

CITY OF CORAL GABLES
LOCAL PLANNING AGENCY (LPA)
PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD MEETING
VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT
VIA ZOOM TELECONFERENCE
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12, 2020, COMMENCING AT 4:04 P.M.

Board Members Present:
Eibi Aizenstat, Chairman
Robert Behar
Rhonda A. Anderson
Venny Torre
Wayne "Chip" Withers
Rene Murai
Maria Velez

City Staff and Consultants:
Ramon Trias, Planning Director
Craig Collier, Special Counsel
Jill Menendez, Administrative Assistant, Board Secretary
Jennifer Garcia, City Planner
Ana Restrepo, Principal Planner
Arceci Redila, Principal Planner

ALSO PARTICIPATING:
Mario Garcia-Serra, Esq., On behalf of Items E-1 - E4
Eduardo Vera, Architect
Hector de los Reyes
Matthew Martinez

1 THEREUPON:

2 (The following proceedings were held.)

3 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Good afternoon.
4 Welcome, everybody.

5 This Board is comprised of seven members.
6 Four Members of the Board shall constitute a
7 quorum and the affirmative vote of four Members
8 of the Board present shall be necessary for the
9 adoption of any motion. A tie vote shall
10 result in the automatic continuance of the
11 matter to the next meeting, which shall be
12 continued until a majority vote is achieved.

13 If only four Members of the Board are present,
14 an applicant shall be entitled to a
15 postponement to the next regularly scheduled
16 Board Meeting.

17 Lobbyist Registration and Disclosure. Any
18 person who acts as a lobbyist pursuant to the
19 City of Coral Gables Ordinance Number 2006-11
20 must register with the City Clerk prior to
21 engaging in lobbying activities or
22 presentations before City Staff, Boards,
23 Committees and/or City Commission. A copy of
24 the Ordinance is available in the Office of the
25 City Clerk. Failure to register and provide

1 proof of registration shall prohibit your
2 ability to present to the Board.
3 I now officially call the City of Coral
4 Gables Planning and Zoning Board Virtual
5 Meeting of August 12th, 2020 to order. Due to
6 COVID-19, Zoom platform is being used, along
7 with a dedicated phone line. The time is 4:04
8 p.m.

9 Jill, will you please call the roll?
10 THE SECRETARY: Rhonda Anderson?
11 MS. ANDERSON: Here.
12 THE SECRETARY: Robert Behar?
13 MR. BEHAR: Here.
14 THE SECRETARY: Rene Murai?
15 Venny Torre?
16 MR. TORRE: Here.
17 THE SECRETARY: Maria Velez?
18 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Maria, if you can
19 unmute yourself, please.
20 THE SECRETARY: Maria Velez?
21 MS. VELEZ: Yes. Here.
22 THE SECRETARY: Chip Withers?
23 MR. WITHERS: Here.
24 THE SECRETARY: Eibi Aizenstat?
25 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Here.

1 Notice of Ex Parte Communications. Please
2 be advised that the Board is a quasi-judicial
3 Board, which requires Board Members to disclose
4 all ex parte communications and site visits.
5 An ex parte communication is defined as any
6 contact, communication, conversation,
7 correspondence, memorandum or other written or
8 verbal communication that takes place outside a
9 public hearing between a member of the public
10 and a member of the quasi-judicial Board
11 regarding matters to be heard by the Board.

12 If anyone made any contacts with a Board
13 Member regarding an issue before the Board, the
14 Board Member must state, on the record, the
15 existence of the ex parte communication and the
16 party who originated the communication. Also,
17 if a Board Member conducted a site visit
18 specifically related to the case before the
19 Board, the Board Member must also disclose such
20 visit.

21 In either case, the Board Member must
22 state, on the record, whether the ex parte
23 communication and/or site visit will affect the
24 Board Member's ability to impartially consider
25 the evidence to be presented regarding the

1 matter. The Board Member shall also state that
2 his or her decision will be based on
3 substantial competent evidence and testimony
4 presented on the record today.

5 Does any Member of the Board have such a
6 communication and/or site visit to disclose at
7 this time?

8 MR. BEHAR: Mr. Chairman, I am involved in
9 Items E-1 through E-4, so, probably, at this
10 point, it's good if I recuse myself from the
11 meeting. Item E-5 is one that I could
12 participate for. So I don't know how we want
13 to address that. Maybe this is the time to do
14 so.

15 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Well, since we're
16 having a Zoom meeting and we're starting at
17 four o'clock, unless there's a Board Member
18 that sees otherwise, I don't know if we have
19 any -- Jill, are there any participants that
20 are going to be speaking on Items 1 through 4?

