

December 19 , 2017

Orlando Business Journal



ORLANDO BUSINESS JOURNAL

Orlando gains momentum: A look back at 2017's biggest commercial real estate deals

A lot of dirt got pushed around in 2017 — and it's a great sign that things are happening throughout the region.

The activity was nowhere more apparent than in the 17-square-mile community of Lake Nona, where a tax service giant's sprawling 55-acre training campus, an e-commerce titan's fulfillment center and a massive entertainment and shopping complex are underway.

That 7 million square feet and nearly \$1.4 billion worth of work is a vote of confidence for the Orlando area, suggesting investors believe the local economy will continue to expand.



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The Lake Nona community's two major corporate projects — KPMG's \$430 million, 800,000-square-foot training and innovation center and the \$132 million, 2.3 million-square-foot Amazon.com Inc. fulfillment center — together will create nearly 2,000 jobs. KPMG's center also will generate about 48,000 annual visits to Orlando and 1,000 passengers flying in and out of Orlando International Airport each week. And Amazon's fulfillment center could be a retail game changer for Central Florida, adding fire to the trend of retailers — brick-and-mortar, as well as solely online — clamoring for more space. Both of those projects will be completed in late 2018.

In addition, master developer Tavistock Development Co.'s \$780 million, 3.8 million-square-foot Lake Nona Town Center is headed for a 2020 completion and continues to position Lake Nona as one of the fastest-growing communities in America with at least \$3 billion worth of construction underway — not to mention being a significant job creator for both the region and the state.

It's going to be a busy 2018. And we can't wait.

Here's a look at some other noteworthy commercial real estate deals that took place in the past year:

Church Street Plaza

Lincoln Property Co. spent \$11 million on April 14 to buy a site in downtown Orlando for a 601,225-square-foot, 26-story, mixed-use high-rise that will include a hotel, retail space and parking garage.



Parties involved: Dallas-based Lincoln Property Co. of Florida Inc., developer; Austin Commercial, general contractor; HuntonBrady Architects PA, project designer; [GAI Consultants](#), civil engineer and landscape architect; Walter P. Moore & Associates, structural engineer; TLC Engineering for Architecture, mechanical, electrical and plumbing engineer.

Signed tenants: HuntonBrady Architects PA, Austin Commercial LP, Lincoln Property Co., [RSM US LLP](#) and E-Spaces

The money: \$100 million in construction costs

Timing: Construction began in August.

Why it matters: Church Street Plaza will offer large, amenity-rich contiguous space that could lure major companies, bringing high-wage jobs and an economic boost to Central Florida. It is the central business district's first Class A office high-rise in a decade, which should offer relief to downtown's limited office space options.

"The problem with Orlando is it hasn't had room to grow, when you think about how a business can attract and retain employees. Church Street Plaza is a play for contiguous space." — **Scott Stahley, regional partner and executive vice president, Lincoln Property Co.**

Del Webb community in Sunbridge

A 55-and-up, 1,350-home neighborhood in the Osceola County portion of the planned 24,000-acre Sunbridge community, an ambitious development bigger than Manhattan that spans two Central Florida counties

Parties involved: Tavistock Development Co. LLC, PulteGroup Inc.

Money: Unknown at this time

Timing: Announced in October 2017; estimated 2019 completion

Why it matters: Sunbridge could create massive business and job opportunities, similar to the impact of Lake Nona that now boasts more than 5,000 employees in Medical City and more than 13,000 residents. Plus, new roads and corridors can help connect Sunbridge to existing job centers such as Lake Nona, the [University of Central Florida](#), Florida's Space Coast and Osceola County.

"It's big. Lake Nona was 7,000-plus acres. Total Lake Nona land holdings are 9,000 acres. This is 24,000 acres stretched across two counties." — **Richard Levey, managing director at Levey Consulting, which represents Tavistock Development in the deal**

Vineland Pointe

New York-based O'Connor Capital Partners on April 13 bought 64 acres from Maury L. Carter & Associates Inc. for nearly \$28 million near the Orlando Vineland Premium Outlets where it plans to build a 400,000-square-foot shopping center dubbed Vineland Pointe.



Parties involved: New York-based O'Connor Capital Partners, West Palm Beach-based businessman Peter Bergner, developers; tenants signed include Lucky's Market, Burlington, Marshalls and Ross Dress for Less

The money: \$130 million in construction costs

Timing: Project broke ground December 2017

Why it matters: Shopping is a major activity for Orlando's 68 million annual visitors. Vineland Pointe is in the heart of a major tourism corridor, and provides more diverse product offerings and helps boost Central Florida's clout as a retail destination and job provider.

"We held [the land] through the worst recession in most living people's memory. Now, O'Connor is going to take it to the next level with a 400,000-square-foot [retail] power center." — **Daryl Carter, president of Orlando-based Maury L. Carter & Associates Inc.**

Grand National

A major Interstate 4 flyover opened in August — the Grand National overpass — as the first completed piece of the \$2.3 billion I-4 Ultimate revamp, which will provide access to the 110,000-square-foot Grand National mixed-use shopping center on West Oak Ridge Road near North International Drive. Signed tenants include Starbucks, LongHorn Steakhouse, Bahama Breeze and U.S. Gift Factory.

Parties involved: Cincinnati-based North American Properties, developer; Focus Development LLC, general contractor

The money: \$100 million in construction costs

Timing: Expected completion by early 2020

Why it matters: Grand National could be a retail game-changer for a busy tourist area that is a hotbed of existing retailers but has few full-service restaurants.

"With 68 million annual visitors to Orlando, we'll be just fine as far as retail at the end of the day. We certainly can piggyback off the success of the area, just in terms of where it's located and the tourist-driven customer base." — **David Gabbai, managing director of retail services at Colliers International Central Florida, who is working with North American Properties on retail leasing**

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