

## High-profile citizens expanding Miami's national reach

BY MARILYN BOWDEN

Miami's reputation on the national front has been boosted by the efforts of a number of its more prominent citizens.

Both Danet Linares, vice president of Blanca Commercial Real Estate and president of Commercial Real Estate Women, and Jack Lowell, managing director of Flagler Real Estate Services, cited Miami Mayor **Manny Diaz**'s smart-growth and green initiatives, both at home and in Washington.

"Mayor Diaz is a textbook example of someone who has adopted an important issue at the local level and parlayed their accomplishments into national action," Ms. Linares said in an email.

"He has led the green initiative locally," Mr. Lowell said, "and as chair of the US Conference of Mayors he has been leading the charge nationwide."

"I consider Mayor Manny Diaz to be the architect of the 'New Miami,'" Ms. Linares said. "In my mind, the term 'New Miami' refers to smart development that plots a clear course for the city's long-term future."

Throughout his two terms, she said, Mayor Diaz has prioritized smart development, both through his Miami 21 land-use and zoning initiative and through his advocacy for conservation and sustainability initiatives.

Most recently, Ms. Linares said, Mayor Diaz launched Energy Smart Miami, a groundbreaking program centered on a \$200 million investment in smart-grid technology and renewable energy.

Mayor Diaz's efforts in the area of sustainability have earned him national recognition, including being named one of North America's leading environmentally-conscious mayors by "Vanity Fair" magazine.

This year, Mayor Diaz and the US Conference of Mayors organization were instrumental in the passage of a \$3 billion

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Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant that will be funded as part of the federal stimulus package.

Mr. Lowell also cited **Donna Shalala**, University of Miami president and secretary of Health & Human Services during the Clinton Administration, who, he said, is raising the university's national reputation.

"In academic circles, she is really cutting a wide swath," he said. "She has done some fantastic things by bringing in great deans in a number of divisions."

Among President Shalala's appointments are Barbara E. Kahn, dean of the School of Business Administration; Isaac Prilleltensky, dean of the School of Education; Patricia D. White, dean of the School of Law, and Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D., dean of the Leonard M. Miller School of Medicine.

"Secondly," Mr. Lowell said, "her strategic vision has been to boost the whole medical research part of the university. She pretty much brought in several research units wholesale out of Duke University."

Another step in President Shalala's positioning of UM as a major medical research facility, he said, is the planned 1.4-million-square-foot Life Sciences Park, a research facility to be built near the School of Medicine.

"Eventually," Mr. Lowell said, "the medical portion of the university will represent 80% of its revenues."

Attorney **Ira Leesfield**, managing partner of Leesfield & Partners, has earned a national reputation both as a trial lawyer and as a humanitarian, said Andrew C. Hall, founder and CEO of Hall, Lamb & Hall.



UM President Donna Shalala has raised the school's national profile.



Photos by Marlene Quaroni

**Attorney Ira Leesfield's reputation as a trial lawyer and humanitarian is known here and nationwide.**

"Ira and I began our friendship when in school together more than 40 years ago," he said. "Since that time, I watched him build his own firm and distinguish himself as one of the finest personal injury attorneys in the nation.

"In every respect he has always demonstrated the ideals of the profession: integrity, relentless dedication, and unending empathy for his clients and causes."

Mr. Leesfield, he said, is often called upon to handle cases

for out-of-state attorneys. Recent wins include a \$40.5 million verdict for a victim who was attacked with a hammer in the parking garage of Key West resort, \$32 million in a class-action suit against United Presidential Life Insurance Co. and \$24 million in a medical malpractice claim.

A decade ago, Mr. Leesfield set up the Leesfield Family Foundation, a not-for-profit foundation designed to support organizations that work to enrich and enhance

the lives of the underprivileged throughout South Florida and the world. To date it's provided funding to close to 50 local and national health, education and social welfare organizations.

"The ultimate test of a great lawyer is whether or not in the moment of need you would reach out and have that person represent you," Mr. Hall said. "Ira is among that small group of lawyers who is on everyone's list should they ever have a need for a lawyer of his kind."