

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-1
October 22, 2024
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 Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Manager, Amos Rojas, Jr.

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Arts and Cultural Coordinator, Catherine Cathers

Public Speaker(s)

Joe Gimenez

Agenda Item G-1[2:45 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission approving the concept and commissioning of a work of public art by Lynda Benglis in conjunction with the Regency Parc development project at 2601 Salzedo St., 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: 6 to 0).

Mayor Lago: And the final item before we go to lunch, G-1.

City Attorney Suarez: G-1 is a Resolution of the City Commission approving the concept and commissioning of a work of public art by Lynda Benglis in conjunction with the Regency Parc development project at 2601 Salzedo St., in fulfillment of the Art in Public Places requirement for public art in private development.

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Arts and Cultural Coordinator: Good afternoon, Catherine Cathers, Arts and Culture Coordinator for the city. We do have the developer here to do the presentation, if we can have the IT people run it.

Mayor Lago: Maybe we'll take G-2 before we go to lunch, we might as well.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

City Attorney Suarez: He's doing G-1. He's saying after he'll do G-2 and then we'll do lunch.

Commissioner Fernandez: Right. We'll do G-1 first.

Commissioner Menendez: G-1 first.

Mayor Lago: Listen to me. Listen to me. I know a lot of people are running the meeting but listen to me.

Commissioner Fernandez: You confused them. You said you were calling G-2.

Mayor Lago: Just listen to me. I said after we will call G-2.

Commissioner Fernandez: You never said the word after.

Mayor Lago: Yes, we did. Its okay. How you doing sir?

Mr. Gimenez: I'm doing well, Mr. Mayor. Thank you. Mr. Mayor, members of the Commission, Joe Gimenez, 2020 Salzedo Street on behalf of the Recency Parc, joined by Luis Castellon, Vice President of Codina Partners for development and Lee Casey, Vice President of Marketing. Thank you very much for taking the time today. This is what I hope to be the last hearing in an overly complicated process as it's been, and I would once again like to thank you and the administration for the concession that you made. I hope that once I finish the presentation you will have found it worthwhile, and we definitely believe that this will be an incredible improvement and an incredible contribution to the Art in Public Places program in the city. As Mr. Codina has been here before to tell you, we do consider this a unique building, not only in Coral Gables, but in Miami-Dade County, and with that came his desire to have a unique art piece and ultimately our request for the escrowed funds to be able to give this the attention that it deserves. We obviously had to take our time. We've put the money in escrow, as you know, and then we formed an advisory committee with Craig Robins and Manny Kadre, as well as Mr. Codina, to find the right advisor to really study the city, study the current inventory that you have our site, our building and come up with something. They've come up with Jeffrey Deitch, who both boards that have, I will admit this is not exactly my area, but I have been told when I flashed this, the audience that I have flashed it to, who did know, said oh, okay, you got somebody. So, I will profess my ignorance, but I've been

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educated since. And they came up with a sculpture by Lynda Benglis, a long-time artist, incredibly well regarded. Unfortunately, at the time, she actually wasn't certified here in the city, but we have since done it, so the boards have approved her, and it was approved very quickly, but this is not somewhere where she had worked before, so we're glad to bring her talents to the City of Coral Gables. The piece that we've chosen named is Power Tower. As you can see by the size it is and I'll give you in another slide, instead of giving you the numbers, just so we understand it in context. This is a significant sculpture that will be at street level. So, as you are all aware, the two buildings that Mr. Codina has built sort of bookend the CBD; the Sophia and our corporate headquarters go to the very last street in the CBD to the north, this building goes to the very last street in the CBD to the south, right along Salzedo. So, whereas the Sophia, we did the artwork right onto the building and the panels that were sculptured right in and the gate that surround Bachour and very much incorporated it into the building. This is designed more to give a more established pedestrian experience. Its something that you walk right by and will be – it sits on a slight pedestal because of the architecture, which we did have to change, but it is, as you can see, even if you were at level with, it is an imposing sculpture. We redesigned the entire entryway so we can see what it used to look like when we first came in for all the approvals to Board of Architects and everybody else, and this is what we've come to know. Again, originally, it had sort of like a Park Avenue feel with that awning and that was part of the pedestrian experience. But when we started giving – and that's why the pedestal is slightly necessary because of the grade of the building where it was. So, as you can see, its right there next to the sidewalk. It is not something that is up in the building. It's not something sort of away from interaction. Another rendering of it to show you the lighting, to show you how it would look like at night, the lighting in this building. As far as I know, the lighting in this building was the first ever actually be approved by the Board of Architects, because the City Architect wanted a detailed presentation on it, and they didn't really know, they were like, why are we hearing this. He wants us to give it to you and we will and Armando, Luis and I went down there; the lighting in this building is specifically designed to be able to be warmed and cooled depending, because of the railings of light that go behind this. So, some complaints that other people made about other buildings and they just being a tower of light, that's something that went into our design and that's something that was approved by the Board of Architects, so we felt that a night rendering of how this would look would be important as well.

Commissioner Castro: Does the sculpture on its own have its own lighting or were you just using the surrounding lighting.

