



# City of Coral Gables Planning and Zoning Staff Report

Applicant: City of Coral Gables  
Application: **Mediterranean Bonus Zoning Code Text Amendment**  
Public Hearing: Planning and Zoning Board  
Date & Time: **October 13, 2021; 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.**  
Location: City Commission Chambers  
405 Biltmore Way  
Coral Gables, FL 33134

## 1. APPLICATION REQUEST

The City of Coral Gables has initiated a request for a Zoning Code Text Amendment as follows:

*An Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida providing for a text amendment to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code, Article 5, "Architecture," Section 5-200, "Mediterranean Standards," providing for severability, repealer, codification, and for an effective date.*

## 2. APPLICATION SUMMARY

A Blue Ribbon Committee was created by the City Commission to study and recommend improvements of the Mediterranean Bonus standards in the Zoning Code.

### BACKGROUND

A Blue Ribbon Committee was created by the City Commission on July 13, 2021, to study the Mediterranean Bonus. The Committee was tasked to begin its evaluation of the Mediterranean Bonus immediately and was given an expedited timeline. All weekly meetings for the Blue Ribbon Committee were open to the public and followed the same guidelines as all other advisory boards, as it relates to notice, meeting minutes, and Sunshine Law. Below is the list of appointed members:

- Felix Pardo, Chair - Commissioner Anderson
- Willy Bermello - Mayor Lago
- Javier Salman - Vice Mayor Mena
- Aramis "Mitch" Alvarez - Commissioner Fors, Jr.
- Robert Behar - Commissioner Menendez
- Glenn Pratt – Commission-as-a-Whole
- Juan Carlos Riesco - City Architect

Each Blue Ribbon Committee weekly meeting included comments from the public that were later discussed among the committee members. Based on the discussions by the members, the City Attorney has drafted

proposed changes to Section 5-200 “Mediterranean Standards” of the city’s Zoning Code.

Staff provided support during the Blue Ribbon Committee meetings, when requested. All proposed Zoning Code text amendments to the Mediterranean Bonus were summarized by Assistant City Attorney Ceballos from specific recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Committee members, which were discussed during public meetings.

During the Zoning Code Update (2018 - 2021), many public amenities and architectural design standards from the current Mediterranean Bonus tables were incorporated into the underlying multi-family and mixed-use zoning districts. Due to time restrictions, changes to the Mediterranean Bonus were not proposed at the time of the adoption of the Zoning Code Update. As such, there are still many bonuses and requirements that are already required in the underlying zoning districts.

The Blue Ribbon Committee’s proposed Mediterranean Standards are provided as Attachment A. Below is a list of significant changes that would set new policy direction:

**Zoning Code Issues:**

- Open Space reduction for Multi-Family 4 (MF4) zoned properties in Table 1
- Require all Table 2 standards, no matter the use
- Allow awnings to satisfy the arcades or loggias requirements in Table 2
- Setback reduction in Table 3
- Another additional .5 FAR bonus for multi-family zones
- (1986) Coral Gables Mediterranean architectural style to original 8 buildings

**Required Comprehensive Plan text amendments to be consistent with Zoning Code changes:**

- Remove the 25% density bonus with architectural incentives in FLU-1.1.2 for Multi-Family Low Density, Medium Density, and High Density
  - Remove the Residential Infill Regulations (RIR) 100 units/acre with architectural incentives in FLU-1.1.2 for Multi-Family Medium Density
- Update Policy DES-1.1.5 in regard to limiting building bulk to allow .5 FAR increase in multi-family zoning districts
- Update Policy DES-1.1.5 regarding creation of open spaces to decrease required landscaped open space in Multi-Family 4 (MF4)

### 3. REVIEW TIMELINE / PUBLIC NOTICE

#### Review Timeline

The submitted applications have undergone the following City reviews:

REVIEW COMMITTEES AND BOARDS	DATE
Blue Ribbon Committee	07.22.21
Blue Ribbon Committee	07.29.21

REVIEW COMMITTEES AND BOARDS	DATE
Blue Ribbon Committee	08.05.21
Blue Ribbon Committee	08.12.21
Blue Ribbon Committee	08.19.21
City Commission - discussion	08.24.21
Blue Ribbon Committee	08.26.21
Blue Ribbon Committee	09.02.21
City Commission – Deferred	09.14.21
Blue Ribbon Committee	09.22.21
City Commission – Deferred	09.28.21
Blue Ribbon Committee	09.30.21
City Commission – 1 <sup>st</sup> Reading	10.12.21
Planning and Zoning Board	10.13.21
City Commission – 2 <sup>nd</sup> Reading	10.26.21

The following has been completed to solicit input and provide notice of the Application:

PUBLIC NOTICE	DATE
Legal advertisement	10.01.21
Posted agenda and Staff report on City web page/City Hall	10.08.21

#### 4. FINDINGS OF FACT

The request is a Text Amendment to Section 5-200 “Mediterranean Standards” in Article 5 “Architecture.” The Blue Ribbon Committee’s proposed amendment is provided as Attachment “A” in ~~striktrough~~ / underline format.

