END OF HURRICANE SEASON 2025

CASA COASTER

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MARNA ATKIN

KW teammates introduced themselves three weeks into a rough transition. A6

WELCOME CHANGES

Partner joins pizza joint; bakery pivots

Casa Costa's go-to pizza shop is under new management. The fresh face in the kitchen of NYPD Pizza, Chef Marco Mendez, has big plans.

In October, he took over as both manager and head chef, bringing with him years of culinary experience and a passion for great food made from the heart. He partnered with Mohamed Kaada, who bought the business in 2023.

Chef Marco's story begins when he came to the United States from Mexico

Please turn to page A3

Downtown Boynton finally taking shape

Casa Costa still has an empty lot for a next-door neighbor to the south, but down the street, construction cranes are swinging.

Since the early 1990s, city commissioners have talked about building a new downtown nearby our property. So far, aside from new municipal buildings, 500 Ocean is the only completed project. It broke ground ten years ago, but only after the city cleared out mom-and-pop retailers but then left the lot empty and fenced off for another fifteen years.

Five more mid-rise projects – each with a mix of housing, parking, restaurants and retail – have won permission to build, which is the first step within city hall. Together, they would bring over 2,300 units plus commercial spaces equivalent to 1 ½ football fields.

Please turn to page A4





MARNA ATKIN

FUR-RIGHT NIGHT FASHION: On Oct. 26 in front of the bakery, social committee judges awarded a half dozen dogs prizes for their Halloween flair. Bella Shapiro and her handler won Best Ensemble; Brady Wilson won Cutest.

INSIDE

OPINION
I pleaded with staff for two years about a safety concern in the parking garage. **A2**

OPINION

KW solved two years of stress in less than a day

BY MICHELLE SREBNIK

Pedestrians cross the south side of the garage to walk dogs, enjoy the lagoon or to get to and from the townhomes. It's a bit scary with cars coming from three directions and not everyone stopping at the stop signs.

Drivers who do stop at the entrance ramp and look in the mirror on the column might still be startled by pedestrians seemingly popping out of nowhere. It's not your fault! Two years ago, I discovered and reported (repeatedly) that the mirror affixed to the column to aid drivers was dirty and angled incorrectly. It was pointed toward a door no one had used in a decade. No one listened.

I introduced myself to the new office staff, and I introduced Elizabeth and Jorana to my long-standing safety concern. Fewer than 24 hours later, they let me know that Mario, the new chief engineer had cleaned the mirror, adjusted it and ordered an extension to further angle it. It now works as intended, giving drivers a view around both corners.

Wow! I know that the new team needs a moment to get their footing, but if this is what they can do while getting their footing, I am very impressed. Details matter. Neighbors, great things are happening here!

Ms. Srebnik reminds everyone to STOP.

EST. 2022

CASA COASTER
Volume IV, Issue Six

SOUTH FLORIDA'S
#1 POOLSIDE AMUSEMENT

J.T. Harrington, Publisher
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Send contributions and corrections to **casa.coaster.news@gmail.com**.

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LETTERS TO THE PUBLISHER

First impressions of KW reflect board's work

We recently came down to our condo for a short visit before we return in January for the winter.

After reading J.T. Harrington's piece ("After a hot summer, it's time to sweat the details," Fall 2025), we wanted to write to say how impressed we are with the work the board went through to change management groups. We had always been disappointed in the level of professionalism and and competence of Castle Group. They consistently seemed to make things more difficult than they needed to be!

So far, the KW team is a welcome improvement. From something as simple as opening the management office door to welcoming people inside (versus locking themselves in and forcing residents to tap on a window to get someone's attention)!

We also appreciate all the efforts being done to correct the issue that has Casa Costa blacklisted.

Thanks again for the work the board is doing!

BOB & MARY KAY VAN DRIEL

A project manager is key for renovation work

My career in carpentry and construction inspired me to make it easy for fellow residents to improve their quality of life.

It started with installing keyless locks and then assembling storage bins. When owners appreciated my reliability, they hired me for various handyman jobs. I gained trust among the building staff and board by understanding – and following – Casa Costa's rules.

Things got really serious when I was asked to rescue a bathroom renovation disaster. I'm not a contractor but I speak their language.

