

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-17
May 20, 2025
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

**Mayor Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Commissioner Melissa Castro
Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Commissioner Richard D. Lara**

City Staff

**City Attorney, Cristina Suárez
City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Economic Development Director, Belkys Perez**

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item H-17

Presentation regarding Giralda Plaza Umbrella Project

Mayor Lago: One item left, H-17.

Economic Development Director Perez: No pressure to get out of here really fast.

[Laughter]

Economic Development Director Perez: Belkys Perez with Economic Development Department. I'm here because on March 11th there was a resolution of the Commission directing the City Manager to develop a plan for the temporary installation of Umbrella Sky on Giralda Plaza to include the funding for such installation in the next budget year. So, at high level look at the evolution of Giralda Plaza, we all know this is what it used to look like, there was no ability for people to have their businesses to have any outdoor dining, the sidewalks were very narrow. As a result, we had Giralda Under the Stars from the Corporate BID and restaurants there literally took their tables and chairs and put it on the street. We have gone through a streetscape project. We've

*City Commission Meeting
May 20, 2025*

[Date]

1

had Umbrella Sky, we've had some art installations as well with this pedestrian plaza, and we just wrapped up Giralda Live. We had 19,000 people that went to it. It was from January to May, and it was very well attended, and we had a great revenue stream that came from people parking in the garage as well. The pros and cons – outdoor dining, obviously is a pro, it's a pedestrian-friendly environment. If you are in the middle of Giralda Plaza, you have less visibility, which is normal, and it's a destination street, you know where you are going to go and that's why you are there. For this one, we just wanted to talk a little bit about Umbrella Sky. The media reach that we had was just incredible. The pedestrian counts before Umbrellas was 6,500 on the street daily. We went up to 20,000 during the project, and we took in \$165,000 of revenue within the time period that Umbrella Sky was on, which was July through September, and restaurants in the plaza talked about an experience of like 40 to 50 percent revenue increase during that time; and if you were not on Giralda Plaza, those businesses experienced a ten percent increase. So, the timeline that we see here is that we went in January to Giralda, we met with the merchants there, we talked about price proposals for Giralda Plaza. In June, we came back with that for our businesses – let me see, individuals and financial contributions. We presented the pricing proposal because there were merchants on the street that wanted to know how much it would be if they would take on that cost, so we went to them. Because it was a low turnout at that meeting, when we presented it, we emailed it to all of the merchants on Giralda Plaza. We also did our due diligence, and we emailed the corporate BID in August to find out if they would be interested in also footing this bill with us and we have not gotten any confirmation from them at all. So, on March 11th this happened, there was a directive and then, April 7th, I did take it to the Cultural Development Board, there was unanimous approval for it. I did not take it to the Art Advisory Board because it is not an art project, and they will not move forward with it; they will deny it. I do want to say that every year I do put this as a new need in the budget, it's always been there for my department. So where we stand right now is that, I did some estimates; the trusses alone would be about \$160,000, depending on when we do this, there is an emergency takedown, because if we do this during hurricane season, which is the low season, the slow season for our merchants, we are talking about a takedown period that we would have to factor in, so that's around \$40,000. I've gotten a recent quote for Umbrellas which is \$50,000, the total being \$245,000, based on the umbrellas being \$25,000. So, what we have right now and what I need guidance on is, this is coded as a six-month installation, six months of umbrellas, six months of something else, three months of umbrellas, maybe three months of something else. What do we think about winter, what do we think about summer, there is extra cost with hurricane season, and what real impact is it going to have. We've done this before, so we really don't know if it's going to have the same impact as in previous years, so that's a big deal also. And that's it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I do have a quick question, and I realize the time it is. If you have the other picture up, you notice the trees were tiny, they were tiny, so you could see the umbrellas. If you did it where the palm trees are so you could actually see the umbrellas, it may bring down the cost

*City Commission Meeting
May 20, 2025*

or you may want to consider some other options where you can see the umbrellas more, but the area where the trees you won't be able to see them at all.

Economic Development Director Perez: You would have to go higher. So, the trusses would have to go higher in order to be able to see and have enough umbrellas in place, yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Maybe over the intersection, I don't know, if we are even allowed to do that, but to where it actually erects more, because if it's above the trees and no one can see it really, but where the palm trees are, I can see that that would have a big impact there.

Commissioner Castro: I would move this to have the administration consider this as one of our capital projects and see how we can fund it and maybe you can come back to us when we are budgeting and see if this is something that we are able to fund or not.

Vice Mayor Anderson: And go back to the businesses again, maybe they want to chip in some dollars.

Commissioner Castro: I can entertain a second.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll second it.

Mayor Lago: So, Commissioners, do you have anything else you'd like to say about this before we vote.

Commissioner Fernandez: If I may just a couple seconds. I know that I have heard from businesses, and I have heard of an interest in some of those businesses in chipping in to maybe see if this works out, because they have seen the benefit, a financial benefit. I think the numbers speak for themselves; 297 media interactions during that period of time is impressive. I don't think we've had anything else in the city that has had even nearly as much. So, I would like to see more buy-in from the businesses and maybe if there is a partnership that might be something that will attract them.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner. Again, I'm always looking for ideas, concepts, ways to bring people, that's the reason why we did the cultural grants program, all the art that we have, a lot of things that are going on. I just don't know enough if this is going to be a hit like it was the first time. Belkys, remind me, when we did this, were we the first or second in South Florida to do this.

