

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting  
Agenda Item I-4  
May 31, 2022  
City Commission Chambers  
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

**City Commission**

**Mayor Vince Lago**

**Vice Mayor Michael Mena**

**Commissioner Rhonda Anderson**

**Commissioner Jorge Fors**

**Commissioner Kirk Menendez**

**City Staff**

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias**

**City Attorney, Miriam Ramos**

**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

**Assistant City Attorney, Naomi Levi-Garcia**

**Public Speaker(s)**

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Agenda Item I-4 [1:58 p.m.]

Update regarding the Miami-Dade County's Rapid Transit Zone Ordinance.

Mayor Lago: And we'll take one more item before 2 o'clock. Let's do I-4, the RTZ zone update. I think Naomi can handle that in two minutes. She'll try.

Commissioner Anderson: No pressure now.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: I'll try.

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City Commission Meeting

May 31, 2022

Agenda Item I-4 - Update regarding the Miami-Dade County's Rapid Transit Zone Ordinance.

Mayor Lago: Or she'll try.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Okay, so a new proposal came out. It was released by Vice Chair Gilbert through the League of Cities. We received a copy. I will quickly go through a summary of that proposal. So, it establishes standards for urban centers and the Smart Corridor subzone. I'm just going to call it the RTZ to keep things simple.

Mayor Lago: Yep.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: So, the RTZ would specifically exclude single-family and two-family residential properties that are not in a mixed-use development. Generally, the City can continue to exercise regulatory jurisdiction over properties within the RTZ that fall within the City's boundaries. However, the City would have to adopt minimum FAR requirements in urban centers and for mixed use developments that are in the RTZ. With the exception that if imposing that minimum FAR would encroach on a single-family residential neighborhood, you can make an exception in that situation. So, the City would have to allow certain uses in the RTZ. Within those uses is a mandatory workforce housing element. For any property that has four units or more, they'd have to allot 12.5 percent of their units for workforce housing. Finally, the ordinance would require each municipality to adopt an RTZ ordinance of its own. For the City, that adoption would have to take place by July 2024, and the County would continue to reserve exclusive jurisdiction over County-owned rights-of-way and County-owned property that is over half an acre in size. So, in terms of timing, first reading is scheduled for tomorrow, June 1st, and Vice Chair Gilbert has expressed that he anticipates the ordinance being adopted by second reading prior to the County Commission breaking in August for the summer. So, we are attempting to coordinate one more meeting with him through the League of Cities where we will express any lingering concerns that we have. We believe the workforce housing requirement may be of concern, and

perhaps, being able to further protect not just single-family and two-family residential properties, but low-density residential properties as well.

Vice Mayor Mena: Is the workforce housing component -- that requirement would be just a newly imposed requirement for this zone, or it would only apply to new projects that come online...

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: New projects.

Vice Mayor Mena: Thereafter?

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: New projects, so anything with four units or more would have to...

Vice Mayor Mena: And I imagine -- I mean, obviously, a big portion of this zone is the university, right? I mean, it seems like over...

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: Over half of it.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Yeah. So, this map needs to be updated slightly. This is kind of the last map we did superimposing the RTZ on the City, so we need to update this a little bit. But yeah, the university comprises a large portion of...

Vice Mayor Mena: It seems like...

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Of the zone.

Vice Mayor Mena: It seems like somebody needs to just kind of get the university engaged in that discussion because I don't know how you're going to overlay a workforce housing component, you know, onto the university -- the future university housing projects. So, you know, maybe they just carve that out? That's fine.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Agreed.

Vice Mayor Mena: But it needs to be addressed.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: We'll bring that to their attention.

Commissioner Anderson: Is the...?

Vice Mayor Mena: To people in the audience that might be able to help.

Commissioner Anderson: Right, right, right, they might. How does the workforce housing requirement interplay with the cost of the land and cost to the construction overall?

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Yeah, I mean, I think that's a very valid question that we need to explore further. I mean, that's always been kind of the City's response to the County's attempt to regulate workforce housing, that the value of our property is so high that it makes it difficult to meet any of those standards.

