

MIAMI TODAY

April 29, 2020

Circulation: 28,665 / UMV: 32,940

Downtown team looks at putting the magic back into the city

BY CATHERINE LACKNER

“Putting the Magic Back into the City” was the focus of a well-attended virtual meeting of Miami’s Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Friday, as directors floated strategies to right Miami’s Covid-19 stricken fortunes.

Recognizing that Miami International Airport is crucial to downtown’s fortunes, directors invited Lester Sola, airport director, to next month’s meeting, at the suggestion of board member Eileen Higgins, a county commissioner

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who represents downtown. The airport is seeing about 90% fewer passengers and 70% fewer flights

than a year ago, DDA research said. “The downtown Miami recovery is tied to how quickly visitors and

locals can support our businesses,” said a report by Ivery Boston III, authority insight and innovation manager. “Downtown Miami will have to demonstrate that we are ready for the “new normal.”

Sanitizing efforts may be key, said Manolo Reyes, authority chair and Miami commissioner. That might include having all passengers screened from hot spots (currently New York, New Jersey and Connecticut) on arrival, he added, as well as meticulous maintenance throughout all of Miami.

Meanwhile, the goal is to keep downtown safe and clean and to

support merchants in whatever way possible, said Christina Crespi, authority executive director. “We wanted to keep the ball rolling on those two missions, especially.”

The authority sends phone calls or Zoom invitations daily to downtown establishments, she said. “Actually, we assisted anyone in the city who called. Restaurants needed help.” Website traffic was up substantially during that time, she added, as people sought resources to keep the doors open for deliveries or take-out orders to keep at least minimal crews employed.