

ELABORATE SALES OFFICES BUILD INTEREST IN CONDOS

A Miami-based developer has begun construction of a \$4 million project that will rise 30 feet in the air and will feature a luxurious kitchen and bath as well as spectacular views of the ocean and beach.

And that's just the sales office.

It will be used to sell units at Jade Ocean, a 50-story, 256-unit condominium planned for 17121 Collins Ave. in Sunny Isles Beach. The sales office, being constructed by **Fortunate International**, will be the most expensive ever built in Florida, according to company President Edgardo Defortuna.

"No one else would be that crazy," Defortuna said.

Architect Carlos Ott designed the 8,500-square-foot sales office, which will feature a full-size kitchen and bath similar to those that will be built in the units at the project. It will contain lots of glass and will mimic somewhat the details of the architecture of the condominium building, at which units will sell at prices ranging from the \$650,000s to more than \$11 million.

Developer sales offices have come a long way over the past few years, said Arturo Belkind, president of **Salini Design** in North Miami, an architect who has been designing and building sales offices in South Florida for 23 years.

In the past, developers would spend about \$25,000 to set up temporary sales offices in trailers or small rooms, filled with just pictures and floor plans, he said. Now, however, sales centers are lavish, to sell potential buyers on the lifestyle they too can have if they purchase a unit.

"The competition is very tough right now," he said. "And with apartments so expensive, developers are trying to create confidence in the buyers that the building will be built."

Despite all the news reports about the booming condominium market, the long lines of buyers champing at the bit to buy in and the quick sellouts, developers say that elaborate sales centers are necessary to



PROJECT PLANS: Jade Ocean's \$4 million sales office in Miami will rise 30 feet above the building site. **Company artist rendering**



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sell units.

"Buyers buy sight unseen," Defortuna said. "Our commitment is to try to show them the quality they will receive once the building is up, and the sales experience — even if the building is sold out quickly — continues during the duration of construction."

"Our sales center takes a static floor plan and makes it come to life."

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Defortuna said he doesn't consider a unit sold just because a buyer signs a contract and plunks down a deposit; to him, the unit is sold when the closing takes place two years down the line.

"You need to keep the interest of the buyer all throughout that period," he said. "To some people, it might be a waste of money, but I would certainly spend 1 percent of the cost of the overall project to show people what the building is all about."

The Jade Ocean sales office will open in September, and will be torn down to make way for construction about 18 months later, Defortuna said.

as is generally the practice with onsite sales offices.

Other developers are building extravagant sales offices as well. Miami-based **The Related Group of Florida Inc.** is building Apogee, a 67-unit project on South Beach where units range from \$4 million to \$15 million. Related spent more than \$1.5 million to create what it calls a "living space sales center" that gives buyers a preview of the lifestyle they can have if they purchase a unit there.

The sales center has an actual kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, living room and dining room and features details such as a sunken tub and gas cooking, said Joyce Bronson, Related's senior vice president.

Related even built an 11-foot-wide balcony on the sales center so that buyers can get a feel for life at Apogee. "Our sales center takes a static floor plan and makes it come to life," Bronson said, adding that the developer has held dinner parties in the sales office so buyers can attend with their friends to give them a taste of what life will be like there.

"Buyers are more sophisticated and want to see more before they make purchasing decisions," she said. "There's just no way you're going to be competitive unless you can portray what makes your building special."

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