

**City of Coral Gables  
Planning Department Staff Report**

**To:** Honorable Planning and Zoning Board Members

**From:** Planning Department

**Date:** July 9, 2003

**Subject:** **Application No. 02-03-094-P, Change of Land Use, Rezoning and Site Plan Review.** Submitted by Guilford and Associates, P.A., applicant, Centro Educative Creciendo en Gracia, Inc., owners, for a residential, multi-family project to be known as "La Plaza de Zamora" for the property legally described as Lots 1-7, Block 43, Douglas Section (44 Zamora Avenue), Coral Gables, Florida, requesting the following:

Local Planning Agency (LPA) review for a Change of land use from "Religious/Institutional" to "Residential Use (Multi-Family) Medium Density" on Lots 1-5 as a pre-requisite for rezoning and site plan review to permit the construction of an eight (8) story multi-family building with 45 residential units.

Planning and Zoning Board review for:

1. Change of zoning from "SA-13", Special Use to "A-13", Apartment on Lots 1-5 to conform with proposed land use designation and permit the construction of a residential, multi-family project.
2. Site plan review for an eight (8) story multi-family building with 45 residential units proposed for construction on Lots 1-7.

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**Recommendation**

The Planning Department recommends approval of the applicant's request for the project referred to as "La Plaza de Zamora" located on Lots 1-7, Block 43, Douglas Section (44 Zamora Avenue), Coral Gables, Florida:

- a. Change of Land Use from "Religion/Institutional" to "Residential (Multi-Family) Medium Density" (Lots 1-5);
- b. Change of Zoning from "SA-13", Special Use to "A-13", Department (Lots 1-5); and
- c. Site Plan (entire site, Lots 1-7).

In furtherance of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan Goals, Objective and Policies, and the Zoning Code's provisions, the recommendation for approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. Installation of site improvements shall be in conformance with the following documents as modified:
  - a) Site plan, building elevations and building program prepared by Marshall Bellin and Associates Inc., dated June 24, 2003.
  - b) Landscape plan prepared by Michael Bedell, dated June 24, 2003.

## La Plaza de Zamora – Change of Land Use, Rezoning and Site Plan Review

July 9, 2003

Page 2

- c) Traffic Impact study prepared by Transport Analysis Professionals, Inc., dated January 27, 2003.
- d) All representations and exhibits prepared and provided to the Planning Department as a part of the application package submitted February 4th, 2003.
2. All conditions of approval recommended by the City Commission shall be included within a Restrictive Covenant prepared by the applicant with final review and approval by the City Attorney.
3. Prior to the issuance of any building permits for the project, the applicant, its successors or assigns, shall adhere to the following conditions:
  - a) Secure approval from the City Commission for all encroachments into public right-of-way, specifically, the proposed curb, paving and landscape improvements related to the provisions of on-street parking.
  - b) Review and approval of the buildings Mediterranean architectural style and granting of required Mediterranean bonuses by the Board of Architects.
  - c) All landscaped areas shall be irrigated with 100% coverage.
  - d) Maintain all landscaping as detailed on the landscaping plan, and replace all dead or non-complying plant materials in accordance with the plant materials identified on the approved landscape plan.

### **Request**

The applicant's request is for a change of land use, rezoning and site plan review to permit the construction of an eight story multi-family building with 45 residential units and 80 parking spaces to be constructed on the subject property. The applicant's submittal package containing the proposed site plan, landscaping plan, building elevations and support documentation is included as Attachment A.

#### *Required Local Planning Agency (LPA) Review*

The applicant is requesting is for a change of land use from "Religious/Institutional" to "Residential (Multi-Family) Medium Density" for Lots 1-5 of the subject property that is located on the south side of Zamora Avenue one block west of Douglas Road and across the street from the Merrick Educational Center School. The change in land use is necessary to redevelop the site with a residential, multi-family project. The proposed "Medium Density" designation allows for a project with a maximum height of six stories (eight stories with Mediterranean bonuses), and 40 units per acre (50 units per acre with Mediterranean homes).

Change in land use requires review and recommendation by the Local Planning Agency (Planning and Zoning Board) and review by the City Commission at public hearings. This proposal is considered a "small scale" amendment according to the thresholds established by Florida Statutes. Therefore, no state required impact analysis is necessary and no Department of Community Affairs review is required. The City is only required to transmit to DCA a certified copy of the adopting ordinance and location map after second reading by the City Commission.