21 THE SECRETARY: I haven't received any
22 request to speak, unless you want to make an
23 announcement. If they want to speak, they
24 could send me a direct message through the
25 chat.

1 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: I will. I will.
2 Robert, would you be opposed, I think, if
3 we just put you on mute and I don't know what
4 the City wants to do about you being on
5 visually, and then we come back to E-5?

6 MR. BEHAR: No. I mean, I don't have a
7 problem. I'll leave my computer. No, I'll
8 turn it off -- I'll have my video off, if it
9 needs to be.

10 MR. COLLER: Yeah. I think,
11 Mr. Chairman --

12 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Yes, sir.

13 MR. COLLER: -- I was advised -- he stated
14 his conflict, and he needs to absent himself
15 from the room, the virtual room. So the other
16 alternative is to --

17 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: To move E-5 forward?

18 MR. COLLER: To move E-5 forward, which
19 might make more sense.

20 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Agreed.

21 MR. COLLER: Get that out of the way --
22 Ramon, unless you have some concerns about
23 handling that item first --

24 MR. TRIAS: Mr. Chairman, I recommend that
25 we move it to the first item.

1 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: That's fine with me.
2 Does any Board Member have an objection?

3 MS. ANDERSON: No.

4 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: No? Having no
5 objection -- first, I'd like to point out that
6 Rene is with us.

7 Rene, you can unmute the microphone
8 yourself, if you go to the bottom -- there you
9 go.

10 Jill, you made a note that Rene is with us?

11 MR. MURAI: I had a little trouble getting
12 into it, but I'm in now.

13 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Not a problem.

14 Let me continue with my statements.

15 For Zoom platform participants, I will ask
16 any persons wishing to speak or testify on
17 specific agenda items to please open your chat
18 and send a direct message to Jill Menendez,
19 stating the agenda item you would like to speak
20 about and include your full name. We're going
21 to call you, when it's your turn. Depending on
22 the number of speakers, I ask you to limit your
23 remarks, please, to three minutes.

24 People that are on the phone platform
25 participants, after the Zoom platform

1 participants are done, I will ask phone
2 participants to comment on the agenda item. I
3 will also ask you to limit the remarks to three
4 minutes, and you can notify us that you would
5 like to speak by pressing *9. Once again, it's
6 *9 for phone participants.

7 Jill, you went ahead and stated that you
8 had received one e-comment?

9 THE SECRETARY: Yeah.

10 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Why don't you go --
11 Mr. Coller, is it appropriate if she reads it
12 now, even though we're taking E-5 first?

13 MR. COLLER: The comment is not regarding
14 E-5, another application, right?

15 MR. TRIAS: It's regarding the other
16 application, sir.

17 MR. COLLER: Okay. So why don't we hold
18 off on that.

19 Also, how many members are we at, at this
20 point? Are we at seven?

21 THE SECRETARY: Yes, the Board is here, the
22 entire Board.

23 MR. COLLER: Okay. So, Mr. Chairman, one
24 slight modification from your remarks, and I
25 know -- I think you were using your remarks and

1 you actually had modified them, and I know
 2 you're not at your home, but with a tie vote,
 3 it doesn't automatically go to the next
 4 meeting. That's what it used to be. It goes
 5 without a recommendation. However, there's an
 6 opportunity for the applicant to request a
 7 continuance to the next meeting to try to get a
 8 recommendation. So it's just a minor
 9 amendment. I only mention it now, because
 10 we're going to be shortly at an even number of
 11 members. So just a minor –
 12 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Thank you very much.
 13 MR. COLLER: – comment on your
 14 introductory remarks.
 15 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Thank you.
 16 MR. COLLER: And, also, since this is not a
 17 quasi-judicial item, Item E-5 is a legislative
 18 item, we don't have to be concerned about
 19 swearing in witnesses for this particular item.
 20 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Understood.
 21 Understood. Thank you.
 22 What I'd like to do first thing is the
 23 approval of the minutes. Do I have a motion?
 24 Has everybody had a chance to read the minutes?
 25 MR. BEHAR: I make a motion for approval.

