

**Menendez, Jill**

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**From:** Alexandra Szczupak <noreply@adv.actionnetwork.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 26, 2025 8:57 PM  
**To:** Planning  
**Subject:** VOTE NO July 2nd MX-3 Overlay and Up-Zoning

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

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Planning City Planning,

Dear Mayor Lago, Vice-Mayor Anderson, Commissioners, and Commissioner Regalado,

I am writing on behalf of my family and many Riviera & South Gables neighbors who will also contact you. We urge you to VOTE “NO” to the proposed University Station Rapid Transit Overlay and associated up-zonings that convert the following low-rise parcels from MX-1 (≈ 45 ft / 3.5 stories) to MX-3 (≈ 190 ft / 14 stories + bonuses):

1150 South Dixie Highway

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1250 South Dixie Highway (site of \*The Mark\*—already denied a MX-2 jump in 2024)

1320 South Dixie Highway

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Although not explicitly named, the adjacent parcel at 6100 Caballero Boulevard (purchased by Fortune International for \$37.5 million) will almost certainly be granted equal height rights if this overlay is approved. The damage this would cause to the character, safety, environment, and livability of our neighborhood is profound—and irreversible.

#### 1. A 233% Height Increase in a Low-Rise, Residential Area

These parcels are nestled between quiet single-family homes, low-density multifamily units, and the sensitive Mahi Canal. The leap from MX1 (≈45 ft) to MX3 (≈190 ft) would allow developers to build beyond 13 stories, with additional height possible through so-called Mediterranean design and TDR (Transfer of Development Rights) bonuses.

The Mark, at 1250 S. Dixie, previously failed to secure MX3 upzoning. So why now propose an overlay to rezone not only that lot, but an entire corridor? This would open the door for Gables Waterway—located just across the canal—to build two towers (already proposed at 13 and 9 stories) where just 3-4 stories are currently permitted.

We are not opposed to smart development. We are opposed to unrestrained vertical sprawl in an area zoned to remain moderate, especially one so close to historic, residential, and ecological assets.

## 2. This Violates the Promises You Made

Our elected officials pledged to protect us from exactly this kind of overreach:

Vice-Mayor Rhonda Anderson: “Dedicated to representing the interests of the residents and curbing over-development.”

Mayor Vince Lago: “I’ve worked hard to protect Coral Gables from overdevelopment... I’ve stood against high-density projects that don’t fit our community.”

Commissioner Richard Lara: “My goal is to preserve the uniqueness of our City Beautiful by fighting against overdevelopment.”

These upzonings go directly against those pledges. In fact, many of us heard Vice-Mayor Anderson tell residents directly, “I will vote the way the residents want.” We are now calling on you to keep that promise.

## 3. A Direct Threat to an Endangered Species Habitat

The Mahi Canal, also known as the Coral Gables Waterway, is far more than a scenic backdrop — it is an ecologically vital, federally and state-recognized Manatee Protection Zone and Warm-Water Aggregation Area. Each winter, a large number of manatees seek refuge in its warmer waters, feeding on seagrass and raising their calves in peace.

The proposed construction of two 13-story towers along its banks threatens this fragile habitat in multiple ways. Blocking sunlight with tall structures will cause seagrass to die, water to cool, and manatees to vanish — or die. This isn’t speculation; it is a documented manatee habitat, and disruption without environmental review is not only reckless but potentially illegal under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and Endangered Species Act.

The threat doesn’t end with shadows. A 500-car podium or underground garage means months of pile-driving, constant noise, and silt disruption, along with the risk of fuel or

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And the danger does not stop once construction is complete. Increased boat traffic from hundreds of new luxury units — many with waterfront access — will bring motorized watercraft into the same calm, shallow refuge manatees depend on for survival. These slow-moving mammals are extremely vulnerable to boat strikes, which are a leading cause of manatee injury and death in Florida. Turning a quiet canal into a boating corridor will make it unsafe and uninhabitable for one of our most iconic and protected species.

Despite all this, no comprehensive environmental impact study has been publicly disclosed or required. The risks to manatees, seagrass, and downstream ecosystems are too great to ignore. Coral Gables must act as a steward of this unique habitat — not as the agent of its destruction.

