

**CITY OF CORAL GABLES**  
**ANNEXATION FEASIBILITY STUDY**

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## Executive Summary

In November last year, the City Commission approved Resolution No. 2015-286 which directed the City Manager to study the potential annexation of the Little Gables and High Pines (including Ponce-Davis) neighborhoods, and provide a report addressing fiscal, service and community impacts to the City.

**Little Gables** is 205 acres in size and located south of SW 8<sup>th</sup> Street between Graceland Memorial Park and SW 40<sup>th</sup> Street (see Figure 1). The County Elections Department records indicate there are approximately 1,480 registers voters and the population is estimated to be 2,530. The average household income is \$60,888 and 52% of the housing units are owner-occupied. The land use pattern in Little Gables is comprised primarily of Low Density (70%) and Low-Medium Density (20%) land.

**High Pines** encompasses 675 acres and is situated southeast of the intersection of SW 72<sup>nd</sup> Street and SW 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue (see Figure 1). The population is estimated to be 2,960, while there are approximately 2,210 voters. The average household income is \$158,367 and 78% of the housing units are owner-occupied. The land use pattern in High Pines is decidedly single-family residential comprising 95% of the neighborhood.

As shown in the table below, annual costs to provide City services to Little Gables and High Pines are projected to exceed yearly revenues by \$2.08 million. In addition, staff has identified \$17 million in new vehicles, and road, park and infrastructure improvements needed to upgrade the areas to meet existing Coral Gables service standards.

Total Revenues / Costs	Little Gables	High Pines	Combined
Annual Revenues	\$ 1,974,285	\$ 6,735,026	\$ 8,709,311
Annual Service Costs	3,245,700	7,543,600	10,789,300
Difference	- 1,271,415	- 808,574	- 2,079,989
Estimated Capital Costs	\$ 3,549,100	\$ 13,484,100	\$ 17,033,200

**Neighborhood Financial Impact.** Annexation will increase the annual property tax bill of residents and owners within the proposed annexed areas by 1.21 mills. It will not raise the mileage of existing Coral Gables residents. Using an average 2016 home price in Little Gables of \$350,000 and in High Pines of \$600,000, the resulting estimated impact on property tax bills is shown below.

\* Little Gables = +\$424/year

\* High Pines = +\$726/year

Annexation property owners would also pay the City's annual waste collection fee of approximately \$729 per dwelling unit and fire fee estimated to be \$70 per dwelling per year.

**Feasibility** is more than dollars and cents. Other important considerations also come into play if the analysis takes a longer view as it should. These neighborhoods are surrounded on 3-sides by existing Coral Gables jurisdiction and annexation will fill 2 gaps in the north and west City boundaries. Physically, these areas "belong" in Coral Gables. In the long term, it is inefficient for Miami-Dade County to serve these neighborhoods and for Coral Gables not to. Estimated costs could well moderate as the new areas are integrated into the existing City services system, and efficiencies and redundancies are discovered that are not evident today. Also, it is likely revenues from property and other taxes will continue to grow steadily each year faster than costs into the future, thus serving to close the revenue/cost gap over time. Finally, it comes down to the residents of Little Gables and High Pines. If initial owner and resident

support from each of the neighborhoods is generally positive and appears to the City Commission to be greater than 50%, then possibly that should be the deciding factor.

## **I. Introduction**

In November last year, the City Commission approved Resolution No. 2015-286 which directed the City Manager to study the potential annexation of the Little Gables and High Pines (including Ponce-Davis) neighborhoods, and provide a report addressing fiscal, service and community impacts to the City. With valuable assistance from City staff, ILER PLANNING has prepared this feasibility report for Commission consideration. Figure 1 shows the location of the subject areas and key City services.

The term “annexation” refers to the change in jurisdiction authority of a land area from one general government entity to another one. In this case, the subject neighborhoods are now under the jurisdiction of Miami-Dade County and if annexed, that authority would pass to the City of Coral Gables to provide municipal services.

