



2nd Crystal Lagoon breaks ground in South Hillsborough

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Metro Lagoons

Neighborhood amenities often mean clubhouse, swimming pool, and fitness center.

But Tampa’s [Metro Development Group](#) has upped the ante significantly. To give its homebuyers a taste of the Caribbean without leaving Florida, the residential developer has partnered with multinational company Crystal Lagoons to build massive freshwater pools with sandy beaches, swim-up bars, water slides and obstacles, kayak and paddleboard rentals, and entertainment pavilions.

“The historical model is to build the neighborhood, put in some parks and dog parks, and build a clubhouse and a pool, maybe a nice pool with some slides,” says Eric Wahlbeck, Managing Director of [Metro Lagoons](#). “Or you build a golf course and put the homes around the golf course. That is the traditional model. This is a totally different game-changing amenity.”

Their partnership began with a seven-and-a-half-acre lagoon, the first Crystal Lagoon in the U.S., which opened late last year in the [Epperson](#) community in Wesley Chapel about 35 miles north of Tampa.

They recently broke ground on their second joint venture, a five-acre lagoon at Metro Development's [Southshore Bay](#) community in Wimauma about 30 miles south of Tampa. It is expected to open in the summer of 2020. In total, Metro Development and Crystal Lagoons plan 11 lagoons of five to 15 acres each at Metro Development communities.

Wahlbeck says Metro Development CEO John Ryan first got the notion to disrupt the traditional concept of amenities when he read a news article about multinational company [Crystal Lagoons](#) and its lagoon projects at resorts around the world.

"You are always looking for what will set you apart and get somebody to buy in your neighborhood instead of the one across the street," Wahlbeck says. "He was on a plane and saw a blurb about Crystal Lagoons in the *Wall Street Journal*. He was curious about what that the heck that meant, started doing a little research and found out they were building these attached to hotels in South America, Dubai, and Mexico. Hotels obviously are known for their amenities. People go there for the scenery or the pool. He started having conversations with Crystal Lagoon and decided to take a risk and put it in a neighborhood, which had never been done before in the world as far as I'm aware of. It's just a different concept something to set us apart from other developers."

Right now, some of the beaches at Epperson are still under development but Wahlbeck says the lagoon has already emerged as a popular spot for birthday parties and weddings. The pool is open to residents and visitors are able to pay \$20 for a day pass. But as Epperson approaches build-out -- only 390 of 4,000 planned homes are currently occupied -- Wahlbeck says access to day passes will become more limited, with most set aside for people mulling purchasing a home in the neighborhood.

He says Metro Development plans to follow a similar strategy at Southshore Bay in southern Hillsborough County, which is slated for 2,800 homes at build-out.

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<http://www.83degreesmedia.com/devnews/construction-starts-on-second-Crystal-Lagoon-in-Florida.051419.aspx>