

CITY OF CORAL GABLES

--MEMORANDUM--



The City Beautiful

TO: Mayor and Commissioners
City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
Asst. City Manager, Peter Iglesias
Development Services Director, Charles Wu
Planning and Zoning Director, Ramon Trias

FROM: Commissioner Vince Lago

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "V. Lago", is written over the "FROM:" line.

DATE: July 28, 2017

SUBJECT: Preserving the Image of Our City

The City of Coral Gables has always recognized the importance of preserving the aesthetic appearance of its residential areas. As such, it is very important to become aware of an increased trend of massive-sized 'white boxes' and 'cookie cutter' McMansion styled homes in our City.

Recently, the Miami Herald published an article entitled "local residents revolt over tree-devouring 'white boxes' invades neighborhood." The article touches upon a few points that I believe are worth noting ([click here to view article](#)). The construction of these modern style homes are beginning to surface in the City of Miami, more specifically, Coconut Grove. Some reasons why developers find this kind of construction appealing is because it is typically less expensive and can be easily marketed as modern style residences. Due to the healthy real estate climate, developers and builders are maximizing every inch of buildable square footage.

However, the emergence of this style of homes could be detrimental to the overall appearance of our City Beautiful. First, these large homes make small lots appear even smaller and diminish green space. Since trees and lush landscape define our city, I believe we should have a green space requirement not solely for commercial buildings but also for new residential properties. Secondly, the height of some of these newly constructed homes can be invasive. Large homes overlooking adjacent properties can be viewed as intrusive to many homeowners. Lastly, I believe, the design of many of these 'white box' homes will become outdated within the next decade.

On a few occasions, the Commission has discussed the importance of building compatible single-family homes. Currently, our code's ambiguous language allows for loop holes to occur. As a result, an informal task force of architects was created with the intention of reviewing the code for deficiencies and formulating suggestions to the Board of Architects and City Commission for feedback. It is my understanding the results of the task force's findings will be presented before the commission in the near future. The Board of Architects, which is appointed by the City Manager, must be vigilant in approving these kinds of residential designs and pay close attention to the set-backs permitted.

I would like to continue this conversation and take pro-active measures to place an end to this growing concern.

CC:

City Attorney, Craig Leen
Deputy City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter Foeman
Public Works Director, Ed Santamaria
Board of Architects
Planning and Zoning Board
Development Review Committee
Historic Preservation Board

EXAMPLES IN OUR CITY



4800-4900 Block of University Dr.



Cantoria Ave.



1512 Cantoria Ave.



Pay close attention to the set-backs.