

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY MAY 20, 2016 4:50 PM

What will Wynwood look like in 30 years? This plan shows the change

HIGHLIGHTS

Entrepreneur Moishe Mana agrees to modify 24-acre plan to soften impact

Plan would create commercial, arts, tech spaces, an expansive central square and hotel and residential towers

Wynwood Business Improvement District agrees to support plan at Miami City Commission after months of negotiation



BY ANDRES VIGLUCCI
aviglucchi@miamiherald.com

Wynwood, we hardly knew ye. Now get ready for Wynwood 2.0.

The metamorphosis that's already taken Wynwood's industrial district from urban blight to urban paragon in record time seems poised for a dose of development Muscle Milk that could pump up the scale of construction along a broad, mostly vacant swath of the neighborhood to new, and somewhat controversial, heights.

The two biggest players in Wynwood's snowballing transformation, at odds for months over a massive redevelopment proposal that some fear could overwhelm the human scale and funky vibe that define the district, have reached an agreement that softens its impact on the neighborhood fabric of spiffed-up warehouses, and likely clears the way for its preliminary approval by the Miami City Commission.

That would mean that Wynwood's largest landowner — moving-company and arts entrepreneur Moishe Mana — can move ahead with an ambitious 30-year blueprint for what amounts to a miniature city containing nine million square feet of space on some 24 acres of mostly vacant land stretching from the neighborhood's main street, Northwest Second Avenue, to its western edge at Interstate 95. The contemplated Mana district, centered around a green public central square, or "commons," that would cut diagonally through the development, is aimed at luring tech companies, commercial trade and arts and cultural institutions to Wynwood.

The board of Wynwood's Business Improvement District, a city-chartered agency that represents most property owners in the rest of the former industrial zone, voted Wednesday to support the Mana Special Area Plan after winning a series of concessions aimed at making sure the developer's new buildings mesh with the surrounding fabric of simple industrial buildings, many of which have been transformed into art galleries, offices, shops and dining and drinking spots.

“There was a lot of reasonable anxiety that you would have this district-within-the district that would be out of scale and out of character with the area,” said Albert Garcia, a member of the BID’s board and its planning committee, which negotiated the deal with Mana. “Over the last six months we’ve made a lot of progress in dialing that back so that it doesn’t suck the life out of Wynwood, which is the nightmare scenario. It’s a much better plan.

“I believe Mr. Mana understands our vision and it’s now a shared vision. We like to do things on a community basis and seek consensus. That’s the DNA of Wynwood. Wynwood is a special place. It’s not a race to the sky.”

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Albert Garcia, member of the Wynwood BID board

Mana’s architect and planner, Bernard Zyscovich, said the developer and his team are happy with the revised plan. Though it’s now scheduled for the first of two commission votes on Thursday, Zyscovich said Mana will likely ask for a two-week postponement to address issues brought up by residents of neighboring Overtown and Commissioner Keon Hardemon, whose district includes both neighborhoods. Those concerns include how the new development would affect adjacent residential areas in Overtown as well as the availability of jobs for residents.

“It’s all positive,” Zyscovich said. “I think we have a great plan, a plan that’s going to create a whole neighborhood that’s exciting and beneficial to our neighbors.”

The BID also had to relent on some issues. Mana would not budge on plan provisions that would allow him to build residential towers of up to 24 stories. But Mana’s team agreed to push those off Second Avenue to the western portions of his property along Northwest Fifth Avenue and I-95, and to conform to current, lower zoning where new buildings would face the existing neighborhood.

Mana’s proposal, unveiled at the end of 2015, riled BID leaders and neighboring property owners. After more than a year of planning, they had just won city approval for special zoning rules designed to control development by increasing allowed heights in most of the old Wynwood industrial district but capping them at eight or 12 stories, depending on location. The goal of the Neighborhood Revitalization District, as the new zoning plan was dubbed, is to foster development of relatively inexpensive housing and new office and retail space while preserving the neighborhood’s modest scale and pedestrian-friendly ambiance.

To take advantage of the increase, developers must pay into a special fund to help finance parking garages, affordable housing, creation of public green space and landscaping and improvement of streets and sidewalks, but Mana wanted to be exempted from the fees. He has now also agreed to participate in funding the programs.

Other changes to Mana’s initial plan aim to ensure his district is closely connected with the surrounding neighborhood. The rules would now require “active uses” like shops and restaurants at sidewalk level along principal facades and pedestrian passageways to break up large structures and encourage walking.

“If you’re a pedestrian crossing the street or you are driving down the street, it’s going to feel continuous and harmonious,” Garcia said. “We didn’t want those jarring transitions where you might have eight-story buildings on one side of the street and 24 stories on the other.”

New rules also allow Mana to begin building his taller residential structures only after he has completed defined percentages of the promised commercial and cultural buildings and public amenities, including meeting space and the central commons. That’s to ensure that those elements, which BID leaders and other neighborhood supporters say are critical to Wynwood’s evolution and comprise the most significant pieces of the Mana plan, don’t get lost or left for last, they said.

“What will make Wynwood an interesting place in 10 years from now and 20 years from now is if that art school and the cultural institutions and tech set up permanent camp here,” said David Polinsky, a developer who is a BID board member and chair of the planning committee. “Not everybody’s happy with the scale [of the Mana plans]. But the board feels reasonable compromises were made. There are still lots of good things that can come out of the [project] if it’s executed well.”

Those good things, Zyscovich said, will include buildings with large, flexible floorplates that can accommodate everything from showrooms and meeting rooms to offices, art exhibition galleries and “maker spaces.” Mana is now working on a plan to create an international trade center on site to link buyers and suppliers of products in Asia and Latin America, he said.

