

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-1
January 13, 2015
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason

Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.

Commissioner Pat Keon

Commissioner Vince Lago

Commissioner Frank Quesada

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark

City Attorney, Craig E. Leen

City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman

Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Planning and Zoning Director, Ramon Trias

Public Speaker(s)

Marshall Bellin, Bellin and Pratt Architects

John Adams, Principal of Strategic Redevelop Group

Robert Behar, Behar Font Architects

Henry Paper, Managing Member Starlight Development

Agenda Item H-1 [Start: 11:59:24 a.m.]

Discussion on North Ponce Study and related planning issues.

Mayor Cason: City Manager, H-1 is a discussion of a North Ponce Study and related planning issues.

Madam City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And we are going to ask Development Services to come forward with the presentation. This was a request from the Commission; we are not asking for you to take action on it, this is a presentation.

Mr. Trias: Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners, thank you very much. I attached a memo in your item that describes some of the background on this issue. Probably if you have any questions that will be the easiest way to have this discussion. For the benefit of the people watching, I will just summarize very briefly the content of the memo. Something that is interesting about this North Ponce area is that there have been many studies in the last 20 years. I had listed five of them starting in 1994, which was the named, “Douglas Apartment District Task Force”. Then in 1998 there was a North Ponce Study. In 2002, I think it was the most public event, which was the charrette, which included some specific recommendations for the North Ponce area. Then there was in 2003 Trial Board meeting, and then in 2005 there was the North Ponce Study, which is this document that you may have seen. Now, I say all this to summarize by saying that this has been talked about for a long time – what is the vision or where is the future for the area; and I would venture to say that there are two or three narrow issues that probably should be the focus of the discussion. One of them is of course the question about what to do with the corridor of Ponce de Leon Boulevard? Most of the development has been larger buildings, mixed use, the med-bonus level two type projects. Then there is the question of what to do or what should the future be of the MF2 apartment area?- and from my perspective that’s probably the main issue that we can propose some ideas about. And finally, there are some general issues about street design, parking requirements, the typical development standards that I think there is a chance to discuss further. I also included a summary of the recommendations from the North Ponce Study just for your benefit, and the Commission never took any action on those recommendations, they discussed it. There is a significant record of minutes of the discussion, but there was no action. It might be because the recommendation may have been a little bit too complicated and too ambitious; perhaps something more focused would have been easier to deal with. Finally, I raised three main issues that I think could be interesting for you to discuss. One of them is perhaps you want to consider a form-base code structure for the type of code changes that may be suggested. I would recommend that you look at the issues of density and parking requirements, as it relates to the small apartment buildings; and finally, try to come up with a clear vision of what the mixed use corridor along Ponce de Leon Boulevard should be. So that is the presentation that I have and if you have any questions, I’ll be happy to answer.

Mayor Cason: We have a couple developers that would like to give us some input as we begin our discussion. So, I’d like to start with John Adams and then Marshall Bellin, and then anybody else, anybody else? Whoever would like to start first is fine.

Mr. Bellin: Good afternoon, Marshall Bellin, Bellin and Pratt Architects, 285 Sevilla Avenue.

Commissioner Quesada: Can you speak up a little bit, can’t hear you.

Mr. Bellin: Can’t hear me?

Commissioner Quesada: Yes.

Mr. Bellin: Marshall Bellin, 285 Sevilla Avenue. To me the main issue is really how we redevelop the North Gables area so that it fits the profile that we'll really like to see in Coral Gables. That area is very important because of its proximity to Miracle Mile. The way it is right now it's very difficult to develop these projects because of the density issue. I think the FAR (Floor Area Ratio), the height of the buildings, for me is OK, the density is really the big problem. You are allowed a certain amount of FAR and a certain amount of density.

Mayor Cason: Could you explain to people watching the definition of density so they understand in layman's terms.

Mr. Bellin: Density is the number of units that are allowed on the property and the FAR is the relationship of the square footage of the building with respect to the square footage of the lot. So for argument sake, if you have a lot that's 10,000 square feet and an FAR of two, your allowable square footage on the property, in the building would be 25 square feet.

Commissioner Lago: Which some refer to as intensity, correct?

Mr. Bellin: Excuse me?

Commissioner Lago: Intensity versus density, correct?

Mr. Bellin: Well they are two different issues. Intensity is the FAR and density is...

Mayor Cason: Number of units.

Mr. Bellin: So I think we need to find a way to solve the density issue. What happens is because the density really doesn't match up well with the intensity or the FAR, the units tend to be very large, and it's really not the market. You have a rental unit at 2,000 square feet and the market is let's say 250 a square foot, you are looking at \$5,000 a month in rent. There really is no market for that, but you can't decrease the size of the units unless you leave a lot of FAR on the table, don't use up all the FAR that you are allowed, which tends to hurt the people who own the property because they can't fully develop the building the way they would like to. So, I think if we keep all the parameters the same except for the density, and say listen fellows, whatever you can fit in this building in terms of units as long as they fulfill the minimum requirement, and maybe the minimum requirement of square footage is 1,100 square feet, 1,150, 1,200 square feet for a two bedroom, two bath, and maybe a one bedroom, one bath is 850, then the units really

can be rented at the market value. We've done some projects in Coral Gables, Tip Hollow's project was a good example, because of the size of the units he can't really rent for market, he's got to be way below market.

Mayor Cason: So you are saying that because of the density problem developing looking at the North Gables, looking at the demography, all the characteristics, can't find a way to build and rent because the rents will be too high and nobody would want to live there, that's the bottom line of it.

Mr. Bellin: Yes, that's really the bottom line. The bottom line is that the developers can't really develop the projects because of that issue, the bottom line doesn't work.

