

DRAFT

EXCERPT

**CITY OF CORAL GABLES
ARTS ADVISORY PANEL MEETING
Wednesday, November 10, 2021 9:00 a.m.**

**Historical Resources & Cultural Arts Department
Hybrid Meeting & Virtual via Zoom**

MEMBERS	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N
	20	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
Nelson de León	-	V	P	E	-	P	P	-	P	P	P	P
Eugenia Incer*									P	P	E	P
Adler Guerrier	-	V	P	P	-	P	P	-	P	P	P	P
Maggie Hernandez* - V. Chair		V	P	P	-	P	P	-	P	P	P	P
Dr. Jacek Kolasiński - Chair	-	A	P	P	-	P	E	-	P	P	P	E
Emily MacDonald-Korth	-	V	V	P	-	V	P	-	E	E	E	E
Manny Mato	-	V	V	E	-	V	P	-	E	P	P	P
Marijean Miyar	-	V	P	V	-	V	P	-	P	P	P	E
Juan Roselione-Valadez	-	A	P	P	-	V	P	-	P	P	P	E

LEGEND: A = Absent; P = Present; V = Virtual; E = Excused; * = New Member; ^= Resigned Member;
- = No Meeting + = Special Meeting

STAFF:

Warren Adams, Historical Resources and Cultural Arts Director
Catherine Cathers, Arts and Culture Specialist

MEETING RECORD / MINUTES PREPARATION: Catherine Cathers, Arts & Culture Specialist,
Historical Resources & Cultural Arts Department

The Arts Advisory Panel meeting was called to order by Ms. Hernandez at 9:30 a.m.

NEW BUSINESS:

b. MOBILITY HUB – CITY PROJECT

Christian Fortuno, Shamim Ahmadzadegar, Carmen Olazabal, and Sergio Bakas joined the meeting via Zoom as representatives of the consultant, Gensler, for the City’s Mobility Hub construction project at 245 Andalusia Ave. The City’s Project Manager, Sherry Shu Zhang, joined

the meeting in person. The Gensler team addressed the Panel and presented a PowerPoint presentation to discuss the project overall and opportunities currently proposed for public art activation.

Mr. Ahmadzadegar provided a brief history of the project, showing the site plan in context and relationship to Andalusia, Miracle Mile, the Miracle Theatre, and Cheesecake Factory. He stated that the project vision as set by the City is for a structure that can handle the coming of more electric vehicles and take the City in a direction pivoting from a typical parking garage to a mobility hub that accommodates typical cars with ample space for electric vehicles. He continued, saying spaces and places for micro-mobility, especially at the ground level, include bicycle storage and charging stations for electric bikes, etc. Mr. Ahmadzadegar said the Mobility Hub will be an activator for downtown development in the City bringing people into the structure because of its uniqueness and amenities, the ground floor will be activated with retail and community type spaces, and the rooftop will be activated with a unique elevated public park on top of the structure. He noted the two paseos connecting to Miracle Mile as additional opportunities for activation. The rooftop canopy was reviewed and remarked as providing shade for the park, generating electricity for the project, and taking sustainability into account.

An aerial rendering showcased concepts of the project, including the celebration of movement itself. Mr. Ahmadzadegar pointed out the incisions created in the façade that allow for moments and views including vehicles and people within the building, and through the glassed-in staircase. The façade, he said, is a veil with a light-filled, perforated material allowing light to come deep into the structure itself. Moments of biophilia incorporate nature into the project, he continued, and the general tonality is meant to blend in with the overall landscape of downtown. Mr. Ahmadzadegar mentioned the dynamic nature of how the hub changes from day to night with an inner glow.

Moving to each area of the project, Mr. Ahmadzadegar began with the north façade exposed ramps allowing for views of cars as they go up and down. The wall directly behind the ramps, he said, is a placeholder for potential art.

The east view from Ponce de Leon was shown next with a cutout niche on the upper right of the building for a sculpture that could be commissioned. On the left, the glazed in staircase was visible and noted as creating passive security.

