

## Visiting Chapel Grove Homes

For our second fieldtrip, we had the opportunity to visit Chapel Grove, a residential community by local developer Label & Co. Our group was greeted and guided by Gary Clement, the company's Vice President, who was very enthusiastic and thorough with his tour.

Label & Co. was founded in 2008 by Harry Posin, former Executive Vice President of Minto Communities. Gary Clement, joined Harry's new venture in 2009, after having worked 33 years for Minto Communities. The Label & Co.'s team is embodied by Harry, Gary, an assistant, an accountant, a project manager and two superintendents.

Throughout the years, Label & Co. has built every type of residential product including large single-family homes, apartment buildings, townhomes, tri-plexes and four-plexes. Moreover, Label & Co's team has delivered over 20,000 units in the state of Florida and 6,000 units alone in the city of Pembroke Pines. According to Gary, one of the reasons they have continued to work in Pembroke Pines is the city's Building Department that has a staff who understands construction and is willing to help developers.

Gary mentioned that as a company there is always a different challenge on each project and one of the biggest challenges Label & Co. recently faced was on their Centra Falls development, in Pembroke Pines, where there was a high voltage line in the middle of the property. Gary described this as "a nightmare!"

On the other hand, Gary mentioned they have barely had any issues with Chapel Grove. He credits this to how diligent the team is with their processes and to having been using the same team of consultants for a long time. He emphasized the fact that this project's site plan was approved in only 14 months and had no issues during the due diligence process. The only challenge that was mentioned was the site's irrigation and how the drainage system had to be redesigned.

Chapel Grove is a multi-family development with 125 townhome units, distributed in 24 buildings, on an 8-acre site located on the west of Pembroke Pines. All the buildings have the same structure, but you can find 5 different models. As of the day of our visit, they had sold 53 units even without having a model unit available to show.

The site currently has some units that are close to completion, with drywall on and ready for finishes to be installed. Other units are in the "grey" stages, where we were able to see trusses, plumbing lines, electrical wires and HVAC ducts. Some units are in the process of vertical building, where we saw high voltage lines and future transformers' locations, and there are areas where underground work was recently completed.

It was interesting to hear Gary talk about Label & Co's marketing strategies and its effects on construction. For instance, all their units have high ceilings that are 9'6" tall, which require roof trusses to be longer and result in higher construction costs. They also use metal studs, which

are termite proof and a better product than wood, pecks for their interior plumbing lines, and impact windows, among others.

I believe visiting Chapel Grove gave us a different insight on construction than our visit to Residences On Las Olas. One of the things we learned was how underground work starts. Gary explained that before workers are able to place any drainage or plumbing lines, they start off by taking densities and boars on the soil. Then, the area is compacted, backfilled, and treated for termites. It was also extremely interesting to learn about the quality of the materials Label & Co. uses, such as 2-hour rated blocks and beams that are structurally sound to resist 2 hours of fire and PEX for their interior plumbing lines, which results in 90% less leaks.

I had the opportunity to buy a townhome 3 years ago and I believe that product is the perfect combination between an apartment and a single-family home, so it was very exciting to watch a townhome in the making! It was also shocking to hear how trends that were used in the 80s are now back and are exactly what the market wants. I guess it is appropriate to say that real estate's trends are like fashion, and "everything comes back."

There was not a better way to finish our visit than hearing advice from an expert in the real estate development industry. Gary talked about his experiences with customers and how important it is to make your potential buyer a priority and to always communicate. He also mentioned how important it is to find subs "that can deliver on time, are competitive, and do what they say and say what they do". However, the phrase that stood out the most to me was "you only have one opportunity to make a good impression." I believe this is something we must keep in mind both for our professional and personal lives, as most of the times if we leave a bad impression on someone, they may not get past that. We should always have the mindset that we may only have one chance to prove what we are capable of doing and how knowledgeable, talented and dedicated we are.