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Thomas Mooney  
Planning Director  
City of Miami Beach  
1700 Convention Center Drive  
Miami Beach, FL 33139

**Re: Letter of Intent for Certificates of Appropriateness for the Partial Demolition and Substantial Renovation, Waivers, and Sign Variance for the Contributing Historic Structure Located at 100 21<sup>st</sup> Street, Miami Beach, FL to Create the Bvlgari Hotel Miami Beach**

Dear Mr. Mooney:

This firm represents BHI Miami Limited Corp, the applicant ("Applicant") for the proposed substantial renovation of the contributing structure formerly known as the Seagull Hotel located at 100 21<sup>st</sup> Street, Miami Beach within the Ocean Drive/Collins Historic District and the Miami Beach Architectural District (the "Property"). Please accept this correspondence as the Applicant's letter of intent for the attached plans and application seeking review and approval by the Historic Preservation Board ("HPB") of Certificates of Appropriateness for partial demolition and design, waivers, and a sign variance.

The Applicant is proposing the transformation of the existing 145-room Seagull Hotel into the ultra-luxury Bvlgari Hotel Miami Beach. This project will be the first Bvlgari Hotel in the United States and will help elevate the cultural and hotel experience on Miami Beach in keeping with the City's stated goals to do so. Bvlgari Hotels & Resorts is a joint venture between the 150 year-old luxury Italian jeweler Bvlgari and Marriott International and is the leading luxury hospitality collection in the world. Its current extraordinary locations include Milan, Bali, London, Beijing, Dubai, and Shanghai. In five of these six locations they rank first (and second in the one remaining location) in average daily room rate performance when compared to top performing hotels in their respective locations. Worldwide, Bvlgari Hotels ranks number 2 out of 26 competitors with an overall luxury brand score of 93.2%. In addition to Miami Beach, future hotel openings include other worldwide cosmopolitan cities including Paris, Rome, Moscow, and Tokyo.

Located just south of Collins Park, the existing 8-story Seagull Hotel is the northernmost oceanfront structure within the Miami Beach Architectural District and the Ocean Drive/Collins Historic District and is effectively isolated from the rest of the Architectural District by its immediate neighbor to the south and west, the Setai Resort and Residences. In order to meet the Bvlgari brand room standards, the proposed project scope includes the substantial but sensitive renovation of the existing building, including three small additions that will actually reduce the current 145-room count to approximately 100 spacious hotel rooms and suites.

The proposed design celebrates the primary historic northern facade facing 21<sup>st</sup> Street and Collins Park, while adding a modest rooftop addition. The height of Bvlgari **with** the rooftop addition is 9 stories and 105'-11". By comparison, the Setai parking pedestal to the south is 11 stories and 107'-9" tall and the tower is more than three times as tall at 393'-7". The renovation also includes the thoughtful removal of a portion of the building's southwest corner to pull the structure further away from the Setai hotel rooms located to the west and will create a truly four-sided design, replacing the plain rear/back of house view the Setai rooms currently face.

The historic Seagull Hotel's 56 southern facing rooms once had a direct views out to the ocean, but these views were cut off by the development of the Setai; these rooms now directly face the rear façade of the Setai's 11-story parking garage. The proposed southern addition will allow the expansion and reorientation of those 56 hotel rooms toward the ocean, with a uniquely-designed louver system that will soften views of the neighboring garage structure while further redirecting views eastward. The proposed renovation will greatly enhance the design and function of the hotel within the limitations imposed by an F.A.R. of 2.0, while responding thoughtfully to the neighboring Setai, which by comparison has an F.A.R. of 4.24.

Additionally, the existing oceanfront rooms are much too small to meet the Bvlgari brand standards, so an easterly addition meeting all applicable code setbacks is proposed to create luxury rooms and suites that meet those standards. The existing lower level historic eastern wing, which extends significantly further seaward than the proposed addition, will be substantially renovated to provide space for the hotel's high-end ground level restaurant, which will be open to the public and will be directly accessible from the adjoining public walkway leading to the public beach. As detailed in the attached plans, the currently existing, virtually solid wall facing Collins Park and the beach will be opened up, connecting the project to the public realm and welcoming pedestrians into the publicly accessible restaurant space. Above the restaurant on the second level will be the luxury spa that will also be available to the public.

