

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

To: Honorable Planning and Zoning Board Members

From: Planning Department

Date: October 8, 2003

Subject: **Application No. 07-03-109-P – Mixed Use Site Plan Review and Conditional Use Request.** Submitted by Merrick Trust, LLC, applicant/owner, requesting site plan review and Conditional Use approval for the proposed commercial mixed-use project referred to as “55 Merrick Way”, located on the property legally described as Lots 1-16 and 24-36, Block 31, Section “L” (55 Merrick Way), Coral Gables, Florida. The proposal consists of an eight (8) story, 84’ high building containing first floor retail, commercial office use, multi-family residential units, parking garage and drive-thru bank teller facility.

Recommendation

The Planning Department recommends the following for the proposed commercial mixed-use project referred to as “55 Merrick Way”, located on Lots 1-16 and 24-36, Block 31, Section “L” (55 Merrick Way), Coral Gables, Florida:

- a) Site plan approval to permit the construction of a mixed use project consisting of an eight (8) story, 84’ high building containing first floor retail, commercial office use, multi-family residential units and parking garage; and,
- b) Conditional use to permit the proposed drive-through bank-teller facility.

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 subject to the recommendations and conditions contained herein:
 - a) Site plan, building elevations and building program prepared by Fullerton Diaz Architects, Inc. dated September 30, 2003.
 - b) Landscape plan prepared by Fullerton Diaz Architects, Inc. and dated September 16, 2003.
 - c) Traffic Impact study prepared by Civil Works, Inc. and dated June 2003.
 - d) All representations and exhibits prepared and provided to the Planning Department as a part of the application package submitted on July 2003.
2. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, 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. The applicant shall secure approval from the City Commission for the vacated alley and the associated conditions contained within the Restrictive Covenant proffered by the applicant as a

part of the alley vacation proceedings. The Restrictive Covenant and the conditions proffered shall be reviewed and approved by the City Attorney and Planning Director. All costs associated with the conditions of the Restrictive Covenant shall be the responsibility of the applicant, successor or assigns.

4. Provide pedestrian and vehicular access to all building facilities and adjoining properties on that portion of the alley that is not being vacated, this shall include access to sanitation facilities, and other associated service needs of the adjoining properties. This access shall be prior to, during and after construction.
5. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant, its successors or assigns, shall complete the following:
 - a) Apply for and secure administrative review and approval for building setback relief (0' setback proposed) as permitted for Mediterranean buildings located within the City's Central Business District (CBD) pursuant to Zoning Code Section 28-5 (a) 2.
 - b) Review and approval of proposed landscape encroachments by the City's Landscape Encroachment Review Committee and Beautification Committee.
 - c) Submission and approval from the Building and Zoning Department of a construction parking and traffic management plan.
 - d) The applicant shall construct and provide for use by tenants of adjoining commercial building located on Lots 37-39 on the northwest corner of Block 31 a trash dumpster enclosure. The trash dumpster enclosure shall be located on the east side of the building's service corridor, across from the subject adjoining commercial building.
 - e) Provide physical improvements to remaining portions of public alleyway that have not been vacated. Review and approval of proposed improvements shall be provided by the Directors of Planning, Public Works and Public Service.
 - f) As proffered by applicant, no commercial signage shall be permitted above the building's third floor.
 - g) Payment shall be provided by applicant, its successors or assigns according to established City requirements for the loss of nine (9) on-street parking spaces resulting from this proposed project.
 - h) All costs associated with the installation of landscaping, irrigation, maintenance any other improvements contained herein and within the rights-of-way, etc., shall be the responsibility of the applicant.
 - i) 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.
 - m) All landscaped areas shall be irrigated with 100% coverage.
6. The Deed Restriction as required for the adjoining Hyatt Hotel shall remain in effect and shall be included by reference or included in the required Restrictive Covenant.

Request

The proposed site plan, landscaping plan, building elevations, vehicle and pedestrian circulation plans and other related support materials are included in the applicant's submittal package (binder) as Attachment A.

