

8-ACRE MIAMI PRODUCE PROJECT IN ALLAPATTAH PROMISES TO CREATE A LOT OF EVERYTHING, pg. 17



DERELICT RULES: Miami city commissioners unanimously approved new rules to deal with derelict ships and vessels, establishing a process for the Code Enforcement Board to remove, destroy and dispose of them. The legislation says a number of derelicts in, on and under the city's public waterways and on the shoreline pose potential hazards to navigation and commercial and recreational use of waters, and to the environment. State law grants the city authority to provide for the removal and disposition, including destruction, of derelict vessels.

LOTS OF NEW USES: The Miami Parking Authority, which owns several properties in the city, is preparing to study other possible uses at one older parking lot. The Off-Street Parking Board approved hiring Bermello Ajami & Partners for \$65,000 to analyze program options for a possible joint development of the authority's Southwest Eighth Street surface lot. To maximize use of its properties and potential revenue, the agency has been actively looking at inventory to determine best possible uses, Authority COO **Alejandra Argudin** told the board. One such property is the 24,500-square-foot lot on Southwest Eighth Street just south of Domino Park. Ms. Argudin said the lot is underutilized. The architecture and engineering firm will work with authority staff recommending options that include ground floor retail; a visitor center, services and other exhibits or support; multi-level parking decks; community facilities; workforce and elderly housing; upper-level roof gardens, and more.

BANKADDS IN NEW YORK: Miami-based International Finance Bank has acquired the international portfolio of New York-based Modern Bank, retained the personnel of Modern Bank's international banking department and added a New York location at 623 Fifth Ave. in a \$152 million acquisition that brings the bank's total assets to about \$700 million.

CUTTING CUTLER BAY TREES: Cutler Bay gave homeowners who let their trees overgrow a subtle warning to maintain their unruly flora by reprinting on its website a section of the town's code detailing their responsibilities. "Every property owner of any tree overhanging any street or right-of-way within the town shall prune the branches (to) not substantially obstruct the view of any street intersection and [provide] a clear space of 13 feet above street surface or eight feet above the sidewalk surface," the Oct. 1 post partially states. The Town of Cutler Bay has received the Tree City USA Award for nine consecutive years since 2009, according to the town's website, which also states the municipality has been given the Tree City USA Growth Award every year since 2012 by the Arbor Day Foundation.



Photo by Mariene Quaroni

Scott Robins
Targets Wynwood project after Miami Beach successes
The profile is on Page 4

Downtown
sells hub of
innovations

By CATHERINE LACKNER

To lure tech firms, the Downtown Development Authority on Friday unveiled plans to position Miami as an innovation center, a campaign modeled on its 2013 push to add financial services firms.

"Miami is a city of innovators, and tech companies are looking to disrupt," said Philippe Houdard, on the authority's Business Development and Marketing Committee and founder of Pipeline Workspaces. The challenge is to change the image from tourism to a place companies can grow.

"They will ask if we have the human capital," he said. "Set in the context of immigration, we do."

In 1900, 37% of New York City's population was foreign-born, compared to Miami's 51%, Mr. Houdard said. Miami immigrants are highly educated, he said, No. 2 in the US for foreign-born residents with bachelor's degrees or higher.

In addition, Florida's higher education is ranked first by U.S. News & World Report and Miami-Dade has about 250,000 college students, along with 6,000 coding academics graduates. Miami-Dade's public-school system is A-rated, he added.

"If you're looking for innovative thought, this is the prime place," he said. "Start-ups play an outsized role in the economy, and 25% of start-ups are founded by immigrants." Miami's total of tech start-ups is second only to Austin, TX, in a time when "it's painful for companies to do business in New York, San Francisco, and Washington D.C.," Mr. Houdard said. But when he presented the facts to tech companies, "They laughed at me."

"They laughed at me, too," said board member Nitin Motwani, managing director of Miami Worldcenter Group and marketing committee chair, who helmed the 2013 financial services initiative. "Perception has not caught up with reality. But these companies are all about data, and now we have great data."

Said Ken Russell, authority chair and Miami commissioner, "This is a start to dispelling the myth."

Mayor in talks to land flying electric taxis deal

By JESSE SCHECKNER

In two years, you might see flying electric taxis streaking across the sky, linking travelers to four Miami-Dade airports.

That's the vision of Mayor Carlos Giménez, who last week met with Lilium GmbH, a German engineering startup whose five-seat Lilium Jet could transform global mobility.

"It's definitely cutting edge, so I'm interested in it," the mayor told Miami Today. "We have an interesting place to try out the new concept. We want to be the city of the future."

The company's website says the Lilium Jet would be the "world's first electric vertical take-off and landing jet," boasting a 186.4-mile range, which it could cover in an hour.

Unlike models in development by competitors like Ehang 184 and CityAirbus, which are essentially manned drones whose propellers operate like a helicopter's to stay aloft, the Lilium Jet converts to horizontal propulsion once it hits a flying altitude, similar to a Harrier Jump Jet.

