



## Darden Restaurants Opens New, State-of-the Art Corporate Headquarters

### 469,000-square-foot facility on track to receive LEED Gold certification

ORLANDO, Fla., Sept 30, 2009 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX News Network/ -- Today, Darden Restaurants celebrated the opening of its new Restaurant Support Center (RSC), which was designed to achieve Gold certification for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for New Construction (NC) from the United States Green Building Council (USGBC). Upon final certification from the USGBC, it will become the largest LEED Gold NC building in Florida.

(Logo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20050203/FLTH026LOGO> )

"Today marks a new era in Darden's history," said Clarence Otis, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Darden. "Our new home is the embodiment of our goal to create a great company - a winning company financially and a special place to be; a place where our employees can pursue their personal and professional dreams.

"More than three years ago, we envisioned a new home that would be a place of pride and performance that honors our company's heritage as an industry pioneer, welcoming and inspiring a diverse community of professionals to work and grow together to re-imagine and transform the full-service restaurant industry," Otis continued. "Our vision was also to set a new standard in sustainability and underscore real corporate responsibility in building design.

"Today our vision has become reality thanks to valuable input and leadership from our employees, past and present; a tremendous partnership with state and local government; and the hard work and know-how of our development, design and construction partners," he concluded.

Darden's commitment to sustainability can be seen in the many sustainable design and construction elements found in its new home. Among them:

- More than 90 percent of the waste generated from construction was recycled;
- Use of systems such as a high-efficiency heating and air conditioning system, and an automatic lighting system that dims or brightens according to the amount of sunlight entering the building will help reduce energy consumption by 16 percent;
- Increased use of natural light (daylighting) made possible by a 114,000 square-foot glass curtainwall exterior;
- A highly reflective roof system that reduces the heat island effect and helps maintain the building's interior temperature;
- Restrooms and irrigation systems using reclaimed water - saving nearly 2 million gallons of water annually; and
- Landscaping features including a bio-soil that promotes water absorption and the use of native trees, plants and grasses that require minimal water.

Darden partnered with developer Trammell Crow Company, architectural firm Perkins+Will and general contractor Hardin Construction to create an open environment that promotes greater collaboration, idea sharing and innovation.

For instance, the building was designed not to exceed three stories in height to allow employees to move easily between floors using multiple staircases. The staircases were also widened to allow for impromptu conversations without blocking the movement of others. And each of the development kitchens for Darden's six restaurant brands is located adjacent to one another, allowing culinary staff to easily interact and share ideas.

"Beyond creating an environment that allows our employees to develop stronger working relationships and deliver even higher levels of support to our restaurants, we were committed to ensuring our employees had input and involvement in shaping the development of this project," said Drew Madsen, President and Chief Operating Officer of Darden. "We're proud of the fact that

many of the amenities found in our new home were the ones most requested by our employees."

In honoring employee input and keeping with the company's commitment to employee health and wellness, those amenities include a 5,000 square-foot fitness center as well as a wellness center, both staffed by Florida Hospital; an on-campus dining facility managed by Guckenheimer, a leading corporate foodservice provider; a 1/2-mile walking trail; and an on-site financial services center operated by Wachovia.

The three-story, 469,000-square-foot facility, situated on a 57-acre campus, will house 1,300 employees who provide support to nearly 1,800 Red Lobster, Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse, The Capital Grille, Bahama Breeze and Seasons 52 restaurants throughout North America. Within its new RSC, Darden will bring together all of its support center personnel under one roof for the first time. Previously, employees worked in 12 different buildings spread across a two-mile radius.

Darden employees began moving into the new RSC in phases on September 21. The process will be completed on October 12.

#### *About Darden Restaurants*

Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI), the world's largest full-service restaurant company, owns and operates nearly 1,800 restaurants that generate more than \$7 billion in annual sales. Headquartered in Orlando, and employing 180,000 people, Darden is recognized for a culture that rewards caring for and responding to people. Our restaurant brands - Red Lobster, Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse, The Capital Grille, Bahama Breeze and Seasons 52 - reflect the rich diversity of those who dine with us. Our brands are built on deep insights into what our guests want. For more information, please visit [www.darden.com](http://www.darden.com).

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