

Cleanup for Heat 'going to look great' for opener

BY CATHERINE LACKNER

A joint push by city, county and state workers, along with a determined taskforce and employees at Miami's Downtown Development Authority, has completed 80% of projects planned near AmericanAirlines Arena, said Nitin Motwani, authority board member and taskforce leader.

"There's been a dramatic improvement," said Kim Stone, board member and executive vice president and general manager of AmericanAirlines Arena. "It's going to look great for opening night."

The taskforce, Miami Get it Done, was formed to spruce up the Biscayne Boulevard corridor in time for the opening of basketball season this month.

Some observers say the Miami Heat's newly hired basketball stars will create a new "Golden Age" in Miami.

"When this process started, there were a lot of naysayers," Mr. Motwani said at Friday's authority board meeting. "It's been an incredible collaboration. Our staff have been onsite all the time. It's had a huge impact."

Work included painting, landscaping, cleaning, replacing broken sidewalks, removing dead trees and replanting, improving lighting and replacing burnt-out fixtures, and generally making the area visitor-friendly, said Cesar M. Garcia-Pons, the authority's senior manager of planning, design, transportation and services. Approaches to the arena, such as the ramp from State Road 395, are also getting



Photo by Marlene Quaroni

"It's been an incredible collaboration," said taskforce head Nitin Motwani. facelifts.

Workers from the City of Miami, Miami-Dade County, the Florida Department of Transportation (which has jurisdiction over Biscayne Boulevard) the Miami Office of Community Image, the Neighborhood Enhancement Team, Downtown Enhancement Team and others have been "making sure it looks good by game time," Mr. Garcia-Pons said.

The police department "is trying to add two more officers in the area on game nights," said Alyce Robertson, authority executive director, to address "nagging issues" in the neighborhood.

In addition, the authority is seeking city approval to expand its no-panhandling ordinance to cover the streets just west of the arena and in the surrounding neighborhood.