

# ROOTS R

## A New Generation Is Reshaping South Florida

With their focus on design, the arts, luxury, and sustainability, younger developers are changing the landscape in communities like Coconut Grove, Brickell, Doral, and Wynwood.

*By Richard Westlund | Photography by Gio Alma*



LEFT TO RIGHT:  
Matthew Whitman Lazenby, President and CEO, Whitman Family Development;  
Jessica Goldman Srebnick, CEO, Goldman Properties;  
David Martin, President, Terra Group

# UNDEEP



## ROOTS RUN DEEP

Through the decades, Miami has constantly re-invented itself. In the 1950s, iconic hotels like the Fontainebleau and Eden Roc introduced Miami Beach to the world. Then came the great Cuban migration of the 1960s, followed by the first condominium wave of the 1970s and the construction of downtown's office towers in the 1980s. Then came the emergence of South Beach as a glittering global destination, followed by the condo boom-bust-boom cycle in the 2000s.

Today, Miami-Dade is once again carving out a new identity as a hub for technology and life science companies, building new cultural landmarks, and playing to its long-time strengths in financial services, tourism and retailing.

In this time of change, a new generation of real estate/development leaders are making their own marks on the community. "The sons and daughters of company founders understand the disciplines of construction, design, finance and marketing," said Lewis Goodkin, president, Goodkin Consulting, Miami. "They are creative, high-energy developers who are committed to truly creating a sense of place." Here are profiles of three of these catalysts of change:

**D**avid Martin believes that in today's residential real estate market, "less is more." As president of Terra Group, he's focusing on open spaces, attractive residences, and sustainable communities, rather than trying to maximize project densities. "We want to create spaces that can be a sanctuary for someone's soul, not just a shelter from the elements," he said. "As a Miami native, it's very rewarding to be able to shape our city's future in that positive way."

Growing up in Miami, Martin says his Cuban-born parents gave him a strong sense of values, and working at the family-owned Bernardo Garcia funeral homes provided a sense of connection with people from all walks of life. "I learned that it's important to live every day to the fullest and to think about the legacy you will leave when you pass away," said Martin, 36, who has a young son and daughter with his wife Christina.

In 2001, he co-founded Terra Group with his father Pedro Martin, who's been his business partner for 13 years. "I appreciate the rare opportunity he gave me," said Martin. "He allowed me to make mistakes and gave me the wings to fly. As partners, I do a lot of the day-to-day operational work, while he's the executive decision maker. It's been invaluable for me to have a father as a mentor—a huge part of success."

Through the years, David has led the company's operations, sales, and marketing initiatives. He also focuses on the acquisition of land, as well as construction and financing of new projects. "As a company we want to be community driven and design driven," he said.

Today, Terra Group has shifted its focus from downtown Miami high-rise residential towers to smaller-scale projects in Coconut Grove, Miami Beach, Doral and other suburban areas. One of Martin's current projects is Grove at Grand

Bay, which will have 96 residences on the site of the former Grand Bay Hotel. "Unlike most new Miami-Dade condo projects, more than half the buyers are local residents who want to live in a laid-back walk-everywhere neighborhood," said Martin. When the project is delivered in March 2015, it will include a pet spa—one of Martin's own original ideas.

Terra Group is also planning the redevelopment of the 5.5-acre Coconut Grove Bank site, and invited four architectural firms to showcase their ideas in a design competition. That project has not yet been unveiled, but Martin said construction will begin in early 2015.

On Miami Beach, Terra Group's showcase project is GLASS, an 18-story building with only ten units – an example of the less is more

philosophy. Designed by Rene Gonzalez, the building's exterior glass panels reflect "the sky, the streets and the people of the South of Fifth neighborhood," said Martin. Terra Group has also acquired a hotel on Collins Avenue in North Miami Beach that it plans to reposition.

On a larger scale, Terra Group is helping to transform the City of Doral by building 1,600 homes in six master-planned communities such as Doral Cay, Vintage, and Las Ramblas. Next

up is the 90-acre Doral Commons mixed-use project, which will have 312 single-family homes and a Publix-anchored retail center. The 3,000- to 4,000-square-foot homes will start in the \$600,000s, with larger homes in the \$1 million range. Martin added that the homes will feature more garage, storage, and closet space than the standard residence.

