

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Items F-7 and F-12 are related
February 26, 2019
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 Frank Quesada

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Planning and Zoning Director, Ramon Trias
Public Services Division Director, Brook Dannemiller

Public Speaker(s)

Rafael De La Sierra

Agenda Items F-7 and F-12 are related [0:00:00 p.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida requesting Conditional Use Review for a Building Site Determination pursuant to Zoning Code Article 3, "Development Review", Section 3-206, "Building Site Determination" to separate into two (2) single-family building sites on the property zoned Single-Family Residential (SFR) District, legally described as Lots 13-18 Block 236, Coral Gables Riviera Section Part II (601 Sunset Drive), Coral Gables, Florida; one (1) building site consisting of Lots 13, 14 and 15 (east parcel), and the other (1) building site consisting of Lot 16, 17 and 18 (west parcel); including required conditions; providing for a repealer provision, providing for a severability clause, and providing for an effective date. (01 09 18 PZB recommended approval,

City Commission Meeting
February 26, 2019

Agenda Items F-7 and F-12 are related - Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida requesting Conditional Use Review for a Building Site Determination pursuant to Zoning Code Article 3, "Development Review," Section 3-206, "Building Site Determination" to separate into two single-family building sites on the property zoned Single-Family Residential District, Lots 13-18 Block 236, 601 Sunset Drive.

Vote 5-0) (Separation of single-family property to create two single-family building sites)

A Resolution to allow release of Restrictive Covenant for Lots 13-18 Block 236, Coral Gables Riviera Section Part 11 (601 Sunset Drive), recorded in Plat Book 12628, Page 1081 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida. (Release of Restrictive Covenant)

(This Resolution is not for consideration at this time and will be included with the above ordinance on Second Reading if approved on First Reading.)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: F-7.

City Attorney Ramos: F-7 is an ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida requesting Conditional Use Review for a Building Site Determination pursuant to Zoning Code Article 3, "Development Review", Section 3-206, "Building Site Determination" to separate into two single-family building sites on the property zoned Single-Family Residential District, legally described as Lots 13-18 Block 236, Coral Gables Riviera Section Part II (601 Sunset Drive), Coral Gables, Florida; one building site consisting of Lots 13, 14 and 15 (east parcel), and the other one building site consisting of Lots 16, 17 and 18 (west parcel); including required conditions; providing for a repealer provision, providing for a severability clause, and providing for an effective date. This is a public hearing item. Mr. Trias.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Mayor, the request is a building site separation and also there's a release of a restricted covenant, which you can deal with next meeting. The site that -- as you can see, it's right on Sunset, facing Sunset on the short end of the block, and it's the full width of that block. And as you can see, that neighborhood is developed with single-family house...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Put the one...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The one before. There, okay.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Almansa and Sunset.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah, yeah.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: And as you can see, there is a fully developed neighborhood with single-family houses and this is the existing building on the site. The request is to separate one, the fairly large site into two, and the site has six lots, so it's being separated into two parcels with three lots each. And as you can see, it's just split down the middle. Split at the middle and then there's two building sites. The land use and the zoning are single-family, as expected in the neighborhood. And as you can see, the applicant has prepared very detailed site plans and architectural designs, as required by Code, which also preserve existing trees, et cetera. So, as you can see in the overall landscape plan, it's a very well thought out floor plan that incorporates frontage -- the pedestrian frontage on Sunset and then the automobile frontage on the corner so that works out fairly well for the architecture. And that's the way that the buildings look. If the applicant wants to explain them further, certainly they can do that afterwards. And as far as the review timeline, the DRC Committee met in September, then there was the required neighborhood meeting in December. Planning and Zoning Board reviewed and recommended approval, and now we're here for the City Commission meeting. There was some discussion on notices. In addition to the mailed notices, as you well know, we also have the notices for the neighborhood meeting and we have posting of the properties. We have legal ads. The item is posted on the agenda on the webpage and the staff report is also posted on the agenda. So, there's plenty of opportunities to find out what's going on. As the City Manager mentioned, the radius for our city is a thousand feet, which is more than most cities. And that basically covers the whole neighborhood around that proposed site. The site plan information, as you can see, basically, a slightly over 10,000

square foot parcel becomes two over 5,000 square foot parcels. The frontage goes from 200 to 100, so they're fairly large sites. And they're two stories and...

