

MIAMI TODAY

WEEK OF THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2007

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\$2

Developers transform vintage motels into condo towers,
pg. 15

RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE

Owners renovate Matheson mansion in Coconut Grove,
pg. 16



MONEY IN, MONEY OUT: After repeated indications that Miami residents would enjoy the same property tax rollback as other taxpayers statewide, city administrators and Mayor **Manny Diaz** at a hearing this week presented a budget anticipating a \$5.64 million increase in property tax revenues while continuing to tout “significant budget cuts.” The budget plan, however, proposes only a \$31 million reduction, not the \$53 million that would come with

the 9% required by most Florida cities as a result of statewide property tax reform measures. The \$523 million budget, the mayor and City Manager **Pete Hernandez** say, has been cut equal to the 9%. But administrators have already put some of what they tout as cuts back into the budget to spend in other areas, including parks and police, resulting in only a \$31 million reduction.

TALLAHASSEE TALKS: State legislators continue to push Miami to self-impose steeper rollbacks. Most Florida cities were required to reduce their budgets by 9% in an effort to ease residents’ property tax burdens. In what legislators have deemed a mistake, Miami appeared on a list of cities exempt from the steep cuts due to the financial crisis it faced until 2001. Florida House of Representatives Speaker **Marco Rubio** “has encouraged the city of Miami to voluntarily reduce taxes and spending because the city’s citizens are over-burdened with property taxes,” said spokesperson **Jill Chamberlin** in an e-mail. “He is disappointed in every local government that has failed to pass on savings to property taxpayers, instead choosing as a local government to benefit unfairly from the big bump in Florida property values over the past several years.”

CUTTING MORE FAT: Some Miami commissioners have called for further reductions in departments to increase payback to residents. “We should abolish the economic development office,” said **Tomás Regalado**, “because we have very, very good agencies throughout the city” that serve similar purposes, including the Downtown Development Authority and the Community Redevelopment Agencies. Axing the department would save \$1.5 million, Mr. Regalado said. **Marc Sarnoff** pointed out increases in several departments’ budgets, including communications, building, public facilities and zoning, among others. “You can reduce it (the budget) 9% and not give the citizens back that reduction, or we can reduce it the 9% and really see if we can give back some significant monies,” he said. Commissioners are to consider the budget for final approval Sept. 27.

THE ACHIEVER



Photo by Marlene Quaroni

Juan Carlos Bermudez
Helping to transform Doral into a community

The profile is on Page 4

Ruling may sink tunnel fund source

By RISA POLANSKY

Miami’s already-elusive \$50 million share to dig a Port of Miami tunnel was further jeopardized by a Florida Supreme Court ruling last week that could hamstring community redevelopment agencies statewide.

For the first time, City Manager Pete Hernandez has conceded city staff may have to look beyond the Miami redevelopment agency for tunnel funds. Administrators have resisted that for months, despite the agency board’s refusal to fund the tunnel.

The court ruled that voters, not just board members, must approve use of redevelopment agency funds to finance bonds for capital improvements, adding time and more risk of failure to the process.

“We don’t know yet” how the ruling will impact Miami’s opportunity to access the money should the agency board allow it, Mr. Hernandez said, but the city is working to see “whether the CRA money could still be used, and if so, in what way, and if not, what are the other options.”

Even if the agency board overturns its vote to deny funds to a tunnel without a guaranteed payback, “too much time is going to go by” if a referendum is required, said Johnny Martinez, district six secretary for the Florida Department of Transportation, which has the largest stake in the project.

The tunnel’s concessionaire has set a Sept. 30 deadline for all funds to be approved before raising its price— which could kill the tunnel, Mr. Martinez said — and the city’s share is the missing link.

After the drastic change to the redevelopment agency’s ability to spend, the state plans to seek an extension, but “it was not easy getting them to hold it until Sept. 30,” he said. “Something like this may force them (the city) to find other ways to make up their share.”

■ Court’s ruling threatening redevelopment agencies, pg. 2

What Brickell condo slump? Developer adds units

By ERIC KALIS

As other Brickell developers downsize or revamp residential project plans, developer Renzo Renzi is trying to add up to 150 units to the long-delayed Beacon at Brickell Village.

Mr. Renzi this week applied to Miami to amend a major use special permit that city commissioners first approved in 2001 for the project at 801 Brickell Plaza, site of the former Mental Health Association building. If commissioners approve, Mr. Renzi would add about 150 residences, for a total of 340, and 12 stories to bring the tower to 448 feet. He’s also applying for 76 more parking spaces, for a total of 440, and about 7,000 square feet of new office and retail space.

The opportunity to expand the project arose from the purchase six months ago of adjacent land, Mr. Renzi said. The transaction allows project planners to replace an existing parking garage, which was the reason for the delay in planning, with a new structure, he said.

The existing garage “had a ramp that was

not very functional and we didn’t like it very much,” Mr. Renzi said. “We always wanted to buy the piece of land next door to assign parking there and make the project more functional.”

Permitting could take up to a year, he said, a period in which project representatives expect to begin marketing the tower. Plans call for a mix of condominium and rental units, he said, but market conditions will dictate unit distribution and prices.

Viability should get a boost from a location at Southeast Eighth Street and First Avenue, Mr. Renzi said, and from more retail tenants building-out stores in nearby mixed-use complex Mary Brickell Village. “This is in a nice area of Brickell that is not done yet,” he said. “It is very important to have Mary Brickell open [this fall] right next door. That is key for the success of the area and project.”

Plans to enhance Beacon at Brickell Village come as Brickell’s condo supply is to soar from 5,348 units to 12,299 by the end of 2008. Two projects —The Related Group’s 633-unit 500 Brickell and 1,000-

unit The Plaza on Brickell — will add about half the new units.

Other developers such as Tibor Hollo are responding to the potentially crowded Brickell market by modifying residential projects. Mr. Hollo has applied to the city to cut in half luxury condos planned for his Villa Magna project at 1201 Brickell Bay Drive and replace them with a high-end hotel.

A congested Brickell condo market, however, isn’t deterring Mr. Renzi, he said. The city’s residential market “always bounces back,” he said. “Miami and other cities may have an oversupply, but it depends on location. When you look at the Biscayne Corridor and see that thousands of units are in the pipeline, that is a problem I see coming. A good location in the middle of Brickell will do well.”

Other Renzi Development projects in the pipeline include office tower 100 Alhambra in Coral Gables and apartment building Ocean Sound in Miami Beach.

Details: www.renzidevelopment.com

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THE INSIDER

JACKSON SOUTH EXPANSION: Miami-Dade commissioners on Tuesday are expected to vote on approving the "erection, construction and operation" phase of Jackson South Community Hospital's expansion and renovation. The 199-bed former Deering Hospital has been operating at full capacity in the wake of the South Dade population boom, and 5.7 acres were purchased in 2005 in anticipation of the project, where a four-story building and additional parking are to be built. The plan adds 180,000 square feet of new construction and 72,000 square feet of renovated space to improve service.

NEW AND BETTER SERVICES: Construction on the \$102 million project is expected to begin next year, with a 2011 completion. Plans call for a multi-phase project including expanded emergency and operating rooms, new critical care and inpatient beds, upgraded maternity services and construction of an ambulatory surgery center. The project is included in the Building Better Communities General Obligation bond program, which is contributing \$65 million. Public Health Trust Series 2005 Revenue bonds are to provide the balance.

ENTERPRISING ATTORNEY: Vivian de las Cuevas-Diaz, a partner with Broad and Cassel law firm in Miami, has been added to the board of directors of Enterprise Florida, a public-private organization that promotes statewide economic development. The organization now has 65 directors, and Gov. Charlie Crist is its chairman. Ms. de las Cuevas-Diaz' term ends July 1, 2011. She is a graduate of Florida State University and received her law degree from Tulane.



Vivian de las Cuevas-Diaz

BUSINESS EMPOWERMENT: The Miami-Dade Chamber of Commerce will hold its third Business Empowerment Networking Series event from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday at Jungle Island. Technology: The Game, a luncheon sponsored by IBM, will feature keynote speaker Marc Morial, president of the National Urban League and former mayor of New Orleans. Microsoft recently gave a \$5 million software grant to the league to help encourage minority students to enter technology career paths, and Mr. Morial will talk about the National Urban League's technology initiatives. IBM's Market Development Executive Denise Evans will also present a lesson at the event.

BUSINESS OWNER'S TOOLKIT: Ms. Evans' presentation will "tell you how you can use technology to help your small business," she said. Topics will include e-mail privacy and security, disaster recovery, how to back up important information and how to organize information. She also plans to talk about a helpful online tool for small businesses, a Web site create by IBM and the World Bank's International Finance Corporation. "This amazing site is in 29 countries and in 14 languages," she said. "It has business planning tools, information on e-commerce and how-to articles." Technology: The Game costs \$25 for chamber members, \$35 for others. Details: (305) 751-8648.

TUNNEL TALK: Commissioner Joe Sanchez voted no last month as a community redevelopment agency board member on a resolution denying agency funds to Miami-Dade County's port tunnel project without a guarantee the \$50 million could be recouped – a virtual impossibility, city and state officials have said. He now says his vote did not indicate support for funding the project, but exactly the opposite. "I'm against the tunnel, period," he said, saying he opposed the resolution because of the recoup clause, not because he was against denying the funds. Commissioner Sarnoff, the resolution's only other opponent, says the tunnel could relieve area blight and voted against the resolution to leave doors open for funding options.

OH, CANADA: The local Beacon Council, The Business Development Board of Palm Beach County and The Broward Alliance are to lead a tri-county economic-development mission to Toronto and Montreal, Canada, Sept. 23-28. The trip is meant to target industries such as aviation, financial and professional services, information technology and life sciences, according to Canadian Consul General Marcy Grossman. "Canada and Florida share a lengthy and vibrant bilateral economic relationship, fueled by trade and investment linkages proudly shared by both," she said in an e-mail. "We hope that this tri-county mission will continue to broaden that relationship and provide visibility to one of Florida's best kept secrets."

FILM FLAP: As Miami-Dade County gears up to slice its film office budget and recover funds lost through a \$100 film permit application fee, Miami Beach officials are resisting. They last week passed a resolution urging the county to resolve the budget shortfall without charging fees. This puts a rift in the long-standing partnership between the Beach, the City of Miami and the county. Graham Winick, Miami Beach's film and event production manager, said last week that while leaving the FilMiami partnership – which allows one-stop shopping for those seeking permits within the three areas – would be the "worst-case scenario," if the county approves the \$100 application fee, Miami Beach will either have to accept it or leave the partnership and issue permits itself, free of charge.

CORRECTION: A previously published article headlined "Several mergers of area community banks pending" was mistakenly republished in the Aug. 30 issue.

New Florida Supreme Court ruling might hurt redevelopment agencies

BY RISA POLANSKY

Outlook for community redevelopment agencies across the state is hazy after a vague Florida Supreme Court ruling last week that could jeopardize the entities' function, experts say, and the ruling also piles more doubt onto the future of a local agency already threatened with extinction.

Planting a roadblock in front of the long-accepted process of using redevelopment money to fund large capital projects, the court ruling requires a referendum – rather than agency approval only – before using the funds to finance bonds for such projects.

"The implications of the decision are just now starting to be realized throughout the state," said attorney David Cardwell, general counsel to the Florida Redevelopment Association.

The court's decision, he said, leaves many loose ends, including who would vote in the referendum and whether it applies to set contractual obligations.

Escambia County, in which the case was based, has until Sept. 17 to ask for a rehearing or clarification, he said.

The ruling could cripple Miami administrators' longstanding but often-criticized plan to use \$50 million in Omni Community Redevelopment Agency money to fund the city's promised share in Miami-Dade County's port tunnel project, as the impending Sept. 30 deadline to secure the funds wouldn't allow time for a vote by residents.

"Time is not our friend on this one," said Johnny Martinez, district six secretary for the Florida Department of Transportation, who plans to ask the tunnel's concessionaire for an extension on the cut-off date.

In the mean time, the city is exploring other funding options, City Manager Pete Hernandez said.

It's not just the tunnel that's at stake.

Redevelopment agencies are funded through property valuation increases. The local government receives tax revenue from the district up to a specified level. As valuations increase, any tax money generated beyond the set level goes to the redevelopment agency.

In order to not only fund the



'The decision does not spell the death of CRAs'

Michelle Spence-Jones

tunnel project but continue generating revenue to contribute to revitalization, both the agency's lifespan and boundaries would need to be extended to stretch past 2017 and include Watson Island, where the port tunnel is to be dug – ultimately, a decision by Miami-Dade County commissioners.

Mr. Hernandez last month voiced concern that the county would be unlikely to extend the agency's life without support for the tunnel – a worry not unfounded, some commissioners said at the time.

Following last week's state Supreme Court decision that nudges the money further out of reach than a recent no

agency board already has, commission Chair Bruno Barreiro said this week "that's not going to be the sole issue that determines if we expand it or not," but "it might" jeopardize the agency's life.

"It's an issue we'll take into consideration," he said. "We take a perspective of making sure it [the agency] benefits the entire county, not just the area, and we negotiate these points."

Emphasizing the necessity of the port tunnel, designed to relieve downtown Miami of port-related traffic by diverting it through a tunnel system connecting the Port of Miami to Watson Island, Commissioner Jose "Pepe" Diaz, head of the county's Airport and Tourism Committee, said he is unsure if the agency's potential inability to put up the funds would sway him to vote against extending



'The Community Redevelopment Agency's refusal to provide the port tunnel funding' might jeopardize the agency's life.

Bruno Barreiro

its life.

"I would really have to look at that closely," he said.

But the ruling doesn't render redevelopment agencies useless, proponents say.

"The decision does not spell the death of CRAs," said Miami Commissioner Michelle Spence-Jones, chair of the local agency boards, in an e-mail. "It only, at this point, limits the financial tools available to have maximum impact of improving the quality of life of those who live in the CRA district."

Carol Westmoreland, executive director of the Florida Redevelopment Association, said the ruling wouldn't stop agencies from doing what they're meant to do but could complicate the process.

In addition to the "time issue" of a referendum taking longer to pass than a vote by the agency board, there's a "higher probability the voters will say no," she said, because the issue becomes "more political than financial."

Jim Villacorta, executive director of the local redevelopment agencies, said in an e-mailed statement that "for more than two decades Florida's communities have benefited from access to bond funding and we are hopeful that redevelopment efforts will not be adversely impacted by the court's reversal of its long established precedent." He did not respond to calls to elaborate on the direct impact of the ruling on area agencies.

"I think there are unintended consequences" of the decision, Ms. Westmoreland said. "Situations that the court did not opine about are causing the ripple effect."



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Doral's Mayor Juan Carlos Bermudez relishes role...

As Doral's first and only mayor since the city's incorporation in 2003, Juan Carlos Bermudez has worked to forge a cohesive community of what he calls a once-"jumbled" area. He points to new parks, city-run code enforcement, public works and police departments, and a recent victory in ceasing incorporation payouts to Miami-Dade County as benchmarks in the city's short lifespan but acknowledges challenges ahead, including getting what he considers a fair share of transportation tax dollars.

A master plan for growth – which includes a push to bring Class A office space and big business headquarters to the city – is planned for Doral's future, and Mayor Bermudez, who also has a Doral law practice, Juan Carlos Bermudez, P.A., says he plans to run for reelection to further this and other aims. He was interviewed in his Doral City Hall office by Miami Today staff writer Risa Polansky.

Q: How has Doral changed since its incorporation just four years ago?

A: Obviously, when you look at just the infrastructure, it has changed. In less than two years we have built out two world-class parks. We took over these parks from Miami-Dade County. We have pictures that show before and after, and it's like night and day. I think Doral has changed in many, many different ways. We've beautified a number of roads, we've taken over code enforcement and public works.

We're now starting our own police department. That's one of the most important projects we have. We've hired Ricardo Gomez, who was the chief when we were contracting with the county, and he has begun to hire staff. We're still under a county contract, but at the same time, we're beginning our police department.

We have our own building department, which is streamlined, up to date, computerized, and much more efficient than we were doing it before. All of those are things that are visible things of incorporation.

But more important than all of that, to be honest, it's the creation of a sense of community. When all those things come together, you now see people with bumper stickers from the City of Doral on their cars and parents who are very proud that their kids not only live here but also play in our leagues, they go to our July Fourth celebration, and I think that's been the most wonderful thing of all.

One of the things that's very important to point out is that we have never raised our millage rate since we incorporated. The part of the taxes we control has never gone up. People think 'oh, they incorporated and they're doing all this, and they raised taxes.' We didn't. We've kept it at 2.4 mills, which is one of the lowest in the county.

Q: What are the principles of Doral's master plan?