Zoning Code Section 14-212.5 provides review standards for Zoning Code text amendments:

Standard	Staff Evaluation
a. Promotes the public health, safety, and welfare.	The intent of the proposed amendment is to respond to the public’s concern of the Mediterranean Bonus standards and improve the incentives to result in higher quality Mediterranean style buildings.
b. Does not permit uses the Comprehensive Plan prohibits in the area affected by the text amendment.	The proposed amendments do not permit uses that are not already permitted by the Comprehensive Plan.
c. Does not allow densities or intensities in excess of the densities and intensities which are permitted by the future land use categories of the affected property.	The bonuses proposed in the text amendments do not exceed the densities and intensities allowed in the future land use categories of the Comprehensive Plan.
d. Will not cause a decline in the level of service for public infrastructure which is the subject of a concurrency	The proposed text amendment does not impact the levels of service.

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requirement to a level of service which is less than the minimum requirements of the Comprehensive Plan.

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- e. Does not directly conflict with any objective or policy of the Comprehensive Plan.
- The proposed amendments implement various goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan to promote the Mediterranean architectural provisions and the historic Mediterranean design and character.

However, removal of the 25% density bonus may conflict with the Comprehensive Plan policy FLU-1.1.2 for Multi-Family Low Density, Medium Density, and High Density. Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan may be required.

Furthermore, the decrease of open space in Multi-Family 4 (MF4) and the additional increase of .5 FAR in multi-family zoned properties may also not be consistent with policy DES-1.1.5 regarding open space and building bulk.

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#### *Staff comments:*

The Blue Ribbon Committee was created to review the Mediterranean Standards and consider the community's concerns regarding the Board of Architects' award of bonuses. Most of the Committee's proposed changes reflect a higher level of aspirational goals and objectives to be compatible with the neighborhood context and allow the Board of Architects to review conceptual designs.

The proposed text amendment to Section 5-200 of the Zoning Code provides additional clarity to the Mediterranean Bonus standards and requirements. The standards identified in Section 14-212.5 for the proposed Zoning text amendment are generally **satisfied**.

## **5. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Based upon the complete Findings of Fact contained within this report, staff recommends the following:

*An Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida providing for a text amendment to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code, Article 5, "Architecture," Section 5-200, "Mediterranean Standards," providing for severability, repealer, codification, and for an effective date.*

As requested by the Commission, the Planning and Zoning Board will review the proposed ordinance on October 13, 2021, should the Commission approve the proposed ordinance on first reading on October 12, 2021. Therefore, the Commission would not receive the valuable input from the Planning and Zoning board members, or from members of the public who may participate during the Planning and Zoning meeting, prior to first reading.

The volunteer members of the Blue Ribbon Committee should be commended for their expertise and dedication, and for establishing a process that has quickly concluded with detailed recommendations. Although speed is important, amendments to the Zoning Code typically have long term effects and should be carefully considered.

Because the City Commission can not adopt the amendments to the Zoning Code until the Comprehensive Plan is amended, the Comprehensive Plan will need to be amended prior to the adoption of the Mediterranean Bonus text amendments. These would likely be “large scale” amendments, and would require state review prior to second reading by the City Commission, which may extend the time of the current process.

Additionally, the Blue Ribbon Committee is proposing to change the first height tier in the Mediterranean Bonus from 50 feet to 45 feet. The 50 feet has the first height tier in the Zoning Code since 2004 per Ord. 2004-13, and therefore is not recommended to be changed.

Finally, the Mediterranean architectural incentive program and the process of the Board of Architects are superior Zoning provisions unique to the City of Coral Gables. Coral Gables does not have prescriptive design guidelines. Instead, it has an extensive process of professional review in place for the past century. Staff believes that the process of review by the City Architect and the Board of Architects has the greatest impact on the quality of architecture.

Staff recommends Deferral, to allow time to resolve Comprehensive Plan inconsistencies.

## 6. ATTACHMENTS

- A. Blue Ribbon Committee proposed Mediterranean Bonus.
- B. Blue Ribbon Committee meetings minutes.
- C. Original Mediterranean Ordinance No. 2632, 1986.
- D. Excerpts of 07 13 21 and 08 24 21 City Commission Meetings.
- E. Legal advertisement published.
- F. PowerPoint Presentation.

Please visit the City’s webpage at [www.coralgables.com](http://www.coralgables.com) to view all Application plans and materials, notices, applicable public comments, minutes, etc. The complete Application and all background information also is on file and available for examination during business hours at the Planning and Zoning Division, 427 Biltmore Way, Suite 201, Coral Gables, Florida 33134.

Respectfully submitted,



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for Planning & Zoning  
City of Coral Gables, Florida