

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item C – Public Comment
November 9, 2021
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Jorge Fors

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Economic Development Asset Manager, Zeida Sardinas

Public Speaker(s)

Aurelio Durana

Maria Cruz

Brett Gillis

Howard Wynne

David Renshaw

Agenda Item C [Start: 9:40 a.m.]

Public Comment

Mayor Lago: Public Comment – Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: The first speaker today is Mr. Aurelio Durana.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Durana, good morning.

Mr. Durana: Mayor, Commissioners, first of all thank you very much for lifting the mask requirement. I'm here basically on a Code Enforcement matter, just to bring you up on

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developments, the saga of children at play figurines, the city cited me for. We went to hearing before the General Master, we lost the hearing. I appealed to the Circuit Court; the matter is pending before the Circuit Court. But the city has found a new way to harass us. We are now being cited as a brand-new violation, and as I understand it, this act of vindictiveness originated in the City Attorney's office. At the direction of the City Attorney that we have been cited again. That is one issue that I want to bring to your attention. What is the harm? While the appeal is pending letting the figurines stay on the swale. They protect children, they protect old people. The Coral Gables Police Department is engaged in a campaign to protect pedestrians. This flies in the face of that campaign. Secondly, I complained about the neighbor putting a chain-link fence in the backyard that I thought was encroaching on my property. The city came, looked at it, Suramy Cabrera's people. They found that it was on the property line, which is illegal. Fences have to be back, set back several inches on your property, but Suramy Cabrera, I believe with the connivance with the City Manager refused to enforce the code. And to add insult to injury, now I get cited, allegedly for having a fence without a permit right after I complained about the neighbors. So just bringing you all up to date, so you know what is going on. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Attorney Ramos: Happy to respond.

Mayor Lago: Madam City Attorney, I was going to ask you for a little bit of clarity on this issue.

City Attorney Ramos: First, its wholly improper to bring this case to this board. There is a process by which Code Enforcement cases are brought through and appealed to court as appropriate. As Mr. Durana said, the hearing officer applying our code found that he was in fact in violation. There is an obstruction on the right-of-way, which are the little slow – children at play signs. There is a constant, almost daily complaint by the neighbors in that neighborhood about those signs. City Attorney's office doesn't know where Mr. Durano lives. Has no particular interest in Mr. Durano's signs, only that they violate the code and there are complainants that are very bothered by these obstructions, and in fact, are in violation of the code. We have the case in the appeal in court. He was cited again because he hasn't removed them. He continues to be in violation of the code. Certainly, and apart from this case, if the Commission wants to change the code to allow those signs, that's within your prerogative, but that is where we are as far as the process. The fence case, I don't know anything about. But I just remind you again, that there is a process, and this isn't it.

Mayor Lago: Madam City Attorney, may I ask a question?

City Attorney Ramos: Of course.

Mayor Lago: In regard to the figurines – these are mobile figurines, correct?

City Attorney Ramos: Yes – and we’ve only asked Mr. Durana to bring them in and then take them out when the children are playing, no problem, but he just leaves them there all the time.

Mayor Lago: How much does these figurines weigh, would you say?

City Attorney Ramos: I have no idea. They are plastic – from the pictures they seem pretty light.

Mayor Lago: Alright. Any other discussion on the matter? Any other concerns? Anything else that we’d like to address?

Commissioner Menendez: Since I think I’m new to this issue, I’d like for the administration at some point to brief me. Like everything, there is always a solution that can be found without having to, I don’t know how to describe it, end up with two parties at each other’s throats. So, if we can find a solution going forward that benefits the community, I’d like to look for it. So, if I could be briefed at some point in time.

Mayor Lago: If I may, if I may Madam City Attorney, I’ve been working on this for probably six months to a year, trying to find a solution. There is a code in place. The only solution here is to change the code and to allow items on the swale permanently, that’s the only solution, or we make an exception for Mr. Durana, that’s what we have to do here. So, to give you an idea. I woke up this week and I was going to save some comments for later, but I had somebody illegally dump tiles on my swale this week. I’m going to pay to have those tiles removed off my swale. They are still there. I’m slowly removing them myself. The swale belongs to the city, as you are aware. We have a responsibility as homeowners to maintain that swale. One of the items that I think has set the city apart from any other city is our requirement for maintenance and green space and cleanly swales. This is an issue that I’ve tried to find a solution for. I try to avoid having a person who I consider a friend have to address this issue before Code Enforcement. This brings me and every member of this Commission a lot of pain to see anybody in this position, have to address this issue. But there is a code in place, and I recommend, you’re very familiar with the code. I don’t need to tell you the code. Sit down with staff so they can brief you, but you are going to run into the same situation I ran into, where its either we allow this to continue, or we change the code as a Commission. And if you would like to change it before the Commission, I welcome anyone to bring to the Commission and allowing anything that’s to be placed on the swale permanently, those are decisions that we have to make as a city, but we have to be very careful, as you are aware what we do. So, Mr. Manager, I think you wanted to say something, or no?

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, I think we have been consistent in that. If you place them and remove them; however, placing something permanently on the swales also a liability for the city. So, I do think that what we are doing now is appropriate.

Mayor Lago: Anything else? I want to make sure this gentleman gets the full time he needs on the public comment to be heard today. Does anybody else like to make a comment on this issue, before I move on. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker is Ms. Maria Cruz.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Cruz.

Ms. Cruz: Good morning. Don't forget my title.

Mayor Lago: The floor is yours.

