

Doris Ugarrita

February 19, 2018

To:

Mayor Dan Gelber

City Manager Jimmy Morales

City Commissioners:

Micky Steinberg

Mark Samuelian

Michael Gongora

Kristen Rosen Gonzalez

Ricky Arriola

John Elizabeth Alemán

This letter is being written after recently hearing Nancy Liebman talk to the City Commission regarding the “walkability” of Miami Beach. I wrote to the city council and Mayor Levine at least one year ago about the same issue. I received one response from Mayor Levine who told me to contact code compliance. As you can note from my address, I live in a residential neighborhood. I enjoy walking 5 miles a day and my route includes Alton Road, 47<sup>th</sup> Street, La Gorce Drive, Pinetree Drive, 51<sup>st</sup> Street and North Bay Road. Many homes on these streets, and I am sure on other streets in Miami Beach, have tall bushes, which abut the sidewalk and the entrance driveways to the residences. Many of these bushes are well over 6 feet tall; most are over 4 feet tall. Because the bushes are so close to the driveways, when people drive their cars out of the driveway onto the street the drivers cannot see people walking on the sidewalk toward the driveway. In fact, many drivers are actually driving their cars in reverse to enter the streets.

I surmise that the homeowners have installed the bushes to dampen noise from the streets and to provide privacy. The homeowners, however, have caused a serious safety problem with the bushes. I have nearly been hit from a car exiting a driveway three times in three different locations the last five months. The pedestrian cannot see a car until the pedestrian is in the driveway. The same situation exists for the drivers of the cars who cannot see a pedestrian until the pedestrian is in front of the car. I know that the letter carriers have the same concern. People who use the sidewalks on the streets mentioned include: walkers, runners, people walking their dogs, people in wheelchairs, skaters, bikers, small children going to the park, children being pushed in buggies and carts, and the persons pushing them.

One can only imagine the positive influence of neighbors walking sidewalks during the day. The coalescing effect of seeing and meeting one's neighbors is valuable, and even safety promoting. The meeting elicits community loyalty and a sense of belonging.

I am reluctant to use code compliance to "report" the overwhelming majority of homeowners who have planted tall bushes next to the sidewalks and driveways. It would be time-consuming as the vastness of the practice is an issue. I am using this letter as an overall complaint and call for the removal of the bushes from these areas. Possible solutions are to remove the bushes, place the bushes three feet back from the sidewalks, prohibit bushes within three feet of the driveway or cut the bushes down to one of two feet. Please let us take action on this problematic practice in order to prevent a tragedy, which could indeed be fatal.

Sincerely

Doris Ugarrriza