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From the South Florida Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/southflorida/news/2023/03/10/palm-beach-gardens-draws-high-profile-developments.html>

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Palm Beach Gardens draws high-profile developments

Mar 10, 2023, 7:01am EST

Tiger Woods, Rory McIlroy, Jack Nicklaus, Justin Thomas, Ritz-Carlton, the University of Florida and Florida Power & Light Co. are among the big names involved in recent developments in Palm Beach Gardens.

The city has been drawing attention from high-profile figures and development has been picking up steam. It has luxury condos and new offices on the east side, a new hospital on the north side, the massive Avenir golf course community under development out west, and a high-profile startup virtual golf venture.

“There is quite a buzz about Palm Beach Gardens, and here’s why,” said Kelly Smallridge, president and CEO of the Business Development Board of Palm Beach County. “The city has placed a high priority on balancing growth with a quality lifestyle. Carrier Corp., DePuy Synthes and Zimmer Biomet are the three giants. On the outskirts of the city line, you will find Scripps, Max Planck, Pratt & Whitney, Aerojet and many of their employees live in Gardens. It also has great public and private schools, a very large mall, and a great mix of restaurant and retail.”

FPL recently completed a 266,000-square-foot corporate campus in the city, and it has a similarly sized office planned for the second phase. Each building is designed for about 1,000 workers.

Local developer Daniel Catalfumo built many of the office and retail projects along PGA Boulevard after purchasing open land from the MacArthur Foundation about 24 years ago. Several years ago, he built the headquarters for Tire Kingdom there, and in 2022 he sold land in PGA Station to Richman Group, which is currently building 396 apartments. Catalfumo said an additional 625 apartments are in the works in the same park, where an extension of the Tri-Rail passenger train is planned.

Catalfumo's big project now is The Ritz-Carlton Residences Palm Beach Gardens, a 106-unit condominium and marina along the Intracoastal Waterway. Units are priced from \$4 million to \$8 million, which signifies the type of wealth the city has been attracting.

"More people are bringing their businesses here, and Ritz-Carlton is a perfect match for them," Catalfumo said.

He also has buyers who are downsizing from large homes on Palm Beach into fairly big condo units. Not only does the city have great golf courses for them, it's terrific for boaters because the Bahamas is only an hour away, he said.

Office market growing

Last year, Catalfumo sold land in PGA Station with entitlements for 200,000 square feet of office to Gatsby Florida. The same developer fully leased the new DiVosta Towers, which total 22,000 square feet, so it's confident it can find tenants for another building, said Constance Thomas of TCRE, the leasing broker for the new building, dubbed PGA Tower.

Nearly 70% of the tenants at DiVosta Towers were new to the market. Most of the tenants were in the financial industry, and some were in tech, she added. While they haven't signed any leases at PGA Tower yet, she anticipates strong interest in the building because companies continue moving to Palm Beach County, and many of the existing tenants want nicer space.

“In the past, PGA Boulevard in Palm Beach Gardens was considered a suburban market, and we are now becoming more of a permanent center for Palm Beach County because more people want to live here,” Thomas said.

With Class A office rents in downtown West Palm Beach rising rapidly, Class A space in Palm Beach Gardens is less expensive for many companies, said Chris Smith, an office leasing broker at CBRE. It’s still close to Interstate 95 and the luxury communities where many executives live, he added

Another benefit of Palm Beach Gardens is it’s not far from the counties to the north, which have more affordable housing for workers, he said.

“When we work with private equity firms with employees making \$100,000 to \$150,000 a year, they are looking in Stuart or Port St. Lucie to live,” Smith said.

Avenir takes shape

There’s plenty of residential construction in the Avenir community on the western edge of Palm Beach Gardens.

The 4,763-acre community was approved for 2,690 single-family homes, 960 age-restricted homes, 250 multifamily units, 1.8 million square feet of professional offices, 200,000 square feet of medical offices, 400,000 square feet of commercial space, and 300 hotel rooms. Through the end of January, 578 home building permits have been pulled and 193 sales have been closed, said Rosa Eckstein Schechter, general counsel and partner at Landstar, the master developer of Avenir.

Multiple homebuilders, including GL Homes, DiVosta, Toll Brothers and K. Hovnanian, are building within Avenir. FCI Residential purchased the multifamily development site.

The most high-end community is Avenir is Panther National, which will have 218 large home lots, an 18-hole golf course and a nine-hole practice course designed by golf pros Nicklaus and Thomas. Prices range from \$3.5 million to \$20 million.

In fact, Panther National developer Centaur Group recently sold six home lots for \$18 million to custom homebuilder Elish Builders.

Panther National CEO Frank Weed compares Avenir to the development of Weston, a community he worked on in the 1980s. Not only does it have large roads and a well-designed community, but Avenir includes a nature preserve with long trails. It's the only new golf course community in Palm Beach County, he noted.

"We wanted to build something that doesn't exist in Florida," said Dominik Senn, the head of Centaur Group and a former professional skier. "The course is mainly for the people who live there and a few outside members. There will be a low number of tee times. There will only be 250 to 270 members, so it will be very exclusive."

All of the luxury residential under development in Avenir will soon create opportunities for the neighborhood's commercial sector to grow, Weed said.

Schechter said they plan to break ground on the town center by the end of this year. Progress is also being made on the health center component, which would be anchored by a 20-bed hospital by Jupiter Medical Center and UF Health.

More hospitals, virtual golf

That's not the only hospital planned in Palm Beach Gardens. The city approved a 300-bed hospital by Universal Health Services in the Alton mixed-use community.

Another big employer on the way to the city is TMRW Sports, a high-tech golf venture co-founded by Woods and McIlroy. It agreed to build a 10.7-acre center for its new TGL golf league on the Palm Beach Gardens campus of Palm Beach State College. It aims to start broadcasting matches from there in 2024.

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