



(Clockwise from upper left: City Hall tower; downtown Orlando skyline; the new Amway Center with the SunTrust Building in the background; swans at Lake Eola; Magnolia Street mural)

PHOTOS BY JIM CARCHIDI

Power players

Four downtown Orlando community leaders you should know

BY MICHAEL SEAN COMERFORD

Downtown Orlando has a colorful history, and its health is viewed as key to the future of the metropolitan area.

Church Street's retail and nightlife, the new Amway Center and the planned the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts each are expected to be major drivers behind luring more people to a vital downtown living, working and recreational environment.

Downtown Orlando also features thriving companies and a top-notch work force, and its leaders anticipate more growth at four planned rail stops for SunRail, Central Florida's planned commuter rail: Florida Hospital, Lynx Central, Church Street and Orlando Health/Amtrak.

This special report features four key community leaders you should know if you want to do business in downtown Orlando, because they're involved in moving the central business district forward, positioning it for an economic upturn:

- Orlando developer Craig Ustler, principal at Creative Village Orlando LLC: His firm aims to develop a 68-acre, \$800 million-plus project into a neighborhood called the Creative Village, with high-tech businesses, higher education and residences. He'll be instrumental in getting funding and giving his input on how the plan will work.

- Thomas Chatmon, executive director of the Orlando Downtown

Largest private employers in downtown Orlando

Company Address	Workers	Industry
Florida Hospital, 601 W. Rollins St.	16,700	Health care
Orlando Health, 1414 Kuhl Ave.	14,000	Health care
SunTrust Banks Inc., 200 S. Orange Ave.	2,644	Financial institution
YMCA, 433 N. Mills Ave.	1,730	Nonprofit health, wellness and prevention center
ZeroChaos, 420 S. Orange Ave.	800	Payroll processing and recruiting

Source: Orlando Business Journal research *Lake, Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties



Ustler



Chatmon



Bobroff



Cohen

Development Board/Community Redevelopment Agency: He has a background in urban redevelopment planning, and wants to revitalize a 1,000-square-acre area of downtown with a variety of restaurants, nightlife spots and retail stores, as well as the community venues and enhanced transportation systems. Chatmon said he already sees an uptick in retail rentals, particularly along the historic Church Street.

- Michael Bobroff, chief operating officer of the Metro Orlando

boost from the planned new performing arts center and transportation upgrades, he said.

- Kelly Cohen, managing partner at the Southern Strategy Group of Orlando: She specializes in government relations and is focused on getting the word out about the improvements in downtown Orlando and the projects underway. Her enthusiasm is infectious.

For more on these downtown power players, see Pages 14-20.

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Economic Development Commission: His optimism about downtown's future resonates. The area already has crown jewels such as Lake Eola and the new Amway Center, but it also will experience a



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City of Orlando fast facts

2010 population: 233,160*

No. of businesses: 13,934

Median household income: \$43,601

Average annual wage: \$40,410

Main industries: Real estate, tourism, defense, entertainment, biotech and financial services

Median home price: \$165,213

No. homes sold in downtown in first nine months of 2010: 1,040

Unemployment rate: 11.6%

Property tax millage rate: 5.65

Sources: City of Orlando, U.S. Census Bureau, Orlando Regional Realtor Association, Orange County Property Appraiser, city-data.com, salarylist.com
*Spring 2010 estimate

Craig Ustler

**President, Ustler Development Inc.;
principal, Creative Village
Orlando LLC**

Area of expertise: Urban planning

Education: Bachelor's in economics and master's in real estate and urban analysis, University of Florida

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Craig Ustler's first job was on a land surveying crew. And he's using that same eye for development these days as president of Ustler Development Inc. and a principal at Creative Village Orlando LLC.

Ustler Development is developing the \$30 million, 105,000-square-foot, seven-story GAI Building at the southwest corner of Summerlin Avenue and South Street, "the only significant private development project under construction in downtown and the first privately developed green office building downtown," said Ustler, also president of Urban Life Management Restaurant Group, which owns several restaurants in downtown Orlando, including Hue, Cityfish and Citrus.

It's no surprise then that he predicts better times ahead for downtown.

"We have the new Amway Center and lots of activity going on, probably as much as any city in the country," said Ustler, 41, an investor and developer of various types of real estate, with a focus on urban infill projects, especially in downtown Orlando. "With Sun Rail and mass transit on the horizon, downtown Orlando will be a national leader in transit-oriented development."

First job: Land surveying crew for DRMP Inc., a civil engineering firm

Main projects I'm working on now: The GAI Building and the Creative Village

My biggest business achievement: Longevity and staying power. Most of our restaurants, businesses and developments have persevered and held up well during the downturn.

Downtown Orlando's crown jewels: Great in-town neighborhoods, lakes, brick streets and oak trees

Downtown Orlando's biggest challenge: Lack of effective and efficient transit options. We need more integrated street car, bus circulator, regional bus, bike, pedestrian and other connections to the upcoming SunRail stations.

Main thing I expect to shape downtown Orlando's future: Transit-oriented development, neighborhood development around the two hospitals, mixed-use projects for the "innovation economy," more education and universities downtown

What government can do to help business: Pay attention and stay on top of the real world social, economic and design factors that truly affect economic development and result in great cities.

My best business decision: Coming back to Orlando after school and focusing on a clear career path for urban redevelopment

My worst business decision: Lots of mistakes, but nothing I didn't learn from and nothing I regret

Little-known fact: I love my work and what I do, but I really would like to be a professor one day.

Favorite reward for myself: Visiting New York City

I've always wanted to learn: How to get everyone's attention about supporting local businesses

What makes me neurotic: Solving the business, social and community problems of the moment. There is always something that needs fixing, and I'm often obsessed with finding the answers.

My most annoying habit: I'm impatient and too orga-



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Craig Ustler

nized. I think it annoys people that I have extremely high expectations and over-plan things.

My best friend says I'm: Always busy

I spend most of my disposable income at: Our restaurants
— Michael Sean Comerford