

City of Coral Gables Blue Ribbon Committee Meeting
July 29, 2021
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

Blue Ribbon Committee Members

Chairperson Felix Pardo

Board Member Aramis "Mitch" Alvarez

Board Member Robert Behar

Board Member Willy Bermello

Board Member Glenn Pratt

Board Member Javier Salman

City Staff

Assistant City Attorney, Gustavo Ceballos

City Architect, Juan Riesco

Historical Resources Director, Warren Adams

Public Speaker(s)

Chairperson Pardo: Would you like to call the roll, please?

City Clerk Urquia: Board Member Alvarez? Board Member Behar?

Board Member Behar: Here.

City Clerk Urquia: Board Member Bermello?

Board Member Bermello: Present.

City Clerk Urquia: Board Member Pratt?

Board Member Pratt: Yes.

City Clerk Urquia: Board Member Javier Salman is currently absent. Mr. Riesco?

City Architect Riesco: Yes.

City Clerk Urquia: Chairperson Pardo?

Chairperson Pardo: Yes. Well, welcome to the meeting. We ran a little long last time, but then again, it was to be expected since we had to basically set the ground rules, and I think we did that. So, I think we'll go through -- first of all, the approval of the minutes. We all received the minutes rather late, but they were pretty verbatim to say the least. If the minutes are acceptable, if someone can make a motion to approve?

Unidentified Speaker: I make...

Board Member Bermello: So move.

Chairperson Pardo: And a second?

Unidentified Speaker: Second.

City Clerk Urquia: All in favor?

The Board Members (Collectively): Aye.

Chairperson Pardo: Very good. Thank you. So, I wanted to just read something very quickly into the record. I actually took some notes of the first meeting, and this is going to be just phrases, phrases of what was spoken by the board members at the last meeting. And if you can indulge me, this is going to be like -- what's the name of that song? I didn't start the fire. So, it'll just be phrases. Okay, first of all, Mitch Alvarez. Mitch mentioned setbacks, how the building lands or touches the ground. The building creates transparency, penetrations. The architect needs leverage with zoning, zoning bonuses for certain height. Why is it that there's no setbacks? Does not have sidewalks. The public reacts intuitively. The Plaza project fails because it's gigantic. Early interaction with the Board of Architects would have helped with zoning. The zoning straitjacket. Zoning represents -- and attendance of -- zoning representation of attendance, not as part of the BOA would be a good direction. The client deals with mathematics, such as 3.0 FAR. If you suggest something less, you're crazy. Mr. Bermello mentioned early intervention with the Board of Architects, encroachment, overall massing, ground floor. Only place public participates. Code is too prescriptive. Why is there a difference between commercial and mixed use for landscaping? Need for retail at ground floor, as high as possible. How do we treat projects near historical sites? Why is a bicycle parking as important as encroachment? No cookie-cutters. Mr. Salman. Overall massing. Massing submittal should be required. Forty-five feet maximum height at 100 feet is good. Setbacks over 100 feet may be irrelevant. Bonus should be used as a separate floor plate. Regions Bank evaporates at the top. Open space, gallery setbacks. Too much formula driven. Setback and step-backs are crucial. Mr. Pratt. Zoning Code is very restrictive. Parking creates volume. Relief by the BOA. Flexibility ground floor only. Is the only place the public participates. Smaller increments for amenities to be achieved. Mediterranean style. Mr. Behar. Forty-five foot, 100-foot deep is a good transition to single-family residential and duplex. We can't change the zoning. It's not that easy. And then both Mr. Riesco and Mr. Behar both said, "How do we make the Code better where the public benefits?" Whether you said it in that order or these Cliff notes, it was just to set the pace of what we discussed and the keynotes that we discussed during that long meeting, the first meeting. So, that being said, on the agenda that we have for discussion, the first thing is that we all agreed that what we were going to try to do was limit the changes to the existing 5-201, Tables 1, 2, and 3. Chair recognizes Mr. Salman.

Board Member Salman: Good afternoon.

Chairperson Pardo: The late Mr. Salman.

Board Member Salman: No, I'm still here.

Board Member Behar: You're late on arrival, but not (INAUDIBLE).

Board Member Salman: Exactly.

Chairperson Pardo: Alright. So, the change of Tables 1, 2, and 3 of the existing Code.

Board Member Bermello: Mr. Chair, I don't believe our voting on that, that might have been, I don't know, maybe the original mandate to this board. But when I was here, one thing that I know that I did say...

Chairperson Pardo: Okay.

Board Member Bermello: Is that I think we should look at 5-200 in its entirety, not just limit ourselves to...

Chairperson Pardo: Okay.

Board Member Bermello: Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Chairperson Pardo: Very good.

Board Member Bermello: For example, in what I had did as far as my homework that -- I apologize -- got to you -- because I didn't think I could communicate with you and not violate the Sunshine, so I sent my notes to the City Attorney.

Chairperson Pardo: Right.

Board Member Bermello: And I realize you got copies that are black lined and it's not as nice or easy to read the redline. But as an example, I deleted entirely Table 3 to pose it as an -- because I feel so strongly that the concept of giving any waivers on setbacks and any concept of encroachment -- unless it's approved by the City Commission because of variances -- is something that shouldn't even be there. So, I didn't like want -- you know, I kind of like -- and I'll just put that out there. I just -- but I think we should start at the beginning, which actually addresses the intent. Because on the intent, there was something that I felt was in congress to what we were doing, and there was one item that I also suggest deleted -- deleting it, and it's under the purpose section. And it was provide for the ability to reduce setbacks and encroachments into the public right-of-way with public open space improvements. In other words, the concept that you can provide open public space -- open space improvements that mitigate or allow you or substantiate the ability for someone to come in and waive entirely setbacks or encroach into the public right-of-way, I think it sets the wrong tone. I mean, I spent -- I don't know how many years now. I think it's going to be almost 47 as an architect, and I've always started understanding what are the setbacks and what are the rules of the game. This kind of says you kind of forget about the rules of the game. And that to me -- so Mr. Chairman, if I may. I thought it was important to go to the beginning. And if there are any areas that are -- and to me, that item was in congress with what I was about to do later. Because to take out Table 3, which deals with encroachments -- basically, Table 3 is a free-for-all for encroachments -- and not to do something about what the intent, is not correct. So...

Chairperson Pardo: Mr. Bermello, if you...

Board Member Bermello: That was the only thing I'd like to bring up.

Chairperson Pardo: You are 100 percent right. My intent in the agenda was the changes of Section 501 completely, which is starting with the intent, which you had your markup; I had mine.

Board Member Bermello: And you have yours.

Chairperson Pardo: A little bit. So, the thing is, you are 100 percent right. The only thing I'm going to ask everyone, when they talk about one specific section, please mention numerically the number. There are members of the public here also so they could follow it, and I think that would be important. So, if everyone agrees, then we will start with the Section 5, Mediterranean standards.

Board Member Behar: Mr. Chairman, before we start...

Chairperson Pardo: Yes.

Board Member Behar: This whole process, you know, I think it's going to be important that, in my opinion, the Planning Department -- because remember, when all this is done, the Planning Department gets to look at it before it goes even to the Board of Architects.

Chairperson Pardo: Right.

Board Member Behar: So, I think it's going to be important for them to be here to hear, not just read the minutes. But I think it would be important to have a member, whether it's the Planning Director or somebody here, for them to know that what we're talking is what it's intended to be, not to get it by reading a document.

Chairperson Pardo: Right. Mr. Clerk?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Chairperson Pardo: You were instructed by the Manager's Office that we would have a representative here from the Planning Department.

City Clerk Urquia: No, sir.

Chairperson Pardo: Okay.

City Clerk Urquia: The -- I'm here to take minutes on behalf of them, but if you have specific questions to the Department, we can go ahead and address them to the Director directly.

Chairperson Pardo: Right. They have been -- Mr. Behar, they have not been prohibited from coming here. In fact, at one point, one person was named to be here, and...

Board Member Behar: I think it's fundamental that they're here. I think that we should, you know, require for them to be here because, at the end of the day, we're going to go through this. I would like for them to hear all our comments and the intent of what we want to do, not just go back and then, you know, do their checklist. Or, you know, this doesn't work. I think it's important for them to be here, and I will recommend that we -- whether it's Mr. Trias or, you know, somebody from - - I prefer Mr. Trias, which is the, you know, Planning Director to be here. I think it's important. That's my opinion.

Chairperson Pardo: Right.

Board Member Bermello: I concur with Mr. Behar's opinion. And Mr. Chair, if we need that in the form of a motion from this panel, be so it. Because I think you -- and you're totally correct. This -- I mean, sometimes reading these, it's almost like reading the Bible. You have to read it 10

times over to make sure you have the right meaning and intent that's coming from it. And since we're here talking about it, this is the perfect time. All of us here are on a volunteer basis. None of us are getting paid. So, we do this because we all live here. We love this community, and we want to make it a better place. It seems to me that for Mr. Devin Cejas or Mr. Ramon Trias to be here present, one of the two or a representative that can absorb like a sponge, not just the written word, but the written meaning of the word that is being discussed is very important.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Chair, we will go ahead and, you know, pass on your comments to the City Manager. However, I believe that was the intent of appointing Mr. Riesco as a board member to this board was his knowledge of the Code and how it's applied right now. However, like I said, your wishes will be passed on to the City Manager.

