

**City of Coral Gables
Board of Adjustment Meeting
Monday, May 7, 2018
Coral Gables City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, Florida**

MEMBERS	J8	F5	M	A	M7	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	APPOINTMENT
	'18	'18	'18	'18	'18	'18	'18	'18	'18	'18	'18	'18	
Maria D. Garcia	P	P	C	C	P	R	R	R					Commissioner Frank Quesada
Oscar Hidalgo Chair	P	P	C	C	P	R	R	R					Board-As-A-Whole
Eugenio Lage	P	P	C	C	P	R	R	R					Commissioner Michael Mena
Jorge Otero	-	P	C	C	P	R	R	R					Commissioner Patricia Keon
Gema Pinon Vice Chair	P	P	C	C	P	R	R	R					Mayor Raul Valdes Fauli
Michael Sotelo	E	P	C	C	P	R	R	R					Commissioner Vince Lago
Jack Thomson	P	P	C	C	P	R	R	R					City Manager Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark

P = Present
E = Excused
C = Meeting Cancelled
R = No Meeting Summer Recess

City Staff and Consultants:

Ramon Trias, Planning & Zoning Director
Jennifer Garcia, City Planner
Arceli Redila, Principal Planner
Stephanie M. Throckmorton, Asst. City Attorney

Court Reporter:
Nieves Sanchez

Attachment: 05 07 18 Board of Adjustment Verbatim Minutes

CITY OF CORAL GABLES
BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT
VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT
CORAL GABLES CITY HALL
405 BILTMORE WAY, COMMISSION CHAMBERS
CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA
MONDAY, MAY 7, 2018, COMMENCING AT 8:05 A.M.

Board Members Present:

Oscar Hidalgo, Chairman
Maria D. Garcia
Eugenio Lage
Gema Pinon
John M. Thomson
Jorge Otero
Michael Sotelo

City Staff and Consultants:

Ramon Trias, Planning Director
Stephanie M. Throckmorton, Assistant City Attorney
Arceli Redila, Principal Planner
Jennifer Garcia, City Planner

1 ALSO PARTICIPATING:
2 Gianeli Mestre Zacarias, on behalf of
3 355 Alhambra Circle
4 Mario Garcia-Serra, on behalf of 232 Zamora Avenue
5 Peter Killidjian

6 BA-18-04-3745
7 (355 Alhambra Circle)
8 Lots 9 Thru 18 & Lots 32 Thru 40 Block 26 Section "K"
9 Cosentino North America - Applicant
10 PRJI 355 Alhambra Circle LLC - Owner

11 BA-18-04-3738
12 (232 Zamora Avenue)
13 Lot 1, Block 41, Douglas Section
14 Mario Garcia-Serra - Applicant
15 232 Zamora, LLC - Owner

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1 THEREUPON:
2 (The following proceedings were held.)
3 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: I'll call the meeting to
4 order. We have two cases today. Is there a
5 preference in which one we start with, City?
6 THE SECRETARY: Should we do the roll call,
7 please?
8 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Sorry?
9 THE SECRETARY: Should we do the roll call?
10 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Yes, let's do the roll
11 call.
12 We'll take the roll, please.
13 THE SECRETARY: Ms. Garcia?
14 MS. GARCIA: Present.
15 THE SECRETARY: Mr. Lage?
16 MR. LAGE: Present.
17 THE SECRETARY: Mr. Otero?
18 MR. OTERO: Present.
19 THE SECRETARY: Ms. Pinon?
20 MS. PINON: Present.
21 THE SECRETARY: Mr. Sotelo?
22 MR. SOTELO: Present.
23 THE SECRETARY: Mr. Thomson?
24 Mr. Hidalgo?
25 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Here.

1 So let's start with the first case.
2 THE SECRETARY: Approval of the minutes,
3 Mr. Chair, from the last meeting.
4 Approval of minutes.
5 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: For the record,
6 Mr. Thomson is present.
7 Good morning, Mr. Thomson. I'll give you a
8 couple of minutes to set up.
9 Do we have a motion to approve the minutes
10 of our last meeting?
11 MS. GARCIA: Move to approve.
12 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: There's a motion.
13 MR. OTERO: I second it.
14 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: There's a second.
15 Take a roll, please.
16 THE SECRETARY: Ms. Garcia?
17 MS. GARCIA: Yes.
18 THE SECRETARY: Mr. Lage?
19 MR. LAGE: Yes.
20 THE SECRETARY: Mr. Otero?
21 MR. OTERO: Yes.
22 THE SECRETARY: Ms. Pinon?
23 MS. PINON: Yes.
24 THE SECRETARY: Mr. Sotelo?
25 MR. SOTELO: Yes.

1 THE SECRETARY: Mr. Thomson?
 2 MR. THOMSON: Yes.
 3 THE SECRETARY: Mr. Hidalgo?
 4 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Yes.
 5 The minutes have been passed.
 6 Are there any changes to the agenda for
 7 today?
 8 THE SECRETARY: No changes, Mr. Chair.
 9 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Thank you.
 10 Is there anyone in the audience that will
 11 speak in the Board meeting? Other than the
 12 attorneys, could we swear them in, please?
 13 (Thereupon, the participants were sworn.)
 14 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Thank you.
 15 Could we start with the first case, please?
 16 MR. REDILA: Yes.
 17 Good morning, Members of the Board,
 18 Mr. Chair. For the record, Arceli Redila, from
 19 Planning and Zoning.
 20 So the first item before you this morning
 21 is a sign variance for 355 Alhambra Circle. It
 22 is generally located in the mid block of Le
 23 Jeune Road and Salcedo Street. It is zoned
 24 Commercial, and currently there is an existing
 25 16-story office building, with a height of

