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By: Camila Cepero

Icon Tibor Hollo, age 90, constructs Miami's tallest tower and has big plans to surpass that with One Bayfront Plaza

THE ACHIEVER

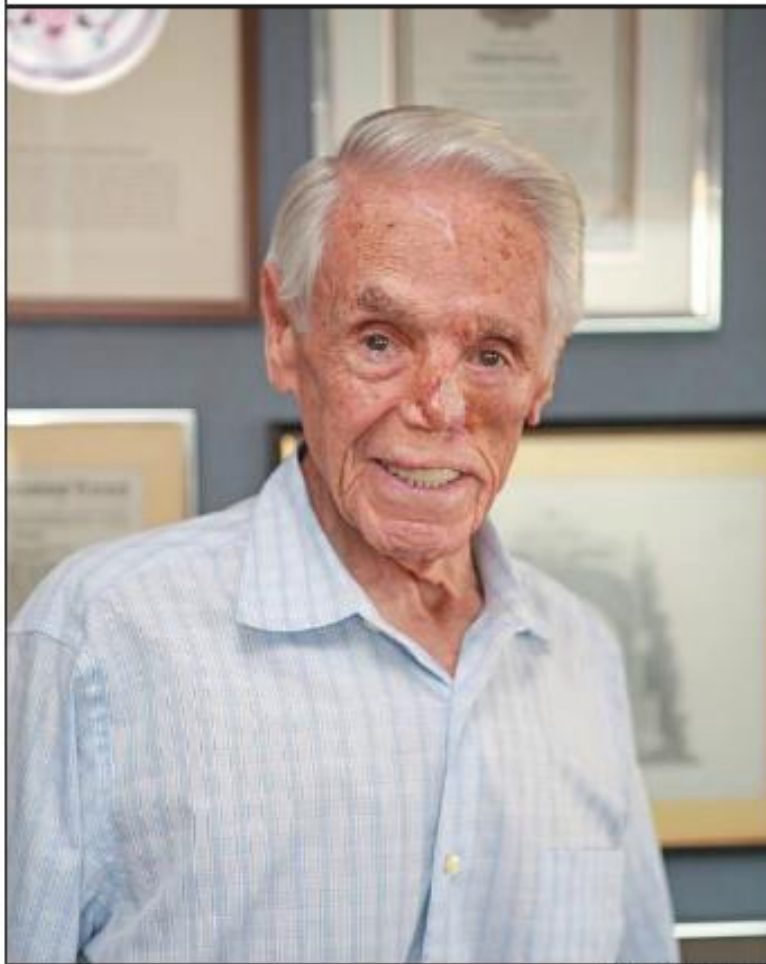


Photo by Cristina Sullivan

Tibor Hollo

Building our tallest tower, with a bigger one to follow

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Icon Tibor Hollo, age 90, constructs Miami's tallest tower...

In 1956, Tibor Hollo packed his bags and reputation as one of New York's most successful general contractors and relocated to sunny Miami, where he founded Florida East Coast Realty. In the 60 years since, the company has built in excess of 60 million square feet of single-family homes, landmark residential and commercial high-rises, government buildings, marinas, high-end retail centers, warehouse complexes, and telecommunications centers.

The company forged new ground by developing Miami's Omni/Venetia area, sparking the transformation of the district into what is now known as the Arts and Entertainment District.

The concept of living, working and playing in the urban core has long been Mr. Hollo's dream, brought to life through his many developments.

Although his self-proclaimed favorite project is the Omni/Venetia area mixed-use development The Grand, he confesses that his new development, Panorama Tower, might be the one to take the top spot.

Panorama Tower is a mixed-use skyscraper now under construction at 1101 Brickell Ave. At 867 feet tall, it will be the tallest building south of New York on the eastern seaboard once completed, Mr. Hollo said.

The building boasts a plethora of amenities, including a billiard room, a 30,000-square-foot gym, a muse room that can serve as a jam space for musicians, a cyber space for computer gaming, and a full-scale kennel, among other amenities.

