

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Items E-3, E-4 and E-5 are related
August 27, 2024
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Melissa Castro

Commissioner Ariel Fernandez

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Amos Rojas, Jr.

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

City Planner, Jennifer Garcia

Deputy Development Services Director, Doug Ramirez

Public Speaker(s)

Jorge Navarro

Edward Martos

Leonela Rohaidy

Jose Vizcarrondo

Aurora Mata

Karelia Carbonell

Agenda Items E-3, E-4 and E-5

An Ordinance of the City Commission amending the Future Land Use Map of the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, "Process," Section 14-213, "Comprehensive Plan Text and Map Amendments," and Small Scale amendment procedures (ss. 163.3187, Florida Statutes), from

City Commission Meeting

August 27, 2024

Agenda Items E-3, E-4 and E-5 are related - Ordinances of the City Commission amending the Future Land Use Map of the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan and making Zoning District boundary changes for Lots 1 through 9 (130 Almeria Avenue, 152 Almeria Avenue, 160 Almeria Avenue) and Lots 17 through 21, Block 14, Coral Gables Crafts Section (103 Sevilla Avenue) and a resolution of the City Commission approving a Mixed-Use Site Plan and Encroachments for a mixed-used project referred to as 130 Almeria.

“Commercial Mid-Rise Intensity” to “Commercial High-Rise Intensity” for Lots 1 through 9 (130 Almeria Avenue, 152 Almeria Avenue, 160 Almeria Avenue) and from “Single Family High Density” to “Commercial Low-Rise Intensity” for Lots 17 through 21, Block 14, Coral Gables Crafts Section (103 Sevilla Avenue), Coral Gables, Florida; including required conditions; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, and providing for an effective date .
(03 13 24 PZB recommended approval, Vote 4-2)

Lobbyist: Jorge Navarro

An Ordinance of the City Commission making Zoning District boundary changes pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, “Process,” Section 14-212, “Zoning Code Text and Map Amendments,” from “Mixed Use 2 District” to “Mixed Use 3 District” for Lots 1 through 9 (130 Almeria Avenue, 152 Almeria Avenue, 160 Almeria Avenue) and from “Single-Family Residential District” to “Mixed Use 1 District” for Lots 17 through 21, Block 14, Coral Gables Crafts Section (103 Sevilla Avenue), Coral Gables, Florida; including required conditions; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, and providing for an effective date.
(03 13 24 PZB recommended approval, Vote 4-2)

Lobbyist: Jorge Navarro

A Resolution of the City Commission approving a Mixed-Use Site Plan and Encroachments pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, “Process” Section 14-203, “Conditional Uses,” for a proposed mixed-use project including live/work units referred to as “130 Almeria” on the property legally described as Lots 1 through 9, 17 through 21, and 39 through 42, Block 14, Coral Gables Crafts Section (130 Almeria Avenue, 152 Almeria Avenue, 160 Almeria Avenue, 2701 Ponce de Leon Boulevard, and 103 Sevilla Avenue), Coral Gables, Florida; including required conditions; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, and providing for an effective date.
(03 13 24 PZB recommended approval, Vote 4-2)

This Resolution is not for consideration at this time and will be included with the above related ordinances on Second Reading if approved on First Reading.

Lobbyist: Jorge Navarro

Mayor Lago: We have a -- we have a time certain item, E-3, E-4, E-5 that I'm embarrassed to say we are almost an hour late. Can we take a five-minute break to go to the bathroom? Is that okay?

Jorge Navarro: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Navarro: The only thing I was going to ask is maybe when we come back -- I know it's a little unorthodox, but there are some residents that came to speak, if maybe we could take them at the beginning of the meeting. Because I think some of them want to...

Mayor Lago: That's fine.

Mr. Navarro: Need to get back to their families.

Mayor Lago: Back in five minutes.

Mr. Navarro: So thank you.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Vice Mayor Anderson: (INAUDIBLE) after the restroom break.

(At this time, the City Commission took a brief recess.)

Mayor Lago: Mr. Navarro. Alright. And welcome back to Items E-3, E-4, and E-5. Madam City Attorney.

City Attorney Suárez: Yes, sir. Mayor -- Mayor and Commissioners, so E-3, E-4, and E-5 are related. We -- I would -- we would like to consolidate them for purposes of the public hearing. I'll read them all into the record. E-5 will not be voted on at this time, but it's just on for your, you know, review and information. So, E-3 is an ordinance of the City Commission amending the Future Land Use Map of the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, "Process," Section 14-213, "Comprehensive Plan Text and Map Amendments," and Small Scale amendment procedures and from "Single Family High Density" to "Commercial Low-Rise Intensity" for Lots 17 through 21, Block 14, Coral Gables Crafts Section, Coral Gables, Florida; including required conditions; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, and providing for an effective date. E-4 is an ordinance of the City Commission making Zoning District boundary changes pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, "Process," Section 14-212, "Zoning Code Text and Map Amendments," from "Mixed Use 2 District" to "Mixed Use 3 District," for Lots 1 through 9 and from "Single-Family Residential District" to "Mixed Use 1

District” for Lots 17 through 21, Block 14, Coral Gables Crafts Section, Coral Gables, Florida; including required conditions; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, and providing for an effective date. This is a quasi-judicial item and so I’ll also read E-5 just for your information. It’s a resolution of the City Commission approving a Mixed-Use Site Plan and Encroachments pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, “Process,” Section 14-203, “Conditional Uses,” for a proposed mixed-use project including live/work units referred to as “130 Almeria” on the property legally described as Lots 1 through 9, 17 through 21, and 39 through 42, Block 14, Coral Gables Crafts Section, and -- one second -- Coral Gables, Florida; including required conditions; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, and providing for an effective date. Mr. Clerk, everyone who will be testifying today should be sworn in.

City Clerk Urquia: Those who will be testifying on this item, please stand and raise your right hand. Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you will provide today will be the truth and nothing but the truth?

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you.

Mr. Navarro: So, good afternoon, Mr. Mayor, Commissioners. I think we had discussed potentially opening up to public comment early for some of the residents that have been here. If that would be okay, we have no objections to it, but I know some wanted to speak and try to get back to their families. So, if that would be okay, if not, I would be happy to go ahead and start my presentation, whatever the will of the Commission might be.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, at this time, I don’t have a request to speak from anyone.

Mr. Navarro: Oh, okay.

Mayor Lago: This gentleman. Yes, sir.

Edward Martos: Commissioners, thank you very much. I represent -- first of all, name for the record, Edward Martos on behalf of TFFO, which is an abutting neighbor immediately adjacent to the site. We have no objection to the project. We have just one small request, sort of housekeeping, if you will, a simple cleanup. I will pass out a copy of the zoning map that’s being proposed and you will notice that along the entire block, the site will be after this is approved -- and we do hope it gets approved -- will be MX1 or MX2. Our one parcel, which is just 5,000 square feet, will be single-family residential. I think it was just an oversight, something that needs to be cleaned up. So, our simple request to you all is that you please clean this up down the road. The City should, I think, act -- apply to make that simple change. And that’s all that we would ask.

Mayor Lago: May...

Mr. Martos: We have no objection.

Mayor Lago: May I ask you for a favor?

Mr. Martos: Yes, please.

Mayor Lago: You can submit that for the public record.

Mr. Martos: I will.

Mayor Lago: And also ask you to please meet with the Manager, the DCM, and also meet with our Zoning Director so that you can...

Mr. Martos: Absolutely.