I was able to negotiate with the city's permit folks, navigate various paperwork, hound and replace lazy vendors, supervise the work and safeguard the overall job site for the owners. We got the stalled project back on track.

I invite other owners to bring me in sooner!

STEVEN MILLS
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Cards and crafts alike

I am back for the winter, organizing another season of popular weekly table games Thursday afternoons in the club room. And if you feel a creative spark, join me in the studio at the Boynton Beach Arts & Culture Center select Tuesdays.

SANDI SACKS
sandisacks@gmail.com

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Fresh slice: Meet the new chef

Continued from page A1

at just 15 years old with his brother. The two stayed with an uncle while their parents remained behind, hoping to give their sons a better life.

Chef Marco started out washing dishes at the Grand Lux Café in Boca Raton. Through hard work and dedication, he moved up to cook, then eventually ran the kitchen. From there, his journey took him to several other restaurants – including a stint in New York City's Times Square – before returning to Palm Beach County.

Locally, Marco has cooked at La Masseria in Palm Beach Gardens, Meat Market Boca Raton Steak House (as a sous-chef), and Wood & Fire, where he discovered his love for pizza-making.

"I've had wonderful, kind, generous mentors along the way," he said. "They each taught me something that I use in my kitchen today." His eyes light up speaking of his love for cooking. "Being a chef is the best job ever," he said.

"Everyone needs to eat and I love making people happy. You eat with your eyes as well as your mouth, so I always want my dishes to look beautiful and taste great."

Chef Marco takes customer feedback seriously, using it to continually improve his craft. "I love what I do – it's not a job, it's my passion."

His wife, Norma, shares his love for the restaurant world. The two met while working at La Masseria. Today, Norma also works alongside him at NYPD Pizza.

They have three young children: two boys (ages 6 and 10) and a daughter (8). Even his brother, Eli, works at the restaurant, making it a true family affair.

Under Chef Marco's leadership, NYPD Pizza maintains its familiar name while he takes the menu in a new, home-cooked direction. "Mohamed worked hard to build this restaurant, and I want to honor that," he said. "I'm keeping the name, but I'm adding fresh ideas – everything with fresh ingredients, cooked to order."



JOHN BATTISTA

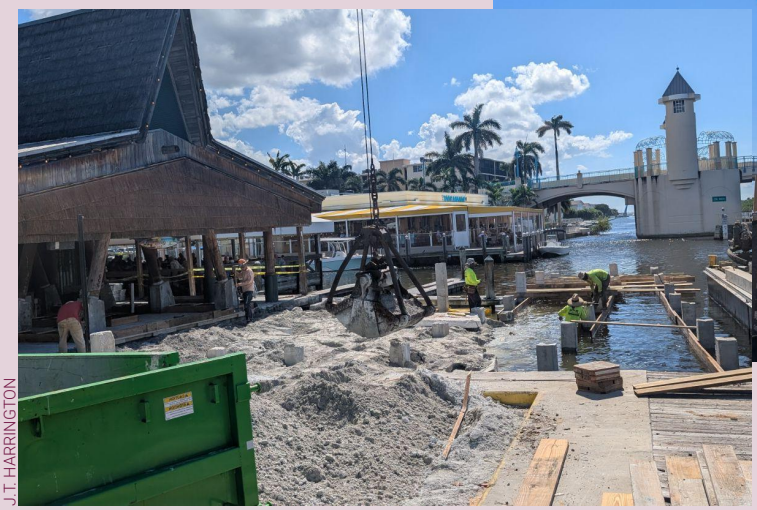
COMING IN HOT: Chef Marco at NYPD.

He's already introduced several new dishes, including homemade tiramisu and delicious rice balls. His thin-crust pizzas are cooked to perfection, and his chicken Parmesan has quickly become a customer favorite. "I want to focus on traditional Italian dishes with a modern flair," he said. "As time goes on, I'll be expanding the kitchen to create even more options."

Please turn to page A5

BOYNTON BEAT

Makeover at the marina



J.T. HARRINGTON



Two Georges Waterfront Grille closed its dining area facing the Intracoastal Waterway. With an assist from a barge-top crane, workers replaced the piers wooden pilings with cement versions. Wednesday trivia nights were unaffected.