That saves significant energy for travel, allowing better velocity and distance than other

models Mr. Giménez said he saw.

"[Theirs] is by far the most efficient in terms of speed and range," he said.

And because it's electric, a Lilium Jet has no single failure point, he said, making it safer and more reliable than standard aircraft.

In an in-flight failure or collision, the jet discharges a parachute "so you can just float down," he said.

No deal has been struck with the company, Mr. Giménez said, but talks will recommence when Lilium returns stateside in November.

The plan, he said, would be for Lilium to provide the jets at no cost to the county through a public-private venture.

Supportive infrastructure would be built, he said, including remote and on-site airport charging stations for the craft, which would be flown by certified pilots.

"You don't need runways; you just need space for takeoffs and landings," the mayor said, adding the jets could hardly be heard once they reached optimum altitude.

But the real kicker is how little the service would cost riders and Lilium itself, he said.

Regular maintenance that fossil fuel vehicles

need would be a non-factor, he said, and because the jets' seats would likely be full each trip, they could carry far more passengers than land taxis.

"A taxi normally takes one to two people. If you have a 15-mile trip, that could take anywhere from a half-hour to an hour depending on traffic," he said. "In that same time, [Lilium] could do three trips with five people."

Low-cost air transport solutions for regular citizens could transform life countywide beyond offering a new and exciting airport taxi, he said.

As the service spreads, it may offer residents far from city centers affordable, fast routes over traffic to Miami-Dade's denser regions.

"You don't have to be right in the heart of the city, where the prices for housing are becoming less and less affordable," he said. "Once you [start traveling] in three dimensions, a lot of problems go away. Not saying that's going to happen tomorrow, but how we get around and the aircraft we use today, it all started with the Wright brothers and a flight of about 120 feet."

Lilium did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

PROFILE

After Sunset Harbour and Española Way, Scott Robins...

Scott Robins, founder and CEO of Scott Robins Companies, has been changing the appearance, and consequently the culture, of Miami Beach since the 1980s.

With a portfolio primarily localized in the Art Deco District of Miami Beach and downtown Miami, Mr. Robins specializes in developing, building, leasing and managing office, retail, hotel and resident spaces in some of the most famous spots in the region.

His past construction, restoration and development projects include the Loews St. Moritz Hotel, Astor Hotel, Betsy Ross Hotel, Marlin Hotel, Netherlands, 555 Washington, Van Dyke Building, New World Symphony, Moore Building, Bath Club and The Lincoln.

The Miami native was a key figure in the transformation of the Sunset Harbour District in Miami Beach.

Most recently, he led a bid for the city to invest millions in revitalizing Mediterranean-inspired Española Way.

"People walk down the street and [say], 'Wow, where did this come from?'" And the people on Española Way — the proprietors, shopkeepers, restaurateurs, everyone — realize how special and important this street is and really do their best to make sure elements you wouldn't want on the street are kept off," Mr. Robins said. "Everyone here feels safe, secure. Kids play in the street. We've created a special environment."

Now, he says, he's plans to bring his vision to Wynwood while maintaining what keeps that area special.

His objective, he says, isn't to create density through skyscrapers and other large-scale housing projects. Rather, it's to accentuate the natural color of places and rejuvenate locales diminished by the wear and tear of time.

"For us, it's about neighborhood-oriented development projects," he said. "It's about creating a place where people love to be [and] feel like human beings — get joy, sun, air and everything Miami has to offer."

Mr. Robins, who in 2014 was appointed chairman of the City of Miami Beach's Blue Ribbon Panel on Flood Mitigation and Sea Level Rise, sat down with Miami Today reporter Jesse Scheckner in newly renovated El Paseo Hotel on Española Way, which he's owned since 1991. The interview was recorded by Jamoukie Dayle and can be found Friday at <http://bit.ly/2uNIHy0Q>.

Q: You started as a general contractor. How does that work inform your current efforts?

A: Without that background and experience, I wouldn't be who I am today. It gave me the foundation to really understand the real estate business.

It's a difficult profession. You're dealing with 30 companies. You don't have control of those companies. You're subcontracting them. It was [my] biggest learning experience [and] certainly the segue into my [current] professional life.

Q: How will higher interest rates at the Federal Reserve [recently announced] affect the environment?

A: Mortgages go up. The cost of everything goes up when interest rates go up.

They've been at such historically low rates. I've been in business 30 years and



Photo by Mariene Quaroni

Scott Robins, who has focused his projects primarily in Miami Beach and downtown Miami, now sees Wynwood as Miami's version of SoHo and targets a project there.

The Achiever

Scott Robins

Founder and CEO, Scott Robins Companies
230 Fifth St., Miami Beach 33139
(305) 674-0600
info@robinscompanies.com
Born: Miami
Age: 55
Education: Bachelor's degree, University of Florida School of Building Construction, 1985.
Personal Philosophy: "Life is about enjoying every moment in business and pleasure. [Don't] sweat the little stuff, keep your eye on the ball [and] get the big stuff done."

I've never seen them this low. For me, this is a little uncomfortable and unusual that they are so low.

