

INDUSTRY NEWS > RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE

Miami Dade College recommends two developers for downtown campus tower

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With four developers bidding to build a massive tower and a cultural arts center on **Miami Dade College's** downtown campus, college officials recommended that two of the proposals advance to negotiations.

The college's Public Evaluation Committee recommended negotiations with both the **Related Group** and Nader + Museu LLP for the public-private partnership at 520 Biscayne Blvd., a 2.6-acre parking lot near the historic Freedom Tower. The proposal by Gregg Covin Development with Oppenheim Architecture was kept as a backup in case negotiations with the other two groups don't succeed. The fourth proposal, from Pi Art Tech and Trade Center at MDC LLC, was recommended for elimination.



The two towers of the Related Group's proposal for Miami Dade College's downtown campus... [more](#)

The committee's recommendation will go to MDC President **Eduardo J. Padrón** for his possible recommendation to its Board of Trustees. At that time, negotiations could begin. MDC Provost and PEC member Dr. **Rolando Montoya** said that if those negotiations result in one agreement being reached, it would have to go through the process again in order to begin work on a final agreement.

"We would initiate the conversation with Related and Nader and in the first couple of meetings with them we might feel if a marriage is possible or not," Montoya said. "I don't think we need to continue talking for weeks or months... There are some key elements that are critical for the college that we would want to go deeper in."

Before the PEC made its recommendation, it scored the proposals on four criteria. The final scores were:

- Related Group: 470
- Nader: 440
- Covin: 405
- Pi Art: 330

"We are pleased the evaluation committee recognized the merits of our proposal by ranking us number 1, and we look forward to working with the College to achieve its vision," said **Lisette Calderon**, president of international and strategic projects for the Related Group. "The Related Group has, by far, the most development experience and financial strength, which is necessary to deliver a complex public-private project of this type."

The private element by Miami-based Related Group would be a 75-story, 350-unit condo tower, a 39-story, a 500,000-square-foot office tower, a 100-room hotel, and a 9,000-square-foot restaurant. There would be 1,172 parking spaces for those uses. It would also have a 10,000-square-foot private club with free membership for MDC faculty and academic leadership.

Nader + Museu's private development would be by two 50-story towers with 250 condos each, a private culinary center of 29,950 square feet that would partner with MDC, a 16,016-square-foot restaurant and over 1,500 parking spaces.

"We congratulate MDC on taking the next step towards this imperative project for the city and look forward to starting negotiations," Nader said.

For the public elements granted to MDC, **Related Group** would build a 3,020-seat performance hall, 33,750 square feet of convention/function space, a 35,900-square-foot sculpture garden and a museum of 45,000 square feet, plus 267 underground parking spaces. The Nader + Museu cultural facilities would be larger at 238,556-square-foot, including a 3,000-seat conference center, a 1,600-seat performance theater, a sculpture garden, and 390 parking spaces. The exhibition space would measure 158,000 square feet. **Gary Nader** also pledged to give \$60 million worth of his art collection to MDC's museum so the college wouldn't have to pay much to stock the facility.

The Related Group proposal was designed by **Arquitectonica** while Nader + Museu hired FR-EE Architects and Nichols Brosch Wurst Wolfe & Associates.

GrayRobinson attorney **Bill Riley**, who represents Nader + Museu, said the larger cultural space for MDC and Nader's significant art donation should weigh in his client's favor.

"By picking two [for negotiations], it opens itself up to a transparent and important process," Riley said. "We are eager to highlight the strength of our team and the strength of our proposal. It allow [MDC] to get a best and final offer from both respondents."

Several of the EDC members said they liked the Related Group proposal because it had fewer pre-conditions before the contract would be in force. The Related Group would ask for 36 months to secure a construction loan, mentioning nothing about sales. The Nader + Museu proposal would seek to pre-sell 125 condos, or half of the first tower.

Riley said his client's proposal is more market driven. The Related Group's presentation showed that it had over \$1 billion in equity and could potentially build the project without a loan. However, in the current Miami condo market, it's extremely difficult to obtain a construction loan without at least 50 percent of units pre sold.

On the financial side, Montoya said that all cost estimates for the cultural center by the developers were preliminary. However, all the developers vowed that once the contract kicks in that MDC would not be responsible for cost overruns unless the college orders changes to the project that increase costs, he said.

Apart from giving MDC the cultural center, the Related Group promised a \$1 million scholarship donation, \$15 million in naming rights for the culture center (to be paid by the developer if a sponsor isn't found) and 10 percent of all condo sales above \$750 per square foot, for an estimated \$5.3 million.

The Nader + Museu payments, on top of the cultural center and Nader's \$60 million art collection, would be \$45 million in participation, a \$15 million naming rights contribution, and \$40,000 for each condo in the first tower and \$60,000 for each condo in the second tower, for a maximum of \$35 million. That would be paid after each building is sold out.

Both the Related Group and Nader + Museu would attempt to tap tax increment financing from the Southeast Overtown/Park West Community Redevelopment Agency to fund infrastructure for the project.