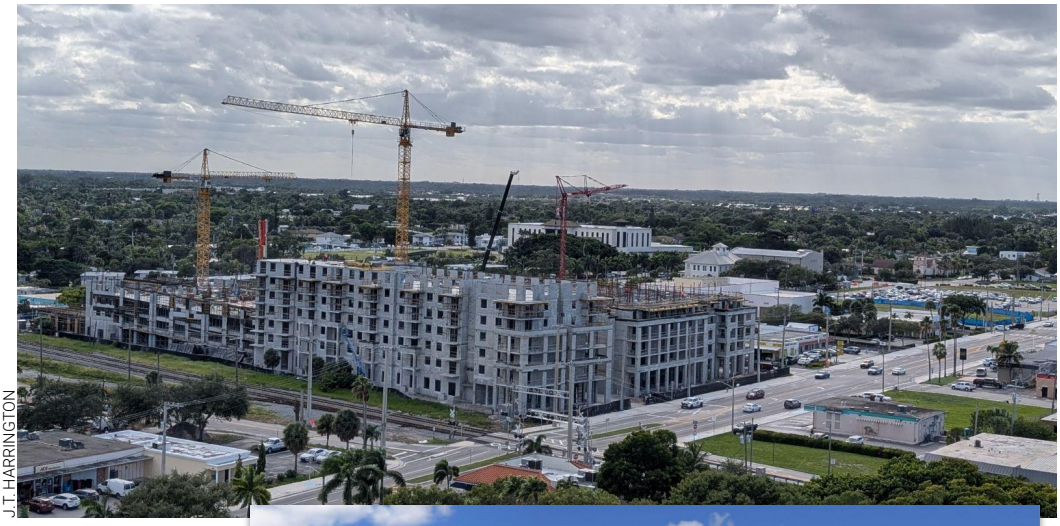
Rising to the west: A downtown dream deferred

Continued from page A1

As 500 Ocean rose in 2017, the city approved a plan for The Villages at East Ocean Avenue on a 5.1-acre site that a Boca Raton attorney had spent 15 years assembling. Just west of the railroad tracks, the project called for 371 apartments.

Although he had a green light and architectural plans, the city effectively froze the project for five years with its multi-step permitting process. The holding cost exhausted the owner, who sold the land and the plans to a Miami-based private equity firm for $12 million in May 2022. Edgewater Capital assumed the risk and complexity of moving it through Boynton's process.

Edgewater split the project into two parts and gained approval late last year for $9.1 in future tax refunds for the first phase: 336 rental apartments rising eight stories, 120 public parking spaces and 8,000 sq. ft. of retail and restaurant space. CC



J.T. HARRINGTON



EDGEWATER CAPITAL

Above shows the view from Casa Costa after five months building The Villages. At right, a rendering of the project's final appearance, with anticipated delivery of the first phase in early 2027.

DUNCES OF THE MONTH



Castle Group handed off the property on Oct. 1 with overflowing, immovable dumpsters with busted wheels. CC

SARA FORCINIO

CASACOSTASOCIAL

Don't miss out on our holiday traditions: CasaCostaBB.com/events



Thanksgiving kickoff

Sunday, Nov. 16 @ 5 p.m.

$15 for turkey; sign up to bring a dish

Hotwire holiday party

Thursday, Dec. 4 @ 6 p.m.

$25 for dinner, open bar & live music

NYPD serves up special delivery; bakery owner mulls new concepts

Continued from page A3

Chef Marco is eager to connect with the Casa Costa community. He's active on social media (@nypdpizza_fl on X and NYPD Pizza on Facebook) and plans to add more signage so drivers can spot the restaurant from the street. He offers happy hour specials and is promoting NYPD's bar and drink menu. Best of all for residents: Chef Marco delivers directly within Casa Costa. "I'll bring the pizza right to your door," he said with a smile.

NYPD Pizza hosted a trivia night in October with coupons for prizes. Throughout the evening, participants enjoyed dinner and drinks as they competed. One attendee, Emily Stepner, "was surprised by the new menu offerings and the quality of the eggplant rollatini and Gorgonzola salad." She continued: "The service was wonderful and efficient. They have made quite an impression."

Chef Marco "wants customers to feel like they're getting a great home-cooked meal: comfortable atmosphere, great food, great service."

