

January 27, 2011- Special City Commission Meeting on Miracle Mile and Giralda Streetscape

John O'Rourke Chairman of Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce and co-owner of Montica Jewlery:

Each and every time I have the opportunity to enter our City Hall, I can't help but think about the great community icon: George Merrick, the founder of our City, the Chamber of Commerce and much more. There is no doubt George Merrick was an incredible dreamer. He was a man of great vision with an implausible passion for what was to eventually become our City Beautiful, Coral Gables. He envisioned an oasis of grandiose proportions that was meticulously planned and amazingly executed. So much so that as I stand before you here today, there can be no doubt that our City Beautiful has withstood the test of time. International commerce, top notch education, a tremendous commitment to culture and the environment, a promise to remain true to an architectural pallet and style, and enduring support for business. Yes, our city remains the ultimate destination, to live, work and play. And yet, none of this would have ever been created, and more importantly sustained, if it were not for the tremendous commitment and dedication of so many since the days of our founders back in the 1920s.

Commissioner Cabrera; since I have known you, you have always kept an open mind to the many ways to which we can help to sustain and improve our downtown district. Your consistent support and open dialogue as to the exploration of the streetscape project, has no doubt been instrumental in keeping the project alive.

Commissioner Anderson; your consistent support of our local businesses and longtime engagement with the BID over the years has been crucial in helping to ensure that the streetscape project remain at the forefront of our of community and its leadership.

Commissioner Withers; You've invested many years of service and dedication to our City Beautiful. You have created a long lasting legacy by helping to ensure the growth and enhancement of the cultural community that surrounds the mile.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk; We've witnessed your passion and belief in the downtown district over the years, you have been supportive of our merchants and their desire to keep the dream alive with the eventual realization of the streetscape project.

And Mayor Slesnick; purely by your actions there can be no doubt of your longstanding commitment to our local business community and unwavering dedication to the economic development and enhancement of our City Beautiful.

Over the years each and every one of you has invested tirelessly in what you believe will help to ensure the greatness of our City. Our downtown district is the heart and soul of Coral Gables. It is the economic engine and we, your Chamber, ask for your support today. Thank you.

Mark Trowbridge- Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce President: Good morning, everybody. As you've heard from our previous speakers, the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce believes the redevelopment of Miracle Mile is the most critical business issue to come before our City Commission in many years.

Sitting amongst us today is a large contingent of Chamber board members, committee chairs, general members, and investors in our chamber. They are the leadership of organization, stakeholders in our community, consumers of our business community, and their presence today is a tribute to their commitment to seeing the Miracle Miles streetscape project move forward. Many of them are your friends, your colleagues and your constituents, and they are here today to lend their support, to thank you for your leadership and to celebrate this historic vote.

We at the Chamber view the Miracle Mile streetscape project as a catalyst for economic development, a business recruitment tool, a quality of life issue and a vital mechanism for the re-imagination of our downtown. What has been laid out before you today is a blueprint of best practices and a rare opportunity for us to employ all of these resources, all of these tools, and all of the brain power that is in this room and beyond to harness a project that will redefine Coral Gables for the next two generations.

This project is bigger than just the design elements proposed, the funding formulas proffered and the numerous elements that need to coalesce perfectly. This project is a game changer, for both Miracle Mile and Coral Gables. It is an economic development project unlike any other in our community and an essential opportunity we may never see in the history of the Mile.

The chamber has been behind this project and so have our businesses. They see the way forward and understand the critical timing and scope of this project. And the time is now. We must move forward and we ask for your support today. You all have been incredibly helpful over the years, and today it is your special opportunity to make the project happen. Thank you for your leadership, your vision and your commitment and your affirmative vote.

Mari Gallet-Executive Director of the BID: Good morning. Thank you Commissioners, City Manager. You couldn't see me, but I was doing a little dance back there during Richard's presentation. For those of you, and I don't think there's that many because we have a lot of stakeholders here today, I want to just let you know that the BID-the Business Improvement District is an organization that's been created through a special assessment which includes all of Miracle Mile, Giralda's restaurant row, and all commercial properties between Giralda and Andalucia, and obviously between Lejeune and Douglas Rd. Our mission is to promote commercial vitality to Miracle Mile and downtown Coral Gables and to act as a strategic catalyst for the overall improvement of the area.

I'd like to first thank Rickard Heapes from Streetworks, for his informative and enlightening presentation. When the BID first began our efforts to redevelop our downtown, we only dreamed of something this big, and now Richard has shown us it can become a reality. We are humbled by the affirmation of our work. I'd also like to thank you, the Commission, and the Manager's Office, for dedicating a whole morning in this special meeting for such an important topic to our City and to all

these residents and business owners who are here today supporting the project. In chronological order I have to mention a few folks who are very important and have contributed to this along the way, obviously our BID members, our BID board, our Executive Board all of who are here today, who having so much at stake, have tirelessly been dedicated to this improvement. Our colleagues at the CG Chamber of Commerce who understand the value to our business community and have made this one of their top goals. And if you all saw in Richard's presentation, this great little red brochure, we did work on in about 2008 there's a list of people that I would be remiss not to mention that are on here. These were all volunteers; professionals in our community who live close by and want to be in our downtown. Our committee was comprised of professional engineers, architects, and retail experts and moderated by the University of Miami and their own Jaime Correa and Chuck Bold, both are experts in urban planning. It included David Plummer, Glenn Pratt, John Fullerton, George Hernandez, Carey Newman, and downtown BID members John O'Rourke, from Montica Jewelry, who you heard from today, and Martin Lynch, from John Martins restaurant. Collectively they dedicated countless hours over the course of 2008 to set the vision which has been firmly validated by Streetworks today. And on the ground of course doing so much of the work C3TS.

Most importantly as direct stakeholders in this project, I want you to know that our BID Board just again this week passed a resolution affirming all of the elements as they were presented today, from the parallel parking option that will allow us to make all these exciting upgrades to the equal split between the City and benefitting properties for the future financing of this project. We stand together with you to proceed. And finally to our Commission, Manager and City Staff here today, we share your enthusiasm and vested interest in making our downtown a world class destination from our Public Service Department who are out there every day cleaning Miracle Mile to our Police, our Fire, our Parking Dept., Code Enforcement and many other supporting employees at the City, not only will we all share and cultivate this heart of the Gables, this third space with you, elbow to elbow, day to day, but our success as a community will be tied to it for generations to come.

I encourage all of you to please approve the resolution before you today and ask for your support, and most of all thank you for your leadership.