

# Comprehensive Cost Estimate: 40,000 SF, 45-Unit Amenity-Rich Motel in Franklin, North Carolina

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## Executive Summary of Estimated Project Costs

### 1.1 Project Overview

This report provides a high-level cost estimate for the development of a new two-story, 40,000 square foot (SF) mid-tier motel located in Franklin, Macon County, North Carolina. The estimate encompasses most anticipated costs from initial site work through to final furnishing, excluding only the cost of land acquisition.

The scope of the project is based on a 45-unit configuration (28 singles, 17 suites) and a comprehensive suite of amenities including a lobby, a 60-capacity dining room with a professional kitchen, a bar, two elevators, a theater, a workout room, a salon, a small shop, and offices. This estimate is prepared as a comprehensive financial planning tool for developers, investors, and lenders.

### 1.2 Total Estimated Project Cost (Excluding Land)

The total estimated cost to complete the project is **\$11,852,000**. This all-in figure translates to a comprehensive development cost of approximately **\$296 per square foot or \$263,377 per room**.

Note that according to the [HVS U.S. Hotel Development Cost Survey for 2025](#) places the cost per key for a limited-service motel at **\$167,048 per key or \$7,517,160**; and **\$265,692 per key** for an upscale extended-stay motel. A key differentiator between a limited-service motel and an upscale extended-stay motel is having a **professional kitchen and dining** versus just a breakfast area. The later figure includes the professional kitchen; based on the potential of a hybrid Independent Living facility, the cost for the propose development are more in line with this estimate. **Cost will depend on the service provided.**

The total cost is allocated across four primary categories: Core Building Construction (Hard Costs), Site Development, Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment (FFE), and a combination of Soft Costs and Project Contingency.

### 1.3 Key Assumptions and Methodological Approach

The cost estimation methodology is rooted in a robust, multi-step process designed to provide a high degree of accuracy for the specified location and project timeline. The process began by establishing a baseline construction cost using 2019 RSMeans data for a 2-3 story motel, a widely accepted industry benchmark.<sup>1</sup>

This baseline was then escalated to reflect current 2025 market conditions, accounting for significant post-pandemic inflation in both materials and labor.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, a location adjustment factor was applied to localize the national average costs to the specific economic environment of Western North Carolina, using the nearby Asheville market as a proxy.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, high-precision local data, including municipal fee schedules for Macon County and the Town of Franklin, were incorporated to replace generalized estimates with definitive costs where available.<sup>5</sup>

*Disclaimer: these figures are just an exploratory exercise to identify potential costs and is not by any means exhaustive . Hard numbers should come from construction contractors, civil engineers, and architects licensed in North Carolina and specializing in hotel development.*

### 1.4 Summary of Key Findings and Cost Drivers

The analysis reveals that the Core Building Construction and associated contractor fees represent the largest portion of the budget, accounting for over 78% of the total project cost. The Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment (FFE) required to make the motel operational is another primary cost driver.

Furthermore, hyper-local factors, particularly the non-negotiable water and sewer availability fees levied by the Town of Franklin, constitute a substantial fixed cost that significantly influences the site development budget.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 1: Executive Summary of Estimated Project Costs**

Cost Category	Total Estimated Cost (\$)	Cost per Square Foot (\$/SF)	Percentage of Total Project Cost (%)
Site Development	\$349,000	\$8.73	2.9%

Core Building Hard Costs	\$9,758,000	\$243.95	78.1%
Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment (FFE)	\$637,000	\$15.93	5.4%
Soft Costs (A&E, Permits)	\$714,000	\$17.85	5.7%
Project Contingency	\$878,000	\$21.95	7.4%
<b>Total Estimated Project Cost</b>	<b>\$11,852,000</b>	<b>\$296.30</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## Core Building Construction (Hard Costs)

The core building construction, or "hard costs," represents the funds required to erect the physical structure of the motel, from the foundation to the roof. This category is the most significant component of the overall development budget.

### 2.1 Baseline Construction Cost Determination

The foundation of this estimate is the RSMeans cost model for a 2-3 Story Motel with a brick veneer and **wood frame structure**, which aligns with the mid-tier quality level specified for this project.<sup>1</sup> The "Open Shop" labor model was selected as it more accurately reflects the prevailing labor conditions in Western North Carolina compared to a union labor model.