#### *Required Planning and Zoning Board Review*

## La Plaza de Zamora – Change of Land Use, Rezoning and Site Plan Review

July 9, 2003

Page 3

The Planning and Zoning Board are reviewing the applications based upon the following:

1. Change in Zoning. Zoning Code Section 3-4, "A-Use District" allows developments consisting of residential, multi-family dwelling units. The property's current zoning designation is "SA-13", Special Use. A change of zoning to "A", Apartment is required.
2. Site Plan Review. Zoning Code Section 25-5(f) provides that when considering an application for a change of zoning, the Board "may recommend to the City Commission that any ordinance passed a adopted in connection with the rezoning shall provide that the proposed building shall be in accordance with the plans submitted with the rezoning application or subsequently revised during the hearings." Approval of the proposed site plan requires adoption in ordinance form following review and recommendation by the Planning and Zoning Board and approval by the City Commission at public hearings.

### **Background**

#### *Development History and Configuration of the Property*

The subject property is 0.91 acres (39,600 square feet) in size and consists of seven platted lots (Lots 1-7). The site is 110' deep and has 360' frontage onto Zamora Avenue. The property is located in the City's Apartment District, which has the City's highest concentration of multi-family residential buildings.

The site is currently occupied by Temple Zamora (Lots 1-5) and two (2) story apartment buildings (Lots 6 and 7) containing a total of twelve (12) residential dwelling units. The temple contains 11,154 square feet and is currently vacant, and the apartment buildings contain 5,312 square feet. There is no available on-site parking for any of the property's existing uses. Twenty-eight (28) on-street parking spaces are located adjacent to the property, along Zamora Avenue (24 spaces) and Galiano Street (4 spaces). These existing parking spaces are not metered, and are available to church patrons, apartment residents, as well as by other surrounding properties.

The apartment buildings were constructed in the 1940's, and the temple was constructed in the 1950's. The Historic Resources Department has reviewed the properties existing structures, and found that they do not meet the minimum eligibility criteria for designation as a local historic landmark.

Ordinance No. 1096 was adopted by the City on July 29, 1958 that changed the zoning on Lots 1-5 to "S", Special Use permitting the construction of the existing church. Conditions were included in the adopting ordinance at the time of approval. Three of those conditions which dealt with the physical development of the property are as follows:

1. Fifty-three percent (53 %) of the property may be built upon.
2. The grass parkways in front of the property and across the street shall be removed and replaced with paving and proper drainage facilities.
3. The rear of property shall be landscaped and maintained in good condition, and shall be landscaped and maintained at the direction of the City Manager.

*Staff comments:* There would be a net increase in residential units of thirty-three (33) units as a result of this project (45 proposed units – 12 existing units). A total 80 on-site parking spaces will be provided. As noted previously, no off-street parking exists for the current uses. When the Temple was originally approved by the City, on-street parking was provided on both sides of

## La Plaza de Zamora – Change of Land Use, Rezoning and Site Plan Review

July 9, 2003

Page 4

Zamora Avenue and no parking was provided on-site. Both of these issues are addressed and incorporated in the applicant's proposal.

### *Existing Land Use and Zoning Designation*

The property has two land use and zoning designations. Lots 1-5 is assigned "Religious/Institutional" land use and "SA-13", Special Use Zoning designation. Lots 6 and 7 is assigned "Residential (Multi-Family) Medium Density" land use and "A-13", Apartment Zoning designations. Lots 1-5 of the subject property require a change of land use and zoning to residential, multi-family designations to accommodate the proposed project.

### *Surrounding Uses.*

The property is surrounded by the following existing land uses and zoning designations:

| <i>Location</i> | <i>Existing Land Use</i>          | <i>Land Use Designation</i>                 | <i>Zoning Designation</i> |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| North           | Merrick Educational Center School | "Educational Use"                           | "S", Special Use          |
| South           | 2-4 Story apartment buildings     | "Residential (Multi-Family) Medium Density" | "A-15", Apartment         |
| East            | 2 story apartment buildings       | "Residential (Multi-Family) Medium Density" | "A-13", Apartment         |
| West            | 2 story apartment buildings       | "Residential (Multi-Family) Medium Density" | "A-13", Apartment         |

### *Future Approved Mid-Rise Developments.*

There are a number of high (13-16 story) and mid-rise (6-8 story) projects permitted or proposed within a one to two block distance from this site. Two eight story multi-family residential projects have been submitted for Building and Zoning Department building permit on Zamora Avenue to the west (across Galiano Street). Two high and mid-rise commercial mixed-use projects are also being proposed along Ponce de Leon Boulevard. The Douglas Grand project, which is eight stories and now nearing completion, is located across Zamora Avenue to the north. There are already existing mid-rise buildings constructed to the south, facing into Majorca Avenue and Alhambra Entrance.

