MIAMIBEACH RISING ABOVE

Neighborhood Resiliency Projects Advisory Committee

TO: Members of the Neighborhood Resiliency Projects Advisory Committee

DATE: May 14, 2025

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Neighborhood Resiliency Projects Advisory Committee on May 14, 2025, Meeting

Present: Clare McCord, Curt Dyer, Karin Matos, Ron Starkman, Julie Basner

Absent: Barbara Montero

City Staff: Amy Knowles, Sabrina Batlle, Samantha Sliger, Thomas Mooney, Albert Rosales

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CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

C. McCord calls meeting to order.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Approval of Minutes

C. McCord moved to approve both March 18, 2025, and April 24, 2025, minutes. C. Dyer seconds. Approved unanimously.

RESILIENCY CODE

C. McCord welcomed the committee and introduced T. Mooney, the Planning Director, noting that the committee had questions on the agenda and thanking him for attending.

T. Mooney suggested starting with an overview and using the committee's questions as a guide.

A. Understanding the relationship between new development and resilience stress

T. Mooney introduced the "Resiliency Code," adopted by the City Commission in February 2023, and discussed adding sustainability and resiliency amendments. In 2021, the commission adopted the code, creating a separate section for new construction, which now covers multifamily, single-family, and commercial buildings. For commercial buildings, the team studied other flood-prone cities for guidance. Many older structures, built at sidewalk level, complicate resilience efforts. New regulations encourage construction above base flood level, with transition areas and raised streets proving effective. Sunset Harbor was cited as a success—buildings planned for elevation remained intact, while others faced flooding due to low- finished floors. Future road elevation is a key consideration. New regulations promote base flood elevation, removing concerns like flood panels for new construction. The code now requires periodic updates to address environmental changes. Land Use and Sustainability Committee discussions aim to refine amendments without a full overhaul.

R. Starkman asked for a definition of base flood elevation.

T. Mooney explained that FEMA determines base flood elevation using maps based on sea level data. Under Florida building code, habitable structures cannot be built below this elevation and provided some examples. Freeboard requires the first floor to be elevated above base flood elevation. Previously, height was measured from sidewalk elevation, but now it's based on base flood elevation plus five feet of freeboard. This change ensures that opting for a higher first floor does not result in penalties.

A. Knowles noted that while many factors determine base flood elevation, it may not account for sea level rise or storm surge, making it just one metric. Being higher above base flood elevation can lower insurance premiums. Draft maps were released by FEMA a few years ago, but the official FEMA map is still pending. In the meantime, the city encourages residents to use the highest estimate available.

C. McCord noted that understanding flood elevation numbers can be challenging, and raising roads could unintentionally increase a building's flood risk, asking about Sunset Harbour, using Fresh Market as a reference, to determine where it sits in relation to flood risk.

T. Mooney stated that Fresh Market sits very low, just 18 inches above base flood elevation. Raising streets helped mitigate serious flooding in the area, but lower-lying sections below street level are still being impacted.

J. Basner noted the growing trend of three-story homes with garages on the first level, which is reshaping neighborhoods. She observed this shift frequently in her area.

T. Mooney noted that houses are placed on hills, with sloped front yards. Older homes sit at lower elevations, but since 2010, many new constructions have elevated the first floor well above base flood elevation. In understory homes, the first floor is often repurposed as an outdoor space, such as a gym, parking area, or outdoor gathering spot.

T. Mooney highlighted that an advantage of these home styles is their resilience during storms or flooding. With the first habitable floor elevated, it remains unaffected, offering protection that berm homes or older homes lack.

The committee discussed various home examples, highlighting how different designs accommodate elevated first floors and utilize space effectively.

K. Matos noted the prevalence of berm homes in her neighborhood and asked whether there are guidelines for this style, particularly regarding permeability and criteria.

T. Mooney referenced the Resiliency Code, stating that a minimum of 50% of the front yard must be pervious. Additionally, Public Works mandates on-site water retention, ensuring properties retain a certain amount of water rather than allowing runoff onto streets or neighboring properties.

The committee then discussed various methods properties can use to meet these requirements, including different approaches to pervious landscaping and on-site water retention.

C. McCord asked whether the ULI report is being considered in decision-making.

T. Mooney confirmed that its recommendations are considered when updating the code and referenced frequently, citing below-grade parking as an example.

B. How do zone laws incentivize optimal building, permeability and resilience code.

T. Mooney noted that much of Question B was addressed in the earlier discussion. Explaining that zoning laws allow for increased building height to expand setbacks and improve permeability. There is a minimum height requirement for indoor/outdoor spaces, with a preference for a 14-foot floor-to-ceiling height. This ensures flexibility for future road elevation over the next 10–15 years, allowing floors to be raised as needed. Building height can increase up to five feet, with incremental adjustments recommended to incentivize flexibility and greater setbacks.

K. Matos asked whether permeable parking areas were being piloted.

T. Mooney noted that there is an increase in porous areas, with surface parking lots now required to use permeable pavement. For understory homes, people often use gravel, like the parking level at the Pérez Art Museum, which is fully permeable and effective even under a building.

A. Knowles added that across the city, projects are incorporating these strategies. First Street will have permeable pavers in the parking lane. She emphasized the need to consider high groundwater levels, as water can rise due to both groundwater and rainfall.

C. How do new projects, permitting and approval take resilience into account?

T. Mooney highlighted the increase in pervious surface areas in yards and a shift toward less parking, with many units now having only one space since single-car households are more common. He noted that the Baptist Center at 7th and Alton is elevated from the sidewalk, improving access. The CSM Hotel project, Target building, and Coat Factory incorporated a transitional area, which has been far more successful from a resiliency standpoint. These properties are less vulnerable to flooding compared to others without such features. He also emphasized the growing importance of micro-mobility, including scooters and bikes, as roads reach capacity. Efficient movement now depends on micro-mobility, yet many areas lack adequate infrastructure, such as bike lanes and recreational paths. He stressed the need for the city to address these gaps.

The committee discussed examples of other countries and cities, such as Belgium and Tokyo, where micro-mobility is prioritized, resulting in reduced parking needs.

T. Mooney connected the team with Bradford Kane, believing he could assist the committee with future questions regarding on-site drainage. He mentioned that members could reach out to Kane directly or go through A. Knowles and her team. He then thanked everyone and left.

PRIVATE PROPERTY ADAPTATION PROGRAM

A. Knowles provided an overview of the Private Property Adaptation Program and updated the committee on its current progress. She explained that applications are being sorted, and a committee will convene to review them. Once the review process is complete, applicants will be notified whether they are accepted into the program. She also shared statistics on the number of applications received, including how many were for historic properties.

FUTURE MEETING DATES/TOPICS

C. McCord reviewed future meeting dates and topics with the committee. The committee and staff discussed Private Property Adaptation Program and Harmonization as potential topics.

Additionally, the committee expressed interest in meeting with a Public Information Officer (PIO), and the staff agreed to look into the request.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- **No public comment.**

ADJOURNMENT

C. McCord makes a motion to adjourn. K. Matos seconds.