

COLIN BAENZIGER  ASSOCIATES

EXECUTIVE RECRUITING

Section 11

Guillermo Olmedillo

*Islamorada Village Manager
Candidate Report*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
COVER LETTER AND RESUME	1
CANDIDATE INTRODUCTION	5
BACKGROUND CHECKS	9
CB&A REFERENCE NOTES	13
INTERNET SEARCH	27

Cover Letter and Resume

Guillermo Olmedillo

6840 SW 130 Terrace
Pinecrest, Florida 33156
E-mail address: Guillermo@olmedillo X 5.com
Telephone: 786 252 0381
November 24, 2020.
Recipient Name

Ref: Village of
Islamorada Manager

Dear Recipient Name:

The purpose of this letter is to express my interest in the advertised position for the Village of Islamorada Manager.

In my attached resume, you will find that I have gathered a vast experience in managing large municipal and county departments and for a period of five and a half years, I served as the Manager for the Town of Surfside, a municipality located just north of Miami Beach and south of the Village of Bal Harbor; with a staff of 120 employees. Coupled with my educational background, I have been able to perform successfully also in the private sector. Those experiences have given me the ability to approach issues from different perspectives.

During my professional career I have been able to also manage complex public policy projects such as the political redistricting of Miami-Dade County, for which I have been the primary consultant to the Miami-Dade County Commission after the 2010 and the 2000 Census.

I coordinated the first Comprehensive Plan for the City of Miami, after Growth Management, and worked extensively in the Miami-Dade County Comprehensive Plan.

While at the County, I ran the consolidated department in charge of Building, Planning, Zoning, Subdivision Regulations, Code, Impact Fees and Incorporations and annexations of new municipalities; with a staff of 450 employees, three unions and a budget of over 85 million dollars.

I firmly explain the logic of my recommendations to the decision makers but I leave space for alternative solutions. I lead by example and manage staff through respect not by fear. I maintain an open-door policy with residents and employees. I look forward to the opportunity to contribute to the Village, serving in the capacity of Village Manager.

Respectfully.

Kathryn

GUILLERMO OLMEDILLO
6840 SW 130 TERRACE
PINECREST, FLORIDA 33156
Electronic mail: guillermo@olmedillox5.com
Telephone: 786 252 0381.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

August 2020 to present time.

Expert Land Use and Development consultant to private parties.

January 2015 to July 13, 2020.

Manager for the Town of Surfside, Florida.

Surfside is a barrier island municipality located in Miami-Dade County, between Bal Harbor and Miami Beach.

Its form of government is a Council Manager, with the manager as the head of the Executive.

Its staff is made up of 120 employees, who work in coordination with the Manager's Office through all department directors.

2001 to 2015

Coordinator of the political redistricting projects for Miami-Dade County as a result of the 2000 and the 2010 Census.

Coordinator of the political redistricting project for the Miami-Dade School Board as a result of the 2010 Census.

Land use, planning and zoning consultant for over 50 cases in Miami-Dade County, the City of Miami, Coral Gables, Doral, Pinecrest, the City of Parkland, and the Village of Key Biscayne.

Consultant in charge of the preparation of the "Finding of Necessity" for three expansions of the existing OMNI CRA and the South-East-Overtown-Parkwest CRA, in the City of Miami.

Expert in over 20 eminent domain cases.

1992 – 2001

Director of the Departments of Planning, Planning and Zoning; Planning Development and Regulation Miami-Dade County.

Responsible for the administration and maintenance of the Comprehensive Development Master Plan; the Zoning Code; Building and Zoning Code enforcement; Impact Fees, Incorporation and Annexation Reports prepared for the County Manager and the County

Section 11

Commission; the management of the budget and the personnel and other technical functions of the departments.

Responsible for the supervision of 450 employees, a budget of 85 million dollars and three unions.

1985-1992

Deputy Director of the Department of Planning Building and Zoning and Chief of Neighborhood Planning. City of Miami.

Author of Zoning Ordinance 11000, the Zoning Ordinance for the City of Miami for 10 years, Coordinator of the first City of Miami Comprehensive Plan under the 1985 "Growth Management Act"

Previous Professional Experience in Venezuela

Registered Architect.

Chief of Regional Planning for the Ministry of National Planning.

Chief of Projects for the Fondo Nacional de Desarrollo Urbano, Venezuelan Federal Bank.

Advisor to two Venezuelan mortgage banks. (Crenca and Metro America).

Member of Board of Directors of Banco de Los Llanos Regional Bank.

CERTIFICATIONS

American Institute of Certified Planners.

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Architecture, University of Miami

SPURS Fellowship from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Regional Planning Certificate from CENDES (Universidad Central, Venezuela).

Bachelor of Architecture, Universidad Central de Venezuela.

Candidate Introduction

GUILLERMO OLMEDILLO

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Architecture, University of Miami
SPURS Fellowship from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Regional Planning Certificate from CENDES (Universidad Central, Venezuela).
Bachelor of Architecture, Universidad Central de Venezuela.

CERTIFICATIONS

American Institute of Certified Planners.

EXPERIENCE

Expert Land Use and Development consultant	2020 – present
Town Manager, Surfside, FL	2015 – 2020
Coordinator and Consultant, Miami-Dade County, FL	2001 – 2015
Planning and Zoning Director, Miami-Dade County, FL	1992 – 2001
Deputy Planning and Zoning Director, City of Miami, FL	1985 – 1992

PREVIOUS PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE IN VENEZUELA

Registered Architect.
Chief of Regional Planning for the Ministry of National Planning.
Chief of Projects for the Fondo Nacional de Desarrollo Urbano, Venezuelan Federal Bank.
Advisor to two Venezuelan mortgage banks. (Crenca and Metro America).
Member of Board of Directors of Banco de Los Llanos Regional Bank.

BACKGROUND

My most recent employment was with the Town of Surfside, with a population of approximately 6,000 people, 130 employees and 12 department directors reporting directly to me. I served as the Town manager for a period of 5 and a half years and resigned effective July of 2020 given the changes in philosophy of a totally new Town Commission, who did not agree on concentrating in long term programs and actions to manage the environmental challenges. My salary was \$170,000.00 with additional benefits.

The 2020 total budget that I presented to the Town Commission was for \$31.6 million, with a General Fund budget of \$16.6 million. The five budgets that the Town Commission approved

GUILLERMO OLMEDILLO

reflected a reduction in millage rates. It is a barrier island located between the City of Miami Beach and the Village of Bal Harbor. As such, the most important issues are related to the environment. Sea level rise and the challenges that it presents, namely physical, social and economic impacts and the potential need for adaptation and strengthening of both structures and infrastructure to serve residents and visitors.

The most recent major project completed under my administration was the beach re-nourishment with a cost of over \$16,000,000, in coordination with the Army Corps of Engineers, who financed it, and a private consultant.

I manage through respect rather than fear. I have been successful in demonstrating to staff that I speak with knowledge and that my recommendations and directives are intended to reach the best overall outcome. I quickly recognize capabilities in staff that allows me to assemble the right team for each project.

Similarly, my approach with the elected bodies is to give my best professional recommendation with respect even when there are differences of opinion.

Balancing the annual budget and establishing the priorities for multiyear projects while looking for the financial stability of a municipality are paramount to my work as administrator.

In my resume you will see that I held positions of great responsibility and you will find that I was responsible for major projects. Ordinance 11000, the Zoning Ordinance for the City of Miami for over a decade, the Comprehensive Plans for Miami-Dade County and the City of Miami, and the Political Redistricting for Miami-Dade County and the Miami Dade School Board are complex projects that demand high organizational skills.

I believe that people approach me with openness and sincerity, this has not always been the case, however, perhaps a character fault, however, I quickly reassess the future interactions with them.

I believe that my experience with planning issues, in particular the environmental challenges, my long-term interaction with the residents and elected officials, my familiarity with staff from other governmental organizations will allow me to serve the Village of Islamorada and contribute to create a vision for its sustainable future.

Section 11

CB&A Background Checks

**Background Check Summary for
GUILLERMO OLMEDILLO**

Criminal Records Checks:

Nationwide Criminal Records Search	No Records Found
County Miami-Dade County, FL	No Records Found
State Florida	No Records Found

Civil Records Checks:

County Miami-Dade County, FL	Results Pending
Federal Florida	No Records Found

Motor Vehicle

Florida	No Records Found
---------	------------------

Credit

Excellent

Bankruptcy

No Records Found

Education

Confirmed

Employment

Confirmed

Social Media

Nothing of Concern Found

Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. 1681-1681Y, credit and bankruptcy information are very sensitive and should not be used in the consideration of hiring. The information is included for each candidate because we do not want you to be surprised if third parties raise what they consider to be a concern. Also, some states have limited the reporting to seven years, so any records older than that will not be available in those states. In addition, motor vehicle reports are limited to three to seven years, depending on the state.

**Background Check Summary for
GUILLERMO OLMEDILLO
Personal Disclosure**

Personal Disclosure Questionnaire

Name of Applicant: GUILLERMO OLMEDILLO

The following questions are designed so that we will be able to make full disclosure to our client concerning your background. Please answer them honestly. Cutting corners or misrepresenting your past will result in you being eliminated from all further searches conducted by this firm. We understand that frivolous charges are sometimes made and that charges do not mean you were guilty. We also understand that you may have been wronged and needed to seek compensation. The bottom line is that we want to be certain that our client is fully informed. If you have any questions, please contact us for clarification.

Please explain any yes answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Have you ever been charged or convicted of a felony?
Yes No
2. Have you ever been accused of or have been involved in a domestic violence or abuse incident?
Yes No
3. Have you ever declared bankruptcy or been an owner in a business that did so?
Yes No
4. Have you ever been the subject of a civil rights violation complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes No
5. Have you ever been the subject of a sexual harassment complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes No
6. Have you ever been charged with driving while intoxicated?
Yes No
7. Have you ever sued a current or former employer?
Yes No
8. Please list all your social media accounts (Facebook / Instagram / LinkedIn / Twitter, etc.) and your personal web page if you have one.
9. Is there anything else in your background that, if made public, would cause you, our client or our firm embarrassment if it came to light through the press or any other mechanism?
Yes No
10. Please provide a list of any lawsuits in which you are or have been a party either as plaintiff or defendant.

Attested to:


Signature of Applicant

Please email this form via PDF DOCUMENT to Lynelle@cb-asso.com or via fax to (561) 621-5965 **no later than 5:00 PM PST 04/19/2021.**
(Note: Please be sure to sign the form with your actual signature if you are sending Fax or PDF Document)

Section 11

CB&A Reference Notes

Reference Notes
Guillermo Olmedillo

Daniel Dietch – Former Mayor, City of Surfside, FL 305-298-6568

Mr. Dietch has known Mr. Olmedillo since 2015. Mr. Dietch believes in an annual performance appraisal which Mr. Olmedillo agreed to and these were conducted every year. Mr. Olmedillo was consistently on the positive side of the scale. He is an outstanding administrator, but Mr. Dietch did outline where he expected higher performance because he tried to be realistic. Mr. Olmedillo was a very fair, honest, and smart person. He navigated a very challenging environment and was a great administrative leader for Surfside.

Mr. Olmedillo was able to find solutions to some very vexing challenges through his experience as an administrator, a planner, and a consultant. They went through a period of different managers. Mr. Olmedillo found a discrepancy between what was presented for approval and what was actually being developed. He created a process to true up at the end of the development process. Also, at a time when municipalities were looking to increase revenue and decrease expenses, he found a way to honestly increase revenue that had not been considered in the past.

Employees hired by Mr. Olmedillo are great. He made bold hiring decisions and stood behind them. He was a champion of the staff and protected them from interference from the Commission. He made hard decisions. He recognized the role that elected officials chose to play in dealing with climate matters. He hired someone who excels in communication. The science is there but communicating the science in a way the public can understand is critical.

Mr. Olmedillo is innovative, a change agent, and he maintains an organization at a high performance level. He is very involved in the community and generally worked very well with the public. He built a capable team and relied on that team to divide and conquer. Some members of the community only want to speak to the Manager, but if he is involved in every matter then he is not leading the town.

The Mayor and Mr. Olmedillo had face to face meetings every week and conversations in between. One Commissioner would not meet with Mr. Olmedillo. He realized that it was important for this Commissioner to be exposed to the context and detail of matters and so he found people within the organization that this Commissioner was comfortable with. He was able to accomplish the briefings through these intermediaries which showed creativity.

Beach renourishment requires multiple parties and has competing interests. They are funded from the Federal, State and County government but the City where the beach is has a seat at the table. Renourishment is incredibly complex, but it went exceptionally smoothly and timely while working through a host of issues from beginning to end. Mr. Olmedillo did a stellar job dealing with the issues and solving problems in a timely and cooperative manner by using his local resources and his relationships with multiple agencies.

Mr. Olmedillo has a great deal of life experience. His father was a banker, which exposed him to financial principles. He is financially competent. He was great at managing expectations. When he brought an item to the Commission, he included a time component. If they asked him to do

**Reference Notes
Guillermo Olmedillo**

something they asked for a timeline. He was keenly aware of schedules and was very accommodating. He delivered on every task. He does not become rattled or outwardly show frustration in challenging circumstances.

Someone sent Mr. Dietch an article alleging that Mr. Olmedillo had relationships with developers, but the article was not entirely accurate and did not impact his employment in Surfside. He did not shy away from controversy. He held employees and contractors accountable. As a resident and an elected official Mr. Dietch felt Mr. Olmedillo was very enjoyable to work with because of how he took care of the Town. Nothing in his conduct or background would embarrass an employer.

Mr. Dietch was not reelected, and politics is an ugly business. The newly elected officials had a different view on the Town and how it was being run. Mr. Olmedillo was a gentleman and he resigned because he did not want the Town to suffer from the politics of the day.

Mr. Dietch would hire Mr. Olmedillo in any capacity. Just because a manager is great in one context does not mean he is the right administrative leader for a given time. While Mr. Olmedillo is adaptable, he is not a get along type manager. He excels at challenging the status quo. Mr. Dietch thinks highly of Mr. Olmedillo. Communities who are not happy with the status quo and want to improve the organization will be fortunate to have him.

Words or phrases used to describe Guillermo Olmedillo:

- Wise,
- Kind,
- Thoughtful,
- Consensus builder,
- Problem solver, and
- Gentleman.

Strengths: Intellect, experience.

Weaknesses: He is a traditionalist and recognizes that he does not set policy. However, elected officials have a wide range of backgrounds and experience and they are often not subject matter experts. Mr. Dietch would have preferred that Mr. Olmedillo, with his experience, gave his recommendation rather than just a range of solutions. He did on some matters, particular administrative, but not across the board.

**Judith Frankel – Planning, Zoning, and Design Review Board Member, Surfside, FL
215-510-6821**

Ms. Frankel served on the Planning, Zoning, and Design Review Board from 2016 until now. She worked with Mr. Olmedillo during four years of his tenure.

Reference Notes
Guillermo Olmedillo

Mr. Olmedillo was excellent and extremely knowledgeable. He can navigate a situation, not just professionally but is well versed in a variety of aspects. Planning and Zoning can be very detailed and complicated, particularly the obstacles in south Florida. He was knowledgeable and calm. Board meetings can become contentious. He was a service professional trying to make everyone happy or understand the problems.

The decisions Mr. Olmedillo made were always in the best interest of the Town. He tried to weigh all the options and satisfy all parties as much as he could. He worked hard to maintain the organization, including high standards for development. Surfside was going through a period of unprecedented growth that they were not prepared for. Many residents were against new development. He held developers to a high standard to make sure the town was not overrun by big money. While he can be a change agent, he is more of a steady manager rather than one that makes change just to make change.

Being in the community was part of Mr. Olmedillo's job. He knew the Town very well and was familiar with all its quirks and issues. He was always at the planning, zoning, and town hall meetings. He set the tone for a calm environment. The public came in very upset about an issue, and he heard them out to determine a solution. Everybody in Town knew him, and he was accessible. He was good about keeping the Planning and Zoning Board informed.

The City was facing high growth with limited resources. Mr. Olmedillo showed great ingenuity by assembling teams of graduates and professors from the University of Miami who were in architecture and urban planning. These individuals worked for almost no money for research purposes to determine options of what the town should and could look like. What these students produced helped residents visualize the choices in front of them.

Mr. Olmedillo was very talented in development finance. Ms. Frankel was not involved in any town budgeting and cannot speak to his skill in this area. He was very responsive with assistance or information. He was very cool under pressure even when things were contentious. Some people want trees in front of their house, others do not. He always listened and took their information. He was very good with the public.

A developer came to town and wanted a long-term lease on Town property. Mr. Olmedillo thought this was a good idea and had potential for the Town. Many residents were upset and did not like the idea of leasing out the land, it was a contentious moment. Mr. Olmedillo believed that they should hear out the developers and find a way to benefit the Town if possible.

The Commission has the right to hire and fire. In 2020 a new slate of Commissioners came to the dais and had different ideas about development, they felt it was changing the nature of the Town. They saw Mr. Olmedillo as an extension of the previous Commission. They did not really take the time to evaluate staff, they just wanted a new slate of employees. His departure was political, and several other high ranking employees resigned as well. Nothing in his personal background would concern a reasonable person.

Reference Notes
Guillermo Olmedillo

Ms. Frankel would hire Mr. Olmedillo, he did well in a difficult situation. He was always fair and he listened to everyone.

Words or phrases used to describe Guillermo Olmedillo:

- Professional,
- Experienced,
- Invested in outcomes rather than checking a box,
- Nice person,
- Professional, and
- Experienced.

Strengths: Dealing with difficult circumstances and trying to get everyone on the same page. His experience really helped the Board navigate situations. Calm person, does not become upset easily.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Yamile Slate McCloud – Human Resource Director, City of Surfside, FL 305-301-7949

Ms. McCloud has known Mr. Olmedillo since 2015. Ms. McCloud started in 2007 and from then until Mr. Olmedillo was hired, she worked for seven or eight managers. He has the longest tenure of any manager in Surfside, the position traditionally has a life expectancy of about a year and a half. He lasted five years which says a great deal about the type of manager he is.

When hiring Mr. Olmedillo worked with human resources to discuss and analyze every position. They looked for the skillsets that the Town needed. He always wanted a diverse work force that was also highly qualified. He really put everything together and was involved in the process and decisions. When the positions were lower level, he was not as involved but always wanted to meet the final three candidates. He made good decisions generally. He was innovative, a change agent, and he maintained a high performance level.

Per Mr. Olmedillo's contract, he was required to attend Commission and Board meetings. He was not the type to walk the Town, though he did a few times, but he was always approachable. He met with residents whenever they wanted, which was a frequent occurrence.

To keep the staff informed Mr. Olmedillo held weekly staff meetings for the senior staff that covered an array of areas including agenda preparation. The senior staff knew what every department was working on. He trusts that his Directors are experts in their field. He supported them and made decisions that they could support. He always had a good reason for any decision. When someone was unhappy about a law, he explained that they needed to lobby for a change in statutes, but he always followed the current law.

Reference Notes
Guillermo Olmedillo

Mr. Olmedillo has a background in banking. He sat on the Retirement Fund Board and made investment decisions. He was always sound with the budget and very financially responsible. He was responsive and his responses were timely.

Managers face almost constant stress in working with an elected Board who all have their own vision. Finding the right balance can be challenging. It reached an unbearable point between the requests and stress, but he handled it like a gentleman and excluded himself when appropriate. When you discuss an issue with him you may not be happy with the outcome, but you accept it because of the positive way that he handles the conversation.

One controversial topic was public/private partnerships, but nothing that Mr. Olmedillo did was inappropriate. He followed the statutes of the Town, which some did not understand. Ms. McCloud is not aware of anything controversial that relates to Mr. Olmedillo.

Ms. McCloud would hire Mr. Olmedillo and misses working with him. He is missed by most of the staff because he always had an open-door policy and was always very supportive. When the staff did not understand a decision, he explained the missing information that they did not know. She recommends him and wishes him nothing but the best.

Words or phrases used to describe Guillermo Olmedillo:

- Kind,
- Respectful,
- Responsive,
- Very supportive,
- Excellent listener, and
- Positive.

Strengths: People person, architect, excellent in planning / zoning / building, over 30 years of municipal experience.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Daniel Gielchinsky – Former Vice Mayor, City of Surfside, FL 917-439-4441

Mr. Gielchinsky has known Mr. Olmedillo since 2015. Mr. Gielchinsky was a lobbyist in Surfside. Later he served as a Commissioner and Vice Mayor.

Mr. Olmedillo is excellent, he was really a class act for a small town like Surfside. He has connections and leverages those connections and resources. The number of people who like him and are willing to help him is impressive. He is very well known in the County and region. Whenever Mr. Gielchinsky went somewhere in his official capacity, they always asked if he

Reference Notes
Guillermo Olmedillo

knew Mr. Olmedillo and then shared a really great story on him. He executes everything with a clear vision of what the goal is while managing to keep everyone informed and communicate with the Commission, department heads, and public. He helped them get the message out to explain why they were doing what they were doing. Having him as a manager was really a blessing. He held scheduled meetings with each Commission member and was always prepared, anticipated questions, and had a thoughtful agenda.

Mr. Olmedillo hired top quality people. His decisions in general were very reasoned, thoughtful and analytical. He maintained the organization at a high level while taking advantage of opportunities for growth or leveraging resources to be more effective. When seeing an opportunity, he informed the elected body and then developed a process to make a decision. He was good on his feet.

While Mr. Olmedillo always attended community meetings, he also drove around the community to make contact with residents and business owners to get the pulse of the community. He was at every meeting and took advantage of every opportunity. He communicates nicely with the public and has a nice way about him.

Surfside does not have any sidewalks and Mr. Gielchinsky wanted a safe corridor that the public could use for non-vehicular transportation. Mr. Olmedillo involved public works and donated some resources for free. They set up a test area, told the public what to expect, gauged community reaction, and made some changes. The idea was not widely accepted by the public, which Mr. Gielchinsky takes responsibility for, but Mr. Olmedillo's vision was excellent. Only one component of the project remains, a walking / bicycling corridor on a larger street.

Mr. Olmedillo has very strong financial skills and is good at explaining the budget. He asked the elected officials to set priorities or deadlines, or he suggested deadlines, and then adhered to them. He has seen so much that nothing is really stressful to him. He laughs it off and gets to work. He has a nice way about him.

Nothing in his background or conduct would concern a reasonable person. He left after a change in the Board. The new Board was a militant, disrespectful group without government experience that pointed fingers at the former elected officials and Mr. Olmedillo. He was in a position where he did not need to work and was no longer willing to listen to false allegations.

One Commissioner felt that she did not receive all the information she wanted from Mr. Olmedillo. Mr. Gielchinsky believes that she had received the information asked for, it was just not what she wanted to hear. Once in a while someone would complain that Mr. Olmedillo did not return their call, but then he called them the next day. Most in the community were all big fans of his, and he has also received praise at the county and state level.

Mr. Gielchinsky has hired Mr. Olmedillo as a consultant, he is an excellent manager. Whoever hires him will consider it a blessing to have someone of his caliber in their community.

Reference Notes
Guillermo Olmedillo

Words or phrases used to describe Guillermo Olmedillo:

- Honesty,
- Transparency,
- Thoughtful in leadership,
- Humble in expressing opinions,
- Deferential to elected officials while being a trusted advisor, and
- Very skilled at helping a municipality maneuver within a web of government agencies.

Strengths: Networking, reputation, clarity of thought and purpose, experience, honesty, transparency. You will not find anyone with more private and public experience combined.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Sally Heyman – Commissioner, Miami-Dade County, FL 305-798-2601

Ms. Heyman has known Mr. Olmedillo for decades. She has held multiple elected and appointed positions in local, county and state government.

Ms. Heyman wants to know that the information she is given is factual. Mr. Olmedillo is very forthright. He is secure enough to admit when he does not know something. He does not always know the technical data but is willing to get the information instead of fabricating. He is good at keeping others informed. He is available to the public and spot on when answering questions.

