

## Extreme makeovers: Upscale



COURTESY PHOTO

In an upscale makeover, clever use of space transforms a 1980s-era residence for its new owners at Vanderbilt Gulfside Condominium.

### Innovative redos make older condos match today's lifestyles

#### SPECIAL TO FLORIDA WEEKLY

Condominium sales throughout the area spiked in the past quarter compared to first quarter 2008 activity, according to statistics from the Naples Area Board of Realtors. Along Vanderbilt Beach, at least part of the good news is the result of a proactive effort to spruce up buildings and residences up and down Gulfshore Drive.

"So many made good use of a market in pause, and we're now seeing buyers walking into condominiums that

knock their socks off and they're buying them," says Mari Vesce of Mari Vesce Realtors Inc.

For homeowners as well as sellers, she adds, "The trend is definitely makeovers."

Vanderbilt Beach, a 1.3-mile stretch The Ritz-Carlton, Naples, and Delnor-Wiggins State Park, contains prime beachfront real estate, much of it in high-rise towers. Upscale dining in the immediate vicinity includes Baleen at La Playa Beach & Golf Resort and the Turtle Club. The intimate neighbor-

hood even holds vestiges of Old Florida with Buzz's Lighthouse Restaurant and Lighthouse Inn on Vanderbilt Lagoon.

The demographic most attracted to Vanderbilt Beach is comprised of empty-nesters in the 50-year age range, according to Ms. Vesce. Whereas the traditional buyer has been a second-home buyer, high technology and the virtual office have paved the way for longer stays among those who are still working.

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## Five new retailers coming soon to Mercato

#### SPECIAL TO FLORIDA WEEKLY

The Lutgert Companies announces the signing of five more retail stores — Bobby Chan, Byte Shop Style, Mercato Jewelers, Pandora and Spectacles — to establish locations at Mercato, the main street-style lifestyle center under development on U.S. 41 north of Vanderbilt Beach Road.

Construction is proceeding on all five shops, and openings are anticipated in late summer or early fall.

Bobby Chan offers golf and resort apparel for men and women. The company's merchandise includes brand recognition such as PGA tour sponsorships and is carried in approximately 3,500 golf shops, resorts and lifestyle stores nationwide. The company also

has stores in West Palm Beach and Phoenix. The 4,000-square-foot Mercato location will be the first Bobby Chan store in Southwest Florida.

Byte Shop Style is a locally owned computer company. Established in Naples in 1986, it offers a full range of IT services and solutions, including computer parts, repair, service, training, networking and Web design and hosting. This 2,100-square-foot location, the second in the area, will also offer a wide assortment of high-end consumer

electronics.

Mercato Jewelers is a local family-owned and operated jewelry store that sells custom designed jewelry as well as

Rolex watches, gold, diamonds and fashion accessories. Jewelry repair is also offered. Mercato Jewelers will occupy nearly 1,000 square feet.

Pandora is a locally owned franchise retailer offering an assortment of fashion accessories including jewelry and interchangeable designer charms. The shop will occupy approxi-

mately 700 square feet at Mercato.

Spectacles is a family-owned optical center being established by Tipton LeMay, who has had two optical stores in Collier County since 1972. Spectacles in Mercato will occupy 1,000 square feet and will offer eye exams as well as a showroom displaying more than 2,000 eyeglass frames.

The Mercato, on 53 acres at the intersection of U.S. 41 and Vanderbilt Beach Road, is a joint venture of The Lutgert Companies and the Barron Collier Companies. When completed, the center will have nearly 330,000 square feet of main street-style retail and restaurants, 140,000 square feet of Class A office space and 175 luxury residential units. ■



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