

50 CENTS
109TH YEAR, NO. 7 ©2011

MiamiHerald.com 

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2011
FINAL EDITION

DEVELOPMENT | DOWNTOWN MIAMI

Group seeks a master plan for area near Arsht

■ Developer Armando Codina is heading an effort to integrate development plans for the area surrounding the downtown Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts.

BY ELAINE WALKER
ewalker@miamiherald.com

As the area surrounding the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts braces for the potential arrival of a \$3 billion destination resort casino, four prominent Miami civic leaders are flashing a yellow light of caution.

Developer Armando Codina, former Miami Mayor Manny Diaz and Arsht Center leaders Michael Eidson and Parker Thomson aim to ensure that Resorts World Miami or any other development complements the existing cultural arts facilities. On their team is star architect Cesar Pelli.

The Town Square Neighbor-

hood Development Corporation, a nonprofit, independent company, has been in the works for a year — long before Malaysian casino firm Genting Group bought land currently occupied by The Miami Herald in May. But Genting's unveiling last week of plans for a massive destination resort on the site served as a dramatic reminder of challenges that include traffic, parking and construction logistics.

Genting's plans include four hotels with 5,200 rooms, two residential towers with 1,000 units, a casino, convention center, more than

• TURN TO DISTRICT, 2A

DEVELOPMENT | DOWNTOWN MIAMI



ARTIST'S VIEW: A rendering shows what a resort built on Miami Herald property in Miami might look like. The Genting Group plans to build Resorts World Miami on the site.

Civic leaders seek master plan for Arsht Center area

•DISTRICT, FROM 1A

50 restaurants and bars, plus a luxury retail shopping mall. The casino would require a change in state law.

"The Genting announcement really puts an exclamation point on why we need to pay attention to the neighborhood," said Codina, chairman of Codina Partners, who serves as the chairman of the Town Square group. "Our job is to make sure we are the squeaky wheel and make sure there is compatibility.

"The balance of the neighborhood needs to be done in a way that's respectful to what's already going on there. We want to see a more livable district. We want restaurants. We need to have dedicated parking. We need the whole surrounding area to come alive."

The group's first move: bringing back Pelli, who designed the Arsht Center, to create a master plan for the entire district. Pelli's hiring was made possible through a \$300,000 grant Town Square received last week from ArtPlace, a federal initiative aimed at revitalizing urban cities by using the arts to spur economic development. The Knight Foundation is one of ArtPlace's supporters.

The goal is a vision integrating all area development, including the Museum Park under construction along Biscayne Bay just south of I-395, a mixed-use project at 1400 Biscayne Center by Espacio USA and Genting's proposed resort. The group's master plan currently has no definitive boundaries and could encompass Wynwood, Midtown Miami and the warehouse district west of the Arsht Center, where Gent-

ing has purchased additional land for employee parking.

"It's about making sure all development will be positive for the neighborhood," said Eidson, an attorney, who serves as chair of the Arsht Center's Board of Directors. "The



CODINA

Arsht Center cannot be shut down when they're building anything over here. We have to be involved in the plan."

Genting executives said they welcome the opportunity to work with Miami civic leaders as their 30-acre master plan moves forward for Resorts World Miami. In addition to the Herald's 13.9-acre site, Genting last week gained control over the mortgage on the Omni Center and plans to integrate that into the master plan. The newspaper has the option to remain in its current building rent-free for two years.

"Connectivity with the downtown Miami neighborhood is a top priority," Jessica Hoppe, general counsel for Resorts World, said in a statement. "As our planning process advances and we move closer to breaking ground, we will continue to engage the area's major stakeholders, including the Adrienne Arsht Center. Our goal is to ensure Resorts World Miami complements the surrounding neighborhood and activates the City's waterfront, providing an important link between downtown's major attractions."

Genting's plans include a 50-foot wide baywalk, designed to connect the entire length of Miami's waterfront from Marg-

aret Pace Park (north of the Herald site) south to the Miami River.

If development is integrated properly, the Town Square group hopes the Arsht Center can create the same type of revitalization in Miami that Lincoln Center did in New York City. The first look at Pelli's ideas is expected to come in the next couple months.

"There is a tremendous potential to build on what's already here," Diaz said. "We can't rest on our laurels. The city has to continue to expand and grow and become a real urban center."

But the way Codina sees it, the infrastructure in downtown Miami is already maxed out. If Genting or anyone else gets approval to build a destination resort in the area, Codina sees a potential for disaster.

"If you go to a Heat game now, it's damn near gridlock," Codina said. "If you take the number of visitors, jobs and vendors they're talking about, there is no way that you would be able to move in downtown. The infrastructure needs of that area have to be put in concurrently with any development."

While Codina has previously opposed efforts to legalize gambling in Florida, he says this group is not designed as a vehicle to campaign against Genting's plans for a destination resort casino. On a broader level, Codina believes politicians need to consider the impact casinos have in most markets.

"Casinos tend to be very selfish; they want you to spend money in the casino," Codina said. "Things don't necessarily flourish in the shadow of casinos. That's a fact when you look at Atlantic City or other cities where they exist."