Mayor Lago: So that you can provide them with that information and put it on the record, but also...

Mr. Martos: Absolutely.

Mayor Lago: Start working towards -- towards some sort of consensus.

Mr. Martos: We very much agree. I'll do that. Thank you, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Martos: Thank you, Commissioners.

Mayor Lago: Anyone else? Any other residents like to speak?

Mr. Navarro: I think there are two and I think there's just some here that are listening in.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Mr. Navarro: But I think there's two that submitted their card to the City Clerk.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mayor Lago: Does anybody want to speak now and then they can do a card later?

Unidentified Speaker: Sure.

Mayor Lago: Come on up.

Leonela Rohaidy: Hi, good afternoon. How are you? My name is Leonela Rohaidy. I'm a resident of 30 Sevilla Avenue for the last 43 years. I came to publicly approve the project. I submitted a letter this morning to the City Clerk stating the same thing. I want to thank the company for having the clarity, you know, to be able to accommodate what needs we have asked of them, especially Mr. Vizcarrondo, who has been very supportive of me, very happy of the park, you know, that it is going to be built. He has taken into consideration the needs of my granddaughter, Eloise, who has special needs and I will hope that this will go very smooth. The people, my husband and I, approved the project and some of the people in the neighborhood who cannot come here today. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Brandon Thomas: Good evening. My name is Brandon Thomas. I'm a resident of Galiano, right across from the proposed project. I'm here today to express my strong support for this initiative. I believe it would be a great addition to our community and play a significant role in bringing everyone closer together.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir. Sir?

Mr. Navarro: Thank you. The floor is mine?

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

Mr. Navarro: Alright. I believe we're sharing our presentation on Zoom. I don't know if you can see it. Oh, there we go. Perfect. So, good evening, Mr. Mayor, Commissioners, Jorge Navarro with offices at 333 Southeast 2nd Avenue. We're here this evening to present the 130 Almeria Park project. I'm here with the property owners, Mr. Jose Antonio Vizcarrondo and Juan Morazo (phonetic) along with my colleague, Devon Vickers. The project we're presenting to you is a project that has been over two years in the planning stage and also we've had over the last year and a half many meetings with residents and many discussions with the area residents and we have really worked closely with the area -- the area that directly abuts this property. I remember back in 2022, the Mayor and the Commission at the time, working on an ordinance that tried to incentivize the private creation of public park space. And we've seen -- and this Commission has approved some of these projects. We've seen it successfully done in other parts of the city, but it has never really been done in downtown. And this owner took the challenge to find a way to not develop on the entire of this -- on the entirety of this property, but to find a way to limit the development to one portion of the property and to preserve an entire portion as undeveloped land

that can be created into some public benefit. And I think you've heard from some of the residents, but we've met with very many. Parks in this area is a great need and we have allocated this undeveloped portion of land as a public park to meet the needs of this residence and I'll show you how we got there after I have a chance to tell you about this property because it's a really unique property and it took us some time to figure out how to develop this in a way that we could get the support of the residents that live closest to this. So, this is a property that's made up of three different parcels. You can see here it totals approximately an acre of land within your downtown. And these parcels are bifurcated internally within this block by an alley. And it's located east of Ponce, just south of your -- of your Central Business District and north of the Plaza project. So, it's right between these two areas of your downtown, but it's also very near a residential neighborhood that abuts this portion of downtown. So, it's a very unique situation. And we spent a substantial time studying what could be done under both the existing zoning, as well as what we could do as an alternative to that that may be a better solution for this property. So, I want to understand -- I want to walk you through what could be done today under the existing zoning and what we're proposing instead so you could compare them and I hope that you reach the same conclusion that we did and I think that the residents did is that what we are proposing is a much better solution for this property than what could be done today.

Commissioner Castro: (INAUDIBLE).

Mr. Navarro: Yes?

Commissioner Castro: (INAUDIBLE).

Vice Mayor Anderson: So have I.

Commissioner Fernandez: So have I.

Commissioner Menendez: Me too.

Mr. Navarro: So, under the existing zoning, this is what could be built today. Obviously, it's amassing with a proposed building in the mid-block portion, but what could be built today -- these are already zoned commercial. They're already allowed for mixed-use buildings. And what you could build today are two 97-foot mixed-use buildings along Almeria and fronting on Ponce that would contain residential office and retail uses and that would generate much more traffic than the project that we will be proposing to you today and presenting to you. And as you could see, it creates a very significant horizontal visual impact. This scenario creates a canyon-like effect along Almeria, which is what we are trying to avoid with the project that we're proposing to you today and I think you'll see a stark difference. One other important factor is that since we originally submitted our application, as you all know, the State Legislature adopted the Live Local Act, which this property qualifies for and which we have looked closely at. I'm sure you're all aware, but the Live Local Act allows for residential mixed-use projects in mixed-use districts such as this with

much more density, height, and FAR than would ordinarily be permitted. And the reason this option is so attractive for this particular property because it's not suited all -- like in all areas, is that it does allow us to, one, build a much taller building, but second of all, it allows us to have a large amount of commercial square footage within the building, which obviously generates much more traffic, but in this area of downtown, obviously with Apple coming in next door, you know, the office square footage is one thing that makes the Live Local so attractive for this particular property. It's also via streamlined approval process, not the two-year process that we've undertaken in working with the neighborhood. So, in the last two months, we have prepared a plan for Live Local that we studied and I want to show you what that would look like just for comparison. This is what would be allowed under Live Local and the composition of this in working with our design team, applying our current plan with the Live Local standards, it would allow us to have 92 units and almost 30,000 square feet of Class A office space, which would obviously be much more intense from a traffic perspective, as I'll show you later. In our plan, one of the things that the residents spoke to us about is that they did not want to see commercial on this property. They did not want to see retail; they did not want to see office. Another drawback from this proposal which when we get to the next one, you'll see the stark difference is that it would have very limited open space benefits to the City because under this pro -- under this Live Local, obviously, all three parcels would be developed, not that they would all be Live Local, but they would all be developed. So, we obviously did not want to pursue either of these two options because my client really has invested a lot of time and effort on this project and he's made a lot of commitments to the community that he intends to keep and that's why we're here before you today with this application. So, this is our alternate proposal from what could be done today. And as you can see, rather than developing all three of these parcels, we are limiting our development to the mid-block portion alone and transferring the development rights that would have been attributed to the Galiano parcel, which is where the public park is shown, and from the abutting AmTrust building, which we're shifting them over and placing them solely within the mid-block portion, which is away from residential and closer to your downtown. So, from a planning perspective, we think that's an amazing concept. One other important thing is that this allows us to maintain the four-story AmTrust building, which we have learned in speaking with many residents, is a building that's very important to the residents and important to the fabric of downtown. And one of the benefits of developing this property in this alternative way is that we're able to propose a 12,500 square foot park that serves as a buffer from that adjacent residential area. So, just to walk you through what we are proposing is we are -- in the mid-block portion only, we're limiting our development there. It'd be a 141-foot building with 122 units and 185 parking spaces. But I'd like to add that we have been speaking with some residents in the last few days, including Mr. Funay (phonetic), and we've committed to addressing his idea of finding a way to combine the number of one-bedroom units that we have to create larger units. And that's something that if this Commission allows us to move forward today, we will be studying and bringing back before you in the future. I also want to highlight just some of the things we've done over the last six months working with the neighborhood. We have reduced the original building height which was 152 feet down to 141 feet by removing an entire level, entire story of residential which I think is where that one bedroom issue came up once we did that. But we are going to go

