

WHERE ARE THEY NOW Ed Wulfe

By Carla Valencia de Martínez

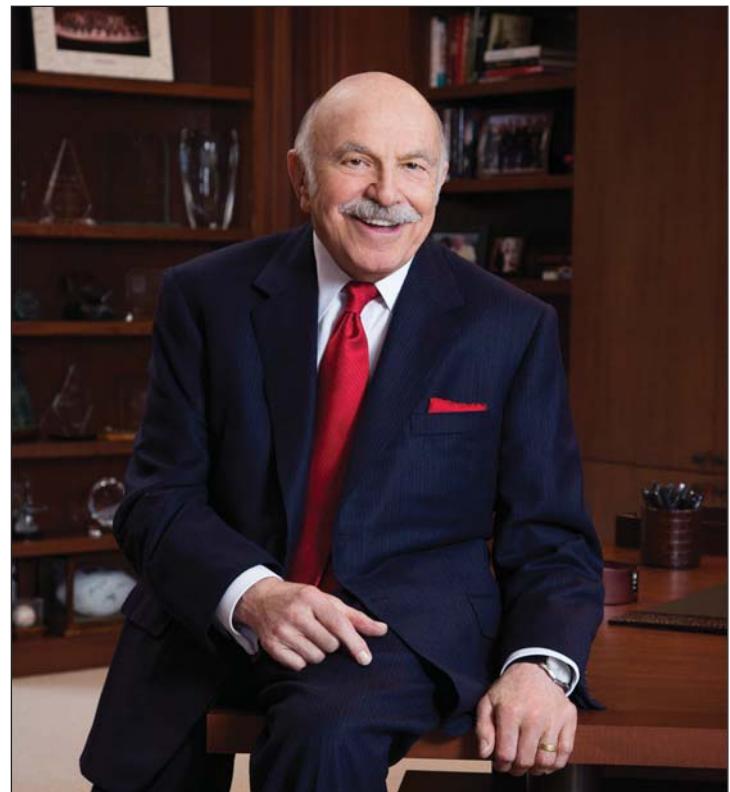
LOCAL has been publishing for over 18 years and we have the archives to show it. With this column we continue to reach back into our old issues to see "Where are they now?"

