

THANK YOU FOR THAT INTRODUCTION, PASTOR JACKSON, AND MY SINCERE THANKS TO YOU FOR HELPING ME FACILITATE THIS CONVERSATION WITH OUR COMMUNITY.

GOOD EVENING, EVERYONE. THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE TONIGHT AND TAKING PART IN THIS IMPORTANT DISCUSSION ABOUT THE REDEVELOPMENT OF YOUR COMMUNITY, LIBERTY SQUARE.

COMMISSIONER EDMONSON, THANK YOU FOR JOINING US.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I WILL KEEP MY REMARKS AS BRIEF AS POSSIBLE BECAUSE THE PURPOSE OF THIS MEETING IS TO HEAR FROM YOU, TO ADDRESS ANY CONCERNS AND ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE ABOUT THE REDEVELOPMENT OF LIBERTY SQUARE – JUST LIKE I AND PUBLIC HOUSING DIRECTOR MICHAEL LIU AND HIS STAFF DID WHEN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY HOSTED MULTIPLE COMMUNITY MEETINGS TO SEEK YOUR INPUT DURING THE PLANNING PROCESS.

I SEE A LOT OF FAMILIAR FACES FROM THOSE MEETINGS HERE TONIGHT, AND I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU HERE AGAIN.

HAVING SAID THAT, I WANT TO TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO ADDRESS SOME MISINFORMATION THAT I'VE HEARD CIRCULATING ABOUT THIS PROJECT, AND ALSO TO REITERATE MY COMMITMENT TO DOING THE RIGHT THING BY THE RESIDENTS OF LIBERTY SQUARE.

I KNOW THAT YOU'VE BEEN HEARING BROKEN PROMISES FOR DECADES ABOUT THE REDEVELOPMENT OF LIBERTY SQUARE AND OTHER PUBLIC HOUSING COMMUNITIES. AND THAT'S WHY I MADE A PROMISE LAST YEAR TO FINALLY MAKE THIS PROJECT HAPPEN.

AND I'M HERE TONIGHT TO TELL YOU THAT THE PROMISE I MADE HAS NOT BEEN BROKEN AND YOUR VOICES ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE PROCESS.

THIS IS A PROMISE I INTEND TO KEEP BECAUSE IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO, AND WE NEED TO DO IT THE RIGHT WAY. AND WE WILL ACCOMPLISH THIS BY WORKING TOGETHER.

IT MAY HAVE TAKEN A LITTLE LONGER THAN I WOULD HAVE LIKED, BUT SOMETIMES DOING THINGS THE RIGHT WAY TAKES LONGER THAN DOING THEM THE QUICK WAY.

DESPITE WHAT OTHERS MAY HAVE SAID IN THE PAST, I'M EVEN MORE COMMITTED TODAY TO SEEING THIS PROJECT THROUGH THAN WHEN WE FIRST ANNOUNCED OUR PLANS IN FEBRUARY 2015.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY REMAINS COMMITTED TO DOING THIS THE RIGHT WAY, BECAUSE FOR ME, EVERY SINGLE RESIDENT OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY COUNTS.

OUR GOAL ALL ALONG HAS BEEN TO WORK TOGETHER TO BUILD A NEW LIBERTY SQUARE, BECAUSE YOU ALL DESERVE IT AND IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

THERE ARE PEOPLE OUT THERE WHO ARE TRYING TO MAKE THIS AN ISSUE THAT DIVIDES OUR COMMUNITY.

I WANT THIS PROJECT TO BRING US CLOSER TOGETHER.

LET ME BE STRAIGHT WITH YOU: THIS IS NOT ABOUT POLITICS.

THIS IS NOT ABOUT PERSONAL GAIN.

THIS IS ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN LIVING IN OUR COUNTY'S OLDEST PUBLIC HOUSING COMMUNITY...

PEOPLE WHO ARE LONG OVERDUE FOR AN UPDATE AND AN UPGRADE.

