



# The Briad Group Builds New Luxury in San Diego

The restaurant and hospitality company is at work on a new AC Hotel by Marriott hotel.  
**BY ALAN DORICH**

IT CAN BE EASY TO GET SET IN YOUR WAYS, but that is not advisable for a business in the restaurant and hospitality industries. Trends can easily shift in these sectors, and The Briad Group adapts by constantly staying in tune with them.

“That mentality helps us try to stay ahead of the curve,” Senior Vice President of Construction and Design Chuck Pagnotta says. “If you become complacent, competition will gain ground on you.”

The restaurant and hospitality company is keeping that philosophy in mind as it builds its latest project, AC by Marriott San Diego, a new lifestyle hotel. The \$65 million project, Pagnotta notes, is located in the heart of the city's Gas Lamp District.

“We're right on Fifth Avenue,” he says, noting that The Briad Group owned the project site for many years. This allowed it to skip steps in the development stage.

Instead of visiting the property to evaluate it, it relied on knowledge it had gained after years of ownership. After completing concept drawings,

“We felt we had a project that benefited the local area and would be profitable for us in the long run,” Pagnotta recalls.

## EXCITING FEATURES

Construction started on the AC by Marriott project in November 2019 and is aiming for completion in March 2021. “At this point, we're pouring the basement foundation and the first-floor podium,” Pagnotta reports. “We're 15 months before turning over to our operations team.”

When finished, AC by Marriott will stand eight stories and feature 147 guest rooms, a restaurant, a fitness room and a rooftop pool, bar and patio that will offer guests views of downtown San Diego. The first floor will feature The Briad Group's new “ultra-lounge” concept, Love Story.

The lounge, which will be smaller and more intimate than its previous developments, will feature a DJ and live music. “It will be a very happening place, open year 'round,” Pagnotta says. “We're

## THE BRIAD GROUP – AC BY MARRIOTT SAN DIEGO

**www.briad.com** | HEADQUARTERS: Livingston, N.J. | EMPLOYEES: 9,500 | SPECIALTY: Restaurant and hospitality franchises | BEST PRACTICE: Staying current with trends

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THE \$65 MILLION AC BY MARRIOTT SAN DIEGO PROJECT IS LOCATED IN THE HEART OF THE CITY'S GAS LAMP DISTRICT. THE BRIAD GROUP IS AIMING FOR COMPLETION IN MARCH 2021.

very, very excited about it." AC by Marriott also will have sustainable features, which The Briad Group includes throughout all of its projects. For example, "We've incorporated large green walls throughout the rooftop experience," Pagnotta says.

Even though the hotel is situated in an urban environment, "We do not want our guests to see old walls or mechanical equipment," Pagnotta says. "We look to shield the 'eye saws' with flowers and turf."

### INDUSTRY ADVANTAGES

The AC by Marriott project has not been without its challenges. Although The Briad Group demolished the original structure that stood on the site, it had to

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shore a historic wall and adjacent buildings, including one that was 100 years old.

However, "That's what we get paid to do," Pagnotta asserts, adding that the work of its subcontractors has been beneficial. During the project, The Briad Group has utilized several vendors it has had long relationships with. This has helped it cope with the labor shortage.

"Every contractor is busy, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic," he says. "As an owner, developer and builder, we're a little bit different. We have advantages to offer our subcontractors."

But leading up to the health crisis, The Briad Group was focused on how to attract the right trades for its projects. "Since the outbreak, we have been fortunate on one hand to be approved to continue building our active hotel projects," he says.

"In terms of attracting subcontractors, we have seen an increase in qualified bidders," he continues. "A good portion of the trades are acknowledging projects which were not started pre-virus may be shelved for some time, depending on how fast the economy bounces back. We want to utilize those benefits and create those bonds with our subcon-



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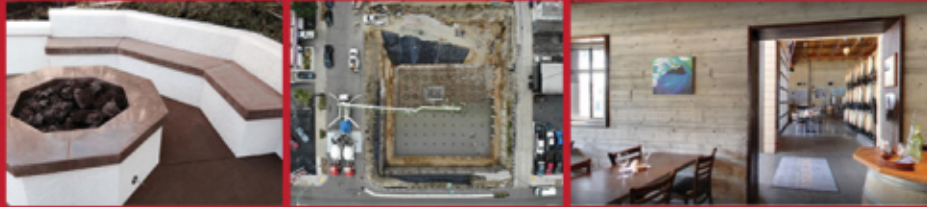


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## COMMERCIAL/INSTITUTIONAL THE BRIAD GROUP – AC BY MARRIOTT SAN DIEGO



AC BY MARRIOTT WILL STAND EIGHT STORIES AND FEATURE 147 GUEST ROOMS, A RESTAURANT, A FITNESS ROOM AND A ROOFTOP POOL, BAR AND PATIO THAT WILL OFFER GUESTS VIEWS OF DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO.

tractors to help facilitate the builds,” Pagnotta says, noting that these include learning experiences. “You can learn from them and they can learn from us.”

