

FOR THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF ELISEPAUTLER@GMAIL.COM

From the South Florida Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/southflorida/news/2023/11/16/mayor-wants-to-cancel-miami-wilds-water-park-deal.html>

SUBSCRIBER CONTENT:

Commercial Real Estate

Miami-Dade mayor recommends canceling deal for water park near Zoo Miami




The Miami Wilds water park is planned near Zoo Miami.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY RECORDS



By **Brian Bandell** – Real Estate Editor, South Florida Business Journal
Nov 16, 2023

 Listen to this article 4 min



Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava has recommended rescinding a lease with a developer to build a water park near Zoo Miami.

If the County Commission agrees with the mayor's recommendation, it would end the long-running effort by Miami Wilds LLC to build a water park there. Environmental advocacy groups have raised concerns about how the project would impact endangered species that live near the property and filed several lawsuits seeking to block the project.

Trending: Lennar has site of historic Coral Castle under contract

The County Commission **approved the lease** in 2020 with Miami Wilds LLC for the 27.5-acre site at 12400 S.W. 152nd St. with Miami Wilds LLC for the purpose of building a water park, hotel and retail. Part of that deal was a release to remove land use restrictions from part of the property to allow for development.

In February, the Center for Biological Diversity, the Tropical Audubon Society and several environmental groups dedicated to protecting bats and butterflies filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Miami against the U.S. Department of the Interior and the National Park Service, seeking injunctive relief to block the project. They alleged the NPS improperly transferred land use restrictions from the project area without first completing an environmental analysis and considering conservation measures.

In a memo to the County Commission on Nov. 14, Mayor Levine Cava said the environmental groups were likely to succeed in their efforts to void the release of land use restriction, so the NPS would need to conduct a study before granting such a release. Therefore, Miami Wild's lease should be rescinded, she said.

However, even if the court does not rule to void the release by the NPS, the county should move to address Miami Wilds' "escalating and imminent defaults of the lease," Levine Cava said.

In her memo, the mayor said Miami Wilds is in default on the lease because it didn't make all of its rent payments and it missed deadlines for completing the land survey and

submitting the site plan, which was submitted about three weeks late - and it's unlikely to meet the construction deadline of Dec. 23 for the water park.

“We’re so grateful to Mayor Cava for standing up for the environment with her recommendation to the county commission to rescind the lease,” stated Tropical Audubon Society senior conservation director Lauren Jonaitis. “We fervently hope the commissioners follow the mayor’s lead. It will be great to begin working together again to permanently protect these environmentally sensitive lands.”

The County Commission is scheduled to meet Dec. 12 to consider amending and extending the Miami Wilds lease - creating more time for the NPS to conduct an environmental study - or the commissioners could follow the mayor’s recommendation and cancel the deal.

The **motion to amend the lease** was heard by the County Commission in September, but it was deferred after environmental groups protested the project.

Architect Bernard Zyscovich, a partner in Miami Wilds, said the project is not in default. The process is behind schedule because of the lawsuit and the delayed NPS study, but Miami Wilds has done everything it’s supposed to do. The developer has already conducted third-party environmental studies. He believes the project would have little to no impact on the endangered bats and butterflies, so he has no objection to the NPS completing its review.

He noted that the development site is currently a parking lot, not a forest.

“It’s totally wrong to try to stop the project when you don’t have any proof anything is wrong,” Zyscovich said. “Why are environmental groups that are supposed to be doing science fighting so hard to make sure the process [environmental review] doesn’t happen?”

Sign up [here](#) for the Business Journal’s free morning and afternoon daily newsletters to receive the latest business news impacting South Florida. For more business intelligence, follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [X \(formerly known as Twitter\)](#) and [Instagram](#).



Architecture Firms in South Florida

2022 gross billings

Rank	Prior Rank	Name / Prior (*Not ranked in year prior) / URL
1	1	AECOM
2	2	Stantec
3	3	Zyscovich

[View This List](#)