

# Casa Gomez, Casa Marti set to revitalize gateway to Ybor

CHRISTOPHER CURRY | TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2024



An aerial view of Casa Gomez and Casa Marti, the new office and apartment developments at the western gateway of the Ybor City Historic District.



At the western gateway of the Ybor City Historic District, the rooftop terrace of Casa Gomez has a view of Ybor City's cultural heritage and its future.

To the east, the fifth-floor future rooftop bar overlooks Jose Marti Park, the gated courtyard park paying tribute to Ybor's Cuban heritage and the legendary revolutionary that has been the property of the Cuban government since 1956. Looking southwest, there's the ambitious mixed-use redevelopment Gas Worx and, past that, downtown Tampa.

## Connecting Ybor and downtown, attracting residents and businesses

Like Gas Worx, Ybor City developer Darryl Shaw launched Casa Gomez and the adjacent Casa Marti to transform vacant properties and older industrial sites into mixed-use developments that will attract new residents, companies, restaurants and retail and fill a gap to connect Ybor with the Channel District and downtown. Located at the historic district's western edge, Casa Gomez and Casa Marti fill most of the block bordered by Nuccio Parkway and North 13th Street and East Seventh and Eighth avenues.



At Casa Gomez, an office building that will have a first-floor restaurant along with the rooftop bar, all three floors of office space are fully leased, says Bowen Arnold, a principal and manager of DDA Development, the Tampa

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An aerial view of Casa Gomez and Casa Marti.

real estate development firm partnering with Shaw on the project. New York-based alternative energy company New Wave Energy, Tampa advertising agency ChappellRoberts and NextPath Career Partners, a professional staffing agency with corporate headquarters in Orlando and a location in Dallas, have each leased a full floor.

With construction complete and the building furnished, the trio of companies and their employees are each about to move into roughly 4,100 square feet of office space.

“It’s imminent,” Arnold says.

After that, he says the plan for Casa Gomez is to have the future first-floor restaurant operate the rooftop bar, with a dumbwaiter bringing food up from the kitchen.

### **New development that fits historic Ybor**

Casa Marti, a mix of residential and retail, is about two months away from the first building opening, Arnold says. It will have 127 studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments across two buildings, with a ground-floor coffee shop and restaurant in one of the buildings.

“It’s a modern building with a lot of the features you would expect to see in historic Ybor,” Arnold says.

Those design touches include a brick exterior with a mix of patterns and balconies with wrought iron railing. In another nod to Ybor’s history, a stretch of Eighth Avenue is being restored to the original brick, which had been paved over with asphalt.

A rendering of Casa Marti.

Casa Marti will cater to people looking to enjoy urban living, Arnold says. An alley between the two buildings is being transformed into a landscaped area and there will be a first-floor gym. But the main amenity is Ybor City itself. Parking spaces will be in the City of Tampa’s Palm Garage off Eighth Avenue. But for residents looking to get around without a car, there’s a TECO Line Streetcar stop right next door in front of Casa Gomez.

DDA Development has been active across Tampa Bay for decades, with projects in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Tarpon Springs. Ongoing projects the company is part of right now include The Nolen condo high rise off Beach Drive in St. Petersburg; The Central, formerly Orange Station, in St. Pete’s EDGE District; and the Motocave Luxury Car Condo off Gandy Boulevard in St. Petersburg.

The partnership with Shaw is DDA Development’s first venture in Ybor. Giving a tour of Casa Gomez and Casa Marti on a Friday afternoon in March with fellow DDA Development principal and manager John Schilling, Bowen says he feels Shaw is creating the right mix of historical renovation and restoration projects and new development to help Ybor thrive.

“Darryl cares deeply about the history of Ybor City and is interested in not only developing apartments but staying involved long-term,” Arnold says. “He’s doing high-quality projects that will stand the test of time.”

### **Mixing new development, historic renovation**

Shaw’s firm Casa Ybor’s renovation projects in the historic district have added office space on the second floor of the Don Vicente de Ybor Historic Inn and converted an 1880s cigar factory—a building that had a second life as the late 20th century headquarters of Tampa’s Oliva Tobacco Company—into apartments at Casa Oliva.

**Trellis at Buchman.**

The circa 1908 building on the 1900 block of East Seventh that once housed the Buchman department store building is renovated and rebranded as The Buchman. Its first-floor storefronts are home to Chill Bros. Scoop Shop ice cream parlor and Trellis at

Buchman beer pub. Studio loft apartments are on the second floor. On East Eighth Avenue, a former firehouse dating to the late 19th century is being renovated and rebranded as Casa Bomberos, which will have a mix of retail and office space and be the home of Sky Puppy Brewing.

Some of Casa Ybor's new construction projects in the historic district include Casa Pedroso, a four-story building next to Casa Bomberos with three floors of studio and one-bedroom apartments over ground-floor retail and office space.

Casa Marti and Casa Gomez are set to open as Ybor City attracts national attention. Money magazine has named Ybor City as one of the 50 best places to live in the country. Money points to Ybor's status as a cultural melting pot with deep Cuban and Italian roots, the architecture, cuisine, art scene, historically renovated cigar factories, the streetcar system and quirky and unique characteristics like the free-roaming roosters. The magazine also referenced Gas Worx, the 50-acre mixed-use district Shaw is doing in partnership with Washington D.C.-based real estate developer Kettler. The first piece of Gas Worx, a residential building with 317 apartments, is slated to open this summer.

Meanwhile, in early April, the Tampa City Council gave initial zoning approval to Shaw's Ybor Harbor project, a 33-acre mixed-use waterfront community planned adjacent to Gas Worx on Ybor Channel south of Adamo Drive.

*For more information, go to Casa Ybor and DDA Development .*

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