FEBRUARY 2006



Photography by Phoebe Rourke-Ghabrial

OCTOBER 2016



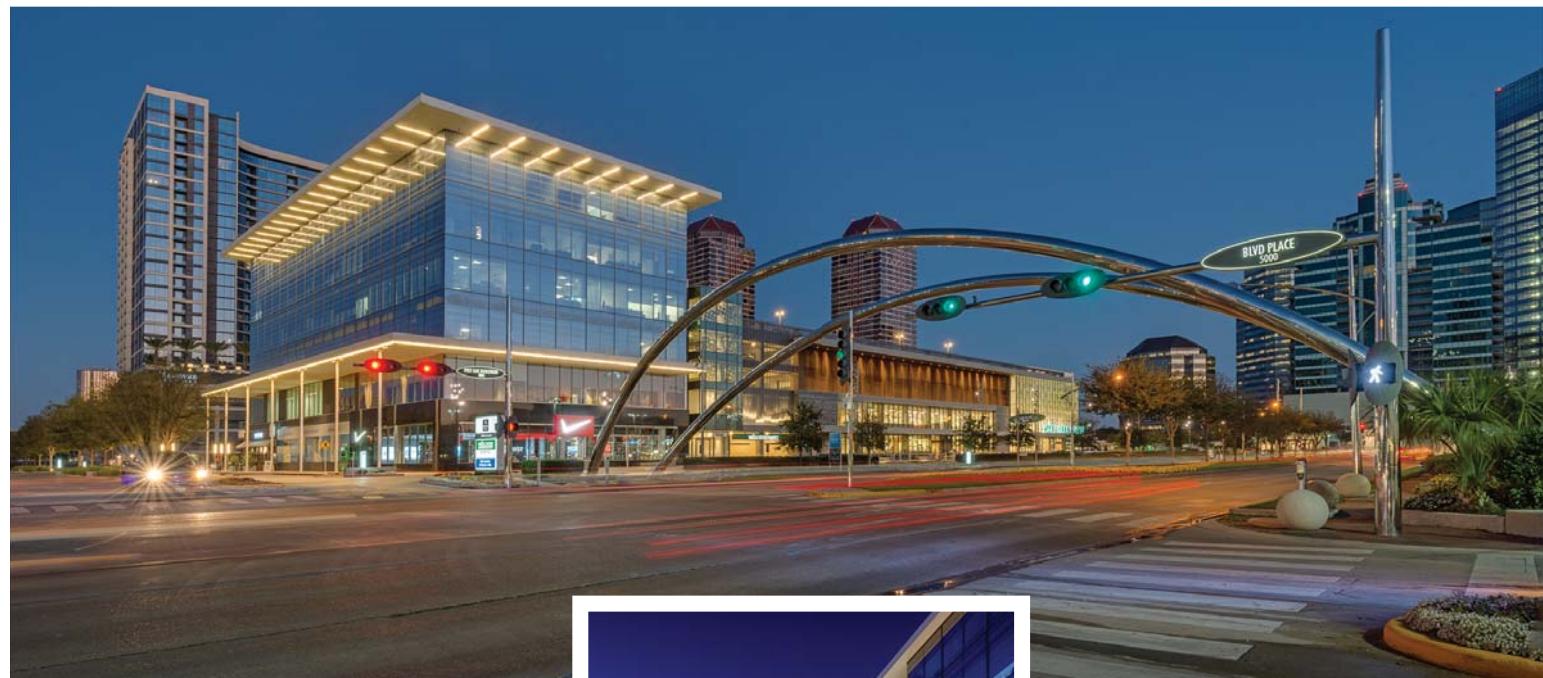
Photography by Gittings

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IN FEBRUARY 2006, CURRENT EDITOR-IN-CHIEF TIM MOLONEY (THEN A CONTRIBUTING WRITER) DESCRIBED ED WULFE AS "THE MAESTRO OF MEYERLAND, THE GURU OF GULFGATE AND THE PRINCE OF THE PAVILION." THE INNOVATIVE DEVELOPER AND POWER BROKER WAS PHOTOGRAPHED IN THE PAVILION, WHICH IS NOW GONE, AND THE DEVELOPMENT HE WAS INTERVIEWED ABOUT – ITS REPLACEMENT, BLVD PLACE – IS A VIBRANT AND BUSTLING REALITY. WE DECIDED TO CATCH UP WITH WULFE AND FIND OUT WHAT HE'S BEEN UP TO DURING THE PAST DECADE.

In 2006, when we interviewed you for our cover, BLVD Place hadn't even broken ground. Fast forward ten years later – is it everything you imagined it would be?

Not quite, but it is well on its way. When we started, we believed this property was strategically located at the epicenter of Houston and primed for new state-of-the-art activity and development to raise the bar and take us into the 21st century. We envisioned a new and major urbanization effort since not much had happened in the District over the last 20–25 years. With BLVD Place we felt that we needed to be a catalyst to encourage and stimulate further development of the area, and that has happened big time. Thousands of high rise apartments have been built, hundreds and hundreds of condos have been constructed, major Class A office buildings have taken shape; and we built BLVD Place, a mixed-use development anchored by Whole Foods and Frost Bank featuring seven new restaurant concepts in the very heart of it at Post Oak Boulevard and San Felipe.

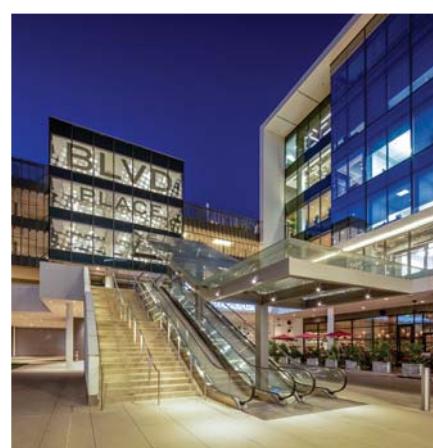


Photography by Slyworks Photography

In the real estate business you try to envision what might be in the next five, 10, 15 years, but it's absolutely essential to anticipate where you are going and how you are going to get there. We learned that an undertaking of this magnitude is a long-term process and it's ongoing. We had several bumps in the road economy-wise – in 2008–2010, and obviously recently as we emerge from the 2014–15 energy challenges. Development requires patience and a long-term view and there are always adjustments that must be made, but you must continue with your plans as there will always be disappointments and necessary changes. The ultimate and essential qualities needed are persistence and resiliency. You have to constantly adapt, revise and find ways to implement your objectives to capture the opportunities the market generates or demands.

Where do you find inspiration for these innovative, and oftentimes, first of their kind multi-use projects?

After we had assembled our 21 acres, I called up Stephen Fox, who is the Architectural Historian at Rice University, and I drove him to look at the property. I asked, "Stephen, what do you think this ought to be?" And he said, "Easy, it needs to be Rockefeller Center." I said, "Thanks a lot." Now, did we build Rockefeller Center? No, but we are working toward its basic mixed-use urban concept. And the things that have and are continuing to happen all around us are helping build a densified multi-faceted community that will become a place to really live, work, play and enjoy. We did travel all over the country looking at mixed-use projects trying to find a combination where you could develop a supermarket and related retail businesses in conjunction with office and residential space, and that's what we did. Besides its successful retail concepts, BLVD Place has been at the forefront in creating a restaurant mecca with multiple restaurants of various types that energize the project and the market.



Can you share anything else that's yet to be completed?

There are several more things to take place. We still have the third phase of our retail/office concept to develop within BLVD Place and the vacant property next to the Hanover's high-rise will be another Hanover residential high-rise development with offices.

But without question, the most transformative and exciting activity happening that I have been very involved with is the Uptown District's redevelopment of Post Oak Boulevard into a grand boulevard with dedicated, managed bus rapid transit lanes and an extensively landscaped streetscape featuring wide, pedestrian-friendly tree-lined sidewalks.

Our original concept for BLVD Place was to create an environment that was neighborhood and pedestrian-friendly, with wide sidewalks and landscaping – we've seen that happen as we've added the restaurants. People are walking to Whole Foods and BLVD Place from the office buildings during lunch or after work for a draft beer. It's going to be ratcheted up further with the completion of BLVD Place and the many new additional developments planned in the immediate area. From a retail point of view, the Uptown/Galleria/Post Oak area will become an even more upscale urban retail focal point and major force to serve the entire greater Houston region as well as Latin America.

What is it about this generation of community-driven octogenarians who continue to look ahead?

We love and are passionate about what we do. We love the creative and inventive aspects ingrained in our business. We are constantly thinking and trying to envision what might be and how we might help make things happen. We are energized and inspired to lead and we cherish bold, creative and innovative activities. But, most importantly, it's fun for us.