



**City Commission Public Meeting**  
**Miami Beach Convention Center District Master Planning**  
**Miami Beach Convention Center, Flamingo Ballroom**  
**1900 Convention Center Drive**  
**March 27, 2013**

Mayor Matti Herrera Bower  
Vice-Mayor Jonah Wolfson  
Commissioner Jorge R. Exposito  
Commissioner Michael Góngora  
Commissioner Jerry Libbin  
Commissioner Edward L. Tobin  
Commissioner Deede Weithorn

Interim City Manager Kathie G. Brooks  
Incoming City Manager Jimmy L. Morales  
City Attorney Jose Smith  
City Clerk Rafael E. Granado

**MIAMI BEACH CONVENTION CENTER DISTRICT**  
**MASTER PLANNING**  
**Public Community Meeting**

Meeting called to order at 7:13 p.m.

Commissioner Exposito stated that each presenter would have 40 minutes each.

Presentations made. Both Portman CMC and South Beach ACE (Tishman) revised plans based on input from the community. Portman CMC, led by developer Jack Portman, is also working with Cirque du Soleil, and has indicated plans to bring the art-inspired circus act to Miami Beach. Renderings provided include a raised hotel with green space below. The group's plans can be seen at [www.portmancmcmiamibeach.com](http://www.portmancmcmiamibeach.com). South Beach ACE, led by developer Daniel Tishman, provided renderings that include inside views of the convention center space with towering ceilings and a modern, glass-topped atrium in the concourse. South Beach ACE launched [www.sobeace.com](http://www.sobeace.com), where more plans can be seen.

To view presentation by Don Tishman, from the Tishman Group [click here](#)

**Tishman Presentation Summary:**

- Tishman envisions a Civic plaza with public spaces and a green roof on the convention center with a running track open to public use.
- Tishman proposed a 60,000 square foot ballroom and 100,000 square feet of meeting space with the meeting rooms being placed in the North West portion of the convention center and the meeting space shared with the proposed hotel.
- Tishman shows an 800-1,000 rooms hotel having 12-17 stories and built on the Jackie Gleason Theatre site with dedicated meeting and ballroom space.

- Tishman replaces the Jackie Gleason theatre with a multi-use venue, featuring Cirque du Soliel and other performances.
- Tishman creates shops around the Convention Center public square totaling 200,000 square feet and links to Lincoln Road with additional 60,000 – 80,000 square feet of linear retail in 17th Street garage. They would rebuild or renovate the parking over the retail space.
- Tishman would build 350-400 residential units on the P Lot and possibly more on the Miami Beach Convention Center north side as well.
- Tishman provides parking on the North side of Miami Beach Convention Center, if the ballroom is built on the P Lot. Portman provides for parking on the North side of Miami Beach Convention Center, as well as on the P lot covered by a grass berm to hide the parking.
- Tishman has contracted Mobility in Chain, an Italian firm, to analyze both vehicle and pedestrian traffic. The team also is considering traffic both during event times and during when the center is not being used. The Tishman plan redistributes traffic to Dade Boulevard, which the company says is now underused. Cars could also enter from the north end of Washington Avenue. Buses would enter from the opposite side of the center, near the current Fillmore Miami Beach at Jackie Gleason Theater. Trucks would stack along the north end of Convention Center Drive.

To view presentation by Jack Portman, from the Portman Group [click here](#)

#### **Portman Presentation Summary:**

- Portman envisions a public square with connectivity to the Botanical Garden, Holocaust Memorial and SoundScape Park.
- Portman proposes the Ballroom placement options on either the P Lot or north side of the building. Proposes 60,000 square feet of ballroom and 100,000 square feet of meeting space. They reorient the exhibit halls to an east/west orientation with the loading docks on the west side of the Convention Center. Do not reorient exhibit halls; stay in existing configuration.
- Portman shows an 800-room hotel having 17- 20 stories and built on top of the southwest corner of Miami Beach Convention Center. Hotel meeting and ballroom space would share Miami Beach Convention Center space. Finances hotel tower.
- Portman redevelops and uses the existing Jackie Gleason Theatre creating an open-air venue in the back portion. They would add a Cultural Center Building behind the theatre fronting 17th Street.
- Portman would create 350-500 residential units on the P Lot and on the Washington Avenue side, with the possibility of more on the north side of the Miami Beach Convention Center, if a ballroom were built on the P Lot.
- Portman identifies a total of 1.5 million square feet of program space.
- Portman would keep with linear retail design only on ground floor of the 17th Street Garage of 60,000 – 80,000 square feet of retail space.
- Portman provides for parking on the North side of Miami Beach Convention Center, as well as on the P lot covered by a grass berm to hide the parking.
- Portman identifies a total of 1.5 million square feet of program space.
- Portman has enlisted David Plummer & Associates, a Coral Gables firm, to look at traffic issues. Their plan would redirect traffic to Dade Boulevard. Hotel traffic would be funneled through 17th Street. They would also close off Convention Center Drive on the north end,

