



City of Coral Gables Planning and Zoning Staff Report

Applicant: City of Coral Gables
Application: **Zoning Code Text Amendment – Recycled Materials**
Public Hearing: Planning and Zoning Board
Date & Time: **November 19, 2025; 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.**
Location: City Commission Chambers, City Hall,
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, Florida 33134

1. APPLICATION REQUEST

The City of Coral Gables is requesting review and consideration of the following:

An Ordinance of the City Commission providing for text amendments to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code, Article 5, "Architecture," Section 5-309, "Trellises;" Section 5-310, "Wood decks," and Section 5-311, "Pavers and walkways," to incorporate composite recycled materials as an approved material for trellises, decks, and walkways; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date.

The request requires three public hearings, including review and recommendation by the Planning and Zoning Board, and 1st and 2nd Reading before the City Commission.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Article 5 of the City's Zoning Code regulates the permitted materials for various exterior architectural elements on a property. Currently, trellises are limited to specific types of wood, composite, or metal, while decks are restricted to two-inch-thick wood. The City Architect may approve similar wood types for trellises and decks on a case-by-case basis. However, the use of painted wood decking has raised environmental concerns, as it contributes to microplastic pollution and negatively affects water quality.

The proposed text amendments would expand the list of permitted materials by allowing the use of composite recycled materials for trellises, decks, and walkways. To qualify, these materials must contain a minimum of 60 percent recycled content. In addition, composite decking boards must have a minimum thickness of one inch to ensure durability and structural integrity. Additionally, the similar wood types is further clarified to be applicable to solid wood, as to only allow composite if it is of recycled materials.

The text amendment was approved at City Commission on October 14th, 2025 for first reading (vote: 5 to 0).

3. PROPOSED ZONING CODE TEXT AMENDMENT

The proposed Zoning Code text amendments are provided below in ~~strike through~~/underline format.

ARTICLE 5 – ARCHITECTURE

Section 5-309. Trellises.

Trellises may be permitted as an accessory use subject to review and approval by the City Architect or the assigned Development Review Official and the following:

- A. Trellises may be constructed of the following materials:
 1. All wood members shall be constructed of one of the following approved materials:
 - a. Solid select heart cypress.
 - b. Solid heart mahogany.
 - c. Solid heart teak.
 - d. Solid heart cedar.
 - e. Clear vertical grain redwood.
 - f. Pressure treated pine or fir except creosote pressure treated wood.
 - g. Similar type or quality of solid wood to those noted above, as approved by the City Architect or Development Review Official (DRO). All other wood members may be constructed of all the above materials including creosote pressure treated wood.
 2. Composite recycled materials with a minimum of sixty percent (60%) recycled content.
 3. Metal.
- B. All supporting members for wood trellises shall be anchored to a concrete foundation with approved metal clips used in such a manner as to prohibit the wood from touching the concrete.
- C. Fastening clips, hurricane clips, and other mechanisms, used in the construction of the trellis shall be concealed from view with moldings, cover boards, or other architectural features.
- D. No materials such as, but not limited to, fiberglass screening, glass, plastic panels or aluminum panels shall be placed upon or attached to the trellis.
- E. The height of the trellis shall be subject to approval by the City Architect.
- F. The setbacks for trellises shall be governed by the same minimum setbacks as required for the main or principal building, except as noted otherwise herein.
- G. The color of a trellis shall be compatible with the main or principal building.
- H. All trellises shall be maintained and kept in good order and repair.

Section 5-310. ~~Wood d~~Decks.

~~Wood d~~Decks shall be permitted as an accessory use in a single-family residential district or to a duplex subject to the following conditions and restrictions:

- A. The foundation for wood and composite recycled materials decks shall be constructed of concrete.
- B. The decking may be constructed of ~~two (2) inch thick material to be~~ one of the following:
 1. Wood of two (2) inch thickness:
 - a. ~~1.~~ Solid select heart cypress.
 - b. ~~2.~~ Solid heart mahogany.

- ~~c. 3.~~ Solid heart teak.
 - ~~d. 4.~~ Solid heart cedar.
 - ~~e. 5.~~ Clear vertical grain redwood.
 - ~~f. 6.~~ Pressure treated pine or fir except creosote pressure treated wood.
 - ~~g. 7.~~ Similar type or quality of solid wood to those noted above, as approved by the City Architect. All other wood members may be constructed of all the above materials including creosote pressure treated wood.
- 2. Composite decking boards manufactured with a minimum of sixty percent (60%) recycled content and one (1) inch thickness.
- 3. All decking must comply with all structural requirements of the Florida Building Code.
- C. All supporting members shall be anchored to the concrete footing with approved metal clips used in such a manner as to prohibit the wood from touching the concrete.
- D. A fascia or skirt shall be constructed on the perimeter of the wood deck to conceal from view the ends of the deck planking, the joists supporting the deck and the clips, angles and other metal anchors and devices. The skirting material shall be one of the ~~seven (7)~~ approved woods and composite recycled materials as set forth under Section 5-~~310 414~~(B) above.
- E. The height of the ~~wood~~ deck shall not exceed the height of the first floor elevation, except in case where the floor slab of the residence or duplex is constructed at grade, in which case the height of the ~~wood~~ deck shall not exceed a height of three (3) feet above the floor slab.
- F. The setback for ~~the wood~~ decks shall be governed by the same minimum setbacks as required for the main or principal building, provided, however, that on waterfront property no rear setback shall be required for such ~~wood~~ decks and in no case shall a ~~wood~~ deck project over the waterway or extend beyond the property line.
- G. The surface of all exterior wood members shall be stained or painted to be harmonious with the color of the main or principal building.
- H. Surface decking on docks shall comply with the material requirements for wood and composite recycled materials on decks.

