SEPTEMBER

CASA COASTER

This publication of the Social & Welcoming Committee does not necessarily reflect the views of the Board of Directors nor managing agent of Casa Costa.

September 1, 2023 | Volume II, Issue Seven | CasaCoaster.com

What's News

Neighborhood

★ A lawsuit threatens the groundbreaking of The Pierce. **A9**

★ The city will pay millions after a 50-year old sewer pipe broke. **A9**

★ Building safety law reforms originated after the 2021 Surfside collapse. **A5**

Casa Costa

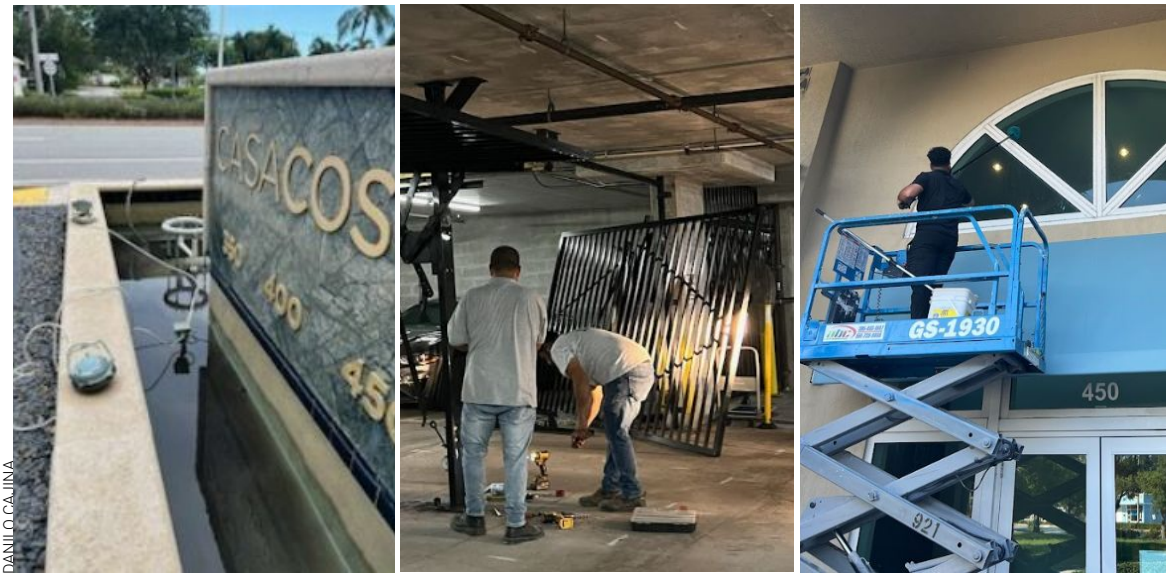
★ The Social & Welcoming Committee has already sold dozens of tickets for its holiday events at the year's end. **A15**

INSIDE

MISTER B'S NEIGHBORHOOD
Meet Adlene and test drive the new plan for newcomers to Casa Costa. **A12**

KITTEN RESCUE
Four residents and a valet teamed up. **A10**

DEATH OF THE MALL
The Congress Ave. corridor's roots. **A14**



DANILO CAJINA

SUMMER SPRUCE UP: In mid-August, staffers cleaned the driveway fountain and pressure-washed walls and windows, while contractors replaced a damaged garage gate.

New reality faces condos

Major Florida law changes mandate property inspections and fundraising for reserves

State regulators responded to the 2021 collapse of a Miami-area building by passing sweeping regulations that place engineers firmly in charge of condominium budgets.

Senate Bills 4-D and 154, passed in the last two years and effective in 2024, close loopholes that many condominium associations have used to "kick the can down the road" on building safety. Experts blame the structural failure of Champlain Towers South largely on deferred maintenance – a practice common among condo associations to keep monthly fees artificially low. The new law requires periodic inspections and forces associations to save up for repairs.

For years, the Florida Condominium Act's nearly 200 pages required that associations consider capital expenditures in their budgets, but failed to require so-called "reserve studies," which are exercises that estimate major property costs down the road. The law also permitted condos to contribute little or zero to a reserve fund.

"It is far too common for associations to be penny-wise and pound foolish," says Harris Katz, a managing partner at Goede, DeBoest & Cross, PLLC, and Casa Costa's attorney.

Now Florida associations must hire a licensed architect or engineer to complete a visual "structural integrity reserve study," a sort of report card on the health of the building's roof, walls, foundation, paint job – plus plumbing, electrical, waterproofing and fireproofing systems. The report estimates repair timing and costs.

Kevin M. Koushel, a Miami-based real estate lawyer, admires lawmakers' intention to prevent another tragedy, but notes that a mere visual inspection of the floors, foundation and load-bearing

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OPINION

The turf isn't greener

By John Battista

My wife, Belinda, and I looked at many condos when we began our search to live in South Florida. Having rented in Delray Beach for three winters, we knew we wanted to be in this area. We looked at over 15 properties from Delray to West Palm Beach, which meant we spent a great deal of time with our realtor. Inevitably, we would talk about condo associations and she had a great deal of knowledge about the associations in each of the buildings we toured.

When we narrowed down our choices, our realtor was clear that Casa Costa had a healthy reserve, was well run and had a functional board of directors.

She told us how one building's board members argued at every meeting and accomplished nothing. One building that we also liked had only 20 units and she talked us out of putting in an offer. She said: "If something big needs to be repaired, the cost has to be split by only 20. The possible assessment is much higher in smaller buildings."

She was also aware of the varied reserves of the condo complexes in the area and steered us away from communities that she knew had low reserves and were not keeping up with maintenance.

Casa Costa was different. We chose to live here and we are very pleased with our decision. Now as full-time Florida residents and condo owners, we are getting used to living in a large, diverse community and loving the benefits that come with it.

During our search, we saw how preventive maintenance is critical to the health of properties. The fact that even before the Miami Surfside collapse, the board here looked into the pool deck leaks, sued the builder and began repairing the garage, is something that should bring us pride and comfort. Yes, we have been dealing with repairs, dust and deadline changes, but ultimately we will have something that is safer and more valuable.