creating a pedestrian area. The firm suggested the use of “smart parking” techniques, with live updates sent to street signs and smart phones about area parking availability. They also talked about enhancing local public transit systems and incorporating the city’s popular bike rental program.

Commissioner Exposito thanked everyone for an excellent presentation and announced that the next meeting will be on May 13, 2013 at 6:00 p.m., at the Miami Beach Convention Center Hall C. He added that the City of Miami Beach is asking for public input, and that an email address has been created for this purpose at [mbconventioncenter@miamibeachfl.gov](mailto:mbconventioncenter@miamibeachfl.gov). The public can provide input as well as questions about the project. He opened the floor for public comment and questions.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

1. Mark Weithorn, Transportation and Parking Committee Chair, stated that it seems that all that is done in Miami Beach is build and build, assuming that cars will be able to go around, and this is a false assumption. He was very happy with the Portman presentation where they spoke about mass transit. City leaders need to coordinate with Miami-Dade County, as the City is in the middle of building a parking garage in the Collins Park neighborhood, in the middle of redoing the Convention Center; the South Beach Local is very antiquated, and the twelve minutes headways is not working. There is a need to rethink mass transit in this area. People cannot continue putting cars in garages, there is no more room on 17<sup>th</sup> Street, and there is no room on Dade Boulevard. They are maxed out. He urged them to work on mass transit.
2. Alejandro Arce noticed that there was only one woman presenting, and he thinks more women are needed. He stated that it does not look like they are developing a Convention Center, because in actuality this is nothing more than a big shopping center. He stated that this is a very small piece of land for a 52-acre project. He asked what will be the benefit for the taxpayers, and how can residents and the City avoid duplicating costs and making a mess of the City. He also asked what the benefit for the children.
3. Ray Breslin, Collins Park Neighborhood Association President, thanked both teams for paying attention to the access through their neighborhood from the Convention Center. They have done a very good job in doing what was asked for. He asked the Tishman team, in regards to keeping the Jackie Gleason, how they plan to bring it into the current century to make it a productive space, about the quality of the theater itself and type of programming that will bring visitors and conventioners.

Commissioner Tobin asked both presenters to address the issue of the 52-acre project that had been asked previously.

Mr. Tishman explained that, not just from a historical standpoint, but the Jackie Gleason Theater has a significant amount of service and life in it; it has a very good operator who has incredible programming, will be enhanced by the renovations to that building; their concept is to open the theater from the back to make a two-sided theatre, make more renovations and then work with the current operator to add programming, both cultural and artistic programming. Relative to the 52 acres issue, both teams were presented with a project that was defined by the City as the ability to think about a Master Plan on a 52-acre parcel of land, but they are not necessarily compelled to use all 52 acres. By preserving the Jackie

Gleason and City Hall, and updating the 17<sup>th</sup> Street garage, there is a lot of that acreage that will not be touched. The project contemplates, of the developable land outside of the Convention Center program that they have asked to create, and the hotel on top of the Convention Center to reduce the footprint impact, they are only developing about 22% of the available land of the RFP of the 52 acres.

Mr. Portman stated that 22 acres of the site is left as open space in their proposed development.