1 approximately 200 feet.
 2 Now, the applicant, Cosentino North
 3 America, who is occupying the entire tenth
 4 floor, proposes to place a wall sign at the
 5 entrance archway front elevation facing
 6 Alhambra Circle. Currently, there's an
 7 existing sign for Merrill Lynch. The Zoning
 8 Code allows for two wall signs for buildings 97
 9 feet or more in height. Now, their building is
 10 approximately 200 feet, so, therefore, two
 11 signs are allowed. However, such sign for
 12 buildings 97 feet and over shall be located
 13 above 97 feet.
 14 So now the applicant is requesting a
 15 variance for a sign to be located at 58 feet.
 16 This is what they're proposing. It is
 17 important to note that this building was built
 18 in 2001. The City enacted a new Sign Code in
 19 2004, where it requires a height placement for
 20 buildings over 97 feet.
 21 Previously there was a sign granted for
 22 this building for the Codina Group, and it was
 23 generally located on that same elevation. At
 24 that time, there was no height requirement. So
 25 what the applicant is proposing here is similar

1 to what was granted in 2003.
 2 So with that, Staff is recommending
 3 approval. If you have any questions, I'm sure
 4 the applicant is here and the attorney is here.
 5 MS. PINON: I have a Board question, just a
 6 point of clarification. You said the current
 7 Zoning Code allows for two signs.
 8 MS. REDILA: Two wall signs.
 9 MS. PINON: Okay. So Merrill Lynch is
 10 currently on the site, as well?
 11 MS. REDILA: Yes.
 12 MS. MESTRE ZACARIAS: Good morning, Chair,
 13 Members of the Board. Gianeli Mestre Zacarias,
 14 with offices at 5757 Blue Lagoon Drive, in
 15 Miami, representing Cosentino North America.
 16 I'm here this morning with Antonio Centuro and
 17 Giselle Maranges, the applicant's
 18 representatives, as well Laura Russo, our
 19 consultant.
 20 As Staff mentioned, we are seeking a sign
 21 variance for height, and we have an approval as
 22 Staff's recommendation.
 23 The property is located mid block on the
 24 north side of Alhambra Circle, between Le Jeune
 25 and Salcedo, and extends to Alcazar in the

1 north. The property is just under 52,000
 2 square feet in size and houses a 16-story
 3 commercial structure. Chase and Marquis banks
 4 occupy the ground level, and the property also
 5 houses Merrill Lynch, and closer to the street,
 6 but more to the west, are the American Legion,
 7 and Green Gables Cafe is to the east. Various
 8 offices are located to the south, including the
 9 Hydrow (phonetic) Law Firm, and the 396
 10 building, which houses HBO.
 11 As it relates to the request before you,
 12 the property has some significant history I
 13 would like to briefly detail. As Arceli
 14 mentioned, the property was built in 2001 by
 15 The Codina Group. In 2003, The Codina Group
 16 sought and was granted a sign variance by the
 17 Board of Adjustments to permit a sign on the
 18 property's entrance archway, the same location
 19 we seek today.
 20 You can see from page one of the handout I
 21 passed out, the sign was modest and respectful
 22 of the building's facade. As such, the
 23 application was unanimously approved, following
 24 a favorable Staff recommendation. That
 25 approval provides us unique insight into

1 ultimately approving the variance before you
 2 today.
 3 Since Codina built the structure, we can
 4 discern that a sign was always intended for
 5 this archway location. However, as the new
 6 Sign Code was adopted between their build out
 7 and the sign placement, they, too, needed a
 8 variance.
 9 Following Codina's recent relocation, the
 10 sign was removed. Because another sign was not
 11 simultaneously proposed, we're here before you
 12 today seeking the same variance that they
 13 requested.
 14 The applicant, who occupies the property in
 15 the entire tenth floor, seeks to incorporate a
 16 tasteful wall sign, similar to the Codina
 17 Group's sign. The applicant has worked with
 18 his team and the City to propose a sign that is
 19 consistent with the neighborhood and the
 20 existing building. The applicant struggled
 21 with the proposed placement of the sign,
 22 desiring an as of right design. However, the
 23 applicant proposes it'd be located in the only
 24 logical and harmonious location with respect to
 25 the building's architecture.

1 Due to the existing design, the proposed
 2 signage, where permitted as of right, defeats
 3 the architectural integrity of the property.
 4 The proposed sign is a modest 21.55 square feet
 5 in size, inclusive of the logo, which is
 6 consistent with the City's Sign Regulations and
 7 slightly smaller than the Codina sign. The
 8 sign includes Cosentino's name and logo at 58
 9 feet in height, as Arceci mentioned. This is
 10 five feet higher than the Codina sign was, and
 11 thus more in compliance with today's Code.
 12 The sign was approved by the Board of
 13 Architects back in October. While a wall sign
 14 exists today for Merrill Lynch, a second wall
 15 sign is permitted pursuant to the Code.
 16 However, such a sign must be at a minimum above
 17 97 feet in height due to the building site. As
 18 such, while the proposed sign is permissible
 19 and complies with all other sign regulations, a
 20 variance is required, because it is proposed to
 21 be located in harmony with the building's
 22 architecture, which is lower than the
 23 permissible height.
 24 The desire for consistency with the
 25 existing structure results in the applicant's