Chairperson Pardo: Please.

City Clerk Urquia: Alright.

Chairperson Pardo: So, we would like either Mr. Trias or Mr. Cejas here...

City Clerk Urquia: Will do.

Chairperson Pardo: For each one of the meetings. They could alternate if they'd like. Mr. Behar.

Board Member Behar: I agree. I mean...

Chairperson Pardo: Okay. Mr. Bermello.

Board Member Bermello: I agree 100 percent.

Chairperson Pardo: Okay, perfect. Alright. So, getting back to the purpose of the section, literally purpose -- A, purpose and applicability. So, I would like to state that one of the things that I found interesting is that I looked at the original 1986 version of the Mediterranean bonuses. And in there, it is almost funny that the purpose that was written in November of 1986 was crystal clear, the first paragraph of Section 30. And the reason that I say that it is crystal clear is that part of that original first paragraph of purpose of 1986 is shown under (1)(d), and it's only part of the sentence where it says, "enhance the image of the City by providing a visual linkage between contemporary development and the City's unique historic thematic appearance." It sounded like a partial sentence, and the reason is because it is. The 1986 version said that the purpose of these regulations is to encourage and expand the creative use of the Coral Gables Mediterranean architectural style. The use of Coral Gables Mediterranean architectural design in the construction of new buildings and in the renovation or additions to the existing buildings will enhance the image of the City by providing a visual linkage between contemporary development and the City's unique historic thematic appearance. So, you could see only about 15 words of that entire paragraph were used, and there's a tremendous loss under the term purpose. And the reason that purpose is so important in any section of any code, the same as any book, is because it basically tells you this is why we're here. And that's the opening paragraph of this particular section. So, when I did my markup, I found it interesting that it does not say exactly what this purpose was. So, 35 years later, they lost their way, and that's one of the primary reasons I think that we are here. So, I would like to be able to incorporate more of the original section under purpose, because in my opinion, I think that it is crystal clear that first paragraph that's there.

Board Member Behar: But you know, in 1986, I think the reason that this whole confusion started is because we had two or three projects along the Alhambra and Ponce de Leon that were the modern box glass building at the time that created a lot of controversy, for lack of a better word. And that's why the Commission back then says, "We don't want to continue down that path. How do we promote to go back into the Mediterranean style of architecture?" I agree with you, but I think that the way that maybe that was intended did not follow through. But I think that there's a

way -- we should find a mechanism that avoids to do that, but yet gives an opportunity to do contemporary architecture.

Chairperson Pardo: And you are 100 percent right. There's no doubt about it. And I think that there's flexibility in it. And let me just jump one step ahead because you hit it on the head already. Back then, they had a Table 1 and a Table 2. But their Table 1 was broken down into two things. The first portion of their Table 1 had to do with the style. In other words, if you did a Coral Gables Mediterranean architectural style, you got .2 FAR bonus, period, right off the top. If you qualified for that -- in 1986, this is how far ahead this was. But the second part, almost the greatest part of Table 1 had to do then with amenities that we have been discussing for the ground level. That could be any style, okay. So, it is -- and I think I made available through the Clerk's Office the original Mediterranean style guide, which has the original -- very simple, easy to follow. So, in here, that's the ordinance and the table, which was very simple, very simple, the table. So, it says up here, development category. Number one, architectural style. This is Table 1. Architectural style. And right there, off the bat, it shows .20 FAR, architectural style. If you do the style, it's .2. The second item, which is everything else after that, was additional amenities. And they all had to do with pedestrian amenities and the features that we have been discussing very vocally about. So, you are correct. This is not to make all buildings Mediterranean, but if you're able to do all of the above, you can get the maximum FAR bonus because all these things cost money, whether they're Coral Gables Mediterranean or they're modern with these plazas and welcoming the pedestrian, et cetera. All of these things cost money. But we give you -- if you meet the requirements of the Coral Gables Mediterranean -- you get that much more. An example, when we talk about setbacks, which they did not fathom in 1986 that people were going to be doing what they've done with setbacks. And as you said, Willy, that -- you know, the setbacks all of a sudden became fair game for everything, even Table 3 just -- it's a free-for-all. Before, it used to be three balls, you know -- three strikes, you're out, and four balls, you walk. All of a sudden, we're playing cricket. It's not even the same thing anymore. And the other thing is that for a city as stringent as Coral Gables for variances, setbacks are one of the greatest variances to be able to overcome in the City of Coral Gables, but not under these rules or lack of rules. So, therefore, as an example,

you take a building -- and I will quote my friend Mitch Alvarez -- and you have now zero setback because now you're allowed zero setback. But if you take that setback 100 foot -- or his example -- and you set it back 5 feet, 10 feet times the height, you've lost that volume. So why not give it back to the development so you don't lose that square footage? These are one of the simple ways that we can address the setbacks. But we -- I think we all have a consensus that the disproportionate, you know, loss of setback is hurting the perception that the pedestrian has at the ground level. So, that's just one of the examples. But the way that this Code was written in 1986 was pretty comprehensive as far as saying, "Wait, wait a minute. If you want to design in this style, this is great, but then the amenities, you get bonuses." And the other thing that we had discussed too is that not all bonuses are created equal. And as Willy said, "You get the same bonus for a bicycle rack compared to something that's incredibly relevant, such as encroachment." How is that? So, therefore, I think that when you look at this, or at least the way I looked at it going back -- and I analyzed this -- instead of a point system, which is also part of the agenda -- instead of a point system, they actually were giving square footages based on certain things, like the example now that Mitch has discussed about the square footage of those setbacks. Because when you take those things out, the developer is giving them, but you have to give it back to them in a different way. So, if they give us something which is good for the people on the ground level that are going to interact with the building, then they should be rewarded. So, we cannot take out -- in my opinion, we can't just take out mention of the Mediterranean style because that's inherent. If your client wants to do a commercial building that is a different style, they can. They just simply won't get the entire FAR bonus.

Board Member Behar: Yeah, but I think that's a problem. And I think that's one of the biggest problems that we have. And we're going to use the Plaza. We're going to use Gables Station as two examples. Because they get so much emphasis on the style, you get results like that. Perhaps the style should be diminished if we're going to keep the point system on how much value you give to the style and you allow a more diverse -- but yet to get up to -- and I'm just going to throw some numbers out. Instead of getting .2 for the style, maybe it's .1, and you get more point for giving me open spaces, giving me public benefit than the style. Because -- I will use it again. I

will use Gables Station project. You look at that project. It is a very massive -- the articulation, the -- you know, it's not, in my opinion, there. But yet, because they got the style, they get the full benefit of the incentive. I don't agree with that. I think, you know -- and the other point is, you're talking about setback. I want to be sure that I understand. Because don't forget, most of the plotted lots in Coral Gables is based on a hundred foot in depth. So, that was the way that Merrick plotted the City. So, you may not have the flexibility in some cases, especially when you do a mixed use in the CBD or in the MXD, which is what creating the most problem to the neighborhood. To reduce -- to increase those setbacks because the depth of a lot may not be adequate to do your podium because, unfortunately, whether we like it or not, cars are still necessary. And I'm a proponent to try to eliminate as much of the cars as possible, but you can't. So, that's going to be a determining factor in how much setback is going to be required. At least that's what I see when we get -- do some of these projects.

Unidentified Speaker: No, I agree.

Chairperson Pardo: Let's take this approach if you don't mind. Let's take the approach -- let's talk first about the design itself of Mediterranean -- the Coral Gables Mediterranean design. And I agree with you 100 percent in the example that you gave. I want to make sure that I put this in the record. This is from the original guideline. It says, "The Mediterranean design found in Coral Gables has sometimes been referred to as Spanish Revival or Italian. Both of these terms suggest the specific origin of those idioms, which have been adopted for the early 20th century architects and owners in this region of the United States. The term Mediterranean as used in this document allows for the broader interpretation of the style and acknowledges the eclectic legacy of design, which freely adapts Italian, Spanish, and Moorish architectural precedent." The general characteristics -- there are certain characteristics and elements associated with the Mediterranean design, which have general application. These include tile roofs, (INAUDIBLE) and stucco exteriors, shaped parapets and dormers, widely overhanging eaves, towers, arcades and loggias, (INAUDIBLE) windows, elaborately shaped arches, balconies, wrought iron details, sconces, railings, exposed rafters and beams, highly decorative window surroundings, casement windows,

courtyards, which often feature a fountain, doorways which are framed by columns and pilasters, carved or cast ornaments, ceramic tile accents, tile vents, decorative chimneys, often featuring a tiled roof, low pitch roofs, multiple roof slopes. The way that the second part of today's code is written, it basically has one sentence, and it names seven buildings on it. This came right out of that guideline from 1986. The features that you're talking about that are missing, this would have been just a palette that could have been used by the Board of Architects to require much more. And I agree, you shouldn't necessarily get the full amount, but I think it should be zero or the full amount. But they have to do something that is exceptional to be able to get that full amount. I think the biggest problem that we have right now is that right now there's a building in the south part of -- south of South Dixie, in the City of Coral Gables that hasn't quite opened yet. They have a "paseo." It's X amount of feet wide. It's squatty. And when you look through from one side to the other side of the street, from one street to the other, it's very dark, so they had to put artificial lighting in there. And it looks -- it doesn't look very inviting. For me, that's not a paseo. See, and the problem is that if you do it by formula, because it connects from one street to the other street, check; it qualifies. But the way that it's designed, it doesn't have the height, you know, for the retail. It doesn't have anything going for it. It doesn't have the detail that makes it acceptable, so it can't be mediocre and then just say, just because they went from one side to the other, they get a bonus, or they get the approval.