#### 4. County-Level Pressure and Overdevelopment Agenda

We are also concerned by the ongoing role of County Commissioner Raquel Regalado, who has become one of the most vocal champions of aggressive upzoning around transit hubs—even when it runs counter to neighborhood preservation. Commissioner Regalado has repeatedly promoted the expansion of Rapid Transit Zone (RTZ) policies that override municipal codes in the name of density. In public forums and interviews, she has stated that cities like Coral Gables need to be more “flexible” and “accept” higher density near stations, suggesting that communities resisting this are “obstacles to regional growth.” But growth at all costs is not sustainable—especially when it threatens federally protected habitats and permanently alters the character of single-family neighborhoods.

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#### 5. Infrastructure, Traffic & Safety Are Already Strained

Traffic: South Dixie, Caballero Blvd, Madruga Avenue, and Red Road are already choked with congestion. This overlay could bring ≈1,600 new residents only considering The Mark as if it reaches 8 floors as previously requested and denied and Gables Waterways (not considering the other addresses on the University Rapid Transit Overlay) with hundreds of additional cars. And yet, no traffic impact study has been required because the site sits within

¼ mile of a Metrorail stop—a legal loophole that does not reflect lived reality. In fact, no one that will live on those two luxury developments will use the Metrorail, as both projects are securing a very large number of garage parking spots.

Sewage and Stormwater: Our neighborhood has already experienced stormwater backups and sewer strain. How will the system handle dozens of new floors, retail, and hundreds of units? The city has not studied this.

Emergency Services: Coral Gables firefighters have testified publicly that staffing has not increased despite the city approving project after project. They have technical difficulties handling high rise buildings. Response times are already at risk—and this overlay adds more fuel to the fire.

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This practice benefits outside developers at the expense of residents. It’s not just bad planning—it’s unjust.

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This overlay is not just about The Mark or a few parcels on U.S. 1. It paves the way for a massive luxury project on the banks of a federally protected manatee canal.

Once this precedent is set, there is no turning back.

## 8. Timing Undermines Transparency and Participation

It is deeply troubling that a proposal of this magnitude is scheduled for public hearing on July 2nd, in the middle of summer vacation and just two days before the Fourth of July holiday, when many families are traveling or unavailable. Whether intentional or not, this timing severely limits resident participation in a decision that will permanently affect our neighborhood’s future. If the City truly values public input, this item must be deferred to a later

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### Our Requests

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Alexandra Szczupak  
a.aserind@gmail.com

6304 caballero Blvd  
Coral Gables, Florida 33146

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**Sent:** Friday, June 27, 2025 1:53 PM  
**To:** Planning  
**Subject:** VOTE NO July 2nd MX-3 Overlay and Up-Zoning

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
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Betty Mortenson

[pinesdavis@bellsouth.net](mailto:pinesdavis@bellsouth.net)

1218 Aduana Avenue  
Coral Gables, Florida 33146

## Menendez, Jill

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**From:** Carlos Alarcon <noreply@adv.actionnetwork.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 26, 2025 7:45 PM  
**To:** Planning  
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Carlos Alarcon  
tarregamon@gmail.com

6627 Tarrega Street  
Coral Gables, Florida 33146

## Menendez, Jill

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**From:** Carmen Ortizbutcher MD <noreply@adv.actionnetwork.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 26, 2025 1:31 AM  
**To:** Planning  
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#### In Closing

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Please prove that our city leaders still listen. Please vote no on this overlay and keep your campaign promises. Preserve our zoning, our neighborhood, our manatees, and our voice.

Thank you for your service. I look forward to your written response on how you intend to vote.

Please submit this as a written comment for the July 2nd hearing and read it aloud during the meeting.

Carmen Ortizbutcher MD  
islandclinic@yahoo.com

6305 Caballero blvd  
Coral gables, Florida 33146



## Menendez, Jill

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**From:** Cathy Burnweit <noreply@adv.actionnetwork.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 26, 2025 4:01 PM  
**To:** Planning  
**Subject:** VOTE NO July 2nd MX-3 Overlay and Up-Zoning

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

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Planning City Planning,

Dear Mayor Lago, Vice-Mayor Anderson, Commissioners, and Commissioner Regalado,

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1250 South Dixie Highway (site of \*The Mark\*—already denied a MX-2 jump in 2024)

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### 1. A 233% Height Increase in a Low-Rise, Residential Area

These parcels are nestled between quiet single-family homes, low-density multifamily units, and the sensitive Mahi Canal. The leap from MX1 (≈45 ft) to MX3 (≈190 ft) would allow developers to build beyond 13 stories, with additional height possible through so-called Mediterranean design and TDR (Transfer of Development Rights) bonuses.

