

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item G-8**  
**January 11, 2022**  
**City Commission Chambers**  
**405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

**City Commission**

**Mayor Vince Lago**

**Vice Mayor Michael Mena**

**Commissioner Rhonda Anderson**

**Commissioner Jorge Fors**

**Commissioner Kirk Menendez**

**City Staff**

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias**

**City Attorney, Miriam Ramos**

**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

**Public Works Director, Hermes Diaz**

**Public Speaker(s)**

**Jessica Keller**

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Agenda Item G-8 [Start: 4:49 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission supporting the concept of Youth Zones and directing the City Manager to take appropriate action to implement the concept. (Sponsored by Commissioner Fors, Jr.)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto G-8 – Commissioner Fors.

Commissioner Fors: Thank you Mayor. I think Hermes has a brief presentation or overview.

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct. If you bear with me, we do have a presentation – Billy. Thank you again, Hermes Diaz, Public Works Director. Upon the initiative of Commissioner Fors, we actually took a look at the concept of youth zones for improvements around parks and playgrounds and open areas. So, the idea is for us to look into the potential for signage, traffic calming, speed limit reductions and sidewalks of certain areas that are likely to get children involved. Right now, we have 63 parks and open spaces within the limits of Coral Gables. These parks are playgrounds, sport fields, some of them are pet-friendly and walking path. Around those 63, right now we have 12 parks that have playgrounds or fields. There are another two that are in  
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the works. So, the idea is to concentrate on those, which are the ones that personally get the most traffic, especially with kids; and we will start with the easy stuff, right. Random signage on the park zones, and that's just a sample of an idea. It doesn't have to be a sign like that, and that's something that we can, once we come up with a more developed concept, we can share for it to be approved, but the idea is for us to be placing two signs on each street fronting entrances in the parks. The design is internally; the cost of this would be nominal. So, it's something that we can do fairly quickly at a relatively low cost, and will bring attention that this area is different, be careful, there are kids. You see that all the time, that sometimes people take it upon themselves to do things like that and this will kind of this will make that official in a way. The next thing we started looking into is the potential for traffic calming. We found that 5 out of the 63 parks, they already have a traffic calming as part of the regular process. So again, concentrated on the 12 to 14 calming that are playgrounds or fields, I think we propose that maybe we look into whether those areas will qualify for traffic calming and maybe potentially expedite that. There are not that many. We are looking at about 14 of them, as opposed to continue to go by zones, maybe those can kind of be taken away and do those a little quicker, if that's something that we find that it qualifies and that its warranted. And we are looking at speed tables, speed cushions, roundabouts probably not, but its one of the options if we find that it's warranted in the vicinity. Speed limit reduction is something that we'll like to negotiate with the county, whether that's something that they will entertain, to go down further to 20 miles per hour in the vicinity of the parks, and those are conversations that we need to have with them as to what's the manner and whether that's something that they are willing to entertain. And finally, sidewalks, this is something that will correlate with the Master Plan that Fred was presenting earlier. Through the Community Recreation Master Plan there were multiple meetings, and one of the things that keep coming up is access to some of these parks and open spaces. So, extending incomplete sidewalks, and this will probably be a longer term, because obviously funding and it may well be that some of it will get done as part of the Parks Master Plan down the line, but I think its something that is worth exploring extending sidewalks; and this is just an idea, within a half-a-mile radius make sure there is a ten-minute walk. We actually did a sidewalk gap study in a way, I keep calling it a study, so it's a little too much, we came up with a map basically, we'll map all the sidewalk gaps, so we can easily identify where we have those areas that are necessary. And one of the things that we could consider is, right now unless you are on a collector street, the abutting property owners are responsible for paying half of the cost of any new sidewalks, so maybe if you consider it a youth zone, then we can consider it for the city to fund the whole thing ourselves. This is just a memorialization of some of the stuff. We have the sidewalk gap inventory on GIS, traffic calming data collection. We have the maps, the parks located in GIS. So, we have a lot of information. And then this is basically one of the things that we got, which I think is very useful, we were actually surprised about – I was under the impression there would be more sidewalk gaps that we found, and one of the things that we saw is basically, the red are the sidewalk gaps that we have, the green is where we have sidewalks on both sides, and then the other color you may have sidewalks on one side or the other. So, we are actually doing a lot better sidewalk-wise than I thought we were. So that was surprising to me, but I think that's a very useful tool that came out of this exercise. I'm done.