Board Member Behar: That maybe is one piece of one-tenth of that requirement that gives you up to .2. That's one of them. Because in some cases, a mid-block paseo may be adequate, may be good to connect, you know, from one side to the other. I -- you said something that I don't know if -- to understand correctly -- you said that either you get zero or you get in full.

Chairperson Pardo: No, I was talking about the style for the Mediterranean. Because we all know, you know, hey, this is really something. I mean, this is really Mediterranean, and they used all these elements. You could see it. You could see there are some very good examples in the City that have been built in the last 40 years, 35 years that are excellent. And therefore, from the style

standpoint -- and I agree with you as far as the amenities, that it should be if you provide this, but you have to really provide the entire thing.

Board Member Behar: But look, let's use the example -- and I don't know who brought it up last time -- the Regions Bank building, the one that, you know -- that's not a Mediterranean building.

Chairperson Pardo: That's correct.

Board Member Behar: And it's a great building. It's a fantastic example. To me, we should be doing -- we should be allowed to be doing more like that and not be -- I forget the terminology.

Chairperson Pardo: Handcuffed.

Board Member Behar: Handcuffed or in a straitjacket to do -- to be able to get to that point, I got to put cornices. I got to put tiles on the walls. No. I think that building expresses the massing correctly, breaks it up. I think it's the way -- we should be able to go in the direction that to give the incentives -- for lack of a better word again -- to be able to get up to that .5.

Chairperson Pardo: Okay, I don't disagree.

Board Member Alvarez: I want to share with you this. I'm going to talk about expectations. People refer to the Mediterranean style, each person in the City has in his own view or heart a sense of what does that begin to look like, the architecture of the period that created the projects that Merrick and Mizner represented very well. The scale of the projects that were very well captured and represented were scaled for small projects. They were three stories, four stories, two stories, villages, pass ways, trellises, bougainvilleas, elements that in that environment work natural. No, we're confronted with most likely buildings that are going to be high or density. The mood through urban America is increase density and avoid dispersion. And the quality -- or not the quality -- the order of zoning is already looking at that with densities that motivate developers

to work for higher density and 50 -- all of a sudden, we're confronting the challenge of designing a 15-story building with high visibility, with great impact vision, glass everywhere because that's what the market expects. So, just to find the style that architecturally will be representable in that scale of projects is immense challenge, if you move away from the low-scale projects to continue presenting Mediterranean architecture as people envision and would love to see. So, expectations are significant. The style is very important. It is -- all I'm saying is, we have to be realistic. You have to open the door for possibility of projects qualifiable as architectural style, but not necessarily making them that style because we are capturing little details that were present in the low-rise buildings and just putting some of them strategically here and there, you know, not trying to -- because these things on a high-rise with a very small, limited space is not going to happen. It's not going to produce the effect. Now, we have immense disadvantage building high-rise, because our soil would be water level immediately after the first basement. And we did a project for clients in front of Dadeland, and the client insisted on two basements, and they went broke. I know a fellow that we met. He was developing -- and you probably heard this story -- in the Coconut Grove area, upward of the original beautiful center that was there. He ran into the same challenge, and he couldn't stop the water. He went broke. So, parking beyond one basement down is impractical, costly, and high risk here. So, dealing with the cars is already a handicap in creating buildings. And we're always going to find out we're sitting offices, hotels, or beautiful homes in the air over a monument of maybe six, eight stories of parking garage, the maximum practical (INAUDIBLE) garage parking experts say don't go beyond 12 because then it doesn't work. People reject it, and it's not acceptable in the market, or even then it's a challenge. So, out of that content, we still have to come forward and say this is Mediterranean and sell it to the community, sell it to the people that are investing, sell it to the people that live here. For us, it's immense challenge to create a product that is viable within the real meaning of possibilities for style. Beyond the bonuses that you can obtain, even if we were not discussing bonuses, it's still -- the subject matter is the cry of the people in the City wanting to see the architectural style expressed. And it's going to continue to be a challenge. This monumental building that is being built, I just happened to take a street that faced -- my perspective was coming down on -- not Almeria, but the

other one maybe -- coming down in front of this gigantic building of the group here, that big project in front of the park.

Chairperson Pardo: The Plaza.

Board Member Alvarez: Yeah. And there was a structure going up on the roof, like my grandchild would do with an erector set, you know. He puts a block and then you start putting things on top. And my wife said, "What are they doing there?" I said, "Qualifying it to become Mediterranean style. They're doing a little turret," or a little observatory or whatever it is.

Board Member Behar: Cupolas.

Board Member Alvarez: Cupola. And then they're projecting the image of architectural Mediterranean style by doing this type of application, which maybe they granted some bonuses, I don't know. But the tendency is to -- and there are not too many other tools. I mean, every time you do this, you put your pencil, you are confronting the same challenge, and these things are interwoven. We're trying to address bonuses, but at the end of the day, the real desire is expressions that become closer to the architectural style. If we can all -- this is almost impossible to, in words, present it, but we have to keep in mind that this -- beyond the bonuses that are considered, the style is going to be forever present in the minds of the people. And the (INAUDIBLE) remain the challenge for us, for you that do a lot of condominium buildings. Our office was not in that practice. We dealt mostly with other type of buildings, but we had to deal with them with building heights, limitations of parking, clarity of windows for the tenants. They expect to have, you know, all these amenities. And when our founding -- Merrick and Mizner -- created the style, they were designing for another scale, another town, another environment that were not facing these types of projects.

Board Member Pratt: Just to -- if I could expand a little bit on Mitch's thoughts. I think one of the things that makes the -- Mitch's building on Ponce so successful is that it doesn't sit on top of a

parking pedestal. There is a -- the parking garage is set behind the building, and the building goes all the way down to the ground plane, which makes -- animates the space and the whole cityscape much nicer. And so, it goes back to what we were talking about previously about parking, and that there's many, many issues that parking creates with trying to -- to try and create the parking garage and integrate that into the overall building structure. It's very, very difficult. And it's something that the Board of Architects really struggles with too, when we look at when the board reviews projects that are submitted, the larger projects that are submitted. And just to use the Gables Station as an example, I guess, because I just drove by there last night and I was thinking about it. And one of the things that -- I know that people -- there's been a lot of statements made that -- about how there's no setback for the building. But on the ground plane, there's a complete arcade and a loggia, which is something that was mentioned as something that was to try and achieve for both coverage from weather and for, you know, setting the pedestrians away from the street and to giving them a sense of protection from high-speed traffic by creating this arcade. So, the -- when the board reviews all of the projects and what's being proposed -- and that was one of the things that I think was partly one of the redeeming things of the Gables Station was that there is a nice public ground plane, especially between the buildings, and there's open plazas. And I don't know if anyone has actually been to there and walked around the site.

Board Member Bermello: Glenn, which project are you talking about?

Board Member Pratt: Huh?

Board Member Bermello: Which project are you --?

Board Member Pratt: The Gables Station.

Board Member Bermello: Which one?

Board Member Pratt: The Gables Station, down on...

Board Member Behar: The one...

Board Member Pratt: Dixie and Le Jeune. I mean, it's very imposing on the street, but there are a lot of public -- again, it's also very isolated. There's a number of contributing factors to why that building is what it is. And with respect to both its location, the FAR that was granted, or the increases that were provided by the -- I think that it utilized TDRs, I believe; I'm not certain. But all of those things went into making a much larger feeling or a much larger building than what would normally be permitted.

Board Member Bermello: Glenn, what it seems to me that that building goes on forever. It almost looks like penitentiary in its scale. Frankly, I mean, I go by it every day, and it's -- to me, it's kind of amazing. And I realize they tried to break up the scale by having the L or the U-shape or whatever you want to call it with the legs, but it's just -- I think -- in other words, I think what I hear from people and, you know, my family, my kids -- I mean, it's everybody -- is the massiveness and the fact that it's bulging over onto the right-of-way. And when I look at it, I fail to see even that as a Mediterranean. So, I wonder, you know -- I look at the Aloft here, just down the street. How did that happen? You know, it's right -- again, you got a -- I don't know -- four- or five-foot sidewalk and -- you know, if you look at the great plazas in Brussels, Salamanca, where you do have the loggias, Piazza San Marco, you never have these colonnades right at the curb edge, which is what we're doing, you know. And I'll tell you, I'm partly guilty in one project. We did the museum parking garage, and there was no way to fit a parking garage of modern times when you have a 100-foot property...

Chairperson Pardo: (INAUDIBLE) the middle of the parking lot.

Board Member Bermello: Because they're so narrow.

Chairperson Pardo: Yeah.

Board Member Bermello: And we had to overlap a portion of the alleyway and then have all the Dempsey dumpsters from all the retail tenants slide under that and then create the arcade. But I'll tell you, as a -- anybody with a retail business, arcades don't do anything for you. They kill you.

Board Member Alvarez: Absolutely.