A: There are three main principles, and we went through a number of public hearings to take input from the business community and the residents. Number one, we wanted to try to focus on getting more single-family homes, and also having mixed-use, which is what our downtown overlay district is. The old Ryder building is part of it. So you're going to



Mayor Juan Carlos Bermudez sees creation of a sense of community as Doral's chief accomplishment. "I think that's been the most wonderful thing of all," the mayor says.

Photo by Marlene Quaroni

The Achiever

Juan Carlos Bermudez

Mayor
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Birthplace: Santa Clara, Cuba
Education: University of Miami (BA, politics and public affairs, English and history); University of Notre Dame (JD)
Age: 45
Personal philosophy: "Be a person of character, honest and straightforward in whatever you do. If you have character, your principles will withstand good and bad days."

see an area where people are going to live, whether it be in townhomes or condos, and where there will be offices, and also restaurants and retail areas.

Number two, we're focusing on trying to attract class A office space. We would like to be able to attract more companies' national and international headquarters.

Number three, we'd like to get our industrial closer to State Road 836 and the airport. The way Doral as an area grew up, it's kind of a hodgepodge now. We have an industrial base; we have a lot of freight forwarders and businesses of that type. They need to get to the seaport and the airport, so for us it's better to get them away from the residential areas and more toward where they can get to the airport and the seaport quicker. So our plan has incentives for those three things.

In addition to that, obviously the plan also has a lot of other things that we didn't have before we were a city, things as basic as architectural guidelines that are much more in tune with the vision of our community, to a greening of the commercial and residential areas, more trees and so on. Now, when developers come and build something, they have to make it a lot greener than before.

Q: Where does the master plan stand now?

A: It's been approved; we have one appeal of our master plan that's being

heard on Sept. 5, from the owners of the Doral Resort & Spa, and it has to do with the White Course. They want to do something else with the White Course. Our position is that the master plan, as approved by the city, does not take away any of their property rights.

Q: So the master plan has been approved by the city council? Does it require state approval?

A: Yes, it was approved by the city council more than a year ago. It has been approved by the DCA (Department of Community Affairs), but there's an appeal period, and [Doral Resort] is the only personal property that's affected, and has appealed our master plan.

Q: Once that situation is smoothed over, what's the next step?

A: It's approved, it's implemented, now we have a set of rules where you know what type of development can go in that particular area. The zoning code is separate. For instance, tonight we should approve our land use regulation; that deals with the zoning code. We were using the county's until now.

The master plan had to come first. We now have a color-coded map of our city that will tell you exactly what each area is planned for. Say you want to build a commercial building, and you know that area is commercial. The zoning code will tell you how many floors you can build in that area, what other requirements there are for that area. That's where land use regulations come in.

Q: What will be the first step once everything is approved? Is there a focus area?

A: Yes, our biggest area we're focusing on now is our downtown overlay district, which is the redevelopment of the area east of Southwest 87th Avenue, what used to be called the Koger Center, then it became the Doral Center. This area includes the older Ryder building, which has been knocked down.

We think that by creating a downtown with class A office space, retail opportunities and residential opportunities, we can attract a lot of the things we want. Our motto is that we want to be a premier place to live, work, play and learn.

I think that by building the downtown overlay district, it will make a big difference. Once the master plan is done from

our perspective, that will be the first area that we'll focus on. And those projects are moving along already.

Q: What is the current business climate in the city and how do you foresee it changing as the master plan is implemented?

A: We're very fortunate in that we have a great area to live, work, play and learn. We're located near the airport, we're in close proximity to Southwest Broward, to South Dade, and to downtown Miami, because we're surrounded by major thoroughfares.

Our proximity to the airport gives us a great opportunity for businesses to be centrally located in Miami-Dade County, so we have a very good business climate. With the master plan, that focus of bringing in class A buildings to have international and national headquarters is going to open up an opportunity for us to attract national and international companies to Doral.

Q: Talk about your battle with Miami-Dade County to halt the post-incorporation payment.

A: That's been a recent victory; actually, they're appealing it now but we still think we're going to win it. Doral paid the largest chunk.

This past year we paid \$8.7 million, just given away to the county, just because we incorporated. That money goes to them. Palmetto Bay and Miami Lakes also paid; less, but they also paid.

In principle I think it's unfair to treat cities differently. You have to remember that our parks are open to all county residents; it's not like the county hasn't benefited from the work that we've done with our own tax dollars. I told my friends on the county commission that it was important.

The county itself named a task force that agreed with our position. And even then, they didn't want to deal with the mitigation payments, which were in perpetuity, by the way – they were forever. And they would go up every year.

So I went to Tallahassee and I really was very thankful of the support we received in the House and the Senate; it passed unanimously, bi-partisan, 112-0 in the House, 35-0 in the Senate, and Gov. [Charlie] Crist signed it.

I think it's wrong for county government to treat new municipalities such as ours, Miami Lakes and Palmetto Bay, differently than other municipalities are treated. And I think it's unfair to charge a mitigation payment, because that keeps people from trying to move toward local self-government, which is the most efficient government you can have.

Q: What's happening in Doral in terms of residential development?

A: We have a lot of growth, in particular to the northwest, which is a mix of single-family homes, townhomes and some condos. There will be residential growth in the downtown area and those will be condominiums and townhomes, brownstones. We want to grow to the east with that downtown concept, and those are the two areas that's we're focusing on right now.

Q: Sergio Pino is planning 4,000 units in Section 8?

A: Yes, that's in the northwest area. Section 8 is between 97th and 107th avenues and between 74th and 90th streets. It's not section 8 housing; it's an area called Section 8 Township 53.

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It's probably going to be less than 4,000.

The county approved the project; we appealed the county decision, took it to court. Then Mr. Pino reached an agreement with us, in which we capped the number of units that could go up. We included in that agreement that he had to build a certain number of single-family homes.

He also had to donate a 25-acre park and a 52-acre preserve, which he did. He had a charter school in which he gave the city two of the five seats [on the board of directors]. He would name two others, and the fifth we would name jointly. He agreed to build out the roads before he built anything. He gave us money for a special election to make sure we control zoning over that whole section, which we didn't have before. We fought hard to reach an agreement with the developer in this case. I think it's a smart thing, because it could have been many, many more units.

Q: What are the greatest challenges you face in planning the budget?

A: We have so much infrastructure, it's challenging to focus on the projects that we need immediately, whether it be additional park space, or beautification, betterment of roads, that's number one.

The second thing is, I'm a policy maker, and I believe in performance-based budgeting. We've been trying to get staff to go in that direction for two years, and we're almost there.

I come from the private sector; I expect our city to be run as if it was a business. Our clients are our residents, our businesses, and the people who come and visit our city. With performance-based budgeting, we can judge how we're doing, how we can get better, and where we need to get better. I hope we have a plan in place for that by the next budget cycle. I'm very insistent that our management team do that.

Q: Do the Miami-Dade County budget cuts affect you?

A: Yes, they do impact us. For example, one of the libraries that was slated for the residential area of Doral has now been eliminated as a result of the county budget cuts. We don't have a library. The closest one being built is over by the International

Mall, which is very far for our residents. Even though it's in Doral, it's actually closer to the Fontainebleau Park residents.

I look forward to working with Mayor [Carlos] Alvarez and hopefully finding a way that the city and the county could jointly create something. I understand Mayor Alvarez' concerns, too – he has to deal with his budget and the way that these budget cuts have impacted it. But I think there are ways that we can still work around these budget cuts.

Q: What are some of the challenges the city is facing?

A: Before we were a city, the zoning was what I would call hodgepodge. You'd have an industrial area here, and a residential area there, and then a commercial area right here. There was no rhyme or reason to the planning of the growth of this area.

That's one of the challenges we have to try to correct with our master plan, as much as we can. We can't correct everything but we can move toward correcting it.

The second challenge is the tremendous infrastructure deficit we've been left with. We have a new area, with a lot of demographic changes, a lot of young families. We were left with no parks. I think we were the only city to ever incorporate without a basketball court, a soccer field or a baseball field.

That infrastructure deficit impacts our parks and our schools – and we are the only city in Miami-Dade County to have all A schools – because we are not starting with a clean slate. And now we're trying to make a beautiful picture out of it. Unlike a city like Weston, where everything was pre-planned and everything was given to them, we had a great area that was jumbled.

Q: Why should Doral receive Citizens Independent Transportation Trust money?

A: Doral, Miami Gardens and Cutler Bay do not receive CITT money, because there was a cut-off time established by the county. The residents of Doral pay the CITT tax anyway, so we should get a fair portion.

But there's even a better reason: we are one of the communities west of the

airport, where most of the business that goes to the airport comes through or from our city. That being the case, this city could use those CITT dollars to better the roads. We pay for it, but we're not getting it. If we were to get it, we'd be helping the county.

We need better roadways in this area, west of the airport, so by logic, Doral should get CITT money. The CITT program has some issues. We're still trying to move forward and we hope to reach some sort of agreement with the county mayor.

Q: And you are also trying to get Metropolitan Planning Organization money?

A: We feel that the roads in the Doral area are critical to the economics not only in Doral but to Miami-Dade County, so we need to get more MPO money to make sure that major roads are built out. My plans are to go convince the MPO that it's critical to our county.

Q: Where do plans stand for the Doral Circulator Trolley?

A: It's been approved, and we've started the request for proposals process to get a vendor. We're going to have a test circulator for a year. We're hoping to roll that out toward the end of this year. We want to see what the ridership will be. It's going to circulate in our core area and also toward these residential area, during certain times of day.

Q: What are Doral's greatest strengths?

A: Being a city that truly can be a place to live, work, and play. We have an excellent business community which is growing and is perfectly situated to do business in South Florida and all over Miami-Dade County. We have high-quality residential housing. Combine those two things with the things we're adding now – the parks, the schools, the beautification program – and the diversity of its people, it's an example of what the future of South Florida can be.

Q: What is your number-one goal as mayor?

A: I'd like to make sure we continue correcting our infrastructure deficit, beau-

tifying our roads and streets, make sure our roads are better, clean out our parks. I want to make sure our city takes a lead on helping get property insurance reform.

I think our businesses and residents are paying much more than they should pay for insurance. It makes not only Doral, but all of Florida, less competitive.

Q: What is your greatest personal challenge?

A: Starting a city from scratch; waking up one day and saying, 'OK, it's me and four other elected officials – where do we start?' It's taken a tremendous amount of time and effort. Very few of the mayors have had that opportunity.

With the airport to the south and the rock miners to the west, it's not like starting a bedroom community. It's been a tremendous challenge to bring everybody together and have them feel a sense of pride in Doral and having everybody understand that we're all in this together. We're not building the city from the top down but from the bottom up. I think we've been very successful at it. The happiness of the people shows it.

Q: Do you plan to remain in public office?

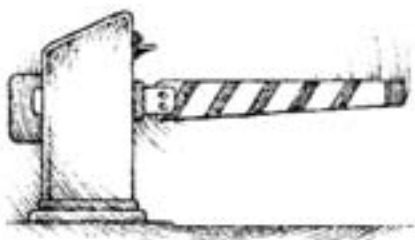
A: My immediate plan is to run for re-election next year. There's a two-term limit, but I can run for re-election and I'd like to see some of the things we've started come to fruition. I like government because I like making a difference in people's lives.

Q: What about your personal life?

A: I have a great wife, without whom I couldn't do this, and two girls, Eneida, 12, and Elena, 8. My wife, Vivian, has been a teacher at Lorah Park Elementary in Brownsville for 15 years. She teaches special education.

Q: Where do you see Doral 10 years from now?

A: I think, in 10 years, Doral will be an area where you will have national and international headquarters of corporations whose employees will also live in the area because of the quality of our schools, our parks, and our quality of life in general. And I see Doral as being one of the premier cities in South Florida – better yet, in all of Florida.



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Waiter, skip the steak – just give me some service, please

Just when we think we've licked our image problems, they bite us again. Maybe we got complacent.

It happened after the 1981 "Miami: Paradise Lost?" Time magazine cover so corroded our image that it took us a decade to polish it again.

But what happened? The image then slid so much that last year Time came back to write of Miami "There's Trouble – Lots of it – in Paradise" and US Rep. Tom Tancredo of Colorado called us Third World.

Was paradise ever lost? Was trouble ever as great as portrayed? Or was it a matter of keeping our image clean – or failing to do so?

The Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau last month decided that the fault, at least in part, is internal. It plans to hire a national firm to repaint the image of customer service inside our own hospitality industry.

There's a great starting point. A bureau-commissioned survey of taxis, ho-



Michael Lewis

tels, restaurants, shopping malls and Miami International Airport found service levels that flunked visitors' expectations – as bureau CEO Bill Talbert said, "nowhere near where we need them to be for a world-class destination."

Service problems are like weeds: you've got to root them out over and over. It's never ending.

Recall 1984, when a local symposium blackballed our tourism hospitality.

In response, in 1985 we created Miami Nice, tied to St. Thomas University, to drive courtesy and professionalism into taxi drivers. The county forced all 4,000 drivers to attend, which took two years. Taxi service complaints to the county tumbled 80% and the program became a model picked up by eight big cities.

But after the program ended, think how many new drivers got behind the wheel. No wonder the training didn't all stick – better than 1984, but not good enough.

Service is a pack of little things in each customer's mind, hard to measure and even to evaluate, but you know when you get it – and even more when you don't. Good service brings you back – and the

bad taste of bad service repels you.

In two restaurants and one hotel where I dine I'm confident of a greeting by name, a smile and excellent service. It helps that I've never had a bad meal in any of them, but I'm fully confident that if I ever had a complaint, it would be fixed quickly, and again with a smile. That's what brings me back.

On the other hand, I believe every reader could relay at least one horror story of poor service in Miami's visitor industry. I don't mean the waiter who spills on you, because accidents are inevitable. I mean what happens next. Or the hostess who asks where "you guys" want to sit. Or the waitress who grabs your half-finished plate while your fork is raised. You can add to the list.

We all know where to go for good service, and where not to go because it's bad. And we want Miami in the former category, not the latter, because service can set us apart among destinations.

Achieving that comes one institution at a time, one worker at a time – from taxis to hotels to restaurants to stores to the airport.

That the convention bureau plans to develop a permanent customer service

program is commendable. Miami Nice came and went – as did the higher ratings for taxi drivers.

Because sales grow with service, and service falters without repeated training and then repeated incentives to keep workers doing what they know. A big incentive in services is larger tips – San Francisco found two decades ago that just dressing a taxi driver better increased tips \$140 a week. Imagine adding a smile and service.

Miami's service suffers because so many in hospitality consider themselves temps awaiting a big acting break or admission to college. They often act like it, giving Third World service.

But with good training and attitude, incomes rise – including tips – and what was once a steppingstone can become a bedrock profession.

The convention bureau's training can expedite that change in service level from amateur to professional, increasing employee incomes, customer loyalty and, eventually, Miami's image as a place to visit, do business and live.

The trick is to keep working on those image problems until the good image becomes reality.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

City's poor need jobs, not costly surveillance

It strikes me as absurd that Miami being one of the poorest cities in the USA, due to most workers earning not even subsistence wages and having to hold two or three jobs just to try to make ends meet, should spend \$27,000 (per camera) on surveillance cameras – that's more than a year's income for most workers in Miami! (See Mr. Villamil's statistics in the Aug. 30 edition of Miami Today.)

Is there no way of putting to better use the \$27,000 per camera? Like using those monies to provide jobs and decent salaries for the working poor? With an adequate income, the quality of life in Miami will improve and there will be no need for those expensive, intrusive surveillance cameras.

Sylvia Ospina

Open bowl site to bids

Your column regarding converting the Orange Bowl to a baseball stadium follows my thinking on this matter.

I would propose an additional question: If the Orange Bowl property is to be used for a public-private venture (i.e., a stadium), shouldn't other private venturers be given the opportunity to bid on the site?

For example, maybe a venture partner would use the site for a concert facility, an entertainment complex, a school or some other use if the land was free or near-free. Some of these alternatives could generate revenue AND meet a community interest.

I would hope that, before it acts on the baseball deal, the city will permit other bidders to propose other potential uses for the Orange Bowl site.

Tom David

Miami arts and culture on the verge of collapsing?

Countless articles have crowned Miami the new arts center in the Southeast, and with good reason. Art Basel, the impact of the Carnival Center, residency of the Cleveland Orchestra, film festivals covering every conceivable interest, and the explosion of the Wynwood Arts District are among the indicators of this welcomed community pride.

Alas, justified panic has descended on our arts community. Why? The state Legislature's changes in our tax system are creating severe cuts in county funding to large and small arts organizations. The "major institutions" such as the Miami Art Museum, Vizcaya and the Miami Museum of Science are facing 25% budget cuts Oct. 1, and smaller arts organizations will lose at least one-third of their budgets.

