

CITY OF CORAL GABLES
LOCAL PLANNING AGENCY (LPA) /
PLANNING & ZONING BOARD MEETING
VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2026, COMMENCING AT 6:02 P.M.

Board Members Present at the City Chamber:

Alex Bucelo, Chairman
Felix Pardo
Robert Behar
Shane McGlashen
Ignacio Alvarez
Gonzalo Sanabria
Alice Bravo

City Staff and Consultants.

Jill Menendez, Administrative Assistant/Board Secretary
Cristina Suarez, City Attorney
Jennifer Garcia, City Planner
Yesenia Alfonso, Assistant City Attorney
Arceli Redila, Zoning Administrator
Fengqian "Grace" Chen, Principal Planner
Cherie Ann Menendez, Transportation Engineer
Charles Hart, Volkert, Inc.

Also Participating:

Jorge Navarro, Esq., on behalf of Items E-1 through E-4
Albert Cordoves, Corwil Architects
Mary Palacio, Crystal Academy
Robert Chisholm, RA Chisholm Architects
Carol Smith
Carmen Diaz Padron
Karelia Martinez Carbonell
Maria Cristina Longo
Bonnie Bolton
Maria Cruz
Omar Packard
Maria De Leon Fleites
Mariana Fleites
Alexis Santos
Judith Packard
Maria Essenwanger
Vanessa Salas
Cheryl Akerman
Lizette Arango
Christopher Saez
Thomas Mooney
Scott Pearson
Art Kozyrovicius
Nicolas Cabrera
David Winker, Esq.
Andres Jimenez
Katherine Swain
German Tinoco
Katherine Cao, Via Zoom
Dr. Laura Olivos, Via Zoom

1 THEREUPON:

2 (The following proceedings were held.)

3 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: The date is June 17th,
4 2026. Calling the meeting to order. All of
5 you, if you can, please silence all of your
6 phones and beepers.

7 MR. ALVAREZ: Sorry.

8 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: I think that was a
9 beeper.

10 Good evening. This Board is comprised of
11 seven members. Four Members of the Board shall
12 constitute a quorum, and an affirmative vote of
13 four members shall be necessary for the
14 adoption of any motion. If only four Members
15 of the Board are present, an applicant may
16 request and be entitled to a continuance to the
17 next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board.

18 If a matter is continued due to a lack of
19 quorum, the Chairperson or Secretary of the
20 Board may set a Special Meeting to consider
21 such matter. In the event that four votes are
22 not obtained, an applicant, except in the case
23 of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment, may request
24 a continuance or allow the application to
25 proceed to the City Commission without a

1 recommendation.

2 Pursuant to Resolution Number 2021-118, the
3 City of Coral Gables has returned to
4 traditional in-person meetings; however, the
5 Planning and Zoning Board has established the
6 ability for the public to provide comments
7 virtually.

8 For those members of the public who are
9 appearing on Zoom and wish to testify, you must
10 be visible to the court reporter to be sworn
11 in. Otherwise, if you speak without being
12 sworn in, your comments may not have
13 evidentiary value.

14 Lobbyist Registration and Disclosure, any
15 person who acts as a lobbyist must register
16 with the City Clerk, as required pursuant to
17 the City Code.

18 As Acting Chair, I now officially call the
19 City of Coral Gables Planning and Zoning Board
20 Meeting of June 17, 2026 to order. The time is
21 6:02.

22 Jill, please call the roll.

23 THE SECRETARY: Ignacio Alvarez?

24 MR. ALVAREZ: Present.

25 THE SECRETARY: Robert Behar?

1 MR. BEHAR: Present.

2 THE SECRETARY: Alice Bravo?

3 MS. BRAVO: Present.

4 THE SECRETARY: Shane McGlashen?

5 MR. MCGLASHEN: Present.

6 THE SECRETARY: Felix Pardo?

7 MR. PARDO: Here.

8 THE SECRETARY: Gonzalo Sanabria?

9 MR. SANABRIA: Here.

10 THE SECRETARY: Alex Bucelo?

11 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Here.

12 Notice Regarding Ex Parte Communication,
13 please be advised that this Board is a
14 quasi-judicial board, which requires Board
15 Members to disclose all ex parte communication
16 and site visits. An ex parte communication is
17 defined as any contact, communication,
18 correspondence, memorandum or other written or
19 verbal communication that takes place outside a
20 public hearing between a member of the public
21 and a member of the quasi-judicial board
22 regarding matters to be heard by the Board. If
23 anyone made any contact with a Board Member
24 regarding any issue before the Board, the Board
25 Member must state on the record the existence

1 of the ex parte communication and the party who
2 originated the communication.

3 Also, if a Board Member conducted a site
4 visit specifically related to the case before
5 the Board, the Board Member must also disclose
6 such visit. In either case, the Board Member
7 must state on the record whether the ex parte
8 communication and/or site visit will affect the
9 Board Member's ability to impartially consider
10 the evidence to be presented regarding this
11 matter. The Board Member should also state
12 that his or her decision will be based on
13 substantial competent evidence and testimony
14 presented on the record today.

15 Does any Member of the Board have such
16 communication and/or site visit to disclose at
17 this time?

18 MR. BEHAR: No.

19 MR. MCGLASHEN: I went to the site
20 yesterday. I just went myself. I stepped down
21 and inspected the neighborhood.

22 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

23 Swearing In, everyone who speaks this
24 evening must complete the roster on the podium.
25 We ask that you print clearly, so that the

1 official records of your name and address will
2 be correct. Now, with the exception of
3 attorneys, all persons physically in the City
4 Commission Chamber, who will speak on agenda
5 items before us this evening, please rise to be
6 sworn in.

7 (Thereupon, the participants were sworn.)

8 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Zoom Platform
9 Participants, I'll ask any person wishing to
10 speak on tonight's agenda items to please open
11 your chat and send a direct message to Jill
12 Menendez, stating you would like to speak
13 before the Board and include your full name.
14 Jill will call you, when it's your turn, and I
15 ask you to be concise, for the interest of
16 time.

17 Phone Platform Participants, after Zoom
18 platform participants are done, I will ask
19 phone participants to comment on tonight's
20 agenda item. I also ask you to be concise, for
21 the interest of time.

22 Can I have approval of last month's
23 minutes?

24 MR. BEHAR: Motion to approve.

25 MR. SANABRIA: Second.

1 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: All in favor?

2 (The Boar Members voted aye.)

3 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: The procedure we'll use
4 tonight, identification of agenda item by
5 Mrs. Suarez, presentation by applicant or
6 agent, presentation by Staff. Then I'll open
7 it to public comment, first, in Chamber, then
8 in Zoom, followed by phone. I'll close public
9 comment. We'll have Board discussion. Then
10 we'll entertain a motion, discussion, and
11 second of the motion, and then Board's final
12 comments, and finally vote.

13 Mrs. City Attorney, can you please read the
14 first item?

15 MS. SUAREZ: Yes. So we have four items on
16 today's agenda, that we will consolidated for
17 purposes of the public hearing.

18 My apologies. We're dealing with some
19 technical issues here.

20 So we have four items on today's agenda.
21 E-1 -- and I'll read them all together, so that
22 we can consolidate them for purposes of the
23 public hearing and discussion.

24 E-1 is an Ordinance of the City Commission
25 of Coral Gables, Florida amending the Future

1 Land Use Map and Mixed Use Overlay District Map
2 of the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan
3 pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, "Process,"
4 Section 14-213, "Comprehensive Plan Text and
5 Map Amendments," and Small Scale amendment
6 procedures, from "Religious/Institutional" to
7 "Commercial Mid-Rise Intensity" and to include
8 within the boundaries of the North Ponce Mixed
9 Use District Overlay, Block 21, Revised Plat of
10 Coral Gables Douglas Section, Coral Gables,
11 Florida; providing for a repealer provision,
12 severability clause, and an effective date.

13 E-2 is an Ordinance of the City Commission
14 of Coral Gables, Florida making Zoning District
15 boundary changes pursuant to Zoning Code
16 Article 14, "Process," Section 14-212, "Zoning
17 Code Text and Map Amendments:" 1) from "Special
18 Use" to "Mixed Use 2", and 2) to include within
19 the boundaries of the North Ponce Mixed Use
20 District Overlay, Block 21, Revised Plat of
21 Coral Gables Douglas Section (110 Phoenetia),
22 Coral Gables, Florida; providing for a repealer
23 provision, severability clause, and an
24 effective date.

25 E-3 is an Ordinance of the City Commission

1 of Coral Gables, Florida granting approval of a
2 Planned Area Development pursuant to Zoning
3 Code Article 14, "Process," Section 14-206,
4 "General Procedures for Planned Area
5 Development" for a mixed-use project referred
6 to as "Crystal Residences," including a private
7 school, on property legally described as Block
8 21, Revised Plat of Coral Gables Douglas
9 Section (110 Phoenetia), Coral Gables, Florida;
10 superseding Ordinance Number 1909 and Ordinance
11 Number 2962; including required conditions;
12 providing for a repealer provision,
13 severability clause, and providing for an
14 effective date.

15 E-4 is a Resolution of the City Commission
16 of Coral Gables, Florida, requesting Mixed-Use
17 Site Plan Review and an Encroachment Agreement
18 pursuant to Article 14, "Process" Section
19 14-203, "Conditional Uses," for a proposed
20 mixed-use project, referred to as "Crystal
21 Residences," including a private school and
22 live/work units; on property legally described
23 as Block 21, Revised Plat of Coral Gables
24 Douglas Section (110 Phoenetia Avenue), Coral
25 Gables, Florida; superseding Ordinance Number

1 1909 and Ordinance Number 2962, to permit the
2 current accessory school as a principal use;
3 including required conditions; providing for a
4 repealer provision, severability clause, and
5 providing for an effective date.

6 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Okay. Presentation by
7 Staff or are we going to hear --

8 MS. SUAREZ: For the applicant.

9 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: I'm sorry. Yeah,
10 correct.

11 MR. NAVARRO: Mr. Chair, Board Members,
12 good evening. Jorge Navarro, with offices at
13 333 Southeast 2nd Avenue.

14 We have a PowerPoint presentation. If we
15 could have it placed on the screen.

16 By way of intro, joining me this evening,
17 we have Mary Palacio, from Crystal Academy,
18 Sarina Sorrentino and Tony Taulbert (phonetic),
19 who are the project principals, our lead
20 project designer, Albert Cordoves, is here, as
21 well as our Planning Consultant, Bob Chisholm.

22 We're excited to be here this evening to
23 present what is truly a unique and important
24 mixed-use project, a project that has been five
25 years in the making. It's a mixed-use project

1 that includes residential, live/work, and open
2 spaces, but it's not your traditional mixed-use
3 project. This project is anchored by a new
4 permanent home for Crystal Academy. I'll
5 discuss this project in greater detail shortly,
6 but I think it would be helpful to provide a
7 little bit of background on how we got here
8 today.

9 There we go.

10 So this process began in 2021. That's when
11 we first started working with Crystal Academy.
12 It has undergone an extensive historical,
13 architectural, and public review process. As
14 illustrated in this time line, this project was
15 carefully evaluated, and it's been refined
16 through a historical review and architectural
17 review process that went on for many years, and
18 after years of hard work, we're here before you
19 this evening to request the Zoning approvals
20 that are needed in order to make this project a
21 reality.

22 The request before you, as was mentioned by
23 your City Attorney, is a change of land use
24 from Religious/Institutional to Commercial Mid
25 Rise intensity, and to add the property within

1 the boundaries of the North Ponce Mixed-Use
2 District. It includes a rezoning from Special
3 Use to Mixed-Use 2, a Planned Area Development,
4 and a conditional use for our proposed site
5 plan.

6 For many years, this property was owned by
7 a church and it was leased to Crystal Academy.
8 For those of you that may not be familiar with
9 Crystal Academy, it's a non-profit school here
10 in Coral Gables that has served more than 600
11 families for more than 16 years. It is
12 actually the only school in Coral Gables that
13 provides specialized therapeutic treatment and
14 education for kids with significant development
15 and learning disabilities.

16 When the church decided to sell the
17 property in 2021, Crystal Academy faced the
18 real possibility that it would lose its home
19 and its ability to serve the families and the
20 children that depend on it. My client made a
21 commitment at that time to preserve the school
22 on-site and to invest in its future by
23 dedicating a 5,000 square foot space within its
24 project, and to provide a 4,000 square foot
25 outdoor recreational area for these children.

1 This is being built by the applicant, fully
2 funded by the owner, and leased back to Crystal
3 Academy for 99 years rent free.

4 This commitment is especially important,
5 giving the growing need for these services and
6 the lack of available institutions that provide
7 it. While Coral Gables is home to many
8 outstanding educational institutions, Crystal
9 Academy is the only one that provides this
10 specialized care. This project will provide
11 Crystal Academy with a permanent home, where it
12 can continue its missions for generations to
13 come, and before we get into the specifics of
14 this project, I'd like to invite Mary Palacio
15 up, so she can tell you a little bit more about
16 this important organization and what this
17 project means to them.

18 Thank you.

19 MS. PALACIO: Good evening, and thank you
20 for your time here today. My name is Mary
21 Palacio, as Jorge said, and I've been a
22 resident of Coral Gables for more than 25
23 years.

24 Over the years, I've always been standing
25 in this room and City Hall, because I have

1 served in several Boards, advocating for
2 inclusion and opportunities for residents with
3 disabilities and students with disabilities,
4 but tonight I'm talking from a mother's
5 perspective and a founder of a school for
6 children with special needs.

7 Twenty years ago, one of my sons was
8 diagnosed with severe autism, and I was trying
9 to look for a place here, where I lived, that I
10 could find those services for my son, and I
11 couldn't find that, and I had to travel, and
12 that's how Crystal Academy was founded,
13 seventeen years ago, because we had a need in
14 this City, for the families that live here, for
15 the families that live nearby, to find a center
16 and a school that would serve their children.

17 Today, Crystal Academy serves the most
18 vulnerable children in the autism spectrum.
19 Most of our children are non-verbal, they have
20 feeding tubes, they use wheelchairs, and they
21 have extreme behavioral challenges that require
22 a one to one intervention. They do get better,
23 but they start that way.

24 I'm grateful to be here, again, today --
25 this is the first time that this project comes

1 to this Board -- because having a rent free and
2 a new building is just transformational for
3 generations to come. Our building is aging,
4 and I don't know if you've been there, but it's
5 just -- the amount of money that we spend,
6 instead of spending it in community-based
7 instructions, and tools, and specialized
8 staffing, it's tortuous. It's a burden. And
9 the fact that Fifield Companies has honored the
10 agreement that Century Builders did five years
11 ago, we are very grateful for them having to do
12 that.

13 So here I am humbly just asking to see if
14 you can move this project forward, so we can
15 continue providing these children and these
16 families with the services that they need, that
17 they can learn to grow in a place that they
18 call home, because this is where they live.

19 Thank you so much.

20 MR. NAVARRO: Having discussed the
21 community mission that started this project,
22 I'd like now to turn into the planning context
23 and the design considerations that we took into
24 consideration when we first started designing
25 this project.

1 I think it's important to understand the
2 context of this area and where this project is.
3 At a high level, the project has 184
4 residential units, 16 ground floor live/work
5 units, a new educational facility for Crystal
6 Academy, and it also includes a 5,000 square
7 foot publicly accessible courtyard and a 4,000
8 square foot outdoor recreational playground,
9 that will be used by Crystal Academy during
10 school hours and open to the public in the
11 afternoons and on weekends, which is -- you
12 know, being a father, that's usually when you
13 take your kids to these types of spaces.

14 So, in terms of location, the property is
15 located right on East Ponce Boulevard, which is
16 the main arterial roadway that connects Ponce
17 into the Douglas Entrance and Southwest 8th
18 Street. The property serves really as a
19 transitional area, in the North Ponce area, and
20 to take a step back as to what the intent of
21 the North Ponce area was when it was created,
22 it was an undertaking that took many years to
23 come across, many workshops and community
24 meetings were done, planning exercises. It was
25 adopted at that time to try to promote the

1 revitalization of this area of the City by
2 encouraging new housing for young families and
3 young professionals, create a walkable
4 environment. The City saw this area as an area
5 that was ripe for growth, because of its
6 proximity to transit, its proximity to
7 commercial uses and nearby employment centers.

8 And the idea was really to create a
9 walkable community, bring in residential, so it
10 can be walkable to commercial, bring in
11 residential so it can be walkable to education,
12 bring in commercial so it could be --
13 residential, so it can be walkable to all of
14 the different office uses in the area, and
15 that's really what this project accomplishes,
16 and we believe it's very consistent with the
17 intent of the North Ponce area.

18 And as you can see in this map, this
19 property is directly adjacent to one of the
20 overlays in your North Ponce area, which is the
21 North Ponce Mixed-Use District, which is
22 highlighted in blue in this exhibit, and
23 directly to the west and to the south, you see
24 that under the existing North Ponce framework
25 that exists today, to the south and to the

1 west, you could have a 190-foot building, with
2 125 dwelling units per acre. To the east of
3 this property is what we call the Neighborhood
4 Conservation District, and this area -- this
5 overlay was created, really, to encourage
6 existing garden style apartments, to have
7 additional development incentives to preserve
8 them, but it also simultaneously increased the
9 development capabilities in this area, by
10 increasing the density and the building height
11 to 100 feet and 100 units per acre. So this
12 property essentially serves as a transition in
13 this area between the high intensity commercial
14 and mixed-use corridor to the west and the mid
15 rise multi-family residential corridor to the
16 east.

17 Our request for MX2 and Mid Rise Commercial
18 is intended to create an appropriate transition
19 between these two areas, between these two
20 overlays, while still maintaining the mid rise
21 character of the area and not exceeding the
22 allowable height that you have there today,
23 which is 100 feet in height, but also having a
24 zoning that allows us to maintain and enhance
25 this existing school that's on site.

1 From a use perspective, the project is
2 fully compatible with the area. It preserves
3 the existing educational uses and it integrates
4 them and introduces residential uses, which are
5 already permitted within the broader overlay
6 today.

7 From a height perspective, and this gives
8 you a context of the area, you could see the
9 project there in the middle, but here's the
10 better aerial. From a height perspective, the
11 way we designed this building was to try to
12 respond to the location. This was as a result
13 of a lot of feedback in conversations with area
14 residents over the last three, four years. We
15 incorporated a tier massing approach, that
16 Albert will explain, that scales down the
17 height of the building from nine stories and
18 approximately 93 feet, on the western edge of
19 the property, that abuts the existing North
20 Ponce Mixed-Use District, and transitions as it
21 goes west into the Mid Rise Multi-Family area,
22 to eight stories 83 feet, which is well below
23 the 100 feet that's allowed today.

24 Equally important, if you could see from
25 this aerial compatibility image, is that the

1 project's height and massing are very
2 consistent with both, existing and recently
3 approved projects in the immediately
4 surrounding area. The architecture and design
5 of this project, including its proportions,
6 scale, and massing was heavily reviewed by
7 multiple different levels and Boards. It was
8 approved by the Board of Architects. It was
9 unanimously upheld by the Special Master Board,
10 it was also upheld by the City Commission
11 Board. So this is a project whose architecture
12 has gone through a very strenuous and very
13 detailed review process.

14 With that context, I'd like to introduce
15 Albert Cordoves, so he can walk you through the
16 project in greater detail.

17 Thank you.

18 MR. CORDOVES: Thank you, Jorge.

19 Mr. Chair, good evening, Board Members.
20 Albert Cordoves, with Corwil Architects, at
21 4210 Laguna Street, Coral Gables, Florida.

22 First and foremost, I want to thank you for
23 your time this evening in reviewing our
24 application. We are extremely happy to finally
25 be here before this Board. This is a project

1 that we've been working on for some time with
2 City Staff, our clients, the ex-clients, but
3 more importantly, with the Board of Architects,
4 which we had numerous meetings, with a true
5 collaboration, to what I think culminated with
6 an incredible project, a beautiful project, for
7 this City and for this community.

8 And since the onset of design -- since the
9 onset of design, I think we found ourselves
10 with an amazing opportunity to create something
11 beautiful in a small City block, in a beautiful
12 area of this incredible City, and, of course,
13 one of the main goals was to take that existing
14 pedestrian realm to truly another level, and in
15 doing this, I think one of the main design
16 goals was to start with ground floor active
17 spaces within the project, and in doing this,
18 we actually, as you can see in our ground floor
19 plan, we anchored the main -- what we think and
20 believe is the main visual corner of the
21 project, of East Ponce and Antilla, with our
22 main entrance to the project.

23 We also have, within the 200 units, 16
24 live/work units that are anchoring a very
25 active use and space at ground floor, and,

1 again, the goal was to maximize the true active
2 spaces throughout the realm. We also have the
3 5,000 square feet school, special needs school,
4 as Mary mentioned, one of our pride and joys of
5 this project, and, again, anchoring with
6 another beautiful green space on the northeast
7 corner of the project.

8 We felt it was important that, not only
9 anchoring the realm with the active use spaces,
10 but also providing additional landscaped areas,
11 which we have given this project throughout,
12 basically, all of the frontages, additional
13 spaces from that of the minimum required
14 setbacks. And it was not enough to do that, we
15 also wanted to bring that green and quality of
16 life spaces to the interior of the project. We
17 created a more than 5,000 square feet
18 courtyard, which is going to be part of the
19 green elements and the open space of the
20 project. We also flanked it by a pass through
21 paseo, from north to south, to just expand on
22 that connectivity for the entire project.

23 As we said before, we have 200 units. One
24 of the things that we are very proud also is
25 our 301 parking spaces, as you can see, are

1 essentially fully lined from the visuals from
2 the street levels itself. Most of the floors
3 are typical, creating that openness in the
4 courtyard, articulation throughout each floor
5 varies a little bit, to create the elevations
6 that we have presented, and then we culminate,
7 at the top of the floor, with the apron that is
8 being lowered. That's one of the ways that
9 Jorge mentioned before that we essentially
10 provided an eighth level to ninth level
11 transition from east to west, as you can see
12 here. This floor houses our pool, our amenity
13 area, and the additional units that we have as
14 the penthouse units.

15 These are some of the elevation designs,
16 but I want to -- before we leave you, I want to
17 leave with some of the renderings of the
18 project, that are part of your package. Again,
19 everything designed with meeting the Coral
20 Gables Mediterranean standards, approved by the
21 Board of Architects, with many of the features
22 that we find in the true Mediterranean Coral
23 Gables design.

24 This is a view of the courtyard, that I was
25 mentioning before, bringing in that quality of

1 life, again, to the inside of the project.
2 Another view from above. All in all, we're,
3 again, extremely happy to be here, open for any
4 questions and answers you might have, but this
5 is one that we worked long and hard, again,
6 with the Board of Architects, with City Staff,
7 with our client to, again, as I said before, in
8 the beginning, truly feel that it is an amazing
9 project for the City and for the community
10 itself.

11 Thank you very much.

12 MR. NAVARRO: Thank you, Albert.

13 So, as Albert mentioned, the PAD request,
14 which is one of the requests before you this
15 evening, is what makes many of the project's
16 most significant design and community benefits
17 possible. This includes the integration of
18 Crystal Academy into the project, the use of
19 active liners to fully line the entire parking
20 garage, expanded open space amenities that
21 would otherwise not be allowed under the
22 existing regulations. For example, just to
23 give you an idea, we're providing three times
24 the amount of open space that's required by the
25 North Ponce Overlay Regulations and 55 percent

1 more than what your traditional PAD regulations
2 require. So we are exceeding the open space
3 standards on all counts, and as Albert
4 mentioned, the reduced building height and
5 envelope with tiered building heights well
6 below the allowable 100 foot height limits that
7 are currently in place for the North Ponce
8 Conservation District.

