



May 12, 2009

Circulation: 31,000

Miami Beach, Miami Unveil New Parks

The long anticipated South Pointe Park in South Beach was finally unveiled this spring. I have delayed sharing my thoughts because I wanted the park to be “broken in” and discovered by its regular users before venturing out to see it. Well, without a doubt the park was worth waiting for. Stretching the length of the tip of South Beach and connecting to the lower western waterfront’s pedestrian promenade, South Pointe Park is an undeniable success. Users of all kinds seem to be flocking to the park at all hours to take in its beautiful vistas. Sunbathers enjoy the constructed ridgeline overlooking Government Cut and the cruise ships that pass by, picnickers enjoy the shade trees and well-manicured grass, families bring kids to enjoy the playgrounds, splash pads and fountains, and exercise fiends traverse the park in droves. Indeed, I altered my daily running route to include the park.

I must admit, however, I first questioned the lack of formal active playspace (basketball, tennis courts, soccer etc.), but it seems they aren’t missed. Indeed, the park balances a fine mix of passive and active use areas, as well as organic and formal landscaping. Furthermore, the presence of the swank steak house—Smith & Wollensky—seems to further activate the park, especially along the outside bar located on a primary spine of pedestrian activity. Perhaps the park could included another, less formal and inexpensive dining option... then again, you can just bring your own!



On the opposite end of the spectrum, downtown Miami has reintroduced the Paul S. Walker Urbanscape, a hardscaped mid-block pocket of missed opportunity. Oh, was that too harsh? Maybe, as the mini park is certainly a vast improvement on the vacant lot that occupied the space previously. Moreover, I am not aware of all the programming, design and logistics that went into the formulation of this space. However, why offer a space clearly intended for the lunchtime crowd and not encourage the adjacent restaurant—Viaggios—to freely spill out onto a portion of the plaza with tables, chairs and dining service? Doing so would have made that or any future restaurant that occupies the space a truly unique setting in downtown. Or perhaps recruit Miami’s best lunch time street vendor and either insert them into the park, or let them hang right outside, as that would



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further activate the park beyond the 12-2pm lunchtime crowd. The landscaping does its best to hide the long blank western side wall, but one imagines even a window or a door would go a long way.

Beyond that issue, the proportions feel too tight given the building bordering the eastern edge rises high (unavoidable), and the space still feels sterile despite its somewhat soft edges. For now, I will withhold any real judgment until a further date, as the urbanscape is brand new so perhaps there will be movable tables and chairs for lunchtime use in the near future. I sure hope so, as the park's use seemed somewhat sparse during the Monday lunch hour given the amenity such a space ostensibly provides. In defense of the park, I will say that the attractively designed sliding doors are a nice feature, and functional too, as I am guessing they close this space up at night to prevent vandalism. Smart move.

