

Designing An Ecosystem

An Interview with Kenneth A. Himmel, President, Related Ross

EDITORS' NOTE Kenneth Himmel is President of Related Ross, and is an expert in creating thriving developments that bring forth the energy and vitality of an urban destination that resonates with existing local lifestyle and culture. Under Himmel's leadership, Related captured the world's attention with iconic, award-winning destinations that include CityPlace in West Palm Beach as well as Time Warner Center and Hudson Yards in New York; the Grand Avenue redevelopment project in downtown Los Angeles; and Related Santa Clara in Santa Clara, California. The developments have had a profound impact on their surrounding environments – neighborhoods that have become vibrant, contemporary urban centers. His past developments reflect his success: Water Tower Place and 730 North Michigan in Chicago; Copley Place in Boston; Reston Town Center in Reston, Virginia; and Pacific Place in Seattle. Himmel is also responsible for the formation of a restaurant collection in Boston that includes the legendary Grill 23 & Bar, The Harvest Restaurant, The Banks Fish House, and Bistro du Midi. Himmel is the creator and the Managing General Partner for the restaurant collection at Columbus Circle, New York City including the legendary Per Se with chef Thomas Keller and Porter House with chef Michael Lomonaco. Himmel is a member of the Historical Society of Palm Beach County and on the Board of the Kravis Center for the Performing Arts. He received a BS degree with distinction from Cornell University – School of Hotel Administration (where he fosters ongoing mentorship), and a BS degree from The College of William and Mary.



Kenneth A. Himmel

The firm also developed and owns the most celebrated destinations in the region including CityPlace – the most visited neighborhood in the City, fostering culture and enriching the community with lush green spaces, a diverse mix of experiential retail and culinary offerings, the largest concentration of public art installed by a private company in Palm Beach County, and educational programming and modern residences; as well as Hilton West Palm Beach, RH West Palm and the historic Harriet Himmel Theater.

What is Related Ross' long-term vision for transforming West Palm Beach into a major business and lifestyle hub?

Our vision is to partner alongside the city and businesses in Palm Beach County to support its growth into one of the country's leading areas for business, innovation, and lifestyle. We are tackling that from the real estate standpoint by creating world-class office, investing in infrastructure that supports the residents, including affordable and workforce housing,

bringing new culinary concepts and shops that rival other top markets, while maintaining the character that makes cities like West Palm Beach special. Beyond real estate, we are also focused on addressing every dimension of how people actually live and work, and delivering what top companies look for in headquarters or office sites, such as talent, education, and healthcare.

That's why we are proud to be partnering with Cleveland Clinic to bring a 120,000 square-foot outpatient center to 15 CityPlace (expected to open in 2027) with a 150-bed research hospital to follow just a short drive from CityPlace. Cleveland Clinic will bring a world-renowned research hospital to downtown West Palm Beach, and Stephen Ross was instrumental in making that happen with a \$50 million donation. In addition, and to his credit, Stephen also championed and committed \$50 million to Vanderbilt University's new graduate campus, which will welcome roughly 1,000 graduate students in finance, engineering, and space and defense technology, and bolster the city's talent pipeline and provide additional opportunities for those in the region seeking graduate-level education.

FIRM BRIEF Led by visionary developer Stephen Ross, Related Ross (relatedross.com) is a fully integrated real estate firm with unparalleled expertise in mixed-use development. Related Ross has led the transformation of West Palm Beach into one of the fastest growing cities in the nation to live, work, and visit. Related Ross leads the market in Class A office with more than 3 million square feet of existing commercial holdings built and under construction. Known for luxury residential buildings, Related Ross is introducing a new class of rentals and condos to the market including The Laurel and South Flagler House.



Rendering of Cleveland Clinic Hospital



Rendering of Edgeworth – Residential Condominium

Beyond his investments in Cleveland Clinic and Vanderbilt University, Stephen has committed \$14 million to the Stephen M. Ross Emerging Scholars program – providing fully covered scholarships for every student attending Forest Hill High School and Palm Beach Lakes High School to earn their associate’s or bachelor’s degree at Palm Beach State College. Stephen saw this as an opportunity to give back to the families and residents of West Palm Beach, and to create real economic mobility for students who might not otherwise have the chance to go to college.

Our approach is to invest in public-private partnerships, build relationships with the community and continually support sustainable growth in West Palm Beach.

How does Related Ross create a “sense of place” in large-scale projects?

We approach every project as a true mixed-use destination rather than a standalone development. From the start, we are designing an ecosystem, thinking about how residential, retail, office, hospitality, and public space interact and support each other, but the heart of every mixed-use project is driven by a collection of curated restaurants and retail brands.

We are also intentional about the mix of tenants and partners we bring in. The restaurants,

boutiques, and brands signal an identity and attract repeat visitors. Over time, that shapes how people talk about a place.

Will you provide an overview of Related Ross’ current developments?



