



The Azul Apartment complex in downtown Stuart has begun leasing units with an anticipated move-in date of August 1.

Former Stuart editor Nancy Smith among Azul's first tenants

Housing choices in downtown Stuart will expand this summer with the opening August 1 of the Azul Apartments on Joan Jefferson Way. Among the first six tenants who already signed a lease is Nancy Butler Smith, executive editor of Sunshine State News, based in Tallahassee.

"The location is fantastic," said Smith, who was The Stuart News editor for 28 years prior to accepting her position at SSN about 10 years ago. "I've always wanted to live in downtown Stuart."

Smith will continue to lead SSN's editorial department, which will require periodic commutes to Tallahassee, she said, but it also means she'll be back home in familiar territory among family, friends, and only a stone's throw from City Hall.

The 1.6-acre parcel directly across from the sailfish fountain roundabout is owned by the City of Stuart, purchased for \$1.5 million in 2013 with an eye, at first, toward building a parking garage. Marketing studies, however, demonstrated that the city would receive a greater long-term return on its triangle-property investment by allowing a developer to build rental apartments.

With proposed monthly rents estimated at the time by New Urban Communities to be in the range of around \$1,200 - \$1,500, an apartment complex also would meet a demonstrated need for additional housing within city limits.

A 99-year contract was signed, tax concessions made for the first 10 years, and a timeline that guaranteed completion by June 2020. Instead, they will finish 10 months ahead of schedule.

The New Urban Communities website is now taking apartment reservations for the remaining 43 units. The advertised rental prices are slightly higher than first estimated; in fact, rental rates were not published until the units went on the market this spring.

The least expensive unit, an 800-sq-ft one-bedroom, one-bath unit, leases for \$1,495 per month. To increase the space to 1,062 sq. ft. also increases the rent to \$2,095.

The most popular size, two-bedroom, two-bath apartments begin at \$2,095 for 1,135 sq. ft. and \$2,895 for a 1,332 sq. ft. unit. Thirty-four units are available.

Four luxury units of three bedrooms and two baths are offered at a beginning price of \$3,195 per month.

All the apartments have high ceilings and gourmet island kitchens. Some have river views with balconies and covered parking. Those units that do not include parking can lease an on-site parking space for an additional \$99 per month.

Amenities include a fitness center, club room and a swimming pool. Tenants are required to purchase a minimum \$100,000 liability insurance policy. Smith added.

The additional charges are worth it, she said. "The stars aligned (to make the move possible)," she added. "I'm very excited."

Additional projects in downtown Stuart include Seminole Bluff, which will offer 20 units starting at \$1.1 million, and River House Stuart, offering 15 condos and five townhouses starting at \$850,000.

Clerk of Court's record of excellence recognized nationally

For the 25th consecutive year, the Martin County Clerk & Comptroller's Office was recognized for excellence in financial reporting by the Government Fi-

nance Officers Association of the United States and Canada, and honored by Martin County Commission Chair Ed Ciampi.

"This is no small achievement," Ciampi remarked during a January commission meeting. "We should not take our Comptroller's record of excellence for granted, just because she makes it look easy."



Clerk of Court Carolyn Timmann

The Certificate of Achievement for Excellence recognized Martin County's comprehensive annual financial report for fiscal year 2017. The report provides transparency and insight into how the county manages public funds.

"Obtaining this milestone certificate is the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting and reporting," said Clerk of the Court Carolyn Timmann. "My entire professional finance team shares in this accomplishment. The record of 25 consecutive years of achievement is a testament to their dedication of financial reporting and government transparency to our taxpayers."

The Florida Constitution established the independent office of the Clerk & Comptroller as a public trustee, responsible for safeguarding public records and public funds. In addition to the roles of Clerk of the Circuit Court, County Recorder and Clerk of the Board of County Commissioners, the Clerk & Comptroller is the Chief Financial Officer, Treasurer and Auditor for Martin County, and is an elected official. ■

Florida loses three prominent Democrats

Three elder statesmen who had a lasting impact on Martin County, indeed, on the entire state, and were often called "titans of Florida's golden age," all died on the same weekend in May.

South Florida native and long-time chairman of the South Florida Water Management District Governing board, attorney Allan Francis Milledge, 88,

died May 24. The 1975 author of the state's first growth management plan, he also chaired the Environmental Land Management Study Committee (ELMS II) for Gov. Bob Graham, as well as a host of other major environmental appointments that addressed the pollution of the Everglades, restoring the Kissimmee River and Florida Bay, and re-plumbing the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project.

The next day, Florida lost its property-rights champion, Bert Harris Jr., 99, on May 25. He was the Highlands County extension agent throughout the '50s, '60s and '70s, after which he served two terms in the state legislature, for which he was best known for passing the state's Property Rights Law that protects private property owners from government overreach.

One of the Martin County lawsuits filed in 2013 as the result of the county commission's Heard-Fielding-Scott decision to deny the Seabranche townhouse development, which had met the county's Comprehensive Growth Management requirements, was based on the Bert Harris property rights law. (The case was settled out of court and resulted in the Sheridan development in Hobe Sound.)

A portion of the Harmony lawsuit against the county also is a "Bert Harris claim," according to court records, and had the Flash Beach Grille lawsuit proceeded to court in 2013, it too would have been based in part on the Bert Harris law to protect private citizens' property rights.

Attorney Talbot "Sandy" D'Alemberte, 85, former president of FSU and First Amendment rights champion who has led Maggy Hurchalla's recent appeal of a civil court jury's award of \$4.4 million in damages to a private company, died May 26. He was respected throughout legal circles for his work on human rights, civil rights, open government and social justice, writing in favor of the passage of Amendment 4 to restore voting rights to former felons.

Former dean of the FSU College of Law, D'Alemberte also served two years as the president of the American Bar Association, prior to being named president of FSU. ■

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