

Dear Mayor and Commissioners,

Regarding the December 5 Special Meeting called by Commissioner Aleman for the express purpose of discussing "Why the North Beach Master Plan's recommendation for Historic District differs with the City's recommendation." The question revolves around the Tatum Waterway neighborhood and the threat by some to remove the area from the Master Plan's recommendation to designate. It is what makes North Beach a unique place in time. The relationship of the homes to the waterway with the beautiful flora and fauna is truly something to be respected and admired.

I was astounded to learn the city left this area out of their plan. It is one of the National Trust District's important highlights- the Tatum Waterway neighborhood. The waterway vistas are part of the North Beach brand and used in visuals to promote the area.

I tried to comprehend how to answer that question for people who are not interested in saving the amazing history of Miami Beach's development. So, I reread the preservation chapter of the Master Plan as well as reviewed the sea rise strategies.

I then asked the master planners at DoverKohl the question about the "differences". Their answers were so on target, I decided to forward them to you with a few of my own comments intertwined to help clarify the work of the Steering Committee and my own observations as a long time preservationist. I hope this will give you true insight as to WHY there was such a difference.

The National Historic Districts of North Beach have enough contributing structures of high enough quality to become local historic districts in their entirety. This is documented by various historic inventory reports elaborating the quality of the structures. The plan mentions that local historic districts have been created in places where there were fewer historic structures, with lesser overall quality and significance.

The wholesale conversion of national districts to local has been a controversial item for some time and the North Beach Steering Committee's charge from the City was to work with residents and stakeholders to create a consensus plan based on compromise from all parties. Having attended all of the public meetings and those of the Steering Committee, everyone's prime concern was protecting the low-scale neighborhoods and this concept was overwhelming supported throughout the year-long study.

The North Beach Master Plan recommended that local districts to be created out of national districts. The plan describes how the Steering Committee was especially interested in the character of the districts as experienced from the water's edge. Many of Miami Beach's waterfront properties are single family, single story. The continuance of a low-scale character for the waterfront is argued by the plan to be contextual for Miami Beach.

As a member of the Steering Committee, I can assure you that once the Steering Committee understood the concept of preservation, the compromise to create local preservation and conservation districts was easy to attain. But the plan was specific as to the division of the two

types of districts. The two types of districts were intensely studied so as to protect the most important areas, such as the Tatum Waterway.

The Master Plan's consultants recounted MB's policies and actions on Climate Change. The Plan stated that FEMA is clear: put less people and less property in harm's way. Therefore the plan recommended increased densities in upland areas and did nothing to increase densities in low-lying, flood prone areas.

The western shoreline needs new sea walls and drainage systems according to the plan. Also, unlike many historic districts in the nation, North Beach districts are composed of reinforced concrete structures. Reinforced concrete is a hearty way to build. The plan also does not discourage the rebuilding or lifting of historic structures to make areas more resilient.

The Tatum Waterway is one of the most beautiful waterways in Miami Beach. It is really a touch of "old Florida" lined with natural vegetation and perfectly scaled buildings. There is already a pump in place that wards off the high tides. The city should be engaged in fixing the sea walls along Tatum Waterway as well as in other threatened historic districts, rather than fighting against historic designation.

If the Tatum Waterway- area does not become part of the local district, it will be left to the whim of developers who will continue to aggregate the buildings and destroy the environment with the type of out-of-scale buildings that we are beginning to see creeping along the waterway. Like any other structure in Miami Beach, if the homes along Tatum Waterway are threatened by rising tides, they will certainly be designated as unsafe structures, and allowed to be demolished. The key to this process is to have an appropriate set of guidelines in place for these waterfront residences -written to maintain the scale of the neighborhood for new buildings. That does not mean copying the architecture. The new architecture should be a product of its own time.

So, let's proceed with a positive attitude that will protect the city's valuable resources and begin to apply new techniques that will save them.

Nancy Liebman

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Nancy", written in dark ink.