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Retail & Hospitality

Young brokers start own networking group

Dallas Business Journal - April 26, 2002 by [Lisa Tanner](#)

Word is getting out about a networking group formed by and for young retail real estate professionals. The group was started by some of those rising young professionals when they couldn't find networking opportunities that met their needs.

Called Retail Dealmakers, the group is gaining momentum. It now boasts a mailing list of more than 50 people and generally draws nearly half that for each of its monthly breakfast meetings.

Brokers Chris Green, John Christon and Hannah Douglas came up with the idea.

"There were a lot of networking opportunities for people who have been in real estate for 10 or 20 years and for those who are in nonretail commercial real estate," said Green, who is with Venture Commercial. Douglas is leasing director for The Shops at Legacy and Christon handles real estate for McDonald's.

"But we needed to create some immediate resources, because it's tough starting out," Green said. They targeted individuals who'd only been in the business for a year or two and aimed to get participation from as many companies as possible.

In addition to monthly breakfast meetings, the group also gathers for property tours of key developments, such as a recent visit to the new Central Market store in Plano, which drew strong interest.

"There's a lot of buzz about HEB right now," Green said. "We want to come up with ideas that are worthy of everyone's time." They're kicking around the idea of doing a program, perhaps called 'Lunch with a Legend,' where they'd invite a big-name local retail real estate player as a guest speaker, and also plan quarterly happy hour gatherings.

Breaking ground

Officials began construction April 23 on a new, \$10 million Homewood Suites near the intersection of State Highway 190 and Jupiter Road in Plano.

A May 2003 opening is planned, said Matthew Newton, director of development for Lewisville-based Magnolia Lodging. The four-story hotel, called Homewood Suites by Hilton-Plano Technology Crossroads, will include 108 suites and about 1,100 square feet of meeting space. The hotel will employ between 30 and 40 people.

"The Homewood Suites brand has a pretty broad reach, drawing people who want an upscale, extended-stay hotel," Newton said.

The project had been on hold for about six months, as the company watched how its other properties fared in the wake of an industrywide downturn connected to the events of Sept. 11 and the economic slowdown.

But the company is encouraged by the performance of its other hotels and by signs of economic recovery, Newton said.

Shinn Hospitality Ltd. is the hotel owner, and Magnolia Lodging will run the property. Magnolia operates two other Homewood Suites hotels in the Metroplex as well as Hilton Garden Inn-Addison and AmeriSuites-DFW Airport North.

Shopping around

- The city of Irving has started the search process for an operations-management company for its

planned 325,000-square-foot convention center in the Las Colinas Urban Center. The deadline for requests for qualifications is May 6. The city plans a 450-room, full-service hotel adjacent to the convention center. Stormont Hotels is developing the hotel.

- Sleek Physiques Health & Wellness Center has opened to offer science-based, personalized fitness and nutrition programs. It limits memberships to individuals who are using personal trainers. That creates a small, quiet environment that's very different from typical gyms, according to president Mike Daniel. The center is at 5118 W. Lovers Lane.

- Dallas-based Tuesday Morning has opened two new stores, bringing its total to 31 in the Metroplex. The new stores are in Blue Grove Plaza Shopping Center in Lancaster and the Best Buy shopping center on Central Expressway in Dallas. Overall, the company operates 493 stores in 42 states.

- Sherlock's Baker Street Pub plans to open in Village on the Parkway. That marks the first Dallas location for the English-style pub and restaurant, which also operates in Houston and San Antonio. Dennis Leibovitz and Mitch Traub of the commercial retail division of The Weitzman Group handled negotiations.

- Cindy Johnson is the new corporate-travel sales manager for the 1,620-room Wyndham Anatole Hotel. She previously was business travel sales manager at Omni Park West Hotel.

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