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Wisconsin company acquires two Devonshire divisions

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CHAMPAIGN – A Wisconsin-based company has acquired the architectural and engineering divisions of the Devonshire Group.

MSA Professional Services of Baraboo, Wis., acquired ASD Architects and HDC Engineering on Nov. 1, the companies announced Monday.

Both ASD and HDC will take the MSA Professional Services name and continue to have offices on the third and fourth floors of Champaign's Devonshire Corporate Tower.

MSA has 14 other offices in Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota and Illinois.

Jim Owen, chief executive officer of the employee-owned company, said MSA has "close to 300" employees.

Its staff members include engineers, architects, planners, surveyors and environmental scientists, as well as global information system specialists.

The Wisconsin-based firm has done a lot of work in municipal planning and engineering – including helping towns find money for projects – while ASD and HDC have tended to do more private-sector commercial work. Now, the local operations will be more diversified.

Devonshire Group CEO Tom Harrington Jr. said ASD and HDC employ about 30 people in Champaign.

He said the sale of the companies followed a strategic review of Devonshire's business commissioned early this year.

The review indicated Devonshire should consider strategic alliances for the architectural and engineering companies.

A consulting firm, Morrissey Goodale, suggested MSA.

Harrington said MSA is a good cultural fit for ASD and HDC.

Both MSA and Devonshire offered a multitude of professional services and stressed "single-source solutions" for clients.

Plus, Devonshire had been considering ways to make equity participation available to HDC and ASD employees. Now they'll be able to take part in MSA's employee stock ownership plan, Harrington said.



Photo by: Heather Coit/The News-Gazette

Jim Owen, left, CEO of MSA Professional Services, listens as Tom Harrington, Jr., of Devonshire Group, discusses the sale of two Devonshire divisions to MSA.

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Owen said MSA has about \$30 million in annual revenues, compared with about \$3 million in annual revenues for ASD and HDC.

MSA began operations in Baraboo in the 1930s as a surveying and engineering partnership between H.E. French and H.C. Amundson. After several name changes, it reorganized in 1958 as Mid-State Engineering Co.

Four years later, it incorporated as Mid-State Associates, and in 1997 it became MSA Professional Services.

The Champaign office will be MSA's second in Illinois, it already having established one in Galena in 1985.

MSA also has seven offices in Wisconsin (Baraboo, Madison, Marshfield, Rhinelander, Adams, Rice Lake and Beaver Dam), four in Iowa (Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Dubuque and Davenport), and two in Minnesota (Minneapolis-St. Paul and Duluth).

HDC was established in 1980 as Huntington Development Corp. and grew into a multi-faceted firm offering land development, engineering and surveying services.

Its staff members include structural, environmental, mechanical and electrical engineers.

ASD Architects was formed in 2009 when two established firms, Architectural Spectrum and Dankert & Associates, were merged.

Owen said Jim Holz and Pat Ready, both of MSA's Dubuque office, will oversee the transition of the Champaign office.

The office will have eight teams: two architectural teams, two civil engineering teams and one team each for structural engineering, environmental work, mechanical/electrical/plumbing and field services/surveying, Owen said.

About a month ago, the Devonshire Group exited the residential real estate business, transferring it to Coldwell Banker Honig-Bell.

Now that the Devonshire Group has whittled itself down, it won't be using that as an umbrella name, Harrington said.

Instead, the remaining components – Coldwell Banker Commercial Devonshire Realty and Associated Capital Title – will simply use their own names.

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