

Real estate partnership turns founders' vision into Durham's newest STEM school

Civic Builders and Great Schools North Carolina partner with Carolina Collegiate to launch a growing public charter high school in the Triangle

DURHAM, NC, UNITED STATES, October 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Carolina Collegiate High School](#) opened its doors to its inaugural class this fall, bringing a new STEM-focused public charter high school to Durham through a partnership among the school's leaders, [Great Schools North Carolina \(GSNC\)](#) and [Civic Builders](#).



Carolina Collegiate High School's new Durham campus at 100 Capitola Drive, developed in partnership with Civic Builders and Great Schools North Carolina.

The collaboration brought together the complementary resources needed to launch and grow a new school: an ambitious academic vision from Carolina Collegiate's founders, early-stage investment and leadership support from GSNC, and the real estate expertise and capital delivered by Civic Builders to create a facility that can grow alongside the school.

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The milestone will be formally celebrated on Oct. 6 with a ribbon-cutting at Carolina Collegiate's Durham campus. To mark the school's first academic year, this event will recognize the students, families, educators, community members and partners who helped bring the school from concept to completion.

Carolina Collegiate was created to broaden access to globally competitive STEM education for students across the region. The school opened with a ninth-grade class and

plans to add a grade each year, ultimately serving about 600 students in grades 9-12 at full scale. Its educational model emphasizes rigorous academics, innovative teaching and learning, and a student body reflective of the diverse communities the school serves.

Carolina Collegiate's founders received early support through GSNC, which invests in promising education leaders and schools across the state. As a recipient of the organization's Startup Grant, Carolina Collegiate received startup funding and strategic support as the school moved from vision toward opening.

"Opening a new public school takes more than a great vision," said Madeline Hannigan, executive director of Great Schools North Carolina. "It takes the resources and persistence to turn that vision into a high-quality, sustainable school that families can trust and students can thrive in. We're proud to have played a part in helping Carolina Collegiate reach this moment and expand access to another high-quality public school option for families in Durham."



Students learn inside Carolina Collegiate High School during the school's inaugural academic year in Durham, North Carolina.

As Carolina Collegiate prepared to launch, Civic Builders partnered with GSNC and the school to address one of the most significant hurdles facing new charter schools: securing a high-quality, financially sustainable facility that could accommodate long-term growth.

Civic Builders acquired the property at 100 Capitola Drive and is leading a nearly \$13.8 million, multiphase renovation and adaptive reuse of the three-story, 65,568-square-foot former office building into Carolina Collegiate's long-term campus. The first phase was completed in time for the 2026-27 school year, with additional renovation planned over the next two years as the school adds grades and enrollment. Civic's turnkey development structure also provides Carolina Collegiate with a pathway to ultimately purchase the facility.

The project marks Civic Builders' first school development in North Carolina, expanding the nonprofit's work to remove real estate barriers for mission-driven public charter schools.

"Carolina Collegiate's founders had a compelling idea for students in the Triangle, and Great Schools North Carolina backed it early. Civic was able to bring the real estate and capital expertise needed to help move it across the finish line," said David Umansky, co-founder and CEO of Civic Builders. "Bringing a new school to life takes vision, courage and collaboration. We're proud that our first project in North Carolina reflects that kind of shared commitment, and even more proud to see students learning here today."

For Carolina Collegiate's founding team, the opening represents the culmination of years spent developing a school designed around what students will need to succeed in college, careers and a rapidly changing world.

"For years, Carolina Collegiate existed as an idea of what high school could be for students in this community," said Joey Webb, co-founder and executive director of Carolina Collegiate High School. "Now, we get to walk these halls and see our founding students learning, building relationships and beginning to make this school their own. Great Schools North Carolina believed in what we were building early, and Civic Builders helped us create a permanent home where it can grow. Most of all, I'm excited about what this school and this campus will make possible for our students in the years ahead."

Financing for the project was provided by Durham-based Self-Help Credit Union, supporting the phased renovation of the campus. The project team also includes DTW Architects & Planners Ltd.; JD Beam Inc.; Edmundson Engineers; and Morningstar Law Group.

Together, Carolina Collegiate, Great Schools North Carolina, Civic Builders and the project's financing and development partners have created a foundation designed not only for the school's first year, but for its growth in the years ahead.

About Civic Builders:

Civic Builders is the nation's leading nonprofit lender and developer of public charter schools. Since 2002, the organization has invested more than \$2.2 billion into over 100 schools, bringing high-quality educational opportunities to more than 55,000 students annually. For more information about Civic Builders, visit civicbuilders.org or follow along on LinkedIn and Instagram.

About GSNC:

Great Schools North Carolina (GSNC) works to ensure that every family in North Carolina has access to high-quality public schools that fit their child's needs. Families want their children to grow into confident, capable adults with fulfilling lives, but too often, the public school options available to them do not reflect how differently children learn or what families need to thrive. GSNC helps bridge that gap by supporting school leaders and strengthening the conditions that make great public education options possible.

As a grantmaking organization and strategic partner, GSNC invests in school leaders and removes barriers that limit school quality and sustainability, helping bring strong public school options within reach for more families across the state, especially those who have historically had limited access. By supporting leadership, building capacity and aligning partners and policymakers around what works for students, GSNC plays a critical role in strengthening the

public school ecosystem so that more excellent options are available, and schools have the resources they need to deliver strong, consistent learning experiences for students. Learn more at greatschoolsnc.org.

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