

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-1
December 9, 2025
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Commissioner Melissa Castro
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)

Agenda Item F-1 [Start: 11:47 a.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission directing City Staff to design all new parks that will be conveyed to the City with the majority of the park to be of landscaped areas and minimal areas for hardscape. (Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: All right, moving on to item F-1.

City Attorney Suarez: F-1 is a resolution of the City Commission directing City staff to design all new parks that would be conveyed to the city with the majority of the park to be of landscaped areas and minimal areas for hardscape.

Mayor Lago: So, this is an item that I'm sponsoring that I would appreciate your support on, and it's a very common-sense item. When I got elected a few years ago, we only had one park in the downtown. We've negotiated with developers and we've bought lots. And what I think is important is to make sure that these projects, I see them come to me when a developer is discussing adding

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a park and we're requiring it. They say they put all this hardscape, which again is great for less maintenance. But at the end of the day, what I want is more green space. I want more grass. I want more shrubbery. I want more shade, shade. So, this piece of legislation, I think there was a friendly amendment from the Vice Mayor that required a little bit more taking it to bumping it up. I am more than interested in that amendment. I'd like to add that amendment. I don't know how much higher we can go because you do need a little bit of hardscape. For example, let me give you an example. The little park in front of Nordstrom's is going to require a podium for a work of art. It's going to provide a little sidewalk. Same thing with Publix. Same thing with adjacent to the Plaza, where you're going to have a beautiful green space and two tennis courts. I think it's a 15,000 square foot lot. You also have the Codina site, which is a corner lot, which is about 12,000 square feet. I think it's about 12 or 11,000 square feet. It has two beautiful oak trees in the back that are currently existing. I want to see more green space. I want to see more shade. I don't want a concrete jungle. I know I talk about plazas and parks as being, again, redefining our downtown, redefining our quality of life. But if we could have more green space, I think codifying it is important for the future.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I do have one question for staff because I haven't reread this morning. We have times where people want to put in parks with green space, with grass, but underneath it, there's a parking garage. Do we address that in the language here?

Planning and Zoning Director: So typically, open space has to be at the ground level. The garage would be elevated. But I think I know what you're thinking about as far as different projects.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Underground garages.

Planning and Zoning Director: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Referring to because it eliminates the ability to put in that shade tree.

Planning and Zoning Director: Right.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, do we address that in this language?

Planning and Zoning Director: In this resolution, we do not.

City Manager Iglesias: Through the Mayor?

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

City Manager Iglesias: Vice Mayor, I don't think we would agree to have a park conveyed to us that was not, that had a parking garage below.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right. No, I agree. I just mentioned it for that purpose.

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City Manager Iglesias: I don't think that would be something that we would address here, that we would approve or condone. And I don't think the Commission would either. So, this deals with just plain old parks.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay. So, the only reason I bring it up is I'm not going to live forever. You're not going to live forever. And Mayor, what do you think?

Mayor Lago: You tell me.

Vice Mayor Anderson: No parking garages under green space.

Mayor Lago: I don't have an issue with that at all.

Vice Mayor Anderson: If you put the pavers above it, because that's your percentage.

Mayor Lago: I don't have an issue with it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay. With that amendment, I'll move it.

Mayor Lago: This is all, these are all good things that make our downtown even better.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, explain the amendment.

Vice Mayor Anderson: The Amendment is that in the green areas, you can't have parking garage underneath.

Commissioner Fernandez: Right. But there was also a percentage component that we were discussing last time. And we're trying to change.

Vice Mayor Anderson: That's already addressed.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, what percentage did we finally go with?

Planning and Zoning Director: Yeah, right now we'll propose is 30 percent hardscape and 70 percent green space. I think what the Vice Mayor is proposing is that 70 percent green space cannot have a parking garage underneath of it, because that wouldn't be permissible.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll second that.

Vice Mayor Anderson: We can't plant a tree there.

City Manager Iglesias: Through the mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

City Manager Iglesias: We would like to add then that the resolution be that if there's a parking garage below, that is not conveyed green space.

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

City Manager Iglesias: Just to be clear.

Mayor Lago: There you go.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you. That's an excellent amendment.

Mayor Lago: They don't get the benefits of saying, give me an additional floor. Again, to me, there's a benefit to that. There's a benefit. So...

Vice Mayor Anderson: For mental health.

Mayor Lago: To me, what I'm excited about, what I'm excited about is over the next two to three years, seeing how our downtown transforms, and literally within a three-block radius, being able to see three or four parts. That to me is a game changer for our downtown. That to me is what is going to set us apart, which we already set apart. But I mean, it's going to take it to another level. We have a motion. Do we have a second?

Commissioner Fernandez: I second it.

Mayor Lago: We have a second. Thank you, Madam Zoning Director.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Commissioner Lara: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)