



Jorge M. Pérez

**EDITORS' NOTE** Jorge Pérez founded The Related Group. He has been at the forefront of the South Florida urban evolution. In June of 2007, Pérez ventured into the international real estate market by launching the first Related International project, Icon Vallarta in Puerto Vallarta. Beyond Mexico, Pérez is researching other great Latin American destinations such as Panama, Argentina, Uruguay, and the Caribbean. He serves on the board of directors of Miami Art Museum, as a vice-chair on the Miami-Dade County Cultural Affairs Council, and is a director of the Miami International Film Festival. He has received numerous awards for his professional and philanthropic achievements, including Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur of the Year and, most recently, the Icon in Real Estate Award of Excellence at MIPIM in Cannes, France. In 2008, Pérez published his first business bestseller, *Powerhouse Principles: The Billionaire Blueprint For Real Estate Success*. Pérez was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He graduated from C.W. Post College, *summa cum laude*, and received a Masters in Urban Planning, with highest honors, from the University of Michigan. In 2008, he was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from C.W. Post, Long Island University.

**COMPANY BRIEF** The Related Group (*relatedgroup.com*) has redefined the South Florida landscape. Since its inception, more than 30 years ago, the firm has built and/or managed more than 80,000 apartments and condominium residences. The Related Group is Florida's top multifamily developer and the largest Hispanic-owned business in the United States. Its current portfolio represents assets under development of more than \$12 billion.

**What brought you into this industry?**

I never envisioned myself in my early career as a developer, but I envisioned myself as a person who would do something important.

I thought I would be involved in urban planning, assisting in the building of housing in cities – I had more of an academic and public service bent.

# A Trendsetter

**An Interview with Jorge M. Pérez,  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, The Related Group**

When I started working with the City of Miami, I was involved in economic and urban development, neighborhood planning, advocacy, and so forth, particularly for low income areas.

As I started seeing people build, seeing something you could create started entering my mind, but I still wanted to do something that benefitted lower income households. That's why I put those two things together and became a developer of affordable housing.

It was a way of doing good as defined by helping the poor but also making money and being creative in developing buildings.

Early on, we became the largest developers of affordable housing in the state of Florida and we got great recognition.

However, working for the government means you're constrained from a design standpoint, which is why I started moving into first market rate rentals and condominiums and mixed-use projects – it was about my desire to expand the work product in a more creative way.

**How do you see the potential in things before others do?**

I like to think of myself as coming into markets before the rest do and that way, we create value and open up areas that need to be opened.

We built the first multifamily rental or condominium project in all of downtown Miami. I felt if we created the right environment, people would come, because the city was where their jobs were, but also because there has been a lot of talk about the inefficiencies of moving to the suburbs – every time you open up a sewer line and a road a mile from the city, it's a waste of resources.

As a planner and an urbanist, I knew I wasn't going to please everybody, but I knew there were people that would want to be in these neighborhoods downtown; I just needed to make them appealing.

We took a risk and combined great design with great art and started bringing restaurants and other retail establishments in so people would have things to do.

As first in, we bought the land at a cheaper price than people that came in later on, so we were able to offer very attractive pricing.

We look at macro trends of the way people are thinking, of what people are writing, and determine how and where they would like to live. We like to be trendsetters and we feel comfortable that if you do it right, a good percentage of the population you are trying to market to will become buyers.

**How has the market recovered?**

Because of international demand, particularly from South America – where the middle and upper middle classes dream about a second home in Miami – the market has recovered at lightning speed. We started by first selling condominiums very cheap to move the existing inventory and then as demand grew, we brought prices to the level they are today. The demand and the increase in prices was fueled almost entirely by the multitude of international buyers trying to come to Miami.

So far in Florida, the recovery is only in Miami because it's an international city.

**Would you give an overview of your current project, One Ocean?**

This project is the one in which I most want to live; this is a development that I'm designing for my 50 best friends.

The passion I'm showing has to be very real, so there is involvement in every line that is drawn, for both the interior design and the architecture of Enrique Norton. We have spent so much time on architecture, on the amenities, on the balconies, and on the interiors from an architectural point of view that it's truly a piece of art. The building is the most beautiful we have done yet.

From a design point of view, I brought in Yabu Pushelberg because I wanted to have a modernity that was timeless and someone who would work with me in selecting art pieces that were not guided by the interior design but stood out on their own.

We're buying great art from important galleries and we're directly commissioning work by great artists like José Bedía, Michele Oka Doner, and Ana Tiscornia for the project itself.

This level of detail is intense but the project will be so unique that people who know will understand the difference.

We're also in the best location in Florida: at the tip of South Beach.

**How did your passion for art evolve?**

Art is an interpretation of the times we live in and it makes you wiser, happier, sadder – it interacts with you and it makes you grow.

It also makes me feel good, it makes the projects better, it provides a value to the people living in those projects, and it helps emerging artists and galleries, which are always struggling.

**Do you ever take the time to appreciate how much you achieved?**

I love seeing the fruit of my labor.

Nevertheless, what drives me is not what I've done in the past but I have yet to do. ●