In order to accomplish this opening of the eastern wing to the public and allow the existing structure to better respond to the adjacent public walkway and beach access, the Applicant is requesting a waiver from the HPB pursuant to Section 118-395(b)(2)(d)(2), to waive the requirements of Section 118-395(b)(2)(d)(1). Section 118-395(b)(2)(d)(1) allows for the retention of an existing historic structure's floor area, height, and parking credits where at least 75% of the front and street side walls are retained, preserved, and restored, and at least 66% of remaining interior side walls for structures that are set back two or more feet from interior side property lines. Section 118-395(b)(2)(d)(2) allows the HPB to waive these requirements if one or more criterion is met, including that the structure is architecturally significant or embodies a distinctive style that is unique to Miami Beach. The requested waiver will allow for this distinctive and architecturally significant historic structure to better connect to and activate the adjacent public realm.

The one-story rooftop addition also requires a waiver from the HPB related to its visibility from the street. Pursuant to Section 142-1161(d)(2), rooftop additions to existing historic structures shall not be visible when viewed at eye level (5'-6" from grade) from the opposite side of the adjacent right-of-way. The HPB may waive this design requirement where appropriate. As indicated in the attached plans, the proposed rooftop addition encroaches very slightly into the line of sight when viewed from eye level on the opposite side of 21<sup>st</sup> Street. This thoughtfully designed rooftop addition is in keeping with the scale and architectural character of the existing building and greatly enhances the final Bvlgari design and guest experience. The encroachment

into the line of sight from 21<sup>st</sup> Street is especially modest in the context of the nearly 400-foot tall Setai tower visible behind the Property. The requested waiver will allow the construction of the rooftop addition as currently proposed.

Finally, the Applicant is requesting a waiver pursuant to Section 138-6 and approval per Section 138-55(b)(4) to allow the proposed Seagull sign on the northern façade of the building, in homage to the history of the structure, and a variance from Section 138-16 to allow a building identification sign to be located on the western façade of the structure rather than facing the 21<sup>st</sup> Street right-of-way. In order to authorize any variance from the terms of these land development regulations, pursuant to Section 118-353 the applicable board shall find that:

1. Special conditions and circumstances exist which are peculiar to the land, structure, or building involved and which are not applicable to other lands, structures, or buildings in the same zoning district;

*The northern façade of the existing historic structure is the most important historic façade, with no appropriate area for a building identification sign without significant alterations that would interrupt the historic character of the building. The western façade is therefore the more appropriate location for the proposed sign and allows for a more visible building identification sign from Collins Avenue, which will help first time visitors to locate the Bvlgari.*

2. The special conditions and circumstances do not result from the action of the applicant;

*The historic nature of the existing building and design of the northern façade are not the result of any action by the Applicant.*

3. Granting the variance requested will not confer on the applicant any special privilege that is denied by these land development regulations to other lands, buildings, or structures in the same zoning district;

*The requested variance will simply allow the Applicant to relocate an otherwise permitted sign to a location that will preserve the historic character of the northern façade while providing a visible building identification sign. The variance does not confer any special privilege that is unavailable to other historic buildings in the same zoning district.*

4. Literal interpretation of the provisions of these land development regulations would deprive the applicant of rights commonly enjoyed by other properties in the same zoning district under the terms of these land development regulations and would work unnecessary and undue hardship on the applicant;

*Literal interpretation of the land development regulations would deprive the Applicant of the ability to install a building identification sign or otherwise require it to compromise its ability to preserve the historic northern façade of the structure.*

5. The variance granted is the minimum variance that will make possible the reasonable use of the land, building or structure;

