

intelligent forms of lifestyle

The GOOD LIFE

By
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URBAN LIVING ABOUNDS
IN DOWNTOWN ORLANDO.

The recently opened
Paramount Towers includes a
Publix grocery store.



The VUE at Lake Eola offers spectacular views of the city's skyline.

» Living in a high-rise condominium, shopping at an urban grocery store, or a night out at the movies. None of these were feasible in downtown Orlando 20 years ago. Nowadays, however, these options are the norm with "The City Beautiful" evolving into a place where many choose to live, work and play.

Third generation Orlandoan and visionary Craig Ustler, owner and president of Ustler Development, Inc., was ahead of the game eight years ago when he built loft condominiums at Thornton Park Central. He was one of the forerunners in shaping one of downtown Orlando's urban neighborhoods.

"Thornton Park Central is the signature project we think was catalytic in launching a lot of the redevelopment in downtown. We also feel that we have transformed downtown into a neighborhood," says Ustler.

Ustler has also brought upscale,

casual dining destinations to downtown with his other company, Urban Life Management Restaurant Group. Restaurants include HUE, Citrus, Cityfish and Kres. The eateries have made a mark in O-town.

"Our thought process was to have a restaurant group that would bring unique and one-of-a-kind concepts to downtown Orlando and make them specifically be anti-chain or very different from the other offerings that were available in the market."

Living blocks away from work has its advantages.



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COURTESY URBAN LIFE RESTAURANT MANAGEMENT GROUP



COURTESY VIBRETTE & SQUILLONE



COURTESY CHURCH STREET ENTERTAINMENT

Downtown Orlando offers a plethora of unique drinking and dining experiences, from Citrus (left) to Ember (center) to the Big Belly Brewery on Church Street.

"Having residents in downtown helps reduce urban sprawl," explains City of Orlando's economic development director Frank Billingsley. "Downtown is a major employment center with 60,000 workers. A lot of those workers now have the opportunity to live footsteps away from their office, which takes cars off of the road."

Besides walking, the free LYMMO bus service has delivered residents and commuters alike to different parts of downtown Orlando seven days a week for the past 12 years. The system transports 10 million people each year.

By this fall, LYMMO will utilize biodiesel buses, and in the next year hybrid-electric buses will hit the streets. LYMMO has come a long way with its downtown shuttling service.

"LYMMO was the first bus rapid-transit system in the country and is a model that's now being used throughout the U.S.," says LYNX spokesperson Matt Friedman. "LYMMO provides a way to move people around to urban cores in a timely fashion with bus-only lanes."

A plethora of condominium options are appealing to downtown dwellers, ranging from young professionals to empty nesters. Open floor plans include one, two and three bedrooms, as well as penthouses with 24-hour security, concierge service, floor-to-ceiling glass and balconies, modern appliances, wood or tile flooring, pools, fitness centers, community rooms with state-of-the-art technology and pet areas.

Historic Creations Design & Development (HCDD) was involved in the

design, development and marketing of The Sanctuary and of Star Tower. Each 18-story high-rise condominium has an upscale ambiance, but a charm of its own.

The Sanctuary, which opened in December 2005, has 173 condos between 1,325 and 5,000 square feet



COURTESY HISTORIC CREATIONS DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT

for \$400,000 and up. The building is almost sold out but its counterpart, the Star Tower, has availability.

The Star Tower opened in December 2007 and features 100 condos that are around 2,000 square feet. Framed photos of movie stars and musicians decorate the building and a "Sky Garden" features an array of plants along with its view of downtown Orlando. Star Tower prices are in the high \$300,000s and up.

Both condominium complexes provide urban dwellers with convenience.

"You're in the heart of everything and it's a better and more efficient way to live," says HCDD's chief operating officer Ted Maines.

The VUE at Lake Eola, opened two years ago, provides residents with

spectacular views of Lake Eola Park and the city's skyline. The 36-story, contemporary building has 375 condos ranging from 568 to 3,209 square feet with a price tag of \$199,000 to \$2.9 million dollars.

Developers and owners Westminster Partners went the extra mile when building The VUE.

