

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Items E-1 and E-2 are related
April 14, 2026
Public Safety Building, CMR
2151 Salzedo Street, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Commissioner Melissa Castro
Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Commissioner Richard D. Lara

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez
City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Planning and Zoning Director, Jennifer Garcia

Public Speaker(s)

Judge Cecilia Altonaga

Agenda Items E-1 and E-2 are related [Start: 11:50 a.m.]

E-1: An Ordinance of the City Commission approving amendments to the text and maps of the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan pursuant to small-scale amendment procedures (Section 163.3187, Florida Statutes), and Zoning Code Article 14, "Process," Section 14-213, "Comprehensive Plan Text and Map Amendments," to 1) modify the required Multi-Family densities and height to allow higher intensity within the "University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay," and to allow Multi-Family High Density within the Mixed-Use Overlay Districts located within the "University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay," 2) include additional properties (6100 Caballero Blvd) within the "University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay" on the Mixed-Use Overlay Districts Map, and 3) amend the Future Land Use Map from "Commercial Low-Rise Intensity" to "Multi Family High Density" for Lots 1&2, Block 5 and Lots 1 thru 3, Block 6, Riviera Waterways Section, Track "K", Addition to Riviera Waterways Section, and Lot 8, Block 208, Riviera Section 14; from "Multi Family Low Density" to "Multi Family High Density" for Lots 3&4, Block 5, Riviera Waterways Section; from "Multi Family Duplex Density" to "Multi Family Low Density" for Lot 5, Block 5 and the southern portion of Lot 5, Block 6, Singer Subdivision; from "Commercial Low-Rise Intensity" to "Multi Family Medium Density" for Lot 4, Block 6, Riviera Waterways Section; and from "Multi Family Duplex

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Agenda Items E-1 and E-2 are related – Ordinance approving amendments to the text and maps of the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan – University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay

Density” to “Multi Family Medium Density” for Lot 5-A and the northern portion of Lot 5, Block 6, Singer Subdivision;, providing for a repealer provision, providing for a severability clause, and providing for an effective date. (Legal description on file) (02 11 26 PZB recommended approval, Vote: 5-0) Lobbyist: Mario Garcia-Serra.

E-2: An Ordinance of the City Commission providing for map and text amendments to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, “Process,” Section 14-212, “Zoning Code Text and Map Amendments,” by 1) amending Article 2, “Zoning Districts,” Section 2-408, “University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay” to a) include requirements for multi-family development and provide regulations for modification and development agreements within the district; b) add additional properties (6100 Caballero Boulevard) to the boundary of the “University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay”, 2) amending Appendix A, “Site Specific Zoning Regulations,” to remove inconsistent Site Specifics, 3) amending Article 14, “Process,” Section 14-204, “Transfer of Development Rights,” to expand Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) receiving sites within the “University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay,” and 4) amend the Zoning Map from “Mixed-Use 1 (MX1)” to “Multi Family 4 (MF4)”, for Lots 1&2, Block 5 and Lots 1 thru 3, Block 6, Riviera Waterways Section, Track “K”, Addition to Riviera Waterways Section, and Lot 8, Block 208, Riviera Section 14, from “Multi Family 3 (MF3)” to “Multi Family 4 (MF4)” for Lots 3&4, Block 5, Riviera Waterways Section; from” Multi Family 1 (MF1)” to “Multi Family 3 (MF3)” for Lot 5, Block 5 and the southern portion of Lot 5, Block 6, Singer Subdivision; from” Mixed-Use 1 (MX1)” to “Multi Family 2 (MF2)” for Lot 4, Block 6, Riviera Waterways Section; and from “Multi Family 1 (MF1)” to “Multi Family 2 (MF2)” for Lot 5-A and the northern portion of Lot 5, Block 6, Singer Subdivision; providing for repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date. (Legal description on file) (02 11 26 PZB recommended approval, Vote: 5-0) Lobbyist: Mario Garcia-Serra

Mayor Lago: Items E-1 and E-2.

