

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item E-4**  
**October 10, 2023**  
**City Commission Chambers**  
**405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

**City Commission**

**Mayor Vince Lago**

**Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson**

**Commissioner Melissa Castro**

**Commissioner Ariel Fernandez**

**Commissioner Kirk Menendez**

**City Staff**

**City Attorney, Cristina Suárez**

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias**

**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

**City Planner, Jennifer Garcia**

**Public Speaker(s)**

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Agenda Item E-4 [11:14 a.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission providing for 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,” to create an open space incentive program within the Central Business District (CBD) to incentivize additional open space by allowing a maximum building height of one hundred and thirty -seven feet and six inches, providing for repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date. (07 12 23 PZB made no recommendation, Vote 3-2)

(Sponsored by Commissioner Menendez)

**Mayor Lago: Moving to E-4.**

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City Commission Meeting

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Agenda Item E-4 - Ordinance of the City Commission providing for text amendments to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code Article 14, Section 14-212, to create an open space incentive program within the Central Business District to incentivize additional open space by allowing a maximum building height of one hundred and thirty-seven feet and six inches.

City Attorney Suárez: E-4 is an ordinance of the City Commission providing for 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," to create an open space incentive program within the Central Business District to incentivize additional open space by allowing a maximum building height of 137 feet and 6 inches, providing for repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date. This is a public hearing item.

Commissioner Menendez: And Mayor, I want to -- if you don't mind -- this item's being deferred.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Commissioner Menendez: And we're just simply doing a presentation on the subject matter and it's being deferred. There may have been some miscommunication, but we're deferring it, and Jennifer's just going to do a presentation to sort of bring the community and others into what the concept is.

Mayor Lago: Would you like for this presentation to be made public in some form or a way for other residents which they maybe can't watch this?

Commissioner Menendez: I think it would be very helpful. Absolutely.

City Planner Garcia: Okay. Jennifer Garcia, City Planner. If I could have the slides, please. Thank you. So, in a summary -- it's going to be summarized in six points. This is limited. This is an open space incentive program. This is to incentivize more open space in our downtown. Our downtown is, as you can see outside the window, it's getting more and more built up and a lot of those open spaces are kind of being captured for the requirement within arcades and loggias, hence the outdoor seating and covered paseos and not giving enough open space to our downtown. So, this is limited just to MX2 zoning. This wouldn't affect MX1 zoning, wouldn't affect MX3 zoning. It would just be MX2 zoning within the CBD, the Central Business District. And again, this is incentivized open space at the ground level. And the way that it's set up, it'd be at 5 percent increments of additional open space that a building provides to a maximum height of 137.5 feet. And that's just based on the calculations of a story, which is 13 and a half feet in our zoning code. It would be prohibited within 100 feet of a single family residence. So, we wouldn't be concerned about having extra height next to a single family, which we have that along the south part of our CBD. And I'll show some maps in a second. It's also limited to only share a property line with MX2 and MX3 because of the additional height. The intent of this is to be in between those two districts and not affecting any other district. It will be prohibited along Miracle Mile and Giralda because, as you know, Miracle Mile has its own overlay district as is Giralda Plaza. And then the newest, I guess, discussion that we're going to put in legislation would be to require a Mediterranean style bonus for this. This will be competing with our already Med Bonus program that we have in our zoning code. So, this dates back, this idea of having open space in our downtown dates back to the early 2000s. In the 2002 charette, one of the -- actually, many of the

