

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Items C-2 and G-2 are related
January 22, 2019
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 Frank Quesada**

City Staff

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Assistant Public Works Director, Jessica Keller
Public Services Division Director, Brook Dannemiller**

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Items C-2 and G-2 are related
A discussion regarding traffic calming.

Status update on signage by staff.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Mayor's comments. Discussion regarding traffic calming. You want to inform us what's happening and where we are on that. Jessica. Good morning.

Vice Mayor Lago: Good morning.

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Agenda Items C-2 and G-2 are related - Discussion regarding traffic calming and status update on signage by staff.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Good morning. Jessica Keller, Assistant Public Works Director. And I want to give a short update on the status of traffic calming projects citywide. We have two categories of traffic calming projects, one of which is traffic calming projects that were initiated before the multimodal transportation planning process was initiated. And I am going to give of summary of where each of those projects are. Red Bird, the area that is bound by Red Road, Blue Road, San Amaro and -- Red, Blue, San Amaro, we had a kickoff meeting last week and we will be notifying the residents by door hangers that construction will begin sometime in February. We are waiting on materials that will not be ready until February. A project that you're familiar with, Aragon Avenue and Giralda Avenue, we're going to hold a kickoff meeting with our construction contractor next week. That project will begin after the area in Red and Bird is completed. Biltmore Drive, we will have a kickoff meeting in February with our contractor to begin construction. We will have -- Solano Prado is another area that we had initiated a project. We will have a kickoff meeting with our contractor in March. We have Anderson and University, a roundabout proposed for that location. And we are currently preparing a tree waiver to submit to the County. They are asking us to remove three healthy trees at that intersection and we will be making our case to have that waived. Finally, De Soto and Biltmore. You often hear from residents along Valencia that are concerned about the status of this project. The County asked us for another study, an updated study to determine the impacts of redirecting traffic on other streets should this particular traffic calming project be implemented. That stud will be completed in April, and then we will submit it to the County for review. The citywide process -- now, this is the traffic calming that was initiated through the multimodal transportation planning -- citywide traffic -- citywide multimodal transportation plan -- that is planned to be brought to you in March for adoption. At that point in time, we'll have a better idea regarding the funding needs for the citywide traffic calming. We will be advancing data collection next month ahead of the adoption of the overall plan, 160 locations have been identified since we have started this particular planning process. We gathered those locations through people who participated in the community meetings for the plan. We'll be hiring design consultants once we adopt the citywide plan to design the traffic calming devices for all the locations. That will also include the community engagement

and our new concurrency process where residents will be voting on those particular locations. Do you have any questions?

Commissioner Mena: Did we -- I know we had this conversation in the context of Red Bird. I don't remember (INAUDIBLE) the others, but what finally got decided with respect to the signage and some of the things we were discussing about both sides of the street, approaches and all that kind of thing, or is that still in discussion?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: It's in discussion, but the County has conceptually agreed to reduce the number of signs.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Have you seen in Alhambra Circle and the corner of Segovia with 16 signs that...

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Including two "stop sign ahead" on both sides of the street, 25 feet before the stop sign on both sides of the street. That's obscene. That's ridiculous. I mean, it's an insult to everybody's intelligence that that is there, you know.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: We'll take a look at that to have that reduced.

Commissioner Keon: Also, on Oak Avenue as you cross -- go east on South Dixie Highway. There's a 25-mile-an-hour residential speed sign and right behind it is a 30-mile-an-hour...

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: What...

Commissioner Keon: Sign.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Location is that? Oak...

Commissioner Keon: On Oak, right east of the highway, just a street across the highway. And then they have also a series of prepare to stop, stop, whatever.

Vice Mayor Lago: You know, since we're all talking about...

Commissioner Keon: I don't know.

Vice Mayor Lago: Signage. If you go around Doctor's Hospital, there's just a plethora of signs, no parking signs every three feet that, to me, make absolutely no sense. I know you don't want people parking on Campo Sano, especially -- you know, I'm the biggest proponent of that, but you know, you could maybe have one, maybe two, maybe three, but there's no need to have eight or nine on a stretch of possibly, I don't know, 75 feet.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Would you like me to give the traffic -- the signage update now? I know that's supposed to come...

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah. That would be great.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Later in the Commission meeting.

Vice Mayor Lago: That'd be awesome.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: I can do that now...

Vice Mayor Lago: Perfect.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: While I'm here.