City Attorney Suarez: E-1 is an ordinance of the City Commission approving amendments to the text and maps of the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan pursuant to small-scale amendment procedures and Zoning Code Article 14, “Process” Section 14-213 Comprehensive Plan Text and Map Amendments to one, modify the required multifamily densities and height to allow higher intensity within the University Station Rapid Transit District overlay and to allow multifamily high density within the mixed-use overlay districts located within the University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay. 2), include additional properties 6100 Caballero Boulevard within the University Station Rapid Transit District overlay on the mixed-use overlay districts map, and 3), amend the future land use map from commercial low-rise intensity to multifamily high density for Lots 1 and 2, Block 5, Lots 1 through 3, Block 6, Riviera Waterway Section, Track K, addition to Riviera Waterway Section on Lot 8 Block 208, Riviera Section 14 for multifamily low density to multifamily high density for Lots 3 and 4, Block 5, Riviera Waterway Section for multifamily duplex density to multifamily low density for Lot 5 Block 5 and the southern portion of Lot 5 Block 6, Singer subdivision from commercial low rise intensity to multifamily medium density for a Lot 4 Block 6, Riviera Waterway Section for multifamily duplex density to multifamily medium density for lot 5a and the northern portion of lot 5, block 6. Singer subdivision providing for

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repealer provision, providing for severability clause, and providing for an effective date. E-2 is an Ordinance of the City Commission providing for map and text amendments to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, "Process," Section 14-212, "Zoning Code Text and Map Amendments," by 1) amending Article 2, "Zoning Districts," Section 2-408, "University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay" to a) include requirements for multi-family development and provide regulations for modification and development agreements within the district; b) add additional properties (6100 Caballero Boulevard) to the boundary of the "University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay", 2) amending Appendix A, "Site Specific Zoning Regulations," to remove inconsistent Site Specifics, 3) amending Article 14, "Process," Section 14-204, "Transfer of Development Rights," to expand Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) receiving sites within the "University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay," and 4) amend the Zoning Map from "Mixed-Use 1 (MX1)" to "Multi Family 4 (MF4)", for Lots 1&2, Block 5 and Lots 1 thru 3, Block 6, Riviera Waterways Section, Track "K", Addition to Riviera Waterways Section, and Lot 8, Block 208, Riviera Section 14, from "Multi Family 3 (MF3)" to "Multi Family 4 (MF4)" for Lots 3&4, Block 5, Riviera Waterways Section; from "Multi Family 1 (MF1)" to "Multi Family 3 (MF3)" for Lot 5, Block 5 and the southern portion of Lot 5, Block 6, Singer Subdivision; from "Mixed-Use 1 (MX1)" to "Multi Family 2 (MF2)" for Lot 4, Block 6, Riviera Waterways Section; and from "Multi Family 1 (MF1)" to "Multi Family 2 (MF2)" for Lot 5-A and the northern portion of Lot 5, Block 6, Singer Subdivision; providing for repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date. This is a quasi-judicial item, so Mr. Clerk, please swear in those who will be testifying today.

City Clerk Urquia: Those who will be appearing on this item, please stand and raise your right hand. Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you'll provide today will be the truth and nothing but the truth?

Planning and Zoning Director I do, thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Madam Director?

Planning and Zoning Director: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: You have a presentation for us?

Planning and Zoning Director: Yes, just a very brief overview of what you're considering today and then also some comparison slides. So, as you know, you adopted the overlay district next to the University Station. We are now proposing to expand that to include a project known as the Gables Waterway. Again, you are only looking today at legislation, the rules in place, map changes, but not a site plan. So, you can see that in the aerial right here where the expansion would occur. What's proposed to you today is to change the land use mostly to be a multi-family high density for most of the property and then a scale down to multi-family medium density and

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multi-family low density as you go south into the single family and duplex neighborhood. The mixed-use overlay district map would be amended to include this property in the University Station rapid transit district overlay. The comprehensive plan would be amended to allow the maximum density of 125 units an acre, and this would be to mimic and mirror what the county's current RTZ subzone allows. The map would be amended for the zoning code to be MF4 for most of the property, then scale down to MF2 and MF3 abutting and adjacent to single family and duplex neighborhoods. And then the zoning code would be amended to allow for multi-family development in the RTZ, the city's RTZ, version of the RTZ for the overlay to limit the height to be 120 feet for MF4, but to also allow 150 if the MF4 property would provide 10 percent additional open space. 125 units an acre would be the density for MF4 and MF2, would be a setback along the waterway of 10 feet, an upper story step back of 25 feet when you're adjacent to or across the waterway from single family, a 50 foot setback when you're budding single family or duplex, and that would be a setback with landscape. A 50-foot setback is more or less the size of a property, a single-family lot. And also, some general development agreements would be reviewed by staff and then approved by the City Commission. And then a change from first reading would allow the green building certification requirements. They would have to be green certified, but the requirements would be distributed by the City Manager. And then the university overlay district would be designated as TDR receiving site, and then they're retaining some specifics to be consistent with what's proposed today. Now, as you're aware, the county did pass an RTZ subzone in our city in September of last year. This is a comparison of the RTZ on the left side, the existing mixed-use zoning in the center column, and on the right side is the proposed multifamily zoning that we're amending in our overlay district. So, the review, of course, would be by the county if it would be an RTZ. And the mixed use and the multifamily would be reviewed by city staff and also by the City Commission. The height would be similar, of 150 feet for the RTZ for the county, but 120 feet with the city and allow for 150 if they provide 10 percent additional open space. The density would be the same, 125 units an acre. We would have a maximum 3.5 FAR where the county has no limitation of the square footage that would allow for that property or any property, for that matter, in the RTZ subzone. We would allow TDRs to have a maximum FAR of 4.375. The open space would be required 10 percent for the county. On the ground floor, we require 25 percent for multifamily as consistent with the rest of our multifamily zoning in our city. And the setbacks would be 20 feet on US-1, 10 feet again on the waterway, and 50 feet when adjacent or abutting single family. The uses. We talked about the last item. The county, of course, would be in charge of approving any uses. It would include bars, parking lots, improving garages, and those uses that we don't usually have in our multifamily zoning. Of course, we don't allow any commercial uses, which is what this property is supposed to be zoned as. It's done in the Mediterranean style. The impact fees, again, would be collected by the county instead of the police, fire, municipal parks, and ability would be collected by the city if it would be built in the city itself, as well as Art in Public Places. So,

