

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item A-1
December 15, 2009
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Donald D. Slesnick, II
Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.
Commissioner Maria Anderson
Commissioner Rafael “Ralph” Cabrera, Jr.
Commissioner Wayne “Chip” Withers

City Staff

City Manager, Patrick Salerno
City Attorney, Elizabeth Hernandez
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Mari Molina, Executive Director, Coral Gables Business Improvement District

A-1 [Start: 9:27:41 a.m.]

Presentation by Mari Molina, Executive Director of the Coral Gables Business Improvement District, regarding leasing activity on Miracle Mile

Mayor Slesnick: We have two more items in portion A of our program, which is our recognition of citizens, our employees and also updates of the events of the day, and we have Ms. Mari Molina, who is Executive Director of the Downtown Gables Business Improvement District to give us an update on our activities in the Business District.

Ms. Molina: Good morning Mayor Slesnick, thank you very much, and to the members of the Commission, Happy Holidays to everyone, thank you for allowing us this opportunity. Before I begin, I'd like to take a moment to introduce to you one of our newest Board members of the Business Improvement District, Mr. Wayne Eldridge, he is the General Manager of Tarpon Bend.

Commissioner Cabrera: Welcome Wayne.

Ms. Molina: This is a very busy time for us, and I really appreciate him coming out today, I also know that Mark Trowbridge, the President and CEO of the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce is here. We are great partners in all our initiatives and without the team effort we could not do the job that we do with our Downtown. This is an abridged version of our annual stakeholders meeting presentation that we gave a couple of weeks ago, and I thought it was really relevant especially after some questions in November about what's going on in the Downtown. One of the most interesting pieces of information as we gathered our annual meeting information was

that we noticed that there is really a retail renewal going on in the Downtown. Since 2007, fifty-five spaces have been remodeled and upgraded within the B.I.D.; these are merchants and restaurants that have come in and totally redone their spaces; of those, thirty-five have opened on Miracle Mile, which means almost one out of every four store fronts has been updated in the past two years. Some of the examples of those are the California Pizza Kitchen, AT&T Concept Store, which is one of only a few in the country, Priscilla of Boston, Le Provenceal, and the list goes on. This is an example of one of the corners, the corset corner that we all know and love, which became California Pizza Kitchen; and also down at 130 Miracle Mile, which appeared to be boarded for some time, was really historically, and we don't just promote downtown, we try to position the entire City as a great place to come. This is from Florida Travel and Life, Jedor featuring one of our merchants; and this is South American, a Columbian magazine, Aloe Novias, which did a huge eight page feature on us as a destination. We also conduct seminars for our merchants this year. We did a social media "Smarts 101", we also did some mixers to get all our merchants together, talking about ideas, and even in this hard economic time, I can tell you that the partnerships and the initiatives done by our merchants in partnership have really made our area much stronger. So what's new for next year besides continuing these marketing efforts?- we are really excited that we are relaunching our ShopCoralGables.com web site; here is just a peak at some of the new features we'll have, its going to be a lot more interactive, and our retailers will have their own presents that they can manage on the Internet, so we are really excited about that, and hope to bring a lot of new activity to the Downtown. And that's my presentation.

Mayor Slesnick: Thank you very much Mari, keep up the good work, and it's critically important. I know that some people that I have talked to say, well you know that Coral Gables is ninety-three (93%) residential in its geographical land mass, and you spend a lot of time talking about downtown projects and downtown issues, but I want to remind everyone that downtown both here and in our commercial district south of the highway, provide us forty-five percent (45%) of our tax base – 45% of our tax base, which without we would really be a different type of City, and a different type of budget which we will be incapable of handling the kind of services we give unless we raise the tax rate astronomically high. We appreciate what you all do.

Ms. Molina: Thank you. And I guess I would be remiss in closing and not reminding everyone to please shop downtown and shop local; I know it's a little sexy to shop online, but please visit your local retailers and your restaurants, this is a real critical time of the year and we want to see them continue to succeed. Thank you.

Commissioner Cabrera: Mari, I was just going to ask you, will you stay until after the consent because I have an item under the consent that I am going to pull that I think will affect the downtown area?

Ms. Molina: I'll be glad to.

Commissioner Cabrera: Thank you.

Mayor Slesnick: Remember everyone in your shopping habits we have stores, restaurants, and other businesses south of the highway and around the corner facing South Miami between Sunset

and Red Road; we have the Village of Merrick Park; we have offices and complexes and places to shop along U.S.-1; we have the Village of Merrick Park and of course Miracle Mile, Ponce and the company blocks, so there is plenty of choice in Coral Gables, you don't need to go anywhere else.

[End: 9:38:38 a.m.]