1 have brief questions or discussion by the
 2 Board, and then I'll go ahead and open it to
 3 the public for comment.
 4 Once again, first I'll open it to Zoom
 5 participants. I ask you to please send a chat
 6 to Jill with your name and the item you want
 7 to speak about. And then the phone line platform,
 8 and, again, it's *9, if you would like to
 9 comment.
 10 We will also go ahead and read any
 11 e-comments or e-mail into the record, and we'll
 12 go ahead and close the public comment for Board
 13 discussion. Then we'll have a motion, any
 14 discussion further with the Board, and if we
 15 have a second, and a motion, if so, we'll take
 16 a vote.
 17 Mr. Coller, if you'd please read the first
 18 item into the record.
 19 MR. COLLER: Sure.
 20 Mr. Chairman, for the record, Craig Coller,
 21 Special Land Use Counsel for the City of Coral
 22 Gables.
 23 Item E-5, an Ordinance of the City
 24 Commission of Coral Gables, Florida granting
 25 approval of proposed amendments to the text and

1 MS. ANDERSON: Second.
 2 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: We have a motion. We
 3 have a second by Rhonda.
 4 Any comments? No?
 5 Having heard none, call the roll, please.
 6 THE SECRETARY: Robert Behar?
 7 MR. BEHAR: Yes.
 8 THE SECRETARY: Rene Murali?
 9 MR. MURALI: Yes.
 10 THE SECRETARY: Venny Torre?
 11 MR. TORRE: Yes.
 12 THE SECRETARY: Maria Velez?
 13 MS. VELEZ: Yes.
 14 THE SECRETARY: Chip Withers?
 15 MR. WITHERS: Yes.
 16 THE SECRETARY: Rhonda Anderson?
 17 MS. ANDERSON: Yes.
 18 THE SECRETARY: Eibi Aizenstat?
 19 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Yes.
 20 A little bit about the procedure tonight
 21 before we begin, please. The identification of
 22 an item will be read by Mr. Coller. The
 23 presentation will then be made by Staff. Then
 24 we will have, on Item E-1 through Item E-4, the
 25 presentation will be made by Applicant. We'll

1 Future Land Use Map of the City of Coral Gables
 2 Comprehensive Plan, pursuant to expedited state
 3 review procedures Section 163.3184, Florida
 4 Statutes, and Zoning Code Article 3, Division
 5 15 (Proposed reorganization ordinance: Article
 6 14, "Process," Section 14-213), "Comprehensive
 7 Plan and Text Amendments;" to clarify density
 8 and height in certain land use classifications
 9 in the Future Land Use Element, and to change
 10 the name of the "Mixed Use Overlay District" in
 11 the Future Land Use Map to the
 12 "Design/Industrial District," and adjust the
 13 boundary of such district, providing for a
 14 repealer provision, providing for a
 15 severability clause, and providing for an
 16 effective date.
 17 Item E-5, public hearing.
 18 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Thank you very much.
 19 Mr. Trias, would you like to start?
 20 MR. TRIAS: Yes, sir.
 21 May I have the PowerPoint, please?
 22 We're all familiar with the Industrial
 23 District or the area that historically has been
 24 called the Industrial District, and this is the
 25 plan that originally Merrick was able to file

1 back in the '20s, and it has changed a lot.
 2 And through the years, we have had some
 3 discussions about changing the focus of the
 4 area, and I think that Mr. Torre, for example,
 5 at some point, suggested calling it the Design
 6 District.
 7 So I think that now that we're going
 8 through all of these updates of the Zoning
 9 Code, we think it's a good idea to also make
 10 some minor changes to the Map and the name of
 11 the area, and then also correct some things
 12 that are already in the Zoning Code, and that
 13 probably should be in the Comp Plan in the same
 14 exact way, so there's no confusion.
 15 So that is what we're doing tonight. We're
 16 making some changes to the Comp Plan. The only
 17 change of substance is the name. The other
 18 changes are simply cleanup, for consistency
 19 with some other regulations that we have in the
 20 Zoning Code.
 21 Next, please.
 22 The area, as you can see, is no longer
 23 industrial, and I think it should be best
 24 described as a Mixed-Use District.
 25 Next.

