

Fall Talk: Workforce Housing, in Numbers

Transcript of the Save Miami Beach Zoom, Sunday, October 25, 2026

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0:00 Welcome, and what has changed since Oct. 11

[0:00] **Daniel Ciraldo:** My name is Daniel Ciraldo, and I am here today as editor and publisher of Miami Beach Journal, which I started last November in order to have some more local news for Miami Beach. And, Miami Beach Journal has been covering the Live Local What we consider a crisis. Since we started, and we've been doing a lot of research on the topic. And we're wanting to share that with you and with the public, and hopefully have residents more informed about what's going on in their community. So, we had our first Zoom on October 11th, and since then, quite a lot has happened. First, the City Commission, on October 14th, they voted on 11 items, which will essentially start to challenge Live Local, question the maximum heights allowed, for these new developments.

[1:10] And also look into, some outside counsel to potentially, see if there's any legal deficiencies that might help, at least reduce the height of what is currently being proposed. On October 14th, the City Commission also approved an item that now requires any time a new application is filed, that the City Commission be notified, because before that time. the commission and the public were only notified once an application was approved. So, as you can imagine, a lot of residents have been upset because all of a sudden they get a notification that a big tower is approved right near their home. And, they could have known a year before, but they didn't. So, that is another positive change that has come out of some of this, concern. And then also, the night after our first Zoom, the real estate developer, Russell Galbut.

[2:19] he, pulled, 3 of his Live Local projects, and those are 1575 Alton. 740 Alton, and 880 71st Street. And he said in his letter to the city that it was due to talks with Commissioner Fernandez and County Commissioner Lopez. And, you know, so that's, positive, but we don't know when he might come right back for another proposal. Here, the next slide, we talked about at the last meeting, but this just is another summary of all the different items that the Commission put forward last meeting. answering the concerns of the residents, and, and it was good to see them all kind of, joining together, to... to push back against Live Local.

3:16 The law in one summary: what a developer gives, what the state gives back

[3:15] **Daniel Ciraldo:** So, the law in, you know, one quick summary. What does a developer give, and what the state is back? So, it is a state preemption. So, what it says is, if a developer Builds a building with 40% of the home's rent capped. For households earning up to 120% of area median income for 30 years, then the state will allow them to build at the height of the tallest building within a mile. So for Alton Road, that's often, they're using Five Park, 519 feet. As well as having the highest residential density allowed anywhere in the city, and 150% of the highest floor area ratio in the city. And the approval can be done what's called

administratively by city staff. That means no planning board, no design review board, no commission vote.

[4:18] And, that is something that was passed by the state that seems to be impacting Miami Beach and barrier islands a lot more than maybe the lawmakers anticipated.

4:32 How a Live Local application moves, step by step

[4:31] **Daniel Ciraldo:** So, we have gotten a lot of questions from people signing up, asking how the application process works. So we made this slide, and basically, it shows 6 steps for a developer to get a Live Local project approved, starting with the filing. Then there is a 30-day mail notice, so if you are an app... if you are a resident. property owner within 375 feet of, Live Local application, you should be getting, a notice in the mail. as well as your neighborhood association should be receiving an email notification. So, make sure that's happening, and if not, you can go to the planning department and, you know, file a complaint about not receiving the notice. But in spite of there being notice, the planning director gets to review it administratively, and if it meets the requirements of the zoning, then it can be approved.

[5:36] And the only rule, as we had mentioned before, is that 40% of homes have to stay affordable, quote-unquote, for 30 years, and it's recorded in the covenant. Now, there is one provision that a reader actually let us know about the other day, that On paper, it does say that the Board of Adjustment can hear an appeal of a Live Local. So if there's any neighbors watching this, that is something that you may want to look into, with your attorney. This is Resiliency Code Section 2.5.5, and there is something about, appealing to the Board of Adjustment, but it's not clear whether that could Really, stop a project.