For me, the glass is half-full. Now the board is looking into the other needed repairs and preventive maintenance projects and I am pleased that we are looking into making my investment stronger. I am not thrilled about a possible assessment, but I am willing to listen to what needs to be done and make an informed decision that will benefit everyone. And, if we can get some enhancements to the amenities along the way, all the better.

Mr. Battista is a member of the Social & Welcoming Committee and clearly wants outdoor grills.

LETTERS TO THE PUBLISHER

Thumbs up for the bumps

I returned to Casa Costa in June to find new speed bumps at the south entrance of the garage. I see an amazing difference in drivers not just slowing down, but actually stopping before proceeding across the unofficial walkway.

Living in a townhome, to get to my car, get mail, get to the front desk and visit neighbors, I need to cross the garage. In the past, it was pretty dangerous for me. I appreciate the community's leaders for taking action.

Michelle Srebnik

Summer edition sizzled

Thanks for the cogent and thorough explanation of the need to be realistic about the building maintenance costs. At least the elevator buttons work now! Kudos to our chief engineer Dan Cajina and his team for being so diligent. The Promenade/Casa Costa history lesson was fascinating.

Finally, best of luck to Mohammed Kaada and his restaurants. I highly recommend the multigrain loaf and the fig bread from Café Prélude and the steak and cheese stromboli from NYPD Pizza.

Elizabeth Pearce

CASACOASTERNEWS@GMAIL.COM

CORRECTION

Due to an editing error, the article "What happened during Casa Costa's early days?" (Summer '23) misstated when "the city gave the property its certificate of occupancy" as late 2019. It was late 2009. We regret the error.

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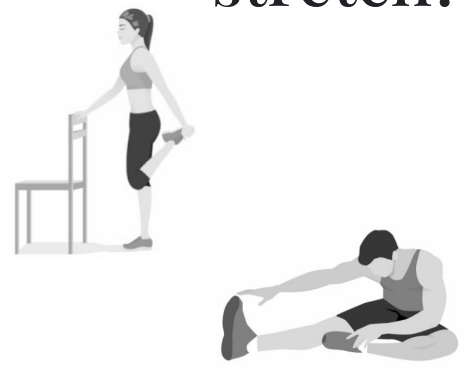
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Why and when should we stretch?



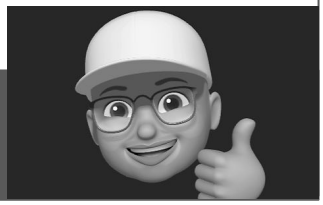
Why? Our bodies, like any machine, undergo changes as we age, which can make staying active and mobile more challenging. Through proper care and exercise we can strengthen our muscles and joints and keep our bodies strong and flexible. Stretching can: help delay the onset of diseases like diabetes and arthritis, improve mental health and improve muscle and movement maintenance.

When? It depends. If you are active and routinely exercise, such as jogging or walking, the best time to stretch is at the end of the activity while your muscles are still warm and loose. For less mobile seniors, stretching can be done at virtually any time of the day. For the sake of memory, it might be best to perform these stretches in the mornings or in the evenings. Whether active or not, make sure to walk around for a few minutes before stretching to ensure your muscles are loose and warm. And remember to pay attention to your breathing throughout the stretches. It's easy to forget and not realize you are holding your breath.

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New Florida building law outlaws reckless 'annual tradition' for condominiums

Continued from page A1

walls "is extremely difficult or practically impossible without substantial destructive work," making any determination on useful life "elusive." Gustavo Alvarez says that inspectors will most likely rely on industry benchmarks and calculations from similar sites to estimate damage that is not visible. Mr. Alvarez is the principal engineer at ABPlus, based in West Palm Beach, and oversaw Casa Costa's two-year repair of the pool deck and parking garage.

The new law's most significant effect is its mandate for associations to make up for unfunded or underfunded reserves. The result will be a steep uptick in monthly dues and special assessments, according to a legislative webinar hosted by lawyers from Kaye Bender Rembaum, PLLC reviewed by the *Casa Coaster*.

Pools of reserve funds will be organized in two buckets: SIRS and non-SIRS, said attorney Michael Bender, referring to items covered by the new structural integrity reserve study. He said, "After Dec. 31, 2024, SIRS is non-waivable," adding that he represents buildings facing assessments up to $80,000 per unit atop escalating monthly dues for inflated operating expenses. In response to a question, Mr. Bender dismissed the notion of a credit facility from a bank as a means for associations to avoid assessments but have access to cash as needed. "You need to show the money in the bank," he said.

Over 600,000 of Florida's 1.5 million condominiums are over 40 years old.

The law also creates "milestone inspections" aimed at aging buildings: every decade starting at 30 years old, and sooner if local agencies demand. Over 600,000 of Florida's 1.5 million condominiums are over 40 years old.

While also a visual examination, engineers may require subsequent destructive testing if they see signs of deterioration during a milestone review. Association leaders must publish all inspections and studies to owners and local officials.

Some Florida counties already had similar requirements for older buildings, including Miami-Dade. Champlain Towers South was in the midst of a 40-year inspection when it collapsed. In the wake of the disaster, the county revised its inspection program to include infrared thermology and reviews of plans and permits so examiners are familiar with the construction materials and building designs.



SENATE BILLS 4-B AND 154

A Structural Integrity Reserve Study is meant to ensure that condominium associations reserve funds for critical structural elements:

- ❏ roof
- ❏ plumbing
- ❏ structure, including load-bearing walls
- ❏ windows and exterior doors
- ❏ electrical systems
- ❏ fireproofing and fire safety
- ❏ waterproofing and exterior paint
- ❏ any other elements worth over $10,000 that affects the building's structural integrity

The impact of the new law on condo owners' pocketbooks is deep and wide, says Eric Glazer, a partner at Fort Lauderdale-based Glazer & Sachs, PA, who hosts a weekly radio show on condo and HOA topics. "Only five to ten percent of condo associations have properly funded their reserves and about fifty percent have waived reserves entirely."

