

1 CITY OF CORAL GABLES
2 PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD MEETING
3 VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT
4 CORAL GABLES CITY HALL
5 405 BILTMORE WAY, COMMISSION CHAMBERS
6 CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA
7 WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2008, 6:00 P.M.

8 Board Members Present:

9 Tom Korge, Chairman
10 Eibi Aizenstat, Vice-Chairman
11 Robert Behar
12 Jack Coe
13 Jeffrey Flanagan
14 Javier Salman

15 City Staff:

16 Eric Riel, Jr., Planning Director
17 Walter Carlson, Assistant Planning Director
18 Scot Bolyard, Planner
19 Elizabeth Hernandez, City Attorney
20 Carlos Mindreau, City Architect
21 Joe King, Zoning Technician, Lead
22 Dulce Conde, Zoning Technician
23 Jill Menendez, Administrative Assistant
24 Kevin Kinney, Parking

25 Also Participating:

Mari Molina
Burton Hersh
Laura Russo, Esq.
Jose Gelabert-Navia
Victor Damian, Esq.
Richard Garcia
Roxcy Bolton
Elizabeth Stone
Lisa Maroon
Zeke Guilford, Esq.
Kimball Woodbury
Shirley Ornstein
Robert Roark
Wayne Block
Yvonne Harrison
Mario Garcia-Serra, Esq.

1 THEREUPON:
2 2008-11-12 PM 2:17
3 The Following Proceedings were had:

4 CHAIRMAN KORGE: Start the meeting.
5 Would you call the roll, please?

6 MS. MENENDEZ: Eibi Aizenstat?

7 MR. AIZENSTAT: Here.

8 MS. MENENDEZ: Robert Behar?

9 MR. BEHAR: Here.

10 MS. MENENDEZ: Jack Coe?

11 MR. COE: Here.

12 MS. MENENDEZ: Jeffrey Flanagan.

13 MR. FLANAGAN: Here.

14 MS. MENENDEZ: Pat Keon?

15 Javier Salman?

16 Javier Salman.

17 MR. SALMAN: Here

18 MS. MENENDEZ: Tom Korge?

19 CHAIRMAN KORGE: Here.

20 First item on the agenda is approval of the
21 Minutes of the Meeting of October 8th, 2008.

22 MR. BEHAR: Motion to approve.

23 CHAIRMAN KORGE: Moved, any second?

24 MR. COE: Second.

25 CHAIRMAN KORGE: Second. Any discussion,
corrections, additions?

1 Hearing none, we will take the roll.

2 MS. MENENDEZ: Robert Behar.

3 MR. BEHAR: Yes.

4 MS. MENENDEZ: Jack Coe.

5 MR. COE: Yes.

6 MS. MENENDEZ: Jeff Flanagan.

7 MR. FLANAGAN: Yes.

8 MS. MENENDEZ: Eibi Aizenstat.

9 MR. AIZENSTAT: Abstain, I was not here.

10 MS. MENENDEZ: Tom Korge.

11 CHAIRMAN KORGE: Yes.

12 Are we going to swear in the witnesses
13 first or should we do that before each
14 presentation?

15 There is only one presentation, that
16 requires the swearing of witnesses, right, the
17 first one?

18 MR. RIEL: However you would like to do
19 it.

20 MR. COE: Swear them now.

21 CHAIRMAN KORGE: Well, first, we have a
22 Streetscape presentation.

23 How long is this going to last?

24 MR. RIEL: About ten, fifteen minutes.

25 CHAIRMAN KORGE: Ten, 15 minutes

1 presentation for Streetscape, so let's do that
2 first, and then we can swear in the witnesses.

3 MR. RIEL: The only reason not to swear
4 them in is because somebody might come in
5 later.

6 CHAIRMAN KORGE: Right, and let me remind
7 everybody, anybody who wants to testify on Item
8 Number 6, regarding the plan, a Mixed-Use Site
9 Plan Review and Vacation of Public Alleyway, you
10 need to sign up over here.