6:24 The city's count: 16 live projects, 2,135 homes

[6:23] **Daniel Ciraldo:** So, currently, here's where we are with Live Local. There have been 16 live projects. with 2,135 homes or units proposed, and 1,041 of them workforce. Five of those have already been approved by the staff, and we're going to show you those quickly on the next slide. And then 9 of them are pending. from the city's latest table, and two of them were filed since that update from the city, and... and that is... those are the two on West Avenue, which we're going to show you shortly. So, workforce share across all 16 is almost 50%, and that's because some of the approved projects are 100% workforce, but most of the towers being proposed are not.

7:22 The five already approved

[7:21] **Daniel Ciraldo:** So the 5 already approved, here's a screen showing all 5 of them. 1960 Normandy Drive was the first one. It was actually approved back in December of 25. Then there was 663 Alton that was approved this summer. 1826 Collins Avenue, which is right across from the Shelborne Hotel. was approved in September, and then there, were two in North Beach, 7410 Collins and 7401 Harding, that were approved in September and October. So the two on the left are all workforce, so 117 and 79, and then the other ones generally have a small, you know, workforce component within the larger condominium development.

8:19 Three projects withdrawn the night after our last talk

[8:18] **Daniel Ciraldo:** we mentioned at the beginning of this meeting that the day after our Zoom, the developer, removed 3 towers from the application process, and those were 1575 Alton Road, 740 Alton Road, and 880 71st Street. And so, actually, 1575, that first one, is the site of the Firestone Building, which is a 1935 Art Deco structure. It is, though, unfortunately not within a historic district, and so, that could

potentially be demolished. under this, live local rule. We don't know if this developer's gonna come back with something different, so I think we should stay tuned and keep monitoring these and the other sites, as we watch to see what's going on here.

9:17 What a workforce home looks like: 512 sq ft, \$2,862 a month

[9:16] **Daniel Ciraldo:** So now, into the details of the Live Local Homes. What does it mean to require 40% to be workforce? Well, the state didn't put anything about the size of the units. And so what we're seeing here in Miami Beach, in this example, 1920 Alton Road, is that the average market rate condos are over 4,000 square feet. and then the quote-unquote workforce housing are around 512 square feet. So that's gonna get you about a studio, the size of a studio, and under the requirements of Live Local. The developer has to charge \$2,862 a month, or less. for that 512 square feet studio. In exchange, they are getting a significant increase in maximum building height to build all of these condominiums. And, 1501, also has the Live Local proposed 1501 Collins, which is within our Deco district.

[10:24] And you could see, comparing the market rate, units that are the blue portion of the building shown here, to the live local that are also about studio size. And once again, there's not a lot in the law about how will it be enforced. whether the workforce has to be from Miami Beach or outside. You know, I'm even thinking that it could be that some of the owners of the condo want to rent it for their household staff. So it's not clear whether this will make the dent That we need in the workforce.

11:03 Southgate Towers and the new West Avenue filings

[11:02] **Daniel Ciraldo:** So next, I'd like to, show the example of Southgate Towers, which we only learned about due to that new commission requirement of notifying the Commission when an application is made. So, on, I believe it was around October 9th. October 8th or 9th, the owners of this property, Southgate, applied for Live Local. And it's... actually, it's just a pre-application, I need to be clear, so they submitted some pre-application materials, to then, you know, kind of get the process going. So currently, Southgate is Two 14-story tower development 4 acres on the bay with 495 rentals, and it was built in 1958, and in 2023, a company called AIR Communities purchased the property, and then it looks like Blackstone bought AIR in 2024. And so, this new proposal would demolish both of these towers and create something new. And, we actually, at the Journal, built the model of what has been submitted, just to give a sense of what's being proposed. So here you see it's, about 454 feet in height, 38-story towers, and then, there would be live local units in the general area of where I'm showing the hand, but actually not... I don't think they face the water, I think they're all on the side.

