

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item G-1**  
**February 11, 2025**  
**Police and Fire Headquarters**  
**2151 Salzedo Street, Coral Gables, FL**

**City Commission**

**Mayor Vince Lago**  
**Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson**  
**Commissioner Melissa Castro**  
**Commissioner Ariel Fernandez**  
**Commissioner Kirk Menendez**

**City Staff**

**City Attorney, Cristina Suárez**  
**City Manager, Alberto Parjus**  
**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**  
**Arts and Cultural Coordinator, Catherine Cathers**

**Public Speaker(s)**

**Maria Cruz**  
**Karelia Carbonell**

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Agenda Item G-1 [10:28 a.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission approving the concept and donation of a work of public art by Jaume Plensa in conjunction with the 4241 Aurora Ave. development project, in fulfillment of the Art in Public Places requirement for public art in private development and applying funds set aside in escrow in conjunction with the 4225 Ponce de Leon Blvd. development project (unanimously recommended by the Arts Advisory Panel approval/denial vote: 7 to 0; unanimously recommended by the Cultural Development Board approval/denial vote: 6 to 0).

Mayor Lago: Okay. Perfect. We'll move onto time certain item G-1, 10:30 a.m.

City Attorney Suarez: G-1 is a Resolution of the City Commission approving the concept and donation of a work of public art by Jaume Plensa in conjunction with the 4241 Aurora Ave. development project, in fulfillment of the Art in Public Places requirement for public art in private

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development and applying funds set aside in escrow in conjunction with the 4225 Ponce de Leon Blvd. development project.

Arts and Cultural Coordinator: Good morning, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners, Catherine Cathers, Arts and Cultural Coordinator for the city. So, this morning we have the developers of 4241 Aurora Street. They are coming before the Commission with a petition waiver request of the Art in Public Places fee requirement. I'd like to introduce Eduardo Othelia and Devin Vickers representing the project and then Carlos Duran, who will be speaking via Zoom will be representing the artist and they'll discuss details about the proposal. I'll come back up and fill in the city side of it.

Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Ms. Vickers: Good morning. Devin Vickers with Greenberg Traurig, offices located at 333 S.E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. If IT could pull up our presentation, please. I am very excited to be here before you this morning to present this very exciting project and artwork that has taken a few years in the making. I'm joined here this morning, as Catherine mentioned, by our property owner and developer for 4241 Aurora LLC, Eduardo Othelia, who has been the art aficionado of our team and who is really stepped up and has been there from the beginning to the art selection, to this point. I also have the distinct pleasure of being joined by the artist representative and director of the Cedar Gallery, Carlos Duran, who is joining us via Zoom all the way from Barcelona, Spain. So, before I turn it over to our artist representative and Eduardo to speak and give you details about the artwork itself, I want to kind of give you some background and remind you of the project, as well as address some of the commitments we made to this Commission back in 2023 when you approved the 4241 Project itself. So, taking it back to 2023, you may remember that this Commission approved a true mixed-use development located at 4241 Aurora Street, that contained ground floor commercial, upper-level residential, as well as upper-level office space. And you also may remember as part of that project, we committed to providing a nearly 5,000 square foot park on the southern end of the property, where our clients committed to conveying that city park upon completion to the city. So, its actually within that park space that we are providing the signature art piece by world renowned artist Jaume Plensa, that is before you today. So, the proposed art piece and its actual location is a culmination of all the input and feedback we've received from this Commission as to the park design itself, but also various neighborhood meetings that we've had where neighborhood stakeholders were able to give us input about the park design itself. Most recent meeting being as of August 2024, as well as the Art Advisory Panel and the Cultural Development Board as to the artwork and location itself, where we obtained unanimous approval from both of those boards. And before I turn it over to the artist, I think its also worth mentioning that this art piece is a culmination and really a marriage of two different projects. So, what we were able to do was utilize the funds that the valuation of this artwork from the 4241 project, as

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well as utilize the funds from a neighboring office development to the east that was also approved by this Commission a few years ago, 4225 Ponce de Leon Boulevard; and so, in order to bring an art piece of this magnitude and quite frankly, this price tag to the City of Coral Gables and on this site, we were able to aggregate both of those monetary values to bring this art piece to your site, and that is how we were able to bring this artwork that is valued at over \$700,000 to Merrick Park. And so, without further ado, we can get the artist representative on the line to give you a little bit more information about the artwork itself.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Ms. Vickers: Carlos, if you are on the line.

Mr. Duran: How are you.

Ms. Vickers: Yes, we can hear you.

Mr. Duran: Okay. Good. Hello to everyone.

Mayor Lago: How are you.

Mr. Duran: Very good. Thank you very much. How can I help. What shall I say. I didn't hear the question, because there was a computer talking at the same time.

Ms. Vickers: No problem. Carlos, if you could give a little bit of background on Jaume Plensa, the artist himself, as well as more detail about the artwork, the inspiration of the artwork, the materials of the artwork and how this came to be on this site.

