

## Transforming Neighborhoods

An Interview with Jorge Pérez,  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Related Group



The Poets in Bordeaux (Body Soul God, Country, Water Fire)  
by Jaume Plensa at Park Grove in Miami

**EDITORS' NOTE** Jorge Pérez has been at the forefront of South Florida's complex urban evolution for over 40 years. He started out in the 1970's, making a name for himself in the public housing market of neighborhoods like Miami's Little Havana and Homestead. Pérez has received numerous awards for his professional and philanthropic achievements, including Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur Of The Year, the Hispanic Achievement & Business



Jorge Pérez

Entrepreneurship Award from Hispanic magazine, The Developers and Builders Alliance's Community Advancement Award, and The Beacon Council's 2015 Jay Malina Award. He is also committed to The Giving Pledge, a campaign founded by Warren Buffett and Bill Gates which states he will donate 50 percent of his wealth to philanthropic purposes. In 2005, Time magazine named Pérez one of the top 25 most influential Hispanics in the United States, and he has appeared on the cover of Forbes twice. He graduated summa cum laude from C.W. Post College in Long Island and earned his master's in urban planning from the University of Michigan.

**COMPANY BRIEF** For more than 40 years, Related Group ([relatedgroup.com](http://relatedgroup.com)) has been improving city skylines with developments characterized by innovative design, enduring quality, and environments that celebrate culture and active lifestyles. Related's distinctive residential projects range from luxury high-rise condominiums to public and affordable housing developments. Since its inception in 1979, Related Group has built and managed more than 100,000 condominium and apartment residences which are meticulously designed with finishes and amenities that transform buildings into vibrant residential environments. Answering the demands and desires of a new generation, Related has helped to define South Florida's urban evolution through its dynamic living communities. Many of Related's properties are distinguished by groundbreaking partnerships with world-renowned architects, designers, and artists who help to create residential developments recognized as

urban landmarks. Philippe Starck, David Rockwell, Karim Rashid, Rem Koolhaas, Piero Lissoni, Cesar Pelli, Carlos Ott, Yabu Pushelberg, and Arquitectonica are among the many famous collaborators and inspirations behind Related properties. A longtime art collector and philanthropist, Related Group's Founder, Chairman and CEO Jorge Pérez, is committed to showcasing museum-quality art in Related's developments, educating and inspiring residents across the

demographic spectrum. Original works by artists from around the world, from iconic contemporary sculpture to one-of-a-kind commissioned installations, infuse Related's properties with energy and sophistication. Related's commitment to architecture and design excellence has resulted in a host of accolades, including the prestigious Honor Award from the National Building Museum.

**What have been the keys to Related Group's success and how do you define the Related Group difference?**

The key to our success has been the same since day one: each and every project must benefit its surrounding community, not just its respective residents.

Looking at developments through this lens definitely adds a layer of difficulty, but it also challenges us to truly understand the needs and wants of each hyper-local community, resulting in a superior product. This approach not only allows us to gain an unmatched understanding of our various markets, but also to kick-start numerous neighborhood-wide transformations throughout areas such as Brickell, South of Fifth, Wynwood, Liberty City and more.

Our team's ambition and commitment to excellence are our biggest differentiators. Each of our developers is always striving to out-do their last project, and those of their peers, and the results speak for themselves. This approach encourages project leaders to



Auberge Beach Residences & Spa Fort Lauderdale

develop a strategy that extends far beyond the building's walls, resulting in our museum-quality art collections, our partnerships with architects and world-famous interior designers, the integration of mixed-use components and more.

**Does South Florida remain the priority for the company's growth?**

Miami is our home, and nobody knows it like we do. Of course, we need to diversify geographically for business reasons, but we will continue to play an integral part in South Florida's urban evolution. In fact, we've recently started work on the first set of mixed-use buildings in the Wynwood neighborhood and our affordable housing division has more than a dozen local projects at any given time.

With that said, we're always looking for new markets and are eager to see the completion of new projects throughout markets like Tampa, Orlando, Atlanta, Texas and Arizona.