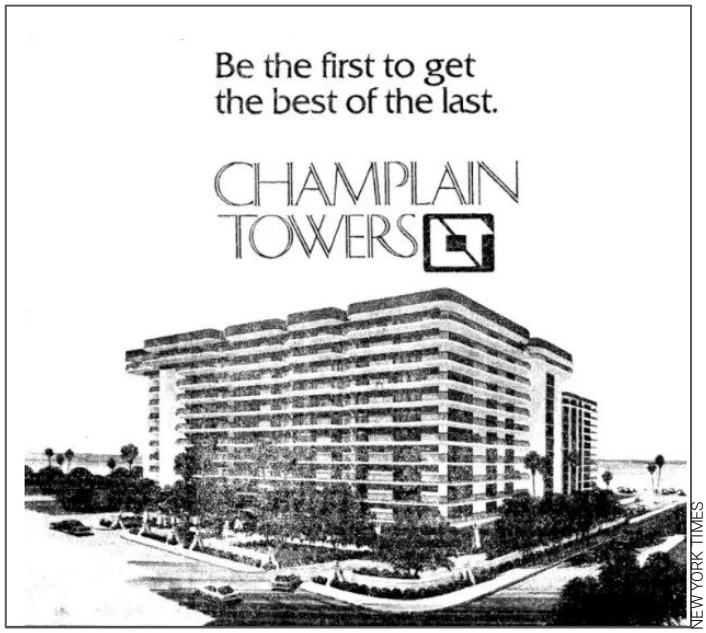
Mr. Koushel says now is a "time to pay the piper" moment at condominiums where skipping reserve studies and waiving reserves has been an annual tradition.

"Florida's getting national attention because we had a building that actually collapsed," Mr. Glazer said. "But this is not unique to Florida. This is something that's going to be affecting the entire country, ultimately."

Mr. Glazer added: "This is going to happen in every condominium everywhere in the United States that's not requiring reserves. Florida clearly leads the country when it comes to condominium law." CC

Surfside collapse prompted reforms

Investigators cite water penetration and corrosion of the concrete structural support in the basement-level parking garage, under the Champlain Towers South pool deck, in the tragedy that took 98 lives. The collapsed deck caused large sections of the 12-story beachfront condominium tower to buckle at 1:22 a.m. on June 24, 2021. Only three residents survived the collapse. The remaining portion of the building was demolished ten days later.



NEW YORK TIMES

This 1980 advertisement appeared in *The Miami Herald*.

Completed in 1981, the building included 136 units. The same developer delivered a second phase, Champlain Towers North, the following year. A third L-shaped building was built thirteen years later. Surfside's mayor Shlomo Danzinger summarized the fallen tower's distinction: Champlain Towers South "didn't do the maintenance that was required."

According to the *New York Times*, "the early 1980s was a freewheeling period for construction in the Miami area, known at the time for its uneven enforcement of regulations" and that builders "tapped their own engineer to sign off on construction work." When the developers requested a last-minute change to add a penthouse floor to the project beyond what had been approved, the town manager couldn't intervene because he was arrested on charges of peeping into the window of a 13-year-old girl and abruptly resigned.

The development team itself had a dubious record. The architect had been disciplined for designing a building with a sign structure that later collapsed in a hurricane. The structural engineer had run into trouble on an earlier project too, when he signed off on a parking garage with steel reinforcement that was later found to be dangerously insufficient.

The National Institute of Safety Standards says it won't release its full findings for two more years, but an investigation by *The Miami Herald* highlighted factors that contributed to the collapse: poor structural design and a severe lack of maintenance.

The tower columns in the project's second phase were nearly twice the size of those in the section that fell. In addition, water intrusion in the Champlain Towers South pool deck area – where the collapse started – allowed corrosion of rebar in the reinforced concrete.

Long before the collapse, the condo association reported growing problems with the building. Water frequently infiltrated the underground garage despite attempts to repair and waterproof the area. Concrete in the pool deck was repaired at least four times between 1996 and 2013, according to town records. Archived photos show that multiple palm trees and planters were not in the 1979 plans but were added later. By late 2017, most of the palm trees were replaced with smaller bushes.

A 2018 engineering report warned of major structural damage, including "abundant" cracking and crumbling of columns, beams, and walls. Yet by 2021, repairs had still not been made. Water damage was visible on the garage ceiling close to where the concrete planters sat on the deck above, video recorded in 2020 shows. In October of that year, the condo association's board warned residents how a lack of waterproofing on large sections of the slab had "exposed the garage to water intrusion for forty years. Where there is waterproofing, it has failed. Water has gotten underneath and caused additional damage to the concrete."

The early 1980s was a freewheeling period for construction in the Miami area, known at the time for its uneven enforcement of regulations.

In April 2021, the association approved a $15 million assessment. The cost per homeowner ranged from $80,190 for a one-bedroom unit to $336,135 for the penthouse, which could be paid upfront or monthly over a 15-year period. Owners had until July 1, 2021 to select their payment option. The building fell a week before the deadline.

In the weeks following the collapse, Miami-Dade officials rushed to evaluate if buildings similar to Champlain Towers were in disrepair. While Florida's high-rise building regulations are among the strictest in the nation, the *New York Times* wrote that those rules have been enforced unevenly by local governments, and sometimes not at all. Towers rose in the early 1980's among real estate

Please turn to page A6

Miami officials vacated 26 buildings after Surfside collapse set tragic record

Continued from page A5

"booms and busts but also South Florida elements: scorching sun and driving rains, battering winds and slashing saltwater."

The city of North Miami Beach had tried and failed for years to bring a 10-story condo building called Crestview Towers into compliance with 40-year recertification requirements. When the building's condo association finally submitted paperwork nine years late, it documented critical safety concerns, a city spokesman said. Officials immediately evacuated the building's 300 residents.

"They knocked on the door and said you have two hours to leave."

"They knocked on the door and said you have two hours to leave," a former tenant told an NBC affiliate in Miami.

Since then, officials have vacated at least 26 buildings, deeming them unsafe. Most are near the coastline. The county said it hired eight additional inspectors and most properties are working toward compliance. Crestview Towers currently has open permits for structural and electrical repairs, but a city spokesperson says it is still unsafe.

Last June, a day before the one-year anniversary of the collapse, a judge approved a $1.02 billion settlement for victims. Miami-based construction litigation attorney Gabriel Coelho said the settlement "put the fear of God into insurers," causing them to "look much more closely at potential problems."

