

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Items are related**  
**January 27, 2026**  
**City Commission Chambers**  
**405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

**City Commission**

**Mayor Vince Lago**

**Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson**

**Commissioner Melissa Castro (Absent)**

**Commissioner Ariel Fernandez**

**Commissioner Richard D. Lara**

**City Staff**

**City Attorney, Cristina Suárez**

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias**

**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

**Planning and Zoning Director, Jennifer Garcia**

**Public Speaker(s)**

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**Agenda Items E-1 & E-2 [Start: 12:15 p.m.]**

E-1: An Ordinance of the City Commission approving amendments to the text and maps of the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan pursuant to small-scale amendment procedures (Section 163.3187, Florida Statutes), and Zoning Code Article 14, “Process,” Section 14-213, “Comprehensive Plan Text and Map Amendments,” to modify the required mix of uses when developed within the “University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay,” to allow a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of 3.5, to provide policies to implement the “University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay,” to amend the Future Land Use Map from “Commercial Low-Rise Intensity” to “Commercial High-Rise Intensity”, and to create the “University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay” on the Mixed-Use Overlay Districts Map, for Blocks 155 and 156, Coral Gables Riviera Section Part 8, Tract “A,” Replat of Coral Gables Riviera Section Part 8, which are the properties bounded by South Dixie Highway, Caballero Boulevard, Madruga, and Turin Street (1150, 1190, 1250, 1320, and 1350 South Dixie Highway); providing for a repealer provision, providing for a severability clause, and providing for an effective date. (07 02 2025 PZB

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recommended approval for Comp. Plan Map Amendments, Vote: 5:1) (12 10 2025 PZB recommended approval for Comp. Plan Text Amendments, Vote: 6-0)

E-2: An Ordinance of the City Commission providing for map and text amendments to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, "Process," Section 14-212, "Zoning Code Text and Map Amendments," by 1) amending Article 2, "Zoning Districts," to create Section 2-408, "University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay" for promoting the use of mass transit facilities and pedestrian activities along transit corridors and near multimodal stations; 2) amending Appendix A, "Site Specific Zoning Regulations," to remove inconsistent Site Specifics; 3) amending Article 14, "Process," Section 14-204, "Transfer of Development Rights," to expand Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) receiving sites to the "University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay," and 4) making Zoning District boundary changes from "Mixed-Use 1 (MX1)" to "Mixed-Use 3 (MX3)" and creating the "University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay" boundary for Blocks 155 and 156, Coral Gables Riviera Section Part 8, and Tract "A," Replat of Coral Gables Riviera Section Part 8, which are the properties bounded by South Dixie Highway, Caballero Boulevard, Madruga, and Turin Street (1150, 1190, 1250, 1320, and 1350 South Dixie Highway), and to create the "University Station Rapid Transit District;" providing for repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date. (07 02 2025 PZB recommended approval, Vote: 5:1)

Mayor Lago: Item E-1.

City Attorney Suarez: E-1 and E-2 are related, Mayor. If it's okay, I'll read them both. An ordinance of the City Commission approving amendments to the text and maps of the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan pursuant to small-scale amendment procedures and zoning code article 14 "Process" Section 14-213 comprehensive plan text map amendments to modify the required mix of uses when developed within the University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay to allow maximum floor area ratio of 3.5 to provide policies to implement the University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay to amend the future land use map from commercial low rise intensity to commercial high rise intensity and to create the University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay on the mixed use overlay district maps for blocks 155 and 156 Coral Gables Riveria Section Part 8, Tract "A" replat of Coral Gables Riveria Section Part 8, which are the properties bounded by the South Dixie Highway, Caballero, Madruga and Turin Street, providing for repealer provision, providing for severability clause, and providing for an effective date. E-2 is an ordinance of the City Commission providing for map and text amendments to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, "Process" Section 14-212, "Zoning Code Text Map Amendments," by one amending Article 2 zoning districts to create section 2-408 University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay for promoting the use of mass transit facilities and pedestrian activities along transit corridors and near multimodal stations amending Appendix "A" site specific zoning regulations to remove inconsistent site specifics, amending Article 14 "Process" Section 14-204 Transfer of Development Rights to expand transfer of development rights receiving sites to the University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay and for making

