

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Commission Chambers
Agenda Items F-4 and F-5 are related
October 13, 2020
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

**Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Jorge Fors, Jr.
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena**

City Staff

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Planning and Zoning Director, Ramon Trias**

Public Speaker(s)

**Julio Webble
Kirk Menendez
George Navarro
Henry Yanis**

Agenda Item F-4 and F-5 are related [11:16 a.m.]

F-4: An Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida, amending the Future Land Use Map of the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan pursuant to Zoning Code Article 3, "Development Review," Division 15 [proposed reorganization ordinance: Article 14, "Process," Section 14-213], "Comprehensive Plan Text and Map Amendments," and Small Scale amendment procedures (ss. 163.3187, Florida Statutes), changing the land use designation for certain properties located in Lots 25-39, Block 27, all of Block 28, and all of Block 36, Craft Section, Coral Gables, Florida from either Single-Family High Density or Multi-Family Duplex Density to Commercial Low-Rise Intensity; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause and providing for an effective date. (07-29-2020 PZB recommended approval, Vote 7-0)

F-5: An Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida providing for a text amendment to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code by amending Appendix A, "Site Specific Zoning Regulations," Section A-36, "Crafts Section,"

City Commission Meeting

by deleting provisions for height restriction for certain properties legally described as lots 16 and 17, lots 24 through 30, inclusive and the west one-half (1/2) of lot 23, all in Block 36, Coral Gables, Florida; providing for a repealer provision; severability clause, and providing for an effective date. (07-29-2020 PZB recommended approval, Vote 7-0).

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: F-4 and F-5, Ordinances on First Reading.

City Attorney Ramos: F-4 is an Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida, amending the Future Land Use Map of the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan pursuant to Zoning Code Article 3, "Development Review," Division 15 [proposed reorganization ordinance: Article 14, "Process," Section 14-213], "Comprehensive Plan Text and Map Amendments," and Small Scale amendment procedures (ss. 163.3187, Florida Statutes), changing the land use designation for certain properties located in Lots 25-39, Block 27, all of Block 28, and all of Block 36, Crafts Section, Coral Gables, Florida from either Single-Family High Density or Multi-Family Duplex Density to Commercial Low-Rise Intensity; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause and providing for an effective date. I will also read F-5, is an Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida providing for a text amendment to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code by amending Appendix A, "Site Specific Zoning Regulations," Section A-36, "Crafts Section," by deleting provisions for height restriction for certain properties legally described as lots 16 and 17, lots 24 through 30, inclusive and the west one-half (1/2) of lot 23, all in Block 36, Coral Gables, Florida; providing for a repealer provision; severability clause, and providing for an effective date. This is a public hearing item, Mr. Trias.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: May I have the PowerPoint please. Mayor, as you know, and the Commissioners know, for a while you have been working on some changes to the Zoning Code, and no changes have been made that deal with policy in the things that you have reviewed so far.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No changes have been made.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: No. So this is the first request that I think is a policy change and it's a request that this point of the land use map, not the zoning map, there is a minor zoning change also, but it's not the zoning map, and it really changes the idea that the policy direction of a very distinct area of the city. That area is shown in this diagram and is bound by LeJeune, Santander and Salzedo; and is very clearly defined, I think, it's just south of the downtown. It's an area that in the mid-century, mid twentieth century developed with single-family houses like many areas around, but it really wasn't designed originally for that. And as you can see, there are very wide streets, they are not residential streets with swales. It's not an area that you can say is a typical neighborhood of Coral Gables. Merrick's original vision for the area was what he called the Crafts Section. As you can see, it's something that we today would probably call live-work or mixed-use, those are the words that we use. And you can see, Merrick had a great vision of what the city should be and only a few years to get it done. So, he never got this area done, because of the

City Commission Meeting

economy and because of many other things that happened. But as you can see, there was a lot of work that was done, a lot of zoning ideas that were implemented. Like I said, it never got built if you look at the area of the aerial of 1938, and then it got filled up immediately though the mid twentieth century. Now originally, in the original zoning code, that area was meant to be commercial, as I had described. And as you can see, as the zoning code evolves there is more of a corridor focus more than the district focus. So, I think that what has happened is that for whatever reason that little area has been left out of the overall development of the area.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: This area in yellow.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes, the area in yellow. As you can see, it's in yellow and its sticking into the area that was designed to be a commercial area. Now, another thing that is interesting is that it doesn't quite have the future land use of single family. It has a single family of high density and is the only area that has that.

Vice Mayor Lago: And its interesting too that you mention that, because when you look at University Drive it serves as a buffer and then you have, obviously the old University of Miami building, and you have the only street that cuts into the other neighborhood is one-way, so there is really no ability unless you go around, or you go through LeJeune to actually get into the residential neighborhood, which you see on San Sebastian Avenue and those areas there. So, it's odd that that area stayed at that zoning.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: And like I said, it was really because it didn't develop when Merrick thought about it, and then it just was filled up with houses in the 50's. And keep in mind, San Sebastian Apartments is just south of it, so that gives you a good sense of the original vision.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And the University was there.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: That is true. That was first home of the University of Miami.