The 2019 baseline construction subtotal from this model is \$118.57 per square foot.<sup>1</sup> This figure is validated by cross-referencing with broader industry data, which places 2-star and 3-star hotel construction costs in a range from \$130 to \$380 per square foot, confirming the RSMeans figure as a conservative and appropriate starting point.<sup>7</sup> More recent 2025 data suggests a national average for a midsized 3-star hotel is approximately \$250 per square foot, providing a realistic target for the final adjusted estimate.<sup>8</sup>

### 2.2 Cost Escalation Adjustment (2019 to 2025)

Updating the 2019 baseline to reflect 2025 market realities is a critical step. The construction industry has experienced unprecedented cost pressures since 2020. While general construction cost indices show modest year-over-year increases of 2-4% in 2025, these figures mask the

cumulative impact of several years of high inflation.<sup>2</sup>

Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that single-family housing construction costs in 2023 were approximately 31% higher than pre-pandemic levels, a trend that reflects the intense market pressures also affecting commercial projects.<sup>3</sup>

This escalation is driven by both materials and labor. Key commodity prices remain significantly elevated compared to pre-pandemic levels; steel is up 31%, and copper has surged by 71%, directly impacting electrical and plumbing systems.<sup>2</sup> Lumber prices, while down from their peak, remain volatile and are 12% above 2024 levels.<sup>10</sup>

Concurrently, construction wages have risen by 4.1% year-over-year, outpacing private sector wage growth.<sup>2</sup> Based on a composite analysis of these factors, a cumulative cost escalation factor of 35% has been applied to the 2019 baseline data to arrive at a 2025 equivalent cost.

## 2.3 Location Adjustment Factor (National Average to Franklin, NC)

National average cost data must be localized to be accurate. While a specific cost index for Franklin is not available, data from the nearby Asheville, NC, metropolitan area serves as the best available proxy for the Western North Carolina region. **Asheville is widely recognized as a high-cost construction market within the state**, characterized by a higher cost of living and a limited pool of skilled labor, which exerts upward pressure on wages and overall project costs.<sup>4</sup>

Local builders in the Asheville area report custom construction costs that are substantially higher than state averages, confirming the premium nature of the market.<sup>11</sup> To account for these regional dynamics, a conservative location adjustment multiplier of 1.15 (a 15% premium over the national average) has been applied to the escalated baseline cost.

The application of these adjustments results in an **Adjusted Construction Subtotal of \$184.08 per square foot**. This figure represents the direct cost of materials and labor. Added to this is the contractor's General Conditions, Overhead, and Profit, which is benchmarked at 25% of the subtotal, or \$46.02 per square foot, based on the RSMeans model.<sup>1</sup> This yields a **Total Core Building Hard Cost of \$230.10 per square foot**.

## 2.4 Detailed Hard Cost Breakdown

The total hard cost can be disaggregated into the primary building systems. While a detailed breakdown depends on final architectural plans, the following estimates per square foot of building area are based on industry averages for this building type <sup>7</sup>:

- **Foundations:** \$5 - \$33/SF
- **Framing (Wood):** \$11 - \$30/SF
- **Exterior Finishes (Brick Veneer & Siding):** \$4 - \$13/SF
- **Roofing:** \$3 - \$6/SF
- **Interior Finishes (Drywall, Flooring, Painting):** \$7 - \$22/SF

- **Plumbing Systems:** \$4 - \$5/SF
- **Electrical Systems:** \$4 - \$9/SF

## 2.5 Specialized Systems Analysis

### 2.5.1 Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

For a mid-tier motel, a hybrid HVAC approach is most cost-effective. Guest rooms are conditioned using individual Packaged Terminal Air Conditioners (PTACs). The cost per PTAC unit ranges from \$600 to \$1,200 <sup>13</sup>, with an average budgeted cost of \$1,000 per unit. For the 45 guest rooms, this totals \$45,000. Common areas such as the lobby, dining room, and theater require a separate central HVAC system. The cost for such commercial systems is estimated at \$20 to \$33 per square foot of the area served.<sup>14</sup> For an estimated 5,000 SF of common area, this adds approximately \$125,000, bringing the total estimated HVAC budget to **\$170,000**.

### 2.5.2 Elevator Installation

A two-story commercial building with the specified amenities requires elevators to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). For a low-rise application, hydraulic elevators are a common and economical choice. The all-in cost for a basic commercial elevator is suitable for a two-story building, including equipment and installation, typically ranges from \$75,000 to \$150,000 per elevator.<sup>16</sup> A budget of **\$200,000** is allocated for two hydraulic elevators.