1 You can see many, many projects have been
 2 built there recently. In fact, one of the
 3 projects the we are -- the only project that
 4 we're dealing with tonight is also in this
 5 area, in this area that we are dealing with.
 6 Next.
 7 The Zoning and the Land Use are going to
 8 probably change as a result of the update to
 9 Mixed-Use, but right now they are Commercial
 10 and Industrial.
 11 Next.
 12 And what we are suggesting is an amendment
 13 to the Map and also some minor Text Amendments
 14 to the Comprehensive Plan.
 15 Next.
 16 So the Map basically changes the name.
 17 Next.
 18 And we call this area, Design and
 19 Innovation District. That's the final name
 20 that we finally decided that probably expresses
 21 the idea.
 22 Next.
 23 And the Text Amendment will create the
 24 District, with some objectives and some
 25 policies, and, like I said, correct the height

1 to 120 feet, and also allow the 125 units per
 2 acre which is currently the regulations that we
 3 have in place. We're simply making everything
 4 consistent.
 5 Next.
 6 And the policy, as you can see, is a very
 7 simple policy. It simply creates the
 8 opportunity to have some Zoning regulations.
 9 Next.
 10 But, more importantly, some economic
 11 development strategies that will promote the
 12 retail activities, such as galleries and design
 13 uses, and some other innovative uses, such as
 14 financial services, biomedical, pharmaceutical,
 15 the kind of things that economic development
 16 strategies could really help with, particularly
 17 at the ground level, which is focused on the
 18 pedestrian quality and Mixed-Use compatibility
 19 with the rest of the District.
 20 In addition, we may have some design
 21 standards for signs and so on, and some
 22 branding strategies that try to promote the
 23 overall idea for the area.
 24 Next, please.
 25 We have sent letters to the property

1 owners. We've also posted the request on the
 2 website, and we also have had newspaper
 3 advertisement.
 4 Next.
 5 And Staff recommends approval to the
 6 amendment to the Map and also the Text
 7 Amendments, as they do follow the standards of
 8 review in the Comprehensive Plan.
 9 And that's the end of my presentation, and
 10 if you have any questions, I'll be happy to
 11 answer them.
 12 MR. BEHAR: Mr. Chairman, can we start
 13 or -- you're muted.
 14 MS. ANDERSON: You're muted.
 15 MR. BEHAR: Okay. There we go. Sorry, I
 16 was not able to unmute myself.
 17 THE SECRETARY: Excuse me.
 18 We're allowed to have ten hosts and I think
 19 someone is on two devices; therefore, I cannot
 20 make the Chair cohost.
 21 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Has anybody signed in
 22 from the Board on their phone and their iPad or
 23 maybe their computer and their iPad?
 24 MR. MURAI: Possibly.
 25 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Is it possible to take

1 one off?
 2 MR. MURAI: If I could find out whether --
 3 THE SECRETARY: Mr. Murai, you're on your
 4 iPad right now. Can I disconnect your other
 5 one?
 6 MR. MURAI: I am in another one?
 7 THE SECRETARY: Yes. You have two
 8 connections.
 9 MR. MURAI: I think somebody is hacking me.
 10 I'm being hacked.
 11 MR. BEHAR: So long you don't get on the
 12 bicycle yet.
 13 MR. MURAI: Okay. Agreed.
 14 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Let's continue.
 15 Robert, you wanted to say something?
 16 MR. BEHAR: Do we need to open it up to the
 17 public before we speak or --
 18 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: That's what I was
 19 going to go ahead and do --
 20 MR. BEHAR: Okay. Go ahead. Then I'll
 21 wait for that.
 22 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: -- because it's a
 23 straight-forward item.
 24 Jill, do you have any members of the public
 25 that have contacted you that would like to

1 speak on this item?
 2 THE SECRETARY: No. No. No one.
 3 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Okay. Nobody on the
 4 phone platform, either?
 5 THE SECRETARY: None.
 6 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Okay. At this time,
 7 I'm going to go ahead and close this item for
 8 public comment.
 9 Board discussion. Robert.
 10 MR. BEHAR: Yes.
 11 MS. ANDERSON: Did you say, Robert or
 12 Rhonda?
 13 MR. BEHAR: Go for it.
 14 MR. MURAI: It could be Rene, too.
 15 MR. BEHAR: You guys go first.
 16 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Okay. Rene, why don't
 17 you start?
 18 MR. MURAI: Okay. If I understand what
 19 we're doing, we're changing the name of the
 20 district and changing text, without substance,
 21 just to conform to existing regulations or
 22 Ordinances?
 23 MR. TRIAS: Yes. And the only additional
 24 thing is that we do have a category now called
 25 the Design District in the Comp Plan, that may

