

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item E-5
August 26, 2025
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Melissa Castro

Commissioner Ariel Fernandez (Absent)

Commissioner Richard D. Lara

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Planning and Zoning Director, Jennifer Garcia

Public Speaker(s)

Laura Russo

Agenda Item E-5 [2:47 p.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission granting Conditional Use approval for a Building Site Determination, pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, “Process,” Section 14-202.6, “Building Site Determination,” and Section 14-203, “Conditional Uses,” to separate one (1) existing building site into two (2) single-family building sites on property zoned Single-Family Residential (SFR) District, legally described as ½ of Lot 9, all of Lots 10 and 11, and the west 25 feet of Lot 12, Block 223, Revised Plat of Coral Gables Riviera Section, Part 13 (1154 Alfonso Avenue), Coral Gables, Florida; one (1) building site consisting of the east 50 feet of Lot 9 and all of Lot 10 (west parcel), and the other (1) building site consisting of all of Lot 11 and the west 25 feet of Lot 12 (east parcel); including required conditions; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, and an effective date. (08 13 25 PZB recommended approval with conditions, Vote 5-1)

City Commission Meeting

[Date]

1

August 26, 2025

Agenda Item E-5 – An ordinance granting conditional use approval for a Building Site Determination pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, “Process” – Lot split-1154 Alfonso Ave

Mayor Lago: E5.

City Attorney Suarez: E-5 is An Ordinance of the City Commission granting Conditional Use approval for a Building Site Determination, pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, "Process," Section 14-202.6, "Building Site Determination," and Section 14-203, "Conditional Uses," to separate one (1) existing building site into two (2) single-family building sites on property zoned Single-Family Residential (SFR) District, legally described as ½ of Lot 9, all of Lots 10 and 11, and the west 25 feet of Lot 12, Block 223, Revised Plat of Coral Gables Riviera Section, Part 13 (1154 Alfonso Avenue), Coral Gables, Florida; one (1) building site consisting of the east 50 feet of Lot 9 and all of Lot 10 (west parcel), and the other (1) building site consisting of all of Lot 11 and the west 25 feet of Lot 12 (east parcel); including required conditions; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, and an effective date. This is a quasi-judicial item. So, Mr. Clerk, please swear in all individuals will be providing testimony today.

City Clerk Urquia: Those who will be testifying on this item, please stand and raise your right hand. Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you'll provide today will be the truth and nothing but the truth? Thank you.

Ms. Laura Russo: All right. If I can ask for the PowerPoint to be set. There we go, perfect. Good afternoon, Mr. Mayor, Vice Mayor, members of the Commission, Laura Russo with offices at 2334 Ponce de Leon Boulevard. I am here this afternoon representing Alvaro Gazzolo and Gillian Gaggero-Gazzolo, his wife who owns and resides at the property in question, 1154 Alfonso Avenue. Alvaro and Gillian have lived at this particular property for 26 years, have raised their family there and have been Gables residents for 35 years. We are here this afternoon requesting a lot separation or a separation of building sites. The slide you have before you is the existing property, which is Alfonso Avenue is located just south of Hardee Road. This is on the west side of Maynada and on the south side of Alfonso with the Mahi Waterway behind it. The property size is rather large. It's one of the largest in the entire area at 36,000 square feet, measuring 225 feet wide by 160 feet deep. Well, we're missing, let's see. Let's go back. Okay, so we're missing a slide. There was a slide there that was showing you the back of the waterway. I don't know what happened. We are proposing to separate the property into the two sites, one site to consist of 20,000 square feet, which is the west parcel and one site to consist of 16,000 square feet, the east parcel. Just to give you an idea, the immediate neighborhood, not within the 1,000 linear feet, but even a smaller area than that, the average size lot is 12,300 square feet. If you go out to the full 1,000, the average lot size is 12,685 square feet. And the average frontage in this neighborhood is 92 square feet. I'm sorry, 92 linear feet. This is the, you can barely see it, but there's the certification in the 1,000 linear feet. So, the zoning code currently would allow the existing home to be demolished and an 11,950 square foot resident to be built at this property. That would be sort of an idea of

what it would look like. It would be overwhelming. It would be three or four times the size of all the neighboring properties. So, we're having a little difficulty with this PowerPoint. But this slide shows you an actual existing home that is 10,475 feet, located on a 37,000 square foot lot. And it's located on Sunrise, on the waterway on Edgewater Drive. Now, in that particular location, the house is appropriate because there are lots of equal sizes all around it. To put that house, and we're having all sorts of issues here. So, to put the house that large in a neighborhood where the properties are substantially smaller is what creates what I call the Ramada Inn Effect, which we've seen around Coral Gables. Let's see if we can see. Well, all right. We had a slide that showed... Okay, we are really having difficulties here. So, we had a slide that showed a property on South Alhambra. Some of you may remember when Anthony Abraham used to do the Christmas lights on... Okay. So, across the street was a property of about 30,000 square feet that wanted to be subdivided into two building sites. It was turned down. So, there is a house there that's about 10,000 square feet and the largest house next to it and all surrounding it are at about 3,400 square feet. So, it's three times the size and it's not appropriate. So, what we are proposing here is a house of 5,625 feet on the west parcel. And a house of 5,948 feet on the east parcel. Added together, both of these properties are less than what you could build if you tore down the one house. So, it's less than... So, the applicant's properties -- so those of you that know the procedure; in order to do this, you have to propose the architecture, the style, the design of the house that you want. Gillian and Alvaro proposed two homes, and they appeared before the Board of Architects numerous times in order to get all the details and one house has a particular Florida vernacular feel. And the project received approval on July 17, 2025. So, this is the western parcel, which is where the existing house is. And originally the idea that Gillian and her husband had was just to remove the easternmost portion of her house and to remodel. But when the architects started looking at the house, which was originally built in 1949 and it was doubled in size in 1985, they discovered the house had four slabs, two electrical systems, two septic systems, two plumbing systems, and suggested that instead of trying to take down a portion of a slab and now adding a fifth slab to everything, it made more sense to just demolish the entire house. So, this is the rendering of the house in a sort of Florida vernacular style. And this is the view from the waterway. The new house, which would be on the eastern parcel, and we're missing a slide here. So, this gives you more or less, I don't know what happened. We have some sort of deterioration of the PowerPoint here, which is the front part of the new residence and the waterway view, which you can't see. So, I'll get into the meat of the presentation. The zoning code requires that in order to meet the requirements for a lot separation, that the lots you are proposing have to be equal to or larger than the majority of the neighborhood. We comply with this by showing the average was 12,000 and change.

