

Downtown Miami creating alternative to absent Art Basel

By KYLEA HENSELER

With the year winding down, Miami's Downtown Development Authority is ramping up funding for key initiatives and new activations.

The organization will sponsor "Alt-B," a play on words for "Alternative Basel," which will grant funds to local artists to activate storefronts downtown throughout December. Executive Director Christina Crespi told Miami Today. At least \$50,000 and possibly more, she said, will be granted to artists who will take over vacant storefronts on Flagler Street and adjacent roads to showcase their art in the windows. Installations, she said, will vary from still art to dancers, and interest in the project is booming.

Each artist, she said, will be given \$2,500 for an activation, and each window will feature QR codes that visitors can scan to access information about both the artists and the property.

"We really wanted to plan a unique activation space that the community can enjoy that will

bring back a vibe to downtown," she said. Festivities will likely begin the week of Dec. 7 and run for a month, bringing tourists and locals alike to window shop and patronize local restaurants and retailers.

Dec. 11, she said, will also see the return of "DwnTwn Movie Nights," the development authority's bi-weekly cinema series at Maurice A. Ferré Park. The season's first production, "Elf," will be screened at 6 p.m. Dec. 11, and patrons will have to reserve tickets in advance and observe social distancing protocols.

Like "Alt-B," Ms. Crespi said, the movie series will promote a community feeling while providing patrons an excuse to shop and dine out. Before Covid, she said, the authority had hosted food trucks and happy hours to coincide with the events, which often drew a crowd.

Miami Today reported in September that the authority had planned to launch a 60-day pilot with delivery service UberEats that would have reduced some fees for local restaurants, but Ms.



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Crespi said the pilot has not yet begun and details are still being negotiated with the company.

Throughout the year, the organization granted over \$1 million to various programs including initiatives to distribute masks

and hand sanitizer and provide local businesses with chairs and umbrellas for expanded outdoor dining.

Additionally, Ms. Crespi said, it granted \$180,000 to Camillus House and Lotus House, two organizations working to combat homelessness in Miami.

The authority, she said, has been working with Camillus House for over ten years to provide employment as landscapers or part of a "cleanup crew." \$40,000 of the grant, she said, will go toward buying 75 beds at Camillus, which is vital, as having available beds at shelters allows police and outreach workers to offer homeless individuals shelter. Another \$40,000 will go toward their "Day Center Program, and \$50,000 will be put toward a new Lotus House pilot program that will provide outreach and shelter beds to women and children.

As part of its "Follow the Sun," campaign, the authority is also granting \$150,000 to private equity firm Blackstone, which has plans to open an office in downtown Miami that

is to create at least 200 jobs for employees earning an average of \$200,000 annually. The company, Ms. Crespi said, held a webinar in collaboration with the development authority to explain its decision to expand to Miami. A chief reason, she said, is the belief in Miami's diverse and growing talent pool.

Under the authority's incentive fund program, Miami Today reported in August, new or relocating companies can earn cash grants of \$500 per employee for the first 50 jobs, \$350 per employee for the next 50, and \$250 per employee after that. To qualify, a company must within three years create at least ten fulltime jobs, the average salary of which has to be at least 125% of the city, county or state average.

According to a spokesperson, Blackstone is hoping to hire 70% locals for the Miami office, rounding out the operation with transplants from other cities who will help get the new office going and contribute to the economy by buying homes and patronizing local businesses.

Monthly virtual town hall meetings target Doral executives

By ANA SOLER

In August, influential Hispanic business group CAMACOL expanded its services in west Miami-Dade with a collaborative venture with the City of Doral. Three months later, officials say their goal to help steer the local economy through the pandemic and beyond still stands.

CAMACOL, or the Latin Chamber of Commerce, is one of the largest minority chambers in the country and the largest Hispanic business organization in the state. According to its website, its programs "strengthen local business activity, promote economic development, facilitate international commerce, and serve the civic needs of the community and state" and have been doing so for almost five decades.

