

CITY OF CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA
NOTICE OF BOARD OF ARCHITECT
SPECIAL MASTER HEARING

Applicant: Sergey Kotelnikov

Application: Appeal of Board of Architect's
Decision

Property: 6901 Trionfo Street, Coral
Gables, Florida 33146

Special Master June 4, 2025 at 3:00 p.m.
Hearing
Date/Time:

Location City of Coral Gables Development
Services Building 427 Biltmore
Way - Fairchild Tropical Board
Room (1st Floor Board Room)
Coral Gables, Florida 33134

This above-entitled cause came on for
hearing before Special Master JOSE GELABERT-NAVIA,
reported by Elsy M. Altuve, FPR, Stenographic
Reporter, Notary Public in and for the State of
Florida at Large.

1 APPEARANCES:

2 ON BEHALF OF THE APPLICANT:

3 SERGEY N. KOTELNIKOV, ESQUIRE
4 Three Brickell City Centre
5 98 Southeast 7th Street
6 Miami, Florida 33156

7 BUCK REILLY, ARCHITECT
8 ADAM & EVE ARCHITECTURE & GARDEN
9 7442 Southwest 48th Street
10 Miami, Florida 33155

11 ON BEHALF OF THE CITY OF CORAL GABLES:

12 CITY OF CORAL GABLES
13 405 Biltmore Way
14 Coral Gables, Florida 33134
15 BY: Gustavo J. Ceballos, Esquire

16 Also Present:

17 Juan Riesco, City Architect
18 Juliette Borges, Intern for Attorney Ceballos
19
20
21
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1 (Following proceedings had:)

2 THE STENOGRAPHER: May I have
3 appearances, please, for the record?

4 MR. RIESCO: Juan Riesco, City
5 Architect.

6 THE SPECIAL MASTER: Jose
7 Gelabert-Navia -- that's G-E-L-A-B-E-R-T,
8 dash, N-A-V-I-A, and Special Master.

9 MR. CEBALLOS: Gustavo Ceballos,
10 Assistant City Attorney.

11 MS. BORGES: Juliette Borges, intern for
12 City Attorney.

13 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Sergey Kotelnikov,
14 Appellant, property owner.

15 MR. REILLY: And Buck Reilly, Architect.

16 * * * * *

17 MR. CEBALLOS: Do you want me to give
18 the introduction?

19 THE SPECIAL MASTER: Go ahead and do
20 your thing. I'll do the history.

21 MR. CEBALLOS: We're here for a Special
22 Master Hearing and appeal of the Board of
23 Architects.

24 For purposes of the meeting, Deputy,
25 what we'll do is the City Architect will go

1 first and provide a procedural history of
2 how we got to this point. Typically will
3 speak as to why it was denied and whether
4 they agree with it or not.

5 I believe we had a conflict resolution
6 meeting but that did not resolve in any sort
7 of a resolution, so we are here today.

8 And then after that, you'll be given an
9 opportunity to make your case to the Special
10 Master, and at that moment he can ask
11 questions of you or of the City Architect
12 and then make a determination.

13 MR. RIESCO: So this project was applied
14 for July 12th of 2024.

15 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Reapplied more
16 recently.

17 MR. RIESCO: Yeah. No. I'm going to
18 give you everything.

19 And then it was reviewed by our staff on
20 July 19th and it was disapproved with the
21 stipulation that the full-glass garage door
22 was not appropriate for the style of the
23 home, and the recommendation was made at
24 that moment to just allow the glass along
25 the top of the garage door. And,

1 apparently, the applicant did not agree with
2 that, so it went to the BOA. On August 8th
3 it was reviewed by a panel and they approved
4 it, as noted, with the glass on the top of
5 the door.

6 So that was the condition of the
7 approval. The applicant went away, and then
8 at some point they came back and in December
9 10th of 2024 with an application that was
10 considered an after-the-fact.

11 Does that mean that you installed the
12 door?

13 MR. KOTELNIKOV: No.

14 MR. RIESCO: Is that correct?

15 MR. KOTELNIKOV: No, we did not install
16 the door.

17 MR. RIESCO: You did not install the
18 door?

19 MR. KOTELNIKOV: I don't recall December
20 10th.

21 What happened is on September 10th -- I
22 believe in September, we had a conflict
23 resolution meeting. Gus advised at the time
24 that we could not proceed with the
25 resolution because the application was

1 rejected in part and, therefore, appeal was
2 not appropriate. So it was advised that we
3 reapply again.

4 It took time to process that, and at
5 some point in April, I believe, we reapplied
6 with the same original -- more or less the
7 same original design. And then...

8 I'm sorry, Mr. Riesco, I believe the
9 rest is --

10 MR. RIESCO: Okay. Again, that's what I
11 have in my history in our computer. Then
12 was it reviewed by staff again on February
13 19th, and it was disapproved and it was
14 recommended to go back to BOA. It went back
15 to BOA April 3rd, 2025 of this year and it
16 was rejected by staff, another two-man
17 panel.

18 So that's the history that I have in
19 our system verbatim.

20 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Okay.

21 MR. RIESCO: If you have something
22 different than that, then I'll be happy to
23 hear your side of it.

24 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Sure, sure.

25 MR. RIESCO: But this is what we have in

1 our records in our computer system with all
2 the dates and the reviews and the
3 dispositions. I have, again, dispositions
4 from the panels, I have the log-ins of all
5 the submittals, and that's kind of what I
6 have historically. And these are the
7 documents that are part of the record that
8 was submitted.

9 So this is what you submitted in
10 January, this is what was submitted back in
11 June. This is the original submittal.

12 MR. KOTELNIKOV: M-hm.

13 MR. RIESCO: And this is the revised
14 submittal that was given to us at the
15 beginning of this year. So that's where we
16 are.

17 Any questions for me? Any issues?

18 Do you have any questions for me, Jose?

19 THE SPECIAL MASTER: No, no.

20 So where are we at? In the sense of you
21 submitted and you got --

22 MR. RIESCO: This is the initial
23 submittal.

24 THE SPECIAL MASTER: And you got a
25 compromise option --

1 MR. RIESCO: Correct.

2 THE SPECIAL MASTER: -- which was to put
3 the glass on the top.

4 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Just one out of the
5 three panels.

6 THE SPECIAL MASTER: Yeah.

7 MR. KOTELNIKOV: I need all three
8 panels.

9 MR. RIESCO: No, no, no, no, no. No.
10 The comment was along the top of the door,
11 means that you would get three windows --

12 MR. KOTELNIKOV: That's what I'm saying.
13 And I need the --

14 MR. RIESCO: Not the whole door.

15 MR. KOTELNIKOV: I need the whole door.
16 That's what --

17 MR. RIESCO: Right. Yeah.

18 MR. KOTELNIKOV: -- I'm requesting.

19 MR. RIESCO: You're requesting the whole
20 door, which we don't feel is appropriate
21 based on the style --

22 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Understood.

23 MR. RIESCO: -- or for the neighborhood.
24 So that's why we're here.

25 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Yup.

1 MR. RIESCO: Now, has the door been
2 installed, yes or no?

3 MR. KOTELNIKOV: No.

4 MR. RIESCO: So currently, as it stands
5 today, the door --

6 MR. KOTELNIKOV: No.

7 MR. REILLY: No work has been done.

8 MR. RIESCO: Okay. Very good.

9 THE SPECIAL MASTER: Again, my role -- I
10 used to serve on the Board of Architects.
11 And, again, my role here now -- and this is
12 my last day -- is that -- to review these
13 things to see whether there's a disagreement
14 on what the Board of Architects has or
15 different opinion to what the Board of
16 Architects approved.

