

MIAMI BEACH

City of Miami Beach, 1700 Convention Center Drive, Miami Beach, Florida 33139, www.miamibeachfl.gov

COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Land Use and Sustainability Committee

FROM: Alina T. Hudak, City Manager 

DATE: January 25, 2023

SUBJECT: **Discuss the Identification and Development of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Zones.**

HISTORY

On September 14, 2022, at the request of Commissioner Ricky Arriola, the City Commission referred a discussion item regarding the identification and development of transit oriented development (TOD) zones to the Land Use and Sustainability Committee (LUSC). This referral was made as part of the First Reading approval of the proposed Resiliency Code and Land Development Regulation (LDR) Updates (Item R5 E).

BACKGROUND

TOD is an urban planning concept whereby development patterns are established to encourage and facilitate the use of public transportation. This is accomplished by providing more comfortable walking environments and providing a mix of uses that minimize the need to drive to complete daily tasks. According to the *Transit Oriented Development Institute*, TOD typically includes the following components:

- Walkable design with pedestrian as the highest priority;
- The transit station as prominent feature;
- Public squares fronting the transit station;
- A regional node containing a mixture of uses in close proximity (e.g., office, residential, retail, and civic);
- A high density, walkable district within a 10-minute walk of the transit station;
- Collector support transit systems include, but are not limited to, streetcars, light rail, buses, ride share and micro-mobility options (scooters and bicycles);
- TOD are expressly designed to include the easy use of micro-mobility (bicycles and scooters) as daily support transport;
- Large ride-in bicycle parking areas within stations;
- Bikeshare rental systems and bikeway networks integrated into stations;
- Reduced and managed parking inside the 10-minute walk circle around the town center / transit station;
- Specialized retail at stations serving commuters and locals including, but not limited to, cafes, grocery, and dry cleaners;

Historically, the South Beach area had a streetcar system that connected it to Downtown Miami via the MacArthur Causeway (then known as the County Causeway). The streetcars primarily made a loop along Alton Road, 1st Street, Washington Avenue, and

Dade Boulevard; however, at its peak in the late 1920s and 1930s, the streetcar system ran as far north as 45th Street along Alton Road and 51st Street along Park Avenue/Sheridan Avenue/Pine Tree Drive. As a result, much of South Beach's historic fabric was developed with public transit in mind and provides for pedestrian friendly areas, a mix of uses, and moderate to high densities.

In the mid-1940s, the streetcar tracks were removed and replaced with buses. In a nationwide trend, the development patterns that followed World War II began to take on more automobile-centric features, including more prominent and greater numbers of off-street parking and more segregated land uses. These land use patterns, nationally, have resulted in an over-reliance on the automobile to complete even simple tasks, although to a much lesser extent in city's such as Miami Beach. As a result, metropolitan areas in the United States experience significant traffic issues. Over time, traffic congestion has become an increasingly significant problem for the City of Miami Beach, as many local and regional trips still require an automobile.

Recognizing the issues with congestion, over recent years, the City has been encouraging development that incorporates many TOD urban planning practices. These include requiring active uses on the ground floor that are easily accessible by pedestrians, allowing a greater mix of uses within buildings, encouraging specialized retail, improved pedestrian facilities, reducing off-street parking requirements, minimizing driveways, and encouraging bicycle and alternative vehicle parking. The North Beach Town Center regulations, in particular, incorporate these concepts. While growth does increase traffic demands, by incorporating TOD concepts, the traffic demand increase is mitigated from what would have otherwise occurred with more automobile-centric development, given that many people are able to access sites through alternative modes of transportation.

Existing Public Transportation

Public transportation in the City primarily consists of buses and the local trolley system and is augmented by a robust bikeshare program and on-demand ride share. The City of Miami Beach is currently served by approximately 11 Miami-Dade Metrobus routes, including: Routes 101 A, 110 J, 112 L, 113 M, 115, 119 S, 120, 150, 241, 79, and the Surfside Shuttle. Route 120, known as the Beach MAX is a high-capacity, limited-stop service. Route 150, known as the Airport Flyer is an express service that connects Middle and South Beach to the Miami Intermodal Center (MIC), an intermodal rapid transit, commuter rail, intercity rail, local bus, and intercity bus transportation hub just east of Miami International Airport (MIA).

