



CITIZENS' OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Under The Auspices of the Interlocal Agreement For
Public School Facility Planning In Miami-Dade County

July 22, 2006

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

Educating our children is arguably the most important obligation we share as a community. Increasingly, it has become obvious that even the most devoted and capable professional educators cannot do an effective job without community involvement and support. This is particularly true in Miami-Dade County, where we have the tremendous responsibility of educating over 335,000 children, making ours the fourth largest public school system in the nation, with an operating budget of a little under \$3 billion.

Four years ago, the Florida Legislature passed a law that required local governments to work together with school boards to address Florida's population growth. This law specifically directs them to focus on matters such as forecasting enrollment and predicting the need for new schools. To do this, all our local municipal governments that have schools collaborated with the School Board and entered into what is called the "Interlocal Agreement for Public School Facility Planning in Miami-Dade County" (Interlocal Agreement). To provide guidance on overseeing the Interlocal Agreement, diverse and representative community leaders were appointed by the School Board, the Miami-Dade County (County), and the Miami-Dade League of Cities to form the Citizens' Oversight Committee (Committee). Over the past year, the Committee volunteered their time and talents to this effort.

The complexities of the Interlocal Agreement added to the explosive growth of our County required many planning sessions of the Committee, plus extensive meetings with elected officials and members of the School Board, as well as the creation of working groups to address specific, pressing needs. The Committee's hard work, along with the tireless efforts of the very talented Miami-Dade Public Schools Department of Facilities Planning, have resulted in the following: the important adoption of the school district's Five-Year Capital Plan, an update of the Educational Facilities Impact Fee Ordinance, development of special programs with individual city governments, and most importantly, the creation of more than 38,000 new student stations by the school district in the last two years alone.

It is a formidable beginning. But, it is only the beginning. There are a number of issues facing us and they are all equally urgent. We must enlist all Miami-Dade communities into the Interlocal Agreement, and we must support lowering school enrollment from 115 to 100 percent capacity. We must persuade governments to locate parks and other facilities adjacent to schools to further build the relationships between a school and its neighborhood.

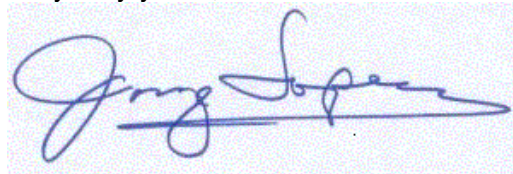
Equally, the schools must make efforts to involve and engage their surrounding communities. We must raise enough money to build the schools we need by revising the Educational Facilities Impact Fee, as well as issuing bonds. We must raise awareness of these challenges

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in the belief that education is everyone's responsibility. For that reason, the members of our Committee encourage everyone in our community to learn more about the work we do.

What we have accomplished so far, as outlined in the enclosed 2005 Annual Report of the Committee, is just the first step toward confronting and solving the educational challenges we face as Miami-Dade County continues its incredible growth. We are devoted to this cause and we implore all our residents to become more involved and to enthusiastically support the Superintendent, his professional team, and our dedicated School Board members. There is little disagreement that we must educate our children properly, they are, after all, our greatest treasure and hope for the future.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jorge Lopez", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jorge Luis López, Esq.
Chairman

Enclosure

cc: Signatories to the Interlocal Agreement
The School Board of Miami-Dade County
Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners
Miami-Dade County Mayor
Superintendent of Schools
Superintendent's Cabinet