11 Hello.

12 MS. MOLINA: Good evening. Are you guys
13 ready for us?

14 Good evening, everyone. My name is Mari
15 Molina.

16 I am the executive director of the Business
17 Improvement District of Coral Gables.

18 As you know, the BID represents all the
19 merchants and property owners of the central
20 core of the business district, and we are here,
21 this evening, to do a brief presentation after
22 about nine months' worth of work.

23 I am going to explain the process shortly.

24 And I want to introduce Burton Hersh, who
25 is the chairman of our Streetscape Advisory

5

1 Committee, but you all should have this piece,
2 hopefully we got this to you.
3 Anyone here in the audience who wants one,
4 I left some up here at the desk with Jill.
5 Basically, if you look at the front page
6 here, and look at the names, we were facilitated
7 by Dr. Chuck Bohl, over at the U.M. School of
8 Architecture.
9 On the team was Burton, our chairperson.
10 We had Jaime Correa, David Plummer on the
11 transportation and engineering front. We had
12 Matt Bukolt, Glenn Pratt, John Fullerton, Jorge
13 Hernandez.
14 And then we had some retail folks, Kerry
15 Newman, with Koniver Stern and two of our own
16 members who served on the committee.
17 Basically, the group looked at kind of the
18 global best practices of what would make our
19 City and our downtown the best that it could
20 possibly be.
21 We did not look at what had been done in
22 the past, in terms of all the different
23 scenarios. At one point there were three
24 alternatives.
25 Basically, we looked at global best

6

1 practices and started from scratch.
2 With that, I would like to turn it over to
3 Burton, so he can go over the design
4 recommendations.
5 CHAIRMAN KERGE: Thank you. Let me just
6 note, for the record, that Javier Salman has
7 arrived.
8 MR. HERSH: Thank you very much. This --
9 the BID through its Streetscape Committee, after
10 studying, as Mari Molina mentioned, the
11 different aspects, did come up with a design for
12 its vision of Miracle Mile, and also Giralda,
13 and we looked at lots of precedents, like this
14 being Aix en Provence in France.
15 I'm just going to go through this very
16 quickly.
17 But we looked at a lot of very successful
18 streets, and we also went through numerous
19 designs, alternate designs, in order to come up
20 with our final recommendations.
21 We looked at the street sections, for
22 example.
23 And one of the things that we noticed, for
24 example, on Miracle Mile, currently 80 percent
25 of Miracle Mile is dedicated to vehicular

7

1 transportation and 20 percent for pedestrian.
2 So we are talking -- one of the things we
3 tried to do is get closer to a 50-50 ratio for
4 the street, and this is actually the current
5 right-of-way, which is actually 75-25.
6 Actually this is Giralda, excuse me.
7 Giralda is 75-25 and 80-20 for Miracle Mile.
8 And we looked at the street section of what
9 we need to handle people walking back and forth.
10 We looked at various street furniture,
11 treatments, again, some of the things that have
12 been successful in other places.
13 I am going to kind of go through this
14 quickly.
15 One of the things that we did want to
16 accommodate, we wanted to try to get kiosks and
17 some uses more on the right-of-way that we
18 thought would help animate the street.
19 And because, in the end, what we see of
20 Miracle Mile is a place where people want to
21 come down and walk, a destination.
22 And, in order to do that, we thought having
23 outside dining areas on the street, some
24 examples like this in other cities, something --
25 you know, maybe something not quite a hard

8

1 structure, but a soft structure with fans,
2 color, again, to animate the street and these
3 are just some.
4 Another problem that we saw with the
5 Streetscape, our final recommendation was to go
6 to parallel parking.
7 One of the things that happens with
8 parallel parking is that it puts a greater
9 burden, because there's just less spaces. We
10 are going to lose about 80 to 90 spaces and you
11 have situations like this, these blank
12 connections between parking and the street, and,
13 you know, these connections could be enhanced
14 and that, we believe, would help to mitigate the
15 loss of parking.
16 For Giralda Avenue, which is Restaurant
17 Row, and this is just the 100 block, the BID has
18 recommended a shared Streetscape.
19 This is currently Giralda, and as you can
20 see, it is mostly street. It is difficult for
21 just two people to walk by. This is a planned
22 view of it. It is currently 25 pedestrian and
23 75 percent for vehicular traffic.
24 Our recommendation is a shared street
25 system.

