

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item E-8
November 8, 2011
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason

Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.

Commissioner Maria Anderson

Commissioner Rafael “Ralph” Cabrera, Jr.

Commissioner Frank Quesada

City Staff

City Manager, Patrick Salerno

City Attorney, Craig E. Leen

City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman

Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Planning Director, Eric Riel

Public Speaker(s)

E-8 [Start: 11:48:10 a.m.]

Zoning Code Text Amendment. An Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida providing for a text amendment to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code, Article 4, “Zoning Districts,” Division 2, “Overlay and Special Purpose Districts,” Section 4-201, “Mixed Use District (MXD),” amending the residential unit density for MXD projects; and providing for severability, repealer, codification, and an effective date. (PZB recommended approval, vote: 5-0)

Mayor Cason: Finally, Item E-8.

City Attorney Leen: An Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida providing for a text amendment to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code, Article 4, “Zoning Districts,” Division 2, “Overlay and Special Purpose Districts,” Section 4-201, “Mixed Use District (MXD),” amending the residential unit density for MXD projects; and providing for severability, repealer, codification, and an effective date.

Mr. Riel: This amendment is basically right now on a mixed-use building or mixed-use district; the mixed-use district surrounds the Village of Merrick Park. Right now there is a density limitation of 125 units an acre. What we are doing is removing that density limitation. This is something that as a part of the rewrite of the Zoning Code and the Comp Plan which we've done in the past 5-6 years, was kind of the next step in terms of making it more flexible in terms of building and encouraging residential in the downtown. What we are suggesting here or recommending here is that in the CBD (Central Business District) as well as mixed-use district there be no residential density limitation, you'll be governed by height, floor area ratio, and parking, which is kind of like a silent regulator. A lot of communities throughout the United States are doing this removing the density limitations to encourage a mixing of uses in their downtown and this is kind of going with that notion or that progressive thinking, and again, actually in the Comp Plan we actually put a goal and an objective about two or three years ago to basically make this happen, and this amendment to bring it to fruition.

Mayor Cason: I would assume that the idea behind this is you would be able to have maybe more efficiencies, more single people, maybe younger people that could be living in the City could afford it, and then would be able to walk down to the businesses and provide more foot traffic and so on, is that part of it?

Mr. Riel: Yes, that's it. Its encouraged in the urban core, urban infill area, the downtown areas that have access to rail, to the trolley to encourage flexibility in terms of size of units right now, there is a minimum of 575 square foot unit size. I don't see this as being something that is going to cause a substantial amount of residential development in terms of the type of density, because if you look at what has been built in the last couple of years, it's been very hard to even get to the 125 units in the mixed-use district, but in the downtown you almost need a fairly large parcel to go above the 125; and there are very few of those left, the City actually owns most of those, and also you have to have a minimum of 200 foot frontage, 20,000 square feet, it's a mixed-use building, so it has to come through you all again. So, I feel there are protective measures in place, and in addition to the fact that the Code is restrictive in terms of mixed-uses. I support this and the Planning Board did discuss this and they did likewise recommend approval.

Mayor Cason: Bill?

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Eric, have you done any modeling on this?- what would be – for instance, let's talk about this. You said there are 43,560 square feet in an acre, you allow 125 units right now, correct?- you multiply that times 3.5 far, basically that's 140,000 square feet – take 20,000 square feet for the retail downstairs you have 120,000 square feet of development upstairs, OK, and if you divide it by 600, 600 is the minimum units,

575, you round it up to 600, you are basically taking 200 units there. Can you get 200 units of 575 feet in that, have you done a modeling?

Mr. Riel: I've done some modeling, and what I'm finding out is if you have a parcel that's under an acre in size in the CBD, you can get up to 135 to 145 units an acre.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: How much?

Mr. Riel: 135 to 145 units an acre. Now if you are going over an acre in size, that's where the numbers can go up to 200 units per acre, and again that's doing a mix of 575 square foot units, 700-800, 1-2-3 bedrooms, but again parking is a regulator, it's very, very difficult and I have to tell you, you have to be one hell of a good designer to fit the amount of parking within the height limitations in the F.A.R. It's really challenging because as you know the lot depths are only 100 feet and you need 120 to do a good parking layout, so it's very challenging.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: So the answer to my question of could you build 200 units on an acre?- you say no, you can't build it.

Mr. Riel: I don't think you are going to be able to get there, no, not an acre, because I did an analysis on Brussels, point 9 and an acre, I don't think you are going to get to 200.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: OK. I have my strong thoughts that I'm a proponent of, I have always voted for residential downtown. I think that's the most important key, I'm just concerned that this might encourage so many small units, I'm not crazy about that.

City Manager Salerno: Vice Mayor, recognizing that concern I asked Eric to contact several of the developers and we also looked at what is being built right now. The bottom line is even though we have 575 foot minimum, the smallest one bedroom that we were able to find were in the 800-850 range.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: But we didn't have this proposal before, I mean, this is going to be a new concept.

City Manager Salerno: That's true, but the market is – and that's why we discussed it.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I know what the market is better than anybody does.

City Manager Salerno: The market – they are telling us is they don't plan to build units smaller than the 800-850 for a one bedroom, that's what they need, that's what they target.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: That's sales, but you might end up having a different concept when a person or developer decides to build an apartment unit where they rent everything out.

City Manager Salerno: They could do that today. If they have a smaller unit and they can't make the 125 even in some cases, they could do that now.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: That's why I started my conversation off asking if they had modeling.

Mr. Riel: In the mixed-use district, I went through and looked at all the densities; the highest density down there currently under construction is 140 units an acre, and that's the Village Place, and they have a total of 127 units, Gables Gateway which is under construction right now has 230 units and they are at 100 an acre.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: 100 what?

Mr. Riel: 100 units an acre.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: OK, but now you are going to let them put as much as you want in that box that they can build with the parking allowed.

Mr. Riel: I understand the mixed-use is...height limitation.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: No, I understand its 8 stories.

Mr. Riel: That is very limiting, and also one bedroom and two bedroom units have the same parking requirements.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: But you are talking about this going to CBD, aren't you?

Mr. Riel: Correct.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: But that's a 16 story height limitation, not an 8 story height limitation, so let's put all the facts out there, OK. Well let's vote, I know how I'm voting on this issue.

Mayor Cason: Close the public hearing. Do I have a motion?

Commissioner Anderson: I'll move it.

Mayor Cason: Commissioner Anderson makes a motion.

Commissioner Quesada: I'll second.

Mayor Cason: Commissioner Quesada seconds it.

City Clerk

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: No
Commissioner Quesada: Yes
Commissioner Anderson: Yes
Commissioner Cabrera: Yes
Mayor Cason: Yes
(Vote: 4-1)

Mayor Cason: Thank you very much.

[End: 11:56:02 a.m.]