

Downtown authority to chip in to Beacon Council marketing effort

BY ZACHARY S. FAGENSON

Miami's Downtown Development Authority is jumping onto the Beacon Council's "Where Worlds Meet" advertising campaign in hopes of attracting businesses to fill nearly 2 million square feet of office space slated to come online in 2010.

The authority, funded by taxes on commercial properties downtown and in the Brickell area, voted to dedicate up to \$150,000 to the second phase of the economic development agency's marketing effort.

The first phase, which launched in October 2008 with a \$2 million budget, promoted Miami as a world-class destination for business and vacation in markets throughout North and South America as well as Europe.

Now that's over and the second phase, which according to Beacon Council President and CEO Frank Nero has already launched in its target markets Canada, New York City and Brazil, has brought Baptist Health South and the development authority into the fold, adding an additional \$500,000 to its budget, now at \$2.5 million.

Other partners include the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, American Airlines, Miami International Airport and the Port of Miami.

Robert Geitner, authority senior marketing manager, said



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joining the campaign was an easy way to promote Miami as a business relocation destination.

"It's a way to put the word out to markets that traditionally feed into Miami," he said. At "times it's not easy to filter the work message into ad campaigns."

And with a growing supply of office space throughout Miami's central business district, the authority already has benchmarks to see whether the partnership is a worthwhile investment.

"From our point of view it will be strictly based on interest and potential leads" generated,

Mr. Geitner said. He added that the authority would also measure its value on how many Web site hits the campaign generates.

Meanwhile, Mr. Nero of the Beacon Council says he'd like the campaign to become an annual program with a budget of \$4 million to \$5 million. That, however, depends on its efficacy.

The agency is to release its economic report on Miami-Dade County, including the amount of businesses and jobs gained during the past year, at its annual meeting in October. In early 2010, Mr. Nero said, the Beacon Council will take a critical look at the success of the campaign.

"Our benchmarks, clearly, are how many impressions and how many ads we can get in front of people," he said. The goal "ultimately is to get interested activity."

"After the first of the year or so when this phase of the campaign starts to wind down, we'll evaluate return on investment and if we feel that it warrants continuing, [My] inherent gut feeling is that it would, provided we can attract the necessary resources," he added.

If the campaign continues, it may partner with commercial realtors and developers and businesses or individuals looking to promote themselves on national and international stages.