



City of Coral Gables
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
August 26, 2025

ITEM TITLE:

A Resolution approving the concept and commissioning of a work of public art by Michele Oka Doner in conjunction with The Aurelian development project at 912 E. Ponce de Leon Blvd., in fulfillment of the Art in Public Places requirement for public art in private development (unanimously recommended by the Arts Advisory Panel approval/denial vote: 5 to 0; unanimously recommended by the Cultural Development Board approval/denial vote: 7 to 0).

BRIEF HISTORY:

Empira Group (the “Developer”) is constructing a development project, at 912 E. Ponce de Leon Blvd. (the “Project”). The Developer has chosen the option of petitioning for a waiver of the Art in Public Places Fee requirement by commissioning and installing artwork as specified in the Zoning Code, Article 9, Section 9-103 B.

The Developer selected Artist Michele Oka Doner from the city’s pre-qualified artist list to proceed with a concept design proposal for the artwork. The Artist responded with a proposal of new work titled *Aurelia*.

Background of Artist:

Michele Oka Doner is an internationally renowned artist and author whose work spans five decades. Her artwork is fueled by a lifelong study and appreciation of the natural world, from which she derives her formal vocabulary. Her artistic production encompasses sculpture, public art, prints, drawings, functional objects, artist books, costume and set design, video and other media. She is well known for creating over 40 public and private permanent art installations, including “A Walk On The Beach,” the mile and a quarter long bronze and terrazzo concourse at Miami International Airport, seen by 40,000,000 travelers a year. She has authored or been the subject of eight books. Oka Doner has received grants from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the New York State Council of the Arts, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation and others; and many awards, including those given by the United Nations Society of Writers and Artists, Pratt Institute “Legends” and an Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Michigan, where she received her undergraduate and MFA degrees.

Oka Doner’s work can be found in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, Chicago Art Institute, Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum (Smithsonian), the Louvre – Paris, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, as well as in museum collections at the University of Michigan, Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and Oxford, among numerous others nationally and internationally.

Description of artwork referenced from the concept proposal:

The *Aurelia* sculpture is inspired by the lush surrounding landscape characteristic of, and defining, the City of Coral Gables, a place proud of their trees and recognized nationally as a Tree

City. Everywhere one looks there are banyans, Royal Poincianas, and our Florida State Tree, the Sabal Palm. It is this tree that lends its form to a figurative sculpture that is in dialogue with its surroundings. *Aurelia* is inspired by the radiant energies of the sabal's fronds, a texture that suggests the feeling of expanding outward from an inner core.

Aurelia will be cast in bronze and patinated to a sheen, giving the metal a golden glow. An application of gold wax or a small amount of gilding at the tips of the bronze fronds will add to the sculpture's radiant sensibility, providing a long-lasting finish, easy to maintain.

Aurelia, the integration of human form and nature, will be timeless and embody our aspiration to be uplifted and moved forward by creative expression.

The concept proposal is attached as Exhibit A to the proposed Resolution.

The cost of the proposed artwork is estimated at \$300,000 (three hundred thousand dollars). Funds toward the artwork should not replace expenses toward any lighting or infrastructure requirements for the project. The artwork and all related expenses for the art will be the responsibility of the Developer. Any difference in cost is to be issued as a check for deposit into the Art Acquisition Fund.

Furthermore, Developer is required to provide for the perpetual maintenance of the artwork in accordance with the City of Coral Gables Art in Public Places: Funding, Goals, and Implementation Guidelines which will be memorialized in a covenant to run with the land.

The Arts Advisory Panel and the Cultural Development Board voted unanimously to recommend the proposed artwork by artist Michele Oka Doner at their respective meetings on August 6, 2025 and August 19, 2025.

ADVISORY BOARD/COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION(S):

Date.	Board/Committee	Comments
Augst 6, 2025	Arts Advisory Panel	Recommended: approval/denial vote: 5 to 0
August 19, 2025	Cultural Development Board	Recommended: approval/denial vote: 7 to 0

ATTACHMENT(S):

- 1. Draft Resolution**
- 2. Exhibit A**

FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

No.	Amount	Account No.	Source of Funds
1.	\$300,000		Private Developer, AiPP fee
Total:	\$300,000		

Fiscal Impact:

Required Art in Public Places fees that would otherwise be deposited into the city's art fund will be used for this project.

BUSINES IMPACT:

n/a