

Downtown authority asks to shut streets to permit social distancing

BY CATHERINE LACKNER



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To lure long-quarantined consumers, directors of Miami's Downtown Development Authority (DDA) voted unanimously Friday to send a resolution to the City of Miami to request all entities that control streets in the DDA district to close all or parts of the thoroughfares to allow for social distancing.

"My mask is too tight, a condition of fatigue for our population," is the malady a report by Ivery Boston III, authority insight and innovation manager describes, and one that the sidewalk-freeing move is meant to cure.

"It was an idea Mr. Ressler had," said Manolo Reyes, authority chair and Miami commissioner, referring to Gary Ressler, board member and a principal of the Tilia Companies. "Obviously we don't control the streets that FDOT and the county do."

There may be red tape, but

many downtown streets are wanting for traffic, said participants at the well-attended virtual meeting. "There is very little traffic on Flagler Street," Mr. Ressler said. He cited it as a prime street for temporary redesign.

At least 1,593 people working within the downtown district have been laid off. Others have seen scheduling stopped or hours cut, pay cuts, or furloughs. Many storefront businesses have closed temporarily and all of those that have remained open "have had to alter operations," Mr. Boston's report said.

"The tourism industry is dead. Miami International Airport is seeing approximately 90% fewer passengers and 70% fewer flights than a year ago," it continued.

"All across the nation, people are finding ways to work it out," said Terrell Fritz, executive director of the Flagler District Business Improvement District. "We can do it, too."