

CITY OF CORAL GABLES
Economic Development Board Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 1, 2014, 8:00 a.m.
1 Alhambra Plaza, Suite 617, Coral Gables, Florida 33134

MEMBERS	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	COMMISSIONERS
	'14	'14	'14	'14	'15	'15	'15	'15	'15	'15	'15	'15	
Scott Sime Chair	P	P											Mayor Jim Cason
Alberto Manrara Vice-Chair	P	P											Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.
Jack PJ Mitchell	P	P											Commissioner Pat Keon
June Morris	P	E											Commissioner Vince Lago
Alexander Binelo	P	E											Commissioner Frank Quesada

A = Absent
E = Excused Absence
P = Present
X = No Meeting

STAFF AND GUESTS:

Ramon Trias, Director, Planning and Zoning Department

Marina Foglia, Executive Director, Coral Gables Business Improvement District (BID)

Leonard Roberts, Acting Director, Economic Sustainability Department

Jorge Casuso, Business Development Analyst, Economic & Cultural Development

Meeting Motion Summary:

Mr. Manrara made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 3, 2014 Board meeting. Mr. Mitchell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Sime brought the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m.

1. Review of the minutes of the September 3, 2014 Board meeting.

Mr. Manrara made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 3, 2014 Board meeting. Mr. Mitchell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

2. Update on Business Tax Licenses and New Businesses

Mr. Roberts presented an update to the board on Business Tax Licenses and New Businesses. He told the board that “welcome letters” had been sent to the new businesses.

3. Presentation by Ramon Trias, Planning and Zoning Director

Mr. Trias made a presentation on the development proposed for the property formerly known as Old Spanish Village near Ponce Circle Park. He said that the developer, the Agave Group, is proposing a hotel, office building, condos and two levels of retail, with at least one level of underground parking that also can accommodate truck service. He said staff had been working hard to get the best project possible for the site.

Mr. Trias also discussed the planning process. He said the department has been working to simplify and clarify the code to make it easier for developers to understand. He said the City is encouraging “a quality pedestrian environment,” as well as “iconic imagery” at the tops of buildings. Planning staff provides developers with a list of eight buildings that serve as models of the kind of development it encourages, including the Biltmore Hotel, Mr. Trias said. It also gives the developers’ architects copies of the original drawings for the Biltmore. “It is the best way to maintain the brand of the City,” Mr. Trias said. “It tells you that you have to do a better job, and it tells you how.”

Mr. Trias said that the City’s Mediterranean Style Design Bonus encourages Mediterranean revival architecture by allowing developers who meet the requirements to increase building height, density and floor area ratio. He said the bonus is what makes the Downtown “cohesive” by including “themes that tie the architecture together.” It is that “level of detail and commitment that sets the City apart,” Mr. Trias said. After input from his department, the projects go before the Board of Architects (BOA), which “fine tunes the details,” he added. The major projects then go to the City Commission for final approval.

Mr. Manrara asked if Ponce Circle Park would be upgraded, since it is an integral part of the Old Spanish Village area. Mr. Trias said staff was exploring the opportunity to integrate the park into the area and create a pedestrian connection to Miracle Mile. Mr. Mitchell said pedestrians should have the ability to visit merchants at both locations. Mr. Manrara also asked about the proposed underground parking for the Agave project. Mr. Trias said parking “creates a challenge” but that it “should be open to discussion at least on the conceptual level.” He said that in Barcelona, parking was built under the street level, adding that the proposed project provides “an opportunity to have a real creative discussion.”

Mr. Trias also discussed the Miracle Mile and Giralda Avenue Streetscapes. He said he had been involved in the Downtown Redevelopment Plan for West Palm Beach and that the size of cities like West Palm and Coral Gables give them “a competitive advantage.” He said they are “small enough for careful attention” and “large enough to attract major companies.”

The Board agreed that it supports the Planning Department's inclusion on the Streetscape Plan's Design Committee.

4. Other City Business

Mr. Roberts informed the board that the new Visitors Center at the Coral Gables Museum would officially open October 2, which coincided with the launching of Miami Attractions month. He said the center offers a touchscreen and a kiosk to help direct visitors to local destinations.

Ms. Foglia informed the Board that the next Gallery Night, held every first Friday of the month, would take place October 3. She said the following Gallery Night on November 7 would coincide with "Giralda Under the Stars," which offers outdoor dining on the 200 block of the street every first Friday of the month from November through March. She said the BID was partnering with the University of Miami to bring a "musical component" to the dining event.

Mr. Roberts told the Board that his Department was planning the upcoming Jazz in the Gables concert series and hoped to expand it to more Gallery Nights and Sundays.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 a.m.

The next Economic Development Board meeting will be held on October 1, 2014.

Respectfully submitted,

Jorge Casuso, Business Development Analyst
Economic & Cultural Development