

Suburbs prove active, fertile grounds for filming projects

By CATHERINE LACKNER

When people think of films and television shows shot here, images of Miami Beach, downtown Miami, Wynwood and Coconut Grove come to mind, as rendered in television's "Magic City" and "Burn Notice," and in films including "Pain and Gain" and "Marley and Me."

But there's robust activity outside those city limits, experts say. Florida City, in far southern Miami-Dade, recently joined the Miami-Dade County office of film and entertainment, which now issues film permits there.

In addition to indoor filming locales like a new basketball gym, Florida City is near the Homestead-Miami Speedway circa-1959 fruit stand and farm Robert is Here, Everglades Outpost, Everglades Alligator Farm

and Prime Outlets Florida City.

Just 45 minutes from downtown Miami via State Road 836 and the Florida Turnpike, Florida City also sits between Everglades National Park and Biscayne National Park, and is close to John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park.

Netflix's "Mesquite" is currently filming in Florida City and Homestead, the film office confirmed.

The county office also handles film permits for the villages of Biscayne Park, Palmetto Bay and Virginia Gardens; the towns of Cutler Bay, Medley and Miami Lakes; and the cities of Doral, El Portal, Hialeah, Hialeah Gardens, Miami Gardens, Miami Springs, North Miami Beach, South Miami, Sunny Isles Beach and Sweetwater.

From October 2012 to October 2013, the top five municipalities for which the film

office issued permits, and their numbers, were Hialeah (51), Doral (25), Palmetto Bay (18), Sunny Isles Beach (13) and Miami Springs (10).

Spanish-language television networks Venevisión and Telemundo film primarily in unincorporated Miami-Dade, Hialeah, Miami Springs, North Miami Beach and Doral, the film office said.

Elsewhere, "Palmetto Bay parks are very popular for commercials and still shoots, as well as some telenovelas," said Sandy Lighterman, Miami-Dade film commissioner. "They are one of our friendliest municipalities," she said of the village.

Most of "Every Which Way" was filmed in Palmetto Bay, she added, while "Four Weddings" was shot at the Thalatta Estate there. Productions in Palmetto Bay have included Univision's "Nuestra Bellaza

Latina," Telemundo's "Pasión Prohibida" and commercials for David's Bridals.

"There are many opportunities for municipalities to promote themselves as locales for film," Ms. Lighterman said. "We welcome more partnerships with them. We want to expand our grasp and showcase what's unique about the community."

The film office reaches out to cities and towns to expand its interlocal filming agreement and to promote filming. Ms. Lighterman said it's helpful if communities take stock of locations that offer promise because of their distinctiveness or, conversely, because they replicate other places in the US or abroad.

"By sharing with us the information they have on their unique locations," Ms. Lighterman said, "we can help promote their municipality and therefore Miami-Dade County as a premiere filming location."

First grocery in years set for move into Overtown

By CATHERINE LACKNER

A historic Miami neighborhood's first grocery store in recent memory will open its doors when the Top Value chain moves into 17,715 square feet of renovated space in the Overtown Shopping Center at 1490 NW Third Ave., probably early next year.

"We're very excited to be involved in this project," said Lisa Tenn of NAI Miami, who, with Josh Rodstein, negotiated the lease between the grocer and the Southeast Overtown Park West Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), which owns the center. "One of the most significant impacts is that we're going to finally have food service at affordable prices for residents. They will have easier access to those goods and products."

"It's part of trying to bring back Overtown's historic liveli-

hood," she added. "We hope this will be catalyst for the economic changes to continue." Some jobs will be created, too, she said.

Top Value responded to a bid for a big-box grocer, one of the CRA's goals for the center.

"We're happy to have a strong provider with a history of running grocery stores," Ms. Tenn said. The grocer will pay \$4 per square foot on a triple-net lease, with the rent to rise 10% over the 10-year lease term. The CRA's total economic benefit will be \$744,000 over 10 years, she said.

The CRA is in the process of retrofitting the space and bringing it up to code, with completion anticipated in late August. Top Value has 210 days after the property is delivered to complete its build-out and open for business.

For NAI Miami, negotiating the Overtown lease was a natu-



Photo by Maxine Usdan

Angel Villares measures a monument for Overtown Shopping Center, where Top Value market will go.

ral fit. "We really enjoy working with cities, trying to enhance the tenant fit. The CRA project was more of a passion," Ms. Tenn

said. The group has represented the City of Miami on 53,000 square feet of retail space in Miami Marlins Stadium parking

lots and the Miami Parking Authority on 17,500 square feet in the Oak Avenue Plaza parking garage, she added.

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