



City of Miami Beach, 1700 Convention Center Drive, Miami Beach, Florida 33139. www.miamibeachfl.gov

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Tel: 305-673-7550, Fax: 305-673-7559

June 24, 2019

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: 1434-1440 Washington Avenue and 400-418 Espanola Way, Miami Beach, Florida – Clay Hotel, Miami Beach, Florida

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.

The Clay Hotel, located at 1434-1440 Washington Avenue and 400-418 Espanola Way, Miami Beach, was constructed in 1925 and designed by Robert Taylor. Subsequent renovations occurred in 1984 by architects Randy Sender, Stuart Grant, Dixon Alvarino, and Todd Tragash, and in 1986 by Sender Tragash Architects. The Clay Hotel is an integral part of the Española Way Historic District, designated by the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 and the City of Miami Beach named the street as a historic landmark in 1986. Architect Robert Taylor sought to create a Spanish Village, now known as Española Way, in the center of Miami Beach. This became one of the first large-scale development of authentic Mediterranean Revival design in the City.

Robert Taylor designed the Clay Hotel as a mixed-use Spanish Village that would become a bohemian entertainment destination for guests of the hotel. The “village” layout of this hotel is comprised of one 3-story large building fronting Washington Avenue, Española Way and Drexel Avenue, with four smaller, individual 2-story courtyard buildings located to the south of the main building and away from the surrounding streets. Access to the main lobby of the hotel is from Washington Avenue. As it still exists today, the Clay Hotel has numerous narrow internal alleyways, which are typical of its European Mediterranean inspiration. The courtyard buildings are built close together with steps to enter each building from the internal alleyways of the hotel.

The subject structure, with the courtyard buildings, interior alleyways, and tiered levels, retains an extraordinary degree of historic and architectural integrity and is representative of the rich diversity of architectural styles that have evolved within the City’s Historic Districts. The Historic Preservation Board has approved a number of renovations to activate the rooftop, maintain some of the hotel unit sizes, and renovate the main lobby area. 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 structures qualify collectively 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 and horizontal accessibility to the units in the courtyard buildings is critical to the restoration plan for the building complex. In order to accommodate vertical and horizontal accessibility, substantial modifications to the historic public

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exterior spaces – the narrow internal alleys – would be required, including extensive ramps and/or lifts and adjusting the tiered nature of the structures that is essential to the historic integrity of the Spanish Village design. Further, retrofitting ADA accessible rooms on both floors of the courtyard buildings would require significant alterations to the exteriors of the buildings, including the rooftop, because enlarging the bathrooms and adding elevators would dramatically shift the exterior window and door openings and require new elevator bulkheads on the roofs. Such interventions would irreparably harm the very significant design, style and configuration of the subject structures.

The Planning Department, on behalf of the Miami Beach Historic Preservation Board, 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