Commissioner Fors: Thank you Hermes. I've explained many times what youth zones are, what the vision is for them; special treatment of areas that experience high youth traffic, Youth Center  
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activities, but are not a school, because if they were a school, we wouldn't be having this conversation because they would be a school zone. The biggest thing I want to emphasize, and I keep on reiterating and Hermes definitely has it already. He already picked it up loud and clear about what I want to share with my colleagues is that the initiative is to create youth zones which are going to reduce speed limits, sidewalks, speed tables. Most likely many of us up here won't even be around by the time they are established. So, I want to keep it simple at first and back up into it. We are going to identify the three places where it makes the most sense, the Youth Center is one of them, because it's the Youth Center, it also has the library on the other side, and we are going to label them Youth Zones and slap signage to that effect in that area. Later, instead of trying to create a youth zone which is a place with lower speed limits, we are going to approach the county or whoever we need to and be requesting reduction of speed in our youth zones, not we want to create a youth zone where its going to be reduced speed. Now we have youth zones, we want to consider reducing the speed there internally, adding sidewalks there, whatever we may think is appropriate, and Hermes is exactly correct, in many cases it will fall right into place with traffic calming measures that are already planned in some cases. But we want to go ahead and label or I think the idea is to label those zones right off the bat and they won't merely be labels. The type of signage that we are considering was something that was suggested by Chief Hudak, something similar they use in Pinecrest, which in his estimation has been quite affective, but without changing any speed limit, we can internally set policies to and in addition to that branding more strictly enforce speeding with a higher police presence during key hours of the day for those locations, and there without having to get any county approval without having to wait for that process which, by the way we will welcome the result of that process, and pursue it as well, but without having to even wait for all that, we can potentially see a difference in those areas where we know for a fact there are a lot of children and families coming in and out, more so than let's say a restaurant or a dry cleaner. It's a place where we have identified that a lot of children and families walk. I want to keep it simple at first and back up into it, and if school zones evolve into something, I think the ultimate goal would be an actual legal zone like a school zone. If youth zones eventually evolve into that, that's fantastic and I'll continue working on that, but they might not all look the same, except for the branding in terms of what measures are implemented, and more importantly, we are going to try to get it rolling sooner than later, in at least these three specific areas, which I don't think we've finalized which three areas. I know the Youth Center is one of them, or have we?

Public Works Director Diaz: I think we have 12 parks that have playgrounds or fields. So, I think we can concentrate on those. We can start already, with your permission to mapping where the signs would be. Maybe we can get like a sample sign, I'm sorry, go ahead.

Commissioner Menendez: I'm sorry, I just want to comment. I think this is wonderful and hopefully at some point, you said we may not be around, I'm not that old, but I'm working on it. Hopefully this is something that takes off those other cities adopt, so we are again leading the way. With regards to the Youth Center, back in the early 90's when they were talking about creating the current Youth Center, that portion of Riviera between University and Segovia, the city was talking about actually, and I am not in favor of it, but they were actually thinking of closing Riviera, that portion of it, so that kids could walk back and forth from the Library to the Youth Center in a safe fashion. University Drive where the Youth Center is, there is a crosswalk with flashers, if you push

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the button, but that's really taking your life in your own hands. Better measures are needed, and I honestly believe you are taking the city in the right direction. I think it's wonderful.

Commissioner Fors: Thank you Commissioner. And by the way Hermes, I think its on its face saying, okay, we are going to do all the parks with playgrounds, make sense, but don't hesitate to only focus on three at first, and we'll see how it goes, and then expand to the others.

Public Works Director Diaz: Absolutely. We'll do that.

Commissioner Anderson: Great project. I commend you for doing it. Just a couple of comments. When I had my conversation with Mayor Cava, she was very open to adjusting the speed limits, we just need to present it. And the thought of having, I'll defer to the City Attorney on this, whether or not we could have like a fine doubling zone, or you put those signs up that tell you what your speed limit is. Just something to ponder.

Commissioner Fors: Yes. And I think when you actually think about the doubling of fines is probably when it starts to become a legal zone like a school zone, which I think is definitely something to aspire to.

Commissioner Anderson: Right.

Commissioner Fors: Maybe not at every single park, maybe yes, I don't know.

Public Works Director Diaz: I believe its in the Florida Statutes involved in that.

City Attorney Ramos: We need to include our legislative team on that and the county.

Commissioner Anderson: Fantastic.

Mayor Lago: Good work Commissioner. Thank you. Mr. Diaz, I appreciate it.

Commissioner Fors: Good job.

Mayor Lago: Moving on to City Manager items.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor really quick. That was a resolution.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Commissioner Fors: Oh, yes.

City Clerk Urquia: We do have a member of the public requesting to speak on this, and I also received a e-comment on this as well. So, a member of the public is Ms. Jessica Keller.

Ms. Keller: Hi there. Good afternoon, my name is Jessica Keller and I'm a resident of Coral Gables. I'm completely supportive of this initiative, especially the traffic calming without warrants and the funding of sidewalks in the youth zones. And as Commissioner Fors mentioned, start small – three locations. I'd like to recommend Venetia Park, which was recently renamed, I forget what its called now, but I attended the renaming event. It's located between Venetia Terrace and Venetia Avenue. It would be a great place to consider starting. There are no sidewalks on Venetia Terrace and the residents must walk in the street, it's a high-volume narrow street in order to access the park. Good luck with your initiative. Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: And the public comment was received from Ms. Deborah Swain. She said, thank you Commissioner Fors for proposing youth zones. As an advocate for safe mobility for all users of city public rights-of-way. I strongly support the implementation of the features recommended, signage, reduce speed limits and sidewalks. I also urge the City Commission to apply the youth zone features to adequately expanded area around schools and parks of distance that will provide a meaningful beneficial impact to pedestrians in those areas. That's it.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. I'll entertain a motion.

Commissioner Fors: I'll move it.

Commissioner Menendez: I'll second.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Fors: Yes

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Lago: Great work. Thank you.