

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item C-1
January 9, 2018
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Commissioner Frank Quesada
Commissioner Michael Mena

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
Assistant City Manager, Peter Iglesias
Assistant City Manager, Frank Fernandez
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Assistant Public Works Director, Jessica Keller
Planning and Zoning Director, Ramon Trias

Public Speaker(s)

Mark Trowbridge
Alfred Lurigados
Jennifer Matos
Ivette Arango O'Doski
Lord Toussaint
Robert Ruano
Rhett Cili
Michael Belaustegui
Venny Torre
Allison Lauger

Agenda Item C-1 [0:00:00 p.m.]

Discussion regarding bicycle paths in downtown and their effect on merchants and parking.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Discussion regarding bicycle paths in downtown and their effect on merchants and parking. And, this relates to -- I am all for bicycle paths. I am all for the livability that bicycling and walking provide downtown. One of the most admirable cities in the world is Amsterdam, but also other European cities with bicycling. People go to work on bicycling. But, I have received notices or complaints from merchants that some of the downtown business -- our bicycling paths reduce or take away their parking spaces in front of their shops. And, these establishments depend on customers coming, and customers come if they find it a friendly atmosphere and a friendly place to park. And, they have spent millions of dollars renovating shops, et cetera. And, I think that this is something that we should discuss here. And, I see that we have people in the audience that wish to speak. And first, I would like to call Mark Trowbridge to talk. Mark Trowbridge is the president of the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce. Mark.

Mark Trowbridge: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, Madam Vice Mayor, Commissioners, Madam Manager, Madam City Attorney, Mr. Clerk. Happy New Year, first and foremost, to each and every one of you. It's great to be with you here this morning. Mr. Mayor, thank you for the opportunity to share a few words. First and foremost, I want to offer just a couple of thoughts. I think -- I want to say thank you to Jessica Keller and her team. They were very diligent in working to reach out to us. We, unfortunately, didn't make a connection, and that is fully on us. Sort of coming out of Irma, we were dealing with a few other things. And so, the first that I think it really popped into our head what was happening was during the holidays with the installation. And I know that this is a pilot program, and so, for the next probably 50 or so days, we're going to see how this project does. And, I applaud the City for looking at things through the eyes of something temporary to see what the permanent solution may or may not be. But I think, Mr. Mayor, in your preamble, you offered some thoughts, which are that some of the

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businesses were not as fully aware of what was going to come, even if it was the pilot program. The other is some of the reduction in parking spaces right in front of their stores, which are incredibly important to them in terms of driving their business and supporting their work. Some of them are businesses that have been here a long time. Some, a shorter time, that made, as you mentioned, significant investment. You know, my concern is twofold. One that we always have a very open dialogue and opportunity to share both concerns and, you know, talk about the issues. I'm also concerned long term, if this were to be permanent, how that may even affect sight lines for retail business along that corridor. So, I know some of those folks are here today to share with you. You'll hear better from them how it's directly impacting them. Again, it's hard I think right now to get a full understanding of what that installation's impact will be because we're coming through the holiday season and some folks are really just back to work this week. They're back to doing what is a more normal routine. But, as always, I know that the City is a great partner, a great listener. It takes a lot of input from not only our residents, but also our property owners. And as you all know, I think we're at a point in time where we're just about to finish the streetscape project on Miracle Mile, and all of our businesses, not just those that are on Miracle Mile, but all of our business in Coral Gables are really desiring to look at 2018 as a time of peace in terms of construction and prosperity. So, anything we can do to encourage that and not hinder that would be greatly appreciated. So, thank you very much.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much, Mark. I wish to remind the public that anybody who wants to speak, you have to fill out a card. They are to my left, to your right, at the City Clerk's desk over there. Please fill out a card and you will be recognized to speak when the time comes. I'd like to call Alfred Lurigados. Yes, sir.

Alfred Lurigados: Good morning.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Sorry if I massacred your name.

Mr. Lurigados: No, that's fine. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Alfred Lurigados. I'm a board member of Friends of the Underline, and I'm here on behalf of Meg Daly, who couldn't join you this morning. We thank you for your continued vision on the Gables Greenway. We're here to support the Gables Greenway as they support economic benefits from the investment of the Underline and high-quality connections to the Underline. And, they are critical to the project's success that we all worked so hard to preserve. We're big believers in safe and effective transportation options. And, the more people know that it's safe to ride a bike on city streets, the more people will be able to get out there and have different transportation options. I have -- and I'll give these to the Clerk -- some letters of support that we'll put on the record, and we're just here to support the Gables Greenway. Thank you for continuing to listen. Thank you for having a vision on a pilot project, and we look forward to the continued dialogue and moving different transportation solutions that are not just in the vehicle and moving those forward. So, thank you for your consideration, and have a great day.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Mr. Lurigados.

Vice Mayor Keon: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'd like to call on Jennifer Matos.

Jennifer Matos: Good morning, Mayor. Good morning, Commissioners. My name is Jenn Matos, and I'm the operations manager, Friends of the Underline. The Gables Greenways project is critical to the greater connectivity that the future Underline will be able to provide for all of its users. As a member of the team for this project, I've witnessed firsthand the many benefits of creating safe and secure bike lanes for pedestrians. I strongly support safe and effective transportation options that have a positive economic and safety impact. The Gables Greenways project plans are positive initiatives for the Underline and for Coral Gables, in my opinion. And, the specific plan proposed is a temporary installation, so it's exactly that. It's

temporary. It's a test for implementation, an opportunity to see what works and what can be improved on for the benefit of all parties. Thank you so much.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. I'd like to call Ivette Arango.