back and study that. Let me walk you through the plan here. As you can see, we have the public park, we have our development -- our sole development property in the middle and the AmTrust building which is going to remain to the left which we have a beautiful photo of it showing its architectural character. So, on the Almeria piece, what we've done is we have -- we originally had retail units on the ground level. Those you can see in the updated site plan have been replaced by four live/work units. So, this project has no commercial use whatsoever. We've also included a large paseo on the east side of the property, which is almost within the center of this block, which will improve pedestrian connectivity, not only throughout the block, but also to the park, which we think is important. Our second through fourth floors are the parking levels for the project and then floors. This is -- now we've changed the layout, but just to give you an idea, floors 5 through 13 are the residential areas and then we have a rooftop area that has residential amenities and some penthouse units. And then you can see from this image, this is the sole development parcel where everything is concentrated on and in the back behind the existing four-story office building just to our east is the park. And this is the one that will remain undeveloped. It allows us to convert -- currently today it's a commercial parking -- commercial surface parking area. We have certain hybrid park programs that we propose. These are not final. These are just conceptual. Obviously, we've talked to many residents. Many residents have very many different ideas as to what could go here. This is just one concept where we have a children's playground area with some pickleball courts, which we know how popular pickleball has become. Potentially, an Olympic sport, I heard, could be coming up too in the next Olympics, but this is one concept. The other concept is very similar because we do know that a children's playground is very important for the families in this area. They said they don't have a safe place for their kids to play. So, that, I think, is the overwhelming kind of request that we had. But we have an alternative plan, which is more of a children's playground area, which you can't see here, but you shall see, which is more of a passive park that has walking trails, shade trees. You know, this is an alternative concept and you can see you have passive sitting areas, running and jogging trails, and then a children's park that is obviously tucked to the back.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mr. Navarro: Sure.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mr. Navarro: Okay.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mr. Navarro: Yeah. So, in this one, the children's park is in the front and the pickleballs are in the back. In this concept, the children's park is actually in the back and the passive area is in the front. But these are just conceptual. We intend to continue to work with the neighborhood between first and second reading if this application moves forward to try to fine-tune this, but we have, as

you could see, try to incorporate as many comments as we could and feedback from the community as to the different options that they wanted to see here. And this, just to highlight, I want to show you the area that we covered over the last year meeting with residents. We have over 110 petitions in support. Devon will be submitting those into the record. You heard from a few tonight. I know there was much more at the Planning and Zoning Board but couldn't join us. And one thing I'd like to just -- I want to be considerate of everyone's time. I know it's not normal to do so, but I'd like to invite my client up just to say a few words. I think he wanted to thank the neighbors. I know he's worked very hard on this and he wanted to tell you a little bit about himself and about his experiences in working with the community. And then I'll just do some minor housekeeping stuff and we'll be here to answer your questions.

Mayor Lago: How are you, sir?

Jose Vizcarrondo: Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners, throughout the last two years, I've had the chance to, you know, meet with you individually, talk about, get your input and one of the things that I wanted to come here today is to -- pardon, Jose Vizcarrondo, 731 Sestina Avenue. So -- and I'm the managing partner of Cade Capital. So, I wanted to come here and thank the neighbors. You know, we've got -- we put a lot of outreach. Outreach has been one of the most pivotal things that we've done on this project. So, we've heard them from, as Jorge was mentioning, on the park, what are the situations and issues that they had with it. We tried to apply a lot of them. We've reduced retail, we've added more units. We're going to try to reduce the amount of units in order to reduce impact. So, I think a lot is -- this final product that you're seeing, which it still has things to clear out, which we promised a lot of the neighbors we would. And also, we will continue to work with Parks and Rec Board. It's a phenomenal team you guys have there. They've been extremely open, giving us the regulation, showing us what we need to do. So, we will continue to work. So, a lot of this is conceptual, as Jorge mentioned, and I want to emphasize on that portion. And a lot of what we did and why we did the park, too, is also to create some sort of buffer for them. You know, when we saw the area and you see the mass of what we have available in downtown, we thought that this park was something -- that pocket park in there is something that a lot of the neighbors will benefit. Leonela, which has been a tremendous help, she has been there since 1981. Her kid grew up there, couldn't play in the street, and now she has a granddaughter. As she mentioned, she's been one of the people that's been most vocal. We've had an outreach center there for the last year where neighbors have come, give us their opinions, sometimes in favor, sometimes against us, but we've been here to help them and try to implement. So, I'm coming to you and thank you for your time and doing this unorthodox and letting me speak, but I really wish you consider that into your -- when you're taking your vote on this and hope you approve our project. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: So, before you leave, I just want to say thank you to both of you. I've had the pleasure of engaging with you well over two years on this project. And when we had a conversation about what the massing was going to be, what the project was. I had, like the first day when you told me that you own the building in the front and that you were considering keeping

that and that you also owned -- that you wanted to do another development on the parcel, the surface parking lot, I asked you if you would be willing to do a park. I brought it up many times here to my colleagues on the Commission that to transform a downtown, you know, we've taken steps, we've worked hard over the last four years to add Publix, 20,000 square foot site, to add Armando Codina corner site, which is about 10,000 square feet, to add the Boschetti site, which you were a part of. And I mentioned this was the last site that is forthcoming that we could potentially add a world-class site, world-class park in the area, transforming our downtown. I have one question for you, the same question I asked you in regards to Boschetti. To get my vote, I need to have the park deeded over to the City. Are you willing to give me that?

Mr. Vizcarrondo: Yes, we are.

Mayor Lago: Okay. I know you were like debating whether that was a possibility.

Mr. Vizcarrondo: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: I want the City to be in control of the land. I think it's a transformational piece of property. I think it's an opportunity for the residents. And you didn't have to do it. You could have developed a project there. You could have come in and asked for a zoning change. Literally, the block is all commercial, even though it's zoned residential, you probably would have gotten it, to be honest with you, it just makes sense. But I think that's a -- that's a commitment. As residents, both of you, I commend you because it shows that you put the residents and this community first over profits. Yes, you're in the business of making money, you have a beautiful building, it's going to be successful in the Gables, but you could have built a third building and you didn't. So -- because you understand that that amenity is going to pay huge dividends to the property. So, I commend you both for that. And I appreciate you for listening over two years ago when I asked you what your plans were for that piece of property. Thank you for that. I know this Commission is grateful for that.

Mr. Vizcarrondo: And thank you all. And one thing I want to say is like, we are long-term holders and we're stakeholders. We've become part of the community where we are. So, we're raising our kids here. So, being able to do this is such a -- for us it's such a feat to be able to tell our kids, you know, 20 years down the line that we at some point were involved in giving and making this city beautiful and more beautiful than it already is. And that's something that we want to do. We're a young firm. We're not as big as our peers. And you know, we're very specific, very boutique, let's call it, in that we're mom and pop. But that's something that we want to do. We want to create an impact in what we're doing and I think through this, you know, partnership in that sense, we are looking forward to doing this with the City.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. You have to make (INAUDIBLE). Go ahead.

Vice Mayor Anderson: (INAUDIBLE).

Mr. Navarro: No, I just wanted to just thank the neighbors that were coming out and I think we've covered everything and we're here to answer any questions that the Commission has.

Mayor Lago: Do you want to hear from staff or do you want to...?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, let's let staff...

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Do their presentation.

Mr. Navarro: Sure.

