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Crandall rises to the occasion for tall development orders

By Suzanne Stagemeyer

Think through some of the metro area's development headlines, and you'll probably hit on one that real estate developer Bill Crandall had his hands in.

Highlights include the Sprint Corp. World Headquarters Campus and regional shopping draw Village West.

Now, the Kansas City native is helping San Diego-based The Allen Group develop a logistics hub near Gardner -- a project expected to bring thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in economic growth to Kansas, and a job for which Crandall discontinued his year-and-a-half-old company.

Crandall said intellectually challenging projects draw him. Even when he's had little or no related experience, he's landed tall orders.

He attributes much of his success to teamwork, being in the right place at the right time and old-fashioned hard work.

"The only place I'll give myself a little credit is I had the courage to try," he said. "I didn't let the intimidation of the projects' scale get to me -- I get excited about projects of scale and capacity."

But there's more to it.

Bob Marcusse, CEO of the Kansas City Area Development Council, helped point The Allen Group to Crandall.

"Bill is a very smart guy," Marcusse said. "He has a proven track record. He is, in the best sense of the word, very aggressive, and he's a lot of fun. Any major developer needs to have a blend of technical capabilities, a drive to succeed and the social skills

necessary to bring people through a complex process, and Bill really has brought all of those things together."

Crandall, a firm believer that "you manufacture your own luck," years ago determined not to let great opportunities slip by.

"I really feel like I wanted to take advantage of my life," he said. "You're only in this world in a productive capacity for 40 to 50 years, and I wanted to maximize that."

He started by setting lofty goals.

As a B and C student with two architecture degrees, Crandall set his sites on earning an MBA from the prestigious University of Chicago.

"I knew I didn't set the world on fire with my GPA," he said.

So he threw all his efforts into perfecting the entrance essay and followed up by doggedly contacting people at the university until he had secured a spot. He later helped develop a \$44 million education complex at the university.

Subsequent pursuits mirror the same bulldog drive.

Crandall returned to Kansas City in 1995 and took a job with Zimmer Cos.

Not long after, Sprint decided that it wanted to build a 4 million-square-foot, \$1 billion headquarters in Overland Park. Zimmer, a firm of about 40 employees, had only two people -- including Crandall -- to take on managing construction of the project. To fill out its team, the company hired two

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