

City pushes changes to allow Wynwood live-work project

BY JOHN CHARLES ROBBINS

The first new construction in the Wynwood Arts District in more than a decade is closer to a groundbreaking.

City commissioners approved the first reading of two ordinances to change the land use of property on Northwest 24th Street from light industrial to general commercial, and change the zoning classification from Workplace to Urban Core Zone-Open.

Steven Wernick spoke about the rezoning on behalf of applicant Wynwood 250 LLC, owner of property at 230, 234 and 250 NW 24th St.

Wynwood 250 plans a mixed-use, phased project to include ground-floor retail, with Live-Work and multifamily residential units above the ground floor, he said.

Mr. Wernick said the real purpose of the development is to bring more residential uses to the booming neighborhood.

The current zoning prohibits Live-Work and apartment units,

which are important to providing a true residential presence in this growing area, he said.

"Wynwood is undergoing a tremendously exciting transformation from a former textile and warehouse district to a mixed-use district, incorporating the arts, cultural programming, tech startups and other unique users, where individuals of all backgrounds and demographics can work, live, and play within its boundaries," Mr. Wernick wrote in a letter accompanying the rezoning application.

"While Wynwood has experienced a significant amount of adaptive reuse and renovation of warehouses into food and beverage establishments, galleries and small shops, there has been little new construction and virtually no residential development since the adoption of Miami 21," Miami's current zoning plan, he wrote.

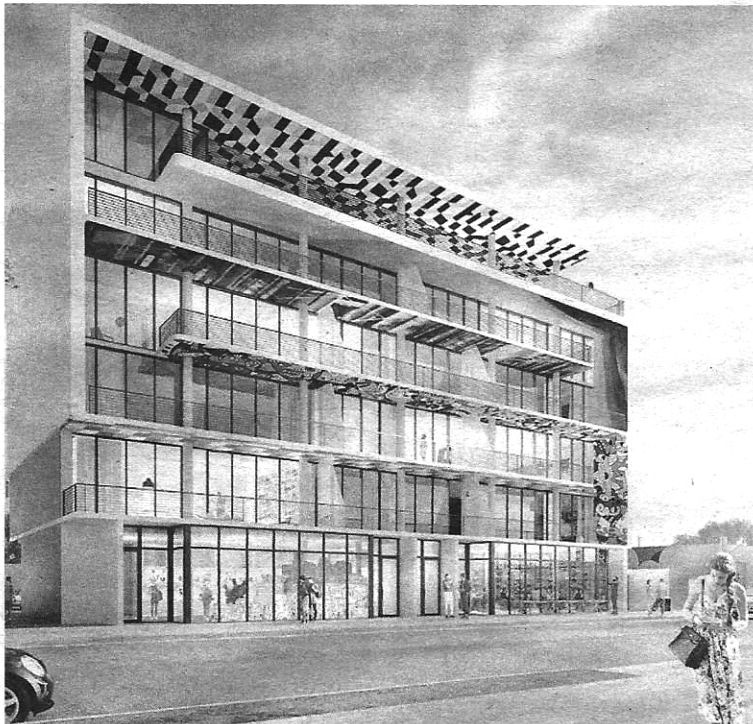
The applicant plans a two-phase project on the site, on a

stretch of Northwest 24th Street behind Panther Coffee, Mr. Wernick said.

Phase 1, already in design and permitting, he said, would call for a six-story mid-rise building, including retail on the ground floor, with five stories of Live-Work or multifamily apartments.

Phase 2 would probably be an eight-story building with retail on the ground floor and seven stories of multifamily apartments and supportive parking. The buildings are likely to be built as condominiums with the residential units to be sold to individual owners, while the developer might retain the ground floor retail, he said.

Mr. Wernick said the project is directly across from the proposed Wynwood Central, a planned mixed-use building, with 69 rental Live-Work units, approximately 40,000 square feet of retail space, 60,000 square feet of commercial office space and a 420-space garage.



Wynwood 250 plans ground floor retail with live-work units above.

"Between Wynwood Central and the Applicant's project, Northwest 24th street is poised to become a vibrant truly mixed-use street in Wynwood, where

people can work, live, and play," wrote Mr. Wernick.

He said the applicant is passionate about the future of Wynwood. The applicant's

managing director, David Polinsky, is not only a local developer but also a board director and treasurer of the Wynwood Business Improvement District, Mr. Wernick pointed out.

Mr. Wernick said Wynwood 250's development might help spur other new growth in the neighborhood.

"The current conditions in the surrounding area show several vacant properties and a number of existing one and two story warehouses and other older commercial and industrial buildings," Mr. Wernick wrote. "Some of these buildings have been renovated for adaptive reuse, but many remain in deteriorated condition. Clearly, many of these property owners have been waiting for the right time and market conditions to redevelop their properties."

Mr. Wernick presented an artist's rendering of what the developer plans to build for the Live-Work project, showing a

colorful and artistic design that he said embraces the artistic spirit in Wynwood.

Albert Garcia, vice chairman of the Wynwood improvement district, spoke in favor of Wynwood 250 saying the district's board approves of the rezoning and the mixed-use project.

"It's great... and he's worked very closely with his neighbors," Mr. Garcia told the commission.

Commissioner Keon Hardemon said he knows there is a shortage of housing in Wynwood and he's excited to see residential development planned for that area.

Commission Chairman Wifredo "Willy" Gort said Miami is alive and vibrant thanks to the revival of old neighborhoods like Wynwood.

"It shows you what art and culture can do," said Mr. Gort.

Final votes on the land use change and rezoning may come this month.