

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item C**  
**April 14, 2026**  
**Public Safety Building, CMR**  
**2151 Salzedo Street, Coral Gables, FL**

**City Commission**

**Mayor Vince Lago**  
**Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson**  
**Commissioner Melissa Castro**  
**Commissioner Ariel Fernandez**  
**Commissioner Richard D. Lara**

**City Staff**

**City Attorney, Cristina Suárez**  
**City Manager, Peter Iglesias**  
**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**  
**Planning and Zoning Director, Jennifer Garcia**

**Public Speaker(s)**

**Laura Russo**  
**Javier Font**

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Agenda Items E-3 and E-7 [Start: 11:13 a.m.]

E-3: An Ordinance of the City Commission approving the vacation of a public alleyway pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, "Process," Section 14-211, "Abandonment and Vacations" and City Code Chapter 62, Article 8 "Vacation, abandonment and closure of streets, easements and alleys by private owners and the city; application process," providing for the vacation of the forty-five (45) foot wide alley which is approximately one hundred twenty-five (125) feet in length lying between Tract A and Lots 27 through 31, Block 156, Riviera Section Part 8 (1250 S Dixie Highway), Coral Gables, Florida; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, and providing for an effective date (Legal description on file). (02 11 26 PZB recommended approval, Vote: 5-0) Lobbyist: Laura Russo

E-7: Resolution of the City Commission approving site plan review pursuant to Zoning Code Article 2, "Zoning Districts" Section 2-408, "University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay," for a proposed mixed-use project referred to as "The Mark" on the property legally described as a Portion of Tract A, together with

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Lots 27 through 31, and together with that Portion of the 45-foot platted alley, Block 156, Riviera Section Part 8 (1250 S Dixie Highway), Coral Gables, Florida; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, and providing for an effective date (Legal description on file). Lobbyist: Laura Russo

Mayor Lago: Do we move on to items E-3 or E-7 or is there anybody to break? All right; we move on. Perfect. Time certain. Items E-3 and E-7.

City Attorney Suarez: E-3 and E-7 are related. E-3 is an ordinance of the City Commission approving the vacation of a public alleyway pursuant to zoning code Article 14 process section 14-211 abandonment and vacations in city code chapter 62 article 8 vacation abandonment and closure of streets easements and alleys by private owners in the city application process providing for the vacation of the 45-foot wide alley which is approximately 125 feet in length lying between track day and lots 27 through 31 block 156 Riviera Section part 8 Coral Gables Florida providing for repeated provisions of our ability clause and providing for an effective date. E-7 is a resolution of the City Commission approving site plan review pursuant to zoning code article 2 zoning district section 2-408 University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay for a proposed mixed-use project referred to as the mark on the property legally described as a portion of track day together with lots 27 through 31 and together with that portion of the 45-foot platted alley block 156 Rivera section part 8 Coral Gables Florida providing for repeated provisions of our ability clause and providing for an effective date. This is a quasi-judicial item. Mr. Clerk, please swear in those individuals who will be providing testimony today.

City Clerk Urquia: Please stand and raise your right hand. Do you swear affirmed testimony you'll provide today will be the truth and nothing but the truth. Thank you very much.

Ms. Russo: Good morning Mr. Mayor, members of the Commission. For the record my name is Laura Russo with offices at 2334 Ponce de Leon Boulevard. I am here this morning representing LCD Acquisitions LLC, who is currently in the process of trying to develop the property we know is 1250 South Dixie Highway, also known as the University Shopping Center. Our first request E-3 is for vacation of an alley that exists on that property. Most people don't recognize it as an alley. It's actually the northern portion of the northernmost access driveway into the property. It runs about 125 feet deep and it's about 40 feet wide and we are making that request. It has been the driveway for the University Shopping Center since this shopping center was built back in 1952 or 53. We are making this request in anticipation of developing the property under the recently passed RTZ overlay in the City of Coral Gables and LCD is very happy to be back in the city and we want to thank staff for working with us and making sure that this project can be something the city can be proud of. And what I'd like to do now is ask Javier Font, who is the architect of the project, to come up and take you through the site plan.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Mr. Russo. Mr. Font good morning. Thank you for being here.

