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HIS DECO DARE: TURN 4 BUILDINGS INTO 1 HOTEL

Stephen Smith, Herald Staff Writer

A million here, a million there, 10 minutes sooner, 10 minutes later. What's the big deal? Adrian Alexandru wonders.

"I had no hobby like fishing or sports so I got into real estate," Alexandru said. "Up there in New York, I'm doing most of the business on the telephone - it takes 10 minutes. The whole life is such a wonderful situation.

Such a deal, too - when you're a Romanian-born veterinaian with pet hospitals across New York City and buildings across South Beach. The most eye-catching deal: \$3.4 million for two hotels and two apartment houses straddling a block of Ocean Drive between 10th and 11th streets.

That's not the end of it. Now, Alexandru's Commercial Management Systems must reckon what it will cost to take the Congress and Waves hotels and the two apartment buildings and make all four into one 155-room inn.

It's harder than it sounds. The hotels are Art Deco pieces from the mid-1930s, friezes rising above windows and bracketing doorways, stripes stretching up and down.

The apartment houses are most austere, the one at 1024 Ocean looking vintage 1964: concrete block and brick, no sense of humor.

"It's nothing, it's ugly looking," Alexandru said of the building at 1024.

Alexandru is a serious man, tough on his own work. Take the paint job on the apartment building south of the Waves, an angular structure in neck-twisting yellow: "We just painted this building and we're going to change it. Ugly."

Commercial Management Systems has come in with a flourish, buying the four buildings in the 1000 block of Ocean Drive and two more on Ocean south of Fifth Street. By year's end, the company expects to own 14 South Beach buildings.

"We in New York, any of those who pioneered early real estate, know an early value when we see it and are not squeamish to take a risk," said Tony Goldman, one of Alexandru's Ocean Drive neighbors. "For what a dollar buys in New York, these are bargains."

Or as **Haim Einhorn**, general manager of Commercial Management Systems, put Alexandru's move into the Beach: "The right person, the right time, doing the right thing."

Same could be said for Goldman. Gerry Sanchez, too. So the question becomes, does Alexandru seek a spot with Goldman and Sanchez, forming a triumvirate of Deco doyens?

Not really. He prefers to live in New York, overseeing his Animal Clinics, running a life with no problems.

"The only problem I have," Alexandru said, "is coming to Miami on a plane, a two-, three-hour delay."

No matter. He will keep making the trips, watching as rooms are done over in the Ocean Drive buildings, as restaurants open, hoping it's all finished by December.

Hoping somebody comes up with a name.

"Decotel, maybe?" Alexandru muses. "But I don't know yet."

Illustration:photo: Haim Einhorn with Adrian ALEXANDRU

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