

March 5, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

City of Miami Beach Design Review Board

c/o Mr. Thomas Mooney
City of Miami Beach
Planning Department
1700 Convention Center Drive
Miami Beach, Florida 33139

**Re: Letter of Intent for Design Review Board Application File No. DRB21-0640
(the "Application") 248 W. Rivo Alto Drive (the "Property")**

Dear Design Review Board Members:

Our firm represents James Hill (the "Applicant"), in connection with certain land use and zoning matters relating to the above-referenced Property. This correspondence constitutes the letter of intent accompanying the Application requesting design review approval for the construction of a new single-family home, as more fully detailed below.

I. The Property

The Property is located on the Venetian Islands, on the West side of the Northern peninsula of the Rivo Alto island. Please refer to the enclosed Map of Boundary Survey. The Property is zoned RS-3 Single Family Residential on the City of Miami Beach ("City") Official Zoning Map and designated RS Single Family Residential on the City's Future Land Use Map. The RS-3 zoning district permits single family residential uses. West of the Property is Biscayne Bay, North of the Property is a similarly sized lot with an approximately 6,500 square foot home¹, East of the Property is West Rivo Alto Drive, and South of the Property is a 10,500 square foot lot containing a single family residence.

The Property is currently improved with a two-story single-family structure and detached garage building. According to the City of Miami Beach Permit Card for the Property, a copy of which is enclosed, the house was originally constructed on March 11, 1929, with a few renovations over the years (including a pool in 1968 and minor renovations in the 1970's). The current home is built substantially below Base Flood Elevation plus freeboard. Additionally, the current seawall is built below minimum City requirements; the current seawall height is approximately 3.2' NGVD, whereas City Code requires a minimum of 7.26 NGVD. Thus, the Applicant is proposing

¹ Based on information from the Miami Dade County Property Appraiser on-line information.

to rebuild the Property in accordance with the City's Code and Land Development Regulations and in furtherance of the City's resiliency standards.

II. The Project - Design Review Approval

The proposed home is consistent with the as built context of the neighborhood, which is developed with single family homes. In addition, the home is beautifully designed to draw upon the environment to create an atmosphere of tranquility and nature between the open water views and emphasis on greenery throughout the Property, especially the proposed landscape and vegetated roofs. The landscape features will provide privacy and shade, and soften the silhouette of the design.

The general design and massing is guided by the Applicant's desire to minimize the visual impact. Specifically, Applicant is utilizing an understory for vehicular storage at the front of the property. At the first floor, the design of the home bifurcates the north and south portions of the structure by a paved walkway. On the North, the first floor is located 12.5' from the North Property line. It's important to note that the North elevation only contains 61.5 linear feet of structure whereas the Property line is 183' in length. The southern portion of the first floor contains the home's active uses, including the media room, laundry, kitchen, dining great room and outdoor covered spaces. The southern facade contains a traditional 10' setback. As you move up to the second floor, the volume shrinks towards the center of the property (setback 18'-3" from the North property line and although a stairwell is located at 10' to the South Property line, its location is limited to a 21' exposure on the South). A separate stair system connects the second floor to the roof deck. The roof deck is located in a limited portion of the rooftop, with the elevator centrally located.

As mentioned above, the Project is designed with an understory to serve the parking needs of the owners and their guests. This space provides covered parking and protection from inclement weather and harsh temperatures while at the same time increasing the permeable areas below the home in the understory area. Designing the project with an understory reduces the amount of fill that would otherwise be required to support the first floor at the requisite freeboard height.

III. Sea Level Rise and Resiliency Review

Section 133-50(a) provides review criteria for compliance with the City's recently adopted sea level rise and resiliency criteria.

- (i) *A recycling or salvage plan for partial or total demolition shall be provided.*

A recycling plan will be provided as part of the submittal for a demolition permit to the building department.

- (ii) *Windows that are proposed to be replaced shall be hurricane proof impact windows.*

The windows and glass balcony system will be hurricane impact windows.

