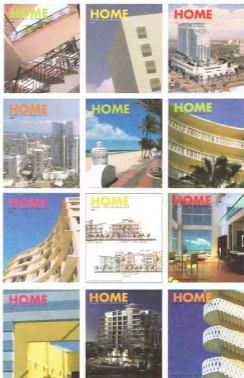


# HOME

FORT LAUDERDALE

6/04



CELEBRATING OUR FIRST YEAR

# FAT

Village Gets

# FATTER

**Text** David Raterman **Introduction** John O'Connor



A few years ago, the Flagler Arts and Technology District was a tiny spark in a few fertile imaginations. In less than thirty-six months the district has gone from looking like an abandoned movie set to a neighborhood full of men, women and cranes, all working at a feverish pace to bring FAT village to life. From the high-rising NOLA Lofts close to Broward Boulevard to the rapidly selling Bamboo Flats, FAT Village is no longer just an idea, but is well on its way to being fully realized. On the following pages, contributing editor David Raterman gives us a run-down on what's happening.

Left: Elevation concept drawing for Village Flats, to be constructed in the Flagler Arts and Technology Village.

*Developers are labeling FAT Village a "live/work/play community" where "housing, business, arts and technology can thrive."*

**S**hirlea LaForce loves the mornings when she sits on the rooftop of her city-view condominium complex and reads a newspaper while drinking coffee. She also likes to entertain guests there in the evening. "I can see the city lights and it's so pretty," she says. "It's so nice to have the common area on the roof."

Besides aesthetics, she likes the location for its convenience. "The area below is nice, too. I can walk to a lot of places and not have to deal with parking, including Riverwalk, Las Olas, restaurants, happy hours. It's just fun. I like the location, and I love that the area is really growing."

Since November the hairstylist and her fiancé have lived in Phase I of Avenue Lofts, which is located at 425 North Andrews Avenue. They share a two-bedroom condo that has 1,545 square feet.

Avenue Lofts stands in the burgeoning Flagler Arts and Technology Village on the northern edge of Fort Lauderdale's expanding downtown. Developers and city officials have been eager to buoy the previously sinking neighborhood, and merchants and residents like LaForce have given enthusiastic support: In only a few places throughout the country can people live within a five-minute drive of a beautiful beach and an energetic downtown, while enjoying a subtropical climate.

Flagler Village, of which FAT Village is the western sector, stretches from north of Broward Boulevard to Sears Town, and from Federal Highway to the Florida East Coast Railway corridor. Historically called Flagler Heights, the area mixes new developments with vacant lots and older warehouses, offices, car shops, houses and apartments.

Recently several commercial and residential complexes have risen in the neighborhood, and there are plans for more. With new streets, sidewalks and lighting being added, a new way of life is being created. Developers are labeling it a "live/work/play community" where "housing, business, arts and technology can thrive."

LaForce says that many of her neighbors are young professionals. Included are high-tech employees whose companies have relocated here, and artists. In fact, for years the overlapping Third Avenue Arts District has been known for its art studios. And nearby stands the Museum of Art in Fort Lauderdale.

Sky Lofts, a 12-unit courtyard development at NE 1st Avenue and NE 5 Street, will offer Fort Lauderdale's first live/work residences. Designed by Anthony Abbate and Margi Nothard, they're being created by Heliconia Development. New Phase Realty will create a residential streetscape with two tony developments: The Courtyards and The Commons at Village East.

Jefferson Place, a 243-unit luxury apartment complex with ground-floor retail, is nearing completion at NE 3rd Avenue and NE 6th Street. Bamboo Flats, with innovative three-story "European flats" and rooftop terraces, recently opened for sales at 712 NE 3rd Avenue. Buyers reserved 70 percent of its 57 units in the first week.

At 425 North Andrews Avenue stands Avenue Lofts. All lofts feature 12- to 20-foot ceilings and lots of open space, with units ranging from 1,262 sq. ft. to 2,417 sq. ft. Bonuses include wireless Internet access throughout the complex and an excellent panorama of downtown. Retail fills the ground floor.

"The neat thing about Avenue Lofts is the swimming pool and gym on the roof of the second building," says Alan Hooper, whose company is developing the project. "And the five buildings are connected by pedestrian bridges that connect to the pool and recreational area."

"(Flagler Village) is the only part of downtown where the city is allowing new residential construction right now," says Hooper, who grew up in Fort Lauderdale.

"There's so much potential. Lots of raw space with the ability to redevelop without too many hurdles to jump over. There are a lot of buildings that are dysfunctional in the area, houses that are in the latter stages of their life that can be torn down. It's not an established neighborhood at this point, but there's so much more promise than a neighborhood that's established in the right or wrong direction. It has people willing to develop, and the investments keep coming in."

*"We're not designing in a style, but in a mix of Modernist and vernacular, understanding the winds, rain and humidity, and lifestyles." Mike Krupnick on*

*411 Brickell and Village Flats.*

Adjacent to Avenue Lofts will be Village Flats and 411 Brickell, which Hooper is also developing. Construction starts next year, with move-ins the following year. With 30 units, 411 Brickell is going to be a mixed-use project with street-front commercial space as well as one floor of office lofts and residential lofts above that.

On the 411 site now is an old warehouse and a junkyard. "We're going to preserve these walls along the railroad tracks," Hooper says. "The old brick's a cool texture. We're going to incorporate old brick into the new brick of the building that's going in front of it so they blend together."

"We're (also) building a parking lot along the railroad tracks. Currently there are some brick facades from the 1920s that are where this parking lot is being built.

We're going to leave the walls standing and build the lot around it so we can preserve a bit of history when the railroad was providing goods to downtown."

Hooper wants to add a mural, and sandblast it to make it look old. "We are becoming the experts on how to build the new 'old' look," he says. "We are sensitive to what's around us and we pull from what exists and use pieces from the past."

Village Flats is another loft project. Plans include 24 units in a six-story structure with a pool on the second story. Prices for Avenue Lofts, 411 Brickell and Village Flats range from the mid-\$200,000s to the mid-\$500,000s.

411 Brickell will include an open work mezzanine, palms positioned with trunks through holes in the concrete roof and brick panels relating to older brick in the neighborhood.



Hooper's architect for these projects, and several more, is Mike Krupnick. The two

met in Little League 20 years ago. "We aren't looking at the buildings individually, but at the Flagler Village as a whole composition," he says. "We aren't designing monumental buildings but designing a community. The aesthetics are important, but more important is how the city interacts with the building and sidewalks."

Krupnick works with his wife Kim Ray, and their influence is Fort Lauderdale's Tropical Modern look. "We're not designing in a style, but in a mix of Modernist and vernacular, understanding the winds, rain and humidity, and lifestyles. We're not believers in the pseudo-Mediterranean style," he says. "(Our style is) appropriate, honest. Very honest materials - what you see is what you get. The buildings are structurally rational. We're not trying to cover up what we're doing." ■