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Developers flock to Fort Lauderdale

Live Local Act spurs plans for workforce housing

By Susannah Bryan South Florida Sun Sentinel

Developers relying on Florida's Live Local Act are lighting up Fort Lauderdale with requests to build. So far, eight projects are in the pipeline, with more likely on the

way under a developer-friendly law designed to get more affordable housing built in a state known for soaring rents. Three projects have already received approval from City Hall staff, records show. Five more are under review. Altogether, the projects call for a total of 2,342 apartments and more than 60,000 square feet of commercial space. Nearly half the apartments — 1,156 to be exact —

will qualify as affordable workforce housing. The rest — 1,186 apartments — will rent at market rate. The tallest tower will stand 380 feet high. The shortest: 65 feet. In keeping with the new state law, the projects are being approved outside the public eye, with no public input from the Fort Lauderdale commission or residents who live nearby. In an effort to spur the development of affordable housing,

the Live Local Act allows builders to ignore height and density caps. Under the law, developers can build to the highest currently allowed height for a commercial or residential building within a one-mile radius. The projects are required to meet certain zoning and permitting rules, but can be built along commercial corridors throughout Fort Lauderdale, in places they were never meant to rise.

The law allows developers to preempt local zoning laws on height and density if they guarantee that at least 40% of the apartments are affordable to renters making up to 120% of the local area median income for Broward County. Broward's median income has risen to \$96,200 for 2025. So the maximum income for a house-

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Rosemary Avenue and the office building where Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan and other finance giants are tenants in West Palm Beach.

West Palm Beach moves upmarket

The city is emerging from shadow of Palm Beach, just across the water, with new condo and office towers

By Julia Echikson The New York Times

West Palm Beach is emerging from the shadow of its affluent world-famous neighbor, Palm Beach, with new luxury condo and office towers as well as a billionaire developer aiming to transform it into the Wall Street of the South. In Palm Beach today, President Donald Trump occupies his Mar-a-Lago compound as the rich and famous continue to snap up multimillion-dollar mansions. But since the COVID-19 pandemic, West Palm Beach, too, has attracted wealthy newcomers and big-name financial firms, as well as world-class art, entertainment, and shopping. Henry Flagler, the oil magnate, founded Palm Beach during the Gilded Age, building an oceanfront resort on a barrier island. West Palm Beach, on the mainland, housed the workers who serviced the wealthy.

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Construction crews work to build South Flagler House, a new luxury condominium complex in West Palm Beach. SCOTT MCINTYRE/THE NEW YORK TIMES PHOTOS

Judge: Right to fair trial violated

Citizens insurance ordered to stop sending disputes to state arbitrators

By Ron Hurtibise South Florida Sun Sentinel

A Hillsborough County circuit judge has ordered state-owned Citizens Property Insurance Corp. to stop sending claims disputes to arbitrators employed by the state. Circuit Judge Melissa Mary Polo said that the plaintiff, Martin A. Alvarez, a Hillsborough resident, demonstrated a "substantial likelihood of success" in his claim that Citizens' practice of ordering cases to be decided by the Department of Administrative Hearings (DOAH) violates policyholders' constitutional rights to fair trials. Citizens obtained approval in 2022 from the Office of Insurance Regulation, and later from the Florida Legislature, to add a provision to all new and renewing policies that allowed the company to divert claims disputes from the court and into binding arbitration. Last year, Citizens' Board of Governors approved paying DOAH \$19.3 million to administer the program through 2027. Policyholders who wanted Citizens coverage were not allowed to refuse the provision. Since 2024, Citizens moved more than 1,300 claims to the DOAH courts. Prior to July 10, the company prevailed in 47 of 51 cases that advanced to a final hearing. For others, Citizens typically tendered settlement offers of \$250 or \$500, attorneys for the

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Tri-Rail chief optimistic despite \$30M shortfall

By Carlton Gillespie WLRN Public Media

Tri-Rail has "a path forward" despite a \$30 million shortfall in state funding that counties appear unable to bridge, the chief of the agency overseeing the service told WLRN. The future of the train operation, which had 4.5 million riders last year, has been in jeopardy ever since the state slashed funding to the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority (SFRTA), which manages the service, in June. SFRTA expected \$42.1 million from the state this year, but ended

up receiving just \$15 million. That has heightened the severity of funding talks between SFRTA and the counties it services — Broward, Miami Dade and Palm Beach. Earlier this year, SFRTA informed the counties that the state was expecting them to start contributing more to the operation of Tri-Rail. The initial ask was for \$10 million additional per year, with the number eventually climbing to \$30 million per year from each county. The counties currently commit \$4.2 million per year.

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Executive Director David Dech of the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority at the Tri-Rail station. MIKE STOCKER/SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL FILE

Alligator Alcatraz, hurricanes: Season brings risks to consider

By Bill Kearney South Florida Sun Sentinel

As Florida enters peak hurricane season, questions persist about the safety of the detainees as well as staff housed at Alligator Alcatraz, the tent city quickly erected to hold migrants in the middle of the Everglades. Specifically, rapid storm intensification, flooding and a storm approaching from the Gulf could create deadly scenarios for anyone living in a tent in the Everglades. The state released a heavily redacted 33-page document on Wednesday detailing the plan for

a full-scale evacuation of the facility, but most of the information was blacked out. A section called "Activation Procedures," which may detail how and when the state would make the decision to evacuate the facility, was entirely redacted. Kevin Guthrie, director of Florida's Division of Emergency Management, stated emphatically at a recent news conference that the temporary structures that house detainees can withstand a Category 2 storm with sustained winds of 96 mph to 110 mph. "I

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