### 2.5.3 Fire Protection System

New commercial construction of this type requires a comprehensive fire sprinkler system. A wet pipe system is the standard and most cost-effective option. For new construction projects, installation costs typically range from \$1.50 to \$3.00 per square foot.<sup>17</sup> Applying a mid-range rate of \$2.50 per square foot to the 40,000 SF building results in an estimated fire protection system cost of **\$100,000**.

**Table 2: Core Building Hard Cost Breakdown**

Building System / Component	Basis of Cost	Unit Cost	Quantity	Total Estimated Cost (\$)
Construction Subtotal	Per SF	\$184.08	40,000 SF	\$7,363,200
Contractor GC, Overhead & Profit	25% of Subtotal	25%	\$7,363,200	\$1,840,800

<i>Specialized Systems (Included in Subtotal)</i>				
HVAC System (PTACs & Central)	Lump Sum	-	1	\$170,000
Commercial Elevators	Lump Sum	-	2	\$200,000
Fire Sprinkler System	Lump Sum	-	1	\$100,000
<b>Total Core Building Hard Costs</b>	<b>Per SF</b>	<b>\$230.10</b>	<b>40,000 SF</b>	<b>\$9,204,000</b>

## Site Development Costs

Site development encompasses all work required to prepare the land and install the necessary infrastructure before vertical construction can begin. These costs are highly dependent on the specific characteristics of the property.

### 3.1 Site Preparation (Clearing & Grading)

For a 40,000 SF two-story building (20,000 SF footprint), a site of approximately 2.0 acres (87,120 SF) is assumed to accommodate the building, parking, and required landscape setbacks. The cost to clear moderately wooded land in North Carolina typically ranges from \$3,000 to \$5,000 per acre.<sup>18</sup>

A budget of \$8,000 is allocated for clearing the 2-acre site. Following clearing, the site must be graded to ensure proper drainage and create a level building pad. Commercial grading costs can range from \$0.50 to \$2.00 per square foot.<sup>19</sup> A blended rate of \$1.50 per square foot is applied to the entire site, resulting in a grading budget of approximately **\$130,700**.

### 3.2 Utilities Infrastructure (Water & Sewer)

The connection to municipal utilities represents a significant and fixed component of the site development budget. The costs are determined by the official fee schedule from the Town of Franklin Public Works department.<sup>6</sup> For a commercial building of this size requiring fire sprinkler service, a 6-inch water main and a 6-inch sewer line are anticipated.<sup>21</sup> The applicable one-time fees for a connection assumed to be just outside the primary town limits are:

- **Water Tap Fee (6-inch):** \$7,590
- **Sewer Tap Fee (6-inch equivalent):** \$2,640
- **Water Availability Fee (6-inch meter):** \$44,100
- **Sewer Availability Fee (6-inch meter):** \$69,300

The sum of these non-negotiable municipal fees is **\$123,630**. This figure represents a high-confidence cost anchor within the overall project budget, underscoring the importance of early verification of local fee structures in any development project.

### 3.3 Parking, Paving, and Landscaping

Parking requirements for motels are generally based on the number of guest rooms, with a typical ratio of one space per room plus additional spaces for employees and amenities.<sup>22</sup> For 45 rooms plus the extensive public amenities, a 60-space parking lot is planned. Including driving aisles, this requires approximately 18,900 SF of paved area.<sup>23</sup>

The cost for asphalt paving in North Carolina is approximately \$1.46 per square foot<sup>24</sup>, though national averages for a complete installation including the aggregate base can be higher. Using a blended, all-in rate of \$3.00 per square foot results in a paving budget of **\$56,700**. This includes basic curbing and storm drainage. Parking lot striping adds a nominal cost of approximately \$4 per stripe.<sup>24</sup> A provisional budget of **\$30,000** is allocated for basic landscaping and site lighting.

**Table 3: Site Development Cost Analysis**

Cost Item	Basis of Cost	Unit Cost	Quantity	Total Estimated Cost (\$)
Site Clearing & Grubbing	Per Acre	\$4,000	2 Acres	\$8,000
Mass Grading	Per SF	\$1.50	87,120 SF	\$130,700
Municipal Utility Fees	Lump Sum	-	1	\$123,630

(Tap & Availability)				
Asphalt Paving & Curbing	Per SF	\$3.00	18,900 SF	\$56,700
Landscaping & Site Lighting	Allowance	-	1	\$30,000
<b>Total Site Development Costs</b>				<b>\$349,030</b>

## Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment (FFE) & Operating Supplies

FFE represents all the movable items required to furnish the motel and make it fully operational for guests. For a hospitality project, this is a major capital expense category, distinct from the construction budget.