And what should Casa Costa residents order first? "The pizza, of course," Chef Marco said, "but try our dinners – chicken Parmesan, chicken Marsala or one of our fresh pastas."

In 2023 he opened a bakery called Paris Je T'Aime (French for "Paris, I love you") and he rebranded earlier this year as Café de Paris. Now business owner Mohamed Kaada is considering a new direction for the south tower storefront.

"We bake fresh pastries every day but never have enough customers buying them," Mr. Kaada told the *Casa Coaster*. "I'm toying with a few options. One is bringing in partners for a fusion concept with French, Brazilian and Mediterranean flavors. Another is made-to-order chicken dishes. Stay tuned!" CC

Association hires specialist attorney

Casa Costa's board conducted a search over the summer for day-to-day legal representation. They selected Andrew Black, Esq. at Kaye Bender Rembaum.



Always bet on Black

Mr. Black lives in Delray Beach and was admitted to the Florida Bar in 2006. His firm specializes in condominium association law and related fields like drafting contracts and collecting late assessments from owners. He is not to be confused with an owner in the south tower with a similar name who collects baseball cards.

He replaces insurance lawyer Harris Katz, Esq., for routine association matters. CC

KW PROFILES

CHANGING OF THE KEYS



Casa Costa is under new management. I'm meeting with the new folks.

I was in the coffee shop getting a drink when Erica Diaz, our new property manager, came in and ordered two cups. When I walked back into the building, I saw Joel holding the coffee that Erica had just given him. It wasn't until our interview that I realized Erica's management style is all about building strong connections with the employees and residents of Casa Costa.

Erica was a flight attendant for many years, but once her daughter was born, she wanted to be able to spend more time with her. She started in the building management field 15 years ago as a front desk attendant. Within two months, she became the assistant manager of a building in Coral Springs.

"We are dealing with the most personal aspect of the residents' lives – their home," Erica said. "It doesn't get more personal than that." This sentiment illustrates how seriously she takes her role in our community.

Over the years, she has learned a great deal about running a building from her experiences as an assistant manager in high-rises, to overseeing portfolios of HOA communities and multifamily rental properties. She knows that the assistant manager role is the backbone of the office, and Erica views her job is to offer her and the team as much guidance and support as possible so that they can do their jobs well.

Born in the South Bronx, Erica is one of five siblings. She moved to Florida when she was 15. Working at Casa Costa is her first experience with KW Property Management, but before accepting the job, she did her research. She spoke with friends who already work for KW, all of whom told her she would be very happy there.

During the interview process, she was told that KW was looking for someone to manage a newly acquired property. "I was so excited that I would be able to be part of a team in a new building for KW," she said. "It would give me an opportunity to shine."

Erica walks around the building every day to see what needs to be done, and she's asked her assistant manager and chief engineer to do the same. In fact, she walks the property with the head engineer several times a week. "It's a group effort," she said, "to make sure we're seeing everything."



"Watch and learn"

Her responsibility as manager is a little different than that of the assistant manager. She serves as the liaison between the association's board and KW, reviews proposals for the board and manages the budget. She is also meeting with every vendor to understand what they do. "My plan," she said, "is to watch and learn first, and then look for ways to improve."

Erica has a collaborative management style, which was clear even in the short time I spent in the office. Erica, Elizabeth (the assistant manager), and Jorana (the administrative assistant) all seem to get along well. "I will give my team the tools they need to be successful," Erica said, "while also holding them accountable."

Having only been on the job for a week when I met her, Erica's short-term goals include developing a preventive maintenance schedule. She meets with Mario, the chief engineer every Monday to set weekly goals, then checks in on Wednesday to discuss progress and meets again on Friday to review results. Along with the maintenance plan, she's focused on building connections with the staff and residents and strengthening what she calls a "solid team."

Erica also maintains an open-door policy with residents and staff alike. "I find this role very rewarding," she said. "I don't do the same thing every day, I'm constantly learning, and I enjoy meeting the residents." She's found everyone at Casa Costa to be thoughtful and welcoming.

Outside of work, Erica is a runner who starts her day at 5 a.m. with a workout. She has two pets – a dog named Bella and a cat named Bruno. She loves spending time with her adult daughter.

