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ASCA AMERICAN SOCIETY of CONSULTING ARBORISTS

March 31, 2025

Mr. Peter Graves
Assistant Project Manager
MG Developer
301 Almeria Ave., #330
Coral Gables, FL 33134

RE: 737 Valencia Avenue
Coral Gables, Florida 33134

Dear Mr. Graves:
We met at the above-referenced property on March 10, 2025, and again on March 26, 2025, where you requested that I evaluate the condition and relocation potential of six live oak trees (*Quercus virginiana*), #14, #20, #30, #41, #46 and #56, and one gumbo limbo tree (*Bursera simaruba*) #45, as shown on the Tree Survey/Disposition Plan you provided (de la Guardia Victoria Architects & Urbanists, Inc. Permit Set 11-25-24. Sheet LA-02). My report follows.

BACKGROUND
Your company is proposing to develop this property. The lot previously had several older residential buildings on it, which have been demolished. The lot has been cleared, except for the seven trees referenced above, which currently have tree protection fencing around them and irrigation provided. The lot had been heavily landscaped with large trees in small spaces. The trees were crowded together, in between buildings, and close to roadways, alleys, powerlines, and other structures. They are now in the open and their response growth to prior site conditions can be more objectively evaluated. Most are in fair to poor **health** due to shade-stress and as a result, they have imbalanced crowns, numerous dead branches, and twig dieback. Their general **condition** and **aesthetic qualities** are poor.*

The aerial photograph on the next page shows the condition of the property prior to demolition of the buildings, with the locations of the trees in question marked by tree number. Note their locations in between buildings and near sidewalks, streets, and alleys.

*City of Coral Gables Article II. Tree Protection and Preservation. Sec. 82-30 (b) Application Review…factors in evaluating said application… (5). *Health, condition and aesthetic qualities of the tree.*

SITE MAP – TREE LOCATIONS

TREE ID

Tree #	Cal. (inches)	Species
46	29	Live Oak
41	31	Live Oak
30	35	Live Oak
20	30	Live Oak
14	34	Live Oak
56	25	Live Oak
45	12	Gumbo Limbo

A photograph of current conditions of the property and the trees in question is below. Note that the trees have one-sided imbalanced crowns due to previous shading and crowding.

For the development to proceed as proposed, the trees cannot remain in their current locations. They cannot be relocated elsewhere on-site as there will not be *"a location that can accommodate the natural growth of the relocated tree."* **

Off-site relocation has been suggested by City staff, however, the live oak trees are too large to fit on a flatbed truck to transport them by road without significant pruning (**topping or hatracking**), which would destroy their structure and general character, and not comply with the City of Coral Gables' Tree Protection and Preservation ordinance***. Also, there are numerous obstacles to moving these trees down the roadways including overhead powerlines, street lights, signage, street trees, monuments, etc., for which removal or alteration is not feasible.

One suggestion was to move tree #41 down the street to the triangular median located at the corner of Valencia Avenue and Cardena Street, which also presents some challenges, which I address in this report.

In this report I have addressed each tree, by tree number on the survey, in numerical order.

** City of Coral Gables Article II Tree Protection and Preservation Sec. 82-30(c)(3).

***City of Coral Gables Article II., Sec. 82-28 – Definitions.
Pruning means that definition of the term as set forth in both the most recent International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Best Management Practices (BMP) on Pruning and American National Standards Institute (ANSI) A300, Part. 1. At no time shall trimming, **topping**, tipping or flush cutting of trees be deemed a form of "pruning".

Tree Abuse shall include: (2) **hatracking or topping**.

