

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item I-10
March 23, 2021
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
Assistant City Manager, Ed Santamaria
Assistant Public Works Director, Jessica Keller
Parking Director, Kevin Kinney

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item I-10

A Resolution of the City Commission establishing the concept of Neighborhood Protection Zones and directing the City Manager to take appropriate action to implement the concept.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I-10.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Attorney Ramos: I-10 is a resolution of the City Commission establishing the concept of Neighborhood Protection Zones and directing the City Manager to take appropriate action to implement the concept.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Good afternoon, Mayor, Commission. I'm Jessica Keller, Assistant Public Works Director. I have a presentation to give to you today. Before we begin the presentation, I want to make sure that I thank all the people that participated in putting this together. It was from many departments, including the City Manager's Office, Planning, Parking, Parks, and of course, my Public Works team. If you aren't familiar of this particular view here, this is Valencia Avenue, adjacent to Salvador Park. And these are the types of situations that we're trying to avoid in the future by developing Neighborhood Protection Zones. We've been talking about the Neighborhood Protection Zones for quite some time, back to 2017, and it's been pretty well established that the proximity to certain land uses increases instances of vehicle intrusion into residential neighborhoods. And this intrusion can cause parking congestion, property damage and endanger pedestrians and reduce the overall quality of life. City staff has identified commercial areas, public centers, such as libraries, parks, community centers, schools, churches, hospitals and the University of Miami as land uses that consistently lead to increased pedestrian parking and vehicular pressure on nearby residential areas. This map to the right is an overall look at some of the locations that we've identified that endure this pressure, and we've called them the Southwest 8th Street Corridor, the area around Sunset Elementary, University of Miami and Doctor's Hospital, Ponce Middle, Coral Gables High School, the Plaza, Venetian Pool, Shops at Merrick Park and Salvador Park, which we shared on the first slide. This is the Eighth Street Corridor, and I wanted to tell you how we came up with these particular areas. Once we defined the particular land use type, we decided that one tenth of a mile from that particular land use would define the boundary of the Neighborhood Protection Zone, and it's NPZ for short. We extended it to the nearest blocks so we did this consistently on all the Neighborhood Protection Zones, but of course, we can trim them back, because in some cases, particularly here on 8th Street, we know from experience working with the Parking Department and other departments that -- I'll pick a street,

for example, Capri Street. Capri Street does not necessarily experience the intrusion all the way to Mariana Avenue, but we wanted to be consistent in applying this for your first look. The next area that we consistently deal with is Sunset Elementary. In this case, we know very well that the intrusion occurs past one-tenth of a mile, so we extended it again to one block. Here we have the University of Miami and Doctor's Hospital. If you have any questions on any of these locations, please ask. This is Ponce Middle School; another area that is problematic for us. Coral Gables Senior High School. This is the Plaza. The Plaza, we are just anticipating the possible intrusion. And Venetian Pool. Shops at Merrick Park, we've recently started seeing concerns brought to us by residents. And finally, Salvador Park. So, what does it mean? What do you get if you are in a Neighborhood Protection Zone? And what does it really boil down to? It boils down to construction of sidewalks at no cost to property owners. Currently, the only way that a person or a property can get a sidewalk is two ways. You can -- if you are on a local residential street, it's split 50-50, the cost of that sidewalk between the City and the property owner, or on a collector street where it's funded 100 percent by the City. In this case, we know of one very specific location near Sunset Elementary along a local residential street where no sidewalk exists. It's only one property, but we had no mechanism to actually build the sidewalk. The property owner was not interested in contributing 50 percent to the construction of the sidewalk, so this would give us the ability to build that sidewalk for them. It also would allow us to handle what's going on in the swale. The Commission has been very focused on reducing sign clutter in the City, but in these particular areas, we have lots of people asking for "No Parking" signs, so there's a conflict. We could offer two options -- and I'll go through those options. So, first here we have the sidewalks that I explained. We have the option of providing the swale treatment, and I think everyone here is aware of the current swale package that we offer to residents in order to deter parking on the property in front -- on the swale in front of their property. This would be offered no permit fee and a cost approximately \$500 to \$1,500. What the proposal is right now is that we would do a one-time construction of the swale, and then the property owner would have to maintain thereafter. Alternatively, we can continue to provide "No Parking" signage. That cost is \$150 each, plus the added bonus of sign clutter. So, we know that we have approximately -- well, it's a little over

2,000 properties that fall inside the Neighborhood Protection Zone areas that we have gone through. And so, we would have to plan in the future -- if we are going to plant swales, we would have to develop a new needs package in order to fund that swale construction. And we'd also have to put a -- I think it would be safe for us to continue business as usual of installing "No Parking" signs and not take a financial hit. We can manage that. We plan for that pretty well. So that's where we are today, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Any questions?

Commissioner Keon: And I think most -- any place where there's a park, there tends to be some issues also. I've had -- really it's only two people that have complained about the lack of parking at JC Park because they think that it's all being used by people at Paseo, although Paseo has free parking in their garages. I don't know if that's a matter of just, you know, people not using the garage and choosing to park on the street, you know, in front of the park, but it leaves the park without parking for people in the area. So, if you could take a look at how you might deal with that issue because there is plenty of free parking within the Paseo, and they don't charge their employees to park or anything, so I don't know who's parking there. And they said that it's -- there's overnight -- people are parking there overnight, and I think there's some regulation against overnight parking there anyway. So, I don't know if it's an enforcement issue, if it's an education issue, if it's, you know, working with the Paseo people to make sure that they're directing people to their garages. I don't really know, but it's a problem.