Planning and Zoning Board Review

This project requires site plan review and recommendation by the Planning and Zoning Board for

the commercial mixed-use site plan and conditional use request. The Zoning Code provisions are as follows:

1. *Site Plan Review*

The Planning and Zoning Board and City Commission review commercial mixed-use projects based on the following provisions contained in Section 3-5, "Mixed-Use District Regulations" of the Zoning Code:

- a) To be eligible as a commercial mixed-use project and bonus provisions, a property must be zoned "C", Commercial, and located within Mixed-Use District No. 1 as defined in that section of the Code.
- b) All applications (for mixed-use approval) shall be reviewed in accordance with Articles 23 and 25 of the Zoning Code, and will require site plan review by the Planning and Zoning Board, with appeal to the City Commission.

All applications for mixed-use projects are to be reviewed according to the following standards:

"Sec. 3-5. Mixed-use district regulations. (2734)

- (a) Mixed-uses. These regulations are intended to allow the harmonious mix of complementary uses within a single development. They are intended to promote efficiency of land use, provide convenience, decrease vehicular traffic and encourage greater housing options. Developers wishing to utilize the mixed use provisions outlined herein shall so indicate on their submitted plans.*
- (b) Mixed-use District No. 1. Commercial Use Districts. The standards set forth herein are to encourage the mix of residential uses into commercial development. All regulations of the underlying use district shall remain in effect except as otherwise specified herein. Whenever a conflict exists between these standards are regulations in other sections of this Code, the standards set forth herein shall supersede. All applications shall be reviewed in accordance with Articles 23 and 25 of the Zoning Code, and will require site plan review by the Planning & Zoning Board, with appeal to the City Commission. (3326)"*

2. *Conditional Use Request*

Section 6-3, "Restaurant Drive-In Service Windows and Drive-In or Walk-Up Tellers" of the Zoning Code allows for the approval of drive-in service windows and tellers as a conditional use by resolution after recommendation of the proposed site plan by the Planning and Zoning Board and consideration by the City Commission at a public hearing. Section 6-3 of the Zoning Code requires that the following be submitted with the proposed site plan:

- (b) That architectural plans, including a site plan, shall be submitted with the application. The plans shall have been approved by the Board of Architects and such plans shall have also been reviewed and a favorable recommendation made by the Public Works Department. Such plans shall show location and dimensions of all proposed structures, adequate on-site storage or stacking lanes, adequate off-street loading areas, adequate landscaping, adequate refuse and service areas, adequate yards and open space and provisions for ingress and egress of traffic and pedestrians. The plans shall also show all proposed signs and lighting. The operation of such restaurant drive-in service windows and/or drive-in and/or walk-up tellers shall be so conducted that it will not interfere with the circulation of pedestrian or vehicular traffic on the adjoining streets, alleys, or sidewalks.*

Background

Property’s Development History and Existing Uses

The project site is 93,029 square feet, or approximately 2.1 acres in size, and is an assemblage of a number of separate properties. These include: 1) the three story Elk’s Lodge (Lots 1-6); 2) one and two story commercial buildings facing onto Merrick Way, including an existing restaurant, clothing store, professional office and vacant liquor store (Lots 24-36); 3) abandoned service station (Lots 7-10); 4) a 47 space surface parking lot (Lots 11-16); and, 5) a 20’ wide public alleyway. Ordinance No. 1254 was approved by the City in September, 1961 allowing the construction of the service station which would not otherwise be allowed under the property’s existing zoning designation (see Attachment B).

A 41 parking space Deed Requirement also exists on the property. This is required parking for the Hyatt Hotel, located to the north, across Giralda Avenue. Any proposal to develop the subject property must include the provision of 41 parking spaces in addition to the parking required for the project itself (see Attachment C).

Surrounding Uses

The property is located within the City’s Central Business District (CBD) and is surrounded by the following existing uses and land use and zoning designations:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Existing Land Uses</u>	<u>CLUP Map Designations</u>	<u>Zoning Designations</u>
North	13 story Hyatt Hotel	“Commercial, High-Rise”	“CB”, Commercial
South	15 story Starwood project	“Commercial, High-Rise”	“CB”, Commercial
East	Sears – 2 story commercial building and surface parking	City of Miami	City of Miami
West	15 story Starwood project and 8 story public parking garage	“Commercial, High and Mid-Rise	“CB”, Commercial

Staff Comment: The project is surrounded by mid and high-rise commercial and mixed-use buildings, except for the three 1 and 2 story commercial buildings that remain on this block, and two 1-story commercial buildings located on the block across Merrick Way.

