

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item C-1**  
**July 11, 2017**  
**City Commission Chambers**  
**405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

**City Commission**

**Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli**  
**Vice Mayor Pat Keon**  
**Commissioner Vince Lago**  
**Commissioner Frank Quesada**  
**Commissioner Michael Mena**

**City Staff**

**City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark**  
**Assistant City Manager, Peter Iglesias**  
**City Attorney, Craig E. Leen**  
**City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman**  
**Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

**Public Speaker(s)**

**Meg Daley, Representing The Underline**

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Agenda Item C-1 [9:32:33 a.m.]  
Mayor's Comments  
Status of the Underline Project

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Status of the Underline Project.

Ms. Daley: Thank you Mr. Mayor and Madam Vice Mayor and Commissioners for allowing us to give a presentation on the Underline Project and our progress. So, if someone from IT is here, you need to queue up my presentation, the PowerPoint. So, as you know the Underline is a big idea with big impact, going through three municipalities. Its ten miles long; one county; 100,000 people live within a half a mile, which is a ten minute walk; fronts our major university, University of Miami; 24 schools; 2 hospitals; an echo system of businesses and there are now four stations under redevelopment within this corridor. So why are we doing this? I'm a full time volunteer. I love what we do, because I think it's all about transforming our community, we are one of the most dangerous places to walk and bike in the United States. The Underline connecting to other trail systems, including municipal systems will create I think a future network for walkability, bikeability, and livability. There is a substantial return on investment

from property value increase, alongside the corridor, as well as new job creation. Think of this as a transportation solution – getting people out of their cars, walking and biking, connecting to transit to get the people really alleviate traffic alongside U.S.-1. This is also about sustainable growth, how do we make sure that we are building a City that people can live in, move in, and have the quality of life they deserve in Coral Gables; and if they are moving, they are also healthier. So, we are a 501(c)3, partnering with Miami-Dade County Transportation and Public Works. Today, Irene Hagridous is here, that's our point person at the County level and she has done an incredible job of getting this project on track, on time, and into construction by the end of this year. We've also worked with all City staff, as well as other numerous organizations. We've been in the news, local, national, international, one of the next great parks of the world, and we are very proud of that and that it's coming to Coral Gables soon. Comparable projects, I think these comparable projects have really helped move this project so quickly, including the Atlanta Beltline, the Indianapolis Cultural Trail, they are all linear, they are transformational, huge economic impact and quality of life benefits, but the Underline is three times wider, with two trails, lit corridor, and also great opportunity for economic growth alongside; and it's really in the sweet spot of what these projects cost per mile. Miami-Dade County spends less than its peer on parks. I think Coral Gables is doing an amazing job, but we really need to advance our green initiatives. Projects like this attract talent, they keep talent, build walkable communities that are far outstripping supply and creating that future 21<sup>st</sup> century vision for transportation. The good news is that within less than three years we have commitments for over 60 percent of our funding, the bulk of that coming from a large commitment from the City of Miami. Our Commissioner Francis Suarez, supported by Commissioner Lago was approved at the City of Miami to direct park impact fees from anything built alongside the corridor up to \$50 million; and I want to thank Commissioner Lago for you supporting this and working with us over the past year to try to come up with a funding strategy in the City of Coral Gables. We've had many meetings with Coral Gables staff as well as the University of Miami to try to put that strategy together. There are a lot of numbers here, but the long story short is we have nine phases planned, two of the first phases are fully funded, and that's three miles in the City of Miami. So, now we are going to back away from the City of Miami as those are under construction and figure out where we go next. There is also a piece in the City of Coral Gables being funded by private development between Douglas and LeJeune. The northern end of this project is basically a highline on the ground; we are going to begin building in earnest by next year. You'll be seeing incredible assets like basketball, outdoor gym, the two trails, a performance area, my mom's from Georgia, so you have to have a porch swing when you are waiting for the bus, a communal table, gaming tables for dominoes, chess, checkers, nature play for children as well as the school children nearby and outdoor art. And, this is what the Underline will look like in Coral Gables. There is that first segment, a third of the mile is being built by Gables Station, when that development goes in, they are building a trail, as well as a passive park. The Douglas Station is featuring the Underline as the focal point for that five acre redevelopment through the center of it. The next mile is the typical trail which is the two trails that's lit with native vegetation, and then the last piece is what we are calling the UM Colonnade, which is reorienting those parking spaces to create a parking lot, as well as a park, an arboretum, a birding trail, focusing on storm water, as well as on alternative energy; and we also want to focus on the transit piece of this with car share and ride share. So, if you build it they will come – not really – we want to make sure that they are there, we'll be programming it with exercise classes, educational components to

