

## South Florida, beyond South Beach

By Hannah Sampson • McClatchy Newspapers

MIAMI • Everyone knows South Beach, but that's the only place many people know.

A handful of South Florida cities and neighborhoods — including Bal Harbour, Coral Gables, Downtown Miami, Miami's Design District and Hollywood — are trying to change that.

"The challenge for those small places is to identify: How do they fit into the game?" said Bill Baker, author of the book "Destination Branding for Small Cities." "How do they fit into the game without banging heads with the biggest competitors?"

That means areas like Coral Gables and Downtown Miami are pitching themselves as a "fill-in-the-blank" alternative to South Beach. Urban. Vibrant. Important. Family-friendly. Historic. Classy.

Downtown Miami calls itself an up-and-coming urban alternative to South Beach. Farther north, Miami's Design District has no hotels but relies on tourists to cross the Julia Tuttle Causeway from the beach.

Bal Harbour will pick up day visitors in a trolley. But tourism officials also want to see people stay there, and to that end have created children's programs, free beach yoga and an arts and culture series.

Coral Gables touts its sophisticated aura, historic properties such as the Biltmore Hotel and Venetian Pool, and restaurants and shopping on Miracle Mile and the Village of Merrick Park.

In Broward County, Hollywood boasts of its beaches, a highly praised boardwalk, numerous mom-and-pop hotels and an invigorated downtown with an arts-themed park.

Even communities with no budget are making an effort. Key Biscayne, for example, has a 24-hour visitors center in the police station, and a presence on Twitter and Facebook to make its pitch: close to South Beach but a world apart. Miami Beach officials say their city probably would benefit from increased tourism traffic anywhere in the region.

"Regardless of who's doing the promotion... when the person gets here, more likely than not, they're going to come to Miami Beach," said Hilda Fernandez, the assistant city manager who oversees tourism and cultural development.

But the city doesn't want to take that for granted: They took marketing efforts to gay pride events in New York this summer and plan to expand efforts when daylight savings time ends. The pitch: there's so much to do, you need another hour.

"We want to make sure people understand there's more than beaches, more than nightclubs," Fernandez said.



Patrons visit the Mai Tardi outdoor restaurant during Art and Design Night in Miami's Design District, on August 14, 2010. (Al Diaz/Miami Herald/MCT)