Ms. Cruz: First of all, Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. I have written some things in case I was not here, because I was, you know in a few minutes. But since I'm here, let me start by thanking the staff, the administration for finally seeing the light about what sanitation employees and residents like myself have been saying for over a year, about the bulk collection, about why we were so delayed in picking up, about why we had such a humungous overtime expense. I am talking about E-3, and since I'm not possibly going to be there, this is why I'm doing it now. I think this is an important step. In case you haven't seen it, the selling one of the front loaders that was priced at 165 or \$166,000; and if you read what it says there, it says exactly what we've been saying for over a year. Now, the key is, there is at least five more that's been sitting in the yard unused or barely used. This one, we are getting \$160,000 for it, because its brand new. If we don't move fast on the others, we are going to have to give them away and throw almost a million dollars away, because we should never have bought them. So, my message today is, before listening to people that may or may not the city's best interest in mind, why don't we ask the people that are going to use the equipment for their input and listen to them, and then make the decision and this could have saved us about more than half a million dollars in overtime and about \$800, \$900,000 in equipment. And for your information, there is no more overtime; overtime has been very, very, quiet, because they went back to doing it the way they've always done, and guess what, you haven't heard many complaints about anybody missing a pick-up, so obviously, they knew what they were talking about and the administration, except for one elected official that went and talked to them, we didn't listen. So, next time, please, please, please there are people using the equipment, let's get their input, and consider it before we spend that kind of money. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you Mrs. Cruz. I'd like to just make an additional comment and I know Commissioner Menendez wants to say something. So, the Manager and I are meeting with the senior level staff, I think its November 30th, just to discuss the current condition of our garbage disposal and to continue to see how we can work on refining the process, not only about garbage, but also about recycling and different things that we are working on. So that's coming. We are meeting with them. I also met with them this week and I had a nice conversation at the recycling event, as always with the team leaders. And they acknowledged, obviously, that the Manager has

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taken a hands-on approach and that that approach has worked. As you can see, garbage is not lagging two and three days, as it was for a certain time period. Yes, Covid played a role. We did have employees that were out, but there were other issues that were at play. So, like Ms. Cruz mentioned, I think – we acknowledged where we may have made mistakes. We are all human, we make mistakes, or maybe we listened to some advice that maybe wasn't perfect, but we learned. And as you can see right now, the process is in a much better place. We are working incredibly hard and now we are working on refining the process to make it even better. So, another positive thing is, overtime is virtually nothing, and we had some pretty significant overtime numbers before. So, we pivoted, we learned, and now it's all about providing the best service as we continue to shine. So, I want to congratulate our City Manager and all the employees at our disposal team that are working hard to make sure that our city stays beautiful. So, thank you on that. Commissioner Menendez you want to say something.

Commissioner Menendez: Actually, it's off topic. Is Ms. Cruz still there?

City Clerk Urquia: I believe she is.

Mayor Lago: She's listening.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay. I have a bone to pick with you Ms. Cruz. I actually ordered a café con leche for you today, to be delivered to you at noon, and the day I do it, you don't show up. So, if you can make it on time, it will be waiting for you, if not it will be here, we go again. So, I just want Maria to know that I follow through with my promise, that's all.

Mayor Lago: I love it. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: The next speaker is Mr. Brett Gillis.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Gillis the floor is yours.

Mr. Gillis: Good morning, this is Brett Gillis, 915 Ferdinand Street. My comments today will be primarily directed towards the Gables Village projects, it's on the agenda. I have to tell you; I really think that our Planning and Zoning and Historical Resources Department have again become very dysfunctional in this regard. I do not see how any historic preservation officer can go by 503 Santander and declare that building not be historically significant. I'm not talking about the other buildings individually. I'm talking about this one building, 503 Santander. In terms of the Gables Village project, I would like staff to explain per their report, this is the report that they came up with based on our zoning code, the planned area of development, the PAD, purpose and objectives, section 2-500 of the zoning code. They state in their report that it meets the provisions in our code to qualify as a PAD. I do not believe that any reasonable person reading our PAD provisions would find that to be true. Point one is that it would provide substantial additional public benefit. Again, not benefit to the people behind the compound wall, public benefit. Point number two, encourage

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enhancement and preservation of our lands. Point three, enforce and maintain neighborhood and community identity. Point four, preservation of natural feature, scenic areas and reduce land utilization for roads. I don't think that this proposal meets any of these; and there is a fifth one that probably does meet, but I haven't highlighted that, because I'm talking about the four that it doesn't. These are not my rules. These are the city's rules. These are your rules that you are supposed to abide by. Residents spoke against it at the Planning and Zoning Board meeting. The Planning and Zoning Board votes for it. They don't explain why. They don't explain to the residents about their concerns and why their concerns are going to be managed or what is wrong with them. They just vote to approve the project. So, I would like you or staff or somebody to explain how this project meets the PAD provisions. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Mena: Mr. Gillis, may I ask you a quick question? We received the memorandum on October 14th from the Coral Gables Neighbors Association which voiced the neighborhood association's support for this project from Ms. Sue Kawalerski, which lists the CGNA board of directors and committee chairs at the bottom of the letter and it actually includes your name as the Historic Preservation Chair of the Coral Gables Neighbors Association, and we received a letter of support for the project from the association. I just want to be clear on whether the association is supportive of the project or are you sort of speaking separately from the association. I'm trying to understand because I had received this letter, which again had your name on it in support.

Mr. Gillis: That was an error. I had resigned from that board and my name should not have been included in that, and I'm speaking to you as an individual; and when I say resident, I'm speaking of residents in that area that I believe you've received letters from, communications from about issues with the PAD, and I'm speaking as a resident for myself. I believe you received a letter from the Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables. So, there are other entities involved in this as well, not only the CGNA, but they can tell you about their position. I'm no longer involved with that.

Vice Mayor Mena: Okay. Thank you for clarifying.

Mayor Lago: So, Mr. Gillis, just for the record. You have a concern about one property on the entire block, correct, that you consider that could potentially be historic.

