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SECTION E

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Movers and shakers: The new generation. Picton Warlow IV (from left), Matt Ravenscroft, Karen Wankelman, Craig Ustler and Todd Andrew have designs on downtown. What they envision is a combination of condos and restaurants, markets and art galleries, offices and theaters. 'We have an advantage in doing urban projects because our generation understands these projects,' says Ustler.

The young guns of Orlando

Five ambitious professionals have big ideas about the future of downtown, and they're doing something about it.

By LINDA SHRIEVES
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Look out, Orlando. The thirtysomethings are coming — and they're planning to change downtown. Their backgrounds are diverse: from boarding schools to public schools, from old Orlando to New Jersey. But they met the way lots of young professionals do — at happy hour.

"We started socializing at Kate O'Brien's," says Karen Wankelman, 33, a real estate lawyer. "We did the young professional happy hours and the downtown development events that are real popular."

Sometimes younger folks can have ... the good timing and good vision to hit it right on the mark in terms of what the market wants.

— FRANK BILLINGSLEY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ORLANDO'S DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT BOARD

"And over a period of time, we kept running into the same people. After a while, we thought, 'Well, this person is a banker, developer, lawyer. Why don't we try to do business together?'"

Now the team of Wankelman, banker Matt Ravenscroft and developers Craig Ustler and Picton Warlow IV are

some of the young guns shaping the growth of downtown Orlando.

Theirs isn't a vision of supersized high-rises and parking garages. Instead, they imagine a mix of restaurants and condos, of offices and art galleries, of small theaters and

PLEASE SEE **DOWNTOWN, E4**

TOM BURTON/ORLANDO SENTINEL

Attitude for gratitude: Message gets across

Like most mothers, I have used threats and intimidation to get my children to write thank-you notes for the gifts they receive.

"You cannot play with that toy until you have written a thank-you to Uncle Kenny."

"You will not spend a single dime of that money until you write a thank-you to Grandma."

"If you can't be bothered to write thank-you notes, then I will tell your relatives not to bother to send stuff to you."

So I shouldn't have been surprised when I



Drying out stigma for problem drinkers

Researchers say drugs that handle alcoholism as a medical condition will encourage people to seek help.

By HILARY WALDMAN
THE HARTFORD COURANT

Medication that alters the brain's response to alcohol could change the treatment of problem drinking so that it more closely resembles the treatment of other chronic conditions.

Ustler sought people with vision, not connections

DOWNTOWN FROM E1

corner markets. They hope the array of successful developments in Thornton Park — ubercool restaurant Hue, bookstore Urban Think, neighborhood deli Central City Market, luxury condos and town houses — will spill over to downtown Orlando.

And, because many downtown condo buyers are in their 20s and 30s, Ustler and company believe they have a leg up on the competition.

"We have an advantage in doing urban projects because our generation understands these projects," says Ustler, 35. "These people 'get it.'"

It's their youth that gives these folks an edge, says Frank Billingsley, executive director of Orlando's Downtown Development Board.

"Sometimes younger folks can have a vision that might be a little bit underneath the radar screen of larger institutional developers, but they have the good timing and good vision to hit it on the mark in terms of what the market wants," says Billingsley.

Ustler, a native Orlandoan, teamed with Phil Rampy to develop Thornton Park Central, a five-story building with shops and businesses. As his business grew, Ustler began looking around for other Gen Xers to do business with.

"It's something that we've been waiting to have happen for the last 25 years."

— BOB SNOW
CREATOR OF CHURCH STREET STATION

As if picking out a family doctor, Ustler chose carefully. He didn't want to find a banker or a lawyer who would retire in five years.

Ustler turned to Warlow, 35, a childhood friend who attended the University of Florida with Ustler, earned his MBA at Rollins College and spent his 20s working around the world.

Ravenscroft, 34, grew up in Orlando's Dover Shores neighborhood. He started in banking at age 19, working as a teller while attending the University of Central Florida.

