

February 27, 2020

Members of the Florida Building Commission & Accessibility Advisory Council
c/o Chip Sellers, Operations Consultant
Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation
2601 Blair Stone Road
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

RE: 334 Ocean Drive, Miami Beach, Florida – Villa Cuatro, LLC

Dear Mr. Sellers and Members of the Commission and Council:

I am writing in reference to the above noted structure, and the request for an accessibility waiver.

Pursuant to the Miami Beach Historic Properties Database, the Property is classified as “contributing” within the Ocean Beach Local Historic District. This is significant because the City has reviewed and determined that the subject property adds to the local historic district's sense of time and place and historical development. Most of the significant architectural elements are intact and repairable. It is a narrow lot with a typical Art Deco style, hotel in Miami beach.

The hotel, previously known as the “Ocean Blue Hotel,” is a 2-story, flat-roofed building. Based on review of the microfilm records on file with the City, the original hotel appears mostly intact without any major alterations. Notably in the lobby, the terrazzo floor, recessed ceiling, accented archways and reception desk all appear to be original; and therefore, merit preservation. The front eyebrow at the second-floor level contains an added aluminum extension, and the front door is now flanked with glass blocks, that may or may not be original.

In 1941, Joseph J. De Brita designed the structure in the Art Deco style as a twenty-eight (28) room hotel. A few central steps lead up to twelve (12) first-floor rooms and two stairways lead up to the sixteen (16) second-floor rooms. It is well known that the Ocean Blue Hotel was one of the numerous buildings U.S. Army Air Forces used for World War II housing.

The subject structure, with the both interior and exterior iconic, Art Deco style features, retains an extraordinary degree of historic and architectural integrity and is representative of the architectural styles that warrant preservation within the City's Historic Districts. The owner has submitted for the City of Miami Beach Planning Department's review and recommendation, a Historic Preservation Board application advocating for the preservation and restoration of the hotel. These renovations are essential to the future understanding of the development of architecture in Miami Beach while ensuring preservation of this historic hotel.

The subject structure qualifies as a historic building under the Federal ADA regulations, the ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) and Chapter 11 of the Florida Building Code. The requested waiver pertaining to the vertical accessibility to the hotel units on the first and second floor is critical to the restoration plan for the building. In order to accommodate vertical accessibility, substantial modifications to the historic public interior spaces – the narrow walkways and stairways – would be required, including extensive ramps and/or lifts. Such interventions would

irreparably harm the very significant design, style and configuration of the subject structures.

The Planning Department strongly supports the subject waiver request. If you have any questions relative to the historic significance of the existing structure, or you need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Debbie Tackett
Chief of Historic Preservation