

# TIME TO CELEBRATE

Mixed-use project Celebration Pointe is set to move forward

By Katherine Boccaccio

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or Gainesville, Fla.-area residents, these are exciting times. Celebration Pointe, one of the more distinctive mixed-use projects in the state of Florida, is about to hit a significant milestone: The initial phase of the ambitious, \$170-million development broke ground in April with site preparation and significant public infrastructure upgrades.

Positioned on a 140-acre plot at the northwest corner of Interstate 75 and Archer Road in the heart of Gainesville, Celebration Pointe promises to be a retail and mixed-use powerhouse with a significant emphasis on destination and entertainment uses. When fully built out, the project will include approximately 300,000 sq. ft. of retail; sit-down dining and entertainment; 1,000 residential units, hotel and meeting space; and approximately 300,000 sq. ft. of Class-A office.

Celebration Pointe is being planned, designed and executed by Atlanta-based RaCo Real Estate Advisors, and Toronto-based Avison Young is handling the leasing and asset management.

## A Gainesville original

One of the South's most dynamic up-and-coming cities, Gainesville is a place that celebrates entrepreneurial energy, encourages an active lifestyle, and fosters an appreciation for sustainability and the region's abundant natural resources. It is also a city that is under-stored.

"Gainesville's high barrier to entry has delayed or even kept some retailers from expanding into the trade area," said Avison Young principal Tonya Creekmore. "Celebration Pointe has been like an enormous magnet grabbing their attention and providing a streamlined and seamless opportunity to access the market and its outstanding demographics."



*Celebration Pointe, in Gainesville, Fla., will feature 300,000 sq. ft. of retail and a mix of dining, residential, hospitality and office uses.*

A nod to the area's environmental bent, Celebration Pointe's master plan features significant conservation components, a number of gathering spaces and outdoor features, and prioritizes connections to adjacent recreational areas. A network of proposed bike paths, walkways and trails that wind throughout the project will connect to a 100-acre conservation area; other protected areas include the existing 460-acre Lake Kanapaha Conservation Area and the 240-acre Split Rock Conservation Area.

## Connectivity and context

As one of the state's first designated transit-oriented developments, the project is making multi-modal transportation a priority. Project leaders have worked closely with Alachua County and the City of Gainesville to create a design that will include bus transit stops within the project. Accessible destinations include downtown Gainesville, the University of Florida, UF Health Shands Hospital and a host of area landmarks.

The project is slated to open phase one in the fourth quarter of 2015. Infrastructure soon under way includes brand-centric entry signage at the project's main entrance on Archer Road, which will have a full-access intersection and new multi-lane roadway with a dedicated bus lane and pedestrian walks leading consumers to the core of the project. A new multi-lane bridge is being constructed across Interstate 75, providing a second major connection from Celebration Pointe to the City of Gainesville.

Sustainable, dynamic and seamlessly crafted into the social and commercial fabric of the city around it, Celebration Pointe's combination of accessibility, civic connections and appealing mix of uses is unique to the region. "This project will literally have something for everyone," said Ralph Conti, principal of RaCo Advisors and a partner in the project. "Celebration Pointe is a true mixed-use environment where 'live, work and play' is not just a tagline, it's a way of life."