Land Use and Zoning Designation

The property has a “Commercial, Mid-Rise Intensity” land use designation which allows a maximum six (6) story commercial building (up to 8 stories with Mediterranean bonuses) and a maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 3.0 (up to 3.5 FAR with Mediterranean bonuses). The property is zoned “CB” and “XCB”, Commercial, which conforms to its commercial land use designation. The “X” designation applies to Lots 7-10 and portion of Lot 11, which are located on the northeast corner of the subject property, and is to permit automobile service station and retail store use. If those lots

are not used for that purpose, the zoning reverts back to its original designation as “CB”, Commercial. Both the property’s land use and zoning designations are appropriate for the proposed commercial mixed-use project.

Discussion

Proposed Site Plan

The proposed project would consist of an eight (8) story structure with a height of 84’-8”. The project is functionally divided into two components by a ground floor service corridor between Douglas Road and Giralda Avenue. The portion of the project facing Merrick Way contains ground floor retail, two floors of commercial office space with the remainder of the project consisting of multi-family residential units. The portion of the project which faces onto Douglas Road and Giralda Avenue contains ground floor retail, four levels of parking with the remainder of the project consisting of multi-family residential units.

The building’s service areas are contained within the interior of the project. The proposed service corridor occupies the same location as the existing public alley, and all building services, as well as a vehicular roundabout drop-off, are provided along the corridor. An open air pedestrian arcade passes through the building and connects Merrick Way and the vehicular drop-off. The service corridor would permit two-way traffic between Douglas Road and Giralda Avenue, however, entrance for delivery trucks and service vehicles would only be from Douglas Road. A two lane drive-thru bank teller facility is being proposed, with the entrance to the drive-thru lanes from Giralda, and exit through the service corridor back onto Giralda. Access in and out of the project’s structured parking is also from Giralda Avenue.

Proposed Mix of Uses

The proposed mixed-use project would require the demolition of all existing buildings on the property. The new eight (8) story structure would contain retail, commercial office, multi-family residential and parking garage components. No specific tenants have been identified by the applicant, however, bank and gymnasium uses are proposed to occupy building space on the ground floor facing Douglas Road.

A total of 44,536 square feet of retail space would be located on the ground floor of the project around the perimeter of the site. The project’s 579 space parking garage and 36,864 square feet of commercial office occupy floors 2-4 of the building. The commercial office component of the project faces onto Merrick Way. 181 residential units are proposed in the upper four floors of the structure.

A pool deck with landscaping for use by the residents is located on the fifth floor, and would be surrounded by the four stories of residential units.

Building Program and Massing

The applicant’s plans propose a building which covers the entire property. The structure is eight (8) stories with a height of 84’-8” T.O.S. The structure is proposed to be built to the property line (0’ setback) around the entire perimeter of the site. The structure would be built over the public alleyway, which the applicant is requesting that the City vacate, and would function as a service corridor for the project. The additional development rights obtained by the applicant from the vacation of the alleyway are proposed to be added to the project’s total FAR.

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A summary, of the key components of the Building Program taken from the Building and Zoning Department's Zoning Analysis (see Attachment D) of this project are as follows:

General

Land Use Designation:	Commercial Mid-Rise Intensity
Existing Zoning District	"CB" and "XCB"
Within Central Business District:	Yes
Applicable Overlay District:	Mixed-Use District No. 1
Setbacks"	Proposed 0' 0" requires Administrative approval pursuant to Zoning Code Section 28-5(a)2.
Permitted Height:	6 stories – 70'0" T.O.S./with Mediterranean bonuses – 8 stories – 97'0" T.O.S.
Proposed Height:	8 stories or 84'-8" T.O.S.
Site Area:	93,029 sq. ft.
Permitted FAR:	3.0/with Mediterranean bonuses 3.5
Proposed FAR:	3.5 or 322,214 sq. ft.
Landscape Open Space Required:	10% of site or 9,302 sq. ft. – may require off site landscape mitigation as provided for by as Zoning Code Section 28-5(a) 1.
% FAR Mix For MU-1 25% Commercial Minimum	25% commercial provided

