

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item E-5
February 28, 2017
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Frank Quesada
Commissioner Jeannett Slesnick

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
Assistant City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Planning and Zoning Director, Ramon Trias

Public Speaker(s)

Mario Garcia-Serra
Vivian Sanchez
Sam Mozes

Agenda Item E-5 [0:00:00 a.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida granting conditional use approval pursuant to Zoning Code Article 3, "Development Review," Division 4, "Conditional Uses," and Article 4, "Zoning Districts," Division 3, "Nonresidential Districts," Section 4-301, "Commercial Limited District," for the University of St. Augustine to allow greater than fifty (50) student seats within a Commercial Limited (CL) zoned district for the property

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Agenda Item E-5 – Resolution of the cc of Coral Gables, Florida granting conditional use approval for the University of St. Augustine to allow greater than fifty student seats within a Commercial Limited zoned district for the property legally described as Blocks 1, 2 and 4, Douglas Entrance.

legally described as Blocks 1, 2 and 4, Douglas Entrance (800 Douglas Road), Coral Gables, Florida; including required conditions and providing for an effective date.

Mayor Cason: Let's move to E-5.

City Attorney Leen: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Item E-5 is a resolution -- a public hearing resolution -- a resolution of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida granting conditional use approval pursuant to Zoning Code Article 3, "Development Review," Division 4, "Conditional Uses," and Article 4, "Zoning Districts," Division 3, "Nonresidential Districts," Section 4-301, "Commercial Limited District," for the University of St. Augustine to allow greater than 50 student seats within a Commercial Limited (CL) zoned district for the property legally described as Blocks 1, 2 and 4, Douglas Entrance (800 Douglas Road), Coral Gables, Florida; including required conditions and providing for an effective date. As this is a conditional use approval, this matter is a quasi-judicial hearing. Mr. Clerk, could you swear in the people that are going to be testifying?

City Clerk Foeman: Would you stand?

Mayor Cason: Whoever's going to be testifying, please stand.

City Clerk Foeman: Okay, raise your right hand, please. Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the statements you're about to make here today will be the truth and nothing but the truth?

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mayor Cason: Okay, Ramon.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: If I could have the PowerPoint, please. Mayor and Commissioners, this request is for a change of use within an existing building and existing parking areas in the Douglas Entrance area. As you know, the project includes several buildings and extensive parking facilities and some streets. And it's within the area that we have been planning in the recent past as North Ponce. You can see the Annex Building. The Annex Building is the smaller building that is facing -- currently facing 8th Street. That is the building where this institution is moving into. And the parking garage is along Galiano, right next to the Annex Building. The zoning is Commercial Limited. And in Commercial Limited, any educational facility greater than 50 student seats -- with more than 50 student seats requires a conditional use. That is why we're here today. The request is conditional use with a site plan review, and it includes some enhancements to sidewalks and some enhancements to the landscaping along 8th Street, which I think are going to be beneficial to the appearance of the city. The review timeline include the DRC review in September, Board of Architects in November; a neighborhood meeting, which is a requirement, in November, and the Planning and Zoning Board and also the Commission. The public notification included letters to property owners, several property postings, DRC, Board of Architects and Planning and Zoning. Website posting, the newspaper advertisement, as required by Code, twice. Staff recommends approval with conditions. We have reviewed the application. All staff has had a chance to review the application. And the standards of review for a conditional use have been satisfied. The Planning and Zoning looked at this project back in February 1st and recommended approval with conditions with a 7-0 vote. The conditions of approval included a maximum number of 390 students scheduled on campus at any given time, some landscape and pedestrian improvements, replacement of some railings. It is a plaza area that they are trying to create, so there's some design aspects of that that I think are going to be a great improvement to 8th Street, including the removal of a curb cut that is right there existing in the plaza. A new transportation stop for the Coral Gables Trolley and the bus, and lighting in the right-of-way. That concludes my presentation. I believe the applicant has a presentation.