In Surfside Mr. Olmedillo constantly engaged with County officials about traffic and the beach. Instead of calling or emailing, he wanted to meet and look over the situation personally. He is very accessible and readily available. He was always the calming factor in the room. Across the board everyone likes him. He does not have any bravado, he is skilled but does not wear it on his sleeve. He utilizes his skillset to get the work done.

Most of Miami-Dade is coastal and there are federal regulations about non-domestic sand. Between saltwater intrusion, erosion, and old age, no one wants to fix the infrastructure. Mr. Olmedillo stepped up with his background, skills, and resources to work with the community. When they had a bad water line break between high rises or for the elderly population, he could tell someone what they did not want to hear in a calm way that they accepted. He dealt with every issue without masking or dancing around. He relayed the facts and kept everyone calm.

When the current Mayor won the election in Surfside Ms. Heyman warned Mr. Olmedillo that he would be hard to work for. Mr. Olmedillo replied that he can work with anyone. However, this Mayor wants a Yes man, which Mr. Olmedillo is not, so he resigned. Local candidates who know this Mayor did not apply for the position. Mr. Olmedillo prioritizes his integrity and

Reference Notes
Guillermo Olmedillo

professionalism over the paycheck. The only people who might disagree with the statements in this reference are those in cahoots with the new Mayor. The community likes Mr. Olmedillo, he accomplished a great deal and moved the organization forward in a very respectful way.

Surfside is on the ocean and the area has hurricanes. Mr. Olmedillo has played different roles in government and has a diverse number of skills to help any community. He has an incredible amount of institutional knowledge.

Ms. Heyman would hire Mr. Olmedillo in a second if she could, she does not settle for anything but the best. She was so happy when he was a Manager for one of her cities. She was happy when he worked in the County she was in.

Words or phrases used to describe Guillermo Olmedillo:

- Very knowledgeable,
- Genuinely a nice person,
- Forthright,
- Personable,
- Calming, and
- Experienced.

Strengths: Wealth of information, genuinely a nice person.

Weaknesses: He is really nice which is a strength and a weakness.

Natacha Seijas – Former Commissioner, Miami-Dade County, FL 786-253-9354

Ms. Seijas has known Mr. Olmedillo since the 1990s when he was a Department Head for the County. They worked together really well because Mr. Olmedillo always kept her informed. He likes follow up and he is good at it. He speaks Spanish beautifully.

Mr. Olmedillo is not the typical government employee, he is professional, serious, has a sense of humor, and will not move from a direction that he feels is appropriate which helps him find the right solutions. She leaned on him quite a bit as a Commissioner. After he left the County, he worked for them as a consultant to help with the distribution of the seats, population, and voter lines. He was always present and very honorable.

Small communities are difficult, but Mr. Olmedillo always came out ahead. He is a gentleman while holding strong to his beliefs. He is driven by professional knowledge and makes others feel comfortable around him. He attended community functions and meetings. Before a raise, reduction, budget meeting, or a changing of the districts, he was always present and available. He provided the best information and answers because he knew everything so well.

**Reference Notes
Guillermo Olmedillo**

Mr. Olmedillo has great financial skills. In challenging circumstances he does not outwardly show stress, rather he maintains a professional demeanor. He uses his sense of humor to alleviate stress. Even when working with the most controversial voting districts he never lost his cool. He gave advice and shared information behind the decisions made.

Ms. Seijas is not aware of anything controversial involving Mr. Olmedillo. She does not know anyone who would disagree with the statements in this reference.

Ms. Seijas hired him. He absolutely has the skillset to be a municipal manager. A good manager is a little bit political and very bureaucratic to work with the thought processes of so many people and he has that skill. Hiring him was beneficial, he helped her be a better Commissioner.

Words or phrases used to describe Guillermo Olmedillo:

- Professional,
- Loyal,
- Responsible,
- Honorable,
- Someone who can be trusted, and
- Empathetic.

Strengths: Professional, very well respected.

Weaknesses: Loyalty is a strength of his but can be a weakness. However, he always finds the right people to be loyal to.

Randy Stokes – Public Works Director, City of Surfside, FL 954-494-7497

Mr. Stokes has known Mr. Olmedillo since 2015. Surfside traditionally has a short turnaround for managers, Mr. Stokes is on his sixth manager since he was hired. Most managers were lucky to last a year, but Mr. Olmedillo was there for over five years. In all honesty, Mr. Olmedillo is by far the best manager that Mr. Stokes has ever worked for.

Both when hiring personnel and in general decision-making Mr. Olmedillo does well. He expects staff to not only bring problems but solutions to him. He maintained operations at a high level.

You can always count on Mr. Olmedillo to be active in the community. He was very well respected and liked in Surfside. He held scheduled weekly meetings with the senior staff and met more often if needed.

When Hurricane Irma hit Mr. Olmedillo was on the phone constantly. During cleanup most of the debris management trucks were in Houston which had been hit with a hurricane a week or so

Reference Notes
Guillermo Olmedillo

before. As the debris management companies were driving back to Florida, Texas offered to double their fees so they turned around and went back to Texas. Mr. Olmedillo took the reins and used the landscaping company and their own solid waste employees to clean up the Town. The debris was removed and the town was cleaned up months before other cities around them.

The elected officials were not happy with the finance department. Mr. Olmedillo revamped operations and hired a finance manager that was later promoted to assistant city manager. He was always on time because being late is one of his pet peeves. He never looked stressed, and he handled difficult situations well. He is in better shape than most people half his age.

Mr. Stokes is not aware of anyone who has a negative opinion of Mr. Olmedillo. He is very well liked and well known in Miami-Dade County. While Mr. Stokes does not know for sure, he believes that Mr. Olmedillo's departure had to do with circumstances in the Town. 85% of Surfside is Jewish and the Rabbis in both synagogues got covid and their congregations were quarantined. These congregations came after Town officials and turned over the elected body during the next election. The assistant manager, planner, and building official quit because of the pressure. Mr. Olmedillo may have felt that his resignation would protect the rest of the staff.

Mr. Stokes would definitely hire Mr. Olmedillo. Everyone who works with him or knows him has a positive opinion of him. He would benefit any community tremendously. If you have a chance to hire him, you should do so.

Words or phrases used to describe Guillermo Olmedillo:

- Trusting,
- Loyal,
- Intelligent,
- Innovative,
- Hands on, and
- Trustworthy.

Strengths: Very knowledgeable, knows his resources and uses them well.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Abraham Issa – Chairman, Pension Board, City of Surfside, FL 305-632-1435

Mr. Issa has known Mr. Olmedillo since 2015. Mr. Issa is on the Pension Board for Surfside and Mr. Olmedillo was one of the members of the Board.

Mr. Olmedillo was very interactive with the Board which was very conducive to new business. When asked a question about an appeal or a pension matter, he had a depth of knowledge of

Reference Notes
Guillermo Olmedillo

what would work and what would not. He is very helpful and always responsive. He definitely knew all of the issues that needed to be hashed out and the right approach to use in the process. He is very knowledgeable and experienced in coordinating the different interests of the groups. He kept the Board members informed.

Finance is an area Mr. Olmedillo excels in. He meets deadlines. He is very low key and diffuses every high stress situation. At commission meetings when they were almost pointing fingers at him he was very responsive, truthful, and factual so the situation did not blow up the way that it could have. He makes good decisions and maintains an organization at a high performance level. He is frequently out in the community.

When the Board wanted to make some changes, Mr. Olmedillo was very conducive to making it happen, which was a difficult position for him. The City does not want to spend more money, but employees leave if they are not adequately compensated. He knew how to approach the Commission and what they would accept. He helped structure the conversation.

Mr. Issa is not aware of anything embarrassing or controversial related to Mr. Olmedillo. Mr. Issa would hire Mr. Olmedillo. He enjoys work and nothing really bothers him. He knows what to predict and adjusts ahead of it. He will bring methodical problem solving to any organization.

Words or phrases used to describe Guillermo Olmedillo:

- Methodical,
- Considerate,
- Helpful, and
- Positive.

Strengths: Knowledgeable, helpful, responsive, good at coordinating the diverse interests of a Board, always professional.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Julio Yero – Police Chief, City of Surfside, FL 305-753-6767

Mr. Yero was hired in 2014 and reported to Mr. Olmedillo from 2015 to 2020. Mr. Olmedillo was an exceptional manager.

Mr. Olmedillo made good decisions both when hiring personnel and in general. While he maintains an organization at a high level he is also very innovative and can be a change agent. He attended community events though there were not a large number of them in Surfside. When out in the public he worked well. He is customer service oriented.

Reference Notes
Guillermo Olmedillo

Using a variety of methods Mr. Olmedillo kept everyone informed. He held regular staff meetings and called, emailed and texted in between. Because of Mr. Yero's role they had almost constant communication on a variety of topics from significant crimes to speeding complaints.

Mr. Olmedillo rallies the staff around the vision of the elected officials. Traffic was an issue, so he suggested a one way pattern throughout the town. The idea was not well received by the community due to politics at the time and it never went through, but it would have made a tremendous and positive change for the community had it been implemented.

When it comes to finance Mr. Olmedillo does well. Anything brought to him was addressed immediately with guidance and support. He responds very well to stress, which is one of his positives. He was never agitated or raised his voice. He remained calm in all situations.

Mr. Olmedillo has not been involved in anything controversial. He resigned when a newly elected Commission was put in that had based their election on change. Mr. Yero would definitely hire Mr. Olmedillo and thinks the world of him. Employees and departments heads worked really well with him and appreciated the value he brought.

Words or phrases used to describe Guillermo Olmedillo:

- Kind,
- Intelligent,
- Humble,
- Experienced,
- Knowledgeable, and
- Nice.

Strengths: Extremely experienced in town governance, personality, very intelligent, kindest gentleman that Mr. Yero knows.

Weaknesses: Too nice at times.

Prepared by: Lynelle Klein
Colin Baenziger & Associates

Section 11

CB&A Internet Research

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://issuu.com/surfsidegazette/docs/gazette-aug2020>
August 2020

Surfside Florida
Gazette

Message from the Mayor

Town Manager Guillermo Olmedillo has decided to move on with the next chapter in his life. In my short time working with Guillermo, he was always a man of his word, highly professional and a real gentleman. Thank you, Guillermo, for your five years of service to our Town.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

[CB&A Note: Only the information relevant to **Guillermo Olmedillo** listed below.]

Miami Herald, The (FL)
May 6, 2020

Miami-Dade cities will lose money due to COVID-19. They can only guess how much

Author: Aaron Leibowitz

Surfside: Tourist taxes are also a concern in the small beach town of Surfside, which is slowing its spending because of hotel-related losses. Town Manager **Guillermo Olmedillo** said the town, which has a budget of around \$30 million, could see revenue drops between \$800,000 and \$1.2 million this fiscal year if the crisis lasts through June, primarily due to lost resort taxes. After seeing an uptick in resort tax revenues in 2019 thanks to several new hotels, Surfside has now frozen all spending of that money, which goes toward running the town's community center and promoting Surfside as a tourist destination. "The length of the crisis is the biggest hurdle in determining the financial impact," **Olmedillo** said.

How much federal help is coming? What happens to city budgets in the coming months will depend in part on what the federal government is willing to provide. Under the CARES Act, the massive stimulus package passed by Congress in response to COVID-19, cities of under 500,000 people can't apply to receive money directly. The funds are instead distributed at the county level. That means even cities as big as Miami, whose population is around 470,000, could get left out.

In an April 16 letter, the National League of Cities, National Association of Counties and U.S. Conference of Mayors called on Congress to provide \$250 billion in "robust, dedicated, and flexible funding" to be distributed among every municipal government in the country. "Both counties and cities are expending an unprecedented amount of resources while losing historic amounts of revenue," the groups wrote. "All local governments, regardless of population, urgently need direct federal funding to help us continue to fight COVID-19 and protect our residents through the summer and beyond." Adding to the uncertainty: cities have no idea when their emergency spending on items like protective equipment for employees and COVID-19 testing kits will get reimbursed by the federal government, if it's reimbursed at all. "When hurricanes happen, everyone is used to the drill and there are formulas for cities to get FEMA aid," said Alexander, the South Miami city manager. "But with CARES, cities have to go through the county to get money. We are all enforcing county and state executive orders restricting what people and businesses can do, so we ought to get some compensation."

During a virtual town hall meeting Tuesday, U.S. Rep. Donna Shalala, who represents a large swath of Miami-Dade County, said she and her fellow Democrats are working on legislation that "will bring the money directly back to cities" to pay for services like police and fire. "I'll go to Washington next week and hopefully not come back without money for Mayor Gelber and all the other cities," Shalala said during the meeting, which was co-hosted by Gelber. "We need to make that investment."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://govsalaries.com/olmedillo-guillermo-101224710>
2019

Guillermo Olmedillo
Town of Surfside

Guillermo Olmedillo Overview

Guillermo Olmedillo in 2019 was employed in Town of Surfside and had annual salary of \$176,534 according to public records. This salary is 208 percent higher than average and 262 percent higher than median salary in Town of Surfside.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

https://efactssc-public.flcourts.org/CaseDocuments/2018/1670/2018-1670_Petition_70988_E31.pdf
October 3, 2018

IN FLORIDA SUPREME COURT

VICTOR MAY, Pro Se

PETITIONER,

VS

SANDRA NOVOA, CHRISTINA WHITE, DANIEL EDWARD DIETCH, DANIEL Y. GIELCHINSKY, BARRY RICHARD COHEN, MICHAEL KARUKIN, TINA PAUL, **GUILLERMO OLMEDILLO**, WEISS SEROTA HELFMAN COLE & BIERMAN, P. L. AND ALEKSANDR BOKSNER, CARLOS A. GIMENEZ,
RESPONDENTS

Lower Case # 3D18-1818

L.T. Case # 2018-13373-CA-01(24)

s s 8

NOTICE OF APPEAL

c NOTICE IS GIVEN that Victor May, Petitioner, appeals to the Supreme Court, State of Florida for Writ of Certiorari or Mandamus, to quash the Order Granting Defendants' Motions to dismiss with prejudice, rendered August 10, 2018, the Final Judgment rendered August 17, 2018, and order denying petition for reconsideration, dated August 30, 2018 by Judge Arzola, 11th Circuit Court of Miami-Dade County.

SERVICE LIST

ATTORNEYS FOR SANDRA NOVOA, **GUILLERMO OLMEDILLO**
WEISS SEROTA HELFMAN COLE & BIERMAN, P.L.

VICTOR MAY,

Plaintiff,

vs.

SANDRA NOVOA, in her official capacity as Town Clerk of the Town of Surfside and CHRISTINA WHITE, in her official capacity as Supervisor of Elections for Miami-Dade County, DANIEL EDWARD DIETCH, DANIEL GIELCHINSKY, BARRY RICHARD COHEN, MICHAEL KARUKIN, TINA PAUL, **GUILLERMO OLMEDILLO**, WEISS SEROTA HELFMAN COLE & BIERMAN, P.L. and ALEXANDR BOKSNER,
Defendants.

ORDER GRANTING DEFENDANTS' MOTIONS TO DISMISS WITH PREJUDICE THIS CAUSE came before the Court on Defendant Christina White's Motion to Dismiss and Defendants Sandra Novoa, Daniel Edward Dietch, Daniel Gielchinsky, Barry Richard Cohen, Michael Karukin, Tina Paul, **Guillermo Olmedillo**, Weiss Serota Helfman Cole & Bierman, P.L. and Alexandr Boksner's Motion to Dismiss Complaint ("Motions"). A hearing was held on August 1, 2018 in Miami Dade County, Florida at which this Court heard argument on the Motions from all parties.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Count VI seeks unspecified relief against the Town Manager, **Guillermo Olmedillo**, concerning outside employment. The Town Charter contains no prohibition against outside employment by the Town Manager. To the extent that Plaintiff Victor May seeks to assert a violation of Ch. 112, pt. III, Fla. Stat. (Code Of Ethics For Public Officers And Employees), such claims must be pursued through the Commission on Ethics. § 112.324(1)(a), Fla. Stat. There is no private right of action that can be brought by Plaintiff Victor May. Judicial review may be had only after a final action taken by the Commission on Ethics and must be sought by "the party against whom an adverse opinion, finding, or recommendation is made." § 112.3241, Fla. Stat. The Court finds Count VI fails to allege a valid cause of action and must be dismissed with prejudice.

Accordingly, it is hereby ORDERED AND ADJUDGED that:

1. Defendant Miami-Dade County's Motion to Dismiss Count I is GRANTED.

2. Defendants Sandra Novoa, Daniel Edward Dietch, Daniel Gielchinsky, Barry Richard Cohen, Michael Karukin, Tina Paul, **Guillermo Olmedillo**, Weiss Serota Helfman Cole & Bierman, P.L. and Alexandr Boksner's Motion to Dismiss Complaint is GRANTED.

[CB&A Note: Above are the paragraphs in which Mr. **Olemdillo** was mentioned. The entire article can be found at the link below]

https://efactssc-public.flcourts.org/CaseDocuments/2018/1670/2018-1670_Petition_70988_E31.pdf

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
July 19, 2015

Surfside - Town proposes to keep property tax rate the same

Author: Joey Flechas

The Town of Surfside is proposing to keep the same property tax rate for the upcoming 2015-2016 budget year in order to maintain the city's services without having to dip into reserves.

The Town Commission has proposed maintaining the tax rate at \$5.03 per \$1,000 of taxable property value.

Under the proposed rate, the owner of a median condo valued at about \$293,000 would pay about \$1,234 in property taxes, which is about \$12 more than last year. This assumes the owner qualified for the standard homestead exemption and the home's assessed value increased by 0.8 percent, the maximum allowed by law this year for an owner-occupied home. The slightly higher tax bill is the result of increasing property values in Surfside.

The city will likely not raise that rate any higher as the budget season goes on, but it can be lowered or remain the same.

According to the town's administration, keeping the same tax rate allows the town to provide the same services and run the government with the same number of employees. The growth in property tax revenue means the town won't have to use reserve funds. "The budget that we're proposing is balanced with no money from reserves," said finance director Don Nelson.

What the town manager says

"That will allow us to maintain the same amount of staff members that we have today." - **Guillermo Olmedillo**

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
July 12, 2015

SURFSIDE - Protesters in Surfside decry sand dumping

Author: Joey Flechas

The sand saga continues in Surfside, where a group of residents gathered Fourth of July weekend to call for the removal of sand dumped on their beach from a construction site last year. Demonstrators say they have found construction debris in the sand dumped March 2014 from a work site at the Surf Club condo/hotel at 9011 Collins Ave. Real estate investment management company Fort Capital dug up the sand and spread it on the beach, in accordance with Florida law. But residents claim the sand is dirty.

Town Manager **Guillermo Olmedillo** said that the Surfside commission instructed the developer to remove the sand at its May meeting. "The developer and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection are working to get an amended consent order, which describes what it is the developer has to do from now on," he said.

In a June 23 letter sent to the commission, **Olmedillo** explains that turtle nesting season may prevent immediate removal of the sand.

The residents and city officials have been discussing this issue for more than a year. Frustrated with the sand situation, longtime resident Deborah Cimadevilla hired attorney Bob de la Fuente to represent her. "For us, the residents of Surfside, that is not acceptable as this material is extremely hazardous," she said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
January 26, 2015

Surfside hires new town manager

Author: Crystal Chew

With a New Year came a new manager for the Town of Surfside. The Surfside town commission unanimously approved **Guillermo Olmedillo**, 70, as the seaside town's next manager. He began on Jan. 5 and will succeed Michael Crotty, who became town manager in March 2013 and resigned last June.

The town hired Colin Baenziger & Associates to find candidates for the position. The firm received 73 applications and narrowed it down to five. Surfside held a community meeting in November for the town to meet and interview the final five, while former assistant Police Chief John DiCenso was hired as the interim town manager.

Olmedillo will receive an initial annual salary of \$155,000. Before he was tapped to fill in for Crotty, **Olmedillo** worked in both public and private sectors. The Venezuelan native moved to Miami at a very young age attending middle and high school here. He graduated from the University of Miami and received two fellowships at MIT. He returned to Venezuela with his wife, Gladys, around 1974, but later moved back to Miami, so that their three children could be educated here.

He has worked for the City of Miami as the deputy director. Then as a director of a consolidated department for Miami-Dade County where he had to handle 500 employees and a \$60 million dollar budget.

When he left the county, the commission asked him to do a political redistricting. "You may think this is kind of a difficult job to do, but try to put together 13 politicians to all agree unanimously on one plan," he said during the meeting in November. "And I did that for Miami-Dade County and the school board."

He was a consultant for many in Miami-Dade, including the City of Coral Gables, Key Biscayne, Doral and UM. "I bring the experience of not only the private sector, but the public sector and I've served under the same political structure that the town has," he said.

Olmedillo's wife teases him about working too much, while he describes himself as a very logical individual, working firmly based on evidence. He is excited to work among the active community of Surfside. "I'm honored. I am looking forward to working with this group," he said.

There will be a special commission meeting at 7 p.m. on Feb. 12 at 9293 Harding Ave, second floor council chambers.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
December 16, 2011

Realtor withdraws plan for office near High Pines
The vice chairman of the Kendall Community Council scolded residents for acting like a “mob” while speaking against a proposed rezoning.

Author: Michelle Hammontree-Garcia

A controversial request to rezone a house near the High Pines neighborhood was withdrawn by the applicant on Wednesday. The Kendall Community Council voted 4 to 1 to approve the request to withdraw a zoning application that asked to change the zoning of the house from a single-family to a semi-professional office district — and to waive filing fees for a subsequent application. Councilwoman Angela Vazquez voted against the measure. Council members Alberto Santana and Peggy Brodeur were absent. More than 200 High Pines residents crowded the meeting to object to the application. Many of the residents spoke out of turn and booed or clapped as if they were at a ball game. One resident was escorted out by security. Vice-chairman Jose Valdes told the crowd that they are “acting in a manner not dignified of the council’s decorum” and that they come off as a “mob rather than interested and involved community members.”

Ivette Agusti, the owner of the house in the southwest corner of Sunset Drive and Southwest 54th Street, said that all she wanted is to run her realty business from her house, where she would be able to take care of her four year old son. “I am a single-mother who fully sustains my son and I. I’m harmless. They could have invited me to their gatherings before the meeting,” said Agusti, who said she has owned realty brokerage for 12 years. But the application drawn up for Agusti by **Guillermo Olmedillo**, a land-use consultant and former director of the Miami-Dade Department of Planning and Zoning, asked for a zoning district that would allow a doctor’s office, attorney’s office, nurseries and kindergarten and after-school care facilities on the site. The council determined that what Agusti was asking for at the meeting and what was being requested in the application were different and moved to defer the item to February to give Agusti time to amend her application. **Olmedillo** was not at the meeting.

Agusti decided to withdraw her application after some 30 High Pines residents spoke against the motion to defer. Agusti also took into consideration that if she rezones her property to a semi-professional district, she wouldn’t be able to live there. Many of the residents who spoke against the deferral questioned Agusti’s intentions and truthfulness. “This is a flip-job. She can call it whatever she wants,” resident and attorney Randy Jones told the council. “Across the street there is an entire office floor available.” There is a restaurant, a dry cleaner and two banks across the street from Agusti’s house. And a four floor office building is going to break ground in one month.

Bob Bishopric, a High Pines resident and Realtor, said at the meeting that he did research on Agusti’s property before the meeting and the owner was listed as confidential in Miami-Dade property records. “Why does someone have to hide if they are not in a federal witness program?” he asked.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

A county Planning and Zoning Department spokeswoman at the meeting said that without a zoning change, Agusti couldn't run a business out of her home that required customers and/or vendors to come to the office. According to Agusti's real estate website, the realty offices are at 101 NE 23rd St. in Miami.

Things heated up after the meeting. "A man came up to me and my parents and threatened us. We had to be escorted to our cars by police," said Agusti. "I love that they are so united and protect their neighborhood," added Agusti. "But my house feels more part of the commercial area that is truly not residential. Otherwise I truly love the neighborhood but I would have bought where it is truly residential."

