

COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Dan Gelber and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Raul J. Aguila, Interim City Manager

DATE: January 13, 2021

SUBJECT: **A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, APPROVING THE CONCEPTUAL DESIGN FOR G.O. BOND PROJECT #40 - 41ST STREET CORRIDOR (THE PROJECT); AND AUTHORIZING THE ADMINISTRATION TO DEVELOP AND ISSUE A REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ) FOR THE SELECTION OF A FIRM FOR THE DESIGN DEVELOPMENT, BID AND AWARD, AND CONSTRUCTION ADMINISTRATION SERVICES OF THE PROJECT; AND REQUIRING THAT THE RFQ BE TRANSMITTED TO THE CITY COMMISSION VIA LETTER TO COMMISSION (LTC) PRIOR TO ISSUANCE.**

BACKGROUND

On July 31, 2018, the Mayor's 41st Street Blue Ribbon Committee approved the 41st Street Urban Design Vision Plan by Alta Planning and Design and Gehl Architects. The Alta-Gehl Vision Plan was a culmination of a 4-week process that included extensive stakeholder engagement, several committee discussions, meetings with business owners and residents, by-passer questionnaires, pop-up workshops, a public survey, and a public charrette. The Alta-Gehl Vision Plan report provided an assessment and analysis of the 41st Street corridor, including traffic patterns and walkability studies. Ultimately, it proposed a broad set of recommendations that would help to improve the 41st Street corridor as a "town hub", with particular focus on improving the pedestrian experience. The report served as "a brief to inform a future G.O. Bond process".

The Vision Plan report made recommendations for three (3) proposed designs that would increase the shade tree canopy, allow for more open space, and improve human-scale lighting. Of the proposed options, the Mayor's 41st Street Blue Ribbon Committee and the Finance City Wide Projects Committee both selected Option #1, which focuses efforts on the removal of sidewalk clutter and the reprogramming of on-street parking.

During the September 12, 2018 City Commission meeting, the review of the plan was referred to the Land Use and Development Committee for review.

On November 6, 2018, Miami Beach voters approved the \$439 million G.O. Bond Program in a voter referendum. The Program was approved with a \$15 million budget allocated for quality-of-life improvements to the 41st Street Corridor. The project scope of work includes the renovation of lighting, landscaping, sidewalks, crosswalks, and street furnishings along the high-traffic corridor to enhance public safety, aesthetics, comfortability, and walkability for pedestrians.

On November 18, 2018 the Land Use and Development Committee reviewed the plan with Gehl Studio and members of the 41st Street Committee and recommended (1) approving Option #1 of the 41st Street Design and Vision Plan and (2) developing a multi-year work plan by referring to Finance and Citywide Projects Committee to prioritize the budgeted funds for implementation in the G.O. Bond Program.

On December 12, 2018, the Mayor and Commission approved the recommendation of the Land Use and Development Committee, 1) accepting Option #1 of the 41st Street Design and Vision Plan, and (2) referring the item to the Finance and Citywide Projects Committee to prioritize budgeted funds for implementation by the G.O. Bond Program.

On January 29, 2019, the Mayor and Commission establish the G.O. Bond Oversight Committee.

On March 13, 2019, the Mayor and Commission approved the issuance of Tranche 1 of the G.O. Bond Program, in the amount of \$151.4 million (net of issuance costs).

In April 2019, the Tranche 1 bonds sold on Wall Street. The G.O. Bond Program began project implementation the very next month in May, 2019.

In March 2020, the City engaged the design firm AECOM to produce conceptual streetscape design options for the \$15 million G.O. Bond-funded 41st Street Corridor Project.

Taking recommendations directly from the Alta-Gehl Vision Plan, AECOM was tasked with presenting conceptual design options to the community that are feasible and executable within the project budget, comply with Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) standards, fit within County guidelines of the Bus Express Rapid Transit plan (BERT) and City master plans, and which coordinate efforts with surrounding City projects.

To achieve that, the AECOM team interviewed multiple City departments as well as FDOT and Miami-Dade County representatives, reviewed several Master Plans and previous district studies, and presented to the members of the Mayor's 41st Street Blue Ribbon Committee.

On October 1, 2020, a virtual public meeting was held by the City where AECOM presented two different conceptual design schemes for a revitalized 41st Street corridor. A public Q&A session followed the presentation of the two design scheme options and then a public online survey was released and advertised for one full week. The survey asked a series of questions to determine design preferences and at the end, it asked respondents to vote for their preferred design scheme option overall. A total of 159 survey responses were submitted and an additional couple dozen email responses were received.