Ivette Arango O'Doski: Good morning. Happy New Year.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Good morning. Come close to the microphone.

Ms. Arango O'Doski: Thank you. My name is Ivette Arango O'Doski. We are the business owners at 300 Palermo, Ivette Arango Interiors. I, too, support the Underline and I support the \$50 million that Coral Gables gave to the project, but I see this as distinguishable. I am in favor of bike lanes, but this -- unlike the Underline where it's uninterrupted. It's supposed to generate economic growth. This really is preventing access to our -- from our clients, and it's hurting the ability of our employees to park. If you speak to any of the business owners around me -- and I've gone door to door to all of my neighbors. And pretty much they all feel the same way. We all fight for the same parking spaces. When we moved, we -- our business was over 40 years in the Design District. We moved our business and made the investment into Coral Gables and renovated a dilapidated building. Commissioner Lago remembers all of our struggles with parking at the time. Public parking was sold out, and the available parking lots were not available, so those meters were really crucial. We have employees that come from Doral and from Kendall. We have people that -- like myself, that have -- need a car, because they have baby seats and infant carriers in the back. And I'm not riding a bike to work. My mom has a bad knee. She's not riding a bike to work. And our clients, you know, we both have -- our tenant downstairs has had the situation where clients circle around and get frustrated and leave, because parking is getting so bad. Traffic is getting so congested, especially in the past few years with the construction on Miracle Mile and in Giralda. The side streets are becoming

crucial for access to downtown and this is really clogging the arteries into the heart of downtown. This is an issue that's going to affect all of our residents and all of our downtown business owners. So, I appreciate the ongoing discussion. Notice to this project, by the way -- the first public hearing, according to the website, happened -- I think it was two weeks after Hurricane Irma. I promise you a lot of people didn't have power, if you recall, at the time. We were one of them. We were not paying attention to this. The installation happened during the holidays when a lot of businesses were winding down; people were heading out of town and thinking about spending the holidays with their family and friends. This is the first week, as Mr. Trowbridge said, that, you know, businesses are getting geared up again and they're just -- this is just beginning to -- people are becoming aware of this. I appreciate the ongoing discussion. I did not receive flyers or anything like that. My neighbors did not receive the flyers advising us, so when it happened; it took a lot of us by surprise. But, I think that there are better solutions that we can come up with. We all agree that we want Coral Gables to be bike friendly. We, too, have been residents for over 20 years, but I don't think this is the answer. Thank you.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much, Ms. Arango. Lord Toussaint, bike path. Good morning.

Lord Toussaint: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, Commissioners. I think that the best way to surmise what my thoughts are about the bike path is to do it by the numbers. I just became aware of this, by the way, I think the same way the prior speaker became aware, from one person that may have known about it. I've lived in Coral Gables for -- let's go by the numbers -- 47 years. I went to Dearborn High School, where Mercedes Benz of Coral Gables is now. And I've watched the change in South Florida. We are now the third -- and it's a little shocking -- the third most populous state in the nation, after California and Texas. We replaced New York last year, as most of you may know. We have a population of almost 20 million people, with 900 people per day arriving in Florida. And believe me, most of them aren't moving to Orlando.

They're moving to South Florida. If you've noticed leaving your house lately in the past year or two, it's impossible to get anywhere. US 1 is a parking lot, not from 7:30 in the morning until 10, but even through noon. It's almost continuous traffic. The traffic has become insurmountable. Let's talk more about numbers. The study that was published in 2014 for this bike path relies almost entirely on data from 2004 to 2008. That's an alternative galaxy from where we are today, an alternative reality from what we face today. In fact, the study mentions there may have been 192 cyclists in that timeframe. And these cyclists had a big rush to enter the Central Business District. I think you want to call it the Central Biking District. This is not Amsterdam, where I was recently. This isn't the City of Frankfurt. This is Miami. This is Miami, where people drive \$250,000 cars over the bridge where I live on Granada at 85 miles an hour. There's definitely a need for a bike path, but that bike path does not need to remove parking spaces in front of my building and the buildings adjacent to it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Which is your building?

Mr. Toussaint: 255 University Drive.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Mr. Toussaint: Okay. I have two tenants in that building that provide a very big service to this community. One on the ground floor is El Encanto Medical Center. They have moved -- a young doctor's practice. In fact, their daughter that graduated from New York University -- and established all their hopes and dreams on this practice being in the center of the City of Coral Gables. In fact, that's how I sold it to them. I said, you'll be in the heart of the City of Coral Gables. I didn't say you will be here -- you're begging me for parking and now the City wants to take it away so on a Sunday, an anesthesiologist can ride his \$11,000 Italian aluminum bicycle down a bike path. We really don't use bikes for transportation in the city of Miami and we need to get over that reality. People bike casually on a Sunday. They do it for fun. I don't see attorneys biking to work in Coral Gables. We have six months of the year where we're in

sweltering heat, where you sweat just walking from the front door of your house to get into your car. So, I really don't see Miami closing The Collection and making a huge bicycle stand out of it. I also noticed that all of the proponents and supporters of this bike path that are businesses are not from the City of Coral Gables, and they're all bicycle vendors, from Max Cycle on to -- bicycle stores that I didn't even know existed in Wynwood. So, there's a little bit of corporate gain behind this bike path and I think it's fantastic that they want to sell bicycles. But, I don't think shutting down the Central Business District with traffic -- with words like this from the study -- road diets. Do we look like we need to shrink our roads and put them on a diet, because they're too wide? Maybe in 2004 we may have considered something like that with University Drive. Now, we did all the numbers except one, the most important one.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah, please conclude.

