



MEMORANDUM

AGENDA ITEM #VII.B

DATE: NOVEMBER 21, 2022
TO: COUNCIL MEMBERS
FROM: STAFF
SUBJECT: CORRESPONDENCE AND ARTICLES

Recommendation

Information only



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Miami-Dade mayor vetoes project near Biscayne Bay, citing Hurricane Ian and flood risks

BY DOUGLAS HANKS



On Thursday, Nov. 10, 2022, Miami Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava announced a veto of legislation to expand the Urban Development Boundary for a South Miami-Dade project. SYDNEY WALSH swalsh@miamiherald.com

Facing the [first expansion of the Urban Development Boundary](#) in nine years, Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava on Thursday vetoed legislation allowing a nearly 400-acre industrial complex to be built on farmland currently outside the boundary that divides the suburbs from agricultural land and the Everglades. The veto of the County Commission vote to move the Urban Development Boundary (UDB) sets up a final showdown on the proposed South Dade Logistics and Technology District.

[READ MORE: Miami-Dade commission OKs project that critics say threatens Everglades restoration](#)

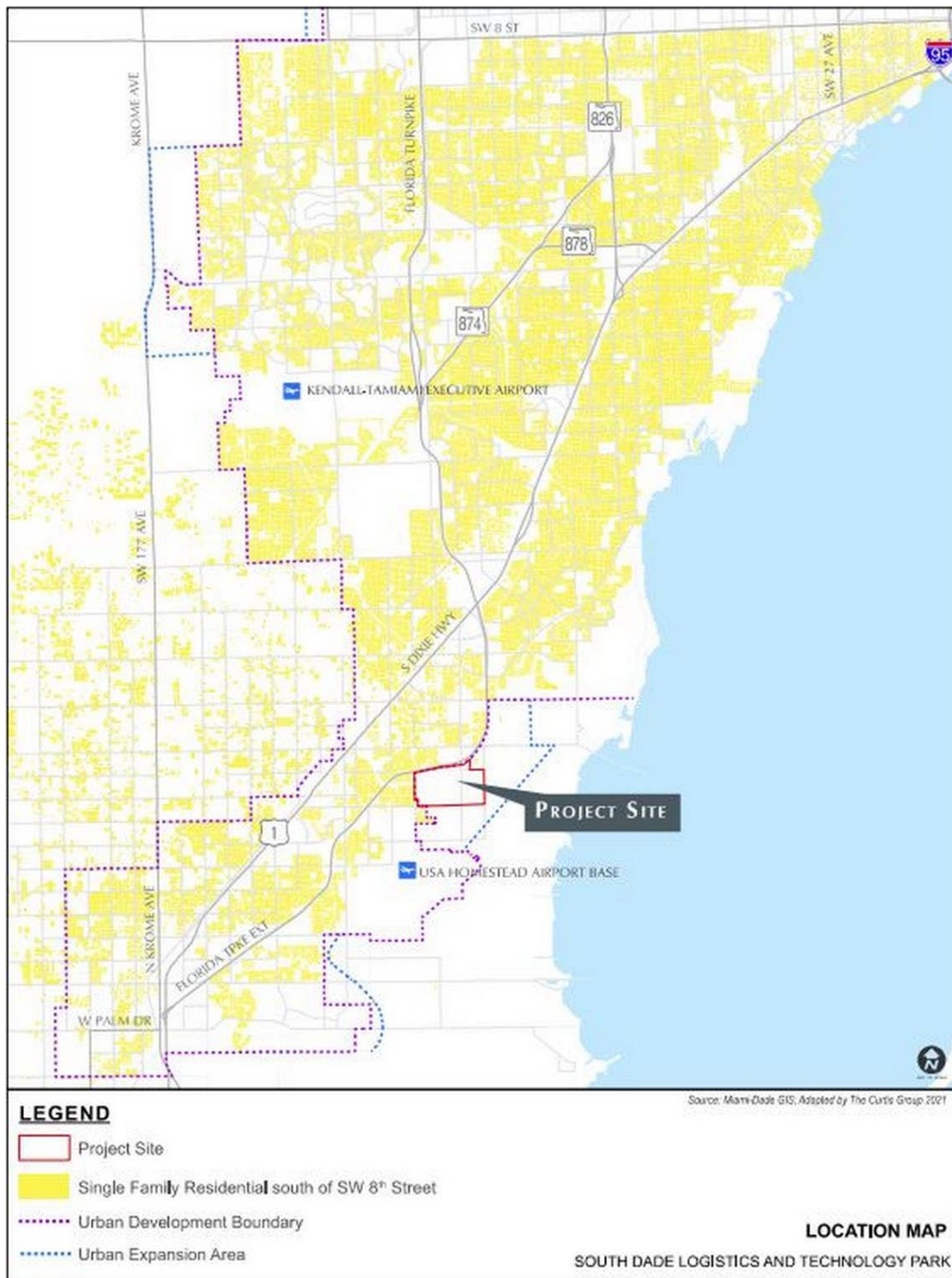
Commissioners approved the site on Nov. 1 with eight votes, which would be enough to overturn Levine Cava's veto when the board convenes for its regular meeting on Tuesday. But if a commissioner who voted yes doesn't show or switches their vote, the veto could be sustained.