Results of the October 2020 AECOM design preference survey are as follows:

1. Which on-street parking option do you prefer?
 - Remove ALL on 41st (Scheme 1) – 43.3%
 - Keep some on 41st (Scheme 2) – 56.7%
2. Which sidewalk option do you prefer?
 - Widened sidewalk (Scheme 1)– 57.9%
 - Flexible Sidewalk/Parking (Scheme 2) – 42.4%
3. Which sidewalk material option do you prefer?
 - Branded paver design (Scheme 1): 57.6
 - Colored textured concrete (Scheme 2): 42.4%
4. Which shade option do you prefer?
 - Replace with shade trees (Scheme 1) – 38.6%
 - Keep royal palm trees (Scheme 2) – 61.4%

5. Which seating option do you prefer?
 - Fixed seating throughout (Scheme 1) – 42.9%
 - Fixed seating at midblock (Scheme 2)– 57.1%
6. Would you like to see a gateway feature?
 - Yes – 78.3%
 - No – 21.7%
7. Would you prefer more bicycle parking on 41st Street or on the side streets?
 - More bike parking on 41st Street only – 10.1%
 - More bike parking on side streets only – 50.3%
 - More bike parking on both 41st Street and side streets – 39.5%
8. Which streetscape scheme is your preference overall?
 - Scheme 1 – 49%
 - Scheme 2 – 51%

On October 15, 2020, AECOM presented the results of the survey and open feedback sessions to the Mayor's 41st Street Blue Ribbon Committee. Based on community and committee feedback, AECOM proposed an idea to create a third hybrid design that would combine the preferred elements of both Scheme 1 and Scheme 2. The Committee made a motion supporting the production of the third hybrid design.

On October 22, 2020, AECOM presented the same survey results presentation to the G.O. Bond Oversight Committee, which also made a motion to support the development of a third hybrid design.

On November 6, 2020, AECOM presented their final conceptual design, based on the third hybrid design, to the Neighborhoods & Quality of Life Committee (NQLC). The final product was detailed in a presentation and video flyover. The NQLC responded with the following direction to City staff:

- Bring the item to be heard by the full Commission at its December 9 Commission meeting.
- Perform informational outreach to business and property owners in the 41st Street business district to raise their awareness of the project, prior to the December 9 Commission meeting.

For the remainder of November 2020, the Economic Development Department distributed a letter (via certified postal mail) and e-mail to businesses and property owners in the 41st Street corridor. The letter and e-mail included links to the project presentations, flyover video, direct contact information, and an invitation to get involved in the discussions led by the Mayor's 41st Street Blue Ribbon Committee. Over 180 property and business owners are confirmed to have received the certified letter, and 69 businesses have received information about the project via e-mail.

On December 1, 2020, AECOM presented the final conceptual streetscape design to the Mayor's 41st Street Blue Ribbon Committee. After a lengthy discussion, the Committee passed a motion to support the AECOM conceptual streetscape design plan, with the added request to examine the royal palm trees with a goal of removing no more than 10% to 15% of them.

ANALYSIS

There have been three (3) major topics of discussion around the proposed conceptual design. They include on-street parking, trees & palms, and fixed seating.

On-Street Parking:

The proposed conceptual design maintains 70% of the existing parking spaces along 41st Street,

and 94% of the parking spaces on the side streets. While there was a strong desire to widen sidewalks along 41st Street, there was also great concern for the removal of most or all parking spaces. A parking study of the corridor showed that there is surplus parking available in nearby parking lots and garages that can compensate for the on-street parking spots removed. However, it also found that some on-street parking spaces should remain to maintain public parking availability during peak use hours. **For these reasons, AECOM’s final hybrid design proposes to widen sidewalks where possible, while also keeping most on-street parking spaces available for public parking.**

Trees & Palms:

The proposed conceptual design includes a total of 332 trees and palms, which is a greater overall tree count than what exists today. The design maintains 72% of the royal palms on 41st Street and 62% of the existing ornamental palms. The design also recommends the planting of 125 new canopy trees along 41st Street and the side streets. The total number and percentage of Palms and Other Trees shown on the conceptual design is as follows on Chart 1:

Chart 1

Total Palms	175	53%
Total Shade & Other Trees	157	47%
TOTAL	332	100%

Since many stakeholders have expressed strong feelings for keeping as many royal palms in place as possible, the design team is only proposing to remove those that are either ill placed (causing narrow pinch points or unnecessary clutter to a clear pedestrian pathway), hazardous (with trip hazards at overgrown roots and heavy branches falling from above), or unhealthy (diseased conditions that contribute negatively to surrounding environments). The selective removal of some royal palms is also critical to the integrity of the design, which requires the removal of clutter, the widening of sidewalks, and the creation of programmable space.