Mr. Toussaint: I will.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Mr. Toussaint: This is the conclusion, which I think will be shocking. In 2004 and 2008, and even in 2014, four years ago, when the study was published, it never took into account -- and I'll say it slowly so it sinks in -- the single largest building permit in the history of the City of Coral Gables, what was called before the Mediterranean Palace that is now -- or Mediterranean Village that is now called The Palace. That project, which will use University Drive -- coming east from LeJeune Road -- as its main entrance -- you better hope it does -- as its main entrance and exit artery is now being shrunk. That project opens its doors in 36 months. And, I think the City has a huge bond to make sure that that happens. We are shrinking the main artery leading to the largest building permit ever issued in the City of Coral Gables. What alternative reality are the bike path people on? This is where we live. The bike path cannot take away parking spaces in front of businesses. We have multimillion dollar investments in properties, multimillion dollar

investments by the people that occupy them. And now, our Central Business District, you want to convert it to a Central Biking District.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Toussaint: You're very welcome.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much. Alright, Robert Ruano. Morning.

Robert Ruano: Good morning.

Commissioner Lago: Good morning.

Mr. Ruano: Mayor...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You filled two of these, right?

Mr. Ruano: Yeah, sorry.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Mr. Ruano: I was running late. It's pouring rain outside. I'd like to speak today as the founding chairman of Bike Walk Coral Gables, and I'd like to read a statement from Bike Walk Coral Gables, if I may. We applaud the City Beautiful for joining many municipalities across the globe with making our city safe for biking and walking. We're excited we will soon be joining other world-class cities in putting people, not cars, first in our downtown with the introduction of the Gables Greenway project. We believe this project will transform and improve our downtown for our residents, businesses and visitors. This addition to our downtown will not only create safe, accessible bike infrastructure for people of all ages and abilities, but will be a significant

investment in the most important public space in our City Beautiful, our streets. Bike Walk Coral Gables promotes a safe and friendly environment for people to bike and walk in our community. As you may know, we've been working with City staff and advisory boards in the creation of the Galiano Green, the new public space that will benefit people walking and biking in our downtown. Renderings from the Gables Greenway project and photos from the temporary demonstration project have already attracted national attention through social media for their aesthetically pleasing landscaped approach to modern bikeways. When built, we expect this project to become an example for communities across the country working to create safe mobility options. We commend the City's recent work and investment in a safe and friendly environment for people on foot and on bicycle, such as lowering the speed limit, opening the Giralda plaza as a great public space and various crosswalk sidewalk improvements throughout our community. Thank you for making our city one of the most beautiful, well-planned communities in the country and your commitment to ensuring the safety of all residents of Coral Gables.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, sir.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And I will disregard your other card.

Mr. Ruano: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Rhett Cili, 7505 Southwest 159th Terrace, Designers Tile. Hi.

Rhett Cili: Hi. Good morning. Just a note, I just ran through the rain, which probably would impact your whole bike path theory, right, because in South Florida, we have mornings like this and not many people are going to be trekking to work or down the street in this condition. So, first of all, I'm at 300 Palermo Avenue. We moved in in February, and we left the Design

District after 15 years. And a lot of the mindset behind leaving was because of the parking situation. So, you can imagine four spaces along our store now are a bike path. I wondered did you guys even consider what was going to happen in the near future with the Fire Department and the police station building being totally renovated. It seems like not much forethought went into creating a problem already that's going to even be exacerbated by the fact that we're going to have a major construction project that same corner. Talked to the Fire Department lieutenant who was worried about the fire engines even getting out of the fire department, because of the planters that are along the street. And also, there is a planter in front of one of the hydrants. Now, I can't park my car in front of a hydrant, but you guys can put a planter in front of a hydrant. So, it seems like the whole thing has just been shoved down the people's throat and that's very disheartening when you come into the area thinking that you have a great opportunity to expand your business and grow. So, already in the morning, I can't find a place to park 80 percent of the time and I have to circle the block several times. My business depends on designers and architects coming to our showroom to look at our products, and they're being hindered in this process. Also, the gentleman that was just speaking before me came yesterday to our showroom to see where we all stood on the issue. And, the problem I see for him is his business isn't even in Coral Gables anymore or is outside of this whole zone that's being affected by the plan. So, if he wants to move into my store and see the impact on my business, then he should be able to stand up here and talk about how greatly he supports this project. I'm sure a lot of people would support it who aren't impacted by it. But for us, it's a major deficit.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Where is your shop?

Mr. Cili: 300 Palermo Avenue.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Mr. Cili: So, we've lost the immediate four spaces along our showroom windows.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Cili: Okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.

Mr. Cili: So, I want you to really consider the whole process as you think about what impact it has on businesses that have made a major investment in Coral Gables.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Mr. Cili: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Michael Belaustegui.

Michael Belaustegui: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Morning, sir.

Mr. Belaustegui: Good morning, members of the Commission.

Commissioner Lago: Morning.

Mr. Belaustegui: My name is Michael Belaustegui, and I own Vicky Bakery, which is at 245 University Drive. I also...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Never heard of it.

Mr. Belaustegui: Never heard of it. So, I am directly impacted by this. I also own the Vicky Bakery at University of Miami. We have invested millions of dollars inside of Coral Gables. We are happy to be here. We've created a business district where one was never there. If you recall, the building that I'm currently in was dilapidated. We've renovated it and created a commerce area where one never existed. I'm directly impacted by loss of parking spaces. Since you've never heard of the business, let me explain it to you. We service...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'm kidding.

