

## CocoWalk revival helps drive Grove business community

By ABRAHAM GALVAN

The revival of lifestyle center CocoWalk and committed support for restaurant and retail industries are to be the driving forces to bring life back into Miami's Coconut Grove neighborhood, local community business leaders say.

At 90% leased, the open-air tourism destination CocoWalk's concept of carefully curating a lineup of local, national, and international retailers has attracted 16 new restaurants, lifestyle and retail businesses to join the center's entertainment experience.

"By reintroducing CocoWalk with the types of brands and concepts that the neighborhood identifies with will give visitors new reasons to rediscover Coconut Grove," said Michael Comras, CEO and president of The Comras Co. and board member of the Coconut Grove Business Improvement District. "We've created a destination that suits the daily desires of the area's residents, office tenants, and locals and ensures CocoWalk to reclaim its spot as the number one shopping, dining and entertainment location in Miami."

New tenants include Planta, Sushi Garage, Mister 01 Ex-



**CocoWalk is reportedly 90% leased, and includes 16 new restaurants, retailers and lifestyle businesses.**

traordinary, Botanico Gin & Cookhouse, Salt & Straw, Sweetgreen, Rosarito, Narbona Natural Foods & Farm Market, Bluemercury, Edward Beiner, Edite Mode, The Spot Barbershop, The School of Rock, Free People Movement, Europann and Late Night Gypsy.

"We are the liaison of our local businesses, letting people know

that they are open for business, while most are just getting back on their feet," said Ken Russell, Coconut Grove Business Improvement District chairman and Miami city commissioner. "The remaining 10% vacancy might be mostly unused office space. To be at that high level of capacity makes me very optimistic at this point."

The business improvement district is also investing time and efforts throughout the broader Coconut Grove business district and living up to its pedestrian-friendly atmosphere and vibrant centralized commercial appeal.

A lot of concentration has been on restaurants, while in general retail businesses are getting squeezed the tightest,

Mr. Russell said.

"Depending on retail stores' goal, we want to help retailers with their business plans and get more customers to come in," he said. "It might be having a bigger online presence or more marketing and promotional campaigns."

With traffic being down, a lot of infrastructure work has been completed, including renovations of all the sidewalks, which had been 10 years in the making, Mr. Russell said.

"We going to try to make the closure of parking spaces and right of ways for outdoor dining option permanent. The reason we haven't done it before was because we worried we didn't have enough parking, which has been a bit of a hot issue," he explained.

The plan is to transform Fuller Street into a first-class seamless paved, well-lit and attractive pedestrian street with an artistic vibe.

"The Grove is famous for outdoor dining, with the highest number of outdoor cafés in the city," Mr. Russell said. "We are about to pass a second reading to waive permitting fees for restaurants to save up to \$7,000 for using streets and sidewalks as dining options during the pandemic."