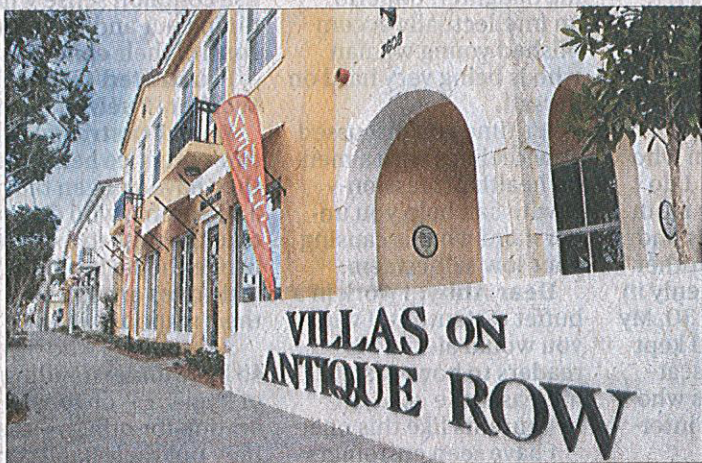


# D | Accent

Culture Editor: Larry Aydlette 561-820-4436 or pb\_accent@pbpost.com | On the Web: [palmbeachpost.com](http://palmbeachpost.com)



Miami City Ballet to dance at the Kravis  
The Scene, D3



Both retail and residential spaces are in the Villas on Antique Row.

CITY LIVING

## A New Energy on Antique Row

Shops, housing reinvigorate downtown art and antiques district

By Barbara Marshall  
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Recently, Neneh Baggiani has witnessed the power of that old real estate adage about location.

For most of last year, her Out of Africa Art Shop limped along on South Dixie Highway, below Forest Hill Boulevard, some days without a single customer.

"It's the dead zone there," she said.

But since she moved into a just-built retail-and-residential project on Antique Row, further north on the same street, she's welcomed a steady stream of collectors buying her ceremonial figures from Ethiopia, her inlaid Moroccan mirrors and bold brass jewelry from South Africa.

"What I've done here in a month is more than the entire seven months I was down there," said Baggiani, a native of Gambia, in West Africa.

For a shopping district famous for the venerable and the vintage, the Antique Row Art and Design District this season is all about the new.

New shops, new shop owners and for the first time in decades, new housing — as well as a new top ranking as a



Neneh Baggiani, owner of Out of Africa Art Shop in the Villas on Antique Row. The shop carries original and authentic African and Moroccan art.

## Antique Row

continued from D1

Baggiani moved into a 630-square-foot shop she rents beneath the Villas on Antique Row in December, about a week after the first five retail spaces were completed. The remaining six retail spaces will be finished in March.

All the shop spaces sold within two weeks of going on sale last year, at \$150,000 each.

"And we have a waiting list of 30 people," said Harry Posin, president of Legend & Co, the Villas' developer.

The week before the project's townhomes had their grand opening last weekend, 25 percent of the 46 units had already sold, Posin said. Prices range from \$320,000 to \$490,000. Two were purchased by Antique Row shop owners.

The land had been a weed-choked sandlot since 2006 when the old Goodwill store was razed and moved south of Southern Boulevard to the 5400 block of Dixie. In those boom days, a previous developer planned 82 units and 14,000 square feet of shops until the idea flopped in the real estate market's bust. Posin started construction on a far smaller project after picking up the land for \$3.6 million last February.