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the top image in red is showing the RTZ zoning. As you may know, RTZ is one zoning district with one height. So, the entire property has one height of 150 feet. The city is proposing that the height would be 120, and then there would be scaling down built in with the zoning. So, the MF2 and the MF3 would be scaling down to the neighborhood to the south. There's a bigger image of the RTZ that the county has already adopted, and as you know, the property owner of this property is communicating with the county to be incorporated into the RTZ subzone. This is what the city is proposing as far as extruding that zoning, showing the height, and showing those setbacks. So, I toggle between the two of these. You can see the setbacks disappear with RTZ subzone with the county. With the city, we have those setbacks on US-1, on the side streets, also along the waterway. Again, 50 feet setback when you're abutting single family, 25-foot upper story setback, 97 feet for that MF2 zoning, that light brown area. The dark brown would be 120 feet with a 20-foot setback again on US-1 and on the side streets. So, you can see the difference between the two of these, and then the images on the left are showing the existing county's RTZ at the cascade at the Douglas Station, and on the right, of course, is your typical Coral Gables development with architecture. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Madam Director. Mr. Clerk, do you have any public comment? All right, perfect.

City Clerk Urquia: So, it's going to be on Zoom. I have Cecilia Altonaga.

Mayor Lago: Madam Judge, the floor is yours.

Judge Altonaga: Good morning. I'm not sure, I can't turn on the video. I thank you for giving me the opportunity to be heard.

Mayor Lago: No, we hear you. We hear you.

Judge Altonaga: Thank you. My address is 400 North Miami Avenue. I don't give my home address for obvious reasons. I was at the meeting last week when this item was discussed, and I appreciate it.

Mayor Lago: Madam Judge, if I may interrupt you, we have a major echo, and I want to give you the respect that you deserve. Can we have the IT team just look for one second, if we can address it? Just give us a second, Madam Judge.

Judge Altonaga: Sure.

Mayor Lago: Can you try right now? No.

Commissioner Castro: Is she on two devices?

Judge Altonaga: I'm here.

Mayor Lago: Your Honor, bear with us. Bear with us.

Judge Altonaga: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Do you want, hello? Are we good? Okay, give me one second. He's asking for a minute. Give me, let me make sure.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor?

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Clerk Urquia: Let's go ahead and take Lisa Detournay. She's actually here in person and would like to speak.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. I thought we didn't have anyone else. No worries. Please.

Ms. Detournay: Hi Lisa Detournay, 10 Aragon, Suite 1405, Coral Gables. I also own a property that's close to the Mahi Canal, and I used to live in the Mahi Canal, one of the four homes that's being affected by this development. I just want to say I've been involved in fighting development on this property since 2004. The last time we were fighting a different developer, we ended up losing in both Miami Court and in the Third, yeah, the Third District Appeals. I moved then to California, kept coming back and forth for work, moved back here, and here we are again. Same property, different developer, but much, much larger. I think one of the pictures that Jennifer was showing of the, even the RTZ light, the Mahi Canal will be completely in the shade by the height of those buildings. That's a pretty big manatee area. One of the few in Florida, I mean, I'm sorry, in Coral Gables, for the manatees to come at the end of the canal. We used to live there, and I know how many would come down, especially with the calves. So, I don't know why the RTZ is even being discussed in this because it's a new thing, right? So that's why this property is now looking into RTZ, but this property has special attributes being the canal and the low density of the homes right up to the size of these large buildings. I just want to say that I am against allowing any development of this height. The restrictions, the current zoning codes, are much, much lower, and as I've mentioned at a lot of our meetings, even though we have our codes, everybody that seems to buy a property wants to develop it. As for far greater height limits and things like that,

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changing the codes is like the codes don't even matter anymore, and if you do want to buy a house in an area that you think will be safe from large development based on existing codes, you're in for a surprise as things go on and the codes keep getting changed to upsize. So anyway, thanks for your attention.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. Madam Judge, Your Honor.