Mayor Cason: And can you give a characterization of – you've seen the homes up there, the apartments, what is the state of the vast majority? My impression is that they are getting very old; a lot of these, there is a need for redevelopment.

Mr. Bellin: There is a need for redevelopment because a lot of the buildings in the North Gables don't have any parking at all, and there is no way to get parking on those sites, so people then who live in those units have to park on the street, and it presents a problem. I think when you redevelop these projects you are required to have all the parking on site, so it frees up the streets for people who would like to park there and maybe walk from there to Miracle Mile to work or for residents who have people coming to visit them. It's very difficult to find parking in the North Gables area.

Mayor Cason: A lot of those buildings are probably very few; I'm sure, ADA compliant. They are probably....

Mr. Bellin: No, there is really no compliance at all.

Mayor Cason: Fire hazards and they don't have elevators, right?

Commissioner Quesada: You know what you have, it's a big mix; it's really an older district, and you do have some bigger buildings, the 999 Building, that's a twelve-story building, is it?- I haven't been in that building in years, but what I think would happen with that North Ponce area, and Bill, actually I don't want to cut you off, finish your thoughts.

Mr. Bellin: You are referring to 999 – the one on Ponce?

Commissioner Quesada: The American Airlines Building on Ponce.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Its 901 and 999.

Mr. Bellin: That's not the zoning district we are talking about.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: You are talking about behind it basically.

Mr. Bellin: The MF2, yes.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: But we are talking about everything. We are talking about North Ponce, actually North Ponce and those areas on both east and west of Ponce.

Commissioner Quesada: Bill, let me ask you a question. What ever happened to the studies? I know there were discussions, I don't think nothing was ever implemented, were there concerns?- were you waiting for anything else?

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Actually, you know, I think the last study was done in 2005, and there was a lot of development going on in there, considering what had been done before, so I think we backed down after looking at it and just let the market dictate. We've talked about it for years, actually before I came on in 1994, there was a study that was done, and there was a Commission committee that our City Manager could certainly talk to you about that more, but the fact is that we identified that as a problem 20 years ago, that we wanted to reactivate that area, and I've heard you speak, Commissioner, about your thoughts of putting Brownstones or different types of elements of townhomes there.

Commissioner Quesada: You know what it is – that area of Coral Gables, north of and even closer to Eighth Street between LeJeune and Douglas. Many of us have been to Eating House, you are in that area, many of us have driven through there, many of us have been to that 7/11, or that bar-be-que place that's changed so many times and you drive through it and there is a certain aspect that doesn't feel like Coral Gables. And I hate to say it, but even Phillips Park down there, I mean, it's something I've discussed with Fred and I discussed that with the previous City Manager, we've got to put some money into Phillips Park, that community is being underserved and we really should try to do what we can there. I've had the pleasure of living in Philadelphia for a few years, I went to school there. I've been fortunate to travel many different places around the world and when you go to Washington D.C., when you go to New York, when you go to certain areas of Baltimore there are some nice areas that are affluent neighborhoods. When you look at our French Village, our French Village is spectacular, and then you look at some of these multi-family buildings that we have in North Ponce that don't feel like Coral Gables, and I know they've changed hands and I know they are every expensive when they do trade, but the rents are

comparable to the rest of our City, the aesthetic is not comparable, is not reflective of the rest of our City. So I've always thought, do Brownstones make sense, do row homes – beautiful architecture and we've had some good examples. I believe Venny Torre has recently built some – and I'm not trying to pick anyone, that's the first one that comes to mind. So there are some beautiful things that had been done recently, there are some row homes that we saw, I think its Valencia...

Mr. Trias: All of Valencia.

Commissioner Quesada: On Valencia – they are beautiful, they are spectacular, and they are consistent with our aesthetic in Coral Gables. And Ramon and I have had these discussions several times and its funny, I speak to a lot of different realtor groups and I speak to site selectors and I've become the City's sales person. Some of you have seen me do that presentation to the BID, and I'm trying to bring more people in, in the sense, try to help drive property values up and really just sell the City to bring in more businesses; and a lot of the feedback I get from residents is, I've been hearing it so often, North Ponce doesn't feel like the rest of Coral Gables, and the conversations I've had with you Ramon are that parking is difficult, and because you can't do some of these row homes because there isn't enough on-street parking and there isn't enough depth on the lots. These are just preliminary conversations that we've had and those are the concerns because again, if we are going to make any changes we need to absolutely make sure it's consistent with the rest of the City. If we can make it feel like the French Village or some of these beautiful projects that we've seen come in as of late, and again, it's not going to affect traffic, it's not going to negatively impact, its actually going to contribute then absolutely that's something that at least I would be in favor of, but obviously it's still very far off. And thank you for putting this together. I've actually gone through some of these reports, as you mentioned from the '94 study to the 2005 study, but it's really just a conversation at this point so that we are all educated. But let me mention one more thing before I pass it back. One of the biggest things that we've discussed is, some of our buildings don't need to be as tall as they are.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Right.