Vice Mayor Anderson: (INAUDIBLE).

Mr. Navarro: Okay, great. I'll be waiting.

City Planner Garcia: Good evening. Jennifer Garcia, Planning Official. Alright. So, the location, as you know, is three parcels. It's just east of Ponce de Leon, between Galiano and Ponce de Leon, and between Almeria and Sevilla. It's those three parcels there in our downtown. And it's that one block, actually, between the south -- southern -- southern border of our CBD, our Central Business District, and the new Plaza development. As you can see, most of this area is zoned commercial, high-rise, mid-rise, with some low-rise in this area. So, they are just north of the Plaza, and the image to the left, you can see the Plaza under construction, this image. The image on the right, you can see looking west, you can see the future Regency Park down the block, the existing 2800 Ponce building off of Ponce de -- Ponce Circle Park, and some taller buildings to the north of that. So, they have three requests, change of land use of the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Code map amendment, and also, the mixed-use site plan. So, currently the middle parcel is -- has a land use designation of commercial mid-rise intensity and the proposal is to change that to commercial high-rise intensity so they can go above that cap of 97 feet and then also to change the land use of the parcel that's on Sevilla and Galiano from single-family high density to commercial low-rise intensity. And the zoning to be consistent with the land use to zone MX2 for that middle parcel to be MX3 and then also the single-family residential to be MX1 on Sevilla and Galiano. And the third request is a mixed-use site plan. So, right now they're proposing to keep the four-story AmTrust Bank building as it's known for, Almeria and Ponce de Leon. They're going to be developing the middle parcel with four live/work ground floor units, pedestrian arcade that wraps around the building, vehicular entrance for the upper level of parking to be off of Almeria, and then vehicular parking in the basement off of the alley with loading in the back, and then a pedestrian paseo that connects to the public park that we locate on Sevilla and Galiano. And then part of this is also requesting an encroachment over the alley right-of-way for a couple of feet because of the roof overhang. The Board of Architects thought it would be more appropriate to

mask the building a little bit differently, which encroached in the corner, the southwest corner of the building into the step back, which then required the overhang to be encroached into the right-of-way. The open space requirement is 10 percent, as opposed today is 34.7 percent, so much over the minimum requirement for open space. The density, they have 122 units, FAR is 3.46, the building height again is 141 feet, and then they're required to have 184 parking spaces and they're providing 185 parking spaces. So, DRC reviewed this back in October of 2022, Board of Architects reviewed a couple times, final approval was in April of last year. They had a couple of neighborhood meetings last summer and in the fall and the Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval in February of this year and here we are for first reading. Letters were sent to the property owners within 1,500 feet as required by the Zoning Code and those were sent out four times for two neighborhood meetings, PZB and today's meeting as well as three times for the property being posted. Website was posted four times and one newspaper advertisement to date. So, staff determined that it is consistent with the goals, objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, recommends approval with conditions, so it complies with the facts of finding that you can find in your staff report in your packet. Those conditions of approval are in the resolution on the last pages of the resolution, but the highlights are to max the height at 13 stories or 151 feet. The public park on Sevilla and Galiano as proffered by the applicant and recommended by the Planning and Zoning Board would be conveyed to the City. Street improvements would include both sides of the 100 block of Almeria to include landscape bump outs and street trees as well as a continuation of the Galiano bike lane for that one narrow block on Galiano between Almeria and Sevilla and then underground utility lines along Almeria as well of that short block and any drainage improvements, of course, would be at the applicant's expense. I'm here to answer any questions that you have for me. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. Well done.

Vice Mayor Anderson: (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: (INAUDIBLE).

City Planner Garcia: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: On the conditions of approval (INAUDIBLE)...

City Planner Garcia: I think your mic -- mic isn't on.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Unfortunately, my mic was off. I'm very sorry. My apologies. On the conditions of approval, is there a covenant that will run with the land, you know, let's say this project doesn't move forward if we grant the additional hike? Will it restrict it to the 141 feet moving forward?

City Planner Garcia: Yes, so they've offered actually two covenants. One to cap the height at 144 -- sorry, 141 feet as well as covenant runs with the MX1 property, the public park property, that would always remain a park...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay.

City Planner Garcia: No matter the zoning change.

Vice Mayor Anderson: All right, forevermore.

City Planner Garcia: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Forevermore. And okay, that was the only questions I had for you and then I have a few for Mr. Navarro...

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Vice Mayor Anderson: As well. So...

Unidentified Speaker: (INAUDIBLE).

Vice Mayor Anderson: I noticed that you all have already agreed to put trees on both sides of the street, correct?

Mr. Navarro: So, that is -- so, on our street, we do have a landscape plan that's obviously improving the frontage along Almeria -- sorry, I'm trying to get my bearing straight -- and the corner of Galiano has some beautiful trees today, which by preserving the public park, we could preserve -- or by converting that into a public park, we could preserve those trees. There are some trees that are within the other surface parking lot -- there's many surface parking lots on this property, but we are looking at how we could relocate some of those trees and it's something that we're trying to do, but we are beautifying as much as possible because, unfortunately, this area doesn't have very large sidewalks and we need to maintain the thorough street because it's a street in downtown and the sidewalks aren't that large and we want to make sure that people could still walk. But within the areas, we are planting additional trees.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay, so...

Mr. Navarro: And I think...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Judging from Street View on Google Maps, it appears, and I could be wrong, that those are all black olive trees.

Mr. Navarro: Yes, but they are lush and the residents like them. So, we have proposed to maintain them, but obviously, we want to work with the residents and the Commission, so I don't know if there's a feeling about that, but I think that people in that area like the lushness and they would prefer for them to remain if possible. Especially if it's going to be a park, it's nice to have very large shade canopy even though they may not be the best tree for that shade canopy, but replacing them, we all know how difficult it is to get a nice shade canopy quickly.

Vice Mayor Anderson: No, I know. I'm -- I'm aware.

Mr. Navarro: But yeah, we had at one point proposed an entirely different landscape plan, but we have since revised that to preserve as many trees as possible and also to try and relocate any trees that are viable candidates from the Almeria parcel that will be redeveloped onto the park as well. Obviously, whatever the final park configuration and what uses go in it and where these trees could be allocated, I think that's part of that design process, but our intent was to try to keep as many trees as possible.

Vice Mayor Anderson: No, I know. I'm all for...

Mr. Navarro: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Maintaining existing trees. Let's assume...

Mr. Navarro: I know they may not be the right species; I wish that they were oaks, but they do have a very large tree canopy there.

Vice Mayor Anderson: There -- there are other trees out there that can put in a pretty good canopy pretty quick.

Mr. Navarro: And we can do a hybrid of that.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, we can.

Mr. Navarro: Yeah, we can mix them in.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, hypothetically here...

Mr. Navarro: By putting trees in the middle and...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Because I'm looking at some of the spacing on some of these trees, and through my tenure here, I've gotten sort of a trial by fire learning about what can be moved and what can't be moved. Let's assume that some of these trees can't be moved and...

Mr. Navarro: Are you looking at the Almeria parcel or the one on Galiano?

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'm looking at the Almeria parcel.

Mr. Navarro: Okay, yes, there are...

Vice Mayor Anderson: A number of black olives in there. Some of them are too -- pretty close to each other.

Mr. Navarro: Yeah, there are a lot of trees that may not be in the best condition in there, but there may be some good candidates. We haven't gone and cataloged each one yet, but I know that working with the residents, the owner has gone out there and looked at some of these.