The Mark, at 1250 S. Dixie, previously failed to secure MX3 upzoning. So why now propose an overlay to rezone not only that lot, but an entire corridor? This would open the door for Gables Waterway—located just across the canal—to build two towers (already proposed at 13 and 9 stories) where just 3-4 stories are currently permitted.

We are not opposed to smart development. We are opposed to unrestrained vertical sprawl in an area zoned to remain moderate, especially one so close to historic, residential, and ecological assets.

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Cathy Burnweit  
cburnweit@aol.com

6304 Caballero Blvd  
Coral Gables, Florida 33146

## Menendez, Jill

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**From:** Cesar Carvalho <noreply@adv.actionnetwork.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 26, 2025 11:05 AM  
**To:** Planning  
**Subject:** VOTE NO July 2nd MX-3 Overlay and Up-Zoning

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

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Cesar Carvalho  
cesarluisbraga@gmail.com

6308 Caballero Blvd  
Coral Gables, Florida 33146

## Menendez, Jill

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**From:** Denise Barros <dedinba@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 24, 2025 8:49 PM  
**To:** Lago, Vince; Anderson, Rhonda; Fernandez, Ariel; Castro, Melissa; Lara, Richard; district7@miamidade.gov  
**Cc:** Planning; City Clerk  
**Subject:** VOTE NO to July 2 MX-3 Overlay and Up-Zoning Changes (University Station / Caballero Blvd Area) and KEEP your campaign promises

**CAUTION: External Sender. Please do not click on links or open attachments from senders you do not trust.**

Dear Mayor Lago, Vice-Mayor Anderson, Commissioners, and Commissioner Regalado,

My name is Denise Carvalho, and I live at 6308 Caballero Blvd, Coral Gables, 33146. I am writing on behalf of my family and many Riviera & South Gables neighbors who will also contact you. We urge you to VOTE “NO” to the proposed University Station Rapid Transit Overlay and associated up-zonings that convert the following low-rise parcels from MX-1 (≈ 45 ft / 3.5 stories) to MX-3 (≈ 190 ft / 14 stories + bonuses):

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But Mrs Regalado, on her 2025 campaign website, states that she is committed to advocating for “responsible urban planning” and “defense of our natural resources”. She also states that she leads the fight to protect Biscayne Bay.

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Thank you for your service. I look forward to your written response on how you intend to vote.

Please add this as a written comment to the July 2nd hearing.

Best regards, Denise

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

## Menendez, Jill

---

**From:** Eric Aserlind <noreply@adv.actionnetwork.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 26, 2025 4:59 PM  
**To:** Planning  
**Subject:** VOTE NO July 2nd MX-3 Overlay and Up-Zoning

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

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Eric Aserlind

easerlind@gmail.com

6304 Caballero blvd  
Coral gables , Florida 33146

## Menendez, Jill

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**From:** Gigi Citarella <noreply@adv.actionnetwork.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 27, 2025 1:15 PM  
**To:** Planning  
**Subject:** VOTE NO July 2nd MX-3 Overlay and Up-Zoning

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

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[gigicitarella@yahoo.com](mailto:gigicitarella@yahoo.com)

1225 Aduana Avenue  
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## Menendez, Jill

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**From:** Jorge Pereira <noreply@adv.actionnetwork.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 26, 2025 8:52 AM  
**To:** Planning  
**Subject:** VOTE NO July 2nd MX-3 Overlay and Up-Zoning

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
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Jorge Pereira

japereira@bellsouth.net



807 South Alhambra Circle  
Coral Gables, Florida 33146

## Menendez, Jill

---

**From:** Lisa Pereira <noreply@adv.actionnetwork.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 26, 2025 1:30 PM  
**To:** Planning  
**Subject:** VOTE NO July 2nd MX-3 Overlay and Up-Zoning

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

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Lisa Pereira

lfpereira@bellsouth.net

807 South Alhambra Circle  
Coral gables , Florida 33146

## Menendez, Jill

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**From:** Nancy Del Pozzo <noreply@adv.actionnetwork.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 26, 2025 7:44 PM  
**To:** Planning  
**Subject:** VOTE NO July 2nd MX-3 Overlay and Up-Zoning