Commissioner Quesada: I mean a lot of our residents hate seeing the tall buildings and really what's some of the requirements that we have; they don't need to be that tall, and this Commission, and I think we've all expressed the frustration of what the correct parking ratio is, and it's not necessarily because we want bigger projects, it's actually because we want smaller projects, but we've got to find something that makes sense for everyone and that's a part of the issue here.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Let me answer since you asked me the question. There are a couple of things and fundamentally that we have not done that we talked about doing earlier. One of them of course is the Ponce median, we want it to tie into that location in Ponce, with the Ponce median, once you see that implemented we should get it done soon, it will feel a little bit better, but we need to go farther, and we've talked about this before. We've talked about landscaping, consistently landscaping that area there. If you go drive through there, you can drive through and see Black Olives, Buttonwoods, old palm trees, it doesn't have the feeling and landscaping will do a tremendous amount; and then parking, there are two parking lots that one is behind the Office Depot and there is another one behind David Plummer. We talked about somehow we would engage and look at the parking requirements in this location here and activate those garages somehow and have those people that live in that location somehow utilize that. There are a lot of things that we can do from a fundamental standpoint that enhances that. We can also look at the issues that you are talking about, which is density and look at that too, but it's not always about how big a building is, it's about what the quality of the building is – and you are right, you are 100 percent right, that's an eclectic little area, because we have all these structures that were built in the 50's and 70's, but then we have some really cool ones that we built in the 20's and 25, now they are not functional, but they are pretty cool and if they fix them up and get some benefits for fixing them up...

Commissioner Quesada: But they are not fixing them up.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I know that's why we have to sit here and come up with some reasons why we fix them up. Anyway, sorry Marshall...

Mayor Cason: Let's ask John Adams to come up too and then continue, maybe have some other points of view on this as well.

Mr. Adams: Good afternoon, John Adams, I am the Principal of Strategic Redevelop Group. I have 30 years' experience in Miami-Dade County, working in and out of your municipality, working with the other municipalities. I am famous or infamous, however you want to look at it, I was the original supervisor for the FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Administration) Program after Hurricane Andrew for Miami-Dade County. I was responsible for breaking your current FEMA Program, which was part of the County's responsibility at the time. I worked with Manny Lopez and other officials, so I'm familiar with codes, we've written a lot of the codes. We wrote a lot of the codes at the time that are still in effect that you still refer to for the County and I have moved my business to doing consulting specifically for investors in Miami-Dade County. We consult for a lot of the land use firms that bring either domestic or international folks in that have money that want to invest and we have historically looked in the Gables and recently we have been really looking at the North Gables over the last ten years, and my general feeling is

that I have not been able to refer that to my clients as a good investment or a good redevelopment opportunity because of the economics of the situation that has grown over the last 20 years ever since they have been looking at this. I was a North Gables resident for three years after I graduated from UM, that was a very – at the time it was a very pedestrian friendly area, but it hasn't changed since then. The building that I lived in which was decrepit and old, outdated at the time is still there, still being rented. The area hasn't seen the change that you would have expected over the last 20 years given how the rest of the County, given how other areas in your City has changed. Against my recommendation, one of my clients bought into that area and has two apartment buildings that he would like to redevelop either now or whenever it becomes feasible, so we directly represent him and his interest and so we are constantly looking at it. What I can say is, you know when you are talking about quality, no matter what we ever do there we are going to do a product that's of a quality that fits the Gables, OK. I'm not a planner and I say this all the time, I'm not a planner, I'm a doer, OK, but instead of code changes we generally like to think that the simplest that gets you to your end use or where you want to be is the quickest and easiest to go along, and I can tell you that this one issue about density and the ancillary, which is number of parking spaces required for each unit will go a long way to allowing the type of substantial redevelopment that will really improve that area, and it will be a lynchpin effect -- one will beget the other, and it will go. As you know, with each development you are required to improve the streetscape in your area, you are required to bring in the utilities that generally aren't there, you have to extend the water mains, those types of things. I represented the principals who did 300 Minorca, which is probably about five years ago, so we are familiar with exactly what happens when you come into that area and you bring that type of redevelopment. That turned out to be wildly successful project on the fringes of what you call the North Gables. The North Gables is a different animal, it's not in your core, it's the edges, and the fringe elements from the other cities that are just across your borders make it, I'm going to say a lesser area, that's not fair, but it's a lesser area than your core and when you talk about the projects on Valencia and you talk about the townhouses that were able to go in, that product is not going to be suited for the North Gables, because the North Gables, it is what it is. You can get a great product, you can get quality people and the typical end user we would be looking at would be the lower executive or the secretaries that are working in the companies that come in and are in your – either in your core or in that new Ponce area where you are seeing a lot more commercial folks come in, and that would be our typical end user that we would target. The beginning professional or the extra people working; the CEO's, they are going to find where they live and the executives are going to find, but that's where we think there is a real need for a product that fits their financial, but is of a quality that those people are going to look at.

Mayor Cason: Marshall, what is the – is there any rationale for the density?- was this just something that was done in 1926 and nobody has looked at it again?- Obviously you don't want tiny little apartments that would rent for \$200.00, but if you have a floor like 1,000 - 1,000 or

1,200 square feet is a minimum, is this something that this density issue is all around Miami-Dade?- is it being addressed elsewhere except for us?

Mr. Bellin: It depends on the area. Miami Beach really doesn't have a density issue, whatever you can put in the envelope. I don't know where it originated and it seems to be pretty arbitrary to start with. One of the things that Frank, I guess is working on and suggesting is row houses, and obviously row houses....

Commissioner Quesada: I'm just suggesting something else, is what I'm saying, something that makes more sense for that neighborhood. One thing that comes to mind, but again, I'm not an expert in this field. I would like to hear feedback and that's the reason we put it on the agenda, as well we want to hear from staff is to get the feedback there. I like what I'm seeing just west of City Hall here what's happening with Valencia and some of those, but maybe that's not the answer for North Gables. North Gables is a little bit different, because you have the 16-storey buildings directly on Ponce, so it's a little different. I don't know. It's very open at this point.

Commissioner Lago: But your vision is not actually row houses on Ponce, it will be on the adjacent streets?

Commissioner Quesada: Correct.

Commissioner Lago: On the interior arteries.