1 request for this single variance. As such, a
 2 variance is requested due to the existing
 3 conditions of the property, mainly the existing
 4 design of the building's facade.
 5 As the Codina Group's variance illustrated,
 6 the proposed location is the logical primary
 7 location for signage. Again, the building was
 8 built in 2001, prior to the new Sign Code that
 9 placed the higher requirements for wall signs.
 10 In addition, a variance is requested due to
 11 the property's location, which is heavily
 12 traversed, and it includes many street trees,
 13 where adequate signage is necessary for the
 14 safety of vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
 15 Neither of these conditions result from any
 16 action of the applicant.
 17 In addition, approval would not provide the
 18 applicant with any special privileges, as the
 19 request is due to the specific design of the
 20 building, as was argued and determined in 2003.
 21 The requested variance works in harmony with
 22 the facade and allows for the business to
 23 advertise adequately.
 24 Since signage is crucial for a viable
 25 commercial endeavor, the City has long

1 recognized the need for visible signage. In
 2 this case, the applicant has worked closely
 3 with its team and the City to respect the
 4 architectural features of this building. The
 5 applicant has worked with the existing facade,
 6 which has proven to be quite a hardship.
 7 Again, as opposed to the applicant
 8 proposing an as of right design that is
 9 inconsistent, the applicant has worked to
 10 maintain and respect the building's
 11 architectural look, while at the same time
 12 providing for the much needed signage. If the
 13 variance were not granted, the sign would
 14 likely be awkwardly placed between the windows
 15 of the Alhambra facade. As such, a literal
 16 application of the height requirements would
 17 deprive the applicant of the right to a
 18 harmonious and respectfully sized signage for
 19 the building, the same right that was enjoyed
 20 by Codina and others similarly situated.
 21 Marketability, this is a property, one that
 22 can be easily accessed and viewed by members of
 23 the community, visitors and tourists. The
 24 modest sign variance to permit signage at a
 25 lower height is the minimum way to effectuate a

1 reasonable scale and provide for the safety of
 2 all users of the adjacent roadways.
 3 The proposed sign is much less than the
 4 maximum permitted sign height of 25 feet, and
 5 the letters are much smaller than permitted at
 6 18 inches versus 30 inches which are allowed.
 7 As such, the sign is proportionate to the
 8 facade. It's located with respect to the
 9 building architecture. The applicant is not
 10 proposing a change in use or a use that's not
 11 permitted, and, lastly, there's not a public
 12 safety with the proposed sign, where the sign
 13 is proportionate to the facade, consistent with
 14 the architecture, and consistent with the
 15 previously approved Codina sign. As such, the
 16 sign is in harmony with the Code and will not
 17 be detrimental to the area. Therefore,
 18 approval is appropriate and consistent with the
 19 City's Code.
 20 To summarize, the applicant's variance is
 21 due primarily to the existing architecture and
 22 design of the building. However, as
 23 demonstrated through the 2003 variance, the
 24 proposed location is in harmony with the
 25 building's architecture. It's also consistent

1 with the neighboring commercial area. The
 2 applicant's design has been approved by the
 3 Board of Architects. This application has a
 4 favorable Staff recommendation and satisfies
 5 the variance criteria as demonstrated in 2003.
 6 As such, we respectfully request your approval.
 7 We're here for any questions and reserve time
 8 for rebuttal, if necessary.
 9 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Thank you.
 10 MR. OTERO: Mr. Chair, I have a question.
 11 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Sure.
 12 MR. OTERO: It seems to me that there were
 13 two signs approved for this building, and
 14 Codina predated you, so it seems like this made
 15 sense, but my question is, in the application,
 16 you make an argument that because your client
 17 is a tenant of the entire tenth floor, it gets
 18 him some kind of advantage or it differentiates
 19 them. So my question is, what happens to the
 20 next guy that knocks on the door and says, "I
 21 want another sign"?
 22 And as a follow-up to that question,
 23 perhaps the City or the attorney can explain to
 24 me what you mentioned earlier of, if it had
 25 been simultaneously done when Codina -- when A

1 goes out and B comes in, you don't need to be
 2 here. That's the question I would like to ask
 3 of the attorney, because it seems to me that
 4 then you're holding some valuable cards in your
 5 hand for your client for the next tenant who
 6 comes in, if and when your client vacates.
 7 Can they sell the sign rights if we are, in
 8 fact, limited to two or do we need to be back
 9 here? It seems to me they're here because
 10 they're the first ones to come, to get that
 11 valuable second sign, right?
 12 MS. THROCKMORTON: I mean, this sign has
 13 been approved itself by the Board of
 14 Architects, so any future sign would need to go
 15 through the same process.
 16 MR. OTERO: And if approved, do they need a
 17 variance?
 18 MS. THROCKMORTON: I mean, I think it would
 19 depend on the situation of the sign,
 20 especially, you know, as this attorney has
 21 presented, the sign, as it relates to the size
 22 of the building, and as she pointed out, there
 23 are only two signs allowed for a building.
 24 There couldn't be a third, for example.
 25 MR. OTERO: And in any approval, could we

1 specify, that this is unique to this tenant and
 2 cannot be assigned to another tenant?
 3 MS. THROCKMORTON: I mean, this variance
 4 would relate to this sign as proposed. The
 5 sign, as proposed here, as approved by the
 6 Board of Architects, at this height, at this
 7 specific height, this specific approval.
 8 MR. OTERO: Okay.
 9 MS. PINON: I think I understand where
 10 you're coming from, because I have the same
 11 question. Did this tenant have in their lease
 12 an exclusivity for the signage and are there
 13 any other tenants that have any similar signage
 14 rights? And when and if they do vacate, does
 15 that exclusively dissolve under the terms of
 16 the lease or that's something that would have
 17 to be negotiated --
 18 MS. MESTRE ZACARIAS: So I mentioned that
 19 they were on the entire tenth floor, because
 20 Merrill Lynch also occupies an entire floor.
 21 So because the Codina sign was there, the
 22 landlord thought that that signage was allowed
 23 now as of right, because he knew that Codina
 24 had gotten a variance for it. And so it is in
 25 their lease, only their lease, that they --

1 because they house the entire tenth floor, that
2 they would be able to have the sign to replace
3 the Codina sign.