Mr. Belaustegui: Hundreds of customers a day. And, the only time I've ever seen customers on bicycles are on Sundays. We're a transient community. We depend heavily on driving to and from our places of work. This will directly negatively impact my business. I also own the restaurant next door, Off the Mile. It's -- if you know, the metered spaces that we currently sit on also service the courthouse. So, between 7 am and 6 pm, those parking spaces are completely full, not just from my business, but the courthouse and adjoining businesses behind me. I do not support this measure. While I am in support of bike lanes and safety, it is a direct negative impact to small businesses in the city, which relies on small businesses. Thank you so much.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, sir. Thank you. And Venny Torre. I'm sorry, Venny, come up, but before you -- is there anybody else that wants to speak, because you have to fill a card and this is the last card I have. So, Venny, please go ahead.

Venny Torre: Good morning, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners, Madam City Manager. I'm here on behalf of the BID. The BID fully supports the initiative that's being rolled out by the City staff. We think it's a great initiative. The question that we pose -- that I pose is what kind of city does Coral Gables want to be? What kind of downtown do we want to have? I just visited three major cities across Europe and I was dumbfounded how backwards we really are here in the States and here in Miami. Transportation methods just incredible. Everything is walking. Stores are lively. People are walking everywhere. We need to move forward. I think

the key here is that Coral Gables needs to be a progressive city, and bike lanes, this initiative, is part of that. I use an analogy that I like to use all the time is our iPhones. Our iPhones are ten years old. How much has the iPhone changed the life of everybody in ten years? How much has that little gadget changed our lives? The issue of transportation of Uber has only been out for a couple of years. Think about what's going to happen in ten years. We have to start thinking more progressively. This is a part of that, and we fully support this initiative. Thank you.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you, Venny.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Venny. Allison Lauger. This is the last card I have.

Allison Lauger: Thank you.

Commissioner Lago: Good morning.

Ms. Lauger: First of all...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Morning.

Ms. Lauger: Thank you for your service and for answering all of our emails in regards to this issue. I'm here for the traffic calming issues. You guys are probably very well aware there are some temporary diverters that have been installed on three streets, very close...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: This is nothing at all -- we're talking about bicycle paths.

Ms. Lauger: No, this is C-3, so this is a new -- would you like to -- me to wait?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No, no, no.

Commissioner Lago: We're talking about C-1 right now.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No, this is...

Vice Mayor Keon: We're doing C-1 right now.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Bicycle path.

Ms. Lauger: Okay, yeah.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You should wait.

Commissioner Lago: Please.

Vice Mayor Keon: They'll get to C-3.

Ms. Lauger: Okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We'll get to that.

Ms. Lauger: Alright.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But this is C-1.

Ms. Lauger: Okay, I'll be back.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. Alright, I'll close the testimony part. And let me -- this is a discussion. This is not...

Commissioner Lago: Action.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Action. And this is a pilot project. And I am very, very much for greenways project. I'm very much for the Underline project. I think it was a unanimous vote, but this is -- we live in an urban city, as I told someone many years ago when they were complaining about traffic. If you complain about traffic and you don't want to live in a city with traffic, move to Amarillo, Texas or something. We live in Coral Gables. And in Coral Gables, with the competing interests that we have, merchants, residents, progressive measures, such as the greenways. It's a balancing of interests. And our downtown is a vibrant downtown, and it is a very important downtown. When I've been making presentations about incorporation and comparing us to other cities around us, one of the big things that distinguish us -- from an economic point of view and from a livability point of view -- is that we do have a vibrant downtown that gives us 45 percent of our tax revenue, as opposed to Pinecrest, as opposed to parts of South Miami, et cetera. We do have a vibrant downtown, and that is very important to us, which requires a balancing of interests with the very desirable greenways project. I'd like to hear from the other Commissioners, because this is a very difficult decision for us. We're not going to take action today, but we do have to take the interests of the merchants and the removal of parking spaces in front of these -- on Salzedo and Palermo and other streets is vital to -- I mean, it's destructive for their businesses and their survival. And, if they're moving here from downtown or from, you know, Wynwood because of the parking situation, we don't want to do anything that will impair our ability to attract these businesses. So, as I say, this is a competing - - I mean, a balancing of interests test and it's a difficult one. Vice Mayor, do you want to say a few words?

Vice Mayor Keon: You know, I agree with the Mayor on this, particularly, with regard to the bike paths in the downtown, which I think is an entirely separate issue from the bike paths, you

know, through the neighborhoods or the bike paths that are trying to connect to the Underline or the bike paths that are trying to connect to Commodore trail or, you know, Cutler trail or those different things. I think, you know, we can be -- the trolleys are equipped with mechanisms on them where you can put your bicycle on and get on the trolley and take it to the Douglas Station and access both the Metrorail or the Underline all at the same time. So, I think that there are alternatives for that. And, I would support the bike lanes in downtown if it didn't take away the on-street parking for the merchants and the people that are going into downtown to use them. I - there's a shop on Palermo that I go to frequently. So, I was surprised in the tile store that's on the corner -- I went in, I think, in November because I was in another shop on Palermo, parked and saw that shop and walked across the street and looked at their tile because I'm redoing some floors. And I thought it was a nice addition to the city. And you know when I came back later, I saw all -- right before Christmas, I saw the bike lanes -- the dedicated bike lane. And I know I'm -- and I understand that that is a much safer way to ride in the downtown, but I don't think it's the answer because I think the benefit you may give to a dedicated bike line, the merchants along there are losing their on-street parking. And these stores are all destination shops. It's not like you go to a mall and you can walk through a mall and you go to all of them. You know, these are destinations and people are going to these destinations, and I'm glad that we have them in our city, so that we don't have to go to the Design District. I don't have to go very far to find, you know, great tile stores or, you know, other great shops or a doctor's office or whatever. You know, it's all right here within our city. So, I would urge you -- I mean, I won't support a dedicated bike lane or separated bike lane -- what's the word for it, Jessica? What's the word we call this?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: It's protected. And now that you...

