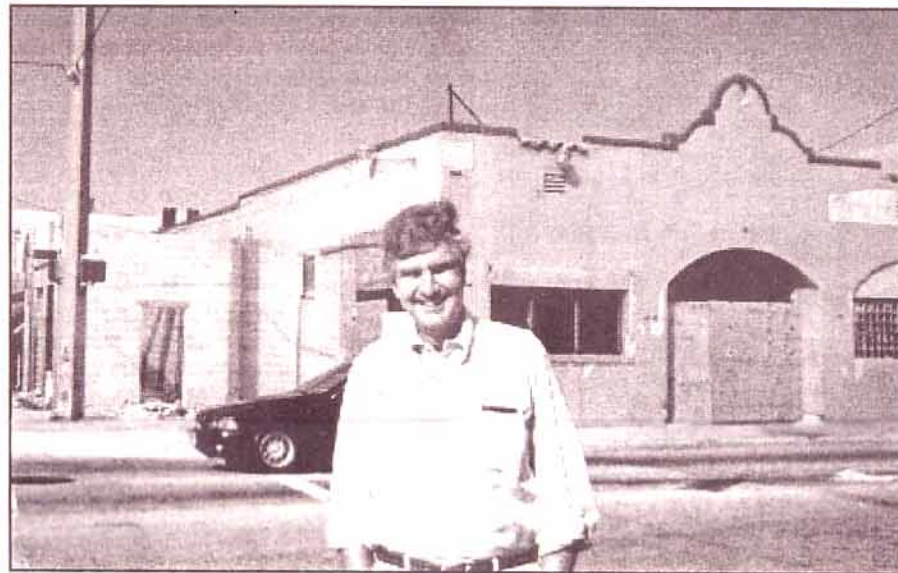


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Parrish breaks ground on Grand Avenue Bahamian project



Andy Parrish in front of his Grand Island development in the Village Island District.

BY ADAM COLE

Ot almost seems like a mirage, but a new building is rising from the dust of a demolished development at Grand Avenue and Douglas Road.

Developer Andy Parrish's visionary project Grand Island is leading the charge of a Grand Avenue renaissance and could be the springboard to transforming the West Grove into an area resembling neighborhoods of Nassau in the Bahamas.

"Change is coming," said Parrish, president of Wind and Rain Properties. "I'm not afraid of being the first. I envision that once this goes up, lots of developers will follow in my footsteps."

Grand Island will accommodate a restaurant, a bank, two commercial spaces and one residential apartment. Tenant agreements have yet to be signed but are in the works and the project is scheduled for completion in the spring.

The overall design of Grand Island is based almost entirely on Bahamian architectural principles, with Bahamian shutters, vibrant colors, an arcade façade, awnings and varied windowpanes. Parrish hired architect Erik Vogt to ensure that the look and feel of Grand Island meets the wishes of the community.

"A community with such rich history and tradition deserves a place that is full of life and full of color," said Vogt, who operates Khoury & Vogt Architects with his wife Marieanne Khoury. "We've acted both as citizens and professionals in creating something that will make this community prosper."

Parrish and Vogt have adhered to architectural elements outlined in a comprehensive master plan by Richard Sheppard and University of Miami architects as a result of information derived from a series of community charettes.

The drive to re-develop the West Grove in a Bahamian style have been advanced with the recent name change to the Village West Island District and passing of the Neighborhood Conservation District.

Parrish sees his project as being an example for future development.

"This is the way we want the whole area to look," said Parrish. "Other developers may come in here and say, 'What is island style?' We'll simply point them to Grand and Douglas."

For Parrish, the vision goes even further than architecture. He sees the area blossoming with Jamaican eateries and handicraft stores. Reggae and jazz will be encouraged and Caribbean steel drum bands will roam the streets.

"I want to make this a place where people from the islands, tourists from cruise ships and Coconut Grove locals feel comfortable about coming to," said Parrish, who first bought the main building for Grand Island in 1997. It was once the location for the legendary bar Gil's Spot.

Parrish has had trouble leasing space since acquiring the property. The building was boarded up from 1999-2001. The problem was two-fold, the building was run down and the surrounding area was infested with crime and drugs.

"I thought about renovating it, but the question kept coming up, who is

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