


## COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Alina T. Hudak, City Manager 

DATE: April 28, 2023

SUBJECT: **DISCUSS OR TAKE ACTION ON ENGAGING AN ART CONSULTANT FOR THE BYRON CARLYLE THEATER.**

### **BACKGROUND**

The Byron Carlyle Theater complex is located at 500 71st Street, between Byron Avenue and Carlyle Avenue, where it opened in 1968 as twin cinemas hosting first-run movies. The City purchased the Byron Carlyle Theater (the Theater) from the WBC Broadcasting Corporation in 2001 and partially renovated it to spur economic development and bolster North Beach arts and culture. In 2014, the City executed a Management Agreement with Living Arts Trust d/b/a O Cinema, who occupied the Theater's western portion. The remaining eastern portion remained uninhabited. The poor condition of the building required it to be permanently closed and has remained so since October 31, 2019.

Since its closure, there have been several discussions held regarding the condition and future of the Byron Carlyle. The North Beach community and the City Commission have expressed interest in exploring various uses for the building, primarily as a cultural center, but also considering potential use as a museum, a business incubator gallery space, artist studios, a film or arts center, as well as retail or office space.

On September 17, 2021, the Mayor and City Commission made a referral to the Finance and Economic Resiliency Committee (FERC) to discuss ways to move forward with the Byron Carlyle Theater. At the September 24, 2021, FERC meeting, the Administration presented a cost estimate for developing conceptual design options (Conceptual Design). FERC's recommendation was transmitted to the City Commission. and on September 30, 2021, the Mayor and City Commission approved the allocation of \$400,000 to fund the development of conceptual designs and charettes for the Byron Carlyle Theater cultural center project.

Furthermore, on September 13, 2021, a citywide survey was issued to better understand the community's desire for the future of the Byron Carlyle. On October 26, 2021, the results were published via LTC 452-2021, which indicated a strong preference to moderately or fully renovate the existing theater (59% of respondents).

Subsequently, at the December 8, 2021, City Commission meeting, a discussion was held regarding the future steps to help move the Byron Carlyle site forward. And on January 20, 2022, the Mayor and Commission adopted Resolution No. 2022-32021 directing the Administration to

immediately initiate the conceptual design options process for the Byron Carlyle Theater renovation, which will be informed by community outreach, survey remits, and input of industry professionals, using the previously allocated funding from the City's FY 2022 budget. Subsequently, the City engaged Shulman + Associates (Shulman) to facilitate the charettes and develop the Conceptual Design Plan.

Thereafter, on April 27-28, 2022, the City held two publicly noticed meetings to obtain community input regarding the future use or redevelopment of the Theater. The charettes were facilitated by Allan Shulman + Associates. Shulman compiled the findings of these meetings and has prepared a Conceptual Design plan for review and comment during a final community input session which has not yet been scheduled.

## **ANALYSIS**

On November 8, 2022, the City's voters approved a \$159 million General Obligation (G.O.) Bond for Arts and Culture that included \$30,570,000 for the redevelopment of the Byron Carlyle Theater.

On December 14, 2022, in response to item R7 E, the Mayor and City Commission directed the Administration to seek expressions of interest from cultural institutions to occupy and/or activate the Byron Carlyle venue. On January 25, 2023, the Administration issued Request for Letters of Interest (RFLI) 2023-261-KB for Cultural Partners for Byron Carlyle Theater. The RFLI was developed with input gathered from the City's Cultural Arts Council and Michael Spring, Director of Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs. On February 22, 2023, responses to the RFLI were received and published via LTC 106-2023. The Administration is in the process of reviewing the submittals from the cultural institutions and operators that have expressed interest in activating the Byron Carlyle Theater.

Additionally, on January 27, 2023, the Finance and Economic Resiliency Committee discussed the Byron Carlyle and recommended the Administration engage with a cultural arts consultant to guide the City with regard to the redevelopment of the Theater, help refine the vision for the space and, ultimately, advise City Commission on what are the industry's "best practices" for developing innovative cultural facilities. This additional input would provide technical advice and models for developing an innovative Byron Carlyle cultural center.

On January 30, 2023, the Administration reached out to Chora Creative, AEA Consulting and Lord Cultural Resources to potentially collaborate on the project. The Administration held virtual meetings with the consultants and provided a preliminary scope. Chora Creative and AEA Consulting submitted proposals to assist with the programming / planning phase of the project (Lord Cultural Resources was not responsive).

After meeting internally, the Administration refined the scope of work (SOW) and reached out to all three consultants again on March 9, 2023 requesting a proposal for specific deliverables. Chora Creative and AEA Consulting submitted revised proposals pursuant to the refined SOW. Subsequently, on April 5, 2023, the Administration reached out to a fourth consultant, AMS Planning & Research, per the recommendation of Miami-Dade County's Director of Cultural Affairs, to request a proposal with the refined scope of work.

In addition to the refined SOW, the three remaining firms (Chora Creative, AEA Consulting, and AMS Planning & Research) were provided with relevant data including M.C. Harry & Associates

Conditions Assessment and Recommendations Report, the Byron Carlyle Community Survey Results and the Conceptual Master Plan prepared by Shulman + Associates.

The recommendation to retain an arts consultant has been further supported by the Cultural Arts Council. On April 13, 2023 the Cultural Arts Council adopted a motion recommending that City should engage a consultant steeped in the knowledge of the intersection of community and arts awareness to assist in creating the design and planning of the Byron Carlyle (Exhibit B).

The Administration has received three (3) proposals (attached hereto as Exhibit A) and is seeking to engage an arts consultant within the City Manager's purchase authority to guide developing the vision of the Byron Carlyle. The consultant will assist in identifying cultural gaps, programmatic needs for the building, and determining how other areas within the facility can be used for various cultural purposes. Moreover, the consultant will assist in finding the single or group of cultural partners that can best meet the needs of the cultural community.

The existence of the three proposals and the monetary requirements of this contract are within the City Manager's purchasing authority. However, as this is a significant step on this high-profile project, and this firm may end up performing additional services, we wanted to provide these proposals and discuss the decision to move forward.

Upon review of the three proposals received, the Administration has considered the consultant's qualifications, familiarity with our region, and expertise in this cultural realm as part of the selection process. The Administration has also considered the recommendation from Michael Spring, who has been involved since inception in this Arts and Culture GO Bond process and is the County's foremost expert on the construction, operation and management of cultural facilities, and therefore, recommends engaging with AMS Planning & Research.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Administration recommends, based upon the above information including the experience and qualifications, in addition to the recommendations of both City and County experts in the cultural space, engaging with AMS Planning & Research as the City's arts consultant. This firm will assist in refining the vision for the space, provide the industry's "best practices", identify cultural gaps and needs, and identify the cultural partner(s) necessary to create a world class Byron Carlyle cultural facility.