Parking Required

Commercial:	227 spaces
Residential Units:	271 spaces
Supplemental as Required per Code:	27 spaces
Deed Requirement	41 spaces
Total Required Parking	566 spaces
Parking Provided	579 spaces
Additional Parking Above Required	13 spaces

Proposed Public Alley Vacation

Two 20' wide public alleyways bisect the property into three separate parcels. The two alleyways meet in the center of the property and form a "T" configuration. The applicant is requesting that they be vacated so that the property can be developed as a single, contiguous site. The approximate area of these public alleyways is 8,750 square feet, or 0.2 acres. The applicant's request to vacate the alley is being processed concurrently with this site plan review, and will be considered by the City Commission at the same public hearing.

The applicant realizes significant benefits from the vacation of these public alleyways. In addition to the creation of a single contiguous development site, approximately 30,625 square feet more structure could be constructed (8,750 sq. ft. alley area x 3.5 FAR). This represents an additional 10% increase in the total size of the building which could be constructed if the public alleys had not been vacated.

Staff comment: The City's Street and Alley Vacation Committee has requested a significant amount of off-site landscaping and improvements to compensate and provide public benefit for the vacation of these alleyways. These improvements include streetscape improvements to public right-of-ways which adjoin this property, traffic improvements to surrounding intersections and landscape improvements to three medians along Ponce according to the North Ponce Improvement Plan. This has been included as a condition of approval. Those improvements proffered by the applicant will be discussed at which time the alley vacation is reviewed by the City Commission. The City Attorney and Planning Director will review and finalize the proffered conditions prior to City Commission consideration of alley vacation.

The adjoining commercial building located on the northwest corner of block 31 shall require a trash dumpster enclosure if the alleyway is vacated, which is recommended to be provided by the applicant as a condition of approval.

Landscaping and Pedestrian Amenities

The building is proposed to be constructed on the property line on all sides; therefore, required landscaping is proposed to be installed off-site. The provision of off-site landscaping for an approved Mediterranean building located within the CBD must be administratively approved by the City. The landscaping plan submitted by the applicant proposes streetscape improvements to the streets adjoining the project, traffic improvements to surrounding intersections and landscaping of Ponce de Leon Boulevard medians. The specific off-site improvements included in a Restrictive Covenant submitted by the applicant as requested by the City's Street and Alley Vacation Committee regarding the proposed alley vacation request is as follows:

A. On Site Right of Way Improvements

1. Traffic capacity improvement device in the form of a Roundabout at Merrick and Aragon intersection, with landscaping, pavers and a fountain.
2. Interior drop off for residents and guests for 55 Merrick Way as part of the public access easement created within the alley to be "vacated". This area will include another roundabout, landscaping and a paver/Coral Gables Pink Concrete treatment.

B. Right of Way Improvements adjacent to our site:

1. With County approval and input from their Public Works Department, as well as the City's Public Works Department, we will be developing an improved traffic condition at the intersections of Merrick Way, Giralda and Galiano. Currently there are two confusing traffic light intersections which create an average of 2 accidents a week. The new plan will improve the flow of traffic and at the same time create a safer, more traditional 4 way stop.
2. Additional landscaping on the north side of Giralda and extended areas of Merrick Way.

C. Off Site Contributions. Merrick Trust LLC has proposed to fund the creation of a Citywide Landscape Master Plan as suggested at the City's Charrette. The Applicant has also agreed to fund the cost of landscaping three medians along Ponce de Leon, from Alhambra Circle, north towards Alcazar Avenue.

Staff Comment: These off-site landscaping and traffic improvements have been included as a condition of approval.

Parking and Traffic Circulation

The applicant is providing all required parking and is not requesting a reduction in required parking for the mixed-use project as permitted in the Code. The proposed project provides 588 on-site parking spaces, which is 16 more than the 572 parking spaces required by the Zoning Code. These parking spaces are located on 4 levels of structured parking above the ground floor retail. An additional seven (7) tandem parking spaces are also being provided that are not included in the parking count. A reduction of nine (9) on-street metered parking spaces (from 20 spaces to 11 spaces) would occur as a result of this project. The City would have to be compensated for the loss of those spaces.

