

August 22, 2011

Mr. Eric Riel
Planning Director
City of Coral Gables
405 Biltmore Way
Coral Gables, Florida 33134

Re: Merrick Manor / Site Plan and Alley Vacation Application / Statement of Use

Dear Mr. Riel:

On behalf of MCI Laguna, LLC and 4111 LeJeune LLC (“Applicant”), I respectfully submit this statement of use in connection with the Mixed Use Site Plan and Alley Vacation Application which has been submitted for the Merrick Manor mixed use project. The Applicant proposes to demolish the structures which are currently erected on the property and to construct “Merrick Manor”, a 10 story mixed use project. The structure will consist of 188 high-end rental residential units with retail commercial space on the ground floor. The site is presently divided by an alley for which we seek closure to facilitate the development, and includes the City owned Trolley Building located at 4133 LeJeune Road which is the subject of a land swap proposal proposed by my client and presently being negotiated with City staff.

Applicant has submitted this application with the intent of fostering the sort of mixed use development which it believes is (1) desirable for the surrounding area, (2) compatible with the nearby “Village of Merrick Park”, (3) consistent with the goals and objectives of the City’s Comprehensive Plan and (4) complies with the conditional use criteria applicable to a mixed use site plan.

Benefits of Proposed Development

The area where the property is located is presently characterized by small retail and office buildings as well as the City’s Trolley Building, which are all designed in a rather non-descript manner. Merrick Manor would be a significant step towards addressing the residential and commercial needs of the City in a responsible manner, by limiting the height of buildings and utilizing the mixed use concept in order to address traffic issues. This project will also serve to improve the aesthetic of the surrounding area by utilizing the Mediterranean style of architecture for which the City is known. In addition, the City will be able to relocate its Trolley facility to a site better suited to accommodate the needs of the Trolley service with a new state of the art building.

Compatibility with the Village of Merrick Park

The Village of Merrick Park was inaugurated in the fall of 2002 as a cornerstone of the effort to redevelop this area of Coral Gables. Merrick Manor would further this redevelopment effort by facilitating the development of “higher end” residential and commercial uses which are compatible with the Village of Merrick Park. The proposed project would provide luxury residential units within walking distance of Merrick Park as well as expand the high end shopping and restaurant venues in the area.

Consistency with Comprehensive Plan

The proposed development is consistent with the following Goals, Objectives and Policies of the Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan:

Goal FLU-1. Protect, strengthen, and enhance the City of Coral Gables as a vibrant community ensuring that its neighborhoods, business opportunities, shopping, employment centers, cultural activities, historic value, desirable housing, open spaces, and natural resources make the City a very desirable place to work, live and play.

Objective FLU-1.7. When amendments to the Zoning Code are processed, discourage the proliferation of urban sprawl by including a regulatory framework for encouraging future infill and redevelopment within existing developed areas. In drafting the infill/redevelopment program, the City shall coordinate public and private resources necessary to initiate needed improvements and/or redevelopment within these areas.

Policy FLU-1.7.1. Encourage effective and proper high quality development of the Central Business District, the Industrial District and the University of Miami employment centers which offer potential for local employment in proximity to protected residential neighborhoods.

Objective FLU-1.11. Maintain a pattern of overall low density residential use with limited medium and high density residential uses in appropriate areas to preserve the low intensity and high quality character of the residential neighborhoods.

Objective DES-1.1. Preserve and promote high quality, creative design and site planning that is compatible with the City’s architectural heritage, surrounding development, public spaces and open spaces.

Policy DES-1.1.2. Provide for rigorous design guidelines, standards, and review processes via the City’s Zoning Code that ensure high quality design of buildings and spaces.

Objective DES-1.2. Preserve the Coral Gables Mediterranean design and architecture.

Policy DES-1.2.1. Continue the award of development bonuses and/or other incentives to promote Coral Gables Mediterranean design character providing for but not limited to the following: creative use of architecture to promote public realm improvements and pedestrian amenities; provide a visual linkage between contemporary architecture and the existing and new architectural fabric; encourage landmark opportunities; and creation of public open spaces.

Policy MOB-1.1.1. Promote mixed use development to provide housing and commercial services near employment centers, thereby reducing the need to drive.

Policy MOB-1.1.2. Encourage land use decisions that encourage infill, redevelopment and reuse of vacant or underutilized parcels that support walking, bicycling and public transit use.

Policy MOB-1.1.3. Locate higher density development along transit corridors and near multimodal stations.

The proposed Merrick Manor would help to realize the above goals objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan by bringing a well designed high-end residential and commercial development to an area that is underutilized. The development also incorporates the relocation of the Trolley service facility to a state of the art building that will enhance the transportation needs of the community at large.

Compliance with Conditional Use Criteria

We respectfully submit that this request for Site Plan approval satisfies the review criteria of Section 3-408 of the Zoning Code as follows:

A. The proposed conditional use is consistent with and furthers the goals, policies and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan and furthers the purposes of these regulations and other City ordinances and actions designed to implement the Plan.

As stated above, the development is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and will help realize the goal, objectives and policies thereof.

B. The available use to which the property may be put is appropriate to the property that is subject to the proposed conditional use and compatible with existing and planned uses in the area.

The proposed mixed residential and commercial use is appropriate and compatible with the surrounding area, which is characterized by residential, office, and commercial uses. Please note that the property is located within the City's Mixed Use Overlay District.

C. The proposed conditional use does not conflict with the needs and character of the neighborhood and the City.

The proposed development will not conflict with the needs and character of the neighborhood and City, but will be compatible and complimentary as discussed above.

D. The proposed conditional use will not adversely or unreasonably affect the use of other property in the area.

The proposed development will enhance the other properties in the area by increasing property values, providing new customers for existing businesses, and new retail options for existing residents.

E. The proposed use is compatible with the nature, condition and development of adjacent uses, buildings and structures and will not adversely affect the adjacent uses, buildings or structures.

The proposed mixed use is compatible with adjacent uses, buildings, and structures as discussed above and will not have an adverse impact on them.

F. The parcel proposed for development is adequate in size and shape to accommodate all development features.

The parcel is adequate to accommodate the development and is to scale with similar nearby developments.

G. The nature of the proposed development is not detrimental to the health, safety and general welfare of the community.

The proposed development is not detrimental to the health, safety, and welfare of the community. Please note that the residential and retail uses proposed do not constitute nuisances or noxious uses.

H. The design of the proposed driveways, circulation patterns and parking is well defined to promote vehicular and pedestrian circulation.

The proposed development has been designed to carefully address traffic related issues including circulation and parking.

I. The proposed conditional use satisfies the concurrency standards of Article 3, Division 13 and will not adversely burden public facilities, including the traffic-carrying capacities of streets, in an unreasonable or disproportionate manner.

The proposed project will comply with the City's concurrency standards.

In short, the proposed development will greatly benefit the area, and the City at large, by fostering development which is compatible with the rest of the City, and Merrick Park in particular, and create a mixed use neighborhood in an area which is presently unaesthetic and

disconnected, stylistically and functionally, from the rest of the City Beautiful. It will also provide for a much needed new state of the art Trolley Facility for the City which will help to enhance public transportation for all of the City's residents, visitors, and businesses. We urge your support of this request and look forward to working with you on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mario Garcia-Serra".

Mario J. Garcia-Serra