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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 Certificate of Appropriateness for Demolition and Reconstruction of the interior floor plates of the Contributing Historic Structure Located at 100 21<sup>st</sup> Street, Miami Beach, FL**

Dear Mr. Mooney:

This firm represents BHI Miami Limited Corp, the applicant ("Owner" and "Applicant") for the proposed demolition and replacement of the interior floor plates 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 a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition and reconstruction of the remaining interior floor plates within the contributing structure in addition to the demotion previously approved by the Board. The Owner and development team are fully committed to delivering the Bvlgari Miami Beach as approved by the HPB, including the restoration of the northern contributing façade; however, the structural condition of the existing building necessitates a different approach than originally anticipated by both the owner and the City, as explained in more detail below and in the application materials.

On June 15, 2021, the HPB approved the Applicant's Application HPB20-0442 for a complete transformation of the 145-room Seagull Hotel into the 100-room, ultra-luxury Bvlgari Hotel Miami Beach (the "Project"). Design architect Citterio-Viel & Partners with the architect of record, Revuelta Architecture International, prepared the HPB approved plans. Importantly, as reflected in HPB approval, it was determined there were no remaining architecturally significant interior spaces and so the focus of the historic restoration was and is the northern street facing façade. Unfortunately, the construction of the Project was significantly delayed for two years by litigation with the Applicant's immediate neighbor, the Setai, which was finally resolved and now the master building permit has been issued and work has commenced on the Project.

Once work on the building began, the interior walls were stripped out and the ground floor slab was removed, as approved in the initial HPB order, allowing full access to the foundations and structural system for the first time. Much to everyone's surprise, a startling discovery was

made in the early summer of 2023. Contrary to the expected foundation system, it was discovered that this 8-story building was built solely on spread footings with no pile-supported structures.

As a result of this discovery, the entire structural approach to the Project had to be re-evaluated and changed. This required entirely new modeling and further evaluation of the structure to determine how to best approach to renovating, supporting the building and particularly the northern contributing façade in addition to supporting the approved rooftop addition. Additional engineers and consultants were brought in to help evaluate the situation to try to find a solution that could be carried out within the existing structure as originally envisioned in the HPB approved plans. It was initially thought that smaller pile driving equipment could be brought into the structure after the south wall was opened up to allow access and removal demolition debris. That would also require the removal of the entire ground floor slab and the bottom two floors slabs to provide access for the equipment to reach the foundations. This would also require multistory shoring and bracing inside the building.

The Engineer of record provided a narrative of potential sequencing for this approach, but also required further geotechnical technical, soils and concrete testing of the columns, beams and slabs along with engaging other specialty engineers and consultants.

The additional concrete core sampling and testing showed that the compressive strength of the concrete structure is inadequate throughout the building with less than half of design load of 4500-5000 PSI throughout. The average strength of the slabs is 2225 PSI and columns range from a low of 1134 psi with several areas ranging from 1300-1700 PSI and several others from 2100-2700 PSI and only one that reached 3100 PSI still fully 1/3 below the design specs. These results coupled with the lack of a pile supported foundations and structure raised significant new issues with both safety during construction and the ability of the existing structure to support and protect the contributing north façade during construction.

As result, the Applicant retained a shoring and bracing demolition specialty consultant, McLaren Engineering, which was engaged to study the Project's existing conditions, including the preservation of the North Façade and a portion of the West elevation per the approved HPB order, and arrive at the best methodology for securing these areas with bracing and shoring.

After several months of research and modeling, McLaren Engineering concluded that due to (1) the weakness of the existing structure and the risk of collapse during construction, (2) the need to have full access to construct new foundations for the building, (3) the resulting need to fully open up the south side of the building, which will then have to consider structural mitigation of lift forces and potential sail effect in the event of high winds and wind loads, including potential hurricane force winds through two hurricane seasons during construction, and (4) the primary goal of protecting and restoring the north façade and the safety of the construction workers on site, the best, and only truly safe, way to perform all necessary demolition and construction activities is to:

- 1) install new foundations (similar to the foundations for the tower cranes) and mount steel frames the full height of the north façade at strategic locations along the façade and a small portion of the western façade (currently anticipated to be between 7 and 9 steel frames) with necessary lateral bracing, to sandwich and support the north façade on both sides of the façade.

- 2) Once that is accomplished, the remainder of the interior slabs not already approved for demolition and other walls will be removed to allow for the reconstruction of the building behind the northern façade with new, code compliant foundations and building that will be coordinated with and attached to the north facade as it is constructed. Once the new structure and new support for the north façade is completed, the bracing will be removed and the necessary restoration of the façade will be completed along with the balance of the HPB Approved Project.

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.

N/A

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

N/A

- 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.

N/A

- 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 proposed scope of work 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.

N/A

- 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.

N/A

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

N/A

- 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.

N/A

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

N/A

- 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 Applicant continues to be excited for its ongoing renovation to the contributing Seagull Hotel structure, transforming it into the Bvlgari Hotel Miami Beach. Unfortunately, the existing building is not structurally sound and requires demolition and reconstruction behind the north face that will be preserved and restored to the greatest extent possible. The balance of the project remains consistent with this Board's approval of Application HPB20-0442. For the foregoing reasons, the Applicant respectfully submits the proposed project for review and approval by the Historic Preservation Board.

Sincerely,

*Carter N. McDowell*

Carter N. McDowell

Enclosures