Vice Mayor Anderson: There's a number of -- of them here that are doubtful, but you'd be willing to replace that in the entire Almeria section from Ponce to Galliano, have the trees on both sides. Because that has been a...

Mr. Navarro: Yes, but I -- yeah, just on the south portion.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Only on one side?

Mr. Navarro: The other side is built...

Vice Mayor Anderson: It says both sides.

Mr. Navarro: Right to the -- if you look at the north side of -- if you look...

Commissioner Menendez: Almeria?

Mr. Navarro: At the north side of Almeria, those buildings are built almost right to the property line, at sidewalk building. So, they're -- even on our end that has a new sidewalk being put in, we are limited by the amount of type of tree that we could fit on our side, and we, working with, you know, Planning and Landscaping Division, have tried to find the tree that could fit within there, but it's not a very large right-of-way, that area.

Vice Mayor Anderson: No, no, it isn't, but something...

Mr. Navarro: No.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Something with shade is better than nothing.

Mr. Navarro: I just...

Vice Mayor Anderson: And we do have some tall, narrow trees that could be popped in in sections of sidewalk that I would ask you to work with our wonderful landscape designer on our staff and looking for that because, you know, having greenery along the street could be amazing. I think it's called a white tab that fits in...

Mr. Navarro: So...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Quite narrowly.

Mr. Navarro: Okay, so we've created two bump-outs to try to place additional trees within the areas that we don't impede the right-of-way with.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay, so I'll give you this hypothetical question. You're an attorney, you can handle it. Assuming our Landscape Department determines that there can be some trees put along on this right-of-way, are you all willing to do it?

Mr. Navarro: Yeah, we would. I think if we could keep it without, you know, creating an additional impact to those businesses because we have worked with them and we have done construction staging plans on how we are going to -- we've done a lot of work with our -- with our neighbors. As long as we don't impact those businesses in a very drastic way, I -- yeah, we would definitely do that.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Oh yeah, I'd absolutely want them...

Mr. Navarro: We have a very extensive construction staging plan on where...

Vice Mayor Anderson: We don't want to...

Mr. Navarro: Trucks move and...

Vice Mayor Anderson: We don't want to put the trees smack in front of their sign.

Mr. Navarro: Um-hmm.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, that's one...

Mr. Navarro: It's kind of like what we dealt with in Crafts where we figured out how we could put them.

Vice Mayor Anderson: It's a conversation.

Mr. Navarro: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Alright.

Mr. Navarro: It was fun. It was like a jigsaw puzzle. We got it done.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, that -- that was probably the hard part.

Mr. Navarro: Okay.

Vice Mayor Anderson: The next one is the EV parking. I understand. State legislature does not require it.

Mr. Navarro: Correct. Yeah, that is a...

Vice Mayor Anderson: In fact, we are a city that probably has the highest per capita in the way of EV charging -- I should say EV vehicles in our city.

Mr. Navarro: And I think...

Commissioner Castro: (INAUDIBLE) required.

Mr. Navarro: I think, just so you know, the type of product that we're offering, you know, is a -- is a very classy project and we do have in our other projects, we have tenants that do have EV. So, even though the City Code requires it, but the State has, you know, done what the State does and preempted the City on that, we are still proposing to provide a minimum of 10, but we are going to be creating the ability to expand that as our tenant base grows, knowing that more and more people every year are using electric vehicles and seeing that in our current projects that people are demanding that. So...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right.

Mr. Navarro: Yeah, so I think we would commit to at least 10.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, you do 10 that are actually charging stations?

Mr. Navarro: Yeah.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Vice Mayor Anderson: 28 that are E...

Mr. Navarro: 28 ready.

Vice Mayor Anderson: EV ready.

Mr. Navarro: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Anderson: And EV capable is 37. And while you're at it, you know, do the sleeving of the building so you get -- it's so much easier in the future.

Mr. Navarro: Yeah, it's impossible to try to retrofit these things after. We've seen that. Even the panel, just to put in a panel or the electrical grid that you need for that. So, even though, yes, it's not required, my client is going to be providing those.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, because you're going to have a high-end client there. We know it's going to be true because this is Coral Gables.

Mr. Navarro: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So...

Mr. Navarro: No, we know what happens is in some buildings that have retrofitted, they have two or three and then the tenants are all trying to figure out in their schedule of the day that, you know, when they could charge their car and it's extremely inconvenient. So...

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I've had people before we started putting in chargers around that are in apartment buildings around our city ask, where can I charge my car? You know, and now they know where they're going to be able to go rent because they're not going to have to go hassle walking blocks to get back to their place. I'll give you this pointer. Put one of the chargers near a handicapped parking space so you don't have a complaint later on down the line that you didn't provide any charging for handicapped vehicles. So, we got the covenant, we covered trees. The other item I want to talk to you about is a minimum of a one-year lease provision so that we don't have a short-term rental issue in that area. I don't think it's anything that it's really desired by the residents in the community. I've received some emails on that regard and they also wanted -- you talked about doing larger units. I'd like you to come back before second reading with what the mix is that you're going to be offering in a way of larger units.

Mr. Navarro: Yes, so we don't know that yet. I know that we spoke with some residents on Friday who gave us this idea that they will feel a lot more comfortable. The reason we got to so many one-bedrooms is that when we removed an entire story of the building to drop it, obviously the larger units, you know, got divided up into one-bedrooms. But we're going to go back and study and see, obviously based on our floor plans, what units can be combined and come back to you on

second reading with an updated unit count, and you know, an updated one bedroom before and after count and updated two and three bedrooms. I think the community did want to see some slightly bigger units in that area. And I can tell you my client does not do short-term rentals, it's not a type of product that they do. So, we have no issue, you know, on a private side proffering that we do not intend to do short-term rentals and we can put that into our covenant that we have that already addresses the height.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, on the park selection, and I'm glad you've engaged with the community. I want you to continue to do that outreach and let's have a clear, you know, ballot procedure like we've had on our other pocket parks so that the community that lives the closest and can walk to this park is the community that speaks the loudest on what the park gets to be. And the last part of that is the maintenance of the park and who's going to be responsible for the maintenance. Is that something that you're building -- you know, your client's are willing to undertake?

Mr. Navarro: So, I think, I know the Mayor has asked for the park to be dedicated. I think the question is if we dedicate it, will we be maintaining it? I know we were planning on maintaining it when, obviously, it was a private park, but that's -- I'm going to...

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice -- Madam Vice Mayor, if I may ask you to bear with -- to bear with me on that front. Maybe we can take care of the maintenance as long as we can control the park. I think it's an exceptional asset for the City and I know we want them to -- to take care of it, but I don't want it to be a deal breaker. What do you think?

Vice Mayor Anderson: It was a -- it was just an ask. I didn't say it was a deal breaker.

Commissioner Fernandez: And I think (INAUDIBLE)...

Vice Mayor Anderson: I mean, there's a few other people here that need to...

Commissioner Fernandez: I was going to go to the same place you were so...

Mr. Navarro: So, I may have a compromise. I think on the maintenance front, the one concern is the liability that a private person would have in terms of some maintenance goes wrong and there's no cap on the liability like a municipality would have. But we would convey the parcel to the City and commit to build the park, obviously. We would -- you know, we would build the park based on, you know, the final direction we receive and then that would be our commitment, which I think is probably the expensive part, but yes, that would still be our -- even if we deed it over, we'll undertake the construction costs of the park.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Vice Mayor Anderson: And that's all I have at the moment.

