

MIAMI BEACH

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Memorandum Historic Preservation Board

TO: Chairperson and Members DATE: April 12, 2022
 Historic Preservation Board &
 Design Review Board

FROM: Thomas R. Mooney, AICP 
 Planning Director

SUBJECT: Discussion: Collins Avenue MXE Height Ordinance

BACKGROUND

On April 7, 2022, the City Commission discussed a proposal to allow for additional height on the east side of Collins Avenue within the MXE district in limited circumstances, as more specifically described below. During their discussion, the City Commission requested input and a recommendation from the HPB relative to the attached height amendment.

Additionally, the City Commission requested that the Board discuss other possible incentives to address the long-term viability of historic properties within the MXE and the current imbalance of accessory uses in relation to main uses. The desire of the City Commission is to partner with the HB, and the larger historic preservation community, to develop tangible ways to ensure the long term preservation and economic vitality of our signature architecture.

Proposed Ordinance – Collins Avenue MXE Height Amendments

The proposed amendment pertains to multi-story additions and overall building height for specific projects on Collins Avenue. Currently, the Land Development Regulations limit habitable rooftop additions to existing buildings located within the MXE district along Collins Avenue to 1-story with a maximum floor to ceiling height of 12'-0". Since the maximum permitted height within this portion of Collins Avenue is 50'-0", this regulation has had the unintended consequence of requiring additional demolition of contributing buildings in order to accommodate 4 and 5-story new rear additions.

In order to incentivize a higher caliber of hotel, residential or office additions and uses, some latitude in the distribution of allowable FAR within properties along Collins Avenue is recommended. In this regard, the ability to build more than a one-story addition would be predicated upon meeting certain standards and definable, operational benchmarks.

The proposed amendment would give the Historic Preservation Board (HPB) the authority to approve multi-story rooftop additions for existing buildings on the east side of Collins Avenue. This would likely encourage the retention and restoration of portions of contributing buildings that may otherwise be proposed for demolition. Additionally, it could foster connections over Ocean Court to properties on Ocean Drive.

The proposed amendment would allow for the maximum height of a building with any addition to exceed 50 feet, but not exceed 75 feet, in accordance with the following:

1. The main use on the property shall be residential, office or hotel; non-office commercial uses would not be permitted as a main use if the additional height is sought.
2. Residential apartment uses shall agree, via recorded covenant, not to engage in short term rentals.
3. The property shall contain at least one contributing building. Any contributing building shall be renovated in accordance with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, including public interior spaces and all guest rooms.
4. The building shall have central air conditioning or flush-mounted wall units; however, no air conditioning equipment may face a street.
5. All non-impact resistant windows and doors and doors shall be replaced with impact resistant windows and doors.
6. Any proposed building height in excess of 50 feet shall be at the discretion of the historic preservation board and shall not be visible when viewed from the east side of Ocean Drive.
7. All additions proposed pursuant to this subsection shall be evaluated in accordance with the Certificate of Appropriateness criteria in chapter 118 of these land development regulations, as well as the following: (i) the addition enhances the architectural contextual balance of the surrounding area; (ii) the addition is appropriate to the scale and architecture of the existing building; (iii) the addition maintains the architectural character of the existing building in an appropriate manner; and (iv) the addition minimizes the impact of existing mechanical equipment or other rooftop elements.
8. There shall be no variances from this provision.

The HPB would evaluate each individual proposal in accordance with the Certificate of Appropriateness criteria, as well the additional criteria specific to the individual building and the surrounding area. Additionally, any multi-story rooftop addition for a property located along the east side of Collins Avenue would not be permitted to be visible when viewed from the east side of Ocean Drive.

RECOMMENDATION

Discuss the matter and provide recommendations to the City Commission on the following:

1. The attached Ordinance pertaining to limited height increases on the east side of Collins Avenue in the MXE district.
2. Other tools and options to incentivize the adaptive re-use of existing, contributing buildings, as well as ensure the long-term economic vitality of these buildings.
3. The use of floor area ratio (FAR), height and other zoning incentives to achieve the long term objectives of the district.

4. The use of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR's) as a means for distributing FAR within unified development sites separated by a street or alley, as well as to incentivize the renovation and restoration of smaller buildings.