The property is owned by Maria, Wilfredo and Ivette Agusti and was bought in April 2009 for \$495,000, according to the Miami Dade Property Appraiser's website. Its assessed value in 2011 was \$372,275.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
December 5, 2011

Miami-Dade to redraw boundaries for 13 county commission districts
County commissioners are weighing plans to redraw 13 commission districts to account for the population shift to the south and west.

Author: Martha Brannigan and Patricia Mazzei

Miami-Dade County, spurred by population shifts detailed in the 2010 U.S. Census, is redrawing the boundaries of commission districts to even out a dramatic 33 percent difference in population between the smallest and the largest of the 13 districts. But don't expect sweeping changes. The seventh and latest version of the plan, which will be considered for preliminary approval by Miami-Dade commissioners Tuesday, avoids major shakeups in the county's political dynamics. The plan, which is subject to further horse trading by commissioners before it is finalized, takes the minimum necessary steps to rebalance the population among the 13 districts — to jive with the Constitutional requirement that votes carry equal weight — while balancing other factors.

One key consideration: Because county residents still show a pattern of voting along racial lines, the new boundaries must protect minority voting rights. Another factor: District map lines are supposed to respect communities, such as municipalities and neighborhoods. The pivotal changes since the 2000 Census are that the county has become more Hispanic (Hispanics account for 65 percent) and a larger share of the population resides in the southern and western reaches. That means districts in the south and west, such as Districts 8, 9 and 11, represented by Commissioners Lynda Bell, Dennis Moss and Joe Martinez, respectively, must shrink to yield population to those in the north and eastern areas. Those districts either grew more slowly, or in the cases of District 2 and 10, actually lost population between 2000 and 2010. They are represented by Jean Monestime and Javier Souto. "The population — which is the main driver — has moved south and west. That means they are overpopulated in the south and western districts and underpopulated in the north and northeast districts," said **Guillermo Olmedillo**, a redistricting consultant for the project, who has worked with commissioners for months on various options rejiggering the map. "The challenge has been to move the boundaries [to redistribute the population] while trying to respect all the other considerations," he said.

Among the more notable changes on the proposed map:

- Districts 1 and 2, represented by Barbara Jordan and Monestime, would have slightly smaller black majorities than they do under current boundaries, while predominantly African-American District 3, represented by Audrey Edmonson, would slightly increase its black population, as would District 9.
- The village of Pinecrest, which straddles Districts 7 and 8, would move completely within District 7 under the new map. District 7 is represented by Xavier Suarez, and District 8 by Bell.
- The city of North Miami, which is split among four districts, would lie wholly within Districts 2 and 4. Sally Heyman represents District 4.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

“It looks as if they are taking some steps to protect the minorities,” said Stephen Cody, a Miami attorney and redistricting expert who was lead counsel in the 1984 lawsuit that resulted in single-member districts for the county. The suit aimed to give blacks and Hispanics a fair shot at electing representatives at a time when political power was dominated by non-Hispanic whites. “They made sure that African-American commissioners will be able to be reelected,” Cody said, adding: “It looks as if they took some steps to protect the incumbents, but that is also a permitted criteria to consider in redistricting.”

The commission plans to hold a public hearing on redistricting on Dec. 19. Once the commission approves the new map, the county will set about revamping voter precincts. The impact of the new boundaries may become clear in August, when commissioners in the odd-numbered districts face a primary election. Meanwhile, the city of Miami has yet to begin its redistricting. Miami is under less pressure to draw its new maps because no municipal election is scheduled until 2013. The city attorney’s office said earlier this year that it expected Miami to propose draft maps after the state released its draft drawings. The Florida Senate put out its proposal last month; a House version is expected this week.

But Mayor Tomás Regalado said he won’t instruct the city to move forward until hearing from the U.S. Census Bureau on whether the federal agency plans to revise its population count for Miami. The city is challenging 2010 Census figures that show the city’s population just under 400,000; the city believes Miami has more than 500,000 residents.

A Census challenge takes about six months to resolve, according to the federal agency. Miami submitted its challenge less than two months ago, Regalado said.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

https://www.doah.state.fl.us/DocDoc/2008/003614/08003614_11172008_03382898.pdf
November 17, 2008

**STATE OF FLORIDA
DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS**

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS,
Petitioner, and KAREN ESTES, BARRY WHITE, 1000 FRIENDS OF FLORIDA, and
NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION,
Intervenors,

vs.

DOAH Case No. 08-3614GM
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY,
Respondent,
And DAVID BROWN, LOWES
Intervenors.

PETITIONER DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS AND INTERVENORS 1000
FRIENDS OF FLORIDA AND NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION'S
JOINT NOTICE OF TAKING DEPOSITION DUCES TECUM OF INTERVENOR DAVID
BROWN'S EXPERT

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that pursuant to Rule 28-106, Florida Administrative Code and Fla. R. Civ. P. 1.390(b), Petitioner Florida Department of Community Affairs ("DCA") and Intervenors 1000 Friends of Florida, Inc. ("1000 Friends") and National Parks Conservation Association, Inc. ("NPCA") jointly will take the deposition upon oral examination of Mr. **Guillermo Olmedillo** on November 24, 2008 at 2:00pm EST at the 1450 Madruga Avenue, Suite 203, Coral Gables, Florida 33146. This deposition will be taken before an Associate or Deputy Court Reporter and Notary Public, who is not of counsel to the parties nor interested in the event of the cause. This deposition is being taken for purposes of discovery, for use as evidence at the final hearing, and for any other purposes as are permitted under the applicable and governing rules.

Examination is requested on the following matters:

1. All allegations raised in Petitioner DCA's Petition.
2. All allegations raised in Intervenors 1000 Friends and NPCA Second Amended Petition to Intervene.
3. All issues raised in the staff reports prepared by Miami-Dade County in regards to the amendments at issue in this case.
4. All issues raised in the DCA's Statement of Intent and "ORC" report in regards to the amendments at issue in this case.

[CB&A Note: The entire article can be found below]

https://www.doah.state.fl.us/DocDoc/2008/003614/08003614_11172008_03382898.pdf

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Waycross Journal Herald (GA)
May 8, 2008

Kevin Kohn's Haul Of Shame

Author: Jacob Bernstein; Miami New Times

EDITOR'S NOTE: Published by the Miami New Times on November 11, 1999, this news story highlights the questionable tactics used by Kevin Kohn and Peerless Dade, a subsidiary of the North American Metals Co. (NAMCO), in their bid to increase the height of a 360-acre Florida dump from 12 feet to 90 feet. It is being republished with permission.

HIALEAH, Fla. - Across Hialeah in the early morning darkness of October 21, more than 125 people awoke with the same purpose and pulled themselves from bed. Drawn from the ranks of the elderly and the unemployed, they shared a 7 a.m. rendezvous and, unknown to them at the time, a full day of "work" ahead of them. Several were infirm and walked with difficulty; for some the outing would be a welcome break from days filled with a steady regime of medical checkups. Arriving by car and foot they converged on the parking lot in front of a boarded-up supermarket in a plaza ringed by shopping centers and apartment complexes in western Hialeah. Those who drove left their cars there for the day.

Three buses idled in the lot on West Eighteenth Avenue and 49th Street, waiting to whisk the group downtown to the seat of county government, the chambers of the Board of County Commissioners, for a public hearing.

Before the commissioners that day was a controversial zoning application. It would determine whether a 360-acre dump near Miami Lakes, owned by a company called Peerless Dade, would be allowed to grow in height from 12 feet to 90 feet. As an incentive the company was promising eventually to build a neighborhood park atop the giant landfill. The deal involved big money and consequently attracted high-powered interest. If the commission voted in favor of expanding the landfill, politically connected backers of the zoning change stood to earn roughly \$270 million over 30 years. Opposition to a bigger dump was also fierce, coming from neighborhood associations bankrolled in part by the billion-dollar company Waste Management, Inc. (The Texas-based conglomerate and Peerless are the two largest private landfill firms that dispose of construction and demolition material in Miami-Dade County.)

Although they were organized to favor the Peerless dump expansion, most of those boarding the buses had little clue what they were supporting, and why. What they did know was that they were promised \$50. All they had to do was show up. "We have no idea what this is about," said one woman, who requested anonymity. "This is the way politics are done here."

In Hialeah it is an open secret that people are paid to be instant supporters of politicians and issues. One politician of Cuban origin who is disdainful of the practice says such people often are called *clagues*, Cuban slang that can mean "garbage" or "the lower class." But the practice of manufacturing - and paying for - grassroots "support" is so prevalent and long-standing in South

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida that the slur is hardly fair. On the bus the "instant supporters" were given dark-green T-shirts and baseball caps. Some put the shirts on over the clothes they wore. Others stripped down in the bus, leaving their undergarments behind when they went to the commission. Written across the front of the jerseys in white letters was the slogan "We're for the park." On the back was printed "A park is in our future. Let's work together."

Organizers told the bus riders little about what those sayings signified. They were informed they were assembled to support the noble idea of a park for children. The whole process would take only three hours, one recalls the organizer assuring them. A man who a participant identified as Hialeah activist Carlos "Cuco" Carcas also advised the people in green not to talk to any outsiders once the bus riders arrived. (Carcas says he only helped bring his friends from Miami Lakes, North Miami, and the edge of Hialeah. He denies paying them or telling them not to talk.)

By 8:30 a.m. the three buses had pulled in front of the Stephen P. Clark Government Center; they were joined by another that had fetched people from South Miami and West Miami. In addition a number of employees of Peerless and their families were on hand. They filed into the government center. Only some were allowed into commission chambers, where they filled a far-right section of seats. Because they were so many, others waited patiently on the ground floor for the hearing to begin. Eventually folding chairs were produced for those outside the chambers.

Opponents of the dump also arrived in equal numbers, dressed in white T-shirts that read "Miami Lakes Country: Keep it Clean." Those in white were furious about the possibility of a larger garbage dump in their neighborhood; they derided their green-shirted opponents. We weren't paid to be here, insisted Gerri Fontanella, although some who supported the Peerless effort disputed that claim. When pressed, participants in green were vague and confused about the relationship between a landfill and a county park. A young man from West Miami who declined to be named explained it like this: "They are going to tear down a park in Miami Gardens and put up a waste dump."

José Garcia from Hialeah had a similar take on their mission. "We want a park instead of a dump," he asserted. Septuagenarian Ismael Campos from South Miami admitted he didn't really know why they were there but ventured, "We want a park and we don't want the garbage." Said Flor Beltran: "We are here so they can make more parks." Offered a woman from Hialeah: "The way it was explained to me is that we are for a park called Miami Lakes and they are against it."

In fact this is a story about much more than a park; it's about lucrative landfills and the companies that run them; it's about the politicians and the lobbyists and the money behind the deals; and it's about the cynical manipulation of the system and of those elderly immigrants who traditionally have been the backbone of Miami-Dade's political machines. During the course of this day's hearing, specific allegations emerged about illegal lobbying, a co-opted community group, hidden financial interests, paid "supporters," and a proposed 368-acre park that opponents allege is an impromptu façade meant to green-wash a toxic-waste dump.

It was Peerless Dade itself that pulled the curtain partially open on this tawdry tale when the company filed a lawsuit in early September against one of the dump's principal opponents, Carl Dasher, in an effort to muzzle him. In depositions taken by Dasher's lawyer, unpleasant facts broke

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

out like a rash that would not go away. What exactly is Peerless Dade? And who is behind it? The answers are muddy at best. According to a deposition taken from Peerless Dade president Kevin Kohn on September 28, the company belongs to a Jacksonville-based entity called Peerless Group, Inc. The firm operates under the name Peerless Waste Industries. According to state records, Peerless Waste Industries also goes by the name Eastern of Georgia, Inc., of which Kohn is also listed as president. Oddly enough Eastern of Georgia, Inc.'s address is 1001 Fannin, suite 4000, Houston, Texas. It is the same corporate address down to the suite number used by Peerless's major Miami competitor, Waste Management, Inc. Eastern of Georgia, it turns out, is a subsidiary of Waste Management. Kohn insists the Peerless Group has no connection to Waste Management. He claims Eastern of Georgia was purchased by another company, which promised to dissolve the name but never did. "Given the confusion we should probably call Waste Management and ask them to dissolve that corporation," he says.

In 1998 Peerless Dade bought the Northwest Miami-Dade landfill from a company called Dade Recycling Center. In state documents the company's address is care of a firm called United Development & Management. According to Kohn's deposition, an employee with United Development and Management is ex-Hialeah councilman Silvio Cardoso. The former politician had been a star running back for the University of Miami, but as a public official Cardoso had not fared as well. After serving on the council for eight years, he opted not to run for re-election after an investigation revealed he had interfered with an FBI probe into illegal kickbacks. Cardoso earned a reduced sentence by testifying against Hialeah Mayor Raul Martinez. Sentenced to four years of probation, 1000 hours of community service, and a \$25,000 fine, Cardoso left public life and became a successful developer. (Repeated calls to Cardoso's Key Biscayne residence for comment were not answered.)

As part of the landfill sale agreement, Cardoso would receive a piece of future profits if he could get the zoning changed to allow the dump to expand, Kohn explained in his deposition. Cardoso did not operate alone in this effort. He received help from Herman Echevarria, depositions revealed. Echevarria is a close advisor to Miami-Dade County Mayor Alex Penelas and Commissioner Miriam Alonso, in whose district the landfill falls. As a Hialeah City Council president, Echevarria was a protégé of Raul Martinez until he unsuccessfully ran against the mayor in 1997. Now Echevarria is a pivotal player in an ongoing political war that pits Penelas and his supporters against Martinez.

Both Cardoso and Echevarria met with county officials to discuss the Peerless effort leading up to the commission hearing. Neither man is registered as a lobbyist with Miami-Dade County. At least one of the people wearing the green shirts believed it was Echevarria who was ultimately responsible for busing the seniors in from Hialeah to support the dump. (Echevarria declined to respond to over a half-dozen phone calls and a list of faxed questions for this story.)

It is unclear exactly what financial incentive Echevarria had in promoting the expanded dump. But in an article in the Miami Herald that appeared on October 22, the day after the commission meeting, Echevarria acknowledged he had a monetary interest in the Peerless deal. Some residents who live near the landfill think Commissioner Alonso gave backroom support to the deal as well. A

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

year earlier she had been a sponsor of a private bond-financing initiative to raise construction money for the Peerless landfill. Some of her angrier constituents even started a petition to demand her removal from office.

By 1 p.m., five hours after the bus riders had arrived downtown, the public hearing on the landfill had still not begun. The green shirts were growing restless. Some had already eaten the prepared lunches given to them on the buses. One woman joked she felt like a child being taken to school. Lunch consisted of an identical box containing a ham-and-cheese sandwich, potato chips, juice, a cookie, and an apple. Some of the sandwiches didn't even have ham, a few grouched. To kill time one woman scribbled on the side of a newspaper the name of a street where they were supposed to live, near the dump. She passed it to other green shirts so they wouldn't have to say "Hialeah" in the unlikely event they were asked where they resided.

On the first floor Alberto Lorenzo, a political operative who specializes in grassroots campaigns, acknowledged he had taken time from Johnny Winton's election campaign to organize one busload from West Miami. The group was excited about the idea of a new park, he said. "We only (show our support) if we believe in the issue," he insisted. In a later interview Lorenzo admitted that allowing an expansion of the landfill was a tough call and that some of his friends were on the other side. He denied having a financial stake in the deal and insisted he doesn't give money directly to instant supporters such as the bus riders, though he pays his assistants who help turn out supporters.

The real reason he was at the commission meeting, he confided, was to help his old high school friend Cardoso. "I am very good at mobilizing people and I did that for Silvio," he said later. Talking with Lorenzo was Francois Illas, the inseparable sidekick of Herman Echevarria. Illas maintained he was just there to have lunch with Lorenzo, but he stayed for the rest of the hearing. Cardoso, Echevarria, and Lorenzo go back a long way. According to state records all three served on the board of directors of a savings and loan called Global Bank that went belly-up in the Eighties. Also downstairs circulating in the crowd near Lorenzo was Alexander Gomez, vice president of Dade Recycling Center, the former owner of the landfill. Flanked by a publicist, Gomez insisted: "The majority of people here are those who work in the dump and their friends and family." Lorenzo and Illas led the green shirts to the ground floor of the government-center food court for another lunch. The seniors upstairs in the commission chambers weren't as lucky; they sat and waited for the hearing, which finally started at 4:19 p.m., nearly eight hours after they had arrived. By that time several of the green shirts were sound asleep in their seats. Others were talking and laughing loudly in an attempt to keep themselves amused. **Guillermo Olmedillo**, director of the county planning and zoning department, opened the hearing. **Olmedillo** told commissioners that as of the night before, his office had received 1,428 protests against the zoning increase and 1,193 in favor. The show of support arrived at the last minute. Just the day before, **Olmedillo** had noted that the numbers were 1306 against and only 2 in favor. **Olmedillo** played a crucial role in the history of Peerless Dade's bid to expand.

First he determined the zoning change needed to pass muster with the Developmental Impact Committee, which consists of seven high-ranking county officials. The DIC usually only hears issues of county wide concern, and is also generally viewed as favorable to business. It delivered a

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

5-1 vote in favor of Peerless Dade. The vote riled residents fearful of an enlarged dump. Yet what made some neighborhood activists even angrier was the decision to have the county commission, and not one of the fifteen local community zoning appeals boards, hear the application.

Lawyers for Peerless Dade acknowledge they never could have surmounted the residential opposition they would encounter from the community zoning board, whose purpose is to give power back to local communities. Eight months after filing the application, Peerless amended the property boundaries around the landfill to include a right-of-way on NW 170th Street, a parcel of land the company does not even own. (County rules specify that an applicant must only prove ownership of 75 percent of the land they wish to have rezoned.) With the inclusion of the right-of-way, the application area now covered two zoning-board territories. **Olmedillo** thus decided the hearing should be held by the county commission. Because of perceived influence peddling, outraged residents believed members of the county commission would be more disposed to favor the company's petition.

After **Olmedillo** introduced the zoning petition, Al Cardenas, chairman of the Florida Republican Party and chief lawyer and lobbyist for Peerless Dade, strode to the podium to start the company's presentation. He began by explaining the waste in the landfill would be odorless construction and demolition material. He then announced a team of stellar legal and professional help who would deliver the case for the dump. The all-star group included Jack Luft (former development director for the City of Miami), a landfill consulting firm, and several traffic experts, among others. Cardenas also introduced co-counsel from the powerful Washington, D.C., law firm Verner, Liipfert, Bernhard, McPherson and Hand, which counts among its members former senators Bob Dole and George Mitchell. Yet during the course of the hearing no one from the firm spoke. Santiago Echemendia, co-counsel from Cardenas's law firm of Tew, Cardenas, Rebak, Kellogg, Lehman, DeMaria & Tague, declined to detail exactly what the influential beltway firm accomplished for his client. He commented cryptically: "Sometimes you need powerful lawyer-lobbyists to do business in Miami-Dade County."

But there was more. Cardenas also introduced nine letters from the construction industry, including the Latin Builders Association and the Association of the Swimming Pool Industry of Florida. He added four glowing testimonials from people who use a landfill that has been converted into a park in Broward. Then he offered Peerless's "community support," and an alleged agreement between the company and a political-action committee called North Dade Citizens Association (NDC).

"I would like to acknowledge those in the green shirts and white caps who are here in support of us," Cardenas informed the commissioners. Those in the white T-shirts laughed and catcalled in response while Commissioner Katy Sorenson, acting chair of the meeting, banged her gavel to restore silence. "Also with us here today are Mr. Willy Hernandez and Frank Serra," continued Cardenas. "They are residents of the project's neighborhoods and they are board members of the North Dade Citizens Association. They will discuss their support for the project, including the settlement agreement and resolution of support."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Cardenas made it clear he would counter any allegations of manufactured support for the zoning change with accusations of his own. In particular he alleged there were forgeries in the 1288 petitions from dump opponents. "Our forensic document examiner has found that there are at least four persons who account for a total of 37 different petitions," he claimed, among other charges. (The team never used the expert. Peerless's counsel, Santiago Echemendia, said that because of the late hour, the examiner had to leave before she could testify.) He also laid out the undeniable reality that the county is rapidly running out of landfill space for construction and demolition material, a fact that will have broad economic implications. Cardenas then moved to the pearl of the Peerless plan. "The ultimate conversion [of the landfill] to a park is probably the highlight of our presentation," he told commissioners.

By the end of the landfill's estimated 30-year life span, the company planned to deed the entire 368-acre tract to Miami-Dade County for a park, which would feature baseball, softball, and soccer fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, and miles of paved trails for biking and walking. In addition the company would create a trust fund of up to five million dollars to help maintain the park. As Peerless Dade completed different sections of the landfill it would turn them immediately into parkland so residents wouldn't have to wait the full 30 years. The first section would be ready in five to seven years, Cardenas estimated.

It quickly became apparent, though, that the county attorneys had not had time to study thoroughly the gift they were being offered. After some probing from Commissioner Miguel Diaz de la Portilla, County Attorney Robert Krawcheck explained that under the Peerless plan, it was possible the county could get stuck with cleaning up a polluted landfill, or lose the promised five-million dollar trust fund for a park if the deal fell through. "Is this [park promise] worthless?" Diaz de la Portilla asked. Krawcheck responded: "In some respects it could be worthless."

By this time many in the Peerless camp had had enough. A number of the green shirts were in open rebellion. They had been sitting in the commission chambers for almost nine hours straight. One lady fretted her son wouldn't know where she was. Many of them didn't speak English and couldn't follow what the speakers were saying. Instead of listening they talked loudly among themselves, and the lawyers representing Peerless in the front row continually glanced angrily at their "supporters."

At one point Cardenas walked back and exchanged sharp words with one of the women. "Miss, you are here to help us. Please be quiet," he said sternly. "If you don't want to be here, leave." So some did. About a dozen or so departed the commission chambers soon after, at about 6:30 p.m. They boarded one of the four buses waiting outside the government center. By the time they returned to Hialeah, nearly twelve hours had passed since they had first set out.

Shortly thereafter William Hernandez, vice chairman and a founding member of the North Dade Citizens Association, began reading from a prepared speech. Hernandez had originally opposed the landfill, but changed his mind after Peerless Dade promised to restrict truck access, plant trees around the site, and agree to a citizens review board. These concessions and others formed the basis of an agreement ironed out with the company and approved by eight executive board members of

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

the NDC. Hernandez trumpeted the park as a \$30 million asset for the community. It would be called a Christmas park. "We know that is a good deal for all," he concluded.

Close by, Carl Dasher's attorney Robert Gilbert lay in wait. (Dasher was one of the founders of the NDC; his vehement opposition to the agreement led Peerless to throw a SLAPP suit at him.) Gilbert questioned whether all eight members had in fact approved the deal. "According to my conversations, they gave me the right to enter into that agreement," Hernandez responded. "If they have changed their mind, it is news to me." (Later one of the eight would claim she and her husband, also a board member, had never approved it.) After Hernandez came Frank Serra, another executive officer of North Dade Citizens Association. Serra appeared nervous and read haltingly from his statement. He praised Peerless for giving something back to the community and related how happy he would be to play with his daughters in the Christmas park. "For many years they will be proud that their father made this decision," he said.

Gilbert approached the podium and asked whether Serra had attended a meeting with Cardoso, Echevarria, and Peerless president Kohn. "Um, please elaborate," Serra requested. "Sir, did you attend a meeting for approximately three hours on approximately August 25, 1999, on which you negotiated a settlement agreement?" Gilbert asked. "I cannot answer the question because I haven't spoken to my counselor," Serra replied. "I feel like I am on trial here or something. Aren't we going to talk about the application?" The white shirts jeered. It was now nearly 8:00 p.m. The commission took a break and the rest of those who had come from Hialeah headed for the buses. They were replaced by more green shirts, many of them workers at the landfill and their family members. When the hearing resumed, some of the green shirts came forward.

