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PHOTOS BY ADDIEL PERERA

A dynamic, urban neighborhood

West Palm Beach residents love their downtown. But, they are the first to admit that it was once marked by poverty and dented by despair—a place they wouldn’t dare venture out on the streets, let alone live or shop there. Twenty years later, The Square, previously known as City Place and Rosemary Square, has truly evolved the area, marking this as “the return of retail,” with cool shops, hip restaurants, and community-driven special events that provide its residents with inspiration and a sense of discovery for all that live, work, and visit here.

Recently, The Square has undergone an

impressive revitalization—reshaping and positioning West Palm Beach as a city with a positive reputation and an emerging market for online retailers to explore and grow their brands through a new and much-improved brick-and-mortar shopping experience.

“Over the last five years, we have truly evolved from a shopping and dining destination to an urban neighborhood,” says Sasha Jozefczyk, Director of Marketing Experience of Related Companies, an entity that “was founded on the commitment to enrich the lives of those who inhabit our buildings and their neighboring communities.”

Not even the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, which did its part to shut down many brick-and-mortar stores, could end Related Companies’ mission to make West Palm Beach’s Downtown an urban oasis. On the contrary, it proved that consumers’ love for in-person shopping was the fuel the company needed to create a shopper’s paradise, with a year-round culturally enriched, outdoor experience.

With the migration to West Palm in the last two years, Related headquarters has made this city an inspiring place for young talent to live and work. Their future plans for additional development like the University of Florida innovation campus,





with such close proximity, will continue to transform The Square, she says.

“We’ve completed a full renovation of the public spaces including all exterior facades, green spaces, streetscapes, bike racks, added lighting, security cameras, and parking garage upgrades,” explains Jozefczyk. “We also have three major public art pieces including The Wishing Tree by Symmetry Labs, a 32-ft-tall LED-lit banyan tree, an interactive water pavilion by Jeppe Hein, an LED light installation titled My East Is Your West by Shipa Gupta, Yinka Shonibare’s 20-ft hand-painted fiberglass sculpture Material (SG) II, and large-scale murals by Chalk & Brush.”

According to Jozefczyk, the redesigned signage is reflective of the property’s new name and elevated branding aimed at offering new experiences and events—mostly all free and open to the public. In doing this, she says, The Square continues to work with dozens of local community organizations to host over 150 events annually. They also launched The Square Rewards app, which provides returning guests with loyalty points. Not a bad deal, especially if you’re shopping, dining, taking classes, or attending events there on a regular basis.

All of these revamped elements have contributed to a consistent rise in their social media following, as well as cool new tenants. “As we look ahead,” she continues, “we’re proud to have broken ground on 575 Rosemary, One Flagler, and 360 Rosemary.”

The 575 Rosemary building, anticipated to be complete in 2024, is a 21-story mixed-use tower that includes state-of-the-art luxury residences and commercial space with easy access to some of the most renowned local arts culture, and wellness programming in the area.

As the last phase of The Square is cemented, residents will be pleased to see two new projects designed by Arquitectonica and Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates. Spanning around 450,000 square feet each, they will include offices, retail, and restaurant space. Just a few blocks from The Square on the Flagler waterfront will be One Flagler.



Brightline has been running the circuit between Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and West Palm Beach since 2018. Miami and Orlando’s train service is one step closer to becoming a reality. West Palm Beach is a convenient starting point for exploring all the action and The Square’s popular hangouts, art installations, bars, and restaurants are a must-see.

This one-of-a-kind workplace is designed by David Childs and is situated at the gateway between Palm Beach Island and the City of West Palm Beach, connecting the two towns. The ultimate showcase of brands, One Flagler will offer a well-rounded collection of lifestyle fashion, home and design, innovative experiential shopping concepts, and highly curated cultural exhibitions. The 275,000 square feet of office, retail, Estiatorio Milos Restaurant, and roof terraces, will also feature public and personal events, set amongst lush landscaping and anchored by striking large-scale artworks.

