

Groundwork

By Helen Hill

Go West ...



Twelfth on West

I must confess a whiff of nostalgia when hearing about another new development on West Avenue. That's the street where I lived when I first came to Miami Beach eons ago.

In those days it was still a sleepy backwater, with many small apartment buildings punctuated by newer rental towers. My home was in one of the last of the waterfront mansions, reputedly built for a governor of the state of Florida, and by then a fairly decrepit boarding school, with decrepit teachers but fantastic views across Biscayne Bay.

Fast forward to the present and West Avenue, now an ultra-desirable South Beach location, is zinging with luxury condo conversions, a chic Mondrian hotel in the works and the just-announced Twelfth on West boutique condo development. The six-story luxury building at 1201 West Ave. will offer 29 units, ranging from 643 to 1,266 square feet and configured as one- and two-bedroom lofts and flats. The four penthouses feature private rooftop terraces with hot tubs and summer kitchens with gas grills.

Architect Reinaldo Borges has designed a modernist building with an urban vibe for The Domus Group, a well-known Argentine real estate development company launching its first U.S. project. Majestic at Home is designing Twelfth on West's interior public spaces including the double-height lobby showing off a Digitile image of shell art by Dominic Crinson. Unit ceilings range from nine to 18 feet and feature floor-to-ceiling glass room dividers. Kitchens and bathrooms will have all the expected luxury fittings, and buyers will have three choices of custom-planned interior packages from ABODE design studio. They can purchase their home designer-ready; finished with flooring throughout, lighting, window treatments and closets; or all of the above plus furnishings by noted designer Moooi. A sign of the times is a home generator system available as an upgrade. Building amenities include a rooftop pool overlooking the city and bay; meditation garden with reflection pool, floating teak relaxing platforms and a "HipMed" (does that stand for Hip Mediterranean or ...) pool area with oversize daybeds. There's also smart technology featuring global remote access and biometric door locks synchronized with the alarm, lighting and thermostat. Prices start south of \$500,000 and go up to more than \$1 million.

Sales are being handled exclusively by Majestic Properties, Miami and Miami Beach offices.

Doorpost Detail

Condo commandos have not earned their reputation for nothing. While the majority of communities live in peace and harmony, with their condo boards dedicated to their well-being, there are a few overzealous condo presidents whose idea of

perfection is to micro-manage to the smallest detail. How else to explain the action of the board of The Port condominium in Fort Lauderdale, which recently demanded that a mezuzah be removed from a resident's condo doorpost? (A mezuzah is a small metal, wood or plastic case, usually five to six inches long, containing a parchment with the Shema, the Jewish holy prayer inside.) For Jews, affixing a mezuzah to the door is a basic precept and it's only six inches long.

But like many condo matters, this issue has escalated into a time-wasting situation, fraught with talk of fines and lawsuits, claims of religious discrimination and downright anti-Semitism.

According to condo legal expert Eric Glazer, whose law firm represents numerous condo associations in South Florida, there is no law in the state of Florida that allows unit owners to display a religious symbol on their common element door. However, Illinois set a precedent with a 2006 statute which provides that the managing board of a condominium association may not institute any rule or regulation that prohibits a reasonable accommodation for religious practices. It allows not only for the display of mezuzahs, but for religious symbols of other faiths, such as the Christian crucifix or the Islamic crescent.

Dig-in

Hard hats and shovels are back in style, with two events in the past couple of weeks.

ICE Development Group, a privately held Miami-based development firm, broke ground on Logik Tower I, the first of a two-tower Class A office condo community at 530 NW First Court in Overtown. With 134,000 square feet of condominium office space within 136 units and 10,000 square feet of ground floor retail space accessible from the lobby and the building's exterior, Logik Tower I should be good for Overtown and the area's economy. Amenities include conference rooms with high-speed Internet connections, a fully equipped fitness center, concierge services, 24-hour security services and smart security systems. Prices for office condos start in the \$350s; completion is expected in winter 2008.

Turnaround Time

Northside Centre, a 50-year-old shopping center at 7900 NW 27th Ave. in Miami's Liberty City area, is showing new life after extensive interior and exterior renovations. UrbanAmerica, a New York-based company with offices nationally including Miami, put \$32 million into upgrading the 540,000-square-foot office/retail complex, which was only 50 percent occupied and riddled with empty storefronts when purchased in 2002. Today, more than halfway through the rehab, the complex is 88 percent leased and seen as a catalyst for area revitalization.

In addition to local tenants, a slew of national tenants have already signed on, a good indicator of the location's potential. Service businesses and a local supermarket add to the tenant mix, as does The Village Market, an air-conditioned, indoor flea market already operating on the premises that will double in size from 40,000 to 80,000 square feet. In addition, a number of government offices have taken space. UrbanAmerica, which holds a 4.5 million-square-foot investment portfolio, is a pioneer in urban core redevelopment with the goal of making positive social and economic changes in these communities, while still attaining high fiscal return for investors. Chalk up another success — Northside Centre now has the friendly, secure, neighborhood ambiance of a town center.

No Comment!

Earth Day Network has released a new comprehensive environmental report card that ranks 72 U.S. cities according to more than 200 environmental, health and quality of life indicators. The Urban Environment Report also introduces for the first time a "Vulnerable Population Index" that factors in each city's susceptibility to an expanded list of environmental challenges based on the percentage of its

population that is most at risk.

The 72 cities in the Urban Environment Report are the 50 largest cities in the United States, plus the largest cities in each state. Detroit, Miami, Cleveland, El Paso and Houston rank lowest overall, based on the environmental indicators. Conversely, Fargo, N.D.; Burlington, Vt.; Portland, Ore.; Colorado Springs, Colo; and Sioux Falls, S.D., rank highest overall.

But look what Miami has going for it compared to the places that scored high! There may be risks to living in our vibrant multicultural city but it's unlikely that they're due to the quality of life indicators used by almost everyone else!

Feeling Blue

Putting the record straight on Blue at Doral (the item in last week's Groundwork was based on some outdated information): Sales of the condo-hotel units are currently under way, with approximately 60 percent sold, and the sales center is open. The first buildings will be complete and ready for owners in June 2007. Available units are priced from the \$500s to \$1.5 million.

Coming Up

Dade Heritage Days 2007, March 1 to April 30, offers some fascinating tours focusing on neighborhood signature architecture as well as an opportunity to observe some of the new buildings going up all around town. Fees range from \$15 to \$22 depending on tour.

Art Deco Architectural Guided Walking Tour — Wednesday, Friday and Sunday at 10:30 a.m., Thursday at 6:30 p.m. Local historians and architects will provide a look into South Beach's Art Deco, Mediterranean Revival and MiMo historic architecture. Info: 305-672-2014 or www.mdpl.org.

Design District Walking Tour — Saturday, March 17, 10 a.m. – noon.

Explore the 19-square-block area considered the heart of design in Miami with the Historical Museum's Dr. Paul George. Advance reservations and payment required. Info: 305-375-1621 or www.hmsf.org.

Historic Coral Gables Treasure Hunt — Saturday, March 24, 3 p.m. Presented by the Historic Home Owners Association of Coral Gables and the Coral Gables War Memorial Youth Center, follow clues to locate historic sites and architectural details throughout Coral Gables. Prizes. Info: Jason Gilley, 305-460-5600.

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