Vice Mayor Keon: A protected bike lane.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Let me up here at the podium, you know that I'm going to want to speak more.

Vice Mayor Keon: Okay. Well, that's up to the Mayor. But, a dedicated bike lane -- a protected bike lane in the downtown only because of the size of the streets and only, because of the merchants that are along there and the parking meters and whatever else. I know I was also in a number of European cities this summer. I was in Denmark, Finland, Sweden, all along the Baltic. And you know, they do -- they ride bicycles all the time. I mean, they ride them everywhere. They ride them in good weather, bad weather, cold weather, rainy weather, everything else. They also are a very different culture than Miami. And, I don't know what it will take to import that culture or if we need to or if we want to or if we're going to or whatever else. But I'm going to tell you, none of your hair would look like it does today if you were living in those cities. But, I don't think that you can take the parking off street. So, I think if you can find a solution -- I mean, I notice when I've been in New York, you know, there is a bike lane. It's not protected, but it's -- you know, there's the sidewalk, the parking and then there's a bike lane and then there's a traffic lane. You know, if that will work, I don't know, but I -- but given the width of the area that you have to work with, I think it is extremely difficult to put in protected bike lanes in the downtown that would work seven days a week. I've been in a number of cities, too, where, you know, on the weekends -- and I remember being in Quito, you know, and waking up, you heard a lot of noise on a Sunday morning and it was because they close the downtown to cars and it's only available to bicycles. You know, which I think most of our businesses aren't open on Sunday. I think (INAUDIBLE) cities like that...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You don't ride bicycles in Quito, because it's 9,000 feet up and all mountainous.

Vice Mayor Keon: Right, but...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It's good exercise.

Vice Mayor Keon: It was filled with bicycles. But, I've been in other cities where I have seen them, you know, close major areas in the downtown for bicycle and pedestrian use on Sundays. You know, and I think, you know, we can look to that. We can look to that. I don't know really how many people. I know I keep hearing about the economic benefit and the economic impact of having bikes and having people be able to access downtown on bikes. I've never seen that data. I don't know that data. I've never seen it. I don't know where it comes from, whatever. But you know, I don't think most people, if you go in to get tile or get samples of tile or whatever else, you're not going on your bike because they're heavy. But, I really think you need to relook at the downtown and the loss of parking to these merchants, because...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Keon: That parking is vital. I also would ask that -- I know a number of you spoke that have businesses there about using the meters for parking. You know, those meters are not meant for long-term parking. They really are for transient parking. So, if you have a need for on-street -- for parking for yourself or your employees, you need to talk to the Parking Department and get permit parking in one of the garages or something else. And, you can use Freebee from that garage to take you right to your office. But, those on-street parking spaces should never be used as a -- for employee parking for a day.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. Thank you very much. Commissioner Lago.

Commissioner Lago: Mayor, I'd like to hear from Jessica, from staff, in regards to this issue.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Commissioner Lago: Because, I mean, I under...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Why don't we finish our comments, and then we'll call Jessica, and then we can go back.

Commissioner Lago: Well, I mean, I think it's important to also hear staff's comments before we have our -- all our comments...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Jessica.

Commissioner Lago: Memorialized, but I mean, again, I think -- this is a 60-day study. I'd like to see it come to an end and see how it plays. I -- again, I visit your market on a -- probably on a weekly basis, two or three times. And I understand -- and I speak to a lot of the businesses. But, I'm not going to rush to judgment right now. We're in the process -- we're in the first, you know, two weeks...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No. This is a discussion.

Commissioner Lago: No, I know. And I just -- but I want to be careful. I want to be very careful about what we say here today because, at the end of the day, we're going to run this for about 60 days, correct? That's my understanding.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Yes.

Commissioner Lago: So -- and I just want to understand staff's direction, you know. What are they trying to achieve? Obviously, we understand the end goal is to have as much bike and pedestrian safety as possible, but did we take into consideration the impact on the businesses. What are other cities doing to minimize the impact? And I know that Lord is shaking his head behind you and he's obviously against, you know, the bike paths. It's fine and it's okay. I understand people are upset. But we need to find a way to balance this, the interests here. And what are other cities doing that have dealt with this issue? You know, what do you see as the

future? What is -- and if this stays as a 60-day study or it proceeds to be permanent, if that will be the future, how can we avoid this kind of infighting in between the commercial and the bicyclists?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: We've put together a short presentation for you. But, one of the things I wanted to mention is -- and reiterate is that this is a temporary project in downtown. And, the intent of this demonstration was to show people what protected bike infrastructure looks like, because so many people do not understand what protected bike infrastructure looks like. The intent wasn't to see if we could increase ridership. We would have structured the project in a different way had that been the case. So, again, it was a demonstration of what it actually looks like. And if we could give our short presentation.

Commissioner Mena: Can I ask you a question about that, though?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Yes.