9 I would like to take credit for many of
10 these design features, but they actually came
11 as a result of a lot of conversations and
12 meetings with area residents and City Staff
13 over the last several years. The proposal
14 before you reflects that feedback, that you're
15 seeing this evening. Some of the changes that
16 we've made was, obviously, reducing the
17 building heights. We reduced the project's
18 overall FAR by more than 10,000 square feet.
19 We incorporated a dedicated pick-up and
20 drop-off area within the paseo, as was
21 requested by some of the residents across the
22 street, in order to minimize impacts on
23 adjacent streets, and we made a commitment not
24 to include any ground floor retail on the
25 ground level. They're fully lined, fully

1 activated with live/work units, and that was
2 really to help with the transitional nature of
3 the project.

4 I'm happy to say that as a result of these
5 changes, we've been able to obtain more than
6 500 petitions from area residents. These
7 aren't residents in the other part of town.
8 These are residents within eight blocks of this
9 project, and I have a map here, hopefully. It
10 will pop up, but we have met with many
11 residents in this area, over many years, and
12 we've spoken to a lot of them, and their
13 feedback -- maybe not all of their feedback,
14 but a lot of their feedback has gone into this
15 project here.

16 I'll give you -- that's our project,
17 identified in red, with all of the petitions in
18 favor of this project and its mission
19 highlighted in green.

20 Your Planning Staff has also done a very
21 detailed review of this application. They've
22 prepared a very detailed Staff report, that's
23 part of your record, outlining how this project
24 complies with each and every criteria in your
25 Code for approval, and is recommending

1 approval, subject to certain conditions, which
2 we are in agreement with. We agree with the
3 Staff report. We believe this project
4 contributes positively to the North Ponce area,
5 and achieves a lot of the goals and initiatives
6 that were thought of when this overlay was
7 first created, by delivering new housing
8 opportunities, open spaces, and most
9 importantly, a meaningful community benefit
10 through the preservation of Crystal Academy for
11 the next 99 years, and we ask for your support
12 here this evening, in accordance with the Staff
13 recommendation.

14 Mr. Chair, thank you for your time. I
15 would simply like to request five minutes of
16 rebuttal at the conclusion of the public
17 comment.

18 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Understood. Thank you.

19 MR. NAVARRO: Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Presentation by Staff.

21 MS. GARCIA: Good evening, Jennifer Garcia,
22 Planning and Zoning Director. Thank you.

23 So we are here for four requests, a small
24 scale map amendment to the Future Land Use Map
25 Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Code Map

1 Amendment, Planned Area Development or PAD
2 designation, and a conditional use.

3 So, as you know, this is the entire Block
4 21 of the Douglas Section, in between East
5 Ponce and Galiano and south of Phoenetia and
6 Antilla, to the south side. This is an aerial.
7 As you can see, it is St. James Church right
8 now, the structure. It's home to Crystal
9 Academy, and I believe a church is renting
10 there currently right now, as well. As far as
11 landmarks, it is south of the Woman's Club, and
12 to the east of ChateauBlueau. To the east side
13 of the project is -- the subject site, is
14 multi-family buildings of different scale.

15 This is a view looking south from the
16 applicant's submittal. You can see the
17 proposed building there in the middle, with the
18 light color. That proposed -- I'm sorry, the
19 approved project that's just north is in the
20 foreground, and you can see the Douglas
21 Entrance to the right side, and Ponce de Leon
22 on -- I'm sorry, on the right side, and the
23 Douglas Entrance on the left side.

24 So the school was approved as a change of
25 zoning back in 1967 as an accessory school to

1 the church at the time. That was amended then
2 later in 1971 to allow that kindergarten to
3 expand, I believe, to third grade, and, then,
4 again, in 1991 to allow it to fifth grade,
5 again, still as an accessory to the school, as
6 the land use, again, is
7 Religious/Institutional.

8 So the request, again, is for a
9 Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map
10 Amendment, Zoning Code Map Amendments, Planned
11 Area Development designation, and then a
12 conditional use. The conditional use has four
13 parts for it. It is the mixed-use site plan
14 approval, because that is exceeding the
15 required threshold for -- for the site plan
16 approval. The private school is a conditional
17 use, as well. Live/work units on the ground
18 floor is a conditional use, as well as an
19 encroachment on the Galiano side, where the
20 entrance of the school is.

21 So, currently, the land use is
22 Religious/Institutional, as you can see there,
23 and what's proposed is Commercial Mid Rise
24 intensity. To the north, you can see the
25 Woman's Club, to the south and to the east, you

1 can see multi-family medium density, and, then,
2 directly west is the commercial high rise
3 that's bordering -- framing along Ponce de
4 Leon.

5 So looking at the context, existing
6 buildings are shown in white, and the subject
7 site is the middle green block. So, as you can
8 see, there are a mix of different scales of
9 buildings. Most of the larger buildings are on
10 Ponce de Leon, and there are a few that are
11 within a block, at the allowed height of 97
12 feet, directly south and to the east. But
13 looking to the Future Land Use Map, what's
14 allowed for the height, with existing zoning
15 and land use, the height for those multi-family
16 buildings is 97 feet or 100 feet, as Mr.
17 Navarro alluded to, for the Residential Infill
18 Regulations, for the RIR Overlay. What's shown
19 here actually is the six stories, the 97 feet,
20 of the MF2 without the RIR Overlay. So you can
21 see the red that's along Ponce de Leon to the
22 left of the slide, and, again, those brown
23 buildings are the existing land use and zoning
24 allowed to have.

25 So as they're proposing, they're proposing

1 to change that land use of that site from
2 Institutional land use to be mid rise --
3 Commercial Mid Rise.

4 As you can see, also, there are some
5 buildings, such as the 911 Ponce building --
6 I'm sorry, 911 East Ponce I believe is the
7 address, the condo building, it is exceeding
8 the allowed height, and you can see that at the
9 top of the slide here.

10 So the Zoning Code Map Amendment is
11 including the change of zoning from Special Use
12 to MX2 and also moving the line between the
13 Mixed-Use Overlay District and the Conservation
14 Overlay District. So the Conservation Overlay
15 District, or its formal name is North Ponce
16 Neighborhood Conservation District Overlay, is
17 really geared towards the preservation and
18 conservation of these older apartment buildings
19 that are in the North Ponce area. So it
20 includes additional uses, that are allowed only
21 in this area, for MF2 properties, and
22 additional conditional uses for any designated
23 historic properties.

24 There's a Historic Preservation benefits
25 program, when it comes to parking, TDR sending

1 sites, and signage, and there's a Garden
2 Apartment Conservation Benefits Program, as
3 well, that allows for a variance request and
4 also some flexibility with parking, if you add
5 on to an existing structure that's built before
6 1964. That's the criteria to be sort of a
7 garden apartment in this area.

8 And, then, for any new construction,
9 there's landscape requirements for the front
10 yard. So there's no walls or fences permitted.
11 There's limitations on the driveway widths, and
12 as well as a parking setback, to have habitable
13 space facing the sidewalk for those front
14 yards. Again, there's no other limitations in
15 the Conservation Overlay for new construction
16 that limits heights, that limits FAR or against
17 your setbacks. All of that still applies with
18 the MF2 underlying zoning.

19 The third request is a Planned Area
20 Development for the PAD designation. So their
21 main benefit or this project is the Crystal
22 Academy, and I'll get to that in just a second.
23 There's a publicly accessible park. That's
24 going to be in the northeast corner, accessible
25 after hours, after the school is out.

1 Crosswalks, internal drop-off and pick-up, to
2 make sure that all of that activity of the
3 school is happening inside the building and not
4 along the streets, internalized circulation,
5 the pedestrian paseo, the courtyard and some
6 plaza on the southwest side.

7 So, as you know, the PAD allows for Code
8 deviations or deviations from the requirements
9 to the Zoning Code in response to public
10 benefits. So there are two identified Code
11 deviations that they have. They are proposing
12 to have nine stories on East Ponce, when eight
13 stories is allowed. That's only along the East
14 Ponce de Leon Boulevard side. As he said, it
15 scales down to eight stories along the east
16 side of the project. Another Code deviation is
17 the ground floor transparency. They're only
18 providing 27 percent along the north side,
19 which is Phoenetia.

20 So in response to that, they are offering
21 5,000 square feet of space on the ground floor
22 for Crystal Academy or a future non-profit,
23 should Crystal Academy ceases to exist. A
24 school would be able to be built there by the
25 applicant, at no cost to the school, and then

1 be there rent free for 99 years. The 4,000
2 square foot park on the corner, that northeast
3 corner of the property, would be for daytime
4 outdoor learning space for the school and then
5 public use, through a public easement, after
6 school hours, as well as public easement for
7 the pedestrian paseo and the courtyard on the
8 property.

9 And the last request is a conditional use.
10 This is the site plan. Again, the park, the
11 school on the east side of the property,
12 vehicular entrance off the south, as to not
13 impact the neighbors to the south of Antilla,
14 because you'll be entering into the driveway on
15 that side, public plaza on the southwest
16 corner, live/works along the ground floor, 84
17 units above, the courtyard again, and the exit
18 of the vehicular traffic would be on the north
19 side, to not impact the neighborhood.

20 So the site is 1.49 acres. The FAR
21 proposed would be 3.5 for 126,000 square feet.
22 The maximum building height allowed per the MX2
23 zoning is 97 feet. They are at 93 feet, so
24 just below the allowed height. Again, eight
25 stories is allowed per Code. They're proposing

1 to have nine stories on East Ponce de Leon per
2 the PAD condition. They're allowed to have 186
3 units per acre -- sorry, 186 units total.
4 They're proposing to have 184, just below the
5 allowed density. Again, 16 units on the ground
6 floor, and 5,000 square feet of the project
7 will be the school, and then the public parking
8 they're providing is 301 parking spaces, and a
9 total of 20,000 square feet of open space.

10 This is another rendering, looking on the
11 east elevation. This was reviewed by Staff at
12 the DRC, Development Review Committee, back in
13 January of 2022, Board of Architects reviewed
14 it in 2022 and 2023, and then it came back for
15 a Neighborhood Meeting earlier this year, and
16 here we are for the Planning and Zoning Board.
17 This would have to be reviewed by the City
18 Commission for two hearings for those
19 ordinances.

20 Letters were sent to property owners within
21 fifteen hundred feet, and I'm happy to see that
22 it worked. We have plenty of people here. So
23 I'm happy that people got their notice and
24 they're here to express their concerns or
25 comments. So that was sent out for the

1 Neighborhood Meeting earlier this year, as well
2 as for this meeting tonight. The property was
3 posted eight times, and the website was posted
4 eight times, and the newspaper advertisement
5 was once for this meeting tonight.

6 So Staff has determined that it is
7 consistent with the Comp Plan, as it is
8 providing housing in an area that has been
9 identified as an area for increased housing, as
10 well as progressing the mobility goals and
11 policies of our Comp Plan.

12 We recommend approval, with conditions.
13 Those conditions are listed at the end of your
14 Staff report, but here's the highlight, a
15 maximum height of nine stories or 93 feet.
16 5,000 square feet for Crystal Academy, a cap of
17 75 students, which is consisting with the
18 existing ordinance that allows the school to be
19 an accessory use right now, the removal of the
20 arcade along the frontage -- the south frontage
21 and the west frontage (Unintelligible) to be
22 more consistent with the Conservation Overlay
23 District and replace those arcades with stoops
24 or porches. Incorporation of a landscaped
25 setback on the north side on Phoenetia, and

1 then a public easement required for a courtyard
2 and a covered walkway and the park after hours,
3 and, then, of course, the off site
4 improvements, such as intersection
5 improvements, pedestrian crosswalks, and the
6 streetscape.

7 And that's is it. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

9 I guess we'll open it to public comment,
10 and before we do, I just ask that everyone
11 who's speaking here today, if they could be
12 concise. It seems like we have a lot of
13 speakers, both here and on Zoom. So if we can
14 keep it to three minutes. If we have to go
15 over it, that's fine, but let's just try to
16 keep it to the three-minute mark.

17 With that said, Jill, if you can call the
18 first speaker.

19 THE SECRETARY: Carol Smith.

20 MS. SMITH: Good evening. My name is Carol
21 Smith. I live at 824 Galiano Street. It's two
22 blocks away from the Crystal Academy. And I've
23 lived there for over twenty years.

24 MS. SUAREZ: Mr. Chair, can we ask the
25 speaker to speak into the microphone, please?

1 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yes.

2 MS. SMITH: So before I -- oh, my goodness.
3 Before I begin, I would like to say that I'm a
4 retired teacher and I've worked in both,
5 private and public schools, and my grandson
6 went to Crystal Academy for classes.

7 And at the same time, I'm very concerned
8 about losing the green space in our
9 neighborhood, and because of my experience
10 working in schools, I have an idea of how they
11 change over time, how Boards change, enrollment
12 changes, funding changes, and all kinds of
13 reasons that are unanticipated, that even
14 though a school plans to be there for
15 generations, they may need a larger space or a
16 different space, and in generations to come, I
17 wonder what will happen to -- you know, with
18 the 99-year lease.

19 So with that in mind, I'd like to read
20 this. If the educational component is being
21 cited as a public benefit supporting this
22 rezoning, what ensures that benefit remains if
23 the school relocates, ceases operations or is
24 no longer in that space? How does the Board
25 evaluate the durability of a public benefit

1 used to support a permanent land use decision?
2 If that benefit intended to be -- is that
3 benefit intended to be permanent and
4 enforceable or contingent on circumstances that
5 may change over time? Once the zoning change
6 is granted, what remains if the public benefit
7 no longer exists?

8 Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

10 Jill.

11 THE SECRETARY: Carmen Diaz, and the
12 following speaker will be Ms. Carbonell.

13 MS. DIAZ PADRON: Good evening. My name is
14 Carmen Diaz Padron, and I've been a resident of
15 Coral Gables for nearly sixty years. I
16 currently serve as president of The Villages, a
17 historic preservation organization. I
18 respectfully urge you to deny this proposed
19 nine-story development. The project is
20 inconsistent with the property zoning. The
21 site is designated Special Use Religious, and
22 permits a maximum height of four stories. A
23 nine-story building is more than double the
24 allowable height, and a major departure from
25 the regulations governing this property.

1 This property is also -- this project, I'm
2 sorry, is also incompatible with the
3 surrounding neighborhood. The area is
4 characterized by one to four-story buildings,
5 with four single-family homes directly adjacent
6 to this site. A building of this scale would
7 overwhelm nearby residences and permanently
8 alter the neighborhood's character.

9 This is a historically sensitive area. Six
10 designated historic structures are located on
11 Phoenetia Avenue, and three on Antilla Avenue,
12 and the neighborhood is currently being
13 considered for historic district designation.
14 Approving a project of this magnitude would
15 undermine preservation efforts and threaten the
16 character that makes this area unique.

17 Residents made their views clear during the
18 Community Vision Workshop, recommending
19 development limited to two to four stories and
20 even identifying this site as a possible
21 potential park space. This proposal completely
22 ignores the community's vision.

23 The impacts on infrastructure are equally
24 concerning. Narrow residential streets were
25 never designed to accommodate a nine-story

1 building and an over 300 car garage. Increased
2 traffic, congestion, noise, and safety concerns
3 will directly affect nearby residents.

4 So for all of these reasons, its conflict
5 with zoning, incompatibility with the
6 neighborhood, impact on historical resources,
7 infrastructure concerns, and lack of general
8 public benefit, we respectfully ask you to deny
9 this application.

10 We thank you for your consideration.

11 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

12 MS. MARTINEZ CARBONELL: Good afternoon,
13 everyone. Good evening. My name is Karelia
14 Martinez Carbonell, and I'm here representing
15 the Historic Presentation Association of Coral
16 Gables. I'm president of the organization.

17 On behalf of the Historic Preservation
18 Association, please accept this as an
19 opposition to the project as presented. The
20 key points are these: There's a zoning
21 violation. The block is zoned Special Use
22 Religious, with a four-story max height. A
23 nine-story building clearly exceeds this. It
24 is incompatible with the neighborhood.
25 Surrounding structures are one to four stories

1 tall. Four single-family homes are directly
2 adjacent.

3 There's a historic sensitivity. Six
4 historically designated structures on
5 Phoenetia, three on Antilla, and the
6 neighborhood is being studied for historic
7 district designation, violate Section 1-103.
8 The Zoning Code requires new development to be
9 compatible with the surrounding architecture
10 and protect residential neighborhoods from
11 incompatible uses.

12 It violates two additional ordinances. The
13 North Ponce Neighborhood Conservation Overlay
14 District, which is Section 2-404 and the Coral
15 Gables Historic City Plan, which is Ordinance
16 201-13, both call for low rise development in
17 scale with the neighborhood. It contradicts
18 the Community Vision Workshop. The City's own
19 planning process called for two to four-story
20 limits, and converting the site into a park
21 space.

22 Infrastructure cannot support it. Narrow
23 residential streets are not equipped for a
24 nine-story building with a 300 plus car garage.
25 And the PAD is quite misleading, because we had

1 heard that the public benefit would be a green
2 space, which, really, wouldn't be accessible
3 when -- would only be accessible when the
4 adjacent school wasn't in session, but this
5 should never be accepted as a qualifying green
6 space, but now we understand that it's Crystal
7 Academy.

8 And with all due respect, my niece is on
9 the spectrum, but that's not a public benefit.
10 It's a private school, with tuition over
11 \$41,000, very limited population, and it's not
12 open to the public. So, again, I am absolutely
13 respectful of what the school offers, but as a
14 public benefit, it does not fit that
15 definition, and I'm sure other people will have
16 that definition when they come up.

17 So, in closing, please understand, this
18 area is under a Commission-funded study, which
19 is in consideration for historic designation,
20 and the project will directly affect the
21 preservation of the Garden of our Lord, and if
22 you haven't been in that area, please go and
23 visit, because it's a beautiful green space.

24 Second, the project is an encroachment into
25 the North Ponce neighborhood. The developer

1 bought the parcel as Institutional/Religious
2 and seeks a variance to build its mixed-use
3 development. This area is under a
4 commission-funded study in consideration for
5 historic designation.

6 Third, the neighborhood is protected under
7 the Zoning Code, Section 2-404, North Ponce
8 Neighborhood Conservation District Overlay.
9 This Code was passed to preserve and enhance
10 the garden apartment character of the North
11 Ponce residential neighborhood properties.

12 George Merrick's Historic City Plan, and,
13 again, if you haven't read it, I encourage you
14 to read it, refers to this area as the Douglas
15 Section, and it specifically states, on Page 17
16 and Page 33, how this neighborhood and this
17 section should be preserved and developed, but
18 it should have its restrictions.

19 And, Fourth, the proposed project's density
20 will have an adverse impact on the quality of
21 life and wellness of the residents living on
22 the abutting streets and the historic landmarks
23 surrounding the area, specifically the
24 nationally recognized Coral Gables Woman's Club
25 and the Douglas Entrance.

1 And, finally, the proposed project will not
2 only raze the Garden of our Lord, deemed a
3 cultural landscape by two nationally
4 recognized, prominent UM School of Architecture
5 professors, but will remove the historic green
6 canopy and heritage trees surrounding the
7 property. If you saw the rendering, there's
8 hardly any trees, and the trees around that
9 area are all a hundred plus years old.

10 And, then -- I'm sorry, I lost my spot --
11 and heritage trees surrounding the property.
12 They're original to Merrick's Garden City Plan
13 neighborhood. The garden is also a memorial to
14 World War veterans and a burial site.

15 So, respectfully, I ask that you deny this
16 proposed project as presented. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

18 MR. BEHAR: Through the Chair --

19 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: If we could limit the
20 clapping after every speaking.

21 MR. BEHAR: Through the Chair. Jill, how
22 many speakers are there, because we have -- we
23 have to terminate -- I've got a hard stop at
24 9:30?

25 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: So do I.

1 MR. BEHAR: So the question is, how many
2 speakers, because I want to make sure that
3 everybody has an opportunity to come up?

4 THE SECRETARY: We have over 25.

5 MR. BEHAR: Okay. I think -- my suggestion
6 is, try keep it, to make sure that everybody
7 has an opportunity to come up. Otherwise we're
8 not going to be able to see, you know, through
9 this tonight.

10 MS. BRAVO: Should the Chair, should there
11 be a set time limit for each --

12 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: There is a three-minute
13 time cap, but I know some speakers go over by a
14 few.

15 THE SECRETARY: So what I plan to do is
16 call at least two speakers up, so we kind of
17 keep the speakers moving.

18 MR. BEHAR: I think it's important that
19 everybody comes up, but I want to make sure
20 that the time is allotted correctly.

21 THE SECRETARY: Correct.

22 MR. PARDO: Mr. Chairman --

23 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yes.

24 MR. PARDO: -- I agree with Robert, as far
25 as listening to every speaker, and the Chair,

1 three minutes, you know, times 25, that's about
2 an hour and a half. It's seven o'clock now.
3 8:30. Hard stop --

4 MR. BEHAR: I just want to make sure,
5 Felix, that everybody --

6 MR. PARDO: Yeah. No, I agree, a hundred
7 percent, but, I mean, the due process -- I
8 really -- so far we've had three speakers, and
9 I've learned something from each one of them.
10 I don't want to stop that. So I want to make
11 sure that that gets into the record, and -- you
12 know, respecting the hard stop at 9:30, you
13 know, from our Board Member, I just want to
14 make sure that we get everything on the record
15 and that -- that we look at all of the sides.

16 We've already heard almost an hour's worth
17 of presentation from Staff and from the
18 applicant. So right now we're into three
19 speakers, and I think it's important that we do
20 this in a very fair process.

21 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

22 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

23 Jill --

24 THE SECRETARY: The following three
25 speakers will be Bonnie Bolton, Maria Longo,

1 Maria Cruz.

2 MS. SUAREZ: Ms. Bolton, I think she was
3 calling -- she was just saying the next three,
4 so you could be ready to come up, but I think
5 you were next, Ms. Bolton.

6 MS. LONGO: If you don't mind, I have to
7 leave.

8 So my name is Maria Cristina Longo, and I
9 live at 16 Phoenetia Avenue, the same street
10 where the proposed project is, and I own this
11 house, and this is one of the historic
12 significant houses that they're talking about.

13 I support preserving the school, and I
14 appreciate the effort to retain an educational
15 use on the site. Keeping a school that serves
16 children with autism is a worthwhile objective.
17 However, the issue before you today is not
18 whether the school is worthy. The issue today
19 is whether this application meets the
20 requirements for a Planned Area Development or
21 PAD.

22 The applicant is requesting a PAD, which
23 provides flexibility from the underlying zoning
24 regulations. In exchange for that flexibility,
25 a PAD is intended to provide a significant

1 public benefit to the community. I do not
2 believe the required significant public benefit
3 has been demonstrated. The school serves an
4 important purpose, but the majority of the
5 students and families who attend do not live in
6 the immediate North Ponce neighborhood. I do.
7 I live on the same street.

8 The school provides a valuable regional
9 service, but it is not, by itself, a
10 significant neighborhood public benefit
11 proportional to the increase in height,
12 density, intensity, and development rights
13 being requested. The project's courtyard, like
14 Mr. Navarro showed, or the architect showed, is
15 an interior courtyard. It's inside the
16 building. It is not a public space. It is an
17 open space. There's a difference between
18 public and open. It is not public. An
19 interior courtyard primarily serves the
20 residents of the development, not the
21 surrounding neighborhood.

22 If the Board is inclined to approve this
23 PAD, I respectfully ask that the approval be
24 conditioned upon the creation of a true public
25 benefit. One way to accomplish this would be

1 to redesign the project by flipping the
2 courtyard and open it to the public, creating a
3 visible, functional and publicly accessible
4 green space that directly serves the
5 surrounding neighborhood. If the City grants
6 extraordinary development rights through a PAD,
7 the public should receive an equally meaningful
8 benefit in return.

