

AGENDA

Arts, Culture & Entertainment Committee Meeting Crafting Cultural Collaborations (C3)

Downtown Miami: It All Starts Here

Miami's Greater Downtown history was uniquely woven with a pioneering spirit and innovative culture. Together we can honor and build upon this creative legacy, weaving the fabric of the future of our Downtown.

Alyce M. Robertson Conference Room
201 South Biscayne Blvd., Suite 2600
Miami, FL 33131
Friday, May 22, 2026
9:30 a.m.

Arts, Culture & Entertainment Committee Members In Attendance:

Martu Freeman-Parker
Amal Solh Kabbani

Arts, Culture & Entertainment Committee Members Absent:

Arva Suzanne Graham Gibson, Chairwoman
Jarred Diamond
Maryam Laguna Borrego

Board Members in Attendance:

Gary Ressler

Staff Members in Attendance:

Christina Crespi
Kim Hills
Yami Roa
Elvira Manon
Maximo Venturini
And others as listed in the sign in and zoom sign in report

1. WELCOME & ROLL CALL

- Welcome – Martu Freeman-Parker, Acting Chairwoman, Miami DDA
- Roll Call & Public Comment – Elvira Manon, Miami DDA Executive Board Secretary
Mr. James Torres, President of the Downtown Neighbors Alliance, provided public comment. Mr. Torres stated that his comments related to the upcoming FY 2026-2027 budget and requested various items, including the Executive Director's employment agreement, Executive Director attendance information for the prior twelve months, information regarding gifts received, absences and vacation time taken, and contracts or proposed contracts tied to rbb Communications. It was clarified during the discussion that public records requests should be handled through the appropriate public records process and that

comments should relate to the Arts, Culture & Entertainment Committee agenda. Mr. Torres concluded by advising the Committee to be careful when approving budgets.

Ms. Alexis Garcia provided public comment. Ms. Garcia stated that she is a Hollywood producer, former talent agent, former talent lawyer, and Miami native who returned to Miami approximately four and a half years ago. She discussed the challenges of attracting more production work to Miami due to the lack of production incentives and stated that she believes future content or film-related allocations could be impactful. Ms. Garcia stated that she could structure and stretch potential funding in a meaningful way and expressed her interest in supporting the district and the City.

Ms. Dilia Alexander, representing Filmgate Miami, provided public comment virtually. Ms. Alexander thanked the Miami DDA for its leadership and support of Downtown Miami's creative economy. She stated that Filmgate Miami is a long-time grantee and a nonprofit organization based in Downtown Miami that has supported the independent creative economy of Florida for nearly fifteen years. Ms. Alexander announced that on June 20, Filmgate Miami would host the Filmgate Florida Production Summit, a statewide gathering of film commissioners, producers, entertainment leaders, policymakers, developers, and creators to discuss the future of film and media production in Florida. She stated that filmmaking is not only culture but also economic development because it creates jobs, activates local businesses, drives tourism, attracts talent, and positions cities as global centers for innovation and creativity. Ms. Alexander stated that Miami has the talent, diversity, architecture, and cultural energy productions are seeking, but needs stronger infrastructure and support systems. She further stated that Filmgate Miami is building a pipeline through its feature film fellowship, which selected twelve feature films from across Florida, and that two projects will receive seed funding this year. She invited the Miami DDA to continue supporting the vision of making Downtown Miami a hub for film, immersive media, artificial intelligence, and next-generation storytelling.

Public comment was then closed.

2. PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS

- **FIFA World Cup Concert Series – Charlie Giaimo & Lisle Bowen, COO, Friends of the Underline**
Ms. Kim Hills introduced the presentation by Friends of the Underline. Ms. Hills explained that Friends of the Underline is a Downtown Creative Collaborator Grant recipient and was presenting because its approved project had changed. She stated that the Grant Review Committee members who originally reviewed the project, including Ms. Renee Pesci attending by Zoom and Mr. Hector Mendez in attendance, had also reviewed the revised presentation and would provide a recommendation.

Mr. Lisle Bowen, Chief Marketing Officer of Friends of the Underline, presented with Mr. Charlie Giaimo. Mr. Bowen clarified that the proposed programming was not intended to be solely a FIFA World Cup Concert Series, but rather part of Friends of the Underline's Levitt music series. He stated that Friends of the Underline planned to host two concerts on July 18 and July 19 in Brickell, in the Urban Gym area of The Underline, in collaboration with World Cup watch parties.

Mr. Bowen stated that Friends of the Underline was working with Art House, a well-known Miami music studio led by Grammy-winning producer Julio Reyes, to elevate the music experience. He explained that the events would include World Cup watch parties for the bronze medal game on July 18 and the gold medal game on July 19, followed immediately by concerts. The goal was to activate the space between

the Interstage/community screen area and the Urban Gym and create a holistic experience for residents and visitors.

Mr. Bowen stated that the events would be free of charge, although ticketed, and would include food and beverage vendors, entertainment, art, and family-friendly elements. He stated that the artists and DJs would be family-friendly and that Friends of the Underline intended to curate programming appropriate for all ages.