**Will you provide an overview of Related Group's current projects?**

We currently have upwards of 5,100 units under active development throughout our four divisions. Our domestic properties range from ultra-luxurious condos like Auberge in Fort Lauderdale, GranParaiso in Edgewater, or Residences by Armani/Casa in Sunny Isles, to hip rentals like Wynwood 25 in Downtown Miami or Manor Riverwalk in Tampa, to transformative mixed-income properties like Liberty Square in Miami, with retail and community spaces and over 1,455 residential units, or the 1,636-unit West River project in Tampa. We are also in the middle of a major expansion into the Southwestern United States.

Internationally, we're much more focused on developing luxury condos and condo-hotel concepts. Currently, we have the two-towered SLS LUX Puerto Madero in Argentina; six-tower SLS-branded property in Cancun; hotel, condo and single-family oceanfront project in Zihuantanejo, Mexico; high-rise condo tower in Panama; Parque Global, a massive 47-story project consisting of five high-rise towers in Sao Paulo, and more.

**What are your views on the Miami real estate market today?**

Miami is a young, vibrant city with huge potential. Thousands of people from around the country and the world are moving here every year, and that influx is sure to keep the local real estate industry thriving for years to come.

Of course, there are matters we must keep our eye on, namely, the limited supply of workforce housing, among other issues. However, the private sector and local government have been doing an incredible job of tackling these issues proactively.

It's also encouraging to see developers taking a much more measured and responsible approach to development. We all learned some valuable lessons after the challenges in 2008, and that stumble forced us to take a hard look at our work and explore ways to end Miami's long-running boom-and-bust cycle. Today,



*La Maternidad by Fernando Botero at Auberge Beach Residences & Spa Fort Lauderdale*

Miami's real estate market is much more mature and, most importantly, it is set up for long-term success. I can't wait to see how the city continues to evolve and grow into its full potential.

**What do you see as the strengths of Miami from a business standpoint?**

Miami's location and natural assets are its biggest strengths. Today's world is much more connected and flexible, meaning a large proportion of businesses are no longer locked into a specific location. So, why would a web-based business choose to be located anywhere other than a tropical paradise like Miami? Adding to that allure is a rich entrepreneurial ecosystem, a world-class culinary scene and a thriving cultural landscape.

This city has it all, but perhaps the most important aspect is the feeling of forward momentum you get when walking through any given neighborhood. You can immediately tell there is something special happening and you want to be a part of it.

**How critical is the role of art in terms of the culture of South Florida?**

The role of art cannot be understated, especially when you consider the direct correlation between the arrival of Art Basel Miami Beach and the recent blossoming of the local arts and culture scene. Today, there are hundreds of young, ambitious artists who are not only pushing the local creative scene forward, but also impacting everything from the area's fashion to its architecture and even the food scene.

**Where does your passion for art stem from and what had made art such a key focus of your philanthropic work?**

My mother ingrained in me a love and passion for art and culture from a very early age. She'd take me to the best museums in Colombia, Argentina and Cuba, and while I didn't know it at the time, these day trips laid the foundation for a life-long passion.

Today, art continues to be a strong link to my family and my culture. It reminds me where I came from which, in turn, guides me to where I'm going. I want others to be able to experience this link to their pasts and by contributing to organizations like PAMM and The National YoungArts Foundation, I achieve just that.

**When you look at the Pérez Art Museum and the impact it has made, is it what you had envisioned?**

The goal remains to help make PAMM a celebration of the city and its incredibly colorful, vibrant and warm people. Today, when I walk the halls, I see visitors of every color, shape and size enjoying the incredible art and coming closer together because of it. What else can you ask for? I couldn't be prouder of what the museum's team has accomplished and can't wait to see what comes next.

**Are you able to take moments to appreciate and celebrate all that you have accomplished?**

I have always tried to stay focused on what's ahead of me and, to be honest, it's been a great way to stay humble and avoid resting on my laurels. But, of course, sometimes I look around and realize just how much things have changed, and it can get overwhelming. To be honest, I just feel incredibly grateful for my life-long career doing what I love, and more importantly, the family I have built in the process. ●