

SOFA RISING: Developers Are Betting On The Future Of Osceola Park

BY DIANE FEEN | PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARC JULIEN

To some people, Osceola Park is the promised land. Marc Julien is one of them.



This residential community, just South of Atlantic Avenue, has been a laid back frontier for local homeowners for years. There wasn't much talk about it, and it's been in the shadow of areas such as Lake Ida or Pineapple Grove.

But not anymore.

For the past few years, builders (and locals) have been realizing that Osceola Park is a hidden gem with an incredible Delray Beach pedigree.



It's also emerging as one of Delray's most closely watched residential markets. Called SOFA, or South of Atlantic, the area is undergoing a dramatic transformation fueled by new luxury homes, public improvements, and a growing sense of community.

Among the developers helping to shape SOFA's next chapter is builder Marc Julien. Julien is a real estate visionary who knows where to build and when.

That's why he is making a substantial investment in the area. He's building elegant single-family homes that attract buyers who want walkability, value and long-term potential in downtown Delray Beach.

Julien has seven homes under construction in Osceola Park, with four more planned in the near future.

Five of his new homes are currently for sale at 207, 209 and 222 SE 5th Street.

"The area is a hidden gem that has so many incredible benefits. The sidewalks have been redone, the roads repaved and the street-lights replaced."

SOFA's biggest draw is the walkability factor, the lower prices and its closeness to Atlantic Avenue.

Marc Julien homes in the area range from 3,200 to 4,000 square feet and are priced from \$2.3 million to \$3.2 million.

With clean modern architecture, expansive glass sliding doors and open-concept living spaces, the two-story residences have the Marc Julien pedigree.



"Buyers who want proximity to the beach and downtown Delray can get a single-family home without paying the premium prices in Lake Ida or Delray Beach's established neighborhoods," he said.

According to Julien, SOFA is affordable housing in downtown Delray Beach. The homes are priced at \$700 to \$800 per square foot. "You get a home here for less than you would in Lake Ida. In SOFA, you get the benefit of a great neighborhood that's up-and-coming and provides buyers an opportunity to make a spectacular return on their investment."

It's not just homeowners who Julien feels will benefit from the SOFA neighborhood. It's also investors.

The SOFA area is family-oriented and neighborly, where residents know one another and where children can play in nearby parks or families can gather for local events.

"The best time to invest in a neighborhood is before everyone else discovers it," said Julien. "SOFA is offering buyers the rare opportunity to own a spectacular home at today's prices while benefiting from tomorrow's growth."

The transformation of SOFA extends beyond residential construction. Public improvements, art projects, and a renewed community spirit are all contributing to the neighborhood's momentum.

One of the area's most recognizable cultural project is known as "Art in the Alley." This vibrant public art initiative has helped bring visibility and creative energy to the neighborhood.

"Osceola Park has become a great place to live, work and play with friends and neighbors, thanks to the efforts of James and Lisa Quillian. They are the heartbeat of the neighborhood," said Sharon Koskoff, lead artist for Art in the Alley.

New galleries and restaurants are adding another layer to the district's identity as an emerging arts and residential hub.

Julien is not alone in recognizing the area's promise. Gulfstream Custom Builders has also been investing in SOFA for years, long before many buyers began paying attention to the area.

Alex Gomez, owner of Gulfstream Custom Builders, said his company has been building homes in the area for the past 15 years. He also sees enormous long-term potential because of its central location.

I think it is such a great area, the location is perfect. It's one of the only quadrants of downtown Delray that is not built up and pricey.

Gomez recognized the neighborhood's future because of its proximity to Delray Beach's thriving downtown, the beach and all its amenities.

"Fifteen years ago, I bought property there because I realized how close it was to everything," he said.

Gomez, who grew up in South Florida, envisioned becoming an architect before entering the building industry. He remembers when people overlooked Osceola Park while development surged all around Delray Beach.



"The northeast section of Atlantic Avenue is all built up. The marina area is built up. This is one of the only areas left that is so sought after."

Gomez is also bullish about SOFA because of its proximity to so many businesses. Along Linton Boulevard are destinations such as Whole Foods, Trader Joe's, fitness centers, medical offices, restaurants, and retail shopping.

Over the years, Gomez purchased multiple lots in the area, eventually selling some to other developers. He currently has two spec homes under construction at 519 and 521 SE 4th Avenue.

According to Gomez, buyers are finally able to visualize the neighborhood's transformation as more homes rise simultaneously.

"When there's just one house under construction, people are hesitant. But when you drive through and see 10 or 12 houses you can see change happening."

Gomez also knows that retirees want to be walking distance to Atlantic Avenue. "It's as good a location as anywhere in Delray Beach."

As construction continues in Osceola Park, developers like Julien and Gomez see the neighborhood entering a pivotal moment. One where long-term investment, community identity and downtown living intersect.

For buyers searching for a place that feels undiscovered, SOFA may represent one of Delray Beach's final opportunities to buy into the city's future before everyone else gets on board.

MARC JULIEN HOMES
755 NW 17th Ave STE 107
Delray Beach, FL 33445
954-200-7758
marcjulienhomes.com