These amenities are a natural evolution from Mr. Hollo's first days in the game, he said, when all that tenants wanted was a nice garbage can to put their garbage in.

Florida East Coast Realty's grandest project to date, however, is to be the new One Bayfront Plaza. It is to be a mixed-use development of contemporary modern design, encompassing a total of over 3 million square feet, principally comprised of premier class AAA office space, together with a luxury hotel and high-end residences.

One Bayfront Plaza is planned as the tallest building on the Miami skyline, reaching a height of 1,049 feet above Biscayne Bay – the maximum height allowed downtown by the Federal Aviation Administration – with 360-degree, panoramic views. If all goes according to plan, the building could break ground as early as January 2019.

Mr. Hollo had no time to search for a business role model when he was younger, so instead he forged his own way in the development world, doing business the way he wanted to, which he said was all in the fun of it.

Were he to be someone's role model, he said he'd like for that someone to understand the importance of strong work ethic, which gives one joie de vivre.

Aside from Miami, his absolute favorite city in the world, Mr. Hollo finds Hong Kong, London, New York and Moscow to be the runner-ups.

His commitment to helping those less fortunate than him is evident in his multitude of civic and community engage-



Tibor Hollo, whose long list of Miami projects includes most of the buildings known as the Omni/Venetia area, is now building Brickell's 867-foot-tall Panorama Tower. Photo by Cristina Sullivan

The Achiever

Tibor Hollo

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Age: 90

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Personal Philosophy: Work hard until you get there. When you get there, work harder.

ments. A founder of multiple charities, mostly focused around health and education, Mr. Hollo said that he's working to help them prosper even further.

At the end of the day, he says he has no big regrets. Given the chance to go back to the beginning and do it all again, he wouldn't make any major changes, he said.

Mr. Hollo's family is his number one priority and even his number one hobby. His second hobby, however, is enjoying good bourbon.

Miami Today reporter Camila Cepero interviewed Mr. Hollo in his office at Florida East Coast Realty, which sits on the future site of One Bayfront Plaza.

Q: When and how did you become interested in this line of work?

A: I was an architect, finished school and couldn't get a job at the time, so I started up as a small general contractor. It was very good for me. I did very well, but in 1956 I decided to pick my own venues, and the only way I could do it is if I became a developer. At that time I did lots of work at Cape Canaveral for the government as a contractor, so I decided to move to Florida and become a developer.

Q: What are your favorite projects that you've done, and why?

A: I was always interested in total living complexes such as the building I'm doing now, Panorama Tower. It is re-

ally about living and enjoying yourself, and not needing to leave the building to have a good way of life and good work places, and not needing a car.

Similar to that was the building I built and up until now probably the best building, The Grand, with shopping all around, all the amenities, plenty of transportation systems, and nice living conditions within the complex.

It's very similar to what we're doing over at Panorama Tower, but in Panorama Tower we added more amenities because as time evolves the public wants more and more comforts and amenities in their property. At the very beginning, 60 years ago, all the people wanted was a nice garbage can to put the garbage in. Then came the elevators, so you didn't have to walk six stories up. Then it evolved into more and more amenities.

Panorama Towers has a plethora of amenities. Not only the billiard room or a giant 30,000-square-foot gym with yoga rooms, spinning rooms, massage rooms, and all kinds of exercise facilities.

It has a muse room. Let's say we have in the building 1,500 different tenants. You know a few of them love music and love to play music, so they can get together in a jam session in a completely soundproof room and practically record their little jam session. That's the muse room.

We have a cyber place where 150 people can get together, just like in a Starbucks, and play with their computers and ask each other questions.

In an apartment, you can entertain two or three couples maybe. But we have a dining room available that can entertain 20 couples with our design. We have a wine-tasting room.

One particular thing: it's the first one in the country that we are putting a kennel in. The other day I was in the Opera Tower, which has 635 units and about 400 dogs. I was coming down in the elevator and there was a pretty lady standing next to me with a dog. So I casually asked her who she liked better: her boyfriend or her pet. She started to laugh, pointed at her dog and said, "No competition."

People love their pets and it's really difficult to have one in an apartment.