Judge Altonaga: Can you hear me now, Mayor? I'm not sure if I'm being heard with an echo or not. I don't want to take up too much of your time. I thank you, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners for allowing me to be heard on this item. I was at the meeting last week. I understand that our hands are tied. We can all relate to that. We understand that. The one question I asked at last week's meeting, and I continue to ask, is what if anything more can be done than has been done? Is there any ability for the city to negotiate anything to scale this down just a little bit? This is not just any project. This is not just high density in the City of Coral Gables. Buildings are bigger and taller and there's more density. We all know that. This is also a waterway with marine life. You all spoke hours ago about our oceans, about our City Beautiful. And my concern is the scale of this development on a waterway. And one of the comments you made, Mayor, in the Coral Gables Magazine with the Hail Mary victory, and that you made a few moments ago on the other item on the agenda with the RTZ zone, is that we're talking about millions and millions of dollars that would have been lost if the developers had gone the county route instead of the city route. I ask you, would we be willing, for example, to give up those millions and millions of dollars in exchange for some concession on scaling this down? Has that been explored at all? And the last thing that I would add is that we need to have some guarantees that we're going to limit the number of users on this waterway in this massive development unless we lose the waterway completely. I thank you all. I know you've given this serious consideration. You know that we're very unhappy with what's happening. We know that your hands are tied. But is there any room to do anything other than this? That's my question. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Your Honor. And I apologize for the issues that we're having. We have reviewed this, as I mentioned before, in the Mark. We had over 12 meetings, myself, our City Attorneys, our Manager, his team, our Zoning Director, in hopes of finding an appropriate project. That project is 105 feet when it could be 150 feet in the RTZ. All a developer has to do is just go to the county and circumvent the city altogether. Our hands are tied and we're trying to find the best deal for the city. Would I give up the money to find a better project? 110 percent. But we also have to understand that we tried that already. We discussed reducing fees. But the project, again, they have the development rights that they can go to the RTZ and just circumvent us anyways. So, they're going to pay it to the county or they're going to pay it to the city in one form or another. I'd rather have those monies go to the city and benefit the residents of the city.

Commissioner Fernandez: Through the Mayor.

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Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Fernandez: I think this is something that has been completely taken out of the hands of the city. We hear, you know, why are we talking about RTZ? This is something that's new. It is new. It was created by the county. And it is a way that the county has the ability to preempt our city zoning codes. We have Live Local, which also has the ability to preempt the city's zoning code when the project meets those parameters. And it's really taken this Commission's ability to control what these development projects are scaling to and what is coming in these projects completely out of our hands. And proposals like these are the ones that give us the opportunity to kind of bring it back to the city and for us to sort of find a way to work with the developer. Your Honor, you were asking about, you know, is there any way to scale it back? Now is when that negotiation can possibly begin with the developer on the project that they actually present because this will be the change to the zoning. That happened with the Mark. We were able to reduce the scalability of that project. We were able to incorporate some of the connectivity issues that were necessary through a lengthy negotiation process. So, I do believe that there may be a possibility. At the end of the day, it's at the hands of the developer. And unfortunately, our hands as a city have been completely tied and, you know, completely cut off at this point. We no longer have an ability to control our own zoning code, something that as a city, we have always been proud about protecting our zoning code and has been a priority that has been set by our residents for us for years. And now we don't have an ability to do that because the county and the state have decided, well, we're going to do something different to ensure the developers can do what they want with these properties. And it's really unfortunate because at the end of the day, here at the municipal level is where we see the impacts of these projects. Here at the municipal levels where we have to figure out, they approve a Live Local project, all of a sudden, we're not getting the funding that we need and we have to provide the security, we have to provide the services that are required. But in order to alleviate issues that they have in other parts of the state where their Live Locals may work, it doesn't work for us here and they're trying to impose that legislation here on us. It's really unfortunate. It puts us in a very tough bind. The one thing and I share with my colleagues now that we can have this conversation that I had shared with staff was, I would like to see if we have the possibility of having an extra conversation with our residents. I know we had one last week but have a second meeting. I think people still don't understand. And, you know, I think our staff did a great job of trying to show what the two differences are, the difference between the RTZ and the city's RTZ light. I think we need to do a better job of visualizing it because until you started explaining it, I didn't even realize the differences in the two features, even though there's different colors. I think if we can make it a little better for people to understand, visualize, and also explain what has brought about that RTZ and how we no longer have the ability to do it. I know we did, I think Martha and her team did a PSA that was put out on Live Local and the RTZ. But I still think that we need to do a better job to get that information out to our residents because they're still not