4. Benita Argos, former City of Miami Beach employee, considers a good project where one can drive and park a car easily or let off the front door without hassles. Covering is needed, perhaps a bridge from parking lots to the Convention Center, and she has not seen this handled. It is a big mistake to consider closing Convention Center Drive from Dade Boulevard to 17<sup>th</sup> Street; they have limited ways to get around town. This is too ambitious for this town, and the City keeps building bigger and bigger buildings and traffic is getting worse.
6. Dorothea Curry, Art Deco Images, LLC, CEO, and Miami Beach Resident for four years, is proud to say that her advertising agency won "Best Advertising Agency Miami Beach 2011" Commerce Award. She teaches college students advertising and marketing and they only do "go green" technology products. She is at the meeting because of the Call of Action from Mrs. Kathie G. Brooks and Michael Góngora. She stated that the community is in support of the things to build our City and for local business. One of the projects on the table is that they are placing TV screens in the 1,200 taxicabs throughout Miami. They support Saul Gross to keep South Beach clean and green. Since they are spending \$500 million dollars for a Go Green community, they do not want to see it littered up. She asked what are the requirements for an RFP and the requirements for a company such as hers to become involved with these programs. Another technology that her company has is that college students are the ones selling the advertising and marketing, which is an infrared triggered technology. She asked for support.

Commissioner Exposito asked her to leave her contact information.

7. Tammy Tibbles asked what the process is and what the next step is.

Jeff Sachs of Strategic Advisory Group, explained the RFP process, and the shortlist in January. Public meetings will continue to be held, the Commission will make their recommendation, and in June the idea is to select one of the teams. That team will spend up to a year working with the community during the design process, and ultimately building the project. They are looking for feedback.

Tammy Tibbles suggested that this should be communicated better on the Convention Center's and the City's website. She stated that she sent an email but would like to mention that there needs to be a vision for longevity in tourism. The way that this was done in the 30s, 40s 50s, and 60s was by creating a family friendly environment. This is not being done with this Convention Center or with the Government Center Project. There needs to be a way to incorporate and bring families in, and by the City saying that there is a need for an 800-room hotel, this is missing. First, there is a need to find out how many people they will be looking at, and then incorporate that into the rooms and decide how many rooms, how many suites, and apartments. She added that they need to avoid incorporating residential into this plan. People in Miami Beach usually move in with the idea of changing the neighborhood to meet

their needs, instead of finding the neighborhood that meet their needs and move in. We do not need to create more conflict with residents. She stated that they should create short-term rental units instead of long-term living units. She agreed with Mike Weithorn as far as the need for a more holistic transportation plan.

8. Sarah Baker, Environmental Artist, added that both projects are very provocative; however, she did not hear anyone mention solar power, wind power, and water conservation by using roof run off to water gardens and she asked the presenters to address this issue.

Mr. Portman responded that at this point they are not ready to respond to this issue in detail.

Mr. Tishman stated that their firm is involved with energy sources, and recently the City uses geothermal system, which can also be tapped in at the Convention Center and hotel. They might acquire renewable resources.

9. Clotilde Luce stated that the presentation was remarkable. She asked the Portman Group that in the past the question was raised to bring Cirque De Soleil to Miami Beach, and added that there has been resident resistance to this idea in the past. It is her opinion, if you associate yourselves with a powerful brand such as Epcot, Disney, etc., it creates a competing concurrent image with what is the Miami Beach brand. She added that Miami Beach does not need a program that is louder than they are.

Mr. Portman explained that with Cirque du Soleil, this should not be a concern and it is going to be a Miami Beach solution related to the Miami Beach community in a responsible way, not a typical Cirque show.

Clotilde Luce stated that anything related to a theme park or anything remotely "Vegas" is a disservice to the community, and she intends no disrespect to presenters. This includes casinos, and is not the direction the residents want.

10. Bruce Backman is concerned with the height of the Convention Center; the hotel is like a gigantic cliff, 200 feet height at its highest point and only a gradual step down; the ballroom (Hall C) height almost doubles it, and asked to verify the height of the proposed hotel model.

Mr. Portman answered that the height of the hotel in the scheme is 120 feet.

11. Rick Allaradef stated that the current most actively developed neighborhood is between the Bass Museum and Lincoln Road, and yet Convention Center is a wall to that. The Convention Center is only utilized 60% of the time, and they will be creating buildings that will keep people away from Lincoln Road. He thinks that in order for this to be beach friendly the proposed map should be flipped around.
12. Edward Jay Overley Lopez heard that the occupancy of the Miami Beach Convention Center is at 60%. To expect the taxpayers to pay at this time is irresponsible. This is not going to bring more people to Lincoln Road. You need to increase occupancy.
13. David Goldberg asked about retail spaces; and if there were any ideas of the retail/tenant mix, and how much square footage will be incorporated with either project.

