

# MIAMI BEACH

## COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee Members

FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager

DATE: May 14, 2025

TITLE: DISCUSS POTENTIAL CITY PARTNERSHIP WITH THE LINCOLN ROAD BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT FOR AN ANNUAL LINCOLN ROAD MARDI GRAS FESTIVAL LAUNCHING IN FEBRUARY 2026

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Administration recommends exploring sponsorship of a Lincoln Road Mardi Gras Festival with the Lincoln Road Business Improvement District.

### **BACKGROUND/HISTORY**

During the February 26, 2025 City Commission meeting, the Mayor and City Commission referred, at the request of Commissioner Laura Dominguez, to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee (PSNQLC) and the Sister Cities Committee, a discussion regarding a possible city partnership with the Lincoln Road Business Improvement District (LRBID) to create an annual Lincoln Road Mardi Gras Festival to launch in February 2026.

LRBID has proposed establishing the festival as an annual cultural event aimed at promoting Lincoln Road as a premier destination for cultural experiences, economic vitality, and community engagement. (See Exhibit A).

Sponsor Commissioner Dominguez requested that the Administration evaluate the proposal, prepare a preliminary budget estimate reflecting anticipated City support, and advise the PSNQLC as to potential next steps. (See Exhibit B).

The Miami Beach Sister Cities Committee met and reviewed the LRBID proposal and recommended support. (See Exhibit C).

### **ANALYSIS**

Themed special events hosted by Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) can yield numerous benefits, including increased foot traffic, boosted visibility for local businesses, and enhanced community engagement, ultimately contributing to a more vibrant, economically resilient area.

The LRBID has a proven track record with producing themed events, notably the annual "Halloween on Lincoln Road" which attracts over 50,000 participants and features parades, outrageous costumes, and family-friendly entertainment. This event boosts business activity, creates temporary employment opportunities, and enhances Miami Beach's image as a lively, inclusive destination. The free event is open to the public and social media promotes Lincoln Road and Miami Beach as a family-friendly destination for Halloween. Attendees patronize businesses along the eight-block district, noted as one of the best spots for people watching on Halloween night. An economic stimulator creates temporary job opportunities, for example, extra staff hired to manage increased foot traffic and produce the event.

Mardi Gras (French for "Fat Tuesday") is to some, akin to Halloween, and more than just parades and celebrations. The focus of many Mardi Gras celebrations is on the joy, community, and

cultural traditions, rather than the religious origins of the holidays. Non-religious activities include parades with floats, music, and costumed participants, wearing of masks, and costumes to participate in the festivities, and enjoying food and beverages.

Nationally, Mardi Gras is a major economic force; in 2024, New Orleans welcomed visitors during the carnival season, generating substantial commercial activity, increased property demand, and heightened retail sales that shapes both the commercial and residential value in Greater New Orleans. In 2024, the carnival season drew 1.7 million visitors to New Orleans, fueling local spending and increasing demand for prime properties. The annual surge influences real estate trends and generates millions in direct and indirect economic impact. The influx of visitors boosts demand for retail space, with businesses looking to capitalize on the surge, often seeking temporary pop-up permits that sometimes lead to long-term leases.

While Lincoln Road is not New Orleans, it could be for one day and a thoughtfully curated local Mardi Gras celebration could become a signature annual event. A local Mardi Gras celebration could be an opportunity – an economic catalyst for businesses that understand how to engage authentically. Strategically executed, the LRBID could create a ripple effect that drives economic activity, encourages cultural expression, and attracts both residents and visitors. As with Halloween, businesses can tailor offerings to align with Mardi Gras to build brand visibility and generate new customer engagement.

The key to success is to strategically build an event that has a long-term strategy that is authentic, purposeful, and offers meaningful participation. An event that is aligned with Miami Beach's values, creates experiences that matter, and invests in relationships beyond the event itself. This is what "Halloween on Lincoln Road" does, and what "Lincoln Road Mardi Gras Festival" can do.

The LRBID's proposal includes an event footprint comparable to Halloween on Lincoln Road, and envisions walking parades, themed decorations, live music, family-friendly activities, crafts, and costume contests. Additional elements under consideration also include:

- Outdoor bars serving themed libations
- New Orleans-inspired culinary activations
- Decorative, carnival themed installations and banners
- Static and digital marketing and promotion

Although LRBID has not submitted a formal financial request for City sponsorship, the event is proposed to launch on or about the first quarter of 2026.

Greater Miami does not have city-wide Mardi Gras celebrations like New Orleans. A Mardi Gras Festival on Lincoln Road represents a unique opportunity to support local businesses, create jobs, enhance tourism, and reinforce the image of Miami Beach and Lincoln Road as a vibrant cultural destination.

### **FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

The preliminary budget for the LRBID Mardi Gras Festival is approximately \$153,000, excluding costs associated with permits, security, sanitation, and other city services. LRBID is requesting a \$55,000 city sponsorship for entertainment costs. Lincoln Road Halloween City Services costs for FY 2024 were \$64,770 for Sanitation, Police, Facilities, and Code Compliance departments.

### **Does this Ordinance require a Business Impact Estimate?** (FOR ORDINANCES ONLY)

The Business Impact Estimate (BIE) was published on .

See BIE at: <https://www.miamibeachfl.gov/city-hall/city-clerk/meeting-notices/>

## **FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

### **CONCLUSION**

The Administration recommends exploring a partnership with LRBID to establish a Lincoln Road Mardi Gras Festival. Mardi Gras is one of the world's most iconic celebrations and presents an opportunity to align with Miami Beach values, such as sustainability, inclusivity, and diplomacy.

Unlike traditional Mardi Gras celebrations focused on excessive material waste (beads, trash and parade-related throws), a Miami Beach iteration could prioritize environmentally sustainable practices—such as reduced plastic use, dedicated recycling stations, and eco-friendly event materials.

The Administration also recommends collaborating with the Miami Beach Sister Cities Committee, which, while not a direct organizer of Mardi Gras celebrations, maintains cultural ties with Sister Cities including Fortaleza and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and Mexico — all have rich carnival traditions.

The Administration recommends that while the Committee evaluates the merits of a Mardi Gras celebration on Lincoln Road, it also carefully considers several critical factors that will significantly impact the General Fund budget, beginning in FY 2026:

1. The City's increasing unfunded capital improvement program
2. Long-term General Fund financial projections indicating a potential shortfall in upcoming fiscal years
3. The passage of Amendment 5 in November 2024, which increases the homestead exemption and further constrains the growth of taxable property values

These considerations are essential to ensure that decisions regarding the addition of a Mardi Gras celebration on Lincoln Road align with the City's broader long-term financial stability and strategic priorities. If the Committee recommends funding, the Administration recommends it be considered as part of the FY 2026 budget process.

### **Applicable Area**

South Beach

**Is this a "Residents Right to Know" item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-17?**

No

**Is this item related to a G.O. Bond Project?**

No

**Was this Agenda Item initially requested by a lobbyist which, as defined in Code Sec. 2-481, includes a principal engaged in lobbying?** No

If so, specify the name of lobbyist(s) and principal(s):

### **Department**

Economic Development

### **Sponsor(s)**

Commissioner Laura Dominguez

**Co-sponsor(s)**

**Condensed Title**

Discuss potential City Partnership with LRBID for an annual Lincoln Road Mardi Gras festival launching in 2026.