

## the edgewater- downtown connection

LUXURY CONDOS, MUSEUMS, AND PUBLIC PARKS GIVE THE ULTIMATE FACE-LIFT TO THE ONCE-NEGLECTED WATERFRONT BLOCKS FROM DOWNTOWN UP TO 28TH STREET. BY ERIC NEWILL

In Miami, the sky has always been the limit, but now that expression is taking on new meaning. Towers rise higher, culture grows deeper, and the presumed core of a vast metropolis—that concept known as “downtown”—actually becomes one. Meanwhile, just to the north, the adjoining Edgewater neighborhood between Biscayne Boulevard and the bay is seeing a spurt of nascent structures, aiming for the burgeoning luxury clientele who want to be in the new center of everything.

According to Miami’s Downtown Development Authority, more than 70,000 people now call downtown home, a population spike of 80 percent from a decade ago. “Three years ago, people thought this was the worst place in the world,” says DDA Vice Chairman Neisen Kasdin, “but we knew it was booming. Investors from abroad and locally were renting to people who worked downtown. Young people were beginning to live, work, and play downtown, and were getting around by walking or on our public transportation. That fueled a true 24/7 community.”

Today, in addition to the pre-bust towers lining Biscayne Boulevard—from The Related Group’s 50 Biscayne to Terra Group’s 900 Biscayne Bay to Gregg Covin’s Ten Museum Park—scores of new residences are now online. Espacio USA has announced a \$412 million residential/retail

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Designed by Arquitectonica, Icon Bay will continue Edgewater’s luxury transformation.



LEFT: Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science; BELOW: Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM) at Museum Park.

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complex at 1400 Biscayne Boulevard, while Genting Group has refashioned its plans for *The Miami Herald* site, and developers Louis Birdman and Covin are releasing plans for a tower designed by architect Zaha Hadid.

“The limited remaining developable land has created a sense of urgency for the best talent in the world to make their mark,” says Covin, whose 60-plus-story building, possibly with a helipad, will be Hadid’s first residential skyscraper in the Western Hemisphere.

She won’t be alone in terms of star quality. Directly across Biscayne Boulevard is the ambitious Museum Park, with two anchor institutions designed by iconic architects: Herzog & de Meuron’s Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM) and Grimshaw Architects’ Patricia and Phillip Frost

Museum of Science. Projected to open this year in time for Art Basel, PAMM will help cement the neighborhood as the new epicenter for the city’s cultural life. “The design responds to Miami’s climate and the needs of a young, rising art museum,” says Director Thom Collins. A canopy not only creates shaded plazas but also, through a series of outdoor spaces, bridges the museum, the park, and the city beyond.

To PAMM’s south lies the Museum of Science, expected to open in 2015. “Museum Park will play a critical role in activating one of our city’s greatest assets—its tropical waterfront,” says President and CEO Gillian Thomas.

Perhaps the first sign of the area’s viability was the launch of the American Airlines Arena in 1999, followed in 2006 by the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami Dade County. These twin institutions propelled the development that followed. Today, Arsht President and CEO John Richard acts as liaison to the Town Square Neighborhood Development Corporation, which has been instrumental in drawing up an aspirational plan for the surrounding blocks, including public spaces, pedestrian access, and buildings easily approached from the street. He is pleased that the

revised Genting plan, incorporating a luxury hotel and condominiums, “represents a more human-scale improvement.” Genting is planning a series of public parks that will allow people to walk along the water from PAMM up to the Arsht and beyond.

All these components—culture, accessibility, proximity to work and pleasure—are adding up to big sales for Alicia Cervera Lamadrid, of Cervera Real Estate, which represents many of the neighborhood’s toniest residential properties. “Luxury follows culture,” she says.

Cervera Lamadrid is also seeing a boom slightly north, in the Edgewater neighborhood. Here, The Related Group is building its latest luxury monolith, on Northeast 28th Street, right off Biscayne Boulevard and mere blocks from the city’s center. The 40-story Icon Bay, designed by

“The limited remaining developable land has created a sense of urgency.”

—GREGG COVIN

Arquitectonica, will continue in the luxury-residence vein set by its predecessors, Icon South Beach and Icon Brickell. “Biscayne is a great corridor,” says Carlos Rosso, president of Related’s Condominium Development Division, “and Edgewater is undergoing a natural expansion.”

He is most enthusiastic about a sculpture-filled public park the company is creating. “We gave back close to an acre to the neighborhood,” Rosso says. “For four blocks around, new streets will be built to provide access to the park.” Related is also partnering with the neighboring National YoungArts Foundation organization—itsself receiving a new Frank Gehry structure—to create a competition that will bolster arts in the neighborhood.

If the success of Paramount Bay is any indication, Edgewater’s new developers may have struck gold. The building was given a redo by hipster designer/musician Lenny Kravitz, not to mention a publicity blitz. The result? Apart from three penthouses, the building is entirely sold out.

In dealing with buyers’ direct wants and needs, Cervera Lamadrid is in a rare position to gauge the future of this blossoming district. “We will have ongoing urban infill, not only with more residential towers going west of Biscayne Boulevard, but also restaurants and retail with increased quality. Edgewater East will become downtown’s very own version of Miami Beach’s exclusive South of Fifth neighborhood.” **OD**



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