

Press Release

# American Planning Association Presents Award of Excellence to Akerman, Wynwood BID, City of Miami and PlusUrbia

January 7, 2016

Firm Assists Client in Creating Miami's First Neighborhood Revitalization District in Wynwood, Named One of the "Greatest Neighborhoods in America"

The Gold Coast Section of the American Planning Association's Florida Chapter has selected the Wynwood Neighborhood Revitalization District (NRD-1) for the 2015 Award of Excellence: Best Plan. The award honors the collaborative work of the Wynwood Business Improvement District (BID) and the City of Miami Planning and Zoning Department, Akerman and PlusUrbia in creating the City's first NRD in Wynwood.

Each year APA Florida recognizes an effort that has accomplished positive changes to a community as a result of state-of-the-art planning. Award Jurors were unanimous in their selection of the Wynwood Neighborhood Revitalization District for its overall quality, innovation and impact in the evolution of Wynwood into a true mixed-use neighborhood.

Building off of the development recommendations identified in the initial study produced by PlusUrbia, a local planning firm led by principal Juan Mullerat, Akerman represented the Wynwood BID in the

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drafting of land use regulations and facilitating the adoption of the NRD-1 legislation. This included the creation of a parking trust fund and localized public benefits fund to generate investment in Wynwood's public realm through private sector contributions. Akerman's work was spearheaded by Partner Steven Wernick, and included Associate Nicholas Barshel and Urban Planner Maeve Desmond.

"We congratulate our client, the Wynwood BID, for its outstanding leadership in what serves as an excellent example of consensus building and neighborhood revitalization to urban communities undergoing transformation," said land use lawyer Steven Wernick, with Akerman's Real Estate Practice Group. "Our team at Akerman is passionate about our role in facilitating redevelopment through creative zoning and policy initiatives in Miami's emerging neighborhoods. We are proud to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with such visionary, talented professionals committed to the continued revitalization of Wynwood while preserving its character, artistic integrity and walkable streets."

According to APA Florida, "The Wynwood NRD preserves unique characteristics of the beloved arts district, while creating a framework for dense, walkable, mixed-use urban development. The NRD advances the science and art of planning by balancing competing interests to usher in a new era of art-based investment, while using innovative tools to preserve the district's industry and blue collar essence."

The APA recently recognized Wynwood as one of four "Great Neighborhoods in America," which celebrates places nationwide that represent the gold standard in terms of having cultural and historical interest, community involvement, and visions for a long-lasting future. The planning initiative was featured for its collaborative process between the City of Miami and the Wynwood BID to plan for the next wave of growth in Wynwood, without losing its character and artistic vibrancy.

Akerman's land use and development team in Miami is led by Office Managing Partner Neisen Kasdin. The team of lawyers and planners work on many of South Florida's largest and transformational development projects, including Brickell Citi Centre, the Faena District, and the Miami Design District, among others.

### **About Akerman LLP**

Akerman LLP is a leading transactions and trial law firm known for its core strengths in middle market M&A, within the financial services and real estate industries, and for a diverse Latin America practice. With more than 600 lawyers and government affairs professionals and a network of 20 offices, it is ranked among the top 100 law firms in the United States by *The American Lawyer* (2015). Akerman also is ranked among the top 50 law firms for diversity in *The American Lawyer's Diversity Scorecard* (2015).

Akerman's Real Estate Practice Group offers comprehensive and fully integrated project counsel services to clients across the United States and Latin America. With substantial industry experience and local market insights, the firm represents clients in complex real estate transactions and financings, development and redevelopment projects, public-private initiatives and litigation. Recognized as a national tier one law firm for real estate law by *U.S. News - Best Lawyers*, the group advises investors, developers, builders, lenders, retailers, owners and corporate end users, often in high profile matters.