

‘Mr. Downtown’ Craig Ustler plans more apartments

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Craig Ustler experienced such a good outcome with his most recent downtown Orlando apartment complex that he’s ready to do it again ... and again.

The president of Orlando-based **Ustler Development Inc.** — known as Mr. Downtown— is gearing up to start work on two new apartment complexes, one that’s part of the 172-acre Florida Hospital Health Village campus and another that will likely be the first market-rate apartments in the planned \$1 billion Creative Village digital arts hub.

“Obviously, we are bullish on these two projects and downtown Orlando as a whole,” Ustler told *Orlando Business Journal*. “We believe that well-located, urban infill apartment projects will continue to do well.”

Ustler’s enthusiasm is driven by the April 29 sale of The Ivy Residences at Health Village, a “Class AA” complex developed by a joint venture between Ustler Development and Atlanta-based Wood Partners.

The Ivy Residences at Health Village, a 248-unit apartment complex that opened in 2014 near the Florida Hospital SunRail station, was one of the first new projects in the region prompted by the Central Florida commuter rail. It was 94 percent leased as of the sale date.

The property got strong interest from a pool of qualified investors and sold for nearly \$55 million, which worked out to a whopping \$221,658 per unit, a record high in the region during this real estate cycle, as previously reported by *OBJ*.

“Newly constructed urban infill apartments sites, especially those proximate to an employment anchor like Florida Hospital, are in high demand so it was a good time to sell, and it validated the



JIM CARCHIDI

Craig Ustler atop the 801 North Orange Avenue address of his office and restaurant, Citrus. JIM CARCHIDI

development of apartments as part of the mix at Health Village,” Ustler told *OBJ*. “I continue to believe that the No. 1 priority for upcoming private development at Health Village needs to be residential critical mass, which means more apartments and a wider variety of multifamily living choices.”

Though he said he wasn’t ready to share specifics on the two projects, Ustler told *OBJ* the next Health Village apartment complex should get the “full go ahead” next month.

Meanwhile, the other apartment complex is still hinging on how things move forward with the planned downtown campus for the University of Central Florida and **Valencia College** — the catalyst for the 68-acre Creative Village mixed-use project.

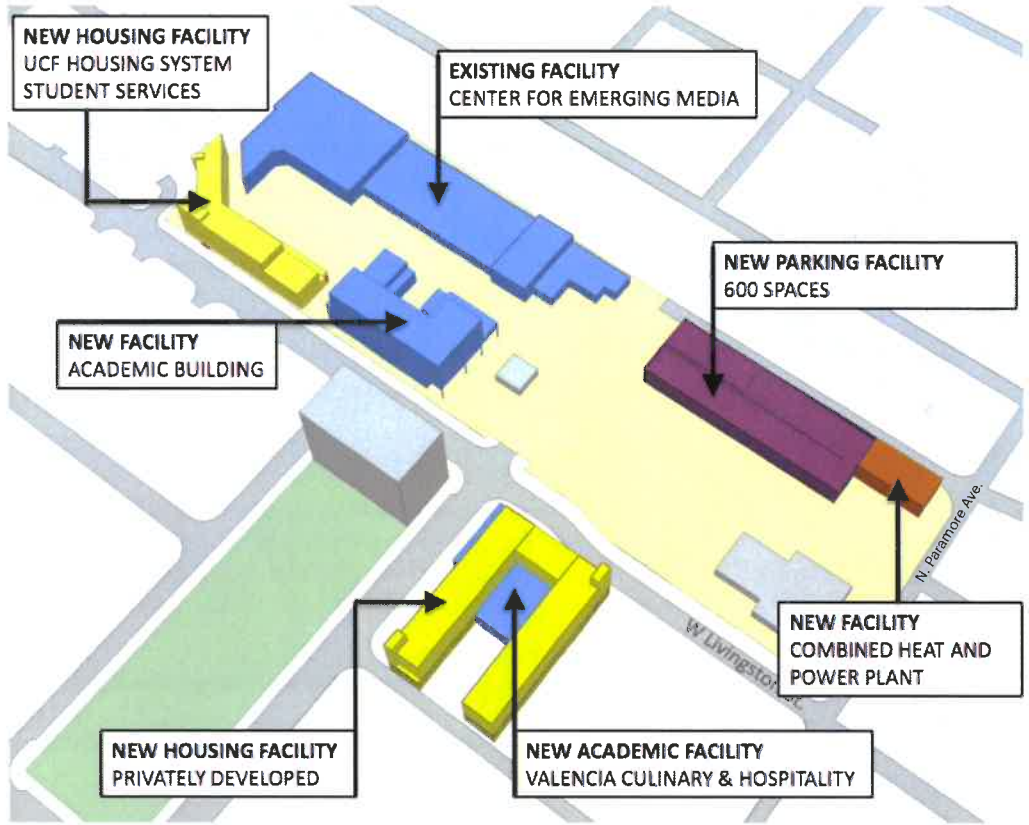
UCF is reviewing proposals from design/build teams for a \$60 million, 165,000-square-foot academic building, its first for the downtown campus. That team is expected to be hired by July or August of this year, and then private development will likely mirror UCF Downtown’s timeline, Ustler said.

UCF Downtown is slated to open in time for the fall 2018 semester.

Ustler had previously shared plans with *OBJ* about a \$40 million-\$60 million complex in Creative Village featuring a 400- 450 student-housing beds, commercial space, educational facilities and a 600-space parking garage. But that project is separate from the market-rate Creative Village apartment complex Ustler said he now has in the works.

Read more previous *OBJ* coverage of Creative Village and Florida Hospital Health Village.

And come back to OrlandoBusinessJournal.com for updates.



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