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YOUNG GUNS

South Florida Market Report

# Real estate's rising stars

Up-and-comers in South Florida's 35-and-under crowd, from Miami Worldcenter developer Nitin Motwani to Related Group's Jon Paul Perez

BY ERIC KALIS

**T**he experience of navigating through the devastating real estate market collapse of the last decade and the past few years' revival has defined the careers of many in South Florida's real estate industry, particularly those relatively new to the business.

*The Real Deal* talked to dozens of local real estate experts to get a sense of who in the 35-and-under crowd is flourishing in a reinvented industry. Several of the names that emerged, including Jon

Paul Perez, Daniel de la Vega and Raymond Fort, represent the next generation of prominent South Florida real estate families who are carving their own paths within the family business. Others, like Lili-ana Gomez, relocated to the area to pursue new opportunities and found their own paths.

Read on to learn more about what makes these industry leaders stand out.

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**MICHAEL NUNZIATA, 32**  
13TH FLOOR INVESTMENTS

In 2009, Michael Nunziata was in Miami scouting acquisition opportunities for a New York investment firm, when he met 13th Floor Investments managing principal Arnaud Karsenti.

"It was a tough time to get deals done," Nunziata said. "I kept reading about Arnaud and decided I had to meet this guy. I emailed him at 6 a.m. and he responded by 6:30, which I loved."

When he was a child, Nunziata's family



At the groundbreaking for Central Parc, from left: Shellaine Ramkishun, Arnaud Karsenti, Michael Nunziata, David Deka and Robert Suris.

ran a small Orlando-area mortgage company and owned a three-tenant commercial building. He would do odd jobs around the property during summers. While meeting with Karsenti, Nunziata was drawn to 13th Floor's entrepreneurial approach, which reminded him of his family's.

Nunziata, who graduated from the University of Florida and earned a master's degree in real estate from Columbia University, joined the company as an associate

in December 2009. With South Florida's residential market in a downswing, 13th Floor aggressively pursued low-cost properties that could be repositioned to generate substantial returns.

One of the sites 13th Floor picked up during the recession was a former golf course in Broward County's Tamarac that was tied to a political corruption scandal. Nunziata, now a principal at 13th Floor and president of company's Central Communities division, is overseeing the redevelopment of the site into the 253-home Central Parc. A second phase of 174 residences is planned.

The project, as well as the creation of Central Communities, represents the evolution of 13th Floor, which in the past would buy land, get it entitled and sell it to a builder, according to Nunziata.

"We saw Central Parc as a great opportunity to expand our platform," he said.