With its clean, modern design—and plenty of glass—Doral Commons will break the mold of the city's traditional Mediterranean-style architecture. "Many Venezuelans and Colombians love modern architecture," said Martin. "We want to offer homes that cater to their tastes while giving them a sense of pride about living in Doral. We are also including parks and open spaces, because they are so important to

healthy communities. I think that Doral has a great future, and we're proud to bring a better offering to the table."

Other Terra Group residential projects are now underway in Palmetto Bay, Sunny Isles, Edgewater, and Southwest Ranches in Broward. Terra Group also has a small office and retail portfolio in Midtown, and owns a large parcel on 36<sup>th</sup> Street. However, Martin said there are no plans for immediate development. "We have a longer time perspective with emerging neighborhoods, and may create a retail village with a pedestrian plaza on that site," he said.

Reflecting on his career, Martin said one of his personal turning points as a developer came after Terra Group purchased the Freedom Tower in 2004. Martin felt it was important to step back and reconsider the plans for the Tower. "Freedom Tower is a civic anchor for our community," he said. "I'm proud that in 2008 we were able to donate this historic building to Miami Dade College."



Rendering of Grove at Grand Bay, Coconut Grove



**David Martin**  
President, Terra Group



**Matthew Whitman Lazenby**  
President and CEO, Whitman Family Development

**M**atthew Whitman Lazenby's family has deep roots in South Florida real estate. His great-grandfather, William Whitman, Sr., a Chicago resident, first visited Miami Beach with his family in 1912. A decade later, Whitman had purchased retail space on Lincoln Road—the city's high-end shopping district during the 1920s.

Then in 1965, Lazenby's grandfather, Stanley Whitman, opened Bal Harbour Shops as an exclusive open-air luxury retail center catering to Miami Beach tourists. At that time, there were nine hotels within a mile of the new center, and Bal Harbour Shops was an immediate success.

Growing up in South Florida, Lazenby spent time during the summer doing a minimum-wage maintenance work and other odd jobs at Bal Harbour Shops, and also working in the law office of his father, Bob Lazenby. He earned a bachelor's degree in English at the University of North Carolina, taught English for several years, and became a successful commercial leasing agent in New York.

In 2003, Lazenby decided to join his grandfather and his uncle, Randall Whitman, in the family real estate business, and became a leasing agent at Bal Harbour Shops, and quickly assumed more responsibilities as operating partner.

Today, Lazenby believes the family company has a once-in-a-lifetime moment to make its impact on the Brickell area. "When we surveyed and interviewed customers at Bal Harbour Shops several years ago, it was striking how many were staying at the Mandarin Oriental or other luxury hotels," he said. "That indicated that Brickell has become a tourist destination, as well as an international hub for financial and business travelers."

That revelation led to a series of discussions with Swire Properties, the Hong Kong-based multinational that developed most of Brickell Key in the 1980s and 1990s and was rapidly moving ahead with the mixed-use Brickell CityCentre project.

"While it would be hard to find two more dissimilar partners on the surface, inside we were very much alike," said Lazenby. "Swire is a seventh generation company run like a giant family business, while we're in our fourth generation. Both of us look at the future in terms of decades, not quarters, and we had a shared long-term vision for transforming Brickell."

While Lazenby's family had never gotten into a joint venture before—and Swire had only done a few—the two companies quickly teamed up for the retail component which will include both luxury and premium brands that cater to the emerging Brickell demographics— young professionals, and visitors with disposable income coming to Miami from around the world.

Despite the massive scale of Brickell CityCentre, the initial retail phase will be about 600,000 square feet—about the size of Bal Harbour Shops after a planned 250,000-square-foot addition is completed in 2016.

"We aren't trying to duplicate the Bal Harbour Shops experience, as that couldn't be done," said Lazenby. "Instead, Brickell will offer an a la carte mix of the best shopping experiences in any major urban city with its own appeal. But we do plan to spend a great deal of time curating our new center, just as we do for Bal Harbour Shops."