9

1 A shared street, according to the best
2 practice for shared streets, is a street that
3 has actually no elevated curb.

4 So, instead of having an elevated curb, you
5 would just see a material line. Everything is
6 at the same level.

7 And what we would do is we would use bowers
8 to mark where cars would be, and at certain
9 times we could cut off the street and just --
10 and make it something that can be used for an
11 event, or you can have just normal parking, and
12 you would mark it with bowers and things and
13 outside dining areas.

14 This is a rendering of what we believe it
15 could look like.

16 On Miracle Mile, the solution that the BID
17 picked, was to go to parallel parking, to widen
18 approximately twelve feet each side additional
19 space, to give approximately 20 to 22 feet,
20 which could be used for the public, and would
21 end up being something like a 60-40 ratio.

22 These were just some sketches.

23 One of the things that you will notice is
24 that we are going to need some help from
25 Planning, because there are some zoning issues

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1 that currently would not be allowed to be done.

2 We would also like to have some uses that
3 could be, like we could have at night, like
4 maybe music venues for more adult, maybe later
5 night types of activities, which we believe,
6 would support the Mile as a destination, a place
7 where people would want to come and take a walk
8 and spend some money.

9 These are some of our -- we hope that we
10 can get some type of reaction from the Board
11 conceptually in support of what we want to do.

12 CHAIRMAN KORGE: Thank you. Is there any
13 action we need to take, at this time?

14 MR. RIEL: No, Mr. Chair. The BID is just
15 looking for any comments, suggestions.

16 There's no formal recommendation required.

17 They just want to come to the Planning
18 Board prior to going to the Commission and
19 presenting the plan.

20 MR. HERSH: Well, actually, we would like,
21 maybe, something, a feeling of the Board. Do
22 you think we are going in the proper direction?

23 We understand we are not here for anything
24 official, but --

25 CHAIRMAN KORGE: Is there a motion to

11

1 support the presentation?

2 MR. BEHAR: I make a motion to support it.
3 I would like to have some comments.

4 If we need to open up for us, I make a
5 motion to support the presentation.

6 CHAIRMAN KORGE: Okay. Is there a second
7 and then we can have a discussion?

8 MR. AIZENSTAT: I would second that.

9 CHAIRMAN KORGE: Second.

10 We have a motion and a second.

11 And go ahead with comments and discussion.

12 MR. COE: Mr. Chairman, if I may, with
13 reference to the Giralda one, I have no problem
14 with, but I am most concerned about Miracle
15 Mile.

16 Taking away parking spaces, I think, is a
17 recipe for disaster, when you also include that
18 with parallel parking.

19 Most people in Florida do not know how to
20 parallel park, and that is pretty obvious.

21 And what you are going to have, is, you
22 know, we lost a lane when they put the median
23 in, and what you are going to have, which you
24 have now, is two lanes in each direction and the
25 inner lane, before you get to the parking

12

1 spaces, will now be perpetually stalled with
2 cars, trying to figure out how to parallel
3 park.

4 That is problem number one.

5 MR. HERSH: May I respond?

6 MR. COE: Problem number two --
7 Okay, if you want.

8 MR. HERSH: You know, we -- I appreciate
9 what you are saying, and it is certainly true.

10 To mitigate that, what we have done is the
11 parallel parking that we're anticipating is an
12 elongated parallel parking, and someone can
13 just, actually you don't have to back into, you
14 go to it frontwise.

15 And, in addition to that, and to the type
16 of parking that we have being much simpler, the
17 angled parking is extremely dangerous,
18 particularly when backing out.

