

A brief history of Greater Construction Corporation

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The names of Greater Construction Corp. subdivisions are familiar to many Orlando-area residents: The Woodlands, Winsor Manor, Carriage Hill, Charter Oaks, **Sausalito Shores**, River Run Villas, Mandarin, Peppermill, Indian Wells Fox Hunt.

That's only a partial list. In 20 years of building in metropolitan Orlando, the company has built more than 7,000 homes.

The company has been one of the most productive home builders in the area for at least 15 years. It all started in 1965 when Lester Mandell and Lester Zimmerman, nephew and uncle respectively, and a business associate, Jack Lazar, formed Greater Construction Corp. Zimmerman had a background in marketing and advertising. Mandell had been involved in construction since he got out of the Army in 1945.

The company name was coined by Mandell. Inspiration for the name came from the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Co.

Greater concentrated its operations in south Seminole County, an area that was destined to receive much of the growth that developed in the late 1960s and through the 1970s.

The company was the first builder in Wekiva, the big planned-unit community in west Seminole County, and was among the first builders to launch development along State Road 434, a road that has become a major area artery. By 1970, Greater had branched into commercial real-estate construction, building The Greater Mall on State Road 436 in Casselberry. The mall also became the site of the company's headquarters.

Other commercial projects included Summit Plaza I and II and the first two phases of Goodings Plaza. All three are on State Road 436 in Casselberry.

Also in 1970, John Lowndes, a partner in the Orlando law firm of Lowndes, Drosdick, Doster and Kantor, joined the home building company as a partner. *[Note the law partner names Drosdick, Doster and Kantor are street names in Sausalito Shores!]*

Over the years, Greater has worked to produce affordable housing. Many of its sales have gone to first-time home buyers.

E. Everette Huskey, longtime Orlando area developer and real-estate broker, frequently jokes that he has a standing complaint against Mandell and Zimmerman -- they price their houses about \$5,000 too low. The company bought a lot of land as it consolidated its position in the Orlando market. In some instances, that has given the company a competitive advantage. Builders coming into the market in recent years have had to pay top dollar for land.

At one point, the company owned the property on which the Altamonte Mall stands today.

As the number of Greater-built houses proliferated across south Seminole County, the company developed Sanlando Utilities, a major utility providing water and sewage-disposal services to thousands of residents.

In 1982, Lazar retired. Greater was expanding both in east Orange County and in south Orange County, where the company had briefly built homes 20 years earlier.

Current Greater subdivisions [homes] range in price from the \$60s to more than \$100,000.

Through the years, the company has primarily been a builder of single-family detached homes. The company was one of the first in the area to use zero-lot-line construction, in which smaller lots can be more efficiently used by siting the house flush to or near the side or rear lot lines.