

Witkins Hults Design Group - Exteriors Getting “Greener” & More Hurricane Resistant

By Mary Myles Gede

When the lush grounds at Anguilla’s exclusive Cap Juluca resort were devastated by Hurricane Lenny, the exterior renovation strategy included not only more hurricane resistant landscaping materials but also a new seawall so cleverly camouflaged that guests never realize it’s there.

When Hurricane Georges destroyed virtually all landscaping at the equally exclusive Little Palm Island Resort in Florida’s Keys, the renovation strategy produced not only more lush and lavish landscaping than had existed before but an innovative “green” solution to the resort’s longstanding water shortages.



Cap Juluca resort, before and after a restoration that now includes lavish grounds protected by an “invisible” sea wall.



Both strategies were the handiwork of Witkin Hults Design Group, a Hollywood, FL landscape architecture firm with a proactive, progressive approach to every assignment, from resorts and residential communities to mixed-use and commercial projects.



East meets West at Tao, in Sunrise, an Asian-themed condominium community.

Says Andy Witkin, ASLA, who founded the firm in 1988, “Our goal is always twofold: To enhance a project’s marketing potential by creating signature exterior environments, and second, to incorporate elements which will make that environment more sustainable and more resistant to hurricanes and storm surges.”

“At both Cap Juluca and Little Palm Island, we were able to make the grounds appear more lush than before the storms by expanding the palette of hearty, native plant materials and using them in designs that enhance survivability to gale-force winds,” Witkin explains.

At Cap Juluca, 1,900 linear feet of beach and dune were lost, leaving beach villas extremely vulnerable. Witkin Hults worked with structural engineers to create a massive seawall that would literally disappear from view, thanks to cascading plantings, sand buffers covered with tropical

vegetation, landscaped pathways and steps nestled into the new ‘dunes’. At Little Palm Island, where water had always been piped in from the mainland and was in short supply for landscaping, Witkin Hults worked with irrigation designers to develop a sustainable irrigation system incorporating water harvesting and grey water usage, providing a permanent and highly ‘green’ solution to the island’s chronic water problem.

The firm is active with resort projects on dozens of Caribbean islands, including the new mega-development at Bimini Bay Resort & Casino, just off the Florida mainland, and all of Sandals International’s Caribbean properties, as well as



The Caribbean, a new Miami Beach condominium community, will open mid-2008 with a lavish oceanside recreation deck.

projects in Central America and South Florida where assignments include the new W Hotel in Ft. Lauderdale.

But resorts are only part of the Witkin Hults story. The firm is also active throughout Florida with commercial, mixed-use and infill projects. Residential projects range from major PUDs and TNDs to landmark, high-rise condominiums, many with elaborate recreation decks

Bimini Bay Resort & Casino, the island's first mega-resort, to include 1,500 residences, a Conrad Hotel, casino, marina, spa and upscale retail center. "Green" landscaping includes use of grey and harvested water to compensate for the island's arid environment.



Witkin Hults designed a resort-style oasis for a 10th story recreation deck at Skyline at Mary Brickell Village, Miami.

perched as high as 10 stories. Witkin Hults services include design of all exterior elements, from recreational amenities and entry statements to landscaping, streetscapes, hardscapes and exterior lighting.

“Our extensive experience with both new resorts and hurricane restorations helps us create luxurious resort-style designs for our residential projects here,” Witkin says. “It has also taught us valuable lessons about how to design exteriors that are energy and water efficient and highly storm resistant, which is essential today for any kind of real estate development.” ■

For more information about Witkin Hults Design Group, go to www.WitkinDesign.com.

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The W Hotel in Ft. Lauderdale.



Little Palm Island Resort & Spa, before and after a restoration that provided a “green” solution to longstanding water shortages.