Mr. Font: Good morning. Thank you, Mayor, Commission, Manager. Javier Font, Behar Font and Partners, 4533 Ponce de Leon Boulevard. I'm happy to be back with this project before the city. I will have a brief presentation. As Laura mentioned, we've been working with staff for a while on this. I'm trying to design it under the new overlay that you have approved recently. So, we're all very familiar with this site. Great location directly across the street from the University of Miami right at the bridge and just a wonderful corner in the city. If you look at the upper right-hand corner of the drawing there that is the hard corner where the bridge comes down. So, what we've done is chamfer the corner, cut it back to create a plaza to receive all the pedestrians that could be coming over the corner or from the bridge, and also to create a nice visual at that point. The top of the drawing is along US-1, which is all retail and our main leasing office. So, we've activated that street as much as possible and then on the upper left-hand side of the drawing is our vehicular ingress and egress, which is in the same location as the current shopping center has today. On Mariposa which is the street on the right-hand side of the drawing, we turn the retail on the corner and then we've got a lobby into our residential component right off the bridge there and then the rest of that street is ground floor units to try and activate the street as well. The lower right hand side of the drawing is another plaza area that we've cut back to give a little relief from the existing residential components across the street, and then most of Madruga along the back is also aligned with residential units, and then on the lower left hand side of the drawing you see our service areas which we've tried to minimize and tried and put most of our services, sort of along the left hand side of the drawing, if you will, internally so they're not facing the street. Our typical floor, which runs from the second floor through the eighth, you can see it's all lined with units. We have an internalized parking garage so there's absolutely no parking visible from any of the streets or even from our neighbors. We create two courtyards that you see in the middle of the building there and then our rooftop, all our amenities are on our rooftop. We have two amazing pool areas. We've got a gym, some study areas, some additional club rooms, if you will, and they all face the US-1 side of the property. These are the elevations. The project is designed in the Mediterranean format, as per the new ordinance, and this is the view along US-1 with the retail on the ground floor, activation of the street, the large sidewalks and this is the elevation along Madruga on the back side of the property. So happy to answer any questions you may have.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. Anything else? Madam Zoning Director. Good morning.

Planning and Zoning Director: Good morning. Can I have the PowerPoint please? Thank you. So, we're at the location, that rectangle space in that yellow box is where the alley location is, and you can see here in the area as well. It's in the parking lot. It's kind of hard to see as far as a built parking lot, but there is that end to the site. As you're aware they did apply for this back in 2024. It was referred by the Planning and Zoning Board. Afterward the City Commission adopted an overlay

