

New company headquarters bring fresh air to neglected San Juan area

CONSTRUCTION

# AOR Set to Open \$7 Million Location in Santurce

## New Building to Feature Warehouse, Showroom to Highlight Company's 30 Brands



Bird's-eye view of AOR's new location in San Juan's Santurce district

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AOR Building Supplies, a Puerto Rico-based firm specializing in construction materials and interior remodeling, in June will open a state-of-the-art warehouse and showroom in San Juan's Santurce district after a \$7 million investment, company President David Medina told Caribbean Business.

The new building—which is in the latter stages of construction on the lot of the former San Carlos Hospital at Stop 26 on Ponce de León Avenue—boasts 55,000 square feet, mostly occupied by a 47,000-square-foot warehouse and basement.

An adjoining three-story building will house a showroom on the first floor to highlight products from the 30 brands that AOR distributes in the Puerto Rico

market, seven of which are exclusive to the company.

Practically every square inch of the showroom will be used to showcase a particular product distributed by AOR, Medina noted. For instance, floors made of different materials will cover the showroom space, while the ceilings will be adorned with architectural motifs such as those frequently used in hotel lobbies. Other products will include acoustic panels, gypsum board, glues, tiles, lamps, insulation, paints, home improvement tools and safety equipment.

Administrative offices, meanwhile, will occupy the second floor, while the third level will consist of training and conference rooms for customers and industry professionals alike. Regarding the latter, the company is setting the stage to provide monthly seminars on new construction

materials and products in collaboration with their respective manufacturers, Medina said.

The sizable investment in AOR's new location serves as a strong counter-example to the difficult times that Puerto Rico's construction sectors are experiencing. The firm has also bucked the trend in terms of day-to-day-business, registering a 42% sales increase last year, Medina revealed. Once the new buildings are all set, the company expects to triple its sales mark, he added.

When asked what prompted AOR's success amid such a difficult landscape, Medina partly attributed it to the company's focus on remodeling. "Nowadays, there are lots of properties out there that need maintenance and re-vamping, so we have geared our offerings mostly toward that particular segment," he said.

The company—whose name

is derived from A. Oscar Rivera, who founded the company in 1937—has also taken steps to diversify its product line to appeal to various markets, such as architects, engineers, contractors, hotels, universities, banks, hospitals, clinical laboratories and pharmaceutical companies.

To that end, the company branched out from the two product lines it offered for decades—Armstrong and Dupont—to include several others, such as USG, ARDEX, Burke Mercer, Acesco, Amorim, NY Stucco, Altro, Outpak Products, Altro Flooring, Crane Composites, Henry Adhesive, Panel Rey, Clark Dietrich, Vinyl Corp., Acudoor, Lanco, ALP Lighting Cos., Kraft Tools, Illumination Products, Wagner, Ramset, Grabber, Versatile and RAM Board.

The firm has also branched into solar panels with its Solaora division, and plans to eventually

cover the roof of its warehouse with enough solar panels to supply about 80% of its energy needs, Medina noted.

The new location will replace the company's old headquarters on Roberto H. Todd Avenue in Santurce, where it has been since 1947. "We were running out of space in the old locale," Medina said, adding that the company does not plan to keep its former location.

The new building has also proven to be a welcome change of pace in Santurce, which for years has suffered from an abundance of abandoned buildings and the corresponding impact on property values.

"Residents of the area could not be happier about this development," Medina said. "We also intend to help the area as much as possible, and have conducted various talks with community leaders about doing that." ■



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—AOR President David Medina