Commissioner Menendez: Jorge, could you put one of the images you had that showed from Galiano looking west?

Mr. Navarro: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: You see the park? I think it's lit up or...

Mr. Navarro: Yes. I've got to get this. Okay. This one?

Commissioner Menendez: No, that one.

Mr. Navarro: That one?

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah.

Mr. Navarro: Okay.

Commissioner Menendez: First off, I want to thank and appreciate the investment group, developer, everybody involved. Because I know we had a healthy discussion earlier today about Live Local Act and the fact that it was made available to this property and yet you decided to work with the community to find a final product that I think enhances the area but also is in line with what the community wants. It's much appreciated because you took the more challenging road and the road that perhaps you had to work through perhaps folks that didn't quite embrace initially the project, but you worked with them to make it work for them. And I think that's very important. Lately, there's a trend coming to the City Commission on folks that have projects that they finally understood that you have to work with community and -- and it's to all my understanding is you all have. So, that's greatly appreciated. It makes our job easier because we're here for the residents and the fact that you all are engaging them that, you know, is a team effort for everybody.

Mr. Navarro: And I have to give credit to my client on that because, you know, over the last six months, he did not stop meeting with residents, trying to find compromises, trying to find ways to address their needs. I know even on Saturday when it was raining, he was out there meeting with some residents as well, giving them an update. So, I have to give credit to this owner...

Commissioner Menendez: Much appreciated.

Mr. Navarro: For all the work he did.

Commissioner Menendez: And with regards, I know the Vice Mayor asked a question and it was answered. The assurance is that the AmTrust building will not be redeveloped. And as the City

Attorney explained and staff said, there are legal assurances, covenants that will be there to protect that property. The reason I asked for the image is because that block is very, very dear to me. That block, actually where the pickleball courts are, I lived there from the moment I was born until I was about 14 years old. There were two houses there. There was a house facing Sevilla on the park side and then my house was where the pickleball courts were facing Sevilla. They were rentals. And I lived there from birth until I was about 13 or 14 and then the '80s, it was sold and then obviously made surface parking lots. I used to take my kids there and go, "That's where dad used to live." "In a parking lot?" So, it's a lot nicer if I can show them a park.

Mr. Navarro: Yeah.

Commissioner Menendez: And you know, what's important to me, because I know that area so well, I lived it, is that that's an activated park. We've had a lot of passive parks lately. But I remember as a child, if I wanted to go and do something as a kid, I ended up going to the Youth Center, which obviously is wonderful. But it's not something that, you know, unless somebody can take you, it's easy to get to, especially nowadays trying to cross Le Jeune. So, this, if you can make sure we work together, create a true family children's park, that would be fantastic, and obviously, activate it. And if it's pickleball even, you know, that'd be fantastic. Just to give some perspective, the building to the right, which is, I think it's three stories or four stories to the right on the other side of the alley, that was -- on the right -- lower right corner, white. That was a full-service gas station for many decades. Full service. So, my point is, the efforts and the ideas and plans going forward, you're beautifying this area. That is -- sort of this area was always trapped between the core of our downtown and it was sort of a lost block. And with a beautiful park and activated and the building that you brought now, the enhancements, it's long overdue. So, I think it's a great addition to the City, but also I think, very importantly for the folks that live there, this is something I think, like I've been told by residents, they're excited about and they're going to embrace. So, I think this is very good for everybody.

Mr. Navarro: Thank you.

Commissioner Menendez: So, those are my thoughts.

Commissioner Fernandez: I think you're going to have to explain to us what a full-service gas station is. No, I'm kidding.

Commissioner Menendez: There are people actually working in there.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, well, we -- well, we've come a long way from a full-service gas station.

Mr. Navarro: Yeah, I've seen those in the movies.

Commissioner Fernandez: No, in the movies exactly, right?

Commissioner Menendez: Well, the cool part was, and I've told the story, you know, you all might remember when you drove up to (INAUDIBLE), they had a like a tube on the ground so that they would know inside there was a new customer. So, when the car would go, it would bing-bing, and they'd come out and clean your windshield wiper and put the gas in for you. As a child, I would ride my bike around that block, especially on the weekends, and I would love going over that tube to make the sound off my bike. So, I digress, but yes, thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, last question, was it Sinclair or...?

Commissioner Menendez: What was it?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Was it Sinclair? What kind of gas station?

Commissioner Menendez: I think it was like a Standard or Texaco or something like that. It was an old school gas station.

Mr. Navarro: It was an Amoco.

Commissioner Menendez: Oh, it was an Amoco? Oh, thank you. No, no, I appreciate it.

Unidentified Speaker: Yeah.

Commissioner Menendez: Thank you.

Commissioner Fernandez: There you go.

Unidentified Speaker: I remember it myself.

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah, it was -- I couldn't remember, but that's fantastic.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, first off, thank you for all the efforts that -- that you have put in. Some of those meetings have been a little heated, to say the least. But I think you've come to a place with the community that the community is more comfortable with the project that's going in there. And I think Commissioner Menendez hit it on the head, the option for Live Local was there from pretty much the last year and a half and you still decided to move forward with a project that was worked on with the community, you reduced the initial height, you worked on a plan where the bank building, which originally was one of the big concerns that the bank building was going to go away, isn't going to go away, and you still kept a park, which is not a small park, a fairly large-sized park. You're proposing potentially pickleball. I know that we're still working on those plans, but it's a need that we have in the community. So, I appreciate you taking that into

consideration as well. I had spoken a couple times regarding this -- this project and I'm glad to hear that we're looking towards maybe a reduction in density. I know the number we're trying to target was maybe under 100. Realistically, I know that, you know, we may not get there, but if we can get as close to that as possible, I think that would be ideal. We spoke about the demand that there is right now in this area for three-bedroom units and that may be a solution for you. The other question that I had was the bank building, although you're not going to be able to build anything taller than that, it is an important building in this community. When that building was designed, that was the beginning of the Mediterranean Revival in the City of Coral Gables. So, one of the things I wanted to ask if you would consider requesting that the City designate the building as historic. I know it doesn't -- and it's under 50 years so it's a little bit of a stricter guideline to get there, but I think because of what that building symbolizes, I think that would be something that would be beneficial to the community and I think to you to preserve that as -- as a beacon of history in that neighborhood.

Mr. Navarro: So, we have -- we have looked at that and we continue to study it. I know that we presented it and I don't know if it'll be feasible on our end to actually designate it. Obviously, we have a lot of different financial considerations on this property, but one of the things that we've done because we know it's important and we may not technically on our end be able to get that approval to do that. And I don't know if it'll meet the criteria yet for designation, but obviously, this building, the original building, I can't recall what happened to it, but I know it was damaged and it was built almost, you know, in the same light. What we have done in this application, which I think is something that a lot of the neighbors have been supportive of and have felt comfortable with, is that we have completely pulled every square footage and density out of that property. So that -- I mean, if you redevelop it, you're basically redeveloping the same building and maybe we could deal with some, you know, architectural restrictions on that, but the property will have no development rights. We've completely then shifted them into this one parcel. And we are also -- as part of this application, what we did is we tied that building into this approval and the conditions have language that basically tie that property to that site plan which has this elevation. So, we've done other procedural safeguards via the covenant and basically making sure that it's not ever financially feasible to redevelop that property, but maybe we could do something with the architectural kind of similar to what happened, right? The building was damaged and when it was, you know, I think it was remodeled, right, significantly trying to keep the same architectural character, which I think is what makes the building so special and unique. And we could maybe work with, you know, your...