A close-up of the biophilia on the west façade was shown, with greater detail of the perforated system allowing natural light and ventilation into the space. Mr. Ahmadzadegar mentioned the softening qualities of the biophilia and heightened experience of health and wellness, noting the structure was future-proofed to allow flexible use of the space by creating flat slabs and floor-to-floor heights of 12 feet.

The ground floor was reviewed, mentioning an 18-foot height to accommodate mostly retail and community space. Mr. Ahmadzadegar stated that the main entrance visually aligns with an existing paseo to encourage foot traffic to Miracle Mile. He added that the team is suggesting paving the alley and further highlighting the connection to Miracle Mile, which may be a place to display art. The interior staircase, it was mentioned, is a connecting staircase running through the project as a void allowing light to pour through the interior of the space and promoting people to use it. The ground floor, open area, width was stated as approximately 45-feet wide to accommodate groups of people and an area for the display of sculpture.

The final area featured was the rooftop amenity and public park. Mr. Ahmadzadegar reviewed the various elements including an event space, play area, terrace, fitness zone, and a wall that is another area proposed for art.

Mr. Ahmadzadegar showed a typical floor level for context and further discussion of available areas for art within the structure.

Ms. Cathers confirmed the locations proposed by Gensler for public art including the ground level main entry sculpture site, façade niche at the upper level for sculpture, vehicle ramp niche, rooftop wall, possible walls in the wellness zones, walls along the ground-level rear access and alleyway, and integrated art displays within the paseos to Miracle Mile that would require partnerships with the building owners. She read staff comments that were submitted to Gensler and the City team including recommending a different treatment of the vehicle ramp wall, possibly not using it for art but painting it a color or applying a textural element that complements the site; noting infrastructure needs of the façade niche for sculpture including drainage, lighting, and accessibility for installation and maintenance; and designing the wall on the rooftop for multifunctional use in daytime and nighttime, rather than applying a (static) piece. Ms. Cathers continued, stating that staff recommends exploring artwork that responds to the building as a whole, as a mobility hub, and encouraged work that incorporates data from use of the space in alignment with the forward-thinking technology initiatives that the City has been pursuing. Staff, she said, has asked for further consideration of the relationship and context of the building to the existing structures around it.

Mr. Ahmadzadegar reported that the presentation went before the Commission the day before and was unanimously approved to move forward.

Mr. Guerrier asked about the budget for commissioning artwork. Ms. Cathers responded that 1.5% of the construction budget is required as the Art in Public Places fee.

Mr. Guerrier, responding to the presentation, noted that on a rendering it is easy to see a sculpture; but an art element from two blocks away would not be noticeable by most people. He suggested an (art) plan that responds to the people who may encounter it first – people entering the structure,

stepping out of their vehicles, etc., versus someone from two blocks away who may see the building, but not necessarily see the inserts inside the building. He also commented that the first-floor sculpture location seemed to be plopped in the lobby area, and encouraged the use of surfaces, noting the 18-foot ceiling height. Mr. Guerrier agreed that the rooftop, if this is a place where people may sit for periods of time, would be a perfect opportunity for wall treatments and projections in the evening.

Mr. de León agreed with Mr. Guerrier's comments about art and placement. He expressed his feeling that it was a presentation about a building and should have been focused on the Art Panel. The building has a lot going on, he said, and the presentation should target the places where the architects think art could be installed. He continued, stating (the architects) take in sight lines, pedestrian sightlines, movement through the property, and should be able to target very specifically on plan and elevation where art pieces go. Mr. de León said he did not see any of that in the presentation except for tangentially and minimally pointing out some background areas. This is going to have a hefty budget, he continued, and said hopefully the City will have notable pieces, and not as an afterthought. Gensler, he said, needs to take the lead for now and say, "Big impact spot here, secondary here, and tertiary here" (locations for art). Representatives for Gensler responded that they thought it was clear where pieces of art could go but could provide more clarification. Mr. de León said he thought the talk of where art could go was background to the overall presentation.