Vice Mayor Lago: It seems like the Mayor mentioned, the San Sebastian Apartments just used to be university, is like a good bookend, it's a good bookend.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Absolutely. So, I think from a town planning point of view, that there are multiple issues that I think support the idea of having something a little bit different. And what we are proposing is a change to the Comp Plan to low intensity commercial and then later on, once you get done with the review of the overall zoning changes, the zoning will be MX-1. Now, we cannot do that today, because obviously that hasn't happened yet, but in the future that may happen. The Comp Plan, as you know, is a forward-looking document, so it's perfectly appropriate for you to set the policy first and then update the implementation policies with zoning. So, this is the right process. And the second request is a very minor cleanup type of issue that deals with some site specifics in a few lots, not a major issue of concern. That's the zoning change. The zoning change, as you see, becomes pink; pink is the same. I'm sorry, the land use change is the same as in the east, so its compatible with the existing in the current context and the zoning text

City Commission Meeting

request is those few yellow lots, there is a maximum height of one story, for reasons that are not very clear to me, since they face, basically San Sebastian Apartments, so we are also removing those site specifics. That way the neighborhood interest in redeveloping that district will be possible, because the land use would be appropriate for the future rezoning for MX-1.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The neighbors are requesting the change?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes. The neighbors were very much in support. This is a few of the neighbors that sent that petition. In the Planning and Zoning meeting, a lot of neighbors spoke in favor of the change. We had public notification letters, the property was posted, and like I said, staff recommends approval for both the Comp Plan change and the Zoning Code Text Amendment.

Commissioner Mena: Who were those letters sent to?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: 1,500 feet.

Commissioner Mena: From the perimeter of the area?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes. A lot of people.

Vice Mayor Lago: My biggest issue on this and we've been working on this for some time. Obviously, we are transitioning to MX-1, correct?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: And I just want to make sure that we are true to the heights.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: 77 feet is the maximum.

Vice Mayor Lago: I thought it was between 45 feet and with the Med at 77.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: Okay. I want to make sure that that's number one, that we stay true to that, because obviously, the neighboring building you've seen the transition all the way to the Bacardi Building to the City National Bank Building, which is four floors, that's number one. Number two, I think there are one or two undeveloped parcels of land that are facing...

Commissioner Keon: Salzedo.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes, the old Rascal Ranger Law Firm. I would love to see; I know this is not the place to talk about it.

City Commission Meeting

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But Rascal Ranger, there is a building there.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes. There is an empty piece of land in front of it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: There is a parking lot.

Vice Mayor Lago: No, it's a green space.

Commissioner Mena: There is a grassy space.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: There are a few vacant parcels, yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: I'm just putting it out there. I know that we can't dictate, but I just want to make sure that we take it into consideration that whatever happens with these three blocks, which are going to be very – people are going to want to, obviously put some sort of assemblance there, because these are great pieces of property and I think it's going to compliment the neighborhood very well, especially if its residential. I would love to see that we can maintain, maybe some sort of small pocket park like what we did with Villa Valencia, which we saw earlier today. I want to see that we maybe offer a little bit of flexibility, we are talking in the future, to whatever ends up happening with these lots, because it would be something nice that the entire neighborhood would be able to enjoy. For example, my daughters went to school at the church there, the little school adjacent to City National Bank, and they don't have an area where they could have gone and played outdoors. They have a little playground inside, but there is no other green space that I'm aware of outside of Ponce Circle Park and it's still pretty far. So, if you are going to build a building there in the future, which eventually what's going to end up happening, it would be nice to see something similar to what happened with Villa Valencia, maybe happen there. I'm just bringing it out there, because I know that eventually something will come before you and it would be nice to see something like that.

Commissioner Mena: I agree with you.

Vice Mayor Lago: I'm not mandating it.

Commissioner Mena: No, no, no. I would even go potentially a little further. Here's what I'm thinking, and I had a very long conversation with staff yesterday about this. So, this is currently residential, single-family. I understand the people who live there want it, I get that they are going to sell their properties and that's great. I have no problem with that. The concern I have is, I happen to work in the Barcardi Building and so I have sort of an aerial view of this area, and it's very low right now, not just the three blocks, obviously which are single-family home, but even around it, you have the current Police Building, you have some other, you know, I'll refer to as sort of medium size buildings, if you will, and while I'm very comfortable with 40-something, 50-foot buildings, the idea of all of that going to 77 feet potentially is a pretty significant impact on that area. And I know that there are setbacks off LeJeune, there is step-back off LeJeune, which are very important, and I think that's terrific. What I want to sort of brainstorm about and understand