But wait, it gets worse. If the voters approve the tax referendum in January, Miami's arts community (and all social service providers) will be decimated and many organizations will disappear.

That said – and I am a former theater board chair and supporter of the arts – this is an important time to step back and ask, "Who is responsible for funding Miami's arts and culture organizations?"

I fear there is an assumption that it is the responsibility of Miami Dade County – the taxpayers – to foot the bills. Because we are a tourist destination and the arts are important in promoting tourism, and we like to think of Miami as an increasingly cosmopolitan community, the arts are considered a key component to a healthy and vibrant city. But who is supposed to pay the bills?



Brian Foss

The Writer

Brian Foss is a Miami management consultant to nonprofit CEOs and boards. Contact befoss@aol.com

In fairness to the arts organizations, they have been led to become highly dependent on government dollars and assumed the checks would keep coming.

The county has some wonderful arts programs, including setting aside 1.5% of construction costs of county buildings to fund Art in Public Places, which has resulted in more than 700 installed works. County taxpayers approved hundreds of millions to the arts through the 2004 General Obligation Bonds. The Miami Museum of Science will receive \$175 million, and \$100 million goes to the Miami Art Museum. Smaller venues were funded, including \$2 million to the Joseph Caleb Auditorium, \$10 million to the Cuban Museum, \$4 million to Westchester Arts Center and \$5 million to the Carver Theater.

With the county scrambling to make huge cuts in response to the Legislature, likely to be compounded by the January vote, arts budgets will be slashed. Who will pick up the slack from the county?

You can count the number of national corporations and national foundations based in Miami on one hand – a serious challenge we face contrasted to other major US cities. That leaves smaller businesses, people of wealth and the rest of us to decide if we are going to be a thriving arts center or whether we are going to give that away and fly to Boston, New York, San Francisco, Chicago and Los Angeles for our dose of culture.

Part of the problem is that too many arts organizations got caught up in "edi-

fice complex" and are building new structures and conducting capital campaigns. Having spent a half billion on the Carnival Center, which we are told has world-class acoustics, is it essential for New World Symphony to have its own building? The Opera has backed off on its building plans.

Miami is blessed to have countless terrific venues, but they sit empty most of the time: the Colony, the Lincoln, Jackie Gleason, Gusman Center for the Performing Arts, Dade Auditorium to name but a few. Add to that the great acoustics at Trinity Cathedral, area university halls, beautiful churches and schools (often used by groups such as Seraphic Fire and the Master Chorale). We are not lacking for places to experience the arts, yet the building campaigns grow larger.

It is long past time for the board and staff leaders of Miami's arts and culture to talk to each other, collaborate, partner, share resources. Survival of some great organizations is at stake.

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Coconut Grove begins forming business district

By RISA POLANSKY

As Coconut Grove property owners, merchants and residents get down to the nitty-gritty of forming a business improvement district, questions of where to set district boundaries and whether residents should have to pay for its services have moved to the forefront of talks.

Property owners within a business improvement district tax themselves to fund area improvements and marketing outside of services provided by their governing municipality.

The Coconut Grove Business Improvement Committee, a City of Miami entity, since 2004 has worked toward establishing a full-blown district and is now in "the chalice moment" of the process, said David Collins, executive director of the committee.

Consultant Daniel Biederman, with the input of stakeholders, has drafted sample boundaries to present to property owners that stretch down South Bayshore Drive to Aviation Avenue, from Aviation roughly to Margaret Street and along Main Highway to Franklin Avenue.

The idea is to encompass the area with both the biggest need for added services and the best ability to pay for them, Mr. Biederman said.

Mr. Collins said the bounds form "a big enough area from which we can shape things," and reminded property owners at a forum last month that "nothing is written in stone, nothing is written in wet concrete."

In the coming months, he said, potential district members will have the chance to voice their preferences, and the final boundaries are to be set from there.

The northeast boundary could change depending on residents' feedback, Mr. Biederman said.

Should condo developments be included in the district, the question becomes how to — and even whether to — charge residents for the added services.

In his 20 years of experience with improvement districts, Mr. Biederman said he has found that some believe residents should not pay a tax at all because the services provided by the district are geared toward businesses.

Others believe, he said, that ev-

eryone in the area reaps the benefits of a cleaner, safer, prettier and more vibrant neighborhood.

"I think they should pay," Mr. Biederman said.

He believes a full assessment should be charged, he said, but some districts use a discounted rate.

Coral Gables' improvement district, recently voted in by property owners for a third five-year term, does include residences but does not tax them.

For mixed-use developments within the Gables district, only the commercial components are assessed.

Miami Commissioner Marc Sarnoff, chair of Coconut Grove's improvement committee, said any residents in the district would benefit from "better police protection and hopefully some better plantings and better maintenance of plantings" and he hopes they would support paying a "nominal amount of money" — perhaps \$100 to \$200 a year — to compensate for what the city may not be able to provide due to budget cuts.

No assessment method or amount has been set for commercial property within the district, but property owners may end up paying 12 cents to 29 cents a square foot.

As discussions continue, Mr. Collins said, the date to vote on whether to instate a district — set for November — may be pushed back a few months "to make sure everybody has their say."

Also under discussion now are the primary needs within the district and how money is to be allocated toward them.

Sanitation is a main concern, and Grove property owners have also focused on marketing, Mr. Biederman said.

Transportation may also get a slice of the pie.

Property owners say they hope for either more parking or a way to get people into the Center Grove without using cars, such as a trolley, a method used in Coral Gables.

Arthur Noriega, head of the Miami Parking Authority, said "you don't need more parking inventory" in Coconut Grove and encouraged property owners to invest their money in a transportation system rather than new garages.



'You don't need more parking inventory' in Coconut Grove.

Arthur Noriega



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Charter panel endorses status quo on offices

Task force wants elections chief and appraiser appointed

By WAYNE TOMPKINS

The Supervisor of Elections and Property Appraiser should remain appointed offices in Miami-Dade County, but commissioners should be able to remove them with a two-thirds vote, the Charter Review Task Force decided last week in a preliminary recommendation.

The vote came a week after the task force decided to keep the county's top law enforcement official and tax collector as appointed positions as well, leaving Miami-Dade as the only county not to directly elect the four offices.

The Miami-Dade County commission has given the task force until Oct. 31 to complete its review of the county's charter, which is the equivalent to a constitution. Ultimately, proposed changes to the charter would go before the voters as soon as the Jan. 29 presidential preference election if the county commission decides to put them on the ballot.

The preservation of—and threats to—diversity in positions of power has emerged as a central issue of the task force's discussions in a county where about 60% of the population is Hispanic and blacks



'We have a long, long way to go before any of this will become reality.'

Maurice Ferre



'What we are trying to do is share power. Sixty percent of the population is going to get 100% of the spoils 100% of the time.'

H.T. Smith



'People want to see elections.'

Javier Souto

and non-hispanic whites roughly split the remainder.

Task force member and civil rights attorney H.T. Smith has been especially vocal in protecting African-American interests, which he fears countywide elected offices would dilute.

"What we are trying to do is share power," Mr. Smith said. In a direct election, "Sixty percent of the population is going to get 100% of the spoils 100% of the time."

Mr. Smith conceded that if blacks had 60% of the popula-

tion, "We would say 'let's vote' also. We have to resist the temptation of taking over."

However, with public emotions still running high over property assessments, the vote on the property appraiser failed only by a 6-6 tie, with nine of 21 members absent. The 12 members present decided to hold a revote on the issue at a future meeting when more members are present.

The task force also recommended allowing the county commission to remove the sheriff, property appraiser and elections supervisor by a two-thirds majority, or nine votes. The tax collector would continue to serve at the pleasure of the mayor.

Miami-Dade Commissioner Javier Souto and Ignacio Jesus Vazquez, a career Miami-Dade police officer and former Sweetwater police chief, have been staunch supporters of electing the four offices.

"I don't just mingle with the rich and famous... the wine and cheese crowd," Mr. Souto said in a broadside to the prominent attorneys and politicians who make up much of the task force. "People want to see elections. This room is for the status-quo. If we don't listen to the people, we have a big problem."

Acting task force chair Maurice Ferre emphasized the task force's recommendations are only preliminary and that its final recommendations will not be made until late in the process.

"We have a long, long way to go before any of this will become reality," he said.

In addition to its regular meet-

ings, the task force's workshops have used interactive technology to gather public input.

The task force has adopted more than a dozen topics to review for possible changes, including the addition of at-large districts to the Miami-Dade County Commission — a proposal that Mayor Carlos Alvarez backs but the Miami-Dade chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People opposes, fearing it will diminish African-American influence on the commission. Also on the discussion list: term limits for elected officials, the balance of power between the mayor and commissioners and procurement reforms.

The task force's membership consists of one member appointed by each of the commissioners, one by Miami-Dade Mayor Alvarez, one by each of the county's four largest cities and three by the League of Cities, representing smaller municipalities.

This review, required by the charter to be held every five years, is the first since Miami-Dade County adopted the strong-mayor form of government in January. Proposed changes — if adopted — could alter the balance of power between Mayor Alvarez and the 13-member commission.

The task force is to meet again at 10 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 19, at the Stephen P. Clark Government Center.

The task force's Web site is www.miamidade.gov/charterreview

FILMING IN MIAMI

These film permits were issued last week by the Miami-Dade County Mayor's Office of Film & Entertainment, (305) 375-3288; the Miami Mayor's Office of Film, Arts & Entertainment, (305) 860-3823; and the Miami Beach Office of Arts, Culture and Entertainment-Film and Print Division, (305) 673-7070.

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RHINO STUDIOS. Miami. Plies. Downtown Miami Streets.

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Ross Report on Real Estate

by Audrey Ross

MATURE HOME BUYERS WANT EASY MAINTENANCE

New studies conducted by real estate industry leaders are revealing that homebuyers over the age of 50 are purchasing properties that include comprehensive yard, grounds and exterior building maintenance. Active adults in their golden years want the comfort and freedom of low-maintenance living, so they have more time to travel, relax and play.

One of the means to achieve an easy-care lifestyle is to purchase a townhouse or condominium, and statistics prove that many seniors are doing just that. Sales of condos broke industry records in the

last few years, and the median price of such units increased at a rate that grew faster than single detached homes. A growing number of seniors have been attracted to the high-end, luxury townhouses and condominiums that have been constructed in greater numbers during recent years.

Mature homebuyers prefer homes that allow them to manage the practical aspects of living with autonomy and confidence. They're also interested in the amenities offered by planned suburban communities, which offer fitness centers, golf courses, swimming pools and outdoor walking,

hiking and biking trails. They want convenient access to public transportation, shopping and medical services. Because many tech-savvy baby boomers work at home as consultants, they look for homes that provide access to high-speed Internet service, structured wiring and intercoms.

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Citizens beg county to spare Mom and Pop grants

By WAYNE TOMPKINS

Sharon Frazier-Stephens' homegrown enterprise, Touched by Angels, was inspired by the 1990s television show.

It was Miami-Dade County's Mom and Pop Small Business Grant Program, however, that gave the small cleaning business the money it needed to thrive.

"I started with one vacuum cleaner," Ms. Frazier-Stephens recalled. "Through the grant program I was able to buy six vacuum cleaners, a carpet shampooer and a buffer and I am working on other services."

Touched by Angels, targeted to low-income elderly and busy working mothers, is typical of the home-grown Miami-Dade cottage businesses helped by the Mom and Pop program, which is one of several programs to be eliminated under Mayor Carlos Alvarez's \$240 million in proposed budget cuts.

The program is one of many where battle lines probably will be drawn between the mayor and commissioners, who must approve the cuts and who have consistently expressed support for the Mom and Pop program. Dennis Moss, arguably its most vocal commission supporter, earlier this year sponsored a resolution that will feature the program's success stories in a show to be aired on the county's TV channel.

"The proposed budget includes reductions totaling more than \$240 million," Mr. Alvarez said. "It goes without saying that this budget was extremely challenging to prepare, and difficult decisions had to be made. All departments and many worthy programs have been impacted by the reductions, including the Mom and Pop Busi-

ness Grant Program."

The mayor added that the reductions are only proposals, and "I anticipate... county commissioners will make changes in the coming week prior to the budget's final adoption."

The Mom and Pop program provides grants of up to \$10,000 for qualified businesses throughout the county. Ms. Frazier-Stephens was one of three dozen people at a packed Sept. 6 hearing on the proposed county budget who pleaded for commissioners to spare the program.

"Many times, we cannot turn to the banks for loans," said Angela Roberts, who runs a Perrine restaurant. "These grants allow us to expand our businesses. We pinch every penny, and the grants allow us to stretch pennies to make dollars and help others."

Mom and Pop has grown from a 1999 program of \$50,000 in grants in District Three that today annually awards nearly \$2 million in grants to 600 businesses countywide, with each of 13 commission districts getting \$150,000, said Leroy Jones, executive director of the Neighbors to Neighbors Association, which administers the program.

Funding can be used to buy equipment, supplies, advertising, marketing, inventory, building liability insurance and security systems and to make minor renovations.

Mr. Jones said the businesses, which must have seven or fewer employees, also on average do business with three vendors. Many also are involved in community activities, such as sponsoring youth sports teams.

They also generate tax revenue for the county, "so the county is getting some of that (investment) back," he said.

Businesses receiving grants are randomly audited and the grants are reimbursable, meaning funds are not released until a business presents documentation for an authorized expense. Mr. Jones said his department has lacked the resources to study success rates since 1999 but that anecdotally the number of grant recipients still in business is "very high."

Ms. Roberts was joined at the hearing by other Mom and Pop beneficiaries, among them a

single mother who owns a Tai-Kwan-Do business, an auto parts vendor and a caterer.

They spoke to commissioners about the jobs their businesses have generated, the safe haven they often provide for at-risk youth and the physical improvements the businesses have contributed to neighborhoods.

"We're a family owned business... we have taken an eye-sore and in eight months hired three new employees," said Carrie Rozier of the Gourmet Cookie

Café in Miami. "A little goes a long way. It was a vision hatched only because we had the opportunity of Mom and Pop."

Adrian Ellis said the program helped get his event catering and party rental business off the ground, allowing him to "show my kids you can do it if you just get out there and do it."

The commission will hold another hearing on the proposed budget at 5:01 p.m. Sept. 20 at the Stephen P. Clark Government Center.

Gimenez seeks separate budget

By WAYNE TOMPKINS

The Miami-Dade County Commission would submit its own budget, in addition to the mayor's, beginning next year under a proposal by Commissioner Carlos Gimenez.

The Budget and Finance Committee signed off on the idea Tuesday, with Katy Sorenson dissenting. Rebeca Sosa voted for the measure, saying she liked the idea but wanted to see more details on how it could work while minimizing duplication.

Mr. Gimenez said of his plan: "My intent is really to create what happens in the federal government and with the Legislature, where the governor, House and Senate have budgets and then the political process happens and the sausage is made and the (final) budget comes out."

Mayor Alvarez could not immediately be reached for comment.

The proposal comes as the mayor has proposed more than \$240 million in budget cuts for the upcoming year. Commissioners, who can approve, negotiate changes or reject the

mayor's budget, have complained about programs the mayor has proposed to trim or eliminate entirely. Mr. Gimenez said he doesn't intend his proposal as adversarial.

"We need to develop our own budget. We need to have our own priorities," Mr. Gimenez said. "We're reacting to what the mayor is putting forward and then 'please put something in for our benefit.' In terms of... what we want funded and what we don't want funded, that's our purview."

His proposal directs the commission auditor to prepare an annual budget for the county beginning with fiscal 2008-09, a mammoth task that the office is not now prepared to do without additional staffing.

Ms. Sorenson said she saw no need for two separate budget offices in an austerity period and that the commission should not be confused with a legislative body.

"We're in the services business. That's what we fund primarily," she said. "Our priorities are not all that different. It's a matter of tweaking at the end.

They're all in touch with the same people that we are, and people know what they want to have funded."

Ms. Sorenson argued that this year's budget process is an aberration.

"We're looking at cuts we haven't been faced with in a long time," she said. "We have to stop seeing this as an us-and-them kind of situation."

Commissioner José "Pepe" Diaz said that while he also disliked duplication of government, the county's \$7.4 billion budget is larger than that of several states and the commission deserves a stronger say in how the money is spent.

"I support the idea of that we have to have a budget, but I want to see a structure that minimizes duplication," Ms. Sosa said. "I'm supporting this because it's a first step."

She said the auditor's office would need to be reconfigured to be able to prepare a budget.

"The mayor will bring his ideas," Ms. Sosa said, "we'll bring our ideas and, by mixing them together, we'll become a better government."

