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Builder Bets Big On Hollywood

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HOLLYWOOD — Miami developer Enrique Wolf is so confident about the future of Hollywood beach that he's named his new company Hobe Development.

The name is a prediction.

Wolf says that within five years, Hollywood beach will be known as Hobe, just as Miami Beach's South Beach — with its upscale cafes, pricey restaurants and beautiful people — is called Sobe.

“We’re betting our money” on Hollywood, said Wolf, a Miami-based store builder.

The money comes in the form of a $1.5-million project that will transform parking lots at the Broadwalk ends of Tyler and Polk streets into up to 15 new restaurants and shops with an art deco feel.

Construction is expected to begin after this year's tourist season, with completion by next winter.

Wolf's plans mesh perfectly with city officials' visions for the beach. But some residents fear it will worsen an already congested parking situation.

The project is planned for two lots that are now used for private parking. Wolf has bought and leased other nearby land to create 41 new parking spaces.

But it still doesn't meet the city's parking requirement. So Wolf has agreed to pay $110,000 into a city fund to be used for future parking lots or garages.

Planning officials still need to work out where delivery trucks will unload in the congested area.

They acknowledge the parking shortage, but are more concerned with changing the beach's image.

Fed up with tacky shops and a stagnant tourism base, officials are planning a multimillion-dollar beach revitalization that could include widening the Broadwalk, adding landscaping and signs and building a small beachfront wall similar to Fort

Lauderdale's.

“This is one of the pieces that’s beginning to fit in,” Assistant Planning Director Jud Kerlancheek said.

Michael Ettus, a nearby condominium owner, doesn't think so.

“They’re taking away 24 spots,” he said. “There’s no room for businesses.”

“We’re trying to shoehorn in too many stores into too little of a lot,” agreed Richard Nathanson, another neighbor.

The new restaurants and shops will face the beach, with an outdoor cafe section where people can sip cappuchino as they overlook Broadwalk action.

“There will be light and bright colors, to set the tone for some playful architecture there in the future,” said Mark Saltz, a Hollywood architect who designed the buildings. “I tried to create a little bit of interest. I think we’ve created something that’s exciting.”

The plans have already captured the interest of tenants. Wolf said that without advertising, he's gotten commitments to fill 13 of the 15 store bays he will build.

“There is no other place like this in the whole of South Florida,” Wolf said. “I see Hollywood beach as something wonderful.”

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