

## Downtown hotels get ads infusion

By CATHERINE LACKNER

Directors of Miami's Downtown Development Authority voted Friday to continue two previous digital advertising programs in cooperation with Expedia and the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, and to fund the effort at \$50,000.

In April 2017, in the wake of the Zika crisis, the authority first partnered with the bureau on a hotel program, contributing \$25,000 for digital promotions that ran from June 30 to Sept. 30. Then in January of this year, the downtown authority increased the funding to \$50,000, based on the success of the 2017 program. The campaigns have focused on conventions and meetings, as well as consumer leisure bookings.

This year, at the 12 participating hotels, room nights more than doubled, to 1.6 million, between January and June, said board member Nitin Motwani, who chairs the authority's Business Development and Mar-

keting Committee. He is also managing director of Miami Worldcenter Group LLC and of Encore Capital Management.

As in last year's campaign, the downtown authority, bureau and Expedia will partner with Cvent, a digital service that provides hoteliers with an integrated platform, enabling properties to increase group business. It's an information clearing house of sorts, with more than 245,000 hotels and venues represented.

Noting that the number of participating hotels had dropped from previous years – at one point there were 18 – board member Jerome Hollo asked if information on the programs' success was provided to all downtown hotels. He is also vice president of Florida East Coast Realty.

"We go to everybody," Mr. Motwani said. "The hotels' general managers have been receptive, and there has been great support from the private sector. In fairness, some hotels



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**Nitin Motwani**

may not have had the allocation in their budgets, and a lot traded ownership. But they understand the value."

"Sometimes it's hard to measure value, but that's not the case here," said Ken Russell, authority chair and Miami commissioner.

Authority directors agreed, voting to extend the program, with authority treasurer Alvin West abstaining; he is the visitors' bureau senior vice president and chief financial officer.