

Biscayne Bay

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Agencies crack down on electronics stores

BY SONYA M. PEREZ

Enforcement officers with the Miami-Dade Consumer Services Department completed random sweeps of electronic stores in downtown Miami with officials from the City of Miami Police Department, Code Enforcement and Fire Rescue on Tuesday, Mar. 18.

Together, the agencies cracked down on violations ranging from misleading advertisements to expired occupational licenses.

As a result of the sweeps, two electronic stores were forced to close due to expired occupational licenses. Other stores received warnings for failing to post a clear return policy or advertising a product that was out of stock. Those with warnings corrected their violations on the spot. The officers, who visited a total of six stores, also checked for fire and safety violations but none was found.

The joint operation between the Miami-Dade Consumer Services Department and the City of Miami began earlier this year as a result of numerous complaints against electronic store businesses, which included accusations of fraudulent activities. Officials from the county and the city will be conducting routine sweeps throughout the year.

"Our department often receives complaints about consumer electronic stores in downtown Miami," said Cathy Grimes Peel, Miami-Dade Consumer Services Department director. "By having joint operations with City of Miami officials, we are able to create a better shopping experience for consumers, many of whom are tourists and who later have difficulty addressing their grievances once they return to their home state or country."



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Community invited to discuss future of Grove Playhouse

BY ANNETTE HERRERA

Originally opened as a movie house in 1926, the historic Coconut Grove Playhouse long served as the western anchor of Main Highway, the Grove's popular central thoroughfare, until closing in May 2006. As part of ongoing planning to reopen the theater, the community is invited to participate in a public charrette, Mar. 28-30.

The three-day charrette, which is sponsored by the Coconut Grove Playhouse and organized by the University of Miami's Center for Urban and Community Design (CUCD), provides residents, businesses, historic preservationists, arts and culture representatives, as well as other interested community members, with an active way

to help re-envision the Coconut Grove Playhouse as a major, regional theater.

"This charrette is a dynamic way to engage key community and cultural stakeholders and the general public in shaping the future of one of the cornerstone institutions of our cultural community," said Michael Spring, director, Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs.

"The charrette is a significant component of an ongoing process that builds upon the work accomplished by the Coconut Grove Playhouse Board of Directors and the county in stabilizing the theater," said Shelly Spivack, chair of the Coconut Grove Playhouse Board of Directors. "It is expected that the charrette will produce a vision report for the site that documents the input from these public sessions and outlines realistic

options to return this great theater to Coconut Grove."

The charrette's goal is to provide a blueprint that will ensure that the revitalized state-of-the-art theater complex will serve as one of the nation's pre-eminent regional theaters — a place where the community's theater professionals can develop their craft at the highest levels and provide South Florida's residents and visitors, families and children with the finest entertainment and educational experiences throughout the year.

"Our charrette will serve as a catalyst for returning this iconic site to its glory days," noted Sonia Chao, CUCD director. "It's important the public be aware that any plans for the theater developed through this process will respect the history and ambiance of this corner of Coconut Grove and will complement the

needs of its residential and commercial neighbors.

"Due to the breadth of his academic and professional experience in preservation, the Center has invited Jorge Hernandez, former dean of the UM School of Architecture and a current faculty member, to lead the charrette design team," Chao added.

The Coconut Grove Playhouse charrette will take place at Ransom Everglades School, located at 3575 Main Hwy. The public is encouraged to visit the Design Team during its work sessions.

For additional information, contact the Center for Urban & Community Design at 305-284-3439 or via email at <cmososo@arc.miami.edu>. For more information about the Grove Playhouse, visit <www.cgplayhouse.com> and <www.miamidadearts.org>.