district which included this property, which changes zoning and land use for this area. So, they are requesting now just a vacation alley and a mixed-use site plan. So, this is an image of the alley. It's 125 feet long and 45 feet deep. This is the site plan as I just went over. The garage entrance from US-1, a 20-foot setback along US-1, retail facing US-1, turning the corner there on Mariposa, as well as living units on the ground floor along Mariposa and on the back along Madruga. A 15-foot rear yard and sidewalk along Madruga with another entrance into the garage off of Madruga and the loading and backup house there would be also on Madruga with the crosswalk, I should say along Mariposa to connect Mariposa south. The property is 132 square feet. The alley is 5,600 square feet for a total of 137,000 square feet for a total building site area. The FAR proposed is a little under the maximum which is 3.5. They're proposing to be 3.46 FAR. The building height would be 105 feet to the roof deck. There would be a proposal of 393 units which is just under the maximum density which would allow 396 units. The commercial area would be 17,000 square feet, again along US-1 and turn the corner on Mariposa. The parking would be provided would be 670 spaces. Open area would be exceeding the requirement at 10 percent at 15 percent of the property area, which is mostly along the setbacks on US-1 interior setback along the south side of the property, as well as the setbacks on Mariposa and Madruga. And as you can see back there 20 feet along US-1, interior setback of 20 feet and then 15 feet on Madruga and Mariposa. Had a lengthy timeline; DRC reviewed this back in 2023. Again, neighborhood meetings back in 2024. Moving forward it was deferred by the Planning and Zoning Board in 2024 and came back with just the alley vacation of February of this year. City Commission of course is right now for alley vacation. Letters were sent to the property owners seven times throughout this entire extent of the project. Four times property was posted; six times a website posting and advertised three times. This is a map that shows the 1,000 feet that includes the properties that were advertised, I'm sorry that were mail notice to. Staff does recommend approval with conditions. Those conditions are outlined in both of your Exhibit A, Exhibit B and Exhibit C. The alley, Commission approval requires that they have to withdraw their pending application with the county before moving forward with the city. If they do not, then the alley vacation will be null and void. Their proposed site would have to conform to the site plan as it presents today. And then they have within two years to build the city permitted site plan. The site plan condition approval and the standard condition approval are outlined in Exhibit C, but you can hear the highlights of that. So again, the vacation of the alley would have to be completed before applying for a building permit. Similar time would be requested by the applicant at that intersection Mariposa and US-1. Speed cushion on Hardee and Madruga. Signage for vehicular delivery and parking again along Madruga but mostly in Mariposa. And then to update their loading operations plan. And as far as they proffered public realm improvements, they are proffering to have a multi-use path to connect the neighborhood to the bridge across US-1. They're also proposing to extend a new sidewalk along Mariposa again to encourage that walkability to access the bridge across US-1. And then they're also proposing to improve the conditions of sidewalk and festering infrastructure along Madruga

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which is their neighboring property to the southwest. And they're also proposing to have bike boulevard share markings beyond the property along Maynada, Mariposa and over to Caballero. That's it. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. Mr. Clerk, do you have any public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: No Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: We'll close the public comment. What is the will of the Commission?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor, I just haven't had a chance to sit down with the developers since the prior plan. Okay and some of the things that we had discussed were the sidewalk improvements and walkability to be able to get people across US-1 and also the residents that I had spoken to who wanted trees on both sides of the streets. Is that something that's been included on this as well?

Mayor Lago: If you could have your turn. Thank you. Ms. Russo?

Ms. Russo: Yes, Vice Mayor. As you can see, the sidewalk connectability was what was just illustrated by Jennifer Garcia. The sidewalk will be coming down from the bridge and going across Madruga and continuing south.

Vice Mayor Anderson: All the way to the intersection of US-1 because it's got a big, huge gap.

Ms. Russo: It goes from the bridge which comes down, and it goes along Mariposa Court and then crosses Madruga and continues down Mariposa Court for the block that is for the east side of the Villa Capri condominium.

Mayor Lago: All right, thank you. Any other further comments from the commission? Okay, I'll entertain a motion.

Commissioner Lara: I'll move it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll second and this would be on E-3.

City Attorney Suarez: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: No

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: Yes.

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Mayor Lago: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Moving on to item E-7. Do we have any public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: No, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: We'll close the public comment. Do we have any comments from the Commission?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes, I just have some brief comments. While I wish I could turn back time and go back to 2024 when this project was a much smaller and compatible development, the time I cannot reverse. It is a beautiful project nonetheless and is respectful of the community. So, a no vote on this item is a yes vote for Live Local, is a yes vote for larger development through the county RTZ. We have no choice because we don't have the ability to turn back time and go back to 2024 when this could have been a very different project. So, I'll move it.

Commissioner Lara: Through the Mayor? Yes, sir. So I want to echo the Vice Mayor's comments and also add that this is a result of tremendous hard work, tremendous commitment to adhering to the City Beautiful standards and really taking a situation that was unfortunate, delayed, frustrating, and through diligence able to bring it back to something approximating what it could have been, but decidedly better than where it otherwise would be given the tortured history of this project and development. I think it's going to be, as was shown in the renderings, a beautiful and environment for people to live and to work. And I think it represents a rather remarkable compromise that in the end falls, in my view, squarely to the benefit of the residents. And it's an enhancement to the City Beautiful. So, I commend all those that work so very hard, developers as well, attorneys, right, and the architects, and the Commission, at least those of us who are going to vote for this. I thank you for your support on this. I hope they join me on a yes vote. So, I guess I'll second.