Mr. Gillis: I'm convinced – certainly I think you well know this city. I've been working on it for over five years. 503 Santander is one of the best examples of the Monterrey style we have in the city. I understand that there are other properties in this proposed development that have gotten letters stating that they are not individually significant. I would agree with that. However, I'm talking about this one property. Just because those other ones received letters – there is speculation that political pressure has happened here, other things have happened in the background. I don't know about that. I'm just speaking about the 503 Santander. I sent in references McAlister, the leading architectural historian in America, who is now deceased, but you look at the references

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they are listed, you look at this building, has every character defining feature. It's no more altered than other historic buildings that have been designated. So, I don't understand who you can sit by and allow this to happen. Sorry for the long-winded answer.

Mayor Lago: Again, this is your time. This is why I put this on the agenda to have one hour of public comment uninterrupted, unabated. I will tell you one thing, with all due respect, and I respect you. When you mention political pressure, I don't think anyone on this Commission, let me correct myself. I know that nobody on this Commission falls for political pressure by any developer. If anything, we've taken some pretty significant stands opposing projects. You are talking about a project here that has less density that is currently existing, that's going to build 48 units versus 53, and I think we'll talk about it. Currently you have 53 that are existing. My opinion, I think the design is significantly more Mediterranean than what currently exists on the block right now. But I'm not a Mediterranean expert. I leave that up to the experts. What I would like to ask from our City Manager and for anybody who is here in regard to historic preservation, they can answer me a question whether this site has been reviewed, and what their opinion is in regard to that matter, and I think that's the point of putting this on the record. I leave that up to the experts. Mr. Adams thank you for being here.

Historic Preservation Officer Adams: Good morning. Any time a property is proposed for demolition, the applicant must receive a letter of historic significance determination, and the department to review that property to determine if the property is eligible for designation. This one was discussed at length with the staff members. We did do a lot of research into this property and my determination was that as a grouping, as a historic district this building would more than likely have been a contributing structure, but it did not stack up on its own to be individually designated. And I should point out, we did take several months during our review of this. At that time, any member of the public was able to submit a designation report of their own and no designation report was ever submitted. So, there was ample time there if someone felt this building was of such significance that it could be designated, then either an application or a full designation report could have been submitted and that was never done.

Mayor Lago: So, my question, let's say that – again, that's another question for Mr. Gillis why this was not submitted.

Mr. Gillis: We didn't know about it.

Mayor Lago: The property has been published and it's been put throughout social media. It's everywhere. It's been discussed ad nauseum at public meetings. So, let's go beyond that. Is it your opinion, Mr. Adams, that this property, this building, this structure on the entire block could be considered historic?

Historic Preservation Officer Adams: On its own, no.

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Mayor Lago: Is there anything that could see that could merit it potentially being historic?

Historic Preservation Officer Adams: Nothing that stacks atop to be individually designated on its own. As a grouping, potentially, but as we had said, all the other properties had been signed off on. We did not have that opportunity. So, this one on its own, it was my opinion that it did not stack up individually.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Mr. Gillis, you have any further questions? Do you have any further statements? Mr. Gillis? I want to make sure that everybody has the appropriate time and necessary time to rebut any comments that are made in public comment.

Mr. Gillis: I was muted.

Mayor Lago: No worries. We're here. Go ahead sir, the floor is yours.

Mr. Gillis: The response is, they do not explain why it does not meet the minimum criteria. This building possesses every character defining feature of the Monterrey style. It is less altered than other buildings that have been designated in this city. I understand that this building is in the way of a proposed development. I have not objected to the architecture of the proposed development. I've objected to this building not being declared historic and I've objected to the PAD provisions because I think any reasonable person could read the PAD provisions and see that this does not – you talk about Mediterranean architecture, that's not what the PAD provision says. It talks about additional public benefit, enhancement and preservation of lands, enforce and maintain neighborhood and community identity. It's not only about Mediterranean architecture. We have the Chinese Village, you have mid-century architecture, a city that has evolved. Preservation of natural features, scenic areas, reduced land utilization for roads. Again, I guess the question at hand right now is, why is this building not a Monterrey building? What are the significant alterations? All of these factors that go into any determination. This building should be meeting the criteria. I don't know what else I can say.

Mayor Lago: Let me just clarify something, because you mentioned there the issue of it's in the way of a development. Just to be clear so you understand that. There have been multiple projects, multiple properties that have come before this Commission or previous Commissions that have addressed the issue that they are in the way of a development. And I have voted in favor, along with the Vice Mayor here, and I know Commissioner Fors was involved also, before Commissioner Anderson and Commissioner Menendez were here, to make sure that we could potentially change the way that we see things. That we give staff the necessary time to have one last bite of the apple to ensure that if there are any properties that could be considered historic, that we take a look at them before we demolish. I opposed the La Salle Cleaning site to be demolished. I opposed the other site that was, I think it was a four-unit on Catalonia, that was also demolished. I thought those sites should have been saved and we tried the best that we could on that issue.

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There was an error that happened. I don't like to hear that things are demolished because they are in the way of a development. That's not the reason why things happen. People have property rights. If staff tells me that there is significance in regard to a property, we have to make a decision based on that. Did you hear Mr. Gillis' comments? You agree with his comments? You want to make a comment on the record?

Historic Preservation Officer Adams: When we review a property for significance, we do not take into account what may or may not be built on the site. That has nothing to do with our review. A property is either eligible for designation or it's not, regardless of what may or may not be built there if the property is demolished. In my opinion, this was designed as a standard four-units and block, and it has a couple of features attached to the outside to actually – it has a protruding balcony, and it has a breakfast add, but we can't designate every building simply because there have been some features added to the outside. If you want...that block, you'll find that all of those properties or most of them have either classical features or Monterrey style features attached to them. But these were specifically designed as multi-family apartment blocks with some exterior features added. They were not designed as Monterrey buildings or classical revival buildings, and so, that's why, in my opinion, it's an interesting grouping of 13 properties which were all multi-families, all built within ten years of each other, by different architects with various features added to the outside. It's certainly an interesting block. But when I started with the city, 11 of the 13 had already been determined to have no significance, so there was no opportunity to create a small district. So, I grouped this one on its own and in my opinion, it did not stack up individually.

