

Burn Notice may film here for years — then city will raze its Grove home

BY JACQUELYN WEINER

With negotiations to extend Burn Notice's lease at the Coconut Grove Convention Center on the horizon, the hit TV show may be filming in Miami for years to come.

While multiple shows set in South Florida like CSI Miami and Dexter are shot mostly out of state, Burn Notice is filmed in Miami.

And it looks as though it intends to stay: Burn Notice has been picked up by USA Network for two additional seasons and work has begun on extending the lease at its City of Miami-owned main filming location at the Coconut Grove Convention Center.

Its current lease agreement expires Aug. 31.

"The Department of Public Facilities is preparing to negotiate with Burn Notice regarding a possible lease extension," Dan Newhoff, assistant director for the City of Miami Department of Public Facilities, wrote in an e-mail.

"Burn Notice is using approximately 107,000 sq ft of space at the Expo Center," he added. "In our negotiations, we would be looking to pass along all costs associated with the building to them."

Mr. Newhoff declined to comment further on the contract negotiations "since these are ongoing at the present time."

Under the city's current lease with the show, the \$20,000-per-month rent goes into a fund for Coconut Grove Waterfront redevelopment.

So far, the city has accrued \$180,000 earmarked for the waterfront plan, he wrote.

This is the first year under the lease agreement that the funds are allocated toward waterfront redevelopment, Larry Spring, city chief financial officer, wrote in an e-mail.

Burn Notice has leased portions of the convention center since April 2007, Mr. Newhoff wrote.

Aside from the income, supporters point to the publicity generated for the area with each broadcast.

It also pumps money into the local economy: Network executives have said they estimate more than \$50 million has been spent in Miami in conjunction with the show.

Yet as far as the rent money to the city goes under the current agreement, all of that is earmarked for Coconut Grove Waterfront redevelopment.

"All the money's in place and can only be used for the master plan," said Robert Weinreb, project manager with the City Manager's Office and chair of the Coconut Grove Waterfront Implementation Committee.

"That money has been sitting in an account."

When the show does stop using the facility, he said, the plan is still to raze the expo center — which has failed to be profitable — in accordance with the Coconut Grove Waterfront Master Plan.

Commissioned by the city for \$600,000, the master plan calls for the expo center's demolition, making way for a park and an amphitheater.

"If and when it all comes down, all of a sudden people are going to have a view of the waterfront," Mr. Weinreb said. "It should add to the quality of life."