*The variance will simply allow a building identification sign that is permitted to be relocated to the western façade of the structure rather than the northern façade abutting the right-of-way.*

6. The granting of the variance will be in harmony with the general intent and purpose of these land development regulations and that such variance will not be injurious to the area involved or otherwise detrimental to the public welfare;

*The variance only affects the location of the proposed sign. The sign will comply with all other signage regulations and the general intent and purpose of the land development regulations.*

7. The granting of this request is consistent with the comprehensive plan and does not reduce the levels of service as set forth in the plan. The planning and zoning director may require applicants to submit documentation to support this requirement prior to the scheduling of a public hearing or any time prior to the board voting on the applicant's request; and

*The requested variance is for the location of a building identification sign and does not affect levels of service. The proposed Project will remain compatible with the comprehensive plan.*

8. The granting of the variance will result in a structure and site that complies with the sea level rise and resiliency review criteria in chapter 133, article II, as applicable.

*See response below.*

The proposed renovation will address the City's Sea Level Rise and Resiliency Review Criteria as follows:

- 1) A recycling or salvage plan for partial or total demolition shall be provided.

*Prior to the partial demolition of the existing structure, the Applicant will provide a recycling and salvage plan to the City.*

- 2) Windows that are proposed to be replaced shall be hurricane proof impact windows.

*All windows within the proposed building will be hurricane proof impact resistant windows with the required NOA's from Miami-Dade County.*

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

*Where appropriate, operable windows will be incorporated into the project design to allow for a passive cooling system.*

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

*Landscaping shall comply with all code requirements.*

- 5) The project applicant shall consider the 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. The applicant shall also specifically study the land elevation of the subject property and the elevation of surrounding properties.

*The architects have studied the land elevation of the Property and adjacent parcels. The proposed renovation will meet all applicable zoning and building codes while protecting the integrity of the contributing historic building.*

- 6) The ground floor, driveways, and garage ramping for new construction shall be adaptable to the raising of public rights-of-way and adjacent land, and shall provide sufficient height and space to ensure that the entry ways and exits can be modified to accommodate a higher street height of up to three additional feet in height.

*There is no new construction proposed adjoining the public right-of-way other than minor modifications to the contributing historic building. However, the project design will accommodate future elevation issues as much as reasonably possible, while preserving and substantially renovating the contributing historic structure.*

- 7) As applicable to all new construction, 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 critical mechanical and electrical systems will be located above base flood elevation or flood-proofed in accordance with FEMA and building code regulations.*

- 8) Existing buildings shall, wherever reasonably feasible and economically appropriate, be elevated up to base flood elevation, plus City of Miami Beach Freeboard.

*The new additions will be elevated to the extent reasonably possible while maintaining the existing contributing historic building.*

- 9) 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.

*Habitable space located below base flood elevation plus City of Miami Beach Freeboard will be wet or dry flood proofed in accordance with Chapter 54 of the City Code.*

- 10) As applicable to all new construction, stormwater retention systems shall be provided.

*Stormwater retention systems will be provided per civil engineer design at time of permitting.*

11) Cool pavement materials or porous pavement materials shall be utilized.

*Porous pavement materials will be utilized where most effective.*

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

*The heat island effects on site will be reduced per code requirements and appropriate engineering design.*

The proposed renovation is highly sensitive to and celebrates the primary historic façade of the contributing Seagull Hotel structure, while incorporating unobtrusive additions necessary to create the quality and type of project, ambiance, and environment typical of and demanded by Bvlgari hotels and their guests. The project requires no variances other than for the relocation of an otherwise permitted building identification sign. The Applicant is proud to bring one of the world's top luxury brands to the City of Miami Beach and the Collins Park neighborhood, representing Bvlgari's carefully chosen first U.S. location. For the foregoing reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits the proposed project for review and approval by the Historic Preservation Board.

Sincerely,

*Carter N. McDowell*

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CNM  
Enclosures

CC: Carly Grimm, Bilzin Sumberg