

December 13th, 2023

Elbi Aizenstat
Javier Salman
Wayne Withers
Julio Grabiell
Robert Behar
Sue Kawalerski
Felix Pardo

Re: Ponce Park Residences MX3 Zoning Meeting.

Dear Members of the Planning and Zoning Board:

I write this letter to you today in opposition to the forthcoming Allen Morris Company (hereinafter “Allen Morris”) proposal for an upzoning of the Ponce Park Residences, from an MX1 designation to an MX3 designation. As will be described in greater detail below, if this proposal were to be adopted by your body, it would have a chilling effect that not only goes against the desires of the City residents, but also sets a precedent for future developments and upzoning to occur in nearby areas like the Crafts Section (hereinafter the “Crafts”).

As a bit of background, Allen Morris’ push for the upzoning of the 2800 block of Ponce de Leon Boulevard goes as far back as 2021. As part of its proposed upzoning, Allen Morris seeks to increase its proposed Ponce Park Residences from a structure that cannot surpass six stories and a 77 foot height limit (with Mediterranean designation), to an MX3 designation with a 16 story, 190.5 foot height limit. Back in 2021, when Allen Morris first proposed this measure, the City’s staff recommended denial for reasons which are still present and relevant today.

In a staff report sent to this body in 2021, Ramon Trias, the former Assistant Director of Development for Planning for the City, expressed various concerns about Allen Morris’ proposal. The first concern shared by Mr. Trias in his report was that an “increase of building bulk, mass, height, and size conflicts with the character of the neighborhood and the city.” Another concern shared in the report was that the “use of possible development square feet of the proposed street vacation has the potential to set a precedent for future development to propose similar requests that may adversely affect the use of other properties.” Finally, the report expressed concerns that “the request to construct a larger building that what is allowed within the private parcels is not compatible with the allowed development of adjacent buildings and structures.”

These are the very same concerns that citizens of the surrounding areas, like the Crafts, have long shared and expressed with members of this body (albeit in different composition), as well as with the City Commission. These developments do not fit the nature and character of the surrounding areas. Yet, time and time again, this body (again, via different composition) along with the City Commission has ignored those residents' concerns and pushed forward projects and developments that make zero sense in the neighborhoods they occupy (i.e.: The Plaza). It is now incumbent upon this body to listen to and follow the concerns of the residents it serves, and nix this Allen Morris proposal, once and for all.

Regards,

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