So we have room for them to leave their pets. We walk the pet, we groom the pet, and we let them play with other pets. They can room it if they want to go away. So we have a full-scale kennel and on and on.

As cities evolve, people want more and more amenities for a better way of life – to make it comfortable, to make it pleasurable. So I think that my favorite already is getting to be Panorama Tower.

Q: What other projects do you have in the pipeline?

A: We have this building where you're sitting. It will be One Bayfront Plaza. This will be the building of the future – it is totally different. We're still building for yesterday, but this building is the future.

We're starting on One Bayfront Plaza in January 2019. It's 1,049 feet tall, and if you look at other buildings they look like yesterday. This looks like tomorrow. The whole demeanor of the building is different.

It will have 1,052 apartments oriented toward the public who really want to live downtown and who really want to have that exciting core. We have about 500,000 feet of office space and 200,000 feet of retail in the building, and it will be connected to the Metromover outside via a bridge. That is the main Metromover station of the city and we are connecting into that.

There will be restaurants and shopping right in your building – you don't have to go outside of the building. And if you're fortunate enough to work in one of the offices, you really don't have to leave the building at all.

We'll have two giant pools on the recreation deck. One is set for the hotel because we'll have a 200-room boutique hotel integrated into the building, and the other one is for residential tenants. However, there is another sky recreation deck, which is on the 40th floor. At that level there is a scoop in the building and in that scoop we have the outdoor recreation area.

We are hoping to complete the building within 40 months after starting. The first residential floor of the building will be the 22nd floor. So can you imagine when you are on the 92nd floor – you will be able to see forever.

Q: What are some of your favorite cities in the world?

A: I love Miami, obviously. I've lived here since 1956 – that's more than 60 years – so this is my absolute favorite.

I like Hong Kong. Hong Kong is a very interesting, thriving city. London is another one. However, we have a great city in the north called New York, and New York is fabulous. So those are the cities I like around the world. Moscow is a very quaint, nice city as well. It has a lot of history.

Q: Who have been your role models, both in business and in life?

A: You can think of role models if you have the time to think of them, but when I had to go to school and support myself and pay for my tuition, I couldn't think much. However, when I was in architecture, Le Corbusier was one of my favorites, and I looked up to him. As far as business, I didn't think

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of anybody, frankly. I just did my work.

Q: If you were to be a role model for someone, what do you hope they learn from you?

A: I think that one of the backbones of a person, of a family, of a community, and of a country is the work ethic of the people. I believe in a very strong work ethic because that's regimen. It gives you a joie de vivre.

In other words, if you work hard you can also enjoy life harder. You don't just float; you create a 24-hour living condition for yourself. I think that's one of the most important things.

Q: If someone came to you and said that they wanted to get into this line of work, what advice would you give them?

A: It's very simple. Firstly, have a good grasp of the paper, of the plan. You don't have to become an architect to understand good planning and good plans and how to put together a good plan. You don't need an architectural degree, but you have to know it.

Secondly, start small. Build a house and understand how it gets put together. Once you do that, then you can sprout out to something more. But always, always understand what you are doing.

Then once you'd like to do something bigger, something more important, then you have to start thinking of good urban planning. Think of how you really plan out, not only the little plot you have but what's around you.

Lastly, learn your demography, the age of the people, and what kind of people you expect in your development— young people, middle-aged people, old people, or a mix of all of them?

Q: What do you think the cities of the future will look like? Will they all be in urban cores? Will suburbs become obsolete?

A: In the Second World War we had 10 million GI's abroad. Coming home, they were all hoping and planning and dreaming of their own little home, driveway, and maybe a car, in a peaceful country.

They gave the GI's that dream and

built small houses that required nothing down and a \$17 a month payment, and that created suburbia. But suburbia was next to the city, then it was half an hour from the city, then we went to two hours away from the city, and that created six-lane traffic coming in and out of town, which was very acceptable to that generation because they satisfied a dream. They had their little house and they had their driveway and a car.

But it wasn't satisfactory to the young generation because they never met their father. Their father left early to drive two hours to the city and came home late because of the driving, so the father was a weekend father, maybe.