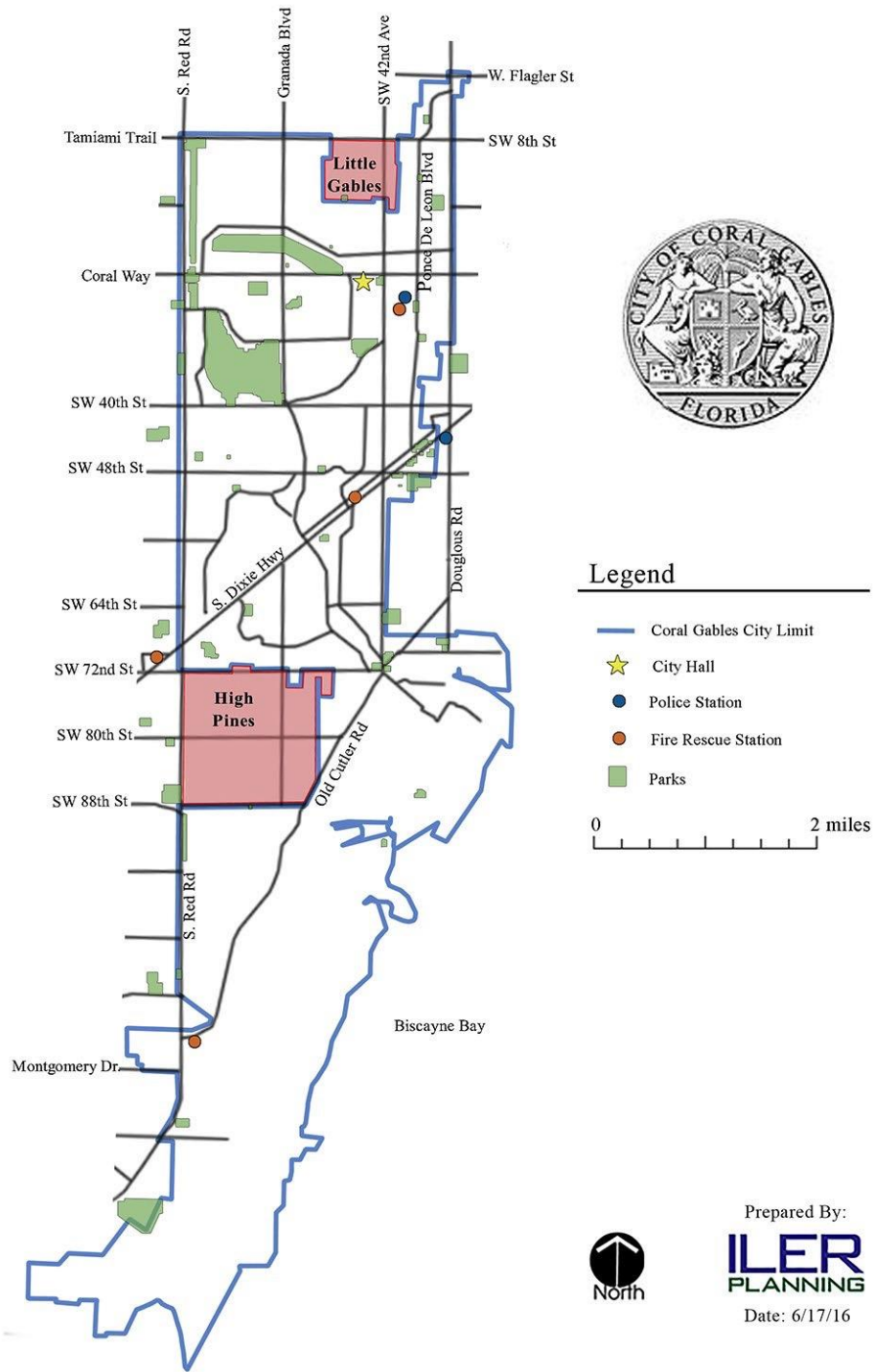
The City’s annexation initiative has 3 distinct but dependent phases. The first phase now underway is the preparation of a feasibility report and consideration of the report by the City Commission, now scheduled for July 26<sup>th</sup>. After review and consideration of the report, the Commission will decide whether or not to move forward with the annexation. If there is a favorable decision, then Phase 2 will commence in which an annexation application will be prepared and submitted to Miami-Dade County. If the City’s application is approved by the County Commission, a referendum on annexation will be held in the neighborhoods proposed to be annexed (Phase 3). It should be noted that Commissioner Sosa has requested that Little Gables be surveyed to see if the area is interested in being annexed to the City of Coral Gables. If this area is not interested, Commissioner Sosa has indicated she would support the separate annexation of High Pines.