[12:45] and on the side facing West Avenue. So it's... it would be a very big change for this predominantly 150-foot maximum height in that area. And so, this does beg the question, is Live Local accomplishing the goal that it's set out to do, which is to preserve and build more workforce housing? Well. you know, in this case, it doesn't look like, that's happening. You've got 495 rental apartments today, and the new project would have only 178 workforce studios. Those are gonna be about 400 square feet. And, then there's gonna be 264 large luxury condos above. So, you know, on the flip side, one could say, well, if this New Live Local project is built, then for 30 years. Those workforce studios do have to stay at 2,800 or lower per month, you know, and add in some inflation. But, You know, it's... this... there's already, you know, 495 units there. And so, by the way, we looked at the average size and rent ask for a studio, one-bedroom, two-bedroom at Southgate, from what we found in listings, and it's actually less.

[14:13] than what a live local unit would be able to ask for. So, something with the math is not adding up here. And that's a big concern also for the people that live there currently. Now, just up the street at the old

Office Depot, or the current Office Depot, this project has just been proposed, which would be 19 levels. and 308 feet, where zoning allows 50 feet. It would also include 18 workforce, I believe those are studios as well, and... they would all be on one level near the bottom of the building. So, those who are still in the pre-application phase. Now, here's one on 6th Street that was filed to replace a set of three Henry Hohauser-designed smaller buildings. You can see one of them here. So, this, project would have 79 units, whereas the current buildings, I believe, have 12 units in total.

[15:25] But, you know, at the same time, it would be knocking down a historic building and, displacing residents that are already there.

15:36 Small homes on low floors, with rents above market

[15:36] **Daniel Ciraldo:** So, it's clear from what we've reviewed that the workforce homes are really very small, mostly single occupant or studio-type homes compared to the market homes. They go on the lowest floors, and usually they're on the floor, or just next to the parking. And the amount of rent that is charged, as you can see here, these are the rules based on the state calculations, it's not necessarily rent that is affordable to... to the workforce, here in Miami Beach. In fact, the studio cap is above the average asking rent in every zip code that we looked at. So, the numbers don't seem to add up. These are the income limits for one person. At that level, 120% of area median income. So the filings say that, at a minimum.

[16:42] They have to have the covenant, but it's not clear how it will be enforced, what happens if the developer, you know, doesn't rent at that rate. what... what will the mechanism be to remedy it? A lot of this is... is not clear at all.

17:01 Questions to ask, and what a fix could look like

[17:00] **Daniel Ciraldo:** So we have asked some questions of the city, and we suggest you can ask them too, or ask candidates that are running for office. Who checks the incomes and how often? Who enforces the 30 years? does a 40% unit count apply to each phase? In the case of that Southgate project, it would actually be two phases. So there's a question of that. And is the city able to ask for more than the minimum that the state provides? We've talked at our last meeting about what a fix might look like, including possibly exempting barrier islands in historic districts, letting a city opt out. from Live Local with its own housing plan, measuring height within the district and not within a mile. And also, folks at the last talk suggested other good ideas, like counting 40% by the floor area of the building, not just the unit count. And that would make the size of the units, more, more even.

[18:10] And setting a minimum size for those workforce homes.

18:15 What you can do this week, and the next three talks

[18:14] **Daniel Ciraldo:** So, before we take your questions, two things that you can do this week is, definitely vote. Early voting runs through November 1st, and we had last time some of the candidates on who were talking about There are concerns with Live Local. If you didn't see that, check out that recording at SaveMiamiBeach.org. And also, stay tuned for our next three talks, which will be November 8th, talking about sewage capacity and how much can the beach really handle. November 15th, we're going to talk about the Raleigh Hotel. And, the FAR vote there. And then December 13th, we will come back and look at what changes might make sense for Tallahassee next session, and also if there's any updates on the Hillsborough suit that we've discussed previously.

19:10 Q&A: the questions sent in at registration

[19:10] **Daniel Ciraldo:** So, on that note, I want to thank you all for listening, and if you have some questions, please raise your hand, and then I will, I'll bring you on to ask. This slide here shows some of the top questions that we got in the sign-up process. Including, what is the timeline for the applications? How can residents oppose the demolition? What happens to tenants who will be displaced? And what is the best way to push back on unnecessary development? How can we amend the law? So these are all Great questions, and some of them were covered earlier, but as far as if you are a neighbor within 375 feet of a project you've heard about, definitely reach out to the planning department to get all of the information on the project.