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Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: We...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And I'm going to spring something on you later which you're not prepared for, but I want to bring it up.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Can't wait. My favorite. Okay, so as it relates to signage, what we have been doing is, over the past month, we have removed over 100 signs that are City signs throughout the city. Those signs have been on a list of signs that we took an inventory for before Hurricane Irma and also as we get the sign concerns sent to us by Commission and from residents. We have some residents here who are doing a lot of legwork for us out there and we are removing them as we get those. You'll also get -- you'll see that we are bringing our -- what was it? Where is she? Okay, we will be bringing a proposal to you to bring Cartograph on board so they can begin the inventory process citywide, and then we'll be handling the sign reduction in a more comprehensive matter -- manner.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: Can I ask one question?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Anything else on signs?

Commissioner Keon: Yeah. In the traffic circle that is on -- I think it's on Hardy and I'm not sure if it's Granada -- no, it's on Hardy -- along Hardy, where they replaced some trees that went down in Irma.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Yes.

Commissioner Mena: On Maggiore.

Commissioner Keon: Yeah, along there. They -- I don't remember there being so many, you know, sort of direction signs there. Are those new or were they always there?

Commissioner Mena: Those are the massive ones?

Commissioner Keon: Yeah. The ones that are -- they're about six foot tall.

Commissioner Mena: Yeah.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Horrible.

Commissioner Keon: With directional things around them.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Yes. Those...

Commissioner Keon: Those are new, right?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Those actually -- they were installed because of the trees that were installed inside of the circle.

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: But we have -- they're chevrons. And we have installed smaller chevrons and we've lowered them to the minimum height, which is four feet. Initially, when they were installed, they were installed too high.

Commissioner Mena: Was that already done, Jessica?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Yes, that's correct.

Commissioner Mena: They already -- you already made them smaller?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: It is...

Commissioner Keon: Are they?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: Yeah, because I -- it seemed to me over the weekend I saw them and was surprised at how high they are. And were they there when the other trees were there?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Those trees were not as large as the trees currently in place.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright.

Commissioner Keon: But they would have grown to be that large. I mean, why did -- those -- you know what, that looks -- it looks terrible. It looks terrible. You cannot help but see that tree. I mean, it's not like...

Commissioner Mena: I brought this up...

Commissioner Keon: They look terrible.

Commissioner Mena: Twice before.

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Commissioner Keon: Yeah.

Commissioner Mena: You're right.

Commissioner Keon: They look terrible. I mean, so what, somebody's supposed to hit the sign before they hit the tree? I mean, what purpose does that sign serve? Don't hit the tree? You need to tell people don't hit the tree?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: So, with the permission of the Mayor, if I may.

Vice Mayor Lago: Talking about this for a while.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Ed Santamaria, Assistant City Manager. Wherever you have a situation where you have a tree that is considered non-frangible, meaning that it would provide a high degree of risk of injury due to an impact with a vehicle, you're required to have those signs. So, the choice that we have right now, which is the department's philosophy, Public Works' philosophy -- is to -- if there is a frangible species of tree that is planted in the circle, then you do not need those chevrons, those warning signs. But if there is a frangible tree -- a non-frangible tree, then you do. You do need to install that signage.

Commissioner Keon: So, tell me the rationale behind that.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: The rationale is that there could be a bad accident where someone is seriously injured...

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Or killed because they impact that tree.

Commissioner Keon: Okay. And they're not going to impact that tree because that sign is there. Is that right?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Well, no. I mean...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That impact (INAUDIBLE).

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: That is not necessarily...

Commissioner Keon: But that -- so tell me the purpose.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Because we have to act in an abundance of caution. Just because we cannot prevent every accident doesn't mean that we're not preventing some.

Commissioner Quesada: Is it a statutory or a code requirement of any governmental body to put that signage?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: It's required by the Manual Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

Commissioner Quesada: And we are mandated to follow those procedures?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Yes.

Commissioner Quesada: Okay.

City Manager Iglesias: When we were doing the circular intersections...

Commissioner Keon: Ridiculous.

City Manager Iglesias: (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Keon: Absolutely ridiculous.

City Manager Iglesias: So that we can look at an example of what it looks like one way and the other because I think we really (INAUDIBLE). So, the next one that we do, we're going to put frangible trees to look at that as an example so that people can see what a frangible tree versus non (INAUDIBLE) tree looks like.

Commissioner Keon: It's a palm tree that has a root ball.