Board Member Bermello: I mean, you go to (INAUDIBLE) in Paris, any major street that is a great shopping street, you don't have an arcade. There's no loggia. So when I see these things as a way to waive and encroach and not provide setbacks, when I review this Code, I review it with a lot of respect, respect for people that came before me. So, I approach it like I don't have all the answers. I just have some questions. And I tried to abstain from making wholesale changes unless I see something that I believe someone just didn't see it through as to what is happening today. Maybe that people didn't see through those encroachments and those lack of setbacks what we will be ending up with. And I think if they were here today, they'd probably be reacting the way I'm reacting. But I think (INAUDIBLE) more than just a couple of things, I think on that particular project, I mean, it just goes on forever. And I know that we have in the Code certain requirements of through-block connections, when your building face is more than a certain amount of feet, et cetera. But you do create a wall effect. And I know that what was there before was not nice to look at in some areas, and then you had automotive, and it's kind of in hospital, right? You're right next to US 1, so you could say what is your reaction going to be from an urban form when you're kind of like next to a high-speed area. But I just don't think the response is, you know, kind of like what we got. And I think we're here today to a great extent because of Table 3, personally. That's -- I mean, nobody says it, but if you look through all this, that's what I -- because I've seen some fine buildings done within the Code. And I think every architect really strives -- many times they're under the influence of a client that is pushing them in a certain direction, and you realize you have to make a living, but there's certain things here that I think are the reason we're here. And I agree totally with my colleague and partner, Robert Behar, with respect to the style. I just don't know that if we tried to address that within the very limited functions that we have as a blue-ribbon panel

committee, that we're going to get that done. What I would love for one of the recommendations from this committee to our Commissioners and Mayor, that we should look at -- within the Code to have a section that allows for excellence in design and elements of high public value to receive the same benefits as adding a barrel tile, or a cornice, or a 4-inch recess in the window casement, you know, the elements that we see as Mediterranean. Because I think, in some instances -- and if you're doing anything over a five to seven story, you're going higher, I would always tell my clients, it will be more appropriate to not do Mediterranean than to do Mediterranean. I mean, if my client asked me, that's what I would say. It's just not appropriate. There's no example anywhere in the world of good Mediterranean architecture when you're doing a high rise. It just doesn't exist. I mean, I still think Philip Johnson's attempts were not his...

Board Member Salman: His best work.

Board Member Bermello: Not his best work. And you know, it is what it is. I just don't think that we can solve it, Robert, here. Personally, I would say, I cannot see myself as a -- here the metaphor would be I'm a medic in a war camp medical tent. And I got some clients coming in here that are bleeding to death, and I got to apply a tourniquet and make him live and -- you know, so they -- and that's what I'm looking at here. That we're going to try to come in here -- I think I see that as my role, making sure that the things that got us here are corrected, but I don't think our job will be done. I think part of -- and I agree 100 percent with you, Robert. The issue of providing setbacks -- this 1986 was a knee-jerk reaction to the (INAUDIBLE) glass tower, okay, because I was a kid coming out of college when that was being done, so I was young enough to be there, and I guess old enough to remember. And I think we have an opportunity. The pendulum swung there, and the pendulum was we didn't want more blank -- let's give an incentive to do Mediterranean. And I think the experiment has not provided some good examples. So, I think we can go back and do that. But I would say that right now here, the big things are the things that people are reacting to, and you see them in Gables Station. You see it on Paseo. And you're certainly seeing it in, I think, Mitch's favorite project across from his beautiful design of Regions, which by the way, I think is beautiful. It's timeless, and even though it's modern, it fits, which is the interesting thing, you

know. That building is next to a historic structure, and it will be complementary, which is what the Code says. You know, you guys accomplished the intent, you know, and that's the reason we all like it. I mean, we all react to it, even though it's a tall -- one of the tallest buildings in the area, right?

Board Member Salman: If I could just add to what you're saying. One of the reasons that I cited that building -- not just because Mitch is over here and I know him and love him, that's not it. The issue is that it's an abstracted reinterpretation of what Mediterranean should be in the modern technology and vocabulary of today. To try to reach back and just dress a modern structure and decorate it in such a way that evokes some elements without the spirit is ridiculous. That -- the Regions building is a heroic building. It comes down to the ground. It actually sets itself back from the corners and projects out into the corners again, you know, addressing classical (INAUDIBLE) themes of, you know, dress the corner, address the corner. And they have the advantage of having two corners. And so they did beautiful and symmetrically -- they curve slightly the façade. They have an open area at the top that acts like a loggia and -- so that the building sort of disappears, which was part of the idea behind the Mediterranean bonuses. And you see that in some of the classical buildings and palazzos in Venice, where you go up, you look up and it's a loggia -- right? -- because it's -- you know, it has step backs. It helps let light in and helps let light into the building, light into the street. It creates a semi-public space above the street level. And they build right to -- I mean, with a solid wall -- right to the property line. So, it's not about decoration. It's about understanding. And I think that part of the problem is the morphing of that understanding and the good intent of trying to create public amenities without any kind of understanding of what their impact's going to be on the street. For example, on the Gables Station project, it does have a plaza. It's in the middle of the building or more or less -- in the middle of the construction of building because it's several buildings. How much more powerful and beneficial would that be to the public on the street, both on US 1, and perhaps, on the other street to the north, if that loggia were to step in and create a bit of an open space to break that line, whereas it really doesn't read that way. It just reads as a long, hard wall along, you know, US 1. And there are a million subtle things that taking an abstraction would yield the Mediterranean

result of being able to be in the sun and out of the sun at the same time, being able to have a street that is enjoyable for multiple uses besides walking, and that would add to the intent of the Mediterranean bonus as stated in 1986, which would enhance the City and the public realm of the City. So, wherever we -- the Code, in my opinion -- wherever the Code grants an excess of space or a projection into the right-of-way or an encroachment into the right-of-way, that is something that really should only be done at a Commission level. I don't see that as being a function of the board because that kind of tit for tat is -- you're dealing now with the public right-of-way and the City owns that. And to have that be in play as part of the Mediterranean bonus -- I actually agree with Mr. Bermello that that really shouldn't be there. Or if it should -- or only with extremely tight parameters. What we're objecting to right now are buildings which were designed many years ago and permanent many years ago. I don't think that anybody presenting a building now and knowing what's going on right now would dare submit a building like those right now. But that's still a possibility. And we have to look at what allowed that -- these things to happen, and as Mr. Bermello said, make recommendations for correction and stick to what we're working on here. This is not going to be complete. There are zoning issues. There are planning issues that are outside the realm of this Mediterranean bonus which also come into play. There are issues which are self-inflicted on many projects with the cooperation of our elected representatives, so that they, I think, are now very aware and will be looking very, very hard on some of the projects that come before them going forward. Likewise, the Planning and Zoning Board is not going to just take the board's recommendation -- the Board of Architects recommendation wholeheartedly anymore. They're going to start looking at why are we doing this or why are we doing this.

Chairperson Pardo: I'd like to take a pause just for one minute. And much has been said about the amenities, which I think we all agree with, especially the amenities at the ground level for the pedestrians. The Plaza project, which is gigantic, has tremendous amenities on the ground level for the pedestrians. I think we all agree. I mean, they're being built out now. (INAUDIBLE) you can see it on their models. They have these enormous plazas. They have a lot of the right things going on. But what they don't have going on is the size, the mass. You know, it's -- I think that's where you have the objection. But the funny thing is that they have tremendous amenities that

they're providing. Now, the key is that you make an argument on the style. Now, I'm making an argument about providing amenities that are substantial for the pedestrian, it'll be enjoyable, but there's a big difference between that project, and let's say, the Shops at Merrick Park. And both have amenities, but one is very different than the other, and I'm not talking about the style. I'm talking about the scale, talking about the mass, talking about the human scale of those amenities in juxtaposition with the architecture. Very different. So, therefore, be careful what you wish for because we could go straight down this rabbit hole, and then all of a sudden -- no, but look at the park, and look at the this, and look at the that. But now you have a building that's not in touch with the scale of the City. The scale of the City is very different than the scale of Downtown Miami, very different. But we have to be very careful with it. I want to read one little thing to you, which is actually in Appendix C of today's Zoning Code, which was the Mediterranean Village PAD, which was written specifically for that project. And under intent, it says, "The City finds that the current regulations sometimes lead to unprecedented results, and in some cases, have fallen short of ensuing the City's desired outcome." So, it's amazing that in their own appendix, that is like 50, 60, 70 pages long for the justification of that development, that in there they're talking about the present code, which was just recently tweaked, that it wasn't changed completely, it was just tweaked. And you see that, although they did a lot of good things, the end result is very different than what everybody was anticipating. I think that's very important that we understand that. So, it's not just one side or the other. Now, if you say, well, you know, the amount of high-rise sites that we have here in the City of Coral Gables are very limited. I want to discuss now the mid-rise sites, the four stories, and then you have a bonus of one floor, that's five stories. Then you have another floor; oh, that's six stories. You could conceivably go to seven, if you interpret it the wrong way. I think that's a mistake. But at five or six stories, the Coral Gables Mediterranean architecture can easily be applied, plus other styles too. So, I just want to say that although there's flexibility in design, the original intent was that the cost of construction to do the type of ornamentation that was required and needed to be able to meet that particular type of architecture -- all day it was discussed that it was going to cost 20 percent more. That's how the 20 percent bonus was brought up. That's how it came to be back then. You know, it was an estimate, but at least it was something to encourage someone to do something other than that. I think it would be

a grave mistake, a grave mistake to say, "You know what, we should just reward good architecture regardless of what the style is." This is a Mediterranean bonus. It's not called "any kind of architecture" bonus. So, I do agree -- in my personal opinion -- that once you get into a high-rise situation, just taking a gigantic building and putting a cupola and putting, you know, all these different elements, it's still the 800-pound gorilla, any way you cut it. It doesn't matter how much lipstick you put on it. It's still the 800-pound gorilla. So, the massing and all these things are really important. We have not discussed it all in this committee, the size of the rights-of-way. The size of the -- the rights-of-way, I'm sorry.

