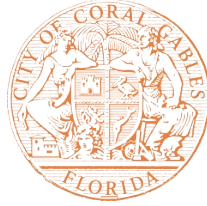


THE CITY OF CORAL GABLES



Office of Vice Mayor
Rhonda Anderson

City Hall 405 Biltmore Way
Coral Gables, FL 33134

The City Beautiful

September 24, 2024

Dear Residents:

On June 21, 2023, I sent a letter to the residents providing an update regarding the status of projects, legislative changes and urging all residents how they could receive news and notifications from the city regarding events and other matters.¹ This letter provides you up-dates and examples of where we have made progress over the past year.

▪ **Traffic Calming, Road Improvements & Pedestrian Safety/Sidewalks:**

- **FDOT Roads.** If you signed up to receive my newsletter, *Rhonda's Report*, via email, you are aware that I requested the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to make significant improvements.² The improvements requested include reduction of speed limits, safer crosswalks with all traffic stopping at intersections for pedestrians (“pedestrian scrambles”), speed detection signs that alert drivers to slow down, and “no left turn” signs at dangerous intersections that do not have traffic control signals. Due to the number of pedestrian injuries and deaths, FDOT agreed to study and install improvements in 2024 and 2025. The first improvements FDOT is making are lowering the speed limit on LeJeune next to the Coral Gables High School and installation of a sidewalk on the South Side of Bird Road, east of Red Road. A complete summary of the FDOT plans are included in the May 24 and June 7, 2024 *Rhonda's Reports* available under “Past Issues” at <https://www.coralgables.com/departments/city-commission/rhondas-report>.
- **City Roads.**³
 - **Sidewalks, Trees and Streets:** Our Public Works team has completed close to half of the currently planned traffic calming devices, and this year, replaced approximately four (4) miles of damaged sidewalks and added over one mile of new sidewalks –

¹ If you did not receive the letter, it is available at <https://www.coralgables.com/staff/rhonda-anderson> in the Memos section. In addition, all prior *Rhonda's Reports* sent out via email are available in the Social Media section, and you can sign up to receive them via email in the future.

² The FDOT roads in Coral Gables are US 1, LeJeune Road, Red Road, Bird Road and S.W. 8th Street.

³ The County Roads running through Coral Gables are Coral Way, Blue Road, Alhambra Circle (S. of Bird Road and N. of Coral Way), Kendall Drive, Douglas Road, Ponce de Leon Boulevard, Old Cutler Road, Riviera, University Drive, Granada and Maynada.

many of which are critical for students to safely walk to school. In addition, 8,000 trees were trimmed and 125 of 200 new trees ordered were planted, replacing damaged or sick trees and expanding our shade canopy. More improvements are planned in 2025, including the long-awaited Ponce de Leon Blvd. median and shade canopy installation between Salamanca and SW 8th Street.

- **Speed Detection Signs & Modified Speed Tables.** The County controls the type of traffic calming that the city can install through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This past year I worked on expanding the types of traffic calming devices the County MOU allows the city to install without approval of written plans for each location. The city recently received approval to install shorter Speed Tables and Cushions that can fit in blocks with limited space between driveways and Speed Warning Signs that alert drivers to “Slow Down” and display their speed. The warning signs reportedly slow down 80% of speeding drivers 10 – 20 mph.⁴



- **Intersection Improvements & Repaving:** In addition to intersection improvements on FDOT roads, this coming year intersection improvements are planned for Coral Way and Granada, Coral Way and Anderson Road and the complex DeSoto Fountain intersection. Streets are being repaved in conjunction with completion of multiple sewer force main pipe replacement projects, drainage projects, and traffic calming and sidewalk installations.
- **FPL Undergrounding:** After 7 years of planning between the city and FPL, in March 2023, the FPL Storm Secure program broke ground in Coral Gables. This program undergrounds all lateral lines behind homes in the North and South Gables, including the drop line to your home, at no cost to the city or residents. You can view updates regarding the areas that will be undergrounded next at <https://www.coralgables.com/undergrounding-project-construction-updates>.
- **Septic to Sewer Master Plan:** A rough draft of the city’s septic to sewer master plan is nearing completion and will be finalized before the end of the year. This plan identifies areas or “basins” of contiguous homes to connect to sewer pipes and pump stations. The next step will be to prioritize engineering and construction drawings for the basins impacting the Waterway the most. I have been leading the effort to coordinate the city’s planning with Miami-Dade County so fewer pipes and pump stations need to be installed, and roads should only need to be disrupted once. Throughout the process and long before work proceeds on any basin, neighborhood meetings will be held to present the plans and answer all questions. As the project progresses, I will provide up-dates in my periodic newsletter, *Rhonda’s Report*. If you are not receiving the newsletter, you can sign-up on the city’s website shown in footnote one.
- **Legislation:** Listed below is a sampling of a few pieces of legislation I sponsored this past year:

