

Retail Bus Tour to Feature 30 Miami-Dade Shopping Centers

By Eric Kalis
Daily Business Review
March 6, 2013



Gary Broidis and Larry Brooks
Photo by Melanie Bell

The national expansion envisioned three years ago by Gary Broidis and Larry Brooks when they launched the Retail Bus Tour Inc. in South Florida is happening earlier than expected.

As the Boca Raton-based retail specialists prepare for next Thursday's annual tour of Miami-Dade County shopping centers, Broidis and Brooks have inked deals for 2013 bus tours in cities like Atlanta, Detroit and Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. They say tours in Boston and San Diego will be scheduled for later this year, and negotiations are ongoing for events in Chicago, New Jersey and Philadelphia.

"A lot of great things are happening," Broidis said during a Monday telephone interview.

"We are always fine-tuning our operation," he said. "In a short time frame it has become a much anticipated industry event."

During the bus tours, more than 150 retailers, brokers and property owners pack buses and tour most of the large shopping centers in a particular market. Broidis and Brooks have hired regional directors to oversee tours in markets outside South Florida, and they recently added an operations manager to work with the regional directors.

"We have been able to take the model that was tested in Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach" counties, Brooks said, "and say, 'These are the things that really work for us,' and use the model to help expand into other markets."

Without disclosing company financials, Broidis and Brooks said the bus tours have proven to be profitable. But they are focusing on reinvesting revenue into the company to offer riders a stronger product.

"When we first started, our tour book was made out of paper and spiral-bound together," Brooks said. "Now it is produced like a magazine."

For the Miami-Dade bus tour, riders will start the day at the Shops at Midtown Miami, which is also where the day will end with a cocktail reception at Bar Louie. In between, the buses are scheduled to visit about 30 shopping centers throughout the county. About five tenant representatives will have an opportunity to address the group during lunch at CocoWalk.

"Instead of just having one conversation between a broker and a tenant rep, we will have an undivided group where the tenant reps get in front of everybody" and detail their client's expansion plans and space requirements, according to Brooks.

Broidis and Brooks expect an enthusiastic group for the Miami-Dade bus tour with the retail sector starting to benefit from South Florida's housing market resurgence.

"In connection with rising home values, the consumers out there are getting a little more confident and spending disposable income," Broidis said. "The retail shop owners have been able to get back to a point where they reinvest into their stores and are able to do some renovations. In some instances, they are able to move forward with expansion plans."

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