Mayor Cason: Mario, are you going to speak for the applicant?

Mario Garcia-Serra: Indeed. Good afternoon, Mr. Mayor, City Commissioners. Mario Garcia-Serra, with offices at 600 Brickell Avenue, representing the property owner, Banyan Street/GAP, LLC, the owner of the Douglas Entrance office complex, located at 800 Douglas Road. I am joined today by Zac Gruber of Banyan Street, Vivian Sanchez, the president of the University of St. Augustine, Dr. Gabrielle Somarriba, the Miami campus director of University of St. Augustine, as well as Jaime Rodriguez, our project architect, and Juan Espinosa, our traffic consultant with David Plummer and Associates. The building, which is the subject of the application, is the Annex Building, which is located at the corner of 8th Street and Galiano. If you can, Alba, maybe just indicate -- go to the aerial photograph there. The building has some interesting history in that it was originally built as a branch office of the Federal Reserve Bank, and later was utilized as offices for several Spanish language radio stations. However, from a functional and aesthetic perspective, it has been something of a forgotten part of Douglas Entrance. And what I mean by that is probably best illustrated in pictures. There you can orient yourself, corner of 8th Street and Galiano, the two-story building right behind the office building -- the tall office buildings of Douglas Entrance. Here we have the other parts of Douglas Entrance, of the La Puerta del Sol building, one of the distinguished landmarks of the City of Coral Gables, one time a primary entrance from the City of Miami, a historic structure, adaptively reused now as both offices and function space. And there you see the arrival area there in the forecourt. The office buildings, which were later built, the site of some of our most prominent multinational corporations that have headquarters here in Coral Gables, also recognized as among the best office space in all of Coral Gables. And then we have the Annex Building, as you can see, designed almost in a sort of bunker style, which probably made sense with its original function as a branch office of the Federal Reserve. Indeed, there's still a safe in that building, which has not been removed. But it has, over the years sort of not had the attention either use wise or aesthetic wise that it should have. What we're looking to do is to try to mix uses here, bring in a new use, which did not previously exist on campus to try to enliven the area, sort of take advantage of a use other than office. We're also looking to do aesthetic improvements to the front of the building. I want to ask both Vivian Sanchez, the president of

the University of St. Augustine to talk to you about the University of St. Augustine. Then I'm going to ask Jaime Rodriguez, the project architect, to tell you about the improvements that they're doing both interior of the building and some of the exterior of the building and the surrounding areas. One of the significant improvements that we will be doing is that this area here, which is right now literally serving as a parking lot -- cars are parking there during the day -- will now become a plaza, sort of plaza that will be available to be used by various office users, the students and so forth and no longer will serve as a curb cut onto Southwest 8th Street in that area. One thing that I want to emphasize is the quality of the tenants. When I say University of St. Augustine, I think at first some people might get concerned that this is some sort of undergraduate school with a lot of young people engaging in fraternity parties...

Mayor Cason: So, this has nothing to do with Miami-Dade Medical College?

Mr. Garcia-Serra: No.

Mayor Cason: Totally different animal.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Exactly.

Mayor Cason: Yes, thank you.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Exactly. And indeed, this is a graduate school for the health sciences. You'll hear information as to what the average student age is, background, career wise, what success they have in career placement and so forth, and you'll see that for the type of school that it is, this is an Ivy League caliber sort of school when you look at admissions, when you look at job placement, when you look at the success rate of students being able to repay their student financing. And just as important also, it's a use that really is going to add and be a sort of good corporate citizen in Coral Gables when you see what they've done in the other communities in which they've been involved and the high caliber institution that they are. The institution's been

around since 1979. We're approaching almost 40 years here. With that said, I'll ask Vivian to say a few words.

Vivian Sanchez: Good morning.

Mayor Cason: Good morning.

Commissioner Lago: Good morning.

