

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-1
August 25, 2020
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena
Commissioner Jorge Fors

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
Assistant City Manager, Ed Santamaria
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Economic Development Director, Julian Perez
Economic Development Assistant Director, Belkys Perez
Business Development Coordinator, Francesca Valdes

Public Speaker(s)

Jackson "Rip" Holmes
Aurelia Reinhardt

Agenda Item H-1 [11:06 a.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida approving Murals on the Mile to boost the recovery of the local economy and activate the Downtown area in partnership with the Business Improvement District of Coral Gables (BID), and providing for an effective date.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Item H-1, murals on Miracle Mile.

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Agenda Item H-1 - Resolution approving Murals on the Mile to boost the recovery of the local economy and activate the Downtown area in partnership with the Business Improvement District of Coral Gables (BID) and providing for an effective date.

City Attorney Ramos: H-1's a resolution of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida approving murals on Miracle Mile to boost the recovery of the local economy and activate the Downtown area in partnership with the BID.

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, our Assistant Director for Economic Development, Belkys Perez, will present on this item.

Economic Development Assistant Director Perez: Can you hear me?

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

Economic Development Assistant Director Perez: Hi, Mayor and Commissioners. I'd like to throw it back to Julian Perez, the Director of Economic Development, and Francesca Valdes, who will be giving the presentation. But we're here -- we're all here anyway to answer any questions afterward.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. Julian.

Economic Development Director Perez: Mr. Mayor, members of the Commission, Julian Perez, Director of Economic Development for the City. At this time, I would like to have a pre-recorded presentation from Ms. Valdes, who has been leading the effort.

Business Development Coordinator Valdes: Hello, and thank you for the introduction, Julian. As Julian mentioned, I'm Francesca Valdes, and I'm here to discuss the murals on...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'm sorry, but I can't -- we can't hear very well.

Commissioner Keon: Speak louder, Francesca.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Economic Development Assistant Director Perez: Oh, it's a pre-recorded...

Commissioner Keon: Oh, turn it up then.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Turn it up.

Business Development Coordinator Valdes: Project driving economic development in an effective, safe and socially distant manner. Now, you might be saying to yourselves, why murals and why now. As our local...

Economic Development Director Perez: It looks like something happened to the presentation. Can we put it up again, please?

Business Development Coordinator Valdes: I can also do it live, if that's easier.

Economic Development Director Perez: Yeah, can we go ahead and do it live, please?

City Clerk Urquia: Francesca, we're going to go ahead and put up the presentation just without audio.

Business Development Coordinator Valdes: Okay, and then I'll just go through it...

City Clerk Urquia: Yes.

Business Development Coordinator Valdes: And have control? Okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It's already up. It's Billy's fault.

City Clerk Urquia: When in doubt.

Business Development Coordinator Valdes: Okay, here we go. So, why murals and why now. As our local economy continues to meet the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to focus on bringing life back to our downtown. The murals would be an economic driver that will help us mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. The murals will also provide an additional reason to come into the downtown, helping our shops and restaurants. That's really a key point for us. We all know that our restaurants and our shops have really been struggling, so when looking for projects that was our number one goal. We're also very hopeful that this will create a viral movement similar to the umbrella phenomenon, where the consumer will want to come into Coral Gables to take a picture of the murals. And lastly, it'll provide an added value for future events and gatherings on McBride Plaza.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can we see a sample of the murals or...

Business Development Coordinator Valdes: Oh yeah, we definitely will.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Business Development Coordinator Valdes: When we were researching projects, we learned that public spaces are the new anchor tenants of the downtown. So, when we were looking at our projects, we said, "Okay, we have some beautiful public spaces here that would be perfect for this sort of project with some private partnership." And this was from a presentation that I attended with the head of the International Downtown Association. So, by saying that public spaces are the anchor tenants, that's really saying that the consumer's moving away from coming into a downtown space to visit a particular retailer. They're coming in more for the public gathering spaces. Murals as an economic driver. So the goal of this program is to bring safe, socially distant activations to

