

**August 5, 2025**

# CITY OF CORAL GABLES

BOARD OF ARCHITECTS

Dear Board Members,

I am writing to again voice strong opposition to the proposed project at 110 Phoenetia Avenue by Century Crystal Group under the current plan. The North Ponce community, understanding that it's predominantly a multi-family community, fails to address individual homeowners on Phoenetia Avenue that will significantly affect our home value, quality of life, and create extreme safety dangers from vehicular traffic on our block. This is already one of, if not the densest area in Coral Gables and putting an additional nine – story development with 117 units within a block of our historical homes seems poorly planned. The populated area we live in seems to be forgotten in the planning and design leaving no solutions to previously reported issues such as street design, connectivity, traffic, and lighting. This leads homeowners, like me, with little faith that this project has any value to our quality of life for our families and the protection of our investment into the community. The sheer volume of units and parking spaces leaves little doubt to the detrimental outcome this project is sure to create at this location putting multiple families in higher risk categories.

In addition, after review of the most recent plans to be presented to the BOA, I continue to see little value regarding the City's historic Mediterranean architecture. The developers call it "contemporary Mediterranean" but continues to lack any value to the area's neighborhoods aesthetics. It is as if the architect and the developer have no knowledge or interest in this community and its impact on it leaving the community troubled and fearful for my families. They continue to boast about the support for Crystal Academy as a win for the neighborhood, however, I have written in the past about my now 21-year-old stepson with multiple disabilities

and when we first moved here, we tried to enroll him there over a decade ago. To do that, it would have cost us nearly \$30,000/year. Fast forward now a decade later, I can't imagine the costs for these services there now, but families from outside this community can afford it. We continue with what we need to do for our child, but for our child who lives a block away from this development and who is really affected by this development, they continue to boast that this is a win for our community. I do not mean to ever diminish the need for special need care nor the Crystal Academy which is an amazing institution, however, with the funding it takes to go there and with minimal families that actually live in this direct community that will be affected, we must take little credence to their support for this project as most simply drop off and pick up their child there and head to their homes outside of the North Ponce neighborhood which in reality is only further densifying this direct area.

I am also shocked that the land designated for this project is not considered historic. It took me 6 months to get a permit for solar panels on my flat roof and another 6 months for my hurricane windows. I was told that even though my home is not designated as historic, due to its age, it was still looked upon as historic. How come this project is not being looked at under the same scrutiny? In addition, a new, more rigorous Mediterranean bonus program was approved, yet the project documents show that they were even able to avoid that.

In short, this project does not benefit anyone but the developer in this location. It is not authentic, and it doesn't resemble the areas historic charm, and most importantly, it puts the surrounding community at risk. The submission completely disregards the impact of the added traffic and congestion on single lane residential streets which once complete, will become irreversible and extremely dangerous obliterating an already weakened pedestrian walking/biking environment from the other building put up in this area alone in the last decade. There is a lot here that needs to be addressed, and I'd hope that the same vigor and fight that we see from City Hall officials will be passed on to projects like this that lack value to the community folks that live in them. We cannot just lay down and simply accept unthought out projects like these in densely populated areas simply because a building can fit in this location. Size does matter in this project and in this location with so many issues surrounding it.

As a former long time, city official at the New York City Economic Development Corporation under the Bloomberg Administration, I am NOT against development at all. I have been part of projects that have transformed neighborhoods through New York City, however, I am also well accustomed to well thought out plans that allow for immersed community input and engagement development projects that make sense to better a community. This does not meet any of those aspects and is further is compounded by the greenspace it will ruin at what we all in North Ponce area believe is a historic location. I am amazed that this parcel is not considered a historic designation, but we have time to make this right but, the time is now to do that before it is too late.

SINCERELY,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Spina". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'T'.

THOMAS SPINA  
20 PHOENETIA AVE.  
CORAL GABLES, FL 33134