Lazenby said he's having fun making plans for the new retail spaces. He's also been traveling to luxury shopping centers around the world looking for fresh concepts and ideas to attract both tenants and their customers. "When Bal Harbour opened, every store was independently owned," he said. "Now, the luxury stores are owned by a handful of companies that want to elevate their brand image while driving growth."

In the long term, Lazenby said his family's most important contribution will be creating a new social hub for neighborhood residents as well as visitors. "Ten years from now, we think Brickell CityCentre will be the community anchor," he said. "Our retail shops and restaurants will be an important part of the entire Brickell experience."



Rendering of Brickell CityCentre on Brickell Avenue, Miami

Now, Lazenby, 36, is stepping outside the family's traditional "comfort zone" by partnering with Hong Kong-based Swire Properties to develop 600,000 square feet of retail space for Brickell CityCentre, a \$1.05 billion, mixed-use development scheduled to open in 2015.

"For the past 50 years, we have been focused on Bal Harbour Shops," said Lazenby. "That dedication has paid off as we have continually attracted the world's top retailers, while expanding our center. It's been a real shift for us, but we believe that Brickell CityCentre is a natural way for us to expand on our success at Bal Harbour Shops in another area of Miami-Dade that is clearly thriving."

On the personal side, he married Kristin Arbuckle Lazenby in 2009, and they are now raising their son, William Whitman Lazenby. Lazenby earned a master's degree in real estate at the University of Miami in 2012 and last year was named president and CEO of Whitman Family Development.

Meanwhile, the International Council of Shopping Centers named Bal Harbour Shops the world's top-producing shopping center in 2012, based on its annual sales per square foot.

In addition, the Urban Land Institute presented an award for "sustainable retail" to the Whitman family for Bal Harbour Shops.

## ROOTS RUN DEEP

In the late 1980s, New Yorker Tony Goldman recognized the architectural potential of Miami Beach's aging cluster of Art Deco properties. He began buying properties that could be redeveloped with modern interiors while retaining their distinctive historic appeal, and his efforts played a key role in creating the glamorous global destination of South Beach.

Today, his daughter, Jessica Goldman Srebnick, is aiming to transform the "gritty" Wynwood neighborhood north of downtown Miami into a vibrant arts-oriented community with worldwide appeal to creative young professionals.

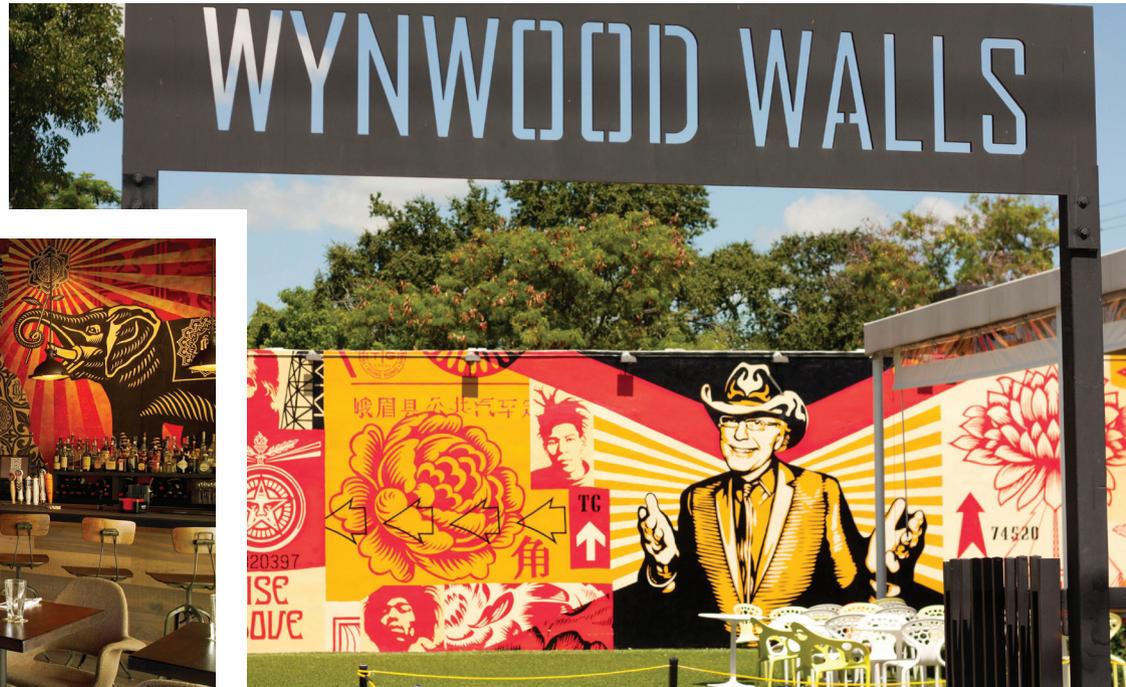
"I think Wynwood has a tremendous opportunity to become a center for the creative class—a place where artists, architects, designers and photographers can collide on the streets and share ideas in a park or cafe," said Goldman Srebnick, who was named CEO of the family company prior to her father's death in September 2012. "I think Wynwood in the