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understanding where we are today, how we've gotten to where we are today and the actions that have been taken by other governments, which are not dictating what we're able to do. What I had asked is if we could push this off to the next Commission meeting so that we can have at least one more community meeting to go over things, explain it to them, maybe create a better presentation that can be more visual for people to understand and then move forward with it. That was the conversation I had with the Manager and the City Attorney during my pre-agenda.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, with regard to notice, I know that our staff are in our E-NEWS, we notified folks about the April 7th meeting. I did it in my social media. I did it in my letter. We only had a small group of folks. I had an individual that wrote me and I suggested to them that they need to sign up for the E-NEWS so that they can get notice of these types of meetings. The cost to send out notices is tremendous and residents need to participate in the meetings. Plus, we had individuals that participated via Zoom. So, the history is there. I took time. I made efforts to meet with our County Commissioner to try to scale back what the county RTZ was to move the building, to move the parking lot more than just an arm's length away from the neighboring property. The steps that were going into an underground garage that was dubbed as being a park space. Okay. There was no willingness or flexibility there. The message was clear. When the County Commissioner came here, she made it clear that if we didn't do our own version of RTZ, which is now dubbed the RTZ light, that that project would be coming forth under the county control with the height and density intensity and underground parking garage a few feet away from the next-door neighbor. So, it is our job to make the hard decisions because the longer you drag things out, the more likely it is the developers will choose to take the county route. We almost lost it before on the Mark. We now have a more intense project, a little taller, but it's far better than what the county project would have been. So, we sometimes are going to have to make these hard decisions. The outcome is going to be the same and we still have the opportunity to go through the actual project itself. This is just the zoning issue. So, I sat down with the developer, and I showed them why a five-foot sidewalk is insufficient and that's the county's requirement on US-1. If you take Google Maps and you pan it across to where the Thesis is, you'll see a nice wide sidewalk. Something that you're not cringing at walking along US-1 about. The proposal by the county was five feet. I'm taller than five feet. Okay. That is how close people would have to shimmy their way down US-1 trying to get somewhere. You'd be splashed by the mud, you'll be breathing the fumes, you'll be subject to all that. So, we can either make the choice to allow it to go the county route by taking an action at this time or move forward and seize the moment and prevent this from going through the county.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Anyone else? Any further comments? Yes.

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City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, Commissioners, the RTZ plan would provide a building that's 150 feet high, unlimited FAR, no setbacks, no parking and it would be essentially a building that would be a county building in Coral Gables. We would not have uses, we would not have signage, and we would certainly not get any building or impact fees. If we want to consider what that is, that's a box. That's a box from property line to property line, 150 foot high. That's what you can do. Because there's unlimited area, a height of 150 feet and no setbacks. And by the way, no parking for residential. So, people complain about cars, there's no parking. It's assumed that the folks will be using the rapid transit. So, if we want to imagine what RTZ is, it's a box. It's just a box from property line to property line. And I think some of the pictures that our director showed are quite nice compared to what it can be as bad as that was. So, I just want to reiterate that what we're dealing with from the RTZ perspective is 150-foot box from property line to property line with no parking. And that's the RTZ concept.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Anything else before I give a few comments?

Commissioner Lara: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Lara: So, to not beat the dead horse, but I do think it's important for the residents to know. And by the way, I thank very much Judge Cecilia Altonaga for providing her comments today. I've had the pleasure of trying cases before her and she's an extremely educated, reasonable and dedicated public servant. And her suggestion, her request that we do what we can to try and negotiate some further concessions on that project are taken to heart. But like the Vice Mayor said, what we're discussing today is a zoning change. I find that we're in this unique position right now to not commit the same mistake twice. The delays occasioned by the previous project, the Mark, were an infirmity that put us on the brink of what the City Manager is referring to as having a box sitting right there on US-1. Because the delays and the delays and the delays caused the project to nearly slip completely out of our hands. Millions of dollars lost in impact fees, signage, usage, and everything else that we hold so dear with respect to the city's zoning is giving way to what's coming out of Tallahassee, and which is in fact law today. So, I'm a huge supporter of working and being strategic and working within the parameters that we're dealt. The problem is never solved by putting your head in the sand. The problem is not solved by walking away from it, but rather meeting it head on, being professional, and being civil, and being strategic in negotiating with the players. So, while I'm always in favor of providing notice to the residents, and I take to heart Commissioner Fernandez, your suggestion as well, that there be more conversation had with the residents, I do feel in this instant it's been met. And met probably, and then some, right? This is one of the more public and hot topic matters that the city has seen in a while. And from the Mayor