Commissioner Fernandez: That's what I was going to suggest, if you can just, you know, maybe between first and second reading, have a conversation with staff about whether that would be feasible.

Mr. Navarro: Yeah.

Commissioner Fernandez: Because that has been a request that has come from members of the community. Regarding the park, one of the concerns that I've heard from residents is the demand in a building like this and the Plaza currently have on the community with dogs in the neighborhood. I know that there has been conversations about potentially incorporating a dog run to the park. Just wanted to put that out there once again, if you could, you know, once you have the neighborhood meetings, obviously, the neighbors will decide what they want in that park going forward, but just want to make sure that's still part of the conversation.

Mr. Navarro: Yeah, and I think that was kind of when the Mayor mentioned deeding this over was one of the things that we thought, look, I mean, you know, we would be happy to convey this to the City because I think, obviously, we've tried to knock as many doors as possible and we have had five -- or four or five noticed meetings, and you know, it's --it's -- there have been mention of dog parks. I could tell you children's playgrounds, I guess, and if we're ranking them is at number one. But then there was also in the last 60 days we got a huge interest in pickleball and then we've also had, oh, well, how about like a passive area? And I think you mentioned it, Commissioner, this is going to be the largest recreational area in downtown. I mean, this is a very large property and there's a lot of programming that could go into it. So, it's not a park that could only serve one function, it could serve multiple functions. And I think it's just on how you divide it up.

Commissioner Menendez: If I may interrupt, like I mentioned earlier, I honestly believe this should definitely have children's -- a children's park activated. Because if you want passive, you know, it's technically passive, Ponce Circle Park is a block away. That's a passive park today. On occasion there are events. So -- and there's already a huge passive park there and this is the one opportunity to activate it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right. And I -- I don't disagree with you. I just really want to make sure that we don't have the neighborhood fighting that we've had on other parks. And -- and you know, you have a general design here now, but we may even be able to weave in some appropriately sized trees and stuff to add some more relief from the sun.

Commissioner Menendez: Well, canopy is needed for...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, I mean, so...

Commissioner Menendez: Without a doubt.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, we all can put our hands into the park design and say, can we squeeze that in?

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I mean, I've been working with staff and -- you know, on Biltmore Way, and they're going to come back to us with a landscape design of giving the residents what they've asked for and then do a presentation of cutting in...

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Small trees that will fit right on the sidewalk and provide that shade canopy you want. You know, just because there's limited space doesn't mean we can't have trees.

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah, right.

Commissioner Castro: Yeah, for me -- oh, sorry, sorry.

Commissioner Fernandez: And I visited the site and saw some of the trees that are on site. The amount of shade they're providing is incredible, especially in that park component. I also saw the trees that are on the Almeria side parking lot, and there are some pretty sizable shade trees that I believe would be movable. There are some that are probably not in a condition to be moved and there are others that have two trees growing out of the same base which may not be able to be moved either, but I think there are a few that will be able to provide some shade on the Almeria sidewalk. And I like your idea of possibly having something on the opposite sidewalk as well because there is nothing there right now.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah.

Commissioner Fernandez: That entire block has no shade on the north side of the sidewalk.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, we've fit in narrow trees in the MacFarlane District. We fit them in along, you know, near the library. There's little yellow flowering trees over near Venetian Pool. We have little white flowering trees, white tabs. There's options there, and you'll see them growing up right next to buildings as if you would a palm tree, but now you're getting the benefit of the shade.

Commissioner Fernandez: Right. I don't love the design and I think I've said that before. I think it could be enhanced some. What I would ask is, obviously, your approval for the design is already there. I just want to make sure that the finishes that are put into the building are not finishes you're going to find in, you know, a neighborhood that's not of the caliber of Coral Gables, and possibly enhance that -- the look of that building. I know you're trying to attract a clientele that is a Coral Gables based clientele that will be renting in that building. The outside envelope of the building needs to look that way. So, I would ask that, you know, the materials that are used in building this look like something that fits into this neighborhood with the Plaza, with the Allen Morris building that's coming a couple blocks away, so that it's cohesive with the look of the area.

Mr. Navarro: And I know that the owner's already started looking at that. I know that we've done some things to enhance it. We're going to continue to study it, but I think even if you look at the rendering that we showed this evening compared to the one that we had maybe three months ago, we have come a very long way and the building does look much more of the standard of what you see in Coral Gables, but we will continue to look at that as well.

Commissioner Fernandez: All right. And I appreciate it.

Mr. Navarro: I always know that, you know, having a building that looks like Coral Gables, you know, you -- it's -- it's something that definitely, from a market perspective, you know, it's what gets people to want to rent in Coral Gables.

Commissioner Fernandez: Right.

Mr. Navarro: Yeah.

Commissioner Fernandez: Regarding the drop-off of Amazon, UPS, FedEx, how's that going to work?

Mr. Navarro: So, one thing that we did is -- and I'll show you here if I could share this and get it to work. Devon, I may need your help here. You seem to be an expert. Okay, is this --? Okay, so one of the things that we've done -- I'm not sharing? Oh, I'm sharing. I am sharing, yeah. One of the things that we've done is we have -- oh, wait, this is a rooftop plant.

Commissioner Fernandez: They're going to drop off my drone.

Mr. Navarro: Yeah, that's what we're doing. We have an Amazon. We're preparing for the future. So, our main entrance, if you look -- our main vehicular entrance, if you look to the east side where you have the paseo, it's right next to it. That's the main vehicular entrance for regular cars. We have -- which is always the preference of the City -- included an access to our basement within the alley and that's also for service as well. That's how we intend to kind of manage that and that is one of the things that we worked is to try to incorporate an additional form of access to try to provide those types of services.

Commissioner Fernandez: Okay. Something that I don't think you discussed, what -- what upgrades are being done to the alley?

Mr. Navarro: So, if you look at the little hatched areas in the plan, those are pavers that we are planning on incorporating within the entrance of -- off of Almeria. And then if you look, we have, through our paseo, there's a long run towards the park. We've also proposed to upgrade that with pavers. That way you have the two pedestrian connections into the park are paved, you know, trying to beautify the alley. So, we have proposed to pave the two pedestrian walkways that go

into the alley. As well, that was more of a vehicular, but we're doing it just to beautify it a little bit along Almeria, just make it a little nicer.

Commissioner Fernandez: Alright. Thank you.

Commissioner Castro: Yeah. The park is very, very important to me and when it comes to the park, I'm talking activated, kids. I think it talks about community. It talks about a place that you gather and residential, commercial, it's very nice harmony when it comes to community and the type of residents we have in Coral Gables. When it comes to historical, and correct me if I'm wrong, Doug Ramirez, if they're going to go ahead and demo or they're going to -- I know you're taking the development rights. There's no development rights. But if there's going to be...

Mr. Navarro: There's zero left.

Commissioner Castro: If there's going to be a major remodel, I think it has to go through Historical.

Mr. Navarro: It does. So, any time -- and I don't know if Doug is here.

Commissioner Castro: Yeah.

Mr. Navarro: But I know that because I need to do it every time.

Commissioner Castro: So...

Mr. Navarro: Even at my house, you have to go to Historical to get a determination.

Commissioner Castro: So, even if it's not deemed historical right now, in the case that there is a change in the future, that something's going to happen to that structure, the bank, it has to go through Historical. And if at that moment it qualifies and it has enough criteria to be deemed historical, it will be deemed historical, and obviously, whatever they're proposing wouldn't be allowed. Correct me if I'm wrong.