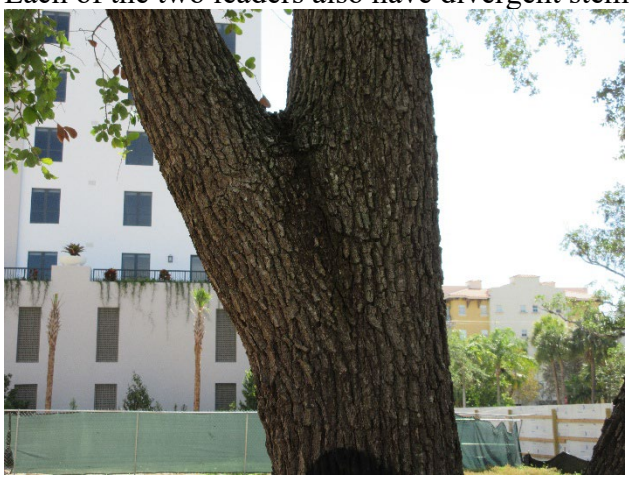
TREE #14
Observations
Tree #14 is a live oak with codominant leaders which diverge at a height of approximately 24 inches above grade. The north-side leader has a trunk diameter at breast height (DBH = 4.5 feet above grade) of 19.3 inches and the south side leader has a DBH of 15.8 inches. Below the divergent leaders, the trunk measures 28.1 inches in diameter. The tree is approximately 30 to 35 feet in overall height. Its crown spread is approximately 55 feet north-to-south and 57 feet east-to-west. The crown is imbalanced, with only about 15 feet of the north-south diameter on the north side, and 40 feet on the south side. The east-west diameter is 23 feet on the east side and 34 feet on the west side.
A view of the tree from the west looking east is shown below.

On the east side of the tree the branches are so low that they are touching and hanging over the construction fence. Some have previously been pruned using heading cuts (inappropriate cuts as per ANSI A-300) to raise them.

A view of the codominant leaders is shown below, from two opposite sides of the tree. The east side of the tree is below, left, and the west side of the tree is below, right.

On the west side of the tree a split between the two leaders is apparent. This is a sign of included bark, an inherent structural defect that makes the trunk prone to splitting apart.

Each of the two leaders also have divergent stems above with included bark between them.



There is a linear grade change just outside the protective fencing on the east side of the tree, indicating the former presence of a structure near the tree.

Discussion and Conclusions

Live oak tree #14 is generally in fair to good condition. However, its crown is severely imbalanced, and very low on the south side. It has codominant leaders within 24 inches of its base, with evidence of included bark between them. In addition, both leaders are divergent above, with included bark there as well.

This tree is not a good candidate for relocation due to its trunk and branching structure. It would be prone to splitting apart upon lifting, and its crown would need to be significantly reduced on the south side to balance its weight. It could not be moved off-site without severely pruning it to reduce its overall size.

For these reasons, it is my professional opinion that tree #14 should not be relocated.

TREE #20

Observations

Tree #20 is a live oak with a DBH of 29.2 inches and is approximately 35 to 40 feet in overall height. Its crown spread is approximately 60 feet north-to-south and 50 feet east-to-west. The crown is imbalanced, with only about 14 feet of the east-west diameter on the east side, and 36 feet on the west side. The north-south diameter is approximately equal on both sides, about 30 feet on each side. A view of the tree from the southwest looking northeast is shown on the next page.

A view of the tree from the east looking west shows that it leans toward the south, with one leader on the south side significantly taller than the rest of the crown.

The tree has numerous broken, dead, and decayed branches.


Many were previously pruned using [inappropriate] heading cuts, particularly on the north side near the powerlines.


There are several conks of the wood decay fungus, *Phellinus* sp. on the main trunk.


The tree has large surface roots on the southeast side of its trunk, the side to which it leans.

Discussion and Conclusion

Live oak tree #20 is generally in fair to poor condition. It has many dead branches and the crown is imbalanced. It is infected with a fungal wood decay disease which typically affects already-stressed trees. Although the disease generally progresses slowly, added stresses, i.e., relocation, could exacerbate its spread, causing faster tree decline. There is no effective cure or treatment for this disease.

This tree might initially survive relocation, but its long-term survival is questionable. Even with a stringent treatment program, the *Phellinus* fungus will likely progress. Following relocation, the tree's unbalanced crown would make it prone to toppling and it would need structural support for at least two to three years.

For these reasons, it is my professional opinion that tree #20 should not be relocated.