Commissioner Mena: Sorry. Did I misunderstand what you just said? I thought that the total site was 30,000 square feet.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: I'm sorry. The -- I was speaking of the development potential, the development potential of the site.

Commissioner Mena: Oh, okay.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: I misspoke.

Commissioner Mena: Okay.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: So, what happens is that, as you know, it's going to be equal or less to the one that is allowed.

Vice Mayor Lago: Can you go back to that?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, the building floor area is 10,000 -- obviously, between both, so it's 5,000 is the max you can build per lot?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, that would be -- what would be the percentage in regards to the buildable square footage -- the buildable percentage, excuse me, Ramon.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: It's about the same.

Commissioner Mena: A third.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: It's about the same. It's not any bigger than it would be allowed as one site, which is what the Code requires.

Vice Mayor Lago: Okay.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: It should be the same or less. And -- anyway, any other questions on the site data? I think it's fairly clear. Then the staff has reviewed for criteria -- for the criteria -- and there are several criteria as you know. And the criteria are satisfied. And in terms of the -- the only issue that has to be satisfied in addition is that there's a covenant that has to be removed by the Commission and that takes place on the second meeting. There was some discussion on that issue in the Planning and Zoning. There was also some discussion in the minutes, in case you read them in detail about the details of the landscape plan. A more detailed landscape plan was submitted and that's what I included in the PowerPoint and I also have it with me. And that is the restrictive covenant that will have to be dealt with independently as a separate resolution later on. So, the requests are two, the building site separation. The staff recommends approval with conditions. And then the second request would be dealt with in the second reading. The conditions of approval are typical. There's the total square footage should not exceed what's allowed now, that the single-family site shall meet all the applicable requirements of the Zoning Code. There's no variances or anything like that. And that they have submitted plans, as you have seen, et cetera. So, that is the request and staff and Planning and Zoning recommend approval.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Commissioner Mena: Can you -- yeah.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We have a member of the public that wishes to speak. Mr. Rafael De La Sierra, 6910 Tordera, and a very prominent architect and resident of Coral Gables.

Rafael De La Sierra: Yes. I live three houses away from this site. I am in favor of dividing this site in two lots, like they proposed. That land has been there sitting for 30 years and it has been a disgrace to the neighborhood. So, I am 100 percent in favor of dividing the lot. What I am concerned about is that across the street from Sunset, there are these two huge mansions and I think the elevations that they proposed on one hand, the one facing Almansa is a very good, you know, house that has a good elevation facing Sunset. The one in Tordera Street, it is very weak. And I think it's not very nice to the people that live across the street in Sunset. That's the objection that I really would have. The rest, I am a hundred percent in favor of it, so I'm talking here to support the application of dividing the lot.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

Commissioner Mena: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Rafael. Comments from the Commission.

Commissioner Mena: Yeah, I have...

Commissioner Quesada: Yeah.

Commissioner Mena: I have a couple things.

Vice Mayor Lago: And so do I.

Commissioner Mena: Ramon, could you -- I just want to clarify something and then I have a question for you. And can you pull up your presentation again? And I was particularly -- the image that shows the home, the aerial view that shows the actual home built on the lot. One of the things I just want to clarify, this is not a lot split. There's six lots here.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Six lots, yes.

Commissioner Mena: This is a building site separation.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's very important.

Commissioner Mena: And -- because obviously, we take lot splits very seriously and we've had issues with those in the past. But the reason I wanted to show that visual of the home is because it's actually -- makes it more consistent with the rest of the neighborhood, right?

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes, yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: That's what...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Absolutely.