Board Member Bermello: Oh, the rights-of-way.

Chairperson Pardo: Rights-of-way. So, the size of the rights-of-way, the size of the streets that are adjacent to any property that's being developed are huge. It just so happens that in the Mediterranean Village PAD, they discussed it in great detail. But I mean, we all understand that. If you have a wide street, some of the biggest high-rises that we have in our commercial districts are on Alhambra. It's one of the widest rights-of-way that we have here. So, you could go up. You could do all sorts of things, and it's in keeping with the scale. But then if you look at Alhambra's right-of-way, and then all of a sudden, you look at the right-of-way -- a 60-foot right-of-way, it's very different on how you treat it. And that's very important because the perception is the key, and the public, as Mitch eloquently said, intuitively, they understand what they expect. So, if you put and pack all of that in a very small right-of-way, you cannot treat the massing the same way, and you can't treat that street scale the same way.

Board Member Behar: But that's where, perhaps, the step backs is appropriate because when you really analyze a European city, I think between 40 and 50 feet is the scale that is acceptable to a 50 right-of-way. It gives you the one-to-one proportion, and it feels like that's the scale. So, that's where today the step back, I think, is addressing and works for a condition. I may not like what it creates, the form-based code, but it's successful at keeping that height to something that is more in keeping with Mediterranean. And it could be a contemporary building, where like, you know,

we're talking about the Regions Bank or the building that my friend here did on Ponce there, that you have a scale and then the building steps back, and it doesn't have to do with the style. It has to do with...

Board Member Bermello: (INAUDIBLE) and establishes the (INAUDIBLE) on that point. If it's 45 feet and everybody would -- regardless of the style, you know, you start to understand that as part of the City streetscape scale, which is what we're getting at.

Board Member Alvarez: But this is where -- I think this is where the concept of the bonuses would really be a very, very potential attraction to improve design. You are going to be able to have a tool to convince your client that you're doing it this way because it has offered you a chance to do a more attractive building without him being penalized and losing ground sellable areas, as they say, rentable square footage. At the same time, you're going to say this building...

Board Member Behar: Mr. Chair.

Board Member Alvarez: Will rent or be occupied or will sell much better than a shoebox in the same location. Realtors sell location, location, location. No, location within character is very much sensitive today than it was before. Location and character go hand in hand, and that's the tool for this type of place. This huge building anyone in abstract sitting right on the edge of the street on a right-of-way, unless you have a 20-foot sidewalk that is the City property, that you can see your property there, it looks horrendous. And if we continue to do that, we're going to have people resenting and arguing against it and opposing them.

Board Member Bermello: Excuse me. Mr. Chair, I'm going to have to -- I have an emergency I have to go to. I'm going to have to leave.

Chairperson Pardo: Mr. Behar has asked to be excused. He has a personal emergency. Okay, thank you. Go ahead.

Board Member Alvarez: No, no. I think that -- I love the way this is moving. I mean, I think the arguments you presented, and you presented, and Mr. Behar presented, all of us, we naturally have confronted them at one point or another in the type of project we have done in our history in design. And we feel that it is necessary to bring tools to the designer team to work and negotiate. It just can't be a straitjacket as sometimes the Code imposes, so this is a very prudent conversation that we're having. Clearly, your thought was very honest. You said we should have recognition for excellence in architecture with another category of bonuses -- or flexibilities may be the word, not necessarily bonuses, more than bonuses. Flexibility would be the word because the moment you use bonuses, somebody thinks you're taking away something from somebody, from the City or from the government or whatever. No, but it's necessary to recognize that because we -- although we don't have too many of those sites still waiting for a building, but some will happen in high-rise, but many more will happen in the mid-rise. You're going to see a lot of buy, consolidate, tear down and start from scratch, and that's where this comes in very handy.

Chairperson Pardo: So, you're saying not using the word "bonuses."

Board Member Alvarez: No, no, no. What you're doing is fine. I'm saying besides and beyond that, we should -- as a lateral suggestion happening as a result of these type of conversations, it should be presented candidly to the powers in the political world and the neighbors that there will be modern buildings happening. But if anything is flexible from within the existing application of regulation, it will be based on design quality. It's not going to be in any other manner because of the style of the architecture being Mediterranean or not. Mediterranean should still be treated -- and this is on the table.

Chairperson Pardo: There's another -- following the original agenda, one of the things that is on the agenda is we had a short discussion that right now the Code is written -- the present Code is written in such a way that it's based on a point system. You know, in other words, you check off the boxes. If you have X out of X, you get Y. The -- it was brought up by Mr. Bermello and others

that you can't weigh these things the same. So, a bicycle rack shouldn't be one of the checkoffs, you know, compared to other things. I know that we can go into those items, you know, specifically. We still have not gotten out of the purpose once we started discussing this. And Mr. Bermello brought up directly the fact that the purpose and applicability is very, very important. That being said, I just wanted to...

Board Member Bermello: May I make a comment, Mr. Chair...

Chairperson Pardo: Yes, sir.

Board Member Bermello: On that, just to maybe add a little bit of color and detail to my comment.

Chairperson Pardo: Okay.

Board Member Bermello: After going through not only here, but in other cities with similar situations, I find that when you do these kinds of prescriptive numerical formulas that are totally arbitrary and have really no sense that you can prove, whether it's five out of ten, or three out of ten, it's really done to facilitate the job of someone with a (INAUDIBLE) that is just simply checking the box, as opposed to saying, "You shall substantially comply with all of these." Now, when you say substantially that introduces flexibility because that's really what I think architects are looking for more because every site is different. Programs are different, and you really want some flexibility when you're trying to strive for greatness and not to be pigeonholed or strapped by some numerical prescriptive when you're doing some things that are much better than anything that can be in that list of things. I'll give you an example. I was involved in a project that Glenn approved, and I know that some people were against the project being done there, but my contribution to the project is the project across from Bill Kerdyk Park, was that I wanted to have a great response to the park across the way, and I wanted the building to have the shape of a crescent, even though I was eating like 40 feet into the property. And I had a developer that was not, you know, like a very generous and forgiving person. And in doing that, I felt -- and maybe incorrectly

-- that in making that grand gesture in the building to create a grand space across from a public space -- as opposed to being right up to the setback, which would have been a straight building with no increased setbacks -- that providing all of that is worth more than providing five bicycle spots. And I would face and look at staff and say how crazy can this be. So, maybe not prescribe it, but letting staff know that they have a responsibility to do the right thing. And when they're seeing someone that's doing something that is really over and beyond, those five bicycle spots may not be as important as other things. So, I think when you introduce this very prescriptive in very menial things, you send a message to the person on the other side, and that is, you know, do menial things and it's fine. You know, you end up with mediocrity. So, I would say if we have a list, try to comply with all of them.

Board Member Salman: Substantial.

Board Member Bermello: Substantially. Do your best.

Board Member Salman: I like it.

Board Member Bermello: And if there's some things that you can't, okay, but you try. But this is just my feeling. Just 50 -- where did that come from? Where did the 50 percent come from? So, that's what I would say is you give the Planning staff -- I think the Planning staff in the City of Coral Gables are -- you got great people. I have no issues with the people that I've met. I think Ramon is wonderful. I think, you know, Devin -- and you know, the people are talented. Let them do their job and motivate people to do great things. So, that's -- so if I were to see you have to substantially comply with 12 items, I'm going to do my best to comply with 12 items, not 5 or 6, because the Code says 6. That would be my -- and introduce flexibility and common sense into the process.

Chairperson Pardo: I think that the only thing, Willy, that I would add to that is that we do have a Planning staff, but at the same time, we have a Board of Architects. And you know, getting that

project -- when the Board of Architects receives the project, the project is completely designed instead of at a schematic or conceptual level. That makes all the difference in the world.

Board Member Pratt: But Willy came to the Board of Architects several times.

Board Member Bermello: Oh, a lot, a lot.

Board Member Pratt: And worked with the Board of Architects and took the suggestions from the Board of Architects, and the Board of Architects supported the concept and the direction that he proposed, and you know, the project turned out very, very well. I think it was -- you know, it's a very nice -- you know, an improvement and a nice amenity to the City and complements the park across the street. And that's a good example of the give and take or the working relationship that the Board of Architects has with most of the architects that present larger projects and comes in and is willing to listen and have -- well, all of the architects that present have great regard for the City and try to do their best. But I think it's always been official to get six or seven different eyes looking at a project and to get input from essentially a board that has no agenda other than to try and suggest improvement. And when the improvement is received and taken, the projects get better. And I think that what was approved was a very, very nice project.

