AMS PLANNING & RESEARCH

THEATRE dreams

City of Miami Beach Report on the Byron Carlyle Theater

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Introduction

The City of Miami Beach engaged AMS Planning & Research and TheatreDreams to support the reimagining of the Byron Carlyle Theater as a cultural hub for North Beach. Miami-Dade County and the cities in its bounds have a long history of investing in cultural infrastructure. Moreover, the Miami Metro's global population has proven itself as a dynamic force not just in consuming culture, but in creating it. The City of Miami Beach has an opportunity to realize the desired community outcomes for a restored Byron Carlyle Theater and is poised to commit to the restoration and operations of a vibrant community arts center, embodying the spirit and vibrancy of North Beach.

The Context

City Commission and City voters have shown longstanding support for the redevelopment of the Byron Carlyle Theater. In 2021, City Commission allocated $400,000 for a conceptual master plan and community outreach which was completed. In November 2022, City voters approved a $159 million General Obligation Bond for Arts and Culture, earmarking $30,570,000 for the Byron Carlyle Theater's redevelopment. Buoyed by this support, in December 2022, upon direction from City Commission, the Administration sought expressions of interest from cultural institutions to occupy and activate the facility with its issuance of the RFLI (RFLI 2023-261-KB) *Cultural Partners for Byron Carlyle Theater*.

Defining a Community Arts Center

AMS/TheatreDreams frames arts and culture initiatives in terms of purpose – *why* and *for whom* an activity, organization, or program exists. The vision describes what impacts (and outcomes) are desired. The mission describes programs and initiatives that realize the vision. And as importantly, the values reflect the behaviors, priorities, and competencies that support the work. Research into best practice illustrates four key components for successful development:

Purpose	**Why** you do it and **for whom**
Vision	**The impacts** you aspire to make
Mission	**What** you do
Values	**How** you do it

Community arts centers' purpose is to enable arts access. Whether in a neighborhood, a town, or in a bustling metropolis, community arts centers exist to make arts experiences available.

Community art centers' impacts center on activity and engagement. Maximizing arts engagement opportunities across community households, age groups, racial groups, and income levels is often an explicit priority. A parallel priority is often to create a home for artists, professional or amateur, and space for a range of creative genres that can nurture discovery.

Community arts centers' programming and initiatives are intentionally diverse in genre and modest in scale. Unlike large, legacy cultural institutions that focus on a single genre or cultural tradition, community arts centers prioritize a wide range of genres and disciplines. This approach is meant to pique interest in many art forms. Community art center buildings tend to be modest in size, with the best available technology for many kinds of users to hone and share their creative work.

Community arts centers put human development first and economic development… later. Uplifting a local, regional, and/or culturally specific population is the priority woven into development and implementation of a community arts center. While the ancillary economic benefits of a community arts center may be substantial, the core operation typically requires ongoing subsidy to stay faithful to the center's purpose.

The Opportunity



In conversations with stakeholders across Miami Beach, and reinforced by responses to a potential user survey issued to the City of Miami Beach Cultural Partners, the restoration of the Byron Carlyle Theater is viewed as a positive development. There is a demonstrated need for arts experiences in North Beach, when compared to the more robust cultural infrastructure and activity in South Beach as illustrated in

the map above. Praise for programming at the Miami Beach Bandshell, whose activities contribute to North Beach cultural life, was balanced with the caveat that it is outdoors and thus weather limited in its use, leaving additional demand unmet. Furthermore, arts organizations indicated a lack of small to medium performance venues in the Miami Beach area more broadly.

There is an appetite for arts experience in North Beach. A restored Byron Carlyle Theater would meet it by being a hub for cultural activity in the community, and simultaneously driving expanded activity by the arts and culture organizations who can activate it. 17 survey respondents (61%) to AMS's potential user survey noted they would anticipate expanding their existing activities (level would increase) were they to access space in a redeveloped Byron Carlyle Theater that suited their needs. Many also noted they would develop new activity (46%) or relocate existing activity (46%).



Desired Outcomes

To illustrate the opportunity and frame recommendations with a clear understanding of desired goals, the City steering committee reflected on what community outcomes they aspire to realize through the redevelopment of the Byron Carlyle Theater. The following desired outcomes and operator role were defined to guide the study:

Performance and working space for local arts organizations.

- Offered at accessible costs to the organizations
- Shared services to support the organizations (e.g., unified contact database for marketing purposes , common box office)
- Shared equipment (e.g. lighting and sound)
- Partnerships with many local not-for-profit cultural organizations and artists

Cultural Hub dedicated to the community of North Beach.

