FLORIDA'S URBAN REVITALIZATION: GOOD-BYE WHITE PICKET FENCES, HELLO LIVE-WORK-PLAY COMMUNITIES

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The “American dream” of owning a home with a white picket fence somewhere in the suburbs is looking more antiquated by the day as numerous new condominiums and apartment buildings are popping up next to shopping centers and office buildings throughout Florida. Millennials and empty-nesters, preferring one-stop, self-contained neighborhoods, where residents can minimize travel to work, shopping, and entertainment, are driving the demand for *live-work-play* communities or so-called “lifestyle centers.” Developers all over Florida have caught on to this trend with mega-projects like Miami World Center, Brickell City Centre, Wynwood 25, 26, and 29 in Miami, Post Lake at Baldwin Park III and The Yard at Ivanhoe in Orlando, and Jeff Vinik’s redevelopment of Tampa’s Channel District. The public is demanding the luxury of having everything essential to meeting their own hierarchy of needs within walking or biking distance, and the developers must follow suit, catering to those who want to live where they can work and play.

Live

Millennials want to live where they can work, eat, and shop without having to drive—or at least minimize their travel per occasion. The shift to urban living has made infrastructure planning, public transportation, and the increased need for walking space, focal points throughout metropolitan areas in Florida. Population density in major cities has created an overflow of traffic and congested highways and roads, discouraging commuting by car. Uber and other companies that connect riders to drivers have made it easy to not own a car at all, and bicycle rental stations, such as Citi Bike, are popping up on every corner. Local governments have supported the shift away from our car-dependent culture while promoting the “car-free” lifestyle. Not only is it eco-friendly, but it also provides additional means of daily exercise.

Cities throughout Florida have become more amenable to approving residential developments with limited to no parking spaces. New developments in the Miami’s Wynwood neighborhood do not come with any parking spaces at all, and yet the new condominium, Wynwood 250, is completely sold out. The Miami-Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works (DTPW) has recently partnered with local groups—such as Prism Creative Group and the New Tropic, who are using creative and artistic campaigns like *Miami’s Never Moved Like This*—to educate and encourage people to use public modes of transportation. Furthermore, the renowned South Florida suburb of Coral Gables, home to the famed Miracle Mile, has expanded their sidewalks to turn the street into a strip consisting almost entirely of foot-traffic: a $21 million makeover of 23 feet of “streetscape beautification”, or more colloquially, bigger sidewalks.

Work

As the demographics and living environment shift, the corporate environment must evolve accordingly. According to the Pew Research Center analysis of 2015 U.S. Census Bureau data, more than one-in-three U.S. workers today are adults between 18 to 34 years old, surpassing Generation X (those born from the early 1960s to mid-1970s) to become the largest share of the U.S. workforce. More and more companies nationwide, looking to attract a younger generation of talent, are either migrating from the suburbs to downtown locations or opening new offices within highly-populated city neighborhoods to be close to millennials living in

downtown condos and apartments.

This move is also fueling the increased demand for office space in or around urban neighborhoods. In June of this year, McDonalds announced they would be moving their headquarters from the suburban Oakbrook to the former Harpo Studios campus in downtown Chicago. Additionally, General Electric Co. announced the relocation of its headquarters from suburban Connecticut to Boston's busy waterfront. The trend for less transportation and more *live-work-play* neighborhoods will likely encourage companies in the suburbs of major cities in Florida to follow suit and to emigrate to major urban hubs.

Play

Numerous residential developments sprouting up in urban areas coupled with corporations moving into the same physical space, has naturally created further demand for entertainment, retail, and dining options. The dream of millennials, to walk or Uber to work and then return home to an apartment or condo overlooking their favorite restaurant, is becoming the new reality. We are now moving to "just-in-time" spaces within a vibrant urban community that blends the shades of work and play. Enjoying not only *what* you do, but *how, when*, and *where* you do it is resulting in higher retention rates of talented employees and attracting some of the best and brightest to work for such forward-thinking companies over those steeped in tradition.

Public parks and wide-open green spaces only add to the beautification of these *live-work-play* neighborhoods. A perfect example of this is the proposed development known as *The East Midtown Waterfront Project*, which will fill a major gap in the Manhattan Waterfront Greenway between East 38th and East 60th Streets along the East River, while providing much-desired waterfront access and public open space resources for the communities of East Midtown and the public of New York at large. While New York is often viewed as the gold standard for the *live-work-play* model, many developers in Florida have also started incorporating a vast variety of amenities into condominiums and apartment complexes. These options include commercial and retail space on ground floors, attached or adjacent green play areas for children, and even specialty dog parks. It is not only trendy or hip to live in these work/play environments, moreover, it is easier and more functional than conventional housing communities.

Conclusion

In 1943, Abraham Maslow published "A Theory of Human Motivation," which included what is now known as Maslow's hierarchy of needs. In a nutshell, it puts forth the theory that our basic human needs must be satisfied before we can become evolved, self-actualized social beings. Those primary needs include physiological needs, such as food and sleep (live); safety and security needs, which include financial and job security (work); and last but not least, our "belongingness" needs, fulfilled with friendships and involvement in the community (play).

To put it simply, the suburbs have lost their sheen: both young workers and retiring baby boomers are actively seeking to live in densely packed, mixed-use communities that do not require cars. The *live-work-play* neighborhoods are no longer limited to city centers—they are now popping up in suburban areas as a way to mimic the conveniences of city life. To stay ahead of the curve, developers need to keep this changing culture and dynamic trend in mind as we move into the future.

For more information on this topic, please contact the author, Iryna Ivashchuk, on the firm's Business, Finance & Tax Team.

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