

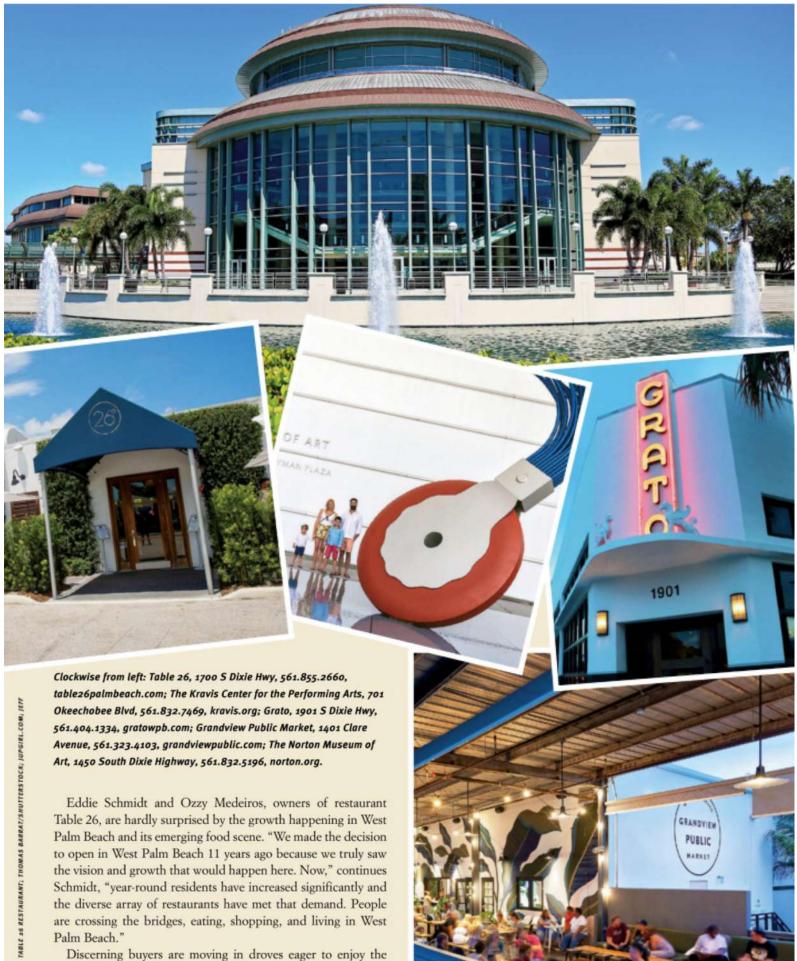
WESTWARD HO!