Environmental groups fought the proposed project off Florida's Turnpike near Homestead as bad for Everglades revitalization because a federal group planning the next phase of wetlands restoration is considering that area for projects.

Levine Cava's planning staff recommended against it, saying enough industrial space already exists within the UDB to accommodate economic growth and the proposed development sits in a low-lying area about three miles west of Biscayne Bay that's vulnerable to severe flooding during a hurricane.

“It encourages development in areas at risk of storm surge, putting more properties at risk in the future, especially concerning in light of the devastation we just witnessed following Hurricane Ian,” Levine Cava said in a statement.

Developers behind the project touted it as a reasonable next step in Miami-Dade’s urban expansion, with elevated streets and buildings to mitigate flooding issues and the potential for more than 7,000 jobs that will provide alternatives to long commutes for residents in South Miami-Dade. The project site sits south of Florida’s Turnpike and north of Moody Drive (Southwest 268th Street).



This map depicts the site for the proposed South Dade Logistics and Technology District project, using the original 800-acre footprint. To win support of the Miami-Dade County Commission, developers have since shrunk the size of the project. South Dade Logistics and Technology Park

Throughout 2022, developers Stephen Blumenthal, David Brown and Jose Hevia [failed to win enough support](#) on the commission to move the UDB for the first time since 2013.

That [changed Nov. 1](#) when Commissioner Raquel Regalado switched from a no to a yes, citing the developers' new offer to purchase about 625 acres of environmentally sensitive land outside the UDB and donate it to a county preservation program.

That left four commissioners on the no side: René Garcia, Sally Heyman, Danielle Cohen Higgins, and Eileen Higgins.



Ashika Campbell, from Naranja, wears a "Bring the Jobs" shirt during a meeting discussing a vote on expanding the Urban Development Boundary before the Miami-Dade County Commission on Thursday, May 19, 2022, at the Stephen P Clark Center in Miami. Campbell was for expansion of the Urban Development Boundary. Alie Skowronski askowronski@miamiherald.com

Miami-Dade's charter requires a two-thirds vote of all sitting commissioners to move the UDB, and a two-thirds vote of all commissioners present at a meeting to override a mayoral veto.

To sustain her veto, Levine Cava likely needs to retain support from the four commissioners voting no and prevent one commissioner from the yes to vote to override. Commissioners on the yes side were: Jose "Pepe" Diaz, Oliver Gilbert, Keon Hardemon, Kionne McGhee, Jean Monestime, Regalado, Rebeca Sosa and Javier Souto. Miami-Dade's County Charter requires commissioners to take up the mayor's veto as their first item of business at Tuesday's meeting.