## **II. Annexation Process**

Chapter 20 of the County’s Code governs municipal annexations and lays out the submittal requirements for municipalities seeking to transfer jurisdiction of an area from the County to a city. This includes a requirement that for any annexation areas with more than 250 voters, the municipality must submit petitions signed by at least 20% of the voters supporting the filing of the City’s application with the County. Each of the subject neighborhoods have well over 250 voters so the petition requirement will apply to the City’s application should it go forward. Also, under the County Charter and Code, prior to filing the application the City Commission will be required to hold a public hearing with notice to the residents within the proposed annexed areas and 600 feet outside the areas during which a resolution requesting the annexation of these areas from Miami-Dade County will be considered.

# Proposed Annexation Areas

Figure 1



Application Submittal Requirements. The application to Miami-Dade County must contain the following information:

1. Legal description and maps
2. County Supervisor of Registration certificate stating the number of voters
3. Grounds or reasons for the proposed annexation
4. Statement whether the areas are enclaves
5. Land use and zoning plan
6. Services to be provided
7. Timetable for supplying services
8. Financing of the services
9. Tax load on the annexation area
10. Identification of any County-designated transportation terminal land use locations
11. Petition indicating consent for annexation of at least 20% of the neighborhood voters
12. Resolution of the local government, approved at a public hearing, requesting annexation.

County Approval Criteria. Chapter 20 of the County Code for County approval are summarized below.

- a. Suitability of proposed boundaries in providing for a cohesive and inclusive community
- b. Compatibility with existing planned land uses and zoning in the municipality
- c. Area is contiguous to the municipality and will not create any unincorporated enclave areas
- d. Impact on public safety response times
- e. Public transit connections to municipal governmental facilities and commercial centers
- f. Will not introduce barriers to municipal traffic circulation
- g. Existing and proposed property tax cost to annexation area residents
- h. Proposed area is totally contained within the Urban Development Boundary (UDB)
- i. Impact on the revenue base of the unincorporated area
- j. Impact on County's ability to provide effective & efficient services to remaining unincorporated areas
- k. Financial impacts on remaining unincorporated areas.

County Consultant Study. Last year the County Commission retained a consultant to assess its annexation and incorporation rules and policies, and their impact on the County budget and future goals. The report was completed in October 2015 and contained a number of recommended changes, most of which do not directly affect this proposed City annexation. However one (1) recommendation pertaining to 'enclaves' was very relevant. An "enclave" is defined in County Code as an unincorporated area: 1.) surrounded on more 80% of its boundary by municipal jurisdiction; and 2.) of a size that could not be serviced efficiently or effectively by Miami-Dade County. The County's consultant report recommends the County "adopt a policy to eliminate the existing enclaves and prohibit the establishment of new ones" and to "use the power under the Charter to compel the annexation of enclaves." It should be noted this latter part of the proposed policy would require an amendment to the County Charter before a city could be required to accept an annexation. Little Gables and High Pines are very close to the 80% boundary rule for an enclave. Since they are surrounded on 3-sides by Coral Gables jurisdiction and other County areas are not nearby, these neighborhoods should be considered enclaves by the County if the annexation application is filed. The County Commission has not acted on the consultant's recommendations yet, however if the new enclave policy is adopted, it would be a positive development for the City's application.

### III. The Neighborhoods

#### Little Gables

This neighborhood is 205 acres in size and located south of SW 8<sup>th</sup> Street (Tamiami Trail) between Graceland Memorial Park and SW 40<sup>th</sup> Street. Figure 2 provides an close-up aerial view. The population is estimated to be 2,530, of which 76% are Hispanic. County Elections Department records indicate there are approximately 1,480 registers voters. The average household income is \$60,888 and 52% of the housing units are owner-occupied. The land use pattern in Little Gables is comprised primarily of Low Density (70%) and Low-Medium Density (20%) land. There is 20 acres of commercial property and a 1.4-acre trailer park. It has 9 miles of paved roads.

Police. The area is currently served by the Miami-Dade Police Department from its Mid-West District Station located at 9105 NW 25<sup>th</sup> Street, approximately 8 miles from the neighborhood. Little Gables is also in the City Police Department's Zone 2 and via a mutual aid agreement with Miami-Dade County Police frequently respond to calls in this neighborhood. Over the past 3.5 years, the average City Police response time to calls in and around Little Gables has been 5:01 minutes. With annexation, public safety responsibility for this neighborhood would be transferred to the Coral Gables Police Department.

