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Meet 'Joe Dirt,' the Real Estate Lawyer Behind South Florida's Biggest Deals

Samantha Joseph, Daily Business Review

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Jose "Joe" A. Rodriguez, partner at Miami law firm Rennert Vogel Mandler & Rodriguez. *Courtesy photo*

Call him Joe Dirt.

Except unlike the downtrodden fictional character, Miami real estate transaction attorney or dirt lawyer [Jose "Joe" Rodriguez](#) has had a hand in several significant land deals across South Florida.

His firm, [Rennert Vogel Mandler & Rodriguez](#), seeks out long-term partnerships with visionary developers looking to change the real estate landscape, rather than the one-time transactions that drive many real estate practices. An average deal, according to Rodriguez, generates three years of revenue.

"We're not a full-service firm," Rodriguez said. "The firm has four divisions and four divisions only. At our core, we're developer attorneys."

The narrow focus brought big business. And in the last decade, it put Rennert Vogel at the center of some of South Florida's most transformative land deals, helping to create trendy neighborhoods in once-desolate corners.

The firm was there, for instance, two real estate cycles ago when Fortune International Group envisioned Jade Residences at Brickell—a project that helped pioneer luxury living in Miami's financial district.

It was there, too, for 250 Wynwood, the first condominium project in the arts district in more than a decade. And it's providing legal representation on the multi-year Downtown Doral project—a \$1 billion Codina Partners and Lennar Commercial venture with 1 million square feet of offices, 2,800 residences and 100,000 square feet of retail space in an infill development set to transform a once-pastoral city into one of Florida's biggest live-work-play endeavors.

In Miami Beach, Rennert Vogel did the closings for the luxe high-rises of Canyon Ranch and assisted Peebles Corp.'s creation of residential development near the storied Bath Club. In Broward, it worked on structuring Metropica, a proposed 65-acre complex with entitlements for nearly 2,400 residential units, 650,000 square feet of office space and 485,000 square feet of commercial development just off Sunrise Boulevard near Sawgrass Mills. And at Plantation's shuttered Fashion Mall, once at the center of yearslong litigation between feuding former partners, Rennert Vogel is helping new owners create a town center for the suburb.

"We kept learning and kept adding," Rodriguez said. "We learned how to protect and achieve the goals of the developer through experience."

That experience formed the backdrop of a landmark deal in which Duane Morris represented buyer Madrid-based MDR Inversiones on a \$17.37 million cash transaction with a Rennert Vogel client to transform a parking garage at 1110 Brickell Ave. into The Bond, a luxe skyscraper with more than 300 residences. Rennert Vogel had carved the parking space out of an earlier sale of the 1110 Brickell building, leaving the door open for the multimillion-dollar deal with MDR for just the lot.

Its efforts earned Rennert Vogel a reputation as the go-to firm for developers—one able to stick with a client from financing to site acquisition, building, sale of completed units, spats with condominium associations, rescissions and construction defect claims.

The firm once spent four years litigating on behalf of developer North Carillon LLC against buyers looking to void purchase contracts for two condominiums over North Carillon's failure to maintain deposits in escrow. The case reached the Florida Supreme Court.

"That's the business of a developer in Florida," Rodriguez said. "And we are with them every step of the way."