Mark Friedlander of the Insurance Information Institute said that "the Surfside tragedy has led to a very tight condo insurance market, especially for master condo associations. Master condo associations are now paying two to five times the rate for coverage they were paying two years ago."

"There's a deadline that's been imposed by the state legislature and this is what everybody is dealing with," said Peter Zalewski, who runs a condo data website. "Five, ten years from now it will all be under control but right now there's a surge. As a result of that, costs are going to go up. Special assessments are definitely coming."

A year after the collapse, a developer from the United Arab Emirates bought the land for $120 million with plans for an "ultra-luxury boutique oceanfront development" of 57 condominiums. In late July, a Surfside city council meeting went off the rails over a proposal to expand a memorial planned at a nearby park. After many victims' families pushed for the memorial to rise on the actual site of the fallen tower, elected officials considered a plan that allowed for that in exchange for letting the developer to build larger apartments on top floors. The proposal was ultimately rejected, but not until after a former mayor was escorted away by police, shouting "You really think you are going to get away with this?"

The Surfside collapse is among the three deadliest structural engineering failures in U.S. history, tied with Washington, D.C.'s Knickerbocker Theater's roof that collapsed under the weight of snow after a two-day blizzard in 1922. Partygoers crashed through overhead walkways at a Hyatt Regency Hotel in Kansas City, Miss. in 1981, killing 114 guests. In 1860, a five-story factory overloaded with equipment collapsed in Lawrence, Mass., crushing an estimated 145 workers. *CC*

Post office to stay put for now

Boynton Beach officials have plans for the city-owned site of the downtown post office at 217 N. Seacrest Blvd., but they extended its lease earlier this summer after a request for proposals flamed out.

The United States Postal Service hopes to stay nearby, and the city envisions a new building for it on vacant land it also owns: Boynton Beach Blvd. and NE 3rd St. – just over the tracks from Casa Costa, on the west side of the rundown laundromat. The problem is they only received two proposals from developers and neither design will work for the post office, according to Thuy Shutt, executive director of the city's development agency.

Ms. Shutt said she fears there's a limited pool of developers willing to build to suit such a government agency and then be its long-term landlord. For the vacant lot, the city council envisions a mixed-use building: a first-floor post office and upper floors for other businesses such as medical offices and a tourist center. They agreed to advertise the listing again, this time to a broader audience. Meanwhile, they agreed to extend the post office's lease at its current location. *CC*

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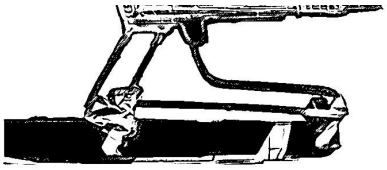
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Condo cancel culture



* * *

Bulk buyers target aging properties, leaving some in limbo; "they want to drain us"

As rising repair and insurance costs make condo living less affordable, some buildings are bailing out.

Across South Florida, investors are singling out older waterfront buildings, especially those in need of repairs, due to little available undeveloped waterfront land.

The latest trend began in Miami Beach when Mast Capital bought a vast majority of the 124 units at La Costa, one month after the Surfside collapse and city officials declared the building unsafe. The developer shelled out $100 million to individual sellers and has plans to demolish the property and build 19 new stories. But it took until this year for a court to force holdouts to sell their units, giving Mast full control.

Most buyouts are tougher. Next door to La Costa, the Amethyst is in limbo. Mast Capital committed to a full buyout 2 ½ years ago but has closed only seven units. Amethyst owners told *The Real Deal* magazine that after the developer's promise, they terminated leases with their renters and moved furniture in anticipation. The deal is tied up by a group of 28 owners holding out for a big payday.

Other owners there fear that they missed their window to sell if shaky market conditions are giving the developer second thoughts. Some allege "dirty tricks" by the bulk buyer to force the remaining sellers to come down in price as they face large expenses tied to maintaining the property. Others claim they are being "held hostage" and have stopped paying their dues, putting financial pressure on the association. "They want to drain us into bankruptcy," one owner said.

Complicating matters further in the fight over Amethyst, rival developer Terra Group sent its own purchase offers to owners in July, at nearly double the price Mast Capital has paid so far.

Castle Beach Club, also in Miami Beach, is an 18-story, 570-unit condominium that needs repairs. Over the years, the condo association has been approached by developers with bulk offers, but never took the bait. Then the building received an unsafe structure violation from the city in July 2021 that required emergency shoring in the garage. The building's board hired a broker to find a buyer for the 57-year-old property. There were nine bids. Related Group won, offering $500 million, but pulled out ten months later after a dozen owners banded together to oppose the bulk sale. Now Terra Group stepped up with the same offer, valuing studio units at over $750,000 – a potential windfall for owners who bought in the late 1990s for around $55,000.

Not all bulk buyers plan to knock down buildings and start over. Granville Tower was built as a 28-story rental in Chicago in the 1960s, and then converted to condos in the 1980s. An investor is now paying $32 million to its various owners to de-convert it. Some owners will move out and others will remain as renters.

Experts say the math can work for the investor as a "value-add" investment. Spend $205,000 per condominium, plus invest $30,000 per unit for new common area amenities and hallway renovations.

As a single landlord freed from condo association budget fights and other restrictions, the investor can raise rents on the apartments, increasing the asset's value. *CC*

How does a condo buyout work?

Condo buyouts have been going on in Miami for at least 20 years, said attorney Martin Schwartz. It gained a bad reputation during the subprime mortgage crisis, when many developers offered much less than owners had paid, he said.

Developers send out individual offers to unit owners, typically basing prices based on square footage. Developers make the deals contingent on them securing enough sellers to guarantee control.

It's a "major undertaking," said attorney Carter McDowell, "There's no such thing as unanimity of opinion within a condominium. The larger number of people involved, the harder it is to reach consensus," he said.

Under state law, it takes a mere 80 percent of owners to approve a termination, though five percent can vote to block it. Some building bylaws have a lower threshold, but others require 100 percent to agree. Sometimes the documents are unclear, sparking litigation. Ideally, an investor secures more than 95 percent of owners to avoid the five percent potential blockers.