Fire. Fire and emergency medical services (EMS) are provided by the Miami-Dade County Fire Department from Fire Station No. 40 at 901 SW 62<sup>nd</sup> Avenue in West Miami about 2 miles away. The nearest City fire station is Station #1 located at 2815 Salzedo Street equipped with 1 fire truck, 2 medical rescue vehicles and an air truck. The average citywide fire response time is 6:04 minutes, while the average EMS response is 5:43 minutes. Currently, this neighborhood is included in the County Fire Service District. Since this neighborhood is an enclave area surrounded on 3 sides by Coral Gables and on the 4<sup>th</sup> by the City of Miami, logically fire and EMS services for Little Gables would be transferred to the Coral Gables Fire Department.

Parks. San Jacinto Park, operated by Miami-Dade County, is located in Little Gables and is an open space park in the middle of a residential block. This park combined with neighboring open space areas will serve the area. This neighborhood does not have any current recreation facilities or parks that offer recreation programming. The closest recreation program providers are City of Miami with Kinloch Park and Douglas Park, and City of Coral Gables with the Coral Gables Youth Center and Phillips Park. Small-scale youth programs can be added to San Jacinto Park to serve the area.

Schools. The only school in Little Gables is the Gables Montessori School. The Snow White Day Care Center is also located to this neighborhood. The location of these facilities is shown in Figure 2.



# Little Gables Neighborhood

Figure 2



### Legend

-  Parks
    - 1. Graceland Memorial Park North
    - 2. San Jacinto Park
  -  Schools
    - A. Gables Montessori School
    - B. Snow White Day Care Center
  -  Neighborhood
-  North

Prepared By:

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PLANNING

Date: 6/17/16

## **High Pines**

Figure 3 provides an close-up aerial view of High Pines. This area neighborhood encompasses 675 acres and is situated southeast of the intersection of SW 72<sup>nd</sup> Street (Sunset Drive) and SW 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue (Red Road). It includes the Ponce-Davis neighborhood also. The population is estimated to be 2,960, while there are approximately 2,210 voters. The population is 31% Hispanic and white (non-Hispanic) persons make up 65%. The average household income is \$158,367 and 78% of the housing units are owner-occupied. The land use pattern in High Pines is decidedly single-family residential comprising 95% of the neighborhood. There are also 28 acres of multi-family residential and 5 acres of commercial property. High Pines has 20.5 miles of paved roads.

Police. The area is currently served by the Miami-Dade Police Department from its Kendal District Station located at 7707 SW 117<sup>th</sup> Avenue, an estimated 7 miles from the neighborhood. High Pines is also in the City Police Department's Zone 9 and via a mutual aid agreement with Miami-Dade County Police frequently respond to calls in this neighborhood. Over the past 3.5 years, the average City Police response time to calls in and around High Pines has been 5:01 minutes. With annexation, public safety responsibility for this neighborhood would be transferred to the Coral Gables Police Department.

Fire. Fire and EMS are provided by the Miami- Dade County Fire Department from the closest station at 5860 SW 70<sup>th</sup> Street, approximately 1.5 miles away. The nearest City fire station is Station #4 (proposed temporary) located at 5275 Sunset Drive which is 0.5 miles from the center of High Pines and equipped with 1 fire truck. Station #2 is at 525 South Dixie Highway, 2 miles from the neighborhood, with 2 fire engines, 1 ladder truck and 1 rescue truck. The average City fire response time is 6:04 minutes, while the average EMS response is 5:43 minutes. Currently, this neighborhood is included in the County Fire Service District. Since this neighborhood is an enclave area surrounded on 3 sides by Coral Gables and on the 4<sup>th</sup> by the City of South Miami, logically fire and EMS services for High Pines would be transferred to the Coral Gables Fire Department.

