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## Massive new hotel and entertainment district headed to Disney area

The Ovation district would transform the I-4 interchange in Kissimmee.



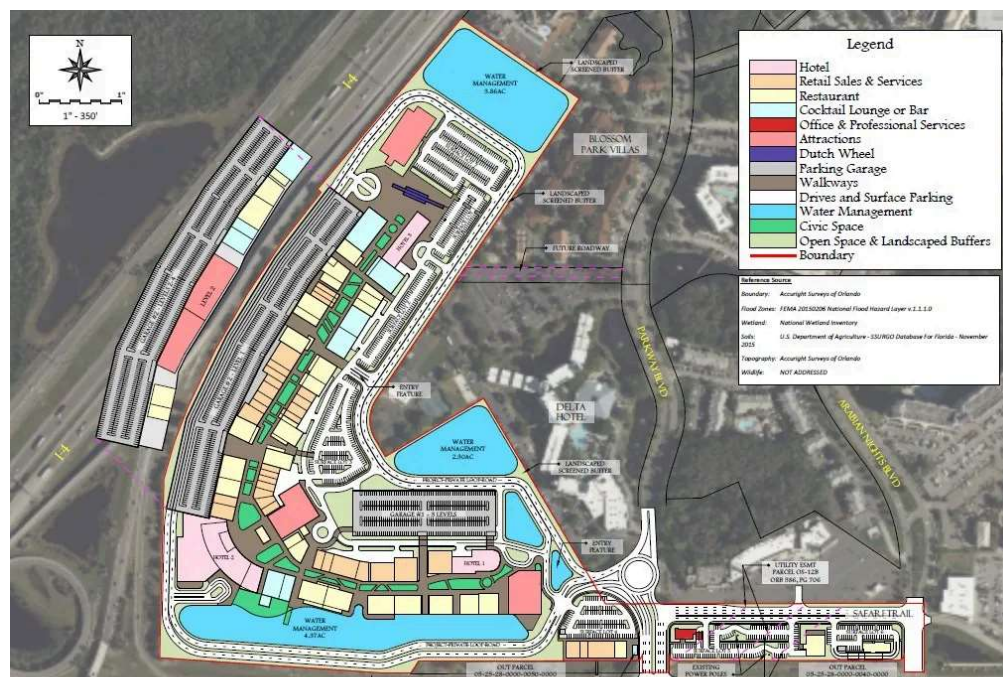
After two years of planning, Miami-based Myers Group has submitted its first master plan concept for the Ovation entertainment district. It would have three hotels, dining and entertainment and a “Dutch wheel” that can be seen from I-4. (Rendering by Rj Whidden & Associates)



One of the biggest blights in Orlando’s tourism corridor could be transformed into a sprawling new entertainment district with luxury hotels, dining and attractions – including a 175-foot-tall Ferris wheel that can be seen from I-4.

“It’s going to be very cool,” said Bill Shewalter, Vice President of Development for **Meyers Group**, which wrapped up more than two years of planning to create the “Ovation” master plan on a 77-acre abandoned motel site at the I-4 interchange with U.S. 192 in Kissimmee.

The developer filed the site plan with Osceola County earlier this week for a compliance review with the W192 design standards. It’s the first step in the permitting process for projects in the county’s W192 tourism corridor. Shewalter said Meyers plans to develop the entire project in one phase.



Owned by [Fortuna Realty](#) in New York, the one-time Hyatt resort is in a prime location right across from Celebration and minutes from Disney.

“It’s a location and a project that seems to attract all the big names that you want versus kind of what’s currently available in Orlando — and there’s a lot of good stuff, but nothing quite like this,” Shewalter said.

The Aventura-based developer [has been under contract for the “Orlando Sun” property since 2022](#) and has refined the concept based on feedback from Osceola County. For starters, they eliminated the 1,150 multifamily units from the earlier plan and instead proposed three hotels with a combined 675 keys, two parking garages and close to 700,000 square feet of dining, signature retail and entertainment uses.

“That’s what the county wants,” Shewalter said, adding that the Osceola County’s costly school impact fees and parking requirements factored into the decision to scrap the apartments.

He said Orlando’s tourism corridor is such a unique market it can support a project of this scale. “There’s no project with similar entertainment, retail restaurant orientations anywhere in America because the financing is so difficult,” he said. “But this is Orlando — this is the theme park corridor. There’s at least six other large centers on this corridor that all, cumulatively, are doing \$1,000 per square foot in sales, which is a very, very positive number.”



This view of the promenade looking north shows the 175-foot tall Dutch wheel and a 175-key select service hotel. (Rendering by Rj Whidden & Associates)

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Large landscaped planters with mature trees will provide greenspace and shade along the promenade. (Rendering by Rj Whidden & Associates)

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The main complex would consist of two rows of buildings linked by a central promenade with lushly landscaped planters, event lawns and shade pavilions. Most of the parking would be provided by two garages on the outskirts of the project that can accommodate about 4,200 vehicles. Shewalter said the layout is similar to the [CityPlace Doral](#), a mixed-use development he completed when he worked for Related Group.