A more controversial – yet not uncommon – approach is for developers to start buying units, either secretly or not, to gain seats on a condo board or to change the condo documents.

Profiles of would-be sellers differ, said attorney Jeffrey Margolis: "Investors are much easier to deal with because they don't have the emotional attachment" of owners who live there.

And even if a bulk buyer owns 95 percent of the building, holdouts can still try to fight the deal in court, but they are taking a risk. After a certain point, state law dictates the value of the remaining units, which is typically less than the juicer prices originally offered. *CC*

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Amid two lawsuits, major project nearby is on hold

Last year, a builder beat out four other proposals to buy city-owned property and develop 300 apartments. In March, the project was approved. A month later, a losing bidder sued.

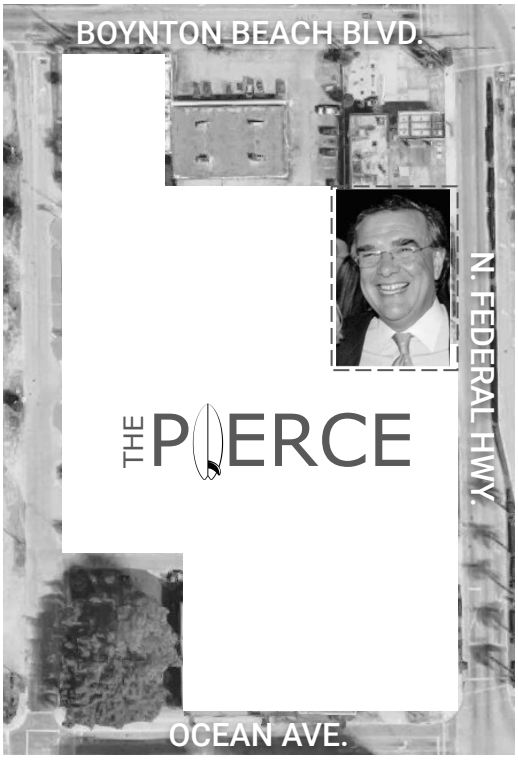
F. Davis Camalier owns a small parcel occupied by The Boardwalk Italian Ice & Creamery, which is poised to be shadowed by The Pierce. His lawsuit claims the city ignored codes and the impact of closing two alleys to accommodate the new development.

The city shot back, calling the claims "akin to someone pounding the table when the facts and the law are against them." Meanwhile the winning builder, Affiliated Development, sued Mr. Camalier, calling his claims "nothing but a shakedown … an effort to force an inflated purchase price for his adjacent property." Affiliated alleges the lawsuit is a frivolous attempt to "make him part of the project or pay him money not to protest."

For decades Mr. Camalier owned the block south of Casa Costa, part of which was given to him by the city in exchange for developing Ocean One, which was approved. He never did.

According to city council meeting minutes from 2021, Mr. Camalier had a deal with Hyperion Development for a $350 million project on both sides of N. Federal Hwy. he called "the city's Rockefeller Center." It was supported by the mayor but narrowly rejected. The city greenlit The Pierce instead; Mr. Camalier sold the land across the street to Hyperion for $12 million.

Mr. Camalier also owns the lot by St. Mark's Church and N. Federal Hwy., just north of Casa Costa. CC



The Pierce was scheduled to break ground in the first quarter of 2024, but its builders now say the "extortionate" lawsuit renders them unable to provide timelines to would-be commercial tenants and others.

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Sewage spill to cost millions

An estimated 12 million gallons of wastewater spewed into the Intracoastal for four days after a 50-year old pipe burst on July 3. This spill equals nearly a fifth of all the sewage handled in all of Boynton Beach and Delray Beach at their co-owned treatment plant.

The culprit was a broken 20-in. clay pipe that the city's utility director, Poonam Kalkatt, said her department knew had been weakening for years due to saltwater intrusion. It was located in a structure between Mangrove Pond and the marina designed to manage heavy rainfall without affecting the sewer system. City officials closed the easternmost end of Boynton Beach Blvd. and hired specialist contractors to fix the leak.

Divers attempted for ten hours to apply a repair clamp but couldn't tighten it due to the pressure and tidal flow. They eventually cut the pipe and diverted the sewage. Ms. Kolkatt said the city had asked for bids to replace the aging pipe but the price was too high. They spent $800,000 to one of the contractors in July alone. CC



THE COASTAL STAR

Repairs near Marina Village continue.

It takes a ~~village~~ casa

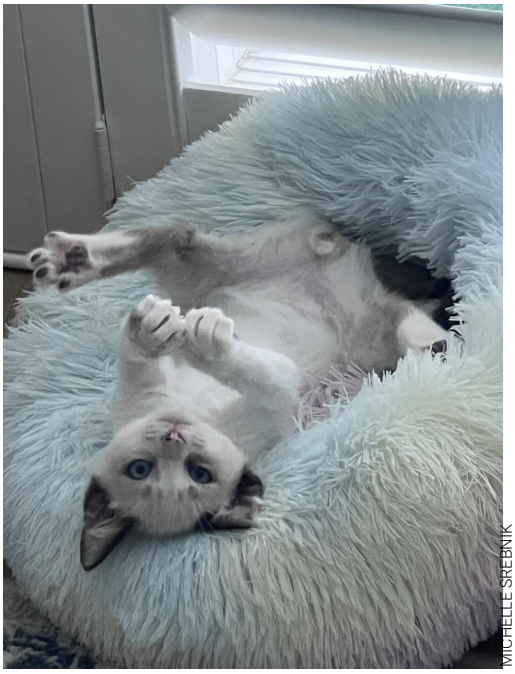
The rescue and renewal of "the chosen one" needed a tender valet and the stars aligned

A precious fur-baby now named Mustafa was given a new lease on life because of some amazing people at Casa Costa. This is the story of what happens when the stars align, the heroes emerge, and this time around some quick thinking and a comfy bed landed an abandoned cat a fur-ever home.

Miguel Iaconis was working valet on Saturday morning, July 1. "I saw something white pass by," he said. "It made me curious, and I went outside, and it was a kitten! I tried to catch it, but I couldn't, since it was super clever."