Preconstruction sales begin for mixed-use Lincoln Square Shops

By MARILYN BOWDEN

Alayo Building Co., a longtime local developer, and European developer Grupo San Jose announced the launch of preconstruction sales for a mixed-use project on Miami Beach.

Lincoln Square Shops & Residences, 1681 West Ave., will contain 35 residential units and about 6,000 square feet of ground-floor retail, Alayo Building Co. Principal Juan Alayo said.

He said the project, which is in the final stages of permitting, should break ground in January and be ready for occupancy 18 to 20 months later.

Apartments at Lincoln Square, which range from 500-square-foot studios to 1,290-square-foot two-bedroom units and also include outdoor space on balconies or terraces, are priced from the low \$300,000s to the mid \$700,000s, he said. Assigned covered parking is included in the purchase price.

"We felt that was important," Mr. Alayo said, "because a lot of the other projects in the neighborhood don't include parking, or lease it to residents

month-to-month. This was something we brought to the forefront in design."

Unit interiors are designed with floor-to-ceiling glass walls and open layouts featuring kitchens by Blum with oak finishes and Bosch appliances, washers and dryers, he said. Among the building's amenities is a cardio-fitness room for residents.

Mr. Alayo said the retail spaces, which range from 800-3,500 square feet, start in the mid-\$700,000s.

"We're looking at users averaging 1,000-2,400 square feet," he said. "They would tend to be local low-intensity businesses, either smaller restaurants or boutique retail businesses already established on Miami Beach."

Some could come from nearby Lincoln Road, Mr. Alayo said, where strong demand from national tenants is driving prices beyond the means of many local businesses.

"At Lincoln Square Shops & Residences," he said, "they will have high visibility just a block from Lincoln Road, and can still be connected to that network."

The building, designed by

New York-based affiliate Alayo Architects, is modeled after traditional Miami Beach architecture, Mr. Alayo said, calling it "a contemporary version of a courtyard building with landscaped interior court."

Due to a new Miami Beach ordinance affecting projects over 50,000 square feet, designs for Lincoln Square Shops & Residences had to be approved by the Planning Board as well as the Design Review Board.

"A lot of the issues such as parking and access that came up during those reviews helped the project," Mr. Alayo said. "One benefit was a good reception by the community."

Matt Scroggins of Gary Hennes Realtors, which is handling leasing of both residential and retail components, said sales have just begun but there is a lot of interest, and the retail portion is selling well to "restaurants and a good mix of other retailers."

"We see the residential tenants as a mix of full-time residents and second-home buyers," he said. "We think both the design of the spaces and the location—right by Lincoln Road



Rendering: Lincoln Square Shops & Residences will have 35 condo units.

and close to the Venetian Causeway—support that mix."

Alayo Building Co., which has been active in Florida since 1974, reports a \$100 million portfolio of residential and commercial properties. Mr. Alayo said local projects since 2000 include Brickell Way, a residen-

tial building under construction at Coral Way and 27th Road, adjacent to Beth David Congregation, and three other residential properties in the Coral Way/Coral Gables neighborhood.

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Small bank among top five for US export-import lenders

Republic Federal Bank helps local businesses export to Latin America

BY WAYNE TOMPKINS

Republic Federal Bank is not among South Florida's largest financial institutions, but it has emerged as a big player in international trade finance.

The bank, which even after a recent acquisition reports a modest \$713 million in assets, has ranked among the Export-Import Bank of the United States' top five lenders in the last three years, based on the total number of transactions.

"We're a niche player," said Daniel Schwartz, the bank's president and chief operating officer. "Our business plan is to help medium-sized companies to export to Latin America with success."

The bank focuses on loans up to \$10 million, but most are less than \$2 million, Mr. Schwartz said. The typical client is a medium-sized exporter trying to increase sales abroad or an importer trying to fulfill capital investment needs.

"We do 60 to 70 transactions per year," he said. "The largest will do around 100."

Mr. Schwartz said most of the large banks will do one or two transactions a year, but they will be \$50 million to \$100 million a piece.

"It's the same amount of work to do a \$1 million transaction as a \$100 million, so the larger banks prefer to do the big ones," Mr. Schwartz said. "We focus on the middle-sized companies. In Latin America, the buyers are companies which have \$5 million to \$10 million in annual sales, which is medium-sized for Latin America but small by US standards."



Photo by Maxine Usdan

Daniel Schwartz, president and COO of Republic Federal Bank, says smaller transactions are the key to the bank's success.

Republic Federal's strategy is a sound one, said Ken Thomas, a Miami-based independent banking consultant.

"That's a good sweet spot," Mr. Thomas said of mid-market import-export loans. "It also increases the strength of the bank through diversification. Often it's better to have 10 \$2 million loans out there than a single \$20 million loan, even if it takes 10 times as long to do the paperwork."

Mr. Schwartz said the US Congress has directed the Export-Import Bank to try to do more smaller transactions. "They don't just want the huge projects, they want smaller businesses to be able to take advantage," he said.

The bank does legwork and due diligence for the borrower to make sure the borrower's Latin American customer is able to make its payments. Often,

that involves bank representatives accompanying the borrower on visits as they verify the customer's finances.

The bank has expanded its business by going to wealthier individuals in Latin America to finance Bell helicopters, small jets or yachts. "There are industries down there with old equipment that are ready to invest in new equipment because the economy is getting better," Mr. Schwartz said.

Mr. Thomas said a lot of the credit needed by exporters will be in the \$1 million to \$2 million range. "Making credit available to small businesses for export is a great need in small business lending," he said.


Republic Federal is the former Hemisphere National Bank, which adopted its new name earlier this year after acquiring Pine Bank.

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State seeks Alton Road opinions

BY WAYNE TOMPKINS

Several options for Alton Road improvements are on the table as Florida Department of Transportation officials seek comments and suggestions from the public on the Miami Beach construction project.

Department engineers are planning a series of improvements to a stretch of the busy thoroughfare from Fifth Street to Michigan Avenue.

The project currently has no funding sources and is not in the Metropolitan Planning Organization's five-year plan, meaning it could be six years or more before the work actually takes place. But planners are performing the preliminary work needed to qualify

for federal funding.

"We are still early in the study process," said Greg Kyle, a planner for Kimley-Horn and Associates. "We have developed a number of potential options to address needs in the corridor, including safety, drainage, pavement condition, pedestrian accommodations."

Mr. Kyle added that the number of construction options under consideration will be narrowed once public input and engineering analyses are completed.

Planners were scheduled to meet with the public Tuesday evening (9/11) at the Miami Beach Branch Library.

Alternatives range from not doing the project at all to constructing a road as wide as six

lanes with restrictive parking and a 14-foot median.

Four-lane and five-lane plans also are among the options, with some plans containing bike lanes and others not.

The study team also was to present possible build and no-build options for the Fifth Street flyover ramp from eastbound MacArthur Causeway to northbound Alton Road.

The meeting is "the opportunity for the community to review roadway improvement options being proposed for the corridor and to provide input before any final decisions are made," said transportation department project manager Adebayo Coker. "At this stage of the study, the public's input can be incorporated and the study team can make revisions based on the suggestions received at this meeting."

Mr. Coker said he expected a design plan to be adopted next year.

'At this stage of the study, the public's input can be incorporated and the study team can make revisions based on the suggestions received at this meeting'

Adebayo Coker

Arts center business plan calls for audience market research

BY RISA POLANSKY

Upon its unveiling, the Carnival Center for the Performing Arts' business plan – vital after a rocky inaugural year – received a lukewarm turnout from board members, but much praise from the few who showed up to critique it at two study sessions this month.

The handful of trust and foundation board members who did weigh in on the 56-page budget and action plan, which foresees the center balancing its budget next year after a county subsidy following this year's \$1.7 million deficit, called for staff accountability

and more market research to help design targeted strategies to draw more visitors.

To address accountability,

center President and CEO Michael Hardy said he plans to require monthly reports from each department to track follow-through on the goals laid out in the plan, including generating an operating surplus, stabilizing operations and serving a broader base of patrons.

"On the to-do list: coming up with an informational kind of monthly report card," he said. "A plan is a plan, the execution is what counts."

Jane Robinson, president of the board of the Florida Grand Opera, said she has felt "disengaged" as a board member of the center's foundation, charged with fundraising for the organization.

"A certain kind of information has not been given to me," she said. "I want at least to know where your successes and

where your failures are on a month-to-month basis."

The report cards would also serve to cut potential problems off

at the pass, Mr. Hardy said, rather than catching them once they've spiraled out of control – a necessity after a tumultuous year of budget shortfalls and parking snafus, among other issues.

"One of the things we're hoping to avoid this year is surprises," he said.

However, one aspect of running the center that will continue to be fuzzy until it has more performance seasons under its belt, Mr. Hardy said, is what shows will fare best here.

"We don't have enough data yet" regarding what sells and what doesn't, he said. "As we come to learn about this market, we take our best guess."

It's a delicate game to play, however, because the center has "no liquidity," he said. "There is no margin for a bad show or a good show. We're very vulnerable to short-term

swings – if one show goes badly, it really hurts us."

Foundation board member Jerome Cohen said the center needs to step up efforts to track audience demographics to ferret out who is coming to which shows, from where and how often, a technique that could benefit both marketing and show selection.

"The information about those people is critical, absolutely critical," Mr. Cohen said. "The more we know, the more accurate your business plan is going to be."

Now, the center can count filled seats, Mr. Hardy said, "but we don't know who they are."

Events at the center gleaned 500,000 ticket sales last year – a number that reflects repeat visitors rather than just indi-

vidual guests.

Because resident companies sell their own subscriptions, it's difficult to track those buyers, Mr. Hardy said.

It's easiest to capture demographic information from those who buy tickets with credit cards by walking up to the box office, said Artistic Director Justin Macdonnell, but "our walkup is relatively small."

This does, however, benefit the center in that box office fees, tacked onto all ticket sales as a service charge except those bought by walk-ups, go straight to the center's budget, whereas ticket revenues themselves are paid to the presenting organization.

Next year's \$26.6 million budget anticipates a \$1.1 million jump in box office fees.

Mr. Hardy said the center must rely on surveys to get the most comprehensive reading on buyers, where they come from and what

they're interested in seeing.

He plans e-mail and in-lobby surveys, and "one of our big objectives is to build a larger mailing list," he said.

Programming will always be a concern at any performing arts center, Mr. Macdonnell said, and the Carnival Center faces a challenge now in managing its time and space to include center-sponsored shows, shows by the resident companies and shows put on by outside presenters.

To reduce costs, the center

plans to present 60% fewer performances itself next year and offer fewer self-sponsored commercially popular shows such as comedies and pop music artists, leaving open dates for outside presenters – but finding room for those shows on the calendar will be tricky, Mr. Macdonnell said.

The opera house is already booked for 2008-09, a positive and a negative, he said. "It's full, it's booked out, it's terrific," he said. But "we don't have enough dates to do the number of Broadway shows we need to do."

Trust board member Matti Bower attributes many of the center's lingering problems to "growing pains. The center is

young."

She expects board members to vote to approve the plan.

Trust Chair Parker Thomson, to be replaced by J. Ricky Arriola this month, remained mum at the study session, saying afterward only that "it's a workable business plan."

Mr. Arriola was out of town and unavailable for comment.

'As we come to learn about this market, we take our best guess.'

Michael Hardy

'We don't have enough dates to do the number of Broadway shows we need to do.'

Justin Macdonnell

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Home improvement retailers find store sites tough to nail down

By MARILYN BOWDEN

Miami's growing population is underserved by home improvement outlets such as Lowe's and Home Depot, retail specialists say, but local conditions make further penetration of the market difficult.

"They're looking for space and making deals," said Paco Diaz, senior vice president in retail services at CB Richard Ellis. "However, it's getting more difficult and expensive in view of the shortage of available land."

He said Lowe's and Home Depot typically require about 135,000

square feet plus parking, and need easy access for deliveries.

"Miami-Dade is underserved across the board in retail," said Owen Cone, head of the retail brokerage at Colliers Abood Wood Fay. "The statistics make that pretty clear when you compare them with national and even state averages."

"Lowe's has only been a presence in the county for the past couple of years, and they are aggressively seeking sites, but because of the lack of developable land for stores like that, it hasn't been easy."

It's the most densely populated

parts of the county that are the most underserved and have the greatest shortage of large tracts, he said.

A smaller home-improvement store such as Ace Hardware might have better luck finding space, Mr. Cone said, "but they haven't been too active here."

Mr. Diaz said HomeKO, a new, smaller retailer in the home improvement sector, recently opened a store in Cutler Ridge.

Drew A. Kristol, a retail investment specialist at Marcus & Millichap, said Lowe's has been frequently mentioned as a potential ground-floor tenant for a five-

story shopping center planned by BDB Development at Northeast Second Avenue and Northeast Seventeenth Street.

Home Depot, he said, recently opened an outlet on South Dixie Highway at Southwest 32nd Avenue, at a site formerly housing a Kmart.

"It's not your typical site for a Home Depot," he said. "Usually they need more land and easier access."

"They were in negotiations for a site just east of Alton Road, but the local municipality reacted negatively. But they are definitely looking to expand."

In Homestead, Mr. Diaz said,

Lowe's recently bought a site and Home Depot leased one.

Home Depot also just opened in Hialeah Gardens, he said.

But Mr. Cone said recent developments in the national economy may slow growth for the home improvement giants.

"Their stocks are being hit pretty badly right now because of the housing slowdown," he said. "People are not taking equity out on their homes to make improvements, because the home-equity ATM has run dry. So they may be looking to cut expenses and just run their existing stores."

Beacon helping New Orleans create economic rebound initiative

By RISA POLANSKY

As New Orleans' proposed private-public economic development arm—modeled in part after Miami-Dade's Beacon Council—moves toward its incorporation two years after Hurricane Katrina, the group is focusing on remedying issues Miami is no stranger to: a lack of affordable housing and a struggling public education system.

In the meantime, Beacon Council representatives continue to guide the organization from here.

Horizon Initiative proponents have commissioned a study of economic development models nationwide to facilitate a plan for the organization and are only months away from legislation officially

establishing it, said George Wentz, co-founder of the initiative.

Beacon Council representatives have been invited to New Orleans Sept. 18, said President and CEO Frank Nero, to "testify" as to how the council was formed and how it carries out its role as an engine for local economic development.

Once the Horizon Initiative is officially established by the local government, it will be "up to that entity to drive the economic development plan for the city," Mr. Wentz said.

While tourism in New Orleans has been improving, Mr. Nero said, a challenge ahead for the initiative will be the recruitment of new businesses, a major focus of the Beacon Council.

New Orleans city officials have already voiced support for moving the Horizon Initiative forward, Mr. Wentz said, and in August passed a resolution that the city's special projects and economic development committee "strongly supports a 'best practices' assessment of and for New Orleans economic development."

The resolution references the "City of New Orleans Economic Development Trust Fund"—supported by a millage on all taxable property in the city—as a potential source of funding.

The Beacon Council is funded through a state-levied surcharge on county occupational licenses and by private sector member-investors, according to its Web site.

As logistics are hammered out, Horizon Initiative supporters are pitching in around the city to aid with storm recovery, Mr. Wentz said.

Group members are offering legal support to New Orleans city officials in clearing titles on blighted housing to make way for affordable and workforce options, needed "tremendously" since the storm, Mr. Wentz said.

They are also "trying to help as much as we can on the education front," through supporting the growth of charter schools and the rebuilding of the once-failing local school district, he said, because quality public education is "essential" to economic development.

These socially oriented efforts differ from the Beacon Council's

main functions as Miami-Dade County's economic development arm, Mr. Nero said, but the council has "stayed the course" in helping get the initiative off the ground.

Mr. Wentz has in the past credited the Beacon Council for the rebirth of Miami after its rough period in the 1990s.

"We felt there were so many parallels between what we're going through that Miami was going through when the Beacon Council was formed," he said in May, citing Hurricane Andrew, racial issues and heightened crime.

A goal of the Horizon Initiative, he said, "is to basically mimic the Beacon Council and tremendous success the Beacon Council has had in Miami."

REFLECTIONS IN EXCELLENCE

BAC Funding Corporation honored at Conrad lunch

BAC Funding Corporation last week received the Reflections in Excellence award at a luncheon at the Conrad Miami hotel.

The monthly award, sponsored by the Conrad and Miami Today, recognizes service organizations that help knit up this community.

BAC Funding and its affiliated entities (collectively the "BAC") foster the growth of existing African-American owned enterprises and are dedicated to creating sustainable value in low- to moderate-income communities in South Florida. BAC helps African-American entrepreneurs capture a critical mass of the economic fortunes generated by South Florida's growth industries.



Edwin Miller and Sonya Milord.

