

## Wynwood land plan is in the works

*Wynwood: A walkable arts and entertainment district is the goal*

By Oscar Pedro Musibay

Property comprising more than 15 acres across several blocks, including the production facility for the new "Charlie's Angels" television show, is being assembled in Wynwood by commercial broker Tony Cho and investor Moishe Mana. Cho, Metro 1 Properties CEO, represented Mana, an investor in Milk Studios and New York City's Meatpacking District, in the purchase of several significant parcels that sit on and around Northwest Fifth Avenue, the main corridor for the entertainment and arts district Cho and Mana have in mind. The rough boundaries for the assemblage are Northwest 22nd to 24th streets and Northwest Second to Sixth avenues. The blocks of property are at the heart of the city's Wynwood Café District, a special designation that loosens rules on liquor licenses and parking.

The southeastern portion of the assemblage is dominated by the Wynwood Free Trade Zone, 8.5 acres Mana bought out of bankruptcy for \$5 million in 2010. The production company for the rebooted "Charlie's Angels," which shot the pilot at the trade zone, signed a lease to use 160,000 square feet of the property as a studio and filming space for the show. The trade zone sits on Northwest Fifth Avenue from Northwest 22nd to 23rd streets.

The southwestern portion of the entertainment and cultural district includes thin, contiguous parcels that front Northwest Fifth Avenue at about Northwest 22nd Street (nearly 1 acre). Mana also owns nearly an entire block (about 2 acres) directly north of those parcels. He also paid \$2.1 million for the former RC Cola plant that sits on 2.72 acres at 24th Street and Northwest Sixth Avenue, forming the northern portion of the assemblage.

Cho and Mana negotiated contracts with SoHo and South Beach visionary Tony Goldman for a few smaller parcels he owns to connect the larger sites, make the assemblage contiguous and provide more frontage along Fifth Avenue, sources said. While Cho declined to comment about the parcels under contract, he said that Mana is executing on the vision, voiced in an August 2010 Business Journal story, of creating a walkable arts and entertainment neighborhood. Cho said they have achieved critical mass through their purchases to execute on their vision of creating bars, restaurants and arts-related uses in the neighborhood.

"We want to turn Wynwood into the cultural and art mecca of the U.S.," Cho said. "Moishe has been through this before. He was one of key visionaries and investors in entertainment and arts space Milk Studios in New York and the Meatpacking District."

The Meatpacking District was home to slaughterhouses in the early 1900s. By the 1980s, it was a haven for drug use. Within a decade, the city had partnered with private investors to transform the neighborhood, attracting high-end boutiques and restaurants. Now, it's a hotspot for tourists and locals.

During the many years the Wynwood Free Trade Zone was mired in litigation, the result of feuds between multiple owners, developers and investors gobbled up property as the seeds of art-related gentrification were sown. Investors included the Goldman family and New York City developer and broker David Lombardi, both of whom own dozens of properties in Wynwood and are seeking art and retail tenants of their own. Artists, galleries and restaurants soon followed, as did Midtown Miami, a mixed-use center of residences and retail stores directly to the east. With the help of these entrepreneurs, Art Basel arrived, spurring the growth of more art galleries, studios and restaurants.

### **EASIER PARKING, LIQUOR RULES**

Key to Mana and Cho's vision is leveraging the city's Wynwood Café District designation, which is part of the neighborhood. It loosens on-site parking rules and allows liquor licenses in businesses that are geographically closer than in other parts of the city. The potential size of the assemblage gives Mana and Cho more freedom within the city's Miami 21 zoning code. Any site that is at least 9 acres in size would be reviewed under the code's special area plan designation, which allows for more development flexibility.

**Former Miami Mayor Manny Diaz, who made Wynwood and Midtown Miami priorities during his tenure, said the vision was to connect Midtown, Wynwood and Overtown. Talking about the trade zone, Diaz, now a partner at Lydecker Diaz in Miami, said the potential for a connection to movie and television production was always there.**