1 be developed further in the future, with
 2 economic development strategies and those kinds
 3 of things.
 4 MR. MURAI: Okay. I still don't understand
 5 your response to my question. We're changing
 6 the name of this district, and we're conforming
 7 some -- I guess, the regulations in this
 8 District, to existing regulations? We're not
 9 changing anything?
 10 MR. TRIAS: We're not changing anything
 11 that regulates development. We're not changing
 12 height. We're not changing density. We're not
 13 changing those things. Even though they're
 14 included in the item, they are the same as the
 15 regulations we have in the Zoning Code.
 16 MR. MURAI: But you said, we're not
 17 changing development. What is it that we're
 18 changing?
 19 MR. TRIAS: The name of the district.
 20 MR. MURAI: I understand that.
 21 MR. TRIAS: And possibly, possibly, the
 22 emphasis on the economic strategies in the
 23 future, but, you know, that's just opening up
 24 those opportunities. That's all we're doing.
 25 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Rhonda, would you --

1 Rene, I'm sorry, are you done? Was your
 2 question answered?
 3 MR. MURAI: You know, sort of. I guess so.
 4 Maybe. I don't know.
 5 MR. TRIAS: If I can explain it better, I
 6 will, but really there's nothing more of any
 7 substance that I can speak of. We're creating
 8 the district. We're changing the emphasis, but
 9 we're not changing any of the development
 10 standards. The same uses apply. The same
 11 Zoning regulations apply, et cetera.
 12 MR. MURAI: Okay.
 13 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Thank you.
 14 Rhonda.
 15 MS. ANDERSON: Ramon, the only comment I
 16 have, and it really dovetails in with 250 Bird
 17 that we're going to consider next, the maximum
 18 height of buildings in this area as originally
 19 passed by or designed by Merrick in the
 20 beginning was what height?
 21 MR. TRIAS: I don't know what Merrick's
 22 original proposal was. I don't know.
 23 MS. ANDERSON: And the existing Zoning Code
 24 right now --
 25 MR. TRIAS: I mean, what I know is that

1 ever since I've been working with the City,
 2 it's been 100 feet. And then it changed to
 3 120. So those changes were made some time ago,
 4 years ago -- some years ago, and it is better
 5 if that is reflected in the same exact way in
 6 the Comp Plan.
 7 MS. ANDERSON: Okay. I have no other
 8 questions on this item.
 9 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Thank you.
 10 MS. VELEZ: I have a question.
 11 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Yes, go ahead.
 12 MS. VELEZ: So, right now, the way it is,
 13 we have 120 feet maximum and in the Low-Rise
 14 and Mid-Rise, we have a limitation of ten
 15 floors, but then -- in the Design District.
 16 MR. TRIAS: Yes, but the edge of the Design
 17 District, along Bird Road, et cetera, there's a
 18 further limitation of the 45 feet. So there's
 19 a couple of limitations already in place.
 20 We're not changing any of that.
 21 MS. VELEZ: I don't understand the
 22 difference between, for instance, in Commercial
 23 Mid-Rise, we have up to 70 feet maximum with no
 24 limitations on floors. So I guess that should
 25 be stories now with the new language that we're

1 using.
 2 MR. TRIAS: Yes. Yes.
 3 MS. VELEZ: That's up to 70 feet maximum
 4 with no limitation on stories or up to 97 with
 5 a maximum of two additional. But, then, if
 6 it's developed pursuant to the Design
 7 Industrial District regulations, there is a
 8 limitation of ten floors.
 9 So if the project that we're going to be
 10 discussing later would have come up under this,
 11 they still would have to come in with a PAD
 12 application?
 13 MR. TRIAS: Yes.
 14 MS. VELEZ: Okay. And why is there no
 15 limitation on the number of stories on
 16 Commercial Mid-Rise up to 70 feet, but if
 17 developed within the Design District, there's a
 18 limitation of ten stories?
 19 MR. TRIAS: Yeah, when the Commission
 20 allows or approves the 120 feet, the Commission
 21 chose to limit that to ten feet -- ten stories
 22 at the time.
 23 MS. VELEZ: That's the way it exists now?
 24 MR. TRIAS: Yeah, that's the way it exists
 25 now.

1 MS. VELEZ: Okay. Thank you.
 2 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Venny.
 3 MR. TORRE: Okay. I support this item. I
 4 spoke about it earlier. I have been supporting
 5 this from a long time. If you think about this
 6 district, which is anchored on one side from
 7 Merrick Park Village, the other by The
 8 Collection, Ferguson's, the Stein -- the piano
 9 place, this is really already a destination for
 10 retailers. There's a lot more opportunities on
 11 Ponce for the smaller retailers to come in and
 12 put their standalone buildings. This kind of
 13 takes it over towards this -- to the west, but
 14 it's primarily meant to be, like Mr. Trias
 15 said, an economic driver for the ground floor
 16 retailers, and to have an area that we can call
 17 and define as our Design District, as far as I
 18 can tell.
 19 So I support it under that premise, and I
 20 don't think what happens above is in play here,
 21 so I'm for this item.
 22 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Okay. Thank you.
 23 Robert.
 24 MR. BEHAR: I mean, I was a little bit also
 25 confused, because it was just a name, but

