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Real Estate

Orlando hotel builder finds it's in demand

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Demand for construction is soft, but hotel projects are keeping a longtime Central Florida builder, D&D Construction Services, busy these days.

D&D, based in Orlando, recently broke ground on a seven-story, 162-room Embassy Suites at Savannah International Airport in southeast Georgia. The contract is valued at \$17 million for the 142,000-square-foot project.

The upscale hotel will be in Savannah's airport corridor, 15 miles from downtown and just off Interstate 95 in Pooler, Ga.

It will have an atrium with water features, indoor pool and spa area, full-service restaurant and lounge, business center, fitness center and 3,385 square feet of flexible meeting space.

D&D said it expects to top off the hotel next April and to complete the project by December 2009, in time for holiday travel and for Savannah's renowned St. Patrick's Day celebration the following March.

With more than 20 years of experience specializing in hospitality work, D&D is also working with Shaner Hotels of State College, Pa., in building three Fairfield Inn and Suites, in Lakeland and St. Augustine, and in Augusta, Ga.

Daryl Williams and his son Darand, owners of D&D, said they have been fortunate to stay busy at a time when many commercial and residential projects are on hold nationwide. They attribute their success in part to a history of completing work "on time and under budget."

The company recently was lauded for the on-budget, less-than-one-year completion of a four-story, 55,000-square-foot Residence Inn by Marriott in Sebring, south of Orlando.

Darand Williams said the company also develops cost estimates "as if we are the owners" of the project, searching for cost savings wherever feasible.

Founded in 1985, D&D Construction is a full-service general contracting company handling all aspects including planning, design-build, construction management, and property development. Its work can be found throughout Florida, Alabama and Georgia.

Schools



With 14 neighborhood K-12 schools already operating throughout Poinciana, the 47,000-acre master-planned community is about to add another one to meet the needs of its residents. Avatar Properties Inc., Poinciana's developer and primary home builder, made it financially feasible for the Osceola County school district to build a \$14.6 million elementary school on Koa Street in northwest Osceola. The Avatar-owned 17.55-acre site, appraised at more than \$2.4 million, was sold to the school district for about \$832,000, saving the district more than \$1.5 million, according to Tony Iorio, vice president of land development for Avatar. The school is expected to open in August with an enrollment of 700 to 750 students, relieving Deerwood, Chestnut and Poinciana elementary schools. Avatar has donated seven other school sites to Osceola, including six in Poinciana.

Landscaping

Keller Outdoor Inc., a Sanford-based commercial contractor that specializes in landscaping, lawn maintenance, irrigation, environmental services, demolition and drainage work, recently completed work on three big projects. Richard Keller, vice president, said the firm recently renovated parking surfaces at Lockheed Martin on Lake Underhill Road in southeast Orange County, including extensive landscaping, resurfacing of parking areas and "hardscaping" of common areas. Also, Keller recently completed landscape maintenance and renovation projects at Atlantic Villas Condominium and Minorca Condominium, two luxury-resort communities in New Smyrna Beach.

Construction

Chadwick Real Estate Group, which is developing 12 European-styled, two-story loft town homes and retail space in Beach Street Courtyard on Beach Street in Daytona Beach, will have a grand opening Jan. 9. Richard A. Friedman, managing director of Chadwick, said several of the one- and two-bedroom residential lofts, ranging in size from 1,304 to 2,135 square feet of living space and in price from \$399,000 to \$599,000, are already under contract. Ground-floor retail at Beach Street Courtyard totals 8,230 square feet; Amore Restaurant will occupy about 5,000 square feet and have seating in the courtyard. Friedman said plans for the restaurant are in the final stage of obtaining permits. Aswin Suri of Re/Max Pro Realty, exclusive broker for Beach Street Courtyard, is negotiating with retailers for remaining space in the mixed-use development. Brooks L. Kellogg, a partner in Chadwick Real Estate Group, said the firm focuses on development of luxury properties in Colorado, California, Kansas and Florida, and owns 178 feet of oceanfront property in Daytona Beach where it plans to develop a luxury condo-hotel.

Leasing

Stiles Corp. reports seven lease commitments at Red Willow Plaza, including a new Dunkin' Donuts concept store with Wi-Fi access and flat-screen TV. Dunkin' Donuts franchisee Morningside Venture Group LLC. of Orlando leased the 1,744-square-foot store, which is scheduled to open next April in the neighborhood retail center at Red Bug Lake and Tuskawilla roads in Winter Springs. Major renovations are under way at the 93,625-square-foot plaza, which was purchased by a joint venture of Stiles Corp. and Guggenheim Real Estate in 2007. An initial renovation phase was completed in October, and Phase II renovations, on track to be completed in the spring, include refacing the exterior facades, installing towers at key locations and repainting the buildings. The plaza is 93 percent leased. Stiles retail specialist David Neal and Stiles director of leasing Ryan Karlin handled the Dunkin' Donuts transaction and other recent leases, including Dominick's Catering, Chic Salon & Spa, Christie Dental, Solutions Wireless, SprintCom and Thai Basil. Stiles is a full-service commercial real-estate development and investment company based in Fort Lauderdale, with offices in Orlando, Miami, Tampa and Fort Myers.

Job shadow

Twenty-one students from Poinciana High School recently participated in Welbro Building Corp.'s biannual Junior Achievement Job Shadow Program. The half-day event, held at Welbro's Maitland corporate office, included a group

presentation from the company's executive team on the importance of education and the value of free enterprise.

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