



Sara McCann is the owner of Hive Collective and McCann Design Group. The Pure by Hive showroom is scheduled to open in the SoSo district in November. DAMON HIGGINS/PALM BEACH POST

Designers are flocking to South Dixie Corridor

Burgeoning SoSo District is seen as new hot spot

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The Hive empire of gifts, garden décor, boutiques and baked goods is expanding south to a new space and with a new product line of contemporary furniture designs for buyers who want sleek and modern over colorful and kitschy.

Called Pure by Hive, the showroom at 4805 S. Dixie Highway in the popular community south of Southern Boulevard, nicknamed SoSo, is expected to

open in November, said Sara McCann, founder and creative director of Hive Collective.

It's a geographic shift for the bustling company, whose shops are nestled closer to downtown West Palm Beach, but also one of aesthetics as new residents from the Northeast and California move to the modern-style homes being built at a breakneck pace in SoSo.

"What we saw is throughout COVID we had a lot of people move here who were used to living in chic New York and California," said McCann, also noting the trend of Palm Beachers who sold homes for big money on the island and moved to coastal West Palm Beach.

"We have a really great updated Old Florida look, but maybe some

younger families want more contemporary."

SoSo in West Palm bulges with new homes, residents and stores

McCann isn't alone in thinking the Dixie Highway corridor south of Southern Boulevard is the next economic boomtown in West Palm Beach.

More than \$20 million in commercial real estate deals were completed in the past two years in the 4000 and 5000 blocks of South Dixie Highway alone, according to Palm Beach County Property Appraiser records.

The transactions have transformed

See DESIGNERS, Page 2C

Designers

Continued from Page 1C

no-frills warehouse and office space into art houses, design shops and restaurants.

A Miami-based company bought the long-vacant 8,200-square-foot building leased to The Hive in October 2022 for \$5.75 million. Both the sale and lease were managed by real estate Broker Simon Isaacs, who also represented the buyer of Nickee's Automotive Center.

Nickee's, which was at 5212 S. Dixie for more than four decades, sold in October 2022 for \$3.6 million. It is now the Del Rio Art Studio featuring the work of Francisco Del Rio.

The building that houses Gil Walsh Interiors, notable for its green façade covered in faux boxwood, at 5505 S. Dixie was purchased for \$2.47 million in September 2022.

The nearly 50-year-old Braille Club at 4801 S. Dixie sold in August 2021 for \$1.45 million to Roxy's Pub owner John Webb for his barbecue-style Tex Mex restaurant called Austin Republic.

George's Paint & Hardware at 4616 S. Dixie was bought by developer Sam Fisch in 2021 for \$2.35 million. It's now office space for his company, the Brown Harris Stevens real estate brokerage, and Osbee smart home technology.

Stores flock to West Palm Beach's 'up-and-coming design district'

Interior design boutique Chelsea Lane and high-end vintage retailer Palm Beach Regency opened this past spring at 5710 S. Dixie. Chelsea Viau, owner of Chelsea Lane, bought the former South Palm Realty building in October for \$1.5 million.

Just north of Viau's building, Gregory's, an offshoot of the popular Mandolin Aegean restaurant in the Miami Design District is under construction.

"I never would have moved down here four years ago. Ever," said Viau, who for 12 years has specialized in wallpaper and fabric, but also offers full-service interior design. "And now it's like 'Oh, I can be here, this is great.'"

The building she purchased wasn't on the market when a Realtor friend solicited the previous owners who bought it in 1994 for \$142,500. Viau, who had two previous locations in downtown West Palm Beach, was lured to the property because of its vicinity to new design businesses opening on the industrial street Georgia Avenue, such as Meg Braff Designs and Danielle Rollins.

Also, where the majority of Viau's business was once concentrated in Palm Beach, more clients have moved to mainland areas such as College Park in Lake Worth, Flamingo Park and SoSo.

Viau rents part of her building to Palm Beach Regency, a furniture and décor shop painted with colorful stripes in shades of pink, blue, yellow and green.

Palm Beach Regency, which is owned by Korinne Belock, has a warehouse in Lake Park, but wanted a shop closer to burgeoning neighborhoods near downtown West Palm Beach. She opened her store in April.



Del Rio Art studio at 5212 S. Dixie Highway opened in the spring of 2023 in the building that once housed Nickee's Automotive Center. The building was purchased for \$3.6 million in October 2022. The red sculpture in front is called "The Human Lighthouse." PHOTOS BY KIMBERLY MILLER/PALM BEACH POST



Chelsea Viau, owner of Chelsea Lane, in her studio at 5710 S. Dixie Highway. Viau bought the building, which was formerly South Palm Realty, for \$1.5 million in October 2022.

"So many people were moving to SoSo and it was a different clientele then we had previously had, maybe a little younger, a little more adventurous," said Belock, who was an entrepreneur and home organizer before she bought Palm Beach Regency in March 2021. "I truly, truly see this as West Palm Beach's up-and-coming design district."

The neighborhood south of Southern Boulevard dates to the first stirrings of West Palm Beach with 1920s-era Spanish Mediterranean homes interspersed with 1950s cinderblock Ranch-style houses.

But except for a small carve-out for the Belair Historic District, the community is not historic. That means home demolitions, new builds and remodels

aren't governed by Historic Preservation Board of West Palm Beach.

While the lack of a historic designation makes old homes vulnerable to teardowns, it also makes the area valuable to developers building on speculation. And those homes are often maximized for space, built to the lot line and two-stories tall with lots of room for new furniture and décor.

For architect and artist Francisco Del Rio, who moved into the former Nickee's Automotive, it's an opportunity to work with homeowners on his large-scale signature art pieces. He calls his work Strategic Art for Architectural Identity.

Outside of his studio, which is owned by a limited liability company, is a towering red sculpture called the "Human



The sign that once advertised Nickee's Automotive now touts the SoSo District.

Lighthouse" and a sign heralding the "SoSo District."

From 'deadville' to chic SoSo District at warp speed

"We've waited long enough for something to happen here. It's been deadville," said Anderson Carr Realtor Paul Snitkin in a March interview about SoSo and Austin Republic. "We are probably the hottest neighborhood in the world right now."

Not everyone is enamored with the warp speed changes to South Dixie Highway, whose original function in the 1920s was to be part of the nation's system of interstate travel.

Simo Kukurik, whose father opened Branko's Glass and Mirror at 5015 S. Dixie more than 40 years ago, questions if there will be enough clients to sustain all of the designers relocating to Dixie and Georgia Avenue.

And, at the same time, businesses that provided more utilitarian services to the community such as George's Paint and Hardware and Nickee's Automotive are leaving.

"What shaped our community over the past 30 years is changing in two to three years," Kukurik said. "The area is losing some of its charm."