19 If you're trying to back out of an angled
20 spot and you have someone to your right, you are
21 completely blind.

22 Not only do we believe that the parallel
23 parking spaces are somewhat easier to -- not
24 quite as easy as the angled space, but not
25 something that you have to back into, but far

13

1 more safer in terms of backing out.
 2 MR. COE: But, the other point I have is
 3 the loss of parking spaces.
 4 MR. HERSH: Right.
 5 MR. COE: I suppose the trade off is people
 6 are going to go into these garages, and they are
 7 going to park in the garage.
 8 MR. HERSH: Yes.
 9 MR. COE: That is your intent, right?
 10 MR. HERSH: Well, if -- that is the intent,
 11 and there are several things that they are doing
 12 to help that along.
 13 One of them is maybe adjusting the time
 14 that you can spend at a space on Miracle Mile.
 15 The other thing to mitigate that is to have
 16 connections that are truly friendly and easy to
 17 use.
 18 MR. COE: What are you going to do, then,
 19 to enhance security in the parking garages?
 20 Every woman I know who lives in Coral
 21 Gables refuses to use any of the parking
 22 garages, because they feel that their safety is
 23 in peril.
 24 MR. HERSH: You know, one of the great
 25 things about Miracle Mile is it has a central

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1 valet system.
 2 You can park your car at Tarpon Enc and you
 3 can pick it up at the other end of Miracle Mile,
 4 and it is really a great service.
 5 People that have that fear, they can use
 6 it.
 7 MR. COE: So, your answer is they can valet
 8 park at \$10 or \$20 --
 9 MR. BEHAR: No, no, it's not --
 10 MR. HERSH: No, it is not \$20.
 11 But, in addition to that, I think that we
 12 have to work at, you know, trying to fix it.
 13 That is a good point.
 14 MR. COE: Okay.
 15 MR. BEHAR: Burton, I want to commend you
 16 guys for taking on this study. I am very
 17 pleased to see this.
 18 About ten years ago, I had the option or
 19 the pleasure of working with Einstein Bagels and
 20 Starbucks, and I went to the City and we were
 21 trying to get outdoor seating, and at that time
 22 it was completely denied.
 23 We -- I had to go back to my client and
 24 tell them I had to carve 625 square feet of
 25 space to create outdoor seating.

15

1 Today, the exact corner is one of the most
 2 used outdoor space in the whole Mile, so I am
 3 very pleased.
 4 This past Saturday night I was -- at 10:45
 5 I came over to both Houston's -- and it was
 6 closed. They did not want to serve, it was
 7 already 10:45.
 8 And I went across to Morton's, and they
 9 also were closed.
 10 We are losing a lot of clientele that are
 11 heading over to Mary Brickell Village.
 12 MR. HERSH: Yes.
 13 MR. BEHAR: And I think we are making a big
 14 mistake by not letting those restaurants go a
 15 little bit longer, have the possibility to stay
 16 open.
 17 I do agree with you that we are in a
 18 climate, that for the most part of the year we
 19 have a very nice outdoor, especially in the
 20 evening, sitting area.
 21 And the best way, in the Champs-Elysses in
 22 Paris, and in all the cities throughout the
 23 world, the best examples where you have those
 24 situations where you promote to have outdoor
 25 seating. I am very encouraged, and I would

16

1 support, even the reduction of the parking, to
 2 be able to have more space to sit.
 3 I think that we are moving in the right
 4 direction.
 5 Again, I commend you guys, and I will
 6 support this process.
 7 MR. HERSH: Thank you so much.
 8 MR. AIZENSTAT: Did you go ahead and take a
 9 look at Las Olas Boulevard, at the way they do
 10 their parking? Because it seems very similar
 11 to what you want to go ahead and do.
 12 MR. HERSH: We did look at Las Olas, and
 13 actually, there was one slide --
 14 MS. MOLINA: We had some slides.
 15 MR. HERSH: We have some -- I rushed
 16 through it because I was so conscious about
 17 taking the Board's time.
 18 And if you look, actually we can give you
 19 -- we will present a copy for the Board of our
 20 presentation.
 21 We did look at Las Olas -- we did look at
 22 Ft. Lauderdale. We looked at South Miami, and
 23 actually, we had a fantastic photograph of
 24 before and after of South Miami, which was just
 25 breathtaking, in the difference.

