

Sundial sculpture will join clock on Village Green

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Location, location, location isn't just a mantra for real estate – it's important when picking the right spot for the Key Biscayne Art in Public Places Board's next installation, too.

The Village Council approved Miami artist Jim Drain's "Pleated Sundial" Tuesday, October 22, and agreed to use \$69,800 from their Capital Improvements Plan to pay for the project. However, Council members had some concerns about the proposed site for the piece, and the Art Board's consultant promised to work with Village officials

to find the ideal location.

After Council member Michael Davey noted the proposed site, next to the tot lot on the southwest end of the Village Green, may be

too shady for a sundial and could also turn the piece into a danger for curious children who use the artwork as a jungle gym, Art Board consultant Cesar Trasobares said

he's happy to work on moving the piece elsewhere in the park.

"I think those are points well taken. That will be the first step – to rethink the location," he said.

"We're open to working with any of you to make sure it's in the best place."

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LED lights will illuminate sundial at night to continue effect

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At the suggestion of Council member Michael Kelly, Village Manager John Gilbert said he will ask the Village's insurance vendor to send a safety expert to evaluate the piece and its location.

The Art Board proposed the tot lot location because they want "Pleated Sundial" – also called "Pleated Gnomon;" Trasobares said the title is still evolving – to become a source of learning for children who gather at the playground. A report to the Council notes, "The structure's dynamic, changing colors and shadows and its welcoming bench/base are fitting with the play, observation and learning activities that take place in that corner of the park."

According to information from Drain, the project will be a vertical structure built out of stacked blocks of white marble terrazzo embedded with solid rods of colored glass. It will sit atop a base that can double as a bench. Through the day, the sun will illuminate the rods, "creating a matrix of shimmering dots of colored light" that will be reflected onto stainless steel pleats separating each column of stacked terrazzo. At night, LED lights will be used to continue the effect.

The project will be an accurate sundial – Drain worked with Florida International University astronomy professor Dr. Walter Van Hamme to design the piece. Dr. Van Hamme will advise on the installation so "Pleated Sundial" is properly aligned to the sun.

Therefore, Drain stated, the structure will provide opportunity for "observation, teaching and engaging audiences of all ages," and will broaden park users' experience on the Village Green.

On the 22nd, Trasobares remarked, "It is a learning, poetic sculpture; and it is scientific

ally based. Children and their caregivers can engage in conversation about the work.

"It will be a very colorful, very active work of art."

He added the project opens doors to lessons not only about time and space, but local history, too: according to Drain, "Pleated Sundial" is inspired by the island's historic Mashta House, the coconut plantation estate which historian Joan Gill Blank described as appearing to "float like Cleopatra's barge" as it reflected light from golden walls.

Drain writes that his project will "showcase the same tropical light and shadow that once bathed the Moorish style architectural gem" and will "link the richness of history of Key Biscayne while also providing the means for wonderment and learning for future generations."

Council members were impressed – Mayor Frank Caplan thanked the Art Board for "doing its customary superlative job," while Vice Mayor Mayra Pena Lindsay remarked, "It's interactive; it's fun" – but felt Drain's artistic and educational goals could be met at a better location.

Safety was the driver for local leaders.

"I didn't realize how much trouble a 4-year-old can put themselves in," Davey remarked; Kelly said he could even see older kids getting in harm's way. "I can see a 10-year-old climbing up there and falling down and cracking a head," he said.

Trasobares and Art Board member Joan Matheson said the sculpture is designed to be safe:

Trasobares noted there's no way to climb up the piece, as there's nothing to hold onto. "It is a continuous surface," he explained. "There's no edge, no ledge for anyone to hold onto to climb, and the distance between the steel upright components won't allow it."

Matheson, noting she's a mother and grandmother, said the benches around the sculpture are fair game – and safe – for kids: "The benches are meant for climbing and jumping off."

Trasobares added the base of the sculpture is broad, making it safe for little ones and an excellent seating option for adults.

"We worked very hard with the artist to make sure it's not an attractive nuisance," he said, which included steps to keep skateboarders from making use of the piece.

That said, Trasobares agreed there's definitely room to adjust the location to address the Council's concerns. Local leaders were pleased; as Pena Lindsay remarked, "It's a

very beautiful sculpture, we're just trying to make sure it's not an attractive nuisance."

The Council eventually voted unanimously to move forward.

Building, Zoning and Planning Director Jud Kurlancheek said construction will take a couple of months. Village officials reported Drain will work with a local fabricator and contractor to build the piece to his specifications, transport it and install it, prompting Council member Ed London, who often argues the virtues of competitive bidding, to remark, "Believe it or not, I don't require competitive building on art because I don't believe you can get two artists to do the same thing."