DOWNTOWN PRICES STEADY: Miami’s Downtown Development Authority has released its latest report, and it contains some new news for renters and potential buyers. Conducted by Integra Realty Resource, the report covers the period from January to June 2016, and says that prices “will continue to hold for new, under construction, and delivered inventory.” There are exceptions, of course. Blokell City Centre raised prices on average by 9% this quarter.

DORAL MOVING SLOWLY TOWARD ONE-WAY STREETS: City of Doral officials have yet to conduct a study approved by county commissioners in March regarding turning some of the city’s two-way roads into one-way streets. The city has received a grant from the county’s Metropolitan Planning Organization that stipulates that the city match 20% of the value of the study, said Doral City Manager Edward A. Rojas. The item is up for approval later this month, he said, after which the study must be completed by the city. The report will be presented to city commissioners for approval.

RENTS DROPPING: Rents in Miami were down by 0.4% in July, according to a report this week by Apartment List, an online company that publishes rent and home-related news updates. The median rent price for a two-bedroom apartment increased by $52.500 and rent for a one-bedroom apartment increased by $51.600, 1.1% lower than they were in July 2015, according to the report. Rents in coastal cities continue to be the nation’s most expensive, the report says, with New York City and San Francisco housing the highest rents in the nation.

SPOTLIGHT ON SMALL BUSINESS: The City of Coral Gables, in conjunction with the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce and the Business Improvement District of Coral Gables, has launched a campaign focused on encouraging small businesses to “shop local” at small businesses unique to the city. The first event tied in with last weekend’s 2016 Miami Salons Tel Aviv Festival, but Family Day on Aragon – a free block party – and the Starwood Sidewalk Sale will be hosted on Aug. 13 and Aug. 20.

WHEELS DONATION: City commissioners approved donating a Ford EXPO one-ton pickup truck from Attachable Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit. The 2004 vehicle, declared as surplus by the city’s chief procurement officer, will be used to start the community’s, a staff researcher says. Attachable Inc aims to help the changes of youth facing challenges within the juvenile justice system, local economy and educational system, the report says.

CONSULATE GENERAL OF ITALY IN MIAMI KEPT BUSY

By Camilla Cipriano

An unprecedented 500 Italians a month are registering as foreign residents within the Consulate General of Italy in Miami’s jurisdictional office. This number is the highest in the history of the Consulate General of Italy in Miami and is expected to increase to 600 by the end of the year.

The Consulate General of Italy in Miami is the only Consulate General in the United States that is dedicated to the promotion of Italian culture and language. It offers a wide range of services to Italian citizens, including the processing of passports, visas, and residence permits. The Consulate General of Italy in Miami is also responsible for promoting Italian culture and language in the United States and for representing the interests of the Italian community in the United States.

The Consulate General of Italy in Miami is located at 2050 S. Biscayne Blvd., Suite 2400, Miami, FL 33131. Its hours of operation are Monday to Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The phone number is 305-371-0735, and the fax number is 305-371-0736. The website of the Consulate General of Italy in Miami is: http://miamiconsulate.it/
Plans for Tri-Rail’s downtown link on track for inclusion

BY CATHARINE LACONDE

With most of the partner agreements in place, final details are being smoothed out for Tri-Rail commuter service to steam into downtown Miami before the end of next year.

“We are looking at insurance issues we’ll have to deal with in the future, and we got All Aboard Florida to give us a tour of its Miami station,” said Jack Stephens, executive director of the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority, Tri-Rail’s parent.

“It’s amazing. By this time next year they expect to be in service (to Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach) and told us we would not be far behind in completion of our part of the station,” he said.

That means Tri-Rail trains could be in service as early as the fall of 2017 “which is what I’m hoping for, assuming no glitches,” Mr. Stephens said.

The insurance underwriters were impressed by progress on the station, he added. “For two years, we have been saying, ‘This is coming.’ Now we can say, ‘This is what it looks like,’ and see if we can get good prices on the insurance we will need.”

The authority must obtain insurance for the 8.5-mile segment of track that will share with All Aboard Florida and Florida East Coast Railway, which will continue to ship freight on those tracks, he explained.

Authority staff is focusing on “critical path items” that need to be resolved, one of which is the agreement with the Southeast Overtown/Park West Community Redevelopment Agency. There are no real conflicts, Mr. Stephens said, “but it is the most complex of the agreements, and the CRA is working it out with the city.”

Alice Bravo

All of the money to support the project has been pledged “but money isn’t begin to move until we get all from All Aboard Florida” for what it has spent so far on the station, Mr. Stephens said. That bill will be split on a percentage basis among the partners, a process that could begin as early as next month, he said.

The project hit a bump when the Florida Department of Transportation pulled out over insurance concerns, but it still is supported by Miami’s Downtown Development Authority, Miami-Dade County, the Citizens Independent Transportation Trust, the City of Miami, the Bayfront Park Management Trust and both the Omni and Southeast Overtown/Park West community redevelopment agencies.

After the state transportation department backed out, the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority agreed to accept more of the financial burden, but none of the other parties were asked to contribute more money than was previously agreed.

On May 2, Alice Bravo, director of Miami-Dade’s Transportation and Public Works Department, advised all of the parties that agreements had to be finalized quickly or All Aboard Florida might withdraw its offer to have commuter service operate out of MiamiCentral, the downtown station to be shared by All Aboard Florida and Tri-Rail.

All Aboard Florida, a wholly owned subsidiary of Florida East Coast Industries, has advanced construction of the commuter rail platforms and is incurring significant costs since the station has gone vertical and columns have been erected,” Ms. Bravo’s letter said. “If we are not able to execute agreements by the aforementioned date, All Aboard Florida has advised us that they will be forced to cease construction on the commuter rail infrastructure.

“Without a definitive plan of action and inter-agency coordination to pursue new agreements, we could forfeit this unique opportunity to bring commuter rail to the central business district,” Ms. Bravo’s letter said. Fortunately, the crisis was averted and work never stopped on MiamiCentral.

Tri-Rail trains could be in service as early as the fall 2017, joining the Brightline Passenger rail service at MiamiCentral in the urban core.

Tri-Rail will be a main player at the new MiamiCentral, now under construction at the site of the old depot West of NW First Avenue.

The heart of downtown Miami will again welcome trains, along with retail, residential and office space.