⁴ <https://www.radarsign.com/#:~:text=Tests%20repeatedly%20show%20that%3A,reductions%20are%2010%2D20%25>

- **Mediterranean Design Standards:** In my first year in office, I successfully sponsored legislation to eliminate “other styles of architecture” from receiving bonuses under the Coral Gables Mediterranean Design Standards and added a conceptual review process before the Board of Architects (BOA) that has provided more opportunity for public input and improved Mediterranean design.

For the past year, I have led a very time-consuming effort to further increase the quality of Mediterranean style architecture in our city. Working with some of the best classical architects, draft amendments were prepared, which are currently being reviewed at the Planning and Zoning Board (P&Z). After P&Z completes its review, the full Commission will review and vote on the proposed amendments. The proposed amendments will make it much more difficult for new buildings to receive bonuses. Only exceptional Mediterranean style architecture will be qualified.

Former Mayor Dorothy Thomson, our city’s first and only female mayor, spearheaded the Mediterranean Design Standards over 30 years ago to ensure that our city maintains its unique character and beauty. In recognition of her legacy, I am hopeful that before the end of this year the Commission will approve the proposed stricter standards for Mediterranean Design so future projects do not dilute the quality of architecture in our City Beautiful.

- **Reduction of Building Lengths and Glazing.** More recently, developers have proposed building lengths more than a half a block long in the North Ponce Residential Infill District – a substantial length in an area that is filled with garden apartments and smaller historic buildings. Therefore, I sponsored a zoning code amendment that limited total building lengths to 300 feet that received unanimous support of the Commission. I also sponsored an amendment decreasing the required amount of storefront glass so that buildings in North Ponce area could have a warmer look.
- **Improved Notice and Early Neighborhood Meetings.** I co-sponsored and co-drafted an amendment to require developers of large commercial projects to conduct two neighborhood meetings. The first meeting must occur before the Board of Architects (BOA) reviews the project so residents can provide comments to the BOA. The second neighborhood meeting must occur after the BOA approves the proposed building and before the Planning and Zoning Board (PZB) meeting so that residents can provide comments to PZB. The notices must include a QR Code and a link for residents to sign up for automatic notices of future meetings regarding the proposed building.
- **Board of Architects Appeals.** I sponsored an amendment to the BOA appeals process to promote impartiality and fairness for residents appealing commercial office and residential development projects. Historically, only one architect appointed, as Special Master, heard the appeals. Substantial changes to the building designs during the appellate process were never sent back to the BOA for review. The amendment requires three (3) Special Masters to review the project and any substantial change to the project must be sent to the BOA for review. This amendment ensures transparency, fairness and impartiality are protected in the appeals process.

- **Lighting:** The city’s lighting ordinance has not been updated to address the advanced lighting options LED lights provide. At today’s Commission meeting, I sponsored proposed changes that will address the key complaints residents have about lighting that is too bright or intense. The Commission should vote on a final version of the ordinance by November.
- **Did You Know?**
 - **The Next Recycling Event at City Hall is on Saturday, November 9, 2024.**
Bring your electronics, computers, paints, pesticides, solvents and chemicals for safe disposal. Free shredding is also available for sensitive documents. Open 9 a.m. to Noon.
 - **Pet Waste in Trash Pits Pollutes the Waterway, the Bay and Ground Water.**
Dog and cat waste disposed of in swale trash pits leaches pollutants into the ground water and drainage systems that lead to the Coral Gables Waterway and Biscayne Bay. Like a leaking septic tank, dog and cat waste causes harmful bacteria and algae growth in the water. Help keep water clean by disposing of pet waste in your household garbage bag or pet waste station.

Coral Gables is a wonderful place to live for many reasons. I am looking forward to hearing your ideas to help make our city an even better place to live. If you would like to discuss these or other issues, I have open-door office hours on most Fridays starting at 2 pm, which are posted on my Instagram account, or by special appointment. I can also be reached via email at randerson@coralgables.com or on my city cell at (786) 529-8766.

Best regards,



Rhonda Anderson

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