9 I just want to end by telling you this, the
10 project has been in the process for five years.
11 It didn't pass with flying colors. It went
12 through a very rigorous process, because it was
13 not well designed. As a matter of fact, the
14 revision of the Med Bonus happened and were
15 triggered because of the design of this project
16 and the potential impact.

17 I'm asking you to please look at the facts,
18 improve the project, by giving it a real public
19 benefit. Thank you for your time.

20 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

21 MS. BOLTON: Hello. Good evening. I
22 wanted to start off by mentioning that there
23 are over 160 unique letters from residents of
24 the North Ponce Garden Apartment District, and
25 I also want to mention that the letters

1 submitted by the developer --

2 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Before you start, if you
3 can give your name and address.

4 MS. BOLTON: My name is Bonnie Bolton. I
5 live at 42 Phoenetia Avenue, and my apartment
6 overlooks the site.

7 The form letters that the developer
8 presented, a vast majority of them are from the
9 Little Havana neighborhood, okay.

10 The proposed zoning changes for the Garden
11 of our Lord must be denied. The project
12 violates numerous laws in our Zoning Code and
13 contradicts the very principles this City was
14 built upon. The site sits in a residential
15 neighborhood. Four single-family homes are
16 right next door. The block is currently zoned
17 Special Use Religious, with a four-story height
18 maximum, and if you look at the surrounding
19 streets, they're primarily one and two-story
20 buildings, and two three-story structures, and
21 one four-story building. And it's also very
22 important to remember that this neighborhood is
23 being studied to potentially be designated as a
24 Historic District.

25 I'm going to cite Section 1-103 of the

1 Zoning Code, because it's there to implement
2 George Merrick's original vision for Coral
3 Gables and ensure that new development doesn't
4 steamroll existing residential neighborhoods.
5 New projects must be compatible with
6 surrounding architecture and they must protect
7 residential areas from incompatible uses, and
8 they must preserve the low intensity character
9 that defines these neighborhoods.

10 It also contradicts the North Ponce
11 Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District
12 Ordinance, which the City Commission created
13 specifically to preserve the character of the
14 North Ponce Garden Apartment District, and it
15 contradicts the Historic City Plan. Quote, and
16 this from the North -- from the Historic City
17 Plan, "Multi-family residences were to be low
18 in height and remain in the same scale as the
19 single-family homes. In fact, some
20 multi-family residences were designed to look
21 like single-family homes from the street,"
22 unquote. That's from the Historic City Plan.

23 It also goes on to state that steps will be
24 taken to, quote, "Save from destruction full
25 grown trees when new buildings are erected.

1 All of the full grown trees and old foliage
2 will be kept intact and utilized in arranging
3 the landscaping of the newer buildings," and
4 that's specifically from our Historic City
5 Plan, which is a landmarked ordinance.

6 Also, it contradicts the North Ponce
7 Community Vision Workshop, which identified the
8 Garden and the playground as two sites which
9 the City needed to purchase to convert to
10 public park space.

11 And the PAD request, under the terms of
12 PAD, it says that a project must provide
13 substantial public benefit. What's being
14 offered here is not a substantial public
15 benefit. It's a highly specialized, small
16 school of forty students. It only serves a
17 very small segment of the population that has
18 severe autism and is very wealthy, and, also,
19 they're supposed to be providing twenty percent
20 landscaped open space, which they're not doing.

21 So I'm urging the Board to please reject
22 the Zoning changes requested by the developer,
23 four different changes. I think it's way too
24 much.

25 Thank you so much.

1 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

2 THE SECRETARY: Just a reminder, please
3 keep it to three minutes, please. Thank you.

4 MS. CRUZ: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller
5 Road. In case you're wondering, I care about
6 the whole City, not just a section of the City,
7 not just a portion of the City. Coral Gables
8 belongs to all of us, and when a section of the
9 City is affected, all of us are affected.

10 Several things have been repeated already,
11 so I've been taking notes, and I think some of
12 the stuff that the developer and Ms. Palacio
13 have said contradict what they're trying to do.
14 For example, she said that this is for
15 residents with disabilities. Well, most of the
16 students are not residents. She also said that
17 there's a need in this City for families that
18 live here. Well, if they don't live here,
19 there are other places, too.

20 I've also heard -- not tonight, but I've
21 also heard that moving the children from this
22 property will affect them. They're going to
23 have to move for the building. So instead of
24 moving them twice, out of here, someplace else,
25 and back to here, they could just find some

1 property. If the property owners are so good,
2 that they want to help these children, I'm sure
3 that they could provide something that would be
4 just for the school, and not use the school as
5 an excuse to be able to build nine stories.

6 We discussed the public accessible park.
7 Obviously, it's not a park accessible to
8 everybody, because it's only partial. Most of
9 the little children that will go to parks do
10 not go in the late afternoon. They go in the
11 morning, because that's when they're home. The
12 little kids that go to parks do not have to
13 wait until after school hours to go to the
14 park. That's a fallacy right there.

15 Okay. I was impressed by the picture that
16 Mr. Navarro showed, a beautiful building, but I
17 couldn't see the Woman's Club there. You know,
18 it would have been nice to show the building
19 and the Woman's Club, so we could really get
20 the idea of what we're proposing. It is a real
21 shame that we're considering this a compatible
22 project when it doesn't fit there. The
23 building is beautiful, but there are better
24 places to build it, and there are better
25 places, if they really want to help the school.

1 But, also, it caught my attention that
2 there's a caveat on the 99-year lease. It
3 says, for Crystal Academy or another
4 non-profit. Another non-profit doesn't have to
5 be a school. It could be anything that is
6 non-profit, and there are several non-profits
7 that are not schools, many of them, okay.

8 So my last comment is going to be about how
9 you -- if you look at what they presented, they
10 claim that there was a neighborhood meeting May
11 4th. I happened to be there, and it was not a
12 meeting. It was a way for the developers to
13 show us what they were proposing, but we -- all
14 of the people that were there, we couldn't
15 talk. We could only talk to -- one on one, so
16 they could explain what they were showing, but
17 we couldn't hear what the sense of the whole
18 community was. That is not a community
19 meeting. That is a sales pitch. That's like
20 going to a developer and looking at what
21 they're proposing and putting your deposit
22 down.

23 Obviously, we, and the people that live
24 there in those garden apartments, do not see
25 the purpose for this, and they are here, most

1 of them -- a lot of them are here, and from the
2 other side of Coral Gables, I'm here to tell
3 you, this is not what is proposed to be. This
4 is not a public benefit. To the contrary, it
5 doesn't benefit the public that lives there.

6 When you look at the map and you see the
7 big buildings on the other side of Ponce,
8 there's a reason for that. There was a reason
9 for the Overlay, to protect this side, not the
10 other side. So the big buildings, there are
11 properties on the other side. They could build
12 it on the other side of Ponce, where the big
13 buildings are, and not on this side.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Next speaker.

16 THE SECRETARY: Omar Packard, Maria de
17 Leon, Mariana Fleites.

18 MR. PACKARD: Good evening. My name is
19 Omar Packard. I live in 911 East Ponce de Leon
20 Boulevard. I'm a lifelong Coral Gables
21 resident, who has spent more than forty years
22 living in the North Ponce area.

23 I have to say, I am absolutely disgusted by
24 the proposed development at 110 Phoenetia
25 Avenue. The design is nothing more than a

1 giant concrete box, with cheap token
2 Mediterranean details painted over it, the kind
3 of building that has no business being in our
4 historic low-rise neighborhood, but my disgust
5 goes far beyond aesthetics.

6 What truly concerns me is what approving a
7 project like this does to our City. Laws exist
8 for a reason. They are what differentiate
9 Coral Gables from every other part of Miami,
10 the tree canope over our streets, the scale of
11 our neighborhoods, the fact that a residential
12 block feels like a residential block. None of
13 that happens by accident. It is a result of
14 decades of planning and ordinances that were
15 put in place to protect the City from exactly
16 what is being proposed here tonight, and yet,
17 here we are, watching those laws be pushed
18 aside, for a wealthy developer, from out of
19 state, who couldn't care less about us or our
20 community.

21 Let's talk about what's being asked of us
22 tonight. This block allows for four stories.
23 This project wants nine, double that amount.
24 The streets around it are aligned with one, two
25 and three-story buildings. Four families live

1 in single-family homes right next door. There
2 are ordinances that exist specifically to
3 protect this neighborhood from exactly this
4 kind of development, and this project violates
5 every one of them.

6 As for Crystal Academy, before Crystal
7 Academy there was a school on the same property
8 called Guardian Sheppard, a school I attended.
9 Some of my fondest memories are running around
10 on the field catching grasshoppers. If you
11 look online, there are countless studies
12 showing the positive effects of teaching
13 autistic children around a nature based
14 environment. I've yet to see one study showing
15 the positive effects of teaching children in a
16 nine-story building. Crystal Academy can exist
17 with or without this development. There is no
18 good reason for them to support a project that
19 ruins our community, except for one, the
20 developer financially incentivized and
21 purchased their support by offering them free
22 rent.

23 In closing, I want to make a plea to this
24 Board. Do not destroy our community. For
25 once, show the residents of this City that

1 their voices matter more than a developer's
2 checkbook. Show us that a wealthy developer
3 cannot simply come in, from out of state,
4 violate every rule we have, ignore everything
5 this community has asked for, and walk away
6 with an approval because of their money and
7 connections.

8 The people who live on these streets have
9 trusted the City to protect them. Tonight you
10 have an opportunity to honor that trust.
11 Please do the right thing, deny this project.

12 MS. DE LEON-FLEITES: Good evening. My
13 name is Maria de Leon-Fleites. I live at 825
14 Messina Avenue. I'm an architect. I'm also
15 adjunct at the University of Miami.

16 I don't live directly in this neighborhood,
17 but my daughter does live caddy-corner, so I am
18 in this neighborhood all of the time. I'd just
19 ask -- I sent you a letter with all of the
20 technical reasons why I believed that this was
21 not an appropriate building for this
22 neighborhood. I'm sure you have it. But I'm
23 just here, again, just asking you to listen to
24 the people who walk their dogs in the morning
25 before work, after work, who walk to Tinta Y

1 Cafe in these beautiful tree lined streets,
2 with a lot of pedestrians, and this building
3 would just -- realistically just destroy the
4 historic character and the scale. It is very
5 incompatible with the existing buildings that
6 are there.

7 And Ms. Palacio, I'm sorry that you've been
8 placed in this whole situation. I think she's
9 running a lovely school. It's a lovely
10 mission. And I honestly feel that there are
11 other ways that they can be accommodated on
12 this site that would not destroy the historical
13 character of this block.

14 And I have spoken to the architect and the
15 attorneys about this before at that Community
16 Meeting. So I really hope that you take all of
17 these comments into consideration and we ask
18 that you consider rejecting these applications.
19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

21 If we could stop with the clapping
22 altogether after every speaker, please. Thank
23 you.

24 MS. FLEITES: Hello. I need to be sworn
25 in. Sorry.

1 (Thereupon, the participant was sworn.)

2 MS. FLEITES: I swear.

3 My name is Mariana Fleites. I currently
4 reside at 49 Phoenetia Avenue. I have a big
5 statement, but I have heard a lot of what I'm
6 about to say already, so I will skip, for the
7 sake of time.

8 I will say that I am an architect, and I
9 currently work at Duany Plater-Zyberk. We work
10 a lot with Codes and urban planning, but
11 specifically I wanted to talk about the Woman's
12 Club.

13 Directly next door, as you all know, is the
14 Coral Gables Woman's Club, completed in 1936,
15 listed on the National Register of Historic
16 Place in 1990, and one of the last surviving
17 examples of this architecture style in all of
18 Florida. If we decide today that the NPCO
19 Overlay is negotiable for 110 Phoenetia, what
20 stops a future developer -- a future developer
21 from making the same arrangement against the
22 Woman's Club? A National Register's listing
23 does not protect a property from local
24 rezoning. The precedent set here matters.

25 The Garden of our Lord is one of only three

1 Biblical gardens in the United States. Once it
2 is gone, it cannot be replicated. Once this
3 Overlay is compromised, every parcel in this
4 district is more vulnerable. I urge this Board
5 to deny the rezoning. The overlays and
6 conservation districts written into the City's
7 Code must be enforced or they mean nothing at
8 all.

9 I have grown up in Coral Gables my whole
10 life. I was living in West Miami while I
11 attended the University of Miami, and I
12 specifically moved back recently, within the
13 year, because of the beautiful canopy and
14 because of the wide setbacks, the wide
15 sidewalks. I love being able to walk my dog in
16 the shaded canopy, and I think that this
17 project directly violates that reason, and I
18 think it will be detrimental to the historic
19 overlay.

20 Thank you for your time.

21 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

22 Next speaker.

23 THE SECRETARY: Alexis Santos, Judith
24 Packard.

25 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Before we go to the next

1 speaker, can we take a three-minute break?

2 This gentleman needs to use the rest room.

3 Do I have a motion for a three-minute break?

4 (Short recess taken.)

5 MS. SANTOS: I can go ahead?

6 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: If you could just wait.

7 We are missing two Board Members. Two minutes.

8 MS. SANTOS: Okay.

9 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: You can go ahead, ma'am.

10 MS. SANTOS: Hi. How are you guys? My
11 name is Alexis Santos, and my address is 1300
12 Ponce de Leon Boulevard, Apartment 308. You
13 may remember me from coming here and reading a
14 letter from my friend. I helped collect
15 approximately 500 signatures in support, as
16 well.

17 Well, now I've recently moved here. I fell
18 in love with the neighborhood and couldn't
19 think of a better place to be, and being here
20 to support this project, as a member of Crystal
21 Academy, is just priceless. So I'm happy to
22 tell you that I have not only collected 500
23 signatures, now I can sign my own, and I have
24 it here, and I also have a friend of mine that
25 signed hers today, as well. Thank you.

1 Do you want me to turn it into you?

2 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: If you could turn it in
3 to Jill.

4 MS. SANTOS: Okay. Thank you so much.

5 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you so much.

6 THE SECRETARY: Judith Packard.

7 Following will be Maria Maria.

8 MR. ALVAREZ: Through the Chair, can we
9 read the letter into the record?

10 MR. PARDO: We don't know what it says, in
11 support, against.

12 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: If you want to pass it
13 around, Jill, we can --

14 MS. SUAREZ: If you only can pass it
15 around, in the interest of time.

16 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yeah. That would work.

17 MS. SUAREZ: I believe that these were
18 attached to the -- these are a part of the
19 record.

20 MR. ALVAREZ: Okay. I thought it was new.
21 I'm sorry.

22 MS. PACKARD: Good evening. My name is
23 Judith Packard. I live at 911 East Ponce de
24 Leon. I've lived in the North Ponce
25 Neighborhood for over 43 years. I'm here

1 tonight because this project concerns me deeply
2 as a resident and someone who cares about the
3 future of Coral Gables.

4 I walk down these streets every day. I
5 know the tree canopy that covers them, the
6 quiet of the blocks, the way this neighborhood
7 has maintained its character over the decades.
8 That character exists because this City has
9 rules to protect it, rules that this project
10 violates. Not one person I have spoken to in
11 this area supports this development, not one.
12 This project would change everything about what
13 makes this neighborhood what it is, and the
14 people who actually live here do not want it.

15 I also want to speak to the Crystal Academy
16 argument, because, as a retired teacher, it is
17 something I feel strongly about. I've spent my
18 career studying how children learn and what
19 environments help them thrive. The research is
20 clear, children, especially those with special
21 needs, benefit enormously from access to
22 nature, open space, and low stress
23 environments, and a nine-story building is not
24 that. Green fields and open skies are.
25 Crystal Academy's students deserve better than

1 that, and so does this neighborhood.

2 In closing, I'm asking this Board to uphold
3 the rules that were created to protect this
4 community and to listen to the residents who
5 live here and will be affected by this decision
6 long after tonight's meeting is over. Please
7 vote no.

8 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

9 THE SECRETARY: Maria.

10 Maria Essenwanger.

11 Following will be Lizette Arango and
12 Vanessa Salas.

13 MS. ESSENWANGER: Good evening. My name is
14 Maria Essenwanger. My address is 800 Douglas
15 Road, 608, Coral Gables 33134.

16 Okay. I'm here to support this project.

17 One second. I'm sorry. I'm trying -- my
18 English is no good.

19 Okay. I'm here to voice my support for
20 this proposed project. I believe it represents
21 a thoughtful investment in our community, and
22 it will have a positive impact on this
23 neighborhood. New housing opportunities can
24 help strength Coral Gables and support its
25 continued growth.

1 I am in favor of this project and
2 respectfully encourage its approval. Thank
3 you.

4 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

5 MS. SALAS: Good afternoon. My name is
6 Vanessa Salas. My address is 1300 Salcedo
7 Street, Coral Gables 33134.

8 I really want to support this project,
9 because I think it's a great opportunity to
10 help others, especially with the Crystal
11 Academy School, for our kids, and they're going
12 to build beautiful apartments here at the
13 Gables. I say, yes, for a beautiful building
14 and beautiful communities at Gables. Thank you
15 so much.

16 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

17 THE SECRETARY: Cheryl Akerman,
18 Christopher.

19 MS. ARANGO: Hi. Good afternoon. My name
20 is Lizette Arango. I live at 4152 -- I'm
21 sorry. Sorry.

22 Lizette Arango, 4152 Southwest 13 Street,
23 Apartment 3, Coral Gables. Good afternoon, by
24 the way.

25 I've been reading about people saying this

1 project is incompatible with the neighborhood.
2 I don't think a neighborhood is defined by
3 across the street. A neighborhood is the place
4 people call home --

5 THE SECRETARY: Excuse me, can you speak
6 into the mic, please?

7 MR. BEHAR: Lower the mic.

8 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: The mic.

9 THE SECRETARY: Yeah, you could lower it.

10 MS. ARANGO: Okay. Thank you.

11 Should I read -- start --

12 MR. BEHAR: No. No. Go ahead. Keep
13 going.

14 MS. ARANGO: Oh, okay. Okay.

15 -- raise children. These things are
16 happening all around here, in buildings just
17 like this one. It doesn't mean that people who
18 don't live in a house don't belong in this
19 neighborhood. I live in an apartment, and it's
20 my home. I am proud of it. I am proud of my
21 neighborhood. I like to be proud and I would
22 love to live here. Thank you so much for your
23 time.

24 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

25 MS. ARANGO: You're welcome.

1 THE SECRETARY; Cheryl Akerman, and then
2 you could follow. Thank you.

3 MS. AKERMAN: Good evening, and thank you
4 for your time on this project. I am against
5 the nine-story building, since it would be
6 incompatible with the neighborhood.

7 MR. ALVAREZ: Name and address.

8 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: If you can give your name
9 and address, before you begin.

10 MS. AKERMAN: Cheryl Akerman, 816 Sorolla
11 Avenue. It's in North Gables.

12 But I do believe that this project is not
13 going to be consistent with the study for the
14 historical designation, the North Ponce
15 District Ordinance and the Historical City
16 Plan. It's located next to the Woman's Club,
17 and that will place a burden on the
18 neighborhood, and please vote no.

19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

21 THE SECRETARY: Christopher, please.

22 After Christopher, Thomas Mooney and Scott
23 Pearson.

24 MR. SAEZ: Good evening. My name is
25 Christopher Saez. I live at 10630 -- excuse

1 10630 Northwest 88th Street, in Doral.

2 However, my son does attend the Crystal
3 Academy, and I'm here to speak for him, because
4 he cannot.

5 My son is one of those students that
6 Ms. Maria Palacio spoke of, that is non-verbal
7 and frankly -- excuse me, frankly, I believe
8 that this project is good for the public here.
9 I love this neighborhood, as well. Sure, I
10 don't live in the immediate vicinity; however,
11 my son does and my wife and I come to this
12 neighborhood all of the time to drop him off at
13 school and everything. So we've fallen in love
14 with it, also, and, well, to be frank,
15 hopefully we can move into this development one
16 day and be able to drop off our son going down
17 the elevator, for example, instead of having to
18 do this long drive and whatnot.

19 Long story short -- excuse me -- the need
20 exists. It may not be needy for everyone;
21 however, a good four percent of the population
22 does show that -- appear on the spectrum. So,
23 quite frankly, statistically speaking, one of
24 your grandchildren would probably need this
25 school one day, and, frankly, it's changed my

1 son in ways that I never dreamed of.

2 I thought he would never speak, and hearing
3 him say daddy just last year, again, melted my
4 heart all of the way to my soul. The -- excuse
5 me. I'm sorry. Sorry.

6 I've heard arguments about this place being
7 for only the wealthy, and I can guarantee you,
8 it is not. I am going into debt trying to get
9 my son to be able to get the education and
10 therapies that he needs, and this was the only
11 place in the entire county I felt comfortable,
12 and well that he is attending and growing like
13 in ways, again, like I never, ever imagine that
14 he would be growing.

15 I can see him growing into a man that is
16 going to be lovely and be able to communicate,
17 which, again, was my ultimate dream for him.
18 And as for the arguments for -- again, I
19 apologize. I need to stop. Thank you.

20 MR. BEHAR: Mr. Mooney.

21 MR. MOONEY: Good -- I would normally say
22 good afternoon, but good evening. First off,
23 Thomas Mooney, and my address is 601 Navarre
24 Avenue.

25 I'm a long-time resident of Coral Gables.

1 I've been a resident since 2000, and I live in
2 North Gables, and I'm speaking to you tonight
3 wearing two different hats. The first and
4 probably the most important is, I'm a parent of
5 a son who is on the autism spectrum. And just
6 by way of reference, he attended the Crystal
7 Academy from 2010, when it was first opened, up
8 until about a month ago. He actually finished
9 the upper school program, and he's going to
10 start a new program in the Fall.

11 And the Crystal Academy actually has become
12 part of the fabric of that North Gables area,
13 and I've seen the school grow personally, not
14 just in the number of attendees. My son
15 started attending Crystal for therapy purposes,
16 and then began attending the school full-time
17 in 2016, but the school has grown, in terms of
18 its mission and in terms of its relationship to
19 the City, and this is important, because in an
20 institution like Crystal, that has become part
21 of the fabric over the last 16 years, will
22 continue to grow and become a more permanent
23 part of the fabric of the community.

24 But in terms of the experience and the
25 public benefit, my wife and I tried a number of

1 options in the public school for my son through
2 kindergarten and first and second grade, and
3 the public schools just were not able to offer
4 him the type of education that he needed, and
5 so we had to put him in a learning experience
6 where he had one on one, otherwise he never
7 would have flourished and blossomed the way
8 that he has. And so, from a public benefit
9 standpoint, I can't underscore enough how
10 important Crystal has been, over the last 16
11 years, and how they will continue to be a major
12 contributing institution in this community.

13 I also think it's important to point out
14 that, while it would be great if Crystal
15 Academy owned the property that it was
16 occupying, they don't, and they simply don't
17 have the financial resources to purchase the
18 property, and they're struggling just to simply
19 keep basic maintenance and basic upkeep. And
20 so it's very, very difficult for specialized
21 schools like this to make it on their own.

22 Lastly, and this is my second hat,
23 professionally, I've been an urban planner for
24 almost forty years. I've been practicing in
25 the field since 1989, and I can tell you that,

1 within this area, the Code changes and the land
2 use changes that are being proposed are fully
3 consistent with the built context of the area
4 and the future context of the area.