Commissioner Fernandez: Through the Mayor?

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, I agree with the comments that have been voiced by the vice mayor and Commissioner Lara. It's not the perfect situation that the neighbors would have wanted, but it has been a labor to get to where we are today, where we have a project that's not necessarily what we are being preempted by the county on, that would be totally out of scale with this community. But it is something that we have been able to bring back, and we're having this vote today because of the hard work that has been put into it, that we're able to make decisions, and we've been able to make recommendations on sidewalks and on connectivity that otherwise we would not have been able to do had this gone through the county process. So, I appreciate staff's work on this to get us back here. Ms. Russo, for your work and the developer for working with us to get this back to the city and making some concessions on that needed to be made in order to make this a project

that was more manageable for the neighborhood and more consistent with what the city of Coral Gables is.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Do you have a second?

Commissioner Lara: Second.

Commissioner Castro: No

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes, for the reasons stated.

Mayor Lago: Before I vote, I have a few points. So, what you will witness after this vote is taken is a political onslaught of misinformation. It will come from the blogs, and it will come from a select few in this community. It's political season in full swing. The effort will be to mislead, but I hope, I hope that people watch what I'm about to say. The developer has been working for three years since 6-23. In two months will be six years, excuse me, three years. They have gone to every board. They have addressed multiple boards. The Planning and Zoning Board reviewed this project. It was a 5-0 vote, including Commissioner Castro's appointment. I want to explain again why we're here today, and I'll brief. There are four items on the table. Number one, the city code. Madam Director, will you please join me? I want you to correct me if I'm wrong, please. I may step out of line. Even though I won't make the blogs, because this is the truth, and it's the facts. But I actually want to make sure that it's factually 100% correct. So please jump in when I make a mistake. Okay. We have four options on this site, correct? Number one, the city zoning code. If the developer would like, they can move forward with the city zoning code, correct? Is that correct?

Planning and Zoning Director: Yes, that's what they're doing today.

Mayor Lago: Yeah. Number two, we have RTZ from the county. They could immediately go to RTZ county if they wanted to, correct?

Planning and Zoning Director: Correct.

Mayor Lago: This property is already incorporated into the RTZ, the subzone.

Planning and Zoning Director: Yes.

Mayor Lago: So, this was out of our hands. This was done by the county. This was not done by us, correct?

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Planning and Zoning Director: Correct.

Mayor Lago: Okay. If it goes to the RTZ, the city of Coral Gables will lose millions of dollars in impact fees, correct?

Planning and Zoning Director: Yes, right.

Mayor Lago: Okay. It will not come to us. It will go to the county. We would also lose the ability to manage setbacks, correct? Right. We would also lose the ability to manage usages, correct?

Planning and Zoning Director: Correct, yes.

Mayor Lago: Like for example, gun stores, pet stores, certain things that we in the city do not allow, but the county allows. Is that correct?

Planning and Zoning Director: Yes, as far as in setbacks.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Anything else would you like to add? Bars.

Planning and Zoning Director: What?

Mayor Lago: Bars, for example. Bars? For use, that we don't allow. How about gentlemen's clubs?

Planning and Zoning Director: As well, yes.

Mayor Lago: Gentlemen's clubs. I want to repeat that again. Gentlemen's clubs. Okay. We would also lose our ability to control signage. You know how we love in the City of Coral Gables, where sometimes people don't realize it, but we have a very understated signage code. Our signage code outside of a building says the building. It's required to fall within a certain fixed size, and it has to be approved by the city. Would it be excessively larger by the county, the signage code?

Planning and Zoning Director: Most likely, and it could probably be pull signs attached from the building, for example, or box signs that we wouldn't allow in the city, right?

