



**Week of 3/24/2011**

**Marlins Ballpark retail lineup needs to pack in off-season crowds**

By Yudislaidy Fernandez

As a search for restaurants and retailers to fill the Marlins stadium complex continues, some tenants won't make the roster because of contract restrictions.

Among business types not allowed in are ticket brokerage businesses other than affiliates of Major League Baseball, retailers that compete with stadium naming rights sponsors, and quick-service restaurants like fast-food joints that might compete with stadium concessions. Jeremy Larkin, president of NAI Miami, which is handling commercial leasing at the stadium's garages, said the firm is pursuing national and regional retailers, restaurant chains and entertainment venues that can draw a local crowd.

Because the Marlins baseball team is to play only 81 days out of the year in the 37,000-seat ballpark in Miami's Little Havana, tenants inked have to be able to attract a crowd the other 284 days.

The plan, Mr. Larkin said, is to draw "a good sports bar, casual dining opportunities and retailers to get a well-rounded (tenant) mix to show all the multiculturalism of Miami." The Miami Parking Authority, which is to manage and operate the four parking garages and six lots on behalf of the City of Miami, appointed NAI Miami to do the leasing job.

The commercial realty firm handles leasing for several of the authority's garage properties, including the Courthouse Center Garage and Allapattah Parking Plaza Garage.

Negotiations are underway with national and regional retailers and restaurants to fill the 53,395 square feet of retail space available within three of the four parking structures. Mr. Larkin said that asking rental rates start at \$25 per square foot, triple net. Overall, he said, the plan is to bring in as few as seven to eight tenants to no more than 15 to 18. Once deals are cooked, Mr. Larkin said, the goal is for the eateries and stores to have a soft opening prior to the baseball season that commences in April 2012.

"We are trying to get restaurants that have a broader appeal," he said. "Our restaurants will open 365 days. We want to support the community as well as the season ticketholders." In the stadium's plaza entrance on the west side, Prime Sites has been hired to find a signature restaurant for the ballpark that would operate all year around. The restaurant space is comprised of 7,300 square feet plus 1,200 square feet of patio and there is an option for a 3,800-square-foot roof garden, said Monette Klein O'Grady, partner along with her husband, Daniel O'Grady, in Prime Sites. "Our target audience has been an approachable restaurant that everyone can enjoy," she said. "It will likely have a sports theme, but at a casual and approachable price point."

The Marlins hired Prime Sites in February, she said, because the team needed a seasoned broker with expertise in the restaurant industry. Revenues from that site go to the stadium entity that the team controls, not to government. Prime Sites has hit homeruns before, bringing successful restaurant brands to Miami-Dade such as steakhouse Smith & Wollensky to South Beach, Hillstone, formerly known as Houston's, to Miracle Mile in Coral Gables and Il Gabbiano to downtown Miami.

The response from prospective tenants has been positive so far, Ms. O'Grady said, and a few have reached the negotiation table. The signature restaurant is expected to open by opening day in April 2012.

The city, which along with the Marlins team and Miami-Dade County is funding the \$515 million project, is covering the costs of building the four garages and six parking lots. The stadium's parking consists of 4,713 spaces in four garages and 826 spaces in six lots. Two garages are on the property's north side, along Northwest Seventh Street, and the other two on the south side.

Art Noriega, the parking authority's chief executive officer, said the city and the authority are drafting an agreement to formally authorize the parking agency to oversee the parking and retail operations. He said the agreement could be ready to present to the city commission for approval in April.