Commissioner Mena: When you say that it was intended to show what it looks like, are you saying that it's not necessarily intended to see how a lane functions in that specific location? You know, in other words, if people see what it looks like generally, then you would go about trying to find an appropriate location, or are you testing out this location for a permanent lane?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: So, there are a number of options for the downtown area for bicycling infrastructure. And, we're not at that point of the implementation process for the Gables Greenways where we're making a decision. We still have to put together small groups in the neighborhoods and in the downtown business district to work with everyone in those areas that are immediately impacted, so that we can come up with the right solution that's reflective of the community. We're just simply not there yet.

Commissioner Mena: Did you work with a consultant or somebody as far as identifying...

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Yes.

Commissioner Mena: This particular stretch for this pilot program?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Yes.

Commissioner Mena: Okay.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: We -- the Bicycle Master Plan was developed by an excellent firm, Street Plans. It works all throughout the country. And as far as the implementation process, we're working with Tool Design, one of the most respected bicycle infrastructure design firms in the country, along with Dover Kohl, which everyone here is familiar with. And, we worked together to identify this area as a pilot location.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Mayor, we have a brief presentation, a PowerPoint that we can give.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes, please.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: If I could have the PowerPoint.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: As they're setting up the PowerPoint, Mayor, I'll remind you also that the Commission has a workshop on January 16 on multimodal transportation...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, good.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And bikes, so the conversation, obviously, is expected to continue January 16...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Perfect.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: 2 to 4 in this Commission chambers.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Perfect.

Commissioner Lago: So, let's...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: And...

Commissioner Lago: If we can just -- I know you're waiting for -- okay, it's up. But, I probably get about two or three emails a week based on what is going to be the future and how are we going to address the issue of speeding in the neighborhoods. And, I want to start diverting people to join that conversation. So, if we can get staff to kind of tell us a little bit more about that date. Is it going to be open to the public? Is it going to be a public forum? Because a lot of individuals have an interest in voicing their opinion and their concerns.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Mr. Mayor, if you'd like me to comment, I will. Otherwise, we'll go on to the presentation.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let's go...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: On to the presentation, please.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Comment after...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Because we do have some additional input for that.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: The idea -- if you look at Miami in 1913, downtown Miami, there you see Burdine's, been there since 1898 and apparently, no longer going to be there. You look at this picture and there are actually two bicycles, one car, mass transit, pedestrians, arcades. Everything is there.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And no airplanes flying over Miami.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: True. And what happens is that later on, as time goes by, in the 1920s, we have Coral Gables. In Coral Gables, what we have is -- it's probably the first city in which automobiles are already part of the thinking of the design. But if you look at Coral Gables, you can see that the streets are fairly informal. And, you can look at the cars that are parked -- they're driving; there's pedestrians. You know, and the point I'm making is that we don't have a very specialized design for the car -- for the automobile, for the bicycle early on. It's a very comprehensive view of design, and that is the state of the art today of thinking in terms of transportation. The midcentury idea -- so, okay, we have to have very fast-moving cars in very specialized lanes and so on, a lot of markings and so on. That really is a thing of the past. Today, we're closer to the images that you see here in '23 or 1913 than some of the images in the midcentury. Now, if you look at Miami 1925, you will be surprised how many people are walking in the sense that we do not associate Miami with a place for walking and so on, but that was the beginning. That was actually the original idea. And, what I propose to you is that some of the ideas that we have used in recent decades, as far as automobile traffic, even bicycle lanes, have interfered with the quality of life of the pedestrians downtown. Now, you mentioned Amsterdam and Amsterdam is a great place. Many of you have been there and seen the bicyclists. I want to use this image because, again, it's just like that image from 1913 in Miami. You have the car, you have the bicycle, you have the pedestrians. You have everybody pretty

much in the same place. And what happens is that in an urban area, where people can behave as drivers or as pedestrians, closer to the thinking of a pedestrian, if they're in a car or if they're on a bicycle or they're walking, they think like pedestrians. They think that they need to go slow, that they need to look at what's going on around them that they need to see how their actions affect other people. Then you end up with a much better quality of life and a much better quality place. Now, that is, I think, the goal of this. And the question is how to get to that point. Now, that could be more specialized. This is in London. Here, you can see the -- more of a traffic engineering approach, which in some high-traffic areas may be appropriate. You may want to have dedicated bus lines, dedicated bike lanes and so on. But, the point that I want to make is that there's a range. There's a range, and I think that's what Jessica was trying to explain, that there's a range of things we can do. And the safest and the most perfect place -- design for a bicycle lane is that protected bike lane, but that also assumes that the behavior of the automobile is going to be dangerous. So, if we have an automobile behavior that is less dangerous, maybe there's less of a need to have so many specialized ideas. And, that is the discussion that I think is going to come before you in the near future with complete streets and road diets. Back in the 1990s, I had a chance to work on those issues in a previous life, and it's really interesting that at this point we're finally getting to the same design ideas that were at the very beginning of all of this. And keep in mind, bicycles and automobiles were developed at the same time. I mean, Michelangelo didn't have a bicycle. This is the -- these are 1890s developments, both of them, so they both are from the same time, and they have been -- I think that they have a great opportunity to be integrated. Now, if you look at the -- at Salzedo presently in downtown, we have four lanes of traffic, then one of the lanes becomes -- or two of the lanes become parking. I think the issue of concern is the removal of eight parking spaces. Kevin Kinney is here. He can explain in more detail, if needed. But the issue is that, at some point, this is not a very high-quality space. It certainly isn't at this point or later on. In fact, one of the early things that I suggested some years ago is that I felt that there were too many lanes of traffic in this street, because then it becomes two. So, when you have two, then the four lanes really are only for stacking. They don't really add to any traffic and so on. So, there's a need...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That is not a good example, this view, because you don't have any parking there and down -- further down on this street is where you're talking about the Arangos...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Right.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And the others, which do depend on the parking in front of the shops in order to attract businesses.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yeah. And the point I was making is exactly what you're saying, Mayor. In some cases, parking is more valuable than an extra lane. That is the level of nuance and detail that we need to achieve, and I agree completely with what you said. Now, the pilot project is the highlighted areas in the darker green. It's about two blocks of Salzedo, maybe two blocks of University Drive. The idea is that there may be a master plan eventually that includes a much more well-connected path and so on. Jessica has been working extensively on it. It's not finalized. Clearly, this is a continuous discussion. And the way it looks -- and University Drive is like this. And you have those planters that are...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It's beautiful.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yeah, very nice. And, this may be the right solution right here, and maybe it's the best solution for a residential area, perhaps. That's something that we can discuss with the public a little further.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let me ask you something. Have we had any bicycle accidents on Alhambra Circle, which does have a painted bicycle path on the right side, east-west. Have there been any accidents there, cars running over bicyclists?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: That's something that I would have to...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Because maybe that's...

