



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
City Commission Agenda Memo
REGULAR MEETING

#26-0691

TO: Honorable Mayor & Members of the
Fort Lauderdale City Commission

FROM: Christopher Cooper, Acting City Manager

DATE: August 18, 2026

TITLE: Motion Approving a Service Agreement with Cortada Foundation, Inc.
Related to the Execution of a Sculpture in Esplanade Park in the amount of
\$75,000 - **(Commission District 2)**

Recommendation

Staff recommends the City Commission approve a service agreement in the amount of \$75,000 with Cortada Foundation, Inc. for the design, fabrication, transportation, and installation of the permanent public artwork, *Elevation Sculpture: 4 feet* which is a part of *The Underwater: Fort Lauderdale Series*, at Esplanade Park.

Background

Xavier Cortada is an internationally recognized artist, environmental activist, and member of the Florida Artists Hall of Fame whose work focuses on climate resilience, environmental awareness, civic engagement, and social practice. Cortada is the only artist to have created works at both of the Earth's poles and has completed large-scale public art installations throughout the United States and internationally. His work has been recognized by organizations including the National Academies, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, and major media outlets including CNN, NPR, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post*.

The proposed project aligns with the City's commitment to expanding meaningful public art installations that enhance public spaces while fostering education and community engagement. Through the integration of environmental themes into public art, the project supports the City's resiliency initiatives and creates an interactive educational experience for residents and visitors.

The proposed artwork titled *Elevation Sculpture: 4 feet*, is a part of *The Underwater: Fort Lauderdale Series* which is a socially engaged public art project focused on sea level rise, climate resilience, and public education. The initiative utilizes sculptural elevation markers, murals, digital engagement tools, and community activations to help residents better understand the long-term impacts of climate change and rising sea levels within South Florida communities. The initiative has been implemented through partnerships with local governments, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions across Broward and

Miami-Dade Counties.

The proposed sculpture will consist of an eight-foot-tall freestanding number four fabricated from hand-built glazed ceramic relief elements with mosaic tile detailing and integrated into a structural sculptural form. The number four represents the elevation above sea level of Esplanade Park and serves as both a visual landmark and an educational marker within the artist's larger *Underwater* initiative. A copy of the Xavier Cortada Design Concept Proposal is attached as Exhibit 1.

The artwork's textured ceramic surface will feature hand-carved patterns and layered glazing inspired by water, topography, and environmental systems, reinforcing the project's themes of climate awareness and rising sea levels. In addition to the primary sculpture, the installation will include a QR-enabled interpretive pedestal connecting visitors to educational and digital engagement content related to sea level rise and climate resilience in Fort Lauderdale.

The sculpture is designed for long-term outdoor durability utilizing high-fired stoneware ceramic materials, artist-grade glazes, polymer grout, and heavy-duty installation materials. Routine maintenance is anticipated to be minimal and will primarily consist of periodic cleaning using low-pressure water, pH-neutral soap, and soft bristle brushes. Upon completion, the artist will provide maintenance guidelines for the City, and the agreement includes a two-year warranty covering defects in materials and workmanship following final acceptance.

The agreement includes design services, fabrication, transportation, installation, and project coordination necessary to complete the artwork. Compensation will be made through milestone-based payments as project deliverables are completed. The project is anticipated to be completed within one year following execution of the agreement.

At its May 18, 2026, meeting, the Public Art and Placemaking Advisory Board (PAPAB) voted unanimously to recommend approval of the proposal and installation of *Elevation Sculpture: 4 feet*, which is a part of *The Underwater: Fort Lauderdale Series*, at Esplanade Park.

Upon final acceptance, the completed sculpture will become part of the City's permanent public art collection. This project supports the City's ongoing investment in high-quality public art, placemaking, and environmental education while enhancing the public experience along the Riverwalk and downtown waterfront.

The Service Agreement is attached as Exhibit 3, and includes project coordination, a two-year warranty, and maintenance guidance for the completed sculpture.

Resource Impact

There is a fiscal impact to the General Fund in the amount of \$75,000. Funding is budgeted and available in the account listed below.

Funding for this project was provided through a Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 decision package item to fund temporary and permanent art installations.

Funds available as of July 16, 2026:					
ACCOUNT NUMBER	COST CENTER	CHARACTER/ ACCOUNT NAME	AMENDED BUDGET (Character)	AVAILABLE BALANCE (Character)	AMOUNT
10-001-3250-579-30-3299	Cultural Affairs	Services/Materials/ Other Services	\$310,690	\$264,379	\$75,000
PURCHASE TOTAL ►					\$75,000

Strategic Connections

This item is a 2026 *Commission Priority*, advancing Public Spaces and Cultural Initiatives.

This item supports the *Press Play Fort Lauderdale 2029* Strategic Plan, specifically advancing:

- The Public Places Focus Area, Goal 5: Build a beautiful and welcoming community.

This item advances the *Fast Forward Fort Lauderdale 2035* Vision Plan: We Are Here

This item supports the Advance Fort Lauderdale 2040 Comprehensive Plan specifically advancing:

- The Public Places Focus Area
- The Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element
- Goal 2: Be a community with high quality parks and recreational facilities that highlight the character of our City.

Attachments

Exhibit 1 – Xavier Cortada Design Concept Proposal

Exhibit 2 – May 18, 2026, Approved PAPAB Meeting Minutes

Exhibit 3 – Service Agreement

Prepared by: Anna Allman, Acting Cultural Affairs Officer, Community Services Department

Department Director: Porshia L. Garcia, Community Services Department