Stephen Helfman, an attorney representing the dump opposition, asked one: "Were you paid anything to be here today? Were you promised anything in exchange for being here today?" "They don't have to pay me anything," responded Ramon Diaz. "It is a good project. Anyone who was interested in the benefit of the community would have come forward."

On the dais Commissioner Miriam Alonso fidgeted. After the testimony of two more pro-dump supporters, she spoke. "May I say something on the record?" she began. "I have the highest respect for Mr. Steve Helfman, but I deeply resent the question that was posed to the gentleman that was here before. In all the years I have seen zoning, I have never seen the question 'If you are being paid' and I really feel that because this person seems to be poor and Hispanic, maybe he was asked that question ... and I deeply resent that."

Helfman responded quickly. "That is very personal and absolutely untrue," he said hotly. "I have it on good information from several people during the day that several of these people wearing green shirts have been paid to be here. So I think it is only fair to ask at least one of them." Shortly afterward Helfman continued: "Your lawyers have raised so many issues I don't know whether they will ever see a park," he exclaimed. "Forget about the park." Helfman then made an impassioned plea for the commissioners to look at the money at stake, the real reason behind all the lobbyists and their presentations.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

When Dasher attorney Robert Gilbert took to the podium, he continued in the same vein. He pointed out that in the financial disclosure, those involved with former dump owner Dade Recycling Center had not disclosed their interest despite having a written agreement whereby the company would receive "a substantial financial windfall" if the zoning were changed.

Lawyers for Peerless argue that Dade Recycling has no equitable interest in the landfill so technically they don't have to disclose the sales agreement. But Gilbert wasn't done. He also alleged undisclosed lobbying. "[Cardoso and Echevarria] represent the interests of Peerless Dade," related Gilbert. "These two gentleman met with senior members of the county staff in connection with this application. Your file of lobbyists bears no indication that Mr. Cardoso or Mr. Echevarria have registered as lobbyists."

In September and October, Echevarria and Cardoso met with both the acting director of public works Aristides Rivera and the director of planning and zoning **Guillermo Olmedillo**. Both men sit on the Developmental Impact Committee. Rivera had lunch with the two in an unnamed Brickell area restaurant, he testified in a deposition. Echevarria called him up, Rivera recalled, "to get acquainted with the DIC process."

According to **Olmedillo's** deposition, Echevarria and Cardoso met with him for fifteen to twenty minutes in his office. Anyone who enters the eleventh floor to get to the director's office will see a black sign reminding lobbyists they are required to register with the Clerk of the Board of County Commissioners. **Olmedillo** says he didn't ask the men whether they were lobbyists or even what role they had in the Peerless deal.

Olmedillo also said in the past three months he had met with Echevarria on another zoning issue. According to the county clerk's office, neither Echevarria nor Cardoso is a registered lobbyist for Peerless or any other company. According to Robert Meyers, executive director of the County Commission on Ethics, the two men's actions would be illegal if it could be proved they worked as lobbyists, and that they were trying to convince staff to work in favor of the dump proposal. "It is a fine line, no question about it," says Meyers.

Back in the commission chambers, at about 9:30 p.m. the residents in white T-shirts began emotional testimony. When told to keep to two minutes, infuriated activists rebuked commissioners for trying to hurry them along. After more than an hour, a weary Cardenas approached the podium one last time. He expressed regret that his client had ever pursued an agreement with the NDC and a lawsuit against Dasher. (Lawyers for Peerless say they are seeking a settlement.)

After the testimony Miriam Alonso again spoke. She complained that antidumping activists who assumed she was supporting the zoning increase had distributed her home phone number and that her husband, recovering from multiple bypass heart surgery, was forced to listen to slurs and angry commentary from constituents. "It has been ugly because of lies and accusations and offenses, and even threats of recall have been sent back and forth," she complained. "I want to put on the record that I will judge this application on the merits, on the facts presented today."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

At 11:20 p.m. Alonso offered a motion to deny the application. Those who had assumed the commissioner would support the Peerless effort believe she realized that opposition was too strong and the rezoning request would lose. Then Commissioner Bruno Barreiro, in one last-ditch move to save the application, offered a feeble attempt to postpone the vote. "We have been criticized for taking decisions at this time of the hour," he said weakly. "I would like to be able to digest and sleep on a lot of this information and defer the item. I think the public has gone through a lot...." The commissioner's voice trailed off as his colleagues looked on, perplexed. Commissioner Miguel Diaz de la Portilla waited a moment and then seconded Alonso's motion. The other commissioners present followed and the application was rejected 9-0.

Peerless Dade has not yet decided whether to appeal. According to one source close to the company, if it appeals the firm might use a strategy suggesting the commission's decision was not valid because Alonso could not give an impartial vote under threat of recall. When the first busload of supporters returned to the parking lot in Hialeah, they made an unpleasant discovery: Their cars had been towed. Posted in four locations around the parking lot were signs reading: "Customer Parking Only. All others will be towed at owner expense."

Carlos "Cuco" Carcas, who was there to meet them, frantically used his cell phone to locate the cars while angry senior citizens yelled obscenities at him. One sign at the entrance revealed Magic Towing to be responsible, and eventually Carcas discovered the company had the cars. Carcas insists the signs were not there in the morning. "Personally I considered it to be a lack of respect," he comments. One participant places responsibility for the towing on Hialeah Mayor Raul Martinez. Many in Hialeah credit him with possessing omnipotent powers, and under this logic he had the cars towed to strike against his political enemies: Herman Echevarria and Silvio Cardoso.

Ivan Del Pino, manager of Magic Towing, says the signs had been posted there for weeks, and that the company announced through flyers that it would tow from the lot. He says Carcas appeared the next day to pay for the release of five of the fifteen cars. In the following days, according to one participant, Carcas paid off the elderly supporters. (He denies this.) The cars never should have been there in the first place, the towing manager believes. "I know who [Cuco] is," says Del Pino. "I'm sure [he] should have known. We sent flyers over to the Building of Commerce and there are a lot of commissioners[']s offices] there."

In the end it is unlikely that efforts to rezone the dump will stop here. There's too much money involved, and Miami-Dade needs landfill space to continue to grow. And certainly the manipulation of the elderly, like so many chessmen to satisfy the hidden interests of the wealthy, won't disappear anytime soon either. Yet it's possible that some "instant supporters" involved in the Peerless Dade effort might choose to stay in bed next time around. "It was an abuse of the elderly," reflects one angry retiree.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
November 18, 2005

BOUNDARY BATTLE HEATS UP

Author: Matthew Haggman and Noaki Schwartz

As developers make the biggest push in years to extend Miami-Dade's Urban Development Boundary, they also are proposing a measure that would likely make it much easier to move the hotly debated line again and again in the future.

On Monday the Miami-Dade County Commission will vote on nine applications by developers to move the UDB, the line that limits large-scale building along the western and southern county border. But two powerful builder groups are also asking the commission to change the standard used to assess the county's housing needs, which could require more developable land.

The proposal is under fire from groups opposed to moving the UDB because it would likely clear the way for developers to win future battles over building large-scale projects on what is now protected land. County planners also consider the language of the proposal confusing. Adding to critics' outrage, the builders submitted a last-minute revision that planners had no time to review.

“It's troublesome that the very people we rely on to comprehend and evaluate are concerned about the language for its clearness,” said Commissioner Sally Heyman. “Where does that leave someone like me who relies on them?”

The proposal, pushed by the Latin Builders Association and Builders Association of South Florida, would require the county to maintain a 15-year supply of developable land just for single-family homes, rather than all types of housing. Single-family homes require more space than condominiums or town homes.

“If you have to maintain a 15-year supply of single-family homes, you are almost always going to guarantee that you have to amend the boundary,” said Mark Woerner, chief for Metropolitan Planning at the county's Department of Planning & Zoning.

Current county policy calls for a 15-year supply of developable land for new housing of any type within the UDB. County planners say that yardstick is being met and there is currently no need to move the line.

If the proposal is rejected, as county planners recommend, it dies. If it is approved, it goes to the state for review and is then subject to a final county vote in April.

Developers contend the county's population has grown to the point that Miami-Dade's housing needs simply cannot be met within the confines of the current boundary. But opponents argue that the area within the boundary is not yet built out, and that open space must be preserved for environmental and agricultural reasons.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Opponents are now furious about the builders' attempt to get the commission to also consider a revised proposal, only presented publicly this week. The revision still calls for a 15-year supply of homes, but requires that the current ratio of single-family-to-condos be maintained in any assessment of future housing needs. Opponents say this runs counter to calls from some public officials to make future development more compact and near transit lines, rather than allowing so many land-gobbling single-family homes.

Guillermo Olmedillo, a former county planner now representing the LBA and BASF, said the revision was necessary because the builders' initial proposal was unrealistic. It was poorly crafted because of "too many cooks in the kitchen," he said.

But opponents called the move an end-run around the review process. Cynthia Guerra and Alan Farago, both leaders with the Hold The Line campaign - an umbrella group opposing any movement of the UDB, said they have not even seen the new language which the commission may consider on Monday.

Farago, executive director of the Everglades Defense Council, called the builders' move "underhanded," adding: "They should get in line like everyone else. If they want to make major changes they should go back into the cycle and come back in two years." The county considers changes to its development plan every other year.

But **Olmedillo** insists the county can do whatever it wishes, including accepting the last-minute revision. The Miami-Dade County Attorneys Office agrees. "It is really up to the commission at this point," said Joni Armstrong Coffey, assistant county attorney.

IF YOU GO

The Miami-Dade County Commission will meet Monday to consider 27 proposals to amend the county's master plan for development. Nine of the applications are to extend the Urban Development Line, and a tenth seeks to change the standard for future housing needs. The meeting is at 9:30 a.m. at the Miami-Dade County Commission Chamber, Stephen P. Clark Center, 111 NW First St.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
October 16, 2005

COUNCIL GIVES GO-AHEAD FOR LANDFILL PLAN

Author: Chris Guanche

A landfill owned by Waste Management got the green light from the Medley Town Council to expand, despite objections from a local industrial complex and the city of Doral. Waste Management, which operates the Medley Landfill and Recycling Center, 9350 NW 89th Ave., won approval for a 26.2-acre expansion to its existing 207-acre facility.

The expansion approval came some six months after the council gave the OK to a separate project that will bring another landfill and waste recycling plant to the small Northwest Dade municipality. Developer Lowell S. Dunn obtained approval of a proposal to create a 160-acre commercial waste landfill and recycling plant near the Medley Police Firearms Training Center at 9700 NW 97th Ave. Tuesday, Dunn's son, Lowell S. Dunn II, said the new landfill would not open until late 2006 at the earliest.

Medley is a town of about 4,350 acres and the combined acreage of both landfills would take up almost nine percent of that space.

As part of the Waste Management proposal accepted by the council, the company will not only pay host fees but also donate \$15,000 per year to a scholarship fund administered by the town. "We can use the revenue to help out with grant programs for our kids, as well as road improvements," said Medley Mayor Ramon Rodriguez.

But, for some people, the expansion means more odor coming from the landfill. "It impacts the quality of life in Doral," said the neighboring city's mayor, Juan Carlos Bermudez, in a telephone interview before the Medley Town Council's meeting on Oct. 5. Bermudez was concerned over environmental monitoring and increased traffic in the northwest Miami-Dade area.

Doral's Planning and Zoning Director Nathan Kogon formally expressed his city's objection to the agreement. Kogon said Doral had not been adequately informed about the negotiations between Medley and Waste Management. The town sued Waste Management in 2003 to block plans by the company to expand the landfill. Doral was originally party to that litigation but withdrew at Medley's request.

The town's special counsel, Barbara Riesberg, said at the meeting the litigation was dismissed but that both parties can still take further action because there is no settlement agreement.

Town Attorney Melvin Wolfe said Wednesday the lawsuit arose over a particular interpretation of the town's codes. He said the agreement was a "step in the right direction" to resolving the litigation but it was still open and several legal issues remain to be resolved.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Odor was also a concern of Gateway Southeast Properties, which owns the Medley Commerce Center adjacent to the landfill. Jeffrey S. Bass, an attorney representing Gateway, objected to the agreement on grounds that a recently enacted ordinance was constitutionally vague. Under ordinance C-306, approved in August, businesses such as the landfill are allowed to expand by up to 15 percent.

“It's the ordinance that appeared out of thin air,” Bass said during the Oct. 5 meeting. Bass also objected to the classification of the landfill, which is privately owned by Waste Management, as a public facility.

Bass requested expert testimony from **Guillermo Olmedillo**, a former City of Miami planning and zoning director who now works as a private consultant. Wolfe questioned whether **Olmedillo** would have a conflict of interest because he previously served as a consultant for a law firm representing Gateway.

Olmedillo said at the council meeting the town's master plan doesn't allow for the landfill to be classified as a public facility. He also said ordinance C-306 was vague and had no provisions for measuring the allowable 15 percent expansion.

Douglas M. Halsey, an attorney representing Waste Management, countered that although the landfill is privately owned, it meets a public need by disposing of trash from residents of Medley and other municipalities. Halsey also cited a town code that says solid waste disposal is classified as a public facility.

On the issue of odor, Halsey said Waste Management spent nearly \$3 million in new equipment and system improvements to reduce odors. According to the county's Department of Environmental Resources Management, the last odor complaint was filed in December 2003.

Halsey also leveled criticism at Gateway over the firm's complaints about odor. He said the landfill was in operation before Gateway's Medley Commerce Center was built. “They created no buffer on their property,” Halsey said. “They're seeking to externalize all costs of creating any kind of distance between the two [properties].”

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

The Miami Herald
December 10, 2001

ACTIVISTS FIGHT 2 CITY HALLS - AND THEY WIN

Author: Cyd Penny

For the second time this year in Miami-Dade County, residents unhappy with government spending have rebelled, taking power into their own hands and upsetting the apple cart of city development.

First, it was Coral Gables. Last week, it was Key Biscayne. In Coral Gables, a core group of activists bitterly complained about development, including a proposed 60,000-square-foot addition to City Hall. Miffed at what they called a cavalier dismissal of concerns, the activists took their concerns to court, represented by Miami attorney Vincent Damian Jr.

The fight helped galvanize public opposition against Mayor Raol Valdos-Fauli and Commissioners Dorothy Thomson and James ``Jim" Barker. All three were defeated in the April election and a new trio of leaders voted to use the land instead for parking and green space.

Key Biscayne residents calling themselves the Coalition to Rescue Paradise - also represented by Damian - forced a special election last Tuesday by collecting enough signatures last summer to challenge government spending.

Demanding a halt to construction of a new civic center on one of the last undeveloped pieces of land in the middle of town, the activists forged two amendments for the ballot and then saw them approved by a surprising turnout of voters. The amendments give residents more say over capital improvements and limit the village's ability to borrow money.

Long called ``a vocal minority" and a ``small group of negative people," the group broke into a rendition of God Bless America as the final count was read. The minority wasn't so small, after all. The coalition believes it will see a new Key Biscayne emerge, one with residents dedicated to bringing about ``change in practices and policies of the village." But some say it will be unable to function, paralyzed by voting challenges and spending watchdogs.

Some experts say it's not a surprise that Coral Gables and Key Biscayne have taken a similar course this year. Residents of Coral Gables and Key Biscayne have important advantages not shared by many other cities, says Peter O. Muller, a specialist in the changing structure of U.S. metropolitan areas and professor of geography and regional studies at the University of Miami. For one thing, they are two of the wealthiest communities in Miami-Dade. In Key Biscayne, 38 percent of the homes are valued at more than \$500,000. ``The glamour and the aura shared by these two communities isn't an accident," Muller said. ``It's an image, a part of the fascinating social fabric cultivated by the people who live there. When there's an uprising, people pay attention."

Muller says concerns about green space in cities, about dwindling recreational areas and places for children to play are not limited to the elite. But less well-to-do communities have other issues that

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

simply take more priority. "Let's face it," he said, "when you have to worry about transportation and crime, you don't have the luxury of worrying about trees." Both cities are well-established communities and in both cases the construction that hit the public nerve was on a premium piece of land in the middle of town.

Coral Gables Mayor Don Slesnick says residents were clear in their desire to have a say in how their city is run. "I think it's about people wanting to participate," he said. "We have raised the educational level of people in the 21st Century. People want to be involved, especially in smaller, upscale communities where there is a certain level of sophistication."

Guillermo Olmedillo, former planning and zoning director for Miami-Dade and now vice president of development for Broward County's Swerdlow Real Estate Group, says along with money comes other advantages for Coral Gables and Key Biscayne. "They have time, they have energy, and they have opportunity," he said. "It's not that people of lesser means don't care about green space. They do. But after you work for 10 hours a day, take the bus home and feed dinner to three kids, you aren't as likely to have the strength it takes to follow an issue closely."

Nevertheless, **Olmedillo** thinks this trend of government rebellion is on the increase. "It's an emotional issue. People are paying more attention to the quality of their personal space," he said. "Prior to World War II, people just wanted housing - period. And while it has always been the intent of city planners to provide the relief of an open area, sometimes the key is not just building, but building right."

Florida has its own tradition with regard to development, says Ronald Berkman, dean of the College of Urban Affairs at Florida International University.

MAY BE IMITATORS

He says one community's success may embolden others. "Watching Coral Gables and Key Biscayne may be an incentive for other communities to make changes."

And that may be true: Damian reports another group of residents is forming in Pinecrest. The group, concerned about possible development of the Parrot Jungle site, is organizing to fight for use of the land as a park after the attraction moves to Watson Island. Citing Coral Gables and Key Biscayne as examples of citizen victories, Damian says he's working closely with the group from Pinecrest. "You really can win if you fight City Hall," he says.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Miami Herald, The (FL)
August 23, 2001

RESIDENTS EXPRESS FEARS OVER IMPACT OF REDISTRICTING

Author: Draeger Martinez

A public meeting Monday on redistricting caused several residents to wonder how well they will be represented in the future. About 50 people attended the conference at the North Dade Regional Library on the federally mandated process. "I'm worried that we're going to go from four black commissioners down to two," said Leroy Jones. "I want someone who looks like me, and who's going to understand me, to represent me."

Miami-Dade County has four black county commissioners: Betty Ferguson, District 1; Dorrin Rolle, District 2; Barbara Carey-Shuler, District 3; and Dennis Moss, District 9. Paulette Sims Wimberly, a longtime member of Community Council 4, advocated adding more seats to the 13-member County Commission rather than redrawing district lines. But George Meier, a redistricting consultant hired by the county, said that was unlikely because it could make the commission too large to be effective.

The town hall meeting marked the first of a series by the Miami-Dade County Elections Department. The sessions are intended to explain why the county must redraw election district boundaries to match new population realities unveiled by the 2000 Census.

"Redistricting is fundamental to American democracy, but it is also exceedingly political," Meier said Monday. "We listen, we hear and we will record everything stated here tonight. And we're just here to tell you the rules and the context behind this process."

Fellow expert **Guillermo Olmedillo** gave a slide show depicting the population changes: Between 1990 and 2000, the county posted a net growth of 316,268 people. But not every district grew at the same pace as the county, which means some people will be switched to different districts.

At the same time, Meier said, any redistricting involves several political considerations. These include not diluting minority voting strength, keeping the districts compact and contiguous, and preserving communities with common history and interests.

There will be two countywide hearings before the County Commission adopts any redistricting plan.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Miami Herald, The (FL)
June 6, 2001

LEGAL MOVE SHORT-CIRCUITS HEARING ON POWER PLANT

Author: Curtis Morgan

With a late legal maneuver, Enron Corp., the Texas company seeking to build a power plant adjacent to farm fields and Biscayne National Park in South Miami-Dade County, will sidestep a stormy public hearing and a critical Community Council vote set for tonight.

The decision to grant a zoning variance for the controversial facility, already given one thumbs-down last month by a park advisory panel, instead will likely be made by the Miami-Dade County Commission in coming months. The reason: The owner of the 61-acre site, now partially used as construction dump and zoned for agriculture, has filed a claim warning that rejecting the proposed plant would constitute a government "taking," requiring financial compensation.

That potentially puts the county on the hook for a settlement running into the millions of dollars and under county code automatically takes the zoning decision out of the hands of Community Council 15, made up of seven representatives from South Miami-Dade. "The item stops in its tracks," said Marcy Gordon, legal counsel for the Miami-Dade Department of Planning and Zoning.

The request, filed late Friday, came too late to legally cancel the hearing, she said, but an announcement pulling the proposal will be made at the 7 p.m. meeting in the South Dade Governmental Center.

Critics accused Enron, which is also embroiled in a battle with environmentalists and homeowners over a similar plant in Pompano Beach, of pulling an end run around growing opposition to the "peaker" plant, a natural gas-burning facility that would operate and sell electricity to Florida Power & Light and other utilities only during periods of high demand. "This 11th-hour tactic makes you wonder what the hell they're afraid of," said Jeffrey Bass, a lawyer representing Manuel Diaz Farms, a major ornamental tree grower with fields nearby.

The administrators of Biscayne National Park, which abuts the site, and Everglades National Park have asked the county to freeze consideration of the facility. The Sierra Club and several homeowners groups had planned protests before tonight's meeting. All are concerned about air and water pollution and fear the plant would ruin the area's rural character. "It seems to be part of a scheme to diminish the value and importance of public comment," said Alan Farago, conservation chair for the Sierra Club.

Eric Thode, a spokesman for the Houston-based energy company, called that characterization of the legal claim "unfair." "It doesn't mean this piece of property is automatically rezoned," Thode said. "It would just change who the decision-makers would be." Instead of the community council, which typically makes zoning calls, "takings" cases generally become the jurisdiction of the County

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Commission, said Assistant County Attorney Robert Krawcheck. Public hearings will still be scheduled, but before the commission instead.

That's a key change that troubles plant foes like Jaime Reyes, an activist from Lakes by the Bay, a neighborhood just a mile from the site. "The county has an excellent track record of putting projects like this in South Dade," he said.

Enron has been trying to expand its grid in Florida. Besides South Miami-Dade, it hopes to build plants in Deerfield Beach and Pompano Beach and is proposing a gas pipeline from the Bahamas to Port Everglades in Broward County. Though Enron does have an option to purchase the land if peaker plant is approved, the company had no role in filing the takings claim, he said.

That was done by the landowner, Certosa Holdings Inc. One of Certosa's two Miami attorneys, Kerri Barsh, also represents Enron, Thode said, but the company is not bankrolling the legal action and had no financial interest in the company.

County and state records show Certosa's only officer is Alberto Erviti. County property records show Erviti owns two homes in Miami-Dade and a county ownership disclosure was filed from the U.S. Embassy in Caracas. He could not be reached for comment. Neither of his attorneys returned calls.

Certosa's letter argues that the county's zoning department director, **Guillermo Olmedillo**, had already described the site as "ill-suited" for agriculture, located next to Mount Trashmore and a county sewage treatment plant. The site requires a landfill closure and storm-water system that will cost upwards of \$4.3 million, the letter says.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
November 26, 2000

SHELTER STRIVES TO GROW

Author: Karl Ross

Operated by the Archdiocese of Miami, Boystown served as a shelter for children spirited out of Cuba in the 1960s during the Pedro Pan airlift. Development plans on file with the county indicate a new fate for much of the Boystown land - the same fate that has claimed much of the surrounding area. Architectural renderings for a 308-unit townhouse development are emblazoned with the name of the historic, church-organized exodus: "The Pedro Pan Subdivision."

"Boystown ran out there for quite a while," archdiocese spokeswoman Mary Ross Agosta said of the residential facility on the corner of Southwest 120th Street and 137th Avenue, adjacent to the Tamiami-Kendall Executive Airport. "But it came to our attention that Dade County says you can't have a facility such as Boystown next to the Tamiami airport."

Ross Agosta said a new zoning ordinance grandfathered Boystown's existing operations - it houses about 30 children of illegal immigrants held at the Krome Detention Center - but the ordinance will not allow it to expand its program. And the church has plans to upgrade the program operated by Catholic Charities. "We want to go from Boystown to a kind of children's village," Ross Agosta said. She said the church has not selected a new site yet for the expanded program.

