

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item E-2**  
**September 24, 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 Attorney, Cristina Suárez**

**City Manager, Amos Rojas, Jr.**

**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

**Public Speaker(s)**

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Agenda Item E-2 [ a.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission providing for text amendments to the City of Coral Gables official Zoning Code Article 12, “Ambience Standards,” Section 12-100, “Lighting,” and Article 16, “Definitions,” to provide for illumination standards and definitions; providing for repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date. (Sponsored by Vice Mayor Anderson)

Mayor Lago: Following item.

City Attorney Suarez: Mayor, E-2 is an Ordinance of the City Commission providing for text amendments to the City of Coral Gables official Zoning Code Article 12, “Ambience Standards,” Section 12-100, “Lighting,” and Article 16, “Definitions,” to provide for illumination standards and definitions; providing for repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date.

*City Commission Meeting*

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1

*September 24, 2024*

*Agenda Item E-2 – Ordinance providing for text amendments to the City of Coral Gables  
Official zoning code Article 12, “Ambience Standards” Section 12-100*

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. Good morning how are you, good to have you here.

Zoning Official Garcia: Good to be here. Can I have the PowerPoint please. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I was just going to say she's done a lot of work on this, a lot of research.

Zoning Official Garcia: Well, thanks to many interested residents, yes.

Mayor Lago: I'm happy you brought that up, because we've been getting, especially from one resident that lives a few blocks away from here, I had a conversation and emails with them. They've been very engaged on this. It seems like there is no answer to resolve it, and I commend the Vice Mayor for working on this, because this is a big issue that certain people in this community are fighting with and I think that this will bring a lot of relief.

Zoning Official Garcia: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll tell that story really quick.

Mayor Lago: I didn't want to touch the story because I know that you...

Vice Mayor Anderson: I've had calls for months and we went through the process that doesn't meet the code and went out and measured the light candles, okay, so I don't quite understand what a light candle is. You have to have an instrument to read it. You can't go to Home Depot and buy a bulb based upon light candles. So, they went out and measured it, they met the code, but things have changed since then. We now have LED lights; we have Kelvin ratings on lights that are much more extreme than we ever did when we were growing up. And this poor resident is suffering from sleep deprivation and that can have impacts on your health, etc., in many different aspects. So, this is an effort to provide some relief as quickly as possible. I know our ordinary course is to send it to Planning and Zoning first but looking at the timing and we need to provide some relief. Jennifer has worked very hard on this. I want to bring this forward and let's get it moving. We can always tweak between first and second, whether it's a different Lumen rating. I feel very comfortable with 3,000 K on Kelvin, because there's a lot of data behind that and Planning and Zoning can put their touch on it as well, as we drill down on that, but the goal here is, I think, we can get this back for second reading late October maybe, I hope. My Christmas present for the resident. Go ahead and proceed with a technical explanation of all this stuff.

Zoning Official Garcia: So, as discussed at last meeting, we have two areas of our zoning code that deal with lighting. The first one is in each zoning district to conform with the standards of dark skies and the second one is actually Article 12, our ambient standards, which is very minimal right now. It provides some protections for adjacent residential properties, but not a lot to work with. So today its going to be expanding the article. And then also, Chapter A6, which is a Miami-Dade County Code, that deals with parking lot lighting, rooftop lighting, the safety standards that deals with lighting. So, today's amendment deals with the four aspects of encouraging dark skies, right. So, shielding, as far as controlling the amount of light that's going to be exposed to the sky;

*City Commission Meeting*

the color temperature, making sure its more warm tone for evening experience; the lumens or the brightness of those lightbulbs and the timing, allowing some definition of lights after hours that's not needed. So, visions are divided into three areas, the general requirements for both non-residential and residential properties, and then residential properties and then non-residential properties. The general requirements apply to all and would require appropriate spaced bulbs so you don't have too much brightness that might overpower an architectural feature or make it uncomfortable for a pedestrian or temple. Also illuminating the redundant light that you might have on a street; streetlights obviously, they are already there, existing, taking into account the same street lighting when you're providing for light on quiet property; and also requiring the Board of Architects approval for illumination of any building tops of multi-family and mixed-use buildings, so you won't have too much lighting that way Board of Architects can review that ahead of time; and then also to limit the color, the light color temperature at 3,000 kelvin, both in residential areas and also adjacent or abutting residential areas. And the residential requirements are much more lengthy, right. So, eliminating the heights of light poles and the setbacks, according to how high they are in residential properties, and as well as providing lumen maximums. Now, this is what we're going to tweak, I think probably between first and second reading. Right now, it's in the proposed amendment before you today, is based on that document, The Dark Skies Standard example ordinance that the Dark Sky Association has, so it's based off of that, but there's still some more tweaking, some more finessing of those lumens. Basically...unshielded light fixtures which have lower lumens, so it would not allow us much light, and would become partly shielded then you can have more lumens and then when you are fully shielded, you are basically reducing the amount of light, you would be both into the sky and also to the adjacent properties that would allow you to have higher lumens. And then the non-residential requirements would limit the non-residential buildings to have lighting on the ground floor for the pedestrian experience, as well as the building top. A good example of that is the Biltmore. The Biltmore has that very top towers is lit very nicely and also the ground floor to add to the pedestrian experience. And then also, the light reduction after-workhours, so not to for parking lots and for rooftop parking, to not to have excess lighting to dark skies, but also to allow that reduction and that's kind of based off of the Section AC3, in Miami-Dade County Code, that does allow for that, but they don't require that. So that would be based off of whatever they allow per building use. Some building uses you can't, obviously reduce the parking lot lighting, hospitals for example, you want to have that lit all night long, but there are some office uses that they see that would be okay to reduce that lighting. So, we're here for any questions. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, couple things I've learned while drilling down with Jennifer and Dr. Bernal on lighting and some architects regarding lighting, because right now, the top of the buildings are not reviewed on lighting by the Board of Architects and we can see an example of that mistake at the Plaza. The bulbs are too closely together. You really cannot appreciate the quality of the architectural features of the building, as a result of that. That's one of the changes in here that will require those types of building tops to be reviewed by the Board of Architects. I Googled architectural lighting, and you can see some really magnificent architecture highlighted and accented with lighting and it really does take an architect, I think to do that analysis on how to emphasize the beauty of the building. So that is no longer going to be a staff decision on building tops and some people call the Plaza the ring of fire. We want to avoid the ring of fire again. I just