A short while later, Rosie and Bentley were enjoying their morning walk nearby and the startled kitten fell into a storm drain. Miguel said that he could hear the kitten splashing in the water and trying to swim.

"I was scared because I thought it would go into the aqueducts," he said, adding that along with Roberta Mann and Mildred Klein, the dogs' parents, he acted quickly. Fueled by adrenaline, Miguel yanked up the storm drain cover and dropped to his hands and knees. He reached into the chasm and grabbed ahold of the frightened kitten, pulling him to safety.



MICHELLE SREBNIK

"I saw something white pass by."

He wrapped the kitten in a towel, brought him inside and gently began to clean its fur. Mildred rushed off for milk and a medicine dropper, and Roberta called Michelle Srebnik for supplies. Michelle grabbed cat food, kitty litter in a tray, a water bowl and a small "calming bed" – a fluffy bed designed to relieve stress and provide a feeling of security, like a weighted blanket. Michelle says she'd planned to donate the bed later that day to fellow animal lover but was relieved to still have it handy. She arrived to see, what she described as "gentle care and genuine concern from the threesome."

Roberta was on the phone with her veterinarian, hoping to arrange an emergency appointment. They moved the kitten into a side room for some quiet and away from the other people and pets. Michelle immediately put the calming bed on the floor and Miguel placed the kitten in the bed.

Exhausted, the kitten happily sunk into the bed and dozed off a bit. Michelle let him lick some gravy and small pieces of wet cat food from her fingers and used Mildred's medicine dropper to give him some water. They let him rest again and then repeated this a few times. It was all that he could handle.

He was so tiny, so undernourished and so exhausted. They turned off the lights to let him rest.

Michelle posted on Casa Costa's Facebook page, looking for the kitten's owner, or someone willing to foster or adopt him. Stephanie Finz immediately came down and asked to meet the kitty. By this point, the little boy had regained some strength and jumped out of the bed to hide behind computer equipment and under some carts. Miguel rescued him a second time, and now back in bed, Michelle held down the kitten with some shoulder rubs.

Back in the lobby, Roberta was working her magic with everyone walking by, trying to broker an adoption. After some laps in the pool, Jonathan Fay came down to the lobby. He knew Roberta as the listing agent for the unit he bought at Casa Costa.

Jonathan says he writes a daily list of goals and aspirations. "I wrote on my list last night: check out cats at Petco," he said. Now that a cat was in his lobby, being nursed back to health, Jonathan was in. "I think God just chose me my kitten," he said.

He rushed upstairs to shower and to call a veterinarian. It ends up, he was calling the same place where Roberta had already secured an appointment. The rescue crew placed the kitty in his new dad's car, in a box with the calming bed and a blanket. Meanwhile, Mildred welcomed Miguel into her home to shower, before he returned to his valet shift.

The vet weighed the kitten in at 1.6 lbs. of skin and bones but healthy otherwise. "They all fell in love with him," Jonathan said after the visit. "He was so cooperative... he was just extremely loving." The two came home with careful instructions on feeding, as to not make him sick after being so undernourished.

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Kitten rescue was a team effort



MICHELLE SREBNIK

Continued from page A10

Jonathan said he thought of *The Lion King* when naming the kitten, because he thought he looked like Mufasa. But he didn't get the name exactly right, instead calling him Mustafa. His granddaughter, Aubrey, laughed and said: "Papa, it's not Mustafa, it's Mufasa." Instead of correcting the name, Jonathan Googled it to find that in Arabic, the name meant

"Papa, it's not Mustafa, it's Mufasa."

"the chosen one," which he said was even better. "Mustafa was chosen to be with me, so I wasn't going to change the name."

It's been just over two months since the morning of the rescue and Mustafa's weight has doubled. He enjoys climbing the top of his kitty condo tower and swatting at his owner's iPhone; he has made some accidental phone calls. "He's hysterical," Jonathan says with Mustafa sitting on his chest. *CC*



"I think God just chose me my kitten."

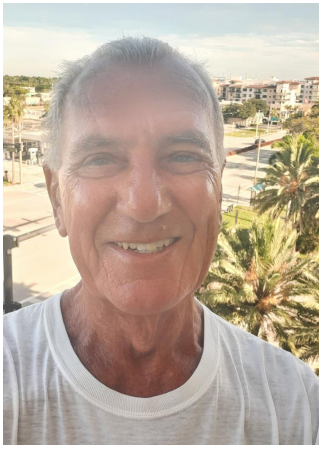
Many thanks to Michelle for sharing the details of the story, as well as to Miguel, Mildred, Roberta, Jonathan and especially Mustafa for bringing everyone together.

COASTER WELCOME WAGON





Baby Joanna, born July 23 to parents Richelle and Jonathan, 7 lbs., 2 oz. and now our cutest neighbor.



William Meyer of Schenectady, New York, came seeking an urban environment close to the beach. His Manhattan apartment was also across the street from a CVS, so Casa Costa feels like home.

Welcome to Adlene, new face in the office

While I was away I received an email that Chenine, Casa Costa's assistant manager, was leaving to pursue other opportunities. I learned from Sue, the property manager, that the process for hiring a replacement was her responsibility and she began the process as soon as she heard about Chenine's plans. After posting the position, Sue received seven applications and from those resumes, she chose three people who she interviewed for the position. Ultimately she picked Adlene Larkin, the one with "the most experience, the license, and a good fit to our organization."



I met Adlene at her desk, piled with notebooks and invoices from the daily operations here. While payables are part of her duties, she said "working with the residents is my priority and I often have to leave what I am working on to help a resident. That's why I am here."

Adlene's career began when she was 19 years old, working the front desk for a condo community. From there, she became an administrative assistant and the experience she gained from that position prompted her to get a Florida Community Association Manager license to further her career. Community associations larger than nine units or with budgets over $100,000 require managers to have the license.



Mister B's Neighborhood

CAM in hand, Adlene took a temporary position as an assistant manager in a condo complex. Just as that temporary position was ending, the Casa Costa job came up. After accepting, she was fortunate enough to meet with Chenine for a few days to make the transition as smooth as possible.