Ross Agosta said the archdiocese, prompted by the zoning changes, sold 31 acres to developers in 1999 for just a little more than \$4 million. Development plans entail razing about 12 acres of pineland and paving over a small lake, according to planning documents.

The county's chief planner, **Guillermo Olmedillo**, initially objected to the planned subdivision. The director of the Miami-Dade Department of Planning and Zoning stated in a September 1998 letter such plans were "inconsistent" with the county's master plan. **Olmedillo** cited as his chief objection the existence of environmentally sensitive pinelands and said a public hearing would be required prior to approval.

The West Kendall Community Council approved a rezoning application in October 1999 that enabled the archdiocese to sell the land to developer Robert Vinas. Vinas and a partner submitted plans for a 316-unit townhouse project called "La Villette Townvillas." But Vinas - whose ties to one of the council members have since come under scrutiny by anti-corruption officials - sold the land, now zoned, to Lauturo Development. At about that time, the project was re-baptized in planning documents as "The Pedro Pan Subdivision." However, Odalys Bode, marketing director for the project, said the subdivision will be sold as "Bristol Villas." She said she was unsure why Pedro Pan appears on the plans.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
November 21, 2000

DECISION TIME AT DADELAND

Author: Elaine Walker

For decades Dadeland Mall has been the powerhouse regional shopping mall in South Florida and among the tops in the entire country. It attracts about 15 million visitors per year and racks up sales of \$714 a square foot - about three times the national average. But the mall, which hasn't been renovated in almost a decade and still sports 1970s-era decor, is starting to show its age. Dadeland plans a facelift next year, but its bigger plans - for an expansion that would add stores - may be in jeopardy.

Dadeland got permission in 1996 from Miami-Dade County for a major expansion, but the plans have languished because the mall's owner - Simon Property Group - can't decide what makes economic sense. "If you don't renovate every seven to 10 years, you're in trouble," said Bill Wholey, a Fort Lauderdale-based retail consultant. "I'm surprised Dadeland has done as well as they have for as many years as they have."

Threatening any possible expansion is a new Miami-Dade County zoning ordinance that seeks to create a traditional, pedestrian-oriented downtown in Kendall. Simon executives claim the new ordinance would require the demolition of large sections of the 1.4 million-square-foot mall to make room for streets and parks.

Last month, the company asked the Miami-Dade County Commission to either change the rules or grant it an exemption. Simon wants the right to expand the mall as it sees fit. Commissioners sent the issue to staff for further review and will discuss it in January. "From an economic standpoint, it's not feasible to tear down the mall and start over," said Debora Exley, Dadeland mall manager. County officials and community leaders say Dadeland still can expand without meeting the requirements of the new code, as long as building permits are issued by December 2004. "We're not taking any development rights away from them," said **Guillermo Olmedillo**, Miami-Dade's planning director. "Dadeland could be there forever, unless it's destroyed by some major disaster."

Once the only game in town, Dadeland is facing pressure from every corner. The Falls expanded in 1996 and took many of the tenants earmarked for Dadeland's expansion. Sunset Place opened last year, offering consumers a place for both shopping and entertainment. Now, coming down the pike are Dolphin Mall in March in West Miami-Dade and the Village of Merrick Park scheduled to open in the fall of 2002 in Coral Gables. The Rouse Co. has proposed building a town center in West Kendall anchored by three or four department stores.

"Dadeland has a unique position that it will always have, no matter what the competition is," said Cynthia Cohen, president of Strategic Mindshare, a retail consulting firm with offices in Miami and around the country. What Dadeland needs is to continue repositioning itself in the marketplace. Once a shopping favorite among wealthy South Americans, Dadeland's customer is changing,

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Cohen said. "It's a much more moderate customer and a much younger customer than it had been in the past," she said. Shoppers looking for more upscale goods are typically heading to the Falls, Bal Harbor and soon to Merrick Park. To keep pace with the market, industry analysts and Dadeland Mall representatives agree that it's particularly important to get a renovation completed before Merrick's opening. "We want to do everything we can to be competitive and stay a viable business," Exley said. "We wouldn't want to have competition open and not have our best face forward."

Dadeland has approval to add 800,000 square feet, which could include a second level and additional anchor stores. The plans were set to expire at the end of this year, but Simon wants an extension. If approved, the mall would have until December 2004 to pull permits for that expansion and December 2009 to complete the work.

Right now, Simon is prepared to do a renovation, which would include new floors, fixtures, landscaping and signage. The new look would be brighter, lighter and more modern, with dramatic entry features and a remodeled food court that would also include more seating. The renovation will take 12 months and will begin in February regardless of what happens with the county zoning issues, Exley said. "We still are going to expand, but we don't know when and to what extent," Exley said. "Hopefully we can phase in an expansion as soon as possible."

If the mall had its choice, the first priority would be to expand several of the existing department stores: Lord & Taylor, J.C. Penney and Saks Fifth Avenue. Over time, the mall would look for ways to increase the number of specialty stores, adding anywhere from a handful to an entire new wing of about 100,000-square-feet.

"Dadeland has been able to thrive because it has been able to change and grow with the times," said attorney Ron Mastriana, who represents Dadeland. "It needs to be able to continue to do that."

Dadeland also is fighting a national trend. Regional shopping malls have faded in popularity and the trend is toward building open-air, streetscape shopping districts or town centers, such as Sunset Place and Merrick Park. Yet, the mall remains a lucrative location, and experts think it is unlikely that Dadeland will be forced to abide by the new ordinance.

"It would be difficult to see how they could justify forcing a successful mall to reconfigure itself," said Dean Schwanke, vice president of development trends and analysis for the Urban Land Institute, a national development group that advocates the creation of town center developments. "For serious shoppers, the regional shopping mall still is a destination."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

seems we have run into another roadblock. **Olmedillo**'s secretary insists the director will not be free for two weeks. *New Times* begins to consider hiring a lobbyist. But that soon becomes unnecessary; **Olmedillo** grants an appointment that requires only a three-day wait.

Seated calmly in his quiet eleventh-floor office at the Stephen P. Clark Government Center, **Olmedillo** concurs with Winton and *New Times*. "What surprises me is that they allowed some [billboards] east of I-95." Regarding the ten-sign limit, **Olmedillo** remarks, "I thought that was the end of it. No more than that." Now we were getting somewhere. But it is a nettlesome problem, especially since the illegal structures are already up. "How the hell do we enforce that?" he wonders, noting that he is thinking out loud. The county would send the billboard owner a violation notice, he ventures. Then the county would send a letter to the Miami city manager asking him to look into the matter. "The city would have to respond to us to say why they did what they did," **Olmedillo** adds. But there's a caveat: He needs to consult with county attorneys to see whether Miami-Dade can force Miami to uphold the billboard law. At press time he had no answer to that question. And hey, if you don't trust *New Times*, **Olmedillo**, or Winton's take on the law, you can check it out for yourself. The easiest-to-find billboards are owned by Carter Pritchett Advertising. Two of them tower over two little houses in Wynwood, just east of I-95 and north of I-395. For months one has featured the omnipresent Yupi.com halo on a dark-blue backdrop; the other, an ad for a car dealership, displays a shark with a mischievous grin sitting behind a desk. Or take the Carter Pritchett sign just west of I-95, at State Road 836. It shows an ad for salsa station WRTO-FM (98.3). Just 200 feet away is an Eller Media billboard with a woman in a red dress lying on her side. Not only does this sign break the local limit of ten, it also violates city, county, and state laws requiring at least 1500 feet between structures.

The State of Florida. Aha! Surely they will take on the sign scofflaws. A call to Francine Steelman, general counsel for the state Department of Transportation's Miami office, reveals FDOT's inspector general is conducting a widespread fraud investigation into the permitting of billboards along state and federal roadways in Miami-Dade. "This is much bigger than [an inquiry into four or five questionable signs]," Steelman adds, refusing to offer any details. The state official directly responsible for targeting billboards in these parts, however, isn't likely to take action soon. She is new to her job. "This is an Olympic-size pool of information," roadside administrator Jeanne Cann acknowledges. "And I'm in the deep end swallowing little gulps."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
March 10, 2000

COUNTY GRANTS EXCEPTIONS TO BAN

Author: Barbara De Lollis

Miami-Dade County commissioners unanimously agreed Thursday to grant exceptions to the unusual building moratorium in District 1, making it a ban mostly against high-density subsidized housing projects. The vote will make things easier for single-family home developers and churches that would otherwise be forbidden from building at least until April 1. Commissioner Betty Ferguson, who called for the moratorium, as well as the exceptions, said she didn't believe Thursday's change would hurt the district. A major beneficiary is Miami developer Tibor "Ted" Hollo, who pushed through plans for 560 market-rate homes on the former North Dade Golf Course in Andover. The homes would sell in the \$145,000 to \$190,000 range, at least \$10,000 above the average price of existing homes, one of the developers said. Neighbors had battled against the project for five years because of worries about neighborhood congestion and overburdened services.

The target of Ferguson's ban is clearly so-called affordable housing. Several such projects are in the pipeline, including two by the Cornerstone Group of Coral Gables: Marbrisa, a 340-unit project, and Sailboat Cove, a 157-unit project being done with a local nonprofit group. "No one should be allowed to develop ghettos," Ferguson said to applause Thursday. The sentiment was echoed by many of the dozen residents, mostly African Americans, who cheered her moratorium effort. Concerned that her district is receiving more than its fair share of subsidized housing, Ferguson in December requested the five-month moratorium and a staff study of the district's vacant land, zoning, property values, infrastructure and services. The report is due to go before the commission on March 21.

Guillermo Olmedillo, director of Miami-Dade's Department of Planning and Zoning, reported preliminary findings Thursday. He said they support concerns that the district is receiving an overabundance of subsidized housing projects. In District 1, he said:

- Ninety-eight percent of condominium sales are low- to moderate-income housing.
- Forty-nine percent of single-family units are low- to moderate-income housing.
- The median market value of single- and multifamily housing units is among the county's lowest.

Imposing a moratorium is a drastic measure rarely taken by governments because the bans can trigger lawsuits. Landowners can claim that government is impinging on their private property rights, since a building ban could depress values. Legal liability, in fact, was one of the main reasons why County Manager Merrett Stierheim last year advised commissioners against imposing a moratorium on Fisher Island, which is among the most expensive real estate in all of South Florida. But one speaker scoffed at the idea of property rights. "Property rights? For who?" asked Marlene Arribas, a 30-year district resident. "A developer, or the people who invested and spent their life savings here?"

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

<https://caselaw.findlaw.com/fl-district-court-of-appeal/1200847.html>

District Court of Appeal of Florida, Third District.

JESUS FELLOWSHIP, INC., Petitioner, v. MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, Florida, Respondent.

No. 3D99-1073.

Decided: February 23, 2000

Before JORGENSEN, COPE, and FLETCHER, JJ. Mathew D. Staver and Erick W. Stanley, Liberty Counsel (Orlando); DiBartolomeo & DiBartolomeo and Dean D. DiBartolomeo, Miami; Bilzin Sumberg Dunn Price & Axelrod and Michael W. Larkin and Jerry B. Proctor, Miami; for petitioner. Robert A. Ginsberg, County Attorney, Augusto Maxwell, Assistant County Attorney; Kathryn Knieriem Estevez, Miami; Adorno & Zeder, Fort Lauderdale, and George F. Knox, Miami, for respondent.

Jesus Fellowship, Inc. [Church] petitions this court for a writ of certiorari asking that we vacate an order entered by the circuit court, acting in its appellate capacity, which order affirmed the decision of the Miami-Dade County Commission [Commission] denying a portion of the Church's zoning application. We grant the petition and quash the circuit court's decision.

The Church owns 12.2 acres in a residential area zoned for one-acre estate homes.¹ In 1997, the Church filed a zoning application for special exceptions and an unusual use to permit the expansion of the Church's religious facilities and to permit a private school and a day care center. After reviewing the application the county's professional staff recommended denial of the requests. At the public hearing before the Zoning Appeals Board 2 [ZAB] the Church agreed to several changes which satisfied the professional staff, bringing about its recommendation of approval. Among the Church's concessions was a limitation to an enrollment of 524 students. The ZAB approved the application with the changes.

The ZAB decision was appealed to the Commission by a number of objectors. The county's professional staff continued to recommend approval with the ZAB-authorized 524 students. The Commission approved the Church's application generally but denied it in part, limiting the school to grades K-6 and 150 students. The Church petitioned the circuit court for a writ of certiorari alleging, inter alia, that the Commission's decision reducing the number of students and grades was not supported by substantial competent evidence. The circuit court upheld the Commission's partial denial....

The objectors' final witness was **Guillermo Olmedillo**, the director of planning. **Olmedillo's** testimony reveals only that it fortified his written opinion that the Church's application met all code standards.⁷

[CB&A Note: The entire article can be found at the link below]

<https://caselaw.findlaw.com/fl-district-court-of-appeal/1200847.html>

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Miami Herald, The (FL)
January 31, 2000

DADE'S EXPERIMENT TO FIGHT SPRAWL IS DOWN - FOR NOW COMMUNITY OF THE FUTURE SEEN AS ADDING TOO MUCH DENSITY

Author: Barbara De Lollis

No one said fixing 50 years of sprawl would be easy, especially in South Florida. In Miami-Dade and Broward, as across the nation, three generations have grown up realizing the American Dream with little worry about what it would cost society. Today the fallout is most visible on the faces of frustrated commuters.

Suburban sprawl and its symptoms plague cities across the country, but South Florida's situation is more urgent. South Florida is ranked the third-most congested area in the nation. The Palmetto Expressway is always jammed. Morning drives downtown from Kendall take an hour or longer. And we can't build ourselves out of the mess, limited by the Everglades to the west and the Atlantic to the east. That's why, 10 years ago, Miami-Dade planners, architects and environmentalists got together to figure out how to change development patterns. They focused on "traditional neighborhood development," fashioned after towns built before the automobile era.

The county passed an ordinance urging higher-density neighborhoods to make more use of what little land is left. A TND differs from a conventional subdivision by mixing homes, town homes and apartments with schools, corner stores and parks. Nearly a decade passed before the first TND plan reached the County Commission. It took deep-pocketed Pulte Corp., the biggest home builder in the nation, to take a risk on building Salamanca in congested West Kendall. It would be a significant departure for a builder that has the ability to set national trends. "This is the most important project that is likely to ever come up in front of you," Andres Duany told commissioners in November. The noted Miami town planner established the TND concept with his wife, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, dean of the University of Miami School of Architecture.

But Salamanca went down in flames by a vote of 7-4 after 33 public hearings and \$1.5 million of lawyering, lobbying and designing. And while the project hangs in limbo - the decision was appealed in Miami-Dade Circuit Court - developers, planners and academics are left wondering whether Miami-Dade County can succeed in curbing sprawl. At this point, people are so fed up that they don't want to see anything approved. "They're saying, 'Hey, just stop, we don't care whether it's good or bad,'" said Jerry Kolo, director of Florida Atlantic University's Center for Urban Redevelopment and Empowerment. "That's a major hurdle that has to be dealt with."

IDEAL SITE

Pulte did its research before choosing West Kendall, a market dominated by smaller home builders and conventional subdivisions. The area ranks among Miami-Dade's hottest housing markets, dominated by Hispanic buyers of all types, from entry-level buyers to move-ups to upper-end buyers, said Tim Hernandez, a former city planner who directs land acquisition and development for Pulte's South Florida operation.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Pulte thought it found the ideal site when it bought an option on 160 acres owned by the Colombian soft drink billionaire, Carlos Ardile Lulle. The square-shaped piece of farmland is bounded on the north by Kendall Drive; on the east by Southwest 167th Avenue; on the south by 96th Street; and on the west by 172nd Avenue. The site was large enough to accommodate a self-contained community such as Salamanca, but it had another bonus. The landowner had asked the county to put the land inside the urban development boundary. The county agreed, based on one condition: Whatever gets built must be a TND. Pulte wasn't expecting big problems. Pulte even visited the district commissioner and came away feeling encouraged, Hernandez said. With Miami zoning lawyer Stanley Price, Pulte went to the Kendall Homeowners Federation, an umbrella neighborhood group.

The federation expressed concerns about traffic generation, though the goal of a TND is to reduce auto use. For example, Salamanca residents could reach a Publix Supermarket on an adjacent parcel by walking or driving from within the development's borders. Pulte projected Salamanca would capture 40 percent of residents' car trips in seven to eight years when the project was completed and people got used to the lifestyle. But there was enough concern to prompt Pulte to pay \$150,000 to the county's public works department. Under Pulte's agreement with the federation, the money would pay for a traffic consultant to monitor future traffic patterns and make necessary road improvements. In addition, Pulte agreed to pay for the federation's attorney fees. Pulte then covered its bases with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, promising to donate almost 16 acres for schools through the eighth grade. The donation was worth \$2 million. But angry neighbors surfaced when Salamanca reached Community Council 11. Some of the very features designed to make a TND attractive, such as parks and alleys, bothered Kendall residents.

One of the most visible differences between a TND and a conventional subdivision is that homes in TNDs have garages out back that are reachable by alleys. The goal is to encourage neighborly contact in the front yard and use the back for storing cars and trash cans. "That would be very dangerous in the lifestyle we are living today," Karla Lugo Morales, from Concerned Citizens of West Dade, said during a community council hearing last year. "We're even attacked in the front of your house, let alone in an alley." Other critics, such as Manny Vera of Community Council 11, disliked Salamanca's plan to have small parks within a two-minute walk of every door, another TND goal. Pulte had eight acres divided into small parks, but critics accused Pulte of trying to unload leftover lots. They wanted an additional five-acre park where kids could play ball. Pulte eventually gave in.

Then residents accused Pulte of buying the Kendall Federation with the traffic study money, a charge denied by both Federation and Pulte officials. "I knew that the Kendall Federation was bought with money," said Keyla Martinez, a Kendall activist who helped lead community opposition against Salamanca. She called Salamanca "a fantasy land that doesn't work here in Dade County." Her husband, Reinaldo Martinez, argued people like to drive too much for the concept to work. "People are used to using their cars," he said. "When they want to go to a restaurant, they don't want to go to a restaurant on the corner, they want to go to a restaurant they like sometimes very far away." The Martinezes were members of the Kendall Federation until the time the federation took a position in favor of Salamanca, said Miles Moss, the federation's president at the time. Moss said the federation probably would have come out against the project had it known

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

immediate neighbors opposed the project. More concerns would surface as time went by: The worry that 1,440 more families would overburden Kendall's already overcrowded schools and the concern that Pulte was increasing density to make too much profit. The outcry led to Salamanca's defeat at Community Council 11.

'WRONG PLACE'

When Salamanca reached the County Commission, Pulte fared no better. Miguel Diaz de la Portilla - the commissioner who describes himself to constituents as "the strongest advocate on the County Commission for intelligent growth management" - led the charge against the project. His view: Great idea, wrong place.

"I agree it has incredible amenities," Diaz de la Portilla said during the meeting, "but we designated certain areas as urban centers and those were areas where we felt we should have higher density. Wouldn't this application run afoul of what we designated urban areas because it's out there on the fringe?" A week after the vote, he replied to a letter condemning him for voting against the project, "I can not change what Kendall had already become when I took office."

Density was the key issue behind Salamanca's downfall. The adjacent Hammocks community has nearly nine units per acre, although Kendall densities typically run between three and five units per acre, according to county records.

"The developer failed to convince commissioners that the density was absolutely necessary to do a TND," said **Guillermo Olmedillo**, director of the county's Planning and Zoning Department. "A TND has less impact on a primary road than conventional development, but it's still going to have an impact."

Olmedillo is convinced the issue will repeat itself in the future: "The big struggle we have is to try to sell the community at large that we can have higher densities without creating a deleterious effect on the surroundings. The public equates density to a bad quality of life, and it's not so."

RANGE OF OPINIONS

Rarely does a development plan foster such extreme positions. Commissioner Katy Sorenson, meanwhile, took the unusual position of supporting the new development in West Kendall despite her own biases. Typically, she said, she doesn't like to burden already overcrowded schools further.

But because Pulte volunteered to donate land for public schools, and the plan met state goals of encouraging transit-oriented neighborhoods, she voted in favor of the project. Sorenson also has a TND pending in her own district at Naranja Lakes, an affordable community wiped out by Hurricane Andrew in 1992. "I am not crazy about the location because it's right on the edge against the urban development boundary," said Sorenson. "But I also understand the need to have a model that we can embrace as a county."

DISCOURAGING EFFECTS

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Without interest from developers, the county has little hope of influencing residents' lifestyle patterns. And right now, the Salamanca decision is sending fear throughout real estate circles.

“When are we going to get serious about recognizing that we need to place density someplace or we're going to run out of urban boundary?” said Andrew Dolkart, a real estate consultant who works mostly for home builders. “There doesn't seem to be any willingness from any commissioner to permit density if it's in a particular commissioner's district.”

Developers wonder if the nation's biggest builder can't pull off a TND, why should they try?

Already, the Salamanca vote has caused deep-pocketed Pulte to back off from other TNDs in North Miami and Kendall, while another developer has abandoned the approach for a Kendall site at 137th Avenue and 120th Street, said Stanley Price, the Miami zoning lawyer who represents Pulte.

“This is what the county's been preaching to us developers - that this is what they want,” said a disappointed Oscar Barbara, president of Luxcom, a conventional West Kendall home builder who likes the TND concept. “It is a whole new concept, therefore, the first guy out there is a pioneer. What is that old saying? The pioneers take the arrows.”

Charlie Martinez, whose Caribe Group is the largest private conventional home builder in Miami-Dade, has no plans to build a TND. He thinks they're “too urban” for his buyers, mainly middle-class Hispanic families, and He believes the concept is more appropriate for undeveloped areas - not mature areas like West Kendall. But as a developer, he's annoyed by the county's vote.

“We are basically mandated as to what and how we're going to develop a piece of property by the neighbors and the community council or the commissioner of that district,” Martinez said. “I think all of them need to be a little stronger in their conviction and say, ‘You know what? We've asked for responsible growth.’”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
September 8, 1999

COMMUNITY COUNCILS' OVERHAUL RECOMMENDED

Author: Charles Savage

Three years into their existence, Miami-Dade's fledgling community councils need to be reformed, a Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce task force says. Since their creation in 1996, some of the locally elected county zoning boards have been plagued by representatives not showing up, night security officers who turn out the lights before the meeting agenda is finished and a pervasive sense of "Not In My Back Yard" decision-making, said developer Ed Bell, coordinator of the council reform committee.

Further signs of kinks in the system: Some of the 15 zoning councils have too much business to handle while others have hardly any. Meanwhile, county legal and zoning advisory staff are chronically overburdened with attending monthly evening meetings in every district. As a result, inexperienced staff are sometimes sent to advise councils - on at least one occasion, a medical issues lawyer was sent to give expert opinions about zoning law. "My fear is the slow starvation of community councils," Marsha Matson, chairwoman of the Palmetto Bay council, told the task force at a meeting with council chairmen last week. "I agree that we need more funding and more staff."

In the fiscal year 1998-99 report, Miami-Dade community councils were listed as spending \$260,000 for zoning hearings and \$64,000 on non-zoning meetings. Those costs covered facility rentals, security and advertising, said Barbara Falsey, director of community planning for the Department of Planning and Zoning. But the actual cost is higher, Falsey said. The report does not include salaries of county support staff who attend all the meetings.

The potential recommendations the task force is considering sending to the County Commission include:

- * Mandatory training in zoning law for council members.
- * Reducing the number of councils.
- * Reducing the number of deferrals allowed.
- * Letting county staff directly approve some site plan changes.
- * Replacing council members who repeatedly fail to show up for meetings.

The proposed reforms come against a backdrop of recently increased pressure on county planners because of an upswing in immigration to Miami, legal and otherwise, by people fleeing troubled Latin-American countries.