A higher-interest-rate environment would indicate a healthier business environment. We just don't want interest rates to go too high or get out of control, and usually that's because of inflation or market forces.

Interest rates have a good historical level that indicates the economy is healthy. It's almost at an uncomfortably low level, although I like it. It's great for my business.

Q: Tell me about your efforts to get Miami Beach to invest \$2.5 million in revitalizing Española Way. What was the vision?

A: It's been a labor of love. Española Way is a special street.

The problem with Española Way is there are very few owners, so we don't have a big voice in the city. It's usually Lincoln Road or Ocean Drive that gets all of the city's capital and focus.

It took us six years to get the city focused on Española Way. Our plans [were] done many years ago, and finally we [were] able to get the city commission to understand our vision of a beautiful [area] with pedestrian walkways [that is] safe and secure.

It had fallen into disrepair over the last 20 years, so it was a long time coming. You can see the results of the \$2.5

million the city spent. It's a fraction of what the city spends on an Ocean Drive or Lincoln Road, but the impact is huge because Española Way is an authentic tourist destination and everyone [who] comes here loves it.

Q: What other areas are you eyeing? You've previously mentioned Wynwood, Allapattah and Little Haiti. Are there others?

A: We just finished in Sunset Harbour. We converted a light industrial district into a vibrant restaurant district [with] workout places where locals come from Miami Beach.

That was my last project. We have since, over the summer, sold that area. That's typically what we do: go into neighborhoods, change them, fill them with great tenants and move on.

Q: This week, you and former Miami Beach Mayor Philip Levine filed plans with the City of Miami for a residential mixed-use hotel project in Wynwood. What can you tell me about it?

A: We are excited about Wynwood. Wynwood is Miami's version of SoHo. It's the next frontier. Wynwood represents the new Miami, the cultural Miami, the urban Miami. Sprinkle in beautiful art and street art all over the place, young vibrant people, young businesses, early entrepreneurs trying to make it for the first time.

South Beach when we started, you didn't know what you were going to find when you turned the corner. The same thing is happening in Wynwood. The center of gravity has definitely shifted from Miami Beach to Miami, and Wynwood is one of the reasons it's shifted across the water.

We have an exciting project. We think it's different. We think it's cutting-edge. It's going to be a hotel product [but not] a Marriott Courtyard or Hyatt-this or Hilton-that. It's going to be a very cool, hip operator.

We're talking to someone specifically. I don't want to talk too much because we're in the early stages. It's going to be a different product that will resonate in Wynwood specifically.

Q: Part of what attracts people to Wynwood is [its] bohemian atmosphere.

In what ways do you plan to fit into that motif, and how do you intend to diverge from it?

A: We're going to go along with it. The first thing we do is we check the DNA of [an] area. We never try to change it. What does it seem like it wants to be? In Sunset Harbour it was health, welfare and food, and we went along with it. In Wynwood, we want to be part of the creation of Wynwood and why it was created.

I go back to its DNA. Why is Wynwood there? What kind of people are going there? We want to build on [the] momentum there. I don't want to change anything. I want to go in and understand what's happening — figure out how to become part of it and take that to the next level.

Q: Do you do projects outside of South Florida?

A: No. For the most part we've stuck to South Florida. I'm trying to figure out where I would go that would be as good as South Florida, and every time anyone tells me we should do a project somewhere else I always say to myself, "Why am I leaving South Florida?"

I don't think it can be matched in any other city in most of the world.

Q: How do you finance your projects? Do you have a single financing source?

A: Usually we'll work with a bank. We work with local banks for a certain amount of our capital.

For the most part, though, I deal with partners that are like-minded [and] understand the process of changing these things. It's usually never institutional partners. It's people like me [who] have the capital to invest and understand where we want to go with our new projects.

Q: You and Mr. Levine sold your Sunset Harbour retail portfolio for a reported \$68.75 million in July. Did either of you receive criticism for possible conflicts of interest, since Mr. Levine was in office during the area's development?

A: I haven't. When you run for office, you get criticized for everything, whether you deserve it or not. I think he might have been criticized; however, Sunset Harbour started way before he was the mayor.

Five years ago, he became mayor of Miami Beach. He left in 2017. Our development in Sunset Harbour started over 10 years ago, [so it] was well on its way. As a matter of fact, Sunset Harbour was completed before Philip Levine became the mayor. I didn't want him to run for mayor until we were done with our development.

Criticism he may have gotten for Sunset Harbour [wasn't] deserved. If people looked at the timing, they'd see [it] doesn't match up.

Q: Did Mr. Levine's gubernatorial efforts ever conflict with his and your business dealings?

A: While Philip was Miami Beach mayor and running for governor, I took a break from doing new projects. I was very respectful. I didn't want to be, and I never have been, accused of any conflict of interests on any level.

As a matter of fact, [I spent most of] those four years serving as chairman of the city's panel on sea level rise. I was chairman of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Flooding and Sea Level Rise for four years and dedicated a lot of time to city issues.