Born in Freeport in the Bahamas, Adlene lived in Miami for a time, but spent most of her childhood in Georgia. When she turned 18, she moved back to South Florida and has lived here since.

She met her husband Myles here and they have two sons: Myles, 5, Bryce, 3. As you can imagine, having two young boys and a full-time job keeps Adlene very busy. Her family enjoys attending football games together. She admits she likes tailgating more than the games, but her husband and children are big sports fans. Family time is very important to her and she carves out as much time as possible for family events.

Adlene sees her role as assisting Sue with the needs of our large community. Specifically, she is responsible for the operations side, which includes invoices, reconciling financials and addressing residents' concerns.

"I want everyone to feel that they are my number one priority when we are working together," she said. Sometimes the issues that she is addressing takes time and she wants everyone to know that she will give her full attention to assist them. She is learning so much in this position and she expressed that she is grateful to be learning from Sue's experience. Adlene hopes to someday manage her own building, so what she is learning here will be invaluable to her in the future.

When I asked what surprised her the most about her new position, Adlene called out the committees here that are tasked with important work. "I am so impressed how much the residents on committees give so much of their time and talent to make Casa Costa a better place. I didn't see that in my other jobs."

I believe Adlene is a good fit into our community. She is pleasant, knowledgeable and willing to help in any way she can. Marsha, our administrative assistant, agrees. She said she and Adlene "have a great connection. She learns from me and I learn from her. It feels like a team and we work together to help the residents. That's what it is all about."

* * *

The Social & Welcoming Committee is more than just a group of friendly residents who organize social events. It is also a team that works to orient new residents to the community. Alongside Marsha, we offer an orientation of the ins-and-outs of moving in and living here. The committee adds a personal touch and a resident's perspective that complements Marsha's professional knowledge of rules and procedures.

For many years, Castle Group conducted orientations to hand off paperwork and parking passes. The Board voted in 2020 to make an orientation mandatory, but as office staff changed and the pandemic began, meetings were inconsistent. The arrival of Marsha and inclusion of the committee got orientations on track.

We now have a "settling in" slidedeck and website (casacostabb.com/intro) that cover parking, trash/recycling, amenities and more. It's a great way to help residents feel comfortable in their new home. Check it out for yourself! CC

Summer school in session at inaugural trivia night on the Promenade







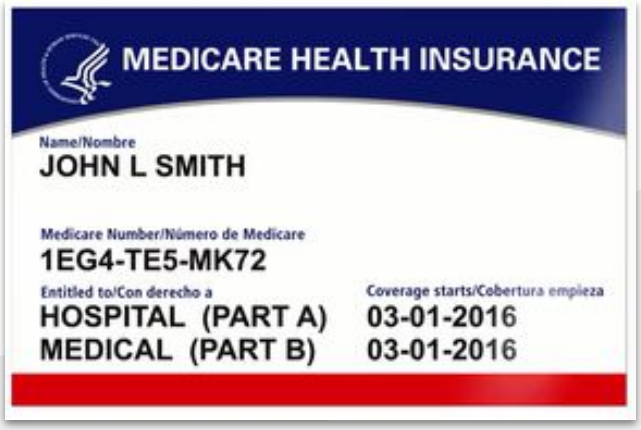
ROBERTA MANN

GO TO THE HEAD OF THE CLASS: The Benilous team (pictured lower left) took top prize at a contest hosted by John Battista.

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FREE CONSULTATION

Death of the mall

With news that the 91-acre Boynton Beach Mall is up for sale as a tear-down, a local historian considers the history of the Congress Avenue corridor

By Janet DeVries Naughton
Reprinted and edited with permission

Once a sleepy little village by the sea, Boynton Beach's population doubled between 1970 and 1980 – from 18,000 to 36,000. The area experienced tremendous growth due to technological changes in transportation and communication, shifting the economy from family-operated businesses to commercial enterprises. These gradual changes stripped away the rustic serenity and charm that was small-town Boynton.

In Dec. 1975 the final portion of Interstate 95 was completed through Boynton Beach. While the highway advanced transportation in South Florida, this event led to the death of downtown Boynton Beach and its thriving business district. The expressway cut off access to Ocean Ave., which was Boynton's main drag through the commercial business district, as well as the road to Alternate A1A and Boynton's Oceanfront Park.

The expressway not only divided Boynton, but tourists also bypassed U.S. 1 and family-run restaurants, motor courts, surf, shell and specialty shops, insurance and real estate agencies and roadside attractions. Nearly 50 years later, some of this land has become housing (high-density condos and apartments), but many worn-out old buildings and lots remain vacant.

Cows grazed on all four corners of Old Boynton Rd. and Congress until 1983 or so, a change factored by Motorola opening its 70,000-sq. ft. Paging Division plant on a former cow pasture on the southeast corner of Congress and 22nd Ave. The new pager industry hired nearly 4,000 factory workers, engineers and executives – many of whom moved with their families to the then still-rural Boynton. A building boom frenzy brought dozens of new housing developments along including Sky Lake, Boynton Lakes, Country Fair, Rainbow Lakes, Sun Valley, The Meadows and Banyan Creek along Congress Ave., Military Trail, Boynton Beach Blvd. and Old Boynton Rd.

Until then Congress was a two-lane road and the Melear Dairy had cow passes (small wooden bridges) so that the cows could graze and avoid traffic. Boynton had the most dairy farms in Palm Beach County.

In the mid-1970s, Edward J. Bartolo, owner of at least 40 shopping malls (including the Palm Beach Mall) and the San Francisco 49ers football team envisioned a $20-million, million-square-foot regional shopping mall on unincorporated land at Congress and Old Boynton Rd. in exchange for city utilities including fire, police and sanitary service. The City of Boynton agreed to annex the project into the city.

In 1975, Vice-Mayor Joe DeLong announced that the city could gain $575,000 in property taxes if the shopping center was annexed.

Boynton once had the most dairy farms in Palm Beach County.

Originally set to open in Aug. 1977, the mall didn't open until 1985, and then it opened in stages, store by store.

The popular indoor mall with its food court, national department store anchors, stores, services and specialty shops further eroded what was downtown Boynton Beach. Strip malls, out parcels, medical buildings, and a sea of chain restaurants lined Congress, Boynton Beach Blvd., and even the old Military Trail, which was considered "The Boonies."