"Cuba had five million people in it when the Castro regime took power, and you saw the results here," said **Guillermo Olmedillo**, director of the Department of Planning and Zoning. "Today Colombia has troubles - 45 million [people]," he said. "Mexico has troubles. Brazil has troubles - 100 million. We are a receptor area, there is no doubt about it." He noted a resistance to extending

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

the Urban Development Boundary or raising population density in existing neighborhoods. Nevertheless, more people arrive in Miami-Dade daily and need a place to live.

The gathering housing crisis underscores the need for a more efficient planning and zoning process, **Olmedillo** said. But Council 11 member Hector Varela, who is challenging Dennis Moss for the District 9 County Commission seat in next year's election, took a dim view of the motivations behind the reform effort.

“Of course, you know that what the chamber is trying for is high density at all costs and to begin laying down reasons to move the UDB, which has been holding back the speculators for the past decade,” Varela said. “You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure it out. The chamber is trying to create a paper grass-roots movement, as if citizens are saying they want a place to live but community councils have this parochial way of thinking, applying NIMBY to everything,” he said.

If that is the case, Varela acknowledged, advocates of extending the UDB out to Krome Avenue may have a tough sell: Both Miami-Dade Mayor Alex Penelas and most of the County Commission oppose such a move.

The task force's draft recommendations drew a mixed response from the various council chairmen who attended its Aug. 31 information meeting. “In the past eight months two of my council's [monthly] meetings have been canceled because a lack of a quorum,” said East Kendall chairman Sandy Youkilis. “I'm here asking you, please, that I need that law changed. Right now it says any member can be excused, and that any excuse is acceptable.”

But Billy Hester, whose Council 8 includes Liberty City, argued against lightening the load on councils by letting some site plans get approved by county staff instead of in a public hearing. “Any time some construction is going in, people need to be aware of it,” Hester said. “In my community, we had all kinds of violations go in because nobody knew about it before the councils came. So the councils are working.”

Matson strongly cautioned the chamber not to recommend reducing the number of councils, an effort she said would be a political “hot potato” in areas seeking to incorporate. “I would be very reluctant to redraw boundaries because I could see it cutting right through the middle of Palmetto Bay,” she said. “We are trying to become a city and we would see it as an attempt to divide our incorporation effort.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
May 16, 1999

VILLAGE MAY SUE OVER BIG PROJECT NEAR DADELAND PINECREST: WE SHOULD BE PART OF COUNTY REVIEW

Author: Charles Rabin

Bitter over not being included in the review of a huge development adjacent to the village, Pinecrest has put Miami-Dade County on notice that it intends to sue.

Attorney Tony O'Donnell - a zoning specialist hired by the village at \$200 an hour to fight the development of Dadeland Junction - said the next move is to file a complaint with the county - which then has 30 days to answer - then appeal directly to a three-member panel of circuit court judges.

"Under local ordinance, the Village of Pinecrest was required to be part of the review process," O'Donnell said. "Dade County Code says any abutting municipality to development zones must be included in the review process." He said village officials were notified a week prior to the April 16 commission meeting of the county's plans to vote on the development at the southwest corner of U.S. 1 and North Kendall Drive - directly across the highway from Pinecrest.

"I don't think that's the case," said Miami-Dade County's Director of Planning & Zoning **Guillermo Olmedillo**. He said about 300 notices were sent to Pinecrest residents living within a half-mile of the project.

The squabble is over a 7.4-acre triangular site bordered by North Kendall Drive, South Dadeland Boulevard and U.S. 1. Three car dealerships there were recently purchased by developers Stefan Johansson and Jackson Ward, who plan to build a 39-story residential tower, two 14-floor office towers, more than 400,000 square feet of retail space, offices, 20 movie theaters and a 2,437-space parking garage. The project would encompass 1.7 million square feet.

A month ago, county commissioners voted 9-1 to allow the developers to move ahead with their plans. O'Donnell, representing the village at that meeting, said the project would intrude on village residents.

O'Donnell said the structures would tower over the village and cause traffic congestion. Residents who spoke at the meeting said they never envisioned a 40-story building staring at them as they lounged in their backyards.

Pinecrest Mayor Evelyn Greer said the developer's motives were nothing more than pure greed. County code already permits a height of 300 feet - why extend it to 389 feet, she asked. **Olmedillo** said according to the county's Master Plan, there are certain areas that would benefit from growing up instead of out. "There are areas where you want to concentrate density, make better and more

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

efficient use of the land and the infrastructure," he said. "This is one of the areas mentioned in the Master Plan."

Tuesday, South Miami Mayor Julio Robaina joined the fight. Attending a Pinecrest Village Council meeting, Robaina presented a certified copy of a resolution South Miami passed several weeks ago, condemning the county's plans.

South Miami's southern boundary is 10 blocks north of where Dadeland Junction would be. "The quality of life in that area will be totally destroyed," said Robaina, adding that he did not fear competition to his city's just-built Shops at Sunset Place. "It's too big a development project for that area. It will not only affect South Miami, it will affect everyone. It's just too big a scale of a project."

Jeff Bercow, an attorney representing the developers, said Dadeland Junction will be a compact, efficient urban development. "We're absorbing the demand that would otherwise seek to go out to West Kendall," he said.

But other nearby communities have also lashed out at Johansson and Ward's plans. Continental Park Homeowner Association President Mary Williams has had several meetings with her neighbors, who live just south of North Kendall Drive.

"It's higher than anyone envisioned. They have asked for less landscaping. There are going to be 15[,000] to 20,000 cars a day in the area that are not there now," she said. "U.S. 1 and Kendall will become so congested there will be even more cars looking for back routes to travel."

Pinecrest resident Bob Ross is president of a nonprofit group called TREEmendous Miami that is dedicated to planting, preserving and protecting trees. "I don't think anybody understood there was going to be 1.7 million square feet developed," he said. "From my street as I walk my dog, I will be able to see this tall spire. I don't even want to think about the noise."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
April 15, 1999

FEDS TO DELIVER NEW U.S. POST OFFICE TO WESTCHESTER

Author: Ana Acle

The junky cars are gone, and the trailer homes of Villa Fair have been moved. After a two-year ordeal that involved relocating residents, changing zoning laws and paying old fines, the property at Southwest Eighth Street and 88th Avenue now awaits its new owner: a U.S. post office. The U.S. Postal Service paid \$2.7 million for the 4.1-acre site. A full-service post office - complete with separate areas for a retail lobby, rental boxes and postal store - is planned. It also will include drive-by drop-off boxes. Contractors have until April 28 to bid for the project's construction and will then have about 15 months to build it.

If all goes as planned, Westchester residents should be using their new 17,000-square-foot post office by August 2000, according to postal service spokeswoman Enola Rice. "When selecting a site, we generally look for the amount of space we need and a convenient location for our customers, plus ample parking space for customers and employees," she said.

Here's what else the plan calls for:

- * 85 parking spaces for customers at the west edge, near Southwest 89th Avenue.
- * 80 trees on the property, including live oak and mahogany.
- * 10 trees along the street.
- * Eight-foot-high concrete walls along the south border at Southwest Ninth Terrace and enclosing part of employee parking along the north border at Southwest Eighth Street.
- * Eight-foot-high black vinyl-coated chain-link fence along the east corner at Southwest 88th Avenue.

Community Council member Paul de Bodor Angelo XXVII says the post office will be a welcome change from the trailer park that had been cited countless times for code violations the past 15 years. "It was more than just an eyesore, but a safety problem for residents," he said. Team Metro employees helped many of the trailer home residents find new homes. The owner of the trailer park property, Edol Corp., then asked the county to change the zoning from residential to limited business use so it could sell the property to the postal service.

The Community Council approved the zoning change, but county Planning Director **Guillermo Olmedillo** appealed the approval. **Olmedillo** wanted to ensure that the limited business use would be restricted to building only a post office and asked Edol Corp. for a covenant agreeing to the restrictions. Once the covenant was created, county commissioners approved the zoning change in October. But the zoning change also included variances. The 85 planned parking spaces for customers are three fewer than what is required. The 80 planned trees on the property are 10 fewer than required. And the 10 trees along the street are 50 fewer than required. "Still, that's more trees than they have now," de Bodor Angelo said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
November 18, 1998

NEW CHANCE AT EXCELLENCE

Author: Herald Staff

Stierhiem appointments bring tantalizing hope for clean sweep of problems. At the same time that County Manager Merrett Stierheim announced his administrative-staff choices he also made key appointments to a problem-plagued county department. To bring leadership to the new divisions of the now-separated Department of Planning, Development, and Regulation, Mr. Stierheim made some excellent selections.

He appointed Charles Danger director of the Building Department and Juliana Salas as deputy director. Frank Quintana will take over Mr. Danger's former job as chief of the Building Code Compliance Office, and veteran planner **Guillermo Olmedillo** will continue to head the Planning and Zoning Department.

All bring commitment, deep expertise, and integrity to an area crucial to government services -- the building and zoning process. More important, they will follow through on the mandates laid down by Mayor Alex Penelas and Mr. Stierheim to instill ethics and professionalism in chronically troubled divisions, from the newest inspector on up.

Enough Miami-Dade County Grand Jury reports have been written on building and zoning abuses over the years to account for a small forest of felled trees. The building department has long fostered an internal culture of favoritism, sloppiness, and what the last grand jury in March termed ``managerial apathy" and endemic low morale among staff.

Two top building officials and the former chief building inspector were indicted on separate criminal charges by that grand jury after a 16-month investigation by police and prosecutors. It was a new low point for a department that has had its share of disgrace.

With the new management crew in charge, let the bad old days of building and zoning scandals finally be at an end.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
June 8, 1998

LATIN BUILDERS' AWARDS ANNOUNCED

Author: Herald Staff

Latin Builders Association honored the following companies and individuals at its 18th annual award ceremony held at the Wyndham Hotel last month:

Honorable mention: **Guillermo Olmedillo** (Planning and Zoning)

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
March 6, 1998

PENELAS, CITING SCANDALS, FIRES VIDAL

Author: Joseph Tanfani and Ronnie Greene

Saying Miami-Dade County has become a "hall of shame" rocked by a scandal a month, Mayor Alex Penelas on Thursday abruptly sacked County Manager Armando Vidal in a move he said would restore credibility in county government. But Vidal, in his own sharp reply, accused the mayor of hypocrisy. He said the mayor was removing him, at least in part, because he refused to buckle from pressure and hire the mayor's friends.

In a late afternoon press conference, Penelas said Vidal, a 15-year veteran of county government, has not been able to restore confidence in a county notorious for misspending at the Port of Miami, phony building permits, too-short palm trees and millions in overpayments in road paving and striping contracts. "Running a competent, ethical government is the manager's most important job, and at this time our community believes our government to be both incompetent and unethical," Penelas said. Penelas said the dismissal was his way of sending a clear signal that he will not tolerate Miami-Dade's sleazy public image.

Vidal fired back almost immediately. "I believe it's totally unfair to utilize this government in an attempt to reward those that have hired the right lobbyists," Vidal said in an interview. "Therefore, in some cases I have had to say 'no.' That has not been a popular stance to take." Vidal said Penelas wanted him to give a no-bid contract extension to an airport newsstand company that included some of the mayor's biggest supporters. "I want my name cleared is what I want," Vidal said. "I am fighting for my job." Penelas said Vidal was not fired for any political reasons. "First of all, it's not my job to bring in anybody for county jobs. That's his job to do. And I've been very careful to keep that fine line very, very clear."

Management frozen

The firing has frozen the management of the county's \$4.1 billion government and touched off speculation over who will succeed Vidal, who became manager in December 1994 after a bruising, ethnically charged debate. Officially, Vidal, 51, is still on his \$173,000-a-year job. He spurned the mayor's request to step aside -- relayed through an influential county lawyer/lobbyist -- and, under the county's charter, will serve for up to 10 days. During that time, the Miami-Dade Commission can call a hearing to explore Penelas' reasons for the firing and consider whether to overrule the mayor. But it would take nine votes from the 13-member board to override Penelas, and not many expect Vidal to gather that kind of support. After the 10-day period, Penelas plans to launch a national search for a new county manager. Penelas, then a county commissioner, was the first commissioner to throw his support behind Vidal for the manager's job. And Penelas kept Vidal as manager after he won election to the county mayor's job in 1996.

Growing tension

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

But tension has simmered between the two men ever since, with the mayor's supporters often complaining that Vidal was prickly, stubborn and often frozen by indecision. The differences broke into the open during last year's budget debate. Penelas rewrote Vidal's budget, slashing a recommended tax increase and whacking most of Vidal's senior staff in the process. He said he wanted a streamlined Metro government more responsive to his initiatives. But Penelas said that didn't work. He has grown increasingly impatient with Vidal, believing he pays too little attention to pushing Penelas' goals. He said Vidal has obviously failed to supervise department directors and has bungled several important issues, including building permit reform and land negotiations for a new arena.

Penelas said he believes Vidal is honest and not personally involved in any wrongdoing. But he said the county needs a dramatic change to reverse a "scandal-of-the-month" culture in which no one is held accountable for misdeeds or mismanagement. In a six-page memo, Penelas gave an extraordinarily detailed account of what he considers Vidal's failings:

- * The manager's inability to produce a plan to overhaul social services or the building permit process. "Despite being told by the county manager last August that a plan was forthcoming, none was received," Penelas said of the building permits. Penelas said he had to do it himself.

- * Vidal's delays in appointing staff to a new ethics commission. "At a time when mismanagement and scandal are at an all time high, this is simply not tolerable," Penelas wrote.

- * Inattention to the increasing problem of jail overcrowding, which Penelas said may result in courts releasing "hardened criminals" back on the street.

But Vidal noted that Penelas pushed to increase the number of people in jails with his Safe Streets, Clean Sweep program. In announcing that program, Penelas said fighting crime was a more important goal than putting limits on jail population. "He's the one who told me not to open the back door," Vidal said.

- * The "blunder" during negotiations with the city of Miami for a new arena site downtown. After weeks of meetings and several offers that were rejected by the city, Penelas learned that the county was really not able to pay for all the land for a downtown port expansion that included the arena. "After leading this community to believe that adequate resources existed for the Port of Miami expansion onto the downtown waterfront, we have now learned that our financial ability to do so is lacking considerably," he said.

Penelas said he has given Vidal plenty of time to shape up, but that hasn't happened. He said that while Vidal has made some progress in cleaning up the seaport, he hasn't done much to turn around the troubled operations at the building and sewer departments.

Heads have rolled at the county over the past year -- including former Port Director Carmen Lunetta and water and sewer Director Anthony Clemente -- but Vidal's was not among them. On Thursday, Vidal said he was planning to suspend **Guillermo Olmedillo**, director of the department of Planning, Development and Regulation, and Assistant Director Reinaldo Villar. Police are investigating whether thousands of building records were changed to give permits to homes and other projects that had not received the proper inspections.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Too little, too late

The firings were too little, too late for Penelas, who described Vidal's record as "a sad history of inaction or the wrong action." Vidal said he would prepare a detailed response to what he called Penelas' "inaccurate" report. "These problems existed and previous managers were not able or did not want to deal with these problems," he said. "This is a classic case of shooting the messenger."

Brian May, Penelas' chief of staff, said Penelas first called Vidal on the carpet six months ago. On Wednesday, after deciding to fire him, Penelas summoned one of his closest political friends and biggest fund-raisers: lawyer-lobbyist Jorge Luis Lopez, who was lobbying for the county in Tallahassee. Lopez said he flew back to Miami and met with Penelas for two hours in his law office. He then drove to Vidal's house to relay the news: Penelas wanted him out. There would be a meeting Thursday morning, Lopez said.

Lopez, one of the county's most active lobbyists and a close friend of Vidal, said he has often been called in to settle disputes between Vidal and Penelas -- including political scraps between Vidal and May.

Trying to mediate

Emissaries for Vidal and Penelas met all afternoon Thursday to try to broker an agreement for the manager to resign. But Vidal insisted on more time to consider his options, and Penelas said he could wait no longer. Lopez said he does not expect Vidal to actually try to stay on as manager. He said Vidal simply wants more time to leave on his terms and with a fair severance package. Vidal also could stay on in another job, he said. "He's not going to run out like a dog in the middle of the night," Lopez said.

Commissioner Jimmy Morales said he would support Penelas' decision. "I would not vote to override the mayor, but I would support the manager being allowed to leave with decency and dignity," Morales said.

But Commissioner Miguel Diaz de la Portilla, a frequent Penelas critic, said he will push for a hearing. "Dade County is not and should not be a banana republic. Therefore, I think we should follow the process the charter indicates. "There's more to this than meets the eye," Diaz de la Portilla said. "I think the truth shall set us free."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
December 18, 1997

POLICE RAID HIGH-LEVEL OFFICES COUNTY FILES, COMPUTERS HELD

Author: Dono Finefrock

Metro-Dade Police and prosecutors staged a surprise raid Wednesday at the county's building department, hauling away cartloads of computer equipment and files from the offices of the county's top building officials. The raid represented one of the most dramatic and public developments to date in a far-reaching criminal investigation that began late last year. Police declined to discuss their motive for the raid, or its timing, but the implications were clear. "We're hoping to get some indictments out of this -- as to who and how many, it has yet to be determined," police Lt. Ralph Fernandez said. Police seized about 10 desktop computers, including those used by department Director **Guillermo Olmedillo**, his chief assistants or their secretaries.

Armed with a search warrant, law enforcement officials arrived early on the 11th floor of the Government Center in downtown Miami and spent the morning and a portion of the afternoon gathering the targeted equipment and files. The search warrant lists what police were after: personal computers and laptops; computer files; and business records including memos, correspondence, notes, telephone address books, telephone message slips and e-mail messages. "The search warrant was part of our continuing investigation into potential mismanagement and other misconduct," Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle said late Wednesday.

Police began their investigation of the Department of Planning, Development and Regulation in November 1996 after county employees discovered phony inspection approvals in the department's main computer. Police and prosecutors have scrutinized those records -- and interviewed department employees -- as part of a larger investigation into possible corruption within the department. "We have conducted interviews with just about everybody up there," Fernandez said. "Everybody has been very cooperative."

Fernandez said police were searching Wednesday for "anything that could be helpful in the investigation and open up some new doors." He declined to say whose computers were seized, but sources said police targeted the department's top administrators, including **Olmedillo**, his assistant directors and some division chiefs. **Olmedillo** confirmed that computers were seized from his outer office.

The raid comes just as a new grand jury is beginning to investigate the building scandal. A former grand jury concluded its work Monday by issuing a two-page report that called for more investigation of the department. "We have found what we believe to be favored treatment, improper actions and incorrect motivations," the grand jury said, without providing details. "What we have uncovered may only be the tip of an enormous iceberg."

Police and prosecutors have declined to discuss their work, but the probe has expanded significantly beyond the phony inspections discovered last year. Investigators have looked into allegations by

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

department employees that they were pressured by supervisors to approve construction plans or shoddy work.

Police and prosecutors also have questioned how Dadeland Station, a \$35 million shopping center on South Dixie Highway with serious structural problems, won county approval despite those construction flaws.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Miami Herald, The (FL)
July 27, 1997

**OFFICIALS DAWDLED ON RECORDS TAMPERING DADE BUILDING FILES
ALTERED**

Author: Don Finefrock

A former Dade County building clerk at the center of a criminal investigation into computer tampering was accused of taking cash bribes in July 1995 -- more than a year before police were called to investigate. Two fellow employees reported their suspicions about the temporary clerk, Pablo Prieto, to a senior building inspector. The inspector told his boss. Nothing happened. Prieto tapped away at his computer keyboard for 10 more months, making hundreds, perhaps thousands, of changes to county building records. Police are investigating those changes as part of a wider probe into possible corruption at the Dade Department of Planning Development and Regulation.

Prieto denies any wrongdoing. The former clerk says he changed building records, but never without the approval of his bosses. He says he suspects that someone else may have used his computer password to make the changes under investigation. Prieto resigned from the county in May 1996. Building officials say the first evidence of wrongdoing surfaced several weeks later. But county records tell another story. The evidence suggests that department managers ignored the first signs of trouble, then botched an internal investigation. Building officials had clear evidence of possible fraud by June 1996. They had identified Prieto as a suspect. But department managers waited four more months before they called police. Building officials say they wanted to conduct their own investigation. But they failed to pursue obvious leads. A key witness was never interviewed. Prieto was never barred from county offices.

Building officials did not brief police until last November, 16 months after the first allegations about Prieto. Department Director **Guillermo Olmedillo** says his department may have been slow, but did react. **Olmedillo** says he made the call to police. But he doesn't rule out the possibility of a cover-up. In an interview, **Olmedillo** drew a line on a sheet of paper. Above the line, he drew six boxes representing his job and the jobs of his four assistant directors and the county's chief building official. Flow of information ``To this layer, I can tell you there is no intent to cover up," **Olmedillo** said. ``I don't see the link, I don't see the chain, going above this point." And below the line? ``Somewhere I think there might be something stopping the flow of information," **Olmedillo** said. ``Where, it beats me."

County Manager Armando Vidal has hired an independent auditor to review the department's management practices. A final report is due in September. Here are the major findings of a Herald investigation, based on interviews with current and former employees and the department's own records. By most accounts, Prieto was a popular employee -- young, friendly and eager -- but his work habits were not above suspicion. Two co-workers whispered their concerns in the summer of 1995 to Assistant Chief Building Inspector Larry Gay. Gay documented those allegations in a handwritten memo addressed to his boss, Chief Building Inspector Roberto Pineiro. ``It was reported to me in the South Office by two separate individuals that Pablo is known to be removing

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

holds for people for money," Gay wrote. A completion hold prevents a contractor from proceeding with a job until certain requirements are met. Gay wrote his memo July 25 -- the same day someone requested a computer report of inspection records changed by Prieto. "Someone knew," said Donna Romito, a department division chief. Department officials can't say what happened to that report -- or even who requested it. Gay said he did not ask for the report; Pineiro said he can't remember.

The whereabouts of the original memo also is a mystery. The two employees who voiced concern have not been identified. Gay declined to answer questions about the memo. But his former boss said he passed the memo to Lee Martin, the county's chief building official. "I remember exactly the memo," Pineiro said. "When we got that suspicion, we did forward that information to Lee Martin." Martin denies seeing the memo. "Getting rid of a temporary employee is the easiest thing to do," he said. "Had I heard even the suspicion of that going on, that's what I would have done. I can tell you I never saw that memo." When department officials first suspected Prieto is important because they could have limited his access to the computer. In December 1995, for instance, the department took away Prieto's ability to remove completion holds -- the subject of the original allegations. Building officials can't say why that change was made -- or whether someone suspected computer tampering. Investigators now fear that Prieto -- or someone masquerading as Prieto -- may have falsified thousands of building records during the two years he worked at Metro. Each of those construction jobs may have to be re-inspected, county officials say. The county has hired six consultants to sort out the mess, at an estimated cost of \$404,000.

Prieto, 22, has told The Herald that he changed computerized building records, but never without the permission of his supervisors. Investigators have interviewed Prieto twice. "Pablo has cooperated fully and completely with the state attorney's office," attorney Mitchell J. Olin said. Olin represents Prieto. He also is an officer and director of Expeditors Inc., the Broward company where Prieto now works. "Pablo is innocent of all criminal wrongdoing," Olin said. "They are making Pablo out to be this rogue clerk. It is the proverbial smoke screen." Olin said Prieto suspects that others may have used his password to make changes, but he offered no specifics. "I don't believe Pablo knows who may or may not have used his ID," Olin said. "Anybody can get into that system and use Pablo's ID. You have a system that is out of control. Someone needs to look into the system."

