

# Atop the Hub, a new View will open next month

The observatory on the top floors of the Prudential Tower aims to give a fuller view of Boston

By [Catherine Carlock](#) Globe Staff, Updated May 23, 2023, 43 minutes ago



The new Prudential sign with individual, illuminated letters replacing what had been single signs. View Boston, the new observatory on top of the Prudential tower where Top of the Hub used to be, has three levels: "The View" on the 52nd floor, with an elevated viewing platform called "The Lookout"; "The Cloud Terrace" on the 51st floor, with a 360-degree open air roof deck, and an indoor/outdoor cocktail lounge called Stratus; and "The City" on the 50th floor, with a variety of interactive exhibits, including an immersive theater. LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

For decades, Top of the Hub was [one of Boston's go-to special-occasion restaurants](#), where countless diners celebrated graduations, anniversaries, and other milestones over plates of foie gras and seafood cioppino while taking in skyline views.

The restaurant's lease ended in early 2020 — just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic — and Boston Properties, which owns the Prudential Tower that the Top of the Hub topped, [chose not to renew it](#). Instead, the firm wanted to take both the restaurant on the 52nd floor and the Skywalk Observatory two floors beneath it and [reinvigorate the space](#).

“The restaurant served a slice of life. We just thought we could do more,” said Bryan Koop, who leads Boston Properties operations here.

### **The view from the 52nd floor of the Prudential Center, 2020 versus today**

After the Top of the Hub restaurant closed just before the pandemic, Boston Properties went about redeveloping the space, which is now known as View Boston.



Photo credits: left, Erin Clark/Globe Staff; right, Lane Turner/Globe Staff

 Interactive content by Flourish

Now, more than three years later, the result is View Boston, an observatory, open-air terrace and immersive tour through the city’s nearly two dozen neighborhoods spanning the top three floors of the Prudential Tower. [The project cost more than \\$182 million to develop](#) — including upgrades to buildingwide mechanical systems in the top floors — according to a recent securities filing, and opens to the public on June 15.

It’s a far grander take on the former Skywalk Observatory, which had been by far the highest publicly accessible point in the city since the observatory at the John Hancock Tower (now called 200 Clarendon) shuttered following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. City officials called for observatories in their initial request for proposals for what would become the [soon-to-open Winthrop Center](#), but winning developers Millennium Partners proposed a multistory public space on the ground floor instead.

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The ticketing and entrance area is an easily accessible location near the center of the Prudential shopping mall. LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

While planning View Boston, the Boston Properties development team toured observatories and across the United States multiple times, from New York to Chicago to Seattle, along with experiential attractions including Walt Disney World's Epcot and the Museum of Ice Cream. The team went through nearly a dozen visions of the space, said Katie Ownes, senior

construction manager with Boston Properties.

Tickets start at \$34.99 for adults, with a \$6 discount for children ages 6 to 12, while children 5 and under are free. Patrons enter a dedicated View Boston entrance in the Pru's central retail corridor (formerly a Microsoft Store that shuttered during the pandemic), then take escalators down to a security zone and waiting area. A dedicated elevator then whisks them to the 52nd floor, a soaring space with 24-foot floor-to-ceiling wraparound windows showcasing panoramic views of the whole city.



Visitors will descend escalators to access the elevator ride to the top. LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

The airy observatory also features multiple metal sculptures designed to be touched, so those with visibility impairments can feel and see the landmarks the observatory windows overlook. Designed in partnership with the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, the sculptures range from the pointed turrets of Trinity Church in Copley Square to the smooth dome of the Hatch Shell on the Charles River Esplanade.

“We wanted this to be as inclusive as possible, for families especially,” said Rebecca Stoddard, vice president of marketing for Boston Properties.

