

GRAND BOULEVARD

— Sandestin® —

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Angela Triplett, Public Relations Manager

Howard Group

850.654.9771

angela@howardgrp.com

Howard Group plans for Sustainable Growth in Grand Boulevard at Sandestin

Walton County, Fla., April 24, 2007 – Since its founding in 1987, Howard Group has developed various upscale residential, retail and mixed-use projects along the Emerald Coast that are nationally-renowned for their high quality and attention to detail. With founder Keith Howard at the helm, Howard Group places a primary emphasis on responsible land development and sustainable growth that benefits the local coastal communities. Long-term planning is an essential part of the planning process and Grand Boulevard at Sandestin is no exception to this rule.

Grand Boulevard is the distinctive new town center located at the entrance of Sandestin® Golf and Beach Resort. This mixed-use development opens this spring with specialty retail, nationally-acclaimed restaurants, Grand Park and premier office space. The town center has been years in the making, with extensive studies and plans at the foundation of Grand Boulevard to ensure a sustainable development for the community.

“We work closely with city, county and state governments from the initial planning phases of a project to ensure the development of sufficient infrastructures,” stated Keith Howard, president and CEO of Howard Group. “One primary goal is to support growth while maintaining the natural beauty of the area.”

One way Howard Group accomplished this at Grand Boulevard was by investing in the additional cost to place the overhead Gulf Power distribution lines and poles on Emerald Coast Parkway below ground. For this large project that cost difference amounted to \$2.4 million. All the overhead power, telephone and utility lines and poles from Sacred Heart Hospital on the Emerald Coast to the Courtyard by Marriott Sandestin have been removed, further enhancing the natural beauty of the area’s coastline.

“Grand Boulevard is a good example of working with our customer to design the best electrical service for them,” explained Sandy Sims, Gulf Power Company district manager. “There are options when it comes to providing electricity, and it’s Gulf Power’s role to make sure the customer understands those options and the pros and cons of each.”

-MORE-

Underground utilities are more than aesthetically-pleasing; they also are not as susceptible to wind and animals as overhead lines are. Underground lines can be safer than overhead utilities since the likelihood of someone being hurt from falling utility poles and wires is eliminated. When the utilities are placed underground, they are placed into a conduit to prevent contact with water or other substances except where the service comes above ground to tie into the overhead electricity distribution system.

“The underground utilities at Grand Boulevard are just one example of Howard Group's commitment to quality development in South Walton County. This investment gives us the unencumbered look we want without compromising reliability and safety of our tenants and our customers during storms along the Gulf Coast,” stated Tom Betts, director of development for Howard Group.

Betts also noted that the foundations and construction elements at Grand Boulevard, including the storm sewer systems, are designed to withstand the pressures and impacts of a “100-year storm,” a storm that has a one percent chance of occurring in any given year.

“This type of storm, although less frequent than a 10-year storm, is deeper and far more destructive,” stated Betts. “In order to begin construction on Grand Boulevard, a series of diversion structures that could withstand a 100-year storm had to be built.”

Howard Group also invested in a natural and environmentally-friendly process of filtering the water entering the offsite storm detention ponds. Brasfield and Gorrie, the general contractor for Grand Boulevard, constructed an underwater littoral shelf, consisting of plants along the shore of the pond, to serve as a natural filtration system. These vegetative plants, suitable for submerged conditions, filter the storm water runoff before it enters the detention pond by catching dirt and other pollutants. The detention ponds will dually serve as an amenity to the local community, complete with a pedestrian walkway, bridge, scenic walking trails and elaborate landscaping.

“The overall feel of the town center is enhanced by details such as the landscaped walkways and installing all the utilities and water pipes underground. Everything’s out of sight, out of mind,” stated Brent Jones, project manager for Brasfield and Gorrie.

The majority of the town center will open this spring and summer, with many restaurants and specialty retail stores making their debut in Northwest Florida. Grand Boulevard will continue to evolve over the next few years, bringing additional phases of entertainment, residential, dining, lodging and retail.

Howard Group is a development company recognized for building responsible and sustainable projects incorporating significant community interface. Established in 1988 in Northwest Florida, Howard Group is responsible for the development of The Market Shops at Sandestin, the acclaimed Silver Sands Factory Stores, several upscale gulf-front resort and residential communities such as Vizcaya at Dune Allen and Stallworth Preserve, as well as Heron Harbor in Destin, Florida. Heron Harbor is being designed as a mixed-use community that will include retail, office, residential and marina components. For more information, please call (850) 837-1886.

Grand Boulevard is the new shop, work, play and stay town center being built in Northwest Florida. Based on the prominent mixed-use architectural model, Grand Boulevard will offer a dynamic lifestyle experience with convenient access to a multitude of exclusive shopping and dining options, entertainment, professional services, corporate offices and lodging.

--END--