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and the Vice Mayor, having met with the residents so many times, it's not a new item, right? It's something that's been going on for some time. I think we need to learn from the past, take the bull by the horns, move this thing with appropriate notice, appropriate speed, and focus on where the efforts should be best put. And that's in negotiating directly with the developers to ensure that we take as much as we can for the city. I'm not ashamed in saying I am as a representative, an elected representative of the city in the business of taking from those who want to take for me, I want to negotiate and take more for us. And I think that you've done an amazing job, Mayor, in doing that with respect to the Mark. Let's work with respect to this project. Always mindful of the unique nature of where it's situated, always mindful of the natural habitat and the environment that it provides for the manatees. But where we are right now, it's a far better place than if it was ceded to the county under the RTZ and through delay, I fear that that's where it would end up.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Without any further ado, if my colleagues are done, I'd like to put my comments on the record. Madam Finance Director, will you please join us? Excuse me, Madam Zoning Director, I apologize. Finance Director started sweating there all of a sudden. I have a presentation. Can we please present it? There's a presentation in regard to E-1 RTZ Overlay. Okay. So, I want to be clear. And I want to mention this for the record. Again, I know it's not going to make it on the Gazette, or on the other blogs, it will not make it because this is this is politically expedient to make sure that we avoid this. This is pure politics, again, but I got to put it on the record. I have to put on the record at the end of the day, because it's critically important. It's critically important to put things on the record that makes sense. I've lived in this community for over 30 years. I didn't show up here four years ago. Okay. I've served on the Planning and Zoning Board. I've served on every major philanthropic organization. My grandparents, when they came from Cuba, they moved to the city. They died in the city two blocks away. So, I care about the city. So, I take it very close to heart when people tell me that I don't care about the city. I want to vote no today. But you know, I'm voting yes, I'm going to explain it to you. It is reckless what is happening here in the city with certain people on this Commission. I don't care if you're running for public office, you cannot mislead residents. If the developer leaves and goes the county route, he goes the RTZ route. What is the height of the project if he goes the RTZ route?

Planning and Zoning Director: 150.

Mayor Lago: 150. Let's go over these items. Number one, the Planning and Zoning Board of the City Coral Gables voted five zero in favor of this project. Both Commissioner Castro's appointee Ignacio Alvarez and Commissioner Fernandez appointee Felix Pardo voted in favor of this project. And I quote, so basically the decision for the board is take this or else we're going to look at the picture on the left. What do they mean? It's the picture below. Look at the difference in the design standards between Coral Gables on the top and what you could get with RTZ in the county below. It's right a stone's throw away that's 37th Avenue in the metro rail. We can play this game about

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Agenda Items E-1 and E-2 are related – Ordinance approving amendments to the text and maps of the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan – University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay

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politics and run for office, and I voted no on the RTZ. Fine. But thank God that we have people on this board who have been living in this community for dozens of years and are willing to take the tough stand and take the beating politically when you have to go in front of the residents and tell them, hey, I had to vote in favor of this because if not, we would have a much more significantly larger project. Now the city, to give you an idea, there is a very stark difference between the county RTZ versus what the city allows, as I pointed out to you. A vote against the city RTZ is a vote in favor of the county RTZ. Very clear. If you vote against this today, you're voting in favor of the county RTZ. You're voting in favor of a bigger project. You're asking the developer to go to the county. You're asking to lose control of signage. You're asking to lose control of usages. You're asking to lose control of millions of dollars of impact fees. You're asking to lose control of the zoning, additional height, and by the way, additional density. Am I correct, Madam Director?

Planning and Zoning Director: The densities say the same at 125 is an acre, but I think you mean intensity, the size of the property.

Mayor Lago: Yes, okay. To say that this is an upzoning is incorrect, is disingenuous. There's no change to density. It's very clear right there. Planning and Zoning Board recommended it 5-0. I know this is not going to make it on the blogs, I understand that, and it's going to be pumped through text messages. Commission votes in favor of the RTZ upzoning. It is what it is, but I feel fine. I feel comfortable. As a person who has lived in the city for decades, I feel comfortable with making this decision today. It's a tough decision. It's not one that I want to make, but I have no other choice. Next slide. Here we have some design elements. This is what happens with the county RTZ versus the Coral Gables RTZ. We lose setbacks. No site residential parking requirements. Minimum landscaping. County requires permit and impact fees. Multifamily and commercial uses, which are not allowed in the city now. Here are the design elements in regard to the Coral Gables RTZ. Pedestrian arcades and connections, just like what the Vice Mayor mentioned in regard to sidewalks. Priority on landscaping. Mediterranean architecture, very different from what would happen in the county. Design review by the city architect. Setbacks. Minimal signage. On-site residential parking required, as the Manager mentioned. City receives permit and impact fees, which goes into the neighborhoods. Public art. By the way, that public art comes from developers and permit fees. It does not come from the general fund. Another ton of misinformation that is being spewed out that's incorrect. Multifamily use only, and the residents receive notification. Let me also make something aware, which again will not be published. The City of Miami has not bonded their lawsuit against Miami-Dade County. Why have they not bonded their lawsuit? Why? Mr. Manager, would you like to explain why the City of Miami has not bonded their lawsuit in regard to the RTZ?