Formed in 1982 as a 501(c)(3) Florida nonprofit community development corporation, BAC is the collaborative effort of over 1,000 corporate and private community leaders, organizations and businesses. These entities provided an initial in-



Leonard Garrett, Shella Sylla.

vestment of over \$6.9 million to provide a beacon of light to the African-American community after the devastation of the 1980 Liberty City riots.

In 25 years, BAC has provided more than \$40 million in business loans and equity in-



Brian Culmer and James Wells.

vestments.

The board of directors, loan committee members and staff enjoy experience in banking, finance, accounting, architecture, urban planning, insurance, law, community and economic development.

BAC's loan program is focused on providing short-term loans to existing businesses to facilitate their cash flow needs.

Since 2004, BAC financed and/or joint ventured in the development of eight homes for low- to moderate-income families. In 2006, 48 new loans were made to small businesses, service providers and real estate investors.

BAC also manages a 5-acre office and warehouse industrial complex comprised of 53 units, which supports a variety of businesses. BAC's newly refurbished 1,523-square-foot business incubator, equipped with internet access, is capable of supporting an additional 22 small businesses.

BAC promoted wealth creation and sustainable value by developing and managing the \$33.5 million MLK Transit Station Building in the Brownsville/Liberty City community. The management and operation expenses represent additional revenue streams for minority-owned businesses of approximately \$2 million per year.

The need to continually identify under-served creditworthy clients in the African-American community and have funds and other resources available to support them is the directive that BAC's board of directors, loan committee and staff has accepted with great enthusiasm.

Details: (305) 693-3550.



Miami Today Publisher and Editor Michael Lewis and Mari Garcia, Conrad Miami director of sales and marketing, give Reflections award to architect Ronald E. Frazier, BAC Funding's board chairman.



Lisa Bailey, Jessie Huston and Makeda Fultz at last Thursday's luncheon at the Conrad Miami honoring the 25-year-old BAC Funding Corporation with the Reflections in Excellence award for service.

Photos by Sergio Alsina



Photo by Maxine Usdan

Lydia Sacasa of SunTrust Mortgage blames some of the foreclosure mess on loan consultants who put commissions ahead of all else.

Dream's Alive

Experts say variable rate mortgages not entirely destroyed by home foreclosures

BY MARILYN BOWDEN

While some homeowners with variable rate mortgages may have trouble meeting higher payments, experts say, homeownership is still a possible dream.

Most risky are Option ARMs, which allow borrowers a choice of payment methods. Some of the methods may not cover the interest on the loan, resulting in negative amortization, or a loan balance that rises with each payment.

Often Options ARMs and the similar MTA mortgages are sold to borrowers without educating them properly, said Lydia Sacasa, a senior vice president at SunTrust Mortgage. "It's unfortunate that many loan sales consultants in the industry thought of their commissions before thinking of their customers' immediate and future financial needs.

"It's likely that these borrowers did not recognize the potential of negative amortization – and to make matters worse, a large percentage of them also obtained 100% financing."

In October, said Todd Wheeler, director of lending at Home Financing Center, "there will be a major change for a lot of Option ARMs that had 2% below prevailing interest rate in the initial period. They will either cap out on the principal, which means they will go up too much, or go up to 7%-8%, which is a huge increase. The fear is that they will go to negative amortization and we will see many foreclosures."

While a mortgage broker may have assured buyers that they could refinance if the rates went too high, he said, "the floor has fallen out of that market.

"The issue in the sub-prime market right now is that Wall Street gave a bunch of lenders a noose to hang themselves on. They could offer 100% financing even if they didn't have great credit. They could qualify on 'stated income,' which means they didn't have to provide any documentation to verify it."

Stated-income loans were introduced, Mr. Wheeler said, for

the self-employed, "but why does a salaried person need it? Only to lie about their income."

In the next couple of years, said John Burford, a vice president at the International Bank of Miami, "there are billions of dollars worth of loans made starting in 2005 that will be reset, and most will be substantially higher than the teaser rate they got when the mortgage was made."

However, he said, only 10% to 15% of mortgage debt is attributable to variable-rate mortgages.

The Federal Reserve's recent decision to cut the interest rate charged to banks may help the variable-rate market, Mr. Burford said, by encouraging investors to buy up more risky loans again.

"That's a heads-up that they will be cutting short-term rates," he said, "and since most variable-rate mortgages are tied to the one-year Treasury bill, they won't be as high as they would have been." Homeownership, brokers say, should still be attainable.

Citing the gap between salaries and home prices in South Florida, Mr. Wheeler said Home Financing Center is aligning with affordable-housing builders and large employers such as Jackson Memorial Hospital and the University of Miami that offer employer-assisted housing benefits to help lower-income families in Miami-Dade qualify for loans.

"Consumers need to make sure they are going to reputable companies, ask questions, and truly understand what they are getting into," Ms. Sacasa said. "Shopping rates alone is not enough. Borrowers also need to understand that if they do not qualify after making all legitimate attempts, they should not allow anyone to persuade them to make any type of misrepresentations on their application or in the qualification process.

"Miami is no different from the rest of the country in that we will have to weather the storm until it passes. We live in a privileged city, from the year-round outdoors weather to our rich multicultural environment. If anything, as in the past, we will come back much stronger."

Buyers waiting for foreclosure opportunities to take full shape

BY ERIC KALIS

Foreclosed residential properties in Miami-Dade County are attracting groups of institutional buyers and some individuals, real estate experts say, but most prospective buyers are waiting on the sidelines in case the market bottoms out.

Large institutional groups are active in shopping for and purchasing foreclosed residential properties, said Richard Langhorne, first vice president at commercial real estate firm CB Richard Ellis. Mr. Langhorne is co-leader of the firm's Corporate Asset Restructuring Recovery Services Group, which serves as an independent advisor for groups or individuals in foreclosure transactions and handles court-appointed foreclosure sales.

Instead of choosing to buy foreclosed properties based on pricing, institutions – and some individuals – view the properties as "value-add" opportunities, Mr. Langhorne said. When using a value-add standard, he said, the groups gauge a property's viability by the potential return on investment over a three-year period.

"What we are seeing in larger properties is the notion that they have to be purchased at pricing that supports the current or reasonable near-term projected in-

come," Mr. Langhorne said. "We have seen some large institutional [deals] already. I know of groups in due diligence to close on deals right now."

While some buyers actively pursue foreclosed properties, most are holding off for at least another year until the declining residential market reaches its lowest point, said Scott Berger, principal for Miami law firm Kaufman Rossin & Co. "Some of the larger wealthier clients anticipate a continued decline in the housing market down here and are looking to put together venture capital funds, wait a year and start buying up properties," Mr. Berger said. "People are very skittish [and feel] the condo market has not reached the bottom yet."

Ironically, a foreclosed property or individual unit – while cheaper than regular properties – is more palatable in today's market to a wealthy investor, Mr. Berger said, as typical homeowners continue to struggle to find buyers for their properties.

"In most cases the average person cannot afford to buy another property if they can't sell their house," he said. "It doesn't present as great of an opportunity to the average person as it does for a wealthy person who can afford to snap up things below market" value.

Buyers of foreclosed proper-

ties have no legal restrictions that limit what can be done with the property, said Michael Ross, a partner with Florida law firm Greenspoon Marder P.A. and member of the firm's Loan Default Solution Department. Most liens – excluding federal tax liens – on foreclosed properties are wiped out during the transaction, Mr. Ross said. Anyone involved in a foreclosure purchase should engage legal counsel, however, to make sure the property's title is clean, he said.

"Once an individual purchases a foreclosed property there are no restrictions other than what is already there by virtue of the property being bought," Mr. Ross said. "When buying a [foreclosed] condo unit, the buyer is subject to the Declaration of Condominium but there are no legal impediments."

With more foreclosures expected for Miami-Dade in coming months as thousands of new condos enter the market, Mr. Ross said, the pace of foreclosed property transactions should pick up.

"Once the condo situation comes to full fruition, many people will either get foreclosed on or buy foreclosed properties," he said. "People should buy [foreclosed] residential properties to live in them, not as investments. That is why we are in this situation in the first place."

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MIAMI TODAY

Permit for 2-tower mixed project sought

BY ERIC KALIS

A South Florida developer is seeking a permit to build a two-tower residential mixed-use project near the Carnival Center for the Performing Arts, but project officials are in no rush to begin construction.

Midgard Development Group applied this week for a City of Miami major use special permit for 1700 Biscayne Blvd., a 620-residence mixed-use project with 289 hotel rooms, 140,281 square feet of retail space and 1,369 parking spaces on several parcels totaling 2.37 acres. Group officials spent the last nine years working with three property owners to configure the site, project spokesman Daniel Goldstein said.

Architectural firm Zyscovich, which drafted a long-term master plan for downtown Miami, is designing 1700 Biscayne Blvd.

The project "has been long-considered," Mr. Goldstein said. "The first pieces were bought in

1998. We always thought this is a great site. The good thing about that property in relation to some other properties just north is the zoning [SD-6 high density] is a lot more intense."

If city commissioners approve the major use special permit for 1700 Biscayne Blvd., a 607-foot tower would contain 261 residential units and 289 hotel rooms while a 549-foot tower would include 358 residential units.

The city's planning department conducts a staff review of all major use special permit applications and makes recommendations before the planning advisory board — and eventually the City Commission — votes on the project. Once approved by commissioners, a major use special permit is valid for two years. The developer can extend the permit for two years twice.

"This has always been envisioned as a mixed-use project, but on the other hand we are open to changes when the new

market comes about," Mr. Goldstein said. "We still believe it will always be mixed-use, but the mix may vary" depending on real estate market conditions.

With Miami-Dade County in the midst of a residential slowdown, project officials will patiently watch the market evolve before setting construction start dates and timelines, Mr. Goldstein said. "We are not really looking to build this right away," he said. "We recognize this is a downturn market. A lot of people would probably be surprised that a new [major use special permit application] is coming through. We don't know how long the downturn is going to last; if it gets better sooner than people think then we'll come to the market sooner."

Original plans call for a three- or four-star hotel on the site to fill a need for a business-class hotel in the area, Mr. Goldstein said. The hotel component, he said, is not etched in stone, however.

PEOPLE



Cynthia Ann Bettner



Carol "Jodie" Breece



Roxana Jimenez



Rebecca Kibbee



William Simonitsch



Michael Gusich

CocoWalk names marketing director

Cynthia Ann Bettner has been appointed director of marketing at CocoWalk. Ms. Bettner has more than 20 years in marketing and promotions. She was

the director of development and membership for the Coconut Grove Chamber of Commerce.

Accounting firm names principal

Lewis B. Freeman & Partners, a forensic accounting and consulting firm, has named former chief assistant state prosecutor Carol "Jodie" Breece a principal. She received her law degree from Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, and a bachelor of arts from the University of Maryland.

International Bank names group VP

The International Bank of Miami N.A. named Roxana Jimenez vice president of the Executive Banking Group. Ms. Jimenez has spent 14 years in banking. She has a bachelor's degree in business administration from Florida International University.

Law firm adds 2 associates

Kirkpatrick & Lockhart Preston Gates Ellis LLP has hired two associates: Rebecca Kibbee and William Simonitsch.

Ms. Kibbee practices in product liability, environmental, asbestos and coverage litigation. She has a degree from the University of Miami School of Law.

Mr. Simonitsch rejoined the Miami office after working in the Tallahassee office of a national construction litigation boutique. He also has a degree from the University of Miami School of Law.

Property firm hires acquisitions chief

Alterra Capital Group has hired Michael Gusich as acquisitions manager. Mr. Gusich received a master of business administration from The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. He received a bachelor of science in finance from the University of Illinois.

Law firm partner co-chairs group

Joseph I. Zumpano, managing partner of Zumpano Patricios & Winker P.A., has been elected co-chair of the Florida Association of Managing Partners.



October 18, 2007

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special section



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RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE

Sunny Isles Beach luxury condos should survive market slowdown

By ERIC KALIS

Several high-end oceanfront residential projects are nearing completion in Sunny Isles Beach, a market driven by the redevelopment of vintage motel sites into luxury condominium towers.

Miami builder Coastal Construction Group topped off 44-story residential tower Trump Royale at 18325 Collins Ave.



Photo by Maxine Usdan
Trump Royale is the third Donald Trump development this year.

and is well into interior work in the 372-condo project, said company President Dan Whiteman. The Dezer Properties tower includes one- to four-bedroom condos and penthouses. Prices range from the \$600,000s to \$2.5 million.

Coastal workers are finishing a lavish podium deck and parking garage for Trump Royale, Mr. Whiteman said. Inside the tower, windows have been installed up to the 40th floor, he said, and drywall, cabinetry and stucco are being mounted.

"The current schedule calls for us to complete the tower by the fourth quarter of 2008," Mr. Whiteman said. "Everything on the project is progressing well."

Trump Royale is the third Donald Trump development to boost the city's residential market this year. The Trump Ocean Grande at 18001 Collins Ave. is open, while the Trump Palace Condo at 18101 Collins Ave. is expected to open by year's end.

The Trump projects are recent examples of the city's gradual transformation into a high-end condo destination, Mr. Whiteman said. Developers such as Dezer Properties aggressively bought old hotel properties in Sunny Isles Beach throughout the past 20 years to redevelop into condo towers, he said.

"Along the oceanfront if someone had three or four of the former hotel lots that were between 100 and 300 feet wide, those lots became major developments," Mr. Whiteman said. "At one time [Dezer Properties] had 40 acres of developable oceanfront property in Sunny Isles. People talk about a slowdown in the condo market, but the best properties are still the best properties and will continue to be developed and sell."

Fortune International, another major Sunny Isles player, is almost done building Jade Beach, a 248-condo tower at 17001 Collins Ave. Construction should wrap up in the first quarter of 2008, said company founder Edgardo Defortuna. The tower is sold out, he said.

About five condos are still available in nearby Jade Ocean at 17121 Collins Ave., Mr. Defortuna said. The 256-unit tower should be ready for occupancy in late 2008 or early 2009, he said.

The wave of projects approaching completion and limited amount of remaining oceanfront properties in Sunny Isles are not deterring developers from starting new projects. South Florida builder Waterbrook Developers is set to break ground on the 69-condo

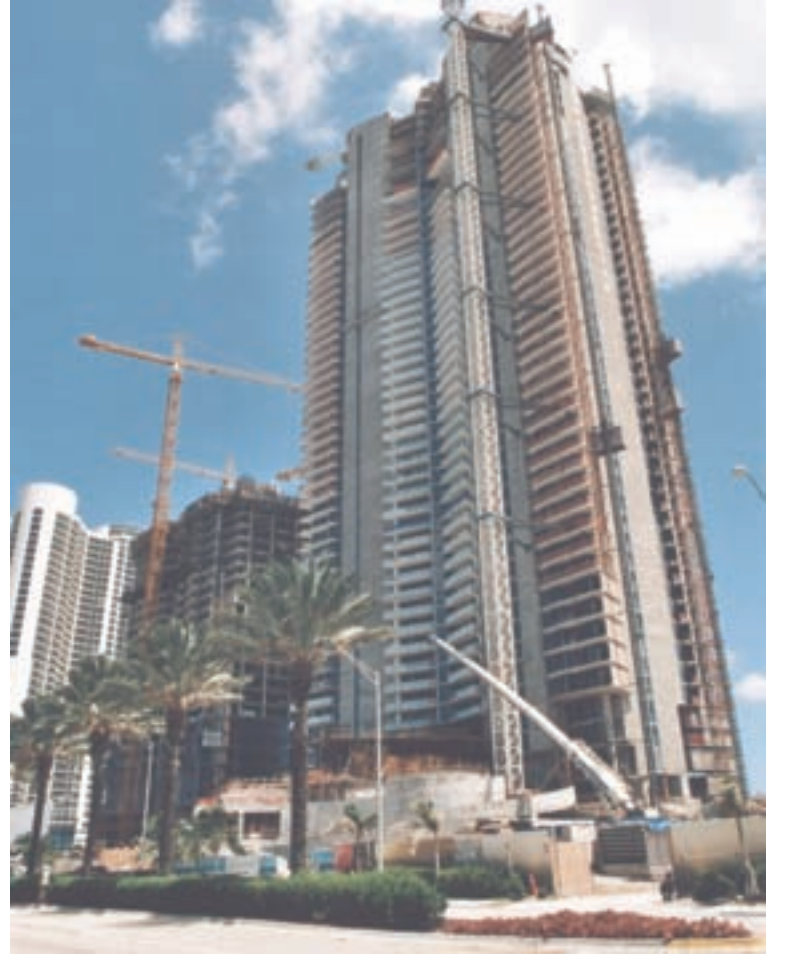


Photo by Maxine Usdan

Jade Beach, right, is 100% sold, according to Fortune International founder Edgardo Defortuna, but units remain at Jade Ocean, left.

