MIAMIBEACH

COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission
FROM: Commissioner Kristen Rosen Gonzalez
DATE: September 13, 2023

SUBJECT: REFERRAL TO THE FINANCE AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCY COMMITTEE AND PLANNING BOARD, AS REQUIRED PURSUANT TO SECTION 1.03(B)(4) OF THE CITY CHARTER AND SECTION 82-37 OF THE CITY CODE, TO CONSIDER THE CONVEYANCE OF THE BARCLAY PLAZA APARTMENTS (1940 PARK AVENUE) TO THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, A PUBLIC ENTITY OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA, FOR THE SOLE AND RESTRICTED PURPOSES OF DEVELOPING AND OPERATING THE BARCLAY AS AN AFFORDABLE AND/OR WORKFORCE HOUSING FACILITY.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

The Barclay Plaza Apartments (the Barclay) property, located at 1940 Park Avenue, is a 26,250 square foot lot with a historic 3-story building positioned across from the Miami Beach Convention Center. The Barclay is in the RM-2, Residential Multi-Family Medium Intensity Zoning District, and is also a contributing structure located within the boundaries of the Museum Local Historic District.

In what I could only describe as one more "managed decline" of a historic structure in the City of Miami Beach, the Barclay has been vacant since 2015, when it was transferred to the City by the Miami Beach Community Development Corporation (MBCDC), an affordable housing entity that has now been taken over by Miami-Dade County.

The Barclay has sixty-six (66) efficiency units, each with a bathroom, closet, and a small kitchen, that are currently not Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant. A feasibility study prepared by M.C. Harry & Associates in August 2021 found that many components of the existing building envelope and all major building systems need to be replaced.

Any improvements to the building will require a Certificate of Appropriateness from the City's Historic Preservation Board. However, **I am concerned that continuing with the status quo could lead to the property being tagged as an unsafe structure that must be demolished to pave the way for over-development**.

For years, the City has attempted on multiple occasions to either list the property for sale or issue RFPs for the development of the Barclay. However, none of these efforts have resulted in an attractive proposal for affordable or workforce housing, and the property continues to sit vacant.

Rather than continue with an obsessive focus on private sector development that is ill-suited for this kind of project, **the one approach the City has not seriously entertained is to partner with the City's local public affordable housing agency, the Housing Authority of the City of Miami Beach, to develop and operate the property for affordable or workforce housing.**

For many years, the Housing Authority has proven itself capable of delivering quality affordable housing services in the City, particularly for the elderly. Over the years, the Housing Authority has also completed multi-million dollar renovations for buildings such as Rebecca Towers, one of the most successful affordable housing facilities in the City.

Having exhausted all opportunities for private sector development of the Barclay, I propose that we initiate the process for the City to transfer and convey the Barclay to the Housing Authority, with a restrictive covenant that the property could only be used for its intended purposes as an affordable or workforce housing facility.

A partnership with a non-profit, public agency whose mission is 100% dedicated to affordable and workforce housing is the most logical way to protect the Barclay and ensure the City achieves its interests in preserving this historic structure and increasing its portfolio of affordable and workforce housing in the City.

SUPPORTING SURVEY DATA

N/A

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

N/A

Applicable Area

Citywide

Is this a "Residents Right to Know" item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-14?	**Does this item utilize G.O. Bond Funds?**
Yes	No

Strategic Connection

Neighborhoods - Prioritize historic gems and create opportunities to build resilience into historic properties.

Legislative Tracking

Commissioner Kristen Rosen Gonzalez