

# PLANNING

## DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT

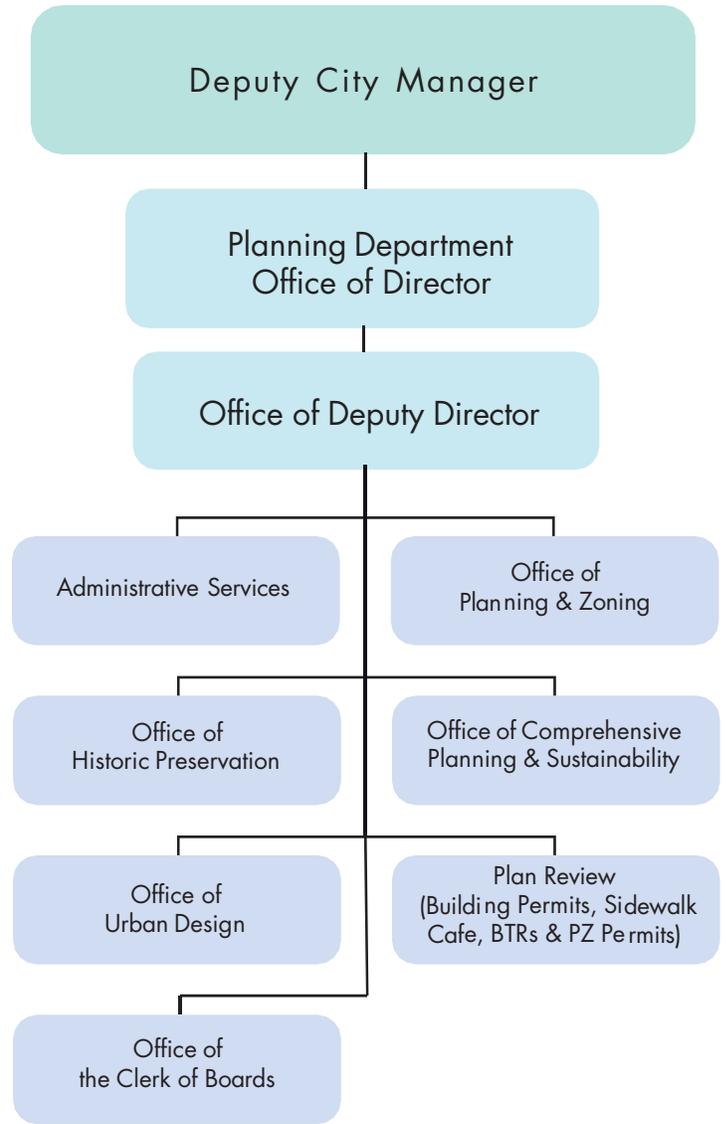
The Planning Department is dedicated to developing, refining, and implementing a comprehensive urban planning vision for Miami Beach with the goal of preserving the integrity of the City’s unique design heritage and enhancing the quality and diversity of the urban experience, inclusive of its residential neighborhoods, business districts, resorts, recreation, and entertainment areas.

## DEPARTMENT DESCRIPTION

The department provides guidance in design and applies regulatory standards and policies with the intent of ensuring progressive urban design principles, while preserving the City’s rich architectural and historic resources.

The Planning Department is responsible for providing professional analyses and recommendations to the City Manager and City Commission on all land development issues. We serve as staff to the City’s Planning Board, Board of Adjustment, Design Review Board, Historic Preservation Board and the Land Use and Sustainability Committee. The department processes applications, reviews and prepares recommendations. It is also responsible for implementing and updating the comprehensive plan as required by Florida statutes. The department reviews building permits for compliance with land development regulations, board orders and for consistency with architectural review guidelines as well as preservation criteria.

Additionally, the department conducts studies on specialized topics, such as resiliency and sustainability, growth management, wayfinding, historic designation, urban and landscape design while also preparing master and conceptual plans for neighborhoods and conservation districts. Such efforts generally involve extensive public participation and collaboration with other City departments and governmental agencies to facilitate implementation of the plans once approved by the City Commission.



## FISCAL ENVIRONMENT

The department is funded from the General Fund. Approximately six years ago, the department adjusted the fee schedule in an effort to align revenue and operational costs while providing financial incentives to homesteaded and residential properties, as well as other development types that include resiliency. Because the department transitioned to full electronic reviews, land use board applications, permit reviews and other processes continue, both in person and remotely. This allowed the department to pivot quickly and adjust for the COVID-19 pandemic. While staff worked remotely during heightened periods, permits and land use board applications continued to be reviewed in a timely manner without sacrificing quality or deadlines. This has allowed the department to meet projected revenue and reduce operational costs.



