

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item E-1
January 14, 2020
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

**Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena
Commissioner Jorge Fors**

City Staff

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item E-1 [9:25 a.m.]

Personal Appearance by Robert Ruano regarding Alhambra Circle bicycle project.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: All right. The next item is personal appearances. Robert Ruano. Mr. Ruano, good morning.

Robert Ruano: Good morning.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: As I told you a minute ago, this is your personal appearance. You have a right to appear before us. This is not -- and I see many people with signs and everything. This is not a discussion on the bicycle paths or sidewalks or anything else. That is not on the agenda at

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this time. I will give you what we gave Sylvia Pinera Vasquez, who was -- had a position identical but on the other side to yours, and you have five minutes.

Mr. Ruano: Actually, sir, you gave her eight minutes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I gave her five and if...

Mr. Ruano: I have about seven.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: She didn't...

Mr. Ruano: I need about seven...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Finish...

Mr. Ruano: For my speech, if you don't mind.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Ruano: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you time it, Mr. City Clerk? Go ahead.

Mr. Ruano: Thank you. Robert Ruano, 1544 Mercia Avenue. Good morning, Mayor, Vice Mayor, and members of the City Commission. I'm an 18-year resident of Coral Gables and I'm here today representing many residents who support safer streets for our children, pedestrians, elderly using walkers, mothers walking with their babies and strollers and cyclists of all ages. Can everyone who supports safer streets for our children and families, please stand up? Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you all for coming. And thank you for Transit Alliance who has a

couple of people here and they're always in support. I'm going to pass out -- or just going to show you some illustrations to prove -- to illustrate my next points. Every day residents are taking their lives into their hands because they have no choice but to walk on city streets, competing with cars for space. We need the sidewalks and bike lanes the City's forward-thinking leadership voted for and approved in 2004, 2010, and again, in 2014. The Alhambra Complete Streets Project, which has been supported by voters in the neighborhood and around the city is the latest to benefit from the City's bike and pedestrian plan. The project area, from Alhambra Circle at Coral Way, south to San Amaro Boulevard at the University of Miami is just south of a two-mile bike lane segment and continuous sidewalk network all the way to the LeJeune Road. I support this project as do the majority of the area's voters because it not only makes the neighborhood safer for residents and cyclists, but it also keeps our trees safe. It is a fact that city arborists have said that only three trees would be removed and that is because they are dying. Otherwise, the tree canopy will be protected. Let me say that again. The plan protects the trees. It's important to understand the rich history that got us here today. In 2004, the Gables Commission adopted -- through a public and transparent process -- the City's bike plan for improving safety in this section so that it would be safe and accessible to cyclists and pedestrians. In 2010, the City's state-approved comprehensive plan reinforced the focus on safety by requiring, requiring public development projects to adhere to the 2004 plan which showed Alhambra Circle getting a bike lane in both directions. Then again in 2013, the City embarked on another public and transparent planning process for improving bike and pedestrian safety. They hired consultants, had a series of public meetings where the community had an opportunity to speak and ultimately sent the item to the City Commission a year later, where it passed unanimously. Let me say that again. It passed unanimously and voters supported it by participating in a public and transparent process. There were four public meetings, four, four public meetings; two were with the Transportation Advisory Board, one with residents at the Youth Center and a fourth before the City Commission. The transcripts of those meetings, along with other backup information, I will send to the Commissioners today and we'll show that one of the major opponents of the plan who claimed that residents were never informed was signed in at the first two public meetings. The truth is that the proposed improvements to the street, which include reducing the travel lane to 10 feet and adding a few feet for a bike lane, have been proven

to help vehicle safety. In a study conducted in 2015, researchers found that while safety increased while you reduced the travel lane, the reduced lane did not slow traffic. Additionally, research in Colorado analyzing data from 13 cities found that when cities implement bike plans, all road users are safer. That means that cyclists, walkers, and even people in cars are less likely to be injured or in a fatal crash. A study in Canada found similar results, noting that streets with some sort of bike infrastructure cut down the chance of injury by 50 percent. Being that Alhambra is a collector road that carries upwards of 8,000 cars a day, which you yourselves have said is critical for a continuous sidewalk network, I urge you today to take the sidewalks out of the discussion and commit to a five-foot sidewalk at least on one side of this stretch of road. Any other amenities can be discussed, but to not build this basic infrastructure for people in wheelchairs, parents with strollers or elderly that have trouble getting around, like my neighbor Sophia in this picture over here, would be negligent and possibly illegal. The truth is that many opposing this project are not thinking about the current and next generation of residents and taxpayers who will be hopefully calling Coral Gables home. From opponents, I hear comments like, “we don’t want outsiders to use our street.” “Look at my yard and how much of it will be cut up by the sidewalk.” “I pay three times in property taxes what my neighbor pays across the street. Let them get a sidewalk.” And my favorite, which shows an obvious not-in-my-backyard mentality, “I’m in favor of this project. It should just be on Grenada Boulevard.” We need to look beyond this type of short-sightedness and build on the forward-thinking vision that has made us the City Beautiful and the model for others. In closing, I want to thank the City administration, and especially, the City Manager for continuing this transparent process towards a safer city. He’s inherited a number of policies that this Commission has passed over the years, policies that aim to provide a safe place to walk, recycle for all residents and he’s doing a great job of getting them done. The fact that the City is providing a vote at the end of the month where affected residents on Alhambra and side streets can vote on this project is indicative of the transparency with which the City is working. Thank you and thank you for your service to our city.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much, Mr. Ruano.

(APPLAUSE)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.