*Staff comments:* This proposed project is located in an area of the Apartment District in an area where a concentration of mid and high-rise projects are proposed or already exist. These projects are being constructed around Philips Park, which serves as both the open space and the focal point of this residential, multi-family neighborhood. The applicant has provided a massing analysis of surrounding properties within their submittal.

## **Discussion**

### *Building Program and Massing*

The proposal includes the demolition of all three existing structures on the property. The new eight (8) story structure constructed in their place would contain 45 living units. Eighty (80) on-site parking spaces are provided on two levels, one level with 55 spaces below the building (below ground) and 25 spaces provided at the building's ground level. A roof top terraced patio and pool deck would be available to building residents on the eighth floor (south side). The proposed 45

## La Plaza de Zamora – Change of Land Use, Rezoning and Site Plan Review

July 9, 2003

Page 5

residential living units are within the maximum permitted range of “Residential (Multi-Family) Medium Density” land use designation (Mediterranean bonuses - 50 units/acre).

A detailed building program describing the proposed project is provided in the applicant’s submittal package (Attachment A). A summary of the key components of the proposed plan are compared with Zoning Code requirements as follows:

| <b>Zoning Code Provision</b>                         | Zoning Code Requirements     | Proposed                     |
|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Maximum FAR (square feet) with Mediterranean bonuses | 1.90 FAR<br>(75,240 sq. ft.) | 1.87 FAR<br>(73,884 sq. ft.) |
| Maximum density with Mediterranean bonuses           | 45 units or 50 u/ac.         | 45 units                     |
| Maximum height feet with Mediterranean bonuses       | 8 floors (97'-0")            | 8 floors (92'-4")            |
| Maximum lot coverage with Mediterranean bonuses      | 11,720 sq. ft.               | 11,550 sq. ft.               |
| Minimum landscaped open space                        | 9,990 sq. ft.                | 16,248 sq. ft.               |
| Minimum on-site parking                              | 80 spaces                    | 80 spaces                    |
| Maximum number of floors                             | 3 floors                     | 8 floors                     |

*Staff comments:* The existing “Religious/Institutional” land use and “S”, Special Use zoning designation would allow for a building with a maximum height of 3 stories (45 feet) and an FAR of 2.0. While the proposed eight (8) story building is higher than the maximum three (3) stories allowed under the current “S”, Special Use Zoning, the proposed size of the building (1.87 FAR) is less than that permitted by the existing “Religious/Institutional” land use designation (maximum 2.0 FAR).

### *Traffic and Parking*

The applicant is required to provide 80 on-site parking spaces, which are provided within below ground and at grade levels of parking. Access to the building’s parking is from Galiano Street. The parking entrance is gated and only available to building residents. Thirty (30) on-street parking spaces would be provided in front of the project replacing the 24 existing unimproved spaces. These on-street parking spaces do not count towards the project’s parking requirements, but would be paved, guttered and striped according to the requirements of the Code and reviewed by the Public Works Department. Two of the existing four (4) parallel on-street parking spaces along Galiano Street would become a loading zone. There would be an overall net gain of four (4) on-street parking spaces, and the existing deteriorating condition of the existing parking spaces would be improved. All work (encroachments) proposed within the public right-of-way would require City review and approval.

This proposal would provide thirty (30) on-street spaces available for use by Merrick School and other surrounding properties. Peak use of these on-street spaces are staggered, with school use occurring earlier in the afternoon than the PM peak hour traffic.

The applicant prepared a Traffic Generation Study for the proposed project which determined that the traffic created at the P.M. peak hour would be relatively low and the Level of Service (LOS) on both Galiano Street and Zamora Avenue unchanged. Galiano Street is functioning at a LOS of A, and Zamora Avenue at LOS of B. No roadway improvements were recommended as necessary to accommodate site traffic. The applicant’s traffic study and conclusions were reviewed and

## La Plaza de Zamora – Change of Land Use, Rezoning and Site Plan Review

July 9, 2003

Page 6

confirmed by Public Works staff. The study is on file and with the Planning Department.