“I’ve done similar kinds of projects in my history and learned how to do this kind of project,” he said. “It’s not my first one like this.”

The tallest building at the corner of the project is a full-service hotel with 350 rooms. Shewalter said it would be at least four stars. The other two hotels would be select service, three-star hotels with 150 and 175 rooms.

The master plan by [Rj Whidden & Associates](#) calls for 182,000 square feet of restaurants plus 186,000 square feet of cocktail lounges and bars. Many would be located along the south side of the promenade and would have terraces overlooking the 4.3-acre pond that buffers the project from West Irlo Bronson Memorial Highway. The stretch that runs parallel to the interstate would be two stories and would be attached to the larger of the two parking structures.

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The row of buildings on the south side of the district will have access from the promenade and terraces with outdoor seating overlooking the pond. (Rendering by Rj Whidden & Associates)

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The tenant mix at Ovation will include some family-friendly uses, but overall the vibe is “more grown up” and will feature the “hottest, latest new restaurants,” Shewalter said.

“There’s a lot of brands coming in from some of the bigger cities on the eastern seaboard,” he said. “And we were able to attract a number of great brands from New York, Philadelphia, New Orleans and Nashville – combined together, it creates something that’s very unique.”

One of the biggest design challenges the team faced was traffic flow within the site and on U.S. 192. The only access points are at Parkway Boulevard and Arabian Nights Boulevard. Both are signalized intersections with dual left-turn lanes, but they may not be able to accommodate the additional vehicle trips from such a large-scale development with parking for over 5,000 vehicles.

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One of the biggest hurdles was finding a way to allow for traffic circulation without causing a bottleneck on U.S. 192 at the I-4 interchange. Meyers Group solved the problem by creating a 4-lane entrance at Parkway Boulevard that leads to a traffic circle and private road to access the parking garage. (Rendering by Rj Whidden & Associates)

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The master plan expands the Parkway Boulevard intersection to eight lanes and incorporates a traffic circle that allows the left turn movements without stopping at a light. A new frontage road would extend along the southern border of the property and curve up one of the two parking garages.

“There’s no stop at a light all the way through, so that enables the access to work,” Shewalter said. “So as you can imagine, that required cooperation of a number of parties.”

Two stand-alone restaurants, a small office/bank building and a multi-tenant retail building would be constructed on outparcels flanking the two entrances. The northern tip of the project would be punctuated with a Ferris wheel that’s about half the size of the one at Orlando’s Icon Park and a large attraction or retail user. Meyers Group was previously discussions with Andretti Indoor Karting & Games to build a second location there, but Shewalter said they are no longer pursuing that use.



On this outparcel between Parkway and Arabian Nights boulevards, the master plan shows a bank building, a stand-alone restaurant and a large restaurant with expansive, double-drive-thru lanes. (Rendering by Rj Whidden & Associates)

The Orlando Sun property has long been considered one of the biggest eyesores on Kissimmee’s W192 tourism corridor, and it has been a priority for the county to see it developed to its full potential. County Manager Don Fisher said “the County is encouraged that a developer is considering to create such a high quality project is on such a high profile property.”

Paul Sexton, vice president of [HREC](#), said Ovation project will be a game-changer for the area. “I have always said once that parcel gets redeveloped, then 192 is effectively a different market.”

Sexton said the Orlando market has demand for more hotel rooms, but it’s getting more expensive to build stand alone select service hotels to meet the need. “It seems like the way we’re going, the only way you can do a hotel project and make it successful is to do a bigger project that has many different elements,” he said.

This is the second new entertainment district announced this year for the Orlando tourism corridor. In January, AIC Hotel Group, which is affiliated with Nobu Hotels, [filed preliminary plans with Orange County](#) for a 44-acre resort district on vacant land just east of Disney Springs. The conceptual plan calls for four hotels with a combined 1,934 keys and a retail/dining/entertainment center comprising 16 restaurants with seating for 2,600 diners and an entertainment venue with a capacity of 1,625 guests. The master plan also includes 270 apartments designated as Club Membership Units and a 26,000-square-foot spa.

Construction is well underway at Everest Place, where Teramir Group is building a

The [Conrad opened in January](#) at Evermore Orlando Resort, while O-Town West is set to get the first [Tau Hotel and Asian Bistro](#) at its City Center. In December Development Ventures Group, DEVEN, closed on the land for a [future \\$400 million Fairmont Hotel](#) on International Drive.

Universal is building three new hotels as part of its Epic Universe expansion, and right next door [Marriott will break ground this year on a 22-story luxury lifestyle W Hotel](#) and adjacent and entertainment venue.

*Have a tip about Central Florida development? Contact me at [lkinsler@GrowthSpotter.com](mailto:lkinsler@GrowthSpotter.com) or (407) 420-6261. Follow GrowthSpotter on [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).*

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