### 4.1 Guest Room FFE Budget

The cost of FFE is directly tied to the quality level of the hotel. For a mid-tier (2-3 star) property, industry data indicates a per-room FFE cost ranging from \$4,500 to as high as \$25,000.<sup>8</sup> A reasonable and well-supported budget for a new-build mid-tier motel is

**\$9,000 per guest room.** This budget covers all standard room furnishings, often referred to as casegoods (desk, dresser, nightstands), seating, lighting, artwork, mirrors, window treatments, televisions, and bathroom fixtures. For the 45 guest rooms, the total guest room FFE budget is **\$405,000**.

### 4.2 Common Area & Administrative FFE

A separate budget is required for furnishing all non-guestroom areas. This includes the lobby, theater, workout room, salon, shop, offices, and all back-of-house furnishings. An allocation of 40% of the guest room FFE budget is appropriate for a property with this extensive list of amenities, adding **\$162,000** to the FFE budget.



### 4.3 Professional Kitchen & Dining Equipment

The 60-capacity dining room and bar require a package of commercial-grade food service equipment. This includes items such as a commercial range and ovens, walk-in refrigeration, fryers, grills, prep tables, a commercial dishwasher, and a ventilation system. The total cost for equipping a professional kitchen and service line can range from \$40,000 to over \$200,000 depending on the scale.<sup>27</sup> A budget of **\$70,000** is allocated for this equipment package.

The total FFE budget demonstrates why this category is a critical focus in hospitality development. At over \$600,000, it represents a significant portion of the project cost. Effective procurement and value engineering in FFE can yield substantial savings for the project.

**Table 4: FFE & OS&E Budget Summary**

Area / Category	Basis of Cost	Unit Cost	Quantity	Total Estimated Cost (\$)
Guest Rooms (28 singles, 17 suites)	Per Room	\$9,000	45 Rooms	\$405,000
Common Areas/Amenities/Admin	40% of Guest Room FFE	40%	\$405,000	\$162,000
Professional Kitchen & Dining Equipment	Allowance	-	1	\$70,000
<b>Total FFE &amp; OS&amp;E Budget</b>				<b>\$637,000</b>

### Soft Costs, Fees, and Contingency

Soft costs are indirect expenses that are essential for project completion but are not part of the direct construction or furnishing costs. This category includes professional fees, municipal

permits, and financial cushions like contingency.

## 5.1 Professional Fees (Architecture & Engineering)

The design of a motel requires a coordinated team of architects and engineers (structural, mechanical, electrical, plumbing). For a hotel project, these A&E fees typically range from 4% to 10% of the total construction value.<sup>26</sup>

While some benchmarks suggest 6%<sup>1</sup>, a more conservative estimate of **7% of total hard costs** (Core Building + Site Development) is used here to account for the specific design requirements of hospitality projects. This results in an A&E fee budget of **\$674,000**.

## 5.2 Permitting and Municipal Fees

Based on the **Macon County** fee schedule, two primary fees apply to new commercial construction<sup>5</sup>:

- **Building Permit Fee:** \$0.50 per square foot. For 40,000 SF, this totals **\$20,000**.
- **Commercial Impact Fee:** \$0.50 per square foot. For 40,000 SF, this totals \$20,000.

The total for these municipal fees is \$40,000. It must be noted that the source document for these fees, while found during a search for Macon County, NC, has a URL indicating it may be from Macon County, TN.<sup>5</sup> While this is the best available data, local verification is strongly recommended.

## 5.3 Contractor General Conditions, Overhead & Profit

These costs, which cover the general contractor's project management, site supervision, insurance, and profit margin, were previously calculated as part of the Core Building Hard Cost section. They are based on the industry-standard rate of **25% of the construction subtotal**.<sup>1</sup>

While an integral part of the construction contract, they are often analyzed alongside other indirect costs.

## 5.4 Project Contingency

A contingency fund is a critical budgetary component to cover unforeseen conditions, scope changes, or cost overruns. For new construction, a contingency of 5% to 10% of total project costs is standard practice. Given the documented volatility in key material markets like copper and lumber<sup>2</sup>, a robust contingency is prudent. An

**8% contingency**, calculated on the sum of all hard costs, FFE, and soft costs, is included in the budget. This amounts to **\$878,000**.

