

# CORAL GABLES

THE CITY BEAUTIFUL

## Economic Development Board Meeting Meeting Minutes

Wednesday | February 7, 2024 | 8:00 a.m.  
Location: Zoom and Economic Development Department  
2506 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Coral Gables, FL 33134

EDB MEMBERS	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	APPOINTING ENTITY
	'24	'24	'24	'24	'24	'24	'24	'24	'24	'24	'24	'24	
James Kohnstamm, Vice Chair	P	P											Mayor Vince Lago
Timothy Heffernan	P	E											Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Derrek Space	P	P											Commissioner Kirk R. Menendez
Nguyen Castilla Cabanilla	P	PZ											Commissioner Melissa Castro
Scott Shuffield	P	P											Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Barbara Perez	P	P											City Manager Peter Iglesias
Thad Adams, Chair	P	P											Chamber of Commerce

A=Absent E=Excused Absence P=Present X=No Meeting PZ=Present by Zoom Z=Zoom - =Former Board Member

### Staff and Guests:

Belkys Perez, Director, Economic Development Department  
Leticia Perez, International Business Development Coordinator, Economic Development Department  
Solanch Lopez, Marketing Manager, Economic Development Department  
Yenisis Gomez, Administrative Assistant, Economic Development Department  
Paulson Jean, IT Network Analyst II, Innovation & Technology Department

Chairman Mr. Thad Adams brought the meeting to order at 8:08 a.m.

**1. Review and approval of January 10, 2024, Economic Development Board Meeting Minutes. Mr. Shuffield made a motion to approve the meeting minutes and Mr. Kohnstamm seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.** There was no discussion regarding the minutes.

### 2. Economic Development Activities

#### a) Community Survey 2023 Results

Mrs. Belkys Perez informed the Board that the City just completed a survey of its residents touching on several different points such as public safety, infrastructure, economic development, and communication. This survey is conducted biannually. Specific results were highlighted which pertain to economic development to provide to the Board.

- Ms. Lopez provided the Board with an overview presentation of the City's Community Engagement Survey. The survey was performed by Polco, which is the same company the city has been using since 2021. The National Research Center, in connection with Polco, conducts the City's Community Survey. The organization collaborates with ICMA, the National League of Cities, and more than 600 communities across the nation which allows the city to obtain national benchmark comparisons. There were 2,913 randomly selected households that received invitations to complete the survey. There was a 16% response rate with 452 participants.

Among the results focused on Economic Development, most notably, 88% of residents provided excellent or good ratings to the overall economic health in Coral Gables, higher than national comparisons. The overall quality of business and service establishments (92% excellent or good) received favorable reviews. Similarly, about 8 in 10 residents highly rated the vibrancy of downtown/commercial areas and shopping opportunities, both demonstrating slight gains. Coral Gables as a place to visit (90%), as a place to work (88%), and variety of business and service establishments received high praise, scoring higher than the national benchmark.

Overall economic health was rated at 88%; variety of business and service establishments rated 82% an increase of 5% from 2021, all higher than the benchmark. Residents were also asked about the overall design or layout of residential/commercial areas. They rated this category at 81% which is a 9% increase from 2021 and higher than the benchmark.

Well-planned commercial growth rated 53%, an increase of 6% from 2021.

For the custom questions that the department asked regarding the downtown experience, residents positively rated Dining (96% very satisfied or somewhat satisfied) and Art & Cultural Programming (83%).

The presentation and the complete survey will be emailed to Board members.

### **3. Business Tax License Report**

Mrs. Belkys Perez updated the Board on the new and soon-to-come businesses in Coral Gables.

### **4. Open Discussion**

Mrs. Belkys Perez updated the Board of the following:

- 1) The Water Below Us art project is scheduled to open on Giralda Plaza on March 22, 2024. It will start on Water Day, run through Earth Day and end in May. The Board will be invited once a date for the opening ceremony has been finalized.
- 2) Next week, the City will be replacing all the string lights on trees on Miracle Mile. This means for a short period of time, the Mile might look dark. All streetlights will not be impacted. Once all the string lights are removed, all the trees will be pruned. The new string lights will be installed the first week of March.
- 3) An update from the January Board meeting, the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce organized and held a meeting with Commissioner Fernandez regarding proposed changes to the signage ordinance.

Mr. Adams informed the Board the meeting was held February 6th, at the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce. There was good attendance, not just with commercial brokers and property owners, but with small businesses as well. The unanimous consensus from the meeting was that changes to the signage code regarding for lease/sale signs will cause a material negative impact on the economy to reduce the size of the signs.

After some discussion and questions, the Board agreed to make a motion.

**A motion was made by Mr. Kohnstamm that the Board support the City's current real estate sign code with a focus on code compliance for existing signage. The motion was seconded by Mr. Space.** The motion passed unanimously.

With no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 9:04 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Yenisis Gomez, Administrative Assistant, Economic Development Department.