City Commission Meeting

better from you Ramon, and maybe it's something that you can prepare for our next discussion on this is, if you approve something now and you approve all of these rights and then later when an actual project comes along, now you are saying, okay, what can you do in terms of improvements and all these things. Well, you've already given away a lot, really with not a lot in return. I understand the logic of, you are going to get taxes, you are going to get impact fees, which are great, but I just want to be very thoughtful and strategic about how we do this, because we have an opportunity – maybe you approve this with, I don't know, I'm just brainstorming, I really am, without Med bonus and then if somebody wants a Med bonus maybe there is something else we can get for that like a pocket park, or maybe if you want certain rights, maybe we should have a bigger open space requirement for this particular area, because again, where we are today with single-family home, we don't have to change anything. And I understand the exercise of this as a planning exercise, hey, this is good planning for this area, because it's close to our downtown and its flanked on the south side by this apartment building and its commercial. I get all that. But immediately west of that is residential and immediately south of that is residential and if you develop three blocks worth of buildings with Med bonuses the impact of that is broader than just that little area. There is more congestion, you are going to have more tenants there, whether they are commercial or residential or otherwise, and so, some amount of development is good, but let's be really strategic about how we go about it, so that its done in a way that is consistent with what we want to see, and not try to really back in later after you approve these things as a sort of planning exercise. And I really want to have a thoughtful discussion about that because I'm a little uncomfortable, for example, with the fact that we are going to vote, and this is First Reading, so we'll talk about it again, we are going to vote to change the Comp Plan, but later we are going to have the discussion about changing it to MX-1, and I don't ever want to be in a position where we are not trying to scale back from something we already approved and now we have a potential legal issue. So, all I'm trying to highlight is I want us all to be really considerate about how we go about this and sometimes less is more, and sometimes it shouldn't just be you know, taking things off the shelf, if you will, in terms of zoning, well MX-1 goes here, therefore that's what MX-1 is. We can do whatever we want here, because right now its single-family and we don't have to just accept MX-1 as MX-1, and so, I'm going a little farther, obviously than what the Vice Mayor was talking about, but I think it goes hand-in-hand because I think there is potential, for example, for more open spaces there. Maybe its certain lot sizes can build something that other lot sizes can't, which would require more open space. I want to brainstorm with staff and with you on how to do this, but I want to be careful that we don't just approve something as a planning exercise and not consider the ramifications beyond that.

City Manager Iglesias: Just remember Commissioner that, excuse me Ramon, excuse me, but just remember Commissioner that the Comprehensive Plan is basically a future vision of what we are doing, it's not the current vision, it's a future vision. And if you look at that area there has been quite a bit, and I think there will be more development in that area now that Agave has come in and we have a potential project from Allen Morris. If you can put that slide back up Ramon, as to what that is. So remember the Comprehensive Plan is really a long term vision of where we want to be, not something that the current zoning, which we were proposing, we are proposing MX-1, but that's part of the current zoning, but this is really a long term land use vision; and if we look at that its surrounded by – go back to the current one.

City Commission Meeting

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: This is the proposed.

City Manager Iglesias: The proposed – go back.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: And that's the current.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let me make a comment.

City Manager Iglesias: There is commercial all the way around and if you look on LeJeune, those are duplex sites on LeJeune facing LeJeune.

Commissioner Mena: But right behind them is single-family, immediately to the west; immediately to the south of that apartment building, the brown one, the triangle, is single-family. Look, I understand what's happening at Ponce Circle Park, I have no problem with that, that's closer to the center of our business district. Two blocks in our downtown is a long way and its fine that we are going to have these buildings on Ponce Circle, but it needs to scale back as you approach the residential.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But it isn't Commissioner. I agree with you in principle and everything you've said, but this particular area and I have my offices at the Ross Rangle Building for a year, two years, so I'm very, very familiar with the area. This area is commercial already. I mean, you have the Knights of Columbus that have a party hall even, you have Ross Rangle who used to be Mayor's offices, you have the ugliest building in Coral Gables right across, which is where Bacardi had its trademark offices.

Commissioner Mena: How big are those buildings?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What?

Commissioner Mena: Columbus is a single-story building.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It is, but it's a party hall. It's not a single-family residential, it's a party hall.

Commissioner Mena: Sure.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The ugliest building is 7-8-10 stories, you have a laundry, Catalonia laundry, you have offices all around, you have the San Sebastian Apartments, which is very high intensity. What you said is right about the development of the area, but this area needs to be modified.

Commissioner Mena: I'm with you on that. I'm with you on that. I'm not against it being commercial, but you can have a 40-foot commercial building or a 75-foot commercial building, and right now you have single-family homes. So, all I'm saying is that the change from single-family homes to a bunch of 77-foot buildings is a significant impact, it really is. And my question

City Commission Meeting

is, why? I get the why of, because its commercial – okay, fine, but why can't it all be, for example, 45 feet?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Commissioner that's up to you, as a Commission. When you review the regulations for MX-1. That doesn't exist right now. That's simply is proposed by the consultant, by staff, you can change it in any way you think is appropriate. The Comp Plan is a policy document. We are asking you to set the policy in terms of whether this should continue to be a neighborhood of single-family houses or a mixed-use area. That's the question today, and that's the way the Comp Plan is supposed to be. The Comp Plan is supposed to be the first policy document and then the implementation happens with the zoning requirements. As I said, the zoning is up to you. The next workshop that we are going to have with the full Commission is a very good opportunity.

