

## As downtown grows, more police officers to patrol streets

BY CATHERINE LACKNER

Miguel Exposito, newly installed Miami police chief, told directors of Miami's Downtown Development Authority last week that the central business district would be assigned 16 more officers into early January, and perhaps permanently, to bolster their presence downtown.

Chief Exposito said the added officers are being taken off desk jobs and assigned to downtown, with civilians assuming their duties for the time being.

"Great cities have great downtowns," the chief said. He acknowledged that the central business district is in the midst of a rebirth, but "it's not as vibrant as it could be. We have a lot of concerns. We want this revitalization to continue, so

we're increasing police presence downtown" until Jan. 3.

The authority's new chairman, Miami Commissioner Marc Sarnoff, had invited the chief to the meeting. City Manager Pete Hernandez and Miami-Dade County Commissioner Bruno Barreiro also attended.

Commissioner Sarnoff said the increased police push could be the start of a quest to "Giuliani-ize" downtown, reminiscent of the ex-New York City mayor's controversial crime fight.

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure; when people feel safe, the perception becomes reality," Mr. Sarnoff said. "Police visibility is a first step in making it safer. Rudy Giuliani demonstrated the recipe, one block at a time."

Plainclothes officers already on the job joined in a recent



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crackdown in which 135 "quality of life" arrests were made, mostly for drug-dealing and prostitution. After the arrests, felony arrests in the area dropped from an average of 10 to 12 per day to two, "which tells me we took those people off the street," Chief Exposito said.

Mr. Sarnoff, who said sev-

eral times that he had "wanted to be the DDA chair for three years," acknowledged that great strides have been made downtown and that much of the credit belongs to the downtown authority board and to Joe Sanchez, former authority chair and Miami commissioner.

"You guys took a ship that was headed toward Niagara

Falls and turned it three-quarters around," he said.

Board member and restaurateur Jose Goyanes asked what could be done about repeat offenders. "Day after day, I see the same people urinating on the sidewalk, panhandling and doing other things; I'm on a first-name basis with some of them."

"We have the laws; we're going to enforce them," Chief Exposito said. Patrols will also be stepped up after 6 p.m., especially in areas where sidewalk cafes flourish, he said.

"I'm thrilled that there is this commitment to downtown, and we are looking for results," said board member Hank Klein.

"This is music to my ears," echoed Tony Alonso, board member and downtown merchant. "You have the right understanding."