The 515 Fern building is located adjacent to the Brightline station and steps away from the fully-leased 360 Rosemary building and upcoming Harry’s and Adrienne’s Pizzabar openings. 515 Fern is expected

to become the largest office building downtown. This 25-story building will feature 456,000 square feet of office and 15,000 square feet of retail.

The building will offer a connecting road from Evernia Street to Fern Street, running parallel to the Brightline station. It will offer enhanced pedestrian connectivity from the station to The Square, with a covered pathway along the east façade of the building.

“With the proximity of the Brightline train as an anchor at the north end of the property and connector to other South Florida communities—Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and soon Boca Raton, Aventura, and Orlando, there will be additional access to various audiences in an easier and more efficient way,” says Jozefczyk.



Standing to the right, Pranati (Pranoo) Kumar Skomra, proud immigrant daughter of Konkani Indian parents, is the founder of Rohi's Readery, a social justice-driven children's bookstore dedicated to critical literacy that promotes inclusivity and diversity. Rohi's Readery is more than a children's bookstore. It is a voice in our neighborhood, revolutionizing the way people read and connect with others.

All of this has impacted this urban neighborhood.

Through cultural experiences and encouraging interaction between brands and their guests, The Square has become the most popular place to shop and have some leisure time. Prominent retailers that have opened in the last five years include Sur la Table, West Elm, Restoration Hardware, Urban Outfitters, Casper, Lucid Motors, Herman Miller, Nini & Loli and UNTUCKit. And a family favorite, Rohi's Readery, the nation's only social-justice-focused children's bookstore.

There's also a New Wave Artist in Residence Program, hosting artists doing their work in place and interacting with the public.

For dining, The Square has added innovative, chef-driven restaurants including El Camino, Pura Vida, Planta, Sweetgreen, True Food Kitchen, Barrio, and The Salty Donut, plus the expansion and relocation of Starbucks.

"Many of the locations at The Square are having a great year and some even much better than before COVID," says Jozefczyk, who likes to invite brands to pop up and test the waters, which helps them all understand how a permanent store will succeed. "We also listen to customer feedback during these pop-ups to learn how guests enjoy certain brands."

It's not too difficult to imagine why The Square has discovered its cool factor as a safe, urban neighborhood. The retailers

are paying close attention, and so is Amazon. Reportedly, the giant online retailer is on its head thanks in large part to the ability of brick-and-mortar businesses to have an in-person presence. Though Amazon wants so badly to be able to replicate the immediacy of shopping in a brick-and-mortar retail store by using drones to deliver an order within hours of it being placed online, the processes of such a system are costly and time-consuming.

The other wrench is, believe it or not, technology. As technology has advanced, more retail stores have been able to manage their websites and online stores. With today's user-friendly websites that come equipped with smart shopping options, retailers can set up their online shops and



Life is Full
at the Square

Since its opening over 20 years ago, this area has been the center of entertainment in downtown West Palm Beach. Today, The Square remains the city's premier shopping, dining, and entertainment destination. In this place, locals and visitors shop in an old-world environment filled with fountains, beautiful architecture, and sidewalk cafes reminiscent of European town centers.

work independently of giant e-commerce platforms.

With technology on their side, brick-and-mortar retailers are placing a greater emphasis on their in-store experience than on their products. They have learned that holding events or offering special experiences and services in-store not only attracts customers, but also encourages them to linger longer, buy more products, and spend more on those products.

The Square has experienced this too.

They see brands that value the experience, like RH Gallery, thriving at The

Square. Brands like Rohi's Readery, which hosts monthly educational, hands-on programming for all ages, Sur la Table's cooking classes, Lululemon's monthly run club in collaboration with local entrepreneurs, Venture X's speaker series, and their rotating monthly Wellness Hour class that is held at various shops and restaurants.

"We encourage our brands to create these experiences outside of their storefront as well," says Jozefczyk, who invites business tenants to be a part of the monthly events hosted at The Square.

If you sit at The Square for any length

of time, you might just see a substantial portion of the city go by! It doesn't hurt that they have live music each weekend, incorporating cultural educational events for all ages year-round with dozens of community partners.

While nobody knows what the future holds, the Relate Companies has learned that quality brands and products will survive and thrive.