Mayor Lago: Who determined that 11 out of 13 were not historic?

Historic Preservation Officer Adams: That was the previous Acting Preservation Officer.

Mayor Lago: And this one in question, was it designed or constructed or did anybody of merit that we know?

Historic Preservation Officer Adams: It was an architect who has designed a number of buildings in the city, and he may have one or two contributing structures within the city, but I'm not aware of them having any individually designated properties, but again, we have to look at each one individually, that is the whole...

Mayor Lago: I asked that to make sure it wasn't significant major architect that we hold in high regard.

Historic Preservation Officer Adams: No, it's not.

Mayor Lago: That we hold in high regard. Again, we respect all architects and their work, but I just wanted to make sure it wasn't someone that...

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Historic Preservation Officer Adams: And again, you know, I've been working in preservation for over 20 years, I do it because I love it, because I care about it, and so these opinions are anywhere we're unsure we discuss as a group in the office, and we are all qualified. And so, this is something which really it just doesn't whim of mind or they want to build a new development, so we sign off on it. If this building had stacked up on its own, I would have had no hesitation in recommending it for designation and taking it to the board.

Mayor Lago: Thank you sir.

Historic Preservation Officer Adams: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Any other questions or statements by the Commission or Mr. Gillis? Want to make sure we give Mr. Gillis the last word. None.

Mr. Gillis: Yes. I think you are making a big mistake. I think that this is an error and you've all been notified of this. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you Mr. Gillis. It's always a privilege and a pleasure to have you. Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker sir is, Mr. Howard Wynne.

Mayor Lago: How are you sir?

Mr. Wynne: Good morning, Mayor, Vice Mayor and Commissioners. I just got back from a trip, and I basically got the notice around the parking garage which is being proposed on Andalusia. I just wanted to check in with you guys, I know you are much closer to the project and all that, but I guess kind of stepping back from it. I live on Giralda, I live at Giralda Place, so I look in front of multiple parking garages, and even commercial or actually office garages behind me, and I just wanted to understand. I know that we have Lot Number 1, which is next-door to Publix. I walk the Gables...and I usually don't see a lot of people parking there. I see a lot of skateboarders and all that. I know, obviously, this is Garage No. 4 that we are talking about, but I wanted to understand what is the data driving to say that we need a 625-spot parking garage? – and then also to, I think on the retail side. I lived in the Gables back from '79-'82, and it pains me to walk Miracle Mile to see so many stores that are closed, right. So, I see that we are putting in retail, which sounds great. I also realize that the Plaza is going in as well, right, so that's more retail, parking there as well. So, I was just wondering, again, not knowing the data around the need for parking or constructing this garage, could there be a better way of perhaps even partnering with many of the office buildings which are within a one-block radius, which every morning I look and see we're just a few levels of parking are basically being used, because people now work from home a bit more. And then, I would say my other question is that do we have an overall strategy in terms of parking

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garage consolidation. So, if you said Howard, we are going to close Garage 1, that's just a block away. Anyway, so that was my comment. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: We've been talking about this for years and we've been working on strategy and working on consolidation. We even went out to a public/private partnership that has been going on for the last two years and now the city is embarking on this process on its own. So, I'm going to have the Manager give you more detail in regard to where we are in the process and the reasoning behind that. It's been multiple studies. This goes all the way back to when we moved from standard parking to parallel parking on Miracle Mile when we lost about 100 parking spaces. So, Mr. Manager.

City Manager Iglesias: Thank you Mayor. Yes, we do have a strategy. We are looking at this parking garage. This is Parking Garage 1, by the way, Parking Garage 4 is the one across from Publix. Not a very efficient parking garage, it doesn't even have an elevator. The current parking garage there is steel structure, and it is operationally obsolete right now. And so, we're looking at this as a Mobility Hub and a future area for, a future area for mobility. We are also including besides the mobility issue we are looking at drone access. But we are looking for a – after the finish of the Mobility Hub, we are looking for a Coral Gables Parking Authority and we are looking for a partnership between the public and private sector. We have a lot of parking garages that are seven feet high that are really not useable for anything but cars or refrigerators; and so, the idea is to have eventually two parking garages in Coral Gables; one is Parking Garage 1, which is in the Central Business District, the most efficient and the best localized parking garage or Mobility Hub in this case; and the other is Parking Garage 7, which is part of our Public Safety initiatives and then we can look at that public/private partnership in our Coral Gables Parking Authority, so we can incorporate those seven-foot garages that really you can't convert them into any kind of office space, and look at our parking garages in potential P3s, to get let's say, mixed use buildings and so forth, where now we have a storage facility, parking garage storage facility. So that's what we are moving towards is that Coral Gables Parking Authority and this is truly the first up-to-date Mobility Hub, and we are calling it a Mobility Hub because we are looking at future parking needs.