THIS IS ABOUT WHAT MATTERS TO YOU.

AND I'VE BEEN LISTENING TO YOU TELL ME ABOUT WHAT MATTERS TO YOU...

TO WHAT YOU WANT THE NEW LIBERTY SQUARE TO LOOK AND FEEL LIKE.

CONTRARY TO WHAT SOME CRITICS ARE SAYING, THIS PROJECT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT.

IN ADDITION TO THE COMMUNITY MEETINGS I MENTIONED EARLIER, THE PRESIDENT OF YOUR RESIDENT COUNCIL, SARA SMITH -- WHO'S HERE WITH US TONIGHT, ALONG WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE LIBERTY SQUARE RESIDENT COUNCIL -- WAS PART OF THE NINE-MEMBER SELECTION

COMMITTEE. AND MS. SMITH, I WANT TO PUBLICLY SAY THAT I APPRECIATE YOUR SERVICE.

AND JUST TO CLEAR THE AIR ABOUT THE PROCESS, WE USED THE SAME BEST-AND-FINAL-OFFER PROCESS FOR LIBERTY SQUARE THAT I RECOMMENDED FOR AT LEAST FOUR OTHER COUNTY PROJECTS IN RECENT YEARS.

AND THAT PROCESS WAS FOLLOWED EXACTLY AS IT SHOULD BE.

THERE WERE NO SHORT CUTS.

WE WERE ALWAYS WORKING TO SECURE THE BEST POSSIBLE AGREEMENT TO REDEVELOP LIBERTY SQUARE.

I'M PRETTY SURE THAT'S WHY, DESPITE THE THREE-DAY WINDOW WE HAD OPEN FOR BID PROTESTS, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY DIDN'T RECEIVE A SINGLE PROTEST FROM ANYONE WHO TOOK ISSUE WITH THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS, OR THOUGHT IT WASN'T MANAGED CORRECTLY.

NOT ONE PROTEST, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

I'M GOING TO QUICKLY OUTLINE THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS WE USED FOR LIBERTY SQUARE SO WE'RE ALL ON THE SAME PAGE:

SIX BIDDERS SUBMITTED APPLICATIONS IN EARLY JULY OF LAST YEAR.

THE COUNTY'S SELECTION COMMITTEE – WHICH CONSISTED OF PUBLIC HOUSING STAFF AND MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY – EXAMINED THOSE BIDS, PICKED ITS TOP CANDIDATES AND FORWARDED THOSE NAMES TO ME.

IN JANUARY, I ASKED FOR BEST AND FINAL OFFERS FROM THE TWO DEVELOPERS THAT RECEIVED THE HIGHEST SCORES FROM THE COMMITTEE – RELATED URBAN AND ATLANTIC PACIFIC. AND I DID THIS TO MAXIMIZE THE BENEFITS TO THE COUNTY AND THE COMMUNITY.

THOSE DEVELOPERS SUBMITTED NEW PACKAGES ON FEBRUARY 5. AND ON FEBRUARY 18, THE COMMITTEE RANKED RELATED URBAN'S PROPOSAL THE HIGHEST.

AND NOW THAT I HAVE MADE MY FINAL RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS BASED ON THE COMMITTEE'S

RECOMMENDATION THAT WE MOVE FORWARD WITH RELATED URBAN, THE CONE OF SILENCE THAT WAS IN EFFECT DURING THE BIDDING PROCESS HAS BEEN LIFTED.

SOME OF YOU MAY BE ASKING WHAT THE CONE OF SILENCE IS. WELL, THE CONE OF SILENCE IS A PERIOD IN THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS DURING WHICH I, AND EVERYONE ELSE WHO WAS INVOLVED IN THE BID PROCESS, IS LEGALLY PROHIBITED FROM DISCUSSING THE PROJECT.

WHILE THIS IS STANDARD IN ALL PROCUREMENT PROCESSES, IT ALSO PROVIDES A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY FOR SPECULATION FROM THOSE NOT PARTICIPATING IN THE PROCESS, OR FOR ANYONE TO SPREAD INACCURATE INFORMATION.