Department managers say the first signs of tampering did not surface until three weeks after Prieto left his county job. Others dispute that version of events. Former roofing inspector Kenneth Bennett had discovered phony inspection results in the computer by early May 1996. Bennett told his boss, senior inspector Freddy Semino, who began to investigate May 8. Prieto left his job two days later. Semino eventually turned up evidence that pointed to Prieto, but top managers say that information never reached them. Semino said he alerted his boss, Manuel Jimenez, who in turn told his boss, Assistant Chief Roofing Inspector Angel Alvarez. "And it was taken from there," Semino said. Alvarez went to the house to re-inspect the roof, but he denies that he knew inspection results had been falsified. Department managers insist they did not learn about the computer tampering until weeks later, when they were tipped to a possible problem by attorney Carlos Garcia. Garcia wrote to **Olmedillo** on May 29, 1996, to question the final approval bestowed on the roof of his client,

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Osvaldo Vento. An internal investigation turned up evidence of possible fraud and a suspect -- Prieto. The county revoked the final approval June 18. "While the source of the fraudulent activity has been identified, proof of such activity is still not sufficient to warrant the pressing of charges," **Olmedillo** wrote that day to Garcia. When were police called? **Olmedillo** said he could not remember when he called police, but others, including assistant director Reinaldo Villar, say the call was made in October, four months after **Olmedillo** wrote to Garcia.

So why the delay? Villar said the department wanted to conduct its own investigation before contacting police. "Perhaps we could have moved a little faster," he said. The Vento case gave the department a solid lead to follow, but that lead was never pursued. **Olmedillo** and Villar never asked for a list of other inspection results touched by Prieto. They also never bothered to find out who entered the Vento results in the computer. The department identified Prieto as a suspect based on a report by senior roofing inspector Manuel Jimenez.

But a computer audit requested by The Herald shows that the results were entered under the computer ID of John Miner, a senior elevator inspector. Miner denies making the entry. He told The Herald that Prieto may have used his computer to enter the results, but he never got a chance to share that explanation with his bosses. They never asked. "This is the first time in my life I ever heard that John Miner was the [ID that] entered it," Villar told The Herald. More than a month passed before anyone in the department requested a list of inspection results touched by Prieto. The first request for such a list was made July 23, 1996, in response to yet another case of phony inspection results. The latest evidence of tampering was uncovered by Jose Fernandez, a senior electrical inspector. Fernandez saw his name listed in the computer as the inspector of record on a job he had not inspected. Fernandez began his own investigation. He interviewed the homeowner. He asked for a computer audit on the entry.

The results came back July 22, 1996. The inspection results had been entered under PP45 -- the computer ID of Pablo Prieto. Fernandez and his boss, Humberto Codispoti, requested a full audit on PP45 the next day. The report raised more questions. "He did a lot of changes he wasn't supposed to," Fernandez said. "He was not working for us. He was not supposed to touch any electrical inspections." Codispoti said he alerted his supervisors -- Lee Martin and Reinaldo Villar -- about the findings. That's when the internal investigation began in earnest.

Three more months would pass before department managers called police. **Olmedillo** said he made that call but cannot recall the date. Two of his deputies -- Villar and Romito -- say the call was made in October. Others confirm that timing. "I don't know if we could have been more aggressive," **Olmedillo** says today. "I don't know if we had very definitive trails to follow."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
June 17, 1997

BUILDING INSPECTOR FIRED FOR DUAL ROLE \ HIS ATTORNEY CALLS IT `A POLITICAL DECISION`

Author: Don Finefrock

The chief building inspector for Dade County has been fired for moonlighting as a licensed contractor while working for the county. vCounty building records show that Carlos Valdes used his license to obtain 31 building permits for AMS Construction after joining the county in 1989. On two occasions, Valdes inspected his own jobs, records show. Valdes, 58, was suspended with pay April 29 after his double life was reported by a fellow employee. He was fired Friday. Metro inspectors are required to deactivate their professional licenses when they join the county to avoid any possible conflict of interest. An investigation by department officials in the wake of the Valdes suspension found three other cases in which inspectors obtained building permits after being hired by the county. Those inspectors each pulled one permit, under circumstances that do not warrant disciplinary action, the county's chief building official said Monday. By contrast, Valdes repeatedly pulled permits for AMS, a small company specializing in home repairs, beginning in November 1990. That situation posed a possible conflict for Valdes and the inspectors who worked for him.

Guillermo Olmedillo, the director of the Department of Planning, Development and Regulation, decided to fire Valdes after meeting with him last week. ``Your violations of rules are quite serious," **Olmedillo** wrote in a letter dated Friday. ``Of particular concern is the fact that you performed and approved a final inspection on your own permit." An attorney for Valdes said his client will appeal the decision. ``We think what happened here is a political decision," attorney Alan J. Kluger said Monday. ``We admitted technical wrongdoing because technically it is wrong, but his record is exemplary. The punishment should fit the crime, and it clearly didn't." Valdes told **Olmedillo** last week that his supervisors were aware of his dual role as inspector and contractor. **Olmedillo** said the department found no evidence to support that claim. ``Your actions have eroded the public's trust in its government and have decreased the morale of the department," **Olmedillo** wrote.

The departure of Valdes leaves the county without a chief building inspector. Valdes had been promoted to the job in February. He earned \$54,200 a year and supervised 32 inspectors and six senior inspectors. The dismissal also represents another black eye for a department under investigation by police and the Dade County state attorney's office. Police are investigating whether department employees falsified building records to make it appear that homes had passed inspection when they had not. County officials say as many as 2,922 properties -- including many single-family homes -- may not have been properly inspected by the county.

The investigation is unrelated to the case against Valdes. But Valdes had been designated as the chief contact for police within the department before his departure, **Olmedillo** said. Kluger said coverage of that investigation by The Herald had increased pressure on department officials to deal harshly with Valdes.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
June 6, 1997

THOUSANDS OF INSPECTIONS IN QUESTION BUILDING RECORDS FACE INVESTIGATION

Author: Don Finefrock

A police investigation into the apparent falsification of Dade County building records has uncovered as many as 2,922 properties that may not have been properly inspected, County Manager Armando Vidal disclosed Thursday. Hundreds of those properties may have to be reinspected, but it was unclear Thursday who would pay to repair any problems. Independent experts are being called in to review all suspect building records.

In the meantime, police are investigating whether employees in the Department of Planning, Development and Regulation tampered with building records to make it appear that homes had passed final inspection when in fact they had not. No one has been charged, but county officials confirmed Thursday that the investigation goes well beyond a former clerk whose activities first raised suspicions.

Metro-Dade Mayor Alex Penelas indicated Thursday that police are looking at others in the department, including people who may have supervised the former clerk, Pablo Prieto. "There is an issue whether it goes beyond one person," Penelas said. Prieto, 22, has denied any wrongdoing. The former clerk has told The Herald he may have changed the department's computerized building records but only at the direction of supervisors.

Concerned about security

Penelas and Vidal said they are concerned about the lack of security for those records and the department's apparent slow response to the problem. "I am very concerned about some of the management practices and actions that have led to this issue," Vidal said.

Department Director **Guillermo Olmedillo** said he first learned of the problem last summer -- nearly a year after co-workers voiced suspicions about Prieto. Those suspicions are documented in a memo written in July 1995. "I wished we had moved faster, but I think we were doing a thorough job," **Olmedillo** said Thursday. Prieto left in May 1996 after 22 months on the job.

Current and former employees say the department's internal investigation began in late 1995 but then languished for months before **Olmedillo** and Vidal were alerted. Penelas has ordered an independent review of all suspect building records to make sure all problems are identified. "If there are people trying to cover things up, I need to know," he said. "That is exactly why I am having outside people look at the records." Vidal said those outside experts -- four registered architects or engineers now under contract with the county -- would begin work today. He said an independent auditor will also be called in to review the department. The discrepancies uncovered so far in the department's building records run the gamut, Vidal said. In some cases, inspection results appear to have been altered. In other cases, construction holds were removed, he said. In some

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

cases, those changes may have allowed builders to obtain final approval from the county without passing all the necessary inspections.

Some of the discrepancies appear to be less significant in nature, Vidal indicated. Those properties may have been properly inspected. The independent experts will pinpoint the problem properties, Vidal said. Owners of those problem properties or contractors will be notified, and inspectors will be dispatched to check out the properties, on Saturday or Sunday if necessary, Vidal said. The county will absorb the cost, he said.

But it was not clear Thursday whether the county would assume additional liability, for any repairs that must be made as a result of the apparent scheme. Nevertheless, Penelas asked county officials to prepare a compensation plan. "I am not sure there is any liability," said Murray Greenberg, first assistant county attorney. "We are researching it." So far, 273 property owners or contractors have been contacted by the county to alert them to discrepancies in their building records, Vidal said.

Police have declined to talk about their investigation, but Penelas said the motives for any falsification of records may be varied. "There may have been issues of illegal compensation," he said.

The actions announced Thursday were prompted in part by the police investigation and by the arrival of hurricane season, which began June 1. Police briefed Vidal last week on their findings. Vidal declined to discuss what police told him. "I can't comment on who else may be under investigation or how high it goes within the department," the manager said.

Penelas asked for a full report on the problem within 10 days. "I am very concerned about homeowners and what may happen with upwards of 3,000 homes that may not have final inspection," Penelas said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
May 7, 1996

GOVERNMENT IN ACTION

Author: Herald Sports Staff

Metro rescinds self-imposed port fine

When Dade County building officials discovered earlier this year that the Port of Miami had built two passenger terminals without proper building permits, the county fined itself \$17,159 for violating the South Florida Building Code. But Port Director Carmen Lunetta won't have to pay.

Guillermo Olmedillo, acting director of Metro's Department of Planning Development and Regulation, said Monday he rescinded the fine after determining that former Metro building official Carlos Bonzon authorized the construction. "I couldn't very well go out and fine someone who had this verification," **Olmedillo** said.

The state Department of Business & Professional Regulation launched an investigation of the case in March. **Olmedillo** said he was interviewed last week by an investigator. Bonzon contends he acted within his authority.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
March 16, 1996

**STATE PROBES CONSTRUCTION AT DADE PORT OFFICIALS, ARCHITECT,
ENGINEER DENY WRONGDOING IN VIOLATIONS**

Author: Don Finefrock

State regulators have launched an investigation to determine how two Port of Miami passenger terminals were built without proper building permits, in violation of the South Florida Building Code. The state Department of Business & Professional Regulation delivered a subpoena Thursday to County Hall requesting inspection records, permit applications, plan review notes and other documents related to the project.

Department spokesman Ed Towey declined to comment on the scope or existence of an investigation, but the department has jurisdiction over state-licensed contractors, architects, engineers, building officials and inspectors. If the department decides any of those professionals violated their responsibilities, it could move to suspend or revoke their licenses.

After Hurricane Andrew, the department filed civil charges against 10 builders whose projects were shredded by the storm. All but two of the cases have been settled or dismissed. None of the builders lost their license. Metro-Dade has until March 27 to turn over its records on the project.

Construction on the \$12 million port project -- a major expansion of two terminals used by Carnival Cruise Lines -- began last year after the county's former building director, Carlos Bonzon, gave his approval. Bonzon agreed to expedite construction at the request of Port director Carmen Lunetta. Lunetta was anxious to complete work to accommodate Carnival.

Bonzon said Friday he acted within his authority under the building code when he allowed construction to proceed before the building plans had been approved and the necessary permits issued. "I did not exceed my authority for one second," he said. But the unusual arrangement raised safety concerns among other building officials, including Bonzon's successor, **Guillermo Olmedillo**, and Charles Danger, the director of building code compliance in Dade.

The lack of permits initially raised doubts about whether the project had been properly inspected. **Olmedillo** dispatched inspectors to check the construction and ordered the contractor, architect and engineer responsible for the job to produce their inspection records for the project.

Metro building officials now say they are confident the project was properly inspected. **Olmedillo** issued a temporary certificate of occupancy last week for a portion of the project, which allowed the port to open one of the terminals for the arrival of Carnival's new cruise liner, Inspiration.

"All code requirements have been met," said Reinaldo Villar, an assistant director in **Olmedillo's** department. "They pulled every permit, and we have inspected everything that we could inspect."

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

"The county issued the temporary certificate -- good for 90 days -- after the contractor agreed to reinforce a steel stairway for passengers. The plan reviewer who checked the staircase drawings expressed concern about whether the steel structure was strong enough. "His concern was at maximum loading, that railing might not be able to withstand all the force of all the people pushing on it," said Metro building official Lee Martin, who oversee permits and inspections. Was it unsafe? "I think that is a matter of debate," Martin said. "It's very strong now."

The port will be required to pay double permit fees and a fine of \$100 a permit for violating the building code. **Olmedillo** sent a memo this week to Lunetta requesting payment. The bill: \$17,159.40.

Olmedillo said his investigation is largely complete, but state regulators are just getting started. Although the focus of the probe wasn't known, Danger said state regulators have authority over the county officials who approved and inspected the project and the professionals who built it. "They have the ability to discipline everybody there," Danger said. "I don't know how far they want to go."

Companies involved in the project include the architect, Bermello Ajamil & Partners; the engineering and inspection firm, Donnell & Duquesne; and the general contractor, C.G. Chase Construction.

Luis Ajamil and Ramon Donnell denied any wrongdoing. Steven Johns of Chase Construction did not return a phone call seeking comment. "We went to Building and Zoning and they told the (port) to proceed. How much clearer can we be on this thing, if the head of the building department tells you to proceed?" Ajamil said.

Bermello & Ajamil and Donnell also were involved in another project that is being scrutinized by Metro building officials.

Miami Beach inspectors in late 1994 halted construction at 404 Washington Ave. after building officials noted a number of irregularities. Building officials said permits had not been granted for the expansion of the building's sixth, seventh and eighth floors. At the time, architect Willy Bermello attributed the lack of permits to an oversight by the developer. Danger's office is investigating.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Miami Herald, The (FL)
October 3, 1995

DADE BUILDING AGENCY CHIEF NAMED

Author: Herald Staff

Guillermo Olmedillo, Dade County's planning director since 1992, has been promoted to head a newly created county department responsible for inspecting construction, enforcing zoning codes and regulating land uses.

Olmedillo will oversee the Planning, Development and Regulation Department, a combination of the former Building and Zoning Department, the Developmental Impact Committee -- an agency that scrutinizes large developments -- the Planning Department and some aspects of the Public Works Department.

The consolidation of departments creates a "one-stop shop for the building industry," said County Manager Armando Vidal. "We're concentrating all activities dealing with construction within one department."

As Metro planning director, **Olmedillo** oversaw long-term land-use planning and steered Metro through the push by several communities to form cities.

In his new position, **Olmedillo** will head a staff of about 500. He said his most immediate goals will be to streamline the permitting process and improve inspections and code enforcement. "I'd say it's a great responsibility," **Olmedillo** said. "I'm looking forward to a big, big challenge."

Prior to coming to Metro, **Olmedillo** served as deputy director of the City of Miami's Planning, Building and Zoning Department and as Director of Regional Planning for the Central Region for the Republic of Venezuela.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Miami Herald, The (FL)
June 4, 1995

CITY FEVER SWEEPING THE COUNTY

Author: Dexter Filkins

The map of Dade County is changing fast, and no one seems able to stop it. Aventura is on the brink of cityhood. Four more areas -- Destiny, Pinecrest, East Kendall and West Kendall -- are right behind it. And Sunny Isles is right behind them. Despite widespread fears that a mad rush to incorporate would leave many areas without basic public services, some of Dade's elected officials have all but thrown up their hands. "The genie is out of the bottle, and no one is going to put it back in," Metro Commissioner Arthur Teele said. "We've allowed the people of Aventura to go forward. How can we say no to Pinecrest and Destiny?"

Last week, after Pinecrest, Destiny, East Kendall and West Kendall gained preliminary approval to form cities, Teele said he would no longer oppose incorporation. Like it or not, Teele says it's politically impossible to try to stop incorporation now. Other commissioners have joined him, saying they can't stop the popular tide.

Yet while it may be politically popular to allow widespread incorporation, some people warn of disastrous consequences for many Dade households if it is continues unchecked. Most of the six communities now in line for cityhood are better off financially than the rest of those in unincorporated Dade. If they pull out, they'll take a large share of Dade's tax base with them. Metro administrators say homeowners left in unincorporated Dade would have to pay higher taxes just to receive the same services as before -- or see their services cut. "The bottom line," Metro Budget Director Steve Spratt says, "is we will have to either cut the budget or raise taxes."

If all six communities secede, he predicts Metro would face a net revenue shortfall of \$43 million annually. That would mean one of two things: deep cuts in basic services like police protection, code enforcement and recreation. Or a tax increase of 76 percent for homeowners who live in unincorporated Dade. Spratt and others worry that things wouldn't end there. As homeowners watch other communities incorporate, they'll want to avoid higher taxes and be led to form their own cities. In the end, only the poorest areas will be left behind. "We will have all of the problems and none of the resources," Teele said.

Supporters of incorporation say Metro is exaggerating. They say the incorporation movements could force Metro to deliver services to the remaining areas more efficiently. "Just scare tactics," said Gary Matzner, a Pinecrest resident who wants his area to be a city. "The only scenario they come up with is to raise taxes. They ought to look at the budget and see ways to save money." All this may come to a head as early as Tuesday at County Hall. Metro commissioners will decide whether to hold elections in Pinecrest and Destiny to determine if they want to become cities. That's the last big hurdle on the road to cityhood.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

But it may not be so easy. Other commissioners say they plan to block the Pinecrest and Destiny initiatives. They say commissioners should first draft rules to deal with the potential inequities of helter-skelter incorporation. Such rules could radically redraw the proposed maps for Destiny and Pinecrest. "The whole thing is going way too fast," said Commissioner Katy Sorenson, whose district includes Pinecrest. "We are not at the point where we should be allowing all these areas to incorporate."

At the same time, Metro Planning Director **Guillermo Olmedillo** intends to present commissioners with a series of alternatives to help them guide the incorporation movement. **Olmedillo's** plan aims to lessen the potential economic disparities that could result from unchecked incorporation. "The big question," says **Olmedillo**, "is whether you are going to allow unincorporated Dade to be rational governing units, or whether you are going to allow each group that comes along to have its way."

Olmedillo plans to offer commissioners three alternatives:

* The first is a "revenue sharing" plan, under which all Dade cities would pitch into a pool for poorer communities. Many leaders of the incorporation movement have expressed qualified support for such a plan. A few large metropolitan areas, namely Minneapolis/St. Paul, have imposed such plans. In Dade, the main obstacle is that the Metro Commission lacks the authority to enact such a taxing scheme. The state Legislature would have to do it.

"Without some kind of revenue sharing, we would be in bad shape," said Commissioner Betty Ferguson. "If we are going to live in this community together, people have to realize that it is to everyone's advantage to make the quality of life as high as possible."

* The second idea is more complicated. Under the plan, an area seeking to incorporate would have to show that the property values in the area fall within a certain dollar range. If the value is above the acceptable range, then the proposed city would have to reach out and include more lower-value homes. It works the other way, too: If property values in an area fall below the range, then leaders would have to redraw their map to include houses of greater value. Under the proposed formula, only two of the six communities seeking to incorporate -- East Kendall and West Kendall -- would be allowed to proceed. Destiny falls below the range; Pinecrest, Aventura and Sunny Isles are above it.

* The third alternative is to allow communities to form quasi-city councils. The councils could have authority over zoning, police patrols and other local matters. It's not clear how the process will shake out. Many residents, particularly those in Pinecrest and Destiny, want a chance to vote now.

Other residents say they would be willing to wait. "I don't want to destroy this county," said Dave Samson, who has led the drive for incorporation in Sunny Isles. "But a lot of those commissioners don't even know where Sunny Isles is."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
May 1, 1994

COMPLEX WILL GET TWO BARS

Author: Ana Acle Chasko

An amusement center with two sports bars and a two-story office complex is being built across the street from The Falls Shopping Center, after a narrow vote of approval from the Metro Zoning Appeals Board.

For two years, the amusement center has been in the works. In October 1992, the county approved the center with three mini golf courses themed for children. But Wednesday, the board voted 7-6 to scrap the golf courses and permit owners to build two sports bars geared for adult entertainment.

Bolingo Inc., the company that owns the center, does not have a published telephone number. The property at 8801 SW 136th St. is owned by Deltamex Canada USA, which also has a nonpublished phone number. Both are owned by Mexican businessman Jose Antonio Nevarez, who also isn't listed in the phone book.

The Metro Planning Department recommended the board deny the request for sports bars.

"My concern is the combination of adult entertainment near an amusement center catering to young kids," said **Guillermo Olmedillo**, Metro planning director. "I don't think it's proper to put a bar next to a playground."

Olmedillo said he has no objections to the amusement center's location because the area is near South Dixie Highway and is properly zoned for commercial use.

Diane O'Quinn, supervisor of Metro's zoning hearings section, said the board questioned the need for such a facility. Some members also were unhappy the developer was replacing what was to have been a lushly landscaped mini-golf course with a parking lot. O'Quinn said no area business or home owner spoke against the request.

According to plans filed with the county, Bolingo Inc. is building a one-story amusement center with parking for 336 cars on a 4.5-acre triangular lot. The back of the center faces Southwest 88th Place and the front faces the parking lot near Southwest 136th Street. The amusement center will have 32,300 square feet. A much smaller two-story office complex on the east side of the lot, near the Prado Plaza, will have 2,000 square feet. The amusement center will have electronic games for children; it won't have the 12 batting cages and mini-golf courses approved in 1992.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
October 17, 1993

ZONING PRESSURES TO BE TOPIC OF MEETING

Author: Alessandra Soler

For years, South Dade residents have been fighting zoning pressures -- which were temporarily diminished after Andrew. Now, developers again are looking south and residents are worried about the fate of their neighborhoods. "We're concerned about our communities," said Jean Welsh, corresponding secretary for the South Dade Community Council. "We prefer single-family homes, and higher density means more apartment and townhouse complexes."

Many South Dade areas including Saga Bay, Lakes By The Bay, Cutler Ridge and Whispering Pines are under a guideline of approximately six units per acre, according to a 10-year-old zoning neighborhood plan. Residents are concerned about developers' applications that want up to 20 units per acre. "Anything that deviates from these guidelines will create much resistance," said David J. Feinberg, council chairman. "We're going to oppose intensifying the traffic and overburdening our utilities. We're already short members of the police and fire departments."

The Dade County Planning Department used to conduct neighborhood planning studies and use them as guides in establishing the general Dade County Master Plan for development.

"The study made 10 years ago might be valid, but I need time to look at where we are now. The neighborhood plans are not part of the laws that govern zoning," said **Guillermo Olmedillo**, director of Metro's Planning Department. "The only fair way for me to treat this is to go back and revisit these areas and compare the results from the neighborhood plan to those of the master plan," he said.

The South Dade Community Council will meet at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Community Health Center, 10300 SW 216th St., to discuss zoning pressures. The directors of the building and zoning and planning departments have been invited. So have lawyers who specialize in zoning law.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
February 21, 1993

DEBATE SURROUNDS ZONING PLAN

Author: Angie Muhs

Supporters and opponents of plans to radically change the way Metro oversees its zoning decisions and its parks clashed Wednesday over whether the measures would increase bureaucracy and costs. At a public hearing sponsored by the Metro Planning Advisory Board, county planning and zoning officials said the proposal to create eight elected neighborhood zoning boards could increase the department's costs by \$900,000 each year.

The plan, if adopted by voters March 16, would be the only one of its kind in the country, said **Guillermo Olmedillo**, director of Metro's planning department. "This is a revolutionary concept," **Olmedillo** said. "There's a departure from an areawide perspective to a local perspective."

Just such a break is desperately needed for Dade, say the plan's supporters. They said Metro deliberately was inflating its cost estimates. "There's not going to be any doubling of the meetings," said Jose Rojas, one of the leaders of the Protect Our Communities coalition. "There's nothing in this amendment that will generate more zoning applications."

Some members of the audience said Metro should give residents a chance. "Put this in the hands of the people who live in the area," said Morgan Levy, president of the West Dade Federation of Homeowner Associations. "They won't be unreasonable."

Others said the plan was well-intentioned, but they doubt it will work. It seems to me there's something lost in the overall planning mechanism," said Oswald Howe, a planning advisory board member.

On the second of the proposals -- to require voter approval to put certain types of commercial developments in county parks -- reactions were also divided.

Richard Jones, an assistant to Metro Park Director Bill Bird, said the parks department would lose fund-raising options it needs if the plan is approved. "We feel the creative solutions would be greatly inhibited," Jones said.