4 When they went to the Board of Architects
5 and got their approval, they submitted a sign
6 permit, thinking that this had already gone
7 through all of the necessary channels, and then
8 Zoning flagged it, saying, no, because Codina
9 removed the sign, that variance is now
10 essentially void and you need to re-apply for a
11 variance, and there's only two wall signs
12 permitted, so that would be all that is allowed
13 on the property.

14 MR. THOMSON: From my perspective, formerly
15 on the board, we were challenged with making
16 this the Latin American Corporate Headquarters,
17 and one of the things that we really wanted to
18 have was a bunch of internationals that would
19 come into our community, and we needed to know
20 that they were here, and so signage became a
21 very important part of that.

22 And myself, I'm very proud to go around the
23 City, in various high rise buildings and low
24 rise buildings, and see the City's corporate
25 names on there. When I look at this building,

1 was no requirements for the height, but for
2 them to be allowed another sign on that facade.

3 MS. GARCIA: I have a question. Cosentino
4 that's the name of a company that came in from
5 Italy, I believe?

6 MS. MESTRE ZACARIAS: From Spain. So they
7 are a global Spanish family owned company that
8 produces high end countertops, everything from
9 Spain. They're nationwide, and they have a
10 Cosentino sign at each and every one of their
11 offices.

12 MS. GARCIA: Okay.

13 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Any other questions for
14 the attorney?

15 MS. PINON: No. I just wanted to -- with
16 your permission, I want comment for the record,
17 I had spoken to the City Attorney's Office this
18 past Friday and wanted to confirm that I did
19 not have a conflict on voting on this matter,
20 because I'm a long-time family friend of Ms.
21 Mestre, and I was told that I did not have a
22 conflict.

23 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Okay. Thank you.
24 So there's no more questions for the
25 attorney, and the public forum was closed.

1 the Codina sign is off, and we're just a little
2 bit higher than the Codina sign, and I guess,
3 just above the palm trees, but I really don't
4 care about who is coming next. I care about
5 this person, this corporate that's here now,
6 and they have the right to, I think, put the
7 sign up on the building, and to be very
8 effective.

9 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Is it correct that the
10 height of the lettering that's proposed is
11 smaller than what Codina had or is it the same
12 size?

13 MS. MESTRE ZACARIAS: So the lettering is
14 the same, 18 inches, but this sign is one
15 square foot smaller than what Codina had and
16 about five feet higher, so more in line with
17 today's Code.

18 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Okay. And a question
19 for the City, are we aware if when the Codina
20 sign was approved by the Board, if there was
21 any limitations to the approval or was it just
22 a unanimous approval, without any limitations
23 on the approval? Do we know that?

24 MS. REDILA: That sign variance for Codina
25 Group was approved in 2003. Back then, there

1 Do we have any other comments from the
2 Board?

3 MR. LAGE: I'll make a motion to approve
4 the item.

5 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: We have a motion. Is
6 there a second?

7 MR. THOMSON: I'll second.

8 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: There's a motion and a
9 second. Can we take the roll, please?

10 THE SECRETARY: Ms. Garcia?

11 MS. GARCIA: Yes.

12 THE SECRETARY: Mr. Lage?

13 MR. LAGE: Yes.

14 THE SECRETARY: Mr. Otero?

15 MR. OTERO: Yes.

16 THE SECRETARY: Ms. Pinon?

17 MS. PINON: Yes.

18 THE SECRETARY: Mr. Sotelo?

19 MR. SOTELO: Yes.

20 THE SECRETARY: Mr. Thomson?

21 MR. THOMSON: Yes.

22 THE SECRETARY: Mr. Hidalgo?

23 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Yes. So the motion
24 passes.

25 MS. MESTRE ZACARIAS: Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: There's a sign in sheet.
2 Please sign in.

3 Also, anyone in the audience today who is
4 going to speaking, if they can also sign in,
5 please, on the sign-in sheet.

6 Our second case for today is 232 Zamora
7 Avenue.

8 MS. REDILA: Good morning, once again. For
9 the record, Arceli Redila, from Planning and
10 Zoning. So this next item before you is a
11 variance for the property located at 232 Zamora
12 Avenue.

13 It is generally located in the southeast
14 corner of Zamora Avenue and Salcedo Street. It
15 is zoned multi-family, MF2, and located within
16 the recently enacted North Ponce Conservation
17 Overlay. It is currently vacant, 9,900 square
18 feet, approximately, and as you can see, it's a
19 triangular lot.

20 The property owner proposes to build a
21 four-story apartment building, with seven
22 units, but in order to achieve that, the
23 applicant is requesting three variances, and
24 the first one is to reduce the minimum
25 off-street parking setback from the front

1 property line to allow 28 feet where 40 is
2 required.

3 Second variance is to reduce the setback
4 for balconies from the front property line to
5 allow seven feet where ten feet is required.