1 there's a lot of changes that have gone on in
 2 this area. I look out my window and I see that
 3 there was a project approved, which is the
 4 Gables Station project -- Ramon, maybe you
 5 could give us a little more insight. That was
 6 either 160 height -- because this whole area
 7 has changed, evolved, over the years
 8 tremendously.
 9 MR. TRIAS: Yeah, Mr. Chairman.
 10 I assume you're in your office looking
 11 across the street. So it is Gables Station,
 12 yes. Is that where you are?
 13 MR. BEHAR: Yeah.
 14 MR. TRIAS: Okay. So, yeah -- no, that was
 15 approved by the Commission under the Mixed-Use
 16 Land Use, with some specific limits on the
 17 height. So I don't remember exactly, but it
 18 was about 160, as opposed to 190, for example,
 19 which would have been had it been changed the
 20 Land Use to High-Rise. So those that are the
 21 subtleties and the complexities that we deal
 22 with.
 23 We're not touching any of that. All we're
 24 saying is -- and partially it was because of
 25 your comments, that it made me realize that we

1 had to clarify the height, the 120, and the
2 density, so it would be very clear in the Comp
3 Plan, as it is in the Zoning Code. That was
4 it.

5 MR. BEHAR: And, Ramon, I think what you're
6 doing, I support it. I think you're absolutely
7 correct. It makes it a lot cleaner, clearer,
8 for everybody to understand. So I also support
9 it.

10 You know, with that in mind, if there are
11 no other -- any other Board Members that are
12 going to speak, I'll make a motion to approve.

13 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Well, I wanted Chip --
14 Chip hasn't gone yet. If you don't mind, I'd
15 like to go ahead and hear Chip's comments.

16 MR. WITHERS: What's the strategy for
17 hospitality in that area?

18 MR. TRIAS: I don't know of any strategy at
19 this point, but certainly economic development
20 could focus on that, also, if you believe that
21 is an important issue.

22 MR. WITHERS: I guess my next question
23 would be, you know, the whole Merrick Park
24 concept came into play, there's a vacant lot
25 across from Nordstrom, and (unintelligible) put

1 a boutique hotel up there, and so that leads to
2 my next question. Have we reviewed the Merrick
3 Park agreement, how many more square feet they
4 can build, that they're allowed to do in the
5 existing parcels they have? So will this
6 conflict with any of their parcels in the
7 City's agreement with Merrick Park?

8 MR. TRIAS: I haven't reviewed the
9 agreement recently, but, like I said, we're not
10 changing any of the regulations. So there's no
11 conflict. All we're doing is, we're changing
12 maybe the emphasis of merchandising and
13 marketing and economic development toward the
14 Design and Innovative District, which I think
15 is compatible with the existing development
16 there.

17 MR. WITHERS: So there's no Land Use
18 change?

19 MR. TRIAS: No.

20 MR. WITHERS: You know, if you can have
21 this as a destination, and, you know,
22 hospitality is important, you know, we should
23 encourage the City to look at that direction.
24 But I guess my other question, which is, you
25 know, it seems the whole area now should be

1 called the Apartment District, and not --
2 seriously. I mean, you look at -- it's just
3 amazing what's happened between -- behind, I
4 think, is Villagio -- whatever the restaurant
5 is across from Gables High School, Villagio,
6 all of the way to The Collection, it's just
7 nothing but a mass of apartments in there or
8 condos.

9 Has there been any effort to try to expand
10 retail into that area as far as the first
11 floor?

12 MR. TRIAS: This is the effort, and that's
13 exactly the issue. The issue is that the
14 ground level, even though it's designed nicely,
15 it's not that successful. So our thinking was,
16 if we were to focus economic development and
17 branding and merchandise and strategies towards
18 design and innovation, we will probably be able
19 to further develop the area, from an economic
20 point of view.

21 MR. WITHERS: How are you going to
22 discourage the apartments from buying large
23 swaths?

24 MR. TRIAS: Well, you can only do
25 Mixed-Use. You're not allowed to do just an

1 apartment building. So the ground level is
2 always going to be Retail or Commercial.

3 MR. WITHERS: I mean, instead of just a
4 ten-story high ceiling on the ground floor, you
5 know, Venny -- you know, you architects chime
6 in here, I mean, I think if you really want to
7 try to develop some nice retail looks, you
8 know, you need to have, you know, taller
9 ceilings on the ground floor.