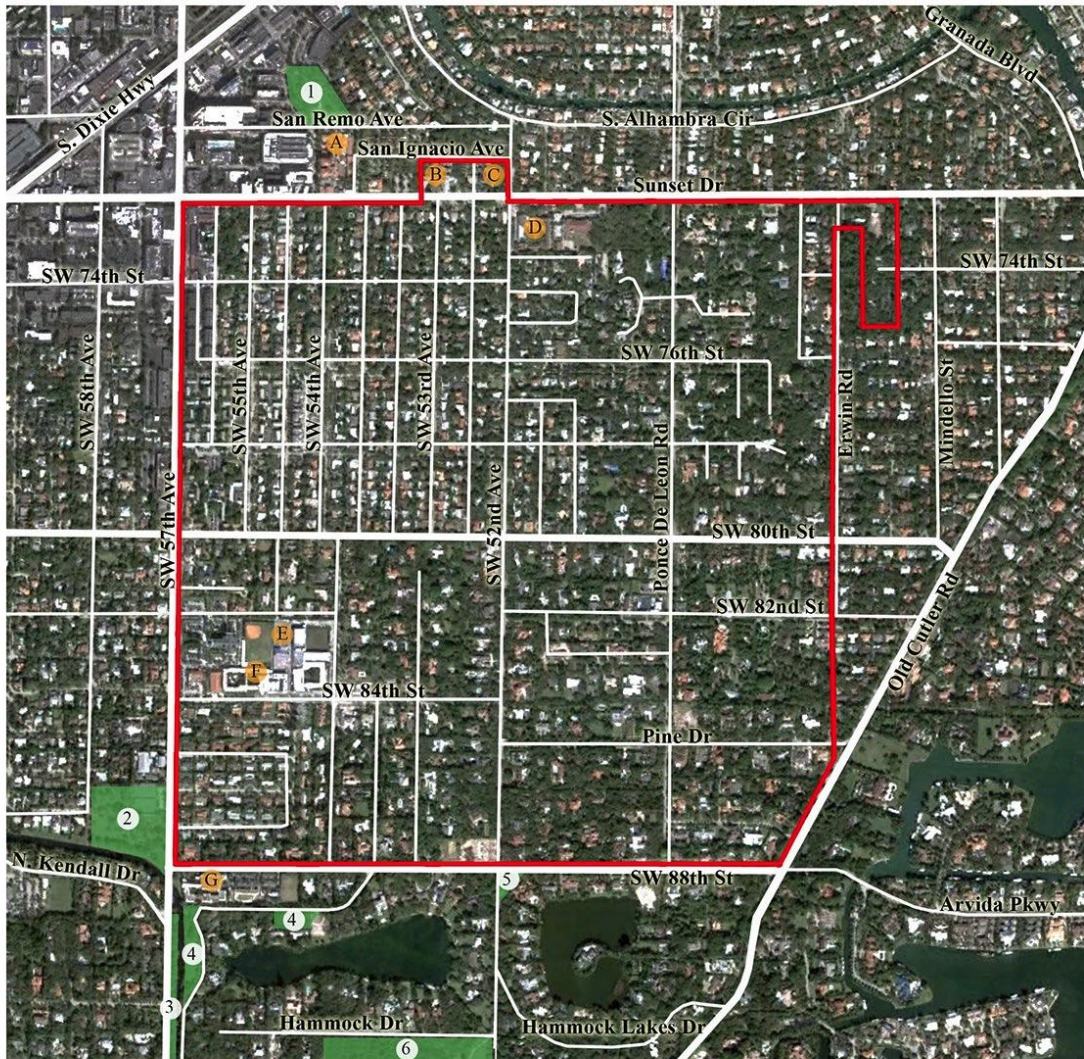
Parks. High Pines has a median that doubles as fitness trail and small open spaces that could be acquired. In terms of park service radius, there will be a deficiency according to current park service radius models in the open space and neighborhood park. The median trail on 76<sup>th</sup> Street will serve as an open space area, and can be renovated with trail improvements and fitness equipment. This will leave an open space deficiency along the eastern side of the High Pines Area and Southwest half of the area. Riviera Park, Pinewood Cemetery and South Miami's Dante Fascell Park serve a portion of the area as neighborhood parks and open spaces, but there is still a deficiency in neighborhood parks in the Southeastern portion of the area. The area is within the service radius for larger park systems due to the proximity of Matheson Hammock Park. Land acquisition would be necessary to meet the levels of service.

Recreation program offerings are provided by parks from several different entities. The City of South Miami offers programming at Dante Fascell Park and Murray Park; City of Coral Gables offers programs at William H. Kerdyk, Family Park and Jaycee Park; and Miami-Dade County provides programming at Chapman Field Park. In addition, the Epiphany School offers recreation programming for their students. Additional programming can be provided if facilities are acquired or a joint use agreement with either Epiphany School or Sunset Elementary can be attained. If annexed, recreational programming would be determined by public input.






