

North Miami paves way for 297-unit luxury apartment development

Nine-story complex is designed to attract mostly younger, working professionals

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By Hortense Leon

Causeway Village, a proposed 529,860-square-foot mixed-use development in North Miami, moved a step closer to approval after the city's planning commission agreed to a land-use amendment.

The 4.13-acre development, which will cost more than \$68 million, will be a nine-story complex with 297 luxury apartments designed to attract mostly younger, working professionals. The developer, Taubco, has built a number of commercial projects in the area over the last 10 to 15 years.

In order to minimize the effects of the building's size on its mostly low-rise surroundings, the design will include setbacks, the architect for the project, Alfred Ravelo-Lombana of Behar-Font & Partners, said at Tuesday's planning meeting.

If approved as-is, Causeway Village, located at 1850 Northeast 123rd Street just east of Biscayne Boulevard, will feature two swimming pools, among other amenities, and 15,480 square feet of high-end retail and restaurant space. It will also have a multi-story garage with roughly 487 parking spaces, mostly for residents.

The new development will enhance the neighborhood, Wayne Pathman, land use attorney for the developer, said at the meeting. "This is what you've been wanting, residential development in this corridor," because it generates less traffic than a strictly commercial project, he said. The site is currently designated commercial only.

Tanya Wilson-Sejour, planning, zoning and development director for North Miami, told *The Real Deal* that "the developers want to build a pedestrian-oriented and transit-friendly complex to create a live-work environment in which residents will have all the amenities, including retail and recreation, onsite." This kind of development is what the comprehensive plan calls for, she said.

North Miami is built-out, with only 1 percent vacant land remaining and a growing population, Wilson-Sejour told *TRD*. "If the city is to remain solvent and continue growing, you have to support residential, mixed-use developments that maximize the limited land that is available," she said.

A staff suggestion streamlined the approval process for the project by extending the boundary of an overlay district — which allows mixed-use development. The Causeway Village site can become part of that overlay district. The next step is for the city council to review the planning commission's decision.

In 2013, the North Miami planning commission had approved an earlier plan for Causeway Village, also submitted by Taubco, but it was never heard by the city council.

Causeway Square, an earlier Taubco development located across the street from the Causeway Village site, earned the ire of some residents because of the increased traffic and noise that it generated. In addition, many objected to Causeway Square's towering over the adjacent single-family neighborhood of Keystone Point.

Residents appeared at the planning meeting to object to Taubco's current plan, though William Prevatel, an architect and former member of the North Miami Planning Commission, said "the positives greatly outweigh the negatives."

"In recent years, the city has mostly seen subsidized housing projects and very little private investment," Prevatel said. And increasing height and density may attract more high-end projects. "There's been remarkably little growth in the housing stock," he said, "and in the commercial sectors in North Miami."

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