Deputy Development Services Director Ramirez: Doug Ramirez, Deputy Director of Development Services. So, it will be depending on the scope of work that they're going to do. If they're going to do a full demolition, it has to go to Historic. It will not be approved unless Historic has looked at it.

City Attorney Suárez: Meaning the Historic -- Historical Resources Department (INAUDIBLE)?

Deputy Development Services Director Ramirez: Yes, the Historic Department.

Mr. Navarro: Yeah, I mean, if we're just going to remodel, then no, but any type of major work, especially like demolition or a complete almost, you know, we are gutting the entire building, I think that goes for historical review prior to permit issuance, right, to...?

Deputy Development Services Director Ramirez: It depends on the scope and how much...

Mr. Navarro: Yeah.

Deputy Development Services Director Ramirez: Demolition you are going to do.

Commissioner Castro: Yeah, now...

Deputy Development Services Director Ramirez: We have to handle case by case. We look at the scope.

Commissioner Castro: Now, if we feel really, really strong that we don't want any alterations to that building, which I think might be the sentiment of some of the -- some of the residents there, I don't know if maybe internally we could show it to the Historical Department to see if it meets criteria.

Mayor Lago: I've never seen that in my life.

City Attorney Suárez: So, there's -- there's...

Mayor Lago: I've never -- I mean, I've never seen that before done in any city. I think we should listen to the City Attorney. They have property rights, first and foremost. I've never been on this dais and referred something for historic consideration. Madam City Attorney, will you -- will you provide a little clarity on that?

City Attorney Suárez: So, for a property to be determined or designated as a historic landmark, it would have to go to the Historic Preservation Board and there would have to be an application and then a report done by staff and so that is the process. This Commission cannot make that determination. It would go through the other process for designation.

Commissioner Castro: Okay, perfect. So, I want to -- okay, sorry. I wanted to put into perspective all the information that I've taken in from -- from the information on record and what you're asking for. You have three parcels. What you're asking for is 141 in height. Now, what you first presented was Live Local. With Live Local, you'll be able to go to 190.5. The park won't qualify for that, but the bank and the second parcel, I believe, would.

Mr. Navarro: Correct, the two parcels on Almeria.

Commissioner Castro: So...

Mr. Navarro: Ponce and Almeria.

Commissioner Castro: If you did do Live Local, you wouldn't be giving us a park, most likely. You'll probably be constructing something there, too. I think it's...

Mr. Navarro: Correct.

Commissioner Castro: I think it's something -- I think it's something that I have to say to be able to put it to perspective of whoever's listening, right? Like, let's go make the best choice possible for the community. I want to thank you for listening to the community and listening to the neighbors and reaching out to the neighbors. That's -- that's -- I think that's what we've been asking for from the beginning. And -- and that's it.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Vice Mayor Anderson: (INAUDIBLE). Do you have anything?

Mayor Lago: No, I was going to say, there's two people waiting to speak on Zoom.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay.

Mr. Navarro: Oh, great, okay.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir. First speaker is Aurora Mata.

Mayor Lago: Good evening.

City Attorney Suárez: Mr. Clerk, if they're...

City Clerk Urquia: Yeah.

City Attorney Suárez: Yeah.

Commissioner Castro: They have to be sworn?

City Clerk Urquia: And I'm asking Ms. Mata to go ahead and unmute.

Aurora Mata: Hello, my name is Aurora Mata.

City Clerk Urquia: Ma'am, could I ask you...

Ms. Mata: Yes.

City Clerk Urquia: To please raise your right hand?

Ms. Mata: Yes.

City Attorney Suárez: We need to see her on camera.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, she is on -- she is on camera. Give me one second.

Ms. Mata: That's my right hand.

City Clerk Urquia: Do you swear or affirm the testimony you'll provide today will be the truth and nothing but the truth, ma'am?

Ms. Mata: Yes, I do.

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you.

Ms. Mata: My name is Aurora Mata. I am a recent resident. I am at 1 Andalusia Avenue. And Mr. Vizcarrondo was very kind to bring him and his wife to give a presentation to us at the palace. Many of us were there. We all approved. We all were very happy with -- with the idea of a park, but there's really no park around here. As far as a pickleball court, perhaps only two pickleball courts instead of four might help. And he also assured me that there would be native trees and native plants and flowers so that bees and butterflies could help themselves and help us as well. So, I'm very much in favor of the park. And the people that were there at the presentation were all in favor of the park as well. And I thank him from the bottom of my heart that he thought of donating that to the City. Thank you so very much for the opportunity to speak to you tonight.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Aurora. Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, the next speaker is, I believe, Karelia Carbonell, but she does not have a camera that she could turn on, so I am unable to swear her in.

Mayor Lago: Okay, alright.

Commissioner Menendez: But we can listen.

Commissioner Castro: So, we can allow her to make her public comment. Just keep in mind it's not considered testimony in this case.

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Carbonell.

City Clerk Urquia: Give me one second. Okay.

Karelia Carbonell: Hi there, everyone. Good afternoon. Good evening. My name is Karelia Carbonell. I am president of the Historic Preservation Association. And I want to, you know, I want to say my appreciation for -- or to the developers because at first it was very sad that we were, you know, maybe going to lose a very significant building right at that corner, which is, you know, even though it's -- it's a new iteration of the original, but it's still on the historical footprint and basically very, very close to the original style. And so, I want to thank on behalf of the preservation community that the efforts are there to preserve that building. That is a really, really very important decision. And I hope moving forward, as other Commissioners have mentioned, to consider a designation, and you know, that -- that will definitely in perpetuity protect the building. There are situations like in Palm Beach where developers have promised to save historical buildings and then have, you know, 20 years down the line, the building now is gone because it was not protected. So, again, I thank you for saving that building and it has a really wonderful history, which hopefully, all of you have read, but originally it was designed by Phineas Paist and then it was redeveloped to the very specifics of the original building. So, anyway, thank you and have a wonderful rest of the day.

Commissioner Menendez: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: All right. Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: So, I will entertain a motion.

Commissioner Menendez: I'll move it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll second.

City Attorney Suárez: So, to be clear, is that on E-3? We should do that one first, E-3.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: I can repeat.

Mayor Lago: Go ahead.

Commissioner Castro: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Lago: Next one.

City Attorney Suárez: E-4.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll move it.

Commissioner Menendez: Second.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Lago: Next one.

City Attorney Suárez: So, the next one will be voted on next meeting, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Navarro: Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: I look forward to discussing the park and the programming and everything that the residents want.

Mr. Navarro: And we will be back to you with the commitments that we made and the items we said we'd look at.

Mayor Lago: Perfect.

Commissioner Fernandez: Thank you.

City Commission Meeting

August 27, 2024

Agenda Items E-3, E-4 and E-5 are related - Ordinances of the City Commission amending the Future Land Use Map of the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan and making Zoning District boundary changes for Lots 1 through 9 (130 Almeria Avenue, 152 Almeria Avenue, 160 Almeria Avenue) and Lots 17 through 21, Block 14, Coral Gables Crafts Section (103 Sevilla Avenue) and a resolution of the City Commission approving a Mixed-Use Site Plan and Encroachments for a mixed-used project referred to as 130 Almeria.

Mr. Navarro: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: All right. Congratulations.

Commissioner Fernandez: Thank you so much.