

# Entrepreneurs thrive in Durham

By Taylor Coil  
UNC Staff Writer

In the heart of the American Tobacco Campus, business is booming. It's not because of cigarette companies — it's because of entrepreneurs.

The Center for Entrepreneurial Development is located in the American Underground, an office space located at the American Tobacco Campus.

The CED has been supporting local entrepreneurs since 1984.

"Durham is a place that entrepreneurs are attracted to and that was something that attracted us," said CED's Director of Entrepreneurship Kathryn James.

Though CED has existed for decades, Durham has seen an increase in the number of startup companies located in the city over the past several years, James said.

*"It started with Durham  
having nowhere  
to go but up"*

— Kathryn James

"I think it started with the real estate renovation," she said. "It started with Durham having nowhere to go but up."

James said that the rise of entrepreneurship in Durham brings a new cultural aspect to the area and described the influx of entrepreneurs as the new creative class, a movement that is good for Durham in part because the people involved are naturally inclined to revitalize tired areas.

"You have this run-down part of town, and you have this class of people that see the potential and opportunity in empty buildings," James said.

Entrepreneurs value expertise and the availability of technology much more than they do attractive office space, she said.

"The space doesn't matter as much — it can be empty and completely no-frills, but the tech support has to be cutting edge," James said.

Emerging technology is something Durham does well. Durham's proximity to the Research Triangle Park



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**The scenic American Tobacco Campus, a hub of entrepreneurship and home to the Center for Entrepreneurial Development.**

and prestigious universities allow for a network of experts that entrepreneurs need, James said. Many entrepreneurs represented at CED are in the technology industry themselves.

James said this creative class is drawn to Durham because the quality of life is much higher than in entrepreneurial hubs on the West Coast. Relocated entrepreneurs want an urban environment, a walkable community and a network that will help their businesses thrive.

"We have a lot of entrepreneurs who have started a family and want to make it more doable, so Durham is attractive to a lot of those people."

## MORE ABOUT CED

CED has helped launch more than 700 companies and raise more than \$1 billion in capital for local entrepreneurs. More information can be found at [www.cednc.org](http://www.cednc.org).