

## **Exhibit B Focus Group Comments**

### **Focus Group A: Restaurants and Small Businesses (May 21, 2015)**

Charlie McDonald:

Permitting takes too long, 4 businesses closed  
9 months to get permit approved for hair salon  
No hidden taxes on business  
Request mid-block crossing by city garage  
Sidewalk don't connect  
Palm trees current in median were for emergency vehicles to get thru traffic  
Massachusetts has streamline permit, has model sign code  
Need cultural change by staff

Gardo Gomez:

City understaffed, always courteous and polite  
Process doesn't make sense, have to go higher up, ombudsman good idea  
Structural review should carve time out ½ day for large project; ½ for small projects  
Code should be applied across-the-board evenly  
Project less than 15,000 sf should have streamline process for smaller projects  
US 1 street frontage should have more enhanced sign code  
Pre-existing condition for a 20' high ceiling are being requested to raise to 23'  
Not enough people to handle the work load  
Infrastructure (sewer line) needs maintenance  
Seasonal sign should be accommodated, currently cannot do  
Streamline process

Vinny Torre:

Help is there if requested by staff, staff is best have ever seen  
For people trying to open a business, to have a Q&A for Concurrency  
Should have a method to estimate permit fees

Aksel Beirov:

Small business owner with construction experience  
Cost money when work done is different than approved plans  
COU an area to improve, why change of use need to go before DRC  
Plan review should catch problems at first review  
Business tax should communicate with Building

Jillian Hornik:

Small signs for surveys

Misha:

Is the City ready for wave of commercial projects to come? Use provide providers as option.

### **Focus Group B: Developers, Designers, and Builders (May 21, 2015)**

City should be announcing which buildings will be historic

Marva: Have to go to Historic, the letter is only good for 6 months.

Lopez: Consider early start letter

Stetson: Suggest walk thru hours. Do review right the first time. Staffing is an issue. Happy of reorganized space. Board of Adjustment don't meet in the summer, that's a problem.

Burton: Permit kind of easy here. Do have staff access, last 2 years made tremendous leaps by staff. Suggest women, members younger than me for Board of Architects, look at that requirement. Suggest checklist for zoning, but would not work for building code.

Andy: Perception already built, clients afraid to come in the city. High quality developers interested, but perception problem remains. If review can get all the comments, piecemeal process a problem. Phase development can be problem if there are changes.

Marsha: What is the process for a zoning change?

Gunter: Prior to Andrew, if went into encroachment, it was easy, now insurance is required.

Misha: Predictability is a problem, left hand doesn't talk to the right hand, review comments cut and paste, yes to checklist, need predictability what happens next

Ed: Tony is go-to-guy; he's great to have in this position. There are good things happening.

### **Comment Cards for Focus Groups A and B**

Establish a preliminary zoning review process; Key Biscayne does that and is helpful.

If the city wants to improve permitting process, you need a good research on best practices for pro-business government. There are a list of "best cities to do business" – make that your goal. Florida not on that list.

Can we do away with separate insurance requirement for extending driveway finish to the ROW up to the street? As it stands now, the homeowner or building owner needs to have their insurance agent write a policy listing the city as a co-insurer. Do you know most insurance companies don't do this anymore? Claudio Quintana

The buildings in Coral Gables have more rights and advocates than the citizens and business owners. A change in city government culture needed before real change can occur. Peter Brooke Chocolatier

Gardo Gomez:

1. Business license official should check Certificate of Use status prior to issuing business license
2. When front line employee cannot move the plans forward, give to ombudsman or Mr. Lopez
3. Express lane for small projects larger projects hold up – ½ day for big projects, ½ for small projects
4. Make Code Enforcement is even across the board and city. “We come when someone complains” quote from Code Enforcement.
5. Interior projects under \$15,000
6. If there is a microfilm request and it cannot be found, waive
7. Small business < \$1.M no fees for variances or exempt from addressing existing condition, etc.
8. No person in charge of pre-existing condition which are not per code currently that they cannot control
9. If change order/plan is caused by city error or prior approval (erroneously) then should not be a fee for resubmittal
10. Streamline small sign process, for seasonal signs also

Historical Board needs to make a more comprehensive assessment of properties that are NOT historical, but yet when you applied for demolition or substantial changes, all of sudden they are declared of “Historical Importance” after the fact. Candido Quintana AIA, [cqarc@aol.com](mailto:cqarc@aol.com)

Early start (while comments are being addressed) for interior improvements  
Concurrency- at times delays an otherwise streamlined process

Experience with the paint design, we wanted to get approved via Board of Architects. We went with 3 designs part of board would approve and part did not, why? If guidelines are same, it is unfair that opinions and subjectivity come into play. Maribel Ramirez (Miami Headache Institute)

The idea of the “Storefront packaging” encouraging business owners/landlords to fix storefronts is a great idea and at the same time very challenging due to who will be responsible for cost, tenant or landowner? Bloom (Maria Saldana)

Create ombudsman position for large commercial projects; P&Z staff insufficient to handle volume and stay on top of them to avoid unnecessary delays.