Commissioner Mena: I appreciate that. And look, let me be clear. It's frustrating – I'll be voting yes today, but what I'm trying to do for you and for staff and to have a discussion with my colleagues is, to forecast the broader discussion that I want to have here. I don't like to have discussions after the fact. I like to have them at the front end. So, I'm trying to give you an idea of where I'm going with this in my mind, we'll see what my colleagues think or don't think, but if you assume for a moment, let's say that there is some support for what I'm saying, then I want to plan towards that objective. I don't want to hear later, well, you already approved X, so now. No. No. What I want to say is, this is what we want to see, now how do we get there? – Again, maybe you hold back some of what you are giving and then if somebody wants to go higher than 45, now they've got to give you a park or a green space, like what the Vice Mayor was talking about. And now maybe you have an entire block that's set back from LeJeune, step-back at 45 feet, goes up to 70 in the middle, but maybe on the east side on Salzedo has a green space. Now you are talking about one building in the middle of the block, it's not as intense, it's not blocking the views as much, you have an open space. This is the conversation I want to have and again, I'm putting onus here on staff, on you, on our City Attorney, on everybody and saying, don't put me in a position later that I'm asking you, and I'm telling you the type of things I'm looking to do here and you tell me, well, we already approved X. That's what I need to rely on your expertise for, okay. So, I want to be very careful about that. I want to hear from my colleagues, but all I'm saying is, why can't we give less at the outset and then if we want to give more later, let's talk about it and let's see where we get an exchange.

Vice Mayor Lago: I agree with everything you said. And this is what I would like to see. Now you hear what Commission Mena wants, this is what I want. I'm also going to vote yes. I've been working with the residents in this area for the last two years to bring this today. I want an innovation study. I want to see down LeJeune going south, Bacardi Building, City National Bank Building, by the way, I remember my wife, thank God for my wife, she just reminded me what the name of the school was, Banyan Day School, and then you have a small little bank on the corner. If we are going to allow 45, and I want to see also, by the way, the bookend, which is the San Sebastian Apartments, which I know are three stories or four, three or four, I'm not sure, I drive by there every single day.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Its four or five.

Vice Mayor Lago: Something like that.

Commissioner Keon: How tall is that is it 60 feet?

Vice Mayor Lago: I don't know.

Commissioner Keon: What's the height of the San Sebastian Apartments?

Vice Mayor Lago: That's why I asked for an elevation.

Commissioner Keon: I thought it was like 70.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: San Sebastian is within the 45 feet, I believe.

Commissioner Keon: You think its 45? I thought it was more than that. Okay.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, what I would like to see is, I would like to see in a Second Reading for these questions to be answered in regard to, just show me very simply with boxes. Bacardi, I know is giant; City National Bank is four floors, I'm in it every single day. I did all the renovations in the interiors. I know that building like the back of my hand. I just don't know the exact elevation of it. The school is one story. The bank is two-stories. I think the school is a historic building, I'm not sure, maybe it will never be redeveloped.

Commissioner Keon: It's a church.

Vice Mayor Lago: I call it a school because that's where my kids went – yes, the church, Banyan Day School.

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, that's one thing. I'd like to see an elevation study. I am in favor of this redevelopment. It makes sense. The simple fact, like I mentioned before, you have University Drive, which is basically the cut, which does not allow traffic to go into the neighboring communities which are south, that's a real residential neighborhood.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We have even cut the speed going south.

Vice Mayor Lago: Perfectly. It's one way and you can't go in there. The residents that live here that have been telling me for years, they deal with the heartache of the cut-through traffic, of the speeding, all that kind of stuff. I'm in favor of it, but I want to be very careful and I want to apply what Commissioner Mena said. If you want to go to 77 feet, I'm perfectly fine with it. If you want to go to 70 feet, I'm perfectly fine with it. But it's got to be a benefit of the community as-a-whole.

City Commission Meeting

I don't want to just give something and say, but listen, why is your building setback to setback? – can you give me a little sliver of green space now? Let's do it based on a scale of benefits for the community, lighting, sidewalks, a real green open space, like we did with Villa Valencia. If you remember Villa Valencia, the residents were all against it. We brokered a deal that I worked on with this Commission and we got a corner space there the developer was able to transition to and now ownership. And all the residents were in favor of it. So, I think we can do something similar to that where the residents win, the up-zoning occurs and we are able to produce a product in the next 4-5 years that, not only benefits whoever buys all this assemblage, but also benefits the community, because there is green space and there is a little bit of quality of life that wasn't there before.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: And keep in mind that the update of the zoning code is not removing any of the same tools that you've used at a 20,000 square foot site, the step-backs from LeJeune, all of that remains, all of that remains, and probably we can explain it better and then you can make some choices to target exactly the regulations you want to have.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What is the wish of the Commission? I don't think we are ready to vote on this.

Commissioner Keon: I don't mind voting on it, but...

Vice Mayor Lago: Like Commissioner said, I don't have a problem voting. I'm ready to vote today.

Commissioner Keon: I don't have a problem voting on it on First Reading, but I also want to know why – I thought when there was initial discussion about this, you were looking at continuing it as MF-1, but it was going to be multi-family and not necessarily commercial. Why did you decide to make it commercial as opposed to multi-family?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Because there will be duplex, MF-1 and that wasn't very appropriate.

Commissioner Keon: What are the smaller...?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: MF-2.

Commissioner Keon: MF-2. I'm sorry, MF-2.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Or MF-3, which is the row houses, the town homes could be another one. There were multiple ideas that were discussed, however, the idea of having it the lowest possible mixed-use made sense for the location next to downtown. That was the discussion that took place and that was the recommendation from staff and from the consultant.