Vice Mayor Mena: Just to address really briefly, the retail component. I agree with everything that was just said. We've had many discussions over the years and if you'd like to see actual data, our Parking Director can certainly get you some of the studies and whatnot. From a retail perspective, we've been very conscientious of the struggles that Miracle Mile has had over the years, in terms of that. I think that's happening now regardless of whether there's a few additional retail stores in this particular location. I would say the idea behind having some retail here is less about a need for more retail and more about a) the aesthetic of the building when it's just a garage and there is nothing on the ground floor, it's not as nice of an aesthetic; and two, just to help make the building more of a placemaking structure where people can come there, there's an activation on the roof in addition to the retail on the bottom. So, the idea is not to have a ton of retail there, it's not going

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to be a shopping mall or anything like that. But there will be a handful of retail locations on the bottom, again, to really just to have a nicer building. I agree with you, we're cognizant of the fact of not bringing too much competition to bear on Miracle Mile, which already having some struggles, but we are seeing improvement in a lot of areas I would note and a lot of exciting things coming to Miracle Mile, I think that's important to note. We talked about that a little bit in terms of some approvals in other areas that are adjacent in the Crafts Section, for example, about trying to avoid having retail on the ground floor there, things of that nature. So, we are conscious of it. We do our best to manage it. I would just say that the retail here is not intended to be a retail destination, per say. It will have some retail in order for it to be a better building.

City Manager Iglesias: And those are very good comments, Vice Mayor, but in addition to that, this building is geared towards adaptability, so that bottom floor will serve for – we have the bottom retail space as completely adaptable. So, in the future we look to that as our micro mobility area. So, for now it may be retail, but in the future, it could easily convert to anything. So, we're looking at that potentially to be our bottom floor micro mobility as that gets moves forward in the next 10 to 20 years. There is an activation on the roof, the floors are flat and are designed for either office space or residential occupancy. So, we are using a speed ramp, we can remove the speed ramp, flatten the floor, and it's an easily convertible building.

Vice Mayor Mena: I just want to say something though, because I think that that last point while a fair point about the flexibility of the design and the adaptability for decades from now, it's designed as a parking garage, and he knows that, we know that, but it's been suggested that this is some sort of, like backdoor approach to have a development on this site instead of a parking garage. It's not what it is. It's a parking garage, excuse me, it's a mobility hub, but it's designed to park cars among other things, predominantly to park cars. What he's saying is, we are designing it in a way so that its adaptable, so that if what some prognosticators have suggested, we are living in what people kind of jokingly call the "Jetson's Age" in 20 years or whatever. Its adaptable. And so, that's all that is. Right now, for the foreseeable future, it's a mobility hub, aka significant parking. The last thing I would add is, we've actually, I think, gone below the number our Parking Director originally wanted for this parking space. I think he wanted 700 plus, at some point.

City Manager Iglesias: We're at 626.

Vice Mayor Mena: We've had a back and forth with him on how much we need and he's basing it on data, so I absolutely respect his opinion. I think it's a matter of trying to gauge how much we do or don't need and how much usage we'll get and when we get it, because when you are talking about the max occupancy for a building like this, you are not hitting that on a daily basis, not even close. It tends to be when you have Carnival on the Mile or whatever, special events, which is only occasionally.

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Mayor Lago: Don't forget we also have issues with permit parking, so there will be benefits for permit parking which hopefully would not be in this parking garage. It will be in the ancillary parking garage, which is outdated, where people are just leaving their cars the entire day. I apologize...

Vice Mayor Mena: We are going to talk about this more later, by the way, I'm not going to get into everything, but I want to at least address the specific points you made.

Mayor Lago: I want to answer just a few other points and I want to have Zeida come up here just to clarify one thing with the Manager. We've run analysis of Miracle Mile and our vacancy rate, and my understanding was that it was below ten percent, was it ten percent? – so that is very healthy, that is very healthy. I want to mention something that its very important to put this on the record. So, the other day I had a meeting, as a matter of fact in my open door, I had a meeting with a gentleman who owns multiple properties on Miracle Mile, and one of the conversations that we were talking about was bringing a restaurant to one of his establishments. And we brought staff, Suramy Cabrera was there, we rolled the red carpet out to make sure that we could do everything we possibly could to expedite his permits to make sure that we can open another business in Miracle Mile, he has multiple bays. So, I asked him a very simple question, which is a question this Commission has had for a long time, and that was, you are bringing in these businesses, why don't we fix up your exterior façade of your building. He looked at me kind of like with a puzzled face. I'll give you an example, Seasons 52, Starbucks, Hillstones, the Gramercy, Forte, why are those places doing so well? – how come they do so well? – and I can give you a bunch of other places. Why are those places really making a presence? We are doing everything we can as a city. We expanded the trolleys on Saturdays now. I'm going to talk about that in a little bit. We are seeing a thousand people riding the trolleys on Saturdays. We have the Freebie. We are having events; people are coming out; people want to enjoy a safe community, a beautiful community. So, one of the things I've realized is that, if people want to really harness the power of Miracle Mile, they need to do two things; number one, you need to invest your façade, change the glass, change the opening. You get one opportunity to make a first impression. Be inviting. Be present, because the numbers don't lie. We have under ten percent vacancy which, I'm not a commercial expert in regard to vacancies, but that's a good number, right, correct Zeida?

Ms. Sardinas: It is – and if you consider that still you have places that been leased, but they are in the middle of buildouts and things...

Commissioner Fors: Out of curiosity, is the vacancy rate based on square footage or per location?

Ms. Sardinas: So, Costar is the service that we use to do that, and they base everything on square footage. They give you the amount of square footage that is currently leased and what the cap rate and what is going to happen and so on and so forth. Yes, its based on square footage.

