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October 29, 2015

Survey: Studio 19 Architects

Specialty: Architecture firm with specialty in mixed-use, multifamily/residential, hospitality, commercial and interior design

Management: Hui Tian, principal

Founded: 2009

Headquarters: Seattle

2014 revenues: N/A

Projected 2015 revenues: N/A

Projects: HUB Seattle, student housing in a mixed-use building near the University of Washington; 23-story apartment building by TeamRise at Fourth Avenue and Bell Street in Seattle; 14-story hotel, apartment and condominium building at Eighth Avenue and Lane Street in Seattle's International District

Studio 19 Architects principal Hui Tian answered questions from the DJC about trends and issues in the industry.

Q: Which development sectors do you expect to expand or shrink locally?

A: Multifamily development is going strong but we expect that to diminish slightly in the next few years but continue to be a stable development type, as individuals and families are moving to the city.

We are also seeing the commercial sector really take off now as more companies are locating in the city and startups are opening up in downtown. Most of these are in technology, but other firms are also setting up shop here.

Additionally, the hospitality sector is growing rapidly, and we have taken on quite a few of these projects. We see this continuing for the next few years.

We expect senior housing projects to be one of the next sectors to pick up.

Q: Your firm appears to be growing quickly. Why is that?

A: Studio 19 Architects has grown from three people to 14 in four years. The Puget Sound Business Journal named us the second fastest growing minority-owned firm in Washington last year. The rankings were based on revenue growth from 2011 to 2013.

We are growing fast because we are a small firm with big firm experience and we are very efficient with projects and schedules. We have added projects over the past two years. They are in different phases of design and construction, which allows us to continue to take on new work.

Our growth is also propelled by current market conditions and opportunities in the Seattle area. This has allowed us to do larger projects than in the past.

We are also better known now because we have been in the market for a while. Additionally, we have been more involved in community events recently, which has led to growth opportunities.

Q: What challenges and trends are you seeing?

A: There is significant demand for condominiums, but little supply.

Many of our clients would like to develop condo mixed-use buildings. However, because of liability issues and limited financing options, those buildings are not getting built. This will continue to be a challenge for some time and will increase demand for condos.

We are also seeing demand for smaller, more efficient apartments. With rising rents, tenants are looking for smaller affordable units that will allow them to live downtown.

More low-income housing is also needed. We think it is an important and necessary development for the city and believe the sector will expand in the near future.

Q: What projects are keeping you busy, and how much of it is funded by EB-5 money?

A: Most of our recent work has been apartment and mixed-use buildings. Since the apartment boom began we have been working on mixed-use apartment buildings downtown and standalone apartments outside of the downtown core. Townhomes and single-family custom homes have also been a big part of our portfolio.

Recently we have added hotel and other commercial projects, as those sectors have started to pick up.

Most of our projects are privately funded in the U.S., but we have experience with a limited number of EB-5 projects.

Q: Is there a recent project that has given your firm a chance to stretch its capabilities?

A: We are working on a 14-story building in the International District that includes hotel, apartment and condos. The programming of the multiple uses is a unique opportunity to creatively work out the layouts and connections. This prominent project will help revitalize that area and shape its future.



Rendering by Studio 19 Architects [enlarge]
HUB Seattle is a seven-story student housing project planned near the University of Washington.

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