Da Vinci on the Ocean tower at 17141 Collins Ave. The project garnered \$11 million in pre-construction sales in the past two months, said director of sales Carina Radonich. Prices for the condos range from \$2 million to \$6.9 million for penthouses.

Markets with a substantial concentration of high-end residential units such as Sunny Isles

can withstand a real estate slowdown, said Ron Shuffield, president of real estate company Esslinger-Wooten-Maxwell.

"We are seeing in some markets right now that high-end inventory continues to do fairly well," Mr. Shuffield said. "Prices have held up nicely in some markets with too much inventory."

Developers target Health District for affordable-housing options

By ERIC KALIS

Miami's Health District is one area of the city heavily targeted by developers for affordable- and workforce-housing opportunities, developers say.

Local developer Urban Development Group is to break ground in September on the Atrium at Spring Garden in the district, said Alberto Milo, company founder and president. The five-story building at 820 NW Seventh Ave. will include 22 affordable-housing and 25 workforce-housing units. Eleven of the workforce units are being subsidized by the city, Mr. Milo said.

Miami-Dade County is subsidizing 14 of the building's 47 units. Company officials hope to complete construction by September 2008, he said.

University of Miami officials and city leaders formed the Miami Partnership to pool resources and spark economic investment in the district bordered by Northwest 20th Street, State Road 836, Interstate 95 and Northwest 17th Avenue. The district includes the university's Miller School of Medicine and Jackson



Photo by Marlene Quaroni

Alberto Milo of Urban Development Group visits The Atrium site. Atrium will include 45 affordable- and workforce-housing units

Memorial Hospital. "We're specifically targeting workers of the Health District," Mr. Milo said. "Other employees work in the area of the hospital, and our project is on the cusp of downtown. We can serve not only the immediate

[hospital] personnel but also the downtown workforce."

Atrium is the second Urban Development Group project in the Health District, Mr. Milo said. The group joined a partnership to build 96-unit Seybold Pointe at 816 NW 11th St. The complex includes

units for purchase and rent.

"We think of the Health District as sort of a sub-downtown" market, Mr. Milo said. "It was always intended to be an extension of downtown."

Urban Development Group last month opened Lake View Villas, a 96-unit affordable- and workforce-housing complex in Opa-locka at 14236 NW 17th Ave. to be built in three phases. With the first phase complete, 22 families live in the complex, Mr. Milo said.

While Urban Development Group moves on Health District and Opa-locka projects, affordable-housing developer Carlisle Development Group is partnering with several entities to bid on the rights to develop a mixed-use complex on 2.6 acres owned by Miami Dade College at 520 Biscayne Blvd., said Carlisle COO Matt Greer. If Carlisle is awarded the project by college officials, the group would build affordable and workforce units for college employees, Mr. Greer said.

"My hope would be for a pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented, real mixed-use" complex, he said. "One of our partners would do a

■ See related story pg. 17

student housing component to create a mix of students and teachers who could live there, work and go to school without a car."

Carlisle officials remain in acquisition mode, Mr. Greer said, despite a scarcity of land in Miami-Dade. "It is still very early in the whole [residential] cycle, so we're not looking willy-nilly" for land, he said. "We look for great opportunities. We have contracts on acquisitions of multifamily complexes to convert to rental, which is something that wasn't on our radar not too long ago."

Meanwhile, city leaders are touting several affordable- and workforce-housing projects and the lofty goal of Mayor Manny Diaz to boost the city's affordable-housing trust fund from \$541 million to \$1 billion by the end of 2010. Developer Gatehouse Group broke ground last week on Lafayette Plaza Apartments, a 136-unit rental complex at 145 NE 78th St. The group recently completed Tuscan View, a 175-unit rental complex for seniors in Overtown.

Couple returns mansion to original 1920s splendor

Coconut Grove Matheson home sees restorations

BY INDRA BOSKO

A local couple went back in time to revive one of the notable Matheson family homes in Coconut Grove with a touch of modernity.

Built and owned by early Grove developer Hugh Matheson Sr., the stately, 1920s-era Neoclassic-eclectic gated mansion sits at the end of Klebba Lane. The peach-colored home's front façade, marked by a pair of welcoming white lion statues with stucco walls and many pillars and balconies, is set on a manicured garden surrounded by coconut palms and tropical plants.

After going through several reincarnations, the old Matheson home is now owned by Alvaro and Ana Varela, fourth residents of the home, who have lived there three years. The 13,000-square-foot mansion has three main floors, 12 baths, eight bedrooms and a tower surrounded by 1.4 acres of lawn.

The Varelas say they're keeping the house's architectural history alive by bringing back its original fixtures, which previous owners had removed and replaced with other materials.

"In the beginning, we just analyzed the plan and removed everything that didn't belong to the original project plan. We wanted to keep it as loyal to the original" as possible, Mr. Varela said about re-designing the home with local architect Luis Rodriguez. The home was originally designed by Walter C. DeGarmo, who also designed the Douglas Entrance and post office in Coral Gables.

With a copy of their home's history in hand, the Varelas and Mr. Rodriguez played tour guides and pointed out completed restorations and original and new designs of the house.

In the living room, windows



Photos by Maxine Usdan

Architect Luis Rodriguez (center) reviews house plans with homeowners Ana and Alvaro Varela.



The Varelas have added striking new features to their home such as Botticelli art in the staircase, travertine marble tiles on the balcony and a large crystal-gold chandelier in the dining room.

with wooden fan-shaped fixtures were brought back to life. Pinewood beams on living room ceilings were left untouched. And all 90 cedar doors went back to their original color – a prior owner had some of the doors painted white during the '70s.

"They were all so white, everywhere!" Mr. Varela said about the doors, which were later refinished. The Varelas also had the cedar and rose oak floors sanded and shined to their natu-

ral wood grain.

After buying the south Coconut Grove house, they spent a year and a half making it livable. "I don't know how we did it in that time," Ms. Varela said. "It was really a full-time job." New plumbing, air-conditioning and electricity were added essentials.

Pillared columns in the back were so decayed that they had to be reconstructed to keep the house intact. "We had to tear that, inject concrete and support the columns. That was one of the delicate" procedures, Mr. Varela said.

Some rooms have switched roles. "The kitchen is not original at all. The den used to be the kitchen, the kitchen used to be the staff dining room," Mr. Varela said. The kitchen is Mr. Varela's favorite place. "I really love to cook, to the point that I gave up golf," he said.

The basement, which used to be a dock and storage for boats, has been converted into a pool room, staff quarters, exercise room, sauna and a laundry room.

The basement also has an elevator that goes to the fourth-floor tower. The open terrace balcony is now covered and turned into a guest bedroom with original terracotta tile floors and a view of Key Biscayne and surrounding lush trees.

Part of the house's new designs included home- and guest-friendly décor. These include Italian-made travertine marble tiles with black mosaic patterns

on the balcony complemented by black and white furniture.

"We entertain out here especially during the winter. It's nice to sit down and relax at night," Ms. Varela said.

She also came up with the idea of designing masculine and feminine guest bathrooms. The masculine bathroom has a Versace theme, and the feminine bathroom has a powder room and chandelier.

Chandeliers are the home's ornaments. The grandest of all

is the eye-catching crystal-gold chandelier that dominates the dining room table that the Varelas bought at an antique store in Coral Gables. After a long search, Ms. Varela finally found her dream of a dining room chandelier. "It was the only one big enough for the room. And the color worked well with the walls," Ms. Varela said.

Paintings and portraits from all over Europe color hallways. A large framed copy of a Botticelli's "Primavera" highlights the first-floor staircase. And the living room is adorned with satirical original oil paintings of popes by 19th century artist Georges Croegaert bought in art galleries in London.

The Varelas first fell in love with the house when they were cycling through the neighborhood during their dating years. When the mansion went on the market again the couple grabbed the opportunity.

"We came to see it and we fell in love with it," Ms. Varela said. "Everybody thought we were crazy because it needed a lot of work. Everything had to be restored."

Continuing projects include re-surfacing a backyard pool on what used to be a canal when the Matheson family built the home in 1924.

The Varelas also plan to add a reflecting pool on the side of the house for guests to enjoy. "It's a complement to the house," said the architect.

The Varelas' home has not been declared historic because it's still a work in progress, they said. "We want to be able to do anything," Mr. Varela said. "We still have things to do 10 years from now. I'm sure of it."

Mr. Rodriguez, the architect, has another agenda in mind, however. He's continuing to pursue an historic designation for the Coconut Grove home. "I want to convince my clients to do that," he said. "That's why I took in the project in the first place. This is really a restorative work."



Fan-shaped window fixtures were restored in the living room.



The Varela home was built by Grove developer Hugh Matheson Sr.

Market slump not slowing workforce housing in Little Havana, downtown

BY RISA POLANSKY

In a market of stalling condo developments, local developers are moving full speed ahead with affordable and workforce housing projects and are focusing on the city of Miami, with several projects set to pop up downtown, in Little Havana and in the health district within the next three years.

Power developer the Related Group, behind luxury projects as well as those geared toward the moderate-income workforce, is concentrating on the central business district, said Oscar Rodriguez, senior vice president for development.

Closings are to begin on the Loft 2 project, 133 NE 2nd Ave., Oct. 1, he said, the same day the developer is to begin constructing Loft 3, 201 NE 2nd Ave., which is to be completed by late 2009.

Related began selling units in Loft 4, 151 SE 1st St., this summer. That project is to open late 2010.

Once complete, the Lofts are to add about 1,400 units to the workforce market, Mr. Rodriguez said, from \$120,000-\$400,000.

Locating the projects downtown near Metrorail stations "lends itself to be a prototypical type smart growth transit oriented development model," he said, and the price range "encourages people of all types of income living in close proximity to one another" downtown.

But residents also benefit by living outside of the downtown area, other workforce housing developers say.

Miami-based mFm Construction has completed six projects in the Little Havana area and has several more in the works, said Eli Dreszer, a partner in the firm.

There, "you're almost in downtown, but you still have the benefit of being in a neighborhood," he said.

The developer expects to complete between October and December Toscana, 49 units at 574 SW First St. and 119-125 SW Sixth Ave.; Porto Allegre, 24 units at 126 SW Eighth Ave.; and Ipanema, 63 units at 804 SW First St.

All offer units from \$220,000-\$280,000, Mr. Dreszer said.

The company is to break ground by year's end on River Grand, 132 units at 1415 NW 15th Ave. in the health district, he said, and is to next month begin building in East Little Havana its Morrison complex, a much larger project of 395 units from \$200,000-\$400,000, he said.

All of the projects, Mr. Dreszer said, target people with annual household incomes from \$45,000-\$100,000.

The Morrison is to include also 30,000 square feet of retail and 34,000 square feet of offices.

"We're envisioning a coffee place, a couple of restaurants," Mr. Dreszer said. "We're also looking into a laundry, we have a few inquiries about wine tasting places and, of course, a

convenience store"

Samuel Gaita, CEO of Gaita Enterprises, is negotiating to build a similar mixed-use concept in Liberty City, he said, but as an affordable rather than workforce project.

It is to include 103 units and 20,000 square feet of commercial space, which could include businesses such as a bank, daycare center, beauty parlor and laundry.

'The goal is to bring jobs into the community and also much-needed services.'

Samuel Gaita

"The goal is to bring jobs into the community and also much-needed services," he said, in addition to offering a sales price equivalent equal to or less than area rents.

Rather than sell at rental prices, the Carlisle Development Group is developing for-rent workforce housing within the Miami city

limits and has several projects in the works, said Matthew Greer, chief operating officer.

Carlisle is to build by late next year, he said, Amber Garden, 110 units at 1301 NW 23rd St.; Villa Patricia I, 125 units at 234-42 NE 79th St.; Villa Patricia II, 125 units at 7831 NE Second Ave.; and Villa Patricia III, 89 units at 7815 NE Second Ave.

Carlisle is "able to leverage a lot of federal and state money," Mr. Greer said, to allow people who earn well below the median area income to rent.

The developments, he said, target people such as "your nurses, your rookie cops, beginning school teachers, clerks in the court system," and offer rents from \$271-\$650 a month.

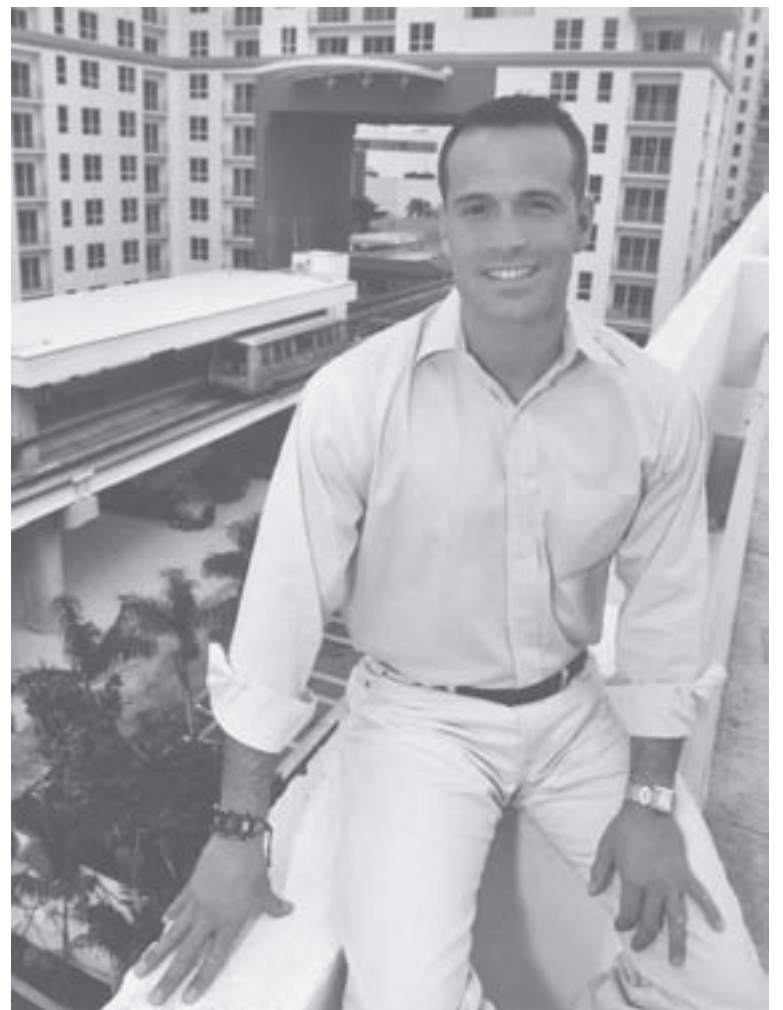


Photo by Maxine Usdan

Oscar Rodriguez, Related Group senior VP, is shown at the Loft 2.

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A singular voice in an evolving city

Ritz-Carlton Club and Residences awaiting construction permits

By ERIC KALIS

The developers of a luxury beachfront 186-condominium complex to be managed by the Ritz-Carlton hotel company in Miami Beach say construction should begin shortly after final permits are pulled in mid-November.

Development partners Lionstone Development and Fortune International plan to start building The Ritz-Carlton Club and Residences, South Beach by the end of the year or beginning of next year once permitting is completed and a construction loan is secured, said Edgardo Defortuna of Fortune International. The project is planned to include 141 wholly-owned condos and 45 units available to Ritz-Carlton Club members for fractional ownership in 21-day periods. Portions of the 21 days can be used at other Ritz-Carlton Club locations.

Prices begin in the \$900,000s for one- to six-bedroom con-

dos ranging from 941 to 7,300 square feet.

A centerpiece of the development is the restoration of the 52-year old Seville Beach Hotel building – owned by Lionstone – at 2901 Collins Ave. The renovated building is to contain 75 condos and two town homes.

Construction of the entire complex should take about 28 months, Mr. Defortuna said.

“The logistics are very important to be able to coordinate work with people refurbishing and preserving the existing building,” he said. “One of the towers is [planned to be] basically attached to the existing building. It is a challenge and we have been studying this for a long time.”

The project partners late last month hired construction company Moss & Associates to build three components of the development. The hiring comes as Moss & Associates expands the company’s Miami-Dade foot-



Photos by Maxine Usdan

Edgardo Defortuna, president of Fortune International, displays a model of the Ritz-Carlton development in Miami Beach.

print by 31% this year, President Bob Moss said.

Moss workers will build the 63,109-square-foot North Tower, which will include 29 condos and be connected by a bridge to the Seville building, the 93,579-square-foot South Tower, which will have 25 condos and also connect to the Seville building by a glass bridge, and several resort-style amenities.

The project “is a terrific opportunity for us,” Mr. Moss said. “We have been involved in many hotel construction projects. This is a desirable location and we are looking forward to a great relationship with both partners.”