Staff asked Gensler to review the art locations proposed for the benefit of the Panel. Mr. Ahmadzadegar pointed out the area for sculpture in the central zone on the ground floor plan directly in visual sight of the project entrance, the background wall where the elevator and stairway are, the outside alley walls and paseo areas, the large wall on the rooftop forming a backdrop to the open space, the wall area behind the vehicle ramp, and the niche cutout on the façade for a sculpture installation.

Ms. Incer asked if there would be a communication plan for the public advising them of the artwork in the space or if viewing the artworks would happen organically from using the space. Ms. Olazabal responded that it is a City building and any PR about the art would have to come from the City. She shared that it's a great idea that the building be a vessel for art and should celebrate it. Ms. Incer asked if there is a masterplan involved, that it includes public outreach. Ms. Olazabal stated that this is a preliminary plan, contemplating where opportunities for art exist and what the vision for art is. She stated her understanding that art is contextual, and that the team is bringing it to the Panel early to understand what the canvas is and what can accommodate the art in the best way.

Ms. Hernandez stated the preference to have a Call to Artists to get important artists on board to present ideas for the building. She referenced the Miami-Dade County Art in Public Places process

where specific areas of a project are highlighted with specific information about where art could go, dimensions, utility access, etc. She gave the example of the rooftop location and whether it could be mosaic, tiles, or if films are going to be projected, whether it would be a different kind of art, maybe an installation that films could be projected on. Ms. Hernandez emphasized the importance of providing specific instructions of where artworks could go.

Mr. Ahmadzadegar said these are great points and as plans are developed, they can be highlighted to provide specificity for the artists.

Ms. Hernandez asked when the building is scheduled for completion. Mr. Ahmadzadegar responded that construction is scheduled to begin next September and be completed in 1 ½ years. Ms. Hernandez said there is an artist selection process, it goes to the Cultural Development Board, and on to the Commission. She reiterated the pressing need to define the spaces and specifics.

Ms. Incer commented that in terms of (material) accessibility, there are challenges to the verticality of (some of) the spaces and the project needs to think of how equipment and materials can be brought in to install those artworks. She asked if there is access for large flatbed trucks, boom lifts, forklifts, etc. She asked if the building is prepared to receive this sort of equipment to make the installations of monumental artworks successful. Mr. Ahmadzadegar responded that there will be construction for the rooftop that has to be built in with the contractor and thereafter, a service elevator going to the roof that will be useful for many things, including this. He agreed that the bigger items should be done during construction.

Mr. Mato asked about the zoning of the property to the east, by the cutaway niche area. He asked about the risk of a developer putting a high building next to the structure's wall. Mr. Ahmadzadegar responded that it is his understanding that the maximum zoning height is 4 stories. Ms. Hernandez asked for the (lowest) height of the cutout area, and the response was 4 stories.

Mr. Guerrier asked to see the typical floor plan and where the cutout area for the sculpture is located. The area was shown on the upper righthand, northeast corner. Mr. Guerrier pointed out that the nook on the floor levels is empty and if it is always empty, maybe it could be used for an art intervention. Mr. Ahmadzadegar said the space occurs in other zones where parking is not possible and on the ground level it helps accommodate the turning radius for trucks. Mr. Guerrier suggested that art could be on almost every floor and there could be a specific installation done with technology within those areas allocated for something more complex. He went on to say that a Call to Artists is done to get great ideas and by giving a lot of possibilities, from something technology driven to something that is marble, etc.

