

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-1
October 24, 2023
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, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Arts and Cultural Specialist, Catherine Cathers

Public Speaker(s)

Ignacio Montes

Guillermo Parada

Agenda Item G-1 [11:12 a.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission approving the concept and commissioning of a work of public art by gt2P Studios in conjunction with the Alta development project at 4101 Salzedo Street, in fulfillment of the Art in Public Places requirement for public art in private development (recommended by the Arts Advisory Panel approval/denial vote: 5 to 2; unanimously recommended by the Cultural Development Board approval/denial vote: 5 to 0).

Mayor Lago: Item G-1.

Vice Mayor Anderson: G as in green.

Mayor Lago: G-1 item, time certain, 11 a.m.

Vice Mayor Anderson: My ears are getting older. Did I mention that.

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[Date]

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October 24, 2023

Agenda Item G-1 – Resolution approving the concept and commissioning of a Work of public art by gt2P Studios

City Attorney Suarez: Mayor, item G-1 is a Resolution of the City Commission approving the concept and commissioning of a work of public art by gt2P Studios in conjunction with the Alta development project at 4101 Salzedo Street, in fulfillment of the Art in Public Places requirement for public art in private development.

Cultural Specialist Cathers: Good morning. We do have a presentation and PowerPoint for this item. So, Merrick 250 is a project of Alta Developers, and they are coming before the Commission this morning with a petition waiver request of the Art in Public Places fee requirement. Section 9-103, the developers have chosen the option petitioning for a waiver of the fee by commissioning and installing artwork with an appraised value equal to or greater than the amount of the Art in Public Places fee that's otherwise required as specified in the zoning code. The developer is here today proposing the commissioning and installing of artwork by the artist team of gt2P. So just briefly, before they begin their presentation to review the approval process, the Arts Advisory Panel made a recommendation approving the recommendation to move forward to the board with approval/denial vote of 5 to 2, and then the Cultural Development Board made a recommendation to this Commission to accept it with a unanimous vote of 5 to 0. Now, I'd like to call up the developer's representation, Nicolle Janek and Ignacio Montes, who will be presenting the remainder of this item, and they also have the artist who is on Zoom who will be coming in from Chile.

Ignacio Montes: Mr. Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners, thank you for having us here today. Quickly, we're here to present to you the project that we're looking to do at 250 Bird Road, between the streets of Aroura and Salzedo, and looking to commission a work of art to a group called "Great Things to People." I'll talk to you a little bit about it. The project that we're looking to develop is a residential project that is a tall story tower with 174 units, comprised of one bedroom, two-bedroom, three-bedroom apartments. Just to give you a little sense of the location. You can see there Merrick 250, as we've designated it is surrounded by Bird Road, Aroura and Salzedo, neighboring to the Belmont Village Project that is recently completed. Here's an aerial with rendering of the project that we're looking to build. As you can see, there's a little office building that you probably have seen renovated already on Bird Road and the multi-family project that we're developing around it. Like I mentioned, 12 stories, with parking, and then with a nice amenity deck facing Bird Road. The art that we're looking to include, so that you can see neighboring the Collection and behind the building this rendering to Belmont Village. I'd like to introduce the team _____, who is representing the artist that we are looking to commission, but we've gone through basically, the city has an extensive list of very good artists. We proposed "Great Things to People" as a potential new edition, which was approved and because we really like the work that they have been doing over the last few years. With that, I will transfer over – So just to mention some of the works, they have a piece in the Miami Design District, they are also in

Denver Art Museum, the Met, the Design Museum in London, and so a very well recognized group and happy with the work that they have been doing. Is Guillermo able to – thank you so much.