Commissioner Mena: In other words, if you go -- keep going back, the other sort of...

Vice Mayor Lago: Sunset Drive.

Commissioner Mena: Tips, if you will, that hit Sunset Drive right there, you can see that, you know, to the left there and to the right you typically have at least two, sometimes three homes on

the equivalent are. And here, you're just going to have two. So, to me, if anything, this current site plan is more out of character with the neighborhood and I live maybe six blocks west of here so I know the area well. So, from that perspective, I think it's a good thing. But one of the questions I had for you was from a Board of Architects perspective -- and I think the design is very nice and I think it's great. One of the questions I had is, does -- is one of the things that Board of Architects looks at is it -- when you have like sort of two similarly designed homes like this that a developer comes in and builds two homes or have multiple homes at the same time that look alike, is that something that Board of Architects...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes, actually...

Commissioner Mena: Has an opinion on one way or another? Is that a good thing? Is that -- you know, I understand the economies of scale for somebody coming in and developing that, but architecturally, if you look at a street, you don't necessarily want all the homes to be homogeneous and look the same, you know.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: The Zoning Code amazingly does not allow you to do the same design twice, it actually requires different designs. And as you can see in the site plan, they're very different. They're very different also because of the existing conditions of the landscape which they are trying to incorporate. So, I believe that the architect has certainly done a good job trying to implement the requirements of the Code. And it went through the Board of Architects. The houses are significantly different in terms of the site plan and also in terms of the overall design. Now, there are some similarities in terms of style.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: It's the same architect. But I do believe that there was a very good process of review and those issues were addressed and you can see it clearly in this image, very different buildings.

Vice Mayor Lago: I agree with your comments and I think that one of the reasons why I'm going to be supporting this is because, number one, it's not a lot split. And number two, it allows for more uniformity on Sunset. This is currently six lots. One of the questions and the only issue that I wanted to really clarify because I didn't have a chance to stop by and analyze the canopy coverage. They're not requesting to remove any trees, right? Like you said, they're designing and building around the existing specimen trees.

Commissioner Keon: There are none.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes. They are keeping the specimen trees and I have the detailed landscape here with me in case anybody wants to review it.

Vice Mayor Lago: I just wanted to clarify that because certain, you know, people...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: I wouldn't go as far as to say that they're not removing anything.

Vice Mayor Lago: No, but I want to be -- I want to make sure that -- I mean, again, if you're removing a tree, there's a purpose for it. But if there's a specimen tree, I'd like to see...

Commissioner Mena: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Lago: That we do everything in our power, especially when we're going to be allowing -- right now is the opportunity to take advantage of a lot size if you're going to be designing these homes. It's not like you're adding -- you're doing an addition and there's a certain tree that may be in the way. I want to make sure that we do everything within our power to conserve, you know, like the specimen trees that we have in our neighborhoods.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I have some comments.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: And then...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And Commissioner, regarding the trees, that's -- I'm with you 100 percent, but that has very little to do with our Zoning Code or lot splitting. But you know, you're right that we should encourage the preservation of the specimen trees. I have been, in all of my years here, very much against lot splitting. And I think it's obscene for somebody to buy a hundred-foot lot and then split it into two 50-foot lots, but this is not that case. These are six lots and it makes all the sense in the world to split them. And we should take Mr. De La Sierra's comments in mind, you know, when we proceed from here. I'm very much for this and if there are no other comments, maybe we should...

Commissioner Keon: I...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Call for a vote.

Commissioner Keon: You know, I went over this a lot with the City Attorney yesterday. I'm sorry I'm late. You know, the reason there's no specimen trees on this -- or there are so few specimen trees on this lot is because they removed about 17 royal palms on this lot without a permit a few years ago. So, that's why there's no trees on the lot.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Lago: No, the...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you call the roll, please?

Vice Mayor Lago: Let me -- if I may. If I may, when I said...

