



January 21, 2025

The Honorable Daniella Levine Cava
111 NW 1st Street
29th Floor
Miami, FL 33128

Dear Mayor Levine Cava,

As you may know, the neighborhood west of Harding Avenue has always been a single-family residential neighborhood with many families, their children, and no sidewalks for pedestrians, therefore, the children wind up playing in the streets and families walk in those streets to visit neighbors or attend religious services.

Many years ago, the town installed barriers and other traffic control devices after study and analysis to protect residents from cut-through traffic off of Harding and Collins avenues. This was done for safety reasons and has worked well for all those years. most importantly, it has protected our residents from accidents with pedestrians causing serious injury or death.

Regarding the foregoing, I write you today about a letter we received recently from Mr. Morales dated November 7, 2024, and subsequent phone conversations on January 9 and 17, 2025 with several of your staff overseeing traffic in the county.

With respect to same, the conversations have not been overly helpful and have left us with more questions, including the criteria used by the County to approve or disapprove traffic modifications in the best interests of the Town of Surfside and consistent with County regulations.

I say the foregoing because this was a theme that I had been focused on during our phone meetings and was never able to get a definitive answer, rather I was accused on the call of being too aggressive in my effort to get black and white answers to my questions.

I now understand, after further educating myself, that the County gets the final word on most traffic decisions, and that same can be subjectively made given *only* what the County believes is best.

The real issue here, and the elephant in the room is why now?

Why is the county jumping on us about changes, put in place exclusively for the safety of our residents, that have been in place for years, if not decades? Changes which have been reviewed, discussed, and rediscussed with the county for almost that same amount of time.

The truth is, and I believe we all know this to be true, is that the Surfside Commission took steps following its election in March to stop the use of our residential district as a shortcut for those wishing to shave a few minutes off their daily commute by jumping out of traffic saturated Collins and Harding Avenues, and using our interior, residential streets as speedways, seriously frightening and endangering our residents.

While I have gleaned from my conversations with county personnel that *“roads are roads, and you must let the traffic flow where it will,”* we have a much different situation, and view of same in Surfside.

Our residential district is bordered by high-capacity roadways (A1A – Collins and Harding; and 96 Street). And, because our past and present leaders (*not Surfside’s*) have seen fit to continue to jam ten pounds of development into a five-pound development bag, we are approaching gridlock on our roads.

That gridlock naturally is looking for alternative routes.

One alternative route, with respect to Surfside, happens to be directly through our narrow, residential streets, where our kids play, our residents move around and our religious community walks to services. Those narrow streets often have cars parked on both sides, which, in many cases, leaves a single traffic lane for traffic, residents, kids, walkers, and speeders cutting through our town. A very toxic mix.

Needless to say, the ultimatum in Mr. Morales’s letter that our gate arms must be immediately removed, potentially followed by the removal of our many other safety measures, (*e.g., 20 mph speed limits, our four-way stop signs, our street-ends closures, etc.*) has very much unsettled us all.

While I am not a traffic expert, I, or anyone else objectively looking at the design of our residential district, should be able to quickly come to the conclusion that the only people “driving” through our neighborhood should be residents, both Indian Creek and Surfside, their guests or those coming into same to do work.

THOSE USING OUR NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS TO TRAVERSE FROM DESTINATIONS NORTH TO SOUTH, OR SOUTH TO NORTH, SHOULD NOT BE PERMITTED TO DO SO.

Why? Because to date, none of our residents, or kids, have yet died due to a vehicular incursion. We did in the recent past have a car strike a child on a scooter, but were blessed that no great damage was done.

What to do?

While I know that we are supposed to believe that the County’s exercise we are currently being pressured to go through is rules based and a technical requirement, it is more than that.

The truth is, much of the so-called “unpermitted” protection strategies the county is now complaining about, regarding Surfside’s efforts to care for the safety of our residents, have existed for a long, long time, with the county’s knowledge and at least tacit approval.

As I said on the phone call with your staff, I do not think the county would dare to remove some of our street closures, because of the firestorm same would ignite.

However, for some reason a gate arm, which would allow Indian Creek and Surfside residents direct access, but stop the never-ending stream of dangerous, life-threatening, cut-through traffic, using our residential streets as a short-cut highway, is far worse than any street closure in Surfside that ever existed. How and why is that possible?

The letter from Mr. Morales, could have said that the county would work with Surfside to potentially permit much or all of the safety measures we have in place, but instead, it arbitrarily selects items that must go now and those that “*may*” be allowed to stay.

Mr. Morales’ decree has put Surfside in the position of reintroducing the flood of cut-through traffic voters elected this commission to eliminate. A traffic deluge that residents, who voted us into office, feared could get someone killed.

The reintroduction of that “*flood,*” because of the county’s removal of our gate-arms, is dangerously underway and we need your help to get those protective gate arms put back in service.

Sincerely,

Town of Surfside



Charles W. Burkett
Mayor