5 This is a property that is located between
6 two major transit corridors, one on Douglas
7 Road, one on Ponce de Leon Boulevard. It's a
8 very walkable area, that's close to a
9 supermarket. It's close to a commercial area.
10 And this has actually benefited the school,
11 because all of the students, and my son
12 included, have become very adept at using
13 transit, using the trolley, and be able to have
14 those types of life skills that are associated
15 with an urban environment, which is very, very
16 beneficial.

17 So with that, I fully support the Staff's
18 recommendation and I would encourage you to
19 transmit the proposal to the Commission with a
20 favorable recommendation, Thank you.

21 MR. BEHAR: Mr. Chair, before he goes.

22 Mr. Mooney, what is your professional
23 today? What do you do?

24 MR. MOONEY: Currently -- well, for the
25 next two weeks, I'm the Planning Director for

1 the City of Miami Beach, and I've been the
2 Planning Director for over twelve years, and
3 I've been with the City of Miami Beach and the
4 City of North Miami Beach collectively since
5 1989 in the field of urban planning.

6 MR. BEHAR: Okay. Thank you very much.

7 MR. PEARSON: My name is Scott Pearson. I
8 live at 4111 San Amaro Drive.

9 I moved to the Gables in 1974 and I've seen
10 the past governments of our City preserve our
11 City and the beauty of the City and the quality
12 of life of the residents, but in the last few
13 years, I've seen more and more large buildings
14 going up, and traffic getting worse and worse.
15 Great cities have great green spaces. We need
16 more green space, not less. The longer we wait
17 to get more green space, the harder it is to
18 get it, because it's all going to be built up.

19 The City government is supposed to protect
20 its people, its citizens, it's not supposed to
21 be working for developers, and we need this
22 garden -- this beautiful garden to be preserved
23 and green space expanded.

24 Great cities, like Paris and London, have
25 height limits and vast areas of their City that

1 they have protected for over a hundred years.
2 Why can't a wealthy City, like Coral, do the
3 same thing? I see no reason why we should bow
4 to the pressures of developers, when we have
5 the resources to fund good things, like Crystal
6 Academy, and increase our green spaces. Thank
7 you very much.

8 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

9 THE SECRETARY: Following, after it will be
10 Nicolas Cabrera, Zully Pardo.

11 MR. KOZYROVICIUS: Good evening. My name
12 is Art Kozyrovicius. I live at 24 Phoenetia
13 Avenue. We own a historic designated home
14 there.

15 I've sent a letter, I mean, with lots of
16 details, and, you know, a lot has been said
17 here, so I just wanted to reiterate in summary.

18 So, again, we're residents of a
19 historically designated home, just about a
20 block -- you know, half a block away from the
21 proposed development, and we, you know, really,
22 strongly oppose and have been, you know,
23 through all of the stages that it has gone
24 through, because the way it's currently
25 designed, you know, it really doesn't fit the

1 neighborhood, and, you know, again, a lot has
2 been said about that.

3 We are not against development, and we
4 don't oppose contextual development that, you
5 know, fits well and brings beautiful
6 architecture. So -- and, you know, having the
7 school there is definitely, you know, a plus,
8 and, you know, it should remain on site, but in
9 order to approve this project, you know, it
10 needs to be significantly redesigned to really
11 match what the neighborhood is. And, you know,
12 basically, you know, the project, as it is, it
13 violates, you know, as many people already
14 mentioned, many existing zoning and legal
15 protections.

16 It also is not -- is not compatible with
17 the surroundings of the neighborhood. The
18 setbacks are really extreme and unacceptable.
19 I mean, the building, you know, the way it was
20 shown, also, encroaches on the streets around
21 it, and, definitely, the infrastructure of the
22 neighborhood cannot handle and support the
23 density that's coming, you know, and there are
24 more things happening.

25 So, you know, there's a median on Ponce

1 that now changes all of the traffic flow.
2 There are other developments approved that are
3 coming up. If we add this building in the way
4 that it's scaled and mass that's proposed,
5 there's no way it's not going to negatively
6 affect the whole area.

7 You know, also, you know, again, you know,
8 a lot of things were said about the PAD and
9 public benefit. Again, I really think a
10 closed, you know, courtyard is really not a
11 significant public benefit that is required for
12 that type of approval.

13 I think what, you know, really would make
14 this project acceptable is, again, you know, if
15 the building height is reduced, you know,
16 consistent with the existing neighborhood and
17 surrounding context, that the setbacks are
18 significantly increased, again, to allow for
19 more pedestrian walks, that the density is
20 reduced, you know, the number of units, and I
21 think we really need to preserve, like, you
22 know, the speaker before me said, the green
23 space and the canopy that's there. The project
24 right now does not incorporate any of that in
25 its design. Basically everything is removed,

1 this massive building goes up, and that's it.

2 So, again, I think, if it's designed
3 pedestrian friendly, if it protects the trees,
4 you know, the oak trees on East Ponce and
5 Antilla. You know, there are ways to do this
6 project, you know, thoughtfully and well. So,
7 again, you know, we're opposing the project the
8 way it stands, but definitely, you know, you
9 could write a lot of conditions to make sure
10 that it meets the zoning and legal protections
11 of the neighborhood. Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

13 THE SECRETARY: Nicolas Cabrera and David
14 Winker, thereafter.

15 MR. CABRERA: Good evening, Members of the
16 Planning and Zoning Board. My name is Nicolas
17 Cabrera, and I reside at 45 Antilla Avenue,
18 Coral Gables, Florida. For context, my
19 building is located directly across the street
20 from the proposed project on Phoenetia. I have
21 made comments similar to these before, and I'll
22 be reiterating some of those points.

23 I'd like to express my support for this
24 project in all aspects. As a neighbor, I'm
25 witnessing firsthand the value this project and

1 others like it are bringing to my neighborhood.
2 There are many reasons why this project is
3 compatible in this neighborhood, but most
4 importantly, the following: The northeast
5 quadrant of Coral Gables, this neighborhood, is
6 probably the last, most ideal area for
7 development in our City, and here are four
8 reasons why.

9 It has little to no historical
10 significance. I hear you. I hear you. That
11 doesn't mean that there are not historic
12 structures, like the Woman's Club.

13 Number Two, it is the most accessible area
14 with Southwest 8th Street, Douglas Road and Le
15 Jeune Road as its perimeter and accessible
16 roadways.

17 Number Three, is the also the most
18 transient section of our neighborhood -- of our
19 City, with mostly rental apartment buildings
20 and very few single-family homes.

21 Number Four, this developer has worked hand
22 in hand with the City to ensure their project
23 is smart development, not development for the
24 sake of development.

25 This is more of a reminder to my neighbors

1 and fellow residents, there's an incredible
2 opportunity before us to bring the appropriate
3 type of growth to our city and to create a
4 bright future for the students, families,
5 faculty, and staff at Crystal Academy.

6 Additionally, Staff's findings very
7 specifically state that this project results in
8 public benefits, including, and I quote,
9 enhanced open space, improved pedestrian
10 circulation, and the integration of residential
11 and educational uses. This could be found
12 quoted on Page 14 of the Staff report.

13 I'd also like to make a couple of notes on
14 some of the points of opposition. Somebody
15 stated that we're losing green space. Let's be
16 very clear, the green space is not currently
17 publicly accessible. It's private property
18 that belongs to Crystal Academy through their
19 lease. The green space, however, proposed by
20 the new project is publicly accessible, and if
21 I'm not mistaken, that's 5,000 square feet.

22 Number Two, the project is compatible with
23 the surrounding neighborhood. There are other
24 projects currently in development that are
25 similar in size and density. An image was

1 presented by the applicant which shows all
2 other buildings that are much larger than the
3 two to three-story apartments already in this
4 neighborhood. If that's not evidence about the
5 compatibility of this project, I don't know
6 what is.

7 I'd also like to make a -- perhaps -- well,
8 I can't make a correction on the record, but
9 I'd like to bring something up. Ms. Bolton
10 stated that letters in support came from
11 residents of the Little Havana area. This is a
12 very harsh accusation to make, particularly if
13 it is untrue. If it is untrue, it must be
14 appropriately corrected on the public record.
15 With that, I'd like to submit my own signed
16 letter in support as this time, as a resident
17 of Coral Gables that lives directly across the
18 street from this project.

19 Thank you all for your time this evening.
20 We appreciate your service to this community.

21 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

22 MR. WINKER: Good evening. David Winker,
23 4720 South Le Jeune Road. I have a PowerPoint
24 that I'd like to quickly go through. Thank
25 you.

1 Here we go again, another developer wanting
2 to build an out of scale project, by getting
3 the City to grant it special concessions. Now
4 an out of town developer is before you asking
5 the City to relieve it from its obligations
6 under our City Code, obligations it was aware
7 of when it bought the property, to build more
8 than twice what they otherwise would be --
9 otherwise be allowed to build, and this is a
10 problem that keeps happening in Coral Gables.
11 This is a problem that residents are
12 consistently expressing concern about, because
13 it begs the question, what are we getting in
14 return for these concessions to these
15 developers to build projects that have
16 significant impacts on our neighborhood?

17 I'm going to go through the City Code, and
18 I think I can show you that legally they do not
19 meet the requirements to allow them to do this.
20 Neighborhood context matters. The property
21 sits within an established residential
22 neighborhood. Four single-family homes
23 directly abut this project. Remember, the
24 Comprehensive Plan, as is currently zoned, is
25 Special Use Religious. That's what people rely

1 on when they look at the future of this City.
2 The current height is limited to four stories,
3 and the surrounding development, as you saw on
4 the maps, is predominantly one and two-story
5 structures.

6 I'm not going to belabor this. We've gone
7 through this. I want to specifically put on
8 the record the historic resources that are at
9 risk.

10 I want to get into the Code provisions.
11 Section 1-103 of the Zoning Code states that
12 the purpose is to implement the Comprehensive
13 Plan, protect Coral Gables historic and
14 architectural character, preserve George
15 Merrick's vision, protect residential
16 neighborhoods from incompatible use, and
17 requires compatibility with the surrounding
18 architecture and development. This project,
19 clearly, on its face, conflicts with the
20 requirements of Section 103; 200,000 square
21 feet of development, 184 units, 93-foot out of
22 scale height.

23 It also conflicts with the North Ponce
24 Conservation Overlay. The Overlay District was
25 adopted to preserve the neighborhood character,

1 to preserve the garden apartment fabric. This
2 is not what's happening, it's being ignored,
3 and there is no reason, there's no
4 justification for not complying with the
5 Overlay.

6 It conflicts with the Coral Gables Historic
7 City Plan. It calls for the preservation of
8 neighborhood character, supports maintaining
9 low scale development patterns. Nine stories
10 is inconsistent with the objectives of the
11 Historic City Plan. It conflict with the North
12 Ponce Community Vision. The vision workshop
13 recommended preserving the garden apartment
14 character, recommended maintaining two to four
15 stories, encourage preservation of scales,
16 support exploration of public park and open
17 space opportunities. We're going to get into
18 that, how this doesn't do that.

19 Comprehensive planning consistencies,
20 remember, this was bought as a
21 Religious/Institutional site. You're hearing a
22 lot of talk about, "Oh, Crystal Academy."
23 Crystal Academy does great things in our
24 community. No one's against Crystal Academy.
25 That's what this is zoned for. They should be

1 able to continue to do that. The developer is
2 the one that's undermining their mission and
3 putting what they're doing at risk. The
4 compatibility analysis is clear. It's not
5 compatible.

6 Traffic and concurrency problems, I think
7 this is one of the biggest areas. The traffic
8 study does not take into account the recent
9 changes. You come in now, you see the changes
10 on Ponce, you see the development. None of
11 that has been accounted for in what they've
12 done. They should be sent back to the drawing
13 board to bring that report and get that done
14 properly.

15 Infrastructure concerns, these neighborhood
16 streets simply cannot -- cannot -- deal with
17 the traffic that is going to come off of this
18 parking garage. The most important, and I
19 think the reason that it makes it clear that
20 you should recommend denial, is the failure to
21 meet our Code concerning PAD public benefits.
22 The PAD process is intended to reward
23 exceptional public benefits. The applicant is
24 seeking flexibility beyond ordinary zoning
25 standard in exchange for public benefits.

1 What exactly does the Code say? Section
2 3-501 says, a PAD can allow additional
3 development rights only when the project
4 provides, quote, "Substantial additional public
5 benefit." It's been a little bit of a moving
6 target for us. At first, it was, oh, we're
7 giving some green space in this interior space
8 with limited access. Now we're being told the
9 benefit is the Crystal Academy.

10 Well, Crystal Academy exists. It's not a
11 substantial additional public benefit.
12 Apparently the benefit is, they're not going to
13 get rid of the school. That does not meet the
14 requirements of the PAD. The City must find
15 equivalent public benefits. So it must be at
16 least equivalent to what is there. The
17 question is, what are we, the taxpayers and
18 residents, getting in exchange for additional
19 height, additional density, increased
20 intensity, and the departure from the otherwise
21 applicable Zoning requirements? If the benefit
22 is not equivalent, the PAD must be denied.

23 Again, claimed benefit, Crystal Academy,
24 private school, tuition of forty thousand
25 dollars a year. It calls for seventy students.

1 That's three million dollars a year in tuition
2 that this entity is receiving, not open to the
3 general public, accessible only to a limited
4 number of families. The PAD Code is simply not
5 met. It requires benefits to the broader
6 community, not just people paying forty
7 thousand dollars.

8 Finally, I want to bring your attention to
9 Section 3-502(c)(6), which requires twenty
10 percent of landscaped open space. The
11 courtyard, if that's what the benefit is going
12 to be, does not meet that requirement, and it
13 does not satisfy the Code.

14 This is a bad deal for taxpayers. We rely
15 on our City government to negotiate with these
16 developers. They want something from you.
17 Please make them give something of value.
18 Please make them do the hard work to make our
19 community better. It sets a terrible
20 precedent. You've heard other people talk
21 about it, what's going to happen to this area,
22 if you do this.

23 We're asking for a recommendation of denial
24 of all four of the special exceptions that
25 they're asking for to allow them to build this

1 project. Thank you for your time and service.

2 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

3 THE SECRETARY: Andres Jimenez. Lucila
4 Jimenez.

5 MR. JIMENEZ: Good evening, everyone. My
6 name is Andres Jimenez. I live at 889 South
7 Douglas Road, and I have been a resident of
8 Coral Gables since 1978.

9 I want to quote something here from an old
10 friend -- where is it -- where is it -- all
11 right. The quote basically, in the case
12 that -- this is what's happening here today.
13 Two groups of people trying to protect what
14 they value. The residents are protecting a
15 neighborhood they deliberately chose -- that
16 they deliberately chose. The developer is
17 trying to increase the economic value of the
18 land it has assembled. And then my friends
19 says, the Zoning Board's job is to decide where
20 the balance lies. We have to, then, remember
21 that the Zoning Board is appointed by the City,
22 in the name of the residents, in order to
23 protect the best interests of the residents of
24 this City.

25 I also would like to point out that the

1 residents of this City, the current residents
2 of this City, many of whom you've heard
3 speaking in here, have their right and the
4 obligation to maintain the benefit -- the City
5 in the state in which it was intended to
6 become.

7 And this is what I see here, that, you
8 know, the residents are opposed by a group
9 from -- somebody mentioned that they are from
10 out of town. The company is from Chicago.
11 And, you know, it's not that they're -- anybody
12 in this country has a right to come here and do
13 what they want, but, you know, there have been
14 several situations in Chicago in which they
15 were named, and the situation was exactly the
16 same.

17 One of them was in -- well, I lost it.

18 Anyway, so what I'd like to point out to
19 you is that, you know, the foxes are getting
20 closer to our hen house, and, basically, you
21 know, these foxes are very smart, and the way I
22 see it, they have made a very, very
23 interesting, how should I say, strategy in
24 selecting a small entity that provides very
25 good service, I am sure, to a small number of

1 people, but they have used it as a -- sort of
2 like a bone for us to accept and approve their
3 project.

4 So, again, I do hope that you look after
5 the residents of Coral Gables, from -- by whom
6 you were appointed, and make the right
7 decision, one that you can go to sleep at
8 night. Good night.

9 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

10 THE SECRETARY: Lucila Jimenez. K. Swain
11 and Ana.

12 MS. SWAIN: Good evening. My name is
13 Katherine Swain. I've lived in the Gables
14 since 1969. I grew up here. I teach at Coral
15 Gables Prep Academy. I'm a member of the Coral
16 Gables Woman's Club, who has a completely free
17 children's dental clinic that does service
18 Crystal Academy.

19 I'm opposed to this proposition, and I have
20 a few questions. Number One, who's the realtor
21 that didn't tell this group that bought the
22 property that there is a height restriction?
23 You're welcome to buy the property, but it's in
24 a historical area, that's been designated by
25 George Merrick, whose wife was part of the

1 Coral Gables Woman's Club, so, therefore, why
2 did all of a sudden this person or group who
3 decided to buy the property say, oh, we're
4 going to make a nine-story building, even
5 though there's a restriction, because we have
6 it in our pocket or somebody else's pocket that
7 we can change people's minds?

8 And I'm so sorry if I'm boring you. I know
9 you've been on your phones. I know you've been
10 on your watches. This is important to the
11 people of Coral Gables. We live here, because
12 there is a design. Yes, I have watched a lot
13 of wonderful things happen in our City, growth,
14 Number One, but I'm really concerned about how
15 people are not paying attention to the guides.
16 If there are rules, why are people breaking
17 them? If a realtor says, here's a property,
18 you can develop it up to four stories, or let's
19 look somewhere else. We have so many places a
20 developer can go. Not only that, why are we
21 using a company that doesn't employ the people
22 from Coral Gables? Why are we going to
23 Chicago? That boggles me.

24 We have the University of Miami. They have
25 an awesome school of architecture. We have

1 engineers that you are personally aware of. I
2 mean, some of them help building at 1109
3 Almeria, that the person took down a little bit
4 every day, and you guys worked on that, but as
5 I'm looking at some of the notes that I've
6 made, if nothing changes, if you allow the
7 proposal to stand as it is, you're hurting the
8 City -- well, let me rephrase that.

9 Let's look at George Merrick's plan. If we
10 keep George Merrick's plan, Crystal Academy is
11 still there. They can still be serviced by the
12 Coral Gables Woman's Club. People can still
13 walk the streets and be comfortable under the
14 shade, and everybody wins, because that company
15 that wants to buy the property, can follow the
16 rules that you already set up, that George
17 Merrick set up, that you are following.

18 If in my classroom I told somebody, "These
19 are the rules, but you know what, I'll change
20 them for you," what is that saying? Are you
21 being wishy washy, are you not following the
22 rules that you're supposed to follow? I'm not
23 trying to be your mother. I'm just saying,
24 look at the rules that are in front of you.
25 Follow them. Follow the people who have put

1 you here. There's no reason that we can't
2 follow these rules.

3 Why do we have realtors? They take classes
4 in ethics. They should be the ones saying,
5 "This property has a limit." I'm sorry I'm
6 taking your time, but please -- I'm voting
7 against this. I love my City. I live, work
8 and play here. I volunteer. But this is not a
9 good proposal. Thank you very much.

10 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

11 THE SECRETARY: Ana. Ana.

12 German Tinoco.

13 MR. TINOCO: Good evening, everyone. My
14 name is German Tinoco. I live in 888 Douglas
15 Road. It's just a couple of blocks apart from
16 the building project that we are discussing
17 today. It's also a seven-story building, just
18 to let you know.

19 And this project, I really support it,
20 because it brings not only the opportunity to
21 bring the stability to the Crystal Academy, it
22 also brings more opportunity for housing, and
23 it opens also the possibility for more projects
24 in the area that is already built with office
25 buildings, that is on Ponce de Leon, and also

1 residential areas that Miami is lacking of,
2 houses and buildings.

3 This is a very good opportunity for Coral
4 Gables to grow up, and also bring more people,
5 good people, to our community. I appreciate
6 your time. Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

8 THE SECRETARY: So we have two more
9 speakers, and these are on Zoom. They must
10 open up their camera, if I'm not mistaken.

11 MS. SUAREZ: Yes, to be sworn in.

12 THE SECRETARY: Laura Olivos.

13 MS. OLIVOS: Hello. I can't switch off my
14 video for some reason.

15 MS. SUAREZ: So if you cannot appear on the
16 video, then you can't be sworn in, but you can
17 make your public comment. It just cannot be
18 considered testimony.

19 THE SECRETARY: Can you try one more time,
20 please?

21 MS. OLIVOS: I'm trying here, but bear with
22 me. My apologies.

23 THE SECRETARY: Would you like me to go to
24 the next speaker, who's on camera, and gives
25 you a few minutes?

1 MS. OLIVOS: Yeah, if possible, so that I
2 can try to figure out this technicality. My
3 apologies to everyone.

4 THE SECRETARY: Sure.

5 Katherine Cao.

6 MS. CAO: Hi. Good evening. Can you hear me?

7 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: We can hear. We can't
8 see you.

9 MS. CAO: Give me one moment. Now can you
10 see me?

11 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Now we can, yes.

12 MS. CAO: Okay.

13 THE SECRETARY: You'll need to be sworn in.
14 One moment, please.

15 MS. CAO: Sure.

16 (Thereupon, the participant was sworn.)

17 MS. CAO: So good evening. My name is
18 Katherine Cao. I live at 14944 Southwest 59th
19 Street, nowhere near the Gables, but I have
20 worked there and dedicated more than twelve
21 years of my life to Crystal Academy and the
22 children that we serve.

23 I'm here tonight not only as an employee,
24 but as somebody who has witnessed firsthand the
25 impact that the school has had in the community

1 and vice-versa. While we are a private school,
2 we are also a non-profit, and every decision
3 that we have made is driven by the mission to
4 serve the children with specialized needs and
5 provide programs tailored to reach their
6 fullest potential. Our focus has always been
7 creating opportunities, independence and
8 meaningful outcomes for the families and the
9 children.

10 I would like to address the suggestion that
11 was made that we only serve wealthy families.
12 That statement, I believe, has no merit. The
13 reality is, while raising a child with profound
14 needs comes with very large financial,
15 emotional and logistical challenges, many of
16 the families have spent many years fighting
17 insurance companies for medically necessary
18 services, only to face denials, reductions in
19 care, and lengthy delays.

20 As a non-profit, part of our mission is
21 also to work to raise funds to provide
22 scholarships and financial assistance to
23 children that do attend our school in multiple
24 ways, not only for tuition, but also for the
25 specialized therapeutic services that they

1 need. For years, our families have worked
2 around an aging building. While we consider it
3 very charming, it also requires a lot of
4 repairs, has many leaks, and we really look
5 forward to having an environment where we can
6 focus more on serving the children instead of
7 really worrying about what -- the next problem
8 in the building might be.

9 To be honest, this process has been truly
10 frustrating over the last few years, because we
11 have often felt that we have help right around
12 the corner, but that has been difficult and has
13 not happened. The building proposed, I
14 believe, is consistent with the character and
15 quality of Coral Gables, but ultimately my
16 objective and my goal is that we want to better
17 serve our children.

18 Being part of this community does allow us
19 to utilize the urban environment and all that
20 the City has to offer, which provides valuable
21 teaching opportunities for many of our
22 students, who go and walk to Target, who go to
23 Publix to shop for their groceries and meal
24 plan. Most importantly, Crystal Academy is not
25 just a building. It really is a community.

1 It's a place where our children feel accepted,
2 where our families have found hope, and where
3 our staff, many who drive an hour or two, have
4 dedicated their lives to helping others. For
5 many of us, this is not simply where we work.
6 This is our home. So even if many of us do not
7 reside in Coral Gables, this is, again, our
8 home.