10 I mean, to me, you're going to get the nail
11 salon, you know, you're going to get the yogurt
12 company. You're going to get -- when you start
13 going with the apartment buildings, you don't
14 get the five and ten thousand beautiful spaces
15 bringing in, you know, high end retailers.

16 MR. TRIAS: I understand your question
17 better. We have included design guidelines for
18 height and transparency, et cetera, in the Code
19 Update. I'll go into more detail next week, if
20 you want to, but that's already there. There's
21 a minimum height, and then there's also a
22 requirement for transparency at the ground
23 level, which encourages retail and so on.

24 MR. WITHERS: Well, I'm not talking about
25 encouraging it. I'm talking about, people want

1 to do Mixed-Used under the guidelines that we
 2 want them to. And, again, it's not, this is
 3 retail and this is what you have to do --
 4 MR. TRIAS: No, it's a requirement. You
 5 have to go Mixed-Use. It's not that it's an
 6 option. You have to do Mixed-Use if you want
 7 to do any kind of residential.
 8 MR. WITHERS: But the design requirements
 9 for the Mixed-Use is, what?
 10 MR. TRIAS: The design requirements for the
 11 Mixed-Use, as they relate to the ground
 12 level --
 13 MR. WITHERS: Yes.
 14 MR. TRIAS: -- are included in the update
 15 that we're working on. They're not in the Code
 16 yet, but we are including 17 feet for the
 17 height, which we need to discuss, and we're
 18 also requiring 80 percent transparency,
 19 meaning, glass, at the ground level. So those
 20 are the things that a Zoning Code can do.
 21 Okay, great. In addition, we can do some
 22 economic development strategies and branding
 23 and other things, such as signage, et cetera.
 24 So the idea is that all of those things
 25 eventually will make the place much more

1 successful, if we all work together and come up
 2 with effective rules.
 3 MR. WITHERS: So what's the vision on both
 4 sides of Ponce? What's the vision on the east
 5 side of Ponce? What would you like to see
 6 there?
 7 MR. TRIAS: What I would like to see there
 8 is, ground level retail, that is consistent
 9 with Design and Innovation, and then two or
 10 three stories of apartments or office space
 11 above.
 12 MR. WITHERS: So you don't want to see
 13 eight stories on Ponce?
 14 MR. TRIAS: That would be my preference.
 15 Now, if you're able to assemble 20,000 square
 16 feet, the development regulations allow more
 17 than four stories.
 18 MR. WITHERS: So do we, as a Board, want to
 19 look at a visioning along the Ponce corridor
 20 and develop it? I mean, now is the chance to
 21 do this. If we have concurrency that we don't
 22 want more than three stories or we want a step
 23 back, like it is on Miracle Mile, then we ought
 24 do that now.
 25 MR. TRIAS: That's a very good suggestion,

1 Mr. Withers, and what I'm doing here today,
 2 simply, I'm creating the opportunity. In other
 3 words, we're creating that Design/Innovation
 4 District in the Comp Plan, so the vision can be
 5 implemented as it's developed.
 6 MR. WITHERS: Okay. Look, my last comment
 7 is, this is probably one of the last areas that
 8 we really have an opportunity to put a real
 9 handprint on, and really do it the way we think
 10 it would be real cool for Coral Gables. If
 11 not, it's just going to be developed as
 12 developers come in and can assemble properties
 13 and make money.
 14 There's nothing -- listen, we're all for
 15 making money, but I'm just thinking, if we
 16 really want to take that area and make it
 17 signature, none of those inner streets are
 18 signature streets at all. Maybe the one
 19 pass-through in Merrick Park is a signature
 20 street. Everything else is just a basic city
 21 street, and Le Jeune is never going to be a
 22 real signature street with a high school there,
 23 but if we really want to make a signature
 24 street in South Gables, Ponce is our last
 25 opportunity, and we really ought to take a look

1 at visioning both sides of the street, east and
 2 west.
 3 You know, the east side -- the west side,
 4 with The Collection, we don't have a lot of,
 5 you know, opportunity there, but on the other
 6 two -- the rest of the block, we have some
 7 great opportunities, and that's all of my
 8 comments.
 9 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Ramon, let me ask you
 10 a question. What is the percentage that's
 11 required now when we do a Mixed-Use to be
 12 Commercial or to be stores with a project?
 13 MR. TRIAS: You have to do eight percent,
 14 which means basically the whole ground level as
 15 retail.
 16 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: You said, eight
 17 percent?
 18 MR. TRIAS: Yeah, eight percent of the
 19 project, at a minimum, yeah.
 20 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: At a minimum.
 21 Did Staff or the Zoning Re-Write look to
 22 change of any that or does that stay the same?
 23 MR. TRIAS: Well, that stays the same, and
 24 it's in the Comp Plan, also, and if we look,
 25 for example, at the project that we're looking