*City Commission Meeting*

don't think it's the look we want for our city, its like billboards, you know. So, the other – I talked to you about spacing and architectural lighting. Here we just have the kelvin rating. The 3,000 kelvin is the most available bulb out there, as Dr. Bernal summarized for us the last time. There were studies that were done on other communities where they put out the lighting ranges between 2,700 and 3,000, and the 3,000 was about where most people landed, and then you have the availability of the fixtures as well that leans on that. The lumens, I'm not an expert on. I defer to staff here to give us some input. I think the Planning and Zoning Board can weigh in on it as well, and if there needs to be some additional tweaks, we can do it before second reading. So, any comments from any of us.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'm glad you brought it up because I went out with some friends on the bay and we were coming back at night and the only building that you can see from the bay at night is The Plaza, and its basically just a bunch of lights. Prior Commissions when that project came up factored in parking, traffic, many other components that have not had a large detrimental impact on neighboring communities, but the biggest concern in that area is the lighting on The Plaza, because its shining into people's homes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, as written, this draft would apply without exception, so the lighting is going to have to be adjusted. Maybe just take out a bulb every other one, that's up to staff to address, but when we have residents unable to sleep at night, because they have an apartment building across the street from them with a 5,000 kelvin light just going through their bedroom window and no matter how much you try to block it with the blinds, it shouldn't be the burden of the resident. We need to take action, and this is the action, I think is going to move it in the right direction.

Commissioner Fernandez: I commend you both for the work that you've put into this. I'll be happy to second it.

Commissioner Menendez: I'm supportive of the legislation. I have a couple of questions just to get clarity. So, in a sense it would be retroactive, its not for new construction, but it will apply to current buildings.

City Attorney Suarez: Well, I think that's one of the issues that we'll work on between first and second reading, since there was some urgency in getting this on the agenda. There are some issues we want to tweak, and we would also want to get the input of Planning and Zoning Board and so, that's something that we'll be looking at.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay. Another just really quick. Another thought would be that just like you can't play in our Central Business District music after certain hours, another thought would be also to say, after whatever the time is for people to have in our CBD restaurants open that lights on tops of buildings at that point need to come off, you know the decorative lights. Just a thought, instead of – it might be a good way to manage it, perhaps.

Zoning Official Garcia: In other cities they do have a curfew that they allow the demition of the lights.

Commissioner Menendez: I think the building that was mentioned, I think those lights are on, if I'm not mistaken, all night, but maybe we have a curfew as to when lights can be on. If those lights are on at 3 and 4 in the morning, do they need to be on at 3 or 4 in the morning, for example, just a thought. The other thing is, I understand that to distinguish between lighting that's decorative and lighting that's perhaps for pedestrian safety, do we distinguish on the kind of lighting or what the purpose is, because perhaps some lighting is necessary to light up an area that otherwise would be dark for pedestrians to walk. If you walk in Coral Gables without good lighting, its treacherous at night sometimes. That's something for just you all to look at or consider. The other part is for second reading, not now, but second reading, could you let me know or let us know what, I guess its kelvin, is for the streetlights on LeJeune and Ponce.

Zoning Official Garcia: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Because if we have streetlights that are a certain strength of light and that's something to consider because I have a feeling that those lights, probably can't do anything about it, but there's a certain level of intensity as well. I'd love to get a bigger picture as to what all the lighting is, the impact.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Let me help you out there a little bit, because I understand the problem. Color is kelvin, intensity is lumens, you know, 100-watt bulb or 60-watt bulb, but if you have all different colors going down a street, then its going to look like, as Dr. Bernal called it, a carnival.

Commissioner Menendez: So, the Vice Mayor is right, so could you let me know about kelvin and lumens.

Zoning Official Garcia: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: For instance, on top of The Plaza, it's the number of bulbs because the more bulbs you have, the more lumens are up there. Do you need all those bulbs in there. I know they are dimmable. They might be dimmable, just put a dimmer switch in, it could be that simple.

Commissioner Menendez: And then finally, what's the impact on the Biltmore?

Zoning Official Garcia: No impact. I was just showing an example of the top of the building and the ground floor of the building.

Commissioner Menendez: People really, I think, love the way the Biltmore is lit up at night, the different colors for different themes, like we do with City Hall, but its sort of an iconic image and I just wanted to ask if there was any impact to the Biltmore.

Zoning Official Garcia: No, no. We've heard the same thing, it's a very good example of how to light up buildings.

Commissioner Menendez: Perfect. I'm supportive of the legislation. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I don't know if I moved it. I already had a second, so I'll move it.

City Clerk Urquia: Sorry, who seconded.

Commissioner Fernandez: I did.

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you, sir.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.