

CHAPTER FIVE

THE BEACON ON 3RD STREET STUNNING BUILDING



“The Carlton Towers is at last a downtown Beacon,” proclaimed the Tampa Bay Times in November, 2004.

“Now the building’s stunning,” is how designer Ed Biggs described the 1960s high-rise . “You just didn’t know it because of what had been done to it over the years. Now people will see it as the architecturally pure building it really is.”

Two architectural firms, Orlando firm Bloodgood Sharp Buster and St. Petersburg’s Wedding, Stephenson & Ibarguen Architects tackled the exterior.

The signature '60s pierced curtain wall on the Third Street side was coated with metallic silver paint, and new lighting made the building glow at night. The awning at the entrance and the pair of metal herons standing in the fountain were first to go. New, sleek aluminum-pipe railings were installed on the balconies.

Investor's Realty president Heidi Marling chose the interior designer to update the models and the common areas eighteen months before.



"I believe a friend of the Marlings told Heidi to contact me," recalled Ed Biggs. "At the time, the Marlings were building apartments. I drove to her office and met with Heidi and John. I begged them not to give the job to anyone else. And I got it!"



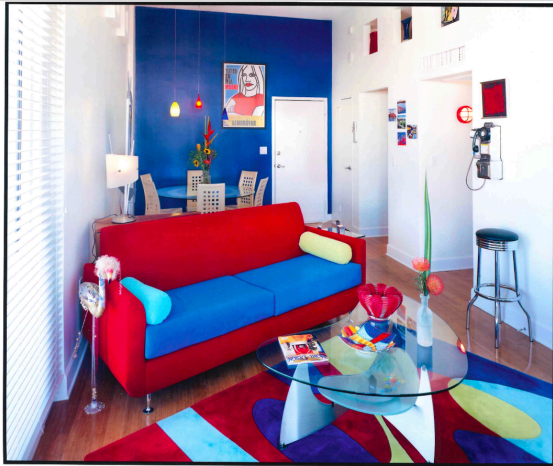
“It was a really solid building with an excellent floor plan, large rooms and lots of closets, explained Heidi. “That’s pretty unique in a building built in 1963. It was a fun, but difficult project.”

The Marling-Biggs team designed and furnished the public areas.

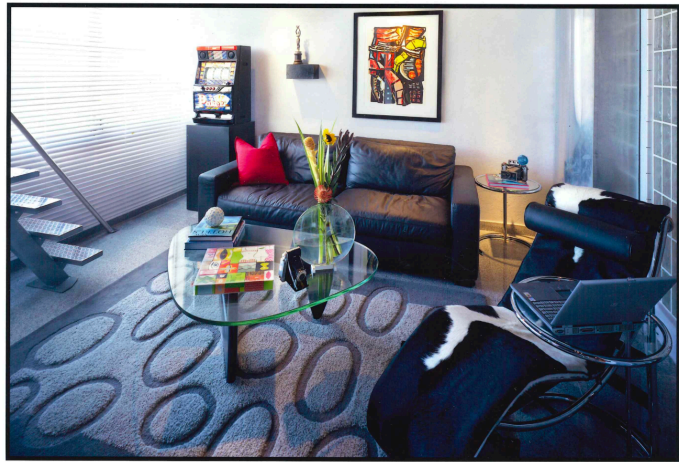
“I wanted to give the building a little more pizzazz,” Ed added. “Heidi and I were on the same page about almost everything in the building. She has amazing taste. No question we had to gut the first floor, with a fresh coat of paint, new lights, pictures on the wall, a new reception desk, even that wood insert in the lobby floor.”

They converted the card room into a social room, with comfortable mid-century modern furniture. They updated the fitness center and put in the fountain out front.”

Biggs also worked with several buyers to design their units. He helped former Carlton Towers tenants Mike and Jeannette Harrison design their two-bedroom unit with raised ceilings, and strong colors to show off their art collection and Italian cabinetry in the kitchen.



THE HARRISONS' CONDOMINIUM



THE BIGGS' CONDOMINIUM

The Sarasota designer and his wife bought two units. He designed #1015 into an urban loft: chisel-edged black granite kitchen sounter, red cabinetry. He created a sleeping loft above the kitchen, accessed by industrial-looking open steel steps

Bigg’s wife bought #319, because it looked over the pool. She said it felt like a resort. Cabanas were added around the pool, to reduce any traffic noise anticipated from the the University of South Florida St. Petersburg’s first Residence Hall under construction across Fifth Avenue.