*Staff comments:* This proposal would improve the existing parking situation by providing all required parking on-site, and improving and increasing the number of on-street parking spaces available for use by surrounding properties.

### *Landscaping*

The applicant proposes the installation of a perimeter column and fence enclosure and a wide variety of overstory trees, palms, shrubs and ground cover. A continuous hedge is proposed along the inside of the fence along the front and west side property line. Groupings of tree and plant species would be installed between the perimeter fence and building. Accent plantings and specimen palms are located at the corners of the property.

Along the rear property line is a continuous landscaped buffer consisting of canopied trees, palms and hedge material. These plantings are proposed to be installed in front of the four foot high masonry wall which separates the building's below ground parking and the rear property line. This landscape buffer is intended to screen the building's parking from the apartment buildings behind the property.

*Staff comments:* Maintaining the proposed landscaping is important reducing the impact of the building on surrounding properties. This is especially true along the rear property line that is adjacent to the building's on-site parking. In order to assure that the plantings installed fulfill that need, Staff is recommending that all landscaping be 100% irrigated, and all dead plant materials that expire be replaced as a condition of approval.

### *Compliance with Charrette Recommendations*

The 2000 Coral Gables Charrette Report included design and policy recommendations regarding the North Ponce Apartment District. The following recommendations address the North Ponce District and are applicable to the proposed development.

#### Design recommendations:

- “4. Develop a master streetscape plan for all Downtown and North Ponce streets to enhance the city as a Garden City, with an emphasis on pedestrian comfort as follows: maximize sidewalk width; add shade trees to increase tree canopy; minimize vehicular lane widths; maximize on-street parking; preserve commercial/retail visibility; access and accentuate mid-block crossings; design aesthetically pleasing lighting; select plant material types to relate to street scale; and promote increased urban open space in safe, accessible areas. Encourage the use of innovative design and planting techniques, including structural soil, to insure survivability of plant material.
16. Reinforce five identifiable communities in North Ponce area, per prior study, with a streetscape that establishes identity and a special green space for each community.”

#### Policy recommendations:

- “1. Consolidate dense development and redevelopment of Downtown to enhance the public realm and its transit friendliness and walkability.

## **La Plaza de Zamora – Change of Land Use, Rezoning and Site Plan Review**

**July 9, 2003**

**Page 7**

14. Preserve historic apartment buildings in North Ponce and develop methodology for implementation thereof.
15. Preserve North Ponce as the City's neighborhood for affordable rental housing.
16. Revise zoning code to promote infill building in North Ponce that is compatible with historic types, with parking behind habitable space fronting sidewalks to ensure eyes on the street."

*Staff comments:* This proposal would create residential density in the area of the City intended for high density multi-family development. This proposal conceals on-site parking behind and under the building, and places the building towards the front of the property which provides "eyes on the street" for additional community security. The City's Historic Resources Department has examined the property's existing three structures and determined that they are not suitable candidates for designation as local historic landmarks.

### *Zoning Code Mediterranean Design Bonuses and Mixed-Use Provisions*

The proposed plan relies on the provisions within the Zoning Code that allows an increase in building height, density (units per acre) and lot coverage. Specifically the Mediterranean Bonuses (Section 28-5) have been requested by the applicant. The Mediterranean Design Bonuses allow the maximum building height to increase from six (6) stories to eight (8) stories, density from 40 to 50 units per acre, and to increase lot coverage according to a bonus formula awarded for design features. The Board of Architects reviews aesthetics of proposed structures and grants bonuses for Mediterranean design.

*Staff comments:* The Board of Architects has not yet reviewed this proposal, or considered the applicant's requests for Mediterranean bonuses. This proposal requires the granting of Mediterranean bonuses by the Board of Architects. Therefore, receiving approval from the Board of Architects has been included as a condition of approval with this Staff report.

### *Concurrency Management*

This project has been reviewed for compliance with the City's concurrency program. The Concurrency Impact Statement issued by the Building and Zoning Department for the proposed development (copy included in application package – see Attachment A) does indicate that there is not adequate water flow available for the project. The applicant has met with Public Works Staff, and has agreed that increased water flow capacity to the site would have to be provided to the site at their cost.

### *City Staff Comments*

The Planning Department requested review by the City Manager's Office, Building and Zoning Department, Public Works Department, Public Service Department and Police Department. Comments were submitted to the Planning Department from the Public Works and Police Departments. The applicant has met with each of those departments and has satisfactorily addressed their concerns.