In a statement, the developers behind the project said Thursday that Levine Cava "chose to kill hope for thousands of South Dade residents...We look forward to the veto override vote."

In a press conference at County Hall, Levine Cava said she was reaching out to commissioners in hopes of moving a member to her side. "I'm working very hard to secure the votes needed to sustain the veto," she said. "I'm very hopeful commissioners will understand the gravity of the vote."

Read more at: <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/article268581832.html>

Don't expand Broward's landfill even more, planning council says. 'Find another solution.'

BY LISA J. HURIASH

A plan to expand Broward's landfill was rejected on its way to the County Commission this week, but Waste Management isn't giving up hope on its plans.

Waste Management has revived its proposal to expand its Monarch Hill landfill — known by some locals as Mount Trashmore — on a 24-acre parcel adjacent to the site by Florida's Turnpike since it's only a few years away from being completely full.

On Thursday, the Broward County Planning Council, a planning agency, unanimously voted to turn down the request, even though the County Commission will have the final say.

Waste Management had sought to re-designate the land use of a 24-acre parcel so it could add to the landfill on that adjacent land. And with a bigger base, the landfill would eventually go higher, too.

But the attempt upset some leaders, who said there is no place for growth.

"Where in this country do we see a landfill this close to a significant population base?" asked Wally Eccleston, the chief of staff to Broward County Commissioner Mark Bogen, speaking to the Planning Council on his behalf. "Where in this country do you see a government allowing an expansion of a landfill this close to a significant population base? The answer is nowhere."

That move to ask the county's planning council to sign off on the plan has been in the works for about a year, although it been stymied from ever getting on an agenda.

"They need their due process," said County Commissioner Beam Furr, who is leading a [consortium of cities](#) trying to figure out if they can manage without Waste Management at all.

"Most of the time we follow their recommendation," Furr said. "We give it the credit it's due."

He was pleased with the decision. "I think that was the right vote for the time being."

Waste Management's proposal

Monarch Hill is a 1965-era landmark that can be seen from miles away in an unincorporated part of Broward County bordering Pompano Beach, Coconut Creek and Deerfield Beach.

One way to get rid of some types of garbage is to [burn it to create electricity](#). But the landfill stopped using a section of the landfill that burned the waste in 2015, blaming a lack of trash when a handful of Broward cities decided to go elsewhere a few years earlier.

“The waste-to-energy facility has been decommissioned, is not operational and the equipment removed,” said Dawn McCormick, Waste Management spokeswoman.

So instead of an incineration site, today Waste Management uses that land as a “transfer station,” trucking in household garbage from northern Broward as a holding spot.

The plan now is to appeal to the county, state and federal level for permit and zoning and site-plan approvals to be able to use that land for trash as it expands the current landfill.

The current landfill only has enough space to take in trash for another eight or nine years, or 17.5 million tons, Waste Management attorney and lobbyist Bill Laystrom told the planning council Thursday.

The approval would mean adding another five or six years to the life expectancy.

The landfill is permitted to peak at 225 feet tall — 220 feet of waste and 5 feet of permanent capping. But now it’s just 200 feet, McCormick said.

Laystrom assured the Planning Council there are odor-control systems in place, and contracts with a bird service to use trained falcons and hawks “to create a hostile environment for avian pests” and prevent unwanted birds from roosting in the area.

But Eccleston told planning council members that the office gets emails and calls daily, and is “the most important” issue in the district.

“Again and again... [they] continue to ask for expansion,” he said.

“It is time to stop the unlimited expansion, which only poses a risk to our residents,” Eccleston urged.

Coconut Creek Mayor Josh Rydell pleaded with the planning council to say no. “It’s a self-constructed crisis by Waste Management to make more money,” he said.

The council heard them: Deerfield Beach City Commissioner and Planning Board member Bernie Parness said he wants the message to be: “We don’t support expanding landfills. Find another solution.”

“Adding another 24 acres is only going to make it worse for Coconut Creek and for Deerfield Beach,” Parness said. “Don’t those citizens count?”