The cumulative impact of these soft costs and fees is substantial. When combined, contractor fees, A&E fees, permits, and contingency add over \$3.4 million to the project, representing more than 35% of the direct construction and FFE costs. This highlights that a preliminary budget based solely on a simple cost-per-square-foot for construction would be dangerously incomplete.

**Table 5: Soft Costs, Fees, and Contingency Calculation**

Cost Item	Basis of Calculation	Rate/Percentage	Calculated Cost (\$)
Architectural & Engineering Fees	7% of Total Hard Costs (\$9,553,030)	7.0%	\$674,000
Building & Impact Fees	\$1.00/SF of Building Area	\$1.00/SF	\$40,000
Contractor GC, O&P	Included in Hard Costs	25%	(\$1,840,800)
Project Contingency	8% of (Hard Costs + FFE + Soft Costs)	8.0%	\$878,000
<b>Total Additional Costs</b>			

## Comprehensive Project Cost Summary and Recommendations

### 6.1 Final Consolidated Project Budget

The final project budget is the summation of all detailed estimates from the preceding sections. This comprehensive view provides a complete financial picture of the capital required to bring the 40,000 SF, 45-unit mid-tier motel in Franklin, NC, from an undeveloped site to a grand opening. The total estimated project cost, exclusive of land, is **\$11,852,000**.

### 6.2 Analysis of Cost Allocation

The budget allocation underscores the capital-intensive nature of hotel development. Core Building Hard Costs, including contractor fees, dominate the budget at 78.1%. The FFE and Soft Costs (including contingency) are also major categories, representing 5.4% and 13.1% of the total budget, respectively. Site development, while critical, accounts for a smaller portion (2.9%), though this percentage can fluctuate significantly based on site conditions. This allocation is consistent with industry norms for mid-tier hotel construction.<sup>29</sup>

### 6.3 Potential Risks and Mitigation Strategies

The primary financial risks to this budget are material price volatility and labor market constraints.

- **Material Price Volatility:** The costs of copper, steel, and lumber have been unstable.<sup>2</sup> To mitigate this, the developer should consider early procurement strategies or direct purchasing agreements with suppliers to lock in prices for these key commodities once the design is finalized.
- **Labor Market:** The Western North Carolina labor market is noted for being tight, which can lead to increased labor costs and potential schedule delays.<sup>4</sup> Mitigation involves pre-qualifying and engaging a reputable general contractor early in the process and ensuring that subcontractor bids are comprehensive and secured.
- **Contingency Management:** The 8% contingency fund is designed to absorb unforeseen costs. Strict change order management protocols should be implemented to protect this fund from being depleted by discretionary scope changes.

### 6.4 Opportunities for Value Engineering

While this estimate assumes a mid-tier quality level, several opportunities exist to optimize costs without compromising the guest experience:

- **Site Layout Optimization:** Minimizing the total disturbed land area by designing a more compact parking and landscaping layout can significantly reduce the high per-acre costs of clearing and grading.
- **Exterior Finishes:** While a brick veneer is assumed, exploring alternative high-quality exterior finishes like fiber cement siding or EIFS (Exterior Insulation and Finish System) in certain areas could yield savings.
- **FFE Procurement:** Bidding the complete FFE package to multiple hospitality procurement companies can generate competitive pricing and significant savings on this major budget category.

**Table 6: Final Comprehensive Project Budget**

I. Site Development Costs		<b>\$349,000</b>
	Site Clearing & Grading	\$138,700
	Municipal Utility Fees	\$123,600
	Paving, Landscaping & Site Lighting	\$86,700

<b>II. Core Building Hard Costs</b>		<b>\$9,204,000</b>
	Construction Subtotal (Labor & Materials)	\$7,363,200
	Contractor General Conditions, Overhead & Profit	\$1,840,800
	Specialized Systems (Elevators, HVAC, Fire)	\$470,000
<b>III. Furniture, Fixtures &amp; Equipment (FFE)</b>		<b>\$637,000</b>
	Guest Rooms & Common Areas	\$567,000
	Professional Kitchen & Dining Equipment	\$70,000
<b>IV. Soft Costs</b>		<b>\$714,000</b>
	Architectural & Engineering Fees	\$674,000
	Building & Impact Fees	\$40,000
<b>V. Project Contingency</b>		<b>\$878,000</b>
<b>Total Estimated Project Cost (Excluding Land)</b>		<b>\$11,852,000</b>

## Disclaimer

While the information is deemed reliable, no warranty is expressed or implied. Any information important to you or another party should be independently confirmed within an applicable due diligence period.

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