

SUBJECT: WAvNA presentation to membership about WoW proposal  
April 2, 2019, 6:30pm, 1330 West Avenue, Waverly Condominium

Hello! The WAvNA board met with the WoW architect and their attorney, the developer was not present, to hear the WOW presentation. Their lawyer led their discussion, we listened and we asked questions.

The WAvNA board met a number of times afterwards and have come to some conclusions. I'm going to briefly go through our process, discuss what the commissioners had to say at their meeting of the Land Use and Development Committee, and also highlight the city's conclusions from the Planning Department and City Manager Jimmy Morales' Memorandum.

Let me start off with this proposed plan, what they refer to as WOW, or West of West. I don't want to mince words: it is a threat to how we live. it is not what you saw in their presentation, which i think is intentionally misleading. Our goal is to ensure that you see what's really being suggested. And why it is so threatening and destructive.

We hope many of you, are intrigued by the concept of approaching the West Avenue NEIGHBORHOOD as a whole. Under the right circumstances we are not against development, but we are against this proposal.

WOW as proposed is trying to pull a fast one on us. They want to change the zoning, I have bought 6 houses in the area and want to be able to have restaurants and bars and nail salons on the first level of my houses. My 6 houses. That's the deal, that's one way to look at what this is all about.

And what about our West Avenue NEIGHBORHOOD? As you know, the West Ave NEIGHBORHOOD is absolutely unique in South Beach. Miami Beach is blessed by many different areas: South of Fifth, Ocean Drive, Sunset Harbor, Alton Road... All have their own vibe, its own feeling. But none of them are like the West Avenue area, a NEIGHBORHOOD where folks live, work and play. We are not bars, not music, not restaurants, not nail salons. We WALK, BIKE, know our Neighbors,. We are a NEIGHBORHOOD with teachers, policeman, engineers, families with children and seniors. We love the idea of building in resiliency. BUT there is no reason to kill our NEIGHBORHOOD while doing that.

We love the idea of looking at the WEST AVE NEIGHBORHOOD as a WHOLE, an exciting CONCEPT. So let's drive a stake in the heart of this current proposal and push for the commissioners and city to really put together a true forward thinking group of Urban Planners, Architects, academics, and include the stakeholders— that's us, that's you— to see if there is a real idea worth pursuing. The Commission has spent the last three years coming up with a master plan for North Beach. Let's ask them to find the time and resources to bring in some creative thinkers to work on the concept of the whole WEST AVENUE NEIGHBORHOOD re-birth while keeping who we are and what we treasure.

And they can even look beyond what is proposed, not just 14th to 16th, but all the way to the new pedestrian bridge on Lincoln Court, and maybe even back to 5th. So now let's talk about the points in this plan that are so worrisome to us. Thankfully they are shared by Commissioner Aleman and City Manager Jimmy Morales and the Planning Department, more on that in a minute. The only voices publicly that we know in support so far are the developer and Commissioner Arriola.

But first, again, let me warn everyone: forget that video, forget the fairy tale, this is what the plan is asking to happen in our West Ave NEIGHBORHOOD, and it is dangerous:

- 1, Rezoning to allow for restaurants, outdoor cafes, & retail
- 2, Commercial and non-commercial parking lots and garages.
- 3, Lowering the minimum off-street parking spots.
- 4, No parking requirement for restaurants w/ fewer than 60 seats.
- 5, No parking for retail stores, grocery stores, whatever.
- 6, Eliminate lot aggregation requirements.
- 7, Eliminate requirement for minimum yard elevation.
- 8, Less setback requirement.
- 9, No minimum landscaping requirements. This one is really the lowest of the low: the whole video is based on tremendous landscaping and yet they are requesting no minimums for landscaping...

The city's very professional Planning Department did a thorough and intense review of the WOW proposal. City Manager Morales sent a Memorandum with their findings to the Land Use and Development Committee, suggesting that this WOW proposal "if looked at from a macro level, from high above, reflects a bold vision with attractive concept renderings and visuals." But then he went on to say, "However, when reviewed at the micro level, close up, there are concerns."

He's saying what we all know: DETAILS MATTER. Forget the pretty pictures, their presentation is a fairy tale minus only Tinker Bell spreading pixie dust. What's really going to happen here is all in the details.

Commissioner Aleman said at the end of their discussion at the Land Use meeting a few weeks ago that she had concerns over a list of things, including the setbacks, the minimum landscaping, the off street parking, the lot aggregation, and agreed with the staff that this can't work in stages. She also wondered why the developer went public now, why didn't he wait and buy up the properties rather than announcing he wanted to buy the properties. She thought that made little sense.

Commissioner Arriola then discussed why he was asking that this proposal be kept alive. He said, and I quote, "Residents overwhelmingly want this." He also said, and I'm quoting, "West Avenue area is not safe, there are bars on the windows of the houses."

At the end of his comments Commissioner Arriola requested that this proposal be kept alive. He said he is attracted to its bold vision and to resiliency. Commissioner Aleman, chair of the Committee, even after all of the concerns she had listed, agreed that it be discussed again at their next meeting, and asked the staff to continue to work on the idea.

So the WOW proposal is technically still alive. But we cannot allow a bad proposal to destroy our way of life in the West Avenue NEIGHBORHOOD.

Making this a little more worrisome, that Commission meeting happened **after** the Planning Department and City Manager Morales issued their report that was quite comprehensive and ended by clearly stating, quote, "the proposal should not move forward". I'm not going to go over each of their points, you can find the Memorandum on line, but it points out that requirements were adopted city wide in 2017 for more resilient construction, yard requirements, stormwater retention, lot coverage, minimum ground floor requirements, surface materials, active outdoor spaces, lot aggregation, building heights, setbacks, and parking.

Then the Memorandum gets into real detail, quote, "reducing the setbacks does not seem to

be warranted.”

And quote, “Minimum setbacks and Landscape is a serious concern. “This will likely have serious impacts on tree canopy and on-site storm water retention. Further there is nothing that would require what appears abundant landscaping shown in the concept renderings and site plan.”

And “the elimination of lot aggregation limitations could allow the construction of very massive, his word, massive structures.”

And last, “the concept relies completely on the elevated central commercial corridor along a heavily landscaped spine, which includes ALL of the properties with the boundaries.”  
Let’s end this on what we value: Our WEST AVENUE NEIGHBORHOOD. We are not against development. And looking at the area as a Whole is interesting. Maybe using landscaping, not that proposed 2nd story bridge but inventive landscaping as we see in some parts of the world where streets are very pedestrian friendly, bicycle friendly, neighborhood friendly.  
We stand ready to be a part of the planning to expand and improve the West Avenue NEIGHBORHOOD concept.

But first we have to put a stake in the heart of the current proposal, it is detrimental to our whole NEIGHBORHOOD.

Your board and the committee are available to answer any questions.