Ustler also brought in Todd Andrew, 40, who built Hue and Central City Market, which is partially owned by Ustler. Andrew graduated from Lyman High School and UF before working his way up in the construction industry.

Ustler hails from a citrus family with deep roots in Central Florida, and Warlow's family tree boasts two of Orlando's prominent movers and shakers, Judge T. Picton Warlow and Gracia Andersen, wife of former newspaper owner Martin Andersen. But the two sons of Old Orlando share a vision of downtown that definitely is not old.

"I think Old Orlando has a conservative, nonprogressive, nondiverse, nonbig vision of Orlando," says Ustler, who teaches classes on new urbanism as a guest instructor at the University of Miami. "I think growth is coming, no matter what you do."

Several years ago, Ustler began studying urban renaissance firsthand — by traveling to other cities.

Miami's South Beach transformation was admirable but

couldn't be copied in Orlando. Ustler liked what he saw in Portland, Ore., where the city's Pearl district had become an urban oasis. But he found a model more akin to Orlando in Atlanta's Virginia Highlands neighborhood, where boutiques, funky shops and restaurants coexist in a neighborhood filled with older bungalows.

Yet, as Ustler eyed Thornton Park and the neighborhoods of downtown Orlando, he resisted the urge to call Atlanta architects and replicate Virginia Highlands here. "If someone from out of town came in and did it, we would just be copying," Ustler says. It's important "as a city to create your own identity."

Members of the group have worked on a dozen downtown projects, including a luxury condo development called Eola South that already has won local architectural awards, and their latest project, the Osceola Brownstones, 26 town houses on South and Osceola streets.

Ustler also dabbles in restaurants, and teamed with Rampy, Mr. Thornton Park, to open Kres, an upscale steakhouse on Church Street.

Making a mark on the city by age 35 may be easier when your parents know all the powers-that-be. But Ustler says he embraced people with vision, not people with connections.

Wankelman, for instance. When she started working in Orlando after law school, she felt like the ultimate outsider. "I was born in New Jersey. My parents have never lived here. I have none of those old connections," she says. "I am a University of Miami alumna in a huge Gator town."

Ravenscroft also came from a different background. Though he'd grown up in Orlando, he'd worked his way through college. And Andrew had worked hard to set up his own construction business.

Despite their differences, they had one thing in common: They all worked or lived near downtown. And they lamented what downtown Orlando had become: blocks of vacant storefronts dotted by tattoo parlors and a few bars. Often, the streets were deserted after office workers went home to the suburbs.

Individually and together, they've been trying to change downtown. They have attended Downtown Development Board meetings and signed on to arts and civic organizations. Even as their careers took off — and marriages and children came along — they remained active downtown, socially and professionally.

Six years ago, Ustler and his cousin, Susan Chapin, she of the Chicone citrus fortune, teamed with Warlow to form the Downtown Orlando Foundation, a nonprofit that holds fund-raisers for worthy causes.

"They're vested in the community 24/7," says Billingsley. "When I go out to eat, or to an occasional bar, I see them out in the street, I see them out in the community. My favorite sight is to see Picton pushing his baby stroller."

Changes are coming

Downtown Orlando has always depended on visionaries, from Martin Andersen, the late newspaper publisher who persuaded the federal government to route Interstate 4 through the city, to Bob Snow, who, at age 29, created the wildly successful Church Street Station in the

Faces of New Orlando

Todd Andrew



Builder
• Age: 40
Education: University of Florida.
Background: Moved to Orlando at 8, graduated from Lyman High School and the University of Florida. Worked his way up through the construction business and formed his own company in 1996. Teamed with Phil Rampy and Ustler to build Hue, Central City Market and Osceola Brownstones. Lives in Winter Park with his wife and three children.