6 And the third variance request is to reduce
7 the minimum buffer width for vehicular use
8 areas to allow three feet in the rear and two
9 feet on the side, interior side, where five
10 feet is required.

11 Now, given the existing condition of the
12 property, a triangular lot, irrespective of all
13 of the regulations of the forty-foot setback to
14 the front for parking and the buffer width, the
15 gray area will be what is left for the
16 applicant.

17 So what the applicant is requesting at this
18 point right here -- my pointer is not working
19 very well -- but they're proposing 28 feet, in
20 order for them to have those triangular parking
21 -- rectangular parking spaces.

22 And the balcony is encroaching, as you can
23 see this red line is seven instead of the
24 required ten feet, and for the vehicular use
25 area, again, in order to have the proper

1 circulation and to provide those parking spaces
2 needed for these seven units, they're
3 requesting for us to waive the five feet and
4 provide three and two for the rear and the
5 side.

6 With that, Staff is recommending approval,
7 given the existing site condition. It's
8 difficult to fit this, given with the
9 triangular configuration of the lot. That's,
10 essentially, the basis for Staff's
11 recommendation, and the attorney is here.

12 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Thank you.

13 MR. GARCIA-SERRA: Good morning, Mr. Chair,
14 Members of the Board. My name is Mario
15 Garcia-Serra, with offices at 600 Brickell
16 Avenue. We're representing 232 Zamora, LLC,
17 the owner of the subject property indicated
18 here in the aerial photos, a lot located at 232
19 Zamora, which is about 10,000 square feet in
20 size and designated for a multi-family medium
21 residential development and Zoned MF2, as well
22 as located within the North Ponce Neighborhood
23 Conservation Overlay District, which was
24 adopted about a year ago with the intent of
25 encouraging re-development in the North Ponce

1 area which is appropriate in scale and
2 representative of the garden district
3 apartments, which has historically been present
4 in this area of the City.

5 I am joined today by project architect
6 Peter Killidjian, who has designed a beautiful,
7 new four-story seven-unit building, despite the
8 challenges of this property's configuration,
9 which is why we are requesting the variances
10 that you are considering today.

11 As Arceli eloquently, I think, expressed it
12 in her presentation, we sort of have a
13 challenge here of fitting a square peg in a
14 triangular hole, because the Code is based on
15 the majority of the properties being
16 rectangular or square shaped and we have a
17 triangle here.

18 The property, really, is shaped sort of
19 like a slice of pizza. It's triangular. It is
20 triangular shaped, and we have a Zoning Code,
21 as I mentioned before, that is based on the
22 assumption that these properties will be
23 rectangular or square in shape.

24 As you can imagine, this creates some
25 challenges and hardships with regards to

1 certain setback requirements. First is the
 2 parking setback issue.
 3 This is the same exhibit that Arceli was
 4 referring to previously. The North Ponce
 5 Overlay Conservation District requires a
 6 forty-foot front setback from the street for
 7 any sort of parking. This is a challenge for
 8 almost any property in Coral Gables, in which
 9 you generally have maximum lot depths that are
 10 not greater than a hundred feet. On this
 11 property, in particular, that setback
 12 requirement, combined with the additional
 13 setback requirement for parking areas from the
 14 rear and side property lines of five feet,
 15 creates even a more constrained area, as you
 16 see there.
 17 The triangular slice of pizza sort of shape
 18 is even smaller, and as you can see, if you
 19 were to look closely at that Overlay, and you
 20 see the areas that are in red and the parking
 21 spaces that are delineated there, not even one
 22 of those parking spaces would be compliant with
 23 today's regulations, because of the setback
 24 requirements, if they were forced to comply
 25 with the setback requirements.

1 So we have to have a way in and way out.
 2 We need to do a driveway, and it's got to be 22
 3 feet in width in order for cars to safely come
 4 in and out, and then when you try to put
 5 standard sized parking spaces on either side of
 6 that drive, inevitably it is encroaching into
 7 some of these required setbacks.
 8 With the balconies, it is a similar
 9 situations. The balconies are required to be
 10 set back ten feet from the front property line.
 11 The curvature of our front property line is
 12 very unique and complicates us from complying
 13 with this requirement.
 14 Let me take out an exhibit now
 15 indicating --
 16 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Do you mind moving that
 17 easel a little closer?
 18 MS. PINON: It's hard to see.
 19 MR. GARCIA-SERRA: And so the balcony in
 20 question here is this one. It's normally
 21 required to be set back ten feet. It's set
 22 back at seven feet in its design. And, again,
 23 the curvature of the front property line really
 24 constrains the situation, as far as how far
 25 back we can potentially put that balcony. If

1 you were to take three feet off of that
 2 balcony, approximately that amount of area, you
 3 would have doors that would essentially open
 4 and that's it. You know, you wouldn't really
 5 have any area to potentially come out there.
 6 As Peter will mention in his presentation,
 7 historically balconies were permitted to
 8 encroach three feet into the front setback area
 9 and created a very acceptable design in
 10 previous buildings here in Coral Gables that
 11 historically has been very common.
 12 With that said, I would like to ask Peter
 13 to come up and just sort of give you a quick
 14 walk-through of his design and then layout and
 15 then elevations.
 16 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Thank you.
 17 MR. KILLIDJIAN: Good morning, Board
 18 Members. Peter Killidjian, with BPK
 19 Architects. We're the designers and architects
 20 for this wonderful site on Zamora, a site that
 21 when we first got in the office, we almost
 22 didn't take the project, because it's very
 23 challenging, as you can see.
 24 But what we did is, we took some of the
 25 challenges of the site and tried to turn them