Section 5-311. Pavers and walkways.

Walkways shall be permitted in the required setback area, but shall only be used for the function of a walkway. A walkway is an aggregated width of pavers, stones, wood, composite recycled materials, or other permeable hardscape not exceeding five (5) feet in width in a setback area. In all cases a minimum of eighteen (18) inches shall be provided between a walkway and the driveway, patio, or property line.

4. REVIEW TIMELINE / PUBLIC NOTICE

City Review Timeline

The submitted applications have undergone the following City reviews:

REVIEW COMMITTEES AND BOARDS	DATE
City Commission 1 st Reading	10.14.25
Planning and Zoning Board	11.19.25
City Commission 2 nd Reading	TBD

The following has been completed to solicit input and provide notice of the Application:

PUBLIC NOTICE	DATE
Legal advertisement	11.07.25
Posted agenda and Staff report on City web page/City Hall	11.14.25

5. FINDINGS OF FACT

In accordance with Section 14-212.5 of the Zoning Code, the Planning and Zoning Board shall not recommend adoption of, and the City Commission shall not adopt, text amendments to these land Zoning Code unless the text amendment:

Standard	Staff Evaluation
a. Promotes public health, safety, and welfare.	The proposed text amendment supports public health, safety, and welfare by encouraging the use of environmentally sustainable and durable building materials. Allowing composite recycled materials reduces reliance on natural wood, minimizing deforestation impacts and maintenance needs. Additionally, the reduction of painted wood decking reduces the release of microplastics and harmful substances into stormwater systems, thereby supporting improved water quality and environmental health.
b. Does not permit uses the Comprehensive Plan prohibits in the area affected by the text amendment.	The request does not permit any use prohibited by the Comprehensive Plan. The amendment solely revises the list of permitted construction materials for trellises, decks, and walkways.
c. Does not allow densities or intensities in excess of the densities and intensities which are permitted by the future land use categories of the affected property.	The request does not allow any increase in density or intensity beyond what is permitted by the Comprehensive Plan. This amendment applies Citywide and only affects material standards for certain architectural elements. It does not modify development rights, land use designations, or allowable floor area ratios.

d. Will not cause a decline in the level of service for public infrastructure which is the subject of a concurrency requirement to a level of service which is less than the minimum requirements of the Comprehensive Plan.	The proposed change will not result in any decline in level of service for public infrastructure. The amendment has no impact on public infrastructure demand or capacity. It does not affect transportation, water, sewer, drainage, parks, or other facilities subject to concurrency review.
e. Does not directly conflict with any objective or policy of the Comprehensive Plan.	The proposed amendment aligns with the Comprehensive Plan’s sustainability and environmental stewardship goals by promoting the use of recycled and resilient materials in private development. It supports the Plan’s objectives related to sustainable building practices, environmental protection, and aesthetic compatibility.

Staff comments: Staff finds that all five of these criteria are satisfied.

Consistency Evaluation of the Comprehensive Plan (CP) Goals, Objectives and Policies

The Planning and Zoning Division has reviewed the CP and finds the following CP Goals, Objectives and Policies are applicable. Consistent CP Goals & Objectives and Policies are as follows:

Ref. No.	CP Goal, Objective and Policy	Basis for Consistency
1.	Policy DES-1.1.2. Provide for rigorous design guidelines, standards, and review processes via the City’s Zoning Code that ensure high quality design of buildings and spaces.	Complies
2.	Goal GRN-1. The City of Coral Gables will take measurable steps towards becoming a “sustainable” community by providing a healthy setting for residents, workers, property owners and visitors and increase awareness of green development practices and ways to have a significant impact on the City’s environment including the following: protecting the quality of air, water, land and other natural resources; conserving native vegetation, fish, wildlife and worldwide ecosystems; minimize the carbon footprint; and reduce greenhouse emissions.	Complies
3.	Policy GRN-1.2.2. The City shall continue to educate and encourage the purchase of recycled materials over non-recycled materials whenever the opportunity arises and is financially feasible.	Complies

The proposed text amendment is consistent with the City’s Comprehensive Plan. By allowing composite recycled materials for trellises, decks, and walkways, the amendment promotes the use of durable, sustainable, and environmentally responsible materials in private development. This supports Policy DES-1.1.2, which calls for maintaining high-quality design standards through the Zoning Code, and advances Goal GRN-1 by reducing environmental impacts and promoting resource conservation. Additionally, it aligns with Policy GRN-1.2.2 by encouraging the use of recycled materials whenever feasible, reinforcing the City’s commitment to sustainability and green development practices.

6. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Zoning Division recommends **approval**.

Please visit the City's webpage at www.coralgables.com to view all Application plans and materials, notices, applicable public comments, minutes, etc. The complete Application and all background information also is on file and available for examination during business hours at the Planning and Zoning Division, 427 Biltmore Way, Suite 201, Coral Gables, Florida 33134.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer Garcia', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jennifer Garcia, AICP, CNU-A
Assistant Director of Development Services
for Planning and Zoning
City of Coral Gables, Florida