Commissioner Quesada: When you walk down on interior arteries, if you've ever been to Madrid, Milan, some of these great cities of the world, Paris, some of the interior streets, and again, you have these great neighborhoods facing the interior streets not on the exterior streets. Now obviously, we have traffic concerns, we have depth of lot concerns, but some of those cities have amazing neighborhoods that everyone – you travel from all over the world to go see these neighborhoods, and the good thing for us is they aren't single family homes in these areas that we are talking about. It's the MF2 district, the vast majority of what I'm talking about and the good thing is its geographically delineated very nicely, it's a very nice cut-out with LeJeune and with Douglas and with Eighth Street really almost Alhambra, maybe it doesn't go that far south, maybe it does, but we can really do something special in those areas where right now you have some of these older buildings that don't have any historical significance and I'll leave that to Dona to let us know if they do or they don't, but the ones that don't have the historical significance that we can do something to make it a desirable neighborhood, because at this point I don't think it is.

Mayor Cason: What I'm hearing from you though is, in order for those good things to happen it's the number of units. If we were to address the number of units then the market would dictate what would be built there, you'd be able to build quality rental units for 1,000 square feet with a \$2,500 that would be affordable by executives and places like 396 Alhambra, all these companies that are coming in, which we don't have much of that right now. They leave the Gables because there is not that kind of a rental that hasn't been developed as much.

Mr. Bellin: I think the bottom line is nobody and we represent a lot of property owners, nobody is doing developing, very sparsely, because of the issue of the bottom line and that's the reason.

Mayor Cason: And there are vacant lots as well in the City because they say, I can't make it work.

Mr. Bellin: That's the problem and they can't make it work because they can't build units that are 1500, 1800, 2,000 square feet because there is no market for those size units in that area. We are doing some projects on Valencia and we are looking at 2,500 square feet and even higher than that, because it's a different area and it can be supported over there. What happens if you do row houses or houses of that general character, you lose about 75 percent of your allowable density, not intensity, because the square footage is what it is, but the density really is hurt by having that kind of a product, and the reason being, if you have 100 by 100 foot lot, assuming there is no alley you can only get three units, three townhouses because you've got to get to the back, whereas normally you could get 12-13 units on that same site.

Mayor Cason: Let's ask Robert Behar and then Henry come up.

Mr. Behar: Good morning, good afternoon I should say. Robert Behar, Behar, Font and Partners, 4533 Ponce de Leon. We not only do architecture, but we do development as well and this corridor, the Ponce corridor is one – Madam it's good to have you back, I'm sorry, it's good to have you back, it's a corridor that is really where the growth of the City should happen. I believe that it should be a mix of density in the sense that you could have some row houses as a liner to the little taller building that will allow more density, because whenever you have a city that is in a growth stage, this is where it has to happen towards this side, because we know going south it cannot happen. I think the density is not – in a similar fashion that the MXD zoning and the CBD where the density doesn't have to be play – you may have almost like a massing zoning that you only allow to do up to a certain point, but if the apartment that Marshall was alluding to, if an apartment needs to be 800, 900, 1,000 square feet because that's what the market calls for, it should be up to the development to do that. We should not impose too many restrictions because that's what happens, and one example is Miami 21. When you start putting too many – in the City of Miami, too many restrictions you start discouraging good quality development to come

into the City, and I think that there is an opportunity there that is a transitional area in the sense that you have City of Miami just two blocks to the east, you've got the corridor, the Ponce corridor, which is what you could have along the main corridor the high structures and then in between you could...

Commissioner Lago: So basically we are saying you would tear off coming from Ponce more towards the interior arteries.

Mr. Behar: Towards the west.

Commissioner Lago: Let me ask you a question. What would be the negatives if you basically tweak the density?- what would be the negative in regards – would it be increased traffic?- would it be increased – if you change the breakdown, the makeup in regards to the square footage required per unit, what would be the negative that you can see?

Mr. Behar: The negative...

Commissioner Lago: Not negative – maybe I shouldn't use the word negative. What could be the ripple effect?

Mr. Behar: Are you going to demand for certain sites that may not be what the market calls for.

Commissioner Lago: I agree with you and I agree with Marshall and I agree with the developers in the sense of that. Right now we are producing a product that in most cases doesn't work for everyone, because you are basically forcing a certain square footage for a unit and what ends up happening is that certain people are not looking for that square footage and the prices are way too high, let's say for something like the rents. What I'm saying is, if we were to make these tweaks, changes in the code what do you see as potential pitfalls or...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I can tell you one. The one would be that you would probably – the way it is now you probably force these things to be condos, the new ones will be condos, because you have to sell them, as you point out you can't get the rents per square foot to make sense of it from an owner's perspective. Not that this is a bad thing, but you'll have renters in that location instead of people that own property that have ownership of their location.

Commissioner Quesada: There are renters there now.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I know, but the newer buildings that have been constructed are bigger so that most people have sold those as condominium units, yes the older buildings are renters. You are asking us what is...

Commissioner Lago: Sorry to interrupt you, but since we are on that point. I'm not going to hold you to the percentage, but what do you think the percentage is owners to renters in regards to buildings?- 30?- 20?

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Well, maybe the better question is of the new construction, what is the amount of renters to owners, meaning from 2005, what are the renters to owners?

Mr. Behar: What you see is a higher percentage of renters than you do – you haven't seen too many new condominium buildings come up.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Yes, we've seen...

Commissioner Quesada: If you look at page 2 of our memo, I think Ramon listed it. 2007 – 888 Douglas was residential.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Residential?

Commissioner Quesada: I think its condos...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Condominiums.

Commissioner Quesada: 1805 Ponce – residential.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Condominiums.

Commissioner Quesada: Condominiums. 1607 – residential.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Condominiums.