policies and recommendations that were found and based on community input was how to find open space in our downtown, try to improve those public realms, mostly the streets, but also try and find some open space in that downtown area. And you can see it was implemented, I guess, as you can see on the Villa Valencia project, which is just a block away. And you can see the building was pulled back from the corner to allow a pocket park on Hernando and Valencia. And the building got a little bit taller to be able to improve that pedestrian realm on the ground floor. So, this is our CBD. It's bounded by that black dashed line. It's south of Navarre. It's east of Le Jeune, north of Almeria, and west of Douglas Road. And within it, you have two overlay districts. You have Giralda Plaza, which is that light pink on the 100 block of Giralda. And then you have the Miracle Mile Zain/Friedman Downtown Overlay District, which is outlined in the blue. As you can see, there's a lot of intense uses here. Our downtown is made up a lot of MX3, which is our highest and most intense zoning district, as well as a lot of MX2 and some MX1 along the perimeter of Le Jeune and some pockets here and there of MX1. So, looking down as an aerial, you can see again mostly built out. There are some parking lots that are underutilized, and you can kind of imagine those being the lowest hanging fruit of redevelopment that could maybe take advantage of this incentive to have more open space. Looking at the structure of our downtown, we have a few signature streets. We have, of course, Ponce de Leon that we're all familiar with. It's a 100-foot wide right-of-way. We have Alhambra Circle, which is the widest right-of-way in our city at 140 feet, and also Miracle Mile, which is 120. And it's bounded between Le Jeune and Douglas Road, which are both 70-70. The rest of the streets in our downtown are usually, I think, always 60-foot right-of-way. There might be a few that are 50-foot right-of-ways [sic]. So, this is what it would apply to. Here you see the red is the MX2 zoning districts. This is comprised of multiple properties within one. This is just showing the zoning itself. So, these properties could take advantage, if approved and adopted by the Commission, could take advantage of this incentive. As you can see, the Miracle Mile is ghosted out because this wouldn't apply to Miracle Mile. So, it would only apply to MX2 zoning within the CBD. That's not Miracle Mile. Here is a graphic that shows that 5 percent increments. The 5 percent increments are shown in blue -- I'm sorry, in green on the ground floor. And then the three additional stories at 13.5 feet to the maximum of 137.5 feet. So, this is a graphic that shows that you're using that FAR or that floor area ratio, that development right, so you would have the volume above the open space and it'd be added to the height of the building. So, the green hatched line is the volume that you're basically moving to the additional height of the actual building. So, again, this would be prohibited within 100 feet of single-family residential. This is a common theme in our zoning code that we don't like to have a lot of height next to our single-family. We want to be respectful of those neighborhoods. And additionally, this would only be between MX2 and MX3 zoning. It wouldn't be next to MX1 zoning and it wouldn't be next to, you know, of course, single-family or special use. This is a map showing, again, the MX2 zoning, that this could be applied to. It would be prohibited within, like I said, Miracle Mile and Giralda. So, there's the list of requirements. You're very familiar with these list of requirements. These are used a lot. These are best practices of open space and shapes of parks that we've seen in our Design Innovation District. The 10 percent open space used for outdoor seating, the ratio of one to three, you can't have a skinny open space. Fifty percent of it has to be tree canopy. They're very similar to what we've seen for the legislation that's found in the Design Innovation District. And then the middle column is that 5

percent additional that they would provide for a maximum height of 137.5 feet. This is a graphic that's showing that on the left side is 10 percent open space. Again, that can be provided in the right-of-way, that can be provided in the arcade or loggia or covered paseo, and you don't really see the impact of it. This legislation would require that this be open together in a compact manner that's actually usable open space. So, you can see the additional height, that would be the pinkish color, the additional three stories, that they provide additional 15 percent open space. Also required to provide the 10 percent that they would be required to anyway. And this is a graphic showing that right now in the middle block is the 97 feet of MX2, the 10 percent that right now is shown as a covered arcade and what that could look like if this legislation is adopted, what the 15 percent open space would do as far as the additional height of the building to be able to have a better ground floor and more pedestrian amenities to the ground floor. That's it.

Commissioner Menendez: Just to clarify, the open space, it would be open to the public...

City Planner Garcia: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Not private.

City Planner Garcia: Correct.

Commissioner Menendez: But open to the public. And you know, for those watching, we went through all -- a lot of the concerns over the years that a lot of the communities had with regards to any changes or any suggested changes. That's why we're trying to do our best to protect single-family home areas. That's why we're putting it where MX2, MX3 currently exists. There was concern that this would sort of dilute the Mediterranean efforts. So, that's why we're trying to take every issue and concern into consideration. And I think, you know, the next step obviously is to take it to the community to get their input because it should be community driven at the end of the day.