Commissioner Keon: I know that we have, we worked hard to try and bring people living in our downtown so that it feeds the retail and the hospitality industry that exists in downtown and it's easy for people to then commute within the downtown. So, the designation you are going to is MX-1.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: MX-1. And MX-1 doesn't exist yet. MX-1 is something that you...

Commissioner Keon: No, I know. That was the smaller.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: Right. If we pass the zoning code as proposed or it's in that thing. You know, we have a blank canvass, and we don't often have blank canvasses of that size that are not already purchased that people whatever. It was my understanding that you were going to retain DPZ to continue to look at this area for more regulation, is that right? What is your intent?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Not necessarily for this area, but certainly if that is the wish of the Commission, we could do that.

Vice Mayor Lago: If I could just add one thing, I think that maybe would give a little bit. I'm ready to vote on this today.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We have members of the public that wish to speak.

Vice Mayor Lago: I know. But what I'm saying, but you know what I think we could do, could be a possibility, if my colleagues are in favor of it. Maybe Med bonus can be a conditional use, so it has to come before the Commission. Again, if we are going to do a mixed-used project, it's going to come before us anyway as per the code, but maybe as a conditional use, that way we have even another opportunity to make more requests in regards to what we as a Commission and what we as a city want.

Commissioner Mena: Those are the types of ideas that I really want to discuss with all of you genuinely.

Commissioner Keon: I do too.

Commissioner Mena: Because I think there are probably many ways to skin this, that's a good example.

Commissioner Keon: I really want to make sure that my concern is once you pass it and somebody comes in and they want to look to vacate a street, so that they make it a larger. I don't want it to lose its street grid, you know. I don't even want – don't even ask.

City Commission Meeting

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: I would never recommend.

Commissioner Keon: Don't even ask, like don't even ask to change the grid in there, don't ask and some of those sorts of things, because it's really a good opportunity for some planning effort that could go into developing this process before. I don't want to give too much by right. I'd like to give what we need to give by right, and then retain what the other opportunities for what you would like to guide development there. And some of that is, is that should be some open space, and even if it's a dawn to dusk park that is included in the development that's okay too, but there needs to be some of those amenities within that area of the downtown before it gets to final reading. I'm comfortable to vote on it now, if we get to that point by final reading. Okay.

Commissioner Fors: I wanted to just add to be careful not to get caught up in anything and we sort of touched upon, but I want to emphasize that since I was elected, the residents that own single family homes in this neighborhood have been talking to me about this potential change that's coming and throughout the years they've often been, I don't want to say given the short end of the stick, but the fact that they will eventually be rezoned has been used as an excuse to not do certain things on that street to improve it. But why improve it if we are going to end up rezoning it. So, I just want to make sure we keep in mind the fact that they've been waiting for this that they've gotten as an excuse, and I don't think anybody disagrees with that.

Vice Mayor Lago: But you make a very good point. All the residents in this neighborhood are in favor of it. I haven't encountered one person who has told me no, unless someone here can tell me. I know that we've all met with them.

Commissioner Fors: Yes, every single one of them, pretty much. At least everyone that I've spoken to and I've seen, obviously the list with the petition. Mixed zone, as you said Ramon, or mixed use will come back to us anyway, over 20,000, right? – however, mixed use...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes.

Commissioner Fors: And 10,000 in that area, if we were to eventually zone MX-1 would not come back to us, so if we wanted to. If there was a situation of a Med bonus on a 10,000 square foot, between 10,000 and 20,000 zoned as MX-1, it would not come back to us, so we would have to go out of our way to say, Med bonus on those, that middle range of parcel between 10,000 and 20,000 would have to come back to us, alright.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: And the issue there is that you may want to have a lesser number of stories when you put the MX-1 for certain parcels, for example, that could be one too.

Vice Mayor Lago: How about this and I'm sorry to interrupt you, maybe we don't want less stories and I've always been an advocate of less height, but if you tell me that the applicant needs an additional floor to be able to provide you a significant green space, with great amenities for the community to enjoy, exactly like what happened with Villa Valencia, where everybody was against it, and then everybody came out in support of it. That's a prime example that we need to

City Commission Meeting

use over and over and over again to get community support. They all came out in support of it, because of programming change and we added that 9,000-plus square foot park, which you just saw, it's going to be something beautiful. There has to be flexibility and I like the idea of a conditional use. I just want to see a model. I want to see an elevation model of where we stand. Where do we stand up and down LeJeune, make people understand that these three blocks are residential, but everything else on LeJeune heading north is, again, commercial and heavy commercial. Its significantly large projects.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let's take a break and listen to the people that want to speak, and you have three letters to read, I think, Mr. Urquia.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you Ramon.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Go ahead.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor first we have Mr. Julio Webble.