Pagnotta says the virus underscores the “advantage our nucleus of trades have by working with us,” he continues. “These are truly unprecedented times; the speed in which the information changes daily is hard to imagine.

“We are faced with not only a health crisis, but a domino effect has led us into an economic crisis,” he states. “We are constantly speaking with our trades, working on plans how to work through the crisis.”

During prior recessions, Pagnotta notes, The Briad Group could “create opportunities by developing

properties in specific locations.” However, “Today, there are so many unknowns and it is downright scary,” he admits. “How long will the virus last? Will it return at the end of the year? Will a vaccine be discovered, if yes, how fast will can it be distributed? When will the economy start to turnaround? How long will it take for people to start to travel both for business and leisure?”

These questions affect The Briad Group’s future development work. “You simply cannot expect to flip a switch and start developing, certainly not at the rate we were prior to the pandemic,” he says. “We will be strategic and opportunistic, and if the right opportunity presents itself, we will move forward.”



THE BRIAD GROUP HAS UTILIZED SEVERAL VENDORS WITH WHICH IT HAS HAD LONG RELATIONSHIPS ON THE AC BY MARRIOTT PROJECT. THIS HAS HELPED IT COPE WITH THE LABOR SHORTAGE.

Pagnotta adds: "Our top trades will be rewarded for the years of doing right by us."

### LEGACY IN FRANCHISING

Based in Livingston, N.J., The Briad Group started operations in 1987 when its owner, Brad Honigfeld, opened a Steve's Ice Cream/Carnegie Deli in Princeton, N.J. Today, it has three divisions, including quick-service, which operates Wendy's Old Fashioned Hamburgers locations.

It also has a polished casual-dining division in Zinburger Wine & Burger Bar restaurants, and a

lodging unit that develops and operates Marriott and Hilton brand hotels. Pagnotta credits the company's success to Honigfeld, who he says has nurtured a family atmosphere.

Not only do employees treat each other like family, but many literally are related to one another. "There are a number of us who have siblings that work here," Pagnotta says. "Brad has his son and his daughter working here. That family atmosphere has translated through the ranks."

The Briad Group also has a two-fold focus on quality. "On the construction side, we have high expectations," he says, noting that this is particularly critical when the company's name is on a building.

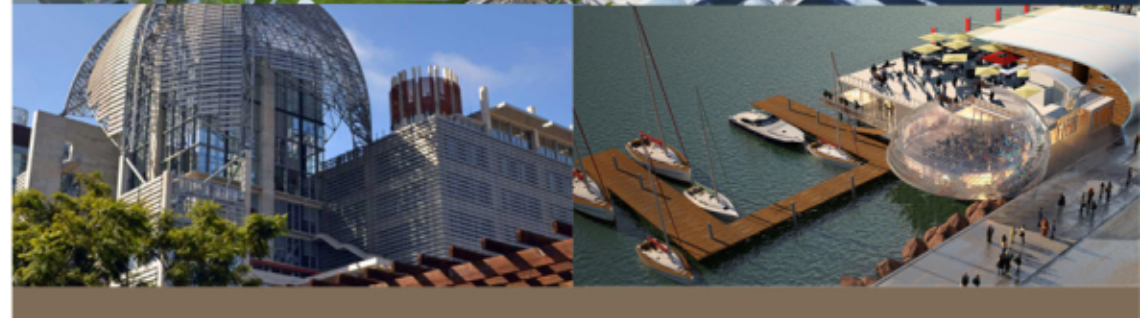
But its quality focus also carries over to the guest experience in its restaurants and hotels. "We want to exceed their expectations," Pagnotta says.

He sees a strong future ahead for The Briad Group, which he says plans to continue expanding its hotel division.

The firm builds in some very unique markets, where the barriers to entry are extremely difficult. Others developers simply do not want wait years for approvals and/or deal with the many challenges in these locations. "You have to be willing to wait out that timeline," he says.

The company also will continue working with Marriott and Hilton.

"Our pipeline with [them] is very deep," Pagnotta says, noting that Honigfeld started his career with Marriott. "That's where he learned a lot of his core values that he built his business around." ■



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