



Strength in Numbers

Article by Article by Don Douloff
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Charles N. Mady couldn't have known how his company would blossom when he opened up shop in 1974 in Windsor, Ont.

Initially, Mady Development Corp. built single-family homes in and around Windsor, and soon delved into general contracting.

Time passed, and within 15 years, the company had grown to a multifaceted developer with irons in a number of different fires.

In 1989, for instance, Mady expanded into the U.S., launching into Florida via the development of a beachfront high-rise condominium.

Even more importantly, the company, in 1990, opened an office in Dallas, and moved key members of its Canadian management team to Texas to help build the business.

"The company wanted to take advantage of depressed real-estate assets in the North Texas market," says President David Mady, Charles' son.

So the developer acquired residential and commercial land, office buildings and retail properties in the area, with the strategy of adding value.

Since then, the company has acquired and developed multi-family apartment projects, low-income, tax-credit properties and residential subdivisions.

And with Dallas' population having grown by 1-million, to over 5-million people, that market should provide plenty of opportunity for some time.

Closer to home, the company opened a Toronto head office two years ago, but retains its Windsor base. Additionally, David and Charles relocated to Toronto.

All of that is part of the company's strategy to pursue development in the Toronto-to-Windsor corridor. One area of focus during the last 18 months, in the Toronto area, has been the company's move into the construction of big-box stores.

"We'd been selling land to big-box retailers, so we decided to expand into building the stores," says David Mady

In fact, in the last year and a half, Mady Contract Division Ltd. has built 10 big-box stores in the Toronto area.

Clients have included such blue-chip retailers as Canadian Tire, Wal-Mart, Home Depot and Sobeys.

David says the company anticipates additional business on the general-contracting side of things.

As Mady notes, however, competition can be stiff for projects builds. In other words, just because the company develops a parcel of land doesn't guarantee it will win the construction contract.

On the retail front, the company has, in the past, focused on strip malls in the Toronto-to-Windsor zone.

But lately, in keeping with the shifting retail market, the firm has favoured big-box-anchored power centres.

As has been the company's practice in the past, it acquires the land, develops the centre, then sells it, to realize value immediately.

Recently, the company sold a grocery-anchored project in Windsor.

Currently under development is Strathroy Crossing, a 350,000-sq.-ft. power centre in Strathroy, Ont.

Slated for the corner of Carroll and Caradon Streets, the project, situated on 40 acres of land, will encompass two major national big-box tenants.

All told, Mady has 20 other retail projects, in various stages of development that it expects to bring to market in that key southwestern Ontario trade zone.

David points out that even though the concentration has changed to large-format centres, the company would still consider strip malls, if the deal were right.

"But our focus is to please big-box clients," he says.

Typically, Mady Developments brings the full skill set to any project - market evaluation, site selection, property securing, land planning and zoning, building design and, finally, building construction.

Its roster of notable residential and retail properties in Canada includes Southwood Lakes, an environmentally sensitive community featuring over 900 residences, in Windsor, Ont.; The Gates of Glengarda, a \$65-million luxury condominium in Windsor; Plaza 300, a grocery-anchored project in Windsor; East Park Retail Centre, also in Windsor; and Heart Lake Plaza, in Brampton, Ont.

In the U.S, besides developing some notable residential projects, the company has been recognized for the introduction of resident enrichment programs.

These programs enable residents living in the company's moderate-income apartment communities to advance life skills through on-site, company- sponsored instructional classes.

At any given time, Mady Developments has 1,000 to 1,500 residential lots in the ground, says David Mady. Looking ahead, David, who joined the company in 1992, working in its Dallas office in asset management for five years, then returning to Windsor, becoming president in 2000, says the company could consider developing retail projects in the U.S.

Otherwise, its U.S. strategy will involve single and multi-family residential projects in Dallas; luxury high-rise condos in Florida, and, in Chicago, converting an apartment building to a condominium.

North of the 49th Parallel, Mady Developments will stick to the Toronto-to-Windsor corridor, but would consider Western Canada for any residential and retail opportunities that may arise, says David.

To this day, the company remains very much a family-run business, with Charles N. Mady still active; David, of course, functioning as president of Canadian operations; David's brother, Charles P. Mady, heading up U.S. operations; and David's Windsor-based sister, Carrie Mady Vigneux, functioning as president of Masterpiece Homes, the Canadian home-building division.

David identifies the guiding mission statement as opportunity-guided growth placing quality of projects over quantity.

"We're not here to take over the world," he says. "We're not here to be the biggest and best big-box developer. We're looking for what adds value."

Words to strengthen a business by, and foster long-term growth.