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zoning district boundary changes for mixed use 1 to mixed use 3 and creating the University Station Rapid Transit District Overlay boundary for Blocks 155 and 156 Coral Gables Riviera Section Part 8 and Tract a Replat Coral Gables Riviera Section Part 8 which are the properties bounded by South Dixie Highway, Caballero, Boulevard, Madruga and Turin Street and to create the University Station Rapid Transit District providing for repealer provision, severability clause, codification and providing for an effective date.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Planning and Zoning Director: Good afternoon, Jennifer Garcia, Planning and Zoning Director. There's been some changes since first reading. This has been kind of piecemeal together, so I have a brief presentation to go through to refresh your memory from October as well as to summarize some of these changes. If I can have the PowerPoint, please. Thank you. So, as you recall, the Board of County Commissioners that adopt on first reading back of last May is what initiated the city's Rapid Transit Overlay District. After discussion from this Commission in May of last year, Planning and Zoning Board did recommend approval of comprehensive map changes as well as zoning code text and map amendments as well. This Commission after the Board of County Commissioners adopted on second reading their sub zone. This Commission did approve on first reading the comprehensive map amendments as well as the zoning code map and text amendments. After that meeting, actually this Commission did delegate the Mayor as well as City Manager to meet with the applicants of the Mark and discuss with them potential changes to the text amendments. At that meeting or meetings, I should say, there have been some changes to the comprehensive plan text amendments that we did review two weeks ago, as well as some text amendments to the zoning code which I'll go through really quick right now. So, the boundary is still the same on US-1 between Caballero and Turin streets. Again, you're looking at two ordinances today. Comprehensive plan map and text amendments as well as zoning code map amendments. The text amendments are what have changed since your first reading in October. So, the maximum FAR will be 3.5. The Coral Gables Mediterranean style will be required for any buildings within this district. The US-1 setback will be 20 feet measured from the curb. The upper story setbacks will be provided based on the design and not necessarily the distance from the street or even a setback on the upper stories. The rear setback would be 15 feet also measured from the curb. The minimum unit size would be 400 square feet. We did clarify that balconies could project into the setback a maximum of six feet. Two uses would be required on US-1 there wouldn't be a requirement of a threshold. Let's see - the parking reduction would be within a quarter mile. And then minor deviations from the zoning code could be approved administratively by a development review official in regard to transparency or width of driveways, something that's very, very minor to our zoning code. And we also clarified the formatting of the site specifics. This is the graphic that shows the existing conditions as far as land use and zoning goes. Again, commercial low-rise intensity and MX1 MX3 zoning. What's proposed today is commercial high-rise intensity and

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MX3 zoning. I think the Mayor requested some comparisons. Their current regulations are on the left side. The middle is the county's RTZ subzone regulations. And on the right side is the city's proposed district which is highlighted in green. The review for the county will require a special exception for the county board. What's proposed to you before today is expedited review with city staff review, as well as City Commission. So, we're bypassing Board of Architects and Planning and Zoning Board. The height for the RTZ is a quarter mile, which is 150 feet. There's already a building there in the district that measured that height. What's proposed to you today is 120 feet with a maximum of 147 feet with additional open space requirements. The density would remain the same at 125 units an acre. The FAR is kind of limited in RTZ, but we're proposing today's moment of 3.5 FAR with the ability to have FAR increased with the TDRs for a maximum of 4.375 FAR. The setbacks would be zero with RTZ. The city's proposing 20 feet to be measured from the curb for the front setback on US-1, and then 15 feet on the back also measured from the curb. The setbacks are not required for either the county RTZ or the city proposed district. And the parking would require zero residential units for the county as well as some commercial and office requirements for the city proposing a 50 percent reduction for parking, as well as 25 percent of waiver with a parking plan and a remote parking ability. Also, here we're comparing the uses. So currently our zoning code only allows uses like restaurants, hotels, commercial, retail offices in our MX-3 zoning. It's approved by the city. The county, on the other hand, allows bars with the restaurants, parking lots and garages are permitted uses, and all those similar uses would be approved by the county. The impact fees, if the project develops within the city, the police, fire, municipal, as well as parks and mobility impact fees would stay with the city. With the county, they would pay those impact fees to the county. Art in Public Places, of course, we require 1 percent of construction costs. The county does not require that for private development. And the design is probably the most important key here. The county doesn't have aesthetics review board or ethics review in general by staff. What we're proposing today is that the City Architect will review for the preliminary review and as well as the Mediterranean style if required here in this district. So, this comparison of current RTZ project near the Douglas station, I believe it's called a cascade development. You can see the difference between how the county does landscape and pedestrian access and street design compared to Coral Gables which is on the right side. You see the Plaza with the landscape, the street trees on street parking, arcades and streets and windows and doors facing the street, etc. Just trying to explain the difference between the county's development parameters and Coral Gables. So, this went through a rigorous review timeline and plans.

