

Shutters must come down downtown, but aid funds vanish

By CATHERINE LACKNER

Ready or not, all businesses within the Downtown Development Authority's boundaries must now remove opaque shutters or guards from doors and windows to comply with a city ordinance passed two years ago. The ordinance also applies to businesses within the Coconut Grove Business Improvement District.

"From the beginning, I have fought tooth and nail against this," said downtown authority board member Jose Goyanes, owner of Metro Beauty Center and Churchill's Barbershop. "The small guy doesn't have the money for this."

For several years, the authority funded a façade program that helped owners meet the costs to remove the opaque shutters and install impact glass. But now, there is only enough money in the fund to pay for removal of the shutters, said

Mr. Goyanes, who chairs the authority's Service Program Delivery Committee.

"The façade program doesn't cover everybody," for both removal and replacement, authority chair and Miami Commissioner Ken Russell noted.

Proponents say removing the shutters will beautify downtown — Mr. Goyanes conceded that they are graffiti magnets — and make it look less fortress-like after dark.

Some businesses might not have problems when they remove the shutters, Mr. Goyanes said, recalling that his former restaurant, La Loggia, experienced minimal negative impact when the shutters were removed.

"But if you own an electronics store, you're going to feel unsafe. The merchants can say to the city, 'OK, I'm removing my shutters; now are you going to send more police?' They're not. It's a delicate situation."



Photo by Maxine Usdan

Shutters like these, shown in 2014, have been outlawed in downtown Miami as well as in Coconut Grove.