make sure that people connect to this place and make it part of their neighborhood. So, here's where we are – we are getting our management and maintenance agreement approved by the Board of County Commission in the fall, we are now working on our next strategies for funding and where we go next, and we'll be launching a capital campaign to endow the maintenance and management of the park ongoing. Thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate the City of Coral Gables support and I'm available for any questions.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much Meg. This is a wonderful, wonderful project, one that will make us proud and we thank you for your leadership on this. It's wonderful.

Ms. Daley: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Really wonderful, it's a win-win situation, any questions or comments?

Commissioner Lago: Mayor, if I may. This is why I love the Sunshine, I had no clue that the Mayor was going to put this on the agenda, so you get kind of caught off guard when these things are put on the agenda, which is great, because as you know like you mentioned, you've been working on this for over a year now, and these three miles that bifurcate the City of Coral Gables are going to be critical in the future of the City of Coral Gables. I live within walking distance of the proposed Underline and I think that what we've been working on over the next years is a great opportunity for us as a Commission to have a discussion whether we are going to be committed to delivering the necessary funds to bring this to fruition in the City of Coral Gables. Peter, do you mind if we have, do you mind coming up for a second? One of the issues that I brought up and that we've been discussing is trying to find a way to fund that one mile, not the one that's in front of the University of Miami or the one that's currently being funded by NPI in private development, the one mile that stretches that currently is in front of Coral Gables and has no real ownership. What I've tried to do and what we've been working on over the past year is trying to find a financing strategy using the similar strategy that was implemented by the City of Miami and that's using park impact fees. As you are aware, we used to have our fee for Art in Public Places for one percent, we bumped it up to one point five (1.5), and that fee will bring in additional \$22 million over the next ten years, correct?

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: \$21 million.

Commissioner Lago: \$21 million – thank you.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: The park impact fee will be \$21 million in the next ten years.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: Yes. The projected numbers are \$21 million for the next ten years.

Commissioner Lago: I want you to explain a little bit and just educate us as a Commission exactly what the City of Miami is doing to raise the \$50 million to fund their portion of the Underline, and why we as a Commission, in my opinion, I think we need to make a decision

quickly on this issue, on whether we are going to head in the same route or we are going to explore and exhaust every opportunity to become a partner in the Underline.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: Yes Commissioner. The City of Miami has proposed to provide the impact fees within the 1,000 foot corridor on either side of the Underline and provide those, in fact that park impact fee to the Underline. Yet the corridor in Miami runs through a very high end area runs through Brickell, major projects where there may be millions of dollars of the park impact fees in just one project. What you have here projected is our 1,000-foot corridor, and we have approximately a redevelopment of plus or minus 40 acres, we currently have Gables Station, Paseo, which could provide monies for the Underline as park fees.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Well the Gables Station already is as a part of their development, they have championed the Underline in that location, so I know that they are doing significant funds on that property as a part of that project.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: Yes they are and that was brought up in park presentation.

Commissioner Lago: That's the project that's covering about three-fourths of a mile, is that correct?

Ms. Daley: Third of a mile.

Commissioner Lago: Third of a mile.

Vice Mayor Keon: So their impact fees, the park impact fees that they would generate are going to that redevelopment of that park?- or they have to do additional...?

Commissioner Lago: As part of the development agreement.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: As part of the development agreement.

Vice Mayor Keon: So, there are additional impact fees, park impact fees?

Commissioner Lago: Oh no, there isn't, because when I proposed that legislation that increased it from one to one point five, these projects had already come through review, so we weren't able to basically tack on that additional point five to get those fees unto the park impact fee coffers.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: So, right now we have these three projects which, we have a third project, Riviera Plaza, which is not yet approved that, could provide additional funds, and then the redevelopment of this area which is approximately 40 acres.

