

Scenic Watch

Citizens for a Scenic Florida



November 16, 2010

NEWS: Miami Fight Heating Up Over 40 Story Billboards

Reporter Raises Serious Questions About Developer

And

Urban Environmental League Holds

An Important Panel Session



Photo: Miami City Center

'Mark Siffin: Times Square in Miami.'

Even Florida's most creative fiction writer, Carl Hiaasen would be quite challenged to come up with a more entertaining character than the real life developer profiled in a new six page investigative report by the Miami New Times.

The reporter lays out a number of quite serious allegations about Mark Stiffin, who is the developer behind the mega tower project which includes the many-story digital billboards.

The article also discusses his strategy on previous projects and the recent maneuvers that have resulted in the current Miami situation.

This article has it all, folks...it starts with naked ladies and goes down hill from there. You HAVE to read this one yourselves....sorry there is just no way for me to do it justice in the space we have here.

The juicy allegations are up front and the practical matters of how the project is being pushed through are on the last two pages.

Please be sure to take your blood pressure meds before reading this one.

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**The Urban Environment League
Invites You to a Panel Discussion**



November 17th

6 pm - Cocktail Meet-Up With Cash Bar

6:30 pm - 3 Course Dinner

View from the Rusty Pelican: Best View in Miami!

Economics vs Visual Pollution: Mega Ad Towers and Public Media in Miami-Dade's Future

The recent proposal for mega media towers raise questions about the public process, economic benefits and limits of signage in our area.

Speakers:

Miami-Dade County Commissioner Carlos Gimenez

Eston "Dusty" Melton, Consultant

Mark Siffin City Square/Mega Tower Developer

Moderator: Gregory Bush

*The Rusty Pelican on Virginia Key
\$25 - Dinner 6:30 pm (tax & tip included)
Program only at 7:00 pm FREE!*

**Use Paypal at: www.urbanenvironmentleague.blogspot.com or
bring a check or cash**

RSVP A MUST: uelinfo@bellsouth.net - Phone: 786-472-0011

November-December



Fun Festivals and Events

North Florida

**Excellent Bus Shelters Built
Using Federal Stimulus Money
and....**

NO ADVERTISING DOLLARS!

Nov20

Amelia Island Holiday Cookie Tour,
Amelia Island

Nov 20-21

Yankeetown Seafood and Arts
Festival, Yankeetown

Nov 26

24th annual Jacksonville Landing
Tree Lighting, Jacksonville

Nov 27

Jacksonville Light Parade,
Jacksonville

Dec 3

Camellia Christmas 2010,
Tallahassee

Dec 3-5

Suwannee Old Time Music
Weekend, White Springs

Dec 4

Sugar Cane Grinding, Newberry

Dec 4-5

45th Annual Market Days,
Tallahassee

Dec 10-11

Southern Pines Blues and BBQ
Festival, Perry

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Central Florida

Nov 13-21

Festival of Trees at Orlando Museum
of Art, Orlando

Nov 13-14

22nd Annual St. Armands Art
Festival, Sarasota

Nov 13-14

Roar 'n Soar 2010, Polk City

Nov 20

The Plant City Pig Jam, Plant City

Nov 23-Jan 3

Leu's Holiday House, Orlando

Dec 3-5



Photo: Post-Bulletin

"... they're the Taj Mahals of bus shelters and it's been fascinating to watch construction workers put them together.

They're clad in creamy Kasota limestone, like the Plummer Building and others around town. They have electronic signs, heated sidewalks and a heating system that will be available at the push of a button. But it's the big glass panels by Iowa artist David Dahlquist that have attracted the most attention. The glass is stenciled with images of a regional plant or tree, then lit with LED lights that bathe the glass in shifting colors.

If you're keeping score at home, the shelters on the north side of Second Street, going west to east, are white oak and big bluestem. On the south side of the street, west to east, they're sumac, cornflower and compass plant. Some ceramic art tile that also reflects the various themes will be added by next spring.

