

As Seen In...

Florida Trend

Retiring in Style: Senior developments are springing up in downtowns around Florida.

June 2018

BY DOREEN HEMLOCK

Bernie Elser has lived his entire life in the cities. When it came time to consider where to live in retirement, he wanted to make sure theaters, restaurants and other conveniences were within walking distance. "I'm not looking for greenery. I'm looking for stores," the 78-year-old says.

Elser picked a senior complex called The Palace at Coral

Gables, just steps from the Miracel Mile and an easy stroll the ice cream shops, barbers and bookstores. He's about to sell his car because The Palace offers a rides to select locales, and there's public trans transit on his block. He enjoys living in a high-rise that offers nightly happy hours, white linen dining and other activities that have helped him make friends.

Suburbs house the bulk of senior communities in Florida, but developments are sprouting in downtowns, appealing to urbanites who want walkability and convenience, says Margaret

Wylde, CEO of Promatura, a senior housing research and advisory firm based in Oxford, Miss. In Miami-Dade County, for example, plans are underway for apartment buildings for seniors, each with roughly 200 units, in downtown Doral and near Dadeland Mall.

Downtown senior developments tend to be higher priced because land usually is more expensive and building rules are more stringent. They usually attract people already living in the area — sometimes just within a few miles, Wylde says.

Case in point The Palace at Coral Gables opened in 2013 and cost more than \$80 million. Some 80% of the 243 unit complex's residents moved from within a 10-mile radius. Some rent-



The lobby at The Palace at Coral Gables resembles that of a five-star hotel.



The indoor swimming pool is adorned with Mediterranean columns.



Bernice Dubrow, left and Marilyn Robinson enjoy being close to downtown amenities.

ers were downsizing from big houses outside of the urban core "to live a more carefree lifestyle," says Adam Rosenblum, Vice President at The Palace Group a private developer based in Miami-Dade's Kendall area. Residents at the nine story complex pay an average of \$6,000 per month, which includes breakfast, four-course dinner's, wellness programs and with personal trainers and other amenities.

Marilyn was among the first renters at The Palace, moving from South Miami after her husband died. She says she appreciates the building's touches, including a lobby inspired by the Four Seasons George V Hotel in Paris, complete with the chandeliers, marble floors and ornate furniture. At 87, she enjoys being in downtown Coral Gables: "You just take your walker with you."