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CASE STUDY

Infill Housing | Miami, Florida

BILCO's Hatches Add Rooftop Access in Little Havana Project

Andrew Frey's primary challenge in his first project as a full-fledged development company had nothing to do with construction. Once he solved it, however, he set about blazing a trail that could bring back the charm to one of Miami's most distinctive neighborhoods.

Frey's real estate development company, Tecela, completed a new infill build project last year in the Little Havana section of Miami. Working with architect Jason Chandler and general contractor 748 Development, teams constructed four three-story townhouses, each with four apartments.

The critical piece to the project, however, was Frey's four-year effort to get the city of Miami to waive burdensome parking requirements. "After the parking issue was worked out, the project went pretty smoothly," Frey said.

Prior to starting Tecela, Frey worked for an apartment development company. He saw that there was very little construction of small apartment projects in the area. "I thought what's the biggest obstacle that I can work on removing?" he said. There was not a lack of capital, consulting talent, or contracting capacity. "The only thing left was zoning," Frey said. "The real big one was parking regulations, which required 1.5 spaces per unit. I knew I had to get that resolved if I was going to build small apartment projects."

Frey drafted a proposal to change the law, drummed up support and eventually got Miami commissioner Francis Suarez to sponsor the bill. With the help of Suarez, now Miami's mayor, the bill passed.

Why did Frey work so diligently to fight parking rules? Cost. According to one estimate, surface parking can drive up the cost of housing by as much as \$10,000 per unit. When built in a parking garage, the space can add as much as \$50,000 to housing costs.

Each townhouse, designed by Chandler, includes multi-layer facades and large balconies. They are divided into apartments, including studios with 595 square feet, 1-bedroom units with 617 square feet and two 2-bedrooms, at 1,130 square feet and 1,211 square feet.

With a population of around 76,000 residents, Little Havana is a social and cultural hub for many Hispanics. It is home to many exiles from Cuba, and has the largest concentration of Hispanics in Miami. In 2017, the National Trust for Historic Preservation included Little Havana as one of its "11 Most Endangered Places." The list spotlights areas where architectural, cultural, and natural sites of national significance are being harmed by neglect or incompatible development.

Atop the townhomes are Type S roof hatches manufactured by BILCO. The hatches have a fixed interior ladder and provide access to rooftop equipment. The hatch includes a counter-balanced cover design for



easy one-hand operation and fully gasketed and insulated construction for weather resistance.

"They were affordable and reliable," Chandler said. "We have used them in previous projects. They were also code-compliant for accessing mechanical equipment on the roof."

Since Frey's work to change the zoning requirements for parking, additional infill housing projects have been built in Little Havana, helping to preserve the charm of one of Florida's most vibrant social communities.



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