



Miami 21 First Reading **Mayor Diaz's Remarks**

As Prepared for Delivery
August 6, 2009

Good afternoon, citizens of Miami, Mr. Chairman, Commissioners.

We started with an idea... born of a desire and the need to plan our future, to realize our collective vision for a better city.

A city where we preserve the valuable elements of our past; where we respect the unique character and enhance the elements of our neighborhoods; where we support future environmental and economic sustainability.

What brings us here today does not result from the most recent development boom, but the growth that spans the breadth of our city's 113 year history.

What we are attempting to accomplish today is not an easy task. Some will no doubt be disappointed should Miami 21 be approved.

But I assure you, a vote to support Miami 21 will be a radical departure from our city's past – a past best exemplified by the philosophy of “Build Now, Plan Later.”

It is the philosophy of those who place personal and economic concerns over the public good. Of those with a vested interest in keeping a zoning code that very few understand – and that we all know is broken.

Now is the time to ride out city of code that places the special interests over the people's interests.

Miami 21 is everyone's plan.

Miami 21 does not belong to the Mayor, the Commissioners, to staff or consultants. Miami 21 belongs to the people of Miami.



It is not a code written by lawyers and special interests that only lawyers and special interests can understand.

It is a plan written by all of the people who have participated in the over 500 public meetings and our website, with more than a quarter million unique visitors, over 4000 subscribers and 7 million hits over the past 4 years.

It is the most democratic planning document in our city's history. The people of Miami have spoken and their voice is reflected in three important goals of Miami 21:

- (1) Protecting our neighborhoods;
- (2) Enhancing neighborhood livability; and
- (3) Achieving Environmental and Economic Stability

NEIGHBORHOOD PROTECTION

Miami 21 will protect our neighborhoods through its use of successional zoning that promotes controlled and planned growth. Zoning decisions will no longer focus on a specific piece of land rather; future zoning decisions must be made in the context of the surrounding neighborhood.

Zoning changes will only be considered twice a year, preventing the struggles we witness monthly in these chambers where more often than not those who can afford to hire those that know the code win, while our neighborhoods and our people lose.

Miami 21 takes into account the entire neighborhood – with emphasis on the preservation of historic community assets, preservation of neighborhood scale, integration of needed density transitions for protection of low-density residential neighborhoods, and the reduction of floor plates for multi-family residential and commercial high-rise buildings.

Miami 21 design requirements ensure compatibility with neighborhoods, preventing many of the offensive building, McMansions and Big Box stores that now go up as of Right without any review.

Miami 21 also eliminates the current practice where you can use land outside your lot and count it towards building higher.

These and many other protections will bring us neighborhood zoning decisions that we all want – and that make sense.



NEIGHBORHOOD LIVABILITY ENHANCEMENTS

Miami 21 will enhance the qualities of neighborhoods that make them come alive, giving them a sense of community, a sense of place – like most planned cities.

Paying attention to streetscapes, stoops, driveways, tandem parking, garage width, setbacks – and bringing back the front porch, creating places that produce a significantly higher quality of life.

By showing us what we can do rather than what we cannot, Miami 21 encourage growth that is desired rather than coerced through zoning variances. Miami 21 shows what we want our streets, neighborhoods and our city to look like, creating an atmosphere that encourages walking, cycling and personal interaction.

Miami 21 will get rid of the current practices that blight our streets and make them uninviting to residents and visitors. Parking uses will be lines with residential or commercial spaces that help enhance and support the development of commercial corridors. Building will be place at the street edge, rather than setting them behind a sea of surface parking, thus enhancing our city's sense of place.

It requires active ground floor uses that animate streets, create a sense of safety and minimize conflicts, finally making the public realm pedestrian friendly.

Miami 21 respects people and encourages our ability to live among one another in places that are designed to make interaction easier, making our sense of community stronger.

SUSTAINABILITY

Equally as important for our future, Miami 21 supports the continued economic and environmental sustainability of our city. Ensuring a sustainable future means we must plan our city not around cars, but around our residents. Miami 21 reflects a growing desire among our residents for a lifestyle that includes vibrant mixed-use, live-work and walkable communities with varied transit choices – a lifestyle not allowed by our existing code.

Ask yourselves why it is that if we live in a city with an enviable year-round climate, no one likes to walk. It's not that it's "too hot." Places like New York, Washington and Chicago all have hot summers, but they also have beautiful, active and inviting streets to enjoy.

Wider sidewalks, inviting frontage, shade trees, bicycle lanes, alternative and viable transportation, green and civic spaces and consideration of how light and air interact with the street below will not only invite us out of our cars, but promote the walking experience, creating streets and neighborhoods that respect and are centered around people.



Miami 21 also effects physical space through green building techniques that bring energy conservation and promote greater use of open public and civic spaces.

The Public Benefits program also recognizes that Miami's continued economic well-being requires a wide range of housing choices at prices that are accessible to individuals at all income levels. This element of Miami 21 seeks to encourage the development of communities that are reflective of Miami's rich racial, ethnic and economic diversity – strengthening the diversity that makes us who we are.

Finally, let me make something clear. The status quo cannot remain.

We can no longer get by with a code that has created the hodgepodge zoning of uncertainty that we live with. We don't start today with a blank canvas. And while we are bound by these mistakes, we are not bound to inaction.

Every single Commissioner that has sat in your place dating back to the founding of our city has dealt with zoning issues. Failure to plan came from the belief that planning is too expensive; the belief that nothing is wrong with haphazard planning; the belief that planning is an impediment, that is slows things down; the belief that planning a city is tantamount to living in the Soviet Union; the belief that Miami did not need zoning at all or that it was all too late.

These are all beliefs that lead to one thing – a zoning code that serves special interests, protects a few, while ignoring the interests of all.

The question is simple: Will you align yourselves with the mistaken beliefs of the past? Or, will you take a step towards the future?

A future that embraces the opportunity to enhance the beautiful and generous public realm, the spaces that create pride, that are equally owned by our residents, irrespective of economic or social circumstance.

Today we must dream big dreams; we must aim high. We must because we owe a lasting legacy to those who will call Miami home long after we are gone.

