Coconut Grove and downtown Miami, SkyRise is one of the most ambitious and most politically-troubled structures in development. Per [The Real Deal](#), the building was approved by the city commission and local voters in the August 2014 primary election, despite opposition regarding the project's competitive bid process. The Florida Supreme Court swooped in the following year to stop the complaint and effectively allow the project to move forward.

Not only is the tower's planned construction a breakthrough for the developers and the project's many supporters, the design itself is unprecedented. The teams at Berkowitz and Arquitectonica told *BD+C* that they plan to build it with concrete in addition to the structural steel—a combination that hasn't been done before in South Florida. Given its small footprint with the bay, the building will also have to withstand up to 186 mile-per-hour winds during [hurricane season](#). The engineering for the tower alone, much like the attractions inside, must be groundbreaking for it to stay afloat.



While many futuristic-looking high-rises are going up in Miami right now, SkyRise will be among the few that are solely dedicated to commercial or entertainment purposes.  
(Courtesy Arquitectonica)

Many of the upcoming residential and commercial enclaves in Miami, especially those sitting directly on its waterfront, pose the same challenges for their developers and architects. Merging (literal) high design with resiliency efforts is a hot-button issue for coastal communities across the U.S. and Southern Florida. With name-brand firms like [Bjarke Ingels Group](#), [OMA](#), and [Zaha Hadid Architects](#) taking on larger developments in Miami, other-worldly designs are poised to not only propel Miami as an architectural attraction but also to support the city's efforts to disaster-proof all of its latest urban advances from future storms.