Nicolle Janek: Hi everyone. Thank you for allowing us to present this beautiful project with you. Thank you for the introduction, Ignacio. Let's show the presentation please. So, the way we work is basically, we take inspiration, in this case, for example from nature and some ideas that mean something for a city, for example, and then we systematize that information in algorithms in order to create object families, in order to create unique pieces and their family. We mix that with hand crafting techniques and new technologies techniques. So, we can say that we love to mix art and science in our process. Next one please. For the city, we wanted to create a landmark for the project, I mean, a landmark through a sculpture, a mirror to mark the entrance of the building, and also, we love that our pieces create interactions. For example, in this case, we are framing the views from the sky through the main sculpture. Next one please. We are taking an imaginary or as an inspiration, we are taking the citrus trees presenting the development of Coral Gables, and also the coral stones. So, taking those symbols, we are systematizing that in a geometry that we have called Suple. Next one please. And we are creating a main sculpture that basically is a component, created by components that we can say that gold components talk about the new technologies, we are talking about, we are working now, and the pipes are creating a bridge with how we can say, with industrial heritage. So, we are creating a kind of mix of the new technologies and our modern heritage in order to create this piece. All the components, all the pipes are micro-perforated, so with that we can create a lightening object during the night. Next one please. Here you can see basically the components of the piece. For accomplishing the code of the city, we're working with a very well renowned ____ team that is called Emission Arts and Craft, and an engineering team that specializes in art pieces that have created pieces around the United States. Related to the ____ basically, we're creating some little caps in order to replace all the LED systems. Next one please. The next one is the mural. Next one. Basically [inaudible]...that we code Hope Keeper, that is inspired in the coral stone that are related to our childhood where we usually to hide secrets or hide things. So, it reminds us of our childhood, the moment where we have infinite hope. Next one please. The components are basically metal components, coded by C and C laser and also folded with C and C ____ in order to avoid intrusions of virtual water, we are putting a little mesh, a very transparent one, in order to keep those perforations visibility – the visibility of those perforations. Next one please. Here you can see so many matches of the collection. We are creating for this beautiful project, and this is how it looks during the day and the next one is how it looks during the night.

Ignacio Montes: Thank you, Guillermo. So just from our perspective as developers, what we're looking to do, what you're seeing here in this rendering is the access, the residential access to the property ---- for sale. Through the middle between our project and Belmont Village there's a really nice paseo that has already, you can see it, as of today or actually two-thirds of it is done, we'll get

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the rest of it done when we finish construction. And what we've looked to do is really activate this paseo and hopefully activate the first floor and the walkability of the neighborhood. We're very excited about the proximity to the Shops at Merrick Park and all the retail that you're seeing that's been activating very recently. We've worked with the artist, to basically take into consideration the questions that we've had from the Arts and Culture Board, really looking to ensure that the maintenance of the art is done well over time. So, there is servicing and maintenance, they'll be basically a covenant to the ownership of the property to basically take care of the art over time. And then also, we've also taken into account and worked with Guillermo and his team to ensure that the design is also well fit for the reality of Florida and Coral Gables specifically. So, it will be well anchored in terms of design, working with a good engineering firm in the design and basically the execution which is key. Maybe we can go to the next slide. There is one more rendering with the art. There is some more technical information but I'm happy to open it up for any questions or comments that you may have.

Mayor Lago: Anybody have a question from the Commission?

Cultural Specialist Cathers: Excuse me, Mr. Mayor, if you don't mind, I just want to finish up on the technical part from the city side. So, just to let the Commission know and the public know that the cost of the proposed art piece and installation is estimated to be over \$700,000. The artwork and all related expenses will be the responsibility of the developer and as mentioned, the developer is required to provide for the perpetual maintenance of the artwork in accordance with our guidelines and policies and that will be memorialized as Ignacio said, in a covenant to run with the land, and coordination of that maintenance is the responsibility is not related to the Art in Public Places fee. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Anybody has any comments?

Vice Mayor Anderson: I just had a question about, because you show it now with the small trees in there. Do we know what kind of trees are going to be installed, so the visibility of them, for instance, the coral piece is not blocked in the future.