Mayor Lago: I think what we need to do also is -- and I've tried this already, and I actually did it at the Mayor's -- Mayor of Miami-Dade County's roundtable discussion, where I brought to light a litany of things that the City of Coral Gables is doing head and shoulders above any other city. We hear a lot about the TODs, and obviously, what's going on with the RTZ. But when you look and you analyze the thousands of units that have been constructed or currently under construction

adjacent to the Metrorail, either near the Douglas Station or at Merrick Park, we are an example for other cities to emulate. And I think that when I brought that up, the other 34 municipalities who were there represented by either a city manager or their mayors were actually impressed and had really limited knowledge of the efforts that we're taking in regards to digitizing our permitting process, revamping 427, doubling our density in the North Gables area from 50 units to 100 units an acre, increasing that amount even, you know, if we're provided with some open space, a bunch of different things that escapes me right now that I mentioned. And I think that those are things that we need to have more discussions with Oliver Gilbert to really make him understand that just because you pass a law doesn't mean it's actually going to work. Let the free market take its place, and you'll see that units, construction will occur. So...

Vice Mayor Mena: We need -- you know, and we need more clarity from staff on how those workforce housing requirements will apply to our city. In other words, is it relative to median incomes in our city, or is it a broader area than just our city? Because that's going to dictate a lot of how it impacts us. Also, I think whether -- I don't know much flexibility there is or is not with respect to that zone because just outside that zone to the south...

Mayor Lago: Residential.

Vice Mayor Mena: There's a lot of pretty affordable residential apartment complexes, older buildings actually that have been there for many years. I used to live by there. And you know, again, I think if you were to compare the rents for that area to the median income in Coral Gables, I think it would probably -- I would like to think it would hopefully check the box for us, but I don't know exactly how that works, and I need staff to clarify that for us.

City Manager Iglesias: I think that overall the intent is to provide density along the rapid transit zone. Most of our density is 125 so that actually meets it. So, they've exempted the residential area. University of Miami brings a lot of density into one area.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: And so, I think it provides certainly a lot of people for the University Station. However, we need to look at that workforce housing a little closer and make sure that -- see how that affects us.

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah, I mean, sometimes what happens is you -- if you want to demand the density, you're then losing the affordability. Some of those older apartments -- if you haven't been back there -- are affordable for...

Vice Mayor Mena: Exactly.

Commissioner Anderson: Folks that live there. But if you would demolish them and build new, it's going to be astronomical in price.

Commissioner Fors: And is there --? If I remember correctly, the definition of workforce housing in this draft of the RTZ proposal by Commissioner Gilbert is defined, right? Or it refers -- it says workforce housing means whatever work...

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: It refers to another...

Commissioner Fors: As defined (INAUDIBLE).

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Section of the County Code. Yeah, there is -- there are two sections of the County Code that regulate workforce housing, but within the County.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: You know, there was an exception for cities to carve themselves out by adopting their own ordinances or, you know...

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Standards, which we have done. So, yes, it refers to the County Code sections, but we just need more clarity on the -- like on this specific portion of the ordinance without a doubt, which is why we're requesting this additional meeting, and this is probably going to be the main item that we focus our conversation on.

Vice Mayor Mena: What -- listen, what's made me skittish about this whole process the whole time is that it's a County-led endeavor, and they're trying to apply the same standards across the board. And typically, as it relates to our city, when you try to do that it's kind of trying to fit a square peg in a round hole. It doesn't work. And so, if we need to get ahead of that and we need to be passing something on a city level that somehow enables us to exempt ourselves somehow or to have a different standard applied, we need to be ahead of that. So, that's my concern. This workforce housing part is a new addition to this that -- as far as I know.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Well, it was in the previous iteration.

Vice Mayor Mena: Okay.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: The use was in the previous iteration.

Vice Mayor Mena: Okay. So, just please look at that and get back to us because that's been my concern the whole time is that as they try to apply this across the board to everybody the same, we might run into some issues.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Absolutely.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay, so we'll be hearing from you.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Yeah. I don't know exactly when this meeting is going to take place, but either way, I'll have an update for you at the next Commission meeting.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Naomi.

Commissioner Anderson: Or before. Or before it so we can...

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Or before, sure.

Vice Mayor Mena: Thank you.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you so much. Great work.