Mr. Duran: The artist Jaume Plensa is a Spanish Barcelona born artist and I'm sure many of you may know him, if not by name, for sure by images, because this topography has been recognized all over the world and he has been doing public pieces all over with quite significant acceptance. I would say not acceptance, but craziness of the city. You might remember, for example, the one in – there is one in Manhattan right now that's very important, you have one in the...museum as well, one of those big heads of a young woman or you might even remember perhaps the one in Madrid in Plaza Colon which is basically creating the skyline of Madrid. Its an iconic piece. Jaume has been working since the 80s, developing language that makes him, I might say one of the most important sculptors in the world nowadays. He went from a very, let's say, brutal system since the beginning of his career, going through a process of conceptualizing and ending in what its right now, let's say culmination probably of the topography...which has these images that you have also seen probably in the...and in many other venues. Jaume took the image of a young lady in a turning point from a child to a woman, in this moment where...like dominating the face but its already not a child, its already a woman, and his works are inviting, with the eyes closed they are invited to the audience to take time to look inside yourself, take time to – its like yelling or screaming for

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peace and...They are very, very extremely artwork in the sense of being completely, how you say, with the beauty, you cannot be – my English is not good for that, but it's a culture that, of course talks to the high level creators and...but talks directly to the average people and this is something that he extremely loved because of that connection. So, in the beginning when we started talking about this possible commission, Jaume has quite a lot of requests and he has exciting work to do. He was approached by Mr. Othelia and the rest of the people; they were explaining the connection with Florida...but it was also the sensitivity of what did they want to do with the sculpture. Why was the sculpture meant to be and what was the purpose of it, and this engaged Jaume to develop the project, and he has been working with a new face...it's a completely new face because it has been made for that project. He has been working for, let's say, more than a year probably and I must say its going to be...so...but its going to be a reference, like one of those in the city that you will remember, because of the presence of the piece. The presence of the piece both daylight and both night light because its real. Being white and being well illuminated its like a real presence that invites introspection, reflection, a little bit in this crazy moment of...and information we live, its like the opposite. Its inviting you to maybe paint and to look for art inside.

Ms. Vickers: Thank you, Carlos. Just to wrap up. We are extremely excited to bring this art piece to Merrick Park and I think just to wrap up what Carlos was saying about the introspection of this piece. As a layman person myself who will be the first one to say, I know nothing about art, but I was immediately struck by this piece, because its of a young woman, as Carlos said, with her eyes closed and in deep contemplation, and so that is juxsupposed with kind of the hustle and bustle of Merrick Park and its going to be surrounded by the lush landscaping that we are providing in the park. So, we think that this is the best location to bring this world-renowned artist and this world-renowned sculpture to Merrick Park. I think one thing that Carlos may have mentioned was that also the sculpture materials is of a bronzed material with a marble base and one of the questions that came up at the Art Advisory Board or Art Advisory Panel was to make sure that the sculpture materials itself lended to Coral Gables and South Florida climate, which Carlos ensured that it would and was specifically picked for this location, taking into consideration the climate of South Florida. So, if you all have any questions about the artwork itself or location, we'd be happy to answer them. If not, I will turn it over to Catherine. Thank you so much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Arts and Cultural Coordinator: Thank you Devin and Carlos. So just going over. I think that Devin actually covered a lot of this, but just for the city side. We could continue the PowerPoint, but it doesn't really matter, its mostly all text, things that you've heard before. So, this is complying with Section 9-103 of the Zoning Code, which allows for the petition of a waiver by commissioning donating and installing artwork with an appraised value equal to or greater than the amount of the Art in Public Places fee. So right now, we anticipate that that will be about the same amount with

the two projects combined. As part of the developer's agreement with the city, the greenspace, as Devin mentioned, along San Lorenzo Avenue is being deeded to the city as a public park, where the sculpture is proposed and will be donated to the city, so it will become part of our collection. The Arts Advisory Panel and Cultural Development Board voted unanimously to recommend the artwork at their meetings of January 15<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup>, and the cost, as we already mentioned, is estimated to be over \$700,000. Artwork and all related expenses for the installation will be the responsibility of the developer. The developer is also required to provide additional fees towards professional maintenance, so in accordance with that it will be ten percent and that will be meeting that qualification. So, all these items will be memorialized in a letter of understanding that will be attached to the permit for the 4241 Aurora Street project.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I just wanted to add. The developer here was very accommodating to the neighborhood. We had a meeting, I think it was August, it was hot, that's what I remember, with the neighbors, not only with the design of the park, the large mature trees that are going to be moved into that park on the site to enhance that park, but this piece of artwork was in the conceptual drawing and it was immensely well-received by the residents in that area. So, I congratulate you for the efforts you've made to choose a piece that everybody loves. It does cause that introspection. It causes you to pause, slow down at the hectic pace of life that we have today, and I think it's a welcome addition to the area. So, thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Anyone else.

