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**By Beth Kassab**

### **Startups by minorities, women win Magic work**

For all the public rancor on whether to build a new \$480 million Orlando Magic arena, the project couldn't have come at a better time for Carl Kelly.

He owns Landscape Designs LLC of Winter Park, a small startup run by Kelly and his wife that largely relies on contracts from home builders to map out landscaping and water features in subdivisions and town-home complexes.

That work has dried up as a result of the housing crash, but Kelly was a successful bidder for a piece of the new arena action. His is one of 13 firms to get a slice of the \$6 million in contracts that went to local minority- and women-owned firms out of the total \$20 million being spent on design work for the project.

"Since the economy has slowed down a bit, this contract is going to keep me going for the year," Kelly said, though he wouldn't put a dollar figure on the work.

Because of the contract, he said, he has been able to hire a consultant to boost his two-person operation.

Now the Orlando Magic, as the arena's developer, is promoting a series of forums for subcontractors, laborers and suppliers who want to take part in the construction phase.

While assertions of political favoritism inevitably crop up whenever big contracts are let -- especially big contracts involving public dollars -- firms who want a share of the pie have to remember that you can't win unless you bid.

And it's up to the Magic and the city to see to it that the process is fair.

"We want to grow local and minority businesses and train local workers in a trade so that they can either start a business on their own or be skilled laborers on some other project after the venues," said Magic Chief Operating Officer Alex Martins.

Construction is slated to begin Aug. 1, and Martins wants small minority- and women-owned firms to partner with bigger firms to, if necessary, obtain the proper bonding and insurance for the project and gain valuable experience.

The main construction contract was awarded to Hunt Construction Group in association with Rey Group, R.L. Burns Inc., HZ Construction Inc. and Albu & Associates. The Magic and those firms will host a forum April 30 at Jones High School Auditorium, 801 South Rio Grande Ave., from 4:30 to 7 p.m.

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