The applicant has submitted a traffic study with this submittal (See Attachment A). That study concludes that the project will not adversely impact any of the adjoining intersection or roadways below the allowable Level of Service (LOS). It is also concluded that the project would reduce the overall traffic generated from the site (mixed-use project) when compared to the development of the site according to the property's existing commercial land use designation. The Public Works Department has reviewed the traffic study and agrees with the study's findings and conclusions.

Vehicular and pedestrian circulation plans and a directional signage plan was also prepared and submitted by the applicant (see Attachment A). The project places the majority of vehicular curb cuts and access into the project on Giralda Avenue, across from the Hyatt Hotels' service docks and parking garage entrance. Vehicular entrance and exit to the project's parking garage, service corridor and drive-thru bank teller facility are grouped together on Giralda on the north side of the property. The only other access into the property is from the south end of the service corridor from Douglas Road. Directional signage is proposed for internal vehicular circulation, and to prohibit truck access from Giralda and the delivery and unloading of goods from trucks along the service corridor itself. All deliveries would be required to occur within the separate service area located off the service corridor.

Designated pedestrian walkways across internal lanes of traffic are provided with textured surfaces (pavers) in order to serve as a visual cue to both pedestrians and drivers of vehicles. ADA approved warning devices have also been proposed at vehicular entrances and exits to the property to provide for pedestrian safety.

Staff comments: Included is a condition of approval that the City be compensated for the loss of nine (9) on-street metered parking spaces.

Drive-Thru Bank Teller Facility

The proposed drive-thru bank teller facility is being proposed in association with a branch bank located in the northeast corner of the building. The name and type of the branch bank has not been provided. The drive-thru facility consists of two bank teller stations, each with a storage or stacking lane. Access to the facility is from Giralda Avenue, existing through the project's service corridor and back onto Giralda. Each of the two stacking lanes could store a maximum of five (5) cars on site. The applicant's proposed plans (including stacking, vehicular and pedestrian circulation, lighting and signage) are include in Attachment A.

The Zoning Code states that the proposed plans shall be “reviewed and a favorable recommendation made by the Public Works Department”, and that “the operation of such [drive-in tellers] shall be so conducted that it will not interfere with the circulation of pedestrian or vehicular traffic on the adjoining streets, alleys, or sidewalks.” The applicant’s proposal provides for a maximum storage of ten (10) vehicles. The applicant’s stacking analysis references two previous studies for drive-thru bank facilities for the First Union Bank at 2501 Ponce de Leon Boulevard (Hines Project) and the Bank of America at 2308 Ponce de Leon Boulevard. Both those studies conclude that the peak period demand for drive-thru bank teller windows are during lunch time, and that the proposed storage capacity exceeds the peak projected demand of six (6) vehicles.

Staff comment: The Public Works Department has reviewed this project’s on-site storage on stacking lanes, vehicular ingress and egresses of traffic and pedestrians and the circulation through and around the project, and have no objection to the proposal or applicant’s stacking analysis.

Mediterranean Design Bonuses

The proposed plan relies on the provisions within the Zoning Code that allows for building setback relief, additional building height and Floor Area Ratio (FAR). These provisions are contained in Section 28-5 “Mediterranean Regulations” of the Zoning Code. The Code’s Mediterranean Design provisions allows for additional height and FAR, and for administrative approval for relief from the Code’s setback requirement for projects approved for Mediterranean bonuses by the Board of Architects that are located within the City’s Central Business District (CBD). This project has been reviewed by the Board of Architects, which preliminarily approved the project on July 31, 2003 and that the building qualifies for Mediterranean bonuses.

Recommendations of 2002 Charrette Report

Staff has evaluated this proposed project with the preliminary recommendations made in the 2002 Charrette Report. The recommended actions in the report were categorized according to three areas design, policy and management recommendations. These recommendations serve as overall goals to guide public and private development, as well as specific regulatory changes. The recommendations which specifically apply to this proposal are as follows (recommendation number provided for reference):

1. Charrette Design Recommendations:

Design 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. Develop four generic approaches (kit of parts) based on the variety of existing rights of way and conditions as follows:

Begin with Aragon, Andalusia and Valencia Avenues.