17

1 Unfortunately, I rushed through it. But I
2 will give you copies.

3 MR. AIZENSTAT: I think South Miami has a
4 wider street to deal with than --

5 MR. SALMAN: No, it doesn't.

6 MR. HERSH: No, actually, it seems that
7 way.

8 MR. BEHAR: Las Olas is one lane.

9 MR. HERSH: Yeah, it's one lane.

10 MR. AIZENSTAT: It appears to be wider.

11 MR. HERSH: Actually, Las Olas is wider.

12 CHAIRMAN KORGE: I like it too, very much.
13 I think it's a big improvement.

14 I am sure that there will be objections to
15 the loss of parking.

16 But recall, you may recall, that when the
17 median went in at Miracle Mile, there was an
18 uproar about how this was going to, you know,
19 ruin the business and it didn't. I think it was
20 a big improvement. It makes the street more
21 liveable.

22 It requires, obviously, some coordination
23 respecting the parking and access to the parking
24 and signage, so people will know where to go to
25 park for Miracle Mile.

18

1 Presumably that can be done without great
2 difficulty.

3 The other observation I would make is that
4 you might want to consider the possibility of
5 using pavers on Miracle Mile as well.

6 I know you would still have the curb,
7 because you don't want people walking into
8 Miracle Mile.

9 But, the pavers or cobblestones, something
10 to that effect, though they are a little more
11 costly, would slow down the traffic some more,
12 which would make it more conducive to
13 pedestrians as well.

14 MR. HERSH: Actually, we have a couple of
15 things that we want to do to slow traffic down a
16 little bit.

17 CHAIRMAN KORGE: Yeah. Great plan. I like
18 it. A big improvement.

19 MR. HERSH: Thank you so much.

20 MR. SALMAN: Burt, I want to commend you
21 and the BID for a very well thought out concept.

22 It takes into account a lot of the issues
23 that are going to be critical to getting it
24 passed, one of which is that reduction in
25 parking.

19

1 I think that the solution lies, as you
2 brought out, in the connection of the street
3 back into the parking in a way that is user
4 friendly, well lit, and I think the increase in
5 activity of people using that will help
6 mitigate, also, some of the concerns people have
7 about having to park in a lonely parking garage
8 if everyone is using it.

9 The use of the valet, and I think that -- I
10 saw your presentation on line, the creation of
11 certain valet stations throughout the design
12 really will address a lot of those issues. So,
13 I commend you, and I am 100 percent behind you.

14 MR. HERSH: Thank you so much.

15 MR. FLANAGAN: I think it's a great plan.

16 I was concerned about the parallel parking,
17 just with the amount of traffic that uses
18 Miracle Mile.

19 I know the parallel parking on Sunset Drive
20 in South Miami really slows the traffic down
21 during rush hour.

22 If you spend any time there you will see
23 what a log jam is created, but when I hear you
24 say you are going to do elongated spaces, that
25 will make it much easier to get in and out of.

20

1 hopefully that will help a little bit.

2 MR. HERSH: Thank you. And I do hear the
3 comments on the parallel parking and reduction,
4 and there are some things, additional things,
5 that we can do to present, not just to this
6 Board, but to help with those concerns.

7 CHAIRMAN KORGE: Well, did you look at the
8 alternative of no parking on Miracle Mile?

9 MR. HERSH: We did, but we were afraid to
10 walk outside after that.

11 CHAIRMAN KORGE: Because, you know, there
12 is absolutely no parking on Miracle Mile,
13 actually, in the long run, it might work much
14 better.

15 MR. SALMAN: I beg to differ. In the
16 developing of a Streetscape, you want to have
17 the activities of the cars moving and parking,
18 and also that those cars park create a sense of
19 security for the people walking.

20 If they are walking next to moving traffic,
21 that becomes a little bit more daunting on the
22 street that has the kind of traffic flow that
23 Miracle Mile has.