Commissioner Quesada: 1600 – office; and 1300 mixed use, but it's really condominiums.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Condominiums – that's Randy Hill's thing.

Commissioner Quesada: And we have the 1200 one that we just approved which is going to be an office.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Right.

Mayor Cason: But I would think that you would see an increase in property values, increase of money to the City from that. You would see more of these executives that can't that nitch from \$2,000 to \$2,500 to rent so they live somewhere else and spend their money elsewhere. These people, I think a lot of them would like to walk to work, they are going to go to the restaurants, they are going to spend their money, they'll have money to spend. Whereas I think a lot of people there now are marginal incomes.

Mr. Behar: I'll give you an example. The Ponce project – 99.9 percent occupied.

Commissioner Quesada: Which Ponce project?

Mr. Behar: The one where Epicure is.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Oh yes.

Commissioner Quesada: Oh yes, yes, that's right.

Mr. Behar: It's a rental – practically 100 percent rented – why?- because it's a product that people want to come to and be in the Gables. Of those projects that you went through, yes, they were condos, they came out as condos. How many of those were left as sold as condos and closed as condo?

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Most of them – yes.

Mr. Behar: OK. There were a lot of people that were renting those units because the developer could not close.

Commissioner Lago: So going back to what I was saying. Do you view as parking being a potential issue in the near future?

Mr. Behar: Absolutely. Absolutely. This is the only municipality that I'm working with, OK, and as you know we do mixed use projects throughout the whole State of Florida, even doing one today in San Francisco. This is the only municipality that doesn't have to fulfill the entire requirement for parking for all the uses, there is no shared parking and that's a big deterrent to have quality development, because you do. I'm doing an example right now – I'll give you an

example of the Ponce project – 367 units, they have about 30,000 square feet of retail, 25,000 square feet of office, we have 942 spaces. At night time...

Commissioner Lago: What is the vacancy rate in regards to those parking spaces?- forget nighttime, I'm talking about during the day, that's what's staggering.

Mr. Behar: If you go there now more than 50 percent, 60 percent of spaces are sitting empty. At nighttime we have...

Commissioner Lago: Let's just put some numbers – at a \$25,000 per price cost for these parking spaces.

Mr. Behar: Oh, it's more than 25.

Commissioner Lago: \$25,000 is the going rate construction-wise, I mean obviously depending on the complexity of the design.

Commissioner Quesada: Respectfully, Commissioner Lago, that's not – the issue isn't what it cost; the issue is what kind of product do we end up...

Commissioner Lago: No, no, no, sorry. It is what it cost because someone's got to pay for those parking spaces and when those parking spaces cost money they pass it on to the end user and they look for other ways to maybe not bring out the best product.

Mr. Behar: Whenever you do a mixed used project, absolutely there should be an opportunity to...

Commissioner Lago: You deal with developers every day, you deal with developers every day, when you tell them you have to put forth these many parking spaces and the developer tells you, I don't have the use for it – what does a developer tell you?- how can we save money on the project, right? So what ends up happening?- Ramon, the design suffers. What does this Commission harp on every day?- we want the best design, so people when you force them to such high standards and we don't allow for shared parking then what occurs is, they say OK, the parking cost "X" amount, let's cut from the aesthetics of the project, I mean you know what happens.

Mr. Behar: At the end somebody is going to suffer and at the end it's the quality of the parking...I agree.

Commissioner Quesada: Let me just say one thing real quick and I want to make this abundantly clear, we don't want to be City of Miami, we don't want Miami 21, we are Coral Gables, we have our own aesthetic, I think it needs to be said in the sense that we want to promote better projects to improve that neighborhood, I think that's very important and underlying all this discussion. Obviously, we are brainstorming here, we want to hear feedback from the public that's why we put it on this agenda, we've got to move forward on this. We are going to have additional public meetings to discuss, and we are going to ask staff and if there is additional input that needs to come from an outside consultant then so be it if staff feels that way, but I just want to be 100 percent clear, we are Coral Gables, we want to continue in the Coral Gables personality and character. I just think it needs to be said, it hasn't been said. I don't want the perception out there to be, Oh we want to be City of Miami, that's not the case.

Commissioner Lago: Commissioner with due respect, I mean the Vice Mayor, we have this discussion, he knows we've had this discussion multiple times on this dais. We set ourselves to the highest level, to the highest bar. I appreciate you putting it on the record, because it needs to be said, but at the end of the day we are not looking to go down that route, we are just trying to look for more efficient projects and maybe see what we could potentially do; and I wanted to bring up that issue of parking because it's there, it's in our face every time a project is either designed or constructed.

Mayor Cason: Let me ask Henry to come up.

Mr. Bellin: I'd like to say something that I think is very important. Robert made my point –I don't know if he realizes that he made my point or not. He's talking about a project on Dixie Highway and Ponce, that project would not have been built if it was in a MF2 zoning. It was built because it's a commercial zone, you can put a mixed use building on it, you need retail on the ground, and you get 125 units an acre. If it was a MF2, you get 50 units an acre, if you are lucky and that's it. So I don't think that project could have been built. If you go to the same point and you apply it to the North Gables area, it's the same thing. You've got to get more of a density to make these projects economically viable otherwise nobody is doing any developing and nobody is.

