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Unicorp's expanded plans for \$1.1B O-Town to rival some of Orlando's largest shopping centers

Chuck Whittall made yet another big change to his Disney-area mixed-use project during meetings at the retail real estate industry's largest mega-conference.

Go even bigger.

The president of Orlando-based Unicorp National Developments Inc., who less than two weeks ago told *Orlando Business Journal* he would double the retail portion of the \$1 billion O-Town project to 200,000 square feet, now is bringing that portion of his project to a total of 400,000 square feet — putting it in the same category as some of Central Florida's other largest shopping centers.



UNICORP NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS INC

"Oops, we did it again," Whittall told *OBJ* via email. "We had such success at the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) expo that we are adding [more] retail and restaurants."

The ICSC RECon show, which was in Las Vegas May 20-23, is the world's largest retail real estate deal-making convention and that's where Whittall said he was getting so much interest from potential retailers. The project will offer a bigger boost to Central Florida's dominant \$70 billion tourism industry, which welcomed a record 72 million visitors last year.

In a nutshell: The \$1 billion, mixed-use O-Town project, as first reported by *OBJ*, was designed to include a 100,000-square-foot, grocery-anchored retail center called The Boardwalk at O-Town West. The tourist-centric complex will contain a mix of restaurants, shops and a 600-space parking garage. Increased attention and momentum in the retail component resulted in the first increase in size to 200,000 square feet, as well as ongoing discussions for more tenants like a dine-in movie theater.

And with the latest upgrade, it may add another \$100 million in project costs, based on industry estimates to build high-end retail space. It also would allow The Boardwalk at O-Town West to be considered among large local retail complexes, such as the 422,980-square-foot Pointe Orlando dining/shopping/entertainment center on International Drive; and Kissimmee's busy The Loop/Loop West shopping centers, which total about 440,000 square feet, based on *OBJ* research.



Another big impact O-Town will have is to provide more retail/restaurant destination needs for existing centers that are affected by construction of the \$2.3 billion I-4 Ultimate revamp and upgrade of Interstate 4.

For example, the Crossroads at Lake Buena Vista — across the street from Walt Disney World's eastern entrance — is expected to be razed, so its retailers will need new space, according to local retail expert Jorge Rodriguez, executive managing director of Colliers International Central Florida.

O-Town also is expected to be an after-hours option for the millions of conventioners and visitors who come to Orlando each year.

“This is going to be one of the most efficient intersections in town and will be transformative for this area,” said Rodriguez, who isn’t involved in O-Town. “The ‘punch-through’ to Apopka Vineland Road will allow access to Bay Hill/South Windermere to get to I-4 and avoid the busy Sand Lake Road, bringing the local residents to this area.”

O-Town also will have 1,500 upscale apartments in multiple towers, a potential hotel and 150 homes in an area called Village at O-Town. The project development team includes Raleigh, N.C.-based Kimley-Horn & Associates Inc. as engineer and Miami-based Zyscovich Architects’ Winter Park office as the architect. Altamonte Springs-based Roger B. Kennedy Inc. is the general contractor on the apartments. The project likely will create thousands of temporary construction jobs and many more permanent jobs.

[Click HERE to view the O-Town slideshow on Orlando Business Journal.](#)

Unicorp’s big lineup

Unicorp National Developments Inc. has more than \$200 million worth of construction in the works in metro Orlando — much of it concentrated in the tourist corridors and nearby. Here’s a look at some of its local projects underway and recently completed:

Griffin Farm at Midtown: The \$200 million mixed-use project in Lake Mary is on track to be almost completed by year’s end. The project, being developed in partnership with Orlando-based Project Finance & Development LLC, consists of a \$100 million, 150,000-square-foot Griffin Farm Town Center shopping center anchored by 24 Hour Fitness and Lucky’s Market; a five-level parking garage; the 138-lot Griffin Park residential community by David Weekley Homes; and the 263-unit Drake at Midtown apartment complex.

Venetian Isle: The \$42 million, 346-unit luxury multifamily project, which broke ground in 2016 as part of the Westside mixed-use complex in the Horizon West area, now is open. The complex features 302 apartment units along with 44 townhomes.

Lakeside Crossing: This \$35 million project — which was completed in 2017 — involved tearing down the historic 147-room Best Western Mt. Vernon Inn on U.S. Highway 17-92 and Morse Boulevard in Winter Park and rebuilding it into a 35,000-square-foot retail complex with an associated parking structure. Unicorp began this project to build on its success across the street, at the Trader Joe’s-anchored Lakeside Winter Park development. Tenants include Kona Grill, Chuy’s Tex-Mex, Bulla Gastrobar and Brownierie Café.



Westside Shoppes: This \$20 million, 70,700-square-foot shopping center was developed as the retail element of Unicorp and Project Finance & Development's Horizon West mixed-use development. Tenants include Tijuana Flats, [AT&T](#), Dunkin' Donuts, boutique grocer Adena Farms Grille & Market, Jeremiah's Italian Ice and Keke's Breakfast Cafe.

Starflyer: A \$10 million, 400-foot-tall spinning swing ride set to debut in June in the Vue at 360 entertainment center — adjacent to Unicorp's \$200 million Icon Orlando 360 dining and entertainment complex, which features the Icon Orlando, Madame Tussauds and a Sea Life Aquarium.

Richard Bilbao
Senior staff writer
Orlando Business Journal