- a. Widen sidewalks; narrow travel lanes; trees on the sidewalk.*
- b. Maintain sidewalk and travel lane dimensions; trees on the sidewalk.*

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- c. *Maintain sidewalk and travel lane dimensions; trees in the parking lane.*
- d. *Maintain sidewalk and travel lane dimension; arcades, pergolas, trellis awnings over sidewalk.*

- Design 10. Develop mid-block pedestrian passages for each block of Miracle Mile and encourage their continuation north-south throughout Downtown. Design pedestrian passages to be inviting to the pedestrians with store fronts, small offices, entries to apartments above, and landscaped courts.*
- Design 15. Develop a palette of street furnishings, including benches, trash receptacles, information kiosks and streetlamps based on original Coral Gables models for use throughout Downtown.*

2. Charrette Policy Recommendations:

- Policy 1. Consolidate dense development and redevelopment of Downtown to enhance the public realm and its transit friendliness and walkability.*
- Policy 10. Revise zoning code to consolidate Downtown retail into the Retail Priority Area, including the length of Miracle Mile and generally the blocks between Salzedo and Galiano from Alhambra to Valencia. Limit the requirement of ground floor retail use to this area only. Require all Downtown buildings to face streets with commercial or residential habitable space (not parking) for first four floors, with doors and windows onto sidewalks.*
- Policy 19. Encourage the establishment of ground level urban open space (e.g., plazas, greens, courtyards) to promote pedestrian gatherings and activities.*
- Policy 20. Encourage the use of art in public and private spaces to further enhance the cultural and historic identity of the City Beautiful. This could include water, lighting, murals, new landmarks and interactive art.*
- Policy 21. Require screening and buffering of obnoxious uses in alleys.*

3. Charrette Management Recommendations:

- Management 8. Clarify parking regulations as follows:*
- a. *Require all public and private garages to put visitor parking on the lower levels closest to the street with permit and employee parking above. Encourage shared parking arrangements to make office parking available for evening retail and dining users.*
- Management 9. Plan for infrastructure enhancements, including burying of overhead utilities and adding infrastructure for new technology.*

Staff Comments: The Charrette encourages mixed use projects which provide ground floor retail, urban open space, and pedestrian passageways and screens service functions. This project fulfills those Charrette recommendations. However, the Charrette does recommend the creation of a master streetscape plan for downtown, which currently does not exist for this area. Staff requested and the applicant prepared and provided a streetscape plan for the public right-of-way which surround this block and install the proposed improvements in return for the required vacation of public alleyways necessary to allow this project to proceed.

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 indicated that there is adequate infrastructure available to service the proposed project, except for "Equipped Play Areas", which the applicant is resolving with the Building and Zoning Department.

City Staff Comments

The Planning Department requested review and comments from the City Manager's Office, Building and Zoning, Public Works, Public Service and Police Departments. Comments which were provided by those Departments have subsequently been satisfactorily addressed by the applicant.

Required City Reviews

The following are reviews and approvals required by the City in order for this project to proceed as proposed. Where applicable, dates of completion have been indicated:

1. Preliminary Review Committee (PRC). This is a Staff review of the proposed project. The PRC reviewed this project on July 11, 2003.
2. Board of Architects (Preliminary review). Aesthetic review of project's proposed buildings and structures and review for Mediterranean Architectural style and requested bonuses. Preliminary approval was received from the Board on July 31, 2003.
3. Administrative Review. Review of proposed building set back encroachments and off-site landscaping (if required) as permitted by Code for approved Mediterranean buildings located within the City's CBD.
4. City Traffic Board. Review of proposed roundabout at intersection of Merrick Way and Aragon Avenue.
5. Landscape Encroachment Review Committee and Beautification Committee. Review of and recommendation on proposed public right-of way encroachments and improvements.
6. Street and Alley Vacation Committee. Staff Review of request to vacate public alleyway with recommendation to City Commission. This committee recommended approval of the alley vacation on September 29, 2003 with the condition that significant off-site landscape and traffic improvements be provided by the applicant.
7. Planning and Zoning Board. Consideration and review of site plan and conditional use request at public hearing with recommendation to City Commission.
8. City Commission. (1) Consider of request to vacate existing public alleyway. (2) Consideration of encroachments (improvements) proposed in public right-of-way. (3) Two public hearings to consider proposed site plan and conditional use request.