Mayor Lago: And again, we live in this great Republic where we can't dictate who goes into what bay, because people have property rights, correct, but we also have to be very thoughtful when we bring somebody into this community. If you have five Italian restaurants on a block you really don't want to put a sixth Italian restaurant. There are certain stores that you see them flipping over and over and over again. There is no TI, there is no beautification on the exterior of the building, and also, I would be remiss if I didn't also put a point of clarity out there. You also have for three or four years you had a certain landowner who owns a lot of property on the Mile, and intentionally blighted the Mile in an effort to try to strongarm the Commission to double the density, double the zoning and increase it in height significantly. That failed miserably. So now they are starting to rent these spaces, as you can see, trying to rent these spaces; and its not because of the city; the city we have locations. We are renting those to appropriate world class businesses that are looking to come to our community. I have another restaurant that's interested in coming that has two different establishments here in South Florida that Zeida is working on in regard to our Ortanique site. So, it's a mixed bag. It's a mixed bag where the owner of the property has to make the investment, we are working with the B.I.D. on that. We have to upgrade a lot of things that I think are important in regard to our Miracle Mile. I'm working with the B.I.D. in regard to our lighting package, its something I'm going to present to this Commission next year for our budget. We have to continue to invite people to our community, work with the Chamber, work with the B.I.D. hand-in-hand. We've got to clean up the downtown. I'll be talking about that now. Starting in December, staff will be rolling out a package to ensure that there are no weeds on the streets, that the sidewalks are clean and that we start fining people when your alleys are left a mess, when you are not inviting. Again, like I mentioned, its that first time to make that onetime impression, and we are going to do it. We are going to do it. Its going to be painful. Its going to be painful, I promise you, but we are going to get it done, because the way things are right now its unacceptable. The sidewalks being dirty, the gum.

Mr. Wynne: The stickers. I see a lot of stickers all over signage.

Mayor Lago: The bird feces everywhere, for example. These things have to be addressed and they will be addressed. So don't think that your comments go on deaf ears, they do, and this is a process. This is ever evolving what we are talking about in regard to the parking garage, but there has been a lot of studies, a lot of conversation in regard to retail strategy and how to address parking concerns and where are we headed in the future.

Commissioner Anderson: Just a couple of comments on retail strategy in particular. Because the last thing I want to do is compete with folks on the Mile, but this Mobility Hub can serve many different purposes in addition to just parking cars. If you are coming in from a section of the Gables and you want to use the trolley, you don't want to have to walk to the trolley pick-up place, you can park your car, you can walk a block, and you can get picked up and not have to deal with the hassle and the traffic and the parking to go downtown, if you have things there. I do it now. I love

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it, not having to deal with parking downtown and the back log of traffic. So, you'll have restrooms that you can use, maybe some grab and go stuff that oh, geese, I didn't grab a snack and I've got to be downtown, I'm going to take a bar with me or something so I can have some food or drink on the road. So, we are being conscious about that and want to assure you that we don't want to detract from the Mile at all, we want to enhance. We need restrooms. You don't have any centralized restrooms anywhere where people can go, it would be handy for folks. Thank you for coming.

Mr. Wynne: No, no. I was going to say thank you again for the forum. This is my first time coming to a meeting like this. And again, its true that we have the right data and then also to futureproofing, you know what we're doing in terms of investments. So, thank you again everyone.

Commissioner Fors: And there is also a final point, a fine line between competition and synergy. Sometimes additional meeting places nearby others actually brings more traffic to that area. Thank you for joining us. Zeida, if you could e-mail us later. I'll be curious to know, not urgent, but as we are always having this discussion as we know, you can e-mail us, I'd be curious to know the per location vacancy rate on Miracle Mile.

Ms. Sardinas: Per location.

Commissioner Fors: Per locale.

Ms. Sardinas: Like each particular locale?

Commissioner Fors: Exactly.

Ms. Sardinas: Okay. Let me see if there is a way to access that in Costar. They have a lot of data, but I've never done it that way, but I will try.

Commissioner Fors: I'm assuming its because its not that generally accepted way of evaluating the place.

Ms. Sardinas: Right.

Commissioner Fors: I wonder if one space vacant which is a very large space, maybe skewers that number in one direction or another.

Ms. Sardinas: There are a lot of things that affect that and there really is no explanation behind how the market behaves, but yes, there are a lot, and we have a lot of conversations. The Manager has had a lot of meetings in our department with respect to all of this with our retail consultant about what we need to do in that space and what needed to happen there for retail. So, we are considering it carefully, we've talked about a lot of things going on, on that first floor to make sure that they are successful, as well as a space upstairs.

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Mayor Lago: If I could answer really quickly and then I just thought about this right now. So, you have Copper 29, you have a restaurant completely remodeled, they are doing exceptionally well. Let's go to Giralda, let's jump to Giralda. So, you jump to Giralda, right now you have multiple restaurants like Coyo Taco, you have the Italian restaurant, brand new construction. You have a rooftop terrace, a rooftop terrace that if you haven't been to, you really got to go. Its first class, really classy joint. How come they are doing so well? Why are we seeing these brand-new rollouts very inviting, the opportunity for people to step in, engage, enjoy something nice, family-friendly, why are they doing so well? – because they've invested the money. They've brought really international and national tenants. We've got to make that investment as a community. So, I think it starts with the city, by the way, if you stay for a few moments, you'll hear the Mayor's Comments, D-1, its an update regarding cleanup efforts in the downtown business district. We are going to do our part. We are going to do our part offering great parking, offering cleaned up streets, transportation. I'm going to talk a little bit about transportation, how it's been working since the last month that we implemented the trolley, and I think its an opportunity, after we hear the rest of the residents speak. I welcome you to stay.

Vice Mayor Mena: The last thing I would say is, there was a lot of discussion positive criticism about the zoning code rewrite that we had last year and specifically as it relates to Miracle Mile. People can agree or disagree on whether you put certain development rights here or there, but one of the underpinnings of that was to have new quality spaces on Miracle Mile, which I think is part of the point that the Mayor is trying to make which is, when people invest in and have a new space or a new store or restaurant, etc., it tends to have more success and bring more people to the store; and lastly too, to Commissioner Fors point, Zeida, it would be great to have actually a regular, if we could get a regular periodic report.

Ms. Sardinas: On vacancy?

Vice Mayor Mena: On vacancy from a square footage perspective, from a location perspective. I don't know if you have an actual like map that shows you filled and that are vacant or whatever.

