

May 16, 2018

Orlando Business Journal



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## 'Interest and momentum' lead Unicorp to expand \$1B project near Walt Disney World

Chuck Whittall is getting so much attention on a piece of his newest project that he decided the best approach was to double down on his plans.

The president of Orlando-based Unicorp National Developments Inc. is expanding the shopping center portion of his \$1 billion, mixed-use O-Town project near Walt Disney World.

More specifically, the grocery-anchored Boardwalk at O-Town West retail complex now will house 200,000 square feet of tourist-centric restaurants and shops — double the amount in the original plan — along with a 600-space parking garage, Whittall told *Orlando Business Journal*.

“We are getting such an unbelievable amount of interest and momentum ... for the retail/entertainment portion [of O-Town],” he said.

Whittall hasn't revealed any tenants yet, but said Unicorp is targeting a dine-in movie theater with reclining seats and more. In fact, the firm already is in talks with three nationally known operators, but Whittall declined to name which ones.

This is just one element of the development planned for 85 acres at the intersection of Palm and Daryl Carter parkways. The project also will include 1,500 upscale apartments in multiple towers, possibly a hotel and 150 homes in an area called Village at O-Town.

Construction is expected to start in first-quarter 2019 and be completed around mid-2020.

Whittall's retail plan for O-Town includes signing a mix of first-to-market restaurants, bars and entertainment brands that would attract both locals and visitors. Tapping into tenants new to the market is a familiar task for Unicorp, as it also developed the center in Winter Park that featured the region's first Trader Joe's specialty grocer and Shake Shack (NYSE: SHAK) burger joint — concepts Unicorp also brought to other projects.

The firm successfully launched into the tourism market with its \$200 million Icon Orlando 360 shopping-dining-entertainment complex, previously called I-Drive 360, that features the Icon Orlando observation



COURTESY OF UNICORP NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS INC.



wheel, Madame Tussauds wax museum and Sea Life Aquarium.

Meanwhile, O-Town is expected to help provide more space for existing retailers in the area who may be hurt by road construction tied to the \$2.3 billion I-4 Ultimate revamp of Interstate 4.

For example, the 155,597-square-foot, 37.6-acre Crossroads at Lake Buena Vista — across the street from Disney’s eastern entrance — may be demolished to make way for future road construction, so its retailers would need to move.

Plus, the Disney retail area is ripe for growth with the right products, said Cindy Schooler, senior vice president and market leader of Orlando retail real estate brokerage SRS Real Estate Partners. Nearby developments like the \$130 million, 400,000-square-foot Vineland Pointe shopping center are generating more buzz — something Unicorp’s project could capitalize on, said Schooler, who isn’t involved in O-Town.

“Unicorp’s project will be much more experiential and sophisticated,” Schooler told *OBJ* in a previous interview. “If you want big-box retail, you go east [to Vineland Pointe], but if you are looking for more experiential, go west [to O-Town].”

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### **O-Town development team**

Engineer: Kimley-Horn & Associates Inc.

Architect: Zyscovich Architects Inc. in Winter Park

General contractor: Roger B. Kennedy Inc. (apartments)

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### **Brick by Brick**

#### **Legoland Florida to add new land**

Legoland Florida is making its theme park more awesome by adding a new area based on “The Lego Movie.” The Lego Movie World, set to open in spring 2019, will bring to life Bricksburg, the home of the film’s hero Emmet. Here’s what will take shape in the new themed area:

Two new rides

Character meet-and-greets

Giant themed playscape

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*Orlando Business Journal*



Orlando Business Journal. <https://www.bizjournals.com/orlando/news/2018/05/16/unbelievable-amount-of-interest-and-momentum-leads.html>