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Building identity

Architects work to help Brevard's cities develop distinctive styles

BY WAYNET. PRICE
FLORIDA TODAY

A new Melbourne City Hall will be a prominent building for Brevard County's second-largest municipality.

Yet the five-story brick, stucco and glass structure isn't meant to be obtrusive or overpowering. The \$8.7-million building, replacing a crowded, 44-year-old city hall on Strawbridge Avenue, is intended to blend into the neighborhood.

"It is important that a building reflect the thought and consideration given by the architect to the surrounding areas, the environment and the integrity of design, while satisfying the needs of the client," said Dave Nagrodsky, the Melbourne-based architect behind the new city hall design.

Across the Space Coast over the last five to 10 years, communities and municipalities have become more attuned to building standards and have started thinking more deliberately about how significant structures can affect the architectural fabric — and even the general feel — of an area.

Melbourne, Titusville and Viera, for example, all have architectural review boards that sign off on structures' designs to ensure they meet community standards.

And though there has been a good amount of criticism, Palm Bay requires the combination Florida Cracker-Key West style that includes wide porches, siding, low-slung pitched roofs, pastels and gingerbread trim. The city's policy does have a couple of broad loopholes allowing for new companies to skirt the design guidelines if it means they would locate outside Palm Bay.

The end result, local architect and engineering firms say, has been the emergence of distinct styles for communities that mostly involve a combination of Key West or Mediterranean influences with a dash here and there of modern and contemporary architecture.

Cocoa Beach is developing an art deco-South Florida motif. Melbourne is mixed, but with the new city hall, and the planned \$35 million, six-story Crane Creek Medical Center, a strong Mediterranean influence is emerging.