Mr. Paper: I have the pleasure of knowing most of the Commission, but for the record my name is Henry Paper, Managing Member of Starlight Development here in Coral Gables. I heard a lot of good ideas here this morning, very good thought, but let me give you a specific example of what we are talking about. We own property in the north end, we own the block across the women's club on east Ponce, it's the 900 address, and we own the north side of....behind David Plummer, the lot is. We've owned the properties now over a decade, I'd love to develop them, can't develop them, because the numbers don't make sense for the reasons Marshall pointed out

earlier. The density requirements and the MF2 section of the Code impose a structure that makes the development of those properties unworkable, the numbers don't work. If you eliminated the density requirement for those properties they would have been built years ago, even during the tough times because Coral Gables is such a pre-eminent community, the values have maintained themselves over the years because it is a pre-eminent community. The demand to move into the City continues unabated and the developments would have been absorbed. I heard the Commissioner talk about row houses – they are nice. I was born and raised in the New York Metropolitan area, grew up in New York, educated in New York, worked in New York, I'm very familiar with that type of product. I've been to Baltimore, I've been to Boston, I've been to Europe, these communities – there are historical reasons for that kind of development – industrial revolution, different reasons that served as a precursor for that kind of development; and what I heard just now is really the point. We are Coral Gables, we have our own identity, we are unique. We are not Chicago, we are not San Francisco, we are not New York City, we are Coral Gables and people love us because we are Coral Gables. I don't believe personally we should lose sight of that. I think the North Ponce corridor is crying out for development, it's a neighborhood that's been overlooked overtime, the development is in the CBD, its west of the CBD (Central Business District), its south of the CBD, because those are beautiful areas they are luxury areas, but we can accommodate housing stock and commercial development in a luxury fashion that does not have to be so expensive. You have the Spanish Village that's now under intense scrutiny for zoning or rezoning, it's going to be a big development, you've got office space coming in, big development. Those developments need to be serviced, you need the human kind, to work there and to live there and to support that. Where is that going to come from?- is it all going to come from outside the City? Can't we accommodate that in the City? I think this is a very good opportunity to do that and that's really my two cents on this thing. I think the starting point should be a very hard look at the MF2 Code to see whether or not you can comfortably with eliminating the density requirement, not the FAR (Floor Area Ratio). A building envelope is a building envelope, you have to provide – all these things are going to drive themselves, they are going to drive themselves. If it works it's going to work. You are not going to be doing any variance to the Code and you are not going to be doing any variance to the community and to the entire community, but I think to the contrary you are going to give it a shot in the arm; and my experience has been that once you get a crack in the ice, once you get a couple of nice buildings going up there that whole neighborhood is going to catch fire, and you've seen it on Valencia corridor, Robert did a very beautiful job there on the corner – townhomes, he did that. Look what happened, we are doing an uber luxury product on the 700 Block on the north side of the 700 Block, we should be coming before you pretty soon. I was responsible for aggregating the property on the south side of that property. We have people walking past that development now on the south side of the 700 Block calling me looking to find brokers to make contact with them because they want to move in over there. That same thing will happen in the north end if we deal

with this in an intelligent way and deal with it in a calm way like this Commission always does, and that's what I'm saying.

Mayor Cason: Thank you. That's very useful. Cathy what would you think would be the next steps in the Commission?- to take this discussion further?- what's in your mind?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We are happy to bring back – I know that there was a suggestion that form-base may be appropriate. We are happy to bring back housing types recommendations that will give you a visual of what could be formed there, but we also want to continue to get input from the community itself and if you would like us to do that we can come back to you with another update.

Commissioner Keon: Why has the density never been addressed in that area when it seems...?- I mean I've heard that over and over again at the Planning and Zoning Board, it was always spoken to. Why has it not been addressed?

Mr. Trias: The density was set up in the Comp Plan according to each of the Comp Plan designations and there is only one type of development where there is no density limit, which is the mixed use project.

Commissioner Keon: Oh.

Mr. Trias: And the way I understand the request and correct me if I'm wrong, is that it would be better for the MF2 area that there will be no density maximum. Now every other limiting factor will still be in place, so it's just maximum height and parking and so on, but what's being suggested, if I'm correct is, they've got the maximum in the density, which is the 40 units per acre. Let it be whatever it fits within that envelope and that's certainly one possible way to...

Commissioner Keon: But we do have minimal square footage per unit?

Mr. Trias: You could do that too to some extent.

Commissioner Keon: Does that work to do minimal square footage per unit and limit the density to that?- the density is not an issue.

Mr. Behar: It doesn't happen in...[Inaudible – off mic]...

Commissioner Lago: When did that happen Robert? What was that timeframe?

Mr. Behar:...Like 2005-2006, we went...and that came out of the MXD and the CBD, no density requirement and you see that's the area that...

Commissioner Lago: And let me ask you a question. Vice Mayor, you were here, what was your input in regards to that?- what was your opinion at that point?

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: As far as...

Commissioner Lago: Yes, the removal of the density from the MXD area.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: We wanted to spur residential development in that location there. You are talking about over by the Village of Merrick Park.

Mr. Behar: Yes.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: And one of the caveats of why we built the Village of Merrick Park was we wanted to surround it with apartment units and we were not getting the amount of development that we wanted, so we thought this would spur it on, encourage it. Yes – yes, and you know that's a unique area though because that's segregated away from the residential areas and its own unique enclave there; and that was our whole game plan and fortunately we've been very fortunate of how much development that has been there exactly what we want.

Mr. Behar: Quality development.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Quality development and also maybe the “big box” that was going to be there may not be the “big box” there; it might be a residential component, so that's exactly what we wanted. But we were pushing for that because we wanted to help the Village of Merrick Park and also provide the availability for people to rent in the location, that's it.

Commissioner Lago: Well let me tell you, your decision in 2005 or 2006 bared fruit. Look at what's going on in that area at the present moment, not only in the City of Coral Gables, but look at the City of Miami, which followed suit of the City of Coral Gables. You have incredible projects that are going up and down Bird Road right next to the Collection, and you have forthcoming developments that are in the books, that are in the works, excuse me, in the City of Coral Gables side they are going to make an incredible impact on that area, they are quality products.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Right.

