
From: bresaro@aol.com
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To: HeraldEd@MiamiHerald.com
Subject: editorial

I applaud the fact that Commissioner Sosa recognizes the need for an Arts Task Force (article by Daniel Chang 6-3-09 in Tropical Life). I hope that one of the things the Task Force considers is creating a Theater District. Every major city in the world has one but not South Florida. Tourist who appreciate theater can't and don't drive all over South Florida. They can't be bothered and we lose that tourist segment of the market to other demographic areas like New York, Chicago, Toronto and even London. Miami Beach is poised to be home to a Theater District. We have many restaurants and hotels in the most walking friendly environment in all of Florida. We already have the Colony Theater, the Lincoln Theater, the Jackie Gleason and the Little Stage, with churches, synagogues, and other closed theater spaces that could be easily converted to performance spaces if a need was created.

The Lincoln theater will soon be for sale when the New World Symphony moves to its new Frank Gehry state of the art facility in 2010. History shows that tourism skyrockets in every city where Frank Gehry builds a cultural masterpiece. It would be the ideal time and show great foresight if the County and/or the City of Miami Beach were to form a private/public partnership to bring all the struggling Art and Performance not-for-profit organizations to Miami Beach. Relocating their headquarters to the abundant office/classroom space in the Lincoln Center would be very cost effective and bring much more visibility to these organizations and to us as a cultural destination, a win for them and our floundering tourist industry. Grouping works and there is safety in numbers. Of course funding is always a problem but remember higher bed taxes do not stop tourists from flocking to New York City. Plus there are always other funding options. Give tourists what they want and they will come. We have to offer more than a beach, shopping, restaurants and clubs. Today's tourist demand more.

I served on Mayor Dermer and Mayor Bower's blue ribbon CANDO committee which defined a Cultural Arts Neighborhood District Overlay neighborhood that encompasses this area of South Beach offering many developer incentives. Another plus for creating a Theater District here.

Collins Park is the home to Miami City Ballet, the Bass Museum of Art, the Miami Beach Botanical Garden, SoBe Institute of the Arts, the Holocaust Memorial, and the most popular regional library in Miami Dade County, all within a few short blocks on 22nd Street and along the historic and picturesque Collins Canal Walkway. We are immediately adjacent to the Miami Beach Convention Center, Lincoln Road and what could be the Theater District. It is time to step back, look at what we have, see what we could create, and then do it.

If we don't, we are not as visionary and world class as we think.

Ray Breslin, president
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