Mr. Portman responded that they are looking at over 120,000 square feet of leasable space and they do not know the tenant mix at this time. It will be composed of shops, restaurants, coffee shops, bar, entertainment facilities, cultural facilities, but at this time are not prepared to say what the mix is.

Mr. Tishman stated that they have about 100,000 square feet with retailers around the side and on 17<sup>th</sup> Street, and currently they are not in discussions with perspective tenants.

14. Steve Berke, former candidate for Mayor of Miami Beach, asked the Portman Group if they have a backup plan to not demolish the Jackie Gleason Theatre. He stated that both plans are incredible and they are lucky to have both of these incredible groups, but he does not know much experience they have in dealing with preservationists in Miami Beach, but that issue alone can cause them not to win this bid. His question to Tishman: He does not think the tennis courts are necessary because it only accommodates five courts and ten people. To both groups, he explained that Miami Beach is the home of very powerful residents, and nothing on either presentation strikes as a major world tourist destination. He asked why not build the biggest Latin American Art Museum in the entire world in Miami Beach and have it here on this property and make something that has presence in Miami Beach and make us proud.

Mr. Portman stated that they are evaluating a variety of different solutions to celebrate and recognize the legacy of Jackie Gleason. What they have determined for the greater good is the alternative of what was presented, but they will consider comments.

Victor Diaz stated that in answer to the question to the Tishman group of what is in the plan for Miami Beach residents; 1) shrinking the footage of the Miami Beach Convention Center and knitting an existing City together by providing public realm open spaces, which will be activated for community use is a conscious move on the City's part, and 2) creating a cultural band and connectivity to an enhanced the Lincoln Road experience, the Soundscape Park, the reconfigured Jackie Gleason, City Hall, the expanded Palm View East Park, and the extension to Miami Beach Botanical Garden is a great amenity to surrounding neighborhood. There needs to be a significant public benefit for the significant amount of money the City is investing.

15. Yvette Costas, Chamber of Commerce member, stated that the green issue is so important. They need parks and that is a fantastic rendering, but a red hot spot is the Jackie Gleason. This is a great concern because Miami Beach is into preservation. The City does not have a long history, so whatever we have, we have to preserve. You need to understand that this is not Vegas, and this is not a town for that kind of venue. They have a great venue with the Jackie Gleason and they want it kept at a small scale.
16. Frank Del Vecchio thinks the Commissioners have a dilemma; there are two directions in which they can go. One is that they can design up to maximize revenues to the City, or they could design down to meet four critical objectives expressed by all the teams: 1) Optimize the Convention Center modernization, 2) Connectivity, 3) The environment and 4) Minimize non-essential traffic impact. He continued to describe how both proposers meet these critical objectives. He asked why bring the entertainment concept if it is not really needed, and suggested this be reexamined by both teams. As far as the Jackie Gleason Theater, the building might be subject to adaptable reuse for an essential component of either plan.

17. Steve Lonquest thanked the Commissioners and Mayor Bower for pushing this project forward. It is very essential to the City to have a viable Convention Center. He also thanked both teams for their work. He complained that what he is seeing with both Miami and Miami Beach public projects is that they are simply not attractive. He is seeing a tremendous amount of "Las Vegas" in terms of looks and added that he thinks the Tishman project is more elegant in terms of how it is built and flows. He requested parking information retained at the 17<sup>th</sup> Street parking garage from both teams.

Mr. Tishman responded that they are retaining all the parking in the 17th Street Garage, as it exists today by adding one more floor of parking on the top. There is the opportunity to add an additional floor, as the building is structurally sound.

Mr. Portman stated that the parking garage would maintain the same number of parking spaces.

18. Lauren Reskin, Miami Beach native, explained how back in the 90s there was not much to do, and now, there are so many new sports and many things to do for the tourists in South Florida. Finally, the Fillmore Miami Beach brought down some incredible shows with so many artists that otherwise will never come to South Florida because of geographically the City is at a disadvantage. People drive from Homestead and West Palm Beach to the Fillmore. The Fillmore is important to the music scene and losing it will be an absolute tragedy. This is the only concert venue of that size that we have in South Florida.

