

**Miami River Commission  
Public Meeting Minutes  
June 3, 2024**

The Miami River Commission's (MRC) public meeting convened at noon, June 3, 2024, in the Downtown Library Auditorium, 101 W Flagler. Sign in sheets are attached.

**Miami River Commission (MRC) Policy Committee Members and/or Designees attending:**

Horacio Stuart Aguirre, Chairman, Appointed by the Governor  
Jim Murley, Vice Chairman, designee for Miami-Dade County Mayor Cava  
City of Miami Commissioner Miguel Angel Gabela  
Eddie Marti Kring, designee for County Commissioner Eileen Higgin  
Betty Hermida, designee for City of Miami Commissioner Gabela  
Patty Harris, Appointed by the Governor  
Megan Kelly, designee for City of Miami Mayor  
Barrett Long, designee Neighborhood Representative appointed by Board of County Commissioners  
Eileen Broton, Neighborhood Representative Appointed by City of Miami Commission  
Alvaro Coradin, designee for Sara Babun appointed by Miami-Dade County  
Bruce Brown, Miami River Marine Group  
Neal Schafers, designee for the Downtown Development Authority  
Philip Everingham, designee for the Marine Council  
Spencer Crowley, Member at Large Appointed by City Commission

**MRC Staff:**

Brett Bibeau, Managing Director

**I) Chair's Report and Vice Chair's "Voluntary Improvement Plan"  
(VIP) Update**

The Miami River Commission unanimously adopted the May 6 public meeting minutes.

MRC Chairman Horacio Stuart Aguirre stated the MRC has a very full and exciting agenda ahead today, so he quickly turned it over to MRC Vice Chairman Murley to provide his brief Miami River Voluntary Improvement Plan (VIP) update before we start today's agenda items.

MRC Vice Chairman Jim Murley, provided the following Voluntary Improvement Plan (VIP) Report:

The Miami River Commission has been actively assisting the efforts of the City, County, State, and private sector to clean up the Miami River District. The MRC pays professional maintenance companies every day to remove litter, invasive plant species, graffiti and provide landscaping, pressure washing, vac truck, and Scavenger Water Decontamination Vessel services along the Miami River. The MRC thanks the Hands on Miami volunteers for picking up garbage along the Miami River in Curtis Park on May 26 and in Sewell Park on May 19.

## **II. Discussion Regarding City of Miami Owned Public Riverfront at 20 NW North River Dr. and Casa Neo at 40 SW North River Dr.**

The following documents were links to the MRC's June 3 public meeting agenda and then were presented on the AV screen and discussed:

- a. [City of Miami's 20 NW North River Dr - Aerial Photo and Info](#)
- b. [Casa Neo's 40 SW North River Dr. - Aerial Photo and Info](#)
- c. [Aerial photo of City Owned 20 NW North River Dr.](#) – Depicting Casa Neo construction equipment on City and FDOT owned parcels.
- d. [Plans presented to MRC January 9, 2017](#) – Included the publicly accessible riverwalk as required by Miami 21 Section 3.11 with side yard connectors and view corridors on both sides of the private property.
- e. [Plans presented to MRC May 2, 2022](#) - – Included the publicly accessible riverwalk as required by Miami 21 Section 3.11 with side yard connectors and view corridors on both sides of the private property, featuring an 8 foot wide unobstructed public Riverwalk circulation zone with no tables nor chairs.
- f. [MRC May 2, 2022 Public Meeting Minutes](#) – Casa Neo provided Voluntary Declaration of Restrictive Covenant stating they would provide public Riverwalk required by code (no dead ends).
- g. [MRC May 1, 2023 Public Meeting Minutes](#)
- h. [Voluntary Declaration of Restrictive Covenants presented on the MRC on May 1, 2022](#) - Casa Neo provided Voluntary Declaration of Restrictive Covenant stating they would provide public Riverwalk required by code (no dead ends).
- i. [Voluntary Declaration of Restrictive Covenants presented on the MRC on June 3, 2024](#) - Casa Neo provided revised Voluntary Declaration of Restrictive Covenant stating they would no longer provide public Riverwalk required by code because now they would have a dead-end on the City side until the City constructs a new seawall and Riverwalk to improve the connection.
- j. [June 3, 2024 Plans Sheet 1 of 2](#) – Depicting Casa Neo public Riverwalk connecting into a 5' wide public Riverwalk on the adjacent City of Miami property.
- k. [June 3, 2024 Plans Sheet 2 of 2](#) - Depicting Casa Neo public Riverwalk connecting into a 5' wide public Riverwalk on the adjacent City of Miami property.
- l. [Pictures Taken May 18, 2024](#) - Depicting Casa Neo construction equipment, overflowing 30 yard dumpster and piles of loose trash on City and FDOT owned parcels and the location where it is feasible to make the public Riverwalk connector into the City owned parcel as required by code.

