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## Boca City Furniture-Ashley showroom opens Thursday

### Complex was built to meet LEED 'green' status

By Arlene Satchell, Sun Sentinel

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Tamarac-based City Furniture will open a \$12 million-plus superstore showroom in [Boca Raton](#) on Thursday.

The 93,680-square-foot complex at 3350 Airport Road features City Furniture and Ashley Furniture HomeStore showrooms under one roof.

It took seven years to secure the prime location along Interstate 1-95 and two more to bring it to fruition, City Furniture President Keith Koenig said Tuesday during a showroom tour.

But for Koenig, who likened himself to a bridegroom waiting for the right bride, finding the perfect location for the store was worth the time.

"It's the only location in [Boca Raton](#) that efficiently draws from east and west communities. ... We're 20 minutes away to well over 1 million people," Koenig said.

The Boca superstore is the first South Florida City Furniture facility built to meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver standards for energy-efficiency. City Furniture is pursuing certification from the U.S. Green Building Council, which oversees the designation.

The store would join a handful of "green" certified furniture showrooms nationwide.

USGBC spokeswoman Ashley Katz said the LEED database lists three certified furniture projects nationwide - IKEA stores in Orlando and West Chester, Ohio, and a Knoll Furniture showroom in Philadelphia.

Projects typically apply for certification after they're operational, Katz said.

Opting to build "green" was a natural extension of City Furniture's core values, which include being a "good environmental steward," Koenig said.

The company practices some environmentally friendly and sustainable procedures – "enough to get us most of the way to LEED," Koenig said. The rest were added to qualify.

Some of the Boca store's features include rooftop solar tubes that direct natural light into the showrooms, LED interior and exterior lighting, high efficiency air-conditioning and interior

décor made from reclaimed or recycled materials.

Koenig said the store should see about \$30,000 in savings a year on electricity as a result of some of its eco-friendly features.

"When it comes to return on investment, it's a slam dunk," he said.

Building to LEED standards typically costs about 2 percent to 10 percent more than normal building costs, depending on the project, said Terry Stiles, chief executive of Stiles Corp. whose construction division built the Boca store.

"City Furniture maintains the highest reputation in the furniture industry, and we are proud to work with them again on such a significant project that benefits both the local economy and the environment," Stiles said.

In the past 26 years, the Fort Lauderdale builder has worked with City Furniture on several store projects.

In recent years, Stiles said, more clients have opted to build "green" or to LEED standards.

City Furniture will close and consolidate three smaller South Florida stores into the Boca complex, which is expected to draw traffic regionally and generate higher revenue.

After they close, the retailer will operate 14 namesake stores and nine Ashley Furniture stores in Florida.

More are in the pipeline. Among them are two Ashley showrooms planned for sites in Oakland Park and West Palm Beach, and a City Furniture in Cutler Bay, south of Miami.

The Cutler Bay showroom project, which was "slowed down" because of the sluggish economy, is expected to get going by the end of the second-quarter, Koenig said.

Demolition of the old Modernage site in Oakland Park is expected to start before summer.

Koenig said he's optimistic about the line of furniture stores that stretches along North Federal Highway in Oakland Park and Fort Lauderdale.

One reason: the City Furniture store in that area recently has seen an uptick in sales -- some of the largest increases company-wide -- as more condos on the beach and nearby communities fill.

In 2010, many South Florida big-box furniture retailers experienced an increase in sales early in the year, but sales tapered off for most of the remainder.

"2010 was a tease," Koenig said. "The first-quarter was extremely encouraging, but the second and third quarters slowed down quite a bit."

Although the retailer expected double-digit increases, sales still were up 5 percent year-over-year.

This year, Koenig is preparing for sales between flat to 10 percent up. "2011 will be a turning point for the furniture industry."

Industry analysts such as Jerry Epperson, of the investment banking and advisory firm Mann, Armistead & Epperson, seem to agree.

Nationwide, retail spending on furniture and bedding is forecast to grow 5.1 percent in 2011 and 6 percent to 8 percent in 2012, said Epperson, the firm's co-founder and head researcher.

That's good news for the nation's estimated \$82.5 billion residential furniture and bedding industry.

Last year, consumer retail spending on furniture and bedding nationwide rose nearly 3 percent – the first increase in three years, according to data from industry publication Furniture Today.

City Furniture isn't alone in positioning itself to capture more market share.

On Saturday, Miami Gardens-based El Dorado Furniture will open its 12th location in West Palm Beach on Okeechobee Boulevard, and a remodeled Plantation store is slated to re-open Jan. 29.

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