Board Member Bermello: Without a doubt, without a doubt. And I -- that's why when you mentioned early on at our last meeting, early intervention, early meetings with the Board of Architects at the conceptual phase, because I think really the Board of Architects becomes part of, you know, your support group with staff, and I think it sends a strong message to staff. In that element of flexibility, for example, what are the salient points that are, again, using again that example of the bike racks or, you know, it may be a project where, where does that through-block connection happen? What is the real width of that? What is the real vertical clearance? Because right now, it's 10 feet. Ten feet is not very wide. I mean, you do a corridor for a school, it's going to be 12 feet wide. And you know, imagine -- and galleria spaces to be inviting, they have to have the right scale. If not, you're like in a tunnel and you want to get out of there quickly. So, I mean,

those things sometimes, if it's very prescribed, Mr. Chair, I just think that we end up not getting the best public benefits. But if you say substantially comply, what you're -- I think the message is, we want you to try -- do all of them, not just some of them, but don't prescribe it. Let the process play out because there may be good reasons why two or three of these can't be done, and then that person knows that they're not going to be sent back. This is -- it was substantially. Every project is going to be different. There are going to be some projects you should be able to comply with every single one, and they're going to be some that it'll be very tough complying with the majority of them. So, that's what I would say. I -- again, we're blessed with a great staff. But they take the cue from you. And if you say it has to be 50 percent, they're going to hold you to the 50 percent. You say substantially and it's the intent, and that they can weigh the important areas that are being provided in a project, I think at the end, that's what we -- I think what we all are striving for.

Chairperson Pardo: I'd also like to bring up another subject that we haven't touched on yet this evening. And that has to do with the historic properties that we have in the City, which are parts of our cultural treasures here. And I asked Mr. Warren Adams, who is our Director of Historic Resources here in the City, to just look at a few things around the country that are being done today as far as how development affects historic structures. So, Mr. Adams is sitting there, and I wanted to bring up, for example -- he gave us four examples. And one of them has to do with the view shed, which is the concept of how the view of something alters the historic nature of a building. You don't have to touch it. Sometimes you just have to cover it, be next to it, or be within, you know, sight of the thing. Let me read something that Mr. Adams brought. So, setting shall mean the environment in which a historic resource is located, including but not limited to the view shed for streetscape. Now, the view shed shall mean the views to and from a historic resource. And one of the things that they look for is the Certificate of Appropriateness to see whether the proposed work will have a negative impact on other historic resources on the site or on other historic resources within the view shed. So, in other words, if you're -- if you have a building that has existed for many years, the Colonnade building, when Mitchy worked on that, he placed the building carefully on the back side, allowing that enormous, beautiful structure to sit with its majestic colonnade. And his building became the backdrop to that important building, but he did

not block the view of this historic building by going in such a way where he could diminish the importance of this historic structure. Now, you can see that, for example, now in the Plaza project. You see the 2901 building, which was George Merrick's original building for his architects and real estate people, is the little three-story Mediterranean building, which is surrounded by this very, very large project. And the only thing between it and the new project is just the width of those little narrow streets on that triangular parcel. So, I personally believe that if that would have been conceptually looked at by the Board of Architects, and they could have had more of a say in it at a very early (INAUDIBLE), that maybe the development could have stepped down toward this building to try to bring something within the scale of that building, which is a historic building. So, there are other places, for example, even the National Historic Preservation Act, it says that the criteria of adverse effect -- and adverse effect is found when an undertaking may alter directly or indirectly any of these characteristics of a historic property. But just the view of the historic property, the use, what it was intended to do, if you alter that or change it, that's something that we should -- if we pride ourselves in our history -- we should look at very carefully. I'm not saying deny development, but make sure that you don't affect it in a negative way. And the Virginia Department of Historic Resources also describes specifically the adverse visual effects that can be caused by a change in aesthetic values or by the obstruction of use. And therefore, determining why a property is significant and understanding what characteristics make it so essential to assessing the visual effects, that is rarely, if ever done. And we have a historical department. It's kind of ridiculous that you have a Historic Department that will qualify a building as historic and tell you all the reasons why, but then you can put a development right next to it and just diminish some of the characteristics that make it very important. Now, this doesn't -- won't happen all the time, but it's something that I think we should address because this is something that is important in the preservation of what the intention of this planning of this city is. So, I bring this to your attention because it's been addressed by other places that have historic buildings. Now, our history is only 100 years old, but in another hundred years, it's 200 years old. And if we diminish everything, you don't need to knock it down, but we could dwarf everything and make it insignificant. And I think, personally, on Ponce, we have a great example of taking a building that was so important and it's been diminished. Now, I can't blame the developer because no one told

them you had to do that. And our Mediterranean ordinance is silent on that. And I think that this is important, the same as saying, well, you know, you want to have the characters of these seven buildings -- which originally were eight, except the Charade's building burnt down. And the whole point is that that should be a component of this particular section because if we don't tell a developer you can't ignore this, they're going to ignore it because they're going to think that we don't think it's important. I think it's important. I think -- I'm sure all of you think it's important. But I see that as an example of if we don't incorporate that here and having the resources that we have with historic, it is a missed opportunity.

Board Member Alvarez: Right. I think you're right. It should be part of that.

Chairperson Pardo: And by the way, some of Mitchy's buildings in the near future are going to be historic buildings that you want to preserve that meet all these requirements that are a very important part of this city. He did it at Douglas Entrance with one of the original buildings, one of the original gateways. But you just have to turn around. There aren't too many of them. So, the implementation of transfer development rights and things like that was one step for a particular building. Now, what we have to do is make sure that people understand the scale and the relationship to those historic buildings. And that has to be, I think, looked at specifically by the Board of Architects, and with the help of the Historic Department.

Board Member Pratt: If I could -- I'm curious because I feel like I'm defending the Board of Architects to some extent. But -- and all of us have actually, I think -- or some of us have sat on the Board of Architects. And I'm curious about how do you -- in terms of this view shed that -- it's a -- to be honest, I've not heard of that term and I'm not familiar with it. I understand the idea of, you know, providing visibility to try to create enough space around historic or those objects, whether they're fountains or preserve the historic features. But I'm curious, what are you trying -- I don't know that I completely understand your direction and what you're trying to say. Are you saying that the Plaza project, yes, it's a large building and it does crowd that existing building. How do you -- other than the builder also -- or the developer has rights. How do you balance those

two? Or do you give concessions in terms of --? Or does the City purchase enough land around the historic structure that they want to preserve to create enough space? Or how does that work?

Chairperson Pardo: I think I could answer your question. I think that, first of all -- and just to read -- a general rule to follow is that if something can be seen from a historic property, obscures the historic property from being seen at a primary location or is visible within the boundary of the historic property, there's a visual effect on the historic property. What I'm saying is not taking away the right from the developer, just saying maybe taking the mass and shifting it to another place to move -- to give it space depending on the orientation of the historic building. There are two examples right now, the building on just north of Alhambra, which is a -- with TDRs, that building was saved. But then there are these enormous buildings right up against it. If some of that massing could have been just stepped back -- in other words, we talk about step backs. And one of the examples that I gave in the first meeting was, for example, when you have a building, let's say across the street from single family and duplexes, that if you take -- and the use, which is part of Chapter 5 and the 20 things that uses are part of it -- that if you take those loud uses that are facing the single family and you simply turn them around, you're not taking the developer's right away, but you're making life a lot better for the people across the street in the single family. Now think of it the same way. Now, let's say it's a historic building. Then all of a sudden, you put this enormous tower right next to it, and then you put the tower here and then you put the tower there, you probably can't even see three of the primary elevations of that historic building anymore. But if it would have been set back a little bit more, or the massing would have been brought down, sunlight probably still hits it, and then you could see the articulation of that historic building. I'm just saying that it won't happen often, but it's going to happen more. And the relationship with the historic building I think is very important as one of the design -- primary design constructs when you have a historic building nearby. I'm just saying that we're all smart enough that we could understand that we're not trying to take away a property right from someone. What we're trying to do is simply recognize the historic building or the historic legacy and still preserve it the best way we can without -- by using imagination and being able to recognize it. So, just imagine, Glenn, if this were a 200-year-old oak tree in your backyard and you wanted to put a swimming

pool in there. And if you go by the setbacks of the Code, you're going to affect that tree in a negative way. Now, you could ask for a variance and say I don't want to -- I don't want on my conscience to hurt that -- I love that tree. That's why I bought my house, but I'd like to have a swimming pool. And I just need another seven or eight, or nine, ten feet to move it over that way, so I could still have my pool -- and I'll make it smaller. I could still have my pool but preserve that oak tree. The City wins and the owner wins. I'm just saying that what I've seen so far in two specific examples, for me, it's almost like blasphemy. How can we do that to a historic building when we have so few of them?

Board Member Bermello: And I think, Mr. Chair, in this case, you're also saying there was plenty of opportunity to work with that canvas to accomplish that.

Chairperson Pardo: Right.