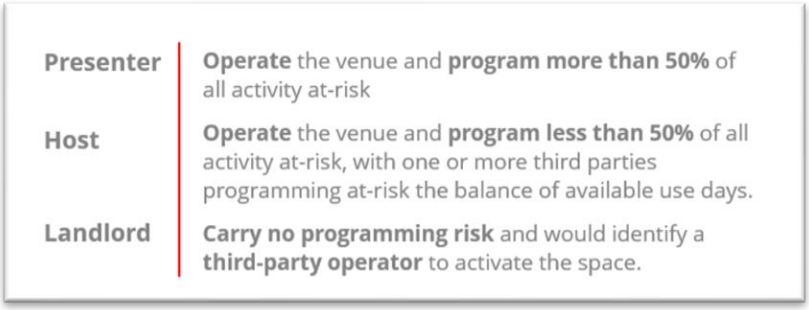
- A variety of activities offered for community members of all ages (workshops, classes, lectures)

- Gathering spaces that are open to the public (including community meetings)
- Partnerships with local businesses and community groups

City to have a role in facility operations; defined as a Host.

- Prioritize inclusivity and diversity of the local cultural community
- Dedicated city subsidy of the facility's annual operating costs
- Collaboration with City departments (Tourism and Culture, Facilities Management, Economic Development)

With the City identifying its role as a Host, it means continuing a meaningful role in the advancement of arts and culture through the operations of the facility while at the same time limiting its financial exposure related to programming as enabling other organizations to present programming in the venue. The terms of the City's engagement would be defined as the details of the project are further studied and cemented. In the future, the City of Miami Beach may engage a small team of City employees to manage the facility and oversee activity, directly partnering with a variety of users to be content providers primarily through venue rentals and long-term partnerships, and taking risk on some portion (<50%) of the programming.



Presenter	**Operate** the venue and **program more than 50%** of all activity at-risk
Host	**Operate** the venue and **program less than 50%** of all activity at-risk, with one or more third parties programming at-risk the balance of available use days.
Landlord	**Carry no programming risk** and would identify a **third-party operator** to activate the space.

Potential Users

The City of Miami Beach has a rich cultural ecosystem with arts organizations in and/or providing cultural activities to the local community. These organizations that have current connections with the City of Miami Beach are known cultural partners. In addition, respondents to the RFLI (RFLI 2023-261-KB) *Cultural Partners for Byron Carlyle Theater* expressed interest in Miami Beach's cultural ecosystem. Both of these groups were identified as potential users of a restored Byron Carlyle Theater by this study – a total of 67 organizations.

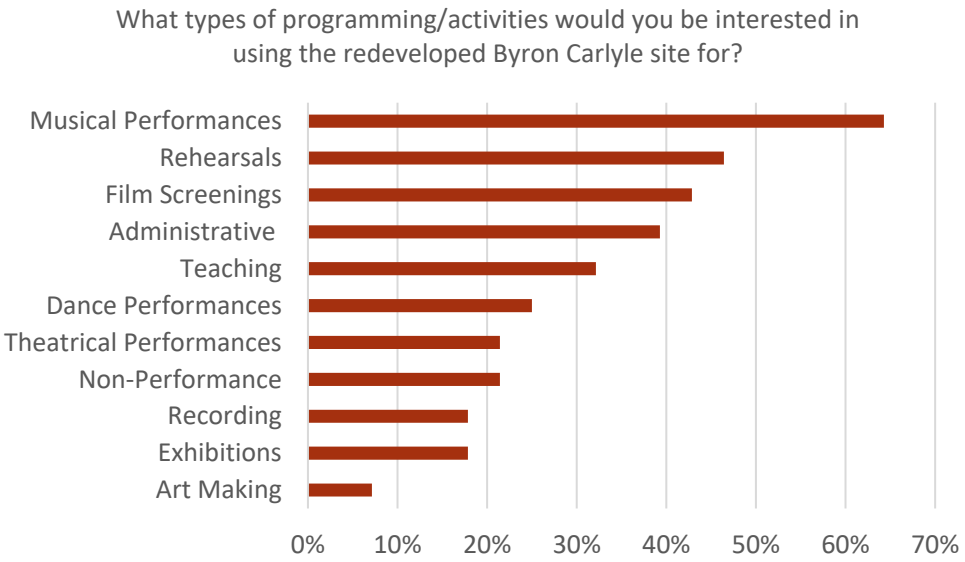
Activity Implications

A restored Byron Carlyle Theater is poised to be activated 365 calendar days a year with both anchor and iterant users. Anchor users are defined as those with regularly repeated activity at the Byron Carlyle Theater (over 60 use days a year). Iterant users are defined as those with annual activity at the Byron Carlyle Theater (under 40 use days a year).

