

# Developers' Delicate Dance To Build High-Rises In Wynwood Without Ruining It

January 12, 2025 | Chloe Gallivan, South Florida 

In Wynwood, walls are canvases, sidewalks are sketchbooks and street signs double as sticker galleries. The Miami neighborhood's signature public art has made it a magnet for tourists and developers itching to get in on the action.



*Bisnow/Ethan Rothstein*

A view of the street art from inside the Wynwood Walls in 2021.

---

Developers **Hidrock Properties** and **Robert Finvarb Cos.**, for example, are moving forward on a 39-story apartment tower at 2534 N. Miami Ave. Despite the fact that their project is more than three times taller than any existing building in the neighborhood, they are focused on making sure the project doesn't take away from what has made **Wynwood** one of the country's coolest districts.

"I'm ultra-sensitive to the fact that we're New Yorkers," Hidrock President **Abie Hidary** told *Bisnow*. "And I know that people in Florida, specifically in Wynwood, could feel like, 'Oh, these New Yorkers are coming in and changing our city.'"

Hidrock proposed its project last June, but its design was initially rejected by the Wynwood Design Review Committee, which has a say over the massing and design of new developments in the 50-block district.

The proposal was sent back to the drawing board for a redesign, after which the partners pitched a more layered design for the building's eight-story parking garage with more details about windows and lighting. The WDRC approved the project in October.

"It's palatable," said Dan Neofitidis, Hidrock's director of design and development, who is leading the project. "We understand some of the public perception for a project of this size, but I think we feel confident that we've proposed something that is within the the vibe and the feelings of Wynwood."





The neighborhood, which sits between [Downtown Miami](#), [Edgewater](#), Allappattah and the Design District, started its evolution from a rundown industrial zone to a buzzy street art mecca when the late developer Tony Goldman started buying up lots in the early 2000s.

At the time, the area was struggling — businesses were closing, hospitality was scarce and the streets were lifeless, teetering on the edge of obscurity, said Jessica Srebnick, the daughter of Tony Goldman and CEO of [Goldman Properties](#).

Goldman Properties acquired more than 25 buildings in the area and began planting seeds. It opened [Wynwood Walls](#) in 2009 in the heart of the district, which became a major tourist attraction featuring a gallery of murals and art exhibits that helped shape Wynwood's identity.

Today, Wynwood has expanded to 50 city blocks, which includes more than 400 businesses, 200 street murals and 30 restaurants, [according to Miami Realtors](#). The area has become a hot spot for development — Developers have built or are underway with at least five new hotels, 24 new office buildings and 28 new residential properties in the last 15 years, according to the Wynwood Business Improvement District.

Each development that goes up must include a public art component and conform to the exacting standards set forth by the WDRC. Developers must submit an art and architectural narrative, dimensioned drawings and photos of the wall where murals will be located, and a colored drawing or computer simulation of the design.

“Luckily, Wynwood and the WDRC, their requirements are very specific, which is great, because there's no gray areas,” said Amro Zakarni, vice president of [Related Group](#). “So, you know what they want, what the neighborhood and their constituents want.”

The building boom has meant the street art that long defined Wynwood's aesthetic has grown in scale, with some murals soaring 100 or so feet in the air. As Wynwood has become a destination for developers, it has also become an aspiration for artists.

Chase Melendez, a 41-year-old muralist based in Cincinnati, Ohio, was hired to paint a mural for the recently completed mixed-use project The Highley House, a two-tower [development with 304 apartment units](#), 72K SF of office and 18K SF of retail at 2150 N Miami Ave. built by Rockpoint and Related Group.



*Courtesy of Related Group and Robin Hill*

Chase Melendez's mural on The Highley House wall.

Melendez took 48 days and 121 gallons of paint to cover a 20K SF wall with a mural of stripes of pink, yellow, purple, blue and orange, with a hint of black. The piece was inspired by the aesthetic of early video games, cartoons and films of his childhood in the '80s and '90s, Melendez said.

The project was not only Melendez's first project in Wynwood, but also the largest of his career to date. He told *Bisnow* that anyone who paints wants to paint in Wynwood.

“I feel honored and blessed, and I'm beyond grateful for the opportunity and everything that it means,” Melendez said.

Olga Cotofana, senior director of design and architecture at **PMG**, felt the responsibility to contribute positively to the neighborhood's character while working on Society Wynwood, a 10-story mixed-use development featuring 318 rental apartments and more than 50K SF of retail space **spanning an entire city block**. The company prioritized the pedestrian experience first, taking into account how visitors and residents connect with the art.



“We consistently ask ourselves how our designs can meet all the committee’s requirements while ensuring they fit seamlessly into the surrounding area and enhance the community’s unique character,” Cotofana wrote in an email.

Society Wynwood has a mural on the west side of the building by a Portuguese artist named Vhills. This piece sits on the corner of the building with light greys painting a woman’s face on a white background.



*Google Maps*

Society Wynwood with Vhills art piece on the west corner of the building.

The commitment to preserving the district’s essence has created a pressure that looms over developers as they navigate the balance of upholding Wynwood’s reputation while accommodating its rapid expansion.

“I think that my hope is that those that are building in the neighborhood are sensitive to the desires of the neighborhood, and it’s a challenge,” Srebnick said. “It’s definitely a challenge.”

The challenge will only grow as developers leverage the **Live Local Act** to build far higher than Tony Goldman ever imagined. The law, **enacted in 2023** and **amended in 2024**, allows projects to be built to the maximum height allowed within a one-mile radius if they incorporate a certain amount of income-restricted housing.

In Wynwood, that means developers can build up to 50 stories because of the high-density neighborhoods like Edgewater that surround it.

“Putting a 50-story building in the middle of an eight-story neighborhood does not make sense to me, and I think does not achieve what [the law] was meant to achieve,” Srebnick said.

In June, New York-based Bazbaz Development announced plans for a 48-story development, including 544 apartments and 621 parking spots, at North Miami Ave. using the Live Local Act, the Miami Herald reported.

“I do find it offensive,” Wynwood developer David Lombardi **told the Herald in June**. “It’s going to really ruin the scale and feel of the neighborhood that we have tried so hard to maintain.”

There are at least two more projects proposed that would rise significantly higher than any other building in the neighborhood, the Herald reported: a 19-story building by Miami Court Holdings and a 25-story high-rise by Miami-based Ultimate Equity.

“I’m definitely concerned,” Srebnick said. “I know that there are projects that are going before the design review that are very large in nature.”

While Hidrock’s 39-story project would tower over the neighborhood, Hidary and Neofitidis stressed that their intention is not to stand out among their neighbors but to blend into what makes Wynwood so attractive.

While they haven’t decided on the project’s public art contribution, the partners are working with art consultants and considering a public competition. They said the building’s height is reasonable and emphasized the effort that went into ensuring it isn’t an eyesore to the neighborhood.

“Even though there may be other developers that attempt to get approval for 50-plus stories, we didn’t want to go there because we felt like that’s way out of scale,” Hidary said.

Despite navigating around certain neighborhood requirements, the New Yorkers point out their commitment to understanding and meeting the community’s needs.

“We’re not going to be combative or force some aesthetic down anyone’s throats,” Neofitidis said. “I think we’ve tried to be as open and receptive to what the neighborhood feels and wants.”