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## Upper Eastside Miami residents support Vagabond Motel owner's plans for outdoor market

BY LAURA MORALES

During a recent community meeting, several Upper Eastside residents lauded a plan -- including an open-air market -- to revive the Vagabond Motel.

Commissioner Marc Sarnoff also introduced an ordinance that could make the proposed outdoor market legal.

At the end of the Sept. 4 meeting, motel owner Eric Silverman asked the 60 or so folks gathered at Legion Park to give a show of hands for or against his plan.

Nearly all -- except a few who disapprove -- showed their support of the ambitious ideas Silverman has for the building, including a fish market and several restaurants.

Current zoning laws ban such a market.

But Sarnoff's proposed ordinance, modeled after the one governing markets in Coconut Grove, would change that. Among its provisions, outdoor markets in the Biscayne Boulevard corridor can only operate from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays and must be located on parcels of at least 15,000 square feet and occupy no more than 65 percent of their parcels.

To open a market, its operator would need a special permit from the city.

After Sarnoff introduced the proposed measure, attendees voiced their opinions of Silverman's vision for the Vagabond, which architectural historian Teri D'Amico called ``the diva of the MiMo District."

D'Amico said she was worried that an outdoor market at the Vagabond would become a junk bazaar. That's the same worry that for years kept the city from approving the Legion Park market before it was finally OK'd in December.

"I do not think this is positive," she said.

City zoning administrator Lourdes Slazyk noted that, under the proposed ordinance, the market can only offer handmade crafts, fresh produce and raw food and drinks made from fresh produce and only on weekends.

She added that violations of the ordinance's conditions would mean no renewal of the special permit.

Most of those who stood up to speak said they support the market and Silverman's big plan.

Casa Toscana owner Sandra Stefani said more business and bustle are exactly what the MiMo corridor needs to keep growing. "You're going to have growing pains, traffic, inconveniences, but that will be for the good of the neighborhood," she said.

At one point, attorney Michael Tarre, whose uncle Sidney Goldberg built the Vagabond in 1953, stood up to praise the new plan for the motel.

"I like it," he said on Monday.

"I give the guy a lot of credit. What he wants to do isn't a lot different from what we did outdoors back then."

But a small group of Belle Meade residents maintain a staunch opposition and raised their hands to that effect.

"We want time for the Legion Park market to work. Besides, an open market doesn't belong abutting a historic building," neighborhood association secretary Rosemary Ference said Monday. "We also don't want to see Northeast Sixth Court become a parking lot."

Silverman has said he would like to have angled parking along Sixth Court, which abuts Belle Meade.

At the end of the meeting, Sarnoff tried to reassure residents, saying the measure can be fine-tuned if needed. "No one's going to thrust anything upon you," he said.

The proposed ordinance will go before the city's Planning Advisory Board at its Sept. 17 meeting.