the downtown that generate pedestrian traffic and economic growth. The uplifting murals at key points in Coral Gables will attract residents to return to the downtown, in turn, bringing them to our shops and restaurants; attract commuters to Miracle Mile, enticing them to discover all that Coral Gables has to offer. The murals will provide another reason for people to come into the downtown to see and photograph the murals. The subject of the matter -- of the murals will resonate with residents and visitors, rekindling a pride of place and community. So we've got a lot going for us in Coral Gables. We've already got these clean, beautiful wide sidewalks that provide a safe, socially distant pedestrian experience. As we emerge from COVID-19, we need to bring a new focal point that drives people into the downtown in a safe manner. This project has the potential to go viral on social media. As people post pictures on Instagram and Facebook, it will grow awareness of the murals and of Coral Gables. So, when looking at this project, we wanted to see what other cities are doing. So, one city that we looked at is Key West, Florida, and that's the picture on the left in the first column. This is a postcard-like setting that they have in their historic seaport. It is on the side of a retailer, the Cuban Coffee Queen. And really, you can't say that a trip to Key West is complete without people going and having their picture taken in front of this mural. A second one that we're looking at is the -- the second column is the mural tour in Austin, Texas. So, the murals tour in Austin has become so popular that they actually have tours that you can take and tickets you can buy to attend that tour to go around the city to see their murals. And lastly on the right, this is Nashville, Tennessee and Nashville's Angel Wings are an iconic stop in the city. And you will see people wait in line in order to take a picture with their angel wings when they go. So, our project sites are along Miracle Mile. This is meant to be a pedestrian travel experience. So, the first stop is the corner of Miracle Mile and Salzedo. This is to utilize the City-owned building of the current Starbucks location. Then as you go down the Mile, it is the -- the next stop is the corner of Miracle Mile and Ponce de Leon, and that is the former Starbucks location, so that is the wall facing onto Ponce de Leon. The last stop is the two walls on Miracle Mile that are on McBride Plaza. So, we would be using both the Barnes and Noble and the former BurgerFi wall. Here, you can see our four project sites a little bit more clearly, just to give an idea of what we're looking at. Next slide, please. Okay, here we go. So, wall number one. Smile, you're in Coral Gables. This is located on Salzedo and Miracle Mile,

and the focal point of this mural is a positive phrase featuring the name of the City as a prominent part of the design. When you are here, you can see that we have picked this street because it's got a high daily vehicular traffic count; 35,000 cars go down the street each day. Now, that was important because we want to entice people to come back to Coral Gables and discover something on their commute that they might not have seen before, and then they'll come back, park and explore our mural project.

Commissioner Mena: Is that the one on Starbucks basically?

Business Development Coordinator Valdes: This is our current Starbucks, yes.

Commissioner Mena: Yeah, okay.

Business Development Coordinator Valdes: So, here we have our monthly pedestrian counts. And when looking at this, we took two months to compare to what's happening now. So, November and December of 2019, we had average monthly pedestrian counts at 269,000 and 264,000, respectively. And now, in June and July, we're seeing we're down at 126,000 and 150,000. So, you can see there's been quite a drop, and that's why this project being a pedestrian travel experience is so important to bring these people back to the street.

Commissioner Mena: That's a great location.

Business Development Coordinator Valdes: Next slide. Thank you.

Commissioner Mena: Yeah.

Business Development Coordinator Valdes: So, wall number two, "Life is Sweeter in the Gables". This, again, is a positive phrase featuring the name of the City as a prominent part of the design. This is located on Ponce de Leon Boulevard and Miracle Mile, really what we consider the Main

and Main of our downtown and has our highest traffic potential. Again, this is very visual. For anybody commuting, this is the main artery of the city. People come down Ponce de Leon every day, and you can see that the average daily vehicular traffic count is 49,000. So, again, you'll see that our pedestrian counts were at 253,000 and 251,000, respectively, down to about 156,000 and 120,000, currently. Wall number three, "Greetings from Coral Gables." So, this is located in McBride Plaza and on the wall that is home to the new Seasy Mediterranean Restaurant, which is the former BurgerFi wall. This is an iconic hometown destination mural, which will be anchoring what we consider the Mural Plaza. This is a larger than life postcard-like setting giving the opportunity for the community to pose with the mural and the ability to share it on social media. We really feel this is probably the number one spot for picture taking because of the parking capabilities, and then this wall that's going to be just -- it's just going to be iconic the way that it's laid out. So, again, our vehicular traffic counts 32,500, and then we see that our traffic count -- our pedestrian counts went from 232,000 and 248,000 down to 117,000 and 119,000, respectively. And wall number four; this is the Galleria de Gables. So, this is the other side of McBride Plaza, the Barnes and Noble wall. And as you'll see in the first picture, it's really sectioned off into five different smaller murals. This is because the wall has a natural delineation along it. It has some lines, it has some pipes, it has some different things that are happening on that wall, and rather than painting just over it one image, we decided to take advantage of that and create little vignettes that provide more than one opportunity for posing. So, this will be a visual companion to the adjacent mural describing the City's beautiful flora and fauna, the rich history, unique characteristics and recognizable landmarks. So, if you look at the pictures below it, these are really inspiration pictures of things that are just kind of iconic to downtown or to Coral Gables. We know we were a grapefruit plantation, so perhaps one of them will be, you know, a blowup of grapefruits and other fruit that are common. The banyan trees, of course, are part of our -- the fabric of our community; the Venetian Pool, maybe a small piece of that. Not to recreate the whole Venetian pool, but to have a small bit of it there. And of course, our Umbrella Sky project that we're also proud of. So, activating both walls at McBride Plaza will make the location a safe destination for locals and visitors alike. Of course, the traffic and pedestrian counts are the same as the previous slide, as they're the same side of the plaza. But you can see -- you know, just to