Ignacio Montes: I know we do. I personally don't know the name of the tree, but Catherine [inaudible]. It's in the landscaping plans, we have worked and there are currently trees installed on Belmont Village and we'll replicate basically the ambiance and the look on Salzedo Road. So, they are not tall enough so the mural will actually remain visible to the street and so will the sculpture itself.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I've looked at some. How do you landscape a city-type of guides and they also tell you, like when you're dealing with storefronts, you want to put the trees in between the two stores, as opposed to blocking the sign to the store, so that's where my thought process is

going here. We don't necessarily want to block the piece of artwork. You put the trees on either side and choose accordingly to the height that they will reach. Okay. So, I think it's creative pieces. When I first looked at them, I said hmm, but then they kind of grew on me and I understood the placement of them in the neighborhood that they are going to be in as well.

Commissioner Castro: Are there two different types of lighting as far as color?

Ignacio Montes: No. What's considered is, basically the construction is stainless steel, which will be treated on the inside. It basically has water led lightening strips.

Commissioner Castro: They're all the same color.

Ignacio Montes: All the same color.

Mayor Lago: Anything else.

Commissioner Fernandez: My question was about lighting. So, it will be lit at night.

Ignacio Montes: It will be lit at night, I mean in the design, the design the idea is not to have it be too incandescent, but really kind of.

Commissioner Fernandez: Make it visual basically.

Ignacio Montes: Visually pleasing, exactly. Remember, you will have residential units surrounding on all sides, basically – across the street, Belmont Village and our own project.

Commissioner Fernandez: I like the fact that you incorporated, basically where's its visible from the street. A lot of times some of these art projects are hidden within the property and its truly art in public places where its visible. I really like the fact that you incorporated our city trees into the design of the sculpture. I think it really speaks of Coral Gables. It's not just an art piece that doesn't blend in. It's something that really speaks to what the City of Coral Gables is and the foundation of Coral Gables. So, I appreciate that.

Commissioner Menendez: I think it's very tasteful and I think it looks fantastic where it's being proposed to be placed. I think it enhances the area greatly, so I think it's outstanding.

Ignacio Montes: Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Two comments. One of them was already addressed was the issue of the perpetual maintenance. I think it's important. I'm very familiar with the artist. It's a great artist. One of the concerns that I brought up to Catherine that I think should be considered is that the sculpture on the wall should be removed, the mural piece. Again, the intent, in my opinion, and we ___ on this several times is having art in public places where you're not walking on the street and you have to

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look up to see it, is not really art in public places. What I would like to see is maybe two of those sculptures or maybe one sculpture that's a little bit bigger and just transfer the cost of that sculpture to the ground floor. I mentioned that to Catherine. I think it's a much better value for the community, because these sculptures are very elevated, you don't get to see it and I think that the light coming off that sculpture on those floors is going to eventually be a nuisance around the neighborhood, because of the light pollution. I like the sculpture. Trust me, I think it's great. I'm a big fan of Freedman Benda. I've bought items from Freedman Benda in the past. I think that the best thing to do is to take that sculpture and make it a little bit bigger. It gives it a little bit more depth and breadth to the work and I think removing the sculpture off the wall is something that I think will bring a lot of value, because you've got to look up; and we've installed these things before in the city and we haven't had good results. Yes, you want to say something.

Cultural Arts Specialist Cathers: Thank you Mr. Mayor, that is something that both the boards and the staff would support. There were a lot of questions about that piece and as you said, the visibility and how effective it would be.

Mayor Lago: Again, if my colleagues want to leave it the way it is, I'm a no vote, but if we move the value of the mural work down to the sculpture, I will support the work. Again, this is a sculpture, this is a designer, more of a designer than anything that's been in Design Miami for many, many years. Has had multiple monumental works, not only at the Fair, but also Design Fair in Basel and is also very involved in the design community throughout the United States in many different metropolitan cities. I just think that we should take advantage of the fact that we can get a sculpture on the ground floor and make it even more significant and more pronounced and take something off a wall that's not going to be really seen.

Commissioner Fernandez: Can we pull that slide back up where you see the elevation of the wall.

Ignacio Montes: The rendering.

Vice Mayor Anderson: If you can pull it up and I'll share an idea with you.