Commissioner Mena: The only...

Commissioner Keon: If you hit it, it's going to go over.

Commissioner Mena: The only explanation I have is at night I get it because the signs are reflective, but you could light the tree.

Commissioner Keon: Right. So, I would -- you know. I would make a design around the trunk of that tree that's reflective.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: So, what we are doing is we're...

Commissioner Keon: It's horrible looking.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Reducing the size of the signage. We understand the concern and it's really not aesthetically pleasing. We're reducing the size of the signage and we're dropping it as low as possible so it's not as visually obtrusive.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Commissioner Keon: Alright.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I have a new thing for you and you, too. In '88, '89, one of the things I did when I was Commissioner, I was very, very proud of the installation of palm trees on US-1. We had palm trees and then Ixora trees winding through the palm trees and they were beautiful. One of the -- and I used to call them Chicken Little. One of the concerns was that the fronds would fall on US-1 and kill people. I don't think there's been an accident in 30 years because of fallen fronds. In '17 or '16, 2016, 2017, the Florida Department of Transportation took out some of these trees on US-1 as you approach Granada in order to widen the street to make it -- increase traffic going into Granada, I guess. Now, they are taking the palm trees out west of -- I mean, east -- no, no, west of Douglas on the way to Riviera, I think, or something and that is obscene, I think. That is terrible that they are paving over our trees and that is just unacceptable and I'm very much for suing FDOT to put those palm trees back there because they are soiling our city with concrete and that is wrong.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Mr. Mayor, if I may. I do have some background on that. I believe there are about 19 trees -- 19 palm trees...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Fine.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: That were removed.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: They were relocated, 16 of them, which were viable trees.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Where?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: They were located to Mariola Court.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's not good enough. I want them on US-1.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: I understand, sir.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: US-1, we have 400,000 cars pass there, and Mariola Court, we may have 17 cars pass a day.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: I understand, sir.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And that's not...

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: And we do...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Good enough.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: We do share your sentiment with that. That said, that was part of an FDOT safety project.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Have there been any accidents there? Why safety?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: I'm sure that they have the accident data to back that up, but I'm not -- I haven't seen it myself. But typically...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let's remove all of the palm trees on US-1 then for safety or whatever and make it concrete.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: That project...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's wrong.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: That project is straightening US-1 at that point and the median they're putting back in will be replaced with palms. It just won't be those exact same palms because...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: They will be replaced with what kind of palms?

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: The -- right now we're in discussions with them. We're requesting that they be date palms instead of the royal palms because of the number of palm fronds that fall onto the street.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: They haven't fallen. No palm fronds have fallen on US-1.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: We do get complaints pretty frequently about palm fronds falling onto cars, so the police department...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: If you let them, we would be treeless.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Well, they -- the...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I mean, this is ridiculous.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: The proposed plan is date palms in the new median and oak trees on the side. So, we would be increasing the canopy from what's actually there now. So, that's what we're in the process of discussing with FDOT.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: When will that get done, in 2025?

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: The project is underway now, so the...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What?

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: The project is underway now so...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No, it isn't.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: The...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I drove by yesterday at 5, and unless they started this morning, it isn't underway.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Well, the first step of -- for them to do the project is to remove the palms in order to start he work.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah. They did that God knows when and nothing has happened since then.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: So, we can get an update from the FDOT manager to see what the project schedule is on that.

Vice Mayor Lago: Go ahead, Mayor. Are you done?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No, no, no. I'm not done, but go ahead.

Vice Mayor Lago: No, no, no, no, no. I don't want...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Go ahead.

Vice Mayor Lago: I have a different -- I want to discuss something else, but I agree with you wholeheartedly in reference to the way that it looks is just completely...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That just shouldn't be done. If you go by there...

Vice Mayor Lago: It's a black eye on the city, in my opinion. I think we could do much better. And by the way, I've fielded probably three or four emails in regards to this and had to explain to the residents that we're not the -- we're not responsible for that type of...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But I'd like to be aggressive in not having them remove trees without that coming before the Commission. And if necessary, suing them for our aesthetic standards and not soiling our city. It is what they're doing.

Commissioner Mena: I agree with you, but I don't see what legal standing we have to do anything about that, to be perfectly honest with you, so I don't -- that -- I would love to be able to do something, but I don't know that we have the authority to do anything.