9 At the end of the day, we're not asking for
10 anything extravagant. We understand that
11 there's conflicting opinions about this, but we
12 ask for the opportunity to continue serving our
13 children in this environment that really does
14 meet their needs. On behalf of the students,
15 families and staff, I ask for your support.
16 Thank you for your time.

17 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

18 THE SECRETARY: Laura Olivos.

19 MS. OLIVOS: Good evening, everyone. Sorry
20 about those technical difficulties earlier.

21 THE SECRETARY: One moment, so you can be
22 sworn in, please.

23 (The participant was sworn.)

24 MS. OLIVOS: So good evening, everyone. My
25 name is Dr. Laura Olivos. I'm a child

1 psychologist and I'm also privileged to serve
2 as a current Board Member for Crystal Academy.

3 I do not come to you to pretend I have any
4 real expertise in zoning, planning or
5 architectural studies. However, I am
6 considered an expert in the field of autism and
7 developmental disabilities.

8 In our clinical community, Crystal is known
9 as a school that takes the children with the
10 most complex and layered profiles that other
11 schools reject. This is the only school of its
12 kind in this community. I know it, because I
13 live it as an aide to Coral Gables families in
14 finding the right placements and educational
15 environments for their children all over South
16 Florida.

17 I wonder, for those that have spoken
18 against this project, if they have ever stepped
19 foot inside of the school, communed with the
20 staff, children and families therein. You
21 speak about how Crystal does not provide any
22 substantial public benefit. Has anyone ever
23 heard of the unparalleled contributions Crystal
24 and their families have done to create an
25 atmosphere and culture of inclusion for our

1 city; how many families and children can
2 finally feel seen, heard, as they finally
3 matter to their city, because of the work
4 they've pioneered. Is that not enough of a
5 substantial benefit for you?

6 You talk about green spaces, but what are
7 green spaces worth if not accessible for every
8 child or family? Take, for example, Salvadore
9 Park. It's an unparalleled green space for
10 children and their families, designed to be ADA
11 compliant and friendly, made possible because
12 of the tireless advocacy and contributions of
13 dedicated City Officials, but also Crystal
14 children and their families advocating for it.

15 Because of Crystal and their tireless work,
16 CF Crystal of Coral Gables is known as a beacon
17 of what inclusion can do for a city. Research
18 shows inclusion benefits society in so many
19 ways, including economic growths. It
20 cultivates empathy. It makes all of us more
21 connected and understanding of one another. It
22 is the ultimate example of what being a good
23 neighbor is, whether you live in a high rise,
24 apartment or home.

25 For those saying it is a school for the

1 wealthy, they are a school that takes Medicaid,
2 where families use scholarship to receive
3 quality care. It is a school that is
4 accessible for various reasons. We are
5 continuously at the mercy of begging for
6 donations to stay afloat. We hold our breath
7 every year, (unintelligible) from the heart, a
8 heart that has room for every child and their
9 family regardless of where they come from or
10 how their minds work.

11 I also heard residents arguing that a child
12 learns best in green spaces, especially
13 neurodivergent ones. Valid, however, one of
14 the biggest agents of positive change in a
15 child's education and therapeutic process is
16 the relationship that they have with their
17 educators and therapists. If one does not feel
18 safe or have predictability in their lives,
19 they cannot learn and they cannot thrive. This
20 is not just a theory. This is not neurology.
21 Moving them creates unpredictability and risks
22 regression. It risks employees and valuable
23 trained clinicians and educators leaving this
24 job to find something more predictable and
25 perhaps less of a commute if moved elsewhere.

1 What good is a green space if a child is
2 stripped from their usual routines,
3 neighborhoods, and potentially the familiar
4 faces that sit in the trenches with them day in
5 and day out?

6 I cannot stand before you and argue the
7 nuances of zoning and planning, but I can stand
8 before you and provide a voice for the
9 voiceless. Hear their plea. Keep them in
10 their home. Thank you for your time.

11 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: No more public comment?

12 THE SECRETARY: No more public comment.

13 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Then let's close the
14 public comment at this time.

15 MR. NAVARRO: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

16 If the IT department could put the
17 PowerPoint up? I'm not going to wait for it to
18 go up. I know you've had a very lengthy public
19 hearing.

20 I'd just like to take a few minutes to
21 correct and clarify some of the statements that
22 were made, as well as answer some of the
23 questions that were asked.

24 The first question was, well, you know,
25 what is the commitment or what is the assurity

1 that Crystal Academy will continue to operate
2 here? And we've entered into a private
3 agreement with Crystal Academy, as soon as the
4 property was sold, to ensure that they could
5 remain operating. Obviously, their facility is
6 not up to the standards that it needs to
7 provide the specialized care that they need.
8 That building requires an infinite amount of
9 repairs and they have been waiting five years
10 for the facility, but -- we also have a private
11 covenant, but we also have a covenant with the
12 City, and that covenant provides that Crystal
13 Academy can remain in this space, if this
14 project moves forward, until they no longer
15 pursue their mission.

16 In the event that they don't, and we
17 anticipate that will be a very, very long time
18 from now, and we hope they never do stop,
19 because what they do is the truly special, but
20 we have a provision in the covenant that says
21 that we will work with the City to select
22 another non-profit that does a very similar
23 mission than Crystal Academy does. So this
24 space is earmarked, it's reserved, for
25 generations to come for this important need

1 that this community has, and this is the only
2 institution in the City that does this.

3 You heard a lot about the Garden of our
4 Lord this evening, and the garden on-site.
5 This is an issue that we've dealt with for two
6 years, and I want to address, this is a private
7 garden. It's not accessible to the public.
8 There is also mention of a pending historical
9 study that is underway for this area, and there
10 is. That study is looking at sites in this
11 area that could meet historical designation
12 criteria to make sure that a site that warrants
13 historical designation, that this City values
14 very much, are protected, and that is a study
15 that we're in support of.

16 But I would like to tell you something that
17 is very important that has not been mentioned.
18 The historical significance of this site has
19 been reviewed by your Historical Preservation
20 Officer, your Historical Preservation Board,
21 your City Commission. They've all considered
22 whether this site meets the criteria for
23 historic designation, and they've all concluded
24 that it does not. Those determinations were
25 subsequently upheld in court, after various

1 appeals by Ms. Bolton, who you heard from
2 tonight. So we have four separate authorities
3 that reviewed the historical eligibility of
4 this property, the garden, and all have
5 unanimously concluded that this property is not
6 historic, and that a current study will not
7 change that fact.

8 Also, the characterization -- one thing I'd
9 like to mention is, the existing garden is a
10 private green space. There are no public green
11 spaces on this property. This project will
12 actually increase the amount of publicly
13 available open spaces -- publicly available
14 open spaces -- by 9,000 square feet, and in
15 terms of open space, this project provides
16 thirty percent open space, where your Code
17 requires twenty percent for a PAD, of which
18 almost seventy percent of it is open to the
19 sky. So this project is delivering, in fact,
20 public open space benefits, and that is a
21 public benefit, and it's been accepted in other
22 PADs in the past.

23 It's important to clarify that, also, the
24 PAD does not require that the landscaped space
25 you provide is public. A PAD allows you to

1 provide both, private and public open spaces.
2 So there's no requirement that this be only
3 public in order to qualify, and that's an
4 important distinction.

5 Another item I want to address is the
6 characterization of the North Ponce Overlay by
7 Mr. Winker as a low rise area. It's factually
8 and legally inaccurate. And I'll put up a
9 picture here while I go through this, because I
10 think a picture paints a thousand words. This
11 is the context that we're talking about here.
12 This is the context that your Board of
13 Architects reviewed in looking at the design of
14 this project for architectural compatibility
15 with the neighborhood. I think you could tell
16 in this picture that this is not a
17 single-family neighborhood. This is not a low
18 rise neighborhood. This is an area that is
19 planned for mid rise residential buildings.
20 That is what the North Ponce area was created
21 for.

22 You could see here that there are already
23 many buildings, residential, office, and
24 mixed-use buildings, that greatly exceed the
25 height that we are proposing. So our project

1 is very much in context with not only the
2 planned framework for this area, but the
3 existing development framework in this area.

4 And with that, I would like to introduce
5 Bob Chisholm, who is our urban planner, with
6 many years of experience, to just talk a little
7 bit about the North Ponce area and how this
8 project fits into its context, and then I'll
9 say a few words and we'll conclude our
10 rebuttal. Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

12 MR. CHISHOLM: Good evening, Mr. Chairman
13 and Members of the Committee. My name is
14 Robert Chisholm, and I'm the founding and
15 managing principal of RA Chisholm Architects,
16 located at 782 Northwest 42nd Avenue, Suite
17 650.

18 I have been a resident of Coral Gables
19 since 1975, and we do some projects in Coral
20 Gables. My latest project just went into the
21 permitting process last week, and we have
22 another couple of projects that we're working
23 on. So I'm involved in the area. I've known
24 the area for many, many years, and I frequent
25 this area constantly.

1 The City of Coral Gables is blessed by what
2 they've done in the past and what they're doing
3 in the present and what they're planning for in
4 the future, and I think that the outcome of
5 this process that we're going through is
6 exemplary and everyone is to be commended, the
7 citizens, the staff, and the professionals.

8 I've only been given a minute by Jorge to
9 talk about this thing, and I hope I can do it
10 quickly, and certainly under three minutes, Mr.
11 Chairman, but it is -- you know, I have a
12 Master's degree in urban planning and I have a
13 Bachelor's degree from the University of
14 Florida in architecture. I've been practicing
15 since 1973 in all aspects, and I've had my
16 company since 1978, and I continue to practice
17 accordingly.

18 I was head of Historic Preservation for
19 Miami-Dade County at one time. I organized the
20 official office. And I was also in charge of
21 the handicapped access program back in the
22 '70s. So, as a planner, I was involved a lot
23 in consensus with the -- in citizen input, and
24 that's the role of government that we have to
25 do, but I think the fact that -- for example,

1 that the Fifield team had to go through five
2 reviews by the BOA is a compliment to both, the
3 BOA and the team, for the commitment to make
4 sure that this project was exemplary in every
5 way.

6 And I think, from analyzing it clearly from
7 an architectural point of view, and in terms of
8 just about every textbook aspect of how this
9 project has been put together, in terms of the
10 architectural design, is exemplary. I can go
11 into detail whenever the Committee requests, if
12 you do so, and I just think that the
13 neighborhood context, in terms of how this
14 project will contribute, the public benefit is
15 not only the Academy, in my opinion. The
16 public benefit is the quality of providing the
17 residential components, which are critical to
18 the social environment of any community and any
19 neighborhood, and the way it's been laid out,
20 the way it's been articulated by Corwil
21 Architects, again -- and I'm not -- I'm not a
22 hired gun -- yes, I'm getting paid for this, of
23 course, because my knowledge and my time is --
24 requires that, but when Fifield contacted me, I
25 told them, let me think about it, let me take a

1 look to see if it was worth and had any merit
2 and value, and what the City has done, what the
3 team has done, and the citizens have every
4 right to express their concern.

5 The future is always an unknown, but the
6 example we have here in the City of Coral
7 Gables as to what has been accomplished over
8 the years is an example to everyone in our
9 country, and everybody knows about the City of
10 Coral Gables, so on and so forth.

11 I don't want to belabor the point, but I
12 think there have been professionals here, who
13 know the context, and have told you that this
14 project will work, and it will work to the
15 benefit of our community. Thank you very much.

16 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

17 MR. NAVARRO: So in terms of -- I know that
18 there was comments about the substantial public
19 benefit that the PAD requires. I think we've
20 mentioned there are open space enhancements.
21 There are significant streetscape enhancements.
22 We created very large and well landscaped
23 sidewalks. We've committed to installing 16
24 foot trees at the time of planting.

25 But we all know we need schools. We're

1 very much in need of schools, especially
2 schools that serve children with disability,
3 and if that's not a public benefit that
4 provides an essential to our community, then I
5 don't know what that is. Just to give you a
6 monetary value of what this public investment
7 in Crystal Academy means over the term of this
8 99 year lease, that would be six million
9 dollars, which is probably the largest public
10 benefit contribution ever made by any PAD
11 that's been requested.

12 Developers usually give a park, after we've
13 taken the density out of it. This is an actual
14 financial contribution, that's taking a very
15 significant spot in this building, and is being
16 fully built out by this development and
17 maintained that way for 99 years.

18 I'll close by saying that, every community
19 makes decisions about the places that it wants
20 to create. Coral Gables is known as the City
21 Beautiful, and we often speak and you've heard
22 tonight about preserving what makes the City
23 beautiful. Well, what makes Coral Gables
24 beautiful is not just its tree lined streets or
25 its world class architecture or its art or its

1 parks or its rich history. What truly makes
2 this community beautiful is the set of values
3 we share as a community, and the high quality
4 of service and excellence that Coral Gables
5 delivers to its residents. These values are
6 the reasons why so many people, including
7 myself, choose to call Coral Gables home.

8 This project reflects those true core Coral
9 Gables values. The City is known for some of
10 the best educational institutions in the state
11 and nation, and that's because Coral Gables
12 realizes that investing in public education and
13 private education is an important public
14 benefit and public need that's worth investing
15 in, and this principle should extend to every
16 child, with no exceptions.

17 This project does more than just deliver
18 new residential housing opportunities to
19 activate an area or beautify and activate a
20 site with a new Mediterranean project, as
21 you've seen before. It preserves and
22 strengthens the only school in Coral Gables
23 that services our most vulnerable kids, a
24 resource that's impossible to replace and
25 impossible to duplicate, if lost.

1 So tonight we have the opportunity to do
2 something truly special and truly beautiful.
3 We have the opportunity to create a project
4 that reflects the very best in Coral Gables, a
5 city that values excellence, inclusion,
6 education and service, a City that recognizes
7 that every child matters and that every family
8 that lives in this City deserves to have access
9 to the resources they need.

10 Your Staff has done a very detailed
11 presentation. You've heard a lot of evidence
12 on the record this evening. Your Staff found
13 that this application meets all of the
14 applicable criteria of approval and warrants
15 approval, and we ask for your approval, in
16 accordance with the Staff recommendation.

17 Thank you so much for your attention and
18 your time this evening. Our entire team is
19 here to answer any questions.

20 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you so much.

21 I'm going to open it to Board discussion,
22 and I'm going to start with Ms. Bravo.

23 MS. BRAVO: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

24 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Uh-huh.

25 MS. BRAVO: I've been looking at the agenda

1 package that included the architectural plans.
2 Would it be possible to pull those up on the
3 screen?

4 MS. SUAREZ: You don't mean the PowerPoint
5 presentation, you mean from the --

6 MS. BRAVO: One of the attachments to the
7 agenda package, the robust agenda package.

8 MR. BEHAR: It is the applicant's --

9 MS. BRAVO: Yeah, Attachment A, applicant's
10 submittal.

11 Sorry to put the technical on the spot like
12 this.

13 There you go. That's it. Could you flip
14 to Page 30 in that PDF?

15 Actually, it's going to be hard to scroll
16 down --

17 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Page 30.

18 MS. GARCIA: This is Page 30.

19 MS. BRAVO: If you were to --

20 MR. BEHAR: Of the ground floor plan?

21 MS. BRAVO: Yeah, but if you want to stop
22 on 24, that's okay.

23 MR. BEHAR: I think she's looking for the
24 ground floor plan.

25 MR. CORDOVES: It's probably A-30.

1 MS. BRAVO: Actually, Page 24, if you want
2 to stop there first. I can ask a few questions
3 about that. If you got there, that -- sorry to
4 put everybody on the spot.

5 Could you just walk us through -- (A) Does
6 this reflect the most current design, the one
7 that went through various iterations with the
8 Board of Architects? This is the current
9 iteration?

10 MR. CORDOVES: The previous iterations,
11 what changed?

12 MS. BRAVO: No. I want to know --

13 MR. CORDOVES: A little bit more about this
14 one?

15 MS. BRAVO: -- is this the most current
16 approved version after going through all of
17 the --

18 MR. CORDOVES: It is. This is the most
19 current -- yes, correct.

20 MS. BRAVO: All right. SO could you walk
21 us through the design?

22 MR. CORDOVES: Absolutely. So as I
23 mentioned before, the primary goal was to
24 provide active spaces throughout -- almost
25 throughout the entire perimeter of a small city

1 block. As you can see there, we have the liner
2 units in blue. We have the main entrance to
3 the project, down an axis with what we consider
4 the main focal point, which is that artery.
5 That's the corner of East Ponce and Antilla.
6 And then we circle back all around. On
7 Galiano, we have the school, and we have a
8 park, on the very northeast corner, and then,
9 obviously, we have the internalized courtyard.

10 But one of the things we did, also, we
11 wanted to make sure that the complete
12 circulation of this, the pedestrian, was unique
13 in every sense. Notice that in the front
14 setbacks on East Ponce and on Antilla, we
15 provided more than the required setback, just
16 to increase the landscaping somewhat, and feel
17 more of a beautiful pedestrian realm. Today,
18 the sidewalks that are currently there don't
19 have that. You have the actual existing
20 property abutting right to the inside portion
21 of the sidewalk. These are wider. We wanted
22 to bring more larger trees into the site, as
23 well, and ultimately, also, we created the
24 centralized paseo. We didn't have to do that,
25 but we wanted to make sure that that courtyard,

1 which is also set aside for public use, had a
2 very direct connection from the south and from
3 the north extending to it, with a really nice
4 beautiful wide paseo.

5 The last thing we did is, also, we wanted
6 to make sure that the vehicles and the entrance
7 and the drop-off areas to the school were
8 totally internalized. We created a second
9 lane. It's a one way lane direction from south
10 to north, but we created a second lane, to be
11 able to have the pass through of vehicular cars
12 coming into an internalized entrance to the
13 parking garage, which works in the clockwise
14 direction, not affecting the drop-off areas, as
15 well. And, ultimately, we internalized the
16 loading facilities, which have direct access to
17 one of the elevators, of course, for move ins
18 and move outs.

19 So, again, all in favor of creating a
20 beautiful pedestrian realm, with minimizing the
21 curb cuts and enhancing the pedestrian quality
22 and the connectivity.

23 MS. BRAVO: Okay. And, then, on the north
24 side of Phoenetia, that's where you have the
25 Woman's Club?

1 MR. CORDOVES: On the north side is where
2 we have it, across the street.

3 And we look at the elevations of that.
4 Even though we have a small amount of back of
5 house area there, that are required by Code,
6 like the FP&L vault and some of those items, we
7 dress it up in a way that they look in complete
8 harmony with the building, its residential
9 appearance throughout.

10 MS. BRAVO: And does that street also have
11 the increased setbacks?

12 MR. CORDOVES: Everything has, yes, correct.

13 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Okay.

14 MR. CORDOVES: Including the park, which
15 really anchors our corner really beautiful,
16 which it does not provide -- it provides a
17 relief of the massing in the corner.

18 MS. BRAVO: And that park is completely
19 open to the public?

20 MR. CORDOVES: It is open to the public,
21 after hours. After the school closes, it is
22 open to the public.

23 MS. BRAVO: So is it fenced in?

24 MR. CORDOVES: It's dual use, right.

25 MS. BRAVO: All right. Could you -- you're

1 on 30. Could you go back to 24?

2 MS. GARCIA: What sheet?

3 MS. BRAVO: Page 24 of the PDF. Yeah,
4 you're very close.

5 All right. I found this view interesting,
6 in terms of putting things into context. On
7 the lower left-hand corner, that's the Douglas
8 Entrance property.

9 MR. CORDOVES: Correct.

10 MS. BRAVO: How tall are those buildings?
11 Do we know the height of those buildings. How
12 many floors?

13 MR. CORDOVES: The height of those
14 buildings is probably -- including the ones
15 across Ponce are 16 stories, 14 stories, 10
16 stories, higher than us for sure.

17 MS. BRAVO: Okay.

18 MR. CORDOVES: Yeah. The entire Overlay,
19 if we look at the map, also, as well, it is
20 essentially allowing the height that we have,
21 and even a few more feet than we have proposed
22 here.

23 MS. BRAVO: And, then, on Ponce, we can see
24 that there's two tall buildings. There's the
25 glass one, the one behind it, and, then, after

1 that, there's like two smaller properties. I
2 think one of them is a motel.

3 MR. CORDOVES: Correct.

4 MS. BRAVO: But those are allowed to be --
5 and maybe this is a question for the Director.
6 Those two properties south of the tall
7 buildings on Ponce, the zoning there would
8 allow those to be the same height?

9 MR. BEHAR: No. That could go up to 190
10 feet.

11 MS. BRAVO: Thank you --

12 MS. GARCIA: Yes. All of the properties
13 you see around Ponce de Leon are zoned MX3.
14 They're allowed to be 150 or 190.5 with
15 Mediterranean bonus.

16 MS. BRAVO: Right. So like that first
17 glass one that we see, is that representative
18 of what's allowed there?

19 MS. GARCIA: That's probably 150, because
20 it's not Mediterranean.

21 MS. BRAVO: And we're allowed to go up how
22 high?

23 MS. GARCIA: To 190 with Mediterranean
24 bonus.

25 MS. BRAVO: All right. And, then, there's

1 the subject property, and then you can see, I
2 guess, other buildings here that have been
3 approved. You know, so I think this gives some
4 context that what you're proposing here is not
5 out of scale with what's already --

6 MR. CORDOVES: We created that slide for
7 that same reason, because it's very telling.
8 If we look at one specific little property here
9 and there, yeah, they're scattered, smaller,
10 but the entire area is destined for that. It
11 was zoned for that, and it starts being exactly
12 what we're looking at. It's right in context
13 with a lot of the buildings that are there,
14 which are even taller than us.

15 MS. BRAVO: And I imagine -- when I look at
16 this, and there's that motel property south of
17 the two tall buildings on Ponce, I imagine it's
18 only a matter of time before --

19 MR. CORDOVES: It probably is.

20 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: I think it's on the
21 market.

22 MR. CORDOVES: Very valuable property.

23 MS. BRAVO: Okay. I think this is an
24 interesting area, especially when you look at
25 the context of Douglas Entrance, and the volume

1 of office space that's there, you know, in
2 terms of reducing traffic, having habitable
3 spaces that compliment those office uses. That
4 seems to me like smart planning for this area.

5 So I have a question to our Staff. You
6 know, there were different issues raised during
7 the public comment period. Did you hear
8 anything that wasn't addressed or reviewed by
9 Staff in providing the recommendation?

10 MS. GARCIA: Well, I heard concerns about
11 traffic and we have a traffic study. We have
12 the consultant here, as well. I heard concerns
13 about the historic and we went through the
14 historic process and beyond. Other concerns I
15 heard about was the City Plan, which wouldn't
16 be applicable here, because that's really
17 dealing with the right-of-way and changes to
18 the right-of-way, and those are the ways we
19 amend them, as well.

20 Our Historic Officer on the City did not
21 deem this change to be a change to the City
22 Plan, so we didn't go through that process.
23 And I'm trying to get -- and a concern, but,
24 again, this has been through a long lengthy
25 review process with City Staff, with the

1 Boards, with the City Commission.

2 MS. BRAVO: Is this a typical time line for
3 a project in the City of Coral Gables?

4 MS. GARCIA: This is pretty expanded.

5 MS. BRAVO: Okay. So in order to summarize
6 what you said, is it safe to say that, then,
7 the comments you've heard here were vetted and
8 considered, the issues that were made in the
9 comments?

10 MS. GARCIA: Yes.

11 MS. BRAVO: Okay. All right.

12 Well, you mentioned somebody's here that
13 prepared the traffic study.

14 MS. GARCIA: Yes. We have the consultant
15 -- we have City Staff here from Public Works,
16 who reviewed the traffic study --

17 MS. BRAVO: Okay.

18 MS. GARCIA: -- if you have questions for them.

19 MS. BRAVO: Just in terms of your review
20 and the capacity of the network, we're close to
21 8th Street, we're close to Le Jeune. I like to
22 talk about transportation.