reiterate that there has been quite a drop since 2019. Okay, so our budget. So, this project will cost around \$50,000. That averages to \$12,500 per wall. The BID has agreed to partner with us on the design and implementation cost of the murals with each organization contributing \$25,000. The cost includes design, labor, equipment rentals, design rights, touch-ups for one year and paint. Now, the timeline for this project is meant that these murals stay up for one year and we're entering into memos of understanding with the private property owners in order to make sure that everyone's goals are met. The City will own the design rights and maintain design and project management functions at all times. The City, with the input from the BID, will have the potential to allocate any profits generated by the project through marketing or merchandising initiatives to support future activities benefiting small business within the downtown, specifically, the Central Business District. Okay, so who are we working with? Chalk and Brush is a local group that would be our vendors for this project. They are local Coral Gables residents. They're well-known within the South Florida community and beyond. They're known for their local touch. They understand Coral Gables, the history, the aesthetics, and are dedicated to making Coral Gables shine and not trying to emulate other communities. They're very, very focused. They're very excited about this project, and like the presentation says, they live right here in Coral Gables. So, of course, we are very cognizant that COVID-19 is an ongoing issue and that we have laid out very many safety precautions in order to make sure that everyone feels safe. Each mural will have hand sanitizing stations at each of the four locations, a framed signage reminding visitors of social distancing, stickers on the ground denoting where to stand for pictures, six feet from other picture spots. Further measures are that police and code officers on routine patrol of the areas will remind visitors and residents of the social distance and facial covering requirements. We will also remind people of this as we promote the murals on social media. And we will also take in our City kiosks to promote the murals and remind of our social distancing and facial covering requirements. Our COVID-19 safety precautions -- also, here you can see on the side, each red dot indicates where the hand sanitizing stations will be, so they'll be placed actually on the corner of Miracle Mile and Salzedo, the corner of Miracle Mile and Ponce de Leon, and then at each entrance of McBride Plaza, so one facing Miracle Mile and one facing the parking lot. Thank you. Just as a reminder, this is an economic driver project. We're really excited to bring this to our downtown in order to

support our shops and our restaurants and really bring that sense of pride and community back to Coral Gables.

Economic Development Director Perez: Thank you, Francesca...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.

Economic Development Director Perez: For your presentation.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very, very much. And one good thing about it is that we would get rid of the sickly green colored wall on Miracle Mile and Ponce, but that's a different thing. Thank you very, very much. Are there comments?

Commissioner Mena: Yeah. If I may, I'm happy to go first.

Vice Mayor Lago: Go for it.

Commissioner Mena: Yeah, I thought that was a great presentation. I love this idea. I think it's fun. I think Miracle Mile really needs a little bit of a boost given the circumstances, and I think this has a lot of potential to do that. Two just thoughts that I just want you to factor in. One is just what sort of final approval of the actual rendering looks like in terms of our -- the City approving it, whoever that is. You know, I think -- I don't -- I'll speak for myself. I don't think that we're necessarily looking for that sort of street art feeling that you have in Wynwood. I think we're looking for probably something a little more classic than that, and so I just want to make sure however that process is managed, we have a process for that. That's one thing.

Unidentified Speaker: (INAUDIBLE) Wynwood.

Commissioner Mena: Two is, I don't know the best way to do this, but I would consider some kind of like security camera of some kind. You know, we've been seeing some incidents of graffiti in certain places, and I hate to say it, but I think something like this is almost an invitation or a target for something like that, and I'd hate to see that happen.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let me comment on that. And experience has proven in other cities, to my surprise and probably to your surprise, that murals combat graffiti. I mean, people -- blank walls are a temptation to, you know, from kids to vandals. But the experience in other cities and in other countries has been that if you put an attractive mural, graffiti people will go elsewhere. I mean -- and that has been proven and I have the statistics.

Commissioner Mena: That makes sense. I believe you on that, actually. I think we've been seeing something a little different lately, not your traditional graffiti, but graffiti more in the form of -- in line with the protests that we're seeing across the country, and I think that -- I'm just saying that I think certain things like a classic postcard with "Welcome to Coral Gables," which I like the idea for our city, could be an attractive thing. So, just think about that. I don't know the best approach, but I know we had an incident recently at the Youth Center and the water tower, and I just want to be mindful of that. But Mayor, I think that's a great point. I -- generally speaking, I agree with your point. I just, you know...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And we caught (INAUDIBLE)...