## **Comprehensive Land Use Plan Analysis**

## La Plaza de Zamora – Change of Land Use, Rezoning and Site Plan Review

July 9, 2003

Page 8

Planning Department review of the applicant's proposal finds the application is consistent and furthers the following Comprehensive Plan Goals, Objectives and Policies:

“GOAL 1-1: ENHANCE FUTURE LAND USES CONSISTENT WITH NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY AND ITS RESOURCES. The City of Coral Gables Establishes the Land Use Goal to Maintain and Enhance the Extraordinary Character and Quality of Land Uses Within the City in Meeting the Aesthetic, Physical, Social, Cultural, Economic, Natural and Man Made Environmental Needs of its Residents and Visitors in a Manner That Will Balance Immediate and Long Term Community Interests and Resources in the Orderly Protection of the Population's Health, Safety, and Welfare.

OBJECTIVE 1-1.2: CONTROL BLIGHT AND PROMOTED REDEVELOPMENT. Efforts shall be made to control blighting influences, and redevelopment shall be encouraged in areas experiencing deterioration. This Objective shall be achieved through the implementation of the following policies.

POLICY 1-1.3.2: APPLICATION OF BUFFERING TECHNIQUES. Uses designated in the plan which cause significant noise, light, glare, odor, vibration, dust, hazardous conditions or industrial traffic, shall provide buffering when located adjacent to or across the street from incompatible uses such as residential uses.

POLICY 1-1.3.3: LIMITATIONS ON POTENTIALLY DISRUPTIVE USES. Normally disruptive uses may be permitted on sites within related districts only where proper design solutions are demonstrated and committed to in advance which will be used to integrate the uses so as to buffer any potentially incompatible elements.

OBJECTIVE 1-1.7: DISCOURAGE URBAN SPRAWL. Discourage the proliferation of urban sprawl by amending the land development regulations to include 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.

OBJECTIVE 1-1.11: RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PATTERN. Maintain a pattern of overall low density residential use with limited medium, and high density residential uses in selected areas to preserve the low intensity character of the residential neighborhoods. This Objective shall be achieved through the implementation of the following policies.”

### **Conclusions**

1. This proposal is consistent with the goals, objectives and policies of the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan.
2. As recommended by the 2000 Coral Gables Charrette Report, this project conceals on-site parking and provides for “eyes on the street”.
3. This proposal would create residential density in the area of the City intended for high density multi-family infill development (Apartment District).
4. There is a high concentration of mid and high-rise projects in this area of the Apartment District that are either propose or permitted which surround and focus on Philips Park.
5. The proposed size of the building (1.87 FAR) is less than permitted under the property's existing “Religious/Institutional” land use designation (maximum 2.0 FAR)
6. All required parking for the project is provided on-site, and an additional thirty (30) improved on-street parking spaces would be available for use by surrounding properties.
7. Previous approvals for the development of this property identified a need for the provision of on-

**La Plaza de Zamora – Change of Land Use, Rezoning and Site Plan Review**  
**July 9, 2003**  
**Page 9**

street parking along both sides of Zamora Avenue, and buffering of adjacent properties with landscape screening, which have been addressed by the applicant.

8. This City's Historic Resources Department has determined that the property's three existing structures are not suitable candidates for designation as historic landmarks.

**Timeline**

This application is tentatively scheduled for City Commission review and consideration as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Reading Tuesday, August 26, 2003, 9:00 a.m.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading Tuesday, September 9, 2003, 9:00 a.m.

Dates and time are subject to change.

**Public Notification/Comments**

Planning Staff requested the applicant conduct a neighborhood meeting to solicit input on the proposed plan. The applicant held a neighborhood meeting on Monday, June 30, 2003. Copies of the mailing list, notification and sign in list are available for review in Planning Department's project file.

Staff mailed out notifications to all property owners within 1,000 feet of the subject request to advise them of the request and provide an opportunity to comment on the application. The listing of property owners who returned the notification/comment form, including the date received, property owners' name, address, legal description, object/no objection/no comment and verbatim comments are attached as Attachment C. A copy of the published newspaper notification of this public hearing item is included as Attachment D.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Riel, Jr.  
Planning Director

**Attachments:**

- A. Applicant's submittal package.
- B. Map of proposed projects surrounding subject property.
- C. Synopsis of comments received from property owners within 1,000 feet.
- D. Copy of published newspaper notification (advertisement)

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