**m. City of Miami Zoning Code's Section 3.11 Waterfront Standards** <https://codehub.gridics.com/us/fl/miami#/cd9d9570-550f-47be-b530-33c1d29c4db3/ce42359c-c251-47bc-abc8-7a64b3b5a237>

The City of Miami's zoning code Section 3.11 states in part:

“Waterfront walkways shall connect to abutting public walkways, neighboring walkways, and Open Space at a consistent A.D.A. compliant width and grade to allow clear pedestrian circulation along the water's edge. Properties abutting a Thoroughfare or Public Frontage shall coordinate with the appropriate agency or organization on improvements and connections to Waterfront walkways required on those properties.

Waterfront Side Setbacks consisting of one (1) or more lot lines generally perpendicular to the greatest adjacent body of water shall be equal in aggregate to at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the water frontage of each Lot based on average Lot Width, to allow View Corridors open from ground to sky and to allow public access to the Waterfront”

Neither of these code requirements are being met in the revised proposal because Casa Neo's public Riverwalk is not connecting into the adjacent City of Miami owned publicly accessible “Open Space”, and Casa Neo is not providing Waterfront Side setbacks to allow view corridors “open from ground to sky and to allow public access to the Waterfront” which is also a requirement of the City Charter.

**n. [MRC Urban Infill and Greenways Subcommittee January 22, 2024](#)**

The public meeting minutes state in part:

**“Public Riverwalk Connection Between Casa Neo and City Owned Riverfront Site –** Guillaume Vidallet, Fabien Guandiola, Riviera Dining Group and Attorney Marc Sarnoff stated there 3 restaurants are nearing construction completion on North River Drive between the Flagler and 1 St Bridges. They presented plans for the desire to fund and construct a 5' wide public Riverwalk featuring a new needed seawall (estimated \$1,000,000) on City owned riverfront at 20 NW North River Drive located between their restaurants public Riverwalk and the Flagler Bridge, plus \$1,000 a month in rent to the City, in return for expanding the area for their restaurant tables and chairs onto the City property. Ms. Hannah Manzo, City of Miami Department of Real Estate and Asset Management, stated the City of Miami ordered an appraisal of the City owned site, which is required in order to determine the market rate prior to negotiations.

Attendees reviewed the City of Miami's awarded 2022 Grant Application to the Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND) titled “20 NW North River Drive Rip Rap and Boat Slip 40-B223800”. The Phase I grant was awarded for design and engineering estimated to cost \$128,250 of which FIND awarded \$43,200 and the City match is \$85,050. After the design is permitted, the City may apply to FIND for 50% of the funding needed for construction. Attendees reviewed the City of Miami's Quarterly Status Report for this awarded grant which the City submitted to FIND

indicating the awarded design is 0% complete. The City of Miami is yet to contract an engineering because the estimated design cost is now \$388,580, therefore the City needs to secure an additional \$206,330 in order to be able to hire an engineer.”

Ben Fernandez stated the distributed proposed revised Voluntary Restrictive Covenant still provides the same original public Riverwalk on the private property consistent with City Code, with the exception that their will be a dead end until the City constructs a new connecting seawall and public riverwalk.