[20:04] So that you can know what might be coming. Speak up at the commission meetings, at your neighborhood groups, at Sutnick Hour, so that this issue stays top of mind for the city. And hopefully, working with your, you know, elected officials to get the law amended. Because it's, it's really getting out of control at this point for Miami Beach. So, I don't see any hands up, hopefully... I answered... Some of the questions... God forbid I've been on mute this whole time and no one heard anything. But... Maybe it's someone who...

[20:52] **Audience member:** Every word. We heard every word.

20:54 Q&A: living at Southgate

[20:54] **Daniel Ciraldo:** Oh, good. Oh, okay, perfect. Oh, here we go, thank you. [name removed]. Okay, [name removed], can we hear from you? Let me, un... unmute you. Welcome, [name removed].

[21:07] **Audience member:** Hi, thanks for having me. I live at the Southgate Tower, so that's how I found out about this meeting. And, I read through what you had up on the screen. I'm a new, like, I just moved here to this building, [detail removed]. So then, to hear this news, you know, it's like, okay, what... what's really going on? So, I'm just curious, because I don't know, kind of, like, how everything runs here, especially since with this local and all this. You know, what do you think about these proposals? I mean, how many are... accepted or approved versus thrown away? Like, are these developers just kind of throwing everything at the wall and seeing what sticks? Like, what is your perception?

[21:45] **Daniel Ciraldo:** Well, first of all, welcome, and it's a great place, a great city to live in, and Before Live Local passed, buildings like Southgate and other buildings, even on West Avenue, were sort of there, because they were built over the zoning code that's currently allowed, so they're kind of what you would consider, like, naturally occurring affordable housing. Because if... the buildings were to be knocked down, the new buildings could not be as big. But that has all changed since the state preemption, and this is why something that we could never have imagined before, the Southgate being redeveloped, is now a possibility. you know, I'm not sure what to recommend to you personally, other than trying to see if other tenants, who are concerned might want to go to the management company and find out how serious this is.

[22:44] and whether you will be a part of the process. I know that, for example, at 1250 West Avenue, that was a condominium that had a buyout by a developer. And the tenants there were able to get assistance with their rent and other things. And it's not at that point yet. They're only in a pre-application. But those are probably the questions you're going to want to start asking, along with your neighbors, so please, please keep us posted as well.

[23:14] **Audience member:** Yeah, I mean, I'm not sure, really, what... when I hear Blackstone, what hope

there is for anything, so, I'm not really sure, like, you know, how serious all of it is, how serious the city is in saying, like, no to these types of things, you know, or if it's pretty much a done deal when these companies, these, like, you know, developers put this out there.

[23:34] **Daniel Ciraldo:** Yeah, I think it's still all to be determined, but the fact that you're already in the loop, at least that shows it what the city just changed this month to require the applications to be shared publicly has gotten us all to this point. So we are, like, ahead of the game compared to the other 14 or so that were filed before, where none of us even knew until, you know, the stamp was there for approval, so... but we gotta take advantage of that... that head start, so, That would be my suggestion.

[24:08] **Audience member:** Okay, so your suggestion is to go to the management company with other residents to get more of a serious inquiry?

[24:14] **Daniel Ciraldo:** Yeah, I would suggest that, and also if there's any, neighborhood groups that you're part of, I know, obviously, West Avenue has WAVNA, as well as SoBe West, and they're both pretty good at staying in the loop on things. So I would... I would suggest kind of spreading... spreading the feelers out to see... see who's also concerned. By the way, I see somebody on the line, [name removed] says Southgate too, I have a question, so [name removed], welcome.

[24:46] **Audience member:** Hey, yes, I got to the, to this meeting quite late, I just got in, but So, my question is, so management here at Southgate, it's very, they do not keep up with our own amenities. We have a rundown dock. [detail removed] We have an elevator on each of the towers that is renovated since the summer, but it's closed up. And management here, it's not out for the residents. They are out for the benefit of the company. Since it's company owned by this large corporation. I know from long... a time residency that have been in the Tower for, like, over 20 years. They have run down to the management to ask. Anything regarding the buyout and the application? The agents and the management, are claiming that they're ignorant to it.