Commissioner Mena: There's more going on right now than your typical sort of street art and graffiti. It's a little bit more than that, and so I just feel like something like this could be a target. This is a side note. I don't want this to be what the discussion is about. I'm just highlighting those two issues. I like the idea. I think it's exciting and I like the locations you picked, frankly, so good job.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Would you make a motion?

Vice Mayor Lago: Well, if I...

Commissioner Mena: I'm happy to make the motion subject to -- I'm sure others have comments.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah, they will but...

Vice Mayor Lago: I'll second the motion for discussion. My comments are brief. I just want to -
- maybe I missed it in the presentation. I had to step out for a second. What was the timeframe, Francesca, that we were looking at in regards to the murals?

Business Development Coordinator Valdes: So, we -- as soon as we get approval, we'll be able to get them -- the -- it moved in and installed, so we think by November 1st, we'd have them in and then they'd stay up for one year.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Wonderful.

Business Development Coordinator Valdes: So...

Vice Mayor Lago: So, when you talk about walls one, two, three or four -- walls three and four are completely appropriate. We've had previous events, actually art events, in that green space and it's just -- it's a great conduit for Miracle Mile. And people come and visit, then they spill over to the Mile and hopefully that translates into business for our businesses right now which are struggling. We had some lively discussion about this on the BID. Obviously, they're in favor. And as your BID representative, you know, I only have one concern, and the concern is on walls one and two, which are right there on Ponce. I just want to make sure that if we're going to move in this direction that we're very strict, especially on those two walls, that it's as tasteful as possible. We're not Wynwood. I was just in Charleston. I was just in Savannah. You know, we are, you know, a city that is progressive on many fronts, but I think that we also need to be very careful on,

you know, what we're putting out there and what people are driving by on a continual basis. So, I want to see something that's as tasteful -- I'm not saying this is not tasteful, but I'm just saying as tasteful and classic and tame as possible on walls one and two. If you want to have something a little bit more out of the box in the park, I don't have a problem with that at all. Thank you.

City Manager Iglesias: Vice Mayor, I don't think we want to do anything that's outside our basic branding, so we'll be doing everything with a tasteful touch. It's not -- certainly, we understand that and we've discussed that.

Vice Mayor Lago: No, I don't doubt it. I don't doubt it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's a good concern. Does anybody wish to speak on this issue? Billy?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor. We have two members of the public who have requested to speak. First, we have Mr. Rip Holmes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Mr. Holmes, you have two minutes to speak.

Jackson "Rip" Holmes: Great. Well, thank you. First of all, I want to congratulate you and praise you all on the Zoom meetings. You can tell I'm -- I guess I'm bordering senility. This is my first meeting that I've watched or attended and -- so I'm embarrassed, and I -- my hat's off to you though for, you know, getting with the whole program, you know, in this COVID-19 era. You all are doing a great job. I don't think any of you will be surprised by my saying please keep in mind the misting machines.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We're not surprised, Mr. Holmes. We're not surprised.

Mr. Holmes: Oh.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Go ahead.

Mr. Holmes: Thank you. Yeah, so how much have I missed? Oh, my God. I've got to go back through all the meetings. So, y'all know what I'm going to say. Only \$20,000 to do Miracle Mile, the four crosswalks, only -- a comparable amount to do the middle portion of Giralda Plaza. And so, if anyone's interested in that, remember, I can connect you or you could go to themistingstore.com. Mayor, you were right on the art helping Giralda Plaza, so let's pray that you're right on this one.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Holmes: Thank you all.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you for your participation. The second person, Billy.

City Clerk Urquia: Second person is Ms. Aurelia Reinhardt.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes, ma'am.

Aurelia Reinhardt: Good morning, everyone, and thank you very much for the opportunity. First of all, thank you really to the business development team. This is an extraordinary presentation, and I know the work you have done to first research and then identify this project and to bring it to our attention today, so thank you for that. And as the BID person here, I can only tell you that we as a board are really pleased to partner with the City on this, so thank you. Look, at the end of the day, we're all really committed to activating the downtown area and bringing visitors back to our streets and residents as well, and back to our businesses. And I got to tell you that I really firmly believe and the BID believes that this mural project will do just that. So thank you, thank you all. And I think that, you know, one thing we are looking to do as well is to not only bring people back to the streets, but to record their experience, activate this experience, and this is

definitely an opportunity for that through the viral presentation and representation that we will have. So, to the team at the Business Development Office, thank you. And we at the BID are really honored to be partners with you on this.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Ms. Reinhardt. Thank you very much. Billy, if there are no other members of the public and a motion has been made and seconded, if there are no other comments, will you call the roll, please?

Commissioner Mena: Yes.

Commissioner Fors: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.