Who paid for the shelters? We did, of course, through federal stimulus money.

The total cost of the whole Second Street project was \$5.3 million. Slicing that up, \$2.8 million was from the Federal Highway Administration; \$2.3 million was from the Federal Transit Authority, courtesy of the stimulus bill, and it's that money that was used for the shelters; other miscellaneous federal money totaled \$1.4 million; \$530,000 was state money, and \$220,000 was local, for sanitary sewer work and the like...

Sure, they're spendy. The city could have just put up steel-and-Plexiglas bus shelters and called it good. Instead, they applied for federal money and got exceptional cool, classy structures that add more flash to downtown. They're among the things visitors to Rochester will remember best, and those of us who live here will appreciate the snowmelt sidewalks and the heat. Worth every penny, I'd say...."

-- Post-Bulletin

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Photo: LA Weekly

West LA:

Billboards Gotta Go!

Sarasota Craft Show, Sarasota

Dec 4

Sanford Historic Trust Tour of Homes, Sanford

Dec 7-9

Medieval Yuletide Feasted, Daytona Beach

Dec 10-11

Fort Foster Living History Event, Tampa

Dec 11

Candlelight Tours of Fort Foster, Tampa

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South Florida

Nov 13-20

Ninth annual Miami Short Film Festival, Miami

Nov 14-20

Miami Book Fair International, Miami

Nov 26-Dec 5

Pirates in Paradise Festival, Key West

Nov 27-28

11th annual Downtown Delray Beach Thanksgiving Weekend Art Fest, Delray Beach

Nov 20-Jan1

Festival of Lights, Punta Gorda

Dec 2

Art and Jazz on the Avenue, Delray Beach

Dec 2-5

Art Basel Miami Beach, Miami Beach

Dec 3-5

Pirates in Paradise Festival at Fort Zachary Taylor, Key West

Dec 3-5

West Palm Beach Antiques Festival, West Palm Beach

Dec 10-11, 17-18

Historic Lighted Inn Tours, Key West

Dec 9-Jan 1

Holiday Nights at Edison and Ford Winter Estates, Fort Myers

Dec 11

Annual Holiday Parade and Lawn Mower Contest, Havana

"Environmental advocates are ramping up their efforts to combat the proliferation of what they call 'weapons of mass distraction,' by urging local lawmakers to get rid of the 100 existing digital billboards in the city...

.Dennis Hathaway, president of the Coalition to Ban Billboard Blight, compared the billboards' unsynchronized flashing lights to putting a video game in front of drivers as they struggle to keep their eyes on the road. 'People in the area are concerned,' he said. 'There have been reports of people almost getting rear ended.'

...three West LA signs are among the digital billboards left standing in LA, since the city passed a temporary moratorium against further construction of the signs in 2008.

Activists are demanding that the remaining billboards - which were not part of the moratorium and were constructed as a result of a 2006 compromise between former City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo and Clear Channel and CBS Outdoor - be shut off once and for all.

Scenic America president, Mary Tracy, reasoned that the 2006 deal was 'illegal,' stating that residents should have been given the opportunity to vote on the matter. 'The people should have say in their visual environment,' she said.

At the end of 2009 a court judge agreed and rejected the settlement, yet the billboards remain. The idea of ridding communities of electronic billboards has caught on in several parts of LA but especially in the westside, where 60 digital billboards - which equals the total number of electronic billboards for the entire state of Michigan - are erected.

'They're disruptive, their obtrusive,' said Barbara Broide, president of the Westwood South of the Santa Monica Boulevard Homeowners Association. She too is concerned that the three signs on the busy intersection of Westwood and Santa Monica face drivers heading south on Westwood Boulevard. 'Are they watching the road or are they watching the signs?'

The billboards aren't just visually distracting, said organizers, they can be loud too. Jean Bushnell, of the Comstock Hills Homeowners Association, opposed the construction of an electronic billboard on Beverly Glen and Santa Monica Boulevards and likened the sound of the billboard's 24-hour-a-day fans to a 'low-flying airplane.'