Rendering of Vanderbilt University Graduate Campus

Since I was interviewed by LEADERS Magazine last year, a lot has come to life and a lot has been added to the pipeline. One Flagler is fully leased with a 50,000 square-foot lease by Wells Fargo announced earlier this year, 10 and 15 CityPlace are under construction with a combined one million square feet of office space anchored by ServiceNow and Cleveland Clinic, and our residential portfolio now spans four luxury condo towers with two actively under construction and expected to open next year, South Flagler House and Shorecrest. Our newest residential launch is Edgeworth, a KPF designed waterfront condominium located within walking distance to downtown West Palm Beach and Palm Beach Island, with an amenity program that outperforms any other amenity package in the state.

We’ve also continued to broaden what we offer this community. We launched a new mixed-income housing division and announced our first ground-up affordable project in downtown West Palm Beach, a 7-story, 137 unit residential project. We are focused on continuing to look for affordable and workforce housing developments in the downtown area to provide housing for the community that lives and works in West Palm Beach.

What do you feel have been the keys to West Palm Beach’s success in attracting major financial firms and talent?

I think West Palm Beach has crossed an important threshold, shifting in perception from being a seasonal retreat to a serious hub for business. Companies that have come to explore what it means to do business here quickly realize the advantages. A great deal of credit for that goes to Mayor James and the City Commissioners, who have been thoughtful stewards of the city’s growth from the beginning. Their civic leadership has made an enormous difference.

Additionally, what people don’t always recognize is that West Palm Beach benefits from being a part of the larger region. Florida’s Gold Coast spanning West Palm Beach, Fort



Renderings of Phillips Point Office Tower (above and below)

Lauderdale, and Miami, essentially functions as one unified growth market, where each city brings something distinct to the whole. West Palm Beach brings the capital and the financial community, and Miami brings the global connectivity and entrepreneurial energy. Taken together, this region makes a compelling case to major firms and talent because it offers companies a combination of advantages, as well as a regulatory environment, cost structure, and network that are unheard of elsewhere.

What are your views on the current state of the South Florida real estate market?

Like any major market, South Florida has to be evaluated carefully and on its own terms. During the pandemic and for the years that followed we've seen extraordinary appreciation, which is, in my view, a healthy thing for the long-term stability of the region.

What gives us confidence is the nature of the demand we are seeing across our own portfolio. The companies leasing space here are making long-term commitments. The families buying homes here are putting down permanent roots. These are not decisions that get made based on where the market is in any given month, and that tells us something important about the underlying strength of this region.

How are technology and AI impacting real estate development?

Technology and AI are beginning to influence nearly every stage of the development process, from how sites are evaluated and underwritten to how buildings are designed, constructed, leased, and operated. Across the industry, we are seeing teams use data and modeling tools to make earlier and better-informed decisions about where to build, how to design efficiently, how to track

construction progress, and how to manage buildings once they are open. The pace of change is meaningful, and any developer working at scale today has to be thoughtful about where these tools add value and where the human relationships and judgment that have always defined this business still matter most.

What role does sustainability play in Related Ross' projects?

Sustainability is fundamentally embedded in how we build and how we operate. It is part of every decision we make, and we take it as a serious responsibility to our communities and

the broader environment. That means designing for energy efficiency, building systems that capture and reuse resources like rainwater, and thinking carefully about long-term resilience at every stage of development.

We are proud that CityPlace was designated the first LEED Gold Certified Neighborhood Development project in Palm Beach County. Across our portfolio, we build to Florida Green Building Coalition standards, our buildings are designed to meet at least LEED Silver, and One Flagler was the first building in West Palm Beach to achieve a WiredScore Platinum rating.



What qualities do you look for when attracting talent to Related Ross?

We are a company that thinks differently and we look for people who do the same. People who challenge assumptions, see around corners, and aren't satisfied with how things have always been done. But we also want people who believe in this place. South Florida is one of the great economic stories in America right now and the opportunity here is immense. We want people who see it and who are invested in what this region becomes.

Our mission is to create opportunity for all across Palm Beach County and South Florida and that mission starts with the people we hire. The people who thrive at Related Ross are the ones who want their work to matter and who care about building to expand access and create possibility.

When you look to the future of real estate development, what excites you the most, and what concerns you the most?

What interests me most is that as people increasingly seek to integrate how they live, work, and spend their time, it creates an extraordinary opportunity for developers who know how to program and operate mixed-use at a high level. The demand for places where everything is within reach – great restaurants, great offices, great homes – has never been stronger, and the cities and developers who deliver that well are going to define the next generation of urban life in America.



Rendering of 10 and 15 CityPlace Office Towers

What concerns me is affordability. As cities grow and strengthen, they inevitably get more expensive and residents often get priced out. That is something every developer of scale has a responsibility to work to address. This issue is also personal to us.

Affordable housing is how Related began, and that sense of purpose carries through to what we do at Related Ross. The mixed-income housing division we launched this year and the homes we are developing at Sapodilla are a direct expression of that. ●



Rendering of South Flagler House – Residential Condominium