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Major Developments Coming to Southwest - 10/1/05

by Debra Wood

Southwest continues to grow at a brisk pace. New mixed-use developments will bring more residents to the community, as well as more dining and shopping options.

Unicorp National Developments Inc. of Orlando is planning to build Dellagio, a \$100 million, 118-unit, upscale residential and retail complex at the corner of Sand Lake Road and Della Drive. Principals Chuck Whittall, a resident of Isle of Osprey at Dr. Phillips, and Lee J. Maher of South Bay Villas expect to break ground early next year and complete the Mediterranean-themed project within 18 months.

"We're going to create a man-made lake in front of the project and [build] themed waterfront restaurants around it, along with boutique shops," Whittall said.

Plans call for lush landscaping to surround the townhomes, priced from about \$500,000 to \$700,000. The retail and restaurant space is about 90 percent leased even though the 29-acre property has not been rezoned yet, but Whittall does not anticipate any holdups.

"We've met with homeowners groups and have gotten good support," Whittall said. "Dellagio will be very neighborhood-, convention- and tourist-friendly. It will be an asset to the Southwest side of town."



South Bay Villas resident Lee J. Maher (left) and Isle of Osprey resident Chuck Whittall, principals of Unicorp National Developments Inc., are planning two major developments in Southwest Orlando.

On International Drive, Unicorp is tearing down The Mercado to build Aqua, a 2,100-unit, water-themed, condo-hotel and retail complex. Owners invest in the condo-hotel units and then make them available for overnight guests.

"Aqua is going to be unlike anything Orlando has ever seen," Whittall said. "The convention center needs more rooms. It will be a five-star hotel with a Las Vegas-quality presence."

Whittall anticipates selling all of the 2,100 units before the project breaks ground in 2006 or early 2007. It will take two years to build and open by 2009. He expects interest from Northerners, vacationers, conventioners and European investors.

The \$2 billion project will include a man-made lake with a \$4 million dancing water show facing International Drive. A theater, Ferrari dealership, and variety of luxury retailers will serve guests. Whittall hopes that people walking along the drive will stop to watch the water show and that the tenant mix will attract local residents.

"We're excited about it," Whittall said. "We think the west-side folks will definitely want to come over to eat in the restaurants and shop at the shops and bring the kids to the water shows."

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Not far from Aqua, construction will start later this year on Villages of Imagine, an Intrawest Corp. of Canada condo-resort community across from the Orange County Convention Center. The resort village will feature shops, galleries, restaurants and 1,000 residential units on about 30 acres.

And construction continues on the 1,500-room Rosen Shingle Creek Resort, scheduled for completion in the fall of 2006. Rosen's project is a traditional-style hotel with spacious rooms and suites and banquet facilities

West of Interstate 4, EB Developers of Boca Raton plans a condo-hotel, Eden Springs Resort, at the former Yogi Bear Campground, on 62 acres fronting Big Sand Lake. The same company purchased the former Delta Court of Flags and is planning a residential/hotel complex on that site. EB Developers did not return requests for more information.

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