Commissioner Lago: So again, I want to find out a little more about that because I wasn't here in 2005 and that decision in 2015, ten years later you are seeing what the fruits of that decision.

Commissioner Keon: Yes. I remember that, we sat on the Planning and Zoning Board at that time.

Mr. Bellin: If I could answer your question. What we'd like to do is take care of the density issue and have a minimum size unit, because we don't want units...

Commissioner Keon: Yes. I would like to see a minimum size unit, the density issues isn't an issue to me, but a minimum size unit...

Mr. Behar: That solution is required by the Florida Building Code, a minimum in '06 and....

Commissioner Keon: What are the units?- what is a one bedroom square unit in Gables Ponce?

Mr. Behar: The smallest is 625 square feet, OK, as a one bedroom, and they range from 625 to like 800.

Commissioner Lago: And let me ask you a question. Again, I know you are not on the marketing side of that product, but what is the waiting list for that?

Mr. Behar: Its nuts – countywide. The moment they are available it's gone.

Commissioner Lago: But that product also has a lot of features and amenities that a lot of projects don't have. It has ingress and egress, it's located next to a great mall, it has public transportation, which is accessible from walking distance, those are great attributes that made that product a little bit better.

Mr. Behar: You're right. You're right. But you know what?- the amenities that were incorporated into that project made it that much better. If you could make the project better you are going to get people to be there and one – and I will go back to something that Bill said about the condo, the property. No – it's all relative to pricing. If I'm able to buy a piece of property, let's say that I'll average out \$50-\$60,000 per unit that becomes a rental product. If you are going to buy it at \$100,000 a unit then that becomes a condominium project. When you take away the density, it helps to be able to do other products.

Commissioner Quesada: I'm not for or against it right now. My concern is the traffic issue and the parking issue.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: We have to think it through – and that’s why I wanted to point out when we did those at Merrick Park, it’s a different type of area, segregated out there, its own island and we were doing it -- again we did a great job by implementing that, I think you were significant as far as that.

Mr. Behar: We were on the Board.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I think that’s very, very important. Here’s it’s a little bit different because it’s a little different area. Something needs to be done. I think everybody addresses, something needs to be done, but we need to look at it from what you were saying – parking issues, as far as traffic issues, and we in the City, you missed it, but we in the City need to do something with the infrastructure itself because it’s an area that’s lacking big time.

Mayor Cason: Let me ask David Torres to come up because we have ten minutes before our Executive Session, we’ve got more discussions on this in future meetings. David.

Mr. Torres: My name is David Torres with T.A. Builders.

Commissioner Keon: I’m sorry, who are you with?

Mr. Torres: T.A. Builders. And I’d like to thank you guys for the opportunity to speak in front of. I’d like to just add probably a few points to a lot of the conversation regarding the subject. Add on a little bit to Marshall’s points, John’s points, and Henry Paper’s points. As a builder we do a lot of design build projects and we also have customers that are suffering with some of the current codes that are in place. To kind of talk a little bit about Quesada’s point on the parking. I also feel that the parking is a great problem in that area, you know the streets look terrible, there is a lot of work trucks, vans, and cars with missing windows, it’s not a good neighborhood to drive through, and I think with what Marshall said relieving the density, I think a lot of that stuff and promoting developing will actually fix the parking situation because by only removing the density it allows you to build a building that now you can accommodate all the parking within that building, so we don’t need as much street parking that will allow for nicer streetscapes, large oaks on the streets. You are going to eliminate a lot of the buildings that are unpainted; I’ve even seen clothes hangers outside the building. So promoting development is going to fix all those things. Some of my customers that owns some of the existing buildings, there is no ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), somebody in a wheelchair can’t live on the second floor of these buildings. The doors are too small, what else...?

Mayor Cason: I think David, a lot of those people if they are rentals, for the kind of rentals that we are talking about, a lot of those people would take public transportation would either bike or walk, or maybe, if the trolley was extended, would take it. These are people that are probably in there 30's or 40's saving up a nest egg to buy a home eventually and a lot of these people don't want to have a car.

Mr. Torres: Going to the point on the rentals, but they don't necessarily have to be rentals; they will be a mix of. At a certain size now they also become affordable to some of the people who actually purchase the units. So, yes we'll have a mix of rentals and condos, but we don't need to continue talking only about rentals because it's not only going to be rentals. It will become an attractive place where you can build lesser expensive condominiums and also, ultimately, I think we are going to attract some of the younger professionals who are going to experience Coral Gables, they are going to start making more money with time and ultimately move into the better neighborhoods, so it's a good way to get some of these people in as well.

Mr. Bellin: I'd like to address a couple of these, especially the parking issue. A lot of these buildings in the North Gables have no parking at all; people have to park on the street. When these projects become redeveloped you have all the parking required on site, which means the character of the street can change looking at bump-outs, and another thing happens too. When you get housing that's affordable for people who work on Miracle Mile they are going to walk to work and that's what we are really trying to do. It just seems like the density issue really is holding back a lot of projects. We could be working on 8 or 10 of them, people just are not going to develop it for that reason because the bottom line doesn't work, and it's up to the developer, if he decides that he wants to do condominiums, he makes bigger units, it's up to him. So I think consideration of that issue is an important one.

Mr. Torres: I think also right now we have a lot of residents who probably don't have the money to actually spend their money dining in Coral Gables, going to the theaters, and all the other beautiful things that Coral Gables has, so yes, they live here, but they go out and spend their money elsewhere, because they can't afford it.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: This is basically, let's face it though, this is the basic last area that we have in the City of Coral Gables, we really redefine what we want in the City of Coral Gables. So we need to do it right, whether it's a density issue, whether it's figuring out something else, we want to make sure we do it right, because this is the last area, and I can tell you this is really – every other area – now we can open up other areas and bring them into development, we can look at expansion of the essential businesses, we can do all sorts of different things, but right now that's our last area for development and we want to make sure like we always do in the City of Coral Gables that we do it right.