Mr. Gimenez: No, it has its own lighting in the pedestal. Yes, and that was actually one of the comments from one of the boards, because we go to Cultural Affairs, Art Advisory, so we've been through, this is our third presentation of this. It's been unanimous so far. We hope to continue that tradition. I won't read this to you, but it was our goal to take our place in the community seriously by our unique position of having the bookends. We are very proud of the artwork on 2020 Salzedo

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and we are very proud to present this as well, and just the lines of demarcation of the CBD, we're proud stewards of that. We hope that you agree. The scheduled installation – I know Luis, I think this date gets earlier every day because Armando has always said, he wants to live there, so now, we are still saying December 2025. We obviously have, and just to be specific, so we all understand and people at home understand, this would be right on Salzedo, on the west side of the building and that map is oriented properly to the north. So right there in the center of Salzedo, in between Valencia and Almeria. What we are required to put up, we have \$1.2 million in escrow. We have our project total here is an estimate of \$1,225,333,000. I know that there is some, I know that there will be some talking about that later, there are some things that aren't, but we would just like to once again thank you very much for the concession you made here. We hope that you are happy with the result that came from it. We look forward to installing this piece, and I'm here to answer any questions.

Arts and Cultural Coordinator: I want to continue with the presentation. There are additional slides for the city.

Vice Mayor Anderson: While you're bringing those up, can you address the maintenance on it.

Arts and Cultural Coordinator: Yes, that would be part of the rest of the presentation. I always know your questions.

Vice Mayor Anderson: You're becoming predictable.

City Clerk Urquia: If Cable TV could put the presentation back on.

Arts and Cultural Coordinator: So, we just want to go over the approval process. So as part of our city code, Section 9-103, the fund requirements – developers do have the option of requesting a waiver through the acquiring or commissioning of artwork. As was mentioned, the Arts Advisory Panel recommended approval on September 4th and the Cultural Development Board recommended approval on September 17th, both of them were unanimous. And you can see it moved forward very quickly. This is just a breakdown of the fees. Part of our code is one percent of the project's total, the aggregate in construction cost, which right now is estimated at approximately \$1.17 million dollars for the artwork and there are additional funds being used for foundation and other related expenses. So, there are things that are permissible through the code and things that aren't, so we'll work with the developer on that. The funds should not exceed or replace expenses that would typically, we use for lighting requirements on the site, or for the artwork in this case or infrastructure or the hardscape. Again, this is all broken down and we will review it with them. Artwork and any related expenses will be the responsibility of the developer with any difference in cost be paid back into the art fund. So, we would release the escrow funds at this time, if it passes approval and then if there is anything after the closeout of the project, they

will pay that back into the fund. Our favorite topic, maintenance – developer is required to provide for the perpetual maintenance of the artwork in accordance with the code, and this will be memorialized in the covenant to run with the land. Coordination of maintenance will be the responsibility of the developer and is not related to the Art in Public Places fee. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Any questions from the Commission.

Commissioner Menendez: I just want to comment that every board and this City Commission did the right thing in handing over the reigns to you all, to come up with this piece. I think it's a beautiful piece. I think it blends in very well with the concept of the project itself. I think it's something people will go to just to see it. I guess the only question I have, so it's called Power Tower, but has nothing to do with Tower of Power, which is a 70's funk brass section, is it.

Mr. Gimenez: I don't know if you've met Mr. Codina, but...

Commissioner Menendez: Not a funk, R&B guy. Okay.

Mr. Gimenez: No. I don't think it has anything, and I don't think Lynda Benglis – no. The answer is no. It could be. I won't say it under oath.

Mayor Lago: I want to give the worst joke on that one, anything to do with the Tower of Terror.

Mr. Gimenez: I was just saying Power Tower.

Mayor Lago: Come up with a worst joke than that one. Like what other worst jokes can we come up with about towers. The Leaning Tower of Piza is it like the Leaning Tower of Piza.

Mr. Gimenez: I hope not.

Mayor Lago: I've got to come up with these punchlines, you know, they're good.

Vice Mayor Anderson: It's a beautiful piece. I'm voting in favor of it. I'm glad you are going to be maintaining it, because I wouldn't want to imagine the bill on that one.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll move it.

Commissioner Castro: I share the sentiments of my colleagues, exceptional. I love it.

Mr. Gimenez: Thank you.

Commissioner Castro: Very, very classy.

Mr. Gimenez: Thank you very much.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Alright. I'll move it.

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Commissioner Fernandez: I moved it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Second.

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Mayor Lago: (Made a hand gesture – yes)

Mr. Gimenez: Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: I don't know, you know.

Mr. Gimenez: Oh, sorry.

[Laughter]

Mayor Lago: I was thinking about it there for a second. I don't know if I'll make it unanimous. I don't know, it's like.

Commissioner Castro: Another joke.

Mayor Lago: I'm in a joking mood.

Commissioner Fernandez: See, this one was actually funny.

Mayor Lago: Well, Menendez' jokes, he hits one out of ten, so, I can't hit them all.

Commissioner Menendez: Which is actually better than your rate.

[Laughter]

Mayor Lago: Oh, no, trust me. I got that, trust me. I know that. Yes.

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you.

Mr. Gimenez: And with that, I really want to thank staff for all their help. They've been great through all of this. The attorney, I know I didn't make it easy on this one, so thank you to everybody, appreciate it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Its beautiful.

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Mayor Lago: Thank you so much.