The Miami Beach Trolley bus service operates four (4) routes, including: South Beach Loop, Middle Beach Loop, North Beach Loop, and Collins Express. The CitiBike bikeshare service and Freebee on-demand service are other alternative modes of transportation that are available within the City.

Miami-Dade SMART Plan

On April 21, 2016, the Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) endorsed the Strategic Miami Area Rapid Transit (SMART) Plan, kicking off a planning process to develop six rapid transit corridors throughout Miami-Dade County. One such corridor is the Beach Corridor which is intended to connect the South Beach area to Downtown Miami via the MacArthur Causeway. The Miami Beach corridor includes MacArthur Causeway

and 5th Street going east to Washington Avenue and Washington Avenue between 5th Street and Dade Boulevard.

On November 2, 2022, Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniela Levine Cava announced that the existing downtown Metromover would be extended to connect to South Beach along the 5th Street corridor. Shuttle bus services would connect Metromover riders to points north, including the Miami Beach Convention Center along Washington Avenue.

Miami-Dade RTZ Ordinance

In a related initiative, on September 1, 2022, the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners approved a revised Rapid Transit Zone (RTZ) Ordinance that establishes minimum land use standards for areas located within a half (½) mile of proposed rapid transit corridors. This includes minimum floor area ratio (FAR) limit standards for those corridors which run through municipalities, including Miami Beach. Specifically, the regulations require the following with exemptions for historic districts and single-family areas:

- Within a quarter mile of the rapid transit corridor, a minimum FAR limit range of 1.0 to 2.0;
- Within one-quarter mile and one-half a mile of the rapid transit corridor, a minimum FAR limit range of 1.0 to 1.5; and
- Within one-half mile and one mile of the rapid transit corridor, a minimum FAR limit range of 0.5 to 1.25.

Much of the area within the RTZ is within a locally designated historic district in the City of Miami Beach, and therefore exempt from these regulations. However, the City's current Land Development Regulations (LDRs) already allow for a maximum FAR within some of these ranges, even within the historic district.

ANALYSIS

As discussed above, the City's existing LDRs do incorporate many TOD concepts. Additionally, Miami-Dade County is studying potential public transportation options to provide improved regional access to the City. Given that a significant number of residents, visitors and employees in the City utilize transit and micro-mobility options, the Administration believes it would be highly beneficial to consider additional improvements in the form of TOD zones. Additionally, such TOD would be able to maximize the use of future regional public transportation infrastructure.

In this regard, the Administration would initially recommend exploring areas that are within a quarter (¼) mile of the proposed Beach Corridor, excluding RM-1, R-PS1, R-PS2, and R-PS4 areas that are predominantly built-out. The potential areas include the following:

- 5th Street corridor between Alton Road and Ocean Drive;
- The Alton Road corridor between 4th Street and 9th Street and
- The West Avenue corridor between 5th Street and 9th Street.

In addition to the above, the Alton Road corridor going north up to Dade Boulevard, as well as the 17th Street corridor, from West Avenue to Washington Avenue, should be considered, as these areas have direct access to local transit options.

The Administration would also recommend that the mid-beach area be studied. Given that there is consideration for improved transportation options along 41st Street, as well as Collins Avenue from 23rd to 63rd Street, the LUSC may wish to explore designating the 41st Street corridor as well, given that there are many sites with remaining FAR, along with several surface parking lots.

A TOD ordinance for these areas could include allowing increased height, density, and FAR, as well as reduced off-street parking requirements. For the parking that is provided, incentives can be included to ensure that it is available to the public to allow for park and ride use of the public transportation. Additionally, such regulations can include enhanced requirements for pedestrian facilities, such as wider clear pedestrian paths, larger street trees, requirements for shade structures or awnings, and limiting driveway proliferation. The regulations can also incorporate improved requirements for active uses at the ground floor and urban design concepts that activate the pedestrian realm.

If any proposed TOD regulations include an increase in the allowable FAR from what is allowed today, voter approval would be required pursuant to section 1.03(c) of the City Charter. Such TOD concepts could also be considered in conjunction with a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program and incentives to develop workforce and affordable housing.

CONCLUSION

The Administration recommends that the Land Use and Sustainability Committee discuss the item and provide appropriate policy direction. If there is consensus on moving forward with TOD districts identified herein, it is further recommended that the item be sent to the City Commission for referral to the Planning Board, as well as the drafting of any required ballot questions for an FAR increase.


ATH/RW/TRM/RAM