Board Member Bermello: So, I just don't know how many more of those kinds of instances do we have that would ever come up beyond that one in the Craft Section. And I don't know, maybe this is more of a question for staff. Again, going through that metaphor of being out in a medical camp right in the middle of a war, are there any projects going on right now that could become the next Gables Station or could become the next Paseo, and that maybe we need to accelerate kind of our tourniquet to make sure that -- I mean, I would hate for six months down the road for someone to stop me down the street and say, "You participated in that blue-ribbon panel and look what just happened down the street. You guys did a great job," you know, sarcastically, obviously. I'm wondering -- because it seems to me that -- I think that's one of the things that I think we were called on to do, which is to say, you know, some of the things that have happened here in the past -- and this is not to look at the Board of Architects because I don't think it's on the Board of Architects -- that maybe some of the things can be -- is there that kind of emergency that we need to, or because there's a moratorium, we don't have to worry about it? Are there projects that are already in the pipeline that would benefit from our thinking?

Chairperson Pardo: That would be for Planning to tell us because, you know, sometimes those projects are in Planning for weeks or even months before...

Board Member Pratt: Before anybody would know, yeah.

Chairperson Pardo: We don't even know. They don't know, they don't know. (INAUDIBLE). They don't even know.

Board Member Pratt: Before the Board of Architects sees any -- that there's -- you know, they're well on their way, and that's why I (INAUDIBLE)...

Board Member Bermello: Yeah. I think it's imperative that they come here before they start doing the workouts of...

Board Member Pratt: So, I think that to have, you know, either Ramon Trias or someone, you know...

Chairperson Pardo: It is -- the reason I bring up...

Board Member Pratt: Imperative.

Chairperson Pardo: The historic is everybody talks about the Plaza project. Everybody talks about the Plaza project, but nobody talks about the historic building that's engulfed by the project. That's why I bring it up now because now is the time to say, "Put a marker on this Code." Put a marker this is one of the factors is one of the things.

Board Member Pratt: But the only thing, Felix, is that -- I mean, with respect to the Plaza and the historic structure, you know, I think that there was a lot of thought and planning. To the extent, I don't know, because that was all done in the Planning Department, and that didn't really -- the

Board of Architects didn't see that until much further down the line. I do know that there were multiple presentations made to the Board of Architects for each of the buildings because the overall project was just so massive that you couldn't really focus on the whole without, you know, looking at each individual piece first. And so, that's why the building has been constructed and approved in a phased manner because of the complexity of the overall. But I know that there was a lot of review and attention that was given both by planning staff and by the Board of Architects and by the Planning and Zoning Board and the City Commission because, ultimately, they were the ones that approved the overall project and the PAD. And I know that there was a lot of talk and consideration about the historic building and having sufficient space around it. But the -- going back to what you were saying in stepping back, Willy and Robert and others that have designed large projects, it's not a simple task to say, you know, let's move the living room from this side of the house to that side of the house. That's easy on a single-family residence. When you start moving components and major, you know, sections that have multiple systems and multiple interconnections and how they work and operate or need to be together in order for the building to function, it's not a simple -- it's not easy to just start moving those components around. And so, I know that -- or at least, I would speculate and guess with a fairly high degree of accuracy, that there was a lot of thought given to just exactly how all those buildings were massed and put together. And if you start shifting the mass to create more open space around the historic, that square footage is going to go someplace else. Either it's going to go up against the residential sector that you were just talking about on the back side, or it's going to have to go in terms of height. Or it's going to have to go increase somewhere else, which is going to create a problem for there. So, it's not a simple idea just to say, well, let's do this. It's a balance. You have to find all of the components that -- and how they work together. It's -- sometimes something may get squeezed a little more than what it should, but it's done at the expense of creating maybe a larger buffer on someplace else. So, it's a balance. It's not...

Chairperson Pardo: And Glenn, I really understand that. And the point -- the reason I bring it up is that right now the Code is 100 percent silent on the topic, 100 percent silent. And it's also 100 percent silent on the actual plan of the City, which was adopted by the Commission just a few

years ago, as historic. How can we now take streets and move them around any way we want without going back to the resolution that was approved by the Commission recognizing Merrick's plan as historic? We could take the plan and just throw it out the window, but since it was recognized, it's recognized. So, we don't have to do that here. The only thing is there's no relationship under the present Code right now as part of the design constructs of any historic building, and that's -- I'm not telling you this is a formula. This is one way to do it, or I'm not saying it's easy, but I just think it's important that we recognize the relationship with historic buildings. And of all the places, this section of the Code is the right place to say that it has to be recognized.

Board Member Alvarez: I think what you're saying has merit. I think it's appropriate to do so and just identify that as a section that is contemplating conditions that merits this analysis, and if necessary, bonuses to grant the option to preserve the views and the general environment around the building that we want to be preserve. That's legitimate. Okay, Mr. Owner, I'll give you this and that -- the example of the swimming pool -- because of your tree, I'm willing to give you this concession because if you exceed (INAUDIBLE) part of your building or your line of construction or whatever, a little further away, 20 feet out or 15, whatever. It's an example of incentive if this is what we're looking at.

Chairperson Pardo: That's all I've asked for.

Board Member Alvarez: Write it down.

Chairperson Pardo: And I -- back to the -- going back to the agenda, I think most of the items that were on the agenda have been discussed. Does any board member -- would any board member want to bring up any other issue at this time at this session?

Board Member Pratt: No, not that I'm aware of.

Chairperson Pardo: And in all fairness, and the hard work that Willy -- and it went through the proper channels to -- you know, through the City Attorney, to get us the markup...

Board Member Alvarez: This touches on your subject, no?

Chairperson Pardo: No, that and historic buildings. That's correct. That was the last subject on that. It's -- that is -- I'm sorry, what Mitch is pointing out is C, which is mitigation of awarded bonuses with adjacent single-family residential, duplex, and existing developments and historic properties. So, none of those things are forgotten.

Board Member Alvarez: No, you addressed it very explicitly touching on that point.

Chairperson Pardo: Right. So...

Board Member Bermello: So, Mr. Chair, if I could later, I'd be more than happy to go back and add a little bit more redline, and I'll send it to the City Attorney. Mr. City Attorney, when I sent it to you and not to my fellow board members, was that the correct procedure? I know in the City of Miami, where I chair a similar board, I don't communicate with my colleagues outside of the dais...

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: So, you're...

Board Member Bermello: Because of the Sunshine, so was that the correct procedure? Is it okay for me tonight to send a follow-up redline to everybody on the list, including you and the City Clerk, et cetera?

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: In regards to the Sunshine, you can -- if you decide to make further modifications to this document, you can send it to the entire board. What I can't -- what you can't do is have a communication or a dialogue between board members going back and forth,

meaning if Mr. Bermello tonight decides to send an article or something to discuss at a future meeting and you want to send it to me and you want me to pass it on to your board members, you can do that. You can pass it on to your board members directly. You just cannot respond back to Mr. Bermello, and the same goes for the rest of the board members. If Mr. -- you know, if Mitch Alvarez wants to send out some sort of documentation to all the board members before your next meeting for discussion, you can do that. You just cannot engage in a conversation about that subject matter.

Board Member Bermello: Okay, because I did not -- Thank you for the clarification. I didn't want to overstep my boundary. That's why I didn't send it out.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: Not a problem.

Board Member Bermello: So, I'm happy you cleared that up for me. So, on the issue of the five or six out of twelve or whatever, I did not touch that. I wanted to have a little bit of kind of conversation, but I'm more than happy to go back and add that because I really do believe that we should strive to greatness. And if somebody felt -- and I really did not see any item that should be eliminated -- that these are good things to be incorporated, but for all of them. I mean, you go for all of them. That's what we tell our kids, right? If there are good things that we need to do in life, you strive for all of them. You don't tell your kids, well, do half of the things. So, I'll go ahead and change that, and I'll put the word substantially comply with all of the below items. And substantially comply, I realize it makes the job of the administrator, of Ramon and Devin and everybody a little tougher, you know. They do -- it's not easy. It's not going to be like, okay, they did five. Okay, pass and go to the next step. But I think at the end, the process is going to be much better. Everybody's going to be much better. Every project. Just imagine if today you only have to do 50 percent and tomorrow everybody's trying to do 100 percent. You do the math. If these items are good, I made an immediate improvement. I mean, if you were running a business and you doubled your revenue, I mean, just think of it. So, I'll -- if I may, I'm going to just do that and send it back. And again, I don't know what the process is going to be. At some point in time, all

of these great ideas, we have to land them -- right? -- formulate them. We need to review them, make sure that we're good with it, and at some point, the Chair is going to present it to the City Commission and say this is the body of our work. We had a number of neighbors that -- and residents that heard us, and you know, some will be support; some will not.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: I would just bring up one quick item for the Board to consider as they're going through all this deliberation as we continue to make modifications and strengthen the Mediterranean bonus, which I believe is the intent of this committee. We need to also be mindful that we've discussed about how nobody wants to take property rights of anyone. I know that that's not the intent of the board. We want it to strengthen the Mediterranean bonus. We always have to keep mind, if we strengthen too much or we change too many sections, that we are removing abilities of certain property owners to build what currently they're allowed to. We may have Bert Harris claims filed against the City. So, I'm not saying that we shouldn't go full bore. I'm just saying keep that in mind when we're strengthening the Mediterranean bonus. You have a question?

Chairperson Pardo: Mr. Attorney.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: Yeah.

Chairperson Pardo: I have an issue with what you just said. The last time I checked, this is a bonus. So, in other words, the bonus can be stricken tomorrow by the Commission and say...

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: I don't dis...

Chairperson Pardo: No bonuses period.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: I understand exactly what you're saying.