Ms. Sardinas: So, Costar allows for you to cordon off a certain area, so we run numbers for the CBD, we run numbers for Miracle Mile, and then we run citywide numbers.

Vice Mayor Mena: And if that shows that there is already something in the pipeline, right.

Ms. Sardinas: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: I don't want to see that as vacant, right, I want to see what's truly sort of vacant with nothing in the pipeline.

Ms. Sardinas: It gives you a present vacancy, it gives you under construction.

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Vice Mayor Mena: Perfect. That would be a good thing for us.

Ms. Sardinas: That's easy enough.

Commissioner Fors: So, vacancy is – if something goes under lease that nobody is in there yet, it doesn't show up as a vacancy.

Ms. Sardinas: The way that that system works, they do everything, they verify everything by phone, so it depends when it hits, but they manage it very well. The system is really the best there is out there for that. I pull the numbers anyway; we pull them in the department.

City Manager Iglesias: Vice Mayor, you are looking at maybe a quarterly report on vacancy?

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes, whatever you think is monthly, quarterly.

Commissioner Fors: However, you routinely to it. If you do it often enough.

Vice Mayor Mena: We don't need it on the agenda in our meetings, just e-mail it to us and then that way if one of us wants to discuss something we have that information.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker is Mr. David Renshaw.

Mr. Renshaw: Good morning. Can you hear me?

Mayor Lago: Yes sir.

Mr. Renshaw: Thank you. Good morning, Commissioner, Vice Mayor, Mayor and I appreciate you folks hosting this open public forum. I just wanted to quickly comment on E-5, in reference to the self-loader. I am glad that you brought this to the attention. We have been aware of this for quite some time, and we have worked due diligently with the city and I commend the employees and rank and file to work due diligently through these very trying times. And as you can see now with efforts on all sides and it's been stated by residents that trash is being picked up, its being picked up timely. Overtime has been drastically reduced and I will always offer this that any time new equipment wants to be entertained for the betterment of the beautiful City of Coral Gables, then kindly advise the folks that do the job on a daily basis and just wanted to put that out there, but I do appreciate the fact that you folks have recognized this, and there is no perfect system, but I'm glad we were able to get to where we're at now versus continuing to make this a worse situation. So, thank you for the opportunity.

Mayor Lago: Thank you sir. Next one.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, the last speaker, I don't have a name, its someone who dialed in.

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Ms. Carbonell: Hi, this is Karelia. Good morning, everyone. Can you all hear me? Hello?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes ma'am, we can hear you.

Mayor Lago: The floor is yours.

Ms. Carbonell: Can you hear me? Okay. I just want to – I am very heartened to hear that Miracle Mile is thriving. It seems like there is really nice activity and it really does give me a nice feeling, but I do want – I hear the Mayor talking about Miracle Mile. I know he is very much very positive on growing it in terms of retail, but I'd love to hear, I wish that the city refers to Miracle Mile as a historic district, as a heritage site. I know that businesses, there is the business side of it, but I think that's an economic asset and I don't hear the city talking about that and I don't hear the Mayor or anyone else referring to Miracle Mile as one of the really key areas of our city. And it's showing now, I think people are starting to once again appreciate it, but I think there is that opportunity to really, really focus on that heritage.

Mayor Lago: Sorry, I didn't know if you were done or not.

Ms. Carbonell: Go ahead.

Mayor Lago: Can you hear me. I'm sorry, it was my fault. You broke up, I thought you had finished already. I apologize. I don't want to interrupt you.

Ms. Carbonell: No Mayor, that's fine. That was my point. My point is that again, I think Miracle Mile is our asset and I am heartened to hear that there is activity now. I love that and I love to hear that. But I think moving forward, I think the city needs to embrace its historic heritage and really add that economic asset to whatever it is that the city is trying to bring people in. Those are my comments, but please yes.

Mayor Lago: So, if I may respond in regard to Miracle Mile. I was pretty vocal in ensuring that Miracle Mile did not go to nine stories. I don't know how much more of a position I could have taken to ensure that, to the extent that we had one business owner basically run an entire campaign against me brutalizing my reputation on social media, on print and on TV, calling me a racist, because of my opinions and views in regard to Miracle Mile, that's number one. So, I took it pretty much on the chin to make sure that Miracle Mile was not taken to nine floors, and everybody knows who I'm talking about, he's the largest landowner on Miracle Mile, that's number one. Number two, I worked tirelessly over the last three years as the TPO member on behalf of this Commission to get funding to ensure that we can expand the trolley. The trolley started last month, and I have some numbers here that I'm going to share now in my Mayor's comments, where we've gone from 500 or so, 543 riders on the inaugural weekend to over 960 riders this weekend. We've expanded the Farmers Market to now have a Farmers Market in North Gables which is again, a great link and people are going to the Farmers Market, and they are coming to visit our downtown,
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to visit our restaurants and have ice cream and maybe stay after to watch a football game or just to enjoy time with their family at one of our beautiful parks. When you talk about investments in our downtown, we are trying, we are now going to be presenting this exceptional new parking garage which will offer people like Commissioner Anderson said, a direct shot to Miracle Mile in a safe, pleasant experience. Right now, our parking garages are not safe, and they are not pleasant. I would not recommend anybody who is elderly, or anybody who is disabled to park in those parking garages, and I know I'm going against the city's will, and I apologize, but its not that they are not ADA compliant, its that we have issues and I want to provide the best, the best parking options and opportunities, lit, quality parking, elevators. I wanted to make it such a pleasant experience that you want to come back. Starting December 1st, we are starting a campaign that this Commission has been lockstep in supporting me in cleaning up our downtown, to ensuring that all the businesses clean up their front yards, that we make sure that we de-weed the front and back of house, and that we make sure that we're putting our best foot forward in regard to Miracle Mile and our downtown. We have been working with Aura at the B.I.D., along with Mark at the Chamber to make sure that we have a cohesive strategy pushing forward what we want to see in our downtown, because again, 27 percent of our tax base comes from our downtown. So, what I want to see is that increase. How are we going to have that increase, by making sure our streets are safe, that they are welcoming, that we are beautiful and that businesses are thriving. So, if you have any ideas on how – oh, we spent \$25 million dollars on streetscape a few years ago, but if you have any ideas on how we can make Miracle Mile. This is what I told the gentleman that I met with who owns, I think five or six bays and Suramy Cabrera was there with me in the meeting, along with Chelsea. I said, give me ideas on how I can make Miracle Mile better. I asked him twelve times in the meeting. He was not able to give me one. I do have ways that the businesses can make Miracle Mile better, because I believe in property rights, and I believe in rolling the red carpet out and making sure that we cut the red tape. You can call me, and I'll run your permits personally with Suramy. I will run them personally to the third floor, and I will call you and address them personally to make sure that we expedite your opening. Number two, you can have landowners and property owners on Miracle Mile fix your storefronts. In this case, this gentleman had not fixed his storefront in 35 years. Think about that. How often are we working on ourselves? How many of us here go to the gym, get haircuts, brush our teeth, look up to make sure that we can do everything, buy a new suit, buy a new dress. We are always working on our appearance, right, because its our first step forward. When you are not working on your appearance on Miracle Mile, I'm sorry, I can't fix that problem for you. If you want to achieve the highest rents, if you want to ask for certain rents, you've got to put forth a better-quality product; and its evidently clear in the projects that are succeeding on Giralda and on Miracle Mile that they put their best foot forward. And I can see Zeida shaking her head, because obviously that's what you need to be successful, and it's a very tough pill to swallow when somebody tells you that.