23 MS. MENENDEZ: Well, hi. My name is Cherie
24 Menendez. I'm a Transportation Engineer for
25 the City.

1 So we did review, in 2022 -- October 2022,
2 a traffic impact study for this development.
3 They took into consideration the Ponce Phase 3
4 median project along Ponce de Leon Boulevard.
5 That was something that was taken into
6 consideration.

7 Also, there were two FDOT projects along
8 Southwest 8th Street. One was a resurfacing
9 project, and that's already been completed, and
10 then the other one was lighting. The study
11 showed that it wasn't going to have an negative
12 impact to the neighborhood, and, basically, it
13 was approved at the end of October 2022. A
14 technical memorandum was sent out, and that was
15 already reviewed.

16 Most recently, we looked at Ponce 8 and --

17 MR. HART: Yes. So the Ponce 8 project did
18 not trigger enough trips to require a traffic
19 study, based on the existing land use, versus
20 the future land use. There was a net gain of
21 26 trips in the peak hours.

22 MS. MENENDEZ: And, also, recently, and due
23 to the changes that were in the site plan, we
24 also reviewed for the Crystal Phoenetia
25 development, their revised trip generation

1 letter, to see if it would negatively impact
2 the neighborhood, and, also, if they would need
3 to update their traffic impact study.

4 After review, it actually created less
5 trips, because they removed the office space
6 from the site plan, and we looked at our IT
7 engineering manuals to verify that, so we
8 didn't have them revise their traffic impact
9 study. So they were good to go from there, as
10 well.

11 MS. BRAVO: Okay. Thank you.

12 MS. MENENDEZ: Thank you.

13 THE REPORTER: Sir, could you say your name?

14 MR. HART: Charles Hart.

15 MR. ALVAREZ: Through the Chair, can I ask
16 them one question?

17 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yes, sir.

18 MR. ALVAREZ: I'm sorry, one question.

19 I'm on -- the map is off -- Almeria and
20 Ponce, and one block south of there, it looks
21 like they're doing the center lane and they're
22 redoing the sidewalks. It looks like it's
23 going to go down to one lane.

24 MS. MENENDEZ: Which one, I'm sorry?

25 MR. ALVAREZ: Ponce --

1 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: On Ponce. Like by 999
2 Ponce.

3 MR. ALVAREZ: Yeah.

4 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Right off of 8th Street.

5 MS. MENENDEZ: South of 8th Street?

6 MR. BEHAR: From 8th Street to --

7 MS. MENENDEZ: Menores to 8th.

8 MR. BEHAR: Correct.

9 MS. MENENDEZ: Okay.

10 MR. BEHAR: The center median is being done
11 today.

12 MS. MENENDEZ: Yes. Yes. That's the Ponce
13 8 Street Project.

14 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Is that going to be one
15 lane or two lanes?

16 MR. BEHAR: No, it is two lanes.

17 MR. HART: It's two lanes that shrink down
18 to one --

19 MR. ALVAREZ: It looks like it goes into
20 the one lane. There's no way you can fix two
21 lanes there.

22 MR. BEHAR: No. No. It is a two-lane.
23 What they're doing is, for the work now,
24 they're putting the barriers -- the temporary
25 barrier, but it will be a two lane.

1 MR. ALVAREZ: No, it's not a temporary
2 barrier. They're doing like the curb --

3 MR. BEHAR: Because those cars are going to
4 become parallel parking. Instead of angle
5 parking they're going to become parallel.

6 MR. PARDO: It will be less parking.

7 MR. BEHAR: Yeah, parallel parking instead
8 of, you know, angle backing, which is dangerous
9 backing up onto Ponce de Leon, but it's going
10 to be a two-lane with parallel parking. That I
11 know, because I'm doing a project -- I finished
12 a project across the street, so I had to adhere
13 to those plans.

14 MR. ALVAREZ: I'm eager to see how they're
15 going to put two lanes there, because that curb
16 comes like straight out.

17 MR. BEHAR: What I don't like is that every
18 other street, they limited the left turn.

19 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: They limited the left
20 turn.

21 (Simultaneous speaking.)

22 MS. SUAREZ: So just a reminder, the court
23 reporter can only take down, you know, one
24 person speaking.

25 MR. BEHAR: Sorry. Sorry.

1 MR. ALVAREZ: So that was my only question,
2 how it was going to affect, because I thought
3 it was going to go down to one lane.

4 MR. BEHAR: No. I assure you, it's going
5 to be two lines with a parallel parking, and we
6 are going to lose some parking spaces.

7 MR. ALVAREZ: All right. I'm sorry, go
8 ahead.

9 MR. PARDO: Mr. Chairman -- I'm sorry.

10 MS. BRAVO: No, go ahead.

11 MR. PARDO; Well, whenever you're done, I'd
12 like to ask them a question, so they don't have
13 to sit down and come back up.

14 MS. BRAVO: I don't have any other
15 questions. I think, you know, the Ponce
16 corridor has a jagged edge. In terms of
17 modifying the zoning to capture this property,
18 I think this is smart development and I'll be
19 in support of it.

20 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: You had a question for
21 them or can I move on to other Board Members?

22 MR. PARDO: Yes.

23 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Okay. Go for it, please.

24 MR. PARDO: Okay. Thank you.

25 So I read the Kimley-Horn traffic analysis,

1 and it's almost like building a ship in the
2 bottle. It doesn't take anything else into
3 account. The, quote/unquote, improvements that
4 are being built now on Ponce, every time you
5 have a limited access highway, if you will, you
6 have less of an ability of people using more of
7 those arteries and they've used less arteries.

8 Today, in my single-family home on Cadima,
9 it took me ten minutes to be able to back out
10 of my driveway onto the street, because
11 everybody on Google is getting all of the
12 traffic to go down Cadima, because if they go
13 down University, they have a traffic light on
14 Le Jeune, and they're being rerouted that way.
15 So our traffic has increased maybe 400 percent
16 in the last three months, and that's with
17 school being out.

18 What is the level of -- the FDOT level of
19 service on the Trail right now?

20 MS. MENENDEZ: On 8th Street?

21 MR. PARDO: Yes.

22 MS. MENENDEZ: If it's -- well, I'll have
23 to triple check. I know the level of service
24 on Le Jeune is F. It's probably close to F or
25 near F, on 8th Street.

1 MR. PARDO: Yeah. I think you're right.

2 Le Jeune is F.

3 MS. MENENDEZ: Yes.

4 MR. PARDO: 8th Street is F, and I would
5 not be surprised if Douglas is close to that.

6 So when you have a glass of water, and it's
7 filled all of the way to the top, you just have
8 to add one drop for it to spill, and I think
9 that Kimley-Horn being a very large firm, with
10 a very large traffic component to their firm,
11 when they give the analysis, it's almost like
12 everything around it is not being taken into
13 account.

14 So when people drive, and you see backups
15 at any time of day, adding one parking trip --
16 or one traffic trip, rather, becomes a problem,
17 and every time that I hear that because -- it
18 doesn't warrant a traffic study, because the
19 site does not project enough trips, you're
20 using it in a vacuum, and it's being -- it's a
21 disservice to the citizens of Coral Gables,
22 that have to then not only accept the fact of
23 that particular project, and all of the other
24 projects when you add them, but also the cross
25 traffic that goes through our City every single

1 day east to west and west to east.

2 I mean, I think that it is wrong for this
3 to be glossed over this way. We have an
4 enormous traffic problem. We have a trip
5 problem. And it's not being resolved by adding
6 medians on the north-south corridor of Ponce
7 that way.

8 MS. MENENDEZ: Well, the Ponce 8th Street
9 project was -- the design was ongoing prior to
10 the traffic impact study in October 2022. The
11 reason why you see median closures is typically
12 because there's a high number of crashes. So
13 those east-west movements -- and I've seen it
14 myself, because I drive down every day, down
15 Ponce, a lot of people throw their car across,
16 and sometimes there are severe accidents. So
17 that's why those median enclosures took place.

18 MR. PARDO: I know. I know, and it's the
19 same thing as Le Jeune.

20 MS. MENENDEZ: Yes.

21 MR. PARDO: And it becomes a problem. I
22 mean, we're in the police station, right, and
23 it becomes an enforcement issue, when it comes
24 to speed. So you can't even assume 30 miles an
25 hour, 25 miles an hour, when people are flying

1 through at 50 miles an hour. That's part of
2 the crashes that you do get. But what I'm
3 saying is, right now, it's becoming a funnel
4 effect on not just one street, but many of the
5 streets.

6 MR. BEHAR: To extend this --

7 MR. PARDO: And, then, when you take out
8 all of the parking that we're going to lose,
9 then that becomes a problem.

10 MR. BEHAR: Mr. Pardo, one second. We need
11 to extend before the nine o'clock, to ensure we
12 could continue.

13 MR. SANABRIA: Mr. Chair --

14 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Give me one second,
15 Gonzalo.

16 MR. BEHAR: Can we make a motion?

17 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: A motion for thirty
18 minutes?

19 MR. BEHAR: Motion to extend to 9:30.

20 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: 9:30.

21 MR. ALVAREZ: Second.

22 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: You moved it. Second.
23 All in favor?

24 (Board Members voted aye.)

25 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Okay.

1 MR. BEHAR: Sorry. Go back.

2 MR. PARDO: No. No. Robert, I don't have
3 any objection.

4 MR. ALVAREZ: What does F mean?

5 MR. SANABRIA: If you allow me, Mr.
6 Chairman.

7 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Let them finish and I'll
8 call you --

9 MR. SANABRIA: Can I please have --

10 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Not right now. Gonzalo,
11 one second.

12 MR. PARDO: The levels can be explained by
13 our Vice Chair, you know, because FDOT has a
14 rating. You get an A, you get a B, you get a
15 C. F is the worst, when it comes to traffic
16 volume. That means that the road cannot take
17 the amount of volume there.

18 So we're surrounded by F, but then the part
19 that's not in there is all of our little side
20 streets, if you will, all of our little
21 residential streets, which are -- it becomes a
22 tsunami when it is early morning or late
23 afternoon, going to work, picking up kids,
24 coming back at the end of the day.

25 So what happens is that our little

1 collector streets, residential streets, are
2 flooded with that. The worse part now is that,
3 because now, the City, is putting in this
4 median, putting in parallel parking, as we did
5 many years ago on Miracle Mile, we're going to
6 lose a certain percentage of that parking. So
7 your business on Ponce and everybody else's,
8 they're going to have to now bleed parking into
9 these residential areas. So there will be less
10 parking, which is created by many things, but
11 based on some of the decisions that have been
12 made of the improvements that are being built
13 now.

14 MS. MENENDEZ: And I just wanted to add,
15 for the traffic impact study, the original one
16 did consider the Ponce Phase 3 project in its
17 analysis. And, then the reason -- well, the
18 revised trip generation letter was compared to
19 that study.

20 MR. HART: Right, and that had fewer trips
21 than the original request.

22 MS. MENENDEZ: So we're just using an
23 analysis that was already done, and then using
24 a trip generation letter that it showed less
25 trips, to determine whether or not, you know,

1 any changes had to be done or if a revised.
2 Traffic impact study needed to be done, but it
3 wasn't that we did not consider the Ponce Phase
4 3 median.

5 MR. PARDO: No, and listen, I don't mean to
6 pounce.

7 MS. MENENDEZ: No. No. I understand. I
8 just wanted to make sure it was corrected on
9 the record.

10 MR. PARDO: I'm just saying that we have a
11 very serious problem. And, then, when we look
12 at projects in a vacuum, it just makes
13 everything else worse. It's the same thing as
14 looking at the site plan and you're not seeing,
15 you know, what the driveways and the uses are
16 across the street.

17 MS. MENENDEZ: Well, we do take that into
18 account, and we also have to submit -- any time
19 we do any closures or anything, we have to
20 submit our plans to Miami-Dade County for them
21 to look at it, as well, for them to take it as
22 a whole, because it's a whole network. Like
23 it's our City, we want to make sure we don't
24 negatively impact our City, but all of the
25 roads in Miami-Dade County are in network, so

1 we're not in a vacuum.

2 MR. SANABRIA: Mr. Chairman, I would like
3 to have a moment to speak, please.

4 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yeah. I'll call the next
5 Board Member. Let Felix finish one second.

6 MR. PARDO: And I'm sorry, I think this is
7 so important for every project that we're
8 looking at, but it becomes very complex -- and
9 by the way, the next natural outlet going
10 north-south is this street right here, Salzedo,
11 and that is, right now -- except for a couple
12 of exceptions, that is a very residential
13 street, with parallel parking, right now.
14 People fly through there, where they have built
15 at least from here to 8th Street, at least
16 eight to ten speed humps to try to slow people
17 down. So it is becoming more and more of a
18 problem, and I think that, really, Staff should
19 do a more holistic job in presenting the
20 information, you know, to this Board for our
21 decision.

22 Thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

24 Gonzalo.

25 MR. SANABRIA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 You can sit down now please.

2 MS. MENENDEZ: All right. Thank you.

3 MR. SANABRIA: Thank you.

4 Mr. Chairman, we have heard endlessly,
5 repetitively pulling at the heartstrings of
6 Crystal Academy as if it was the most important
7 thing that we are looking at today. The truth
8 is, the fact is, reality is, the project we're
9 talking about is 226,000 plus square feet. The
10 promise to Crystal Academy is less than two
11 percent of that total build out, 5,000 feet,
12 and minimal contribution, versus what the
13 impact of that building is. So let's be
14 totally clear about this, a very small
15 contribution.

16 I know it was mentioned numerous times and
17 the applicant has competent staff at all
18 levels, and I admire that, but let's be frank
19 and let's be real, this is a massive
20 development, and I would just like to have
21 Bonnie come up for a second and just give me a
22 history, again, of the Garden of our Lord, for
23 the benefit of the information we can use.

24 Bonnie, if you would -- are you in the area
25 here still? Come on up.

1 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Before she comes, City,
2 can we have --

3 MS. SUAREZ: You mean, the process that
4 involved the request for historic designation?

5 MR. SANABRIA: The historic of the Garden
6 of our Lord.

7 MS. SUAREZ: Yeah.

8 MS. BOLTON: The Garden of Our Lord --

9 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: One second before you
10 begin.

11 MS. SUAREZ: That's not before the Board
12 today. What's before the Board today is the
13 applicant's application for the proposed
14 development.

15 MR. SANABRIA: I hear you.

16 MS. BOLTON; They could also switch out the
17 green space that they have on the northeast
18 corner of the property with the garden and I
19 would stop fighting, but, yes, I'm very happy
20 to talk about the Garden of Our Lord.

21 MR. SANABRIA: Just tell us what year it
22 started and the tradition, please.

23 MS. BOLTON: It was built in 1951.

24 MR. SANABRIA: 1951.

25 MS. BOLTON; By Robert Fitch Smith, a

1 renowned South Florida architect, who many of
2 his projects have been designated historic.
3 It's a cemetery. It's one of the first three
4 Biblical gardens in America. Some of the trees
5 and bushes that grow there at this minute came
6 as seeds from Guissemini. That's the garden
7 where Jesus was the night before his
8 crucifixion. It's also a war memorial, medical
9 memorial, and community memorial.

10 MR. BEHAR: Mr. Chairman and City
11 Attorney --

12 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yes.

13 MR. BEHAR: -- why are we -- this is not
14 part of this application.

15 MS. SUAREZ: I don't believe this is relevant.

16 MR. BEHAR: I don't think it's applicable
17 here.

18 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: I happen to agree, as
19 well.

20 Gonzalo, if you could wrap up your comments
21 and Ms. Bonnie --

22 MR. SANABRIA: I appreciate Bonnie's
23 comments, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

25 MR. SANABRIA: So the balance sheet here is

1 that we have a project coming, a square block,
2 1.4 acre, and also caveat input, the Century
3 Group, are very, very savvy investors and
4 developers from years back. They did not buy
5 this property on the blind. I'm sure they did
6 their due diligence and knew exactly that they
7 were buying, and the development that they
8 could do in place. However, something
9 happened, and now they're seeking a small scale
10 amendment, a radical change from the current
11 zoning, and the thing that everybody here on
12 this Board and my colleagues and everybody is
13 listening to this is, this is not a Crystal
14 Academy application. This is a developer's
15 application. Crystal Academy's footprint on
16 this is two percent of the build-out.

17 So, with that said, I'd also like to say a
18 few other things here. The normal setback
19 under the current zoning for a building on this
20 property varies from 25 feet to 15. The
21 proposed project's setback is eight inches,
22 nine inches, basically zero setback. So this
23 open space dialog that we have been listening
24 to is an internal patio area for the
25 development. It is really in congress with

1 what we have been hearing.

2 So I hope my colleagues understand that
3 what we're doing with here is a major impacting
4 development in a very cherished, open green
5 space area. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

7 Shane, any comments?

8 MR. MCGLASHEN: I just have a few quick
9 questions maybe for Staff possible or the
10 applicant may be best suited for the question.

11 I know earlier we looked at Page 24 of the
12 applicant's package and that was an image of
13 the subject property, and I just want to make
14 sure I have this right, as the predicate to my
15 next question, but it looks like we have
16 digitally filled in the construction for the
17 subject property, as well as a few other
18 properties that have been approved, right?

19 MR. NAVARRO: Correct.

20 MR. MCGLASHEN: Okay. So I've seen in the
21 papers and in conversation that this is called
22 a transitional property, and that it's an
23 inappropriate transition. And my question is,
24 what -- maybe this is simplistic question, but
25 what makes it transitional? When I go to the

1 property, for example, and I saw it yesterday,
2 to me, it looked like it fit appropriately in
3 the Conservation District. So what makes this
4 a transitional property as opposed to other
5 properties on that area that's within that
6 Conservation District? And I think the second
7 part to that question is, what stops the
8 precedent from all of these properties being
9 upzoned?

10 MR. NAVARRO: So I'll take the question.
11 We obviously have your Planning and Zoning
12 Director, who also did their own independent
13 analysis of this request, but just taking a
14 step back, I know we're all looking at this
15 property like it's like a Special Use district,
16 right, and I'll get to your question, I
17 promise, but I think this context is important.

18 When the North Ponce area was studied, it
19 created two areas. It created the North Ponce
20 Mixed-Use District, which allows, as your
21 Planning and Zoning Director said, between 150
22 and 190 feet in height, and then it created the
23 residential infill district, which is known as
24 the North Ponce Conservation District, which
25 allows 100 feet in height and 100 units.

1 There were properties that were not studied
2 at that time, because they had existing schools
3 and churches. If you look at the North Ponce
4 Corridor Plan today, the only properties that
5 aren't MF2 or MX in the entire area are the
6 religious and schools, and that's because, from
7 a planning perspective, you leave those
8 institutions in place, because they are
9 existing educational uses.

10 What makes this property a transitional
11 property is that East Ponce Boulevard currently
12 has three properties, on the west side, one of
13 them already approved for, I believe, 165 feet,
14 which is Regency on the Park, and it has 190
15 feet directly across the street. East Ponce is
16 the corridor that basically is the main
17 arterial corridor in that area, other than
18 Ponce. It connects Ponce directly to Douglas
19 Entrance, which is one of the largest retail
20 and office destinations outside of probably
21 Downtown and Merrick Park in this area.

22 So it is a main roadway, and you have --
23 right now you have, directly to the north of
24 this property, the North Ponce -- the MXD
25 already extends. So what makes this a

1 transitional site is that this is not half a
2 block or a portion of a block. It is an entire
3 block that basically sits between 190 feet in
4 height and 100 feet in height, and what this
5 projects tries to do is to keep the mid rise,
6 keep it at 100 feet, but creates a mixed-use
7 project that transitions from this very high
8 intense, the most -- actually, the most intense
9 zoning and land use that you have in this City,
10 to a mid rise residential. It's creating a
11 buffer between these two areas, and that's why
12 this is a transitional site.

13 I don't think there's another site in this
14 whole area that sits between these two that's
15 an entire City block and that sits on a main
16 arterial roadway.

17 MR. MCGLASHEN: And is that last part
18 essentially the distinguishing factor for other
19 properties on that same area from all being
20 upzoned?

21 MR. NAVARRO: Correct. Yeah. And I think
22 what would be interesting is if we can take a
23 time machine and go back in time, how the North
24 Ponce Charrette would have treated that
25 particular property, because it was not

1 studied. It was just left as, it's a school,
2 it's a church, we're going to leave it just as
3 institutional.

4 MR. PARDO: Mr. Chairman --

5 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yes.

6 MR. PARDO: -- if I may. I'm probably the
7 last living member of the North Ponce Apartment
8 District, not -- it wasn't a Charrette. It was
9 a Committee. I sat on it. And what you just
10 said is not correct.

11 What you are referencing is something that
12 happened many years after, and we did an
13 analysis of every historic building that was in
14 that area, and as many studies, it was shelved,
15 but was it studied, yes. Was there an intent,
16 yes. And I speak from a historical standpoint,
17 because I was there, and what was just said now
18 is not correct.

19 MR. BEHAR: But Felix, I wasn't involved,
20 as you were maybe, but I was involved in the
21 sense that in 2015, the City took it upon it to
22 change that area and allow -- can you pull up
23 the Zoning Map, because maybe what you did was
24 twenty years before that, but that evolved to
25 something else. So it would have to be put in

1 the past, and the present, today, look at the
2 Zoning Map to see what is allowed, because
3 you're allowed 100 feet in that area.

4 MR. PARDO: That's because it became an
5 urban infill.

6 MR. BEHAR: But that was passed through
7 Commission. It went through the approval.

8 MR. PARDO: I understand that.

9 MR. BEHAR: It went through approval, so
10 that's what we're looking at today.

11 MR. PARDO: I understand that, but this was
12 -- what I'm saying is that it was not done in a
13 haphazard way.

14 MR. BEHAR: No, but what was done, that is
15 in place today, was done correctly, and it
16 was -- looked at every property. What
17 Mr. Navarro stated is correct, that
18 institutional properties were not taken into
19 consideration, which they should have been
20 done, as well, because unfortunately, a lot of
21 those institutions, churches, are going away.

22 MR. PARDO: Every single one of them was
23 zoned S, as in special.

24 MR. BEHAR: As in special, because there
25 was that Special zoning for that.

1 MR. PARDO: That's correct.

2 MR. BEHAR: Not anticipating that in the
3 future, they could become something else.

4 MR. NAVARRO: Through the Chair, if I can
5 finish answering the question.

6 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yes.

7 MR. NAVARRO: So an interesting case, which
8 is actually directly to our north, at the time
9 of the 2015, 2016 Charrette, which I was a part
10 of, there is a site just north of this. You
11 can't see it on this map, but you could see it
12 on the map that we had that shows the land use,
13 the East Ponce corridor was being studied, and
14 they just decided to say there was a site they
15 wanted to include, but they didn't include.
16 They wanted to see the project that was going
17 to go in there, and that's Regency on the Park.
18 That site was recently included in the North
19 Ponce Mixed-Use District expanded,
20 understanding the character of East Ponce
21 Boulevard today.

22 Another important point is that site was
23 not always religious. In 1971, this site was
24 rezoned to religious to permit the church, but
25 in George Merrick's plan, and in the old Zoning

1 Code, where we have the height maps that show
2 what this property was designated for, and we
3 have the Planning and Zoning Director here, who
4 can confirm this, this block is actually a
5 transitional block, because half of the block
6 in the height map that was created for this
7 district allowed 150 feet in height, and that
8 was the western portion of the block. The
9 eastern portion of this block was sixty feet.
10 That's how this area, way back when, because we
11 started talking about North Ponce or North
12 Ponce Charrettes or anything, that's how this
13 area was planned for.