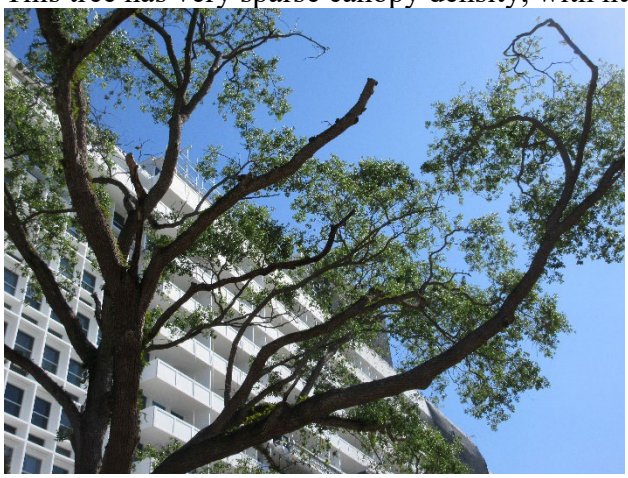
TREE #30

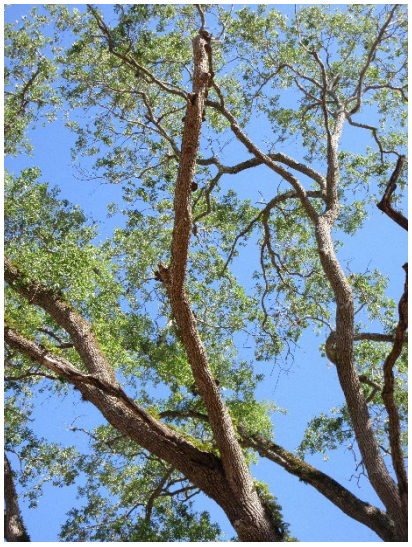
Observations

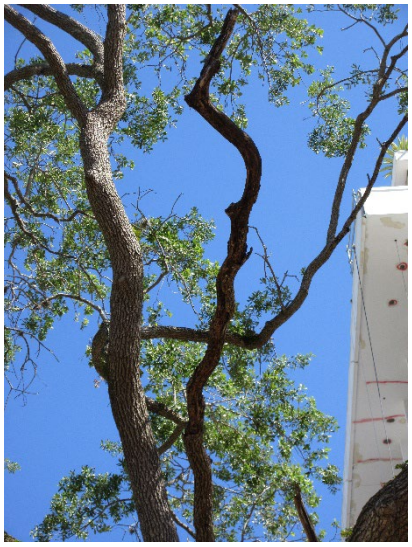
Tree #30 is a live oak with a DBH of 30.8 inches and is approximately 40 to 50 feet in overall height. Its crown spread is approximately 54 feet north-to-south and 72 feet east-to-west. The crown is slightly imbalanced, with about 32 feet of the north-south diameter on the north side, and 22 feet on

the south side. The east-west diameter is also slightly imbalanced, with about 30 feet on the east side and 42 feet on the west side. A view of the tree from the south looking north is shown below.

This tree has very sparse canopy density, with numerous dead branches.












There is a pile of rocks near the base of the tree and it appears that there had been some type of structure or garden wall near the tree. The grade is uneven and there are root suckers present, an indicator of root damage or stress.

Discussion and Conclusion

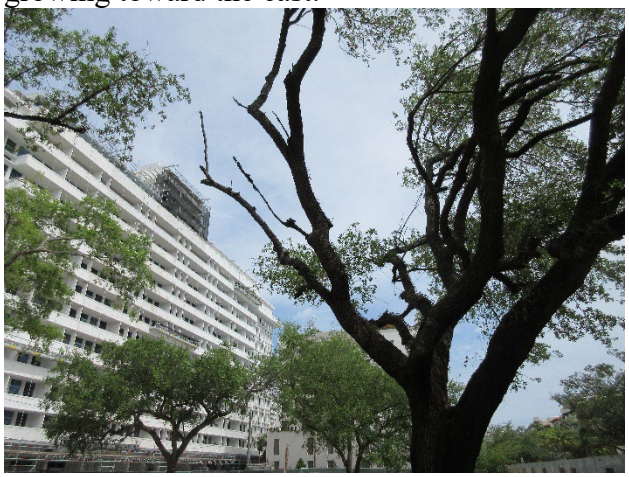
Tree #30 is in poor condition, showing significant signs and symptoms of damage, stress, and decline. It is not like to survive relocation and therefore, it is my professional opinion that it is not a good candidate for relocation.

TREE #41

Observations

Tree #41 is a live oak with a DBH of 28.8 inches and is approximately 35 to 40 feet in overall height. Its crown spread is approximately 30 feet north-to-south and 50 feet east-to-west. The crown is imbalanced, with only about 8 to 10 feet of the north-south diameter on the north side, and 20 to 22 feet on the south side. The limbs on the north side are bent toward the south, probably due to past shading effects. The east-west diameter is approximately equal on both sides, about 25 feet on each side. A view of the tree from the west looking east is shown below.

