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The Dallas Morning News

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## The Sorrento -

For more than a half-century, Mario Messina served authentic Italian dishes in his Il Sorrento restaurant on Turtle Creek Boulevard just north of Northwest Highway.

Patrons flocked to the restaurant to enjoy the pasta, rum cake and an accordion player who nightly brought a touch of the Amalfi Coast in Italy to Dallas.

But in 2003, Mr. Messina retired, closed the restaurant and sold the land to developers who wanted to build a medical office building.

The plans for the medical building fell through. And in stepped Guy Brignon of Glenbrook Residential, who built many of the JPI apartments in Dallas and around the country. He planned to build "some of the most expensive apartments in Dallas" on the site of the restaurant.

But when he started to market the apartments, he found far more interest from buyers than renters. So he changed his plans and designed the five-story building for condominiums.

Mr. Brignon named the new residential building The Sorrento, after the restaurant. "We asked Mr. Messina for permission to use the name, and he said 'yes,'" Mr. Brignon says. "He comes around occasionally to check on us."

Mr. Brignon plans to pay tribute to the restaurant by hanging photographs from its 50-year history, including one of the accordion player. And he named the largest unit — a 2,000-square-foot, three-story condo overlooking the pool — the Messina.

"We don't even try to market that unit. The right person will come along and buy it," he says.

Naturally Mr. Brignon designed the building to reflect its namesake, a popular

tourist destination on the Mediterranean Sea, south of Naples. Unlike the French- and country French-style residential buildings that surround it, The Sorrento evokes the bright colors of southern Italy.

Those colors, which have shocked some and delighted others, Mr. Brignon says, are the inspiration of Adrian Faulkner, the granddaughter of George Dahl, one of Dallas' most prominent architects. The late Mr. Dahl designed Methodist Dallas Medical Center, the Earle Cabell Federal Building downtown, Jesuit College Preparatory School of Dallas, Mrs. Baird's Bakery, the Owen Fine Art Center at Southern Methodist University and *The Dallas Morning News* building. He was also an artist, and one of his murals of an Italian scene will hang on a wall in the lobby.

The Sorrento offers 93 units — down from the original 97 because a few buyers have merged two units into one. The one- to three-bedroom units with 800 to 2,600 square feet of living space are priced from \$215,000 to \$749,000.

For this neighborhood, where housing prices are "astronomically high," Mr. Brignon says, "The Sorrento is far more affordable than several of its new neighbors."

The key to the lower unit prices is the density of the building, Mr. Brignon says. It is built on 1½ acres, which created some challenges. To ensure that each unit would be very quiet, Mr. Brignon and his business partner, Michelle Duncum, have hired a sound consultant and a quality-control inspector, who visit the building weekly.

The building has 18 inches of insulation between floors, double Sheetrock between