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Records sets out straight for development career

by Jill Jamieson-Nichols

Jeremy Records is one of those rare people who knew early in life what he wanted to do and set out to do it.

The proof is Central Development, a Denver-based development and investment company with a broad project spectrum and focused strategy.

Whether it's an office investment, flex development or infill redevelopment, the company looks for multiple exit strategies, markets with barriers to entry and "quantifiable" markets – the company isn't a greenfield developer.

"We are very broad in product type. We do investment, acquisition, development and rehabilitation," said Records. Yet, "We are very focused. All of our investments have a similar profile."

Records became bent on becoming a developer while growing up around the industry in Portland, Ore., and Sacramento, Calif. His father, John Records, worked in those and other markets across the country, running CB Richard Ellis' East Coast property management division before retiring from that firm.

"As a kid, I always liked drawing buildings," said Records. But Records was more interested in the big picture than where to put studs.

Knowing he wanted to be a developer in Denver, which offered an urban environment like Portland, but also sunshine, like Sacramento, Records studied entrepreneurship at the University of Colorado in Boulder. When he was 19,



Jeremy Records

he spent the summer doing market research for CBRE in Las Vegas, where he was impressed by seeing a concrete tilt-up building rise in a single day.

While still in school, he worked as a runner at CBRE in Denver, learning from industry professionals Ray Pittman, Rob Link and Mark Ballenger.

Records was trying to get a leasing assignment for a downtown Denver office building that Panattoni Development was contemplating when he got a position with the company in 2000. He spent five years with Panattoni, three of which involved putting together the 600,000-square-foot Harvest Junction retail center in Longmont.

Records founded his own firm in 2005.

"All the stars kind of aligned. It was relatively easy to make the transition. Debt was plentiful, equity was plentiful," said Records, adding the business gave he and his wife, Jennifer, an

opportunity to work together. They were joined by partner Brad Cushard, a schoolmate from Sacramento. A couple of years later, John Records joined his son as a principal in the company.

Central Development's first project, which was built by affiliate Central Construction, was First & Inca, a seven-unit townhome project in the Baker Neighborhood that sold out prior to completion. The company went on to develop Littleton Ridge at SouthPark, a six-building, 31,400-sf office complex in Littleton, and Lakemont, a 53,000-sf industrial condominium development in Wheat Ridge. It assembled land for multifamily development across from the University of Denver and also acquired the 60,000-sf Barrons Building in Highlands Ranch.

The company acquired the historic Cable Building in downtown Denver, where it has its offices, in partnership with the Hampshire Co. in 2007. It has approvals for the addition of an 18-story tower originally envisioned as a hotel. But with the economy bringing that and nearly all commercial development projects in Denver to a standstill, the use may change to meet demand in the next development cycle.

In terms of new projects, Central Development is looking at apartment and build-to-suit opportunities in Denver.

Records believes the downturn in the investment market could cause trouble with assets of \$15 million and up, but not so much at the lower prices, where local and regional banks still are lending. "Most of the owners

in Denver seem to be fairly well-heeled and aren't willing to sell at distressed prices," he said, adding that, "Denver has functioned pretty well through this downturn."

Records and his wife, who is Central Development's chief financial officer and also oversees property management, live in the DU area. They have worked together on residential projects – "I almost look at it as a hobby to be out there pounding nails. It's fun," Records said – but their three children, 5 and under, consume much of their spare time.

Like most developers, Records gets satisfaction from work that is tangible. "When you're done with something, you can point to what you did," he commented.

He also enjoys the variety and changing nature of development. "When people say they know real estate, they may have done 50 Walgreens, but the 51st is going to be different," said Records. "I love that every day is different, every project is different."

"You get to deal with a lot of different people during the course of a day. You get to deal with a lot of different backgrounds and a lot of different skill sets," he said, adding he enjoys getting to know the people he does business with and building long-term relationships with them.

"If we're buying something from a seller, we know that seller. They know us," Records said.

"We look forward to having fun in business, the deals we choose and the people we work with." ▲