[\[RELATED: Broward’s landfill is ‘fast approaching’ the need for more space. Here’s why neighbors are fighting the latest plan.\]](#)

The plan for change

Broward cities have been [organizing for years](#) to figure out if they can bypass [Waste Management](#), and handle their own garbage and recycling, possibly with the creation of a new taxing district.

The idea gained momentum in 2020 after Waste Management announced [it would stop some recycling](#). The company [quickly reversed course](#) after the decision outraged the community.

But it was too late: [There was an outcry](#), and the cities rallied.

A committee of local leaders, who call themselves the Solid Waste Working Group, agreed Wednesday to have “a framework for a master plan within 45 days,” Furr said.

“We have to give the committee a chance to operate,” Parness urged.

Read more at: <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/fl-ne-waste-management-broward-county-plans-20221028-ufhq2o6ycnfexetz4obxqdcemq-story.html>

'Neither normal nor sustainable.' South Florida home prices finally fall, but key issue remains

BY MICHAEL BUTLER AND REBECCA SAN JUAN



South Florida's runaway housing market is showing signs of a slowdown. However, the region still struggles with a housing-affordability crunch. Downtown Miami is shown in May 2021. MATIAS OCNER \ mocner@miamiherald.com

[Housing prices fell again last month in Miami-Dade County](#) and dipped for the first time in months in neighboring Broward County, an uplifting sign for aspiring home buyers.

Miami-Dade's median sale price dwindled to \$551,250 for a single-family home in August, down from \$570,000 the prior month, according to the monthly sales report released Wednesday by the Miami Association of Realtors. [Condominium prices](#) also dropped to a \$375,000 midpoint from \$380,000 in July.

The price decreases in Miami-Dade represent the second consecutive month, after climbing steadily from September through June and reaching historic high marks of \$579,000 for a house and \$410,000 for a condo.

"Prices never go up forever," said Ana Bozovic, founder and real estate market analyst at Analytics Miami. "The steady ramp up we have had through mid-2022 was neither normal nor sustainable."

In August, Broward showed the first signs of a softening residential real estate market. Although condo prices held steady at a \$265,000 median, the midpoint sale price for a house fell to \$562,500 from \$600,000 in July.

The South Florida housing market has overheated during the two-year pandemic due to a tight supply of available homes and an influx of out-of-state buyers who decided to call the area their new home. That pushed demand and prices up since many of these newcomers outbid local residents and paid cash for houses and condos.

The pandemic-induced dramatic shift in the white-collar workplace from office buildings to homes allowing technology, finance, legal professionals and others to work remotely from anywhere during the pandemic has

sharply worsened [a housing-affordability crisis in South Florida](#) that began well before the coronavirus emerged in March 2020.

South Florida August housing activity

Median sales prices rose year-over-year in Miami-Dade and Broward counties.

County	Month	Houses median sales price	Annual percent change	Condo median sales price	Annual percent change
Miami-Dade	August 2022	\$551,250	10.1%+	\$375,000	11.9%+
	July 2022	\$570,000		\$380,000	
	August 2021	\$500,500		\$335,000	
Broward	August 2022	\$562,500	13.6%+	\$265,000	20.5%+
	July 2022	\$600,000		\$265,000	
	August 2021	\$495,000		\$220,000	

Table: Rebecca San Juan • Source: Miami Association of Realtors • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Natives and longtime residents in Miami-Dade and Broward have been waiting on the sidelines, betting the runaway housing prices would eventually settle down.

For now, South Florida still has slim pickings for people determined to buy a home. Miami-Dade has an available inventory of 3.3 months of houses and 3.4 months of condos. Broward has supplies of 2.5 months of houses and 2.1 months of condos. This is far from a balanced market, which typically has five to seven months of housing supply to purchase.

Total housing sale transactions did increase from July to August across the region. Miami-Dade reported 2,505 sales, up from 2,375, while Broward recorded 2,700 transactions, higher than the 2,575 in July. Keeping with a longer trend, nearly half of the buyers last month paid for homes in cash — to likely avoid rising interest rates on mortgages, experts say — in both Miami-Dade and Broward.

