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RETAIL
Little River, Miami
No big thing
What do you do when you can't find a neighbourhood to suit your needs? Make your own.
By *Mary Holland*
Photographer *Gesi Schilling*



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Sara Rose Darling's budding shop-cum-studio is filled with heady flower arrangements, some of which hang above a mustard-green velvet couch and Persian rug. It does not look like the kind of retailer you'd expect to find in Miami. But then again, the entire neighbourhood of Little River looks slightly out of place in a city known for gleaming high-rises and flashy beachfronts. It's one of the oldest districts in Miami, north of Little Haiti, populated with warehouses where boats and furniture were once built. Now the disused buildings are being overhauled as part of a project dreamt up by Ashley Abess and her husband Matthew Vander Werff.

Before they started buying properties in Little River five years ago, they hadn't been entirely committed to the idea of living in Miami full-time. Abess still had one foot firmly planted in their former home of New York. "If we were going to stay in Miami we needed a neighbourhood where we would want to spend a lot of time," says Vander Werff.

Their block back in Brooklyn had a good mix of shops, cafés and bars. Nothing in Miami lived up to it so they made the bold decision to get creative. Vander Werff, who'd worked in real estate for over a decade, stumbled upon a few properties being sold off-market in Little River, which Abess fondly



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remembered from her childhood. Before they knew it, the development was starting to take shape.

Today there are more than 100 tenants in the Little River establishment, from coffee shops to plant studios, all handpicked by Vander Werff and Abess. Although the couple are hands-on, they note that it happened organically. Many of the meetings with the now-tenants came about through friends of friends, or while travelling around the country. "Our thinking was, 'Who and what do we think Miami is lacking? And what relationships do we have to make that happen?'" says Abess. With her red lips, sharp fringe and black jumpsuit, she looks like anyone but your stereotypical Miami resident. "We want this project to feel as though it's happened organically," says Vander Werff, who shies away from the term "developer".

One of the entrepreneurs that they are collaborating with is Freddy Kaufmann, the owner of butcher's Proper Sausages and co-founder of Eat Here Now, a pop-up food event that takes place in a courtyard on Fridays. "For a long time people weren't really coming to Little River," says Kaufmann, who describes the casual gathering as "a couple of people selling food at the same time". Burgers from USBs, cheese steaks from Proper Sausages and scoops



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(1) Rose Coloured Floral (2) Inside 4510/Six (3) Madreselva Plant Studio (4) Items at 4510/Six (5) Freddy Kaufmann and wife (6) Vases at 4510/Six (7) Show presented by 4510/Six (8) Primary Projects (9) Eat Here Now dish (10) Frice Cream



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Address book:

4510/Six: Ceramics, books, accessories and fashion. All the global goods at this lofty retail space, courtesy of brands from Ganni to Sies Marjan, are beautifully assembled.
7338 Northwest Miami Court;
fortyfiveten.com

J&H Barbers: A hole-in-the-wall barber shop that is tucked away at the back of a café.
7299 Northwest 2nd Avenue;
imperialmoto.com

Aaron Mapp: Collectable furniture chosen by gallerist and designer Aaron Mapp. Think high-end design covering everything from Marcel Breuer Wassily Chairs to porcelain and chrome lamps.
7291 Northwest 2nd Avenue;
aaronmapp.com

Imperial Moto Café: A coffee shop and store serving Counter Culture Coffee, as well as selling goods and clothing inspired by cars.
7299 Northwest 2nd Avenue;
imperialmoto.com

Fabrice Tardieu: Haitian-born Fabrice Tardieu worked at Armani before deciding to create his own brand of handcrafted luxury footwear.
7221 Northwest 2nd Avenue;
fabricetardieu.com



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Apiary: A workshop for creatives working in various disciplines – ceramics, woodwork and a whole lot more.
300 Northwest 73rd Street;
apiarymiami.com

Little River Social Club: Co-founded by Max Pierre and Arthur Baker (a producer who worked with New Order), Little River Social Club is a community-driven hangout where locals listen to vinyl records.
214 Northwest 73rd Street

Primary Projects: This art space is all about sourcing new talent in the contemporary-art world and showcasing their work.
7410 Northwest Miami Court;
thisisprimary.com

Rose Coloured Floral: Founded by Sara Rose Darling, this studio-cum-shop specialises in bouquets as well as event flowers. Darling also works with artists to sell an enticing selection of limited-edition homeware.
7338 Northwest Miami Court;
rosecolouredfloral.com

Bill Brady Gallery: Former New York-based gallerist Bill Brady opened this Miami space in order to sell the works of international emerging artists.
90 Northwest 72nd Street;
billbradygallery.com



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