The tree has two large dead limbs on the north side and a dead limb through the center of the crown, growing toward the east.




The dead limb in the center of the crown has active fungal growth present.


Several branches on the south side, near the street, have been pruned with [improper] heading cuts. There is now extensive “sucker” growth emerging from behind the cuts.


There is abundant root sucker growth beneath the tree, indicative of root damage or stress.


The tree was root-pruned on the north and west sides, reportedly done on January 6, 2025, and on the east side, reportedly on March 18, 2025. The root pruning cuts are approximately 12 to 15 feet in diameter.


The tree is located about six feet from edge of trunk to the sidewalk on the south side, limiting the potential size of its rootball if relocated.

The proposed receiving site for this tree is in the triangular median located at the corner of Valencia Avenue and Cardena Street. In that triangle there are two existing live oak trees about 8 to 10 inches in trunk diameter, with Ficus 'Green Island' ground cover beneath. The trees are healthy and vigorous and have been root-pruned on four sides.

On the south side of the triangle is a sidewalk, with two healthy live oak trees, also about 8 to 10 inches in diameter, in the adjacent bump-out. They have been root-pruned on four sides. Their crowns are beginning to touch those of the two trees in the triangle, and starting to form a "tunnel" over the sidewalk. See photo next page.

Discussion
The proposed relocation plan calls for tree #41 to be moved to the triangular planter at the corner, which would necessitate removing the two young healthy live oak trees or relocating them elsewhere. The two live oak trees in the bump-out may also need to be removed or relocated in order to avoid a conflict with the crown of tree #41.

Live oak tree #41 is generally in fair to poor condition. It has large dead branches and the crown is imbalanced. It has been improperly pruned on the south side. The presence of root suckers indicates root damage or stress. In its current condition, its potential for successfully surviving relocation would be marginal. For it to survive in a healthy condition, it would require an aggressive treatment program of irrigation, fertilization, and pest control beginning immediately and continuing for at least two to three years following relocation. Even with these treatments, its health might still be marginal.

Following relocation, the tree's unbalanced crown would make it prone to toppling and it would need structural support for at least two to three years, possibly longer. Should it topple, there are three streets and a sidewalk, with frequent usage, at risk of being impacted. The potential consequences of tree failure could be severe.

Wooden stakes would not likely be strong enough to support this tree and stainless steel cables would need to be used. For adequate stability, the cables would need to be fastened to the tree limbs, above the trunk, and there may not be enough space within the triangular planter to properly anchor them.

Relocated trees perform best when they remain in their original directional orientation and this tree would need to have the larger part of its crown oriented toward the south, where it would likely conflict with the canopies of the existing live oak trees in the bump-out.

Conclusion
It is my professional opinion that, while successful relocation of tree #41 may be possible, it is improbable. There are many challenges including its health, the need for an aggressive treatment program for several years, an unbalanced crown which poses a risk of toppling in a high-user area, limited space to place and cable the tree, and the need to remove/relocate up to four healthy, young

trees that already fit the space and have the potential of providing significant environmental and sociocultural benefits for many more years than tree #41. For these reasons, I recommend against relocation of tree #41.

Although the four young root pruned trees in the triangle have already been root pruned in anticipation of relocation, they could be left in place "as is" without any significant impact on their long-term health, and it would be less stressful than relocating them elsewhere.

TREE #45

Tree #45 is a gumbo limbo (*Bursera simaruba*). Its trunk measures 14 inches in diameter and it is approximately 25 feet in overall height. Its crown spread is approximately 18 feet north-to-south and 15 feet east-to-west. The crown is imbalanced, with only about 6 feet of the north-south diameter on the north side and 12 feet on the south side. The east-west crown diameter is roughly equal. The tree can be seen below, looking from northeast to southwest.

The tree was root pruned on the northeast side on January 6, 2025.

The tree is currently dormant, but healthy. As a species, gumbo limbo is highly tolerant of relocation and due to it species, size, and condition, this tree is a good candidate for on- or off-site relocation.

TREE #46

Observations

Tree #46 is a live oak with a DBH of 29.0 inches and is approximately 35 to 40 feet in overall height. Its crown spread is approximately 58 feet north-to-south and 50 feet east-to-west. The crown is imbalanced, with only about 10 feet of the north-south diameter on the north side, and 48 feet on the south side. The east-west diameter is approximately equal on both sides, about 25 feet on each side. A view of the tree from the west looking east is shown below.