Parking Director Kinney: I think a number of things you touched on, we actually are doing. And yes, contacting the valet when we go out there and telling him to make sure you're not parking at the park. We actually, in the recent weeks, have not found very many violations at the park. Most people -- it's pretty easy. If we don't see anybody on the park and there are six cars there, we can cite the six cars because it's only for patrons. The overnight issue, I don't know how much of that's happening because I don't have people there overnight.

Commissioner Keon: Yeah, I have no idea.

Parking Director Kinney: So, we'll try...

Commissioner Keon: They say that, but I don't know.

Parking Director Kinney: And figure that out, but yes.

Commissioner Keon: (INAUDIBLE) go by there (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Parking Director Kinney: To date, the valet has been fairly cooperative in making sure they don't use the JC Park, but I think some people who go to the restaurants do use JC Park and we've been issuing citations for that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. Thank you very much. Alright, thank you.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Well, we are asking for direction on this.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: This is a resolution.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah. You're asking for a resolution. Do I hear a motion?

Commissioner Keon: Yeah. I mean, I'd like you to continue doing, you know, what you're doing and continue to work on it. Is that the direction you're looking for?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Establishing the concept and then you'll come before us...

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Correct.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: With implementation, right?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: With an implementation policy for the...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Right.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: Could I ask you --? I live in a single-family home, and I applied this swale technique already to my home, so I have a little bit of experience in regards to whether this works or not. And in my case, it's worked, and I think it's been very beneficial. Also, along with the voluntary removal of my trash pit it, so not only is it a beautification issue, but I think it's also an issue of no parking. And I live in front of the University of Miami, so I do face sometimes people were parking before on my swale. What I would like to see, if you would, because you're asking for a little guidance, is I'd like to see something like this maybe go before the School Advisory Committee, maybe some committees that are applicable so that they can -- since we are dealing with schools and universities, maybe they can give their input in regards to this. You know, I think it's a great idea, but I think we're going to run into -- we should get neighbor -- resident input on this. It's voluntary at the end of day, so it's not like anybody's going to be forced to do it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The problem is that everybody wants a sidewalk, but on the other side of the street.

Vice Mayor Lago: No, no, I know, but I'm talking about the swale treatment. I'm talking about the swale treatment. I'm not talking about the sidewalk. So, I think -- I mean, I think it's beautiful. I think that it applies a lot of value to the street. I don't see any issues with it. Maybe funding could be an issue, but I don't know. We'd have to find the money for it.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: So, the idea is to develop the full palette of opportunities that we would have to address a resident request because they are being impacted by spillover parking from these adjacent uses. So, unless the resident approaches us, then we will take no action. And so -- and it's a gamut of possibilities. It runs from enforcement if the signage is already there, to the potential construction of a sidewalk. A sidewalk is a deterrent to parking in a lot of cases because if you park on a sidewalk, you're exposing yourself to additional enforcement. Not only is it going to make it safe for pedestrians, but that's the other benefit in the Neighborhood Protection Zone. And so, these Neighborhood Protection Zones -- and the reason we brought it up today so we could start formulating this policy is because during the pandemic, this pressure has ebbed, but we fully expect that once we recover fully from the effects of the pandemic in terms of schools being active again -- fully active again, because they're only partially active right now, in terms of everything else that might be happening in commercial districts adjacent to single-family residential properties, so we feel right now it's a good time to kind of explore what we might be able to develop moving forward.

Commissioner Keon: Well, the planting along Sunset has been effective in keeping people from parking on Sunset, so...

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: It has.

Commissioner Keon: It works. And I noticed in the library too; you know, people used to park under the banyan trees there, and with the planting there, they don't.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: So, in those cases, the alternative swale treatment has worked.

Commissioner Keon: Yeah, so it has -- it's been very effective...

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Yeah, and...

Commissioner Keon: And it looks nice too.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: One of the issues we've run up against is when, on one hand, we are directed to not install new signage, we offer the swale package to the property owner, and the property owner said, "Well, why won't I just get a sign for free? Why do I have to pay to redo my swale?" And so, this initial concept would be the alternative where the City would fund it one time. And we will develop, you know, estimates of how much something like that would cost and bring it back.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much. Good concept.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Do I hear...

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Did the --? Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Do we have a motion?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Did you take...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: The vote?

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No, we haven't taken...

Commissioner Keon: I'll move it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: A vote yet.

Commissioner Keon: Okay, I'll move the item...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It's moved...

Commissioner Keon: To move it forward.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And seconded.

Commissioner Keon: And the direction, yeah.

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

City Clerk Urquia: I'm sorry, Mr. Mayor. Just really quick, who second it?

Commissioner Fors: I second it.

City Clerk Urquia: Okay. And then we do have a member of the public requesting to speak on this. It's Ms. Maria...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No. This is not a public hearing, no. Thank you. Is it a public hearing?

City Attorney Ramos: No, sir. It's not.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No. Thank you. Will you call the roll, please?

City Clerk Urquia: Sure.

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Fors: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

(Vote: 4-0)