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

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Nancy Del Pozzo

nancydelpozzo@gmail.com

6627 Tarrega Street  
Coral Gables, Florida 33146

## Menendez, Jill

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**From:** Siena Devine Guzmán <noreply@adv.actionnetwork.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 26, 2025 8:39 AM  
**To:** Planning  
**Subject:** VOTE NO July 2nd MX-3 Overlay and Up-Zoning

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

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Siena Devine Guzmán

sienadg@icloud.com

927 Hardee Rd  
Coral Gables , Florida 33146

## Menendez, Jill

---

**From:** Tracy Devine Guzmán <noreply@adv.actionnetwork.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 25, 2025 11:07 PM  
**To:** Planning  
**Subject:** VOTE NO July 2nd MX-3 Overlay and Up-Zoning

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

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We are not opposed to smart development. We are opposed to unrestrained vertical sprawl in an area zoned to remain moderate, especially one so close to historic, residential, and ecological assets.

## 2. This Violates the Promises You Made

Our elected officials pledged to protect us from exactly this kind of overreach:

Vice-Mayor Rhonda Anderson: “Dedicated to representing the interests of the residents and curbing over-development.”

Mayor Vince Lago: “I’ve worked hard to protect Coral Gables from overdevelopment... I’ve stood against high-density projects that don’t fit our community.”

Commissioner Richard Lara: “My goal is to preserve the uniqueness of our City Beautiful by fighting against overdevelopment.”

These upzonings go directly against those pledges. In fact, many of us heard Vice-Mayor Anderson tell residents directly, “I will vote the way the residents want.” We are now calling on you to keep that promise.

## 3. A Direct Threat to an Endangered Species Habitat

The Mahi Canal, also known as the Coral Gables Waterway, is far more than a scenic backdrop — it is an ecologically vital, federally and state-recognized Manatee Protection Zone and Warm-Water Aggregation Area. Each winter, a large number of manatees seek refuge in its warmer waters, feeding on seagrass and raising their calves in peace.

The proposed construction of two 13-story towers along its banks threatens this fragile habitat in multiple ways. Blocking sunlight with tall structures will cause seagrass to die, water to cool, and manatees to vanish — or die. This isn’t speculation; it is a documented manatee habitat, and disruption without environmental review is not only reckless but potentially illegal under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and Endangered Species Act.

The threat doesn’t end with shadows. A 500-car podium or underground garage means months of pile-driving, constant noise, and silt disruption, along with the risk of fuel or

chemical seepage entering the canal. Since the Mahi Canal flows directly into Biscayne Bay, a federally protected marine ecosystem, any contamination — whether from stormwater runoff, debris, or spills — becomes a regional environmental hazard.

And the danger does not stop once construction is complete. Increased boat traffic from hundreds of new luxury units — many with waterfront access — will bring motorized watercraft into the same calm, shallow refuge manatees depend on for survival. These slow-moving mammals are extremely vulnerable to boat strikes, which are a leading cause of manatee injury and death in Florida. Turning a quiet canal into a boating corridor will make it unsafe and uninhabitable for one of our most iconic and protected species.

Despite all this, no comprehensive environmental impact study has been publicly disclosed or required. The risks to manatees, seagrass, and downstream ecosystems are too great to ignore. Coral Gables must act as a steward of this unique habitat — not as the agent of its destruction.

#### 4. County-Level Pressure and Overdevelopment Agenda

We are also concerned by the ongoing role of County Commissioner Raquel Regalado, who has become one of the most vocal champions of aggressive upzoning around transit hubs—even when it runs counter to neighborhood preservation. Commissioner Regalado has repeatedly promoted the expansion of Rapid Transit Zone (RTZ) policies that override municipal codes in the name of density. In public forums and interviews, she has stated that cities like Coral Gables need to be more “flexible” and “accept” higher density near stations, suggesting that communities resisting this are “obstacles to regional growth.” But growth at all costs is not sustainable—especially when it threatens federally protected habitats and permanently alters the character of single-family neighborhoods.

Coral Gables has its own building code and planning principles for a reason. We expect our elected leaders—not county pressure—to decide what is right for Coral Gables residents.