[25:53] I was here one day during the summer, and I did see people surveying, and they did not look like they were looking for the water or whatnot. My other neighbors have also noticed people that have been coming to survey the whole premise. So this has been... I worked behind the scenes since, you know, a few months back in 2026. So, going to management, it's not gonna be an answer to us. Okay. And they, you know, like, I've been here for [detail removed]. They'd rather have residents leave so they can raise the rent for new people, and so they can get their commission for each unit, so it's not in their, in their heart for, you know, to... The only thing is that the management and the agents live in the premise, so now they're gonna be... also, like, forced to be relocated if this is to happen. A neighbor of mine also told me, [name removed], be careful, [detail removed].

[26:57] And he told me, [name removed], be careful in what you share and how you share it, because your passion to fight for your... for... to stay here and whatnot, you can get in trouble with the lease in provoking, to go against, like, the corporation and whatnot. So, they... they advised me not to... kind of, like, not to lobby too much, but to share information. I was going... in the own chat that we have, that [name removed] is in it. Someone said, please do not keep this political, do not talk about this, like, just keep it about the building, updates, and, you know, if the emergency sound goes off, or what's happening to the pool, you know, but, right. So, now I'm afraid to kind of be vocal, because, you know, in the end, we don't want to... Be the one to be highlighted as the one that's, like, lobbying, for life, life, you know, local.

[27:56] **Daniel Ciraldo:** Yes, no, I appreciate... I... and honestly, that's part of the challenge with this law, because the way it was written, I don't think they expected it would target a building like yours, full of really workforce, residents, people that work in the city, etc, and then they... they might all be displaced, so... I

think, though, there's... you've got to balance that concern about, you know, being a tenant with also trying to get the word out, maybe attracting some press and some media, so that at least you all have a seat at the table. When this is going forward, with the... with the developers, that would be my recommendation. But of course, you have to do it in the right way, as you mentioned. Okay, well, let's see... does anyone else have... oh yeah, so [name removed] said, reach out to resident-friendly commissioners.

[28:59] Definitely this item, I'm sure commissioners are aware of it, now that the letter went out to them. So, anyone in the building who knows commissioners, go to them and say, this building should not be a live local target. Help us, you know? I mean, I think 3 or 4 of them are up for re-election next year. So, they have many reasons to care about this as well. So I think all that I'm trying to do, we're trying to do, is make sure people are in the loop on what's happening within their neighborhood, how it could impact them, and

29:35 Q&A: opting out, lawsuits and other cities

[29:35] **Daniel Ciraldo:** And... and go from there. Okay, [name removed], I see you have a question.

[29:39] **Audience member:** Yes, I do. I'm sorry about my video here, it keeps going in and out today. It's a two-part question. I've heard... I don't know how true they are of other municipalities in Florida, attempting to opt out of the law. Is that possible? And then the other part of the question is, what is the status of any legal challenges right now?

[30:07] **Daniel Ciraldo:** Okay, great question. So, as far as opting out, I'm not as clear on... on that, I think there may have been some amendments done, over the prior sessions. It may have allowed for certain things, especially related to agriculture. But, like, opting out, but as far as Miami Beach or Barrier Islands, there is not currently an opt-out provision. As far as lawsuits, Hillsborough County is the first... it's their county commission that, actually filed a lawsuit, and it's in, Leon County Court currently, which is where Tallahassee is, and they're basically saying that they don't believe the law is constitutional, that it usurps the rights of the local municipalities. The state has already moved to dismiss and claims the sovereignty of the state.

[31:07] But, that is still an active case. As far, though, as, like, neighbors suing to stop a Live Local project near them, I'm not aware of that other than Bal Harbour. So Bal Harbour has done that as far as the shops of Bal Harbour. And I think that that case is pending, but in Miami Beach, I'm not aware of that yet. But I do think that, you know, soon some neighbors or some residents of these buildings that are being impacted may take the legal route. Right. Isn't it...