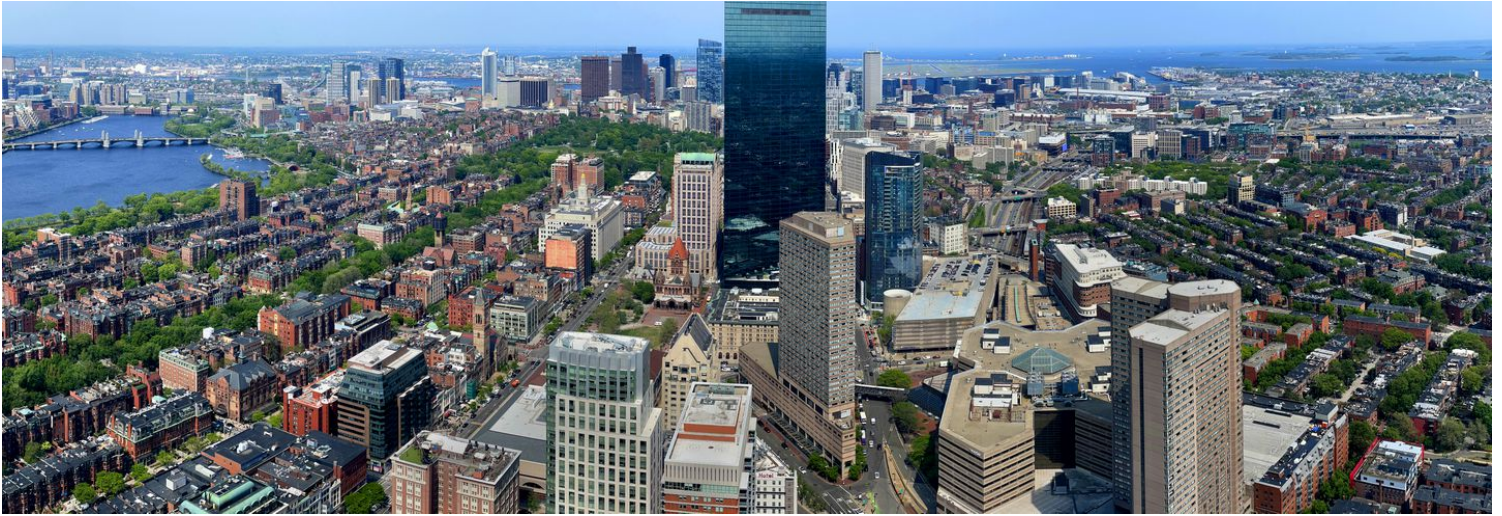
One story down stands an open-air terrace, encased in glass that wraps all the way around the building — though there are some slight gaps to allow for wind, water, and weather — with the Prudential signage towering above. The terrace comes with its own dedicated window-washing system that runs on tracks beneath the wooden slatted floor. Stratus, a cocktail bar serving

small bites, will have indoor and outdoor seating on the terrace.

Inside, the city exploration continues, with a large swivel interactive touchscreen showing patrons what part of the city they're overlooking, and where they can explore. Visitors can select spots that intrigue them and create a customized itinerary for however long they're in the city. The highlights include traditional tourist destinations — the Boston Tea Party Ships and Museum, or the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum — but give more of a locals' eye view too, highlighting landmarks such as the Rainbow Swash designed by Corita Kent on the National Grid gas tank in Dorchester, or the Class of 1959 Chapel at Harvard Business School in Allston.



Rebecca Stoddard, vice president of marketing at Boston Properties, walks out on the deck of "The Cloud Terrace," an outdoor wraparound platform on the Pru's 51st floor. LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF



A panorama photograph made with an iPhone shows a view visitors can expect of the Back Bay, Charles River, 200 Clarendon (formerly the John Hancock Tower), and more. LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

Down one more flight of stairs is a host of interactive experiences, including a striking model room dubbed Boston 365, and Open Doors, a 270-degree theater showcasing some more local flavor, including Beacon Hill on Halloween, Chinese New Year celebrations, and going out on the field at Fenway Park. A wall of 14 megasize touch screens lets visitors search for what they're interested in by topic — breweries and distilleries, architecture, entertainment — but also includes interactive games just at kids' heights.

Creating a space that both locals and visitors could enjoy was important to the Boston Properties team, Stoddard said.

“What people were worried about losing and missing was the place where the memory was created. It wasn't necessarily: ‘I miss that pasta dish; I miss that bar.’ It was: ‘I went to my graduation dinner here with my grandparents,’” Stoddard said. “And when we developed View Boston, we thought: ‘we can preserve the memories.’”

“We can make more,” Koop added.



An interactive 3-D model of the city with a multimedia show gives visitors a detailed view of Boston. LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF



Bryan Koop, who leads Boston Properties' local operations, looks over the interactive model of the city at View Boston. LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF





Sarah Shields, Boston Properties' marketing manager, watches a film of a family visiting Boston landmarks in View Boston's 270-degree immersive theater. LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

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