City Manager Iglesias: Because of the potential liability of stopping a project of this size. It could be certain profits, and it could be substantial. We've already had that happen one time in

Edgewater when we stopped the project. It cost the city \$5.5 million, and that was 25, 30, 25 years ago.

Mayor Lago: So, in closing, this is very simple. As you can see, there's a stark difference between the county RTZ and the city RTZ. This is something where you have to hold your nose and just vote in favor, because if not, what's being proposed is significantly massive in comparison. So, in closing, this is being done to protect the City Beautiful. We have no other choice. If we go the RTZ route, we lose control of our own zoning code. So, we have no further public comment. If there's anyone here that would like to make a motion, I'll accept the motion.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll make the motion, and Madam Director, I do have one question for you. Our landscape buffer on this zoning from the single-family homes is 50 feet.

Planning and Zoning Director: Correct.

Vice Mayor Anderson: And in the RTZ, I'm looking at the floor, and it was 10 feet. So, I made the motion.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk?

City Attorney Suarez: And this would be the motion on E-1?

Mayor Lago: Yes. Mr. Clerk.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes, because I don't want to vote for the county RTZ to proceed in this area.

Commissioner Castro: I think it's very clear that I don't agree with the city's stance, and that I share a very different perspective from my colleagues. And I think that's okay. I don't think we need to go ahead and here display that this is political or whatever the case is. My strong opinion is that the city should have taken a stronger stance, shown some resistance, and at very least sued the county, showed the residents that we're here for them before continuing this route like City of Miami did. I know the City Manager is going to come up saying they haven't bonded, but you know what? They're at least showing they care that they're trying to do something. So no, my vote's going to be no once again, because I do feel that our hands are not tied 100 percent. We could still do more.

Mayor Lago: I would love nothing more than to agree with Commissioner Castro, but then we would both be wrong. Let me also make you aware of the simple fact. The reason why it's not

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bonded is because the City of Miami knows they're going to lose this lawsuit, okay? Why not just bond it, pay for it? It's a fee, but if you're going to do something, put your money behind it. So, at the end of the day, it's a waste of city resources, just a waste of city resources, and it jeopardizes the city. This is about protecting the city, not about trying to win a reelection. These are the tough decisions that have to be made by people who have lived in the city for decades and take great pride in the city, not Johnny Come Lately. Yes. Moving on to item E-2.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll move it for the same reasons I moved the last one.

Commissioner Lara: Second.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

Commissioner Lara: Well, I just want to say that with respect to any comments that more could have been done, more should have been done, it would be futile. It would be a pyrrhic victory. You're spending money, wasting resources on an endgame that you can't win under these circumstances. The win, as difficult as it is, the win for the cities is this vote of a yes today. That's the win, because that's the effort that we're putting into to try and take back for us a remnant of Home Rule, some control over our destiny. This decision is a difficult one, but it's the right one for decades to come. We're on the right path. Anything other than a yes vote today is, well, it's been said before, it is nothing more than just a show of defiance without any real intention to make a meaningful difference. And it is unfortunate, I'll say this as well, that we won't have a 5-0, 5-0 unanimous vote, which would show not only the residents, but also the county of how we think and we stand together on behalf of the residents. But c'est la vie. My vote is yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: For those who don't litigate and stuff, it's hard to understand why the city simply just doesn't sue. But for those of us who have had done litigation in our lifetime, we understand this is a pure legal issue, and it's a losing one. It's a dead loser. The only thing we'll do is lose for the city. We'll lose for the residents. We'll cost the residents lots of money and expedite the route that the developer will take going to the county. Now's the time to seize the moment and make sure that this goes in the right direction, so the residents do have a voice up here. The residents do have an opportunity to affect how this building is designed, to be able to protect the manatee zones, to be able to make sure that the water quality is improved, and to have the neighborhood amenities put in that we can. And I'm glad to report that my meeting yesterday with Senator Garcia, along with the individual with the Underline on the FDOT, is moving in a good direction. We've made the request for Caballero Boulevard to have a light, and hopefully we'll have some fruit on the end of that tree. Those are the types of things you can do if you want to make a positive impact on this community. My vote is yes.