Police Chief Hudak: Mayor, just for a point of information, the DOT, in 2012, I was the major of the Specialized Enforcement Division. On the traffic plan they present the first time that we were put on notice of that was in 2012. Those accidents that happened and why they're straightening out the road are in the City of Miami jurisdiction, so they would not reflect on our numbers. The idea -- and it's -- so, this is 2012. We're now in 2018. That's how long this has been on their books. Is to straighten out -- apparently, the City of Miami's accident rate at that intersection at the slight turn on US-1, usually in the off hours, was creating accidents in the City of Miami jurisdiction. The idea was to straighten out that area. They are going to go into the County property to the right-of-way to the right side and kind of straighten that so it straightens it out. The

understanding in the drawings -- I don't think I still have them -- was to actually replace those trees as Brooke stated, that that idea of what we have in there is supposed to be -- I'm not the tree expert. I'm the traffic guy. So, they're just trying to straighten that as it comes in our city. Our jurisdiction starts probably right where the -- our tree planting actually begins. I think it went a little bit farther than that, but when that gets done -- again, this started in 2012 and that's the first time that they presented us the traffic plan and what they were going to do so...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: If it started in 2012 -- it's 2019, seven years later. Is it going to take them seven years to replace trees in our jurisdiction, in our city?

Police Chief Hudak: I doubt that. I...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Yeah, the landscape is part of the project. So, once they finish the straightening, they'll be installing the landscape -- the trees.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can we have, for the next Commission meeting, a report with pictures and everything and a little map of what's going to go there and what's happening?

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Yeah. We should be able to do that.

Vice Mayor Lago: Can you do me a favor? Can you also add Bird Road to that, please, because there seems to be a lot of trees that fell as a result of the hurricane that still haven't been addressed. There's many gaps. If you drive down...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: So, the...

Vice Mayor Lago: In between 57th Avenue and Granada, it's pretty significant.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Yeah. The ficus...

Vice Mayor Lago: Even further.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Trees in the median of Bird Road is a species called ficus religiosa. We were only able to find two of those species at nurseries throughout Florida. So, we're in the process of air grafting those to propagate those so that we can replace them with the same species because it's not a commercially available species.

Commissioner Mena: Do we want the same species?

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: It is historic, so we...

Commissioner Mena: The trees are historic?

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Yeah. So, we're trying to keep the same species.

Commissioner Mena: Ed, trees that are not there are historic? How does that work? No, I'm asking, seriously. How does that work?

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: The -- it's the same species...

Vice Mayor Lago: That feel -- I guess that feel and that look.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Yeah. It's the same tree throughout the entire corridor, so we're trying to keep that same species.

Vice Mayor Lago: And also, on the corner of...

Commissioner Mena: Are we required to put the same tree because the corridor is designated historic even though the tree is gone, is dead?

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: I would...

Commissioner Mena: And is...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: I would want to...

Commissioner Mena: And is so because it's not a native species, according to what you -- I think what you've told us in the past.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: The -- yeah, it's not a native species. I'll let Dona speak to the historic designation of that. But the -- there's no other species in the median, so we were just attempting to keep that same historic theme throughout the median.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And can I...

Commissioner Mena: I'll be honest with you. That seems -- that -- putting a tree like that that we know falls during hurricanes...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: It -- the...

Commissioner Mena: Prevalent -- it was pretty prevalent...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: No, no. It's a different...

Commissioner Mena: This last storm.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: That's a different species. That's a ficus benjamina, the one...

Commissioner Mena: It's a different type of ficus.

Unidentified Speaker: Yes.

Unidentified Speaker: Completely different one.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Than the ficus religiosa.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Could I...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: It has a little heart-shaped leaf.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We have to be very, very careful with Bird Road because the County and FDOT has been dying forever to widen the street and whatever. And we saved that street as it is because we --- it was declared historic.

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: It's a state historic roadway.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And let us not mess with that and -- for them not to come up with ideas about making it six lanes or whatever it is and destroying the character of a very beautiful street in Coral Gables.

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: That's right. That's why that was done. It's a state historic roadway and no federal funding -- and I believe possibly state funding can be used on the road because it's historic, at the state level.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'm very much afraid of FDOT, the County in destroying our city...

Vice Mayor Lago: Well, do me...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Very much.

Vice Mayor Lago: Do me a favor. My second point that I'd like to also, like the Mayor mentioned, have an update at the next Commission meeting, number one, on those trees on Bird Road, and number two, on 57th Avenue and Bird Road. The swale looks terrible.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: On the east side?

