



COA (SP) 2026-008
March 12, 2026

**STAFF REPORT
SPECIAL CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
FOR THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT
1233 DICKINSON DRIVE
“APARTMENT BUILDING #35 (LA GORCE HOUSE)”
A LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK LOCATED ON
THE UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI CAMPUS**

*Historical Resources &
Cultural Arts*

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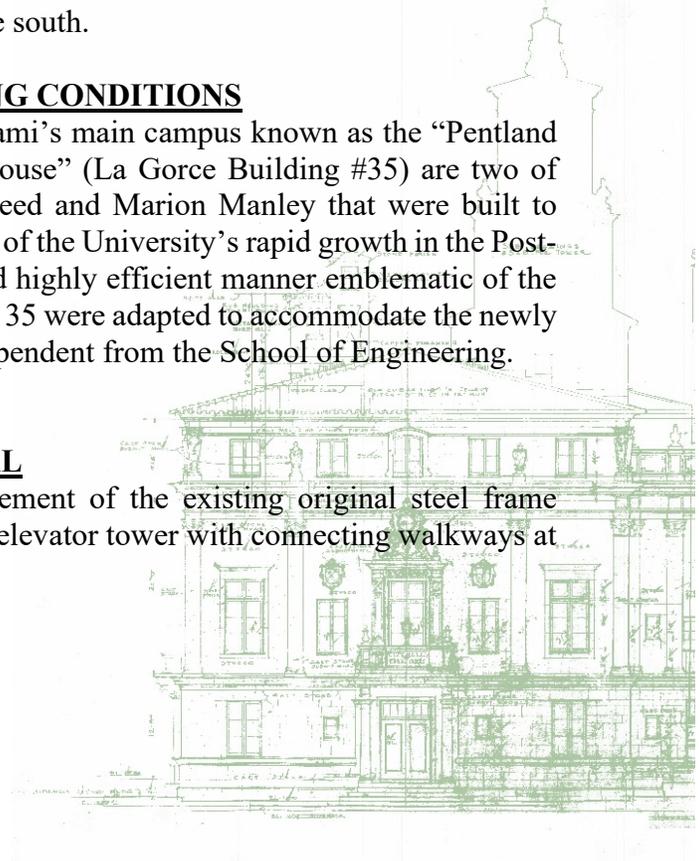
- Proposal:** The application requests design approval for additions and alterations to the residence, and sitework.
- Architect:** Gurrimatute
- Owner:** University of Miami
- Legal Description:** Lengthy legal description on file, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 46, at Page 81, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.
- Site Characteristics:** The property is located in the southern portion of the main campus of the University of Miami, on the southern shore of Lake Osceola. The closest external road is Ponce de Leon Boulevard to the south.

BACKGROUND/EXISTING CONDITIONS

Built in 1947, the structures on the University of Miami’s main campus known as the “Pentland House” (Pentland Building #34B) and “La Gorce House” (La Gorce Building #35) are two of twenty-seven structures designed by Robert Law Weed and Marion Manley that were built to house veterans taking advantage of the “GI Bill.” Part of the University’s rapid growth in the Post-War years, the structures were styled in a modern and highly efficient manner emblematic of the International Style. In the 1980s, portions of Building 35 were adapted to accommodate the newly formed School of Architecture after it was made independent from the School of Engineering.

PROPOSAL

The applicant is requesting approval for the replacement of the existing original steel frame windows, interior renovations, and the addition of an elevator tower with connecting walkways at the second and third floor.



SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

The following Standards have application in this matter:

2. *The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*
5. *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*
6. *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*
9. *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*
10. *New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

STAFF OBSERVATIONS

The work proposed includes interior renovation to prepare the building for new studio spaces and faculty offices for the School of Architecture. Interior partitions will be reconfigured to accommodate the new use. None of the proposed interior work affects the window openings on the exterior of the building.

On the exterior of the building, the proposal includes the installation of new windows, the installation of thru-wall air-conditioning units with metal louvers, and the construction of an elevator tower on the east side of the building.

The applicant's proposal requests approval to remove the original steel Hope's window system which is a combination of fixed units flanked by awning-type operable windows, single small awning windows, and a unit comprised of two stacked awning windows. They are proposing to install custom made impact-resistant fixed and operable steel windows, also made by Hope's in the same openings and in the same configuration as currently exists.

The University is also proposing to install thru-wall air-conditioning units throughout the building. Currently, the building has window units mounted on plywood and installed within the frame of the windows. The new units will be flush with the exterior wall with a metal louver (painted to match the building) mounted on the exterior to conceal the units. All exterior conduit and piping will also be removed.

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The final exterior alteration proposed is the construction of an elevator tower adjacent to the existing, original stair tower on the east side of the building. Like the existing stair tower, the new elevator tower will be connected to the building with concrete walkways at the second and third floor. The new open-air walkways will continue the simple metal pipe railings of the existing building.

VARIANCES

No variances from the Coral Gables Zoning have been requested with this application.

BOARD OF ARCHITECTS

The proposal was reviewed and approved by the Board Architects on February 19, 2026.

STAFF CONCLUSION

The existing steel window units are original to the buildings and their operability played an important role in the “Subtropical Modern” architectural style in which these structures were designed. The “Subtropical Modern” is a local interpretation of the International Style, specifically adapted to the local environment. Elements include the use of exterior stairways and breezeways, cross-ventilation, wooden louvers, and overhanging eyebrows to protect from sun and rain.

The windows have been in place since 1947 and now are over 60 years old. The University has had ongoing concerns and issues about the levels of maintenance, HVAC efficiency, and security that these existing windows provide. They sought an appropriate replacement and are replacing the windows in-kind. Some of the units will be fixed windows to respond to the University’s concerns. The introduction of thru-wall air-conditioning units is in response to the removal of the window units that currently exist. The University looked at other options, and this was deemed to be the least intrusive. Similar units were installed at the University’s school of architecture and Pentland House-Building 34.

The proposed elevator tower is necessary to provide ADA access to the upper floors of the building. Sited adjacent to the existing stair tower to minimize the impact on the east façade of the building, the elevator tower takes its cues from the existing building and its detailing. The proposed addition and alterations do not detract from the overall historic integrity of the property.

Staff requests that the following conditions be incorporated into any motion for approval:

1. Muntins are to be high-profile.
2. Windows on the La Gorce Building will have clear glass, no tint, no mirror finish.

Therefore, Historical Resources Department Staff recommends the following:

A motion to **APPROVE** the design proposal for additions to the residence and sitework on the property located at **1233 Dickinson Drive**, a Local Historic Landmark, lengthy legal description on file, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 46, at Page 81, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida, and **APPROVE WITH THE CONDITIONS NOTED ABOVE** the issuance of a Special Certificate of Appropriateness.

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Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anna Pernas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A" and "P".

Anna Pernas
Historic Preservation Officer