"The primary target when building The VUE was a single woman that wanted nice things and convenience," explains vice president of sales and marketing, Lindsey Pfaender. "The VUE offers a high-end, luxury, urban lifestyle catering to someone that wants to have the quality of life of home but the social interaction of what you get in downtown."

Art deco makes a resurgence in ZOM's Paramount Towers. The 16-floor facility opened last year and features 313 condos available in 650- to 4,000-square-foot options for purchase or rent. Penthouses and villas also have private parking garages. Condos are priced from the low \$200,000s to over \$1 million. Rentals are \$1,400 to \$9,000 a month.

The Paramount Towers provides its residents and other urban dwellers with a shopping option.

"The 28,900-square-foot Publix grocery store is the most unique amenity that we have and it's a first in downtown Orlando in almost 30 years," says senior vice president Greg West.

Newcomer 55 West on the Esplanade will open this fall. Grosse Pointe Development has taken over the project from Euro-American and is



COURTESY DPAC



COURTESY HOK SPORT



COURTESY 55 WEST

Urban dwellers will have a host of new entertainment options when the Dr. Phillips Performing Arts Center (left) and the new Amway Center (middle) open. Right: Developments such as 55 West are making urban lifestyles easy to achieve in Orlando.

managing the 32-floor high-rise condominiums located in the Church Street district. The building will feature 377 units ranging from 1,010 to 1,808 square feet. The condos currently rent in the low \$1,000s.

"55 West is in the center of it all. It's a landmark building where there are a lot of things to do within walking distance and it's a great addition to the city's skyline," says chief executive officer Bob Hensley.

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For those living and working in downtown Orlando there are an array of entertainment options. Dining and nightlife are steps away from downtown condos. Choices include grabbing a bite to eat and a brewski with friends in the Church Street district, at Ember or in the Wall Street Plaza; to wining and dining the Italian and Mediterranean way at The Black Olive restaurant at the Plaza Orlando.

Afterwards, catch a flick around the corner at the Plaza Cinema Cafe. The almost 60,000-square-foot, high-end theater opened in RP Realty Partners, LLC's space last May and features 12 screening rooms, 10-inch custom armrest tables with beverage holders at each chair and around 1,200 leather rockers in a stadium-seating atmosphere, along with two wine bars.

"The Plaza Cinema Cafe is in the hub of downtown's entertainment district and provides an affordable enter-

tainment experience with an upscale urban feel," says director of business development Kim Ellis.

In the future, downtown Orlandoans can look forward to attending Orlando Magic games and concerts at the \$380-million Amway Center in the Church Street district, which is slated to open in fall 2010. The 875,000-square-foot, environmentally-friendly facility will seat 20,000 patrons and feature seven levels, including suites,

an outdoor patio, six clubs, full-service themed restaurants and lounges overlooking the event floor, and state-of-the-art amenities.

The Amway Center hopes to bring even more vigor to downtown Orlando.

"We really believe that this is going to be a catalyst for development here, particularly in an area of downtown that needs some revitalization," says Orlando Magic's chief operating officer Alex Martins.

Urban dwellers also will have an opportunity to appreciate the arts at the \$383-million Dr. Phillips Performing Arts Center (DPAC). The state-of-the-art, green venue will be situated across from City Hall in downtown Orlando.

On the drawing board at DPAC are an amplified hall, which will feature a proscenium for Broadway and large-scale productions and seat 2,800 attendees; an acoustic hall for the Orlando

Philharmonic Orchestra and the Orlando Ballet; a glass community hall, designed as a multi-purpose area for local groups, and education space with classrooms; as well as performance areas, rehearsal halls, a roof garden and a public plaza for outdoor performances, which will accommodate 3,000 people.

Dr. Phillips Performing Arts Center's president Kathy Ramsberger says the facility will fill a void in Orlando.

"The nobility of this institution [Dr. Phillips Performing Arts Center] is what Orlando is craving. The key is to engender pride and to really start putting a pulse in downtown that galvanizes the community."



COURTESY PLAZA CINEMA CAFE

The New Plaza Cinema Cafe is in the hub of downtown.