Commissioner Fernandez: I just had one question. The location of the art is it going to be recessed into the landscaping or is it going to be – I think part of the discussion so that children can touch it and make it something that is interactive.

Arts and Cultural Coordinator: Yes, one of the discussions that came up at the Arts Panel was also confirmed through the Cultural Board. They did ask that there be paving around the whole piece so it could be seen from a different perspective. And I agreed that that's a really important aspect of the artwork. So, while we wouldn't necessarily encourage people to touch it a lot. Its going to be white painted bronze, but if they do, you know its not being set so they can't do that. Right now, its on a marble base, basically.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, I guess, the reason I bring it up is, I just want to make sure that if it is a marble slab that its on, that there are no sharp corners or edges, because you don't want a child falling and hitting that sharp edge, if it can just be softened so that it isn't a hazard. That's it.

Mayor Lago: Anything else. I'll entertain a motion.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Move it.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, do you have any public comment.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor. First speaker is Mrs. Maria Cruz.

Mrs. Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. I'm trying to understand. At my age its not easy to do that, but I'm a little confused. It says that we are approving the concept and donation, but most of the monies coming from the Art in Public Places or how much is the developer contributing, just the installation and the upkeep or how much.

Mayor Lago: Catherine, would you like to provide some background.

Arts and Cultural Coordinator: So, the code requires the Art in Public Places fee to either be paid into the fund they can request a waiver, and that waiver is through the purchase and installation of the artwork. So that's what they are spending the Art in Public Places fee on.

City Attorney Suarez: So, if I could clarify. Its being paid by the developer's required contribution. It's listed as a donation because its not going to be something that stays on their property. Its going to be on city property.

Mrs. Cruz: Okay. But the money was required, so this is not extra money being put in. This is using the money that is required to put in that account.

City Attorney Suarez: Correct.

Mrs. Cruz: Okay. Because you know when you say donation, it sounds like I'm doing something, well if I was required to put it in, all I'm doing now is deciding what I want to use that money for. Correct.

City Attorney Suarez: It will be installed on city property as opposed to their private property. So that is why it's a donation to the city, because now the city will own that property.

Mrs. Cruz: Okay. The city property was an agreement already in the construction, right. I mean the park was supposed to be deeded anyway, correct.

City Attorney Suarez: Correct. This is not a donation about the park. It's a donation about the artwork.

Mrs. Cruz: Okay. But once again, the money is a requirement, so what they are choosing now is they are going to use that money or. That's what I understand, I want to make sure.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

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City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, on Zoom, I have Karelia Carbonell who has requested to speak.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Carbonell. You want to come back, if there is anyone else.

City Clerk Urquia: There's no one else, sir.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Carbonell, can you hear us. Can you hear us.

City Clerk Urquia: We are asking her to unmute.

Ms. Carbonell: Hello.

Mayor Lago: Yes, we can hear you.

Ms. Carbonell: Yes. Sorry about that. Actually, I wanted to speak on the item before, which was on the Coral Gables Museum, but I guess that's already past, I'm going to just say that, and again, am I able to respond to that item before, because that's the item I wanted to speak on.

Mayor Lago: Madam City Attorney.

City Attorney Suarez: Its up to you, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: I have issues, as long as you keep it brief since we already heard that item.

Ms. Carbonell: Okay. Thank you. I just wanted to say, I am encouraged by the Coral Gables Museum's shift, basically from what they were offering which was so much art and a lot of Latin American art, and so, really shifting to the original mission, which is a historical museum and I do ask, and this is something that should never have happened, but I ask on behalf of the preservation community, they do need to bring George Merrick's exhibit back in its entirety, having an exhibit or some posters by the bathroom hallway, really shouldn't satisfy the museum as-a-whole and as its mission. Anyway, that's what I wanted to comment, and I am hopefully looking forward to a more robust future. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: So, we have a motion and a second.

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

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Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Mayor Lago: I'm going to vote yes and before we move onto the next item, I want to commend Constellation for their efforts. Again, when we first met about these two projects, I asked you to join both amounts of money for the artwork to get a work that is more robust in nature and its less maintenance for the city and for everyone involved. Also, getting the park deeded over to the city was an item that I requested from you, and we were able to get it done in a Commission meeting and I commend you for that. We are getting a worldclass piece of art here. I was in Madrid last year and I got to witness Julia, which is the actual work that's in Plaza Colon. You are talking about a worldclass artist who is in every major art fair, every major museum, and if you want to see a live sculpture in your face, you don't have to travel to Madrid, you can go to the Pam and you can see a beautiful sculpture, which is a magnificent sculpture in size and in quality at the Pam right there on the ocean. So, I want to commend the team for putting something together for deeding it to the city, which I think is incredibly important as we continue to grow our parks inventory, and we continue to elevate the quality of art that we have here in the city. So, this is something that again, everyone sees the beauty in it, and the quality, so I commend you for that. Thank you.