17 The thing is, honestly, I have to agree
18 with them. Because if the house was modern
19 and the whole thing was contemporary, which
20 like we were discussing before, we don't
21 have too many of those --

22 MR. CEBALLOS: Not trying to interrupt
23 but before you make any further decision or
24 deliberation, I would recommend that you
25 listen to the Applicant, have them make

1 their --

2 THE SPECIAL MASTER: I asked them.

3 MR. CEBALLOS: Oh, okay.

4 THE SPECIAL MASTER: I asked if you
5 had...

6 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Oh, yeah. We prepared
7 a statement for you to hear.

8 THE SPECIAL MASTER: Oh, no, no. I'm
9 sorry. I thought you were --

10 MR. KOTELNIKOV: We've prepared a
11 statement.

12 THE SPECIAL MASTER: Go ahead, please.

13 MR. KOTELNIKOV: I'm going to
14 ask Mr. Reilly to go first and I, also, have
15 a separate statement --

16 THE SPECIAL MASTER: Okay.

17 MR. KOTELNIKOV: -- at the end.

18 THE SPECIAL MASTER: No, no. I'm sorry,
19 I thought you were saying that you had
20 nothing else to say.

21 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Oh, no.

22 MR. REILLY: We did -- I did, also,
23 submit a traditional Board of Architects
24 submittal that shows facades of the
25 neighboring houses, pictures of all that,

1 the houses. I didn't see that last time I
2 presented to the Board of Architects in the
3 packages that they had.

4 So I did print those out and I'll submit
5 those for the record. They'll be helpful to
6 refer to, rather than just the plans --

7 MR. RIESCO: And let me -- let me help
8 you with that.

9 What happens is, in February of this
10 year we transitioned from paper to fully
11 digital.

12 MR. REILLY: Understood.

13 MR. RIESCO: And now the submittals that
14 are fully digital have to incorporate
15 photographs, surveys, has to be one PDF.
16 What's happening is, in the transition, a
17 lot of people don't understand, or don't see
18 that, or haven't read that requirement, and
19 so they submit multiple PDFs, and we're
20 only -- because of the capacity of the iPads
21 that we have, we only have the one PDF per
22 project, because there's 30 or 40 projects
23 every week.

24 So what you need to do in the future is
25 combine all of these ancillary documents,

1 the surveys, into one PDF --

2 (Simultaneous speakers.)

3 MR. RIESCO: Your plans, photographs,
4 surveys, landscape, whatever compiles the
5 presentation has to be in one PDF. So
6 that's what's happening.

7 MR. REILLY: Understood.

8 MR. RIESCO: My guys are only uploading
9 the plans, and then all the additional PDFs
10 just don't get put into the system. So
11 that's probably what happened in your case.
12 I just wanted to clarify that.

13 MR. REILLY: Understood.

14 So the proposed alterations to the
15 garage exterior facade will add two
16 impact-rated windows to the north-facing
17 garage wall and replace the existing stamped
18 aluminum garage door on the west-facing
19 garage wall with an impact-rated, aluminum
20 framed, opaque glass garage door. This will
21 allow natural light into the garage where
22 the clothes washer and drier are located.

23 The 5-foot overhang...

24 So the 5-foot overhang of the roof
25 shades the garage door, and late afternoon

1 sun is blocked by the large live oaks that
2 line the street. The window on the north
3 elevation do not receive direct sunlight.

4 I raise these points to emphasize that
5 the project will provide natural light to
6 the garage without allowing solar heat gain
7 which would make it uncomfortably hot.

8 The new garage door will be consistent
9 with the existing element of the front
10 facade, including the horizontally oriented
11 windows and the structural wood element?

12 The small garage door is 95-inches wide
13 by 80-inches high. The new garage door is
14 composed of four vertically stacked panels
15 divided into two horizontal panes
16 maintaining a traditional residential
17 esthetic, similar to a window with mullions.

18 The aluminum frames will have the
19 woodgrain powder coating to match the
20 existing front door and the ipe wood columns
21 and beams at the front porch.

22 The garage's front doors, laminated
23 glass -- sorry. The garage door's laminated
24 glass will be opaque white.

25 The proposed design is in keeping with

1 the neighboring homes. They were all built
2 in the late 1950s with limited facade
3 ornamentation. Like the adjacent homes is a
4 ranch-style house, this house has Spanish
5 style elements, including red roof tiles,
6 and dark exposed wood at the front porch and
7 roof overhangs.

8 In previous exterior projects at the
9 home, our goal was to use textural material
10 that age well and are seen throughout the
11 neighborhood in Coral Gables and contribute
12 to an authentic sense of place.

13 Those materials are red roof tiles,
14 travertine pavers, while walls oolitic
15 limestone edging, ipe columns, and native
16 plants. the dark-colored metal elements,
17 such as the bolts and structural
18 connections, the gutters, light fixtures,
19 address numbers, and the mailbox, relate to
20 rot iron that is common in Spanish style
21 homes.

22 The existing white-stamped aluminum door
23 is neither a Spanish style nor a ranch-style
24 element, and doesn't relate to the style of
25 the house. The proposed woodgrain and glass

1 garage door, on the other hand, relates to
2 the home's materials and horizontality of
3 the windows and the street facing elevation.

4 This project adds to the home's
5 appropriate contextual style, and we
6 respectfully request your approval.

7 Pending any questions, I'll turn it over
8 to Sergey to talk through his points.

9 THE SPECIAL MASTER: Thank you.

10 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Good afternoon. My
11 name is Sergey Kotelnikov and I am the
12 property owner. Thank you for the
13 opportunity to make this statement in
14 support of my application.

15 As you know the issue in question is
16 whether the decision of the Board of
17 Architects to reject my application to
18 install glass garage doors should be
19 overturned. It should be because BOA's
20 decision is arbitrary, capricious, and not
21 supported by competent substantial evidence.
22 The Board of Architects provided the
23 following rationale for its decision.

24 "Full glass garage door is inappropriate
25 for Spanish style house."

1 Mr. Reilly has just presented his view
2 as an architect as to why the garage door
3 design we proposed is appropriate for the
4 style of my house and provided other
5 relevant considerations.

6 There are also additional grounds to
7 overturning the BOA decision and approving
8 my garage door application. To fully
9 appreciate these grounds, it is important to
10 understand the background behind the
11 application.

12 My wife and I own the house and live
13 there for ten years. We have decided to
14 stay in the home for years to come because
15 we love the people and vibe in our
16 neighborhood. The house was built in 1956.
17 It is not particularly remarkable in its
18 appearance, was not designed by a noted
19 architect, does not otherwise present any
20 special historic architectural interest that
21 would merit special protection of its
22 current appearance. In its overall
23 appearance it's like the hundred of houses
24 in Coral Gables built in the 1950s and
25 1960s.

1 When we purchase this house in 2015, it
2 had not been meaningfully renovated for
3 decades. It looked like many other 1950s
4 homes if they do not receive timely updates
5 and repairs. Since we purchased it, me and
6 my wife have been making substantial
7 investments to gradually renovate the entire
8 house, inside and outside to refresh and
9 modernize its appearance a thoughtful and
10 visually appealing manner.