24 On Giralda, it's a lot less intense,
25 especially if you go through the expense of

21

1 treating the surface of the street with
2 cobblestones and creating a whole lot of
3 barriers, it's going to be very unfriendly for
4 cars. But it is in a section that you could
5 easily fill with people, whereas that is not the
6 case necessarily with Miracle Mile.

7 MR. HERSH: I think it adds a little
8 animation, and again, we have to work with
9 parking.

10 I think if we adjust some of the time that
11 you can stay at a meter, because what you want
12 to do is, you want to provide a way that people
13 can come, park, run into a store, pick up
14 something and leave. That is what those are
15 for. We can do things that, you know, adjusting
16 the time, I think that would help mitigate that
17 loss.

18 MS. MOLINA: I just want to add one more
19 thing, as a lay person, sitting through these
20 sessions with the design team, including David
21 Plummer, who looked at a lot of these questions
22 for us, I learned the fact that slowing traffic
23 is a good thing, not a bad thing.

24 If we look at Sunset Place, and I grew up
25 there, it went from diagonal to parallel.

22

1 And on the weekends, when I go there now,
2 when I actually go to do shopping, traffic slows
3 down to let the pedestrians through because you
4 feel, obviously, the pinch there in the street.

5 So one of the things we do from the
6 merchant's perspective in the commercial
7 district, we want to slow down traffic. We
8 don't want to be just a raceway thoroughfare for
9 cars coming through, you know, east-west.

10 So, when we talk about congestion being a
11 bad thing, it truly not necessarily is a bad
12 thing, especially for our retailers and our
13 pedestrians who feel comfortable crossing the
14 street.

15 MR. BEHAR: One more question, when do you
16 foresee implementing, you know, this becoming a
17 reality?

18 MR. HERSH: Next Tuesday, we are going --

19 MS. MOLINA: On Tuesday we go for the first
20 time publicly before the Commission to present
21 this.

22 We have been working with all the City
23 departments on this.

24 When we met with Public Works, basically
25 their estimate is the earliest we could start

23

1 any construction would be summer of 2011, given
2 all of the work that needs to be done in advance
3 of the project.

4 We would take great pains to make sure we
5 would mitigate any interruptions to business,
6 you know, do a plan, and Burton can speak more
7 to that, but that's basically the --

8 MR. HERSH: One of the things is, we have
9 available monies already that are dedicated for
10 this work. We have to start to spend that money
11 in order to keep it, so we can start the design
12 process now.

13 And, I think by going to the Commission,
14 that will set free the ability to start working
15 on some actual drawings.

16 MR. BEHAR: Is that State money or --

17 MR. HERSH: It's County, I believe.

18 MS. MOLINA: County. The County GOB bonds
19 that we have earmarked.

20 MR. HERSH: We would like to start getting
21 the design going.

22 CHAIRMAN KORGE: We have a motion on the
23 table, so would you call the roll, please?

24 The motion is recommendation in favor of
25 the proposal to Streetscape the two streets we

24

1 are talking about.

2 MS. MENENDEZ: Jack Coe?

3 MR. COE: Yes, subject to my previous
4 concerns. I will wait to see if you can handle
5 those.

6 MS. MENENDEZ: Jeff Flanagan?

7 MR. FLANAGAN: Yes.

8 MS. MENENDEZ: Javier Salmen?

9 MR. SALMAN: Yes.

10 MS. MENENDEZ: Eibi Aizenstat?

11 MR. AIZENSTAT: Yes.

12 MS. MENENDEZ: Robert Behar?

13 MR. BEHAR: Yes.

14 MS. MENENDEZ: Tom Korge?

15 CHAIRMAN KORGE: Yes.

16 Thank you very much for the presentation.

17 The next item on our agenda is Application
18 Number 06-08-070-P. Mixed-Use Site Plan Review
19 and Vacation of Public Alleyway at LeJeune Road,
20 Greco and Granello Avenues.

21 Anybody who would like to testify in
22 connection with this, and has signed up to
23 testify, why don't we have them stand up now and
24 swear them in right now, if you would.

25 (Thereupon, the prospective witnesses were