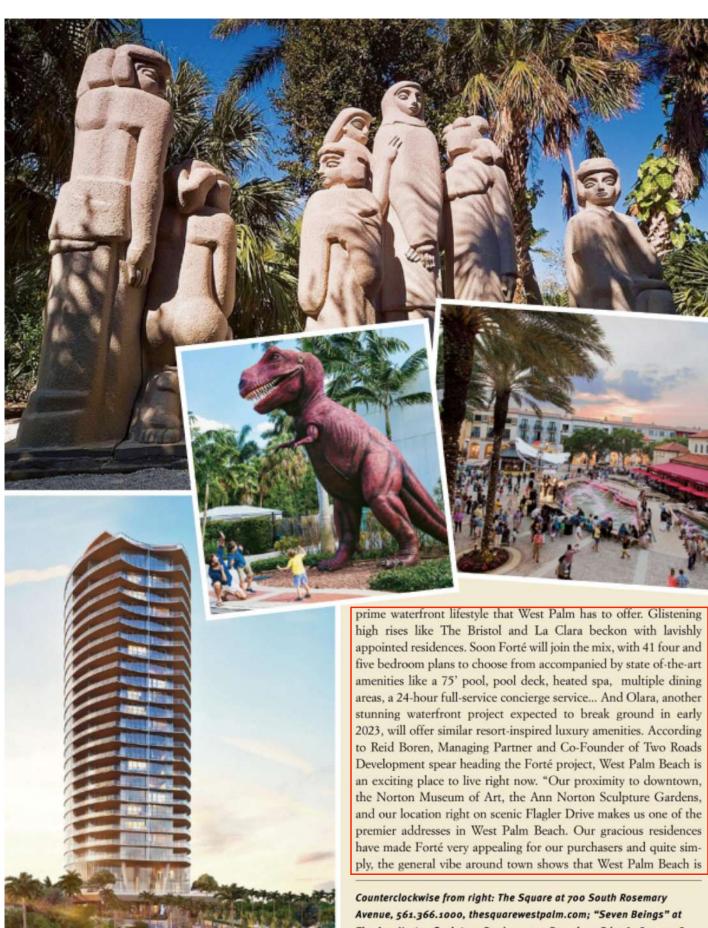
BY JAYNE CHASE

HENRY FLACILER, the American Industrialist would be hard pressed to recognize the bustling cultural explosion in the town he founded today. Since the 1890s when Flagler arrived in Palm Beach with the intention of constructing hotels and a railroad to accommodate tourists eager to enjoy Florida's sunshine, West Palm Beach (separated from neighboring Palm Beach by the Lake Worth Lagoon) has undergone more changes than he ever could have imagined. And while every decade since the turn of the century has seen either a significant boom or bust in West Palm Beach, the current area's renaissance is accelerating at a high-speed rate unlike any other time in its history.

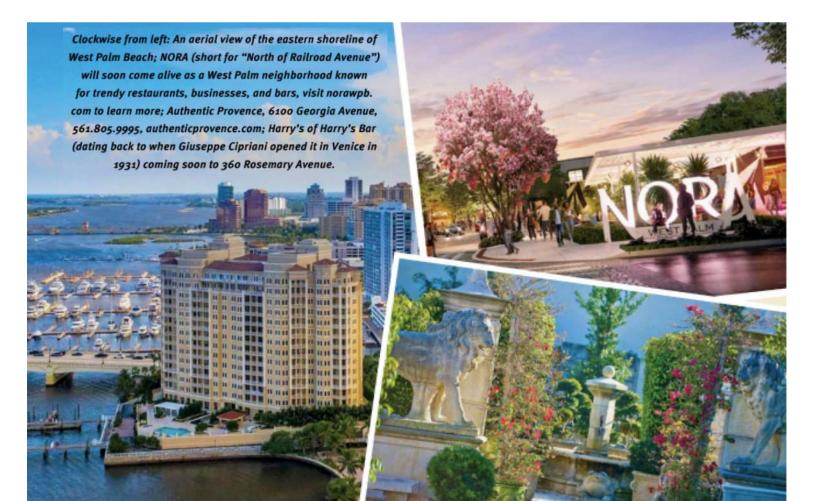
According to Kelly Smallridge, President and CEO of the Business Development Board of Palm Beach County, "the area is not only attracting titans of the financial sector, but also developers who are investing in our county. Over 60,000 people have changed their driver's license from New York to Florida and Palm Beach County is the number one place they've moved to." The statistics continue to be staggering. Kelly's team has personally courted over 30 companies to the area and created over 2,500 jobs. Of 19.8 million square feet of office space in Palm Beach County, 1.5 million are under construction. "Most of that activity is happening in West Palm Beach" adds Kelly.







Counterclockwise from right: The Square at 700 South Rosemary
Avenue, 561.366.1000, thesquarewestpalm.com; "Seven Beings" at
The Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens, 253 Barcelona Rd, 561.832.5328,
ansg.org; a terrifyingly lifelike dinosaur at The Cox Science Center and
Aquarium, 4801 Dreher Trail N, 561.832.1988, coxsciencecenter.org;
Forté on Flagler, 1309 S Flagler Drive, 561.903.2819, fortewpb.com.



where you want to live right now."

Photographer Nick Mele and his wife, Molly, parents of two young boys, couldn't agree more. "We moved to West Palm Beach 8 years ago and even in that short time, the city has changed a lot. Tons of young and successful families have moved here, realizing they don't have to live in large cities to have a career and you can't beat the lifestyle down here. Our kids have friends their age that live next door, across the street, and on every block practically. The Palm Beach area in general offers camaraderie and a feeling of a small community while still having access to the cultural and commercial benefits of a large city," says Nick.

West Palm Beach is on the brink of becoming a world renown art, cultural and business metropolis. Everyone we talked to agreed: the growth has only just begun. Recently, the historic area of Georgia Avenue, known for its upholstery workrooms and stone and glass companies has been completely transformed. Now, well-known antique stores and interior designers have gravitated to the neighborhood to take advantage of the larger spaces. "West Palm Beach is a community dedicated to work, and it's friendly and neighborly," says Casa Gusto owner, Charles Peed. "Georgia Avenue allowed us a larger space to build an environment that was completely unexpected and very quickly others followed suit. Now, we are all looking forward to a very bright future."

