

South Florida Construction Activity is Hot, Hot, Hot!

By: Keith A. Langley



The South Florida construction scene is sizzling with rapid growth in commercial, residential and industrial sectors. With all this heat, some players may find themselves getting burnt. Langley LLP's Miami office is on the scene, ready to protect our clients from burns and soothe those who may already be feeling the effects of the Florida heat.

Residential Construction

South Florida, the tri-county area of Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties, has 247 new condo projects with more than 33,000 units in the pipeline. Miami-Dade County has the most projects – about half of which are in the Downtown Miami area. Other developing areas include Hollywood/Hallandale Beach, West Palm Beach, Miami Beach, Aventura, and Sunny Isles Beach. (www.CraneSpotters.com)

Retail Construction

Retail development has taken off in Miami with construction of the mixed-use Brickell City Centre and the Miami Worldcenter, as well as expansion of existing sites like the Aventura Mall and the Design District. The \$1.05 billion Brickell City Centre project includes office, hotel, and condo space and is expected to be completed in 2015.

But that's not all. An additional retail complex is planned for Downtown Miami with hopes that it will turn into a casino one day. A 403 room Hilton hotel is being built in West Palm Beach and significant hotel construction is occurring in Miami Beach. Broward County also has plans for a \$1.5 billion Metropica (the "city within a city") project beginning as early as January 2015. The multi-use concept includes plans for 2,000 condos, 300 townhomes, and enough commercial space to hold 11 Walmarts. This project, which has been in the works for nearly 20 years, is estimated to take 10 years and 5,000 construction workers to complete.

Industrial Construction

The South Florida ports are racing forward to meet the needs of the construction community and accommodate the increased traffic that is expected to result from expansion of the Panama Canal. Port Miami is undergoing \$2 billion worth of capital improvements that will allow it to double the capacity of its current infrastructure and receive ships up to three times as large as it is presently able to support.

Arizona • Arkansas
California • Colorado
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Texas

Dallas

901 Main Street, Suite 600
Dallas, Texas 75202
(214) 722-7160

Phoenix

76 East Mitchell Drive
Phoenix, Arizona 85012
(602) 428-7339

Miami

2937 SW 27th Avenue
Suite 106
Miami, FL 33133
(305) 397-0630

info@lwllp.com

www.lwllp.com

To "Go Green", our firm uses recyclable paper or ceramic cups and no longer uses Styrofoam cups. In addition, we have adopted a less-paper office environment.

We hope that these changes make big differences in the future.

Well done is better than well said.

- Benjamin Franklin



Why the Heat?

The ongoing expansion and development of South Florida results from the area's unique positioning as a gateway to Latin America and the Caribbean with strong international trade opportunities. South Florida has three ports (Palm Beach, Miami, and Everglades), three international airports (Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and Palm Beach), and a skilled, educated and multi-lingual work force. Taxes are low and Florida is perceived as generally business friendly, poised to soon to overtake New York as the third most populous state in the nation.

The hot construction and development markets in South Florida have attracted incredible amounts of money, whether from Russia, Europe, or Central and South America – and have attracted our law firm to open an office in South Florida. Why us? Three main reasons:

1. Our experience across the South, in the Texas Rio Grande Valley, Arkansas, Arizona (and contiguous states) has shown us that there are pockets in the country where litigation and complex claims are challenging and often mission critical, and South Florida is one of those pockets. When a construction/surety/insurance case has to be tried – whether one day or 12 weeks – we have the experience to handle it.
2. We have developed practices and protocols, including resolving the vast majority of claims by creative negotiation, that are very well suited for the emerging Florida construction market.
3. We understand the business of our clients and know how to advance their goals. We work effectively with consultants and expert witnesses, and we have existing relationships with the consultants that are well-established in Florida.

Attorneys residing in the Miami office are Brandon Bains, Nicole Ramos, and Max Langley; Liss Olivares has also joined the office to provide paralegal support. Many of you already know Brandon, who has been with the firm since 2006 and recently traded his cowboy hat for a Guayabera. Nicole grew up in Puerto Rico and graduated summa cum laude from the Universidad del Sagrado Corazon in San Juan. Nicole was part of the first graduating law school class from Florida International University, where she graduated cum laude and ranked fourth in her class. She has been practicing in the South Florida area since 2005, where she has cultivated knowledge of the 3 C's – the courts, the construction scene, and the culture. Max recently graduated cum laude from the University of Miami School of Law and was part of the school's Innocence Clinic. This Clinic garnered national attention due to its involvement in the successful appeal of the conviction of John Connolly, the FBI agent who was portrayed by Matt Damon in the movie *The Departed*. Liss – a native Cuban – has more than seven years of experience in the South Florida legal industry. Ready for a hot time in South Florida!

Keith Langley is a partner at Langley LLP and may be contacted at klangley@lwllp.com.