Mr. Webble: Mr. Mayor, members of the Board, thank you for having us this morning. I am one of those neighbors that signed that letter. I've been here for 30 years or so, 309 Malaga Avenue, my name is Julio Webble. I just like to say a few things, one is that using the word odd is the one that I would like to use to describe this area. It is a pocket of few single-family homes surrounded by heavy traffic and high speeds, and it mingles into this area making it very uncomfortable to live in a single-family home here. It has the scape of the street is odd as well for a single-family home. It has 68, I think, street right-of-way distances, the scale is huge compared to what you see in other districts of single-family homes in Coral Gables. It has no trees, so it doesn't have the ambience of that single-family home. The lighting is terrible, its highway lighting, now a pedestrian lighting and so on. So, I have a picture. I don't know how to share the screen because the host is not allowing me, but I'll file it for the record comparing this street versus the regular Coral Gables street for a single-family home. So, I've been here for 30 years, I have to support the rezoning of this area. Thank you so much.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you sir. Thank you very much for your input.

City Clerk Urquia: Next you have Mr. Kirk Menendez.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Mr. Menendez.

Mr. Menendez: Yes – good morning members of the Commission, Mayor, Commissioners, my name is Kirk Menendez, I reside at 325 Malaga Avenue and I support the rezoning of the subject area. I've resided on the 300 Block of Malaga since 1977 and in the Crafts Section of the City of Coral Gables since 1962. For more than half a century my life's been closely intertwined with the City and most importantly with the area being considered for rezoning today. As was mentioned earlier in reference to George Merrick in 1942, George Merrick died without seeing his vision for the Crafts Section completed. When World War II ended in 1945, G.I.'s, as we all know, flocked

City Commission Meeting

to South Florida to study at UM and start their families. Suddenly there was a great demand for smaller, more affordable homes. That's exactly when construction of single-family homes began on the 300 Blocks of Malaga and Catalonia. It was actually the late 1940's. My house was built in the late 1940's. At that time, it was a detour of opportunity from the original plan for the area. As former Commissioner Chip Withers stated during the recent PNZ meeting, there has been discussions about rezoning this area to commercial within the city government since the 1990's. So, this is nothing new. When you look at our streets, as Mr. Trias said, they are the same width and makeup as most every street crisscrossing the downtown area of the city. We even have the same type of streetlights you find throughout the city's urban core and we are on the same electrical grid as parts of the commercially zoned area of the Crafts Section. In fact, the San Sebastian Building at the corner of University and LeJeune, besides being at one point dorms for UM, was actually a fully-fledged hotel in the early days of the city during the peak of George Merrick's vision for Coral Gables. I think we are all in agreement. This goes decades back. It's finally time to codify what everyone has known for decades that this area between Catalonia and Santander, LeJeune and Salzedo, it meant to be commercial. It always has. So, on behalf of my family, I respectfully request that you please approve these items and approve the rezoning to commercial today. Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you Mr. Menendez.

City Clerk Urquia: Mayor next you have Mr. George Navarro.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes sir.

Good morning Mr. Mayor, Commissioners, can you hear me?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Good morning.

Mr. Navarro: Good morning Mr. Mayor, Commissioners, George Navarro with offices at 333 S.E. 2nd Avenue. I'm here this morning on behalf of over 25 property owners that reside in the Crafts Section neighborhood that is proposed for redesignation under Item F-4 and F-5. We've heard from some and we've heard from other residents that have lived in this area for many years who are 100 percent in support of the city's efforts to designate this area to make it consistent with what exists today in the area, which is essentially in the downtown corridor. This is the first step in a long process that has been talked about plans and the work for many years and he has been very supportive of...This is an isolated pocket of single-family homes that's directly adjacent to your downtown core and the neighbors in this area have for many years...the traffic, noise, off-street parking, overflow parking...[inaudible]...safety and security and it's really an area that's no longer suitable for residential, especially single-family, its primarily single-family residential and it does not live to the high quality of life that the City Beautiful has established. So, on behalf of these residents, we ask that you please approve these items here today and we submitted a petition signed by over 59 of the residents that live in this area and...[inaudible].

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

City Commission Meeting

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, lastly, we have one speaker, but I don't have their name. Listed on the computer is Hyannis PC, that's what it says.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What is your name sir?

Mr. Yanis: Good morning Mr. Mayor and Commission, thank you for taking the time to take up this important matter and listen to us. My name is Henry Yanis, my wife Esperanza Yanis, 330 Catalonia Avenue. The home is owned by my mother-in-law Maria Teresa Rodriguez, my sister-in-law Teri Rodriguez and my wife Esperanza Yanis. My mother-in-law still lives there at the house. And just very briefly, we also want to weigh in with our support for the rezoning and for just a couple of very simple and basic reasons. Number one, although it's been stated that there are single-family homes there, quite frankly, the area is no longer residential at all, because of all the things that have already been mentioned, the traffic, not only the high speed traffic, but pedestrian traffic coming through the area. And quite frankly at this time we feel that we are stuck, we feel that we are squeezed and more and more so now when you look east towards the massive developments at Ponce Circle, a hotel property going up, all of the sites have been, the vision, the views have been obstructed and changed completely. So again, thank you for listening to us and we are fully supportive of your vote to rezone the area. Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you sir. Thank you for your testimony. And Mr. City Clerk, you have three letters you wish to read.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes sir. My office received three e-mails yesterday in regard to this item. The first one reads, *"Dear Mayor, Vice Mayor and other Commission members, I am unable to participate in today's Zoom meeting, but want to provide comments in regards to Agenda Item F-4 and F-5 on the City Commission Agenda. For the record, my name is Maria Menendez and I live with my family at 322 Catalonia Avenue. We have lived here for over 27 years. We love the City of Coral Gables for the quality of life and services it strives to provide its residents. The quality of life in our small neighborhood area has diminished over the years and a discussion to change the zoning and land use for this area has been ongoing for a while. In 27 years in our home, and you will hear from other residents that have lived in their home for even longer, no improvements have been provided to our three-block area. We have no trees, no grass, no traffic calming, no amenities, and no neighborhood enhancements. Our area is an enclave, we are separated from other residential neighborhoods by LeJeune Road on the west and by University Drive on the south. That includes a historic 4-story San Sebastian Apartments that buffers the residential area to the south from us. We have commercial zoning to the north, just separated by an alley, and to the east, across Salzedo Street that we share with our commercial neighbors. Our quality of life will continue to be impacted and challenged by additional developments in our area, such as the Mercedes Benz expansion to the old Police and Fire Station, bringing the dealership activities closer to our residential neighborhood. An additional development site anticipated in the area resulting from the land exchange involving Mercedes Benz. A new high-density development*