Mayor Lago: Can you go back for a second?

Planning and Zoning Director: Yes, of course.

Mayor Lago: This is important. Got to put this on record, okay? So, the last time this came up on first reading, it was voted 4-1, correct? Okay. I think the clear examples here, I think things are, a lot of the wording, things get lost. But when you put it in photos like this, it really provides and encompasses why we're having to do this. We're not doing this because we think it's a great idea. We're doing this because we have no other choice. A developer has two options, go through the city process or go through the RTZ. We have now delivered a third option in an effort to try to find some middle ground. In that middle ground, you can see that middle ground is to your right. If not, they go to the RTZ which is to your left. I want lushness. I want canopies. I want Mediterranean style. I want art in public places fees. I want fees that deal with police, fire, impact fees coming to the City of Coral Gables, not to the county. I want setbacks to our standards. I want usages to our standards. I want signage to our standards. That is all being delivered in regard to the Mark, which I'm grateful that that developer has had multiple meetings with myself and the Manager and yourself and your team to find common ground and move forward in the right direction. But if we do not negotiate, we end up with the left. If we negotiate, we end up with the right. So, I know that in politics, there's a lot of grandstanding and there's a lot of opportunities just to try to bash people and tear people down. Like I've mentioned a few times here, you saw a clear point example with the New Times. The New Times doesn't want to comply. They don't want to deal with beautification. So, what do they do? They try to intimidate me by writing an article about me. So, when you vote against the city, RTZ, you're just hurting the city. That's what you're doing. You're hurting the city because we don't get those impact fees. We don't get art in public places. We don't get a tree canopy. We don't get a setback. We don't get a Mediterranean design. We don't get to control signages. We don't get to control usages. So, what you're seeing when Commissioner Castro voted against this, that is pure politics so that she can say later when she runs, hey, I didn't change the zoning code. Yeah, but if you don't do this, they're going to go to the RTZ, which is going to be a building that is gargantuan in height. You're only hurting the city. So, we have to be honest with ourselves, and we have to find and be realistic that right now we are not in control. We're not in the best position. We have to compromise.

Commissioner Lara: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Lara: So, the question to you, Jennifer, to make it real simple. Voting against the ordinance, which was to amend to allow for what you and the City Manager and the Mayor have negotiated with the Mark. If that had not carried, right? Unfortunately, I wanted to be 5-0. It was 4-1. But let's say it wasn't carried. Would you say that the resulting project of the Mark under the RTZ would represent the absolute opposite of what you would say are Coral Gables standards for a development? In terms of FAR, in terms of height, lacking impact fees, setback, signage. In other

words, all the things that we have that make up Coral Gables zoning and code requirements for developments, wouldn't apply, right?

Planning and Zoning Director: Right, exactly. What it would do is it would have that control design in the county's hands. And you can see by the county what they're reviewing right now and approving and building is not up to our standard, which is why this slide is very important. Because you can put all you want in the zoning code, but you need to have people actually reviewing for aesthetics and making sure it's important on street trees and street design and doors and windows facing the street. You're putting all that control into their hands and not keeping it here.

Commissioner Lara: And I would say that voting for what at least four of us at the Commission did at that last meeting is to try and bring back that development under Coral Gables' standards. And that a vote of no could not stand for protecting out-of-control development. It couldn't stand for protecting Coral Gables standard developments. Because without this compromise that we've got, this project was going to continue as it looks on that example, that exhibit up there where it says county RTZ. Am I right?