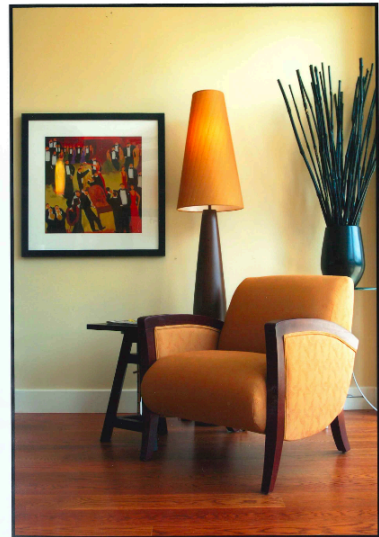
THE LOBBY

Carlton Towers



THE LOBBY

Beacon on 3rd



THE SOCIAL ROOM

Carlton Towers (Card Room)



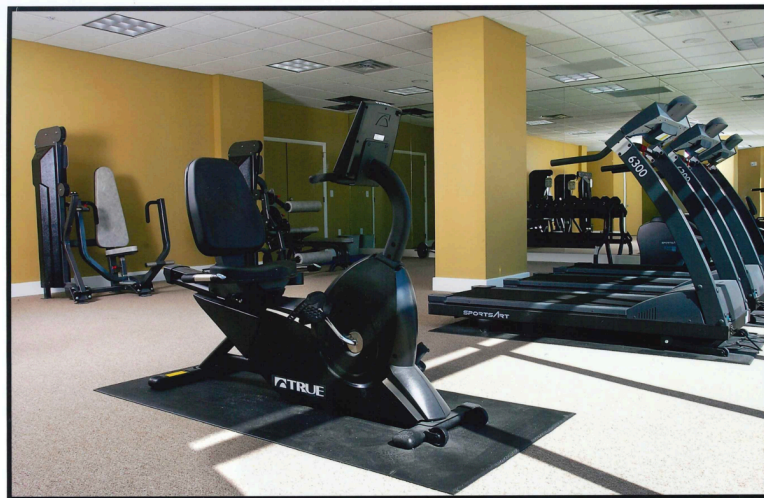
THE SOCIAL ROOM

The Beacon on 3rd



THE SOCIAL ROOM & FITNESS CENTER

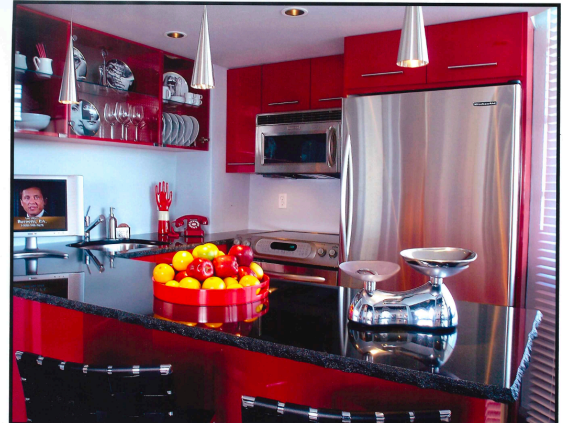
The Beacon on 3rd



CONDOMINIUM MODELS



CONDOMINIUM MODELS





Biggs also created the Carlton sign, the historic art piece that honors the past while looking to the future.

“The contractor had removed the letters from the building’s roof and I found them in a dumpster. I dragged them out and took ‘em to a automotive paint shop. A metalsmith then put them together. Heidi and I wrote the accompanying plaque.”

RENAMED THE BEACON ON 3RD, IT NOW STANDS PROUDLY IN THE ST. PETERSBURG SKYLINE, CELEBRATING THE PAST, CAPTURING THE PRESENT AND EMBRACING THE FUTURE.

While the building was being remodeled on the inside, the developer recognized another pressing need, parking. Back in 1963, demand for parking was non-existent. Only a handful of tenants even owned a car. And many—like Mrs. Archer and Mrs. Capron—had long since given up driving.



Southside Parking Lot



Northside Parking Lot

But by the turn of the century, times had changed. Families owned two cars. Additional parking would be an attractive feature for prospective condominium owners. So, while the building was being updated, a million-dollar parking deck was added, wrapping neatly around the structure.



City Planner John Hixenbaugh, in approving the new permit, noted that “real estate demographics have changed, and more parking is needed to attract a younger and more automobile-dependent population. Carlton Towers is a perfect example of a property that can remain viable if the opportunity is available to provide additional parking.”

Project manager John Marling credited the architectural firm of Wedding, Stephenson & Ibarguen for completing the 40,000-square-foot parking deck in just fourteen months.

By early 2005, the developers had invested roughly \$6 million in the property—spending \$1 million each on common areas, fire sprinklers and life-safety systems, the parking structure, and unit upgrades, plus another \$2 million on electrical, plumbing, heating, and air conditioning systems.

Still, the conversion of Carlton Towers into the Beacon on Third Street took longer than anyone anticipated.

“About eighteen months too long,” recalled Marling.

The HOA’s board of directors believed the developers had only painted and band-aided defects, while failing to complete all the projects as promised. (More about that in a later chapter) In

spite of their disagreements, Carlton Towers Partners, LLC officially turned over control of the Beacon on 3rd to the homeowners association on May 10, 2005.

“At that point the individual condominiums were pretty much sold out,” Marling explained. “Turning the building over to the Association so that the Board could run the Property was the right thing to do.”

But challenges loomed for the stunning building. The Beacon on 3rd Street was headed into a difficult stretch—one the board of directors would have to navigate.

Their story picks up in Chapter 6.