Westward expansion's tidal wave surged for the next 40 years until it hit the Florida Everglades. So many communities were planted over former family farms that developers came up with pretentious, and often ridiculous names for their planned mega-communities. Someone suggested that they must spin a wheel to find ill-fitting names like "Journey's End" and "The Canyons."

Meanwhile, the Boynton Beach Community Redevelopment Agency has worked to improve downtown Boynton

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BOYNTON BEACH LIBRARY

The Boynton Beach walkers at the mall in 1986, a year after its first stores opened.

Housing to replace mall

Continued from page A14

and incentivize businesses to open in their districts. The city has opened new state-of-the-art fire and police headquarters, city hall and library. The Boynton Beach Historical Society saved the 1913 schoolhouse that now serves as a Children's Museum and Learning Center. The historical society and the Historic Resources Preservation Board saved the 1926 high school and the city restored it into a vibrant cultural arts center.

In juxtaposition, Boynton Mall attendance declined over the years. With the run-down mall sold, another layer of Boynton history will be paved over. What would have benefited the community and the taxpayers the most? A swimming pool, a history museum, a nature center, a small concert center, a canopied bike and walking trail? No doubt some type of housing is in its future. After all, people still want to live in beautiful Boynton Beach, and pushing farther westward is not an option. *CC*



Ms. Naughton is the past president of the Boynton Beach Historical Society, an academic librarian and history professor at Palm Beach State College. A historical researcher and local tour guide, she is available as a consultant for family history projects, books and personal archival collections. Reach her at janetdevries1@gmail.com.



The committee hopes to build off the success of last year's festivities in Nov. and Dec.

Holiday events now on sale

The Social & Welcoming Committee announced the dates of its two holiday events and has already sold dozens of tickets.

The annual tradition of welcoming back snowbirds continues with a pre-Thanksgiving feast on Sunday, Nov. 19. Unlike previous years, the committee said the meal will be completely catered so that residents don't need to cook. "Anyone who wants to bring a homemade side dish or dessert is welcome, but we're buying enough of everything from Too Jay's catering," said Roberta Mann, the committee chairperson. "We also want to thank our attorney Harris Katz and his team at Goede, DeBoest & Cross, PLLC for buying the turkey again this year," she said.

Hotwire Communications, the property's provider of cable television and Internet connections, has once again agreed to host a holiday party. This year's date is Thursday, Dec. 7 on the pool deck. Hotwire is bringing a fully stocked bar, employees as bartenders and a live band. The committee is arranging Italian catering and hopes to replicate the ambiance of last year's event, which brought over a hundred residents and staffers to the fifth floor. Attendees told the *Casa Coaster* that the 2022 evening was held the night after a full moon and concluded with at least one after-party.

Tickets for both events are available at casacostabb.com with early-bird prices available for residents now. *CC*

CASACOSTA SOCIAL

Committee goes Hollywood

The Social & Welcoming Committee announced a new sponsor for an outdoor movie night on Oct. 19.

Brian Goldman, a part-time resident since last year, owns Gold Standard Financial Group, retirement specialists based in Pittsburgh.

Mr. Goldman already advises several residents and their families, and he is eager to meet more, as the upcoming Medicare enrollment period provides a brief opportunity to explore and switch plans.

He will hold a brief seminar with refreshments prior to screening *What About Bob?,* a 1991 comedy. *CC*

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Sat., Sept. 16 | 6 - 10 p.m.
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Free parking, live painting

MOVIE NIGHT IV
Thurs., Oct. 19 | 7 - 9 p.m.
Pool deck | Free
What About Bob?

THANKSGIVING KICKOFF
Sun., Nov. 19 | 6 p.m.
Banquet hall | $20*

HOLIDAY PARTY
Thurs., Dec. 7 | 7 p.m.
Pool deck | $25*

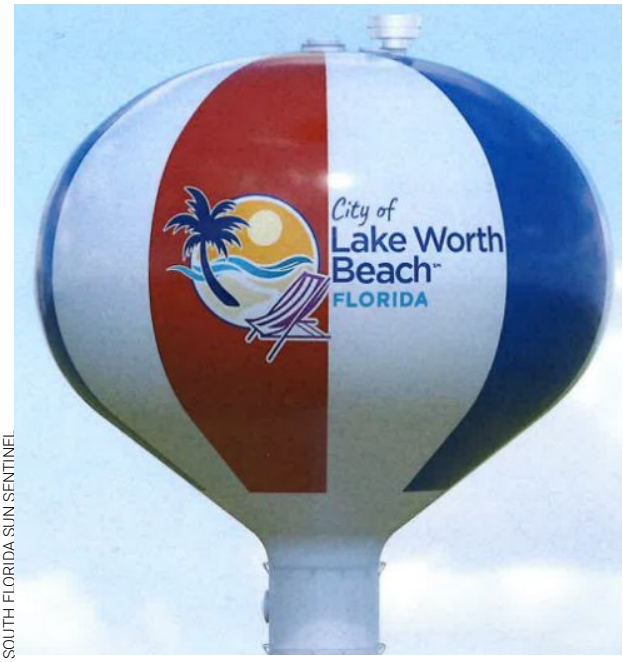
** Early-bird pricing available for a limited time at CasaCostaBB.com*

Lake Worth Beach paints tower

In 2019, the city of Lake Worth changed its name to Lake Worth Beach after a close decision decided by 60 votes. At the time, the city allocated $150,000 to change business cards and street signs, hoping that the change would attract tourists. Now the city is repainting a bland water tower to look like a giant beach ball to celebrate the rebranding.

"Leisure travelers often say 'beaches' in the top three reasons they come to Florida, always – and that's never changed," said a professor specializing in tourism at Florida Atlantic University.

Other South Florida towns have adopted catchier names: Dania became Dania Beach in 1998, Isles became Sunny Isles Beach in 1999, Deerfield became Deerfield Beach 1939. CC



SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL

Mayor Betty Resch said the tower is supposed to be repainted every 10 years. "It's been pretty boring. So I thought to myself, 'Let's make it more fun.' So it's being painted like a giant beach ball."