Commissioner Fernandez: The one you just had on.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I've seen round spheres on ground levels, you might have coral is kind of round, brain coral, etc., kind of round if you want to think about that, bring it down to the ground level. If it does speak to some of the important things in our oceans that are being imperiled now from various water pollution and hotter waters that we've been experiencing more lately. So, I think it would help bring an awareness to the issues that we're having.

Commissioner Fernandez: I think the Mayor brings up a valid point, especially looking at it from this angle and it brings back the question you had about the tree coverage. That's something that

could easily be invisible if you have some tree cover from that tree that you see there across the street, even though its just in your rendering. I think the Mayor brings up a valid point. I think it definitely would make the project better if you were able to move that to a different location as a different work.

Commissioner Menendez: I don't necessarily have an issue with the mural. I just did my Google search and I recall the Bacardi Building on Biscayne Boulevard as a mural on its wall. Its an iconic mural. It's a different design, different dimensions, but if my colleagues feel strongly on the mural, I'll turn to them. I think over time it could be iconic as well and catch people's attention, but I defer to my colleagues.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I would agree with the Mayor to bring it down to the ground level. The number of e-mails that I've gotten from residents wanting trees in these streets. This is not the same situation you have where the Bacardi Building is where you have a nice ocean breeze, it helps cool the street. We're talking about areas that need the shade desperately, and we need the greenery. I had brought in some cuttings that I had taken for the Pumpkin Patch to show people some of the specimens and my husband said, I'm so happy you brought the greenery in. It's just cuttings of a hedge. I think it's important that we maintain the greenery and not have to trim the greenery in order to make this artwork visible.

Mayor Lago: Can you go back to the picture. No, go back. So, I see some of the specs that you had before, you were talking about warranty. I want to make sure that the warranty that they are providing, even though it's for items that pertain to the construction of the materials that are being used that does not pertain to the city. The ten-year warranty, as you can see right there it says ten-year warranty, an extension can be reapplied. I just want to make sure – you're showing this in the public record, and I want to make sure that it's very clear. We've had issues, not this Commission, but the Commission before. We had to address taking money from Art in Public Places to address sculptures that were not being upkept, so we actually took money from Art in Public Places to start addressing sculptures that again, have fallen into disrepair, which again were an eyesore. So those are a few issues. I am of the belief, I would scrap, it's a beautiful piece, don't get me wrong. I would scrap the mural, bring those monies down to the ground sculpture, raise the quality, elevate the quality, a few more branches, make it bigger, and then like we always say, I know it has nothing to do with you, but tell the developer when they come that they are going to have to install real trees on that promenade. It's going to have to be something substantial so that it doesn't take 25 years for the trees to mature. You see the branches hanging across the street that you can see it. Your photo, your rendering is showing a beautiful tree that is providing a canopy. We want something similar to that. This is nothing new. By the way, I'm not saying this to you, probably I say this to every single project. I ask for it so that once the project does come online that there's already a beautiful tree canopy there. Again, we're not talking about 30, 40, 50-year-old trees,

we're talking about trees that have a significance to them that I think are only pay dividends to your project and to the community. I would remove the mural. Ensure that the developer in perpetuity, whoever the developer may be, if its sold, if this project is sold to somebody else, that it's a covenant running with the land which ensures that the sculpture is maintained and I think that there has to be language in the agreement with the city where it has to be addressed, has to be addressed that these sculptures need to be addressed within a certain time period if they fall into disrepair, if not, a lien has to be put on the property. Because the last thing you wanted to see is a beautiful sculpture which could be very valuable in the near future, depending on the artist trajectory. For example, Roy Lichtenstein in Miami Beach, that's a monumental sculpture that the city bought for their performing arts center and when they bought that sculpture, they paid nothing for it. Now who knows what – that's invaluable. So, I want to make sure that if we go down that same path that there is a path moving forward on how to ensure the quality of that sculpture in perpetuity. So, I'm ready to vote on it today, if you can tell me that you're willing to remove the piece off the wall and bring the value down into the sculpture and really make it something prominent. I have faith in staff and the boards where they can lead us in that direction, so you don't have to come back to this board. I don't want you to come back to this board.

