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Petco Park, Gwynn Stadium Developer Breaking Ground on 15-Story Tower Near La Jolla

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Houston, Texas-based Hines, the commercial real estate development firm that built Petco Park and Tony Gwynn Stadium at San Diego State University, said it would build a 15-story, 340,000-square-foot building in University Towne Center in La Jolla.

"The office tower will be the first commercial high-rise built in the area since 1989," said Paul Twardowski, vice president of Hines, in the San Diego office.

Hines will break ground on the building in early November, with completion in early 2008.

"Typically buildings are not always gorgeous and effective, but we have been able to do it and have been able to master this science," Twardowski said.

The La Jolla Commons Office Tower has earned silver pre-certification from the United States Green Building Council.

Twardowski said he considers Hines a leader in constructing green buildings.

Energy efficient designs in the new tower will include using a reclaimed water system and a clear glass around the whole building.

The glass, said Twardowski, cools at a lower temperature and reflects more heat, allowing more sunlight to enter into the office.

"There have been studies that have shown when a company provides its employees with more natural light, it is better for business," Twardowski said. "It reduces employee turnover."

It is difficult to ascertain how much Hines spent on making the building green; Twardowski said the cost is embedded in all aspects of design and construction and is not easily broken down.

Five percent or more is spent on construction costs to meet the U.S Green Building Council's nation wide set standards.

Other Hines green buildings include office towers in Irvine, Bellevue, Washington and San Diego.

Established in 1957 in Houston, Texas by Gerald Hines, the firm moved to California in the 1970s and has regional offices throughout the state.

The firm is growing, but Twardowski declined to divulge any growth percentage.

"We don't focus on a volume of sales and we don't track a gross percentage, but we do grow opportunistically, based on what we see in market," he said.

Looking to expand, Hines reported it intends to put some of its roots in the ground, developing a larger presence in San Diego.

"In San Diego there is a great diversification of industry, with redevelopment, and mixed-use projects and we've looked at all of them, but we (Hines) haven't found anything we like yet," Twardowski said.

Though the San Diego office hasn't found anything it's interested in, Twardowski said it's only because the opportunity hasn't presented itself.

The structure of Hines allows the local entities freedom to dictate what development would work best in each area

"Our regional offices are fairly autonomous," Twardowski said. "They drive what we do in each area."

What sets Hines apart from its competitors is the high quality in management, their attention to design detail and ensuring tenant satisfaction, Twardowski said.

"We see an opportunity here to deliver a higher quality project; others pioneer area development, we bring things to a whole new level," he said.

Meanwhile, the firm said it also acquired an existing three-building complex, Pacific Plaza in the Torrey Pines area. The 220,000-square-foot complex, which was developed in 2000, was chosen for its visibility and high quality.

Hines is focused on acquiring existing properties, developing projects, and redevelopment in San Diego.

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