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Downtown art museum a huge leap

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Downtown Miami has long been known as a business hub, but its growth as a center for arts and culture took a massive leap in 2013 with the opening of the Peŕez Art Museum Miami (or PAMM). That momentum is expected to continue in 2014.

“PAMM is a biggie,” conceded Alyce Robertson, executive director of Miami’s Downtown Development Authority. “One of the things I find so special is that the architecture is so Miami- based.” Pritzker Prize-winning architects Herzog & de Meuron toured Miami, she said, and took as their inspiration Stiltsville, a cluster or houses on stilts in Biscayne Bay. “It’s a uniquely Miami type of architecture, with huge verandas, vertical structures and beautiful greenery. As more and more locals go to see it, it’s going to become one of their favorite things to do. The views are gorgeous.”

The downtown authority is involved in culture, too, hosting Art Days in September and a free shuttle bus service during Art Basel.

“With Art Days, we went from 50 events in 2012 to more than 130 in 2013,” Ms. Robertson said. “We intended it to be for local residents. One of the big things I’d like to see in 2014 is that our local residents see Miami like the rest of the rest of the world has seen it.”

She said downtown’s booming population – residents nearly doubled from 39,000 in 2000 to 75,000 this year – has created an audience for arts and other downtown activities, from the Miami Heat games to museums. “More locals are turning to downtown in a way they haven’t before. This urban setting has really grown up over 10 years.”

Moreover, “the growing urbanization that we see in Miami is happening all over the

country," she observed. "People are catching on that people in urban environments, in communication with other people, create new ideas, and that moves the community faster. If you're talking to one another about advances technology, about advances in general, then in that situation, one and one equal more than two."

Mark Meland, a shareholder in the firm Meland Budwick, P. A., said Miami's development as a center for the arts has blossomed in 2013 and will continue to be a strong factor in the future.

His firm represents real estate developers and was involved in the 10 Museum Park high- rise residential tower at 1040 Biscayne Blvd.

He points to the 1000 Museum project, which has drawn inter- nationally known Zaha Hadid is its architect. In addition to winning the Pritzker and the Stirling prizes, the Dubai- and London- based architect is a dame commander of the Order of the British Empire.

> "Years ago, an architect of this stature would not have developed a building in Miami," Mr. Meland said. "Miami now has the attention of global markets. For a city to have this kind of iconic building says we are growing up. Not that we don't have great architecture and a unique skyline, but it is getting even" better.

He also cited Brickell CityCentre as proof that great cities require great design. "It's an amazing project. A company like Swire, which is more than 150 years old, has the long-term view of things. They have billions of dollars in the ground there, and they'll probably hang onto it for a long time. They are betting long on the city; they believe in the city."

Crossing the Miami River, "Wynwood is changing tremendously," and will continue to do so, he predicted. He points to Wynwood Central, a project of long-time Miami developer Marc Kovens and Shawn Chemtov and slated for completion in 2015. "They believe in the area and are committed to it. Before, there were too many sellers and not enough buyers; now it's just the opposite.

"There's always been an art scene here, and maybe Art Basel put a spotlight on it. It

all goes together in a good space. We've got a creative population from a lot of different cultures and that creates a lot of ingredients, and when they combine, maybe that's the batch that went on the dynamite. Our firm is involved in the process of doing the buildings, but as a citizen, you also see it happening in a good way."

In 2013, "There was an ambitious, comprehensive, and much-needed plan to develop and redevelop the downtown area," said Yamal Yidios Char, president and CEO of Ytech International, a Miami-based multi-family investment and development company with a portfolio of more than 3,000 units.

Some of the key projects, Mr. Yidios said, are the Grand Central Station, Miami World Center, Resorts World Miami, Brickell CitiCenter, Peŕez Art Museum Miami and Met Square. "These developments will permanently transform the city, along with its culture, and will have a tremendous impact on the region's economy.

"I believe that the downtown Miami area will be the big winner during this real estate cycle," he predicted. "While Miami 21 promotes a more sustainable and pedestrian- friendly plan for the city, especially at core areas like downtown, the zoning district allows for retail, entertainment, office, lodging and civic uses, as well and substantial residential development with zoning density of up to 1,000 units per acre."

Two important 2013 events that will influence the future are the opening of Museum Park (which began with the Peŕez Art Museum Miami) and the announcement of Macy's and Bloomingdales' move to Miami Worldcenter, said Lucia Dougherty, co-chair of the Miami land development & zoning practice at the Greenberg Traurig law firm.

"Those things will spur the development of residential," she said. "You have two big powerhouse retailers who could have gone anywhere, and they made a decision to go downtown because of all of the good things that are happening there: the Adrienne Arsht Center, the museums, the park. It's the evolution of things that have happened in the past five years."

She agrees that noted architects have helped move the city forward. "Design sells so many of our clients, and developers are bringing in very noted architects because it marks their building as unique." She cited Ms. Hadid, and also Dutch architect Rem

Koolhaas, who has been recruited to renovate Miami Beach City Hall and is rumored to have a bank project in Coconut Grove on the drawing board.

For next year, development is rife all along the Biscayne Boulevard Brickell Avenue corridor, and even further north.

The firm represents The Related Group, which alone has six projects in some state of development in that corridor and four more in the Edgewater neighborhood, which stretches east of Biscayne Boulevard from the Omni area north to about Mid- town. “Related is the leader of the pack and a driving force,” Ms. Dougherty said.

Many of the parcels in private ownership will change hands, said Iris Escarra, a Greenberg Traurig shareholder who specializes in land use, zoning and procurement law, and local government law.

“You’re really going to see a change in the fabric of these areas,” she said. “There is a lot of interest in Edgewater and a significant number of projects now in the works. And one of the things we’re seeing is that the architects have designed these buildings to address the neighborhoods, not just to be gorgeous buildings.”