"I had thought I would be on South Beach for just a couple of years and go back to New York, but I fell in love with Miami," said Goldman Srebnick, who married criminal defense attorney Scott Srebnick, and is now a mom with three sons.

She's also busy as a mentor to University of Miami real estate development and urbanism graduate students, and active in Crew Miami, a professional group of women involved in commercial real estate. In 2009, she co-chaired the Young Presidents Organization (YPO) Global Leadership Conference in Miami,

"My influence in Wynwood is all about the arts," she said. "One of my ideas was for 'Women on the Walls,' which brought some of the world's best women street artists to Wynwood."

Goldman Srebnick is also a leader in Wynwood's real estate market, managing the construction and financial aspects while contributing her ideas to designing residential, retail, and office spaces. "Having concrete floors versus wood boards or exposed brick rather than traditional drywall can make a big difference in creating a sense of authenticity," she said.



LEFT: Wynwood Kitchen & Bar, Wynwood, Miami  
TOP: Wynwood Walls, Miami

next 10 years will be one of the nation's most important neighborhoods for the public arts."

Born in New York in 1970, Goldman Srebnick started coming to Miami when she was 16 and her father started buying properties on the "new American Riviera." She spent five years as an associate fashion director of Saks Fifth Avenue in New York before joining the family real estate business in 1997.

"One of the many lessons I learned from my dad is that there is a solution for everything, provided you look at it with optimism and hope," she said. "When he looked at a dilapidated neighborhood, he saw what things could be, rather than what were there now. I try to follow that same philosophy."

Goldman Srebnick took charge of the company's hospitality division, leading a staff of more than 250 people. Under her leadership, The Hotel of South Beach won a *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine award in 1999 as one of 31 Top New Hotels.

which drew more than 2,400 attendees. Recently, the Florida International University Center for Leadership named Goldman Srebnick one of "50 Prominent Women" who lead businesses in Florida.

For the past seven years, Goldman Srebnick has paid increasingly more attention to Wynwood, a long-neglected industrial neighborhood south of the Miami Design District "I think we have a real estate 'trifecta' here with each area playing a distinctive role—design, science and the arts," she said.

One of Goldman Srebnick's first accomplishments was orchestrating the design of Wynwood Kitchen & Bar, that opened in 2010. She also began playing a significant role in "Wynwood Walls," a highly acclaimed street art museum, and produced a book on the project. In 2011, she was co-producer of the documentary series "Here Comes the Neighborhood," which explored the transition of the Wynwood Arts District.

Goldman Properties recently opened Wynwood House, a mixed-use project on NE 26<sup>th</sup> Street that includes commercial space on the first floor, 1,500-square-foot office/studios on the second floor, and 1,000-square-foot live/work rental units on the third floor.

"For creative professionals, the office and the living room often blend together, and we want to give them a well-built product with options," she said. "Like my father told me, people don't like to be put in a box."

As one of the largest landowners in Wynwood, Goldman Properties has two large development projects in the planning phase that will include residential, retail, and parking components.

"With today's technology, people can do business outdoors or indoors without going to an office. We're striving to help meet that demand in Wynwood, by creating a community where you can live, work and play. I am really excited about the future of Wynwood." **E**



**Jessica Goldman Srebnick**  
CEO, Goldman Properties