Comprehensive Land Use Plan Analysis

Planning Department review of the applicant's proposal finds it is consistent and furthers the following Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) 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 PROMOTE 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.

OBJECTIVE 1-1.3: ACHIEVING COMPLIANCE WITH FUTURE LAND USE MAP AND PLAN. By the year 2010 the City shall endeavor to reduce the number of inconsistencies between the Future Land Use Map and the actual land uses from 70 to 35.

POLICY 1-1.3.1: AVOID ENCROACHMENT INTO NEIGHBORHOODS BY INCOMPATIBLE USES. Residential neighborhoods should be protected from intrusion by incompatible uses that would disrupt or degrade the health,

safety, tranquility, aesthetics and welfare of the neighborhood by noise, light, glare, odor, vibration, dust, hazardous materials or traffic.

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.

POLICY 1-1.7.1: DEVELOPMENT OF EMPLOYMENT CENTERS. Encourage effective and proper development of employment centers of high quality which offer potential for local employment in reasonably close proximity to protected residential neighborhoods.

POLICY 1-1.7.2: DEVELOPMENT OF UNDEVELOPED LAND. Encourage development of remaining undeveloped and vacant isolated parcels of developable property through identification and staff assistance in providing information as to appropriate uses permitted by code and proper procedures to be undertaken to obtain the proper development orders.

OBJECTIVE 1-1.9: INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS. Encourage sound innovation in development regulations which provide a continuing process to respond to community needs. This Objective shall be achieved through the implementation of the following policies.

POLICY 1-1.9.1: MIXED USE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT. Encourage balanced mixed use developments in the downtown, which promote pedestrian activity and provide for specific commitments to design excellence and long term economic and cultural vitality.

POLICY 1-1.9.2: PRINCIPLES FOR DOWNTOWN PLANNING. Encourage the detailed planning of downtown to establish sound economic, aesthetic and land use principles for effective utilization of both public and private resources.

Staff Comments: Staff's determination that this application "is consistent and furthers" the Comprehensive Plan's goals, objectives and policies that are identified is based upon compliance with conditions of approval recommended by Staff and site plan provisions incorporated by the applicant which address the recommendations of the Charrette and City objectives for mixed-use development to enhance and encourage the downtown pedestrian environment.

Conclusions

In summary, the Planning Department is supportive of the proposed based upon the following:

1. The proposed project is consistent and furthers the goals, objectives and policies of the City's Comprehensive Plan.
2. The project fulfills the recommendations of the Charrette Report regarding ground floor retail, provision of urban open space, pedestrian passageways, screening of service functions and creation of a master streetscape plan.
3. The project site is surrounded by mid and high-rise commercial and mixed-use buildings.

4. The proposed building has been reviewed and preliminarily approved by the Board of Architects for Mediterranean bonuses.
5. Additional off-site landscaping and other associated improvements are being requested of the applicant to compensate the City for the vacation of public alleyways on the project site.
6. The Public Works Department has reviewed and had no objection to the proposed drive-thru bank teller facility.
7. The proposed project contains an additional 41 parking spaces as required to be provided on the subject property by an existing Deed Requirement.

Timeline

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

- 1st Reading Tuesday November 4, 2003, 9:00 a.m.
- 2nd Reading, Tuesday, December 2, 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 Wednesday, July 30, 2003. That meeting was held in the evening at the Hyatt Hotel, and four (4) residents attended. Copies of notification, sign in list and summary minutes 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. No comments were received from any of the property owners within 1,000 feet of the subject property. A copy of the published newspaper notification of this public hearing item is included as Attachment E.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Riel, Jr.
Planning Director

Attachments:

- A. Applicant's submittal package.
- B. Ordinance No. 1254.
- C. Deed requirement for 41 parking spaces.
- D. Zoning Analysis prepared by Building and Zoning Department.
- E. Copy of published newspaper notification (advertisement).

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