11 All such renovations were fully
12 permitted; and in my view, most of the
13 house, excluding the garage area, now
14 combines the overall Spanish style
15 architecture with modern design elements
16 such as ipe wood column, large
17 hurricane-resistant windows, modern light
18 fixtures, and others.

19 The garage door is the last portion of
20 the house that remains in its near original
21 image. It is important to note that the
22 garage door in question is very narrow and
23 represents only a fraction of the facade
24 area. One of the key shortcomings of the
25 garage is that in its current state it

1 requires a significant amount of artificial
2 lighting, including during the day so that
3 it can be used for its intended purposes in
4 a safe and comfortable manner.

5 And even if a lot of artificial light is
6 installed, as experience has shown, the area
7 will still not be adequately lit, unless
8 further substantial expense is incurred to
9 add a ceiling bevel below the roof.

10 Additionally, a tall house on the east side
11 of our home makes the only way to bring a
12 meaningful amount of light, natural light
13 inside the garage area is from the west side
14 where the garage door is located.

15 My wife and I are firm believers that
16 houses should utilize as many
17 energy-efficient features as possible. We
18 have made substantial investments throughout
19 this property toward that goal. We believe
20 that the glass door is by far the most
21 energy efficient solution to the garage
22 lighting problem. The amount of natural
23 light it will bring will substantially
24 improve the situation and significantly
25 reduce the need for artificial lighting

1 during the day. We also believe that this
2 tasteful and incremental update to the house
3 facade would continue the process of
4 refreshing its visual appeal while
5 maintaining its overall character and
6 appearance.

7 Now that you have this background, I
8 will turn to the additional grounds for
9 approving my garage door application.

10 First: The Board of Architect's
11 decision failed to take into account the
12 City's clearly stated objective of promoting
13 energy efficient home solutions and the
14 Board's own decisions authorizing
15 alterations to nearby properties that were
16 not consistent with the overall character of
17 the house, but that were apparently approved
18 for their energy efficiency value.

19 Second: In approving glass garage doors
20 in the immediate vicinity of my property and
21 elsewhere in Coral Gables, but rejecting my
22 application, the Board has applied the
23 Design Review Standards in a capricious and
24 arbitrary fashion.

25 Third: In making its decision, the

1 Board failed to consider some of the core
2 purposes of the Design Review Standards,
3 failed to apply them fairly and uniformly
4 relative to its other recent decisions, and
5 failed to take into account the broader
6 harmful effects of its decision.

7 I will now address in greater detail
8 each of those three points.

9 First, the City of Coral Gables has made
10 sustainability and resiliency a top
11 priority. This is a direct quote from the
12 Sustainability section of the City website.
13 The website goes on to say that "this
14 includes identifying and implementing
15 measures to optimize the City's energy
16 emissions."

17 In 2017, the City has passed a
18 resolution supporting the establishment of
19 100 percent clean, renewable energy in the
20 City. The City advertises its many
21 sustainability and energy efficiency
22 accolades and awards from various
23 organizations. The list of City's
24 accomplishments and initiatives in this area
25 is very lengthy and I will not recite them

1 here.

2 I'll submit, for the record, excerpts
3 from the City website supporting these
4 statements.

5 I am identifying now Attachment 1, which
6 I'm going to provide a copy to you.

7 Mr. Riesco, one for you.

8 And one for the Special Master.

9 These are directly from the City website
10 for sustainability.

11 As I mentioned at the outset, energy
12 efficiency and other benefits of natural
13 light are key drivers behind my garage door
14 proposal. Even on its face, without
15 knowledge of any facts beyond those I have
16 already recited, it should be clear that my
17 proposal fits squarely within the four
18 corners of the City's priorities and should
19 be encouraged, not blocked.

20 Further, we have clear evidence that the
21 Board of Architects has recognized this City
22 priority and has authorized departures in
23 the visual profile of properties as a
24 result. I am referring to repeated
25 approvals by the Board of Architects of the

1 solar panels on private residences. At
2 least two homes with solar panels are
3 located within 200 yards of my property on
4 the same or adjacent street.

5 I submit these images for the record.
6 I'm going to identify them as Attachment 2.

7 For you, Special Master.

8 Mr. Riesco.

9 And for the court reporter.

10 As you can see, the solar panels are
11 plainly visible from the outside. They
12 represent significant departure from the
13 house's overall appearance. I, also,
14 located at least one other Spanish-style
15 home in Coral Gables that has solar panels.

16 For the record, the addresses of those
17 properties immediately adjacent to me are
18 1207 South Alhambra Circle and 1200 South
19 Alhambra Circle. Another example included
20 in this package is 1502 Zoreta Avenue.

21 It would be inconsistent for the Board
22 of Architects to approve these departures
23 from the overall character of those houses
24 and the neighborhood, and reject my
25 application where both are motivated by the

1 same desire for energy efficiency and
2 sustainability.

3 Given the small size of my garage and
4 the nature of improvement I'm requesting, it
5 would represent a much more modest departure
6 from the original character of the house
7 than a roof full of solar panels that are
8 visible from the street.

9 In failing to uniformly apply the Design
10 Review Standards to closely related design
11 elements, the Board's rejection of my
12 proposal represents a decision that is
13 arbitrary, capricious, and not supported by
14 competent substantial evidence.

15 Second. As any government organization,
16 the Board of Architects cannot apply law or
17 regulations in an arbitrary or capricious
18 manner. And if it does, its decision must
19 be overturned by the Special Master.

20 In this case, the Board has approved
21 two-glass garage doors in the immediate
22 vicinity of my house; 6901 Mentone and 1010
23 South Alhambra Circle. 1010 South Alhambra
24 Circle, in particular, is a house of similar
25 style where the garage door, in my opinion,

1 possesses far less sidewalk appeal than my
2 proposal.

3 I provide these images for the record.
4 I'm going to identify them as Attachment 3.

5 Special Master.

6 Mr. Riesco.

7 During the conflict resolution meeting
8 with Mr. Riesco, he confirmed that the Board
9 has previously approved a number of glass
10 garage doors, but that subsequently the
11 Board or Mr. Riesco -- I'm not clear which
12 -- had a change of heart.

13 But that is the point, Mr. Riesco --

14 MR. RIESCO: Repeat your statement, I
15 didn't understand what you're saying.

16 MR. KOTELNIKOV: When we had the
17 conflict resolution meeting --

18 MR. RIESCO: Right.

19 MR. KOTELNIKOV: -- we briefly discussed
20 this. You mentioned at the time that, yes,
21 in the past the Board has approved glass
22 garage doors.

23 MR. RIESCO: Correct.

24 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Subsequently, I don't
25 know if it was you or the Board in general

1 decided that's no longer going to happen
2 basically --

3 MR. RIESCO: No, no, that's not a true
4 statement.

5 What I probably said is that the Board
6 has approved garage doors with glass panels
7 but it depends on the style of the home,
8 it's on a case by case basis.

9 Your house has a particular look,
10 particular identity. More modern homes are
11 more susceptible to allow a garage door with
12 glass because of the architectural style.

13 MR. KOTELNIKOV: M-hm.

14 MR. RIESCO: So it's not like we're
15 saying you're not allowed to have glass
16 garage doors, that's not the point here.

17 The point here is that we vet each
18 property independently and individually
19 based on the current existing style, and in
20 your particular home we don't feel it's
21 appropriate based on your style.

22 And, for the record, the two BOA
23 meetings that you've had, have been with
24 four different architects. Two panels with
25 two people, twice. All four have agreed

1 that this particular door that you're
2 proposing is not consistent with that style
3 of home, so I just want to clarify that.