Potential Anchor Users

- Area Stage
- Dance NOW! Miami
- O Cinema
- Miami Beach Classical Music Festival
- Miami Light Project, Inc.
- Nu Deco Ensemble
- Miami International Piano Festival
- Rhythm Foundation
- Young Musicians Unite

Potential Iterant Users: Bas Fisher Invitational, Miami Jewish Film Festival, Cinema Italy, Community Arts and Culture Inc, Cuban Classical Ballet of Miami, FUNDarte, Hued Songs, Inffinito Art Foundation, Live Arts Miami, Miami Chamber Music Society, Miami Children's Chorus, Miami Music Project, Miami Short Film Festival, OUTshine LGBTQ+ Film Festival, Seraphic Fire, South Beach Chamber Ensemble, South Florida Symphony Orchestra, YoungArts, as well as many other arts and cultural organizations and artists operating in Miami Beach.



With such a deep group of users, the Byron Carlyle Theater would be home to many artform genres, disciplines, and means of community participation. A performance may take place in a proscenium theatre, while an experimental performance happens in a black box theatre. A film may be screened in the film theatre while a rehearsal takes place in an adjacent space. Educational classes and music lessons may take place in the educational spaces, as students learn how to be sound engineers in the recording studio and lectures and presentations are offered for North Beach residents.

Space type	# of Interested Orgs	Annual Use Days
Proscenium stage with fixed seating	18	296
Cinema/film screening rooms with fixed seating	11	365
Rehearsal room	14	365
Black box/flexible performance space	15	308
Administrative/meeting space	10	365
Outdoor terrace/event space	9	65
Flat-floor, multi-use activity/event space	9	74
Recording studio	7	365
Classrooms/teaching studios	6	365
Gallery/exhibit space	3	365
Artist studios/maker space	3	365

Facility Implications

To ensure that the reimagined Byron Carlyle serves the artistic organizations and the North Beach community it should be comprised of spaces that meet the contemporary standards of performance.

A **proscenium theater** of at least 300 seats with appropriate dressing rooms and rest rooms with showers. It should have an orchestra pit that could be mechanically raised or lowered to be able to provide a pit or additional orchestra seating. If the orchestra floor had the ability to be easily converted to a flat floor, it could be used for immersive performances and special events such as gala dinners or community dance evenings.

A **black box** flexible space theater is desired by almost all potential users of the Byron. It should have a flexible seating system with a minimum capacity of 200. It could also be used as additional rehearsal space. It should have its own set of dressing rooms.

A **rehearsal room** with a flexible seating system with a minimum capacity of 50 is needed by almost all performing arts groups in the Miami Beach area and would be in great demand.

A **film theater** with a minimum capacity of 150 would be used up to 365 days a year, not only by O Cinema and the various Miami Beach Film Festivals, but also by a number of the performing arts groups who expressed an interest in film as an adjunct to their live performance.

A **recording studio** would be used full-time by at least two of the potential users and one (Young Musicians) indicated that they would fully equip the studio.

All groups expressed a desire for a **spacious lobby** and that it should contain a concessions area and / or café which they believe is an important part of the theater going experience. Furthermore, if the lobby were large enough it could also serve as an event space for opening night receptions.

All groups believe that a **gallery** and or "makers'" space would be a complement to the theater activities. Some would use it to stage non-traditional performances. One group would use it to create immersive art. None were in the business of mounting exhibitions.

At least 3 **classrooms** would support a complement the teaching activities offered by a number of the users.

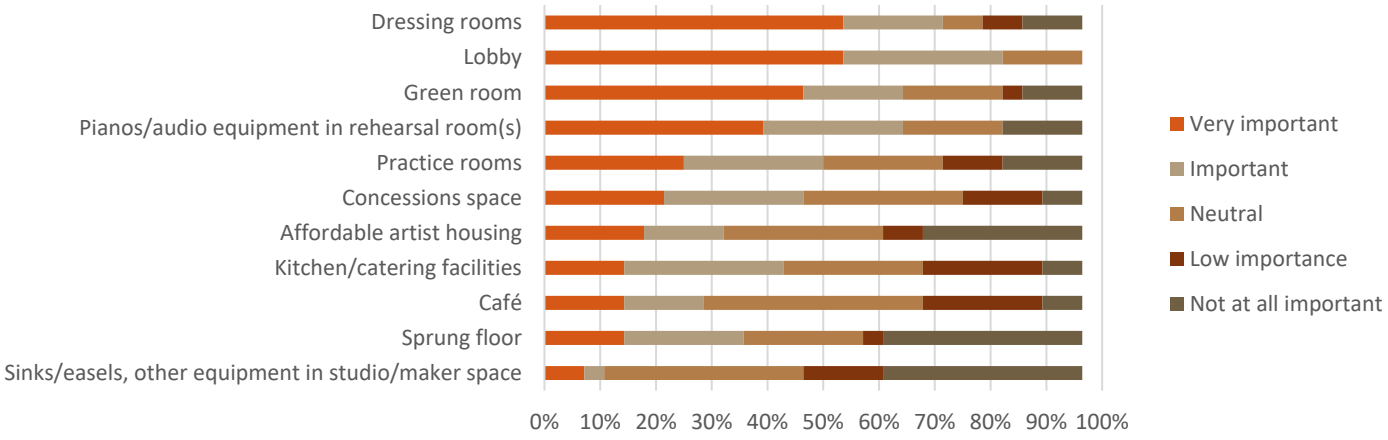
All groups expressed a desire for **office space** and/or **meeting space**.