It should be noted that the Urban Forestry Master Plan categorizes the 41st Street Corridor as a *Highly Visible and High-Profile Corridor*. The Plan makes the following recommendations for this corridor typology:

- Require the extensive use of green infrastructure (suspended pavements) to provide soil volume for proper root growth;
- Consider visibility, safety and building protrusions: select species that can provide clearances of minimum of 14 feet when mature;
- Consider reducing spacing between selected species to provide greater shade;
- Consider reducing loading zone areas and repurposing them for bulb-out and street trees;
- Diversifying the street tree palette to include species regarded as ‘expensive’ or ‘luxury’;
- Do no use self-cleaning trees or palms with a high index of litter, this includes royal palms;
- Recommended predominant species category include large canopy trees with narrow to oval canopies and estate type palms that are not self-cleaning.

The Urban Forestry Master Plan is a guiding document. The proposed AECOM’s final hybrid design provides a compromise between the community’s desire to maintain royal palms and the Urban Forestry Master Plan’s recommendations for increasing walkability and diversity. It should be noted that during the next phase of design, a certified arborist will assess the condition of the existing tree canopy. Additional trees may need to be removed and relocated during construction due to health, condition, and/or conflict with design. A summary showing the total palm and tree count breakdown under this conceptual design is indicated below in Chart 2:

Chart 2

TYPES	SUBTOTAL	TOTAL	% REMAINING
Royal Palms to Remain	146		
Royal Palms Removed	58		
Subtotal Royal Palms		204	72%
Ornamental Palms to Remain	29		
Ornamental Palms to be Removed	18		
Subtotal Ornamental Palms		47	62%
Canopy Trees Remaining	32		
Canopy Trees to be Removed	4		
Ornamental Trees Removed	31		
Subtotal Other Trees		67	48%
TOTAL PALMS AND TREES TODAY		318	
LESS PALMS AND TREES TO BE REMOVED		-111	
SUBTOTAL ALL REMAINING		207	65%
PLUS CANOPY TREES TO BE ADDED		125	
TOTAL PALMS AND TREES*		332	

*Final count subject to further analysis during the design development phase.
Total count is for 41st Street and the Side streets.

Fixed Seating:

The proposed conceptual design includes fixed seating walls at four (4) mid-block locations. The four (4) seat wall locations will offer pedestrians with a place to stop, rest and relax, on their way to or from their destination. The seat walls also exist as a plant divider and bollard that separates the pedestrian area from vehicular traffic. **While some stakeholders have expressed concern for loitering at fixed seating locations, the seat walls can be designed in a way that deters this behavior.** There are many creative and successful strategies to do so.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the approval of AECOM’s hybrid conceptual design. The design takes into consideration the established project budget and is a balanced approach solution that meets the key objectives of the project, including:

- Widening of sidewalks and removal of clutter to allow for clearer pedestrian pathways.
- Reprogramming of on-street parking to allow for more pedestrian and flexible use space.
- Expanding the shady tree canopy to increase walkability.
- Installing seating along the corridor to give pedestrians a place to stop and sit.

CONCLUSION

The Administration recommends approval of the conceptual streetscape design, as presented by AECOM. Additionally, we recommend that the City Commission authorize us to proceed to issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for the selection of a firm for the Design Development, Bid and Award, and Construction Administration of the Project. This approval will allow G.O. Bond Project #40: 41st Street Corridor to advance into its next phase of design which will be managed by the Office of Capital Improvement Projects.

SUPPORTING SURVEY DATA

Results from the 2019 Community Satisfaction Survey show that 64.4% of residents desire more walking and biking friendly streets / paths.

ATTACHMENTS:

Conceptual Design Presentation and Video Flyover can be viewed at link below:

<https://www.miamibeachfl.gov/residents/neighborhood-associations/neighborhood-affairs-division/active-projects/other/41-street-revitalization/>