4 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Sure.

5 MR. RIESCO: If I can go on further? I
6 want to rebut some of his other statements.

7 MR. CEBALLOS: I'm not sure --

8 MR. RIESCO: Are you done?

9 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Not yet.

10 MR. RIESCO: I'm sorry. Finish up. I'm
11 sorry. I thought you were done.

12 MR. KOTELNIKOV: No worries.

13 So in any case prior garage doors have
14 been approved. But I think that is the
15 point, the Board cannot simply grant
16 approvals to some residences, be they just
17 like you, well-connected, or wealthy, and
18 resulting in a preferential treatment for
19 some versus others.

20 Unfortunately, this is what's happening
21 in this case. While it's some property
22 owners were allowed to have a glass garage
23 door, my application was rejected. This is
24 the second reason you should overturn the
25 Board's rejection of my application.

1 And then third argument. Third point,
2 and I'm addressing my final point both to
3 Special Master and Mr. Riesco.

4 I sincerely believe that the
5 neighborhood I live in is charming, in the
6 best sense of that word. The houses on the
7 streets all around me emanate a sense of a
8 peaceful place where people truly live their
9 lives, as opposed to a collection of
10 someone's second or third homes visited two
11 or three times a year. Driving or walking
12 through these street fills me with hope that
13 I can continue living in this beautiful
14 relaxing area, despite all of the
15 overdevelopment that goes on in most other
16 areas of Miami.

17 For example, my neighborhood stands in
18 stark contrast to the High Pines area just
19 across the street, where over the past ten
20 years I watched the majority of prior owners
21 sell their properties to commercial
22 developers who have demolished homes similar
23 to mine and instead directed hypermodern,
24 angular, boxy mansions, that while seemingly
25 popular these days, have nothing in common

1 with the authentic charm of my neighborhood.

2 There are hundreds of houses in Coral
3 Gables -- just like mine -- that are built
4 in 1950s and 1960s in the same Spanish
5 style. Together they contribute to the
6 charm that Coral Gables is so proud of.
7 They represent the City's architectural
8 heritage, but there is a serious problem.

9 All of these homes are quickly aging
10 aesthetically and physically. Even if
11 younger families like mine, who want to move
12 into them and want to keep the overall
13 character of the house the same, the cost of
14 doing so is very high and returns diminish
15 over time.

16 And if that is not enough, the Board of
17 Architects has developed a reputation for
18 being overly conservative and restrictive,
19 clamping down on innovative feature as the
20 Board's decision in my case demonstrates.
21 As if a house built in 1950 must always look
22 its age.

23 Let me share with you and for the record
24 one last the set of images for today. I'm
25 going to identify this is Attachment 4.

1 What you see on these images is the
2 property located at 6910 Leonardo Street in
3 Coral Gables just five blocks from my house.
4 The other images are pictures of the homes
5 surrounding that residence. To state the
6 obvious the images show a very modern-style
7 house built around homes similar in
8 appearance to mine.

9 How Coral Gables allowed this boxy
10 modern design to be erected among these
11 other homes is confounding. While very
12 modern and popular, this design has no place
13 in this neighborhood.

14 And I have two observations in this
15 regard. First, I hope the irony does not
16 escape you that a resident like me, who just
17 wants to make a small incremental change to
18 refresh his house's facade has to go through
19 layers of approvals and appeals just to get
20 a shot getting it approved, while someone
21 else in the very same neighborhood gets to
22 build an entire house that is so incongruous
23 with its surroundings.

24 Second, I have to believe that the Board
25 understands that houses like 6910 Leonardo

1 are a symptom of a much bigger problem. The
2 Board's reluctance to allow residents like
3 me to breathe new life into older homes will
4 continue to drive more and more homeowners
5 to sell their properties for the value of
6 the land, thereby inviting more and more
7 house flippers houses to move in and build
8 houses like 6910 Leonardo.

9 A review of the property records for
10 that location indicates that it is owned by
11 a commercial reseller of residential
12 properties.

13 The Board of Architects is here to help
14 Coral Gables to preserve our City's charming
15 architecture and I very much agree with that
16 mission.

17 If the Board wants to fulfill its
18 mission the path to do so is not through
19 stifling homeowners' modest improvement
20 proposals. Instead, the Board should
21 embrace these proposals and use its
22 expertise to help the homeowner tastefully
23 reimagine their homes in the original spirit
24 but with modern features.

25 Section 5.101.A.2 of the Coral Gables

1 Zoning Code states that one of the goals of
2 the Design Review Standards is to, "Promote
3 innovative design with regard to the
4 aesthetics, architectural design,
5 appearances, safety, and function of the
6 built environment in relation to the site,
7 adjacent structure, and surrounding
8 community."

9 The Board needs to act on that and be
10 more willing to reimagine what a
11 Spanish-style house looks like in the 21st
12 century. Make it desirable and competitive
13 again. After all, we do not need highly
14 skilled professional serving on the Board
15 just say to "no" to residents. We
16 absolutely do need them to figure out how to
17 innovate Coral Gables' aesthetics by
18 bringing more and more modern features into
19 these older homes and rejuvenate them,
20 otherwise we will lose them completely.

21 I submit for the record a statement
22 signed by each resident on my street, all of
23 whom share this sentiment and support my
24 proposal. I will read it for the record.

25 This is a copy and I'll read the

1 statement.

2 It's addressed to the City of Coral
3 Gables.

4 Dear Sir/Madam:

5 The undersigned collectively are owners
6 of all the properties located on Trionfo
7 Street. We have reviewed a copy of the
8 enclosed petition by Sergey N. Kotelnikov to
9 the Coral Gables Board of Architects
10 regarding a glass garage door proposed to be
11 installed at 6910 Trionfo Street. This
12 letter is in support of Mr. Kotelnikov's
13 petition.

14 We call on the Board of Architects to
15 approve it and to be receptive to proposals
16 like the one Mr. Kotelnikov has submitted to
17 the Board in general.

18 Virtually every house on our street has
19 been renovated in the past five years.
20 Given that our houses are now 60/70 years
21 old, they will continue to require frequent
22 and substantial renovations to preserve
23 their appearance and marketability.

24 We see little value in making
25 substantial investments in renovations if

1 the Board insists on restricting us from
2 gradually modernizing the appearance of our
3 houses. We welcome the Board's role in
4 helping us reconcile modern design features
5 with overall character of our houses, but an
6 outright prohibition on modern design
7 features will only discourage and reduce
8 further investments in our properties.

9 In sum, we support Mr. Kotelnikov's
10 proposal and share his goal for the Board to
11 adopt a more progressive vision for the
12 design of our homes.

13 I will give you a copy.

14 MR. RIESCO: Who drafted that letter?

15 MR. KOTELNIKOV: I drafted it and
16 everybody read it and signed it.

17 MR. RIESCO: Okay.

18 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Special Master and
19 Mr. Riesco, Mr. Reilly and I gave you many
20 reasons for reversing the Board's rejection
21 of the garage door proposal. It is well
22 designed with our City standards in mind.
23 Its perceived departure, if any, from
24 Spanish style home aesthetics is justified
25 by sustainability advantages that our City

1 strongly promotes. Glass garage doors have
2 already been approved for nearby properties.
3 My proposal, and others like it, aligns well
4 with the purposes of the Design Review
5 Standards and as a part of a solution to
6 preserve the City's charming but aging
7 residences.