14 This site actually has a site specific
15 zoning in place today that allows 150 feet in
16 height and allows for residential. Obviously,
17 there's been a change in policy with the
18 creation of the North Ponce District, but those
19 site specific standards date all of the way
20 back to when George Merrick planned this town.

21 So this is a transitional block today, it
22 was a transitional block back then, and the
23 reason is, because it is a block that sits
24 between your most intense commercial areas, on
25 a commercial corridor, that is used to get, you

1 know, to 8th Street and to Douglas Entrance,
2 and that sits between mid rise residential.

3 MR. MCGLASHEN: Two last very quick
4 questions. What happens to the property if
5 this doesn't pass? I just want to know what
6 happens to the property and what happens to
7 Crystal Academy.

8 MR. NAVARRO: So the way that this deal
9 came about was, in 2021, when this property was
10 purchased from the church, this deal has to
11 make a certain amount of financial sense, in
12 order to say we are going to give free space
13 for 99 years, that could have been four
14 live/work units valued at six million bucks.
15 There has to be something.

16 So if this project does not move forward,
17 unfortunately our agreement with Crystal is no
18 longer effective, and I know Mr. Sanabria
19 mentioned it, this property was owned by
20 Century. It was sold. And no one needs to
21 honor this commitment, but Fifield has come in
22 and said, we are going to honor it. They've
23 been to that school. They know what this
24 school means. And I think anybody that has
25 been in that school understands how important

1 it is. They made the commitment and decided to
2 keep it. But, unfortunately, if this project
3 doesn't move forward, Crystal's future is not
4 bright.

5 MR. MCGLASHEN: So then who would own the
6 property, though, just so I'm clear?

7 MR. NAVARRO: So there would probably have
8 to be a change in the plan, and that change
9 would be to not have Crystal as part of this
10 project, and, you know, I don't think anybody
11 really wants to see that. But what could
12 happen? It remains undeveloped, you know, gets
13 sold again, new proposal comes in.

14 Either way, I think we could all agree,
15 whether you're in favor or against this
16 project, that if this property did not have a
17 school or a church in 2016 when the Charrette
18 was created, at a minimum, bare minimum, this
19 property would be MF2. What would that allow?
20 100 units an acre and 100 feet in height.

21 What does this project propose instead? 93
22 feet in height, that transitions to 83 feet in
23 height, and 125 units an acres, plus the
24 preservation of Crystal Academy for 99 years,
25 in a brand new facility, with new classrooms,

1 new art rooms, new therapeutic rooms, and a
2 brand new outdoor recreational area. So we
3 can't say, oh, we're going from Special Use to
4 MX2.

5 If the whole area of North Ponce was
6 planned for 100 units an acre, 100 feet in
7 height, that's where we start.

8 MR. MCGLASHEN: Okay. And just a last
9 question, why does the building have to be nine
10 feet as opposed to eight --

11 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Floors.

12 MR. MCGLASHEN: Nine stories.

13 MR. NAVARRO: Stories.

14 MR. ALVAREZ: Right. I heard, feet.

15 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: I heard nine feet, as
16 well.

17 MR. MCGLASHEN: I said, feet? Wow.

18 MR. NAVARRO: The request for the PAD, and
19 I know you've had a long night, I'm going to
20 try to say this quickly just to address it, it
21 is nine stories, but it is within an
22 eight-story building envelope, and I know we
23 have some very -- you know, very knowledgeable
24 architects on this Board, but what we have done
25 is, we have taken nine stories, and put it into

1 an eight-story envelope. That is what the PAD
2 designation that we're requesting for this
3 property allows us to do.

4 You're allowed eight stories within 97 feet
5 in height. We are asking for nine stories
6 within 93 feet in height, and what that allows
7 us to do is, the massing, it allows us to
8 reduce it, and it allows us to create these
9 wide sidewalks that we've worked with City
10 Staff on for quite some time.

11 MR. MCGLASHEN: Okay. Well, I want to
12 thank all of the residents for being here
13 tonight. Thank you so much. I want to thank
14 the applicant. They made an amazing
15 presentation.

16 I think this is tough decision, one way or
17 the other. I want to hear the rest of my
18 colleagues talk about it before I make a
19 decision, but I can see both sides. But thank
20 you all very much.

21 MR. NAVARRO: No, and thank you so much.

22 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Felix, do you want --

23 MR. BEHAR: Age before beauty. You said
24 you were historic.

25 MR. PARDO: Okay.

1 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Public comment is closed.

2 MR. ALVAREZ: Only surviving person.

3 MR. PARDO: It is better distinguished than
4 extinguished.

5 So the point is that we're talking about
6 this proposed zoning like if that's what's
7 existing on the site, because it's not, and
8 Mr. Sanabria made excellent points. It becomes
9 a point of what becomes realistic for the
10 redevelopment of this property.

11 There are points of contention. One of the
12 areas there, it was said that if it would just
13 be flipped to another corner, this open space,
14 which is inside of a building, that would work
15 better.

16 The four things tonight is that we're
17 taking, again, now not just zoning, but we're
18 taking about the Master Plan and throwing it
19 out of the window. The Master Plan has limits,
20 and the limits that the Master Plan has goes
21 back mathematically to what the levels of
22 service allows for those particular uses.

23 When you look at that as a small scale
24 amendment, it's because we're in an urban area,
25 and that's why it's called the small scale

1 amendment, based on just the area, the size,
2 but it is a huge impact.

3 The second thing is that zoning, again, is
4 going from Special Use to something other.
5 This is not MX2. Right now, it's "S," and
6 everything you get one foot above "S" is more
7 than what you're allowed today.

8 The third point is that the funny part
9 about it is, just from a point -- historical
10 point of reference, the reason the PAD was
11 created was because of the Douglas Center. The
12 Douglas Center, which was a historic building,
13 was going to be torn down, and a group of
14 architects purchased it, and they made it their
15 home for many, many years, and then they
16 developed the rest of it, to be able to
17 compensate for the make-up of what was there.
18 So the Planned Area Development was designed,
19 the PAD, as a tool to be able to have a special
20 significant neighborhood public benefit, and in
21 that case, was saving a historic building.
22 There is no special neighborhood public benefit
23 here.

24 Finally, the mixed-use site plan review,
25 going beyond the limits where now we could have

1 an 18-inch setback, compared to whatever the
2 minimum setbacks are today. I think that we
3 have reached a point in this City that, at the
4 end of the day, we've gone from what I consider
5 urban planning, to hostile development, and I
6 think we've reached that point in many parts of
7 the City, and for me, as an architect, it
8 depends on development. There are certain
9 limits. I think that this project could be
10 reduced in height, in volume, size, and still
11 keep Crystal Academy there as a tenant, but I
12 think that being an economist, Mr. Sanabria
13 said it right the first time, that particular
14 use is two percent of the total square footage
15 of this project, and that's not even
16 considering a 300 and some odd square feet or
17 300 and some odd parking spaces there, in an
18 area where none of those right-of-ways are
19 going to grow, and you have incredible examples
20 when you go down south of Segovia, where new
21 developments are popping up, and the streets
22 are becoming not wider, they're becoming
23 narrower.

24 What use are wide sidewalks when you can't
25 get people in cars, because that's the way we

1 travel here, from Point A to Point B? That's
2 all I have to say.

3 MR. BEHAR: Mr. Chair, before you go --

4 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

5 MR. BEHAR: This is too important. I know
6 I said I had a hard stop at 9:30. I think we
7 should extend it a little bit more, because I
8 think we're getting to the end.

9 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: I'm in favor of that.

10 MR. BEHAR: I want to be part of the vote.
11 So I'll make another motion to extend another
12 thirty minutes.

13 MR. PARDO: Sure.

14 MR. BEHAR: Okay.

15 MR. PARDO: So moved.

16 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: All in favor.

17 (All Board Members voted aye.)

18 MR. ALVAREZ: Can we take a two-minute
19 bathroom break?

20 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Half a minute.

21 MR. ALVAREZ: Half a minute. All right, so
22 off the record?

23 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Off the record, yeah.

24 (Short recess taken.)

25 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: All right. Back on.

1 Iggy -- Ignacio, sorry.

2 MR. ALVAREZ: Mr. Chair, I have a couple of
3 questions.

4 First of all, Gonzalo was talking about
5 eight inches. Wasn't the recommendation of the
6 Gables that that was going to change? I read
7 that based on the recommendations that you
8 wanted more --

9 MS. GARCIA: Yes, we do. So currently they
10 have an arcade, and the arcade I believe is
11 eight inches from the sidewalk in certain
12 locations, and that's where the eight inches is
13 coming from. Staff is recommending to remove
14 the arcade and have a front yard of ten feet,
15 that's consistent with the Conservation Overlay
16 District. So you have a frontage that's
17 consistent with the area around it, and that
18 would be increased, obviously, to a more
19 landscaped area as part of the condition of --

20 MR. ALVAREZ: So that would be our
21 recommendation if we do pass this, that we
22 incorporate your recommendations, as well?

23 MS. GARCIA: That's for the Board, but,
24 yes, Staff is recommending that we do remove
25 those arcades, so that we have a front yard

1 or --

2 MR. ALVAREZ: Okay. This burial site keeps
3 on coming up. Is this a cemetery or --

4 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: There's no public
5 comments. Public comments are closed.

6 MR. NAVARRO: Unfortunately, I know very
7 much of this. No, I just want to answer the
8 question. No, this site was alleged to be a
9 cemetery four years ago. The State of Florida
10 came and certified it is not a cemetery.

11 MS. BOLTON: It is definitely --

12 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Ma'am, please. Thank
13 you.

14 MR. ALVAREZ: I know Robert said, we can't
15 ask this question today, but what's going to
16 happen with these trees and with this garden?
17 You're talking about trees that were a hundred
18 years old and gardens. What's going to happen
19 with all of that?

20 MR. NAVARRO: So I'd be happy to answer
21 that. So the City arborist, Deena Bell, has
22 been out to the property. It is
23 well-documented, there is -- from five years
24 ago, when the Garden of Our Lord designation
25 process began, there are no historical,

1 Biblical trees in that garden today, and five
2 years ago, there were none. There is a large
3 specimen oak on the property, and we have
4 Michael McCoy here, our tree expert, which --
5 and I know it may not be part of these
6 proceedings, we have committed to relocate to
7 the outdoor plaza that sits right on the
8 intersection of Phoenetia and East Ponce.

9 There is also another large tree, on the
10 northwest corner of this property, that we have
11 carved the building back in order to preserve.
12 So there are two trees on site that we
13 preserving. The trees that Ms. Bonnie is
14 referring to do not exist on the property.

15 MS. BOLTON: I have proof to the contrary.

16 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Ma'am, please.

17 MR. ALVAREZ: Okay. A lot of my questions
18 were asked and answered already by my prior
19 colleagues, but I want to be honest, I'm also
20 torn on this decision, for two reasons.

21 One, my office is on Almeria and Ponce, a
22 block from 8th Street. I've been told that
23 Shoma Construction Company is going to build a
24 huge complex between 37 and Ponce, on 8th
25 Street. There's going to be another huge

1 residential complex going on 747 Ponce, maybe,
2 707 Ponce.

3 MR. PARDO: 760 --

4 MR. ALVAREZ: 760 Ponce.

5 MR. BEHAR: But it's not a huge
6 development.

7 MR. ALVAREZ: But it's going to be another
8 development, a couple of hundred more cars. I
9 can't get on 8th Street now.

10 I'm sorry? Okay. I can't get on 8th
11 Street now, so traffic is a major concern for
12 me, versus the autism school, Crystal. There's
13 not enough schools of autism in Dade County.
14 Even though my four-month-old is perfectly
15 healthy, I have a lot of friends with autistic
16 kids, and but for -- they work 80 hours a week
17 to be able to pay their care. There's no
18 services out there for autistic kids. So I'm
19 torn between Crystal and I can't get on 8th
20 Street now, imagine all of these three projects
21 now jumping out, and you can't drive on 8th
22 Street. That's where I'm torn right now.

23 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

24 MR. BEHAR: Thank you.

25 Jennifer, or -- can we put up the Zoning

1 Map again, please? And while you do that,
2 because I want to make -- I want to see a
3 correction, based on one of Maria Cruz's
4 comment that only the taller buildings, the
5 height is west of Ponce de Leon, and I think
6 that was incorrect -- or it is incorrect,
7 because you're allowed and it was proven that
8 the zoning on both sides of Ponce de Leon
9 allows for up -- 150 feet, up to 290 feet six
10 inches with the Mediterranean bonuses.

11 So can you put up that map a second,
12 because I think that height is definitely
13 permitted on both sides of Ponce?

14 MR. PARDO: Robert, do you mean the present
15 zoning or the Comp Plan?

16 MR. BEHAR: Both -- both. Both.

17 MR. PARDO: Okay.

18 MR. BEHAR: And, then, because once we pull
19 that up, I want to do the -- address the
20 compatibility of the area.

21 Go to the other map that you had, you had
22 side by side, where it was the existing and the
23 comp -- and the proposed.

24 And, then, also, I don't know -- and I'm
25 going to ask the applicant to show me or

1 somebody where exactly is the location of the
2 Garden of the Lord, you know, when it comes to
3 the site, the specific exact location of that.

4 MR. PARDO: Robert, it's on the northwest
5 corner. The northwest corner. North is up.

6 MR. BEHAR: Okay.

7 MS. GARCIA: This one?

8 MR. BEHAR: Where are the glasses? There
9 was another one that -- maybe it was the
10 applicant who put it up.

11 I mean, we can use that, because the -- you
12 can zoom that, because that shows that, to the
13 east of the site, all around the site, at a
14 minimum, you have the MF2 zoning, which allows
15 100 feet and 100 units per acre. Is that right
16 or not? Everything around the property, to the
17 east, is MF2; is that right?

18 MS. GARCIA: Yes. Everything around there
19 is MF2.

20 MR. BEHAR: And that currently allows 100
21 feet and 100 units per acre?

22 MS. GARCIA: For large properties that are
23 20,000 square feet or more, yes.

24 MR. BEHAR: Okay. So it's not like what is
25 there now -- the zoning that only allows one

1 and two stories. There are one and two-story
2 structures, but the zoning currently allows up
3 to 100 feet.

4 MS. GARCIA: Correct.

5 MR. PARDO: If you meet the square footage.

6 MS. GARCIA: Criteria -- right.

7 MR. BEHAR: But when you have 1.7 acres,
8 you're going to meet -- when you have 60
9 something thousand square feet, you're going to
10 exceed it by three times.

11 MR. PARDO: Right.

12 MR. BEHAR: Okay. So compatibility, it's
13 clearly demonstrated that it is comorable and
14 compatible to the immediate surrounding
15 properties. No question about it.

16 If we go one block to the south, there's
17 already an existing -- which I was looking at
18 my phone, on Google Earth, seven-story
19 building, is it not -- or eight-story building
20 to the south?

21 MS. GARCIA: Yes.

22 MR. BEHAR: To the east, immediately
23 adjacent to the property, you have what appears
24 to be twelve to fourteen-story buildings.

25 MR. PARDO: On Ponce.

1 MR. BEHAR: On East Ponce. East Ponce, as
2 you go, because there is two buildings already
3 on -- just immediately to the northeast, that
4 are far higher than this property.

5 MS. GARCIA: Mr. Behar, would you like for
6 me to pull up the PowerPoint that I had with
7 the massing?

8 MR. BEHAR: Yes, please.

9 MS. GARCIA: Okay.

10 MR. BEHAR: While you do that, the reason
11 that this property, in my opinion, was not --
12 like Mr. Navarro stated, it was not made or
13 rezoned back then in 2015, 2016, to the MF2,
14 because it had a school, had a church, but this
15 is one property that would be consistent.

16 And on this exhibit, as you go north on
17 East Ponce, at the end you have a building that
18 is like twelve stories, that one.

19 MS. GARCIA: Yes, the 911 East Ponce.

20 MR. BEHAR: Okay. Then, to the south of
21 that one, you have another structure.

22 MS. GARCIA: Seven or eight stories, yes.

23 MR. BEHAR: When you show that green to the
24 block on Santillane and East Ponce, there's
25 building, that's coming, which I believe is ten

1 stories --

2 MS. GARCIA: Yes.

3 MR. BEHAR: -- approved, ready to start
4 construction.

5 MR. ALVAREZ: Where at?

6 MR. BEHAR: The building -- Jennifer, where
7 is --

8 MS. GARCIA: Right there. Right here.

9 MR. BEHAR: Right there. You see that
10 green area there? There's a building that's
11 starting construction there that is ten-story.

12 MR. PARDO: And they just closed off East
13 Ponce on Ponce. That intersection there, if
14 you're going south, you can't cross over.

15 MR. ALVAREZ: He's right.

16 MR. BEHAR: I mean, that's something else.
17 That's a different --

18 MR. PARDO: Which makes it worse.

19 MR. BEHAR: That's different, but those are
20 the projects that are ready. So to be -- the
21 compatibility on this is there already. It's
22 not like they're introducing something new.

23 You have -- on this project, you have an
24 eight-story component at 83 feet and a
25 nine-story at 93, which is far -- you know, not

1 far less, but it's a little less than what
2 you're allowed to have.

3 If I would have been doing -- and this is
4 not, you know, against the architect. He's a
5 very good architect. I would have probably
6 started placing that green space more -- or
7 that park more in an area to try to preserve
8 those trees. Maybe the planning would have
9 been a little bit different, but, you know, six
10 of one, half dozen of the other.

11 I would have also -- your park -- can you
12 go to the Site Plan or the ground floor plan?

13 MS. GARCIA: Yes.

14 MR. BEHAR: And this is something that
15 maybe could be looked at and do it as it goes
16 through the process. Maybe that park, instead
17 of running north and south, you go east and
18 west. So give the Woman's Club a little bit
19 more openness, without -- can we please hold
20 on? Okay.

21 So maybe that's a possibility, just rotate
22 the park. Doesn't lose any density, any square
23 footage or anything. It's just a matter -- it
24 will be good if you could show that ground
25 floor plan. And I think that could be, in my

1 opinion, a good compromise.

2 MR. PARDO: There you could see the trees.

3 MR. BEHAR: If you see there -- and if I --
4 where you have -- I wish I had the PowerPoint.
5 On the top, what is on the north side of that
6 ramp? That's the ramp to go up to the garage,
7 correct? What is on that side of the ramp, the
8 FP&L vault?

9 MR. CORDOVES: The FP&L vault.

10 MR. BEHAR: Okay. And what happens --
11 because if you were to change it a little bit,
12 and you put the park on the north side, going
13 east and west, I think it's going to serve the
14 same thing, because you're going to have the
15 school that you could open and it could relieve
16 a little, you know, more openness to the
17 Woman's Club.

18 MR. PARDO: With the mature trees.

19 MR. CORDOVES: Honestly, it's a great idea.
20 We started that way, exactly that way, exactly
21 how you're describing, but what happened,
22 Robert, was that the width of the parking
23 rendered us a very thin sliver between the
24 liner units on the south and the parking
25 itself.

1 MR. BEHAR: Can you go up to the upper
2 floors?

3 MR. CORDOVES: When we turned it around, we
4 wanted to make sure that we had liners on both
5 sides. So if I kept the liners toward the
6 Women's Club, which was really important, when
7 I turned them, we had a very, very thin sliver
8 on the south, but that's how I originally
9 wanted to plan it out, but it's --

10 MR. BEHAR: Albert, I think that, you know,
11 it's --

12 MR. CORDOVES: We could review.

13 MR. BEHAR: You could look at it. I think
14 -- I would think it would be more appropriate
15 to give that setback to the Woman's Club than
16 the way it is today. Obviously, I want to make
17 that sure that the project works, you know, is
18 functional.

19 MR. CORDOVES: I appreciate your thoughts.

20 MR. BEHAR: I am not one -- you know, one
21 bit against the project. I think it's going to
22 be good. There's a lot of things.

23 One of the comments that one of the
24 speakers made about the location of the
25 interior courtyard, is that courtyard really

1 accessible to the public?

2 MR. CORDOVES: It is, and we also have it
3 on covenant that it's accessible to the public.
4 That's why we created the north-south paseo, to
5 be able to -- it is not a small paseo. It's a
6 pretty wide paseo.

7 MR. BEHAR: I think, Albert -- I mean, it
8 may be, but for me as a public to access that
9 through the paseo, is not -- is not calling to
10 me and says, you know, welcome, and that's --
11 you know, it could be there for the public, but
12 it doesn't appear to be that's the case.

13 And, you know, I think that if you did a
14 couple of those -- if you tried to implement a
15 couple of these minor, I don't think they're
16 major, you know, solutions, I think it would
17 be -- everybody would be happier, particularly
18 when it comes to the green space, to the park.

19 MR. PARDO: And if the parking were
20 oriented instead of north-south, east-west, you
21 take the 5,000 square foot and then simply make
22 it a little further or larger on the southwest
23 corner, then, all of a sudden, you've got your
24 liner. You took the 5,000 square feet.

25 MR. BEHAR: Not the southwest corner,

1 because the southwest corner -- it would be --
2 you're saying the northwest corner?

3 MR. PARDO: I meant the northwest corner.

4 MR. BEHAR: But I think the northeast
5 corner -- I like what he's doing on -- putting
6 the --

7 MR. PARDO: On the northeast corner.

8 MR. BEHAR: -- on the northeast corner,
9 because I don't want to lose the liner units.

10 MR. PARDO: No, no, without a doubt. But
11 what I'm saying is that the 5,000 square foot
12 of the open space, which is really inside,
13 accessible only through the paseo, then would
14 become irrelevant, because would it be moved to
15 the northeast corner, it would be much better
16 and you preserve --

17 MR. BEHAR: I just want you to look at it,
18 study it.

19 MR. CORDOVES: I appreciate the comments
20 and we'll absolute do. We've been working
21 almost five years on this project, on and off,
22 and if there's something that we can do
23 internalized, that does not --

24 MR. BEHAR: What's another thirty days.

25 MR. CORDOVES: Exactly. That's where I was

1 going, that we'll be happy to look at it and
2 study it, and if there's a possibility, why
3 not? It's not going to affect the exterior at
4 all.

5 MR. BEHAR: Before -- you know, because I'm
6 prepared to make a motion, can we, on the
7 zoning, both sides of -- east side of Ponce de
8 Leon, you're allowed to go up to 190 feet,
9 right?

10 MS. GARCIA: On Ponce de Leon?

11 MR. BEHAR: On Ponce de Leon.

12 MS. GARCIA: Yes. Between 8 Street pretty
13 much and CBD.

14 MR. BEHAR: Because I just want to make
15 sure for the record that -- because I
16 understood Maria Cruz's comments to say that
17 it's only on the west side of Ponce, but, in
18 fact, it's on both sides?

19 MS. GARCIA: Yeah.

20 MR. BEHAR: Okay. I have no more
21 questions. Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Thank you.

23 And I just -- I have a few comments and
24 questions.

25 One of the speakers made a comment that

1 they live in the neighborhood and parking is an
2 issue. In regards to the staff, and I think
3 this is a question for the applicant -- in
4 regards to the staff and the faculty for
5 Crystal Academy, is there parking within the
6 building?

7 MR. NAVARRO: Yes, there is. Yeah, we've
8 accommodated a dedicated pick up and drop off
9 area and we also have dedicated parking for
10 Crystal within the garage.

11 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Got it.

12 MR. PARDO: For the employees?

13 MR. NAVARRO: For the employees, yeah, and
14 staff.

15 One thing I'd like to mention is, we've
16 also been working with the neighborhood. I
17 know we talked about parallel parking and all
18 sorts of things. We've been working with Staff
19 to also preserve the spaces on East Ponce that
20 are used by both, the Woman's Club and some of
21 the area residents.

