

**JORGE A. CAMEJO, AICP
1098 S.W. 10th Avenue
Boca Raton, Florida 33486**

July 11, 2017

Chairman Scott Singer
Vice Chairman Andrea Levine O'Rourke
Commissioner Susan Haynie
Commissioner Jeremy Rodgers
Commissioner Robert S. Weinroth
Boca Raton Community Redevelopment Agency
City Hall
201 West Palmetto Park Road
Boca Raton, FL 33432

Re: Mizner 200
CRP-16-01/16-97500007

Chairman Singer and Commissioners,

My name is Jorge Camejo. I believe I know most of the Commissioners of the Boca Raton Community Redevelopment Agency ("CRA") but I will provide a brief summary of my professional background. I retired from the City of Boca Raton after serving in many capacities, over a 28 year period, including Executive Director of the CRA and Development Services Director. Over my career I have had the privilege of working with many talented Architects, Developers and City leaders all of which were focused on making Boca Raton a premier destination. I take great pride in knowing that I played an important role in establishing the very successful redevelopment program that is in place today. Perhaps the most controversial project, in which I was involved, was Mizner Park. Mizner Park today is heralded as one of the best examples of mixed-use development in the United States. It amuses me to see the many local residents, who at the time vehemently opposed the approval of Mizner Park, speak of it today with such pride.

I have been asked to review the plans and provide my opinion regarding the Individual Development Approval for Mizner 200. Mizner 200 is located on a parcel of land, which is currently occupied by a rental residential project known as Mizner on the Green. Mizner of the Green played a significant role in the early evolution of Downtown Boca Raton because it was the first major residential development after the advent of Mizner Park in the early 1990's. The first test of the marketability of a Downtown residential project was Mizner Park and the second test was Mizner of the Green. The design and execution of Mizner on the Green was marginal, at best. However, those of us that had confidence in the strength of the Downtown residential market knew that someday there would be an opportunity to revisit this important parcel and Mizner 200 is that opportunity. Further, due to its relatively short height, Mizner on the Green did not adversely impact Mizner Boulevard and did prove the viability of residential development in Downtown as we hoped that it would. Downtown Boca Raton today does not

face the challenges and uncertainty of an unproven residential market as it did in 1990. Thus, the CRA is presented with an opportunity to revisit the development pattern of this significant parcel of land.

Mizner 200 is a well-designed high quality project with elegant architecture that will likely be very desirable in attracting condominium buyers. In formulating my opinion about Mizner 200 I have referred to the Downtown Development of Regional Impact Application (“DDRI Application”), the Design Guidelines of Ordinance 4035 and other historical documents, including the 1986 Beautification Plan (“1986 BP”) and past development applications submitted for review on other similarly sized major parcels of land in the Downtown.

I have also read the March 17, 2017 and the April 5, 2017 Memorandums from Ms. Kaitlyn Forbes of the Mellgren Planning Group. As well as the May 5, 2017 Vander Ploeg, Mummaw and Eisen letter (“Response Letter”) to Ms. Kaitlyn Forbes of the Mellgren Planning Group dated May 5, 2017. I concur with the historical discussion and conclusions of the Response Letter.

The subject parcel is clearly identified in the 1986 BP, which served as the “Downtown Master Plan” for submittal of the DDRI application. A copy of the 1986 BP cover sheet is attached. At the time, the 1986 BP presented the controversial idea of allowing significant residential density along the east side of Mizner Boulevard, at the edge of the Boca Raton Resort and Club Golf Course, on a parcel of land that was at that time zoned Recreation (REC). At .5 units per acre, the underlying REC Zoning did not provide sufficient density to accommodate the type of residential development that would be feasible or desirable along the east side of Mizner Boulevard for our emerging vision of the Downtown. Maintaining views in to the golf course and allowing light and air through future architecture were among the primary factors considered at that time in determining how future development of this land should occur. The parcel was included in the DDRI Application and was provided with the flexibility as required to accommodate the type of density that was anticipated. The low-rise profile of Mizner on the Green did not violate any of the major considerations related to building mass and, as stated previously, we knew there would be future opportunity for revisiting.

Mizner 200 proposes 384 condominium apartments and a building height of 100 feet. The building is placed along the edge of Mizner Boulevard with a central driveway, which provides the only architectural break along that entire street frontage. In sharp contrast, the east side of the project facing the golf course has vast open space, which is created by placement of the recreational amenities above the parking structure. As with most residential development, the open space in this case is oriented for the benefit of the residents of Mizner 200 and not toward the public realm. The proposed placement of such volume of height and bulk along the edge of Mizner Boulevard is in clear contrast to what was envisioned in the 1986 BP and will result in a far greater impact to this important edge than what exists today with Mizner on the Green. This placement will create a very urban edge along Mizner Boulevard that has always been contemplated to be a more suburban edge of the Downtown. Mizner Boulevard was never intended to be part of the Downtown core and should not be treated as such.

During my tenure with the City of Boca Raton, a structure of similar mass was presented for preliminary review by my staff. The project was submitted by Zom Development for the Via Mizner property at Camino Real and Federal Highway. The massing of the development provided a structure of 100 feet in height and a solid building plane along Federal Highway that stretched for approximately 600 feet without any break in the building mass. This proposal was met with strong opposition from me and my staff and the applicant ultimately withdrew the application. Subsequently, Via Mizner was approved and later revised with significant breaks between buildings. The Zom proposal and the Via Mizner approved plans are attached to the Response Letter.

Although the architecture and design of Mizner 200 is far superior to the Zom proposal, I fear that the impact of the height and bulk will be equally as adverse. Further, unlike the Zom development, which was proposed along Federal Highway in an area where a more urban pattern is appropriate, Mizner 200 is located in an area where height and bulk should be more suburban.

Recommendation

I believe there are relatively simple measures that can be taken to reduce the visual and physical impact of the proposed Mizner 200 project.

Widen the building separations at the center driveway.

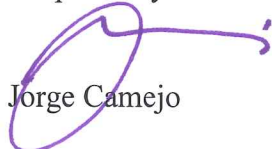
Provide two additional architectural breaks in the building mass along Mizner Boulevard. One to the north of the center driveway and one to the south of the center driveway.

Provide one additional architectural break in the building mass along the south property line.

The architectural breaks should occur at least at the 60 foot level and have a meaningful width.

The challenges faced by Boca Raton today is a symptom of our success. There is no question that East Boca Raton has become a very desirable residential market and the CRA should take appropriate measures to ensure that future projects will add value and not detract from the desirability currently enjoyed by Downtown Boca Raton. Open space is required for all redevelopment. However, open space related to major residential projects is oriented inward as opposed to commercial open space, which tends to be oriented toward the public realm. I believe the CRA should give serious consideration to direct staff to create additional design parameters that will enable staff to require proper placement of the required open space for all future residential projects.

Respectfully submitted,



Jorge Camejo



*1986
Beautification
Plan*

Federation of Homeowners April 5, 2005

Boca Raton CRA



