

Sunshine Law Meeting February 25, 2014- Miracle Mile and Giralda Streetscape

Mark Trowbridge- CG Chamber of Commerce: Good afternoon, leaders. On behalf of our members and Chamber leaders, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts with you this afternoon on this longstanding priority initiative for our organization. For decades our main street has been in need of significant attention- a face lift if you will, but certainly more than a nip and a tuck. It is currently a hodgepodge of styles and foliage, a muddled character that is not befitting of our Coral Gables. In its current form it is not the prominent destination and pedestrian promenade that our business community desires or deserves. But today is the day. The day that we have been patiently and at times not-so-patiently waiting to arrive. A day that will create extraordinary opportunity for our businesses in Coral Gables, a day that will return our down town to its originally envisioned glory, a day that will ensure that we put the “miracle” back in Miracle Mile. Miracle Mile is inextricably linked to our past, to our founders and our community’s DNA. It is our main street, an essential gathering place where retail businesses can soar, restaurants can thrive and people can assemble in an attractive, open, meaningful space.

Commissioners, you see the strong interest and passionate support this program engenders by the leaders and business owners who have come here today, on their own time to vote with their feet. They are here because they are invested, engaged and resolute in their desire to see our downtown updated. The time is right to ensure our long term competitiveness, to create a visitor and shopper-friendly district that can become unparalleled not only in Miami but in south Florida.

We recently were recognized as one of the most livable cities in the world; for our incredible communities, innumerable amenities. I believe that if our Miracle Mile streetscape program was complete we would have taken home the gold. The reimagination of this public space will be a legacy project of this Commission and an inheritance for future visitors, residents and business owners. Now I know there are some skeptics, and we must do our very best to listen to and hear these voices and assuage their fears. All can agree that this project will be a vast improvement over what currently exists and a game changer for Coral Gables. But many of our businesses are just beginning to regain their confidence after a long, painful and destructive recession. Most are just starting to grow again, to hire again and to engage again and this project cannot hinder that process, it must catalyze it. It must be transparent and that begins today with your leadership and a determined path forward.

As I mentioned, this project has been a longstanding priority of the Chamber, dating back many years. Each of our Chairs and their respective boards understood the importance of a competitive Miracle Mile to our local economy. We have seen other areas blossom as time marched on. Today, it is our turn to bloom. Great cities have vibrant downtowns that create a sense of place-combining architecture, lighting, landscaping, a strong retail and restaurant mix and other physical attributes. They also have a strong business community that is invested in making what is already good, well, extraordinarily great.

This is more than a streetscape project, ladies and gentlemen, it is an opportunity, a civic renewal program, a lasting legacy, and it is now in your able hands. I close with a gentle reminder that many of us have been invested in this plan for a long time. For me it has been more than 8 years, but for others,

many in this room, much much longer. And today we tip our hats to the CM for his efforts, the BID and their leadership for their stalwart support, and to each of you seated here today who will ultimately make the decision that will change our community forever. For today is that day. Thank you.

Mari Gallet- BID: Can I just say what Mark said? Thank you, Mark. That was wonderful. Thank you Mayor, Commissioners, City Manager, City Attorney, City Clerk. I am back. I've been gone for- I guess a month now. I was your executive director here at the BID for 9 ½ years and personally and in representing the BID I can tell you that this is the most exciting thing and I wouldn't miss it. I also want to tell you that our president, Mr. Burton-Hersch is out of the country and he wanted to be here today but couldn't. However, looking at everyone here around the room we have about 30 of our members here, and I applaud them for being here today, and I thank them.

For those that don't know the BID, the BID is a special assessment district, not unlike the one that we would have to implement for this financing project. Every property between Douglas and Lejeune including Miracle Mile, two blocks north to Giralda and one block south to Andalucía is the district. That's 16 city blocks. This project, which as Mark mentioned, we've been working on for as long as I've been here and probably about 15 years since the charette in 2002. I see a couple people here who date back to the charette, including Mr. Jaime Correa from UM. And frankly, we've been trying to get this accomplished for a long time, and as a district we've been dedicating resources to it.

Just if you do some round numbers, there's 120 property owners in the district, there's about 300 businesses in the district. So each one of those would be responsible financially for this project. I begin by saying that the 50% contribution from the City- we thank you, we applaud it, we appreciate it, we also appreciate the number of consultants on the project. But ultimately the folks here today and the rest of those 120 folks are the ones that are going to be having to pay for this project. In the meantime we the BID are here to support, together with the Chamber, these businesses to thrive, and there will be an uncomfortable point, and we will have to work through that.

I want to go on to say obviously through all the charettes and meetings that we had we have enlisted a lot of world class experts, and I think we're at the juncture right now with this design that we feel that this is going to take us to the next level. The vitality of our downtown is directly responsible for keeping the millage rate in the City lower than a lot of other areas in the City. It's been said by our commissioners, by our CM for as long as I can remember, that 50% of the City's revenues are derived from the commercial district of the city. Without a successful and vibrant commercial district our millage rate and our residents wouldn't enjoy the quality of life that they do, and even our own commercial properties would have to pay more. So at the end of the day we are contributing to that in the form of taxes, fees, parking revenue, enforcement revenue so we are here, we're fortunate to be doing business in the City, but as Mark mentioned we have to remain viable through the process. I also appreciated the two years that we're going to be given; one of the things I ask, and I haven't consulted with our board, but this is all that was going through my head. If for any reason the construction were to take more than a year, and we're confident that it will be done as quickly as possible but if we could please clearly have a year grace period. We would be remiss to have the construction project go for two years and then there's still dust and we haven't had a chance to recuperate.

And finally the other thing is I was very happy to hear from Mr. Fishkind that we can work together prior to the assessment roll being finalized. Our staff is here today as well, and I can tell you no one knows better this folio number and every little piece of this district. We walk it, we talk it, we know our property owners, and there were some minor errors in there and some things omitted. So please if given the opportunity, use us as a resource we can help you go through the folio numbers there's old reference numbers on there etc. Basically let us help be a resource to you as you go through the assessment process and again we all agree with everyone in the room, this is a long time coming. We look forward to collaborating with you, with the property owners and with our business owners. Thank you so much.