Commissioner Quesada: Well, I have a quick question, expanding on that. I'm fully supportive by agreeing with Commissioner Lago. I've been discussing this financing with Meg and as well as the City Manager for it feels like years now, we've discussed different approaches. My central question comes back to what Commissioner Lago is saying, and Commissioner Lago you

championed this to have more park space throughout the City and we discussed how much this coffer of money that we want to have to create to have larger parks throughout the City. How do we give that with this? I think it's pretty safe to say that I speak for all of us that we want both.

Commissioner Lago: Yes, we want both, and there is an issue though, and I'm going to go back, just take a step back, I know this is nothing to do with this, but it plays into what you are saying. Remember when I proposed this legislation about being able to hopefully bring in \$21 million, my proposal was, I wanted to use those \$21 million for a park in the downtown area, to acquire a big piece of property in the downtown area. I was told by our astute legal counsel and Peter also guided me on this issue, that we couldn't use funds throughout the City and divert it just to the downtown, correct?

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: Correct Commissioner.

Commissioner Lago: So, we are still going to raise those \$21 million, which are going to go into obviously continuing to buy parks, which is something I'm going to bring up in the Budget Hearing, since we are...

Commissioner Quesada: Is it possible to do both?

Commissioner Lago: No, no, I want to do both, so what I'm saying is, I think that we need to figure out, we need to have this conversation here amongst us to say, OK, how much can we raise using the same model the City of Miami did on our U.S.-1 corridor?- what do we fall short?- and how can we get that money?- Can we bond money out?- can we try to raise a portion of it via private entities? I just don't want to walk away from this and have Coral Gables who has three miles of important open space not be a partner in the Underline. I've seen, Mayor, I apologize, we all have seen how transformational these type of projects are in Chicago, they are in New York, they've taken blighted areas in the City and transformed them into financial hubs; areas where people who never had a piece of green space, now can hopefully walk...

Commissioner Quesada; Commissioner Lago, I think we all agree with you.

Commissioner Lago: That's why I'm so passionate about it. Again, I want to find a way, there has to be a way to do this.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: And just to clarify, of the \$21 million, \$3 million are for commercial projects and \$18 million are for...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can I interrupt everybody. This is too serious a topic for us to discuss on an ad hoc basis like we have been doing today. I wanted to bring Meg Daley up to give us an update, which has raised very significant issues of financing and on dedicated money and whatever. Why don't we put this on the agenda for the August meeting, prepare for it, get a report, and get full comprehensive discussion on this versus an ad hoc today. I think if you are OK with that...

Commissioner Lago: It's your item, I hijacked your item and I apologize. Can I dovetail on the Mayor's comments? I would like to have a report from the University of Miami, like to see where the University of Miami stands in regards to the Underline, and I'd like to see that when we come back, when staff comes back before the Commission, I want to see all options on the table, everything.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: OK.

Commissioner Quesada: With a central goal, at least in my eyes what I want to see is, I want to see a plan so it doesn't, obviously contribute funds to the Underline, but at the same time not hijacking the funds....the City.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. We'll put it off till the August meeting, September meeting, whatever, at the next meeting, or two meetings from now, so that they have time to prepare.

Commissioner Quesada: Also ask the volunteers at the Underline to give us their strategies or their thoughts, maybe with more details.

Ms. Daley: We can talk about the first three miles and how those were funded; it was a variety of sources.

Commissioner Quesada: Yes, but I don't want you to solely look at it from here. You talked about the Beltway in Atlanta, you talked about Chicago, I'm sure they had similar issues.

Ms. Daley: Happy to share that.

Commissioner Quesada: I would like to see all the different options, so that we can make an informed decision. We want to make this happen; we just got to make sure it works.

Ms. Daley: Would you like that in advance of the next time we present, in conjunction with the staff's recommendations.

Commissioner Quesada: Yes, get it to staff so that they can digest it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. Thank you very much.

Vice Mayor Keon: Can I just ask is the funding that you now have on the table; is the funding that you are looking at as your goal? This is fully developed with all of the amenities along the Underline that are currently in your plan.

Ms. Daley: Yes. Everything is in there with what's featured in the master plan, and the basic trail is the two trails, one for pedestrians, and one for bicyclists. This will be lit, it's currently not lit; all native vegetation, trash receptacles, water fountain, benches, we are even looking at solar canopies.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Why don't we discuss this at the next meeting? Alright. Thank you very much.

[End: 9:49:04 a.m.]