Economic Development Director Perez: We're the second – in South Florida we were the first.

Mayor Lago: We're the first. So, I just don't know if we're going to have that like grab because everybody's done it already. I know Doral did it. I know that a bunch of other cities have done it. I just don't know if we're going to get that same splash as we did, and we're talking about \$250,000. I'll be honest with you; the streamers weren't that much of a big hit. Everything has

*City Commission Meeting
May 20, 2025*

fallen flat after that. So, if you're going to spend \$250,000 again, I'm all for it. I want to get like what Commissioner Fernandez said, I want to get some impressions, I want to get something like where the businesses benefit. So, I'm all about spending the money to get people there. Let me give you an example, we do a \$20,000 investment in the "Dia de los Muertos," – 6-7,000 people; we do a \$20,000 "Dia Barranquilla," – 5,000 people; we do a \$20,000 investment in "Feria de Sevilla," – there were 10,000 people. Yes, it didn't work out perfectly. We have to fix things. You're telling me, that's a \$20,000 investment, you are getting that amount of people to come to your city that are going to go spend money at Books and Books, that are going to go have a drink, that are going to go to Hillstones, that are going to go to Mica, they are going to go to all these other places to have dinner, to spend time, to watch a movie, to Merrick Park to shop, to walk down Miracle Mile. I know we are not going to get; that's a onetime event and all these people come because they are supporting their culture, our culture. For example, like what our friends do at John Martins, how many people come to the city. They come, they have a great time, then they leave, and they go eat somewhere. I'm all for it. I'm willing to do it but is there anything else out there that's interesting that you think that we could do that's cool, that could be a splash. I don't know. I just feel – I'll go along with it to go along with it, but then I'm concerned that if we go along with it and we spend this \$250,000 we could have invested in something, like for example, the drone show that I thought could be really cool as the Vice Mayor has been harping about for years now and I love the fact that she's harping about it, because it's really cool, because I look at drone shows more and more and I think I'm starting to realize why they are so interesting. I just put it out there for you guys to think about it, because maybe it could be something that we could do.

Economic Development Director Perez: Yes – and it has to also check off that box of having some shade, which is something that our merchants are really say its important, but we can come back with some options. We've got also FIFA in the city, which I think would be a really nice potential opportunity to really cash in on that and just get all those fans to Coral Gables as well.

Mayor Lago: Collaborate with them.

Commissioner Fernandez: Soccer balls.

Mayor Lago: Soccer balls.

Commissioner Fernandez: We could do a soccer ball sky leading up to the World Cup.

Economic Development Director Perez: We'll see.

Commissioner Fernandez: And actually, to your point, one of the numbers that caught my attention that she had on her slide was, pedestrian count was 6,500 before and 22,000 during, so you more than tripled the pedestrian count during that show, but you are absolutely right, that was that time, now that people have seen it in other places, is it going to attract the same number of people, but

*City Commission Meeting
May 20, 2025*

its still even if it doubles, we are talking about the numbers that you are seeing for “Dia de Muertos” and all this stuff.

Mayor Lago: When I went to see that, I went to see it the first day it happened, I mean people were just going bananas over umbrellas that were hanging in the sky, it wasn’t anything like crazy, you know. There was no sophistication. It was literally simple fish string, and I was like, this is crazy, how many people were there. Everybody was taking pictures, and it was Coral Gables, Coral Gables, Coral Gables. It was amazing. It was a marketing tool.

Commissioner Fernandez: And it was just the same way – the last day you couldn’t even get a good picture because you had people all over you.

Commissioner Lara: I’ve seen it in Washington, D.C. and people are walking and they couldn’t really care.

Mayor Lago: Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I don’t know if any other cities have done it more than once, but we certainly can take a look at some options and maybe they can come up with an innovative idea for something, whether its soccer balls. I know FIFA is looking to put its name out there a lot of places right now, and now is the time to talk to them, maybe they have some ideas.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Belkys, thank you.

Economic Development Director Perez: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor, before we adjourn anything for the good of the order.

Commissioner Castro: There’s a motion and a second.

Mayor Lago: There’s a motion and a second.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor.

City Attorney Suarez: Can we get a little bit of clarification on the motion. It’s just directing staff to come back with funding options, is that.

Commissioner Castro: Exactly.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Ideas.

Mayor Lago: How about other ideas.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Other ideas – something.

*City Commission Meeting
May 20, 2025*

Mayor Lago: Yes, something.

City Attorney Suarez: Other ideas and funding options.

Commissioner Castro: We can definitely explore that as well. I love the idea of the soccer balls, but I also think it's important that we need to find funding.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Soccer flags.

Commissioner Castro: See how that – because if we come up with all these ideas, but if there is no funding that's the issue.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, we have a motion and a second.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Commissioner Lara: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)