Vice Mayor Lago: The green island ficus, yeah, it looks terrible. I want to -- and I also want to find out -- we've been talking about this for about two, almost three years, what is going to finally -- well, not what. We already know what's going to happen there, but when is the keyword. When is this going to happen? 57th Avenue all the way to University of Miami, Ponce de Leon, it was going to be -- all those swales were going to be revamped with trees. We've been waiting for three years. what is the plan? When is that going to finally happen? We talked about shade trees. Shade trees weren't an option because...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Yeah, so we have...

Vice Mayor Lago: Of traffic issues, you know, accidents. So, we're still looking for something in that area.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: So, we have a permit approved by FDOT to do solitaire palms all through there because they're frangible. There's about 230 of them. We've planted the first seven about a year or two ago. We have an item...

Vice Mayor Lago: A year ago?

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: No, about a year or two ago. It was before Irma that we planted the first solitaire palms in that intersection. The -- we have an item today for SFM and part of that is allowing the additional tree planting with the funds that we have remaining. And so, if that's approved today, then we'll be able to move forward with that.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, what I need to do -- I need you to do me a favor, please. At the next Commission meeting, please include a schedule of when this is going to occur and make sure that we deal with the swale on Bird Road and 57th Avenue. I know that our staff is opposed to curbing, but there are certain areas in this city that we need curbing. And that is a situation that, in my opinion, we should consider installing curbing.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Yeah, that's a...

Vice Mayor Lago: People who do not -- people who...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: That's a state road.

Vice Mayor Lago: I understand, but we need to figure something out because people who, you know, who live on that street, you know, deserve the same quality of life that people who are driving on 57th Avenue could care less. They're running over the swales. We're going to talk about swales later and I'm going to give some examples of what I found in front of my house and that we need to do a much better job in reference to swale maintenance. But we need to find an answer in reference to corners that are high-traffic areas like Bird Road and 57th Avenue. It's just -- it's a quality of life issue.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And -- no, no, wait, wait. Tell me about the tree in this park here. Why did we knock out a beautiful, huge tree and...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: So...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Replace it with...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: The cassia fistula that we just removed from the park on the south side had been in poor condition for years, so we waited until after the holiday park to remove it, but it was in very poor condition. It had dieback and it was pretty scraggly looking because of all the pruning we had to do to remove all the deadwood. So, we removed that after -- when the holiday park came down and we planted a large oak there last week. But that tree wasn't viable long-term, particularly given the number of events that we have.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's my point. It wasn't viable long-term, but none of us is viable long-term. Would it have lasted another...

Commissioner Keon: Long-term like now?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Ten years? What?

Commissioner Keon: What's long term? Be careful there.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Precisely. That's exactly the point.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: So, when...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: If somebody gets a heart attack at 60 or 35, it will not be viable long term, but maybe that person can have a 35-year-old -- I mean, 35-year very useful life.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: When you have a tree that's that weak...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I agree with you from a medical or botanical point of view, but aesthetically, it doesn't...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: It's more of a safety issue because when you have a tree that's weak that can break at any moment, if it was in an open space, a median somewhere that -- you know, middle of Alhambra median where there's no pedestrian traffic, vehicular traffic, we may have been able to leave it longer. But when it's in a park that's occupied every weekend with the farmer's market, the holiday park, where you have children playing, it's just not worth, you know, pushing it long term because it -- if it falls and fails, it could potentially hurt or kill someone. So, you know, it's just a high-risk area, so you don't want to leave it there to see. You don't want it to...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Fail on its own.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, good.

Commissioner Keon: Can we have a look at -- in the park across the street...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'm not viable long term.

Commissioner Keon: It would be...

Vice Mayor Lago: I just disagree, sorry.

Commissioner Keon: Well, in the park across the street...

Vice Mayor Lago: I apologize. I'm shaking my head because I just disagree. We've had this discussion, you and I, and we have like three trees right now that I'm monitoring in the City of Coral Gables where residents have begged that the trees not be cut down. And you know, to me, it's just...

Commissioner Quesada: Yeah, that's true.

