

## New Kids on the Block

Written by Mark Sell, BT Contributor  
August 2018

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### Miami Shores gets its first downtown wine bar



or Kim Flower and Andy Wagner, it started with a chance remark six years ago on their usual Sunday walk through downtown Miami Shores, a block from their house.

“We walked up to NE 2nd Avenue and there was just nothing there,” remembers Wagner.

“We asked each other: ‘Wouldn’t it be nice to have a little pub to go to after our walk?’” adds Flower.

Unlike many others who have likely said the same thing, Flower and Wagner took the plunge and bobbed up swimming. On July 10, they opened Flight Wine Lounge and Shop at 9711 NE 2nd Ave., the first such establishment in the village’s 85-year history, and a likely harbinger of things to come. A week later about 50 neighbors, well-wishers, and local worthies jammed into the place for a second opening to sample the wines and artisanal pies.

For now, Flight is open 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday, and until 10:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

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Wagner, a BBC veteran and the drive-time voice of WLRN-FM, Miami's NPR affiliate, helped operate a base pub while serving in the British army. He's keeping his day job while working the counter in the evening, he says. Flower, an architectural designer specializing in residential projects, had worked in restaurants and catering. She's winding down her design business to concentrate on Flight full time.

It's their first business together, one spurred by a shared passion for wine, food, and travel.

Inside, Flight's 1200 square feet offer dark walls, barstools, upholstered chairs, and 37 seats arranged for easy conversation and meeting. Among other things, its list of 30 wines includes three-glass "flights" (hence the name) of paired offerings, organic eight-dollar "ArtPies" with names like Mata Hari, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Marie Curie, and plates of pâtés and artisanal cheeses. There's a partial kitchen; locals supply most of the prepared food.



"One of our high points was to create a gathering place, a local community," says Flower. "That was the driving force behind this design. *We* wanted a place to go to."

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“At last! Good news!” said Shores Councilwoman Alice Burch, echoing others, as she sat down at the bar recently with an Oregon Pinot Noir.

For downtown Miami Shores, Flight’s opening is as clear a signal as any that the stars are finally aligned, now that the sewers are in after a generation of talk. A fresh jolt of energy is prompting new businesses to open and buck each other up. The newly formed Merchants Collective meets every Thursday morning.

Communal Miami Shores events are a village tradition. Plaza 98 is a gathering of businesses on the second Saturday of the month from November through April. Downtown throws itself open for the vast Green Day celebration along NE 2nd Avenue, scheduled for November 3 and organized by the Greater Miami Shores Chamber’s energetic executive director, Megan Gerstel.

Getting those crucial pedestrians year round isn’t so easy, however, with the scarcity of places to hang out, eat, drink, and meet. This is starting to change.

Sewers are one big reason for the improvements. While in the ground since last fall, actual hookups have come gradually. Flight’s sewer just got connected June 28, shortly after the 9999 Building, where Côté Gourmet recently reopened under new owners. Most buildings have yet to connect to the main lines, but more restaurants are about to enter the pipeline, with Mediterranean and Asian fusion restaurants planned for the 9801 Building in early 2019.

Lucio Coffee to Wine -- under the ownership of Barcelona-trained chef Lucio Bueno at 9802 NE 2nd Ave. -- offers Mediterranean cuisine for delivery only, and cheeses, wines, and chocolates. It’s also arranging pop-up chef nights at Flight. Open for 21 months, Lucio is right next to the Miami Theater Center, soon to launch its 2018-19 season and an emerging magnet for community events.

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[letters@biscaynetimes.com](mailto:letters@biscaynetimes.com)