A breakdown of the most used space types by the most active anchor users can be found below:

Space type	Potential Anchor Users	Capacity
Proscenium stage with fixed seating	Classical Music Festival, Area Stage, DanceNOW!, Nu Deco, Piano Fest, Young Musicians Unite, Rhythm Foundation	150-400 (250avg)
Cinema/film screening rooms with fixed seating	O Cinema, Young Musicians Unit, Rhythm Foundation	50-150 (90avg)
Rehearsal room	Classical Music Festival, Area Stage, DanceNOW!, Nu Deco, Miami Light Orchestra, Young Musicians Unite	30-50 (40avg)
Black box/flexible performance space	Classical Music Festival, Area Stage, Nu Deco, Miami Light Orchestra, Young Musicians Unite Rhythm Foundation	50-300 (160 avg)
Classrooms/teaching studios	Classical Music Festival, Nu Deco, Young Musicians Unite	3-4

In addition to the aforementioned spaces, equally important will be the ancillary spaces that offer the necessary support needs for organizations, artists, and participants.

How important would it be to have the following ancillary spaces and features available when using the redeveloped Byron Carlyle site?



Governance Recommendations

Governance of the Byron Carlyle Theater should reflect "success" as defined above, intentionally aligning desired outcomes with the City of Miami Beach agency best able to meet those outcomes. The City has asserted its interest in being the operator of the venue, playing a Host role to a set of users who would provide a variety of artistic programming and activities. The "cultural hub" would primarily serve the North Beach community, including both residents and local arts organizations. With these priorities in mind, AMS recommends the following:

Governance principles should be established and should reflect the key stakeholders and desired outcomes for the theater. These principles may be a lightly edited version of "success, defined" or could be crafted anew with City and public input. In either case, it is important that there be a set of values assertively describing how the theater – its operator and users – will work.

The operating unit should reside in a City agency or other enterprise that best matches the desired community and creative sector outcomes. Multiple City departments have an interest in the successful

operation of the Byron Carlyle Theater. The departments of Tourism and Culture, Economic Development, and Parks and Recreation may have strong alignment, for example. The new unit the City proposes to establish should be structured within the agency best aligned with the theater's critical inputs, like program providers, and the most important constituencies – the local community and arts organizations.

Community voice is a key to success. A governing body that advises, but does not directly supervise, the operating unit would be important. Such "advisory boards" are typically composed of up to 11 individuals with demonstrated expertise and interests in the work of the venue. For example, if the City resources that support the venue are derived from a Hotel Occupancy Tax, it would be appropriate to allocate a number of governing seats to local leaders in the hotel and leisure industry. Similarly, given the Byron Carlyle Theater is intended to provide space for local arts organizations, representatives of these organizations (potentially drawn from their Boards of Directors) would also be appropriate to include in the governing body. It will be important to create a transparent, efficient process by which people are invited to serve on the governing body. From past experience, the AMS team recommends that these be appointed positions, rather than elected.



Next Steps

This study substantiates the opportunity to reimagine the Byron Carlyle Theater as a cultural hub for North Beach. The venue's best and highest use would include performance and working/support space for local artists and organizations.

Following evaluation of any possible housing component related to this development opportunity, pursuant to City Commission's direction to Administration to draft and RFP to development partners for workforce housing, it is recommended that the City of Miami Beach complete tasks related to a business plan for the facility. This would include a detailed activity profile, *pro forma* financial forecasts, staffing recommendations, and operating cost analysis. In parallel, we recommend engaging an architect with expertise in the building type to advance a concept design.

In tandem, the City of Miami Beach should create and implement a transition plan to prepare to operate the facility.

Community input is an essential part of the development phase, to encourage the people and organizations who would be most impacted by the center are invited to voice their needs and aspirations. In the implementation and operating phases, it is critical to identify a skillful manager with knowledge of the arts, who will be able to understand and balance community needs, while stewarding the financial and real estate resources.

The City of Miami Beach is poised to build on longstanding commitment to the redevelopment of the Byron Carlyle Theater. This endeavor is envisioned to drive positive community outcomes, embodying the spirit and vibrancy of North Beach.