Florida Atlantic University finance professor Ken H. Johnson, an expert on the real estate market, said interest rates will continue increasing through the remainder of the year.

On Wednesday, the Federal Reserve announced its fifth bump in its benchmark interest rate in 2022, the third increase of three-quarters of 1% — aggressive moves to try to curtail lingering consumer price inflation. The Fed's rate hikes have pushed 30-year conventional mortgages to an average of 6%, double the mark from a year ago and the highest level since 2008.

Johnson thinks part of the Fed's inflation-fighting strategy to keep raising interest rates is to limit consumer buying power. One element of the Fed's thinking, he said, is that as mortgage rates go up fewer people will borrow against the equity in their homes via home equity lines of credit.

“The Fed is aware that we have the availability of credit being driven by the size of equities in our home and the Fed is worried about building bigger lines of credit,” Johnson said. “Many of us worry that this is creating another form of money supply that the Fed doesn’t have control over.”

Meanwhile, Joey Francilus, a North Miami native and digital strategist, has been shopping for a home but is reassessing the timeline due to interest rate jumps and protracted consumer price increases. The 32-year-old wants to buy by late 2023 a three-bedroom, two-bathroom house in North Miami, similar to the home where he grew up. His mother, Marie Severe Jean-Francois, emigrated from Haiti to New York City in 1979 and soon after moved to Miami. She bought her home in 1998 for \$88,000. Today, it’s valued at \$400,000.

Francilus fears the South Florida newcomers with deep pockets are continuing to force out longtime residents like him.

“We can have growth,” he said, of the housing market. “But if we’re pricing out the very people who make this town what it is, then what’s the cost? We’re losing our essence, if the people who make this town can’t afford to live here.”

George Washington University School of Business Professor Vanessa Perry studies the homeownership gap and thinks that aspiring first-time home buyers like Francilus are hindered more than others by higher mortgage rates.

“That’s a particular constraint we are dealing with now, because house prices are so high and we’re seeing such enormous rates of house price appreciation over the pandemic,” Perry said. “It makes it even more difficult for the first-time home buyer to enter the market, because they need a mortgage to buy a home and qualifying for that mortgage is even more difficult than it was a year ago.”

Read more at: <https://www.miamiherald.com/article266133821.html>

Four factors complicating final Urban Development Boundary vote in South Miami-Dade

BY DOUGLAS HANKS



View of a neighborhood next to a field located at 26100 SW 112th Ave, Homestead, that is included in a plan to expand the Urban Development Boundary by converting farmland into a 9 million-square-foot industrial park near Homestead. The project is up for a final vote on Thursday, Sept. 22, 2022. PEDRO PORTAL pportal@miamiherald.com

