

New 27,000-square-foot Palm Bay City Hall Annex to create hundreds of area jobs — Certified General Contractors leads local design-build team with longtime partners CEG and DNA

By Ken Datzman

Construction is under way on the first multi-story government building in Palm Bay slated for certification under the sustainability guidelines established by the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program.

The three-story, 27,000-square-foot Palm Bay City Hall Annex is being built in front of the existing City Hall facility, at 120 Malabar Road.

The design-build team doing the project is led by Certified General Contractors Inc. of Melbourne. CGC's team partners include local firms Construction Engineering Group LLC, and DNA Architects Inc.

"As a team, we have completed many design-build projects over the past 10 years, including the new Melbourne City Hall," said Jim Stivers, president and founder of CGC. "We did an excellent job on that project, finished it on time and on budget. We expect to do the same for the Palm Bay City Hall Annex. The city gave us a budget and we worked as a team to design that project to their budget."

Using this industry approach, the design and construction aspects are contracted by a single entity in contrast to a "design-bid-build" sequence," he said. "Every member of the team becomes part of the design-build process." The design-build method is saving the City of Palm Bay between \$650,000 and \$800,000, Stivers said.

Stivers said the contract was awarded based on the team's "qualifications, not pricing. Everybody on the list competed for the same price." The city ranked the teams based on their qualifications and compiled points.

CGC won the contract Dec. 9 and began construction Jan. 1, Stivers said. "DNA, CEG and CGC employees worked nonstop from Dec. 9 right through the holidays. Tom Adams (CEG structural engineer) finished the structural drawings over Christmas."

The City Hall Annex construction will pump roughly \$4 million into the local economy this year, creating hundreds of jobs.

Stivers said his team is "committed to hiring" Brevard County subcontractors and suppliers for the work. "All the members of the design-build team are local and all the subcontractors are going to be local hires. The money is going to stay in this community. That was very important to the City of Palm Bay when it awarded the contract."

Alan Broadway, CGC's on-site project manager, said the construction project will involve more than 400 people, including suppliers.

The recipient of federal stimulus funds, Palm Bay was able to save money on the project's interest costs through the issuance of Recovery Zone Bonds.

The project is scheduled for completion this fall. At that time, Palm Bay will consolidate staff and move operations that are now housed in rented space, in a building on Babcock Street, to the City Hall Annex. City officials say Palm Bay will save nearly \$2 million over the next 30 years because of the annex, and be able to provide more comprehensive services to residents at a lower cost.

Team member Jake Wise, CEG civil engineer, said the annex project will include an expansion of the City Hall courtyard. There will be a connection between the two buildings, creating more of a campus feel."

"The building will feature a lot of modern design elements, such as decorative stairs," said architect Dave Nagrodsky, principal of DNA Architects.

The Palm Bay City Hall Annex is being built to qualify for LEED certification by the Green Building Council, said CEG mechanical engineer Keith Couch. LEED certification provides independent, third-party verification that a building project meets the highest green-building and performance measures, said Couch, who holds the LEED Accredited Professional designation.

"LEED certification covers a wide scope of rules and regulations for a green project design, everything from the use of building materials to meeting certain energy-efficiency standards. For the City Hall Annex, we are targeting at least a 25 to 30 percent energy-efficiency performance above and beyond the requirement of the normal code," he said.

Couch said green buildings are designed to lower operating costs, reduce waste sent to landfills, conserve energy and water, and reduce harmful greenhouse emissions, while providing other benefits to building owners and the community.

CGC's Ryan Runte, LEED AP project manager, said the "waste that the project produces is being recycled. Everything is being separated on site and put into the proper dumpsters."

Rood & Zwick Inc./Architects in Association did the "design criteria" package for the project.

Architects, general contractors, engineering firms, and other businesses that serve the design and construction industry are looking for slight improvement in the market in 2011. One encouraging sign is that architectural billings are on the rise.

According to the American Institute of Architects, the design and construction industry is continuing to move toward a recovery. On the heels of its highest mark since 2007, AIA's Architecture Billings Index jumped more than two points in December. As a leading economic indicator of construction activity,



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

The Palm Bay City Hall Annex project is expected to create more than 400 jobs in the area. Construction is under way on the three-story facility. The design-build team members are, from left: Tom Adams, CEG; Dave Nagrodsky, DNA Architects; Don Sibert, CGC; Adam Broadway, CGC; Jim Stivers, CGC; Lauren James, CEG; Keith Couch, CEG; Ryan Runte, CGC; Jake Wise, CEG; and Dave Alley, CEG. They are at CEG's office in Melbourne.

the index reflects the nine to 12-month lag time between architecture billings and construction spending.

"I hope we've made a turn for the better," said Nagrodsky, an AIA Space Coast Chapter member. "I've noticed the phones have been ringing more often at our firm since the beginning of January. Even during the times when the market was thriving, January typically was a slow month for us. But in the last few weeks, we've been getting calls. Mainly the discussions have been about small projects. Still, this is encouraging to hear."

CEG partner Wise said he is more upbeat, too, about the potential for new business this year. "We are not only seeing a mix of retrofitting of existing sites, which has been a constant throughout the downturn for our firm, but we're also seeing more new sites being looked at and people are starting to proceed with projects, which is definitely a good sign," he said.

Stivers added that his company anticipates gaining new contracts this year in the commercial-building sector.