City Commission Meeting

proposed at Catalonia and Ponce, east of our neighborhood which wants to eliminate the dedicated right-hand turning lane from Ponce to University Drive. Vacating this right turn will potentially divert traffic east onto Catalonia when traffic is backed up from a red light at Ponce and University. This is bound to happen, especially during peak hours when commercial traffic is heading for the evening. And finally, the existing commercial zoning just north of us allows for high-rise development, a parcel or assembly of parcels of 20,000 square feet or more maybe built up to 190 feet in height, less than 200 feet away from our single-family residential neighborhood. I believe that you are all in receipt of a petition signed by 100 percent of the property owners along the 300 Block of Catalonia and Malaga Avenues. I, along with my neighbors respectfully request that you approve the land use change for our area, as presented and supported by city staff. Thank you for consideration to this request.”

Next, we have received an e-mail, “My name is Richard Formoso and I own property at 3011 Malaga Avenue. I’m writing in support of the rezoning of my neighborhood. I have owned my property on the corner of Malaga and Salzedo since 2017. My initial plan for the property was for me and my family to live in the house and call it a home. During the renovation of the property, we decided as a family that the neighborhood across and down the street form a heavily commercial area was not suitable for us. I rented the property in 2019 after six months search for tenants and a 20 percent drop in my rent price. Many tenants were turned off by the adjacent commercial use, as I was. I feel the natural progression for this area is to be absorbed into the adjacent commercial areas with an upgrade in zoning. Thank you, Richard Formoso.”

And lastly, an e-mail, “My name is Dennis Fundora the authorized agent of 317 Holdings, LLC, which is the legal owner of [317 Malaga Ave in Coral Gables, FL 33134](#). I am submitting the attached e-comment, in my absence, to be read at before the Commission regarding items F-4 and F5. As authorized agent, I hereby support items F-4 and F-5 regarding the Craft Section rezoning. As members of the Commission are aware: this area is no longer compatible with Single Family Residential as there is no buffer to the surrounding commercial developments which result in increased cut through traffic, privacy issues, safety concerns, and parking overflow issues due to the neighboring police station, car dealerships, office buildings, and retail establishments. Secondly, our properties are surrounded by existing and proposed commercial developments all of which tower above these low-rise residences further eroding privacy and the quality of life that Coral Gables is known for. Being surrounded by commercial developments where speeding cars are a daily concern results in decreased property values and makes it difficult to find renters. Finally, the Crafts Section was promised streetscape improvements and buffers to improve the streets and those were never delivered. The tenancy and parking overflow issues created by the San Sebastian apartments do not allow for the normal calm residential neighborhood as most Coral Gables residents enjoy. Further, all of the neighboring property owners have signed a petition supporting the rezoning and have been promised a rezoning for more than 10-years and it is time that we are heard. Accordingly, I respectfully request that the Commission votes to approve the proposed rezoning immediately as this cannot wait any longer. Very truly yours, 317 Holdings, LLC,”

City Commission Meeting

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you Mr. Urquia. Are there any other persons wishing to speak?

City Clerk Urquia: No Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: For the record, I'd like to – I know that the Manager met with the residents in the area and they did come up with it was almost a million-dollar plan for streetscape in the area.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I don't understand what you are saying.

Commissioner Keon: Each person has remarked that they were promised streetscape, and nobody has ever delivered on it and nobody has ever done anything, so that's why they are asking for this. The Manager did meet with them and they did come up with a plan that was a million-dollar plus plan to do streetscape and they preferred to move on with the rezoning of their neighborhood as opposed to the streetscape. So, they didn't go forward, the city didn't go forward with redoing those streets, because of the rezoning effort and granted it is a difficult enclave. You would like to see it differently, but for the record, they were offered an opportunity to change those streets and chose the opportunity to rezone as opposed to that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. Any other comments please?

Commissioner Mena: I just have a question for the City Attorney which is based on the comments we were making earlier, walk us through just very briefly the legal, sort of ramifications of approving the Comp Plan as is before us today, and then the separate discussion we are having on potentially MX-1 for this area. What is the Comp Plan – so when we are approving, what is it called, commercial low-rise, isn't that what it is?