19. Larry Thorenson stated that the presentations were tremendous with many interesting ideas. The problem he has is in getting from North Beach to South Beach because of traffic congestion and he is glad to see that this is being addressed. He did not hear from either presenter was the scale of the events that they are planning to have. He had the pleasure of attending one of the largest scientific meetings that took place in the world, the American Heart Association Scientific Center. He asked if they expect Miami Beach to be able to handle this type of large event with thousands of people attending from the public and the media 40% of the time throughout the year.

Jeff Sachs of Strategic Advisory Group stated that the impact on average is about a 30% increase in terms of conventions, and it is hoped to get conventioners that are more professional. He will come back in June with the lineup of the Convention Center and the resource side.

20. Christine Florez is concerned with the finances and economic impact. She feels that the Portman project has too much concrete and too many squares. She believes that the Jackie Gleason Theater is an important part. She believes that the music scene should be part of the City. She asked if City Hall would be expanded and was told that there were no plans at the moment. Ms. Florez also requested the teams to look at the impact on Lincoln Road businesses. She reiterated that preservation is an economic driver for Miami Beach.

21. Colina Lasorio asked the Commissioners if there is any way they can create a definite commitment on the mass transit or the transit issue linked to this development. She is asking this because as government officials they have the potential of bringing amazing creators and innovators represented by the incredible ideas of these teams, and they will react to the guidance that you will give them. When talking about the needs of our community, we know we have a huge diversity, we have people from all over the world, but we also have to be

mindful of community building and social innovation when it comes to the needs and the financials. Can a commitment be created on the transit issue by this Commission linked to this development?

Commissioner Exposito explained that the issue had been seriously discussed at Land Use and Finance and Citywide Projects Committee meeting.

22. Dennis Russ, MBCDC member, stated that there needs to be a vehicle for engaging the business and the community for opportunities. He has had conversations with art groups that they want to participate in the future of this community. He asked if each team would be willing, during the course of the development if selected, to have conversations with local arts groups, institutions and artists and be open to using what they have throughout the year.

Mr. Portman stated that they are willing to seek local participation.

Dorothea Curry, Art Deco Images, LLC, CEO, asked about the RFP requirements.

**City Commission Comment:**

Commissioner Tobin stated that they had talked about bringing higher quality/caliber conventions, as oppose to trade shows, and that may help reduce traffic. Some of them want to create this regional destination, the best museums from South America in the world. He would like to know their thoughts, in reference to traffic, if they were to create a regional destination so everyone from Ft. Lauderdale south will come to Miami Beach to view this unbelievable destination, as opposed to bringing visitors for a Convention to the City.

Mr. Portman stated that as far as a regional attraction, anytime you build something new, it will attract a lot of attention from people, but the objective is as a Convention Center location and creating a facility that will attract higher level of conventioners by having a hotel adjacent to the Convention Center. These will minimize the traffic as compared to the traffic generated today. Discussion held.

Mr. Tishman agrees that by having the hotel adjacent to the Convention Center will relief significant amount of traffic. Currently, there are people from all over town going to the Convention Center. Their intention is not to build a destination paradise; it already exists and is called Miami Beach. This is improving the situation you already have. Statistically, as you bring the higher end businesses, the likelihood that the number of users will go down and the length of the stay will go up and multiply by many factors in the amount of spending in the City.

Commissioner Libbin congratulated both groups and stated that it has been demonstrated that they have listened to the many sectors of the community. The most important thing is yet to come. He would like to see and hear, in the next meeting, about the economic impact, which they have not heard. This is important for the community to hear. He is not talking about the cost to build, but the benefits derived, since value is determined, not so much by cost, but by benefit. He will not be scared by the cost if there is value, and they need to demonstrate what residents are going to get, the economic value is, and how it translates into benefit to the residents, merchants on Lincoln Road, Washington Avenue in the long term, not year by year. He needs to know the investment made today, how it will benefit the residents years down the road. It is incumbent on the Convention Bureau to take the numbers and do this calculation. As far as the transit, it is critical, but it is not something that the City Commission deals with alone.

