

 Southern Community Newspapers Inc.

 PRINT THIS

Powered by  Clickability

Updated: 6:09 AM Jan 28, 2010

Men at work: Big construction projects at GGC good for economy

Georgia Gwinnett College is not just the home of the Grizzlies; it's the site of a lot of economic stimulus.

[Photo slide show inside](#)

Posted: 10:00 PM Jul 11, 2009

LAWRENCEVILLE - Georgia Gwinnett College is not just the home of the Grizzlies; it's the site of a lot of economic stimulus.

Two major construction projects are under way on the Lawrenceville campus, and officials plan to break ground on a student center this week. The combined square footage of the projects - 560,000 - will double the college's building space, said Eddie Beauchamp, vice president of business and finance.

"We've got more (square footage) under construction than we're actually operating right now," Beauchamp said.

These big projects are "a big boon to the ailing construction industry right now," said Chic Fries, vice president of design and construction for Place Properties.

Place Properties is developing Georgia Gwinnett's student housing, a \$60 million, 415,000-square-foot, five-building complex that will house 1,030 bedrooms.

"It's huge to the area," Fries said. "It's rather large for multi-family housing."

About 150 Atlanta-area residents are working on the student housing construction site, Fries said. Many of the subcontractors are from Gwinnett County.

Beauchamp said the college tries to target Gwinnett County firms for its construction projects.

"We certainly make sure that when one of the construction management firms bids (for items such as steel, grating or dirt) that they include Gwinnett County contractors and give them an opportunity to bid," Beauchamp said. "But ultimately it's up to the construction management firm as to who wins."

That's because the firm guarantees the college a maximum price for the project, and it's the company's responsibility to build within that price.

Tom Wening, executive vice president of H.J. Russell & Co., the construction management firm for the student housing project, said the building site is "a nice economic stimulus to a lot of Gwinnett citizens."

"There has certainly been a slowdown in the private sector, and it's always encouraging to see something like what's going on with the student housing," Wening said, referring to the project's status as a public-private partnership. "The beauty of the student housing is that not a single penny of taxpayer money (is going) into it."

The Georgia Gwinnett College Foundation provided the money to build the state-of-the-art dormitories. The money will be repaid with student rent, which will average about \$650 per month, Beauchamp said.

The Potts Co., the construction management firm for the college's Library and Learning Resource Center, employs about 120 people per day at its site, said Dave Buser, president of the Conyers-based company.

Buser said the company is fortunate and blessed to be managing the \$19 million project, but it's not the largest one his company is currently handling. The Potts Co. is also managing a \$49 million judicial center in Augusta and will start working on a \$29 million academic building at Gainesville State College in about two months.

Although his company has survived well in the recession, Buser said many of his friends and peers have not.

"There's not as much work out there as there needs to be," he said. "Nobody goes unscathed today."

Find this article at:

<http://www.gwinnettdaily.com/archives/headlines/82919937.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

Copyright © 2002-2010 - Gray Television Group, Inc.