[31:44] **Audience member:** Is it possible for Miami Beach and other cities, because I know there's a lot of concern in Fort Lauderdale and other coastal cities, to, Join forces with this lawsuit.

[32:00] **Daniel Ciraldo:** Yes, you're right, and actually, on that note, Mayor Meiner had something, if I could pull up that slide, at the commission meeting where he's working with, see, it's the second one here, C7AP, He's working with other mayors, especially coastal mayors, to repeal or amend it. So, and hopefully he's going up to Fort Lauderdale, too, because I know there's issues all the way up the coast. In Dade and Broward and Palm Beach in particular. So, we've got to do what we can to let people know the impacts of this loss, show them these concrete examples. go to the legislatures who wrote the law and say, hey, you know, did you really mean this? Or, hey, I'm a resident of this building, did you really mean to... that I'm going to be kicked out and replaced with the luxury high-rise? You know, we've got to have those learning moments.

[33:00] So that we can hopefully appeal or... or amend, or re... repeal or amend the law in the next session.

[33:09] **Audience member:** And Daniel, one more question, then I'll certainly let everybody else chime in.

[33:14] **Daniel Ciraldo:** Sure.

[33:15] **Audience member:** Obviously, I think we're all concerned about the historic district, and the fact that these buildings can tear down a building within a historic district. Isn't there a way to challenge that? Because the whole historic preservation movement is based upon federal laws.

33:36 Q&A: the historic districts

[33:36] **Daniel Ciraldo:** That's a great question, [name removed], and yes, that's something that the Commission is looking at, in fact. Alex Fernandez at the last commission meeting added to their, their list of things that they want to push back on to look at that Safe Structures and Resiliency Act that was passed a few years ago. and impacts historic preservation, to see if that can be overturned or repealed. I did want to mention, though, that there was an amendment made, and it was in... it was in the 2025 session at the state legislature where it said that if a Live Local project impacts a historic building, then there does have to be what they call facade replication, which for us is not Not the best, but it essentially will preserve the facade or rebuild the facade of a historic building, but it doesn't go far enough in protecting that.

[34:38] **Audience member:** [inaudible] was the whole point of historic preservation.

[34:42] **Daniel Ciraldo:** Yes, yeah, exactly. But, like, as an example, the Bancroft at 1501 Collins, where the developer is actually suing his neighbors to try to get it approved, at the very least, that building is required to maintain the facade, because prior to that, Galbut could have filed for a total demolition prior to that Live Local update. So there have been these small updates based on, you know, just as much pressure as can be given, but I think a bigger comprehensive update is needed before, like you said, we destroy that... the character and the scale of our historic districts.

35:25 Q&A: can approved projects be stopped?

[35:25] **Daniel Ciraldo:** Okay, I see a question from [name removed]. Hi, [name removed]. If the law is appealed, can it stop projects that have been approved, but have not yet received a building permit? That is a really good question. I'm not sure the rules about, about, like, estoppel and, like, entitlements and granted rights. But ideally, if we were able to get the law repealed, we would also say that those buildings that were approved would not be approved. But that being said, you know, if you look at the history of South of 5th and those towers along the bay, there was a lawsuit during that time to stop those developments, and the city ended up settling with the developers. So I think that we as residents have to Pay attention and make sure that whatever's being done, that they're not compromising too much with what they're doing, and we've got to hold them all accountable with these developers as well.

36:34 Closing: where to follow and reach us

[36:33] **Daniel Ciraldo:** All right, well, I don't see any other questions, but, we will, have that next meeting on, November 8th? And in the meantime, please make sure to follow us on Instagram, Miami Beach Journal. We also have Save Miami Beach Official on Instagram. And we will continue sharing as we see what is going on. If you are a resident of a neighborhood or a building that's being impacted by this. please reach out to us and keep us posted. My email, my email at the journal is daniel at miamibeachjournal.org. And... or you can contact us on the website. But thank you all again for joining us on a Sunday, and, hope you have a great week ahead, and I'll see you soon. Take care.