1 into positives. One of the nice things about
 2 the site is where it sits on the street. It's
 3 at the end of that Salcedo access heading
 4 south, so we took advantage of that long
 5 distance and decided to create a design that
 6 had a vertical tower that ends with that vista.
 7 So we're reshaping the sidewalk and
 8 incorporating our green space, with some of the
 9 public space, to create a public space in that
 10 area.
 11 The other challenge of the site, obviously,
 12 is the curve type pattern of the triangle. So
 13 we initially went through a couple of scenes
 14 that other architects had done, which had
 15 underground parking, which, for such a small
 16 site, is not feasible, and we came up with one
 17 that lines the site and hides the parking from
 18 the front. That produces a building that's a
 19 little bit more complex and more expensive to
 20 build, but we were able to convince the owners
 21 that that was really the way to go to create a
 22 building that was in the character of this
 23 neighborhood.
 24 Our design was approved unanimously at the
 25 Board of Architects, with no comments, which is

1 a rare occurrence. Through the process, we met
2 with Staff, to make sure we were producing and
3 designing a building that was in character with
4 the neighborhood, the scale and style and
5 materials and so on.

6 We were really fortunate that this
7 Ordinance exists, because it's a very powerful
8 Ordinance. It really relaxes some of the
9 setbacks and some of the requirements that were
10 previously set on the site, but the geometry of
11 the site is such, that even with this
12 Ordinance, we needed a little help on getting
13 the parking and some of the functional aspects
14 of the building to work.

15 The facade of the building is, the building
16 got a Mediterranean bonus at the Board of
17 Architects. We're not using the maximum of the
18 bonuses. On this site, we can probably do
19 eleven apartments, and we're doing seven.
20 Really, the building is a Mediterranean
21 eclectic building, with sort of art deco units,
22 and we're really taking cues from some of the
23 historical buildings, like the Palms Hotel, the
24 San Sebastian Apartments, that really are
25 infill buildings, that build up to be buildable

1 line and then kind of activate the facade and
2 break it up and give scale to the facade, and
3 that's where a terrace or balcony helps in this
4 type of design.

5 We're going to be here to answer any
6 questions. There may be a lot of questions you
7 may have, but this is it.

8 MR. SOTELO: I have a couple of questions
9 before I forget, because I forgot a pen to
10 write.

11 You said, seven units in the building.

12 MR. KILLIDJIAN: Correct.

13 MR. SOTELO: And so thirteen parking
14 spaces -- I'm assuming they are two-bedroom
15 units? Is it two bedrooms?

16 MR. KILLIDJIAN: Yeah, two bedrooms and a
17 den.

18 MR. SOTELO: So, in essence, we have -- we
19 figure two cars per unit, we're missing one
20 parking spot for one of the units, right?

21 MR. KILLIDJIAN: We are complying with the
22 requirements for the Code. We're actually
23 about a parking and a half over what the
24 requirement is. Additionally, this area is
25 rich in parallel parking on the street. So we

1 wanted to make sure that we complied with the
2 parking that is required for the building, but
3 we don't see any issues with a parking problem.

4 MR. SOTELO: If we maintain with the Code
5 as it is right now, how many parking spaces do
6 you need?

7 MR. GARCIA-SERRA: Well, the requirement
8 right now for two-bedroom units in Coral Gables
9 is 1.75 parking spaces for each unit. So that
10 would result in ten spaces that are required,
11 and we have thirteen.

12 This one particular exhibit, which I
13 created, I think sort of spells out the point
14 completely. The original City planners, for
15 whatever reason, decided that Salcedo Street
16 should have this curve at this point. I
17 suspect that that curve most likely happened,
18 because the City of Miami boundary is also
19 right here. So if Salcedo would have gotten a
20 straight north-south direction, you would have
21 essentially had a significant amount of
22 property going up that would not have been able
23 to be developed.

24 So they curved the street easterly, and
25 when they curved the street easterly, the

1 property that took the brunt of that hit was
2 this one, and instead of being a square shape,
3 as every other property here, has this shape.

4 And so because of that, that's why now we
5 have, whatever it is -- you know, almost 100
6 years later, we're facing the issues of setback
7 and parking and how much space we have in the
8 front in order to have a balcony.

9 It's a challenging site, but I think Peter
10 has developed a very nice project for it, and I
11 think this is really sort of your textbook
12 example of when a variance is justified. When
13 we have the triangular shaped lot and you have
14 setbacks that are based on a square shaped lot,
15 it raises the issue of constraining how much
16 space you potentially have to develop, in this
17 case, parking, is when a variance is justified.
18 Especially here, when the intent was to sort of
19 keep parking out of the view of the public and
20 still being compliant with the design that we
21 have, with all of the liner use in the front of
22 the building.

23 MR. OTERO: I have a question, and then I
24 have a question for the City. As you know, the
25 hardship is a non-economic hardship, correct,

1 but yet the architect says it was contemplated
2 and they looked at one time to do underground
3 parking but it's not cost effective.

4 Your letter says that this property would
5 be very difficult -- it doesn't say,
6 impossible -- to do. What other options did
7 you guys consider in order to develop this
8 site, that would not require a variance?

9 MR. KILLIDJIAN: Architecturally, the only
10 other option is to do a parking garage, which
11 also would be very challenging in this site and
12 really would bring the building up to its
13 allowable height, which we're not meeting --
14 we're not using the allowable height for the
15 Mediterranean Bonus. We're way under it. 97
16 feet is what's allowed. We're at 62, I think.