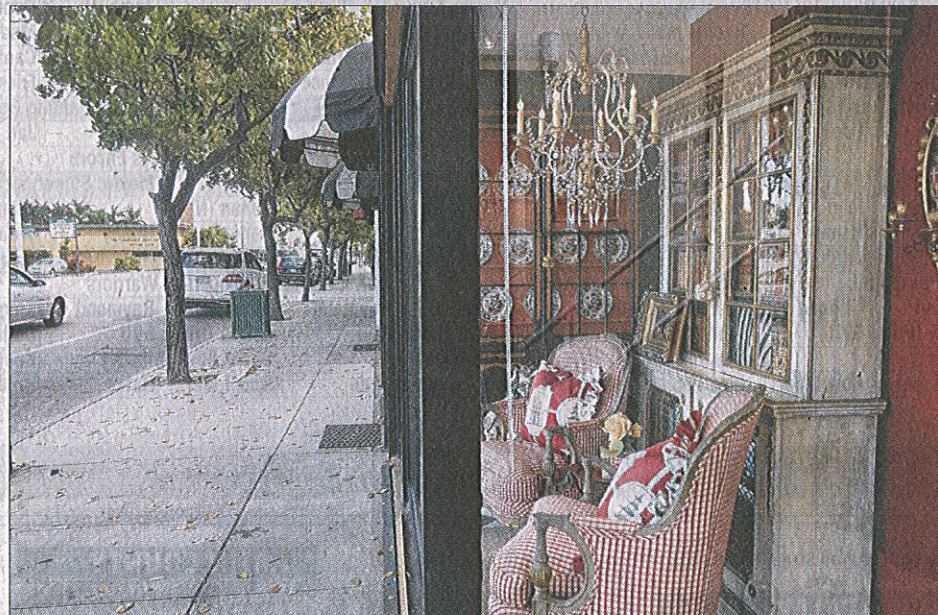
In recent years, Antique Row's high/low mix has been mentioned in publications from the New York Times to House Beautiful to Architectural Digest.

Earlier this month, Conde Nast Traveler magazine mentioned the Row as one of the reasons its readers rated Palm Beach the nation's fourth best shopping city.

The magazine's readers heralded Palm



The Villas on Antique Row have prompted favorable comment in national publications: BILL INGRAM PHOTOS / THE PALM BEACH POST



Shops along Antique Row helped give Palm Beach its No. 4 ranking as best shopping area.

and splurge" trips, including the Antique Row Art and Design District, a destination for home design and clothing shops. Simply put, there is "something for everyone."

The fact that Antique Row is across the Intracoastal in West

New York furniture designer Todd Hase was already spending the winter in Wellington so his teenage daughters could ride in the Winter Equestrian Festival. Charmed by the Row's mix of more than 50 shops, he bought one of the Villas' new retail

furniture as well as the antique French pieces he picks up each summer in France.

To Hase, Antique Row's concentration of shops feels like one of the Left Bank neighborhoods he's familiar with in Paris.

"I think it's very

district in Paris, with its concentration of very fine antique dealers. It's a good fit for us. They can buy custom-made upholstery from us then find Murano glass lamps from the dealer next door," said Hase.

Cheryl Grubb's Patina Antiques and Design Services is another Antique Row newcomer, who opened recently after moving from Fort Lauderdale.

Other shop owners jumped at the chance to be owners rather than renters.

For more than 20 years, Christa Wilm rented space in the heart of Antique Row. This season, she moved her Christa's South Seashells & Jewelry shop across the street to the Villas, as an owner.

"I'm so happy this wonderful little place came available to purchase," Wilm said. "It's smaller than my old space, but since I'm carrying my seashell creations only, instead

The newly energized atmosphere, she says, feels like the camaraderie of the years when the fledgling antiques district was still filled with shops selling cast-offs from Palm Beach condos.

"I love my new neighbors, who are new faces to the Row. They're all so enthusiastic and they all show up for the (Antique Row board) meetings. I have a feeling this block is going to be like the old days when we would have potluck dinners," Wilm said.

Antique Row Association president Faustina Pace isn't relocating her shop of French industrial antiques but she did purchase one of the new retail spaces to rent to another merchant.

"Owning a place on Antique Row? How can that be a bad investment?" said Pace. "There's hardly ever a vacancy for the season."

In recent years, the Row has even siphoned off several long-time Palm Beach interior design shops, such as Lars Bolander, Cindy Ray and Mecox.

To Posin, adding housing to an established retail district with a national reputation seemed a sure bet.

"We were pleasantly surprised at how strong the Antique Row brand is," Posin said. "Add to that, the total absence of new houses in the area. We think there are a lot of people who want to live in the area but don't want to have to do the renovation required of an older property."

Pace says she's happy to see new life blossoming in a place whose stock-in-trade is the past.

"Having this new project," she said, "has brought new energy to the street."