# High Pines Neighborhood

Figure 3



**Legend**

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
|  <p>North</p> | <p> Parks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Riviera Park</li> <li>2. Dante Fascell Park (City of South Miami)</li> <li>3. Red Road Linear Park</li> <li>4. Banyan Drive Park</li> <li>5. Hammock Lake Park</li> <li>7. Matheson Hammock County Park</li> </ul> | <p> Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Riviera Day School</li> <li>B. Child Care Center Inc.</li> <li>C. Bilingual Cooperative Preschool</li> <li>D. Sunset Elementary School</li> <li>E. Our Lady of Lords Academy</li> <li>F. Epiphany School</li> <li>G. St. Thomas Episcopal Parish School</li> </ul> |
|  | <p> Neighborhood</p>   |   |

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 PLANNING  
 Date: 6/17/16

Schools High Pines has a number of educational facilities as listed below and shown in Figure 3.

- \* Riviera Day School
- \* Child Care Center Inc.
- \* Bilingual Cooperative Preschool
- \* Sunset Elementary School
- \* Our Lady of Lords Academy
- \* Epiphany School
- \* St. Thomas Episcopal Parish School

## VI. Projected Revenues and Costs

Potential City Revenues. The property tax base of the High Pines neighborhood is assessed at a total of \$1.08 billion, while Little Gables has a total assessed value of \$226 million. Potential City revenue estimates were prepared by City staff and are presented in Table 1. The primary revenue source will be from property taxes estimated to generate a total of \$6.1 million annually from both neighborhoods. Waste collection fees are the next highest source with \$1.1 million per year and sales tax revenues are the third largest with \$778,000 annually.

Total annual revenues are estimated to be \$8.7 million. Of this total, approximately \$7.2 million would be available for General Fund use, while \$1.5 million would be restricted to specific-purpose funds including waste collection, stormwater management and fire and emergency medical services.

**Table 1: Estimated Revenues**

Revenue Sources	Little Gables	High Pines	Total
Property Tax	\$948,399	\$5,103,850	\$6,052,249
Sales Tax	355,822	422,311	778,133
Communications Tax	65,513	291,330	356,843
Alcoholic Beverage License Fees	553	656	1,209
Waste Collection*	460,728	677,241	1,137,969
Stormwater Utility*	88,810	146,678	235,488
Fire Fee*	54,460	92,960	147,420
<b>Total Annual Revenues</b>	<b>\$1,974,285</b>	<b>\$6,735,026</b>	<b>\$8,709,311</b>

Source: Coral Gables city staff; Miami-Dade County Property Appraisers Office, 2015-16.

\* Note: Use of funds restricted to services for which collected.

Estimated City Costs. Table 2 below provides projected expenditures for necessary City road and infrastructure improvements, new equipment, and annual provision of City services. City staff has estimated \$17 million will be needed in one-time capital costs primarily for road, parks, fire, landscape and solid waste improvements, and new equipment, such as vehicles, to upgrade both neighborhoods. Annual operational expenditures are projected to be \$10.8 million with police, fire and EMS comprising 77% of the total. Operational costs include new personnel, vehicle maintenance and similar expenses.

**Table 2: Estimated City Expenditures**

City Services	Little Gables		High Pines		Total	
	Capital	Operations	Capital	Operations	Capital	Operations
Public Works	\$1,360,300	371,200	3,615,500	1,113,600	4,975,800	1,484,800
Police	358,000	2,367,100	502,000	3,091,000	860,000	5,458,100
Fire	62,500	45,300	4,732,500	2,903,600	4,795,000	2,948,900
Parks	1,761,000	70,000	4,630,000	55,000	6,391,000	125,000
Development Services	7,300	292,100	4,100	180,400	11,400	472,500
General Government	----	100,000	----	200,000	----	300,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$3,549,100</b>	<b>\$3,245,700</b>	<b>\$13,484,100</b>	<b>\$7,543,600</b>	<b>\$17,033,200</b>	<b>\$10,789,300</b>

Source: Coral Gables staff, 2015-16.

### **Expenditures By Department**

Public Works. Infrastructure costs estimated by the Department include street paving, sidewalk upgrades, drainage improvements, street lighting, trees, personnel and related equipment. It was noted that sidewalk and drainage improvements are not included for the mobile home park because it is not physically possible due to the existing development condition to upgrade that area to current City standards. New equipment to serve the neighborhoods includes:

- a.) 1 street sweeper;
- b.) 1 standard vehicle standard vehicle;
- c.) 2 garbage trucks;
- d.) 2 trash trucks;
- e.) 1 trash crane; and
- f.) 1 pick-up truck with dump body.

