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Businesses Expect Economic Boost From Heat's Hype

Reporting by David Sutta

As the Miami Heat open up their most anticipated season, the kitchen at Tre Italian Bistro downtown is heating up too.

"I think the Heat are going to light it on fire. They give downtown more of a life," said manager Nick Oliveira. Oliveira has already seen the Heat's all-star squad turn up business never seen before. It all started with pre-season games. "They are walking by us. They see our specials. They are starting to come in," Oliveira said.



It appears the Downtown renaissance that went bust when builders got overzealous with 22,000 condominiums has suddenly been re-sparked.

Neisen Kasdin, vice president of the Downtown Development Authority, or DDA, told CBS4 News that "the reality is the overbuilding, the real estate bust, has accelerated the revitalization of downtown." Kasdin says the influx of renters moved things along. He believes the community is now bustling.

"It's changed perception and therefore changed reality in this area," Kasdin said.

Add in the Miami Heat's all-star cast and the result, the DDA says, is the opportunity of a lifetime for the downtown economy.

"A brew pub is opening up across the street from the arena. There are new restaurants and bars opening up nearby," Kasdin said.

Downtown mainstays are smiling too. Brian Alonso's [family](#) started La Epoca on Flager Street in 1965. The Heat have pushed them to do something new.

"We are staying open to 7," Alonso told us. Not only are more people coming through the doors, but clientele is spending more. Top of the line \$40 Levi's have been replaced with \$250 [Diesel](#) jeans. Oddly enough, he's hoping other retailers take notice. Alonso told us, "Competition is great. If there is three stores like us, we would do even better."

Downtown certainly isn't what it was when the Heat started in 1988. Some could argue the economic impact of the team is finally being felt, albeit, 22 years later.

All the [businesses](#) CBS4's David Sutta spoke to say they expect restaurants and bars to do very well initially from the Heat's heat. However, you can expect retail to do well following that, perhaps adding in more businesses. It certainly means that the Heat's hoopla is more than just a bunch of hype.