Hathaway, Tracy and their supporters are weighing their options and may take legislative actions to challenge the permits of the digital billboards.

While that action hasn't occurred, they are making some headway in their efforts to fight billboard blight. Longtime digital billboard opponent and 5th District councilman Paul Koretz recently introduced a motion calling for a veto of last week's action of the Board of Recreation and Parks Commissioners decision to allow outdoor ads at three city parks in Westwood, Hollywood and Encino. Warner Bros., which is promoting its movie 'Yogi Bear,' offered the city \$46,636 as part of the deal.

At the meeting, the park commission decided to rescind their action, said Hathaway. Digital board opponents are heartened by outcome but know the campaign against digital billboards isn't over. 'No one here is declaring victory,' Koretz said. "We have far to go. In fact, the fight has just begun.' "

-- Lelani Albano, LA Weekly

[Read the Article Here >](#)

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Note from the Editor

Suggestions for improvement are always welcome.

"Lamar Ends String of Losses"

Expects to Add 300 Digital Billboards in 2011



Photos: Adme.ru

"Outdoor advertiser Lamar Inc. ended a two-year string of losses in the third quarter and met the forecast of stock analysts surveyed by Thomson Reuters.

Baton Rouge-based Lamar reported third-quarter earnings Thursday of \$690,000, or 1 cent per share, compared to a loss of \$4.9 million, or 5 cents per share, a year earlier.

During a conference call with stock analysts and investors, Lamar Chief Operating Officer Sean E. Reilly described 2010 as "a good solid recovery year" that has the company positioned for an even better 2011.

During the third quarter, Lamar's billboard rates and occupancy both increased, the first time that had happened in 2010, he said. Some 70 percent of Lamar's posters, the smallest billboards, were leased during the quarter and 75 percent of its largest billboards, called bulletins. A year earlier, the percentages were 67 percent and 73 percent, respectively. Meanwhile, the rates for renting those spaces rose by 2 percent, Reilly said.

Reilly said he was encouraged by an increase in business from local firms, which he described as Lamar's "bread and butter" and a key to growth in 2011. "You will see growth next year," Reilly said. "It will come from local ad spend."

Lamar expects its local business segment to grow by around 4 percent in the fourth quarter, Reilly said. The segment grew by just 0.5 percent in the third quarter, while national advertising grew by 9 percent. "That's encouraging and again gives me confidence going into 2011," Reilly said.

Lamar also expects to add as many as 300 digital billboards to its inventory in 2011, Reilly said. The billboards will cost around \$50 million, and the company expects to recoup that expenditure in a little over three years.

Lamar now has 1,169 digital billboards in 140 markets and will have more than 1,200 by year's end, Reilly said. The new billboards, based on average performance, will add \$30 million in revenue per year. "We're happy to be back in the business of aggressively growing our digital platform," Reilly said...

-- Ted Griggs, 2theadvocate

[Read the News Here >](#)

Statewide Ban Proposed:

Bill Proposes Statewide Digital Billboard Moratorium in Michigan

"The trend of replacing traditional billboards with digital billboards could soon come to a screeching halt.

A bill proposing a statewide digital billboard moratorium in Michigan is being considered by the state House. If it makes its way through the legislature, the statewide moratorium would be in effect until Jan. 1, 2012.

... The original bill was introduced by state Rep. Rebekah Warren, D-Ann Arbor, on Nov. 5, 2009 to ban billboards except in cities with more than 35,000 people and impose a two-year moratorium on any new or converted digital billboards. The bill has been amended and is not working toward a ban for all digital billboards...

...In September, the city of Walker established a six-month moratorium on digital billboards within its limits. Numerous cities across the country have adopted similar bans or moratoriums this year, including St. Louis and Denver. In an effort to promote tourism and scenic beauty, Alaska, Hawaii, Maine and Vermont have bans on all billboards..."

- Emily Grove, Central Michigan Life

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