Ms. Sanchez: As Mario mentioned, Mr. Mayor and Commissioners, I'm president of the University of St. Augustine. I also have the distinct pleasure of being a long-time resident of Coral Gables, living at 2515 Indian Mound. And for all of you that know that area, it's very ironic that is the president of St. Augustine to the end of the block on the left, I have St. Theresa Catholic School and to the right, I have St. Phillips Episcopal School. So, it sits very nicely from my home too. I do stand here today to tell you a little bit about the university, primarily because we don't want any association with any kinds of institutions that you have mentioned. I also stand here from the vantage point of resident to hopefully answer the questions that you might have about a university coming into the school, so -- into the area. So, that's what we'll talk about today. So, with that, Mario did a great job already of talking about some of our heritage. We were founded in '79, so almost 40 years now of an existence. We are the only institution in the country of its like. We are a graduate program in health sciences, only offering programs in doctoral and master's level. We do primarily physical therapy and occupational therapy. And, because we have a national presence, we also exist in California, Texas and in Florida, and we are now looking to expand into Miami, which we've had our first intake of our class in September. So, what we would like to make is our permanent home here in Coral Gables. We have 6,000 alum around the world and around the country. And I think what's really important is that we have been in these 40 years permeating the health sciences of the organization. We specialize in practice ready professionals. And what that means is we have strong clinicals, strong community engagement, and henceforth why we have 95 percent placement rates upon

graduation for our students. We are part of the designation of what you mentioned. We are a certified B corporation. What does that mean? That's a benefits corporation. The only way you get to be a benefits corporation is through proving social responsibility, and it's something we take very importantly, especially for our master's and our doctoral students and how they engage in the community, how employees and our employee rights actually exist and what we do overall for the environment. So, that is our designation as part of a benefits corporation. And so, once again, our heritage, I think, speaks for itself. Our accreditations also speak for themselves. We have the accreditations and the maximum accreditations that you can have as an institution, both institutionally and programmatically. These are the same accreditations that you would find at Duke University, at Northwestern and NYU that have doctoral programs and graduate programs in these fields. So, our outcomes is where we measure, your metrics. You like metrics, so we do too. And so, our metrics, we have 27 percent of acceptance rate. Again, we get more qualified students than we can accept and that we do accept, because we cap our programs. We don't accept everyone. We do require students to have a significant amount of work experience and significant amount of academic qualifications to do so, which has made us the number one graduate program in physical therapy in the country and the number three master's and graduate programs in occupational therapy in the country. With that said, again, we talked about our national reach. We have 5,200 clinical relationships around the country, so our placement rate of our clinical students in varied environments, not just in specific environments, from geriatrics to pediatrics, from large hospitals to small sort of clinics is also something we pride ourselves in. And finally, I know there's a lot of conversations about -- these days about debt and students' ability to pay debt. That's measured by the cohort default rate. And in the cohort default rate for our institution is 0.2%. I think the national average, as you see here that we point out for context, is 11.3, so it basically means one student. And so, again, it's something -- our outcomes are something we take very seriously. Our accreditations are something we take very seriously, and it's that heritage that we pride ourselves in trying to bring right now to Coral Gables. So, with that, who are our students? Again, Mario refers to frat parties, which is kind of funny. Our students are, on average, 26 years old. They, again, 100 percent of them have work experience and practical experience before they arrive. Their GPA is 3.3 percent. And, our intake in

Florida, as I mentioned to you, in Miami we have already started our first cohort. Half the students are not from Florida. We actually, because of our reputation and our reach, they're from Ohio, they're from New York, they're from Pennsylvania, they're from Louisiana, they're from Georgia, so we do have a varied student body also, as depicted in our other campuses and what we've been able to do in Miami already also. Our graduation rate is 94 percent and our licensure pass rate is 99 percent.

Mayor Cason: Wow.