City Commission Meeting

February 26, 2019

Agenda Items F-7 and F-12 are related - Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida requesting Conditional Use Review for a Building Site Determination pursuant to Zoning Code Article 3, "Development Review," Section 3-206, "Building Site Determination" to separate into two single-family building sites on the property zoned Single-Family Residential District, Lots 13-18 Block 236, 601 Sunset Drive. Page 10

Commissioner Keon: They...

Vice Mayor Lago: When I say specimen trees, I'm not talking about palm trees.

Commissioner Keon: Royal palms...

Vice Mayor Lago: I'm talking about...

Commissioner Keon: Are specimen...

Vice Mayor Lago: I'm talking about...

Commissioner Keon: Trees.

Vice Mayor Lago: But I'm -- Commissioner, what I'm talking about is, you know, say like an oak tree or a significant mahogany that may be on the property. That we should do everything in our power to try to save those trees. They're...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Absolutely.

Vice Mayor Lago: Beautiful trees. They've been there for a long time. They're giving away -- they're giving away palm trees. You can go to Diaz Farms right now, who has thousands and thousands and thousands of palm trees because nobody wants palm trees. They're giving them away at prices that are unheard of. The City Manager can tell you that. Brook can tell you that. People don't want to plant palm trees. There's no market for it. And when I go to Homestead and I take my daughters to Robert Is Here and we go buy succulents, you see all these plantations where there's thousands of palm trees.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Guys...

Vice Mayor Lago: Nobody wants them.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I know.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, what I meant by specimen tree was -- the issue was just a tree of significant magnitude that offers shade, that it would be a shame to lose it, that you can't replace it and you can't buy it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We're all in agreement. Will somebody make a motion?

Commissioner Mena: Well, but I'd like...

Vice Mayor Lago: So move.

Commissioner Mena: Hold on. To your point, Commissioner Keon, I wasn't aware of that, so I appreciate you bringing it up. So...

Commissioner Keon: And they got a permit after the fact.

Commissioner Mena: So...

City Attorney Ramos: An after the fact permit and paid...

Commissioner Keon: They got...

City Attorney Ramos: The fines.

Commissioner Mena: Okay.

Commissioner Keon: And paid no fines?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

City Attorney Ramos: No, they paid the fines.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: A motion has been made. Is there a second?

Commissioner Mena: They paid the fines. Yeah, okay.

Commissioner Keon: They paid the fines.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Is there a second?

Commissioner Keon: You know what, I have a concern also with the same thing that Mike raised with regard to the similarity in the architecture. You know, because the rooflines are the same, they do strike me as very similar. In looking at them, you don't...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: From a...

Commissioner Keon: Think they are?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Clearly, they're designed by the same architect with the same architectural language, so that is the similarity. In terms of the configuration of the site, they're very different. So, you know, there's some similarities and that may be a critique of the design.

Commissioner Keon: Alright.

City Attorney Ramos: This is a public hearing item. Does anyone wish to speak?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No. We -- he did. They...

Vice Mayor Lago: Brook.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Did already.

Vice Mayor Lago: Can I call Mr. Dannemiller up one second, if possible? So, we were talking about trees. I brought it up because obviously I couldn't -- I didn't take a chance to drive by the property even though I drive by -- we all drive by the property on a consistent basis but we haven't really looked deep into the property. My only concern was the issue of when you're going to be building these two lots out, you're starting from a fresh canvas because you're going to demolish these homes. I wanted to make sure there wasn't any major specimen trees that were being demolished. I brought that up to Ramon. Obviously, he would defer to you. Have you had a chance to take a look at that and make sure there was nothing...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: I'll double-check with Jorge Rivera to make sure that each -- every time a lot split or there's work, he goes out and inspects to make sure that there's no specimen trees.

Vice Mayor Lago: That's my only point.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Brook.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Proper (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Vice Mayor Lago: I appreciate that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will somebody second the motion?

Commissioner Quesada: Second.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you call the roll, please?

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Mena: Yes.

Commissioner Quesada: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)