Once settled in, her goal is to provide weekly email updates to residents to keep everyone informed. With her drive, optimism and people-first approach, Erica is already proving that good leadership isn't just about managing a building – it's about building a community. CC

KW PROFILES




J.T. HARRINGTON

KW KICKOFF: On Oct. 21, the incoming team introduced themselves to over 50 residents who packed the club room. On his fifth day on the job, chief engineer Mariusz Onichimiuk (upper left) told the applauding crowd they'd see him plenty as he gets his hands dirty.

When I first met Elizabeth Taylor, our new assistant manager, I couldn't resist asking about her famous name. She laughed and told me there's no Hollywood story behind it – she was named after her grandmother. She said that growing up, she had no idea about the Oscar-winning actress from the 1960s who was just as famous for having seven husbands over the years, but our Elizabeth has embraced the celebrity as an adult.

We grabbed a cup of coffee to chat, and as we walked through the hallway, Elizabeth stopped to pick up a small piece of litter. That simple act said a lot about her approach to work – when she sees something, she does something.

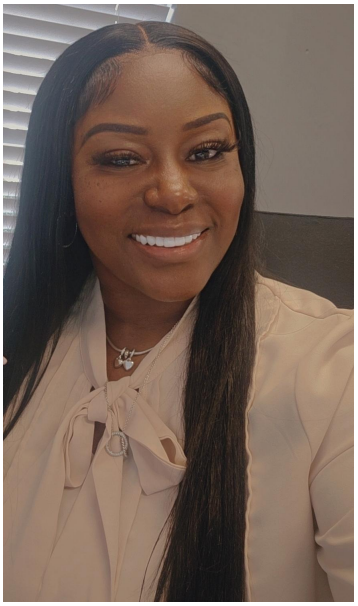
Elizabeth has spent the past 25 years in property management, first as a customer service representative in a call center. Since then, she's worked as an assistant manager in both self-managed properties and others overseen by management firms, developing a broad understanding of how communities operate.

When she heard that KW was holding a job fair, she decided to explore a new opportunity. After going through an extensive interview process, the KW transition team offered her the position.

A true Floridian, Elizabeth was born and raised in South Florida. She is active in the community, volunteering in several local schools and organizations. She's also the proud mother of three adult children who live nearby. "I watched Casa Costa being built," she said, "and I'm so happy to now be part of this amazing building."

Elizabeth describes her job as being the right and left hand of the property manager. She works closely with all vendors to ensure they're properly vetted and holds herself accountable for keeping the property in top shape. The assistant property manager has primary bookkeeping responsibilities, including processing invoices and collecting dues. Walking and inspecting the building regularly is also part of her routine. "I want to do my part to make this space beautiful for us," she said.

Of course, one of her most important roles is working directly with residents. She points out that the office door is always propped open because "we truly have an open-door policy."



Ready for her closeup

For Elizabeth, the job is about more than solving problems – it's about showing people that you care. "You might not be able to fix everything right away," she said, "but residents need to know you're listening."

She's made it a priority to build what she calls "happy relationships" with the people who call Casa Costa home. "You can build relationships," she explained, "but it's important to build happy ones." In fact, on her first day here, she stopped what she was doing at the front desk to introduce herself – and the concierge – to everyone who walked by.

Elizabeth says her first impression of Casa Costa was how large it is and how warmly she's been received. "This is a special place," she said, "and I'm happy to be part of it."

She encourages residents to stop by the office to say hello or talk through any issues. "I always show up happy," she said, "and I want everyone to know they can talk with me about anything."

She's grateful for the training and support that KW provides. "There are continuous trainings and guides for the office staff," she said. "I never feel alone – especially now that Erica is here. And Sara is always just a phone call away."

Sara Forcinio is KW's district manager and oversees about a dozen properties. She served as our interim property manager while Casa Costa was being staffed up, which has given her the hands-on experience to be a key resource.

With her warmth, energy, and "see it, do it" attitude, Elizabeth Taylor is already helping make Casa Costa an even happier place to call home. She may yet become more famous than the late *Cleopatra* actress. CC



With over 40 years of experience as a dedicated realtor, I specialize in listings, sales and rentals, proudly serving as **the go-to agent for our building**. Having lived here full-time for the past 12 years and leading the social committee, I offer local expertise and genuine commitment to helping you with all your real estate needs. Let me be your trusted resource in achieving your property goals.

-Roberta Mann

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