

LHD 2005-02  
COA (SP) 2005-03  
MARCH 23, 2005

**DESIGNATION REPORT  
PROPERTY, 544 SAN ESTEBAN AVENUE**

<u>Date of Construction:</u>	C. 1926
<u>Architect:</u>	Robert Law Weed
<u>Legal Description:</u>	Lot 3, Block 21, Coral Gables Riviera Section Part One
<u>Plat Book and Page:</u>	28-31
<u>Original Owner:</u>	Joseph Kresse
<u>Present Owner:</u>	David M. Deza and Nerida Deza
<u>Original Permit No.:</u>	1823
<u>Present Use:</u>	Residence
<u>Building Type:</u>	1-story Mediterranean Revival
<u>Site Characteristics:</u>	The residence is located on an interior lot. The primary elevation faces north onto San Esteban Avenue

**SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Permitted in 1925, the residence at 544 San Esteban Avenue was designed by nationally renowned architect Robert Law Weed. It was commissioned by Mr. Joseph Kresse and built by the George E. Batcheller Construction Company. This residence is significant as an example of a one story Mediterranean styled home designed by one of Coral Gables premier architects.

### **CRITERIA FOR SIGNIFICANCE**

*b. Architectural significance:*

- 1. Portrays the environment in an era of history characterized by one (1) or more distinctive architectural styles*
- 2. Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction*
- 3. Is an outstanding work of a prominent designer or builder*

The residence at 544 San Esteban Avenue is an excellent example of the Mediterranean style which characterized Coral Gables in the 1920's. Features such as the varying heights and different roof slopes, barrel tile, and asymmetrical design of the main elevation create interest in the composition of this home. This home is an example of the smaller, more modest residences, which were designed to provide the same quality of construction and detail at a more affordable level to a less wealthy clientele.

An article from the Miami Riviera newspaper in the 1920's characterized the "Mediterranean Revival" style, and in particular, the design tenets of the cottage in this manner:

*A small house, in which every detail is a joy, is made beautiful with a cloistered entrance whose slightly pointed arched and carved columns lead to an open patio, as finely thought out and executed as a Renaissance palace, and as beautiful in its setting. Another small house whose wall spaces are unusually simple, has as its chief decoration an entrance loggia with a group of three round arches, the middle slightly higher than the other two, separated by twisted columns so delicate and right that no other decoration is necessary. Even grouped ventilator holes are made to play delightful part in the design of a whole house front, and such inconspicuous details as in the iron work of a window, the trim of a chimney, the curve of a garage roof, the right placing of a huge Spanish water jar to break the surface pattern of an open veranda, are harmonious, styled, architecturally right.*

Characteristics exhibited within this home are:

- \*One story in height
- \*Masonry construction
- \*Decorative barrel tile vents
- \*Predominant chimney
- \*Stucco exterior finish
- \*Varied roof types-Flat and low pitched gabled roof forms and flat parapet roof
- \*Arched openings
- \*Detached garage
- \*Porte Cochere

### **ARCHITECT**

Originally from Pennsylvania, Robert Law Weed came to Miami in 1919 and opened an architectural office in 1922. Weed designed residences and commercial buildings, including department stores for Sears and Burdines, as well as the Dadeland Mall. In 1941, he was awarded First Award for "The Beach Theatre" on Miami Beach, noted as the finest example of theater architecture in the United States. Nationally recognized for his excellence in architecture, he was also attributed for his many contributions on the University of Miami master plan in the late 1940's -early 1950's. According to the City's building records, his association with Joseph Kresse and George Batcheller between 1926 and 1929 included approximately 22 homes. The majority of his work was concentrated within the Riviera Section of the Gables.

### **CONTRACTOR**

An article published in The Miami Herald on February 14, 1926 listed three hundred and four licensed contractors, as compiled by the then building inspector, Leonard H. Davis. George E. Batcheller Construction Company was identified as a contractor who had built in Coral Gables. Together with Joseph Kressee, Mr. Batcheller in the excess of 22 homes.

### **ADDITIONS / ALTERATIONS**

The residence at 544 San Esteban Avenue has undergone alterations. As with many of the older homes in Coral Gables, the windows and doors have been replaced and the loggia has been enclosed. The windows on the front façade have been converted to French doors. French doors have also replaced the doors on the detached garage.

**ACCELERATED**  
**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS PROPOSAL**

Proposal: The application requests design approval for the construction of an addition and alteration to the residence

Owner: David M. Deza and Nerida Deza

Architect: Ernestos Santos

Legal Description: Lot 3, Block 21, Coral Gables Riviera Section Part One

**SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION**

The following Standards have application in this matter:

- 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 proposed addition is located to the rear of the existing structure and will extend the living space on the ground floor as well as create a new second floor. The ground floor expansion will create a new family room and terrace as well as house the stair which will access the second floor. The second floor will occupy the space above the new expansion, the existing east bedroom, kitchen and a portion of the dining room. Comprised of a new bedroom suite and the master bedroom suite, the second floor also utilizes the space above the new terrace as an open terrace overlooking the rear yard.

Set to the rear at approximately twenty-three feet, the new two-story section complies with the intent of the Standards and provides living areas not otherwise contained within the building envelope. The central volume is designed with a gable roof while the rear section is a simple parapet. A one-story shed roof will be installed over the side patio.

It is our opinion that the addition does not violate the integrity of the residence, and is harmonious with the existing residence and the neighboring residences in its scale and general massing.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Constructed in 1926, the property at 544 San Esteban Avenue (legally described as Lot 3, Block 21, Coral Gables Riviera Section Part One) is significant to the City of Coral Gables' history based on the following criteria found in the Coral Gables Zoning Code, Article 31, Section 31-2.4:

- b. Architectural significance:
  - 1. Portrays the environment in an era of history characterized by one (1) or more distinctive architectural styles
  - 2. Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction
  - 3. Is an outstanding work of a prominent designer or builder

Staff finds the following:

The property located at 544 San Esteban Avenue (Lot 3, Block 21, Coral Gables Riviera Section Part One), constructed in 1926 is significant to the City of Coral Gables history based on:

#### Architecture

Therefore Staff recommends the following:

A motion to APPROVE the Local Historic Designation of the property at 544 San Esteban Avenue (legally described as Lot 3, Block 21, Coral Gables Riviera Section Part One) based on its architecture

Respectfully submitted,

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Dona M. Lubin  
Historical Resources Department

Report written by Simone Chin

## Bibliography

Building Microfilm Records for 544 San Esteban Avenue, Building and Zoning Department,  
Microfilm Division, Coral Gables, Florida.

1940's Archival Photographs, City of Coral Gables, Historical Resources Department.

Real Estate Records for 544 San Esteban Avenue, Historical Resources Department, Coral Gables, Florida

Building Permits Record Book, City of Coral Gables, Historical Resources Department, 1928-1944



### Location Map



## **REVIEW GUIDE**

**Definition:** The Review Guide lists some of the more prominent features, which contribute to the overall character of a structure and/or district. It is not intended to be all-inclusive, as photographic documentation fully illustrates the present physical character of the property.

**Use:** The Review Guide may be used to address the impact of new construction, additions/modifications/alterations and/or renovations which may become the subject of some future Certificate of Appropriateness consideration....and

The Review Guide by describing EXISTING physical characteristics may be used to determine whether or not elements which create the character of the structure and/or district is present and/or whether or not later additions or alterations have so changed that character so as to cause the property (ies) to become ineligible for listing.

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Residence Address: 544 San Esteban Avenue

Date of Construction: c. 1926

Construction Material: concrete block covered with stucco, and barrel roof tile



Photograph Year 2005