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Berkowitz revises plans, gets thumbs up on Aventura center

By JEFFREY S. SOLOCHEK

Sidewalks and canopies appear to have saved Berkowitz Development Group's Aventura Commons project.

Faced with potential opposition by the county planning department, the Berkowitz group had its architects revise its site plan while maintaining the basic integrity of its proposed 250,000-square-foot shopping center.

Developer Jeffrey Berkowitz acknowledged he didn't have to alter the \$21 million project but

said he wanted to respond to the "legitimate concerns" raised by Planning Director Guillermo Olmedillo two weeks ago.

Mr. Olmedillo panned the original design, arguing the "sea of parking" between the stores and restaurants would make customers' car dependent. He approved the design changes that included landscaped walkways between the outparcels and the main center and a canopy in front of all the stores.

"There were areas where we

could not accommodate certain concerns and there were areas where we could. Wherever we could, we did," Mr. Berkowitz said. "These changes will significantly enhance the quality of the center."

They also will cost the development group \$500,000-\$750,000, he said.

Changes accepted, the county Developmental Impact Committee's executive council recommended approval of the five-acre addition to the site on the east

side of Biscayne Boulevard between Northeast 207th and 213th streets.

Metro commissioners are to consider the zoning changes Nov. 9. If the commission OKs the alteration, Mr. Berkowitz said, construction should commence in January.

Site plans for the retail endeavor show three restaurant outparcels and five large box stores on the location. The commission already has approved a 20-acre plan for the site, but Berkowitz wants to

expand the project.

Once built, county documents show the project should bring \$231,571 in annual tax revenues to the county and \$190,593 to the school district.

Adjacent to the shopping center, Trafalgar Associated of Aventura Ltd. has proposed to construct the Aventura Lakes subdivision, an 879-unit residential community on 57.65 acres.

The county has yet to act on the residential proposal.