#### 5. Infrastructure, Traffic & Safety Are Already Strained

Traffic: South Dixie, Caballero Blvd, Madruga Avenue, and Red Road are already choked with congestion. This overlay could bring ≈1,600 new residents only considering The Mark as if it reaches 8 floors as previously requested and denied and Gables Waterways (not considering the other addresses on the University Rapid Transit Overlay) with hundreds of additional cars. And yet, no traffic impact study has been required because the site sits within

¼ mile of a Metrorail stop—a legal loophole that does not reflect lived reality. In fact, no one that will live on those two luxury developments will use the Metrorail, as both projects are securing a very large number of garage parking spots.

Sewage and Stormwater: Our neighborhood has already experienced stormwater backups and sewer strain. How will the system handle dozens of new floors, retail, and hundreds of units? The city has not studied this.

Emergency Services: Coral Gables firefighters have testified publicly that staffing has not increased despite the city approving project after project. They have technical difficulties handling high rise buildings. Response times are already at risk—and this overlay adds more fuel to the fire.

## 6. TDRs (Transfer of Development Rights) Are an Insult to Residents

The overlay would enable developers to buy extra “air rights” from historic or low-density zones and stack more height on top of their towers—effectively purchasing the sky above our homes. If “air” is for sale, why is the city profiting and not the people who lose their views, sunlight, and peace?

This practice benefits outside developers at the expense of residents. It’s not just bad planning—it’s unjust.

## 7. Gables Waterway Is the Endgame

Make no mistake: although the July 2 hearing doesn’t name it, Gables Waterway (6100 Caballero Blvd) will claim whatever entitlements these parcels receive. That’s why Fortune International made its purchase contingent on approvals.

This overlay is not just about The Mark or a few parcels on U.S. 1. It paves the way for a massive luxury project on the banks of a federally protected manatee canal.

Once this precedent is set, there is no turning back.

## 8. Timing Undermines Transparency and Participation

It is deeply troubling that a proposal of this magnitude is scheduled for public hearing on July 2nd, in the middle of summer vacation and just two days before the Fourth of July holiday, when many families are traveling or unavailable. Whether intentional or not, this timing severely limits resident participation in a decision that will permanently affect our neighborhood’s future. If the City truly values public input, this item must be deferred to a later

date in the fall when full community engagement is possible. Rushing a decision on something so consequential—during a time of low attendance—undermines transparency and public trust.

#### Our Requests

We, the undersigned residents of Coral Gables, respectfully ask:

Deny the MX3 overlay and zoning changes for all parcels listed.

Maintain the 4-story (≈45 ft) height cap for 1150–1350 South Dixie Highway and 6100 Caballero Blvd.

Require independent environmental and traffic studies before allowing even a 1-story increase. Don't allow extra traffic inside the single family home streets, including Madruga Avenue and specially Caballero Blvd where we have our neighborhood park, Jaycee Park. Honor the commitments you made to voters to defend the City Beautiful from overdevelopment.

#### In Closing

This is not about opposing progress. It is about preserving what makes Coral Gables livable, safe, and beautiful. It is about respecting the residents who built this city and the wildlife that shares it with us.

It is also about trust. That trust is broken when elected officials campaign on one message and then govern the opposite way.

A 13-story wall on the Mahi Canal was not in anyone's campaign brochure.

Please prove that our city leaders still listen. Please vote no on this overlay and keep your campaign promises. Preserve our zoning, our neighborhood, our manatees, and our voice.

Thank you for your service. I look forward to your written response on how you intend to vote.

Please submit this as a written comment for the July 2nd hearing and read it aloud during the meeting.

Tracy Devine Guzmán  
tdguzman@miami.edu



927 Hardee Road  
Coral Gables , 33146

**From:** [Jim Berlin](#)  
**To:** [Planning](#)  
**Cc:** [DENISE BRAGA DE CARVALHO](#)  
**Subject:** Univ Station District  
**Date:** Tuesday, June 24, 2025 10:28:43 AM

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CAUTION: External Sender. Please do not click on links or open attachments from senders you do not trust.

Dear Gables Planning Board;  
South Gables neighbors are concerned about a possible University Station RTO District.  
We request your careful attention  
on what this proposed District  
means re already heavy congested  
traffic on US1. We resist effort  
that might limit application of  
standard code and permit regs.  
And will watch a July 2 review.  
Thanks, JimBerlin 737 Tibidabo

Sent from my iPhone