17 So it would be a building that's completely
18 out of character with the neighborhood. The
19 number of units probably would not justify any
20 type -- any other type of development. So it's
21 really -- you know, even if it's not an
22 economic hardship, it's reality that, you know,
23 that type of development can't exist on that
24 type of site.

25 MR. OTERO: The question I had for the City

1 building is on top. That doesn't create the
2 best quality urban area.

3 So the idea was, okay, we can do parking,
4 as long as it's forty feet back. Now, because
5 this is a triangle, it didn't quite fit. So
6 that is why they are requesting that.

7 MR. OTERO: Is it safe to say that it's not
8 a safety consideration, but an aesthetic
9 consideration?

10 MR. TRIAS: It's an aesthetic consideration
11 and also for the activity that we're trying to
12 generate at the ground level at the site.

13 MR. OTERO: Would that be the same answer
14 for the balcony variance?

15 MR. TRIAS: The balcony variance is a
16 little different. It's similar, and I think
17 that it's something that we may want to revisit
18 with the regulations, because it makes it
19 difficult to have balconies, which we encourage
20 balconies. Balconies provide shade, balconies
21 provide aesthetic relief to the facade and so
22 on.

23 I would ask you to see this as a test of
24 the recent regulations, and I would ask you,
25 also, to keep an open mind that we may want to

1 was, the reduction from 40 feet to 28 feet --

2 MR. TRIAS: Yes.

3 MR. OTERO: -- historically what is it, 40
4 feet, and are we talking about any potential
5 safety issues to go from 40 to 28 feet?
6 There's a reason for the 40. I don't know the
7 reason for the 40.

8 MR. TRIAS: Mr. Otero, that's a very good
9 question, because the dimensions that are being
10 applied to this project are the result of the
11 recent North Ponce Overlay. So this is
12 actually the first significant project that is
13 following that recently adopted Overlay.

14 Now, as the applicant said, the dimensions
15 were really designed for a rectangular lot. I
16 think it's ironic, in a way, that the first
17 project happens to be one that is perfectly
18 situated for a variance, because the lot is
19 completely different than the typical lot.

20 So what happens is that the philosophy
21 behind the idea was that parking should not be
22 seen at the ground level. If you look around
23 the neighborhood and you look at a lot of the
24 1960s buildings, they tend to have parking all
25 throughout the ground, right, and then the

1 tweak them a little bit, because I think that
2 they are very restrictive, and since we offer
3 them, I take some responsibility for that. We
4 were trying to come up with the most
5 restrictive possible regulations, and now we're
6 realizing that maybe we should have a little
7 more flexibility.

8 MR. THOMSON: And your concern about safety
9 is mine, also. We went by the site yesterday
10 and drove it, and my concern was, is this
11 building going to block the traffic view if
12 you're turning left from Zamora, and it does
13 not. There's a whole car length beyond this
14 building, where you could stop and turn left,
15 and so I don't think this is hindering our
16 traffic problem.

17 MR. TRIAS: Mr. Thomson is correct. If one
18 looks -- let me see that -- all of that gray in
19 front of the building, all of this, is actually
20 the setback for the traffic, which includes the
21 curb, parking, et cetera. So the building is
22 set back, from the functional point of view of
23 traffic, and, in fact, all of that right-of-way
24 is designed into the front yard of the
25 building. So it's a very nice cohesive design

1 and I think it's very safe, certainly, from a
2 traffic point of view.

3 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: I think it's a very
4 unique lot, because in a traditional lot the
5 property line is right there. In this case,
6 you have a lot of green space in front of the
7 building, which is that gray zone that's shown
8 on that site plan, correct?

9 MR. GARCIA-SERRA: Everything that's gray
10 here would be green.

11 MR. TRIAS: So there's a required setback,
12 also, of ten feet, from the Overlay, to create
13 this pretty much lawn in front of the
14 multi-family buildings and that's what you see
15 here. So that is part of the aesthetics of the
16 garden apartments that we're trying to
17 recapture with the new regulations.

18 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: So, currently, on the
19 balconies, there's a three-foot differential
20 between what's required and what you're
21 providing. What is the current depth of the
22 balconies that front on Zamora?

23 MR. KILLIDJIAN: That particular balcony is
24 eight feet, which is about the minimum that you
25 should have for a useable balcony. We want to

1 the minimums for them to be workable and
2 furnishable spaces. If we start -- you know,
3 we squeezed it as much as possible. If we
4 start moving it back, you know, you get spaces
5 that really don't work and then it becomes --
6 the whole criteria falls apart.

7 MR. SOTELO: It's really Apartment Number 3
8 that gets impacted the most.

9 MR. KILLIDJIAN: Right. Yes. That other
10 ones -- and that illustrates the geometric
11 shape of the building. At this point of the
12 building, we're able to keep the terrace within
13 the building setback, and as we lose space and
14 gets thinner, you know, those kinds of
15 conditions begin to appear.

16 MR. SOTELO: Where is Apartment Number 1 in
17 all of this?

18 MR. KILLIDJIAN: Apartment Number 1 is
19 here, which is something that was received very
20 well, because, again, we're activating the
21 ground floor. It's not just storage or a
22 lobby. There's an actual unit on the ground
23 floor. So you have activity at the ground
24 level.

25 MR. SOTELO: They don't have any kind of

1 create spaces that are going to be usable and
2 activate the facade. You know, having a
3 balcony just as a decorative element, although
4 it breaks down the scale of the facade, is not
5 as nice as having a balcony that's activated
6 by, you know, people using it and looking down
7 on the street, keeping your eyes on the street.
8 So eight feet, really, is the -- is the minimum
9 that you should have for a front porch or a
10 balcony for it to be usable.

