

College claims North Miami Beach went from pro-business to pro-developer



Alex Shchegol believes his school is a victim of a plot hatched by father-and-son real estate developers who want to take his land and build a high-rise community on top of a shopping mall in the Eastern Shores community of North Miami Beach.

“This is a total disregard to the small guy,” protests Shchegol. “When I came from the Soviet Union more than 20 years ago, I didn’t think something like this could happen!”

For two years, Shchegol, the founder and president of ASA College, has been locked in litigious warfare with developer Michael Dezer and his son Gil over the school’s right to operate at Intracoastal Mall, a shopping center situated on 31 acres at NE 35th Avenue and NE 163rd Street.

The Dezers own most of Intracoastal Mall and have announced plans to start building 2.5 million square feet of commercial space and 2000 condo units on the 26 acres they own by 2021. That project has been watched by affluent residents of neighboring Eastern Shores who fear the additional traffic congestion. As a precondition to development, the city has stipulated that additional roads be built to handle future traffic.

City Yanks Back Its Welcome Mat

Written by Erik Bojnansky, BT Senior Writer
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The Dezers have built several towers in Sunny Isles Beach, just east of the Intracoastal Mall. These include Trump-branded projects that attracted \$98.4 million from Russian investors, some of whom have connections to the Russian government, according to a *Reuters* investigation published in March 2017.

Shchegol contends that the Dezers won't be able to build 2000 condo units at the site. That's because his ASA College controls 1.3 acres of land at the mall's northeast corner, near the Intracoastal Waterway, including a three-story office building that acts as ASA College's main campus in greater Miami. On that land, 500 of the Intracoastal Mall's 2000 units could be built, according to an analysis conducted by Sklar Architecture on ASA College's behalf.

That means, Shchegol clarifies, that the Dezers now "only have a right to build 1500 units, not 2000." And that's why, he says, the Dezers are trying to pressure him into selling the property. He also believes that city officials are colluding with the builders. "They're trying to buy us out at a very low price," he declares, "but we have no intention of selling."

In a written statement to the *BT*, Gil Dezer states that the ASA College parcel is "not necessary for, nor planned to be, part of the redevelopment of the Intracoastal Mall."

Asked if the Dezers ever wanted to purchase the ASA College property, Dezer replies: "Since there is a lawsuit currently pending between the Dezer affiliate that owns the Intracoastal Mall and the owner of 3909 NE 163rd St., Florida law prohibits the disclosure of any settlement discussions."

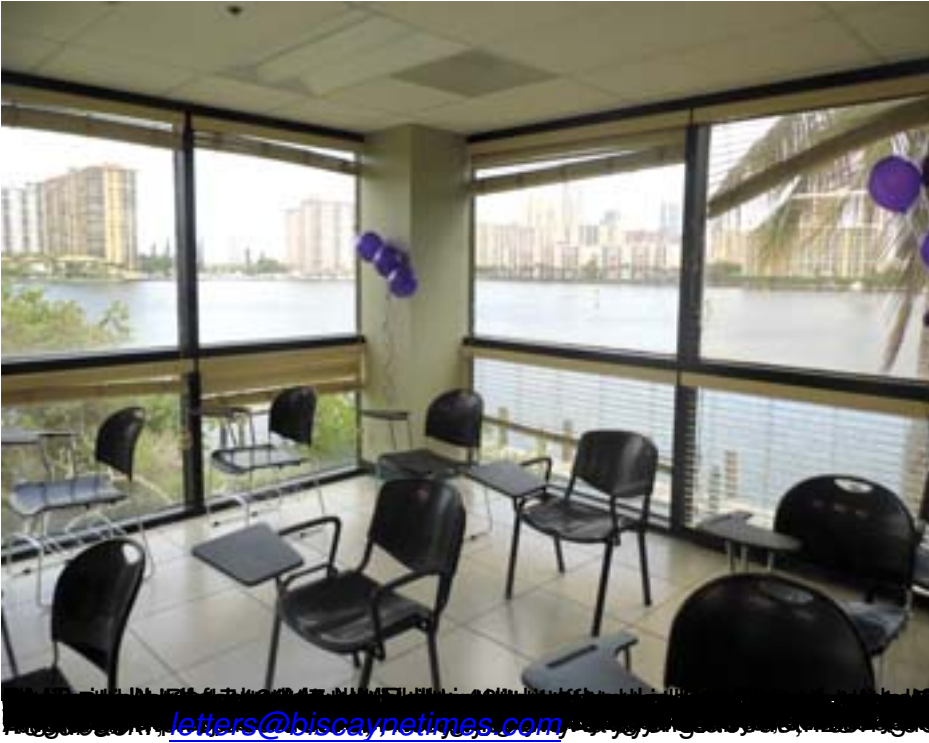
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