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Sent: Saturday, January 24, 2009 2:03 PM
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Subject: Cultural Arts in Miami Beach

Dear Mayor, Commissioners, and City Manager:

February 13th, 2009 brings to a close the term for the Mayor's Blue Ribbon CANDO committee. The Committee collectively feels they have accomplished what they set out to do and without further commitment from the city, they can go no further.

I know how important Cultural Arts are to our Collins Park Neighborhood since all but one block sits in the CANDO Arts District. I know you all realize its importance as well. In bad economic times Arts are the first funding areas to be slashed by everyone, both private and public. Please remember that the Collins Park Cultural Campus is poised to become the third destination in South Beach and the one that we have all the opportunities to do right because we are building it from the ground up. You can make this happen. Find the funding. Create the tax. Do whatever it takes.

Look how Miami City Ballet took the front page of the Miami Herald today vaulting our already prominent city into the cultural forefront of the largest city in our United States. You can't buy that. You can only earn it and Miami City Ballet certainly did. That alone should make everyone of you proud that you allocate funds to Miami City Ballet. We own their home and they bring great returns on this city's investment in both tangible and intangible ways. This same thing can happen with the Bass Museum and S oBe Music Institute. It is surely going to happen with the New World Symphony and their new Frank Gehry building. The added art venues at both the Botanical Garden and the Regional Library show how important Art and Culture are to this community.

You need to do more.

You need to fund more.

Don't make excuses.

Think outside the box.

Find a way.

A simple way is to add a bed tax to fund the Arts like they do in New York City but that would be a battle in itself. I personally feel that tourists would not stay away and go elsewhere based on a 1/2 cent or penny tax. Tourists still go to New York City, don't they? You could help make Miami Beach a cultural destination like Manhattan is. Plus we have better weather and a beach, a winning combination year round. Every major metropolitan area has a theater district, not South Florida. We are poised to take the leadership right here in the CANDO District of Miami Beach. We have the restaurants, hotels and the most walking friendly city in Florida. Capitalize on this. Give us a Cultural Center. Give us a Theater District. You are about to reopen the Little Stage Theater at the Carl Fisher Complex. The Collins Park Rotunda is ripe for development through an RFP as a theater in the round. You have already renovated the Colony Theater. We have the Jackie Gleason and Lincoln Theaters. This is a great start. Build the second addition to the Bass Museum and there would be another theater space there.

This City is already trying to create an image with CANDO but an image isn't enough. Don't sell us short. This is the way to greatness and will solidify our community as a cultural destination that will bring prosperity to our city for generations to come. You have the opportunity and chance to do this. Cease it.

Thank you for listening. I hope I struck a cord in all of you on the importance of Art and Culture in Miami Beach, specifically Collins Park and how important it is to fund our not-for-profits. They are the cornerstones of our cultural community.

Ray Breslin

www.collinspark.us