Commissioner Castro: I will continue to vote no on upzoning on a corridor on a parcel that is on US-1. It's highly congested. The traffic there is, I mean, it's terrible. The quality of life next to the homes that live in this parcel that we're upzoning to the residents is going to be really bad. And I will continue to vote no because I believe there's another route, but this administration and this Commission is not willing to go ahead and enforce it or even take a chance. No.

Commissioner Fernandez: As I stated earlier, I think we are really left with no options. We have an opportunity here to now try to sit down with the developer and reduce the scale. Every property owner has the right to develop their property. We as a city cannot say you don't have the right to develop your property. They have the rights based on the zoning code. What we need to go back to is our zoning code is no longer valid because the county has implemented its RTZ on this property. So, the only way that we can bring it back to the city and scale it back is by creating this RTZ zone, which would allow us to bring it back. You want to know how you can change it? Start appealing to your County Commissioners and, you know, find ways to ensure that this doesn't continue to happen that there aren't new changes or new openings on the RTZ zone. Your state legislature to make sure that they don't continue to expand on the Live Local Act. Those are active ways that we can prevent it. As for this project, the wheels are already in motion. If we vote against this project today, tomorrow they'll file their application for the RTZ, and we will have a project there that will be completely out of scale with what the City of Coral Gables is. And all you need to do is drive on US-1 towards downtown Miami, and you see the size and scale of some of the buildings that are being put into those locations. I just wouldn't want to see that in our city. That's the reason that I'm voting yes on this item today. And whoever's going to be sitting down over the next few weeks with the developer, if it's you, Mr. Mayor, I hope we're able to get them to make some concessions and reduce the scale a bit, as the residents have been asking for. If the developer's watching, I would ask that you sit down with the residents, the neighbors in that area, as other developers have. The developers of the Almeria project, the developers of the project up in the Flagler section. And they worked on a project that worked not just for their ends, but also for the community that you're coming into. When you're developing a project, it's not about developing a project and then moving away. It's about developing a project that's going to stay with this community. And you need to ensure that when you're building these projects, they're in scale with the community that you're building into. You bought a property in Coral Gables. Try to live up to those Coral Gables standards and respect the residents who live in Coral Gables and who have owned their properties around this project 40 and 50 years. That's my request today. As I said, I don't think we have an option. I have to vote yes on this item today.

Mayor Lago: Yes, I reluctantly vote yes as a result of the simple fact that this is common sense, not politics. I would love nothing more than to vote no and then send out an email tomorrow saying I voted against this upzoning. But the moment that we vote no is the moment that they go the county route, and they go the RTZ and they build a monstrous building here. Think about it.

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You just witnessed the Mark. It's coming in at 105 feet. I'm still not satisfied with that. But it could have been 150. Could have lost millions of dollars in impact fees. Could have had a gentleman's club there. If it would have had the usages from the county, a gun store, it could have had massive signage in comparison to what's permissible here in the City of Coral Gables. They could have had the buildings like I showed you there that are not in Mediterranean and in flavor. So, the idea of going to, I heard this over and over again, let's go to war against the county. You have two incredibly competent, incredibly competent litigators that are bookending this Commission that have litigated at some of the highest courts to the Supreme Court. And they're telling you that this is a dog and we're going to lose. But we're going to listen to people who have no formal legal training. If the City of Miami was so certain in their lawsuit, and I've called and I've inquired with attorneys and the Manager and I have talked about this, they would have bonded that lawsuit. They didn't. It's very easy to be the hero and say, I vote no. I vote no. I'm the hero and then come to you as I walked door to door and say, vote for me. But at the end of the day, that behavior is risky and jeopardizes the city in the long term. Because if that developer goes and takes those impact fees or builds a larger building and you lose that lawsuit, what happens then? What do you do? Oh, well, you know, I tried. I lost a lawsuit. It is what it is. But I was a hero, and I look good and I got reelected. So, my vote is yes. It pains me to do that. But at the end of the day, we have to move forward, and we have to think about not ourselves, but the residents here in the City of Coral Gables. And what the blogs will write tomorrow and the insanity that will be sent out by all these text messages that should have a disclaimer, by the way, start putting disclaimers in your text messages. I put them on mine. It's illegal. Just so you know, it was one sent out today that didn't have a disclaimer on it. We need to be more responsible and thoughtful. That's against that's against the elections code here in Miami-Dade County, just so you know. Vote is yes. We're going to take a two-minute break, a two-minute break. Hold on one second. We're going to take a two-minute, a five-minute break. And then we'll come back and we'll take F-11, which is time certain for 12pm. Thank you.