To help push pre-construction sales, project officials are close to opening a fully-furnished on-site model of a fractional ownership condo. Full ownership condo sales are moving along despite a slower residential market, Mr. Defortuna said. Contracts are in place for 62 of 86 condos on the property’s east side, he said, and with the region’s appetite for speculative investment dwindling, most buyers are end users.

The development team also plans to build condos on the property’s west side starting in the \$700,000s, Mr. Defortuna said. Sales of those units will begin in November.

“Buyers are typically seeking second homes coming from New York, Chicago and California,” Mr. Defortuna said. “We also have many international buyers, ranging from a plastic surgeon from Milan to a professional soccer player from Real Madrid. All the buyers look forward to living there when they are in Miami.”

Meanwhile, prospective buyers are extremely receptive to the fractional ownership concept, Mr. Defortuna said. Through seven months of sales, he said, more than 100 fractional ownership contracts are in place.

“The fractional [portion] has been an unbelievable success,” he said. The project “is the No. 1 selling fractional site for Ritz-Carlton. This is also attractive to a lot of buyers who already own fractions in other Ritz locations.”

Details:
www.ritzcarltonrealestate.com

Mega contractor moves into Dade expansion mode

By ERIC KALIS

In a down residential real estate market, one of the region’s largest builders is in the midst of a major expansion in Miami-Dade County.

With several significant projects already under way in Miami-Dade, construction company Moss & Associates expects to pump \$360 million into the county this year, company officials say, which would mark a 31% increase over 2006.

The 3-year-old company is experiencing plenty of business despite the market conditions, President Bob Moss said.

Versatility in a slow market allows the company to grow its Miami-Dade portfolio, Mr. Moss said.

Some of the company’s local projects in the pipeline include the University of Miami’s Interdisciplinary Wet Lab Research Facility, phases one and two of the Colonnade luxury condominium community in Kendall and the mixed-use Downtown Dadeland project in Kendall.

“Because we are all very familiar with the ups and downs of the market here, one of our objectives as a company is diversity in clients and project types,” Mr. Moss said.

“As markets change, opportunities change. The more diverse our clients and projects are, the higher probability of us getting consistent earnings and overall company performance.”

While Moss & Associates expands in Miami-Dade, the developers of luxury residential project Ritz-Carlton Club and Residences South Beach hired the company late last month to build three components of the Miami Beach development.

Moss workers will build several resort-style amenities at the 2901 Collins Ave. complex and the 63,109-square-foot North Tower, which will include 29 condos and a bridge to the Seville building. They will build the 93,579-square-foot South Tower, which will have 25 condos and also connect to the Seville building by a glass bridge.

A vast pool of quality subcontractors have helped foster the company’s growth in Miami-Dade, Mr. Moss said.

“A large number of accomplished subcontractors are in the Miami-Dade marketplace,” he said. “They like working with us and are always looking for opportunities. We will continue to look for the right clients and projects wherever they are.”

Details: www.mosscm.com

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MIAMI TODAY



Seville Beach Hotel on Collins Avenue will become luxury condos.

‘Hurricane safe haven’ a haven for Bunker Brickell

By RISA POLANSKY

The “bunker” in Bunker Brickell may be its best chance at success, a hospitality consultant says, as developers begin to construct the hotel-condo project in what the consultant describes as a non-existent market.

“The hotel-condo market has dropped out entirely,” said Guy Trusty, president of Lodging and Hospitality Realty.

But Bunker Brickell, which broke ground in July with completion expected late next year, expounds on the standard hotel-condo concept in designing the project as a safe haven from hurricanes, project creator Hans Baumgartner said.

Owners are to have the option to rent out their units in a hotel-condo system when unused, he said, with a guarantee they can swoop in to take shelter during or after a storm, because the project is to be built at 1750 SW First Ave. outside of the mandatory evacuation zone and include extensive safety features.

The concept adds “potential” to the project, Mr. Trusty said. “Without the bunker concept, I think you’d have a hard time selling the concept in today’s market.”

But Bunker Brickell has contracts on about 70% of the units, Mr. Baumgartner said, precisely due to “the uniqueness of the product. There is nothing else out there.”

Because an owner who chooses not to live in his condo can rent it out at hotel rates, Bunker Brickell serves as “insurance you have for your safety that pays for itself,” he said, and buyers have largely been “end users that have this option to put it in the hotel program.”

The 42,000-square-foot, \$20 million development – to house fully furnished units from \$300,000 to the mid \$500,000s – is being marketed heavily in area evacuation zones, he said, to homeowners there who could be hit hardest by storms.

South Florida building codes require a one-day power sup-

ply, while Bunker Brickell guarantees 30 days, according to a comparative chart Mr. Baumgartner provided.

The codes call for impact windows or shutters for openings more than 30 feet high. Bunker Brickell is to provide impact windows on all openings, the charts shows, including windows and terrace doors.

The design plans to nearly double outer wall resistance requirements, Mr. Baumgartner said. Other storm-safe amenities include a filtered drinking water tank with a 30-day supply, emergency satellite telephone and Internet services, automatic roll-down steel shutters, safe storage, a 24-hour weather monitoring system and an air purification system.

Owners can also rest easy about their cars, he said: Bunker Brickell is to also feature a safe parking plan allowing for up to four cars per household to be stored in a covered, above-ground-level facility to protect from flooding.

Hotel operator Eurosuites makes possible the guarantee that an owner can access his unit during a storm even if it’s occupied through the hotel program, he said, as guests in Bun-



Bunker Brickell is 70% sold.

ker Brickell would be relocated to Eurosuites Doral.

The operator helps makes the condo hotel viable in what Mr. Trusty called a flailing market, Mr. Baumgartner said. Eurosuites is operated by Interstate Hotel Resort, he said, which runs 189 hospitality properties with more than 43,000 rooms internationally.

ART

Thursday 9/13

URBAN MIAMI

Urban Manifesto is an exhibition that features art on urban life in Miami by local artists. Various times at Buena Vista Building, Suite 102, 180 NE 39th St., Miami. Through Sept. 14. Free. *Details: (786) 488-2195.*

ELDERS TRIBUTE

The Art of Aging exhibition is a tribute to elders and their way of life. Artists from North America, Israel and England showcase their views on aging through multimedia art such as painting, sculpture, photography, fiber, mixed media and videos. Various times at Jewish Museum of Florida, 301 Washington Ave., Miami Beach. Through Sept. 23. \$2.50-\$12. *Details: (305) 672-5044 or www.jewishmuseum.com.*

CANVAS ART

Miami Art Museum presents its new exhibition Tamayo: A Modern Icon Reinterpreted by Mexican artist Rufino Tamayo. Various times at 101 W. Flagler St., Miami. The exhibition continues through Sept. 23. Free on Sundays; Free children younger than 12; \$2.50-\$5 others Tuesdays-Saturdays. *Details: (305) 375-3000.*

ASIAN ART

Miami International Airport's Mia Gallery presents Amazingly Asian exhibition, a compilation of drawings, paintings, and sculpture of Asian culture. Through Sept. 28. Various times at 4200 NW 21st St., Terminal E, Miami. *Details: (305) 876-0749.*

PROPOSED PLANS

University of Miami's School of Architecture presents an exhibition of City of Miami photographs by students who are working on academically related proposed plans for the Miami Waterfront Study. Through Oct. 5. Weekdays. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. at Jorge M. Perez Architecture Center New Gallery, 1215 Dickinson Dr., Coral Gables. Free. *Details: (305) 284-1563.*

GEOMETRICAL ART

Jan Dibbets' collection of inkjet photographs and pencil drawings on walls can be seen at the Miami Art Museum. Various times at 101 W. Flagler St., Miami. Through Oct. 14. Free students with identification and children younger than 12; \$2.50-\$5 others. *Details: (305) 375-3000 or miamiartmuseum.org.*

NEW ART

MOCA at Goldman Warehouse presents New Art: South Florida exhibition, which features various artworks by recipients of the 2007 South Florida Cultural Consortium Fellowships for Visual and Media Artists. Various times at 404 NW 26th St., Miami. The exhibition continues through Oct. 27. Donation fee. *Details: (305) 893-6211.*

RARE COLLECTION

The Wolfsonian-Florida International University presents Indoctrinating Youth: Selections from the Pamela K. Harer Gift of Propaganda Books for Children. Donated by Ms. Harer, the exhibition features dozens of children's books and pieces from around the world in relation to war and propaganda. Through Oct. 31. \$3.75-\$5.35. *Details: (305) 531-1001 or www.wolfsonian.org.*

DINOSAUR EXHIBIT

The Miami Science Museum features the Dinosaurs of China. The collection includes dinosaurs, bird fossils and mounted skeletons. Various times at 3280 S. Miami Ave., Miami. Through June 16, 2008. \$13-\$20. *Details: (305) 646-4200 or www.miamisci.org.*

URUGUAYAN ART

Miami Dade College's InterAmerican Campus hosts the 11th annual Uruguayan Art Exhibition featuring artists such as Mario Marinoni, Ruben Bello and Daniel Pontet. The exhibition begins Saturday and runs through Aug. 29. Various times at Tower Theater, 1508 SW Eighth St., Miami. Free. *Details: (305) 643-8706.*



MUSICAL PLAY: Gusman Center for the Performing Arts presents "The Truth" (About the Down Low). Various times at the Olympia Theater, 174 E. Flagler St., Miami. Today (9/13) through Sunday, Sept. 16. Tickets \$32.50. *Details: (305) 358-5885 or www.ticketmaster.com.*

calendar of events

week of thursday,
september 13, 2007

MULTI-MEDIA

Museum of Contemporary Art presents Karen Kilimnik, a multimedia exhibition. The exhibition features close to 100 works on paintings, drawings, photographs, assemblage and installations of Ms. Kilimnik's work, which is based on popular culture, history and literature. Various times at 770 NE 125th St., North Miami. RSVP required. Free members, North Miami residents and City of North Miami employees; \$5 others. Through Nov. 11. *Details: (305) 893-6211 or www.mocanomi.org.*

AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHS

Bass Museum of Art presents a new exhibition of portraits and city photographs during 20th century America in Facades: Expression and Architecture in American Society. The exhibition will feature photographs by famed photographers such as Annie Leibovitz, Lewis Hine and Mitch Epstein. Through Jan. 6. \$6-\$12. *Details: (305) 673-7530 or www.bassmuseum.org.*

BUSINESS

Friday 9/14

BUSINESS CARDS

Chamber South hosts a Business Skills workshop on business cards. Noon at Chamber's South Miami Office, 6410 SW 80th St., South Miami. RSVP required. \$15-\$20. *Details: (305) 661-1621.*

COFFEE NETWORK

Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce hosts a coffee networking event with its chamber members. 9 a.m. at North Beach Elementary School, 4100 Prairie Ave., Miami Beach. RSVP required. Free. *Details: (305) 695-6834.*

Monday 9/17

CIVIC/BUSINESS

Women's Business Council of the Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce, Arts at St. Johns, and Miami Beach Botanical Garden presents Women's Commitment to Community, a panel discussion on how civic involvement enriched life and business.

6:30-8:30 p.m. at Miami Beach Botanical Garden, 2000 Convention Center Dr., Miami Beach. RSVP required. Free. *Details: (305) 695-6813.*

Tuesday 9/18

BUSINESS COUNCIL

Women's Business Council. 8:30 a.m. at 1920 Meridian Avenue, Third Floor, Miami Beach. Free. *Details: (305) 695-6832.*

BUSINESS NETWORK

Miami-Dade Chamber of Commerce hosts Technology: The Game, a business empowerment networking series with guest speaker Marc Morial, president of the National Urban League. 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m. at Parrot Jungle Island, 1111 Parrot Jungle Trail, Watson Island. \$25-\$35. RSVP required. *Details: (305) 751-8648 or www.m-dcc.org.*

BAR LECTURE

Miami Beach Bar Association's monthly meeting presents guest speaker State Attorney Katherine Fernandez-Rundle. Noon at Miami Beach Golf Club, 2301 Alton Rd., Miami Beach.

\$15-\$40. *Details: (305) 604-4057.*

Thursday 9/20

BUSINESS LUNCHEON

Greater North Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce hosts a business luncheon with guest speaker and television personality Tony Segreto. Noon at Nova Southeastern University, 1750 NE 167th St. RSVP required. \$20-\$23. *Details: (305) 944-8500.*

CARD EXCHANGE

Chamber South hosts a business card exchange. 5:30-7 p.m. at CitiBank, 11341 S. Dixie Hwy. RSVP required. \$15-\$20. *Details: (305) 661-1621.*

Tuesday 9/25

BRITISH NETWORK

Florida Association of British Business hosts a networking event. 6-9 p.m. at The Doubletree Grand Hotel, Blu Moon Resto Bar, 1717 N. Bayshore Dr., Miami. Free. *Details: (305) 371-9340.*

BOOKS

Wednesday 9/19

MIDEAST OIL

Author Jerry B. Brown will discuss "Freedom from Mideast Oil." 8 p.m. at Books & Books, 265 Aragon Ave., Coral Gables.

Thursday 9/20

SELF-HELP

Author John C. Maxwell will discuss how to achieve success in "Today Matters." 7 p.m. North Miami Public Library, 835 NE 132nd St., North Miami. *Details: (305) 891-5535.*

CHILDREN

Sunday 9/16

READING & ARTS

Reading & Arts Program. 1-4 p.m. at North Miami Public Library, 835 NE 132nd St., North Miami. Grades 2-5. *Details: (305) 891-5535.*

Wednesday 9/19

STORY WITH ELMO

Story Time with a visit from Elmo. 7 p.m. at North Miami Public Library, 835 NE 132nd St., North Miami. *Details: (305) 891-5535.*

DANCE

Tuesday 9/25

'STOMP'

Carnival Center for the Performing Arts presents dance-musical show "Stomp." Through Sept. 30. Various times at 1300 Biscayne Blvd., Miami. \$20-\$50. *Details: (305) 949-6722 or www.carnivalcenter.org.*

FILM

Wednesday 9/19

FILM PREMIERE

Miami Beach Cinematheque presents film premiere of "Gypsy Caravan," with food and live music. 8:30 p.m. at 512 Española Way, Miami Beach. \$12-\$15. *Details: (305) 673-4567.*

MUSIC

Sunday 9/16

CLASSICAL CONCERT

Sunday Afternoons of Music celebrates its new season with a classical concert performance by violinist Aaron Rosand and pianist Robert Koenig. 4 p.m. at Maurice Gusman Concert Hall, University of Miami, 1314 Miller Dr., Coral Gables. \$10-\$42. *Details: www.sundaymusicals.org.*

Saturday 9/22

SPANISH HARLEM ORCHESTRA

Gusman Center for the Performing Arts presents the Spanish Harlem Orchestra. The 13-piece ensemble will perform new musical selections from their latest album "United We Swing." 8 p.m. at 174 E. Flagler St., Miami. \$27-\$52. *Details: (305) 237-3010 or www.culture.mdc.edu.*

OUTDOORS

Thursday 9/13

NATURE WALKS

Crandon Park Visitors & Biscayne

calendar of events

ART



'Me the Flower and the Pistil,' 2000 by James Surls.

TERRAIN ART

Lowe Art Museum hosts an opening reception for Material Terrain: A Sculptural Exploration of Landscape & Place, a

mixed-media exhibition on earth's terrain. Friday. 8-10 p.m. at Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, 1301 Stanford Dr., Coral Gables. \$5 students; \$10 others. A lecture in relation to the exhibition will be at 7 p.m., Storer Auditorium, University of Miami School of Business, 5250 University Dr., Coral Gables.

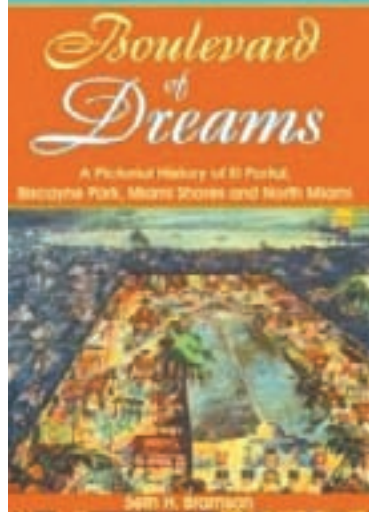
Details: (305) 284-3535 or www.lowemuseum.org.

BOOKS

Political reasoning

Author and former White House counsel John W. Dean will discuss his latest book "Broken Government." Tuesday. 7:30

p.m. at Temple Judea, 5500 Granada Blvd., Coral Gables. *Details: (305) 444-9044.*



Featured book discussion

Florida history

Local historian and author Seth Bramson will discuss "Boulevard of Dreams: A Pictorial History of El Portal, Biscayne Park, Miami Shores, and North Miami." Monday. 2 p.m. at North Miami Public Library, 835 NE 132nd St., North Miami. Free.