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## STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Main Vision Area:

### Neighborhoods

Management Objectives:



- **Prosperity**
  - Revitalize targeted areas and increase investment
- **Neighborhoods**
  - Modernize and streamline our old and complex land development regulations and City codes
  - Prioritize historic gems and create opportunities to build resilience into historic properties
- **Mobility**
  - Increase housing options for current and future residents
  - Support affordable, compatible workforce housing
- **Organization Innovation**
  - Support all objectives to improve strategic decision making and financial stewardship, making the city more business friendly and user friendly, with an employee culture of problem solving and engagement

Strategic Plan Actions:

- **MAKE** substantial progress on North Beach Town Center/ Byron Carlyle/Ocean Terrace.

Budget Enhancement Actions:

- Workforce Housing Code Update

Resilient305 Actions:

- **BUILD** an Inclusive Economy
- **STRENGTHEN** Resilience Planning
- **BOUNCE** Forward 305

## BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

The department serves as the liaison to several land use boards that include Planning, Design Review, Historic Preservation and Board of Adjustment. Additionally, the department manages and is the liaison for the Land Use and Sustainability Committee as well as the Flood Plain Management Board. Planning conducts Special Area Studies that require participation with civic organizations such as the Miami Beach Community Development Corporation, North Beach Development Corporation, Housing Authority, as well as several homeowners’ associations and neighborhood groups. Planning also addresses and responds to requirements from state agencies and the South Florida Regional Planning Council and represents the City at select committee meetings with the School Board of Miami Dade County, other county government entities and neighboring municipalities based on various inter-local agreements. Internally, Planning maintains a close working relationship with various departments, including, Transportation, Public Works, Housing, City Clerk, IT, Building, Code Compliance, Economic Development, Fire, CIP, Parks and Recreation, Environmental and Sustainability, Housing and Community Services, Office of the City Attorney and Facilities Management. The Planning Department provides technical and professional guidance on projects that may need approval from the Miami Beach City Commission or its committees.



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## BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT CONT'D

During the 2021-2022 fiscal year, the department experienced an increase in demand in all areas of service, including but not limited to land use board applications, zoning verification letters, building permit review and requests for new certificates of use. Overall, the department's workload has increased by approximately 8%. However, the department remains understaffed by 5 full time positions, which is the equivalent of 18% of the department's total full-time positions. The department continues to analyze its functions and responsibilities to maximize resources while delivering excellent customer service.

## SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Continuation of virtual land use board meetings. The City of Miami Beach has four land use boards to evaluate the impacts of growth and redevelopment in the City's neighborhoods and historic districts –the Historic Preservation Board, Design Review Board, Board of Adjustment and Planning Board. Each board meets monthly to consider a range of applications such as small additions to residences up to major development projects. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit greater Miami, normal activities that would otherwise be commonplace grounded to a halt. This meant that our elected officials, land use board appointees and City staff could not come together to conduct public meetings and carry out tasks and functions necessary to keep the city operational. In support of the City's growth and prosperity, staff explored options for convening land use board meetings in a manner that would not place the health and welfare of the public, applicants, staff and board members in peril. The ability for in-person public input during the meeting is not only required by law, but the cornerstone of the public process. Shortly after the pandemic hit, Planning Department staff implemented a process that would allow the land use board meetings to resume on a virtual platform. All members of the boards were directed and taught by staff how to use Zoom and navigate through the review of applications and presentations on a virtual platform. As we hit peak periods of the pandemic, staff adjusted the process to ensure city business could continue. Land use board meeting processes had to be adjusted to reflect real-time health advisories and requirements. Because this was a major shift from normal operations, it was imperative that the evolving processes met all applicable legal requirements. Achieving this goal and implementing meeting alternatives has allowed projects to move forward, and sends a positive message to residents, businesses, and financial institutions that the City of Miami Beach is resilient.

## SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS CONT'D

- Drafting of the new Resiliency Code continues and is approximately at 40% completion. Throughout 2021, the department and consulting team held several focus group meetings to receive input from various stakeholders. These included homeowner associations, members of the Land Use and Sustainability Committee, the City's land use boards, the Miami Beach Visitor and Convention Authority, land use attorneys and the development community. Throughout 2022, the team will be drafting amendments and seeking additional public input, with the expectation of adopting the new Resiliency Code at the end of the year.
- Ordinance 2020-4371 – Minimum Flood Elevation Requirements for Non-Residential Buildings: This ordinance establishes regulations for the ground floor of commercial buildings to ensure that they are resilient to sea level rise and storm surges while maintaining an active and attractive pedestrian environment. The ordinance creates different regulations for new construction with short frontages and long frontages, as well as regulations to increase the resiliency of existing buildings that are being restored or remodeled.
- Ordinance 2020-4376 –RMI Hotels Historic Sites in North Beach: This ordinance established incentives to facilitate the restoration, redevelopment and enhancement of the International Inn, in conjunction with the historic designation of the site
- Ordinance 2020-4383 –Floor Plates Non-Conforming Buildings: This ordinance was approved by voters in a public referendum. It allows for the re-introduction of the floor plates that were removed prior to June 4, 1997 in certain historic buildings. This ordinance is allowing for the reintroduction of a floor that was removed at the Bancroft Hotel many years ago. This is allowing the Bancroft Hotel to change to an office use, which is furthering the City's goals to diversify the economy and transform Ocean Drive.

***Has successfully maintained virtual meetings for the City's 4 land use boards.***

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## SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS CONT'D

- Ordinance 2021-4391 (January 13, 2021) –Height Limits Terminal Island: This ordinance modified the zoning regulations for Terminal Island by increasing the height limit for office uses from 40 feet to 75 feet. This ordinance facilitates the development of Class A office space, which is a goal of the City as it strives to diversify the economy so that it's not dependent on tourism. As a result of this ordinance a new office development has been approved on Terminal Island which will contribute to the City's goal.
- Ordinance 2021-4399 –International Inn Historic Designation: This item worked in conjunction with incentives adopted in ordinance 2020-4376. These ordinances will allow for the preservation of the iconic portion of the International Inn in the Normandy Isles neighborhood, while allowing for the redevelopment of the remainder of the site in a manner that will enhance the hotel. The building has been neglected and creates nuisances for the surrounding community.
- Ordinance 2021-4422 –This ordinance modified the regulations for certain oceanfront properties in the RM-3 district. This ordinance will facilitate the redevelopment of the historic Seagull Hotel, which will be turned into the Bulgari Hotel. This ordinance fosters the restoration of historic structures while improving the offerings for tourists within the City.
- Ordinance 2021-4437 –Sunset Harbour CD-2 and CD-1 Overlay: The Planning Department worked with Sunset Harbour residents to develop a zoning overlay which is intended to enhance the Sunset Harbour neighborhood by incentivizing Class A office developments in the perimeter of the neighborhood with some additional height, while protecting the quality of life by limiting nuisances and minimizing impact. This ordinance also prohibited hotel uses in the neighborhood. This furthers the City's goal of creating a diversified economy that is not reliant on tourism. As a result of this ordinance, the City has received interest in the development of office space along Alton Road in the Sunset Harbour neighborhood.

## CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

- Adopt regulations to support the City's efforts in becoming more resilient to the impacts of climate change including sea level rise.
- Identify sections in the Land Development Regulations that are in conflict or impede process improvement and delivery of services

Both factors are being addressed in the redrafting and update of the land development regulations under the Resiliency Code initiative.

## FUTURE OUTLOOK

The department is in the process of analyzing the current code and has completed the first round of public engagement. The consulting team and city staff has briefed elected officials, and other stakeholders to craft a code that is resilient, transparent, and responsive to the needs of the residents and businesses of Miami Beach. The adoption of a resiliency code will enable the City to formulate a strategic plan that will continue to promote and protect the historic character of the district neighborhoods, while identifying areas for sustainable growth and addressing our shocks and stresses. Developers will have a clear understanding of the areas that are available for growth and will be able to focus their resources on projects that can succeed. The predictability that comes from this knowledge will encourage residential and commercial investment that will benefit both the City and its residents.

The revitalization of North Beach is a long-term initiative and will remain a focal point of policy makers for the foreseeable future. To that end, the Commission has approved several incentives to spur development and the revitalization of underserved areas. We expect that these incentives will generate additional plan and permitting activity.

Operationally, sustained increases in requests for reduced turn-around time with respect to permit reviews and application submittals for land use board approvals continues to tax department resources affecting our ability to deliver services.