Mayor Lago: Setbacks, usages, signage, millions of dollars of impact fees, and if it went the RTZ, what would be the height of the building potentially be?

Planning and Zoning Director: So, the RTZ is written in a way that a quarter of a mile within the property, they can have that height. So, it'd be 150 feet, because the property next to them is 150 feet.

Mayor Lago: So, 150 feet.

Planning and Zoning Director: Correct.

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Mayor Lago: What is it going to be right now?

Planning and Zoning Director: 105.

Mayor Lago: 105. The reason why is because they're going what we call the RTZ light or RTZ Coral Gables. I do not want to pass the RTZ Coral Gables, but like I've told certain residents, the nice lady who's here, who I visited her when I visited some residents in their home on the waterway, we are back, our back is against the wall. The developer can choose to go the city route, which is significantly less in scale, or we'll go the RTZ, which holds a city powerless. And the fourth and final one, which the commissioner to my right, Castro, advocated for, which is Live Local. You can go Live Local at the end of the day. So, my point is this, am I 100% happy about this? Under no circumstances. But like I've told you, we had to negotiate to get where we're at today. By negotiating, we lowered the building by 45 feet. By negotiating, we controlled setbacks. By negotiating, we controlled usages, gentlemen's clubs, gun stores, a litany of other usages that are not allowed in the city like pet stores. We also controlled signage. I heard certain other individuals, and we're going to cover this bridge later when we get there, when we talk about the RTZ for the waterway project. It was said, why don't we just go to the county? Why don't we just go to the county? Let's go to the county and take our chances. This is already law. The RTZ already exists. It's past. The train is out of the station. You can go and advocate all you want. By the way, Commissioner Regalado has been here four or five times to talk about the RTZ. Nobody except myself and I think one or two other commissioners on the commission made statements about the RTZ and ask questions and oppose the RTZ. The train is out of the station. We're moving forward. We have no other choice. Our hands are tied behind our backs. I wish, I wish, I know the Herald will publish this, but I wish instead of using this as a political tool in an effort to get reelected, join the Commission, join the Commission in banding together and saying we tried the best that we could and I'd rather have a 105 foot building than have the developer go to the county and get a 150 foot building. That to me is intrusive even further than where we're at right now. So, this is where elected officials have to decide whether we're for the city or we're for politics. And this is a very tough decision for me. I have to vote yes because I'm left with no other choice. But this is a much better outcome than what could have possibly happened if they would have gone the RTZ route. In closing, I want to thank the developer. I want to thank the architect. I want to thank the lawyer. And most importantly, I want to thank staff. Okay. I want to thank you, Madam Director. I want to thank our Manager, our DCM, our ACM. This commission selected me in an effort to try to negotiate as much as we could with The Mark. How many meetings do we have, Mr. Manager? About a dozen meetings. We negotiated hard and the developer negotiated hard. You could have turned your back on us and said I'm going to go the county route, and you could have gotten a significantly larger building, more units, more height, less setbacks. So, I want to thank you for that. I want to thank you for that. We worked on something together that I think is going

to be, it's not perfect, it's far from perfect, but it's much better than 150 feet. That could be allowed by the RTZ. And the city would have lost six or seven million dollars in impact fees, correct?

City Manager Iglesias: That's correct, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Where do those impact fees go? I want to put it on the record. It's not going to make the blogs anyways at the end of the day. But where do those impact fees go? Impact fees go to parks, mobility, police and fire, and also building permit fees. I want you to understand that the RTZ, which is a county ordinance, takes all those impact fees away from the city of Coral Gables. Now they're staying here with the RTZ Coral Gables iteration. So, my vote is a yes. Thank you very much. Moving forward.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, before you move forward, you had a couple of speakers.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, I'm going to get back to that right now. Thank you, sir. Thank you for bringing to my attention, by the way. I appreciate it. We have a few speakers on the item on the public comment section. I didn't make it, so I'm just going to go back, open the public comment section. It's two speakers and we'll hear them out.