- (iii) *Where feasible and appropriate, passive cooling systems, such as operable windows, shall be provided.*

Passive cooling systems, such as operable windows and balcony doors are included in this development. The proposed high density green roofs provide energy and environmental benefits to both the building and the environment. The incoming heat through the vegetated roof is lower than the incoming heat through a roof without vegetation, reducing the cooling load required by the home

- (iv) *Resilient landscaping (salt tolerant, highly water-absorbent, native, or Florida-friendly plants) shall be provided, in accordance with chapter 126 of the city Code.*

All new landscaping will consist of Florida friendly plants, with necessary salt spray and drought tolerances. Emphasis is placed on the incorporation of native and xeriscape compliant species. The landscape will buffer the North and South neighboring properties to increase privacy for the Property and neighboring homes. Significant design efforts have been made to retain as much existing landscape as possible on site, with approximately 80% intended to be retained in place or relocated on the Property.

- (v) *The project applicant shall consider adopted sea level rise projections in the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Action Plan, as may be revised from time-to-time by the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change compact, including a study of land elevation and elevation of surrounding properties were considered.*

The Property is resiliently designed to increase the seawall elevations in accordance with City Code. Furthermore, the home is built to a minimum of BFE plus 5' of Freeboard. The yards are designed to adjusted grade to ensure compatibility is achieved with neighboring properties and the future road raising contemplated by the City's Public Works department.

- (vi) *The ground floor, driveways, and garage ramping for new construction shall be adaptable to the raising of public rights-of-ways and adjacent land.*

The ground floor will be raised to the height of the future crown of the road at 5.26' NGVD. The driveway will peak at the minimum required yard height of 6.56' NGVD before lowering back to 5.5' NGVD to enter the understory area.

- (vii) *All critical mechanical and electrical systems shall be located above base flood elevation. All redevelopment projects shall, whenever practicable and economically reasonable, include the relocation of all critical mechanical and electrical systems to a location above base flood elevation.*

All mechanical and electrical equipment is located above base flood elevation.

- (viii) *Existing buildings shall be, where reasonably feasible and appropriate, elevated to the base flood elevation.*

Elevating the existing structure to base flood elevation plus freeboard is neither reasonably feasible nor appropriate. There is a significant risk that the structure would be damaged during such an operation. Additionally, the existing building envelope does not meet current insulation requirements. Significant renovations would be required for the entire building envelope (roof, floor slabs, walls, doors, and windows).

- (ix) *When habitable space is located below the base flood elevation plus City of Miami Beach Freeboard, wet or dry flood proofing systems will be provided in accordance with Chapter 54 of the City Code.*

To the extent applicable, Applicant will wet or dry flood proof as appropriate.

- (x) *Where feasible and appropriate, stormwater retention systems shall be provided.*

The North and South corners of the front yard will be utilized as stormwater retention areas. The side yards will swale towards these two low areas. Dense landscaping will conceal these lower areas. Additionally, the required 5' setback area between the first-floor slab edge and the understory area will be utilized as a vegetated water retention area, to prevent stormwater from entering the understory area. The understory is required to be a permeable material, so in a flooding event, it will act as drainable surface for the property.

- (xi) *Cool pavement materials or porous pavement materials shall be utilized.*

The proposed hardscape consists of porous keystone on sand as part of the patina and appeal of South Florida locale, and low energy materials.

- (xii) *The design of each project shall minimize the potential for heat island effects on-site.*

The highly vegetated green roofs will reduce the heat island effect by reflecting sunlight and heat away from the home. The lush landscape will increase shade around the home and improve the air quality. All hardscape materials are light colored, high albedo materials to reduce heat island effects.

IV. **Conclusion**

The Applicant is requesting design review approval for the redevelopment of the Property into a high quality, resilient and architecturally unique single family home. Based on the foregoing, we respectfully request your favorable consideration of this Application.

Sincerely,



Ethan B. Wasserman, Esq.

BEW:dv

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