11 Trust me, we studied moving it back. All
12 of the dimensions within that footprint is what
13 is the minimum for them to work in the real
14 world. So if you move the balcony back, we
15 probably would have to lose it. And then you
16 get these -- a wall of a building that we can
17 probably work with, but it will not enhance the
18 neighborhood or the City in the way that this
19 does.

20 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: And, also, the back wall
21 of the balcony could also be pushed further
22 into the unit, but then you're losing square
23 footage.

24 MR. KILLIDJIAN: Yes. Like I said, all of
25 the spaces within the unit are what we consider

1 patio, right?

2 MR. KILLIDJIAN: No, that's all public
3 space.

4 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Any other questions?

5 MR. LAGE: I like the building. The
6 balconies, when you look at it, you don't see
7 the solid volume. You see open areas. Also,
8 you didn't take it higher and you could take it
9 higher, so you brought it down to the
10 neighborhood, and I think you're hiding the
11 parking spaces in the back. You can't see the
12 cars when you walk, and I think overall it
13 looks like it -- I like it, and I think that I
14 would support this application.

15 MR. KILLIDJIAN: Thank you.

16 MR. SOTELO: To piggyback on that, I think
17 we need to become -- this is a beautiful design
18 and a beautiful building that's going to be put
19 in an area that probably needs it. We need to
20 be more flexible in the City. I would support
21 this, as well, 100 percent.

22 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Does the Board have any
23 other comments for the attorney or the
24 architect?

25 MS. GARCIA: No. Move to approve.

1 MR. LAGE: I'll second that.
 2 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Before we move, is there
 3 anyone in the audience that is here to support
 4 or in opposition of this approval or of this
 5 item?
 6 For the record, there's nobody in the
 7 audience. So there's been a motion.
 8 MS. THROCKMORTON: And just to clarify,
 9 this is for all requested variances, to clarify
 10 the motion?
 11 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: The motion needs to be
 12 for all three items or we can have a motion per
 13 item?
 14 MS. THROCKMORTON: Either way. I just
 15 would like to clarify that.
 16 MS. GARCIA: To clarify, it's for all three
 17 variances, the motion.
 18 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: So we have a motion to
 19 approve all three items.
 20 MR. LAGE: I'll second that.
 21 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: And a second. If we
 22 could take the roll, please.
 23 THE SECRETARY: Mr. Thomson?
 24 MR. THOMSON: Aye. Yes.
 25 THE SECRETARY: Mr. Sotelo?

1 MR. SOTELO: Yes.
 2 THE SECRETARY: Ms. Pinon?
 3 MS. PINON: Yes.
 4 THE SECRETARY: Mr. Otero?
 5 MR. OTERO: Yes.
 6 THE SECRETARY: Mr. Lage?
 7 MR. LAGE: Yes.
 8 THE SECRETARY: Ms. Garcia?
 9 MS. GARCIA: Yes.
 10 THE SECRETARY: Mr. Hidalgo?
 11 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Yes.
 12 MR. GARCIA-SERRA: Thank you very much.
 13 Have a good day.
 14 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Thank you.
 15 Do we have any other items? Does the Board
 16 have any additional items or the City?
 17 THE SECRETARY: No other items, Mr. Chair.
 18 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Do we have tentatively
 19 anything planned for next month?
 20 THE SECRETARY: We did not receive any
 21 applications for next month.
 22 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Just for the record, I'm
 23 not going to be in town next month in the event
 24 that we have --
 25 THE SECRETARY: Today would be the deadline

1 for next month.
 2 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Okay.
 3 MS. THROCKMORTON: I'm sorry, before we
 4 adjourn, to clarify, there's an appeal that was
 5 filed that may come in June or July.
 6 MR. TRIAS: It's an appeal from a position
 7 of Staff, which is a little bit different than
 8 the items you have. As soon as we schedule it
 9 with the City Attorney's Office --
 10 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: An appeal on a prior --
 11 MS. THROCKMORTON: It's an appeal of the
 12 Staff's decision, that's not an appeal of a
 13 Board of Adjustment decision, and as a Planning
 14 and Zoning Staff decision, that's not a Board
 15 of Architects decision, it comes to this Board.
 16 We had one recently.
 17 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: That's the first one.
 18 MR. TRIAS: That's another one of the roles
 19 that the Board of Adjustments has, which is
 20 whenever Staff makes an administrative
 21 determination, there's an appeals process and
 22 the appeal of that comes to the Board of
 23 Adjustments. We've never done that, that I can
 24 remember recently. So that may be coming up in
 25 a couple of months or so.

1 MS. THROCKMORTON: And the appeal has been
 2 filed, so it's just a matter of scheduling it.
 3 You don't have any variances scheduled for
 4 June, but this Board may still meet in order to
 5 hear that appeal from Staff's decision.
 6 CHAIRMAN HIDALGO: Thank you.
 7 MR. TRIAS: Thank you very much.
 8 (Thereupon, the meeting was concluded at 8:45
 9 a.m.)
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CERTIFICATE

STATE OF FLORIDA:
SS.
COUNTY OF MIAMI-DADE:

I, NIEVES SANCHEZ, Court Reporter, and a Notary Public for the State of Florida at Large, do hereby certify that I was authorized to and did stenographically report the foregoing proceedings and that the transcript is a true and complete record of my stenographic notes.

DATED this 18th day of May, 2018.

SIGNATURE ON FILE

NIEVES SANCHEZ