

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item D-3
October 14, 2014
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason

Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.

Commissioner Pat Keon

Commissioner Vince Lago

Commissioner Frank Quesada

City Staff

Interim City Manager, Carmen Olazabal

City Attorney, Craig E. Leen

City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman

Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Meg Daly, President of Friends of The Underline

D-3 [Start: 10:24:22 a.m.]

Presentation and possible action regarding The Underline by Meg Daly, President of Friends of The Underline.

Mayor Cason: We'll move to D-3, we have Meg Daly, President of Friends of The Underline who will make a presentation and Meg I have a letter here of support from Donna Shalala, I don't know if you've seen it.

Ms. Daly: I have a copy of it.

Mayor Cason: OK. Good.

Ms. Daly: Thank you. Thank you Mr. Mayor, thank you Commissioners, I'm Meg Daly, President and Founder of Friends of The Underline. What we are working on is to produce a 10-mile urban trail and linear park and today I'm going to talk about our request for master plan funding in order to take our initiative forward. So simply put the initiative is to transform 10 miles of underutilized space underneath Metrorail from the Miami River by Brickell Station

down to Dadeland South. We are going to be using a combination of trails and parks and I have two images here. On the left is in the Vizcaya area, on the right is UM; and on the left it's really a pretty clear picture of what we want to do with the trail. It's to widen it to 20 feet, on lighting, and seating and other amenities; and on the right where we have more band width like University of Miami is to add strategically placed park nodes. So other successful initiatives that have done urban trails and linear parks have produced substantial returns and investment. In this case I'm going to focus on the Highline in New York. It's one and-a-half miles long and its produced \$3 billion of real estate investment, 42 new developments along one and-a-half miles. There is also a really positive return for tax revenues for the City; it's also the second most visited cultural destination in the City at this time. So to really model ourselves after other successful initiatives we are taking the queue from zoning and also economic impact, so through the University of Miami we are working on an economic impact study right now through their School of Finance and Masters of Business Administration. We want to work on those current conditions of the property and see, project forward what can happen in terms of values of those properties. We are working on a group charrette with Miami-Dade County, City of Miami, Coral Gables, and South Miami, we had our first a couple of weeks ago at UMCAD, and so we are looking at the 10-miles and seeing where there is rezoning opportunities for future growth and development. The health benefits: There is a really great statistic – for every mile that you put into a protected trail you see \$24 worth of return in investment in reduced medical cost. So I don't know if there is that really strong return on investment for anything in the world and there is also a great number which is a 15 percent reduction in really critical disease like obesity as well as diabetes, if you live within a 10-minute walk of a trail. We are working on a HIA to see what we can do for the 400,000 residents that live within that 10-minute walk we are talking about. Some of you probably know that Miami-Dade County has a reputation that we need to work on in terms of bike-ped safety. We are one of the most dangerous places in the country for pedestrians, we are the fourth highest mortality rate for pedestrians; and we also want to work on our bicycle mortality rate. We are currently the most dangerous in the state. So how are we going to do that? Well this is going to be a completely off-road bike-ped trail, so it's not shared, it's not in the street, it's a commuter highway for pedestrians and bicyclists and our master planning is critical to helping us understand how we can get people across the street safely. This is Stanford Drive and we are looking at making large pedestrian refuge islands on each side of the intersection, widening and shortening crosswalks as well as lighting them, but most of it will be defined in the master planning. So the trail – what are we doing with the trail?- so expanding it, lighting as I had mentioned and so forth, but we are also going to be adding the park nodes. So Department of Transportation has been a real friend of ours in this process. Currently they are doing a study on US-1 for possible no right-hand turn heading south, so when you are heading south on US-1, taking a right on Bird, so on and so forth, they may have to stop, pause and not drive right into the crosswalk. They've also committed to redesigning the 8 intersections to our specifications when they are done, and they've also been very generous in helping us look for funding

resources for their alternative transportation grants. So the future for many great cities is integrating all modes of transit. At our transit stations City of Coral Gables has University of Miami as well as Douglas Station. At Douglas we already have trolley, we have bus, we have transit, we are going to be introducing a safe bike and ped path and really want to produce many ways for people to move and giving them options for how to get around downtown. So all of you should have received a letter from President Shalala today, she said, I believe the Underline has the potential to truly transform our City and the region making it more livable by providing a 10-mile safe haven for residents and visitors as well as students and faculty. She said the University of Miami is eager to support the park spaces and trail in front of UM that creates their new front yard; and I think that that's how really we need to look at this. If you are at Brickell it's in your backyard, in Miami it's a new front yard, and we are adding hundreds of acres of park spaces. This is our list of endorsements; Miami-Dade County just endorsed us last week. Every single Commissioner co-sponsored that endorsement. So here's what we are doing with the Master Plan. As all of you know, we've had a lot of energy and a lot of initiative, but the Master Plan is going to define how we start?- how we begin?- what our budget is?- because that's sort of the question, what is this going to cost?- and how we inform that. So we've asked all the municipalities, there are three of them, City of Miami, City of Coral Gables, and City of South Miami, to fund 30 percent of the Master Plan, so we are asking City of Coral Gables to provide \$50,000 worth of funding toward a \$500,000 or \$600,000 Master Plan cost. Everything will go into that, so its traffic studies, its cost estimates, its design, and we are going to have a very transparent process. Commissioner Lago asked that I share for the record what our funding timing is. So starting November our 501(c)3 will be leading the RFP process, it will not be going through the County, and that's really not because it didn't want to, it's because of speed, and I think one of the hallmarks of this initiative has been momentum. So we want to open up the RFP process in November, close it in January, select the design team in January. We'll have five people represented on the....who has not been selected yet, and we want to get our Master Plan done by June or July of 2015, so we can get into funding cycles for 2016; and those are going to be federal, state dollars primarily. Any questions on that? We did get our commitment over the weekend from the Knight Foundation for a one-to-one matching grant with a cap of \$250,000.