Mana also plans to replicate elements of his Mana Contemporary art center, a converted tobacco warehouse in Jersey City, New Jersey, that combines artist studios and exhibition galleries with services such as fine-art storage, transportation and conservation, Zyscovich said.

The plan also includes hotels, but the potential residential buildings, Zyscovich stressed, are secondary.

“Our main idea is not to create more residential, which everyone is doing,” he said. “We’re looking for a job creation strategy. Showrooms, office infrastructure, entrepreneurial spaces — all that is very much the idea.”



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Bernard Zyscovich, Mana project architect and planner

There are some unsettled matters. Mana, whose holdings are centered around the former Wynwood Free Trade Zone complex, which he purchased in 2010, has been using the facility and adjacent vacant land for large special events under a temporary permit, including a reggae performance that recently drew a reported 60,000 people.

BID leaders want those events curbed because they say they’re disruptive and detract from Wynwood’s particular ethos. Mana has in principle agreed to abide by normal city rules for such events. They also want Mana to support a proposed expansion of the boundaries of the BID — a special taxing district that levies a fee on property owners to support special services like security and trash cleanup.

Some Mana properties now sit outside the BID boundary, but the expansion would mean all of Mana’s holdings would be subject to the levy. Mana — whose failure to vote on any of his properties contributed to a defeat last year of a previous effort to expand the BID — has agreed to support the expansion. But he has not committed to paying the additional levy. If the city commission approves Mana’s development plan on first reading, the BID agreed it would negotiate the terms of his participation before the second reading.

The BID board made it clear last week that they would rescind support for Mana’s plan if he doesn’t follow through on his promise to support the expansion.

Because the plan is conceptual and doesn’t bind Mana to building as promised, there is still substantial concern in Wynwood over the proposal and its potential impact on the neighborhood renaissance, Garcia said. But if Mana does follow through on his promises, he added, Wynwood stands to benefit significantly.

“On the plus side, if it’s developed as planned and does bring the economic stimulation it promises, it’s a win for Wynwood and for Miami,” Garcia said.



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COMMENTS

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**Brandon Kerns** · Assistant Staff Scientist at University of Miami

PLEASE no mega parking structures. Build mass transit instead. The new zoning requires less parking. Make it so.

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**Micco Mann** · University of Miami

Can't imagine wanting to live there facing that tree-less commons. Without trees-- and I'm not talking palm trees-- it will be like living in a furnace during the summer. So, instead of a heat reflecting plaza, you couldn't put in a park?

Like · Reply · 6 · May 20, 2016 2:19pm

**Andres Viglucci** · Princeton University

That's just a conceptual image. There is no design. BID and Mana will work jointly on a landscaping plan.

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**Jorge Martinez**

Get plenty of canopies for shade. We don't want the place to feel like an open oven!

Like · Reply · 3 · May 20, 2016 4:46pm · Edited

**Micco Mann** · University of Miami

Andres Viglucci Still, you would think that a respected architectural firm would have an instinctive gut feeling that a concrete plaza is NOT the concept they want to push to sell this development. They could have conceived a mini Central Park between the two buildings with bike paths, open fields for concerts, and plenty of shade producing trees.

Like · Reply · 3 · May 21, 2016 11:07am · Edited

**Roberto Ravelo**

First it was 95 then the arena now Wynwood goodbye blacks go back to Ga those damm Cuban politicians have a plan to get you out of over town

Like · Reply · May 20, 2016 4:33pm

**Fernando Martinez** · Miami, Florida

I agree with you, I feel the African American citizens have to be brought in more fully and given a bigger fighting chance. They lived there during the hard times and now that it's getting good they have to leave? That's just plain wrong, they deserve the jobs and opportunities that are rolling in.

Like · Reply · May 21, 2016 9:49am

**Gaby Gabriel** · Miami, Florida

Ravelo que clase de singao eres

Like · Reply · May 22, 2016 6:27am

**Richard Strell** · Antioch College

After the other Wynwood developers got the city to upzone the heights of all their properties - which were already all upzoned recently just before that, with Miami 21, they were upset. Someone with actually even more money and clout then them came in with a better winning hand. The city has no plan for the city or any areas, other than whoever has the most money, and traffic keeps getting exponentially worse, since there's no plan for mass transit. More density and traffic, no solution, less green space and no added parks. Really, far from an enlightened city plan.

Like · Reply · 4 · May 20, 2016 7:33pm · Edited

**Fernando Martinez** · Miami, Florida

This is a horrible plan. The traffic and environmental problems will be overwhelming, plus where is the affordable housing. This is just another Brickell further north without a metromover, what a jlp.

Like · Reply · 1 · May 21, 2016 9:51am · Edited

**Jack N. Hoff**

In 30 years it will either be a slum again, or if the global warming hysterics are correct, under water.

Like · Reply · 2 · May 22, 2016 5:07am

**Bob Gremillion** · University of New Orleans

It won't be completely under water in 30 years...

Like · Reply · May 22, 2016 5:29am

**Jack N. Hoff**

Bob Gremillion

<http://www.wired.com/.../map-shows-sea-level-rise.../>

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**Micco Mann** · University of Miami

I may disagree with your views but I will fight to the death for your right to use your nom de plume!

Like · Reply · 2 · May 22, 2016 8:59am

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Greg Hamilton · Miami, Florida

Where is that Crystal ball? Why stop with Wynnewood, what about the rest of the world?

Like · Reply · May 22, 2016 5:49am



Tina Spiro · Friends Academy, Locust Valley, NY

There is no urban planning and design sense to this plan

Like · Reply · 1 · May 22, 2016 6:23am

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long, before adding that it seems appropriate to raise



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