

South Florida BUSINESS JOURNAL

Friday, December 18, 2009

Miami 21 implementation delayed

South Florida Business Journal - by [Oscar Pedro Musibay](#)

In a blow for supporters of Miami 21's recent long and winding road to approval, the city's three sitting commissioners voted to hold off on implementing the controversial zoning overhaul for three months.

Commission Chairman Marc Sarnoff, who voted to approve Miami 21 in late October, on Thursday voted with new arrivals Frank Carollo and Francis Suarez to start the clock on the new code on May 20, instead of Feb. 19.

New city Mayor Tomas Regalado requested the delay. Regalado, who voted against Miami 21 as a commissioner, argued the public did not have enough input in the final zoning code. He said he wants to give neighborhood activist groups such as Miami Neighborhoods United more say in the final zoning rules and more input in the review of future zoning changes.

Despite the delay, Regalado said he would not scrap Miami 21. Regalado adviser Horacio Stuart Aguirre, who criticized the process that produced Miami 21, said the mayor wants to allow citizens more time to review last-minute changes in Miami 21 made prior to its approval. He also emphasized that Regalado wants to "tweak" the code and doesn't plan to scrap it.

Aguirre said he hoped to have more than 90 days to address the issues tied to the new zoning code and that changes in the coming months may require another extension. For one thing, Miami residents will be voting to elect two commissioners Jan. 12, filling seats held by Michelle Spence-Jones and Angel Gonzalez, both of whom are under separate investigations by the state attorney's office. Spence-Jones is running to regain her seat.

Many urban planners have supported Miami 21, which was supposed to scale density throughout the city and make neighborhoods more walkable.

It was one of the signature accomplishments of former Mayor Manny Diaz, who was the plan's biggest champion.

But, some of the plan's details sparked criticism from local activists, who said the city's streamlined zoning review process limited public input. Some business owners, developers, landlords, architects and zoning attorneys charged it would downzone property and stifle design.

Maria Sardina Mann, a planning advisory board member who resigned to run against Carollo, applauded the commission's move to review Miami 21.

The PAB raised many concerns about Miami 21, but eventually passed the zoning rewrite. Months later, the same board, with different members, voted to delay another important vote on Miami 21.

Mann said conflicts still exist between the higher density allowed on traffic corridors abutting single-family neighborhoods. She hopes the next 90 days will be enough time to fix what she says is broken in the new code.

"Miami 21 was meant to protect single-family neighborhoods," she said. "It didn't do that."