8 I respectfully request that you approve
9 my proposal. Thank you.

10 MR. RIESCO: Can I --

11 THE SPECIAL MASTER: Yeah, yeah.

12 MR. RIESCO: I want to address a couple
13 of comments that you made.

14 You mentioned heavily the sustainability
15 issue and the fact that our Board and our
16 City is pro sustainability and we try to
17 encourage that as much as possible.

18 And as you know, architects, and even
19 owners there's multiple ways of achieving
20 sustainability. Now, you're making a
21 correlation between solar panels and windows
22 on a house, and to me those are two
23 different functions. One is an energy
24 source creator, which is the solar panel, in
25 lieu of power by Florida Power & Light.

1 MR. KOTELNIKOV: M-hm.

2 MR. RIESCO: And the other is a window
3 that's used for the purposes of viewing or
4 for bringing in daylight like you mentioned.

5 So you have the ability and the option,
6 and you've already addressed it yourself by
7 the intent of what you're trying to do.
8 You're adding windows on the side yard to
9 increase daylight into the garage, which I
10 think it merits a lot accolade that your
11 trying to bring daylight into a house.

12 I'm not sure what the purpose of that
13 daylight into a garage is, the purpose for
14 it; because, traditionally, the garage is a
15 storage of a vehicle. It's not a family
16 room, it's not a living be space, it's not a
17 people space. It's a product that's
18 designed for storage, whether it's car
19 storage, paper storage, bicycles, whatever.

20 So my rebuttal to that comment would be
21 you're already adding two windows, why not
22 just add a third window and get the daylight
23 into the garage? And, by the way, as your
24 architect probably know, this is a northern
25 exposure of the house and the best daylight

1 is north exposure. It's very subtle light,
2 it's very consistent light versus the west
3 exposure. The west exposure only happens,
4 theoretically, from 2:00 o'clock till
5 6:00 o'clock when the sun goes down.

6 So if the concept is natural daylighting
7 into the garage, I think you're in the wrong
8 place. Let me just put that for the record.
9 You get better and more even distribution
10 lighting on the north side.

11 So the other point I want to make an
12 issue about, is that you are saying that
13 this is atrocious or this is not something
14 that you --

15 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Not --

16 MR. RIESCO: -- egregious --

17 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Not atrocious.

18 MR. RIESCO: Well, you said something, I
19 forget --

20 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Incongruous.

21 MR. RIESCO: -- what the word is.

22 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Incongruous.

23 MR. RIESCO: Incongruous with the
24 neighborhood.

25 This is what we call a transitional

1 house, and that is what this Board does.
2 This Board, you mentioned earlier, also,
3 that the Board is very conservative and
4 doesn't allow for the modern language.

5 This is a modern language. That's why
6 these things get approved. Now, are these
7 good? In my opinion, no. But it's
8 something that the Board experiments with on
9 a weekly basis. They do allow architects to
10 come with modern language, with different
11 ideas, with transitional elements. So to
12 say that my Board doesn't allow for that is
13 a misstatement, and I just want -- again, I
14 want to make -- put that on the record that
15 that's not true.

16 And I think that was -- those are my
17 points. I don't know I don't have if you
18 have anything.

19 MR. KOTELNIKOV: May I respond?

20 MR. RIESCO: Absolutely.

21 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Okay. So first, I
22 think the distinction -- the point about the
23 panels versus the glass garage --

24 MR. RIESCO: Yes.

25 MR. KOTELNIKOV: -- and how that relates

1 to sustainability.

2 My point there is both are inherently
3 driven by desire to save energy. Some save
4 energy by new energy, others bringing more
5 light, and also both are inherently
6 inconsistent with older architecture.

7 No house built in 1950s, 1960s will
8 match well with solar panels; right? I
9 think it's --

10 I hope, Mr. Riesco, that you would agree
11 with me that it is a departure but it is a
12 justified departure given the benefits of
13 sustainability.

14 All I'm trying to say is this design
15 feature is driven by the same motivations
16 and deserves the same treatment. To say
17 that, Hey, look, we appreciate that it is a
18 departure a little bit from the character of
19 the house but it has real benefits to the
20 house from the sustainability perspective,
21 and our City supports it and we're willing
22 to make an exception in the interest of that
23 support. So that's Point Number 1.

24 Point Number 2, yes, we are bringing
25 windows on the side, as you pointed out.

1 And you also raise the question, Why do you
2 need more light? I'll explain that as well.

3 But going back to the windows. Yes, we
4 are adding two windows. And I've been in
5 that house for a long time, it will bring
6 incremental amount of light, but it will not
7 bring, as Mr. Riesco believes, meaningful
8 amount of light.

9 THE SPECIAL MASTER: Are we using this
10 as a garage or a family room?

11 MR. KOTELNIKOV: As a garage.

12 But that garage -- I'll explain one
13 second the third point Mr. Riesco raised.

14 The garage houses, as Mr. Reilly pointed
15 out the washing machine, the drier, it
16 houses a lot of tools. I have little kids.
17 And the garage has a very -- I don't know
18 how to explain. It doesn't have a real
19 ceiling --

20 (Simultaneous speakers.)

21 MR. RIESCO: Exposed. Exposed --

22 MR. KOTELNIKOV: So it's extremely --

23 DEFENSE COUNSEL: =

24 MR. RIESCO: Like most garages.

25 MR. KOTELNIKOV: So it's extremely dark.

1 So, yes, it has light. But the level of
2 light in there but it's -- I don't know what
3 the right word is -- but it's dingy. The
4 lighting situation there is bad.

5 Yes, the windows will incrementally
6 help; but by far, that garage door will make
7 the biggest impact. So that's my sort of
8 response to Mr. Riesco.

9 MR. REILLY: Sergey, can I add to that
10 point?

11 So the north facing windows -- north
12 light is the best light you can have, no
13 direct sun, it's great. That is only one
14 wall.

15 The other wall, it's the wall that's
16 shared with the house so you're not going to
17 have windows there. The rear and -- there's
18 electrical panels, there's air-conditioning,
19 there's the washing machine, so there are
20 reasons why those are not appropriate spaces
21 to add windows.

22 This west facing garage door, it is
23 almost like a north facing because of the
24 5-foot overhang of the porch area and all of
25 the live oaks that are on the street. If

1 you drive down that street -- it's right by
2 Sunset Elementary -- it's striking that
3 neighborhood, how many live oaks they have.
4 The tree canopy they have, so the light that
5 they have there, it's not -- you know, it's
6 not blinding light there.

7 So even when -- in the late afternoons
8 when sun is coming through there, you're
9 getting dappled sunlight. It will actually
10 be very, very nice quality of light on the
11 west side.

12 MR. CEBALLOS: Real briefly, just to
13 kind of bring in the conversation.

14 You probably know this, but for the
15 record, you are not bound by the decision of
16 the Board of Architects. This is a hearing.
17 You are to apply City Code and the City
18 Architectural Standards, and whether you
19 believe that this application, as presented,
20 meets it or does not meet it. You are not
21 in any way bound previous approval by the
22 Board of Architects or any of the decisions
23 or comments made Board of Architects in this
24 particular project.

25 MR. KOTELNIKOV: And may I -- just one

1 final point you made.

2 MR. RIESCO: M-hm.

3 MR. KOTELNIKOV: And, Mr. Riesco, I did
4 not mean to misrepresent the Board's
5 position on the modern features. I mean,
6 you point out that you did approve that
7 house.

