



DAN CHRISTALDI



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upwards expansion for barbados company



GSA SEES HIGH RISE DREAMS
BECOMING A REALITY

AFTER MORE THAN FIVE DECADES OF DELIVERING PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AND HIGH QUALITY DESIGN WORK, GILLESPIE AND STEEL ASSOCIATES CONTINUES TO EVOLVE.

The Barbados-based architectural and interior design services company, now known as GSA, has not only taken on new branding, but has also forged new and exciting partnerships.

A growing relationship with talented and experienced Canadian Architect Alistair Kirkwood has led to an evolution of GSA's goals and dreams and will see their expanding focus shift to the design of mid and high-rise residential and commercial buildings in Barbados, the wider Caribbean and further afield to Toronto. Kirkwood's own specialisation over the past 20 years has been in medium and high-density residential projects and retirement residences in Ontario.

"We are looking to the future...and our rebranding came about through our venture in Toronto where we have recently opened a new office. It has been in the works for quite some time and has now become a

reality," Christian Marshall, a director and architect at GSA tells *MACO Caribbean Living*.

"We've found that there are strong links and many synergies between Canada and Barbados. It provides us with an opportunity to provide services to our Canadian clients via our Toronto office and through our Barbados office for projects here in Barbados."

Director and designer Jeremy Gunn discloses that, along with the Canadian partnership providing opportunities for GSA Barbados, it has brought them one step closer to the possibility of further developing high-rise buildings on the island and in the wider Caribbean. Gunn reveals that GSA has worked on and continues to work on projects throughout the region including St. Vincent & the Grenadines, other islands in the Eastern Caribbean, the British Virgin Islands, Jamaica, Trinidad and further afield.

Marshall believes that high-rise construction is well suited to the housing challenges in Bridgetown, Barbados, as this approach can be both spatially and

ABOVE Sandy Cove, St James, Barbados

RIGHT Beach View Hotel,
St James, Barbados

FAR RIGHT Sandy Lane Estate Beach
Club, St James, Barbados



WINTER PARK PHOTOGRAPHY



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financially economical and can significantly improve neighbourhood amenities.

“I definitely think that it is happening. Given our limited land resources, it is going to become a necessity and a reality as we go forward. Barbados is well poised for growth in high-rise construction with projects like the Bridgetown Hyatt coming on-stream,” he says.

“The last thing we should do in Barbados is build on every square foot available. We need to keep our country’s green spaces free to make sure we maintain an environment which will complement our tourism industry.”

With an increase in both commercial and residential areas in Barbados, Marshall says urban developments need to have a mix of residential and commercial activity, which support each other.

Meanwhile, Gunn says GSA has been working with Barbados hotels on upgrades as they seek to expand their offering. He maintains that in a highly competitive tourism market, it is important for hotels to continually improve their properties.

“You need to continually update and refresh your product, especially when you have returning guests, so, over the past six months, we have been working on hospitality design projects, of varying scopes and budgets. There is definitely a continued need for this, both as it relates to architecture, as well as interior design.”

Head of the interior design team at GSA and LEED Green Associate, Michelle Sambrano, also readily

admits that, in the area of commercial office interiors, international guidelines have had an impact on the way the company designs in this sector. There has been increased involvement of international business entities in the region and it has led to new design direction in corporate interiors. This includes the introduction of completely open-plan spaces with less enclosed offices and alternative solutions for collaboration, which make use of non-traditional spatial arrangements.

“There has also been a greater push towards sustainability especially as energy costs in Barbados are exorbitant compared to other territories. We are seeing a welcomed increased demand for the inclusion of sustainable elements in our design, such as LED lights, proximity sensors, daylight harvesting, as well as the use of photovoltaic power sources. In the Caribbean it makes complete sense for us as Small Island Developing States, with very limited resources, to be as energy efficient as is possible,” Sambrano points out.

GSA has also recently expanded into residential interior design working with clients to develop unique design solutions for their island homes - often homes for which GSA may have also provided the architectural design.

It has been a busy six months and GSA, with its fourth and fifth generation of Directors at the helm, is well-positioned as it continues to offer expanding design services in the Caribbean and the wider international community.M



MIKE TOY

NOW IS THE PERFECT TIME FOR BARBADOS TO LOOK TOWARDS INVESTING IN HIGH-RISE RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS AND GSA IS THE RIGHT COMPANY TO LEAD THAT CHARGE

ABOVE One Welches, St Thomas, Barbados

ABOVE RIGHT Private Residence, Royal Westmoreland Resort, St James, Barbados

FAR RIGHT Private Residence, Apes Hill Club, St James, Barbados

RIGHT Footprints Cottage, St James, Barbados



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