Planning and Zoning Director: Right.

Mayor Lago: So, I think that's critically important to put on record. And I appreciate my colleagues putting on the record because this will be a political item come next November. This is politics right here. This will be used next November to say, you know, by the blogs and other entities out there to say, oh, Mayor Lago voted in favor of rezoning and providing more benefits to the Mark. If you did not provide this expedited service, we would lose millions and millions and millions of dollars of impact fees, Art in Public Places, and we would lose control, setbacks, usages, heights. This is what's been done. And this is why I thank God for truth in journalism, where you have entities, for example, like the Coral Gables Magazine, which provide the facts, not romanticize the lies that are used by entities here in the City of Coral Gables in an effort to impact elections. But as you know, as was shown before, there was a tidal wave at the last election where people were crushed who sided with this type of behavior. We have to be honest with ourselves and be truthful to the residents, and that's why we're putting this up there so they understand and we can explain later. Mr. Manager, I would like to explain in a transparent way in our next newsletter, where we explain the decisions that were done here, why they were done, and what would be the outcome if we did not take this action as a Commission.

City Manager Iglesias: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, Mayor, I will certainly do that. One thing that we also have to have to look at the left and to the right is that uses and signage would be through the county. So, this would

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essentially provide a county building inside Coral Gables. So not only are we getting the left, but we're also losing control of that particular building. So, there are many aspects, not only are we getting permit fees, impact fees, and so forth, but we're losing the control of that particular building. And Mayor, I'll be happy to put that out because I think we need these things to be explained thoroughly so that people understand the position that the city's in, is it's either take the county building or go with our overlay, which is, as we can see, this picture is fantastic because it shows what we've accomplished versus what could have happened.

Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson: So, I think a picture speaks a thousand words. And this photo is an excellent example. I mean, we unfortunately cannot turn back time. And we can't undo, you know, the damage that was done approximately a year ago, where the developer was motivated to go through the county because of the treatment that occurred at the Planning and Zoning Board level. So, we can't change that, but we can take control now. It's not what I would have done had the events at the Planning and Zoning Board meeting hadn't occurred. But with the options that we have right now, this is the best option we can do. And I applaud your efforts to bring back the Mark. You know, it's brought back a lot of things for our city. We have the impact fees for our parks, so we can have more parks in our city. We have also the impact fees for the police and the fire and so forth, that we can do that. We have greater setbacks than what the county was going to provide. More walkability, more trees, more green. But thank you, and picture's worth a thousand words. So, use it.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Yes, sir.

Commissioner Fernandez: So just, I agree. The picture definitely does make this understandable. I just had a question for the Manager. I know we talked about maybe a PSA on Live Local and the RTZ. Were we ever able to put that out there for residents to understand the impacts that both are having in our city?

City Manager Iglesias: Through the mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, Commissioner, there's two short videos on each one.

Commissioner Fernandez: Okay, thank you. And I think we've seen an openness from developers to really try to work with the city in the last few years. We have another developer in the room who worked with us on the Almeria Project, which was also instrumental for members of the community to work with them on alleviating the impact it would have to their neighborhood. It's

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a project that could have gone with Live Local, did not go with Live Local, they decided to go with a project that fit into the neighborhood that neighbors were able to stand behind. And we had nobody come up to speak out against that project as well. I think this legislation really gives us an opportunity to bring this project back to the city and ensure that Coral Gables has a final say on what this project looks like. We know the county is not very good at approving projects. We've seen the type of projects that they approved. They would not be consistent with what our city is, with the vision that our residents have for the city. So, I'm happy to support this legislation.

Mayor Lago: We have a motion and a second. Can I have a motion?

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll move it.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll second.

City Attorney Suarez: So that would be on E-1?

Mayor Lago: Yes. Do you have any public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: No, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: All right, we'll close by comment.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Mayor Lago: On item E-2, may I have a motion?

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll move it.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll second.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago?

Mayor Lago: We have no public comment on E-2?

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City Clerk Urquia: No, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes. Thank you very much. Well done.