The capital cost also provides for the installation of 2,461 new trees at a cost of \$1,388,000. The operational costs for Public Works allows for 16 new employees, 11 of which are for sanitation services.

Parks. In Little Gables, the San Jacinto County park property is of sufficient size for a neighborhood park and would meet the levels of service standard as noted above. Up to \$600,000 could be spent for further renovation of the park. One urban open space centrally located within Little Gables would meet the criteria and goals. A 13,000 square foot space at approximately \$75 per square foot would be \$975,000. Development costs would be approximately \$175,000.

For High Pines, a neighborhood park property, ½ acre in size, in the central part of the area would meet the park level-of-service criteria and goals. Recent park purchases by the City in other areas have indicated that a property this size could be purchased for approximately \$1,575,000. The park development and construction costs, taking into account cost increases over time, will be approximately \$500,000. The level-of-service criteria and strategic goals will also be met with the addition two urban open spaces. The spaces would average 13,000 square feet in size; at the rate of \$75 per square foot, \$1,950,000 would be the total estimated cost to secure two properties of this size. The parks would be developed with landscaping and minimal construction. Approximate costs for development of each property would be \$175,000 for a total of \$350,000.

Fire. The Fire Department estimates Little Gables can be serviced with existing City facilities, personnel and equipment in the general area. Ten (10) fire hydrants would need to be installed and 41 existing



hydrants converted to City specifications for a total capital cost of \$56,000.

High Pines would need considerably more City investment to provide appropriate service. The Department estimates a new fire station would be required at a total cost of \$3.5 million including land. New vehicles for the station would include 1 fire engine and 1 rescue vehicle. In addition, 27 new firefighters would be needed. It is important to note this new station will provide improved service for other areas of south Coral Gables, beyond High Pines.

Police. The Police Department projects it will need an additional 25 sworn officers and 9 civilian personnel at a total cost of \$5.5 million annually to serve the subject neighborhoods. This level of additional sworn personnel will keep the City's police force at the current level of 4.31 officers per 1000 population. Vehicles and equipment required are listed below and estimated to cost a total of \$860,000.

- \* 8 patrol cars
- \* 8 other vehicles
- \* 2 motorcycles
- \* 18 radios
- \* Computer equipment

Development Services. The proposed annexation will result in a need for additional staff. It is anticipated that Little Gables will require 2 additional Code Enforcement Officers (CEOs) and High Pines, 1 CEO. Other department functions will likely be impacted by annexation, however it is harder to quantify the associated costs. For example, the Building Division will assume responsibility for issuing permits in the neighborhoods. Projecting the number of permits that may be issued and staffing impacts will be difficult because permits are issued at property owners' requests and it's difficult to predict how many will be requested. Likewise, development approvals (e.g., applications for zoning map and future land use map changes) will be demand-driven after any initial, city-initiated changes, and are difficult to predict. Finally, the Certificate of Use program will likely see an increase in activity, although this will be slight and the impact minimal as there are few commercial properties in the areas in question.

## **V. Neighborhood Financial Impact**

In addition to other property taxes, residents in the subject neighborhoods now pay an unincorporated tax rate of 1.9283 mills plus 2.4207 mills for the County Fire District service. A 'mill' is defined as \$1 for every \$1000 of property value. If annexed into the City, these areas would begin to pay the City's property tax rate of 5.5590 mills, and the County's 1.9283 mill Unincorporated Municipal Service Area (UMSA) rate and 2.4207 mills for County Fire & EMS service would be removed\*. Following annexation, the Coral Gables Police and Fire Departments would assume public safety, fire and EMS responsibilities, as well as

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\* *Note: Were the County to decide to retain the neighborhoods in the Fire District, the cost of annexation to area residents would triple; a millage rate difference so high that it may be difficult to achieve the majority vote necessary to approve the annexation.*

sanitation service. This produces an estimated net increase of 1.21 mills on neighborhood tax bills if the neighborhoods become part of Coral Gables.

It is important to put this into a context showing the real financial impact of annexation on neighborhood property owners. Using an average 2016 home price in Little Gables of \$350,000 and in High Pines of \$600,000, the resulting estimated impact on property tax bills is shown below.

\* Little Gables = +\$424/year

\* High Pines = +\$726/year.

