

Coral Gables news

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Historic preservation tour visits 'painted ladies' on Miami River

Two special ladies and local preservationists, Arva Parks and Avra Jain, partnered for a private guided tour and talk about "why old places matter" at the newly renovated Miami River Inn — a historic oasis in Little Havana.

BY LEE STEPHENS

"Historic Preservation is magical," observed Avra Jain during a recent gathering of the Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables (HPACG).

Two special ladies and local preservationists, Arva Parks and Avra Jain, partnered for a private guided tour and talk about "why old places matter" at the newly renovated Miami River Inn — a historic oasis in Little Havana.

Parks and Jain presented a colorful and educational talk highlighting the past, present, and future of preservation among the lovely "painted ladies" of the Miami River. Parks is a native Miamian best known as local historian and author. Jain is a respected developer and a pioneer of Miami's MiMo district rebirth with her purchase and subsequent renovation of the Vagabond Hotel.

Jain bought the historic Miami River Inn property in 2015. Made up of a cluster of buildings at 437 SW Second St., the hotel faces the Miami River. The oldest of the structures was built in 1906. Preservationist Sallye Jude, who serves on the board of HPACG, restored the site in 1990 and reopened it as a bed and breakfast that year.

"It's really an irreplaceable property in Miami, and that's why it's exciting," said Jason Katz, the Aztec Group vice president who closed the sale on behalf of Jain. "I think it shows that Miami is growing both out along the river and growing culturally. There's an appreciation for history as there might not have been in past cycles. It's not all about high-rise development anymore."

Close to 60 members and friends attended the outdoor event. Guests were able to sit under the palms, appreciate history, participate in great historical discussion, sip cocktails, snack on bite size Cuban sandwiches and "pastelitos," all while admiring the irreplaceable "painted ladies" to which the four inns are lovingly referred. After the presentation, a private tour was offered inside two of the inns showcasing their preserved spaces.

"The experience was magical indeed," said HPACG president Karelia Martinez Carbonell, as she felt the breeze of the river.

The price was free for Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables members, \$30 for others.

For more information or if you are interested in joining, visit <www.historiccoralgables.org>.



Pictured at the Miami River Inn are Avra Jain, Arva Parks and Karelia Martinez Carbonell.