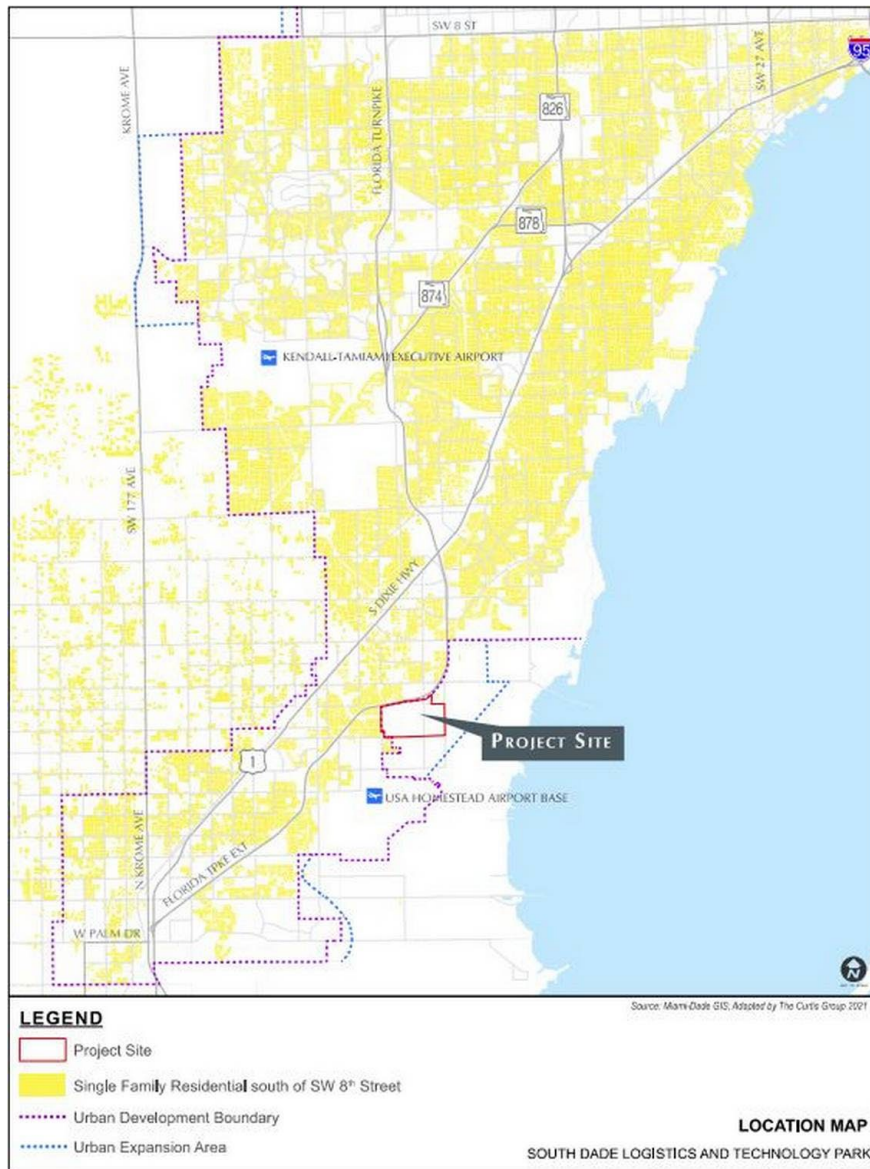
Unable to secure the votes to expand the Urban Development Boundary, developers of a proposed 793-acre industrial complex in South Miami-Dade are returning to county commissioners this week with a smaller project. The proposed South Dade Logistics and Technology District had forecast 11,762 full-time jobs directly created by the collection of warehouses, offices and other businesses to be built on farmland off of Florida's Turnpike. Now covering 380 acres, the project's job estimates are down nearly 40%, with about 7,300 full-time permanent positions on site in the developers' revised economic forecasts.

[READ MORE: Vote delayed on expanding Urban Development Boundary for industrial building complex](#)

The [Urban Development Boundary](#) (UDB) separates farmland and wetlands near the Everglades from most residential and commercial construction in Miami-Dade. Building the project requires Miami-Dade commissioners to expand the UDB for the first time since 2013.

It's a move developers say is overdue to provide an employment center for South Miami-Dade's commuting residents. Environmental groups insist it will create more urban sprawl at the expense of Biscayne Bay and the Everglades.

The site is south of Florida's Turnpike and north of Moody Drive (Southwest 268th Street), north of the Homestead Air Reserve Base and about three miles west of Biscayne Bay.



Miami-Dade County commissioners will vote on the proposed expansion of the Urban Development Boundary for the South Dade Logistics & Technology District, which is planned in an area categorized as a coastal high hazard zone. South Dade Logistics and Technology Park

Developers Aligned Real Estate Holdings and Coral Rock Development pitch the new plan as addressing criticism of the original project.

That criticism included the project being too large.

Despite the smaller footprint on land south of the turnpike, project lawyer Jeffrey Berrow wrote county planners Sept. 9, the project will still “bring much-needed jobs to South Dade, reducing excessive commutes for residents.”