1 at today, it's 8.4 percent retail. So it seems
 2 to be a reasonable number.
 3 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Okay.
 4 MR. TRIAS: If we need to look at anything
 5 in more detail, we certainly could.
 6 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Okay. I basically
 7 echo the same sentiments that were expressed by
 8 my fellow Board Members. The points were well
 9 made.
 10 Are there any other comments anybody would
 11 like to make?
 12 MR. BEHAR: Let me address Chip's comment a
 13 second, because in every successful community
 14 that incorporates Mixed-Use, and for the
 15 retail, whether it's galleries or restaurants,
 16 you need to have Residential support in order
 17 for it to be successful. And that's why -- I'm
 18 in this area. I am actually walking distance
 19 from Merrick Park. And what's great about, now
 20 you see, the restaurants are being more
 21 successful, maybe not the last four months,
 22 five months, but prior to that. When you start
 23 putting Residential in an area like this,
 24 that's when you have successful restaurants and
 25 shops, because you need to bring people to

1 Design District name is meant there to be able
 2 to be promoted as such, to bring in high end
 3 designers, to bring in high end furniture
 4 stores, to bring in high end architects and
 5 interior designers to sell high end fabrics.
 6 So the idea is to, yes, promote it as such,
 7 and try to get the designs to follow that, with
 8 the high ceilings and the better storefront
 9 designs. So how we do that in the future, how
 10 do we qualify that the designs are better,
 11 that's something I'm not sure we can do in the
 12 new Code changes, but that's something we
 13 should be exploring, how to improve that
 14 streetscapes.
 15 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Thank you, Venny.
 16 Would anybody like to make a motion?
 17 MR. BEHAR: I'll make a motion to approve.
 18 MR. TORRE: I'll second it.
 19 MS. ANDERSON: I'll second.
 20 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Who said, second,
 21 please?
 22 MR. TORRE: I did, but I think somebody
 23 else did, as well.
 24 MS. ANDERSON: It doesn't matter.
 25 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: We have a motion and a

1 them.
 2 And I think, Ramon, you will agree with me
 3 there, that's why you see a lot more
 4 apartments, you know, whether it's condo or
 5 rental apartment, in this area.
 6 MR. TRIAS: I agree. I think that the
 7 issues that we're talking about, qualitative
 8 issues, is how well can we do this, but I think
 9 the big idea is very sound.
 10 MR. TORRE: Another point. Can you all
 11 hear me?
 12 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Yes.
 13 MR. TORRE: The point that you just made,
 14 Robert, is exactly correct. I mean, I went to
 15 Midtown two or three weeks ago, just to see how
 16 they were faring compared to Miracle Mile, this
 17 is measure of the BID's performance, and they
 18 were busy as could be. And the reason is, for
 19 those apartments above, Midtown was busy, and
 20 there's a lot of people downstairs and those
 21 retailers were actually active.
 22 The idea is, again, not to bring in the
 23 hair salons and the nail shops and the, you
 24 know, Subway shops or Subway sandwiches. It's
 25 to bring in better retailers, and then the

1 second.
 2 Any comments?
 3 THE COLLER: That would be done in
 4 accordance with Department recommendations?
 5 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Is that correct,
 6 gentlemen?
 7 MR. BEHAR: Yes.
 8 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Okay. That is
 9 correct, Mr. Coller.
 10 Having heard no comments, call the roll,
 11 please.
 12 THE SECRETARY: Rene Murai?
 13 MR. MURAI: Yes.
 14 THE SECRETARY: Venny Torre?
 15 MR. TORRE: Yes. Here.
 16 THE SECRETARY: Maria Velez?
 17 MS. VELEZ: Yes.
 18 THE SECRETARY: Chip Withers?
 19 MR. WITHERS: Yes.
 20 THE SECRETARY: Rhonda Anderson?
 21 MS. ANDERSON: Yes.
 22 THE SECRETARY: Robert Behar?
 23 MR. BEHAR: Yes.
 24 THE SECRETARY: Eibi Aizenstat?
 25 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Yes.