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Building boom: Meet the man behind some of Jacksonville's most visible apartment projects



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Jeff Klotz, the president and CEO of Klotz Group of Companies, stands at The Reef Oceanside Apartments in Atlantic Beach. The Reef, is almost complete and is one of several large scale Jacksonville area development projects currently underway by Klotz's company. *Bob Self/Florida Times-Union*

As the Jacksonville skyline adds more residential properties, one name in particular is behind a lot of the activity.

Jeff Klotz is the president and CEO of Klotz Group of Companies, a real estate investment platform that focuses on multi-family housing.

A Florida native, Klotz got his start in real estate around the time he graduated high school in 1995, buying a property that he said was “probably not a good deal,” and expanding his interest in real estate from there.

With a portfolio valued at over \$3 billion, Klotz has two projects in Atlantic Beach — The Reef and The Surf — that he said represents about half of the market share. The Reef is described as “the largest luxury apartment development built in Jacksonville to date.”

“They’re going to provide a lot of much-needed housing in that area,” Klotz said. “Our focus and specialty is the apartment business and multi-family development.”

The Klotz Group operates in 13 states with over 125,000 units purchased and sold. It employs over 6,000 people.

One of its big plans is to redevelop the site of the former Morocco Shrine Center, which was demolished in February, into a \$200 million-plus mixed-use development with over 1,000 residential units along with a hotel and commercial space on the nearly 37-acre site.

“For years, the rental community has been neglected,” Klotz said. “You look at all these residential developers who build massive, master-planned single-family communities which are designed to be for homeowners and be these amazing communities with this amazing quality of life. We’ve always felt that the rental demographic needs to have access to those types of communities and that type of lifestyle.”

Over 25 years in the community

Klotz said he isn’t sure where his entrepreneurial spirit came from. He grew up middle class, the son of a firefighter. Both of his parents are from “small-town Pennsylvania” about an hour and a half east of Pittsburgh.



The Morocco Shrine Center was demolished in February to make way for the Village of Town Center mixed-use project. The development will span 37 acres and be home to over 1,000 residential units along with retail, restaurant and office space.
Corey Perrine/Florida Times-Union

They were driving through Jacksonville in the '70s when their Volkswagen broke down, Klotz said, and as they were waiting for it to be fixed, they decided to stay. 00000

“If you grew up in town, or out at the beach, everyone wanted to leave – whether going up north, out west or down south, no one wanted to stay in Jacksonville,” he said. “If you look back over 20-30 years, Jacksonville has come a long way.”

As a teenager, Klotz said he became obsessed with the how behind home buying and selling, and he started building a small portfolio of residential real estate in his late teens.

“I sort of became grounded here and committed here because that’s where all the real estate was,” he said. “I went to college at UF and started operating between here and Gainesville and sort of became a regional operator in the late '90s.”

Klotz said he came back to Jacksonville because of the opportunities available to him here.

“It was really hard during the ’90s and early 2000’s for Jacksonville prior to 2014 when more investment capital started coming to the city,” he said. “It didn’t have that good of a reputation and wasn’t really well-known. Jacksonville became a bit of the best secret in the south.”

By 2017, he said, it was really no longer a secret.

“In the last couple years, we find ourselves doing a lot more work in Jacksonville because of the national interest it gets,” Klotz said.

Jacksonville’s market grows more complex

Despite population growth and a full-steam-ahead approach for projects, the real estate market and construction delays from supply chain issues and labor shortages continue to bring uncertainty.

“Every day you wake up and wonder what new curveball is going to be thrown at you,” Klotz said. “We as an organization are committed to continuing to build and grow our business. We’re optimistic [about purchasing in 2023].”

Klotz said his company intends to bring more quality of life to the rental community. Whereas homeowners have historically had more of a sense of pride and community in where they live, he said, the hope is that offering the amenities they do at luxury apartments will help renters find that community as well.

“We aim to offer a quality of life that is really unmatched, and we think we’re doing a pretty good job of that,” Klotz said. “And we’re going to continue to grow.”



Advertising hangs on a fence line promoting the Village at Town Center Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2023 at the Morocco Shrine Center in Jacksonville, Fla. The Klotz Group of Companies and KABR Group begin demolition of the former active Morocco Shrine Center, a city landmark for 36 years and one of Jacksonville's iconic fixtures. The building is being torn down to make way for the new Village at Town Center. The project will span 37 acres and be home to 1,025 units that include high-end luxury residential and student housing, plus 115,00 square feet of retail, restaurant, and office space. *Corey Perrine/Florida Times-Union*

Part of this is plans to bring more affordable and workforce housing to the area as well. He said the company intends to “satisfy needs on both sides of the coin.”

“We’re committed to the city,” Klotz said. “Being born and raised here, there’s nothing more exciting than seeing the successful growth in Jacksonville. To meet people coming to Jacksonville from all over the place and how excited they are to be here, that makes you feel good.”