NOW THAT THE CONE OF SILENCE HAS BEEN LIFTED, WE CAN ONCE AGAIN ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE WITH THE COMMUNITY ABOUT THE PROJECT.

YOU WILL SEE IN A BIT WHY RELATED URBAN'S PROPOSAL RECEIVED SUCH HIGH SCORING FROM THE COMMITTEE.

AND YOU WILL SEE THAT YOUR INPUT WAS HEARD WHEN ALBERT AND KAREEM FROM THE RELATED URBAN DEVELOPMENT TEAM SHOW YOU THE PLANS FOR THE NEW LIBERTY SQUARE.

YOU'LL SEE THAT EVERYONE WHO LIVES IN LIBERTY SQUARE CAN EITHER STAY, OR THEY CAN MOVE TO LINCOLN GARDENS FOR A WHILE AND RETURN TO THE NEW LIBERTY SQUARE ONCE CONSTRUCTION WORK HAS BEEN COMPLETED.

YOU'LL SEE THAT RELATED URBAN'S PLANS INCLUDE A GROCERY STORE – JUST LIKE YOU ASKED FOR, AND LOTS OF COMMERCIAL SPACE FOR “MOM AND POP” SHOPS.

YOU'LL SEE THAT THE UNITS WE WILL BE BUILDING ARE LARGER THAN THE ONES YOU LIVE IN NOW, ARE MORE MODERN, AND OFFER BETTER AMENITIES THAN YOU CURRENTLY HAVE.

YOU'LL SEE THAT THIS PROJECT IS BRINGING CONSTRUCTION JOBS AND PERMANENT JOBS TO THE RESIDENTS OF LIBERTY SQUARE.

THAT'S AN IMPORTANT POINT FOR TWO REASONS: FIRST, BECAUSE THE PEOPLE OF LIBERTY SQUARE WILL HELP BUILD THE NEW LIBERTY SQUARE.

AND SECOND, BECAUSE I REALLY BELIEVE THAT THE ONLY WAY OUT OF POVERTY IS THROUGH A GOOD JOB. AND WE'RE GOING TO HAVE GOOD JOBS FOR PEOPLE WHO WANT THEM.

YOU'LL ALSO SEE THAT WE'RE BRINGING IN COMMUNITY PARTNERS THAT WILL GIVE YOU A NEW COMMUNITY CENTER WITH FREE WIFI ACCESS...

A NEW HEALTH CENTER...

A HEAD START CENTER FOR YOUR YOUNG CHILDREN...

AND ONSITE ACCESS TO CLASSES AT FLORIDA MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY.

THE LIST GOES ON.

BUT MY POINT IS THAT YOU HAVE NOT BEEN LIED TO, IGNORED OR "DISRESPECTED" BY ME OR MY ADMINISTRATION AT ANY POINT DURING THIS PROCESS.

AND I WILL CONTINUE TO WORK TO MOVE THIS PROJECT FORWARD THE RIGHT WAY -- WITH YOUR INPUT.

THAT'S WHY I'M HERE TONIGHT AND THAT'S WHY I WILL BE BACK AGAIN IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THIS IS NOT ANOTHER SCOTT-CARVER PROJECT OR HOPE VI.

THIS IS NOT ANOTHER BROKEN PROMISE.

THIS IS LIBERTY CITY RISING.

AND AS LONG AS I'M YOUR MAYOR, WE WILL ALL RISE TOGETHER.

THIS PROJECT IS NOT ABOUT PROCESS. IT'S ABOUT OUTCOME.

AND THE OUTCOME IS TO BUILD A GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD ... SOMETHING THAT YOU ALL DESERVE.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU, AND TO CONTINUE WORKING WITH YOU, TO GIVE YOU THE LIBERTY SQUARE THAT YOU WANT AND DESERVE.

THANK YOU AND MAY GOD BLESS US ALL.