City Attorney Ramos: Right. So, the Comp Plan is a much broader concept and then the zoning code is going to give you a lot more detail to put in there. So, the Comp Plan is giving you the parameter, right, the type of use and the height, and...

Commissioner Mena: What type of rights does that Comp Plan give you visa vie height, for example?

City Attorney Ramos: Whatever the height you are rezoning to – is that 70 Ramon?

Vice Mayor Lago: Its 45 feet.

Commissioner Mena: So, the Comp Plan, this item before us today dictates the height, not the MX-1.

City Attorney Ramos: Both.

Commissioner Mena: Okay. Explain that to me legally.

City Attorney Ramos: So, the Comp Plan is the first thing.

City Commission Meeting

Commissioner Mena: I understand that.

City Attorney Ramos: You can't have – MX-1 can't come and say you can go to 100, if the Comp Plan says 50, it has to be consistent.

Commissioner Mena: Right. If the Comp Plan says 77 with Med bonus and later on, we want to say, I'm just brainstorming hypothetically, 45 feet, as the Vice Mayor said, and Med bonus is a conditional use, right. How does that work? – is that a...issue at that time?

City Attorney Ramos: How about on Miracle Mile and Giralda right now. So, you have a Comp Plan that lets you build higher and then you have overlay that...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: The Comp Plan basically sets the maximum that you could do and then the zoning regulations could be a little bit less, as long as they have some criteria and some clear established process that they need to follow. That has been the norm in the code. So what happens is that the Comp Plan is the policy document, it tell you okay, now we are going to be commercial, we are not going to be single-family anymore, that's a big policy change, that's a big difference; and then the zoning would give you the opportunity to within that overall framework tailor it accordingly. If it's a larger parcel you can do some things. If it's a smaller parcel you can do other things. That is typically what the zoning code does right now.

City Attorney Ramos: Ramon is correct. The biggest thing the Comp Plan does here is change in the use from being a residential neighborhood to being a commercial neighborhood. That's the big, big thing that happens here.

Commissioner Mena: I'll sit down with you in between first and second reading to get some clarification. The concept of the biggest thing and – things are not things and I want to understand exactly what the legal implications are of approving a Comp Plan that says you can build up to 77 feet. That's my question, because I don't want later to have a problem, given the discussion we just had that there may be an appetite or maybe not, going all the way to 77 or maybe only going to 77 if other conditions are involved. I don't want to have a problem later legally. That's it. Let me make it clear. I said a lot of things of concerns. To address Commissioner Fors point, which I think is really well taken. I have no issue whatsoever with changing this from single-family to commercial. The question is what rights come along with that commercial approval.

City Attorney Ramos: Okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. We have one more person that wishes to speak and I thought we had closed the public hearing part of it. I will let this person speak, but this is the last person and after that person I will close the public hearing section of this item. Two minutes.

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you Mr. Mayor. The speaker is Maria Blatt.

Ms. Blatt: Hi. Good morning. I don't know if you can hear me.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Commission Meeting

Ms. Blatt: Okay. Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Two minutes.

Ms. Blatt: My name is Maria Blatt, pardon me.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Two minutes. Go ahead.

Ms. Blatt: Okay. I am the owner of 2 through MBP Malaga Holdings, the owner of 232 Malaga and I'll keep it short. Been an owner since 2014. There has been lots of issues that have been raised already that, obviously cover a lot of the points that I wanted to make today with regard to the volume of traffic. The fact that our area is used as a cut-through area and the speeding is just been a little out of control. We've had decrease in our rental opportunity and obviously real estate properties have gone down, because of the impact from the neighboring and the activity that happens due to its location. So there is significant impact and really I just wanted to be sure that another voice was heard to let you know that I hope that you all will consider all of these issues and will approve the land use change that is required in order to hopefully change this neighborhood for the better and make our City Beautiful in our small pocket a much more palatable place to live. Thank you so much and thank you for allowing me to speak.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you Ms. Blatt. No more speakers, right? Okay, I close the public hearing part of this. Do I hear a motion from the City Commission?

Commissioner Keon: I'll move it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: First Reading.

Commissioner Keon: I'll move it on First Reading, yes.

City Attorney Ramos: So, this is F-4.

Commissioner Keon: F-4 on First Reading.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Commissioner Keon has moved, is there a second?

Vice Mayor Lago: Second.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. Will you call the roll please?

Commissioner Fors: Yes

Commissioner Keon: Yes

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes

Commissioner Mena: Yes

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

City Commission Meeting

City Attorney Ramos: F-5 is slightly different. Ramon you want to explain the difference between F-4 and F-5.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: F-5 applies to those few lots that were highlighted in yellow and it has to do with the maximum height of one story.

Vice Mayor Lago: So moved.

Commissioner Keon: Second.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: They requested to remove that.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Second?

Commissioner Keon: Second.

Vice Mayor Lago: I want to make sure we made it very clear, when this comes back for Second Reading, we have a litany of things that need to be addressed. If you want to meet with us in person, we are more than willing to meet again, but I'd like to see all the questions as specifically Commissioner Fors, Commissioner Mena and myself, please.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. Its been moved and seconded. Will you call the roll please?

Commissioner Keon: Yes

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes

Commissioner Mena: Yes

Commissioner Fors: Yes

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)