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Research.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The solution as opposed to blocking anything.

Commissioner Lago: Yeah, but Mayor, if I may. Again, I'm not saying I'm in favor of the proposed bike lanes, but what we're doing here -- and if you could just take a step back and maybe look a year and two years in the past -- look at the way that we're legislating as a Commission. We are pushing density and intensity in the north corridor of the city. We voted to go from 50 units an acre to 100 units an acre. You're seeing construction happening in the urban...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Because we want to attract younger people to Coral Gables, yes. Go ahead.

Commissioner Lago: But, that was never in doubt in my statement. That was -- but I appreciate the clarification, but it was never in doubt. So, and not only young people. We want to also -- divorcees, elderly. We want people to come and stay and live in the city. I'll give you an example. The two individuals that were fortunate enough to work for the Commission, our aides, one of them used to live in Fort Lauderdale, and the other one used to live pretty far away, probably it was about an hour and a half away. I was very clear and adamant, and I told them, if you're going to come and work at this Commission for the City of Coral Gables, you need to live in the city, because it's all about quality of life. What we're having here -- and as I've been on the TPO for the last two meetings, we have a disaster for a public transportation system in Miami-Dade County. Why am I bringing this all up? I'm bringing this up, because as we push and we push for people to live inside the urban core of Coral Gables and continue to protect our neighborhoods, we have to make sure -- maybe this is not the answer, but we have to make sure that we provide adequate transportation, alternate forms of transportation for these people that

are now going to start moving into the city. Remember, projects are coming up in the downtown. If they're not built, they're being built. Over the next five years, we're going to see a transformation of what we call the CBD and the MXD. So, my advice to you is, if this doesn't work or we want to transform this or maybe we want to take portions of this that may work -- for example, University Drive in this stretch may work because we have those two lanes, like you mentioned. We have to not just discard this, because it doesn't work in front of certain commercial businesses. We have to really consider the opportunities to find alternatives because if we don't deal with it now, we'll be dealing with it in five years. And I promise you -- because when you double the density in downtown and developers start building, especially in the North Gables area, how are those people who are going to start -- who work and live in the city, how are they going to get here? Don't forget the trolley only runs one way. We only have, what, two Freebees -- four, excuse me. You could potentially have hundreds, if not thousands of new people living in the City of Coral Gables, which is not a bad thing, especially when we have such a poorly planned Dade County that has such a lack of infrastructure. So, I just want to -- you know, I want to -- I understand and I appreciate where we're going with this. I just...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Right. That's why...

Commissioner Lago: I want to move on from the issue of it's a negative project or it's a positive project.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's why I put it in the agenda for us to discuss.

Commissioner Lago: No, I understand. I understand, and I think it's a good thing to discuss. But I want to move on from that.

Commissioner Mena: I think the most important part of this is that it's a pilot program.

Commissioner Lago: Yeah, it's 60 days.

Commissioner Mena: And the whole point is to get information, to get the comments that we're getting from residents and businesses, so that we can make informed decisions. And, we're sort of putting the cart before the horse a little bit in that I think we need to get all the data, see what, you know -- we've now heard from many business owners, which I think is extremely helpful -- and figure out how to make this work, you know, in a way that accommodates as many of those interests as possible.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Absolutely.

Commissioner Mena: You know, with respect to your comment about, you know, the lanes on Alhambra and whether or not there's been any accidents. The only thing I would say to that is, you know, part of the importance of a protected lane is that it encourages people to use it. So, while there may not be a ton of accidents on a non-protected lane, part of that may be because people aren't using it. I'm not going to take, you know, a young kid or my daughter with me...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Or that maybe...

Commissioner Mena: To ride...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: People are using it and there are no accidents, and maybe that is a -- something to explore, like we're exploring other alternatives.

Commissioner Mena: Right, but it's not just about use. It's about safety. And so, my point is just that. Perhaps more people would use it if they felt safer using it, and particularly, people with children. And so, all these are things we need to discuss, and that's, I think, the entire goal of this pilot project is, again, to give it a try, see what works, see what doesn't. We've had, you know, basic comments from putting things in front of a fire hydrant to how it impacts businesses. These are all things that you need to work through in order to come up with a solution. So, you

know, I think we should really sit down at the end of this and continue to get input from the businesses that you're impacting, because there's no question it impacts them. And maybe there's other solutions. I don't know, you know. Is there a way to provide them with some sort of alternate parking? Is there a way to accommodate them otherwise? I don't know in each case, but that's part of this discussion and that's the whole goal of this. So, you know, I just want to make sure that we reevaluate this once we have more information.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And we will. This is...