Ms. Sanchez: So, again, very strong students, very strong academics and students. I gave some student profiles here. We know we've got sort of the fun athletic trainers, as you would imagine, that study physical therapy and doctor in physical therapy. So, we do have right now the training and conditioning coach for the Knicks graduated as part of our class. Before that, he was with the Pittsburgh Pirates. We have a lot of military that actually come into our -- as you know, occupational therapy and physical therapy is one of the big areas -- behavioral issues that we're having with our veterans, so you're actually seeing a growing field within that area. So, you see -- one example we gave here of Dr. Larson, she was a lieutenant in the Marines, served in Iraq, graduated from our program just three years ago, and actually started an institution and an organization dedicated to the rehabilitation of veterans. And we have a lot of academics that come to our field. We do have renowned academics, including we have here Dr. van den Heever, who just actually received from California a recognition for his unique curriculum in community practice. We also have someone to introduce who's also, as I mentioned -- who's actually down here, Dr. Somarriba. Dr. Somarriba was a professor at University of Miami, very engaged in public parks, very engaged in clinical, pediatrics in Miami Children's Hospital, is very renowned for his publications and he is the director of the Miami campus for us, for the University of St. Augustine. Also joining us here, as Mario mentioned, is our chief academic officer, in case you have any questions on our curriculum or programs, and in case you have any other questions regarding the institution's integrity and controls. We did bring our internal auditor from our parent company, (INAUDIBLE) who many of you know is also a long-time

resident of Coral Gables. So, that's some of the feel in terms of our university and our students. What is the essence of what we do at the University of St. Augustine? And I think this is really important for consideration, one, as the president, and second, as the resident. And, that's primarily our community responsibly. We take our benefits corp status very seriously. We take very seriously the integrity of our students going out in the community and the role they must play. Because of that, we design our curriculum, so that only half the curriculum is delivered on campus. The other half of the curriculum, they are in clinicals. They're in community settings. They're receiving their lectures in a digital format as science is going more digital fashion also. And it makes them part of solving issues in the community early on while they're students, not entering into the practice and trying to figure things out. And, because of that, that's very important for us you see as we come into Coral Gables, our students will do as much community outreach as we do in our others. We gave some examples here. I was very fond to hear about the autism programs that we're supporting. Part of what we do is autism with aquatics for our students. We do a lot for the elderly through AARP. We do a lot with Habitat for Humanity, particularly in designing homes for the disabled. And so again, we bring lecturers onto our campuses and we go out to the communities to be able to make -- have an impact, because again, it's the essence of what we do. I know there's a lot of energy also around traffic. I think one important point -- and again, a good stat is as part of a benefits corporation, we reduced the carbon footprint of what we do. And so, therefore, we actually give incentives for students and staff not to actually drive onto campus.

Mayor Cason: Great.

Ms. Sanchez: Which basically, we give monetary incentives to do that. So, they carpool, they Uber, they Lyft, they bike. And right now, as a stat, 42% of our students and our staff are part of that green program in the Miami campus as we have it today. So, in short, you know, I wanted to give you an essence of what we were as an institution in terms of what we're trying to do. You know, I was very moved by when Rabbi Rothman mentioned that what this is about is a richer and more meaningful life. And I think what we're trying to institute for our students is

really being and providing that more meaningful life to their communities. So, again, as the president, I'm very proud of the institution. We would love to make our home in Coral Gables, and henceforth, are looking for you to please approve the changes and the resolution before you. And as a citizen, I have to -- I mean, a resident of Coral Gables, I'm very excited to see sort of a more thriving part of the community. So, thank you very much...

Mayor Cason: Thank you.

Ms. Sanchez: And if you have any questions...

Mayor Cason: I think what a wonderful addition to the City of Coral Gables. We've got so many hospitals and new medical facilities. I've cut the ribbon on a lot of rehab companies that have been coming in that are sort of springing up all over the Gables. So, I think that your graduates will probably find some jobs here in Coral Gables...

Ms. Sanchez: Yes.

