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Miami 21 zoning plan to go into effect May 20

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Miami 21, the city's long-sought and forever-debated zoning code, will be implemented as planned on May 20.

Miami Mayor Tomás Regalado and commissioners had a brief discussion on the item Thursday morning, with most agreeing the zoning blueprint needs some tinkers.

But they made clear that scuttling or delaying the plan -- as some attorneys and developers had been seeking -- would be a near impossible task.

Though the plan was passed by a vote of the commission last year, the newly-seated commission voted in February to delay implementation for three months as they became immersed in the code's complex details.

In the past three weeks land-use attorneys and their clients have held several closed-door meetings trying to find a way to delay or kill the plan. They felt it, as adopted, could unfairly limit development rights.

Yet Regalado ultimately said the plan must be implemented, even though he had voted against it last year while serving on the commission. The mayor said he is now tasked with moving it forward, because it had already won approval.

"A contract is a contract," said Regalado.

Backers say Miami 21 -- a key piece of former Mayor Manny Diaz's administration -- will make the city more uniform and pedestrian-friendly, with hidden garages, larger walkways and scaled development. Some opponents have threatened lawsuits over building agreements that now must change because of the new code.

The commission did agree to hold a special session in late May or early June so residents, commissioners or developers can air their concerns and later possibly amend the zoning code. No date has been set.

"We all understand Miami 21 is a working document," the mayor said.

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