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How JBG Smith plans to engage Rosslyn with art

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In Rosslyn, a quiet beach darkens as the sun sets over the ocean in the distance. Snowy mountains and evergreen trees surround a glistening tranquil lake. Volcanic rock sizzles as angry waves smash against it. Fluffy white clouds float through the sky, casting their reflection in the water below.

In Rosslyn? Really?

These vivid nature scenes don't exactly bring to mind the Arlington neighborhood, but they do appear on the giant digital screen in the lobby of 1201 Wilson Blvd., JBG Smith Properties' (NYSE: JBGS) Central Place office tower at the corner of Wilson Boulevard and North Lynn Street. The moving images command attention, pulling people's eyes to them — some even through the door.

And there's more where that came from.



SARA GILGORE
 Moving nature scenes appear on the giant digital screen in the lobby of 1201 Wilson Blvd.

The lobby is just the beginning. It's part of a larger art program the Chevy Chase-based developer is incorporating into the project — and in which it has invested around \$1 million, topping Arlington County's \$700,000 public art requirement, according to the company.

When complete, the art program's components will appear throughout Central Place: in the observation deck, plaza, garage and both the office and apartment buildings. The company said it does not yet have a target date for installing all of the displays.

In the 377-unit apartment building, the company worked with Farmboy Fine Arts, a Vancouver-based art consultancy, to conceive a diverse collection of artwork and photography by young American artists — an effort to reflect the diversity of the building's residents and Rosslyn's community, according to Matt Ginivan, senior vice president of real estate development for JBG Smith.

In the shared below-grade garage accessible from North Lynn Street, JBG Smith tapped artist Jason Woodside, whose work features geometric shapes and patterns, to do a mural on its solid wall. He'd previously worked with the company on a mural at the Continental Beer Garden down the street.



JBG Smith is also working with artist Cliff Garten to use light as a medium to make the Central Place plaza the heart of a larger “Corridor of Light” project in Rosslyn, Ginivan said. The two glass curtainwall buildings have above-grade parking wrapped in a translucent glass façade that glows at night because it’s lit on the inside.

“It’s actually quite beautiful, but it can be a little bit plain, so we wanted to have some fun with that,” he said. “So he came up with a scheme where we’re actually backlighting those glass panels and will be able to display graphics and imagery and different colors, and it will be much more kinetic and lively.”

JBG Smith wanted to do something more ambitious with the office tower’s 12,000-square-foot public observation deck, Ginivan said, so the company is working with New York City-based Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners LLP to rethink the space as a piece of art itself. The ceiling is made to feel like a dark, starry night — with a navy blue-color that’s fractured and bent in different ways — with small lights creating the illusion of a constellation. In place of traditional benches, an undulating wood structure crawls around the circumference of the space and becomes the bar for food and drinks. The team set out to highlight the views and accentuate the drama with this effort, Ginivan said.

The developer originally planned for the office building’s lobby to resemble the typical D.C. trophy look, with simple, clean white marble. But to engage both its tenants and people driving and walking by the building, JBG Smith wanted to create something visually stimulating, rather than just a blank backdrop, according to Ginivan.

So the developer teamed up with Sansi North America, or SNA, which designs LED screens like that found in the Salesforce Tower lobby in San Francisco — a project that captivated the company, Ginivan said.

For now, the 20-foot by 30-foot screen in 1201 Wilson displays nature videography, but JBG Smith also plans to use it for original art from its other buildings, as well as other possible visuals down the road because it’s so flexible. It could even feature the view from the top of the building, though Ginivan notes nothing is finalized.

Though JBG Smith looks to incorporate art into all of its projects, Central Place afforded a chance to do something different.

“What’s different about it is the areas of opportunity that we had here,” Ginivan said. “We don’t have an observation deck at other projects. We don’t have this size of lobby. I think particularly, for a lot of our downtown projects, the lobbies are more of a boutique experience, so I think that’s unique — the size and scale of the canvas that we work with here.”

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