This tree has numerous broken, dead, and damaged limbs and branches.


It also has twig dieback throughout the crown.


There appears to have been a structure immediately adjacent to its trunk, as there is a linear grade change on two sides of the tree. A few root suckers are present, an indicator or root damage or stress.


Discussion and Conclusion

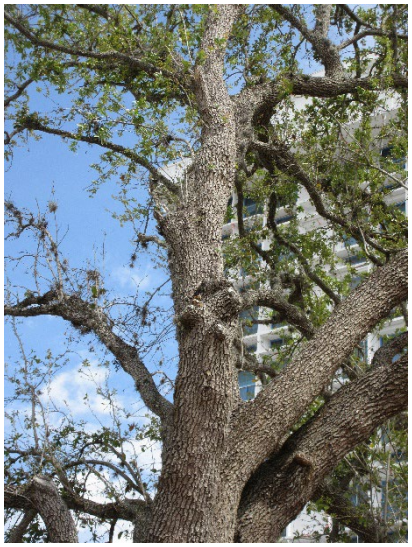
Live oak tree #46 is generally in fair to poor condition. It has many dead branches and the crown is imbalanced. Its root system may have been compromised by growing in close proximity to structures. In its current condition, its potential for successfully surviving relocation would be marginal. For it to survive in a healthy condition, it would require an aggressive treatment program of irrigation,

fertilization, and pest control beginning immediately and continuing for at least two to three years following relocation. Even with these treatments, its health might still be marginal. Following relocation, the tree's unbalanced crown would make it prone to toppling and it would need structural support for at least two to three years.

For these reasons, it is my professional opinion that tree #46 should not be relocated.

TREE #56
Observations
Tree #56 is a live oak with a DBH of 25.3 inches and is approximately 35 to 40 feet in overall height. Its crown spread is approximately 37 feet north-to-south and 32 feet east-to-west. The crown is imbalanced, with only about 6 to 8 feet of the east-west diameter on the west side, and 25 feet on the east side. The limbs on the west side are bent toward the east, probably due to past shading effects. The north-south diameter is approximately equal on both sides, about 18 to 20 feet on each side. A view of the tree from the south looking north is shown below.

Several branches have been removed from the west side leader.



There are numerous dead branches and significant twig dieback.




The tree was root-pruned on the south and west sides, reportedly done on January 6, 2025, and on the north and east sides on March 18, 2025. The root pruning cuts are approximately 12 to 15 feet in diameter.


The proposed receiving site is the Granada Golf Course, several blocks away. The tree would need to be moved on a flatbed truck, which would require that its crown be pruned to reduce it to about 14 feet in diameter. Such pruning would be considered “hatracking”, an unacceptable pruning practice that would leave the tree with little to no live foliage. There are numerous obstacles to relocating the

tree off-site by road including, but not limited to, overhead powerlines, street lights, signage, existing street trees, and monuments.

Discussion and Conclusion
Live oak tree #56 is generally in fair to poor condition. It has many dead branches and the crown is imbalanced. In its current condition, its potential for successfully surviving relocation would be marginal. For it to survive in a healthy condition, it would require an aggressive treatment program of irrigation, fertilization, and pest control beginning immediately and continuing for at least two to three years following relocation. Even with these treatments, its health might still be marginal.

Following relocation, the tree's unbalanced crown would make it prone to toppling and it would need structural support for at least two to three years. Off-site relocation by road is not practical due to the need to "hatrack" the tree and somehow avoid numerous obstacles along the roads.

For these reasons, it is my professional opinion that tree #56 should not be relocated.

CONCLUSION
In conclusion, I have evaluated six existing live oak trees on this site and one gumbo limbo tree. Although the City's Tree Protection and Preservation Ordinance prioritizes preservation or relocation of specimen trees over removal, the six live oak trees on this site cannot remain where they are, and they are not good candidates for relocation due to their species, age, size, health/condition, aesthetic qualities, and location. Mitigation with nursery-grown, younger, healthier trees, as per City code, would provide more sustainable, long-term benefits to the City than relocating these older, over-mature, unhealthy trees.

Gumbo limbo tree #45 is a good candidate for on- or off-site location.

Thank you for calling on me to assist with this project. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about this report or additional needs for assistance.

Sincerely,

Lisa H. Hammer

Lisa H. Hammer, RCA
Horticultural Consultant