



MIAMI BEACH

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER
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LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor Matti Herrera Bower and Members of the City Commission

FROM: City Manager Jorge M. Gonzalez 

DATE: March 22, 2010

SUBJECT: Pedra Portuguesa Paving - 1100 Block of Lincoln Road

Questions have been raised regarding the recent installation of "Pedra Portuguesa" stone paving on the 1100 Block of Lincoln Road. City staff has received emails from people who dislike the paving, and are raising questions of its appropriateness for the disabled, and those wearing high heels. These concerns center upon the natural irregularities in the paving stones that may present a hazard.

The paving stones were installed to tolerances meeting Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, and the subsequent inspection of the paving after installation determined that the pavement met the ADA requirements and was approved. The paving contractor has also continued to work on improving the smoothness of the stone walking surface in the weeks since the 1100 Block re-opened.

In an effort to investigate the concerns expressed by some members of the public, on March 11th staff from the City's Planning Department, Building Department, Public Works Department, and the City Manager's Office conducted an 'in-the-field' evaluation of the conditions of the Pedra Portuguesa stone paving together with the contractor's representatives. During the two hour field evaluation the entire 1100 Block was walked by the team and the condition of the stonework noted. Staff observed that in certain areas some stones still present a high "edge" or "center" that could be uncomfortable for pedestrians and users of wheelchairs or power-assisted vehicles. Staff also observed locations where the grout between the stones was lower than the top surfaces of the stones, possibly creating uncomfortable depressions for high heel shoes.

Overall, however, the Pedra Portuguesa paved plaza has been constructed to a very high standard, considering the unique nature of the natural stone surface. In the course of the two hour evaluation period, during heavy mid-day pedestrian traffic, the evaluation team observed no-one walking with any difficulty, or with any apparent discomfort through the plaza. Members of the team spoke with individuals using wheelchairs and power-assisted personal vehicles. While most felt the stone paver surface presented no meaningful challenge, one woman riding a three wheel power-assisted vehicle commented that the stone paver surface is clearly more challenging in comparison to a smooth concrete sidewalk. The same person noted, however, that the 1100 Block represents only a brief segment of unique paving which is not unreasonable to traverse.

She also commented that Miami Beach, in her view, is unique among American cities in terms of excellent accessibility for physically challenged persons, and for that reason she and her husband are considering moving here permanently.

In order to address the concerns that have been raised, and improve the smoothness of the paving surface as much as possible, staff has scheduled an additional four day work session on the 1100 block plaza, together with the paving contractor and work crew, to systematically identify and improve immediately any areas that may still appear to present uncomfortably uneven or irregular surfaces, to the point that they could be a tripping hazard. This additional four day work session is began the week of March 15th, and upon completion should satisfy any reasonable remaining concerns with regard to the Pedra Portuguesa stone paving of this unique section of Lincoln Road.

Staff of the City's Planning Department and Property Management Division also attended the Disability Access Committee meeting on March 16, 2010, and explained to the committee the situation described above. Staff will attend next month's meeting in order to give the committee an update.


JMG/JGG/RGL