

CITY OF CORAL GABLES

- MEMORANDUM -

TO: PETER IGLESIAS, CITY MANAGER

DATE: DECEMBER 29, 2021

FROM: HERMES DIAZ, MELISSA DE ZAYAS

SUBJECT: YOUTH ZONES

Upon the initiative of Commissioner Fors, we have evaluated the Youth Zone concept and have prepared this memorandum for consideration.

The City of Coral Gables Public Works' Department often receives requests from residents to improve safety around parks and schools. The City is home to nine (9) public schools, eight (8) private schools and sixty-two (62) parks and open spaces. These types of locations serve the most vulnerable members of the community – children.

Youth Zones

School Zones protect areas around schools and force drivers to exercise increased caution, but there are many other sensitive locations throughout the City that attract large numbers of children and pedestrians and warrant extra protection. The Public Works Department recommends establishing Youth Zones around neighborhood streets that experience a high number of pedestrians due to the presence of parks. Youth Zones could be exempt from traffic calming studies in order to lower posted speeds. They may also be given aesthetic treatments like branded signage.

The concept of Youth Zones is aligned with the recommendations identified in the 2020 Community Recreation Master Plan, Comprehensive Plan, 2020 – 2022 Strategic Plan, Coral Gables Complete Streets Policy, Coral Gables Active Design Policy and Coral Gables Age Friendly Design Policy which all support safe public rights of way.

Speed Limit

Reduced speed limits are an effective way to decrease the risk of injury or fatality on roadways. The City reduced the speed limit on local residential streets from 30 mph to 25 mph. Residents were receptive and felt it made their neighborhoods safer. Despite that, residents often feel vehicles drive through neighborhoods and areas adjacent to parks too quickly. Studies show that 7.5 out of 10 pedestrians hit by drivers at 25 mph will escape without severe injury. When the speed is lowered to 20 mph, 8.7 pedestrians will escape severe injury. The Department recommends the City move forward with coordinating with other government agencies to establish zones around City parks similar to those around schools where the speed limit would be reduced.



Sidewalks

The City currently funds 100% of the cost of sidewalks on collector streets. On local residential streets, sidewalks are 50% funded by the City and 50% by the residents; however, within Youth Zones, sidewalks could be fully funded by the City to increase the safety around parks and schools.



Figure 1: Neighborhood Sidewalks

Signage

Special branded sign designs are being finalized that would identify an area as a Youth Zone and encourage lower speeds by drivers.



Figure 2: Sample branded signage

Education and Information

Youth Zones will be a novel concept to residents within the City and it is vital to ensure that educational campaigns are implemented to inform residents about the initiative. In an effort to properly inform individuals throughout the City, the Department recommends the following steps be taken:

1. Provide online references to relevant documents and maps of designated Youth Zones, which could include a website for public informational purposes.
2. Advertise via social Media and E-News.

Next Steps

Youth Zone implementation will be approached incrementally. Initially, branded signage will be installed, encouraging slow speeds. Sidewalk construction for neighborhoods in the zones will be advertised through E-News and social media. Speed limits will need to be negotiated with the County, but given new leadership, there is likely support for initiatives that align with the County's Vision Zero Plan.