8 I think my point there is if the Board
9 finds it appropriate to put in a house that
10 modern among the houses of more classical
11 style like mine, I don't understand why it's
12 so inconsistent with the Board's overall
13 approach to architecture to allow an
14 incremental change to a portion of the
15 house.

16 To me, the visual impact of 6910
17 Leonardo on the neighborhood is far greater,
18 is far less harmonious than a small
19 incremental garage door that has so many
20 benefits to my family.

21 THE SPECIAL MASTER: Okay. A couple of
22 things.

23 First of all, I appreciate your effort
24 in preparing for this. As we were
25 discussing before, I'm married to an

1 attorney, so I appreciate what attorneys do.
2 And, again, I am very much appreciative. I
3 think you have presented your case. I don't
4 agree with half of what you're saying, but
5 you have taken the time to put all the
6 things together and I appreciate that.

7 Sometimes in the time that I've sat
8 here, there are people who come and
9 basically they pitch a fit, they tell me
10 that they know the mayor, I'm their best
11 bud, just so that I should know that as
12 though that may -- actually that happened to
13 me, counterproductive.

14 But so I appreciate that and I
15 appreciate the tone in which you presented,
16 because I believe that these things should
17 always be done in -- as much as we can in a
18 civil way.

19 But, first, let me just try to explain
20 the way I see it. I used to sit on the
21 Board of Architects twice, and I lived in
22 this community now for over 40 years. I
23 used to live in a house just like yours.

24 And you probably know this or your
25 architect knows this, most of the houses in

1 Coral Gables were either built between 1921
2 and 1923, or were built between 1951 and
3 1954.

4 The 20s reflected the boom years and it
5 was, you know, Spanish houses because that's
6 what was selling in Palm Beach and that's
7 what it became. In the 50s, frankly, it was
8 mostly people -- a lot of people returning
9 from the war, people who are buying a modest
10 house. These, more than Spanish houses, I
11 would they're ranch houses.

12 Now, a lot of them even had, you know,
13 the flat tile, like this; which, in a way,
14 have nothing Spanish in them. You put some
15 red tile on them and you can say --

16 MR. KOTELNIKOV: This is not my house.

17 THE SPECIAL MASTER: No, no, no, but
18 they look --

19 (Simultaneous speakers.)

20 MR. RIESCO: He's saying in general.

21 THE SPECIAL MASTER: But it's not a
22 Spanish neighborhood.

23 So, basically, what we're looking are
24 houses which -- again, I lived in them, 518
25 Perugia. Modest houses with no pretensions,

1 like you say. They were -- you know, when I
2 lived in it we also had a young family, and
3 it was wonderful to live there. I also
4 lived -- Perugia was also a quiet street,
5 which, again, at least one block away from
6 LeJeune. So all those things are true.

7 Now, the two main points that I disagree
8 with you on, first, look my firm -- and we
9 don't do residential work, mostly we do
10 institutional work. We're probably the most
11 resilient firm, certainly in the state and
12 possibly in the country. So I do know about
13 resiliency.

14 Frankly, in here -- that's why I asked
15 if this was a garage and the garage with
16 washing machines. If you said this was the
17 living room, this was something it could
18 different. But, mainly, what we're talking
19 about, if this is going to be a garage,
20 there's going to be a car behind and then
21 there's going to be washing machines on the
22 side.

23 I think the reason the Board
24 recommended, and I happen to agree with
25 them, is a compromise between the two things

1 of having lighting but also being
2 consistent. And if -- you know, if you look
3 at your own neighbors, solid door, solid
4 door, solid door. The transparent door is
5 not something that within your neighborhood
6 is what is being done.

7 Frankly, I hate garage doors. To me,
8 the best solution to garage doors is
9 something that disappears. Really, like
10 what you have. However, I understand the
11 issue, whatever, you want the light.

12 I think -- and, again, frankly, the time
13 I sat on this board is to sort of reach some
14 compromise. Because, obviously, you feel
15 passionately about this thing, I'm sure your
16 wife feels passionately about this thing,
17 and I'm trying to, again, sort of mediate
18 between sometimes decisions that do seem
19 maybe that I disagree with and something
20 that can be done that can accommodate both
21 sides.

22 I, frankly, feel that if you have the
23 top light in there and if you had the lights
24 on the other side, you can accomplish the
25 lighting situation and you wouldn't see the

1 cars from the street.

2 Now --

3 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Sir, are you under the
4 impression that you would see the vehicle
5 inside?

6 MR. REILLY: It's an opaque glass.

7 THE SPECIAL MASTER: But --

8 MR. KOTELNIKOV: There's no car.

9 THE SPECIAL MASTER: But the other part
10 is this -- and that has to do with what the
11 Board of Architects does and why there is a
12 Board of Architects. I think if I had a
13 legal case and I had to appeal the legal
14 case, I would peal to judges that are
15 lawyers. I wouldn't say, as an argument
16 from my end, I think you are not qualified,
17 as an attorney, because I feel this way.

18 And, you know, we all study different
19 things. He studied architecture, you
20 studied law. The reason it's called a Board
21 of Architects is because they're architects.
22 And, at least when I served on the Board,
23 the primary charge, I always felt, was, How
24 do we have something that, again, maintains
25 a certain consistency and quality in the

1 neighborhood?

2 If you want something daring done in
3 architecture, you're not going to do it in
4 Coral Gables. In Coral Gables, sometimes I
5 used to criticize it because I felt that the
6 Board was legislating mediocrity because if
7 you just put -- you know, everything stayed
8 more of the same.

9 However, when the economy came crashing
10 down in 2009, the only part of Miami that
11 survived that, in which the values did not
12 plunge, was Coral Gables. The reason people
13 keep on moving here is because of the
14 values. You go to Coconut Grove and you
15 have what you were saying, I'm living in a
16 nice house. I feel good in this
17 neighborhood, and then they do give me the
18 three-story box that maximize the price next
19 to it and I have something horrible next to
20 it because there is not Board that reviews
21 it. So they -- and that's what I try to do
22 before, is maintain a certain quality there.

23 Now, the reason I quit the Board then is
24 because I felt, You've hired an architect.
25 I didn't get this job. So why should I be

1 designing it for you? and I felt at one
2 point that some of my colleagues were
3 designing it for everybody and I did not
4 like that. And I said, Look, you know what?
5 You either hire me as an architect and I sit
6 on the other side -- but I'm not going to
7 design it from this end of the table.

8 And so the only thing here, in the
9 modest sort of way is, I know it's not
10 exactly far are from what you're looking
11 for, but I think the horizontal addresses
12 the issue.

13 Now, as to the role of the architects;
14 when you say that it's arbitrary, I can tell
15 you, at least from -- you know, first of
16 all, unlike the law, we don't always go by
17 precedent. So we've had, in here sometimes
18 that people say, I'm going -- we had a guy
19 that came in a few weeks ago and said, I
20 want to put a solar panel in the front of my
21 house. And then I said, Well, you can't.
22 They said, But here's an example of someone
23 that put a solar panel on the side of the
24 house. And I said, Well, that actually is
25 not quite the same situation. And this was

1 one of the things that the lady stormed out
2 of it because, you know, she wanted that and
3 even though the solution which Juan gave
4 her, Why don't you just put a generator?
5 Because she didn't want -- she said, My aunt
6 is old, my mother is dying and --

7 (Simultaneous speakers.)