The following is a chronological timeline of Casa Neo:

- 2017 - City of Miami permitted construction of Casa Neo including 2 required public Riverwalk connectors on private property as required by City Code 3.11 (neither of which were constructed) and no Riverwalk dead-ends as required by code although now they are proposing a dead-end which is not allowed in code.
- 2022 - City of Miami awarded a FIND grant for design and permitting of a new seawall and public Riverwalk on the subject City property
- January 2024 - Casa Neo presented at MRC subcommittee public meeting their desire for the City of Miami Commission to consider a month-to-month Revocable License Agreement to lease riverfront City owned 20 NW North River Drive for additional restaurant tables, including a 5-foot-wide public Riverwalk.

**The MRC adopted a unanimous resolution recommending a minimum 8-foot-wide public Riverwalk be provided on the City, private, and FDOT parcels before the City and or private parcels are opened as a restaurant (which does not necessarily need a new seawall on day 1, rather the new needed seawall maybe added after designed and permitted, which may take 2 years). In addition, the MRC recommended that as required by City Code the public Riverwalk at the restaurant building should not have a dead end, rather should connect with the currently publicly accessible adjacent City parcel / “Open Space” as required by City Code Section 3.11, before the structure gets a TUP and is allowed to operate as a restaurant, and that at the City parcel there should be no blocking the view of the River to the general public from the sidewalk and street. The MRC is not opposed to losing the City owned 20 NW North River Drive currently 100% publicly accessible City owned riverfront greenspace for a private restaurant, subject to the conditions of including an 8-foot wide unobstructed public riverwalk, no Riverwalk dead-ends at Casa Neo, and not blocking the view of the Miami River from the sidewalk / street.**

### **III. Discussion regarding Archaeological and Historical Conservancy, Inc.'s State Grant Application to Plan the "Tequesta Trail"**

**The MRC unanimously authorized the following MRC letter of support:**

To Whom It May Concern:

“We are pleased to support the Special Category grant submitted by the Archaeological and Historical Conservancy for developing a plan and designs for the proposed Tequesta Trail.

We believe that an interpretative trail highlighting Miami’s unique prehistory will become a focal point for visitors and tourists. The Miami Circle, a National Landmark, highlights Miami’s archaeological heritage, and creating the Tequesta Trail will place a spotlight on Miami’s cultural history.

The Miami River Commission will be an important part of the planning and review process since much of the Trail will follow the Riverwalk.

Thank you for your consideration for this important Florida project.”

Mia Laurenzo, Arch. Conservancy, spoke in support of the item on behalf of Bob Carr whom was unavailable to attend, and Miami River resident Christine Michaels spoke in favor of the item.

### **IV. Florida Department of Transportation Funded Plans to Improve the Existing On-Road Miami River Greenway along NW 7 / NW 8 Ave from NW 3 ST to NW 8 ST**

Patricia Quintela, FDOT, distributed and presented a detailed PowerPoint “State Road 7 / NW 8 Avenue / NW 7 Avenue From north of NW 3 ST to NW 8 ST Design Roadway Project”. The project will “replace damages sidewalks, close abandoned driveways, upgrade pedestrian curb ramps, upgrade traffic signs repave and restripe the road”. The reconstructed on-road Miami River Greenway will maintain its current and designed “mesa beige” color.

### **V. Informational Presentation Regarding “Kind Designs”, 3007 NW South River Drive**

Anya Freeman distributed and presented information regarding “Living Seawalls” constructed by “Kind Designs” stating in part, “Our code-compliant, 3D-printed Living Seawalls are structurally identical to traditional seawall panels, but also function as artificial reefs! 3D printing technology allows for greater design freedom and faster production than traditional construction.” Ms. Freeman stated at their new Miami River location they have 2 arms which are the world’s fastest and highest resolution concrete 3D printers. Ms. Freeman stated their 1<sup>st</sup> Living Seawall was installed along 100 linear feet of a private residence in Miami Beach, and they are currently working on a 1,500 linear foot “Living Seawall” at the “Jockey Club”, 1111 Brickell Ave.

**VI. New Business** - The public meeting adjourned.