Commissioner Lago: I agree with you...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The first step.

Commissioner Lago: 110 percent.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah, let's go on. Thank you very, very much.

Vice Mayor Keon: Though it's a 60...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Keon: Day...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Keon: It's a 60-day thing, and then you'll pick it all up at the end of 60 days, and then we'll come back and talk?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Keon: Does it stay while we talk or...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: This is the beginning.

Vice Mayor Keon: How does it work? What's your...

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Yes.

Vice Mayor Keon: Your plan going forward...

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Well...

Vice Mayor Keon: Just so that everyone knows.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Okay, so, after the 60 days -- we're going to start putting together these localized community meetings between now and the end of the project, so that we can work with, you know, the very, very local communities and identify what the right treatment is. It's very easy for us -- I mean, this is temporary, so it's very easy for us to take that out as we work through what the ultimate solution is. In the meantime, I'm going to provide you countless studies that support that businesses thrive when protected bike infrastructure is implemented, even with the reduction of parking.

Vice Mayor Keon: Okay.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: We have more data in favor than against.

Commissioner Mena: Can I ask one last question that I meant to ask earlier? What was done to let the businesses know that this was going to happen? I'm sure some sort of notice was sent out,

but did they know this was coming? Did they -- and I don't mean putting it on our website or anything...

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: No, that's okay.

Commissioner Mena: Like that because, obviously, you know...

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Well, we did all of those things.

Commissioner Mena: Correct.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: But also, I personally walked door to door of every business along that corridor and provided flyers to every business. In some cases, it may have gone to a receptionist and never made it any further. You know, we explain when we go in, you know, this is an important project. Please make sure it gets to the right person. I did have the opportunity to speak with the manager or the president of Designers Tile when I went -- when we did that particular day, and he did express his concern. And you know, we're committed to working with these businesses to make sure that they do have the best solution.

Commissioner Mena: Well, thank you -- first of all, thank you for doing that. Can I just encourage you to, if possible, anybody who's spoken up, get their email address. Whatever's going to be happening going forward, let's make sure we communicate with the principals, you know, and just that they're informed of what's going on. That way -- you know, the one thing we don't want is for people to not feel like they had a chance to participate in the process.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Sir...

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: No, absolutely.

Commissioner Mena: Sir, just a minute.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Please no more testimony. This is the beginning. This is discussion. We're going to be discussing this over the next 60 days. And...

Mr. Cili: Well, this was just in reference...

Commissioner Mena: But...

Mr. Cili: To her coming to my store to tell me about the program which you brought up, which was like on a Friday to tell me Monday the lanes would be closed and the planters were going in. So, this was not an open discussion. This wasn't an informative meeting. This was a starting Monday we're closing your bike lanes -- or we're closing...

Commissioner Lago: You know the great thing about this, this is just temporary, so...

Mr. Cili: But, you know sometimes you let the...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. This...

Mr. Cili: Genie out of the bottle and (INAUDIBLE)...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I will close this part of the meeting, and let's go on to the next agenda.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And Mr. Mayor, Commissioner Lago had asked about the format with your workshop. Because you're going to be asked to look at complete streets and take some type of position on it, this is an education discussion for you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We had not envisioned public -- a public meeting.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Well, maybe we need to have that.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Public can observe, but not public comment. We're happy to have evening meetings, 5 o'clock...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah, we should have that.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: That could be open to everyone if that is convenient for them.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Because it's not only the merchants that have complained. It's people on Riviera Drive and people on other streets...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Understand.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That are going to have bike paths.

Commissioner Lago: I just want -- I know that we're working on a project right now to really study holistically the entire City and what we're going to do to address traffic concerns and speeding concerns, besides the fact that we're lowering the speed limit. There's a lot of other

issues that are being studied. I don't know if Jessica's still here. I know there's a study taking place...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: The multimodal -- correct, sir.

Commissioner Lago: Yeah, multimodal. So, I want to know when that's going to be completed and when will we offer the findings, so that staff and the residents and the business owners here can give their input before, let's say, a circle is prescribed or speed humps or whatever the final finding's going to be. So, when that is finished I want to put a hard end date to that, so that I can start notifying people. Because right now, when people call me -- for example, I know that -- I know certain -- several people on this Commission received emails this week. My answer is, working on a study right now. It'll be completed -- and I copy Jessica and she writes her...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Commissioner Lago: She responds with the information. I just want to kind of have more of a defined end date.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: And, we will go over that in more detail at our meeting next week.

Commissioner Lago: Perfect.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: But just so you know, under no circumstances will we be making a decision about any traffic calming measures and installing without community input. Again, similar to what I mentioned related to the Gables Greenways, we will have small local community meetings, so that the solutions work for those individual neighborhoods, street by street.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Jessica. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Keon: You know...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright...

Vice Mayor Keon: Experience has told...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let's go on to the next.

Vice Mayor Keon: Yeah, but experience has also told us that even though we do studies and we do a lot of public notification and whatever else, it's not until it actually appears...

Commissioner Lago: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Keon: That people seem to notice...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Ms. Lauger.

Vice Mayor Keon: It, so...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We're not taking your subject up today. I have put it in the agenda for the next Commission meeting, where we will discuss the diverters and -- you know, Sevilla and those streets, so we're not going to be discussing it today. I just wanted you to know that.

Ms. Lauger: Okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. Thank you.

[End: 10:04:15 a.m.]

City Commission Meeting

January 9, 2018

Agenda Item C-1 - Discussion regarding bicycle paths in downtown and their effect on merchants and parking.