



COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Commissioner Tanya K. Bhatt

DATE: October 30, 2024

TITLE: REFERRAL TO THE LAND USE AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE - DISCUSS INCENTIVES FOR PROPERTY OWNERS TO RESTORE/REHABILITATE HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN COLLINS AND WASHINGTON AVE BETWEEN 5TH AND LINCOLN ROAD.

RECOMMENDATION

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

Please place on the October 30, 2024 agenda a referral to the Land Use and Sustainability Committee to discuss and develop a set of incentives for property owners on Collins Avenue and Washington Avenue, between 5th Street and Lincoln Road, to encourage the preservation and improvement of naturally occurring affordable housing.

Collins Avenue and Washington Avenue, between 5th Street and Lincoln Road, are home to a number of multi-use properties that include naturally occurring affordable housing. These properties play a critical role in maintaining housing for residents in the workforce and middle-income brackets, who are vital to the economic and social fabric of Miami Beach.

However, many of these buildings are aging and in need of significant upgrades to continue offering safe, appealing, and affordable housing. Owners of these properties often face financial challenges in maintaining and improving them, making it tempting for some to sell to commercial developers. These developers may seek to replace or drastically modify the buildings in ways that are inconsistent with the character of the neighborhood and the scale of its existing architecture.

In order to prevent overdevelopment that would erode the unique character of these corridors, while also helping property owners improve their buildings and retain affordability, it is essential to create a set of incentives for property owners who are committed to preserving affordable housing.

I would like the LUSC to explore and develop incentives for property owners on Collins Avenue and Washington Avenue, between 5th Street and Lincoln Road, to rehabilitate their properties without compromising the existing scale, architectural character, and affordability of the neighborhood. The goal is to support the improvement of these properties while ensuring that they remain accessible to middle-income renters and continue to contribute to the city's inventory of affordable housing.

To accomplish this, the Administration is requested to prepare recommendations for incentives, including but not limited to the following ideas:

Provide property owners with an expedited process for renovations and improvements through the Building Department, as well as any necessary approvals from the Historic Preservation Board (HPB) or Design Review Board (DRB), as applicable.

Assign a dedicated liaison for property owners to navigate both the permitting process and the HPB and DRB approval process, with the authority to provide guidance and make binding decisions.

Consider reducing or waiving fees related to renovations that align with the goals of maintaining affordability, improving safety, and preserving the neighborhood character.

Assist property owners in identifying, applying for, and utilizing state or federal grants that support affordable housing improvements.

Help property owners obtain life safety variances that allow them to preserve the defining characteristics of their buildings, without sacrificing safety.

Offer financial support to help defray the costs of critical renovations, particularly for those willing to commit to maintaining affordable rental rates and voluntarily prohibiting short-term rentals (STRs).

These measures are intended to help property owners modernize and upgrade their buildings, while preventing out-of-scale development that could displace residents and alter the character of these iconic streets.

The Administration is requested to prepare recommendations based on the concepts outlined above and present them to the Committee for discussion.

ANALYSIS

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

Does this Ordinance require a Business Impact Estimate?

(FOR ORDINANCES ONLY)

If applicable, the Business Impact Estimate (BIE) was published on:

See BIE at: <https://www.miamibeachfl.gov/city-hall/city-clerk/meeting-notices/>

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

CONCLUSION

Applicable Area

Citywide

Is this a "Residents Right to Know" item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-17?

Yes

Is this item related to a G.O. Bond Project?

No

Was this Agenda Item initially requested by a lobbyist which, as defined in Code Sec. 2-481, includes a principal engaged in lobbying? No

If so, specify the name of lobbyist(s) and principal(s):

Department

Office of Commissioner Tanya K. Bhatt

Sponsor(s)

Commissioner Tanya K. Bhat

Co-sponsor(s)

Commissioner Kristen Rosen Gonzalez

Condensed Title

Ref: LUSC - Restoration Incentives for Historic Buildings on Collins and Washington Ave.
(Bhatt/Rosen Gonzalez)