Commissioner Quesada: If I could jump in for a second here. Thank you for the feedback; it's a good first start. Now, the memo that we got from staff has a number of recommendations, and I'm referring to page 3, that recommendation and also the table at the end, you guys can take a look at that. There are three recommendations – zoning overlay, off-street parking requirements, and the preferred scope should be looked at, and then also, on the table there is 2005 consultant proposal, 2014 staff evaluation. What I'm proposing is that staff go back and if staff can have its own internal workshop and come back to us based on what you've heard today with additional feedback, I think we are going to have to have a number of different public meetings. I want to think about it some more after what I heard today, and obviously you've heard what the other Commissioners have to say at this point, but I think I would like to see that come back if staff could have some sort of internal workshop. I know you've put a lot of work into this already, you can see it, but if you could come back to us, what I would like to see is maybe a PowerPoint presentation – I'm sorry?

Commissioner Keon: A map.

Commissioner Quesada: Yes like a PowerPoint presentation we did last time around – what we have now?- what you can do?- what you are proposing?- what we should be able to do?- the visuals come across much easier especially discussing zoning, so I think that would be very beneficial to all of us.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Why don't we also show what developments have been done in the past ten years, so that we see if there has been any development there or any proposed developments that may be in the pipeline so that we get a feel if there is any developments that are proposed in there and get a holistic picture of this.

Commissioner Quesada: I think that's a great idea, if you can incorporate that into whatever your workshop is when the proposal comes back. I think you need to pay special attention in the workshop, special incredible attention to parking requirements we have in our City and the other options. I know we hired, I want to say about a year, year and-a-half ago, a company called Haas, Tim Haas and Associates, they came back with a recommendation, mechanical parking was discussed, automated parking, the pros and cons to all different things and shared parking as well. We've discussed it numerous times, we've heard it, we know other municipalities are doing it. What do you guys believe?- what does staff believe we should do moving forward? Again, you've heard us say that we are not looking for bigger projects, look at the example that Robert Behar gave us with the Gables Residential, that's 99 percent leased out. If you are in the real estate world in South Florida you've heard about the success of that building, even if you only focus on Aventura, you've heard of the success of that building how popular it has been to be

there; and when they are full they still have 50 or 60 percent of their parking empty that means that money was thrown, not thrown, I don't want to say thrown away, but is not being properly utilized, we could have had a better design project, a smaller project at least in height, and again, we don't want to promote developers having a separate business storing cars, that's not what we want. So I would like to see an analysis of what projects had -- actually there hasn't been enough parking spaces. I know we have Dade Medical College that was an issue which was the exact opposite, obviously we don't want to run into that situation, but they want to completely change the use of the building, so it's obviously something that wasn't anticipated. I want you to consider those types of situations when you are doing this analysis when you come back to us, because again we want the most efficient types, best looking projects that we can get something that I've heard consistently, as well and something you've seen in South Florida. A lot of projects are inward facing, we are a community that we promote walking, we promote cycling, is it possible; and I think I've heard the differences between the standard old type of zoning code, I've seen this from the Urban Land Institute and the Forum Base that its outward looking, it's more welcoming, buildings are outward looking more sense of community. Coral Gables, we define ourselves by being a community, so keep those things in mind that workshop, and if you could come back with recommendations, but obviously what I've seen in the table here, you are saying for example, Table 1 – the FAR, the setbacks and the height. You have a bullet point that says, “special regulatory changes for this neighborhood are not an effective approach to achieve the stated goals.” Instead of just saying, it's not going to work with what the consultant wants or it's not going to work with what we have now. Give us the recommendations of what will work.

Mr. Trias: Commissioner, what I'm going to recommend that in the next presentation is two types of changes, some that are very simple, very straightforward changes, such as the fact for example, that right now we have front setbacks that require 20 feet. Clearly you cannot do a row house with that. There are few simple things like that. Then there are some more complex, more ambitious ideas that require some public input that are about developing the vision. So I'll try to break it down into simple straightforward changes.

Commissioner Quesada: As you see fit. Use the guidance from the 1994 study all the way to the 2005 study to what you've heard today or based on your experiences...

Mr. Trias: To create the overall vision, the more ambitious changes, I think we do need some public input and some...

Commissioner Quesada: Of course. Of course.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: That's very important because we do create the vision up here; we listen to our constituents and we create the vision, so maybe we can create the vision either one of two

ways – we can create the vision when we are at a workshop or you can meet with us individually so that we tell you what we are thinking so you can incorporate that in your presentation package.

Mr. Trias: We should do both and I'll process a process for you.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: OK.

Mr. Bellin: I'd like to make another comment, we discussed this. Getting rid of the density what does that do?

Commissioner Quesada: Marshall, we've gone over density, let him come back with an analysis, we are not going to solve a decision right now. I would ask you to reach out to Ramon and discuss it with him, because going back and forth right now – I'm happy to meet with any resident, I'm happy to meet with you to discuss it. I know we have an Executive Session that was supposed to start a minute ago, so plenty of opportunity to continue discussing it.

Mayor Cason: Thank you all for your input.

Commissioner Keon: I'd also like the peer review process that you used, the peer review process that you used in looking at...

Mr. Trias: That was very effective.

Commissioner Keon: I think maybe you could utilize that sort of a process too in coming up as to do a peer review.

Mr. Trias: Absolutely.

Mayor Cason: Thank you all.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you for your efforts.

[End: 1:01:39 p.m.]