Vice Mayor Lago: This issue of viability -- in my neighborhood -- and I hate to take ownership of it, but I walk those -- that little street every Saturday and Sunday with my kids. And when my kids look at me and say, hey, look, a tree's gone. You know, you have to respond to them and explain to them why a tree's gone. That tree was complete and utterly viable. It was lush. It was perfect. They went and cut it down because it had some sort of fungus on it, you know, at the ball. And we've had this discussion back and forth on many occasions, just like when we wanted to relocate that tree that had fallen off Bird Road. I drove by that tree and I walked by the tree the other day. That tree is -- again, it's not as beautiful as it was, but guess what? You have a lot of growth on that tree and maybe it could take off in the next ten years. Maybe it won't; maybe it'll die. But this idea of viability and let's start cutting trees -- I see that we're cutting down a lot of trees in the city. And if you told me that we were cutting these trees down and we were replacing them with decent, not even saying significant -- I'm saying decent canopy, I'd be okay with it. I'd be fine with it. But we're replacing them with these tiny, scrawny little trees that when you have somebody who has seen a tree mature for the last 30, 40, 50 years in their front yard and then you plant it with a little, tiny tree, it just takes away from their quality of life so much. I just think we need to be a little bit more, you know, prudent when we start cutting these trees down just because it has, you know, the viability 10 years, 15 years from now may not be there. We need to be more careful, I think.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Lago: And I mean, I'm not telling you anything you don't know. We've had this discussion. As a matter of fact, I've told you don't cut those trees down on multiple occasions and those trees are still there.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: You know, the little park across the street, Merrick Park, the -- that south side of that little park was reduced back to make that lane when there was some thought at one time to expand, you know, the -- to create a plaza here in front of City Hall and that changed and whatever else. Can we go back and look at now that if we're not going to extend that and Biltmore Way is going to remain open and the Mile is going to continue to flow through there, is that we don't need that lane.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Don't need what?

Commissioner Keon: It wasn't there for a long time, the right-hand turn lane that comes down...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What's wrong with it?

Commissioner Keon: It isn't -- there's nothing -- it's not that there's anything wrong with it. It's that when before it was put in, the park was larger. There was more green space. It was a larger park and there wasn't a cut-through at the bottom of the park that allows people to come around. It wasn't like that (INAUDIBLE). It was changed and it -- that's why we also lost a big oak tree that was on that south side because the roots were cut from that tree when it was done. If we can go back and look at...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Keon: You know, it doesn't make any difference to be able to expand that park so there is a larger green space there and you can plant, you know, some larger -- or allow for larger oaks to grow in that space and maybe, you know -- I know that there is a project to look at that park. Isn't there -- were there funds allocated to...

City Manager Iglesias: We can...

Commissioner Keon: Merrick Park?

City Manager Iglesias: We can look at the necessity of that lane, Commissioner, and get back with you.

Commissioner Keon: Pardon me?

City Manager Iglesias: We can look at the necessity of that lane and get back to you.

Commissioner Keon: Okay, but were they -- don't we have some funds allocated for Merrick Park? I thought it was part of the Neighborhood Renaissance Program. Do you remember, Commissioner Quesada, because you were the one that was here when they did all of the Neighborhood Renaissance. I think you're the only one that was here at the time when they did the -- when they initiated the Neighborhood Renaissance Program.

Commissioner Quesada: So...

Commissioner Keon: And I thought there was money aside...

Commissioner Quesada: Yeah, but...

Commissioner Keon: Set aside for Merrick Park

Commissioner Quesada: What ended up happening...

Commissioner Keon: Did we just redirect all that money?

Commissioner Quesada: We did.

Commissioner Keon: We did.

Commissioner Quesada: So, it was originally the original conversation...

Commissioner Keon: Okay.

Commissioner Quesada: And there were monies allocated.

Commissioner Keon: And I don't know whatever happened to them.

Commissioner Quesada: No, but it was...

Commissioner Keon: We can -- well, I mean, we can talk about it later, but...

Commissioner Quesada: No, no. I'll tell you because...

Commissioner Keon: I think it's a...

Commissioner Quesada: That came -- that was my very first meeting when I got elected and we approved it and we went forward on it. And that got pushed back -- those monies got redirected, I don't know, maybe three or four years after that.

Commissioner Keon: Oh, really?

Commissioner Quesada: Maybe right when you were coming into office or maybe right before.

Commissioner Keon: It was before because I only remember...

Commissioner Quesada: Those were no longer...

Commissioner Keon: It was talked about...

Commissioner Quesada: Allocated. And I mean, I can...

Commissioner Keon: Okay.

Commissioner Quesada: I'm sure I can find in my old documents exactly what was outlined and how much was set aside.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. Let's get back to the agenda. Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.