Ms. Carbonell: May I.

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Mayor Lago: I just want to say one last thing. And you've also got to realize too as a landowner on Miracle Mile that I would not compromise my values, because one developer is trying to strongarm me in an effort to have a nine-story building put in the corner of Miracle Mile – Miracle Mile and Ponce. I never will. I never will and I don't care what you call me or what mail you run against me or what commercials you run against me. I will continue to vote what I think is in the best interest of this community to ensure, to ensure and we already forgot, I think its important, that we preserve the historic nature of Miracle Mile.

Ms. Carbonell: Oh, I love that. Okay. You said what I wanted to hear. You see, you said what I wanted to hear, and that's really all I'm suggesting.

Mayor Lago: I didn't say what you wanted to hear. I did what you wanted to hear three years ago when I battled on this Commission floor as Vice Mayor, to ensure that we didn't have a nine story building on the corner of Miracle Mile and Ponce, which was a super modern structure, which had no parking, and they wanted to use the alley and they wanted to use the alley, would be the first time in my history that I've seen where the alley which belongs to you, the residents and the business community, get used for the benefit of one business. That's what I battled against on this Commission.

Ms. Carbonell: And Mayor with all due respect, I totally agree, and that's why my comments said, I am happy to hear that Miracle Mile has turned a page. The Commission and you did make that happen, you all rallied to the fact that Miracle Mile is important and that we do have a heritage to protect. What you just said now, you know that we are going to protect the historic integrity of Miracle Mile and use that as a heritage as an asset and I think, you know again, I'd love to hear that the city is using those types of words when you refer to Miracle Mile and we refer to Miracle Mile. I thank you. I'm happy that Miracle Mile has those statistics and I understand that there was a lot of support from your end and from many people. So, thank you.

Vice Mayor Mena: Karelia, I agree with everything the Mayor just said and a lot of what you said. I want to be careful about what he's not saying, which is, I don't think he's saying to be clear, because I know it will come up in the future that every building on Miracle Mile is historic.

Mayor Lago: Exactly.

Vice Mayor Mena: Because its not. They are spectacularly historic, beautiful buildings like the Colonnade on Miracle Mile.

Mayor Lago: The Fink Studio right off Miracle Mile.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes, absolutely. But every little building is not historic in nature and so, while I appreciate that we want to preserve the historic integrity of Miracle Mile and I agree with that, I think that's why it has really its own zoning overlay, because otherwise it would be the heart of

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the CBD with 150-foot buildings. So the fact that it has that, the fact that its treated very uniquely, frankly, and you started out your comments today saying that that was somewhat likely, and I think that's just not consistent with some of the facts, which is that it has been treated very uniquely because of its importance to the city, its historic characteristics, we invested in it, we continue to protect the scale of anything that goes there. Again, people can agree or disagree whether something should be three stories, or four stories, that's fine. We can have disagreements on that, but we all agree that it shouldn't be 150-foot core of the CBD with parking pedestals. We did away with all that specifically to protect the heritage of the street, and so, as we move forward there's inevitably going to be proposals on different particular buildings. Some of them may have historic characteristics, some of them may not. The fact that the building is located on Miracle Mile alone will not dictate that it be treated as a historic building. I just want to make sure that's clear, because we've had discussions in the past and I know you are very passionate about historic preservation and we all appreciate what you do and your position on things, but I wanted to be clear about that.

Ms. Carbonell: Mr. Vice Mayor when I say historic Miracle Mile, I'm talking about the commercial district, just the four blocks, and that is a historic, that's part of Merrick's original plan. So, Miracle Mile, like you said, there is that overlay, so not all buildings are historic, but there is a historic overlay to it. So, when I say historic Miracle Mile, I'm not saying that all buildings are historic, but there is a nice number and of course the four blocks are important to preserve.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Ms. Carbonell: That's what I mean.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. We appreciate your guidance. Thank you. Mr. Clerk can we close the public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: That's it sir.

Mayor Lago: Close the public comment.