8 THE SPECIAL MASTER: -- my mother is
9 dying and I need the solar panels in case
10 there's a storm and all that. And I said,
11 Look, the fact that -- this is it, you just
12 can't put that in there.

13 So but I think that the Board, beyond,
14 you know, if we can accommodate the
15 resiliency ideas, we can. But the most
16 basic thing is that it fits within the
17 neighborhood, and what you're asking is, you
18 know, again, like you said, a modest request
19 which I think should have a modest solution
20 as well.

21 But the part that -- then this is the
22 part where the architect in me does come in,
23 over the years -- and I also teach in
24 university, I've been teaching there for 42
25 years. So I do know a little thing about

1 style. And part of the problem is I've had
2 people here that come and say, Well, I'm
3 bringing -- this is Boca Raton style. I
4 said, There is no such thing as Boca Raton.
5 These are house in Boca Raton.

6 Well, that's not it. You either have a
7 real Spanish house or you have a real
8 contemporary house, and what you're doing is
9 -- these houses, which again, they were like
10 the people who originally built them,
11 wonderful, honest people that this was their
12 first home. And they were modest. They
13 were not probably -- it's worth a lot of
14 money now, a lot more than when it was
15 originally built because of where they sit,
16 because it's in Coral Gables, because of
17 your neighbors and all of that.

18 But the whole thing about incrementally
19 making it modern, I don't think there is
20 such a thing, you know. We can't say, I'm
21 going to make the corner modern, and I'm
22 going to begin to address the present day by
23 introducing modern elements in it.

24 Modern elements -- for example, I'm
25 having half my apartment torn out because

1 we're putting hurricane windows. Well, it's
2 the same opening as it was before, it's
3 going to be more energy efficient, it keeps
4 the sound out, it has better glass. Well,
5 that improves on what was there, you know,
6 50-year-old window, and that's what I think
7 the Board of Architects is actually trying
8 to do.

9 Now, what -- I believe, I really believe
10 -- that's why I'm not going to stay on this
11 Board, on this position anymore. I believe
12 there is a process in Coral Gables, which is
13 that they're always from -- I mean, when
14 Coral Gables was started that there is a
15 Board of Architects. It used to be the
16 Board of Architects, there was only one
17 person Phineas Bates, the guy who designed
18 City Hall, and whatever he wanted, you had
19 to do. And he was famous for sometimes, if
20 he disagreed with one, he would just toss
21 the plans back at you. But, again, at the
22 end of day, those Boards have preserved a
23 certain quality in here. And I wish this
24 would happen at every level.

25 And, you know what? You are right about

1 one thing, Why are you being made to do all
2 these small things? And in here in the
3 times I've heard appeals on fences, I've
4 heard appeals on this, and I said, You know,
5 why am I hearing all these appeals when no
6 one has asked the City, why have all the
7 changes in the Biltmore not brought before
8 the Board of Architects? They haven't,
9 none.

10 So to me that's it should be focused on,
11 not on this. But, trust me, this is not to
12 make your life difficult, or I'm sure it has
13 created a lot of anxiety and I hope you
14 can -- maybe not now, but come to terms that
15 if you put the clear story on it, if you put
16 the lighting on the side, this will be --
17 maybe not the most pleasant of kids' room,
18 but at least a place where you're washing
19 the clothes and all that, that you're not in
20 a dingy garage.

21 MR. RIESCO: And, again, I congratulate
22 you, because a lot of projects that we see
23 at the Board level, new house or renovation,
24 typically this wall on the garage is a solid
25 wall. Nine times out of ten. And the

1 Board's recommendations and purview is
2 typically, Hey, you need to bring in some
3 windows because the Board, as a whole,
4 doesn't think that a solid wall is conducive
5 to any. Especially when you're in a
6 residential neighborhood.

7 So it's great that you're thinking about
8 daylight and you're thinking about, you
9 know, doing perforations in a solid wall,
10 that's always good. I just, I concur with
11 Jose's statement that this vocabulary is
12 just not consistent with the style of the
13 home. The modern, you know, high-tech,
14 glass door, small frame with the milky
15 glazing is not something that's conducive to
16 this particular style of home.

17 It's like you said, it's a very simple,
18 modest home, and I think it needs to be kept
19 at that level. And if the intent is to
20 modernize, then, hey, more power to you but
21 come in with modernization that's complete.
22 That talks about the whole house, not just
23 one component though.

24 And that's the danger we fall into on a
25 weekly basis at the Board level. You're not

1 the first one. We have renovation work that
2 we see all the time, and, unfortunately,
3 that's the danger when you remodel, is the
4 client may not have the budget that you
5 think -- you know, you, as an architect,
6 always want to do something great and
7 specular and new, and a lot of times you're
8 restrained by budgets. And so, Hey, let's
9 do the balcony only, or, Hey, let's do the
10 railing only, or, Hey, let's do the driveway
11 only.

12 So we end up in a position that we get
13 put in where we're seeing a composition
14 that's not complete, that is only a part of
15 the composition. And, as architects, we're
16 creative people, you know, we're trained to
17 do the composition, not a piece of the
18 composition. And so, unfortunately, because
19 of deadlines, because of money, and because
20 of personal issues, people start renovating
21 homes and introduce a brand new door and
22 they tell us, Oh, yeah, we're going to
23 remodel the house, you know, in the next
24 couple of years. We're going to do this,
25 this, and that.

1 And all of a sudden we end up with a
2 residence with a modern feature and the rest
3 of the house is traditional, contemporary,
4 Mediterranean, colonial, and the renovation
5 up process is not complete. And so we have
6 to guard that position. You know, we have
7 to have some kind of peace of mind from the
8 applicant, from the architect, from the
9 owner, say, Hey, yes, I am going to
10 completely renovate this house and this is
11 the first step.

12 But that's not what we heard here. It's
13 quite the opposite. If you want to make a
14 modification to one portion of it and leave
15 it alone, and as an architect -- and I'm
16 looking at you as his architect -- I don't
17 feel that's the right thing to do.

18 So I'll leave it at that.

19 MR. REILLY: So one thing that I think
20 is important to point out, Sergey and I have
21 worked together on several projects on this
22 house over the past 15 years, I believe.

23 MR. KOTELNIKOV: (Indicates.)

24 MR. REILLY: The garage door is one
25 piece that was -- wasn't addressed in those,

1 and it always -- in my opinion, it was
2 something that needed to be done eventually.
3 The reason I pulled these sheets out is so
4 that you can see some of the details of
5 it --

6 (Simultaneous speakers.)

7 THE SPECIAL MASTER: That's beautiful.

8 MR. REILLY: -- is due respect to the
9 Spanish style --

10 MR. RIESCO: Absolutely.

11 MR. REILLY: -- of the house.

12 MR. RIESCO: Everything you've done is
13 consistent with the look except the last
14 piece of the puzzle, which, in my opinion,
15 is the garage door.

16 THE SPECIAL MASTER: But even if you
17 wanted the whole thing, sustainability and
18 resiliency, the glass door in the garage has
19 no operable windows --

20 MR. REILLY: That's true. It is
21 operable, the entire door --

22 (Simultaneous speakers.)

23 MR. RIESCO: Open the whole thing.

24 THE SPECIAL MASTER: You're not going to
25 open the thing, so I don't know, again,

1 where the washing machines are --

2 MR. KOTELNIKOV: It's in the back.

3 MR. RIESCO: Probably in the back.

4 THE SPECIAL MASTER: But they are
5 operable. These windows are operable --

6 (Simultaneous speakers.)

