

Shop Palmetto Bay...

A Convenient – and ‘Green’ – Way To Support Our Local Community

By Mayor Eugene P. Flinn

May 22, 2008

“Think Globally Act Locally.” What have you done lately to get this phrase off your car bumper and into daily practice? Try supporting a local Palmetto Bay business? It’s pro-business, it’s pro-community – and it’s pro-green – all in one.

Thinking globally and acting locally is smart, too, especially these days, with gas racing to break \$4 per gallon and vehicle emissions wreaking havoc on our environment. Staying “local” fosters a strong local business climate, brings businesses back to the local community, and is pro-green because it reduces lengthy and wasteful errand-commute times.

Village of Palmetto Bay Council Member Paul Neidhart (District 2) started such an effort early. About five years ago, he began promoting a village charrette calling for a revitalization of the Franjo Triangle and US1 Island (FT&I) area. Here, neighborhood-friendly businesses will co-exist among attractive residences and commercial office space. He envisions a nicely landscaped, pedestrian-friendly area where people will live, work and shop. Village government has already invested heavily in this area with the opening of a great park in US1 in the FT&I area. Now it is time for additional restaurants, ice cream shops, and bike and skate shops to find the newly created markets – and it is time for additional customers to find these businesses.

Government can only create a plan, because ultimately, what determines how an area develops is how that community supports its area businesses. This is where

the concepts of good intentions and actual consumer practice go their separate ways. You see, there are people who complain about the demise of small businesses. Then there are people who do not acknowledge that a lack of support of local businesses leads to an eventual loss of local businesses. Strangely enough, these are often the same people.\

Next steps...

The dreams of the Franjo Triangle US1-area zoning district will soon be realized as the long-awaited introduction of a water and sewer infrastructure soon gets underway. This will allow small businesses – especially restaurants – to come to town. Once government completes the infrastructure, the next step depends on the free-market relationship between businesses that have properly invested in the area and the local customers who should support these businesses.

As you may know, the Village Council has promoted a long-range business plan for Palmetto Bay. During the 4th State of the Village Address it was announced that Council Member Shelley Stanczyk (District 3) will work with the Palmetto Bay Business Association and the Economic development Council (EDC) to promote a “Shop Palmetto Bay” campaign. In short, this is a village-wide initiative for creating a strong local economy based on locally owned and operated businesses. We encourage consumers to shop locally and, in the process, help independent businesses compete more effectively. We would also like to see these businesses band together to create a unified marketing plan to provide for the area needs and better promote their services throughout our community. One important component of the Shop Palmetto Bay program will be the creation of a commercial directory and web site so consumers can easily find the business and services they need.

Other Palmetto Bay initiatives are on the books, including Vision 20/20 that I announced in 2006 along side the leadership of Miami-Dade County

Commissioner Katy Sorenson (District 8) Cutler Bay Mayor Paul Vrooman, the EDC, and Chamber South. This effort continues to move forward with initiatives designed to reach and entice the right investment in our business areas – efforts that have included good zoning codes and code enforcement programs, web sites, promotional materials, and other outreach such as bus tours for interested investors.

Discover Palmetto Bay...

Do you seek out the “interesting” and “different” in life? Where do you eat? Where do you shop? Where do you meet your friends to socialize? Did you ever consider that if you are not patronizing a locally owned business, you may be missing an opportunity to discover that which is truly unique to Palmetto Bay? Why drive your consumer dollars across town? You owe it to the local economy to check out the merchandise and services provided right here in Palmetto Bay by merchants who lives right here in our town. You might just find in these establishments the little touches that make life fun and worthwhile.

Let's consider what our own US1 business corridor has to offer: There are local and regional banks such as Coconut Grove Bank and Sunstate Bank. There is a lovely antique district developing in the US1 Commercial Island. Here you can also find many of the colorful (and perhaps a few not-so colorful) village residents at such restaurants as Papa Rico's, French Bistro, Steve's Pizza, Walter's Coffee Shop and Lots of Lox, to name a few. There are locally owned bicycle stores, lawnmower equipment and repair shops, auto shops and tire service centers, and many convenience stores. Or take it all in at craft stores such as our own South-Dade landmark, Calico Corners.

While many of us might instinctively run right over to the Dadeland area big-box chain stores for sporting goods, consider a Palmetto Bay alternative, such as King's Bay Athletics. This local business serves many of our local sports leagues. So go in and say hi to Larry Barfield. I'm sure he would be thrilled to accommodate your next sports-equipment purchase. In fact, we have many such businesses throughout our commercial areas: Beauty parlors, boating suppliers, grocery stores, and the list goes on. I also have to mention one very popular restaurant, which is located in the shadow of Palmetto Bay on the north side of 136 St., but is equally supportive of our area businesses and organizations: Fleming's.

I cannot possibly mention all the local businesses, however, just look at what I have been able to highlight in such a short space! Let's not forget any of the locally owned businesses in our community. What more do we need? These businesses support our community! And in return, they depend on local support of the community to encourage them to stay, and also to encourage new business.

I cringe at complaints of the demise of our community when it is those of us who live here that are failing to support our own local businesses. Let's not open the door for the Wal-Marts of the world to come in. These mega-chains threaten our small communities and our businesses – and worse, they force us to travel miles to get a bike part, to pick up a hardware item, or to dine with our family. Without community support for local businesses, there may come a day when none remain!

We are ready...

For any businesses considering moving into Palmetto Bay, not only are we ready with a valued market, but we have small-business support services available through our zoning department and through our partnership with the EDC, as well

as marketing opportunities through the Palmetto Bay Business Association. We also have targeted advertising potential through *The Miami Herald* “Neighbor’s” editions, and Community Newspapers such as the *Palmetto Bay News*. Michael Miller, executive editor of the Community News, has asked for photos of your favorite local place. Let’s share our stories updating fellow residents on some of our local gems, and spare the drive – and the fuel – in the process.

Are you on the e-newsletter featuring Mayor Flinn’s Village Updates? This periodic e-news provides updates on activities, events and issues affecting our Village of Palmetto Bay. Visit Mayor Flinn’s website at <http://www.eugeneflinn.com> or e-mail him at EugeneFlinn@aol.com.

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