Commissioner Lago: Just a quick question. When you say \$250,000 from the Knight Foundation, is that in reference to the master plan?- or is that in reference to the project as-a-whole?

Ms. Daly: That's master planning only. They also have something called the Knight Cities Initiative, which we are going to be applying for, for engagement, and that may even be a demonstration project. So the Knight Foundation has been supportive on some new levels, but this is their second investment in our initiative, they provided seed funding, and now they are putting \$250,000 towards the master plan only. So the master plan is really critical as I mentioned for knowing what our steps are, and so you can answer those questions of where you

starting?- where you ending? We really want in 2016 to have construction moving forward. We want to have the beginning of our trail, that master plan will help us know where to start as well as the economic impact study, so we know where those opportunities are. We'd also like to have the beginning of one those park demonstration spaces and this will be again informed by the master plan. So that's the Underline, anybody wants to find us we are www.theunderline.org. We are very transparent, when you e-mail, you are e-mailing Meg and we try to be as responsive as possible. Do you all have any questions for me?

Commissioner Keon: Meg, I would really like to applaud your efforts and all you have done. You have done just an outstanding job in your visioning and you're putting it together and you're following through. You come from a dynamic family and you have been just wonderful, you deserve all of our praise.

Ms. Daly: Thank you. It makes it easy when you are doing something that's so much fun and that you love and you have the support of so many, just like yourselves. Thank you Commissioner Keon.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Let me just say that I also applaud you and I think that the City of Coral Gables should be part of this initiative. This is a very forward thinking initiative, I mean when you are talking about encouraging bicycling over 10 miles of land, 100 acres of new park, landscaping, and all these other things that go along with this initiative it's just what we call a "slam dunk" as far as I'm concerned, and I'm strongly for moving forward with this project, have you move forward and participating like the City of Coral Gables should participate.

Commissioner Keon: I think that too, but I think one of the things that give us confidence in being able to contribute to the master plan is the capacity of the people involved to bring this project to fruition. So you have gathered a very commendable group of people who have spear-headed other projects, we have seen the work that has been done and its finding groups that have that capacity with our communities to actually do things is not always so easy, so I can't say enough good things about what you have done that I know and have the faith that you will see this through and that we will see this.

Ms. Daly: I do want to add that our master plan will be considering the Bike Master Plan for the City of Coral Gables, as well as South Miami's and Miami's, because we are trying to push forward an integrated vision because if we don't do this holistically we'll end up with one of those patchwork quilts and this really is – we are not just building a path, I think that we are building a better City and I think the City of Coral Gables is a City of visionaries. So we may not be riding in gondolas but we certainly will be riding our bikes as well as cars.

Commissioner Lago: If I could just interject for one moment. The comment that you made at the end in reference to taking into consideration the Bike Master Plan for the City of Coral Gables is

essential, because I've spoken to two individuals who are very involved in the biking community here in Coral Gables, and they want to make sure – they are super excited about the project, but they want to make sure that we don't double efforts and if we are going to do this, which the Commission is behind 110 percent that we take into consideration what the City's planning in regards to our Bike Master Plan.

Ms. Daly: Just one second. Last week I rode the trail with a team called Gail Architects, which are from Copenhagen, San Francisco, and New York, and they designed the Broadway Plan, including the intersection closures and they did the Hudson River trail. So they are not just urban planners, they are bike specialists and one of their messages to us which we are taking very seriously is ensuring the connections. We are trying to get people out of the silos and talking to each other and having one master document for that initiative moving forward. So thank you so much for all of your support and for believing in us and we'll keep you well informed moving forward.

Mayor Cason: Thank you.

Commissioner Lago: Great work.

Commissioner Keon: Can we talk about the budget issue. Do we have to be able to contribute?

Mayor Cason: I think we agreed last Commission that we had the money, it was in the contingency funds and that we would....

Commissioner Lago: That's why I requested from Meg...

Commissioner Keon: That's what I'm asking is do we need now to make a motion to fund that study?- or is there something else that needs to be done?

Commissioner Quesada: Alright, I'll make a motion.

City Attorney Leen: My understanding was staff was planning to do that. You could do the motion if you'd like. Do you have any issues with that?

Commissioner Keon: I don't have any issues.

Commissioner Quesada: I think we should do a motion to help Meg to show that we have full support from the Commission.

Commissioner Keon: I'd like to make the motion to contribute the \$50,000 toward the master planning of The Underline.

Mayor Cason: OK. Pat Keon makes the motion.

Commissioner Lago: I'll second the motion.

Mayor Cason: Commissioner Lago seconds.

City Clerk

Commissioner Quesada: Yes

Commissioner Keon: Yes

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Yes

Commissioner Lago: Yes

Mayor Cason: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Cason: Thank you.

Commissioner Quesada: Great work

Commissioner Keon: Great work.

[End: 10:38:17 a.m.]