Doral, according to the city's 2019 economic report and a study by the Florida International University Metropolitan Center, has one of the fastest-growing economies locally and is responsible for

53,151 jobs, \$5.4 billion in sales, and 4% of the total gross product in Miami-Dade since 2011. It is especially successful in hospitality and international trade.

The pandemic took a toll on that success, but Doral is now bouncing back, said Manuel Pila, city economic development chief.

"Our restaurants, hotels, gyms, events facilities, and other industries that are oriented toward serving the public have experienced the most difficulties," he said. "Even our trade and logistics sectors have been affected, especially in the earlier phase of the pandemic, though we have seen more bounce-back in the past few months in those general categories."

The introduction of CAMACOL, Mr. Pila said, has helped bring to Doral a new network of executives with experience in different industries that can help businesses reinvent themselves amidst the pandemic.

One of those executives is the CEO, Pete De La Torre, who has more than 20 years' experience working in the Doral business sector, launching the Business Forum Group at Doral in 2016.

"What we are trying to do here [with CAMACOL Doral] is first and foremost work with businesses at all levels: large, medium, and small, but especially focusing on the small businesses that have been impacted in a very tough way because of Covid-19," he said.

Mr. Pila said the group is offering monthly virtual town hall meetings on various topics — including hospitality, real estate and healthcare — to help local business owners and entrepreneurs.

"These events have offered insight into the state of these industries in our city, and the ways in which some key movers and shakers are responding to the pandemic," he said.

And Doral Mayor Juan Carlos Bermudez said the partnership is a boon for all parties involved.

"With this partnership with an organization with such good history like CAMACOL, we want to give businesses the assets to not just deal with this pandemic, but to learn how to get better once we get out of it. My hope for the future is that we have a true partner in the non-profit business community who can give these resources to our city's businesses," he said.

Mr. De La Torre acknowledged that the impacts of the partnership are yet to be seen, but he remains

optimistic that they will be seeing results by the first quarter of 2021. However, he said, there has been tremendous interest and press coverage of the virtual events.

"There's not a lot of results so far, because it is still early, but when you look at the combined experience of the team at CAMACOL, including myself, we believe we've got a track record of being able to help businesses in the past. Now with this new initiative, we want to continue doing it and listening

to what the businesses really want and need," he said.

The overall goal, said Mr. De La Torre, is to help maintain Doral's upward trajectory.

"Doral is the fastest-growing city in the state and probably one of the fastest in the country, but they don't have an economic development department, so their growth is more organic," he said. "What we want to do in the future is continue that growth, but in a more planned type of way."

CITY OF MIAMI, FLORIDA NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

A public hearing will be held by the City Commission of the City of Miami, Florida on December 10, 2020, at 9:00 a.m., in the City Commission Chambers at City Hall, 3500 Pan American Drive, Miami, Florida, 33133, for the purpose of waiving the requirements of obtaining sealed bids for the sole source purchase of twenty-five (25) Helmet Communications Kits with Related Equipment, to replace the existing kits that are no longer compatible with the new radio system, from PVP Communications, Inc., located at 2310 205th Street, Torrance, CA 90501, is the sole provider of this purchase, for the Department of Police.

Inquiries from other potential sources of such a system who feel that they might be able to satisfy the City's requirements for this item may contact Justin Griffin, Senior Procurement Contracting Officer, at the City of Miami's Department of Procurement at (305) 416-1949.

All interested persons are invited to appear at the meeting and may be heard with respect to the proposed ordinance. Should any person desire to appeal any decision of the City Commission with respect to any matter to be considered at this meeting, that person shall ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made including all testimony and evidence upon which any appeal may be based (F.S. 286.0105).

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, persons needing special accommodations to participate in this proceeding may contact the Office of the City Clerk at (305) 250-5361 (Voice) no later than five (5) business days prior to the proceeding. TTY users may call via 711 (Florida Relay Service) no later than five (5) business days prior to the proceeding.



#33673

Todd B. Hannan
City Clerk



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Juan Carlos Bermudez