

TRIANGLE BUSINESS JOURNAL

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

Biz: Raleigh ups its hotel game; Triangle lawyer scores \$92 million verdict

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Just as Raleigh's downtown hotel scene was about to pick up, the pandemic hit, dampening the opening of the hip Longleaf Hotel and the Origin Hotel Raleigh.

But now, Raleigh's hotel scene is looking promising – and another property is about to open.

Both the Longleaf and the Origin offer appealing designs and enticing lounges within an easy walk of the core of the city. And coming online by September, according to its website, is the new AC by Marriott Raleigh Downtown Hotel in Glenwood South. Summit Hospitality Group bought the property for \$4 million in 2018.

Raleigh's downtown hotel history has been decidedly mixed for a capital city. The Yarborough Hotel had a prominent spot on Hillsborough Street until it burned in 1928. The swank Sir Walter Hotel became apartments for seniors in the 1970s. And the circular Holiday Inn on Fayetteville has the distinction of being where Prince crashed an N.C. State University fraternity party and jammed for astonished students.

But the city needs more juice in the hotel scene – and the new properties make welcome additions.

Raleigh lawyer scores a big win

Raleigh lawyer Taylor Higgins Ludlam became a litigator because, she quips, "I like to talk and I like to argue."

She started on the commercial business side of the law, but shifted to patent litigation. On May 7, Ludlam played a key role for the Kilpatrick Townsend team that won a \$92.2 million verdict for client GREE – and it could have major implications in gaming.

"I first learned about this kind of game from my kids," Ludlam said of her two sons. "That's a pretty common refrain."



Attorney Taylor Ludlam of Kilpatrick Townsend in Raleigh.

But the gaming space is more than child's play. Ludlam was a co-lead in the case as GREE argued Supercell, a Finnish video game developer, had infringed on six of its patents. GREE has been a pioneer in the "freemium" model, in which games are free to join but you pay for certain upgrades.

A federal jury in Marshall, Texas, found that Supercell (owned by China's Tencent Holdings) infringed on six patents. The jury also found Supercell had "willfully" infringed, meaning damages could be trebled.

"Behind our masks we probably had the biggest smiles you will ever

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The AC Hotel by Marriott rises in Glenwood South.

see,” Ludlam said.

In September, GREE won a separate \$8.5 million verdict against Supercell.

To Ludlam, the victory is a boost for the Triangle, and local law firms are ramping up their expertise in these areas as the tech scene explodes.

“We are going to see more and more of those battles ...,” she said. “But more relevant for North Carolina is it’s obvious that the technology is advancing and it is valuable and clients need to be in a position to protect it.”

Ludlam adds, “Not only are we an attractive place for development, but we’ve got people who can handle all aspects of your work. And there is nothing better than having your attorneys in the area.”

Celebrity chef cooking event raises \$1M for all-girls academy

Raleigh chef Ashley Christensen contributed her culinary skills at a fundraising event that brought in \$1 million to help empower young women while preparing them for success.

Christensen, a James Beard Award winner, attended the celebrity chef event, which was hosted by Robert Irvine, star of the Food Network series “Restaurant: Impossible,” at Girls Leadership Academy of Wilmington on June 18.

Ken Lowe, former chairman of the Scripps Network, announced he would donate the money and name a wing of the all-girls public charter school in honor of his mother, Barbara Love Lowe, The Wilmington Star-News reported.

Alabama construction firm makes another North Carolina acquisition

A construction giant out of a small town in lower Alabama is continuing to make moves into North Carolina.

Construction Partners of Dothan, Alabama, announced June 22 its acquisition of grading and site-work contractor PLT Construction of Wilson.

“We are pleased with this strategic acquisition to further enhance our vertical integration of construction services across multiple markets in North Carolina,” said Fred J. (Jule) Smith III, the CEO of Construction Partners.

Smith earned his undergraduate and MBA deGREEs from Wake Forest University. State records for PLT Construction start in 1992, and the company has grown ever since.

In North Carolina, Construction Partners acquired the Raleigh-based contractor Fred Smith Company in 2011 and asphalt and pavement contractor Gelder & Associates in Raleigh in 2020. Construction Partners also has affiliates in Florida, Alabama and Georgia.

UNC students can’t hang out at this library any more

The landscape of Franklin Street in Chapel Hill is changing as another business announced its closure June 22.

The Library, a bar and club, located at 120 E. Franklin St., has closed after over 18 years in business.

Former UNC basketball players Brice Johnson and Brandon Robinson were among the hundreds of current UNC students and alumni who expressed their sadness about the closing.

The Library is closing to make room for a “national brand,” according to the their post.

Matt Gladdek, director of the Chapel Hill Downtown Partnership, said he is not aware of what business is coming.