Chairperson Pardo: There's no Bert Harris or anything else.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: I would disagree. I would just -- I'm simply providing the committee with the notice. At the end of the day, just keep that in mind. I think what you're suggesting is probably accurate, but I'm just -- I'd like the committee to keep that in mind when we're making modifications to any part of our Zoning Code, regardless of what it is.

Chairperson Pardo: And the reason I bring this up is because I don't want to create the illusion that this committee is going to recommend possibly eliminating complete components of what exists today, the same as things were changed before. It doesn't go -- and I'm sorry, but it doesn't go one way. We could reduce. We could ask for more, or we could take them out completely. And then at the end of the day, it's the Commission. Now...

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: It's within the purview of the committee to suggest whatever they deem is appropriate.

Chairperson Pardo: Exactly.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: I was just...

Chairperson Pardo: But...

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: I'm just doing my due diligence and reminding the Board. That's it.

Chairperson Pardo: And Mr. Attorney, I appreciate that very much. And I'm not trying to debate what you're saying, but what I'm saying is very, very specific. It is very different in Bert Harris, very, very different to say we're going to take away your zoning right compared to we're going to take away a bonus for you to build above and beyond the Code. That makes no sense. And that's

my opinion based on my years of experience, not as a lawyer, but as being involved in all sorts of things, which include changes of zoning, changes of master plan, all sorts of things, the same as the moratorium that is in today, which is completely legal. It's a time of pause. And this time of pause is specifically because there is a real or perceived issue. And it's for the benefit of the citizens of the City of Coral Gables, which include every person that owns land in the City of Coral Gables. So, by trying to make this better, whether it's taking something away or making something more difficult to achieve, you know, I don't think that we're putting the City in any harm's way. But you know, I think understanding the intent of Bert Harris is that everybody has to know you have to treat everyone equally, and you can't take away property rights away from people.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: You just can't have a disproportionate effect on individuals.

Chairperson Pardo: That's correct.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: Yeah.

Chairperson Pardo: But if the Commission chose tomorrow that based on what they see and what they perceive and what they hear from their constituents, and they say, "We're going to take all the bonuses and throw them out the window," so be it. That's up to them. The only thing we're doing is providing a recommendation, and we're not trying to take away these bonuses. We're trying to make greater architecture, greater planning in the City of Coral Gables to maintain the City Beautiful and try to straighten out our path based on some of the projects that we're not all that happy with.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: Understood.

Chairperson Pardo: And I think that's what we're trying to do.

Board Member Bermello: And Mr. Chair, if I could clarify. Because I did send this to the City Attorney. I don't believe that in any of -- and there were numerous comments. I don't believe that there's any of those comments that really infringe on the right of any property owner to be able to do what they should be able to do. The thrust of my comments had to do with the issue of encroachments and reductions of setbacks. And I will be more than happy to stand in front of the Commission to support in that kind of -- and that should not in any way inhibit anybody from developing their right. I'm all for property rights and protect them. That's America. That's United States of America, and I'll support that 100 percent. But my comments did not have to do with that. I did include an item, which just like people -- there's a concept in financing of a reverse mortgage, when you get a lot of white hair like I have. I included something that you could describe as a reverse bonus in there, although I don't call it that. And it's really an incentive for developers to build less units, to provide more setback, and not to take advantage of all the building height that they can take advantage right now. So, build lower, build fewer units, and provide more setback. Now, you could say, "How can a developer do that and still make money?" Well, because he's building larger units. Right now, our Code, I believe, has two important fallacies. Number one, it really pushes development to providing as many doors -- and that's how people in the real estate world, they look at this. It has as many doors as possible; small units, as many as you can squeeze in. And that's why we end up with all the traffic and et cetera, and what we're seeing, okay. And number two, and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk understood this. City staff understood it, and it was about to get passed, and at the last moment, the City Commission voted it down. But FAR has no business in residential zoning. FAR is an issue for mixed-use zoning and for commercial zoning, not residential. And that's a lot of the ills that we have is that. Residential density is based on the Comprehensive Plan and the setbacks and the building height in the district. That determines bulk in a residential format. It's not FAR. FAR was created for commercial properties and mixed use. And we end up with a dichotomy because if some -- if the developer tells you I bought a one-acre property and I have up to 50 dwelling units per acre, any one of us should say, one times 50, you got 50 units. And if it tells you that in that property you should be able to go to 75 feet in height, and you got setbacks of 10 feet on three sides and 20 on one side, you know immediately the bulk and the height and the width and the length of that

property. You don't have to be a mathematician. But once you introduce FAR, you introduce a whole hornet's nest, and that's what we're living with. And we were one step away from cleaning that up and we didn't. Hopefully, when they go back -- and you -- Mr. Chair, you said it correctly -- they tweaked the Code. They -- you know, the pandemic got in the way. That delayed it further, and then they, you know -- hopefully, we can go back. But I included in the write-up towards the end what I would refer to as a reverse bonus that I think some developers would obviously take advantage of today. If you look at what Armando Codina's doing, where the old police building is, building larger units, building fewer units, family units, less cars. I would guarantee you that you do those projects when you have a guy like David Plummer or Tim Plummer here, they'll present negative traffic counts. So, I'm introducing that for discussion. I know you guys haven't had a chance to -- because you just got it today from staff. But maybe that's something we can discuss. But I agree with you, Mr. Chair. I don't -- you know, at the end of the day, the Commission's going to do what they think is the right thing, and I'm happy to be serving with all of you here. As I read through it, there's things that need to be tweaked, but I'm not here, Mr. City Attorney, to take anybody's rights away, and I'm very protective of that. But there were some things that I just felt are the reasons that we're here. And the encroachments and the setbacks...

Board Member Salman: I agree.

Board Member Bermello: You know, that's the first thing. You know, each of us -- you know, we get a client, we get the survey. The first thing we look at, what is the zoning district, what are the setbacks, what is the building height, what is -- and really, in residential, you really don't need the FAR. If you can meet all the setbacks and you have your lot coverage, you know, you're done. And you have your height, you're done. Go do a design, you know. And the City staff, if they have flexibility, they should work with you. I'll give you an example. I'm just doing a single-family house for myself now. At age 71, I never thought I'd be doing that, but I'm doing it. And the property had two beautiful live oak trees, and I wanted to make sure I could design them and not touch them. And by golly, I'm doing that. I have to do a bunch of things design-wise to accommodate that, but staff recognized what I was trying to do, and they work with you. And I

think if we get rid of all these prescriptions and let staff do their work and let architects do their work and subscribe to greatness -- if there are ten items, let's shoot for the ten items, not five. It's crazy, you know.

Chairperson Pardo: On the setbacks that you're mentioning, it's funny, as a single family residential, most lots residential -- single family residential lots are platted -- most of them are platted 50 by 100. So, if you take a 50 by 100, your side setbacks are five feet on each side. But if you have two lots, which a lot of people have, a double lot, you execute a unity of title, et cetera, now your side setback, you could go five feet on one side, but the other side has to be at least 15 feet because it still has to maintain 20 percent of the total width. Now, funny thing, that's for a single-family home. So, if you have a bigger home, you still have exactly the same amount of setback as if you had two 50-foot lots. But when we're talking about development like this, there's no setback, so you could accumulate the entire block and you have no setback. How does that work? We force the resident to provide the same exact setback for a 100 by 100-foot lot as two 50 by 50, but now all of a sudden, if you take a bunch of lots and you take up an entire City block, you could have zero setback, when before there were setbacks at each property. Not only does it change the dynamics from a planning standpoint, but there's no incentive to create any setback. So, the setbacks, I think, are something that we can't ignore, but keep that example that we're telling the single-family residential homeowner that if you build on a 100 by 100-foot lot, two of them, you have to provide at least the same amount of setback as what you started off with. But if you're developing and putting -- amassing the blocks together, now you get to go to zero and there's nothing for the pedestrian in the front because it's zero. And the only place in mixed use that has a setback is in the rear, which is ten foot. How does that work? Is that to get a bigger garbage truck in through the alley? It makes no sense. And every time we say staff -- and pardon me, for me -- these nice people here are staff, the City architect, and the Board of Architects. They have to be at the very beginning involved in the design, with all due respect to the rest of staff in Planning. So, that, in my opinion, I think is something that we should look at, take a look at the comments for the next meeting, and see if we could start going straight at the first section and go

through it and see how could alter it. Now, I know there are people from the -- in the public. Unless someone has some burning desire to say something -- okay.

Unidentified Speaker: Thank you all.

Chairperson Pardo: Thank you for coming. Appreciate it.

Unidentified Speaker: Thank you.

Chairperson Pardo: I would not open it up for public comment right now unless -- Mr. Clerk, have you received anything from anyone watching on Zoom or maybe we put everybody to sleep?

City Clerk Urquia: There are members of the public on Zoom. However, no one has requested to speak, and we -- I did receive two speaker cards earlier...

Chairperson Pardo: Okay.

City Clerk Urquia: But those people have left already.

Chairperson Pardo: I'll entertain a motion to...

Board Member Bermello: Motion to adjourn, Mr. Chairman.

Chairperson Pardo: Adjourn.

Board Member Salman: Second.

Board Member Pratt: Second.

Chairperson Pardo: Alright. All those in favor?

The Board Members (Collectively): Aye.

Chairperson Pardo: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

Board Member Bermello: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Board Member Pratt: Thank you.