

## Q&A with Gary Kueber, Scientific COO

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Durham Magazine in Gary Kueber, Golden Belt, Scientific Properties, Tucker Bartlett



Photo by Briana Brough  
Congratulations to **Gary Kueber**, who first gained notoriety as the author of the **Endangered Durham** blog, on being named COO of **Scientific Properties**, the prolific developer of some key downtown properties. In addition to its current flagship projects the **Venable Center** and **Golden Belt**, the company is poised to erect a mixed-use tower – office, retail, restaurant(s) and hotel – at the site of the Chrysler dealership downtown, a signature project known as **Van Alen**. Gary has a big job to bring that project and others to fruition. He's excited about the opportunity.

Gary graced our pages about a year-and-a-half ago, when editor Matt Dees took a stroll with him through East Durham. His passion for saving places in our city that many have abandoned and forgotten is infectious, and he has brought that passion to bear in his 2.5 years with Scientific. He took a few minutes to answer some questions about his new gig.

Before we get to that, we should note that Gary is replacing **Tucker Bartlett**, who is returning to work at **Self Help Credit Union**. Tucker acquitted himself well as the face of Scientific during his time at COO, and we know first hand how highly he's regarded at Self Help. They're glad to have him back, and we wish him well.

Now, here's Gary...

**DM: Please describe your current duties and how long you've been with Scientific. What will your new duties be as COO?**

**GK:** I've been with SP for 2 1/2 years – I have been director of development projects for the company, namely Venable Center and Golden Belt. I've also headed up community/neighborhood initiatives and sustainability work for the company. As COO, I will manage the SP staff/company, oversee all properties, and actively seek new acquisitions.

**DM: Scientific is searching for a new anchor tenant for Van Alen, a key to that project. What's going to be your strategy for landing one?**

**GK:** We'd love to attract the kind of sizable corporate tenant that would allow us to start Van Alen. We are certainly actively contacting people, and we work collaboratively in that effort with the brokers, relocation firms, Department of Commerce, Durham Chamber, and everyone who wants to see Durham take that next step forward in order to convey the message that downtown Durham is where a big firm wants to be.

**DM: The credit crunch has put some Scientific projects on hold, particularly any plans for a hotel. In the meantime, how do you keep the company prepared to move quickly once financing becomes more readily available?**

**GK:** We continue to lay the groundwork to execute our new projects (site plan approval, architectural work) such that we are prepared to execute new projects once the debt market improves and we have viable tenants.

**DM: This was an interesting comment from architect Scott Harmon over on Bull City Rising: "Only in Durham can a vocal community activist become the head of a major development company." Tell us how your preservation work/interests will inform your leadership of Scientific.**

**GK:** Fortunately, I've never had any conflict between my community interests, Endangered Durham, and my work at Scientific Properties. The economic redevelopment of downtown Durham by the private sector has come almost exclusively through historic preservation, and it will also come through the redevelopment of downtown car dealerships, parking lots, strip shopping centers, etc. with infill construction. My background as a student of history, urban form, preservation, and urban planning strongly informs my sense of wise land use, the kind of projects that we want to build, and what the market desires.

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