Matt Ravenscroft



Banker
• Age: 34
Education: University of Central Florida.
Background: Grew up in Orlando's Dover Shores neighborhood. Began working as a teller at age 19. Now vice president at RBC Centura Bank. Serves on board of directors for Downtown Orlando Foundation and on the board of the Buoncontti Fund to Cure Paralysis. Married in April to Nicole Ravenscroft, a lawyer.

Craig Ustler



Developer
• Age: 35
Education: University of Florida, bachelor's degree in economics, master's degree in real estate.
Background: Grew up in College Park; son of Kathryn Chicone Ustler. Hers is one of the dominant citrus families in Central Florida. Serves on the boards of the Orange County Regional History Center, the Downtown Arts District and co-founded the Downtown Orlando Foundation to raise money for Orlando charities. A regular guest lecturer at the University of Miami on "new urbanism."

Karen Wankelman

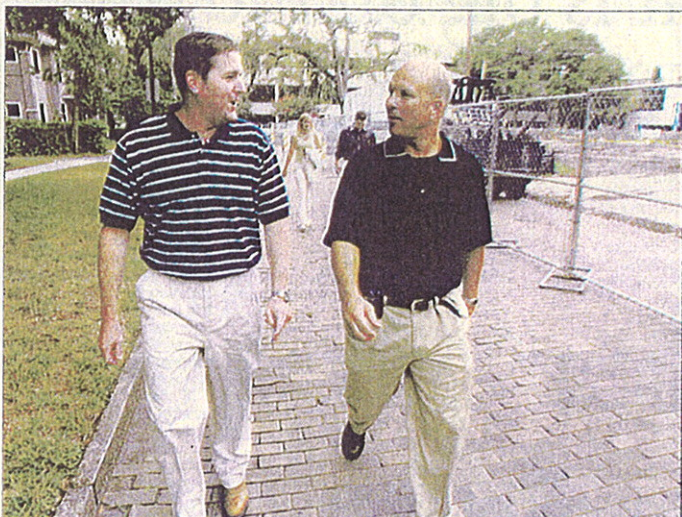


Lawyer
• Age: 33
Education: University of Miami, Stetson University College of Law.
Background: Grew up in New Jersey. Parents now live in Sarasota. Came to work at Orlando law firm Mateer & Harbert after graduating from law school. Married to Wes Wankelman, a banker. Has a 6-month-old daughter, Kate.

T. Picton Warlow IV



Developer
• Age: 35
Education: University of Florida; master's degree in business administration from Rollins College.
Background: Fourth-generation Orlandoan. Grew up in College Park. After college, worked in Amsterdam, London and New Zealand. Co-founded the Downtown Orlando Foundation, serves on the board of the Orange County Regional History Center. Married to Carla Warlow. Has a 1-year-old son, Thomas Picton Warlow V.



PHOTOS BY TOM BURTON/ORLANDO SENTINEL



Shared vision. Craig Ustler (far left) has deep roots in Orlando, and Todd Andrew was raised in the city, while Karen Wankelman (above) is from New Jersey. But they and their colleagues want the same thing: A vibrant, diverse downtown that stays alive after the sun goes down.

1970s, and former Mayor Bill Frederick, who pushed a major renovation for Lake Eola Park in the late 1980s.

Snow is among those watching as this new generation of visionaries seeks to transform downtown.

"I think it's terrific, and it's a step in the right direction," he

says. "It's something that we've been waiting to have happen for the last 25 years. But I have one qualification: I hope the Orlando economy can produce enough high-paying jobs to pay the prices they're getting for those condos."

The numbers, Ravenscroft says, speak for themselves.

"The biggest problem is there aren't enough condos to keep up with demand," Ravenscroft says.

In the next 18 months, he says, watch for mind-boggling changes as downtown transforms dramatically.

For now, the young guns remain focused on their vision.

"The real thing that we need to get better at," says Ustler, "is that downtown doesn't have a character to it. College Park has that."

That will take work, he says. And a little help from his friends.

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