

Greg Filipek and Tom Fore, principals of Sora Holdings, LLC, in Sewell, NJ, and Towson, MD, advise that today's unforgiving economy necessitates taking extra time ensuring a project not only complements a community, but is sustainable. This requires comprehensive, fact-based planning. It has been this philosophy that has made Sora Holdings today's leader of New Jersey's most innovative municipal revitalization projects.

Sora has become a specialist in revitalizing older, struggling downtown retail districts, creating downtowns that work in today's world and renewing them into vibrant, mixed-use, walkable communities. The firm's revitalization success has garnered Sora renown for renewing communities that host colleges and universities and the construction of university facilities. The firm also has developed a niche for transforming downtowns into popular shopping and dining destinations and the creation of large-scale commercial retail and office centers.

One of Sora's primary projects now under construction is Glassboro, NJ's \$300-million Rowan Boulevard, a new 26-acre, 100-foot wide corridor stretching a third of a mile from the foot of Rowan University's campus to the center of downtown. A public-private partnership between Glassboro, Sora and Rowan University, it is currently the largest municipal renewal project in NJ. Kinsley Construction is the project's construction manager.

The new Rowan Boulevard will feature broad tree-lined sidewalks, dozens of stores, restaurants with café-style sidewalk dining, residential condos and town homes, a new student housing campus, a hotel-conference center and a town square. It is expected to attract 60 new retail stores, including a dozen restaurants, boosting the local economy by more than \$48 million annually when completed in 2014. More than 100 types of retail operations were analyzed planning Rowan Boulevard, which included surveying residents, regional businesses, property owners, elected officials, and a virtually ignored market of students and staff at Rowan University. Because the retailers are being hand picked, mirroring the findings of the study, the businesses will prosper.

In August, 2009, construction was completed on Rowan Boulevard's Phase I of new Rowan University student housing, and construction is nearing completion on a 37,000-sq.-ft. Barnes & Noble Collegiate Superstore, the boulevard's first major retailer, which will open in November, and Phase II of student housing, which opens in September this year.

Also this September, a groundbreaking will mark the start of construction of a 100-room Marriott Courtyard hotel and conference center and the first two mixed-use retail buildings. The A-1 retail building will offer 22,000 sq. ft. of retail space on its ground floor and housing and multipurpose space for Rowan University honors students on upper floors. The E-1 retail building will have 20,000 sq. ft. of retail and a 1,400-space multi-level parking garage serving the hotel, retail shops and university students. The hotel, A-1 and E-1 will be completed by winter, 2011, and three additional mixed-use retail and residential housing buildings are planned. When complete, the boulevard will offer a total of 185,000 sq. ft. of retail space, 40,000 sq. ft. of office space and 307,000 sq. ft. of residential space.

Sora's projects complement an array of smart growth principles, including creating a sense of place, embracing private investors, utilizing existing infrastructure and resources, preserving and creating open space, increasing residential and commercial opportunities and strengthening the economy through mixed land use. The result is a multifaceted, intergenerational community bringing life and excitement back to downtown.

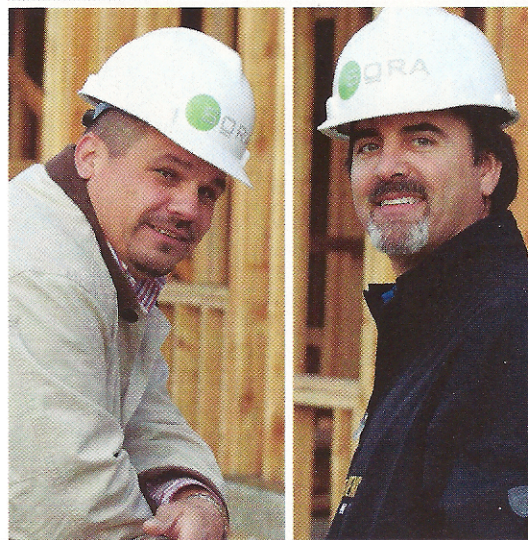
Sora was founded on the financial strength, knowledge and integrity of its partners, Greg Filipek and Tom Fore, who together offer more than five decades of combined development expertise. In addition to Glassboro, recent firm work includes projects for the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Maryland, major office parks, and several multi-million dollar senior housing and luxury condominium developments. ■

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