Ignacio Montes: So, just to address the two things. One, in terms of the design, we have been working with the artist because ensuring the value of this, we're investing in it as developers, so we really want to see it add value, not only to the project but the neighborhood as-a-whole. So that's something and the ten-year warranty that you see in there is basically the materials and the treatment what's currently available in the market. That was one of the specs that we took up, because they were initially thinking about treating with a three to five, we said no, we want it to have the best standard currently available in the market in terms of the treatment. With the covenant, we've discussed with Catherine, the team, what we'd like to do, so it's going to be a covenant that goes with the property in terms of ensuring the maintenance. In terms of the wall piece, I'm sure it's been a pleasure to work with "Great Things to People" and the team. We're happy to commit to taking the value of the mural if that's something to bring it down to the ground floor. We need to work with them to see exactly and that can be kind of enhancing the tree or even maybe considering something around.

Mayor Lago: I would like to see the enhancement of the tree and let me tell you why. Again, the will of the Commission, they can make any decision they like, but I'm just giving my advice. We've tried, we've tried for years to try now to get the best. So, it's not about quantity, it's about quality. So, this is an exceptional designer, seen the work many, many times. I would like to see something monumental from them, instead of having two works, you can just have one work. Its less maintenance for you in that sense. I imagine that wall piece is very intricate and requires a lot of maintenance. You've got to get up there on a scissor lift to get to it and its going to require a lot of attention and I think this is a lot easier probably to clean and probably maintain, because you

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could probably do it with a ladder of some sort or anything like that, but that's just my opinion. One-piece, bigger scale.

Ignacio Montes: It's been an iterative process with the artist, and we've taken this in. I think we really like it and if you see even in the budget, wall pieces are an appendix to what the real piece is, which is really the treat. So, we're happy to commit to that if that's...

Mayor Lago: I would like to make a friendly amendment to the resolution adding the language and the request that I've made today.

City Attorney Suarez: Mayor if you're making a motion, then you should pass the gavel.

Mayor Lago: I know. I will. I'm just talking, talking it through. Does anybody else here have anything they want to add?

Vice Mayor Anderson: I appreciate the amendment you're making. The maintenance is always a big piece of it. I do think there are enhancements they can do on the tree. I'm willing to share ideas with you.

Commissioner Castro: I wouldn't be opposed to having the two sculptures actually be different. Bringing the one down as a separate item, as a separate object, a piece and having the tree there. I don't think it's a bad idea.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I think you have more projects coming down the line. You're going to be very proud of this one.

Mayor Lago: So, we're combining the funds and we're building a larger tree, that's what we're moving forward with.

Ignacio Montes: We're fine with that.

Mayor Lago: That's my friendly amendment.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I will second that.

City Attorney Suarez: So just to clarify the motion is to approve the concept and the commission of the...with the conditions that were stated here, which is that the eliminating the mural and using the value of that to enhance the separate sculpture.

Mayor Lago: And also, again, it's not per the resolution but I ask you when you come back, because you're going to come back eventually to the Commission, you are going to get the same statement from me that I give to everybody. Let's make sure those trees are exceptional and that it really looks beautiful. I get my haircut across the street, so I'm in front of that building constantly.

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I see how pretty the street looks now and how difficult it was for all the businesses in that area over the last two years, and you're going to see there's large oak trees on the other side. We don't have to mimic those oak trees; it would be financially impossible. I'm not asking you to do that. See if you could do something that would make us proud.

City Attorney Suarez: Mayor just one point of clarification. If you all approve it today, unless you want it to come back, it would not be coming back.

Mayor Lago: I'm not talking about this. I'm talking about the trees. The development has to come back.

City Attorney Suarez: I think it's already approved. The development is approved.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Well, if you could take that into consideration. I will never hold a hostage of anybody here. I'm just asking you, help us out with that. I thought for some reason that that had to come back. You could help us with that, it would be nice. Mr. Clerk.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Ignacio Montes: Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Have a wonderful day. Thank you.