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City won't give notice to TV icon

By JACQUELYN WEINER

All signs point to hit TV series Burn Notice filming locally another year, with no rent hikes at its government-owned set.

Miami commissioners are to vote today (7/22) on a one-year lease extension for the USA Network show's main shooting location — city-owned Coconut Grove Exposition Center. Officials have said they expect the extension will be OK'd.

Burn Notice has leased the center since 2007 and has filmed four seasons there. Its current lease ends Aug 31. If approved, the extension would stretch to Sept. 30, 2011.

The current \$20,000-per-month rent would go unchanged, according to the resolution, but Burn Notice would pay utility and maintenance costs, now city paid.

Rent money would go toward Coconut Grove waterfront-redevelopment plans as per the current agreement.

These plans include eventual demise of Burn Notice's set, according to the legislation: "This City Commission remains firmly committed to ultimately razing the Coconut Grove Exposition Center and creating parkland."

But for now, Greater Miami can continue reaping the economic and image-boosting benefits the show's presence brings.

Jeff Peel, Miami-Dade Office of Film and Entertainment director, said Burn Notice pumps \$20 million into the local economy yearly and is estimated to have generated "well over \$200 million" in advertising value for Miami.

"It's been a huge hit all the way around," he said.

And paired with newly approved \$242 million in transferable tax credits for filming from the state, Mr. Peel said a television series and pilot have shown strong interest in filming locally "between now and the end of the year."

"Burn Notice has proven to the Hollywood studios that you can make a great-looking television show in Miami on a budget that makes sense."