Unusual circumstances. There has to be something, two different zonings, double facing a through block or something that makes it unusual. In this case, we have an essence of through blocks since a waterway is the equivalent of a street. And it complies with this along with being the largest property in the area. The property maintains open space, neighborhood compatibility and visual

attractiveness. It exceeds the open space requirements, and you couldn't see that because it disappeared from the slide, but both properties exceed the 40% requirement for open space. And there are no canopy trees that are being removed on the east parcel. And two beautiful Japanese orange blossom trees on the west parcel are going to be moved from the backyard to the front yard. So, then the fourth criterion is where you have to satisfy two of three. Then the first one is whether the street or waterfront is equal to or greater than the majority within the thousand linear feet and this property complies. The second criterion we do not meet and that is whether there would be an existing encroachment. And obviously we have an existing encroachment, the existing house, which would be demolished. And this criterion says that if you demolish, you have to wait 10 years. So, we don't meet that criterion, but we do meet the third one. So, we do meet two out of the three, which is that the subject property owned by the current owner must be owned by them continuously for a minimum of 10 years. As I stated earlier, Gillian and Alvaro have lived there for 26 years. Let me see if I can show you. Gillian and Alvaro had a neighborhood meeting. Oh, good. This is the most important slide. And they proposed, you know, they showed their neighbors what they were proposing. And what I want to comment in red is the property. And so, they have their neighbors to the immediate west, to the immediate east, to the north and to the south. So, you couldn't ask for more support and people who, you know, were perfectly okay with their names being put on the screen. And some of them would have been here, but as you know, it's hard to predict timing. And with this being the first week of school and some people still on vacation, we weren't able to get any of it. All of these people submitted letters of support. We presented this proposal to the Planning and Zoning Board and received a five to one vote of recommending approval. We did have one neighbor who showed up, Ms. Debbie Register, who lives at 1240 Plasencia. And she came to speak in favor of the application. She was very pleased with it. So, in conclusion, on behalf of Gillian and Alvaro, I respectfully request that you approve our application. And we're happy to answer any questions. And I apologize for the PowerPoint. We had one and apparently the one we used at Planning and Zoning disappeared.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. Madam Director, do you have a presentation also?

Planning and Zoning Director Garcia: Brief, brief.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Trying to get to lunch.

Planning and Zoning Director Garcia: I know, I know. I talk really fast, it's okay. Yes. So, the property at 1154 Alfonso Avenue, as you can see, the location of it is Alfonso, the end of Hernando on the west side of Maynada. There's an aerial, it's a single-family neighborhood with a Mahi Canal in the rear. So, the proposal, this is split the property to have two building sites, where right now, staff have determined there's only one. So as part of that process and request, they come here

City Commission Meeting

before the Commission to ask for this subdivision. These are the existing, what they're proposing as far as a building site, 125 feet or 100 feet building frontage. One lot on the west side will be 20,000 square feet. The one on the east side will be 16,000 square feet. And they meet all the Florida, sorry, the building floor area, the height, the setbacks, open space, all that meets code. These are the renderings showing the two houses, the top rendering showing the front from Alfonso looking south. So, you can see the style of architecture and on the bottom rendering showing the views from the Mahi Canal. DRC reviewed this of March of this year. They had a Board of Architecture review and approval in July of this year and neighborhood meeting plans when I'm working on approval earlier this month and here, we are for first reading. Letters were sent to all the property within 1,000 feet. Three times they were sent to the property owners. The property was posted three times. The website posted three times needs for advertisement and two emails to those who subscribe to our email service. Staff have determined this is consistent with our comprehensive plan in regard to low density in our single-family neighborhoods. We do recommend approval that it has complied with the code as far as meeting all the criteria. And we have two, sorry, three conditions of approval. These are straight from the zoning code that they cannot have any variances moving forward. The site plan you see today, those elevations are tied to this approval and a bond may be determined to be appropriate by the building official to remove any non-conformities. That's it. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. Mr. Clerk, do you have any public comment? Okay, close the public comment. I'd like to first commend the applicant. The two sites look beautiful. The architecture is stunning. I think it'll make the neighborhood; it'll comply with the neighborhood. And I think people are very excited about it. I sure heard from multiple people who reached out to me saying that they were very excited about this future development project, especially for the neighborhood itself. I think you've done a great job, and I commend you on your future home, by the way. Thank you. Do we have any further comment, or I'll entertain a motion?

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll move it.

Commissioner Castro: I'll second.

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Commissioner Lara: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

City Commission Meeting

(Commissioner Fernandez: Absent)

(Vote: 4-0)

Mayor Lago. Congratulations. Thank you, Laura.