Mayor Cason: If they're not already working in the Gables.

Ms. Sanchez: Yes, they are. Many are already involved. Interesting, we talked about the walk, so they're already involved in that. We're involved in some of the clinical work and outreach already, but also through our faculty. So, a lot of our faculty, obviously, are practitioners, so as they come onto the campus, they're also leveraging the students in many multiple ways. So, you will see them throughout the community already, so we're very excited about that.

Mayor Cason: And a good option for our Disability Advisory Board and our Senior Advisory Board. I'm sure your students -- your professors could make a meaningful impact on those boards and that part of the community.

Ms. Sanchez: We hope so. So, thank you very much.

Mayor Cason: One question about -- are you going to have a restaurant or anything in your facility or are they going to go out and patronize -- to the extent they don't bring their own lunch -- the local restaurants?

Ms. Sanchez: Yes, they would patronize. Yes, we do not run cafeterias from our locations. We have areas for the students to engage and have lunch, but they would actually patronize the local...

Mayor Cason: Great.

Ms. Sanchez: Areas.

Mayor Cason: Great.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you. I think it's also -- you know, it speaks to the work we're doing in the North Gables and with the North Gables infill and the ability to provide a type of housing opportunity for students since your demographics is being so many out-of-state...

Ms. Sanchez: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: Students are coming here and we can provide, you know, that housing near to...

Ms. Sanchez: This area.

Commissioner Keon: Where they are in school. That also reduces the issue of traffic driving through our city to get to this sort of a facility. So, I think it ties into -- particularly, in that location, it ties into a lot of the other, you know, things that we are currently working on.

Unidentified Speaker: Alright.

Mayor Cason: Great. We have one speak card. Dr. Sam Mozes.

Sam Mozes: Good morning. Is it working?

Mayor Cason: Yeah.

Mr. Mozes: My name is Sam Mozes. I have been practicing dental specialty across the street from the Douglas Entrance for the past 39 years. We also own the commercial retail and office building at 3737 Southwest 8th Street, corner of Galiano, across the street from the Annex, and a residential property at 36 Oviedo. It is no secret that our section of 8th Street has been fairly neglected for the past four decades compared to other sections of the city. We, ourselves, intended to make investments in our property to do significant improvements, but were holding back for fear of being the only ones to make any investment in the area. That is why we are so delighted to see what the Douglas Entrance intends to do both in the character of their tenant and in the façade improvement and the outdoor landscaping and seating. We feel that their initiative will probably encourage other property owners in the area, us included in going ahead, stepping up to the plate and investing in our property and creating a classy, vibrant, though uniquely flavored, it complements to what is occurring on Miracle Mile, Giralda and North Ponce. So, we encourage you and hope very much that you will approve their request, because we feel that it will be a benefit to the whole neighborhood.

Mayor Cason: Thank you very much.

Mr. Mozes: Thank you.

Mayor Cason: That's great. Any more discussion? Do we have a motion on E-5?

Commissioner Keon: I'll move the item.

Mayor Cason: Commissioner...

Vice Mayor Quesada: Second.

Mayor Cason: Keon makes the motion. The Vice Mayor seconds. City Clerk.

Commissioner Slesnick: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

Commissioner Lago: Yes.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yes.

Mayor Cason: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Thank you very much.

Mayor Cason: Congratulations.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Have a good day.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Thank you.

Mayor Cason: Thank you. Let's move to F-1 and then G-1.

City Attorney Leen: I just want to clarify, while everyone's -- that the -- my understanding of the resolution and the motion is that you're incorporating all the conditions. And they were proffered, aren't they?

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

City Attorney Leen: They're proffered conditions. Can you state that on the record?

Mr. Garcia-Serra: The conditions were proposed by City staff. We're in agreement with all of them.

City Attorney Leen: So, they're agreed?

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Yes.

City Attorney Leen: Thank you.

Mayor Cason: Okay.