Certainly that's not the satisfactory lifestyle to the current young generation. So what are they looking for? They want to be closer. They want to have the proper entertainment areas, restaurants, cultural facilities, museums, operas, and once that develops into the core beside the office buildings, the residential follows. All of a sudden, a big residential community comes forward.

So what's the future city? I see our urban population concentrating themselves in the core areas. Core areas cannot expand. Like here, we are pretty limited. We can go north and south but just a certain amount. So in order to satisfy the demand, you have to go vertical— and more and more vertical.

I built the tallest building in the city 52 years ago. It was called Center House. It was in the Civic Center next to Jackson, now called Dominion Tower. That was the tallest building at 22 stories high. Then somebody built a 30 story and a 32 story one. Then I built a building that was 42 stories. That was the tallest until somebody built a 50-story building. So now I'm building Panorama Tower, which is the tallest by about 100 feet. It's 867 feet tall and the tallest south of New York on the eastern seaboard.

One Bayfront Plaza I expect will be 1,049 feet tall. Why 1,049 feet? Because the Federal Aviation Administration

maxes out at 1,049 feet— they won't let you go any higher because of the flight path, so I guess 1,049 feet will be a staple all through town because if I build it, the next guy is going to build it.

So I think that I'll see vertical cities loaded with amenities in the buildings for residential and I'll see more and more combination, multi-use buildings where you not only have residential but residential, commercial, retail, maybe hotel— a mix of it all.

Q: What are your most well-known projects and why have they received the most acclaim?

A: I think the assemblage we did in 1968, 1969 and 1970 that became the Omni area. I think that was the most significant project. The crown of this was The Grand, but at the time, when we built the Omni area, that was the number one shopping destination in the city in our downtown area.

The various buildings we built there— the Biscayne Bay Marriott, Plaza Venetia, The Grand, Opera Tower, Bay Parc Plaza— represents about 18 million feet of construction, so that was probably at that time the most significant project of the city. That was the spring for the corridor development.

Q: How do you distinguish yourself from all of the competitors in your business?

A: I always look to the future— sometimes too much.

Q: Are developers ever satisfied? Will you one day reach a point where you can say that you accomplished everything that you wanted to?

A: I always look forward to doing new things, to doing what is better. Like I said, 60 years ago, the most wanted amenity in a building was a nice garage can you could put your garbage in. That was it. Today, there's a plethora of amenities that 60 years ago people didn't dream of. I'm always looking for newer things and how to do them and how to rethink everything.

Q: If you had the chance to do ev-

everything all over again, would you do anything differently?

A: Heaven is good to me. I accomplished the things that I set out to accomplish, thank heavens. I don't know if I would do anything differently. Certainly in retrospect, you can be a Monday morning quarterback. You can think of lots of little things to do better, but that wouldn't be fun. Fun is when you do it in your own way.

Q: What do you most enjoy about life in Miami?

A: I was once in San Francisco and I went out to Carmel and went to the beach and went into the ocean. I went in for a little bit and came out and everybody that was on the beach sat up and looked at me like I was crazy because the water was so cold. I was blue. The water, it's not useable. It's useable for sailing, and for boating it's good, but in Miami it's good for everything. I could swim in the bay if I wanted to. I can swim in the ocean if I want to. It is a beautiful place to live. New York at this time, the middle of February, has big snow storms and is 37 degrees. Here, we have eternal paradise.

Q: What's left on your list of things to do and accomplish in your lifetime?

A: Nobody ever accomplishes everything in their lifetime, but I have a bunch of charities and I want to make them prosper and help people who are not as fortunate as I am.

I'm very involved in charities of education and healthcare. I partnered with Dr. Oz, who started an organization called HealthCorps, and so I help with that. I very much believe in access to education for everybody, so I am giving grants to schools. I like the arts and I think that one of the hallmarks of a good city is what kind of art you can go buy. So those are the areas that I want to accomplish more in— my charities.

Q: What are your hobbies and interests?

A: My family is my number one hobby. And I love good bourbons.