Details: (305) 891-5535.

FILM



Jerry Herman with Angela Lansbury and Carol Channing

Jerry Herman

University of Miami's Frost School of Music's Stamps Family Distinguished Visitors Series screens "Words and Music by Jerry Herman," a documentary on the life of UM graduate and composer Jerry Herman. Mr. Herman has composed musicals such as "Hello Dolly" and "La Cage Aux Folles." There will also be a question-and-answer session with filmmaker Amber Edwards and Broadway musical director Don Pippin and Barry Brown. Monday. 6 p.m. at Jerry

Herman Ring Theatre, 1312 Miller Drive, Coral Gables. RSVP required. Limited seating. Free.

Details: (305) 284-4940 or www.festivalmiami.com.

MUSIC



Opera flyer

Italian opera

Miami Lyric Opera presents "Barber of Seville," an opera in three acts by Rossini. Saturday. 8 p.m. at Colony Theater, 1040 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach. \$20-\$30.

Details: www.ticketmaster.com.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

cont.—

at Miami City Hall, Commission Chambers, 3500 Pan American Dr., Coconut Grove. *Details: (305) 579-2444.*

Wednesday 9/19 MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Sunshine meeting: Charter Review Task Force. 10 a.m. at Stephen P. Clark Center, 111 NW First St., 18th Floor, Miami.

CITY OF MIAMI

Equal Opportunity Advisory Board. 12:30 p.m. at Miami Riverside Center, Tenth Floor, Main Conference Room, 444 SW Second Ave., Miami. *Details: (305) 416-1990.*

CITY OF MIAMI

Urban Development Review Board. 1:30 p.m. at Miami City Hall, Commission Chambers, 3500 Pan American Dr., Coconut Grove. *Details: (305) 416-1433.*

CITY OF MIAMI

Liberty City Community Revitalization Trust. 6 p.m. at Hadley Park, 1350 NW 50th St., Miami. *Details: (786) 355-7654.*

BAY HARBOR ISLANDS

Education Committee. 6:30 p.m. at Town of Bay Harbor Islands, 9665 Bay Harbor Terrace, Bay Harbor Is-

lands. *Details: (305) 866-6241.*

NORTH MIAMI

Board of Adjustment. 6:30 p.m. at City Hall, 776 NE 125th St., North Miami. *Details: (305) 895-9817.*

CITY OF MIAMI

Arts and Entertainment Council. 6:30 p.m. at Miami City Hall, Staff Room, 3500 Pan American Dr., Coconut Grove. *Details: (305) 860-3823.*

CITY OF MIAMI

Planning Advisory Board. 7 p.m. at Miami City Hall, Commission Chambers, 3500 Pan American Dr., Coconut Grove. *Details: (305) 416-2030.*

Thursday 9/20

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Service/Awards/Regular. 8 a.m. at Stephen P. Clark Center, 111 NW First St., 18th Floor, Miami.

CITY OF MIAMI

Code Enforcement Board. 9 a.m. at Miami City Hall, Commission Chambers, 3500 Pan American Dr., Coconut Grove. *Details: (305) 416-2030.*

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Second Budget Hearing. 5:01 p.m. at Stephen P. Clark Center, 111 NW First St., 18th Floor, Miami.

NORTH MIAMI BEACH

Redevelopment Advisory Board. 5:30 p.m. at City Council Conference Room, Fourth Floor, 5:30 p.m. at

City Hall, 17011 NE 19 Ave., North Miami Beach.

MIAMI GARDENS

Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee. 6:30 p.m. at City Council Chambers, 1515 NW 167th St., Suite 200, Miami Gardens. *Details: (305) 622-8000.*

SPECIAL EVENTS

Friday 9/14

HEALTH CONFERENCE

South Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce presents the Hispanic Health & Wellness Conference. Noon-2 p.m. at Hyatt Regency Coral Gables, 50 Alhambra Plaza, Coral Gables. RSVP required. \$35-\$800. *Details: (305) 534-1903 or www.sflhcc.com.*

Saturday 9/15

ADULT PROM

Pridelines Youth Services presents A Night in the Jungle, an adult prom dinner and fundraising event that includes cocktails, dinner and entertainment. All proceeds benefit Pridelines Youth Services, a non-profit organization that promotes education and provide a safe place to the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth in Miami. 7 p.m.-midnight at Treetop Ballroom, Jungle Island, 1111 Parrot Jungle Trail, Watson Island. \$125-

\$1,500. *Details: (786) 264-1316.*

Wednesday 9/19

PERUVIAN TREASURES

Tribal Arts Society presents Lost Peruvian Treasures Reclaimed by Carol Damian, professor of Art History at Florida International University. 7:30 p.m. at Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, 1301 Stanford Dr., Coral Gables. Free Tribal Arts Society members and students with identification. *Details: (305) 284-3535 or www.lowemuseum.org.*

Thursday 9/20

PANTHEON LECTURE

Mark Jarzombek from Massachusetts Institute of Technology will be speaking on The Pantheon in Rome and Its Modernity. 6 p.m. at University of Miami, Jorge M. Perez Architecture Center, Glasgow Hall, 1223 Dickinson Dr., Coral Gables. Free. *Details: (305) 284-1563.*

SPORTS

Thursday 9/20

FLORIDA MARLINS

Florida Marlins vs. New York Mets. 7:05 p.m. at Dolphin Stadium, 2269 Dan Marino Blvd., Miami Gardens. *Details: www.ticketmaster.com.*

Friday 9/21

FLORIDA MARLINS

Florida Marlins vs. New York Mets. 7:05 p.m. at Dolphin Stadium, 2269 Dan Marino Blvd., Miami Gardens. *Details: www.ticketmaster.com.*

Saturday 9/22

FLORIDA MARLINS

Florida Marlins vs. New York Mets. 3:55 p.m. at Dolphin Stadium, 2269 Dan Marino Blvd., Miami Gardens. *Details: www.ticketmaster.com.*

Sunday 9/23

FLORIDA MARLINS

Florida Marlins vs. New York Mets. 1:05 p.m. at Dolphin Stadium, 2269 Dan Marino Blvd., Miami Gardens. *Details: www.ticketmaster.com.*

THEATER

Thursday 9/13

COLLEGE PLAY

The University of Miami presents an off-Broadway version of "The Fantasticks," a romantic musical with lyrics by Tom Jones and music by Harvey Schmidt. Through Sept. 15. Various times at Jerry Herman Ring Theatre, University of Miami, 1312 Miller Dr., Coral Gables. \$8-\$18. *Details: (305) 284-3355 or www.miami.edu/ring.*

THE LAST WORD

CONSOLIDATED ELECTIONS: The Miami-Dade County Commission is asking County Manager **George Burgess** to study the consolidation of municipal elections onto a single date, or on the same day as countywide elections. **Rebeca Sosa**, who is sponsoring the ordinance, said same-day elections would create economies of scale and be "a more efficient use of public resources" that would "increase voter participation." The Government Operations and Environment Committee heard the plan at its Tuesday meeting.

MORE TIME, PLEASE: The Miami-Dade Charter Review Task Force, which from the outset has chafed at its tight Oct. 31 deadline to complete its work revising the county's constitution, is asking Miami-Dade commissioners for an extension to Jan. 29. In exchange, the task force has promised to submit an "initial report" Oct. 31 and its final one in January. The county commission's Government Operations and Environment Committee approved the request Tuesday, sending it to the full commission for action. The charter task force is debating issues including addition of at-large county commission districts and direct election of now-appointed offices such as the supervisor of elections and the property appraiser. Its recommendations ultimately will go before voters if county commissioners approve.

BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED ASPHALT: Miami-Dade Transit has scheduled a presentation session on plans to build a pedestrian bridge over US 1 at the University Metrorail Station. The overpass is designed to improve safety by eliminating the need for Metrorail passengers to cross US 1 at street level to reach the station. The meeting is 4-7:30 p.m.

Sept. 27 at the Holiday Inn University of Miami, 1350 S. Dixie Hwy in Coral Gables. Free hotel parking is available.

OPINIONS, CRITICISM SOUGHT: Area residents, business owners and city officials are invited to the session to view architectural plans for the pedestrian overpass and comment. The overpass will feature elevators, stairs, landscaping and architectural elements that create a community gateway. The People's Transportation Plan half-penny sales tax is funding the project. *Details: Jean Kouch, (786) 469-5550 or mdt outreach@miamidade.gov.*

CRANE SAFETY: Miami-Dade Commissioner **Audrey Edmonson's** resolution on construction crane safety has interesting trivia on Miami-Dade's fading construction boom, including that more than 100 major projects are under way in the county using heavy hoisting equipment such as tower cranes and that there exists a "Miami-Dade County Crane and Heavy Equipment Advisory Committee." Citing hazards that use of the equipment pose to workers and the public, she is asking the commission to urge the state to adopt the same level of crane safety standards that the county and committee are proposing.

CANCER BENEFIT: University of Miami President **Donna Shalala** is to speak at Health Choice Network's seventh annual Jessie Trice Cancer Prevention Benefit gala Oct. 3. The event includes a reception, dinner, entertainment and an award ceremony that will honor former US Rep. **Carrie Meek** and her son, Rep. **Kendrick Meek**. The 6 p.m. gala is at Sofitel Miami hotel, 5800 Blue Lagoon Drive, Miami. \$75-\$750. *Details: (305) 599-1015, Ext. 8080 or www.hcnetwork.org.*

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Dining Out



Satisfy a sweet tooth, caffeine craving at these cafés

Sugary baked goods serve as ideal complement to coffee beverages

BY INDRA BOSKO

Starbucks has a new motto: Coffee is culinary.

Because coffee fares well with pastries and side dishes, it is no wonder that the best coffee experience come from locals' favorite cafes and pastry shops.

Besides Starbucks, Cynthia Ann Bettner, director of marketing at CocoWalk, loves **Focaccia Rustica**, a French bistro in Coconut Grove. "It's a little hole in the wall that not too many people know about," said the longtime Grovite.

"I drink just plain coffee or latte with a little bit of sugar," Ms. Bettner said. And she loves its Italian coffee. "It's just really rich, dark, nice coffee."

Ms. Bettner enjoys having croissants and baguettes with her coffee drinks. Focaccia Rustica's coffee selections include regular and decaffeinated coffee, cappuccino, café latte, café espresso and macchiato.

The bistro, decorated with baskets of breads and pastry dishes, serves butter, apple and chocolate croissants, éclairs, apple raspberry tart, strawberry mousse, Napoleon with vanilla cream, and tiramisu.

The restaurant also serves various salads, sandwiches and breakfast items.

"I grab a cup on my way to

work. It perks me up and gets me going for the day," Ms. Bettner said.

Carol Ellis-Cutler, senior vice president at Colliers Abood Wood-Fay, likes **Chocolate Fashion** in Coral Gables, formerly known as Andalucia Bakery. "It's great. There's a wonderful pastry chef. I would highly recommend it," Ms. Ellis-Cutler said.

Coffee choices include cappuccino, café latte, café mocha, cortalito, espresso and espresso panna topped with cream. Ms. Ellis-Cutler likes to order the café con leche. "And I

like it with sugar, too," she said. "Mmm... I'm sure they have a secret ingredient," Ms. Ellis-Cutler said about its coffees.

Besides its coffee, Ms.

Ellis-Cutler also likes to go to Chocolate Fashion "because I like to get a dessert," she said.

The menu has danishes, muffins, scones, empanadas and apple turnovers. Ms. Ellis-Cutler particularly likes croissants with her coffee. "The croissants are so sweet," she said. Chocolate Fashions' various breads are baked daily, with the exception of breaded khala bread, baked only on Fridays. Desserts include tiramisu, chocolate and raspberry tarts.

The eatery also serves breakfast items, salads and sandwiches.



Photo by Marlene Quaroni

Cynthia Ann Bettner enjoys a hot coffee beverage and muffin at Focaccia Rustica in Coconut Grove.

Susan Schein, executive director of Entertainment Industry Incubator, suggests **Segafredo**, an Italian café on Lincoln Road.

Segafredo is an ideal place to have coffee during business meetings or just to enjoy the beverage, Ms. Schein said.

"I like them strong," she said about her coffee drinks. She likes Segafredo "mostly for the atmosphere, it's outside, comfortable," she said.

She likes that Segafredo's

coffee comes with miniature round cookies.

The restaurant serves hot and cold coffee drinks. Hot drinks include Irish coffee with espresso, Irish whiskey and cream; Calypso with espresso, Rum and Creme Di Cacao; Roma Espresso with rum, creme de cacao and white chocolate; Amalfi Espresso with Galliano, Grand Marnier and cream; and espresso coffee with a scoop of vanilla ice-cream

Cold coffee drinks include

iced cappuccino and Caffe Shakerato Espresso stirred with ice and sugar. Others come with Italian names such as Dolce Vita Espresso with Frangelico and coconut cream; Venezia Espresso with Drambuie and vanilla ice cream; Verona Espresso with chocolate, cream and mint; and Tervisio Espresso with Baileys, Kahlua and milk.

Segafredo also serves side dishes such as salads, bruschetta selections, seafood and meat appetizers, and pizza by the slice.

Desserts on the menu include Tiramisu lady fingers, key lime pie, cookies, Italian apple tart, chocolate mousse cake and frozen zabaglione with chocolate.

"This exotic style of Southamerican cooking really give a jump start to my taste buds. The service was great and I can't wait to come back."

Eric Boatti visiting Jaguar from NY.

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THE RESTAURANTS

Focaccia Rustica, 3111 Grand Ave., Coconut Grove. Breakfast \$0.89-\$6.99, appetizers \$3-\$7.95, entrées \$3.50-\$8.95, desserts \$1.50-\$3.99. 7 a.m.-6 p.m. Mondays, 7 a.m. - 10 p.m., Tuesdays-Fridays, 8 a.m. - 10 p.m. Saturdays, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Sundays. (305) 476-8292

Chocolate Fashion, 248 Andalusia Ave., Coral Gables. Breakfast \$1.50-\$8.45, appetizers \$7.45-\$8.75, entrées \$7.45. 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. Mondays-Fridays, 7 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturdays, 8 a.m. -3 p.m. Sundays. (305) 461-3200.

Segafredo, 1040 Lincoln Road, Miami Beach. Appetizers \$4.95-\$12.95, entrées \$7.95-\$9.50, desserts \$3-\$6.50. 11 a.m.-1:30 a.m. Mondays-Thursdays, 11 a.m.-2 a.m. Fridays-Sundays. (305) 673-0047.

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The Department of Off-Street Parking of the City of Miami d/b/a Miami Parking Authority ("MPA") is seeking Submissions ("Proposals" or "Responses") for a Pay By Phone Parking System ("Services").

Interested firms may pick up a copy of the Request for Proposal ("RFP") to be issued on **September 14, 2007** at 190 Northeast Third Street, Miami, Florida 33132. The RFP contains detailed and specific information about the scope of services, submission requirements and selection procedures.

One (1) original, five (5) copies, and one (1) copy on CD-ROM in PDF format of the completed and executed Submission must be delivered to: Miami Parking Authority, Attention: Procurement Department, 190 Northeast Third Street, Miami, Florida 33132 **no later than 2:00 p.m. (EDT), on or before October 19, 2007.** Submissions received past such deadline and/or submitted to any other location or office shall be deemed not responsive and rejected. The Executive Director and/or the Board reserves the right to accept any Submission deemed to be in the best interest of Miami Parking Authority, to waive any technicalities or irregularities in any Submission and/or reject any or all Submissions and re-advertise for new Submissions.

This RFP may be subject to the City's "Cone of Silence" in accordance with **Section 18-74 of the City's Ordinance No. 12271.** Any request for additional information or clarification must be received in writing **no later than 5:00 p.m., October 5, 2007.** Respondents may fax or mail their requests to the attention of Claudia Saintanne, Procurement Manager, 190 N.E. 3rd Street, Miami, Florida 33132. The facsimile number is (305) 371-9451; email is: csaintanne@miamiparking.com. All responses to questions/clarifications will be sent to all prospective bidders in the form of an addendum.

A Pre-Proposal Submission Conference is scheduled for **October 4, 2007 at 2:00 PM (EDT)** at 190 Northeast Third Street, Miami, Florida 33132. Attendance at the aforementioned conference is not mandatory, but highly encouraged as a source of important information.

All firms are responsible for visiting MPA's website or contacting Claudia Saintanne (in accordance with the Cone of Silence) to obtain and/or download crucial information pertaining to the RFP.

Addenda will only be forwarded to those firms that complete and submit the RECEIPT OF RFP FORM found on the last page of this RFP.

This RFP is also available on our website: www.miamiparking.com

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