Mr. Bowen also discussed the marketing strategy. He stated that the community outreach team had begun working with local buildings in Downtown and Brickell, including homeowners associations and building management, to promote the events directly to area residents through newsletters, digital screens, and similar outreach channels. He also stated that Friends of the Underline had a comprehensive marketing and content strategy to support the activations before, during, and after the events.

Ms. Renee Pesci asked about the event times. Mr. Bowen stated that the July 18 watch party would begin at approximately 5:00 p.m., and the July 19 watch party would begin at approximately 3:00 p.m. He stated that the concerts would follow the games, with some possible overlap depending on the runtime of each game. It was discussed that the Saturday concert would begin around 11:30 p.m., and the Sunday concert would begin around 5:30 p.m., with an estimated two-hour concert window.

Ms. Pesci expressed concern that the revised proposal significantly changed the originally approved grant. She stated that the original proposal was for a five-weekend multicultural community festival that was highly family-friendly and intended to strengthen neighborhood and community engagement. She stated that the revised proposal appeared to be a different event focused around the FIFA World Cup and potentially a different audience, with more emphasis on tourism and strategic positioning.

Mr. Bowen responded that the revised project would still offer a family-friendly and culturally diverse environment. He stated that the music would be clean, family zones would be established, and vendors would be curated to support the experience. He further stated that the World Cup component would still lend itself to a diverse cultural experience.

The Committee asked about the original dates for the previously approved programming. Mr. Giaimo stated that the original series was intended to begin in mid-April and continue into May. Mr. Bowen stated that the change was made because Friends of the Underline wanted to combine experiences and avoid spreading its team too thin, with the goal of creating a stronger overall event.

Concern was raised that the revised project changed the dates, reduced the number of activation dates, and was being proposed during a time when other FIFA-related activities would be taking place in Downtown Miami. It was also noted that the original project contemplated multiple dates activating local areas, while the revised project concentrated programming into two dates. A concern was also raised regarding the value of maintaining the original grant amount given the changed scope.

Mr. Bowen stated that the FIFA Fan Zone would no longer be active by the dates of the Friends of the Underline events. He also stated that the location had not changed because the revised project remained in the same general area as originally proposed. Mr. Giaimo clarified that, although the original proposal contemplated five dates, the awarded grant amount was lower than the full amount requested, which had already resulted in a reduced scope. Mr. Giaimo further stated that the revised proposal would activate a larger venue, including the Urban Gym north of Southwest 8th Street and the Interstage area south of that location, effectively doubling the activation footprint from the original proposal.

The Committee also asked about weather and hurricane season contingency plans. Mr. Bowen stated that Friends of the Underline's leadership, facilities, and security teams were scenario-planning for rain and hurricane threats. He stated that rain dates were being considered and that the stage design would include protective elements, such as covered staging, to protect artists and equipment in the event of rain. Mr. Bowen referenced a prior event where rain was successfully managed because equipment and performers were protected. Mr. Giaimo added that, because the proposal was part of the Levitt Block music series, Friends of the Underline would have dates beyond July that could potentially provide flexibility in the event of weather-related changes.

Ms. Pesci stated that she would recommend approving the grant change but reducing the award amount to \$10,000 because the revised proposal was significantly different from the originally approved project. She stated that even if the original grant award had been lower than requested, the grantee would have needed to submit and obtain approval for changes to the approved grant scope.

Further discussion followed regarding whether the revised project was being characterized as a FIFA World Cup Concert Series or as part of the Levitt music series. Mr. Bowen stated that the title of the presentation was not intended to characterize the grant as a FIFA World Cup Music Series and reiterated that the concerts and FIFA watch parties were separate experiences, although they would occur on the same dates and in overlapping areas.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to move the item forward to the Board with a recommendation to approve the revised project at a reduced amount of \$10,000. The transcript did not clearly reflect a formal Committee vote or identify a second to the recommendation.

- Various Presentations/Discussions – Kim Hills, Director Community Engagement & Communications, Miami DDA

- 2026-2027 Grant Guidelines

Ms. Hills presented the proposed 2026-2027 Downtown Creative Collaborators Grant guidelines. She first thanked the Downtown Creative Collaborator grantees in attendance for attending the required meetings necessary to be considered for the next grant process.

Ms. Hills stated that the Miami DDA would continue with three general grant tiers but that, for the upcoming cycle, all legacy grantees would be required to reapply. She stated that the purpose of requiring legacy grantees to reapply was to ensure that legacy grants remain aligned with the Miami DDA's goals, values, mission, and vision. Ms. Hills explained that not all legacy grants may remain legacy grants and that some may instead become part of the regular Downtown Creative Collaborator Grant process.

Ms. Hills stated that the application would include three regular tiers and a fourth tier for legacy grants. She clarified that applicants who are not current legacy grant recipients should not select Tier 4 because they would not be considered for that category. She stated that there were fourteen current legacy grantees and that Miami DDA staff was aware of which organizations qualified for consideration under that category.

Ms. Hills reviewed the funding priorities, which include activating outdoor public spaces such as rooftops, parks, and open-air venues; fostering community engagement; offering family-friendly

programming; highlighting Miami's global identity; educating the public on culture and history; promoting public transportation; promoting Downtown Miami restaurants; and providing resident value.

