

## To put pedestrians ahead of drivers, downtown agency tries mind games

By CATHERINE LACKNER

To find ways to put pedestrians ahead of cars on First Street between Biscayne Boulevard and Southwest Second Avenue downtown, Miami's Downtown Development Authority hosted a public workshop this week to "get into the psyche of the Miami driver."

The April 4-6 event, in which Miami and Miami-Dade County also participated, was funded by the downtown authority and the Health Foundation of South Florida.

In February, the authority unveiled plans for that slice of First Street and hired Nelson Nygaard Consulting Associates and Caltran Engineering Group to develop an action plan.

At the heart of the effort is Complete Streets, a program backed by the National Association of City Transportation Officials and other groups that has a philosophy that puts the pedestrian first, an authority document said. "Our streets should work for everyone, of all ages and abilities, regardless of how they travel."

"By bringing everyone together under one roof, the DDA hopes to 'cut through the clutter' and walk



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**Ken Russell**

away with a clearly identified solution that the Miami-Dade County can then implement quickly," said an authority release explaining the event. "Potential upgrades include more defined crosswalks, dedicated bike lanes and aesthetic improvements to enhance curb appeal. This will also be used as a 'best practices' model to then be implemented for other streets throughout the urban core." Alice Bravo, director of the county's Department of Transportation and

Public Works, was expected to attend.

"What we want to do in this workshop is to get into the psyche of the Miami driver," Ken Russell, Miami commissioner and downtown authority chair, said Tuesday. "We don't want to just copy an idea from somewhere else, throw it on the ground, and then wonder why it doesn't work. We need a shift in perception."

Miami's reputation as a car-centric city is well-deserved, he said. "It's how everybody gets around."

Changing the east end of South First Street will serve as a pilot project to show how much safer and pedestrian-friendly a thoroughfare can be, he said. "We're talking about reducing lanes and reducing on-street parking, which sounds counterintuitive: people always want more lanes and more parking. But if we can show how much more enjoyable and livable a street like that can be, we can help make that shift away from the car mentality."

Workshop participants were to interview experts and consultants on basic concepts for improving street dynamics, Mr. Russell said, "and then we'll get into specifics, and make some recommendations."