

CITY OF CORAL GABLES
Economic Development Board
Strategic Planning Workshop
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, November 8, 2017, 3:00 p.m.
2121 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Suite 720, Coral Gables, Florida 33134

EDB MEMBERS	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	COMMISSIONERS
	'18	'18	'18	'18	'18	'18	'18	'18	'18	'17	'17	'17	
Carolina Rendeiro										X	P		Mayor Raúl Valdés-Fauli
Olga Ramudo, Chair										X	P		Commissioner Michael Mena
Stuart McGregor										X	P		Vice Mayor Pat Keon
June Morris										X	P		Commissioner Vince Lago
Elizabeth Patino										X	P		Commissioner Frank Quesada

A = Absent E = Excused Absence P = Present X = No Meeting Ph = Present by Phone - =Former Board Member

STAFF AND GUESTS:

Javier Betancourt, Director, Economic Development Department
Leonard Roberts, Assistant Director, Economic Development Department
Belkys Perez, Marketing Specialist, Economic Development Department
Francesca Valdes, Business Development Marketing Specialist, Economic Development Dept.
Leticia Perez, International Business Development Coordinator, Economic Development Dept.
Mariana Price, Administrative Assistant, Economic Development Department

Meeting Motion Summary:

A motion to approve the minutes of the August 24, 2017 meeting passed unanimously.

Mrs. Ramudo brought the meeting to order at 3:11 p.m.

Review of the August meeting minutes (Action)

Mrs. Rendeiro made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 24, 2017 Board meeting.
Mr. McGregor seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Welcome & Overview of EDB Purpose, Governance & Protocol

Mrs. Ramudo welcomed the board to the Strategic Planning Workshop. Mr. Betancourt presented all employees of the department and reviewed the purpose of the workshop. He stated the purpose of the Economic Development Board is to “advise the City Commission on matters affecting the Coral Gables economy. They also serve as sounding board for our department, for joint venture developments, city initiatives and improvement efforts, and provide a corporate perspective on government regulations and procedures.” He also

informed the members that this would be the opportunity to discuss whether the current meeting schedule works for everyone.

Overview & Status of Economic Development Projects / Strategic Goals and Opportunities

Mr. Betancourt gave a quick overview of the projects and initiatives of the department. He explained the functions of the department, including managing the city's assets, marketing, publications, and advertising events, including the Downtown Event Series, execution of a downtown retail strategy, and finally, retail and corporate recruitment. The downtown retail strategy, Mr. Betancourt explained, outlines what kinds of retailers would likely succeed in the City, as well as what to do with existing buildings. Two workshops have already been held, the first to assist merchants with how to properly use visual merchandising to increase sales, and the second workshop focused on digital marketing and social media.

Mr. Betancourt explained that because of the streetscape projects, the department has spent a lot of time marketing. While the primary focus of Economic Development is to attract businesses, the streetscape project temporarily shifted its focus to market to consumers to attract them to downtown merchants. The department must now begin to refocus back to business recruitment. There is a special assessment in downtown collected by the Coral Gables Business Improvement District (BID), which is supposed to be used to market the downtown area to consumers.

Open Discussion / Priorities and Recommendations

Board members took turns sharing ideas of what they thought would improve the economic development of the City of Coral Gables. Mrs. Morris made a point that Coral Gables needs to be a place where one can live, work, and play. She said this meant getting people to live downtown which would encourage them to walk everywhere. Mrs. Morris also said that Coral Gables should be a walkable city and create something where people want to be.

Mr. Betancourt added that Economic Development brought Freebee to the City, which has been very well-received. The City has received mostly positive feedback with the only negative feedback being that it doesn't expand far enough in terms of distance or hours of operation.

Another point Mrs. Morris brought up was the importance of making public education accessible and desirable for Coral Gables' own residents. She and Mr. McGregor recalled that when they attended Coral Gables High School it was a top-rated school, but has now slipped and become a "C-school." Mrs. Ramudo added that the exterior appearance of the schools should also be improved.

Mrs. Patino offered that there should be a stronger emphasis on social media for marketing the City, which Mr. McGregor supported. Mrs. Rendeiro pointed out that the City of Coral Gables should take advantage of the Strategic Forum, a three-day long conference which happens every year at the Biltmore Hotel. The event brings in top ministers and decision-makers from around the world here and their purpose is to discuss private and public policy

decision-making, including economic development. She stressed the magnitude of this missed opportunity for the City, and encouraged having a presence at this conference. Ms. Rendeiro also recommended that the department meet with the Director of Global Affairs at the University of Miami, Dr. Assad.

Mrs. Ramudo suggested that a travel budget be created for travel missions, and Mrs. Rendeiro recalled a time when ten thousand dollars was set aside every year for international outreach. Regarding business startups in Coral Gables, Mrs. Rendeiro emphasized the importance of not neglecting them and making sure they remain in the Gables once they move beyond their incubators, for example. Pipeline, Quest, Regus, OfficeItch, WeWork, and Global Workspace Association (GWA), all reside in Coral Gables.

Mrs. Morris stated the importance of the City working with potential companies and not disincentivizing them from opening business through code restrictions and zoning obstacles.

Members also discussed the possibility of bringing a high-profile event to attract spectators to Coral Gables, which would help to make the city's name more well-known. This could coincide with or follow an entrepreneurship conference-themed weekend. The idea of introducing space for artists to display their work, including artists in residence spaces to encourage their craft at subsidized rates was also encouraged by the members.

As a result of this discussion, the following focus areas for the economic development of the City were recommended by the board:

- Create storefront guidelines
- Build a walkable city
 - Attract residents and workers to downtown
 - Include transportation Options
- Sears redevelopment opportunity
- Public Schools
- University of Miami Partnerships
- Improve Digital Marketing, Social Media, and Branding
- Travel Missions for recruitment
- Ability to develop / zoning code
- Maintain Coral Gables brand, but be open to change
- Art Park at Ponce Circle Park
- Entrepreneurship weekend; tied to
- An International & Latin Music conference and festival
- Artist Space
- Alley Maintenance

After voting for the most important goals, the following focus areas were selected:

1. Digital Marketing, Social Media, and Branding (3 votes)
2. Entrepreneurship weekend/Int'l & Latin Music Conference & Festival (2 votes)
3. Travel missions for recruitment (1 vote)
4. UM Partnerships (1 vote)
5. Storefront guidelines (1 vote)
6. Building a walkable city (attracting residents, workers & transportation focus) (1 vote)

Items 3-6 were listed in no particular order.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:48 p.m.
Respectfully submitted,

Mariana Price, Administrative Assistant - Economic Development Department