

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE Rilea Group

Ojedas restart luxury condo project shelved in 2007



J. ALBERT DIAZ

Diego Ojeda said the secret to the family's success with Rilea Group has been not to rush, do one or two projects at a time and never overleverage.

by Susan R. Miller
Special to the Review

Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, Alan Ojeda's Rilea Group Inc. is resurrecting a project the company was shelved in 2007 as the housing market spiraled downward.

"Luckily enough we had not started construction," said Ojeda's son, Diego.

On the back burner for about four years, the project was tweaked to meet the needs of today's buyer; the land was sold to the Spanish investment firm MDR Toledo LLC, and the two are in a joint venture to create the Bond at Brickell, a 44-story, 323-unit luxury condominium at 1080 Brickell Ave.

Construction is expected to begin in October with completion scheduled for mid-2015. Pre-sales began in April, and it's about 60 percent sold, according to Diego Ojeda. If all goes as planned, the tower will be the first new-to-market condo to

break ground on Brickell in the current real estate cycle.

For this project, and many others that Rilea Group has been behind, it's been all about timing and understanding the marketplace enough to anticipate problems before they become troublesome.

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Years The Bond on Brickell has been shelved due to the 2007 real estate recession.

The younger Ojeda said the secret to the family's success has been not to rush, do one or two projects at a time and never overleverage.

"My father uses the metaphor of a sailboat. He says if you go out sailing it may be a nice day, but when the storm comes

it's the keel that saves you, and our keel is equity," Ojeda said.

As with many condo projects, Latin Americans make up most of the buyers — Venezuelans, Argentines, Colombians and some Brazilians. "But not as many as we thought," Ojeda noted.

"Venezuelans are the sweet spot. These are buyers who want to park some money in the states, and it's not just as an investment. If it was, they might be buying in other parts of Miami," he said. "They are thinking, 'If my country goes to hell for whatever reason, can I live in that unit?' They are buying it as an investment but also as a second home."

Like most other developers, buyers have to invest a fair amount of money upfront — half by the time the building is topped off.

"It's now a partnership, the people who come on board are real," Ojeda said.

The company's other proj-



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Construction on the Bond at Brickell is expected to start in October.

ects include 1450 Brickell, an office tower that achieved full occupancy three years after delivery at the height of the recession, and One Broadway, one of just a few luxury apartment buildings in downtown Miami, which is 95 percent occupied.

It's also finishing the Monte

Carlo, a residential tower in Miami Beach that it will start pre-leasing in November.

Up next?

"We are bullish on Dania Beach," Ojeda said. "We have three pieces of property across from" the soon-to-be-renovated Dania Jai-Alai.