Environmental groups say the original flaws remain, including risks to an ongoing Everglades restoration project and needing a rewrite of Miami-Dade’s ban of commercial development on flood-prone farmland to build the warehouses, hotel and call centers that would go there.

“The same conflicts still exist,” said Laura Reynolds, a leader of the Hold the Line Coalition, which lobbies to keep the UDB in place.

While the arguments for both sides remain largely the same, Thursday’s scheduled final vote on the UDB application faces new wrinkles. Among them:

FLORIDA POWER AND LIGHT’S LAND

A top objection to the proposal from the administration of Mayor Daniella Levine Cava involves the sizable portion of property included in the application to move the UDB but not cooperating with developers on the actual project.

Before the prior votes, a top landowner in the project footprint, billionaire banking mogul Leonard Abess, owned roughly 20% of the land and was fighting the UDB expansion. The revised proposal drops most of the Abess holdings from the project but not land owned by Florida Power and Light.

The utility’s vacant 84 acres would house about 25% of the scaled-down project’s planned six million square feet of construction, but FPL hasn’t applied for the zoning changes developers are seeking.

[READ MORE: To expand the UDB, developer needs Miami-Dade to change county policy on flood risks](#)

MARTINEZ SUSPENSION SCRAMBLES VOTE COUNT

Developers previously needed nine commissioners to vote their way in order to move the UDB but only secured support from seven board members when the project first was up for a commission vote on May 19. That’s put extra focus on five commissioners who voted against the project in May: René Garcia, Eileen Higgins, Danielle Cohen Higgins, Jean Monestime and Raquel Regalado, plus Sally Heyman, who didn’t attend that meeting.

But Tuesday’s [suspension of District 11 Commissioner Joe Martinez](#) means a new count. To move the UDB, Miami-Dade’s charter requires a two-thirds vote of commissioners “then in office” — a calculation that county lawyers say now means eight votes are needed, not nine.

That still means five commissioners can block a UDB move, and that’s how many commissioners opposed the project in May. One caveat: if Gov. Ron DeSantis appoints a replacement commissioner before the 9:30 a.m. meeting, that person would be eligible to cast a vote on the project.

Time is running short on the current vote count, with three term-limited commissioners backing developers — Jose “Pepe” Diaz, Rebeca Sosa, and Javier Souto — leaving office after the November elections.

UDB PROJECT NEAR PLANNED KENDALL PARKWAY ALSO UP FOR A VOTE

Because the commission held a public hearing in May on a different South Dade project, the public probably won’t be allowed to address board members again on that UDB application. But Thursday’s commission agenda includes another project proposed for land outside the current UDB, providing a chance for public comment on similar issues.

Developers Blue Heron and Terra137 (an entity that's not related to Miami development firm [Terra](#)) want to build a 41-acre commercial complex focused on parking, refueling and washing facilities for tractor trailers and large trucks.

The facility would go up on vacant land west of Southwest 137th Avenue, and south of where the 836 Expressway ends. That would put the project in an area between the current UDB and the proposed southern extension of the 836, a project known as the Kendall Parkway.

Developers are pitching it as a way to get large trucks out of parking lots, roadsides and other spots where truck drivers take breaks or store their vehicles. The Levine Cava administration opposes the project, saying truck depots can already be built outside of the UDB, and there is land available for similar facilities closer to the urban core.

The project is up for a preliminary commission vote Thursday that would authorize a state review of the application.

COUNTY STAFF'S LAST-MINUTE RECOMMENDATION ON UDB MOVE

Aligned Holdings submitted the new [project plans on Aug. 31](#), leaving about three weeks for county agencies to review the revised plans and update their recommendations to commissioners. As of early Wednesday afternoon, a final report hadn't been posted online ahead of Thursday's vote.

Levine Cava said this week a final recommendation was coming, but she didn't expect it to change much from her administration's original conclusion that the UDB shouldn't move. "We're still concerned about the environmental impact," she said Tuesday.

Read more at: <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/article266021951.html>