7 THE SPECIAL MASTER: -- and, frankly, if
8 indeed it's a garage and a washing
9 machine -- probably it's the kind of thing
10 that, you know, if you had operable windows
11 --

12 (Simultaneous speakers.)

13 THE SPECIAL MASTER: -- and a ceiling
14 fan --

15 THE STENOGRAPHER: Okay. One at a time.
16 Remember, you have a stenographer.

17 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Oh, okay.

18 MR. REILLY: The washing machines are
19 there. That air conditioning unit is here.
20 This is whole wall is covered with
21 electrical panels, side walls --

22 (Simultaneous speakers.)

23 MR. RIESCO: I figure everything --

24 MR. KOTELNIKOV: AC.

25 MR. RIESCO: This another little diagram

1 that I was doodling while you guys were
2 talking in terms of light entering a space.

3 This is a rectangular. That's a
4 rectangle. The long part of the rectangle
5 is where you're allowing the daylight
6 supposedly to come in. That daylight will
7 never make it back here.

8 MR. KOTELNIKOV: But it's the -- by far
9 --

10 MR. RIESCO: This, by far, is a better
11 scenario because this is a shorter distance
12 and there's better distribution.

13 MR. KOTELNIKOV: But we --

14 MR. RIESCO: If that's your concern,
15 again. If that's your concern --

16 MR. KOTELNIKOV: The problem is we
17 can't. It is a concern, but we can't.

18 MR. RIESCO: Okay.

19 MR. REILLY: One additional point, the
20 reason that the top panel of glass wouldn't
21 be ideal is there is this 5-foot overhang.
22 And it's that dark, dark wood porch ceiling.
23 So that will allow some light in. But
24 imagine there's a 5-foot eyebrow over there
25 blocking that. So it's not a whole lot of

1 light. Whereas --

2 (Simultaneous speakers.)

3 MR. RIESCO: Remember --

4 MR. REILLY: -- glass panels --

5 MR. RIESCO: Remember solar angles.

6 MR. REILLY: Yes.

7 MR. RIESCO: The western solar angle --

8 MR. REILLY: Yes.

9 MR. RIESCO: -- is low. So the overhang
10 does not preclude it. Architecture 101,
11 what I learned when you have western or
12 eastern exposures, the daylight -- the
13 sunlight comes in horizontally and is
14 basically very low. And then --

15 MR. REILLY: For a brief --

16 MR. RIESCO: -- the north and south --

17 MR. REILLY: -- period of time.

18 MR. RIESCO: Yeah. and the north and
19 south gets most of the sun because the sun
20 is higher. So you're exposed from
21 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on the south side,
22 the north side gets all the nice, smooth
23 daylight; and the east only gets it in the
24 morning from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00, and then
25 the west hits you at 3:00 o'clock till

1 5:00 o'clock, 6:00 o'clock.

2 So, again --

3 MR. REILLY: It's not a dark space in
4 the front yard --

5 MR. RIESCO: Right. Again, I'm just
6 trying to show you that there's other ways
7 to skin a cat to achieve his goal. His goal
8 is daylight. We can achieve daylight
9 multiple ways. You can make this a French
10 door with a glass panel and give you a lot
11 of light --

12 MR. REILLY: I understand.

13 MR. KOTELNIKOV: No, not true. There's
14 a very tall house right behind here, there's
15 an extreme tall hedge. Two-story house,
16 two-story hedge, no light. Not possible.

17 MR. RIESCO: It will give you daylight.
18 It won't give you direct light, but it'll
19 give you daylight.

20 MR. REILLY: One point. So if there
21 were -- looking at this room, for example --

22 MR. RIESCO: Ah-huh.

23 MR. REILLY: -- there -- it's nice that
24 there are windows on multiple walls. If we
25 were to have just a lot of light in one

1 area, that would not be ideal --

2 MR. RIESCO: It doesn't --

3 MR. REILLY: -- whether it's there --

4 MR. RIESCO: -- give value.

5 MR. REILLY: -- or it's here. It's nice
6 to have it from multiple angles.

7 MR. RIESCO: Absolutely.

8 MR. REILLY: It's definitely preferable
9 to have --

10 THE SPECIAL MASTER: Okay. Look, you
11 know --0

12 MR. REILLY: I don't want to take us
13 down the wrong path.

14 THE SPECIAL MASTER: No, no. But,
15 basically, this is what I think the Board
16 was saying and this --

17 MR. RIESCO: Right.

18 THE SPECIAL MASTER: -- is what --

19 MR. RIESCO: Which is a compromise --
20 we're giving you the daylight.

21 THE SPECIAL MASTER: -- I can't approve
22 now. You did bring the court reporter so
23 you can appeal it to the City Commission.

24 MR. REILLY: Understood.

25 MR. RIESCO: Yeah. I think the Board

1 answered your request. You wanted daylight
2 we thought it was appropriate to do the top
3 portion of the door that allows daylight but
4 we felt that it was appropriate to have the
5 rest of the doors solid so that it matches
6 the context of the neighborhood and all the
7 other homes. Period.

8 That's kind of the discussion I had with
9 the Board members and I thought it was fair
10 and reasonable. They're not telling you to
11 do a solid door, that's never been the case.
12 We've always allowed you to have the glass
13 panel, but we think it's better along the
14 top and have the solid base so at least at
15 human scale, at your height, your perception
16 is the solid door even though there's glass
17 and the glass allows the daylight.

18 So we felt we complied; but, again,
19 obviously, you didn't agree and that's why
20 we're here so.

21 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Yeah. Well, I don't
22 know if it's working further statements.

23 Special Master, I really appreciate your
24 time.

25 MR. RIESCO: We have another one

1 actually at 4:00 o'clock.

2 THE SPECIAL MASTER: Really, again, I
3 tried to arrive at compromises, because as I
4 grow older is I feel less and less sure of
5 having the truth in my hands. So I believe
6 that, you know, somewhere in the middle is
7 the truth.

8 And, honestly, if I didn't feel that
9 this would enhance your house and this would
10 give you the light, and if it's not enough
11 light there's always artificial light, and,
12 now, it doesn't have to be fluorescent base.
13 There are better things to do. You can
14 increase the lighting issue, but I think
15 you're house would look -- and you have a
16 nice house and, again, it would like nicer
17 and it's a great neighborhood. We looked
18 and looked and looked there and we couldn't
19 find a house when we wanted to move, but we
20 like your neighborhood.

21 And so thank you so much.

22 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Thank you for hearing
23 us.

24 THE SPECIAL MASTER: Do you have the
25 address of this house?

1 MR. RIESCO: I want to look into this.
2 You mentioned it but I didn't write it down.
3 The other one was Menores, right? The
4 first one was Menores?

5 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Why don't we -- can we
6 adjourn this meeting and then I can --

7 MR. RIESCO: Oh, yeah, yeah.

8 MR. KOTELNIKOV: Can we adjourn?

9 THE SPECIAL MASTER: Yes.

10 (Proceedings were concluded at 4:07
11 p.m.)

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STENOGRAPHER CERTIFICATE

STATE OF FLORIDA)

) SS:

COUNTY OF MIAMI-DADE)

I, Elsy M. Altuve, Stenographer and Notary Public for the State of Florida at Large, 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 2025.



ELSY M. ALTUVE, FPR, Stenographer
Notary Public, State of Florida
Commission No. HH 343687
Expires on December 21, 2026

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