They need partners with the Federal government, State Government and Miami-Dade County. He requested the public to comment, between now and next month, as to the sale of residential units versus leasing. He likes the idea of spreading the parking around and getting all the trucks out of sight. For the record, he added that the Chamber of Commerce has nothing to do with the Cirque De Soleil and this project.

Mayor Bower stated that Commissioner Libbin is right and she also wants to hear about the residential units; they need to know how many units, what is the square footage, etc. She agrees that the value is very important. She added that they do have 60% usage because they have the time setting up and setting down. If there is no exhibition then there is a low in the hotel and business usage. The expansion explains that as one show is moving out, the other one could be setting in, and there will always have the business for the hotel and the merchants. She asked if this is going to be attracting better conventions and if they are going to be able to have more conventions?

Bill Talbert, President and CEO of the Greater Miami Beach Visitors and Convention Bureau, stated that the Dermatologist Convention is a classic example of what this Convention Center expansion and enhancement is going to do for the community. They have been here before and they were just here for five days. Revenues per available rooms cascade all over the City, restaurants, ground transportation; retail was up 38% for five days. Dermatology Convention will not be coming back to Miami Beach because none of this is happening.

Mayor Bower asked how long it took them to set up and set down.

Bill Talbert, President and CEO of the Greater Miami Beach Visitors and Convention Bureau, stated it took them probably a week between in and out. With the expansion, they can have conventions that are more concurrent  
Discussion held.

Commissioner Exposito asked if either of the plans maximize the capability of in and out of each convention so that they could have multiple conventions operating simultaneously. Discussion continued.

Mr. Tishman stated that the City and Miami Beach Convention Center operator are "joined at the hip." He added that hotels rely on Convention Center business to fill up, and they are comfortable as hotel operators to fill the additional time to take down and set up if there are no overlapping conventions. The efficiency in the Miami Beach Convention Center will likely cut down on the time but not eliminate it.

Mr. Portman stated that there is no way around that; they have the Miami Beach Convention Center and a separate ballroom and outside space, to give three separate venues, to market simultaneously or separate and that will help the down time.

Discussion continued.

Commissioner Weithorn summarized her questions and requested the answers be provided at the next presentation. For the GMCVB, she requested to know a long-term outlook of what it will be like without an upgrade; she requested schematics of the number of parking spaces now versus later; wants more detail on the proposed residential, including the height and type and the scale of the residential is. She requested a height diagram with size and scale of the

surrounding community. She also requested from the GMCVB the industry benchmarks are. She wants to ensure that the current users and managers are part of the conversation and ask for their input to make this a better facility.

Mayor Bower requested changes to the format of the meeting and stated that slides need to be slower, and they need to be able to ask question for each individual one at the moment they are looking at it. It is better to ask questions as they are presenting. The residents need to see what they see and be able to understand it. She suggested the Commissioners to give their input on this issue.

Commissioner Tobin stated, for the benefit of the residents, that both teams have made themselves available for unlimited amounts of time to describe the presentations in a more detailed way. He added that they have spent a lot of time understanding the presentations and going over the financial issues. This explains why the Commissioners are not asking many questions tonight.

Commissioner Exposito thanked both presenters and asked for public input from residents and his colleagues. He asked that for the next meeting both teams be prepared to discuss the benefits and disadvantages of selling versus leasing of the properties. In addition, to include some analysis on the rate of investment, return on investment; on the height, he requested for the community and his colleagues to provide additional input on the height and open. In regards to operation and maintenance, it is very important that they upkeep what we build. He requested a plan from both teams, in regards to making sure that the facility is properly maintained in the future. Concerning the financing, he requested to have a better analysis for how the debt bonding for this Convention Center will affect the City's future bonding capacity on other projects going forward. Lastly, he speaks for himself only, but he has a level of discomfort because this is very critical and the information that will be discussing in terms of financing entails many details. He asked his colleagues if they feel that it is important to hire a financial expert, a third individual, that will be able to analyze each of the teams proposals, item by item, and compare apples to apples and tell us from a third party perspective which team is the most viable way going forward. He thanked everyone for their time.

Meeting adjourned at 9:59 p.m.