22 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: I know a couple of the
23 residents and some of my colleagues mentioned
24 compatibly. I think Ms. Bravo did an
25 incredible job. I, myself, work at 999 Ponce,

1 and right behind my building, I guess, going
2 east, there's a development going in. I don't
3 know any of the details of that development,
4 but it's a monster project. I mean, the land
5 has just been completely wiped out.

6 So it's more than compatible. I think you
7 have buildings that are just as tall, if not
8 taller. One of the questions I had is, someone
9 mentioned that their public space and the green
10 space -- is the green space that's there now
11 open to the public at all, at any point?

12 MR. NAVARRO: No. It is private. It's not
13 accessible.

14 MR. PARDO: But it can be. But it easily
15 could be.

16 MR. ALVAREZ: You're talking now.

17 MR. NAVARRO: But, yes, and we're going to
18 look into that, yes.

19 MR. PARDO: If you reconsider.

20 MR. NAVARRO: Yeah.

21 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: And, then, the only last
22 question I had, because you hear Garden of the
23 Lord, and this is something that, I guess, I
24 heard when I was campaigning four or five years
25 ago, there's nothing historic about that

1 property, correct? It has been fully deemed
2 non-historic? That's not something --

3 MR. NAVARRO: No.

4 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Because you heard about
5 the historical neighborhood, so on and so
6 forth.

7 MR. NAVARRO: And I know that's been a
8 concern, and it's been a big topic of
9 conversation. It has gone through every review
10 board that the City has, and it has gone to
11 court, and has exhausted all of the appellate
12 remedies and that issue is concluded.

13 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yeah. And just by way of
14 reference, not that this has to do with this
15 today, I had the pleasure of visiting Crystal
16 Academy in 2021, and what they're doing there
17 is absolutely incredible. I mean --

18 MR. NAVARRO: It truly is special.

19 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: I think someone said it,
20 it's worth visiting, because it leaves you
21 floored.

22 So I have no further comments, in the
23 interest of time. I'm in favor of this, and
24 accepting as the Staff recommended.

25 MR. BEHAR: I'll make a motion to approve,

1 with Staff recommendation, conditions, and with
2 my suggestion. I'm not going to make it a
3 condition, but very close, okay, that you look
4 at turning that green space along east and
5 west, versus north and south, on the northeast
6 corner.

7 MR. PARDO: Robert, wouldn't it be
8 better -- pardon me. Wouldn't it be better to
9 ask for a deferral, or, rather, recommend a
10 deferral now -- recommend a deferral to be able
11 to get this, because, remember, there are four
12 conditions? One is the Comp Plan, one is the
13 zoning, they have the PAD and the PAD carries
14 the site plan approval. So if they change the
15 site plan, it would be --

16 MR. BEHAR: But it's a minor -- it's a
17 minor modification, if they do. It's not a
18 substantial modification.

19 MR. PARDO: Well, I would just feel more
20 comfortable seeing, because it would be --

21 MR. BEHAR: I'm sure the applicant could,
22 you know, confirm, but you're on a time, that
23 you need to go to Commission?

24 MR. NAVARRO: Yeah. I mean, this project
25 is critical for the school. Also we have been

1 five years working on this project. It has
2 been a long time coming. We, as you could see,
3 have been very open to working, to make changes
4 to this project. That's something that we will
5 strongly consider. You know, we will try to
6 make it work, if it's feasible, definitely, I
7 think, in terms --

8 MR. BEHAR: I'm really -- I hate to do it,
9 but I think it may become a condition, okay,
10 that you turn that. And if you do, if you
11 commit to do it, and I think you can, you know,
12 you've got my full support on it.

13 MR. CORDOVES: We will definitely start
14 studying ASAP, and what I would love to do is
15 share the studies with the Planning Department,
16 so that they can see how it's being developed.
17 It's all interior. I agree. It should be a
18 minor, but we need to see it --

19 MR. BEHAR: This is the 4,000 square foot
20 area green space that you have a portion of it
21 already going to the corner. It's really -- at
22 the end of the day, it's moving -- from what I
23 saw, moving your vault to one side and
24 relocating it, you know, and put the school --
25 which I think the school could front the park

1 completely also.

2 MR. CORDOVES: I'd be more than happy to
3 study that, Robert.

4 MR. ALVAREZ: So what is the motion?

5 MR. PARDO: I would say, a deferral to --

6 MS. SUAREZ: Mr. Chair, there are four
7 items, so there would be -- we would need four
8 separate motions, and, remember, the first one
9 is on the land use.

10 MR. BEHAR: Okay. So I'll make a motion to
11 approve the land use.

12 MS. SUAREZ: To recommend approval.

13 MR. BEHAR: Approval, with Staff
14 recommendation.

15 MS. BRAVO: I second the motion.

16 MR. PARDO: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, I just
17 need to understand this, because we're going
18 down a slippery slope here. One is the Master
19 Plan. Then it's a zoning. And then what do
20 you do with the --

21 MR. BEHAR: Well, right now it's the
22 zoning.

23 MR. PARDO: No. No, but I need to
24 understand what the game is.

25 MR. BEHAR: Then we put a condition.

1 MR. PARDO: Which is?

2 MR. BEHAR: To turn the park.

3 MR. PARDO; To incorporate --

4 MR. BEHAR: To incorporate the comment.

5 MR. PARDO -- the Garden of the --

6 MR. BEHAR: Yeah. I mean, that's where we
7 could put on the condition, not on this one.

8 MR. ALVAREZ: On which one?

9 MS. SUAREZ: On the third and fourth items,
10 on the PAD and on the site plan.

11 MR. BEHAR: Correct.

12 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: But let me ask you a
13 question, Robert. And if they're unable to do
14 so, is that condition --

15 MR. BEHAR: The what?

16 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: If they're unable to do
17 that -- I'm an attorney, so I don't know.

18 MS. BRAVO: Or is it delegated to Staff to
19 work with them and maximize that approval?

20 MR. PARDO: And, then, obviously it should
21 come back to this Board, to see --

22 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: That's my concern, making
23 it a condition. I'd rather make it a
24 recommendation.

25 MR. BEHAR: Okay.

1 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: That's my biggest concern
2 on making it a condition.

3 MS. BRAVO: For them to work with the City
4 Staff.

5 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Correct. I definitely
6 think we should implement it in the motion,
7 just not make it a condition.

8 MR. ALVAREZ: We're not there yet.

9 MR. BEHAR: We're not there yet.

10 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: You're right.

11 MR. ALVAREZ: We're still on the zoning.
12 We have a motion for zoning. I want to add an
13 amendment to it.

14 MS. SUAREZ: Sorry, it's for the first
15 item, which is the land use change.

16 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: That's correct. We have
17 a first and a second.

18 MR. BEHAR: Friendly amendment?

19 MR. ALVAREZ: Friendly amendment. I have a
20 major concern with traffic. I can't get on 8th
21 Street now. We have to do some type of traffic
22 study to figure out how to fix that mess on 8th
23 Street, especially if we're going to have three
24 major projects -- now, a fourth one. I didn't
25 know about the one just north, that you just

1 mentioned, but that's four projects.

2 If you can't gets on 8th Street now, Coral
3 Gables needs to do a traffic study to address
4 that problem.

5 MS. BRAVO: And I don't want to speak for
6 Staff, but they did do a traffic study.

7 MR. ALVAREZ: No, they said they didn't.

8 MR. PARDO: No, they said that they were
9 not required to.

10 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: No, they did.

11 MS. BRAVO: No, they talked about a
12 different project, and maybe we could -- and
13 8th Street is a State road, so there's much
14 more to it than --

15 MS. GARCIA: There's a traffic study that
16 was completed for this proposed project. I
17 think what they were saying is that there
18 wasn't an update when they changed a unit or
19 two. There wasn't an update that was required.

20 MR. PARDO: No, I heard that they didn't
21 meet the threshold.

22 MR. ALVAREZ: Right.

23 MS. GARCIA: For Ponce --

24 MS. BRAVO: That was for a different
25 project.

1 MR. PARDO: That's what they testified.

2 MS. BRAVO: That's a different project.

3 MR. SANABRIA: Mr. Chairman --

4 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Hold on. Let's just hear
5 from them first.

6 MS. MENENDEZ: So there was a traffic
7 impact study. It was conducted in 2022. They
8 recently had submitted a revised trip
9 generation letter, when they revised their site
10 plan and their development plan, and it was
11 still found that they were under the trips --
12 they actually had less trips than what was
13 proposed in the original traffic impact study,
14 because they took out an office space.

15 What I would do as a recommendation would
16 be, the new developments that come in have to
17 do -- you know, go through the process of --
18 which is, first, they submit a trip generation
19 letter to us, and if they've got fifty or more
20 peak hour trips, they have -- a change in peak
21 hour trips, then they have to do the traffic
22 impact study. My personal or professional
23 opinion, I don't think it's the best idea to
24 have them redo their study, and, then, if it
25 gets delayed, then they're going to have to

1 redo it every time a new development comes in.
2 It probably should be the next development that
3 comes in that has to incorporate this one into
4 their study, yeah.

5 MS. BRAVO: Their background trips.

6 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yeah, let's try to --

7 MR. BEHAR: We've only got five minutes.

8 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Let's do five minutes?

9 MR. BEHAR: Fifteen minutes.

10 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Fifteen minutes. Can I
11 get a motion?

12 MR. BEHAR: I'll make a motion to go to
13 10:15.

14 MR. ALVAREZ: I Second.

15 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: All in favor?

16 (Board Members voted aye.)

17 MR. SANABRIA: Mr. Chairman --

18 MR. ALVAREZ: Wait. I'm not done yet.

19 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: He's not done.

20 MR. ALVAREZ: These projects have already
21 been approved. The Shoma project has been
22 approved, seven whatever --

23 MR. BEHAR: No, the Shoma project did not
24 come through the City. That's a Live Local
25 project. So we don't even get a bite at that

1 apple. The one that has been approved, one in
2 East Ponce, that was approved like five, six
3 years ago. Now is when it's starts
4 construction.

5 The one on 760 Ponce got approved last
6 year, yeah.

7 MR. ALVAREZ: So that concept is not going
8 to work.

9 MS. MENENDEZ: It's just, if you keep doing
10 that every time a new development comes up,
11 they're going to have to redo their study, is
12 my thought process.

13 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yeah.

14 MS. MENENDEZ: So they'll never finish,
15 because more developments come up.

16 MS. BRAVO: The norm is, for future
17 projects to take this project into account as
18 an existing condition and the background trips
19 that they're starting with.

20 MS. MENENDEZ: Yes.

21 MR. SANABRIA: Mr. Chairman?

22 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yes.

23 MR. SANABRIA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 So we haven't heard from opposing counsel.
25 I would like to have opposing counsel come up

1 and say some statements, as well, since the
2 applicant has basically taken up most, if not
3 all of the time.

4 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: I think we have a motion.
5 Gonzalo, I think we have a motion -- what's the
6 protocol for that, City Attorney?

7 MS. SUAREZ: So I haven't heard a second.
8 I don't know if there's been a second.

9 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yes, there is a second.

10 MS. SUAREZ: Oh, there is a motion and
11 second. Yeah, so we should --

12 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Jill, can I get --

13 THE SECRETARY: Alice Bravo?

14 MS. BRAVO: Yes.

15 THE SECRETARY: Shane McGlashen?

16 MR. MCGLASHEN: Yes.

17 THE SECRETARY: Felix Pardo?

18 MR. PARDO: No.

19 THE SECRETARY: Gonzalo Sanabria?

20 MR. SANABRIA: Yes.

21 THE SECRETARY: Ignacio Alvarez?

22 MR. ALVAREZ: No.

23 THE SECRETARY: Robert Behar?

24 MR. BEHAR: Yes.

25 THE SECRETARY: Alex Bucelo?

1 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yes.

2 MR. BEHAR: I'll make a motion, Item E-2,
3 for approval, with Staff recommendations.

4 MR. ALVAREZ: Which one is E-2?

5 MS. SUAREZ: E-2 is the zoning change.

6 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: The zoning change.

7 MR. ALVAREZ: What did we vote on, wasn't
8 it the zoning change?

9 MR. SANABRIA: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, one
10 moment please. Mr. Chairman, hold on one
11 moment.

12 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yes.

13 MR. SANABRIA: What did we just vote on?

14 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Land use.

15 MR. SANABRIA: All right. MY vote is, no.
16 I want to retrace my vote to no.

17 MS. SUAREZ: What is the count?

18 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Okay. We have a motion.
19 Do we have a second?

20 MS. BRAVO: Second.

21 THE SECRETARY: No.

22 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Jill -- I'll give you a
23 second.

24 MS. SUAREZ: On E-2, there is a motion and
25 a second.

1 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: And a second.

2 THE SECRETARY: I'm sorry, for E-2?

3 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: For E-2. A motion to
4 approve with Staff --

5 THE SECRETARY: Motion by, I'm sorry?

6 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: By Behar, second by Ms.
7 Bravo.

8 MR. BEHAR: Can I --

9 MR. ALVAREZ: No, it's okay. Just do it.

10 MR. BEHAR: We should have started with 3
11 and 4, because that's what -- in the site plan,
12 we could put a condition.

13 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: I thought we were --

14 MR. ALVAREZ: Robert, let's just finish.

15 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yeah, let's just go. If
16 you can call the roll, Jill, please.

17 MR. SANABRIA: But what are we calling the
18 roll on, please? What is the motion?

19 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: The zoning.

20 MR. SANABRIA: Which one?

21 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Zoning.

22 THE SECRETARY: E-2.

23 MS. SUAREZ: So it's Item E-2, and there's
24 a motion to approve, with Staff's
25 recommendations, and it's the zoning change

1 from Special Use to Mixed-Use 2, and also to
2 include within the boundaries of the North
3 Ponce Mixed-Use District Overlay.

4 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Call the roll.

5 THE SECRETARY: Shane McGlashen?

6 MR. MCGLASHEN: Yes.

7 THE SECRETARY: Felix Pardo?

8 MR. PARDO: No.

9 THE SECRETARY: Gonzalo Sanabria?

10 MR. SANABRIA: No.

11 THE SECRETARY: Ignacio Alvarez?

12 MR. ALVAREZ: Yes.

13 THE SECRETARY: Robert Behar?

14 MR. BEHAR: Yes.

15 THE SECRETARY: Alice Bravo?

16 MS. BRAVO: Yes.

17 THE SECRETARY: Alex Bucelo?

18 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yes.

19 MR. BEHAR: Make a motion to approve E-3
20 and this is where we're going to go on a
21 condition, not a recommendation. On a
22 condition that -- and I want to make sure the
23 applicant -- can the applicant come up? If we
24 put a condition, will you accept the condition?

25 MR. PARDO: And, Robert, it's basically

1 what Mr. Sanabria was asking counsel to come up
2 for that purpose.

3 MR. BEHAR: Okay. Well, do you accept the
4 condition that you will rotate that park, for
5 lack of a better -- the green space, going east
6 and west versus north and south?

7 MR. NAVARRO: So we do not have an
8 objection to that. We commit -- we --

9 MR. BEHAR: Okay. You're going to accept
10 the condition.

11 MR. NAVARRO: We will accept the condition.

12 MR. BEHAR: I'll make a motion to do the
13 site plan to change the orientation of the
14 green space to go east and west so I get a
15 better green space in front of the Woman's
16 Club.

17 MR. PARDO: Preserving as much as possible
18 of the Garden of the Lord.

19 MR. BEHAR: Preserving as much as possible,
20 but -- okay.

21 MR. ALVAREZ: I second that.

22 MR. BEHAR: Okay. We have a motion and a
23 second.

24 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Jill --

25 MS. SUAREZ: Mr. Chairman, my apologies. I

1 just want -- so my understanding is that the
2 condition is that the site plan be changed in
3 the way you described?

4 MR. BEHAR: Correct.

5 MS. SUAREZ: Not studied for the change,
6 but changed?

7 MR. BEHAR: Correct. Change it, including
8 Staff recommendations.

9 MR. PARDO: Mr. Chairman.

10 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yeah.

11 MR. PARDO: -- if you will, Mr. Sanabria
12 asked to see if the opposing counsel, as he
13 described would --

14 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: They're not a party,
15 right?

16 MR. PARDO: -- Mr. Winker would come up.
17 The reason I think it's important is because of
18 the contentious component of this whole
19 application, just, you know, to make sure,
20 because I heard someone say we would love to
21 have that happen. I think it would be a
22 positive thing.

23 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: I guess, let's hear from
24 the City Attorney.

25 MS. SUAREZ: So it's up to the Chair, if

1 you'd like to hear from them.

2 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: If they can keep it
3 brief, because we've extended --

4 MR. BEHAR: If you keep it --

5 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yeah, if they can keep it
6 extremely brief, I have no problem.

7 MR. WINKER: Yes, thank you so much.
8 Thanks for all of your hard work on this. I
9 really appreciate everyone trying to get to a
10 solution.

11 I mean, to me, I would prefer to a deferral
12 and have it brought back as a form thing, but
13 it sounds like that we're going to do it with a
14 condition. I guess, legally I struggle with
15 even how that's going to work, if they don't --
16 if they're not able to get there.

17 MR. BEHAR: They will have to get there.
18 They're going to have to get there. They're
19 going to have to rotate that same square
20 footage and go east and west.

21 MR. PARDO: The question is, if they get
22 there.

23 MR. BEHAR: If it gets there, you're okay
24 with that?

25 MR. WINKER: Yes, please.

1 MR. BEHAR: Okay. Call the roll.

2 MR. PARDO: That's all we wanted to hear.

3 MR. WINKER: Okay.

4 MR. BEHAR: Call the roll.

5 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Call the roll.

6 THE SECRETARY: Felix Pardo?

7 MR. PARDO: Yes.

8 THE SECRETARY: Gonzalo Sanabria?

9 MR. SANABRIA: What is the motion?

10 MR. PARDO: To have them redirect --

11 MS. SUAREZ: Let me restate, as I

12 understand the motion.

13 MR. PARDO: Sure.

14 MS. SUAREZ: It's a motion to recommend to
15 the City Commission that this request for the
16 PAD be approved with the conditions that Staff
17 has recommended and with Staff recommendations,
18 including that the site plan be changed, as has
19 been described here, to change the orientation
20 of the park, et cetera.

21 MR. BEHAR: Correct, but it's a condition
22 to change the orientation.

23 MR. NAVARRO: So it would be to basically
24 rotate the park.

25 MR. BEHAR: That's it. That's it.

1 MR. PARDO: Rotate and extending green area
2 that you can into that area.

3 MR. BEHAR: That's the condition.

4 MR. NAVARRO: We're okay with that
5 condition.

6 MS. GARCIA: Could we clarify how that will
7 be reviewed? It will go to the City Architect,
8 the same as the setback, and the removal of the
9 arcade?

10 MR. NAVARRO: Yes, we can add it to --

11 MR. BEHAR: All that stays. All of that
12 conditions stays.

13 MR. PARDO: Staff recommendations.

14 MR. BEHAR: All we're doing is, the park,
15 going like this. That's it.

16 MS. GARCIA: Right.

17 MR. NAVARRO: So to the Planning Director's
18 point, could we add to the condition that we
19 already have that Staff recommended to remove
20 the arcade along Antilla --

21 MR. BEHAR: Yes.

22 MR. NAVARRO: Perfect, with the same
23 approval --

24 MR. BEHAR: Yes.

25 MR. NAVARRO: -- process that's provided

1 for that.

2 MR. ALVAREZ: Quick question. How do the
3 kids get to the park?

4 MR. BEHAR: The same way. The school is
5 fronting the park. They're going to front the
6 same way.

7 MR. PARDO: We're just going to expand it.

8 MR. ALVAREZ: Okay.

9 MR. NAVARRO: We'll figure it out. I trust
10 Mr. Behar.

11 MR. BEHAR: I have no --

12 MR. NAVARRO: If he says we can do it, it
13 can be done.

14 MR. PARDO: You're going to expand it along
15 the Phoenetia Avenue side, where the existing
16 garden is --

17 MR. CORDOVES: Instead of north-south, east
18 west.

19 MR. PARDO: Correct.

20 THE SECRETARY: I have Mr. Pardo, yes.
21 Gonzalo Sanabria?

22 MR. SANABRIA: Instead of voting on this
23 motion, I would like to have, at this point, a
24 reconsideration of the previous motions in
25 terms of a deferment, so at this time I'm

1 forced to say that I'm voting against this, as
2 well. No.

3 THE SECRETARY: Ignacio Alvarez?

4 MR. ALVAREZ: Yes.

5 THE SECRETARY: Robert Behar?

6 MR. BEHAR: Yes.

7 THE SECRETARY: Alice Bravo?

8 MS. BRAVO: Yes.

9 THE SECRETARY: Shane McGlashen?

10 MR. MCGLASHEN: Yes.

11 THE SECRETARY: Alex Bucelo?

12 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yes.

13 MR. BEHAR: Okay. E-4.

14 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: You're on a roll, so keep
15 it going.

16 MR. BEHAR: I'm going to make a motion to
17 approve with all of the conditions that we have
18 in place, you know, on E-3.

19 MR. PARDO: The Staff recommendations.

20 MR. BEHAR: Yes.

21 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Do we have a second?

22 MR. ALVAREZ: Second.

23 THE SECRETARY: Gonzalo Sanabria?

24 MR. SANABRIA: What is the motion?

25 MS. SUAREZ: It's a motion -- this is on

1 E-4. It's a motion to approve -- to recommend
2 to City Commission approval of the mixed-use
3 site plan and encroachment agreement, as well
4 as permitting the current accessory school as a
5 principal use, including Staff's recommended
6 conditions and the same condition that was
7 included in the prior motion, which is to
8 rotate the park.

9 MR. BEHAR: Correct.

10 MR. SANABRIA: No.

11 THE SECRETARY: Ignacio Alvarez?

12 MR. ALVAREZ: Yes.

13 THE SECRETARY: Robert Behar?

14 MR. BEHAR: Yes.

15 THE SECRETARY: Alice Bravo?

16 MS. BRAVO: Yes.

17 THE SECRETARY: Shane McGlashen?

18 MR. MCGLASHEN: Yes.

19 THE SECRETARY: Felix Pardo?

20 MR. PARDO: Yes.

21 THE SECRETARY: Alex Bucelo?

22 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yes.

23 THE SECRETARY: Six-one.

24 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Okay.

25 MR. ALVAREZ: Motion to adjourn.

1 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Motion to adjourn.

2 (Simultaneous speaking.)

3 MR. SANABRIA: Mr. Chairman?

4 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Yes.

5 MR. SANABRIA: I'd like to make a motion to
6 reconsider the approval of the previous items,
7 in the sense of being deferred to the next
8 meeting, so we can further fine tune the
9 language that we just approved, and I believe
10 some of my colleagues did feel sympathetic to
11 that, so I'd like to make a motion to
12 reconsider and defer.

13 MR. ALVAREZ: I thought we just had a
14 motion to adjourn and seconded it.

15 CHAIRMAN BUCELO: Okay. Then let's call
16 the roll on the motion to -- or all in favor?

17 (Board Members voted aye.)

18 MR. SANABRIA: The motion is deferred. All
19 motions are deferred, okay.

20 (Thereupon, the meeting was concluded at
21 10:10 p.m.)

22

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24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

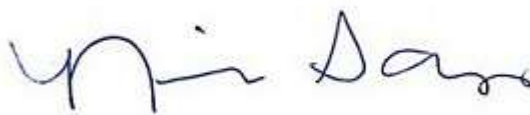
STATE OF FLORIDA:

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 24th day of June, 2026.



NIEVES SANCHEZ