Dan Paul, one of the leaders of Save Our Parks -- the citizens' coalition -- said parks officials haven't made the right choices in the past. For example, the park department's first priority after Hurricane Andrew was cleaning up for the Lipton tournament, he said. "That shows you what happens when parks professionals make the decisions," he said.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)**

Miami Herald, The (FL)
September 20, 1992

NEW PLANNING CHIEF TAKES OVER AS COUNTY BEGINS REBUILDING

Author: Charles Strouse

Guillermo Olmedillo, a former banker and land planner from Venezuela, is the new architect of Dade County's future. **Olmedillo** took over last week as chief of Metro-Dade's planning department. His job is one of the most important in shaping the county's new look after Hurricane Andrew.

"Our No. 1 aim now is to attract development that is hurricane-proof and doesn't perturb the environment," **Olmedillo** said. "Andrew showed us we need to take a hurricane into consideration every time we consider a new development."

The University of Miami graduate takes over from Reginald Walters, who was the county's chief planner for three decades. **Olmedillo's** last job was as deputy director of planning for the city of Miami. He will review plans for many new shopping centers, large apartments and other projects -- then make recommendations to Metro commissioners. His department has 53 employees and a \$3.1 million budget.

Olmedillo, 49, grew up in Caracas. He said his family came to Miami in 1958 after the overthrow of dictator Marco Perez Jimenez. He graduated from Coral Gables High School and earned a degree in architecture from the University of Miami.

In 1967, he returned to Venezuela as chief of planning for the area around Caracas. Later, he took positions with the Venezuelan government and then as a private banker before the economy collapsed in 1984. "Because of the economic situation, I found myself looking for a job," he said. "So I folded up my tent and we came here."

Olmedillo has worked for the city of Miami for eight years, starting as chief of the neighborhood planning division and ending as deputy director of planning.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
August 11, 1991

GETTING TO KNOW THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS

Author: Joseph Tanfani

Miami's top planner says it's time to bring his staff closer to the people. A restructuring of the city Planning Department means that each of 12 Miami neighborhoods now has its own planner who will be expected to become an expert in what people care about and what makes the area tick.

"Sometimes, I don't think they were bringing the real message back from the neighborhoods," said **Guillermo Olmedillo**, city director of planning and development, of his assistant planners. "Different areas of the city have different needs," **Olmedillo** said. "This will give us an opportunity to look closely at all those issues."

For example, in Coconut Grove, residents complain about cutting trees; along Northwest 15th Street, residents want trees cut because they provide cover for drug dealers, **Olmedillo** said. Little Havana will accept a development that the Roads area won't, he said.

Olmedillo said he has ordered planners to get out of the office and bring back practical ideas -- something each week -- about how to improve their neighborhoods. Before, staff members produced fat three-year plans that were widely ignored. "We were just reacting to each application," **Olmedillo** said.

Planners will have primary responsibilities for everything that goes on in their individual areas. John Calkins, president of the Morningside Civic Association, said he welcomes the idea if it's not just "another layer of bureaucracy" that will insulate **Olmedillo** from irate residents. Calkins said he would not cite the city of Miami as an "outstanding example of what cities can do to improve neighborhoods. I think they can improve an awful lot. If this position is designed to do that with some gusto, some enthusiasm, that's good."

Olmedillo said he hopes neighbors call their planners, invite them to meetings and give them an earful about what's happening on their street. The number is 579-6086.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
August 8, 1991

HOMEOWNER FIGHTS CITY TO SAVE HUTS

Author: Joseph Tanfani

To Don Sweetbaum, the two chickee huts in his front yard are beautiful and functional examples of Indian history. To the city of Miami, they're illegal. City inspectors have cited Sweetbaum for putting up the two 10-foot structures of cypress poles and palm fronds without a permit, and for building too close to the lines of his property at Shipping and Allamanda avenues.

Last month, the Miami Zoning Board unanimously rejected Sweetbaum's application for a variance to permit his two chickees and three small sheds. But Sweetbaum, a 49-year-old carpenter, is fighting to save the structures. His defense: City laws can't touch his chickee huts because they were built by contractor Sandy Osceola, a Miccosukee Indian. "It's a sovereign nation," Sweetbaum said.

City officials aren't buying it. "Maybe within the Indian reservation," said **Guillermo Olmedillo**, deputy director of the city's planning and zoning department. But Miami's not Miccosukee territory. **Olmedillo** said he had the question researched by city attorneys, but they could come up with no evidence that Native American structures have immunity from zoning regulations outside reservations. **Olmedillo** says he can't remember the question coming up before. "But he's got a right to make the argument," **Olmedillo** said. "We've got to listen to all of them."

Besides the Miccosukee defense, Sweetbaum said he has other arguments to put before the City Commission on Sept. 26 when his appeal is scheduled.
He contends:

- * None of his neighbors objected before the zoning hearing.
- * Only the tops of the chickees and sheds are visible over his eight-foot fence.
- * The chickees look better than some of the townhouse projects going up in his North Grove neighborhood.

If Sweetbaum had built a carport with metal poles and a canvas top -- removable during a hurricane -- he'd have no problem, says Joe Genuardi, city zoning administrator. The chickees, though, are considered permanent structures and must comply with lot-line requirements, he said.

"Inequitable," Sweetbaum said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
June 13, 1991

RECOVERING ADDICTS SUE TO KEEP HOME

Author: Carl Goldfarb

The seven women are all recovering addicts. They live together in a two-story house on Northeast 23rd Street. They pitch in for the rent and take turns acting as counselors and confidantes, helping each other stay clean. "If it wasn't for this house, I probably wouldn't be alive today," said Veronica Bryant, 35. "I probably would have gone back out and used." But the women's refuge violates a city zoning ordinance, which says more than three unrelated adults can't live together in a single-family home. The city is seeking \$200-a-day fines against the home's owner. Wednesday, the owner and residents sued the city, claiming Miami's zoning code is "arbitrary, capricious, unreasonable." They also said it "creates an irrational and unjustified barrier" to housing for people like Bryant.

City Attorney Jorge Fernandez said Wednesday afternoon that he had not seen the suit and could not comment. Deputy Planning Director **Guillermo Olmedillo** also declined comment. Speaking of the city's general policy, he said Miami had to set some limits on who could live in a single-family home. "Can you imagine your neighbor in the Grove having 15 nonrelated people living in a house?" he said.

The house is leased by a nonprofit group called Brighter Days. Three of the four founders of Brighter Days, who draw no salaries, are themselves recovering alcoholics or addicts. Brighter Days has also joined the suit. The women who live in the house have had tough lives. Pat Johnson, 30, abused drugs and alcohol for almost 14 years. She has three children, all born addicted to crack. She spent a year living on the streets of Miami. She has been clean for more than a month. She rises every morning at 4 a.m. to get dressed, catch a bus and arrive at her job as a nurse's aide by 6:30 a.m. Johnson, who makes \$4.50 an hour, has six months to find a suitable home, a judge ruled recently, if she wants her children back. If the home closed, she said, "it would set me back." Although little known to the public, there are other such houses in Miami, said Brighter Days directors. They won't reveal where or how many. "They're in hiding," said Tracye McCray, a resident of the home.

The American Civil Liberties Union and two volunteer attorneys, Daniel Suchman and Sheila Moylan, represent the tenants in their suit. Noting that the ordinance makes it illegal for four college students or three professional couples to live together, Suchman said the city was picking on his clients by failing to enforce the law uniformly. "It's all an expression against nontraditional family relationships," he said. The precedents for such a zoning restriction are mixed. A 1974 U.S. Supreme Court case found such restrictions legal. But more recently, state supreme courts in New York, New Jersey and California, among others, have thrown out such measures. Other state courts have ruled the other way. Said **Olmedillo**, the deputy planning director: "You have to draw the line somewhere. What better place to draw it than on a Supreme Court decision? You go with the gospel and you're safely home."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Palm Beach Post, The (FL)
September 23, 1990

MIAMI PLAN MAY CURB FREE MEALS - REGULATIONS TARGET CHURCH SOUP KITCHENS

Author: John Fernandez

City officials have often come under fire for trying to sweep the homeless off the streets without providing shelter elsewhere. Two years ago, a proposal to jail and fine people for sleeping on sidewalks near the just-completed Miami Arena was dumped when it drew ridicule nationwide from advocates for the homeless. A new plan for controlling large gatherings at soup kitchens-- considered a nuisance by neighborhood groups-- will come before Miami commissioners Thursday.

It calls for regulating churches that serve free meals. Under the proposal, places of worship that serve more than 100 meals more than once a month will have to pay an application fee ranging from \$650 to \$1,400 to obtain a special zoning permit. Religious leaders and the American Civil Liberties Union have joined activists for the homeless in condemning the proposal.

No other plan aimed at reducing the presence of the homeless population has received such widespread opposition. "I appeal to the city fathers not to make Miami a national laughingstock," said Archbishop Edward McCarthy of the Miami Archdiocese. "They should not attempt to regulate a basic humane and spiritual instinct to feed our brothers, sisters and children."

One of the hardest hit churches would be First United Methodist, which serves up to 800 meals a month to the homeless downtown. "The city has no business interfering with what has always been the spiritual mandate of the religious community," said First United's pastor, the Rev. William Barnes. First United and Trinity Episcopal Cathedral are part of a network of soup kitchens in the downtown Miami area, home to Dade's largest concentration of street people. The number of homeless in Dade County is estimated to be between 5,000 and 10,000.

"The city has traditionally left it up to the private sector to care for the homeless," said the Rev. Donald Crickbaum, pastor at Trinity Episcopal, which often hands out 300 to 500 meals a week. "Now, the city wants to strip away at our ability to do so."

The proposal violates the constitutional separation of church and state, said Robyn Blumner, executive director of Florida's ACLU. "It's like setting up a whole new set of taxes on places of worship," Blumner said. "Are they going to tax confession, too?"

The proposed regulations, which city planners will recommend to commissioners, are so ambiguous, Blumner claims, that they may jeopardize Eucharistic practices-- the serving of consecrated bread and wine in Holy Communion. "The churches may feel this infringes upon their rights, but we differ from that opinion," said **Guillermo Olmedillo**, Miami's deputy planning director. Complaints from neighbors of an East Little Havana church, which announced plans for a soup kitchen in February, sparked a review of church zoning restrictions by city administrators.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches Guillermo Olmedillo (Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Homeowners griped that large congregations of people waiting to be served at the church would hurt their neighborhood and reduce property values. City planning officials came back with a ruling requiring all churches to get special soup kitchen permits.

The Miami Coalition for Care to the Homeless appealed the ruling to city commissioners, who deferred the matter until homeowners' groups and the coalition could work out a compromise. When no compromise was reached, city planners devised the proposed church regulations to be considered by the commission Thursday. The more meals a church hands out, the stricter the regulation under the plan.

Miami has roughly 250 known churches, but about 20 regularly serve food to large numbers of people. In the downtown area, five places of worship would qualify under the strictest regulation for churches serving more than 500 meals a month. That category would require a church to get permission from the city zoning board and the city commission and pay a \$1,400 one-time fee. "The city is trying to keep neighborhood groups happy, but they're doing it at the expense of hungry people," said Christine Hildner, executive director of the coalition, a non-profit network of social service groups.

City planners admit they are dealing with a difficult issue. "The main question is: At what point does an activity that attracts a large number of people begin to affect an area?" **Olmedillo** said. "It's something we have to address when 500 people gather at one place regularly."

Miami's dubious reputation regarding the homeless problem was reinforced in November 1988 when the city almost made it a crime to be homeless. After the national media focused on a proposed ordinance empowering police to arrest people who sleep on the streets, city commissioners unanimously axed the idea. Later that year, however, ACLU attorneys accused Miami police officials of stepping up enforcement of nuisance and littering laws to rid the streets of the homeless before major holiday events, such as the Orange Bowl parade.

This summer, the city ended a five-year struggle to push Camillus House, downtown's landmark shelter, away from the Miami Arena and out of a once-blighted neighborhood targeted as a mecca for middle-class professionals. The city purchased Camillus House for \$2 million under a condition that the religious order that runs the shelter drop a plan to set up satellite feeding centers for the homeless throughout the city.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
August 19, 1990

BUNGALOWS' FUTURE LOOKS GRIM LITTLE HAVANA HOMES STAND IN WAY OF REDEVELOPMENT

Author: Blanca Mesa

On a wall of the Miami Planning Department, next to dozens of urban planning awards, there's a photograph of a Little Havana bungalow with a diagonal line cutting through it. A caption underneath reads: "Rest in Peace." Despite a scramble to save it, that bungalow was demolished. In its place there's an apartment building.

The photo is as much a memorial to the historic Belvedere bungalow as it is a symbol of Miami's struggle between preservation and progress. Preservation has usually lost. For Ivan Rodriguez, former director of Dade's Historic Preservation Division, it's a struggle he could no longer tolerate. He starts a new job with the county Monday, supervising the refurbishing of run-down commercial districts.

The bungalows, built before 1925, are Rodriguez's favorite historic style. Their environmentally smart design, with deep front porches, large windows, wide overhangs and use of native materials such as oolitic limestone, made them a Miami favorite from 1915 to 1925. They were built throughout the city, but the best and largest concentration is in the Lawrence Estates subdivision, in what today is called Little Havana. But their future is uncertain. Many are badly deteriorated, sitting on expensive land in a declining neighborhood. In Little Havana, as throughout Miami, that's a recipe for redevelopment -- not restoration. "We have zoned historic preservation out of existence," said **Guillermo Olmedillo**, assistant director of Miami's Building, Zoning and Planning Department. "People have bought properties with certain expectations. If you can't offset the investment potential, it won't work."

In a neighborhood with a housing shortage, on land zoned for higher density, bungalow rows have turned to apartment rows. The city also has encouraged private groups such as the East Little Havana Community Development Corp. to build high-rise condominium buildings. The few restoration projects -- the Warner Place, an office building that houses the county preservation office, and the Miami River Inn, a bed and breakfast hotel and apartment complex -- have not prompted a historic restoration movement in what is one of Miami's oldest neighborhoods. Instead, the bungalows are regarded as an obstacle. And it's unlikely they'll receive historic designation or protection in the future.

A \$4,500 state grant the city got last year to survey the remaining bungalows was returned last month. Miami planning officials said they have neither the time nor the money to complete the project. Although the state considers \$4,500 an average-size grant, Miami said it can no longer accept those "small" amounts. "Right now we only have one person who does both historic and environmental preservation. As limited as we are with money and personnel, it wasn't going to get us anywhere," **Olmedillo** said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
April 5, 1990

CENSUS LOOKS TO ILLEGAL APARTMENTS

Author: Aminda Marques Gonzales

They've counted the homeless and tried to reach illegal aliens, but now the U.S. Census Bureau wants to find another unseen group: people living in illegal additions and garages that have been turned into efficiencies. "You usually find individuals living in those circumstances because their income is low," said David Rosemond, a census spokesman. "They are the ones with more of a need."

The prospect of losing out on the once-in-a-decade body count has officials from Hialeah and Miami squawking. Federal and state funds are distributed to local communities based partially on their population. And the numbers gleaned from the census are used to determine political representation. "The difficult part is just trying to convince people that this is just a count, not an enforcement effort," said Dan DeLoach, Hialeah's chief of staff.

Hialeah officials don't know how many illegal structures there are in the city, or how many people are living in them. "We have the weekend warriors, the folks who start building on Friday after City Hall is closed and have a house built by Monday," DeLoach said.

Last year the city received 183 complaints of structures with extra kitchens -- a sign of for-rent additions, said Albert Gamble, chief code enforcement officer. That's less than one percent of the residential structures in the city. "I'm sure there are many, many illegal structures with extra families living in them that we have no knowledge of," Gamble said.

Hialeah had the same concerns in the 1980 census, DeLoach said. In 1985, the city held its own count, coming up with 159,473 people -- 14,219 more than the census found back in 1980.

In Miami, officials turned over a list compiled by the planning department a year ago when employees went door to door to update their housing list. They found 5 percent to 7 percent more housing units than they thought existed, said **Guillermo Olmedillo**, deputy planning director for Miami.

In the last week, Rosemond said, he has received 20 calls a day from people living in illegal efficiencies. "They don't have a mailbox," he said. "There's no other way we can reach that population."

Anyone who hasn't received a questionnaire can call the Census Bureau to request one. People who rent a room in the house can be included in the main household. They still have until mid-April to return the completed forms, Rosemond said. "There is no kind of repercussion," he said. "This information is not going to code enforcement."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
September 28, 1989

BREAKING THE CODE

Author: Herald Staff

QUESTION: What is even less comprehensible than the Strategic Defense Initiative (Star Wars) theory?

Answer: Miami's zoning code. Everybody -- even zoning lawyers -- grumbles about its complexity. It isn't surprising, then, that the Miami City Commission decided last year that the Planning Department should streamline the code.

That was timely; the code needs to be compatible with the city's comprehensive plan, completed this year. After about 100 meetings -- half with staff and half with neighborhood and special-interest groups -- the new code is finished.

Streamline it does. The city's 58 zoning districts are cut to 30. Some special districts were dropped because they've accomplished what they were created to do. Those who've read it say that the code, still over 200 pages, is easier to understand.

But the proposed revamping of several crucial zoning concepts will have significant future impact on neighborhoods, property owners, and developers with projects in the works. Some zoning lawyers say that the streamlining has inadvertently become a process of change. They want the purported changes to get public scrutiny before the commission votes on them. Neighborhood associations want more time to examine the new ordinance, since they just received the document last month. The city commission had set today for its first reading, but that was when it anticipated having the Planning Advisory Board's (PAB) recommendation on the new code.

The PAB last week postponed its recommendation until Oct. 4. If the PAB decides then, the commission will consider the new code on Oct. 26. Before it decides, the PAB plainly -- and properly -- wants to know what the public thinks. So commissioners today should forget the Oct. 4 deadline and schedule public hearings during the month.

The planning staff sagely wants as much public exposure to it as possible before the new code goes before the commission. "A zoning code should be something that the community can identify with," says project supervisor **Guillermo Olmedillo**, deputy director of the Planning Department.

Exactly. Let people who must live with -- and by -- the code take part in its making.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
March 27, 1986

RESIDENTS DECRY CONDO ZONE CHANGE

Author: Evelyn Hernandez

People who live in the area of the Vizcaya Metrorail station say they are the losers in a deal struck between the city of Miami and the developers of Claughton Island. The deal calls for the Claughton Island developers to provide 104 condominium apartments in the neighborhood of single-family homes and duplexes known as The Roads. Area residents say the proposed eight-story building at SW 32nd Road and First Avenue would be an unwelcome intrusion into the quiet, insulated neighborhood. "It's a wholesale sellout of the area without a lot of regard for the neighborhood," said Martin Schleifer. He owns the house he lives in at 30 SW 31st Rd., another house at 255 SW 31st Rd. and a duplex at 1146-1148 SW 22nd Ter. Today, the Miami City Commission will consider the zoning change that would allow construction of the eight-story building.

Residents say they realize the Miami City Commission had to coax, pressure and cajole Claughton Island Developers into providing the site, part of a promise the developer made to the city 11 years ago. But the proposed building is too big and will bring traffic and crime to their neighborhood, area residents say. The proposed building also does not conform to a recommendation made by city planners in the 1979 Station Area Development Design study, which said buildings in the area of the Vizcaya station should not be taller than six stories. Vizcaya is the only Metrorail station built near a residential neighborhood, city planner **Guillermo Olmedillo** said.

Linda Koenigsberg McGuinness, who is part owner with Schleifer of the 1146-1148 SW 22nd Ter. duplex, said the Vizcaya housing should be scaled down to fit the parameters set in the 1979 study. City planner **Olmedillo** said the zoning change calls for a building that is 30 percent larger than what the 1979 study suggested. But, **Olmedillo** said, the study was meant to be a guideline, not a rigid rule of what could be built.

The city planning department and Zoning Board have recommended approval of the project. Assistant City Attorney Joel Maxwell said the commission's approval of the deal last month does not mean the commission must approve the zoning change. But the building can't be built without the change. If the commission turns down Juan M. Delgado, general partner of the building firm Vizcatran Ltd., the Claughton Island Developers firm would be under no further obligation to provide the Vizcaya development, Maxwell said.

But City Commissioner J.L. Plummer said Tuesday that the commission could turn down the zoning change and require the developer to find another site for the apartments. The project is one of three that Claughton Island Developers last month agreed to provide in the settlement of an 11-year-old dispute with the city. The firm agreed to purchase and market the Vizcaya moderate-income condominium site and contribute \$1.6 million each to developments in East Little Havana and Liberty City. The one- and two-bedroom apartments at Vizcaya will sell for \$50,000 to \$60,000.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

If the project cannot be scaled down, McGuinness said, perhaps the 104 units could be redistributed among the other two housing sites. If The Roads project is built, it should be no taller than six stories, it should provide more parking spaces than the proposed 114, and the development plans should be subject to special review by the planning department before construction begins, she said.

Olmedillo said he understands the neighbors' concern. City planners have asked to see the developer's plans in time for today's commission meeting.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Miami Herald, The (FL)
October 31, 1985

PLANNERS STUDY GROVE

Author: Evelyn Hernandez

In places, Southwest 27th Avenue in Coconut Grove is a study in contradictions: a Burger King across the street from a white church and steeple, an Amoco station across from a cream-colored house with laundry hanging out to dry, the posh Grand Bay Hotel across from an empty lot with a huge For Sale sign out front. Behind the avenue lies a world where tree branches form domes overhead, squirrels move easily from tree to tree in front yards, and narrow streets shoot at odd angles through lush, green foliage.

On Friday, City of Miami planners will meet to cull information gathered in a seven-month study of 27th Avenue and the neighborhoods lying immediately to the east and west. Planners will meet two weeks later with people who live or own property in the area. The subject: the changing face of 27th Avenue. A preliminary study of the area proposes several zoning changes that take into account the increased demand for office buildings along the street. At present, eight commercial projects have been built or are planned on or near 27th Avenue in the Grove, according to the study.

"Something has got to happen with 27th Avenue," said Jim McMaster, president of the Coconut Grove Civic Club. But planners must balance the demand for office and commercial space with the needs of the people who have homes in the Central Grove area, McMaster said. "I think the plan hinges on their coming up with protection for the neighborhoods surrounding any office zoning," he said.

Grove neighborhood planner **Guillermo Olmedillo** is aware of the challenge. He and other planners say the area bounded by U.S. 1 and 22nd, 32nd and Tigertail avenues will be immediately affected by changes on 27th Avenue. The preliminary study identifies four centers of activity in the area: the Metrorail station at 27th Avenue and U.S. 1, the avenue's intersections with Bird Avenue and with South Bayshore Drive and the Village Center area at Grand Avenue, Main Highway and McFarlane Road. The plan proposes to change the lots that abut 27th Avenue south of Bird Avenue, which already are largely being used for businesses, from residential to residential and office use. That already is the zoning in the lots that abut 27th Avenue north of Bird Avenue.

Olmedillo said the city proposes to protect the solid, single-family neighborhood to the east of 27th Avenue from commercial development, while increasing the zoning density to encourage smaller townhouse developments in the transitional neighborhood to the west of 27th Avenue. One way to protect the east area is to make Tigertail and Bird avenues and 28th Terrace the main streets into the neighborhood, and to close off other, smaller streets, **Olmedillo** said.

McMaster said he does not support the notion that increasing the zoning density west of 27th Avenue would encourage townhouse development there. "With the exception of office buildings,

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Guillermo Olmedillo
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

we're not building anything in the Grove," he said. He believes that area, where he lives, should remain the same.

Neighbors in this area were strongly opposed to Day Center Corporations plans for an office building at the corner of the 27th and Day Avenues. Approved by the Miami City Commission in July, the project has hit a legal snag. Neighbors have hired attorney Steven Silverman, who has notified the city that he will appeal the City Commission's decision.

Compiled By: Shannon Farr
 Colin Baenziger and Associates