Overcoming mediocre design

Says Andrea Downs: we're getting bad architecture in downtown Sarasota. Luckily, this isn't news.

We've been getting bad buildings ever since some nondescript condominium high-rises went up in the 1960s and '70s. And they just keep coming -- witness The Metropolitan, a too-beautiful building with architecture that can be described as mediocre, at best.

Downs thinks she's designed a city plan to design the way to get better architecture downtown, while local architects object.

Codes create "authoritarian mediocrity," local architect Jack West was quoted as saying recently. But even without a code, we have state high-rises than most developers won't take chances. For every BnA Ciba, there are two Tower Residents at The Field Garden, a building whose interior elegance is marred by its boring exterior.

Someone who knows a thing or two about cutting-edge high-rises is in town recently to speak at the reception following the thoroughly modern tour. Bernardo Fort-Brescia, principal of the Miami firm Arquitectonica, says the key to progressive design is not good codes, but good clients.

"Actually, architects largely depend on the sensuous commitment to a specific architect," said Fort-Brescia. "Some developers are more informed than others about the current thinking in the profession. We need to give the credit to developers who are willing to move forward with new ideas.

[The text continues with an article about the University of Florida computer engineering associate professor Sumeet Sekhon and his "smart house." The article discusses the house's various features, including a "smart" toilet, a "smart" sink, and a "smart" laundry room. The article also mentions the need for architects and developers to work together to create more sustainable and stylish homes.

The article concludes with a quote from Jack West, the local architect, who says, "We need to give the credit to developers who are willing to move forward with new ideas."]