City Planner Garcia: Right, so we plan to have a meeting and we're planning to mail notices to the neighbors probably tomorrow or later this week to invite them to the 23rd for an evening meeting.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay.

Vice Mayor Anderson: All right. Mayor, if I just, a couple things. Commissioner, I'm glad you've deferred this item, you know, for a workshop because, you know, a lot of the concerns that were, you know, expressed down in the Design District, you know, because we had a meeting -- there was a Sunshine meeting a year prior to even the first iteration of a zoning text amendment coming forward. And then there was a second meeting -- I'm sorry you couldn't make it, you know, last week when we did it -- in which the community, you know, expressed support for it. But a couple of the takeaways that I can give you -- because there's a dramatic difference between the Design District and the Central Business District. Number one, there's no historic buildings down there

or some that could potentially become historic. We're dealing with a much different area here in the Central Business District with historic structures interspersed between our other buildings. There was a density limit that was placed on the, you know, the green space iteration of it. And as you could see from what happened at Villa Valencia, which was not a project that had any requirements like that, but the community is who addressed what they wanted there. And the community said they wanted green space. They didn't want pavers. We didn't want open space. We wanted green space there. You know, they pushed the building back all the way to the alley to create both a linear dog park in the front and that lush foliage buffer that exists between the building and the pedestrian walkways. You know, so a lot of these things will need to be taken into account. And if you do a comparison between the heights that were in a design district and the increases that happened -- would happen if this was done, there is a big difference. I'd like to flesh that out a little more during our workshops, but it's not the same as what was done in a design district, and we'll flesh that out during the workshop.

Commissioner Menendez: And that's the purpose why it's going to go to the community.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay.

Commissioner Menendez: We're having -- to have those discussions, hear what the concerns are, and see how we can create more open space in our downtown, but it's important to get the community involved. It should always be that way. So, I'm very supportive of that.

Mayor Lago: So, two quick points. Number one, I commend you for bringing this up. There's about five or six projects, like I mentioned before, that are forthcoming and it will come to the Commission, like what happened with Villa Valencia. You know, one of them is Publix, which the Manager and I have been working on for four years, and we're going to be presenting almost a 20,000 square foot park on Andalusia. And we've gone through multiple iterations, moving the building, you know, placing it in different positions. And I think the Commission's going to be very happy with the park that's going to be given to the City. It's not going to be -- and by the way, it's a real park. It's -- as the Manager will tell you, it's not -- we've taken all the bricks out. We've taken all the pavers out. We've taken the fountains out. We're just putting green with some beautiful trees, and I think it's going to be an opportunity -- but I welcome this discussion. I'm grateful that you put this on the Commission to have a real conversation about this. And if you want to hold off to have more public input, again, I welcome it. I just think that we should bring it back -- should bring it back sooner rather than later after we've had enough public input, to your liking, as the sponsor, because I think that this is something that if it's 137 or it's 127 or it's 117, whatever the number ends up being, you can never have enough open space on the ground floor because I think you'll pay significant dividends. And especially if you start connecting one building with another building, you can really start connecting these open spaces. I think it's something that's well worth having a real conversation and I commend you for bringing it forward.

Commissioner Menendez: I'm happy to say that the input feedback I've gotten from members of the community, basically the theme was that, you know, they would like the community an

opportunity to give feedback and give, you know, answer -- get questions answered. But the idea, the concept of more open space in the core of our city, the Central Business District, it was overwhelming support for that concept. So, I think this is an opportunity to see what we can come up with and just get everybody involved, all the stakeholders, starting with, obviously, the residents.

Mayor Lago: So, we'll defer this to sometime in November? We'll leave it up to the sponsor.

Commissioner Menendez: Leave it for now and then...

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Commissioner Menendez: We'll come back.

Mayor Lago: All right, well, thank you very much. Great job, very nice presentation. And through the sponsor, if I may, I'd like to see if we can get that presentation put up so that anybody that wants to refer back to it can take a look at it in preparation for that public meeting.