Ms. Shu Zhang, with the City, clarified that the project was brought before the Panel for informational purposes to keep the Panel in the loop. She said it is not in the stage to present an

art plan for consideration yet; eventually, she said, a plan will be formed taking into account the Panel's feedback from this meeting. From there, she said, the team can go into what kind of art could be incorporated. Ms. Cathers stated the importance of getting information from the panel as early as possible so there is feedback to the design team that can be incorporated. She said a Call for Artists takes time and having the time for the artists to prepare proposals takes time. If the wait is too long, she continued, the City has to retrofit the art (into the space), which is not ideal (and increases the cost). Ms. Cathers said right now, the project is on track, and it would be helpful for the Panel to make formal recommendations so it can be presented back to the team. Ms. Shu Zhang agreed that feedback from the Panel is beneficial and mentioned working with the design team on the procurement of the artwork. Ms. Cathers stated that the Panel acts as the recommending and review panel for (the City's public) artworks; they make a recommendation to the Cultural Development Board, who makes a recommendation to the City Commission.

Ms. Hernandez asked the team to come back with more details of where art could be placed and specific information about the locations. She said artwork could be on the levels as well as the places already mentioned. She added that it's important for artists to know what the use of the space is, as it will affect how the artwork is conceived around it. Ms. Hernandez agreed that it is not too soon to put together the Call to Artists. It's not just our process, she said, it's the construction of the artwork, the design, fabrication, implementation, and installation; there are a lot of steps involved and important that we start doing this as soon as possible.

Mr. Bakas summarized next steps and said the team would put together a set of documents that is somewhat similar to what has been seen but allows for getting it into the hands of possible artists. He said the documents would tell the story of the building, why it is unique, the philosophy of the building, its uses of mobility, etc. so artists have the information without making a presentation, but by leafing through the drawings. He suggested including the locations discussed and maybe adding a few more, leaving it open to allow ideas from the artists. The next step would be picking the artists and projects.

Mr. Guerrier asked for less rendering and more drawing, stating that artists can read a drawing, a floor plan, a section, and will want to know if something is 18-feet wide rather guessing.

Mr. Bakas mentioned that the scope of work for Gensler is to the property line, but encouraged thinking of the areas beyond to the alley and paseo as areas that can be place holders for art. There is a lot of foot traffic there, he said, and wondered how best to fold these areas into the project as it works together as a district.

The Panel thanked the Gensler Team, who thanked the Panel and left the meeting.

To move the project along, Ms. Cathers asked the Panel if they had a recommendation specifically regarding placing artwork at the site that could be forwarded to the Cultural Development Board.

Mr. Guerrier stated that the Mobility Hub would look poor with no art in it and would recommend that there is artwork on site, at least on the ground floor and ideally on the roof.

Mr. Mato expressed concern about the niche for sculpture, noting that the cost of doing something impactful could absorb the whole budget and risk eventually being obscured by development next door. Even at 4 stories, he said, one must be far away to see it and seems like an afterthought. Mr. Mato also pointed out that it isn't at the corner and is set in (making installation and maintenance access even more difficult). Mr. de León agreed and noted that the rendered angle is one of the only views from where one would see the artwork. He said it will be very difficult to have art elevated on the building unless it's an enormous piece, and that there is no visibility from Miracle Mile. Mr. de León stated that the tree canopy on Miracle Mile is so thick that neither a pedestrian nor vehicle is going to see much of the building except for quick vignettes through the trees. The elevated portion, he said, is going to be a huge struggle to get artwork that people can appreciate from different vantage points in the City.

Ms. Incer agreed, adding that it doesn't look accessible from outside and only people using the building are going to be enjoying the artwork. For a public building to have that vision, you want to see more promotion of it. Everything in terms of the art, she said, seems like an afterthought.

Ms. Hernandez said the only places seem to be on the ground level and rooftop.

Mr. de León shared his thought that the corners on the levels are inaccessible, where cars turn, and someone would have physically walk out of their way to experience the art; it is not in a natural path of travel, he said, the corners are dead and not a place one will gravitate.

Other garage examples were mentioned, including on Lincoln Road and in the Design District.

Overall, the Panel agreed and recommended that art belongs in the building with the Art in Public Places fees allocated to public art at the building.

Staff thanked the Panel for their comments and their attention to the detail regarding context, sightlines, and access for installation and maintenance, saying their comments will be shared with the Cultural Development Board.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine J. Cathers
Arts & Culture Specialist