See **BUILDINGS**, 3C



Tim Shortt, FLORIDA TODAY

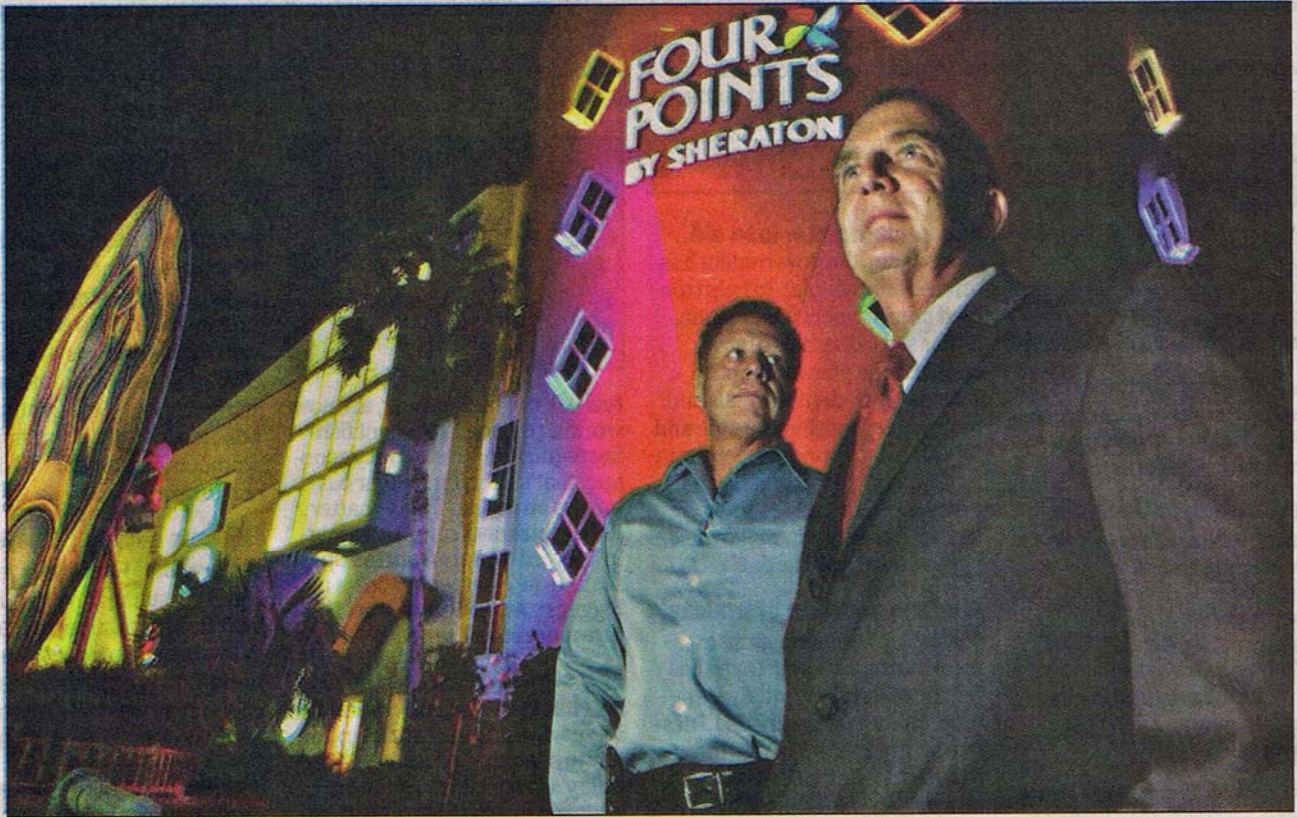


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Latin influence. The Mediterranean style's prominence in Viera and Melbourne is displayed in these existing and planned buildings: The Wesche Jewelers building in Viera (**top**) and — shown in artists' depictions — Melbourne's future city hall (**middle**) and Crane Creek Medical Center (**bottom**).



Craig Rubadoux, FLORIDA TODAY

The Art Cocoa look. MAI Architectural Engineering Construction Vice president Carlos Alvarez of Indialantic, left, and president David Menzel of Melbourne did the architecture for the

Cocoa Beach Surf Co. — which includes the Four Points Sheraton — following the town's distinctive South Beach-style art deco look.

New buildings establish style

BUILDINGS, from 1C

In the Viera area, The Avenue Viera retail center, Health First's Pro-Health & Fitness Center, the Viera Discovery Center and the Wesche Jewelers building are four of the major projects that have solidified a strong Mediterranean and Spanish architectural style for that community.

Under review

Some of those involved in the process say the role of review boards as these styles have progressed has been generally positive. And just because there is an economic slowdown, no one should expect review committees to overlook their charge of monitoring building designs.

Craig Suman, vice president for the Melbourne-based Holeman Suman Architects Inc, said architectural review boards "operate mostly within the opinions of the persons on the board" who usually reside in the community. Suman has served on numerous architectural review boards in Brevard and says they are the domain of the strongly opinionated. "Architecture, like many things, generates emotion in people. The emotion is usually tempered by the likes, dislikes and opinions of the observer," Suman said. "For the most part, these boards or committees are meant to keep a sense of continuity of their image of their community, mainly concerning property values, and sometimes to impose opinion of style."

Some buildings, like the new Melbourne City Hall, will likely be a significant influence on future structures and may induce existing structures to adopt newer, fresher facades.

The same with Cocoa Beach.

Dave Menzel, president of MAI Architectural Engineering Construction, who can claim credit for more than 500 building projects in Brevard and surrounding counties, said the Cocoa Beach Surf Co. building — which includes a retail center and the 75-room, five-story Sheraton Four Points Hotel — is one of his favorites.

The building, at 4001 N. Atlantic Ave., is directly south of another of Brevard's most high-profile buildings, the Ron Jon Surf Shop.

"The Cocoa Beach Surf Co. incorporates retail signage and products directly into the architecture," Menzel said. "The combination has been so successful that it has made the project an attraction of sorts that stimulates passersby to visit and shop."

MAI also is helping with the new Crane Creek Medical Center in Melbourne, which will be just south of the new city hall.

Nagrodsky, who also designed Wesche Jewelers at 8145 N. Wickham Road in Viera, said being in touch with existing community standards should play a key factor in design.

"As long as the building is designed well," Nagrodsky said, "meaning scale, proportion, color, positioning of building on site, are factored into the overall design, then I believe the building will be successful." ■