Annexation property owners would also pay the City's annual waste collection fee of approximately \$729 per dwelling unit and fire fee estimated to be \$70 per dwelling unit per year.

## **VI. Future Schedule**

With Commission go-ahead in July, the consultant, working with staff, would prepare the application and collect the necessary 738+ voter petitions. During this time, it is suggested the City follow through with the recent request by County Commissioner Sosa for a survey to be sent to Little Gables residents on the annexation question. Also a significant community outreach and education effort should be conducted in both neighborhoods. With these tasks completed, we should be ready to file the application with the County by September-October provided the petition collection process goes smoothly and overall neighborhood support is positive. Immediately following application submittal, the first step will be a County Commission public hearing to officially receive the application and direct staff to initiate the review process. Although very difficult to estimate, the County review process should be completed in 9-12 months after application submittal barring any significant unforeseen issues. During the review, the application will be considered by the County's Planning Advisory Board at a public hearing in which mail notice will be sent to all residents in the subject areas and those within 600 feet outside of the neighborhood boundaries. At the end of this period and if the Commission is supportive of the annexation, they will direct a referendum be held in the annexation neighborhoods and will certify the results following the vote. It is anticipated the election will be conducted by mail-in ballot.

## **VII. Findings**

The primary findings of this report are presented below.

### **Revenues v. Expenses**

With annexation, annual City operational expenses are projected to exceed revenues from the subject neighborhoods by \$2.1 million per year. In addition, staff has identified \$17 million in new vehicles, and road, park and infrastructure improvements needed to upgrade the areas to meet existing Coral Gables service standards. Both neighborhoods have little vacant land so revenue growth will be primarily limited to annual area growth in value of currently developed properties with some redevelopment.

The annual revenue deficit from the annexation presented above is not entirely accurate because some capital and service improvements identified by staff will also improve services outside the neighborhoods in nearby existing City areas. Given the nature of municipal service provision, it is very difficult to precisely estimate the service cost of an area when it is already surrounded by your service area on 3 sides. There will be spillover in the form of improved and more efficient services for nearby City areas as well. So any cost estimate is normally going to be higher than the precise cost of serving only the subject area. A good example in this case is the new City Fire Station proposed in High Pines if annexation occurs. The Fire Department states clearly this station will serve areas outside the immediate neighborhood.



### **Community Support**

This report has not addressed the level of community support in each neighborhood for annexation. This should be done as soon as possible if the Commission decides to move forward. It was mentioned previously that the City will need to collect support petitions from at least 20% of voters in each neighborhood in order to file the application with Miami-Dade County plus there will be a County-sponsored referendum at the end of the process if approved by the County Commission. Solid support in each neighborhood will make both of these events easier to achieve. The City should present the benefits and costs of annexation to neighborhood residents in community meetings, meetings with community leaders, website postings, social media and print flyers. In addition, it is suggested the City follow through on the recent request by County Commissioner Sosa for a survey to be sent to Little Gables residents on the annexation question.

### **Fire & EMS Response**

It would be very informative for the City Fire Department to determine specific response times to each neighborhood. The average city-wide response time of 5:56 minutes was provided by the Department. If they are significantly faster than County response, this could be a very important factor in the County application process and in the subject neighborhoods. In addition, faster fire response could lead to substantial reductions in property insurance rates for home and/or property owners. This should certainly be the case in High Pines where a new City Fire Station is proposed.

### **Should We Annex?**

Feasibility is more than dollars and cents, although fiscal impact on the City's budget and neighborhood property owners is a primary factor and has been analyzed in detail herein. Other important considerations also come into play if the analysis takes a longer view as it should. These neighborhoods are surrounded on 3-sides by existing Coral Gables jurisdiction and annexation will fill 2 gaps in the north and west City boundaries, making it consistent and uniform. Physically, these areas "belong" in Coral Gables. In the long term, it is inefficient for Miami-Dade County to serve these neighborhoods and for Coral Gables not to.

The estimated revenues and costs presented in this report may show an annual deficit in service provision, but costs could well moderate as the new areas are integrated into the existing City services system, and efficiencies and redundancies are discovered that are not evident today. Also, it is likely revenues from property and other taxes will continue to grow steadily each year faster than costs into the future, thus serving to close the revenue/cost gap over time.

Finally, it comes down to the residents of Little Gables and High Pines. If initial owner and resident support from each of the neighborhoods is generally positive and appears to the City Commission to be greater than 50%, then possibly that should be the deciding factor.