

COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Members of the City Commission

FROM: Commissioner Alex J. Fernandez

DATE: May 15, 2024

SUBJECT: Referral to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee a discussion regarding co-naming of 15th Street in honor of former City Mayor Matti Herrera Bower

I would like to refer the above-referenced item to Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee (the "Committee") to consider the co-naming of 15th Street, located between Ocean Drive and Bay Road, in honor of former City of Miami Beach Mayor Matti Herrera Bower, along with any amendment to Section 82-503 of the City Code that may be required to accomplish the naming.

Pursuant to Rule 9.02. of Section 2-10.2 of the Code of Miami-Dade County, proposed naming, renaming or co-designation of Miami-Dade County roads for any elected municipal, county, state or federal official is permitted as long as the public official is not currently serving, or has served in any elected office, within the last five years.

Mayor Bower is the first woman, as well as the first Hispanic, to serve as Mayor of Miami Beach, where she served with distinction from 2007-2013. Mayor Bower also served as a City Commissioner for 8 years, prior to her period of service as the Mayor.

Mayor Bower's road to community activism began as a PTA mom, working to save an elementary school from closing. Her enthusiasm, innate leadership and charisma led Matti to become President of the Parent-Teacher Associations at three Miami Beach public schools, a decade long record of service. In the process, she became a leading advocate for quality education in Miami Beach and began a long trajectory of service to Miami Beach's public schools.

She served on the Miami-Dade County School Board Attendance to Boundary and Bi-Lingual Education Committees, the Miami Beach Ad Hoc Committee for Quality Education, the Miami Beach Feeder Pattern and Citizen's Advisory Committee, and the State of Florida Transition Team task force on Reading and Literacy, and championed the expansion of the International Baccalaureate Program to all of Miami Beach's public schools. Through her persistent

leadership to ensure quality education for every child in Miami Beach, Bower achieved the City-wide implementation of the International Baccalaureate program, thereby allowing for all students to significantly expand their learning opportunities within our City.

Mayor Bower was also an instrumental part of the campaign to save the historic Art Deco District in South Beach. Inspired by the leadership of her friend Barbara Baer Capitman, Matti became an early volunteer with the Miami Design Preservation League and served on the Board of Directors for over a decade. She has advocated for responsible growth management and the creation of historic districts around Miami Beach, including the first and most famous, the Miami Beach Architecture District.

In addition, during her tenure as Miami Beach City Commissioner and Mayor, Bower helped introduce innumerable ordinance and Code amendments that ushered in the modern era of historic preservation in the City of Miami Beach, including championing the amendment to the City's Charter to require voter referendum approval prior to increasing floor area ratios in the City of Miami Beach, possibly the single most important piece of growth management legislation in the City of Miami Beach.

Further, Mayor Bower also helped create affordable housing for low-income elderly and others. To this day, Mayor Bower serves on the Board of Directors of the Miami Beach Housing Authority, which provides quality affordable housing for seniors and others. For many years, she worked closely with Unidad of Miami Beach, Inc., the non-profit community-based organization that operates the Unidad North Beach Oceanfront Center and engages in advocacy for seniors, particularly those in the Hispanic community, and provides social services and cultural programming, among other important work performed for the benefit of our entire community.

In addition to being a champion of education, historic preservation, affordable housing, and social services for the elderly, Mayor Bower has supported many social equality initiatives over the years — including the adoption of the City's Human Rights Ordinance and the first City-supported gay pride festival — and development of the arts, among other causes.

In order to facilitate the co-naming of 15th Street, I would also propose that the Committee further recommend an amendment to the City's naming ordinance, codified in Article VI of Chapter 82 of the City Code, which would expand the provided criteria for the co-naming of City streets in honor of a former Hispanic, female municipal elected official who has made a direct, significant lifetime contribution to this community, provided the public official has not served in any elected office within the last five years, in accordance with the Miami-Dade County Code.

Mayor Bower has left an indelible mark on the City of Miami Beach, not only in her support of many worthy causes over the years, only a few of which I have highlighted above, but in terms of her personal touch and her belief in the importance of community engagement and transparency in government decision-making. She is a force of nature and a living example of a public servant that has always stayed true to herself, with values that place *people* above *politics*.

I respectfully submit that Mayor Bower is worthy of our consideration for a naming opportunity to mark her many contributions to civic life in Miami Beach, and I urge my colleagues to support this item. Should you have any questions or concerns about any of the foregoing, please do not hesitate to contact me or my aide Monica Salinas.

AJF/RAP/FA/ms