Please have BOA agenda up earlier.

### **Focus Group C: Realtors (June 1, 2015)**

Pat: Put the pieces together, demolition needs survey and historic letter; put together flow chart, the public don't read. What to do if there are no permits, institute microfilm request on-line; are there appointments for regular people? Need more waiting space. How does owner know if there is an open permit?

Charlotte: What is the process for an after the fact permit, how risky for a buyer to take on this risk? What is the review timeframe when a permit is pulled? Clients don't understand if house is designated. Is the permit payment public?

Christopher: Under-utilized land sold for land value. When sign is posted for BOA review, case is then postponed then reviewed, what is the transparency?

John: Can we use historic aerials to spot illegal work done?

Ana: Can you find property records on-line?

Robert: Expedited lien search? What to do with open permits?

Slesnick: 1 page pamphlet "moving into the Gables", cliff notes, garage, how to look up permits, closing permits

Areia: provide as many tools available, videos, make it simpler for consumer

Michelle: Is there a contractor approved list?

### **Focus Group D: Homeowners (June 1, 2015)**

Be descriptive in Gov QA when a problem is addressed, what is being addressed.

Things are improving. Need fast track for maintenance project. Took 6 weeks to replace identical door.

Streamline shall things.

Why can't review a replaced door within 2 weeks? Best permit desk, BOA very helpful. Traffic frustration at Miller and Alhambra, UHealth raises traffic concerns, gigantic traffic mess, don't trust traffic analysis is real. Miami-Dade has jurisdiction, so county city have to work together. Want to know if UM buildings got a pass from BOA?

Historic Reviews: Historic first, then BOA then letter from HP. For friend, COA was denied after it was approved by everyone. HP should do their review first before BOA.

Need to establish benchmarks.

Concern about private provider, support staff hiring contractor for peer review. Need true Planning Department. What is Med Village impact in Public Safety? Project shouldn't look at single focus, but city-wide. No input on water, sewer, FPL, DERM.

Signage for Asian Massage as big as window front.

Need a way to find old records readily.

Help residents w DERM and WASA process, takes at least 2 months.

Need checklist

Homeowners in CG have a disadvantage when compared with major projects. By the time the citizen is involved; don't know when departments reviewed the project. When issued raised by private resident, it's too late. Notice sign too small, almost have to walk a dog to find out. Use City enews link.

UM Project dwarfs the community. Resident shows up for meeting and rescheduled.

Why one block has septic and another on sewer?

### **Comment Cards for Focus Groups C and D**

I would like to see a better earlier system for notifying residents before a plan or permit is approved especially like the Miller UM entrance and the new Health facility. Public meetings before a decision is made, rather than we had a public meeting and it really was only a rubber stamp or a checked box.  
Heather Salt rhsalt@aol.com

Great opportunity to learn more about the process. Very impressed with the improvements in the past 20 years.

Developers of greater than 1 acre need to pay for parks in the neighborhood for example 10% of project sf need to be provided as an off-site public park or towards the purchase of park space.

Please let me know of how (in addition to who I usually say to other people about 3<sup>rd</sup> floor) may I help (as to sharing my experiences) to improve the perception. Ray Ramesh carwell1981@gmail.com

Coral Gables has deserved reputation for being a police state; permitting required for trivia unrelated function or property values. Confidence in permitting and other processes under mined by examples of defective projects being approved; inadequate coordination regarding traffic decisions, pedestrian etc.; including site attention city's own signs ankle height illegible; reliability accurate information; accountability sanctions when public officials get things wrong.

A gentleman (Enrique Lopez) made a very important point, each project seems to be reviewed as a separate item, w/o consideration of the whole spectrum, (2 examples) (a) the traffic plan for the new UM Health facility routed traffic within the university but nothing was improved with respect to traffic throughout the city (b) the Board of Architects approved the UM designs to a different overall standard

than the rest of us. We need to work the interface better. Need cumulative impact. Rock Salt 1435 Miller Road

My wife is with sequencing of Certificate of Appropriateness approval after Board of Architects public hearings. If a representative of the historical resources department is present at the BOA public hearing, the Certificate of Appropriateness approval decision should be done at the same time. The Board of Architects hearing which is public and at which the homeowner can attend in person should be the final decision on aesthetics. No decisions should be made behind closed doors.

Please look at the \$100 fee from Historic Resources Dept for non-designated properties. Why would your designation only last for 6 months? It's very hard to get it all together for demolition in a 6 month period. And why wouldn't your non-historic designation last forever! What could possibly happen in six months to make the property all of a sudden become historic? I resented having to re-pay the \$100 again. I have a friend who has paid it 3 times. It leaves a bad taste in one's mouth.

Very informative. I hope you will have a follow up meeting. Please continue to promote this communication forum to residents. Well done. Marcia Borden

I would love to see much better coordinated problem-solving w/M-D Highway/Roads. I believe significant improvements are possible, but only if the city and county are working better together to develop solutions. Rock Salt 1435 Miller Road

To start a home remodeling, could you specify a people (flow) chart? Maricio Brener  
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