Ms. Hills reviewed the application timeline. She stated that the grant application process would open on Wednesday, July 1, 2026, and close on Monday, August 17, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. She stated that all grant applications must be submitted through the Submittable platform and that Miami DDA staff does not control the third-party platform. She strongly advised applicants to keep copies of their submissions. Ms. Hills further stated that the annual participant meeting would be held on July 13, 2026, at 2:00 p.m., in person and via Zoom, and that applicants should review the application in advance and come prepared with questions. She stated that the information would also be placed on the Miami DDA website for review by those unable to attend.

During the discussion, a Committee Member asked about the evaluation criteria for legacy grantees and whether specific deliverables would be expected and itemized in the application. Ms. Crespi and Ms. Hills explained that the Miami DDA evaluates continued growth, engagement, return on investment, crowd participation, promotion of Downtown restaurants, and economic impact within the district. Ms. Hills stated that the Miami DDA would use Placer AI data to evaluate attendance and the impact of events on the district, including comparisons to prior-year activity, particularly for legacy events that occur during similar time periods each year.

Ms. Hills stated that the rubric includes metrics related to economic impact, community outreach, and promotional efforts. She also stated that, beginning with this cycle, grantees would be required to allocate at least ten percent of their awarded grant amount toward marketing. She explained that the intent is to ensure that grantees are also responsible for promoting their own events, rather than relying solely on Miami DDA promotion. Committee Members expressed support for the evaluation process and interest in being involved in the review process.

Ms. Hills then reviewed allowable and non-allowable expenses. She emphasized that payments to the event producer, as well as full-time or part-time staff not hired specifically for the event, would not be allowable expenses. She also stated that, to receive the full awarded amount, a grantee must complete the number of events and programming approved in the funding application. Any reduction in the number of events or changes to approved programming may affect the awarded amount.

Ms. Hills reviewed the proposed change process. She stated that if there are any changes to an event date, venue, or programming, the grantee must notify the Miami DDA in writing at least six weeks prior to the scheduled event date through Submittable. All changes must be submitted through Submittable and approved by an authorized Miami DDA representative. Changes to event programming would require a presentation to the Arts, Culture & Entertainment Committee for review and approval. Failure to comply within the required timeframe could result in grant forfeiture.

Ms. Hills also stated that if a grantee schedules an event during a major holiday period, such as the holiday season, Valentine's Day, Miami Art Week, or a major event period such as FIFA, and later changes the event date, the grantee may not be eligible to apply for a grant in the following year.

Ms. Hills reviewed communication requirements. She stated that the Miami DDA will periodically send requests for required documentation and updates and that grantees are responsible for monitoring communications and responding within specified deadlines. Failure to respond within the required timeframe would result in a ten percent reduction of the grant award. Award letter acceptance and final report receipt confirmation would each require a response within two weeks. A grantee that is unresponsive for more than thirty days would have the grant deemed forfeited.

Ms. Crespi commented that the grant team has been lenient and gracious with time and deliverables compared with other grant programs. She stated that grantees are not being asked to provide certain items, such as insurance, before applying, and encouraged grantees to work with the Miami DDA team so the program can continue to operate efficiently. She also noted that when grantees complete required steps on time, the Miami DDA is able to review performance and issue reimbursement checks relatively quickly for a government agency. Ms. Crespi thanked Ms. Hills and her team for creating parameters that help manage future changes and protect the grant process.

- **2026-2027 Budget**

The Committee then discussed the Arts, Culture & Entertainment budget for FY 2026-2027. Ms. Crespi stated that the budget would include dollars for activations and grants to support upcoming applications.

Ms. Crespi also discussed the annual holiday banners and décor program, including the annual holiday event that lights up Flagler Street. She stated that the prior year's event was successful, with approximately 2,000 people at the event and close to 20,000 people over the course of approximately three weeks of activations and holiday programming. She stated that the Miami DDA intended to continue the holiday programming and that the related allocation was included.

In response to public comments regarding film and content-related support, Ms. Crespi asked whether the Committee wanted to consider adding a film-related item to the budget. She stated that the Miami DDA had previously allocated approximately \$400,000 several years earlier to begin a program or fund that could potentially be used as seed money to raise additional private dollars and operate as an incentive. The Committee discussed the idea of earmarking funds for film and media-related support, including the Miami Film Festival, Filmgate Miami, and other interested organizations.

The Committee discussed the County's film-related program and the need to reopen lines of communication regarding film production incentives and opportunities. Committee Members expressed general support for adding a film-related line item or earmark to the budget for future program development. Ms. Crespi stated that the item would be added to the budget for further consideration.

Ms. Crespi noted that the budget would be discussed again at the upcoming Board meeting in connection with strategic planning and consensus-building around priorities. She stated that the tax

roll would be received June 1, after which revenues would be added and the proposed budget would come back in June for further review.

3. MEETING ADJOURNMENT

*Next Meeting: Monday, July 13, 2026, at 9:30 a.m.
2026-2027 Downtown Creative Collaborator Grant Participant Meeting*