

## Lyons, Nancy

---

**From:** Art Kozyrovicius <artkozy@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 17, 2023 11:11 AM  
**To:** HIST  
**Cc:** karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com; Lago, Vince; Mena, Michael; Anderson, Rhonda; Menendez, Kirk; Cason, James  
**Subject:** 110 Phoenetia Ave, The Garden of our Lord historic designation

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

The Honorable Mayor Lago, The City Commissioners and The Historic Preservation Board:

My name is Art Kozyrovicius and I would like to express my full support to designate 110 Phoenetia Avenue (The Garden of our Lord) as a historic property in the upcoming Historic Preservation Board meeting tomorrow.

My wife Solveiga and I own 24 Phoenetia Ave, a historic home a block away from the Garden of our Lord. We have lived here for over a year and bought our house because of the character of the property, the street and the surrounding neighborhood. We also chose Coral Gables as our residence because of the historical nature of the city and it's commitment to being green and protecting the history and the character that was planned and created from the City's inception.

We love to walk the streets of our neighborhood and other neighborhoods in Coral Gables with our daughter and enjoy the greenery and the history with all the unique features and character. My wife is also a member of the Woman's Club across the street which represents part of the rich history around.

The Garden of Our Lord is a tranquil place representing everything Coral Gables is about, and it is part of the "green corridor" which runs from East Ponce to the Douglas Entrance. The Garden is an essential part of the neighborhood, and we are surprised it has not been designated historic in the past. It has been designed by the notable architect Robert Fitch Smith with a specific intention and purpose, and we should make sure we treasure and protect it to honor those intentions and the identity of the neighborhood.

We believe that The Garden of our Lord has to be designated as a historic property, and no large residential/commercial development should be considered for the property beyond the improvements necessary to maintain the Garden and make it a historic and park facility accessible to the public for it's intended use.

We urge you to evaluate the Garden of our Lord in the context of it's historic and aesthetic contribution to the green corridor and the neighborhood.

Thank you for your attention and participation in this Board, and for your commitment to the City of Coral Gables differentiation qualities that respect history and nature.

Respectfully,  
Art Kozyrovicius  
Solveiga Vailionyte-Kozyroviciene

## Lyons, Nancy

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**From:** Santiago, Lina  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 17, 2023 4:57 PM  
**To:** Urquia, Billy; Suarez, Cristina; Ramos, Miriam; Adams, Warren  
**Cc:** Dacosta, Susan; Davis, Yolande; Chen, Brigitte; Quintana, Gabriela  
**Subject:** FW: 110 Phoenetia Ave, The Garden of our Lord historic designation

Good afternoon,

Please see email below from resident Art Kozyrovicius re: The Garden of our Lord Historic Designation.

Best,

Lina

### Lina Santiago

Commission Liaison  
Office of the City Commission  
405 Biltmore Way, 2nd Floor  
E: [lsantiago@coralgables.com](mailto:lsantiago@coralgables.com)  
O: 305-569-1817

---

**From:** Anderson, Rhonda <[randerson@coralgables.com](mailto:randerson@coralgables.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 17, 2023 11:36 AM  
**To:** Santiago, Lina <[lsantiago@coralgables.com](mailto:lsantiago@coralgables.com)>  
**Subject:** Fwd: 110 Phoenetia Ave, The Garden of our Lord historic designation

Good morning Lina. Please forward the email below to the Clerk, Historic and the City Attorney.

Thank you,

Rhonda

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**From:** Art Kozyrovicius <[artkozy@gmail.com](mailto:artkozy@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 17, 2023 11:10:43 AM  
**To:** HIST <[HIST@coralgables.com](mailto:HIST@coralgables.com)>  
**Cc:** [karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com](mailto:karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com) <[karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com](mailto:karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com)>; Lago, Vince <[vlago@coralgables.com](mailto:vlago@coralgables.com)>; Mena, Michael <[mmena@coralgables.com](mailto:mmena@coralgables.com)>; Anderson, Rhonda <[randerson@coralgables.com](mailto:randerson@coralgables.com)>; Menendez, Kirk <[kmenendez@coralgables.com](mailto:kmenendez@coralgables.com)>; Cason, James <[jcason@coralgables.com](mailto:jcason@coralgables.com)>  
**Subject:** 110 Phoenetia Ave, The Garden of our Lord historic designation

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The Honorable Mayor Lago, The City Commissioners and The Historic Preservation Board:

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Respectfully,  
Art Kozyrovicius  
Solveiga Vailionyte-Kozyroviciene

## Lyons, Nancy

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**From:** Santiago, Lina  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 17, 2023 5:01 PM  
**To:** Urquia, Billy; Suarez, Cristina; Ramos, Miriam; Adams, Warren  
**Cc:** Dacosta, Susan; Davis, Yolande  
**Subject:** FW: Hello. The Garden of our Lord historic designation

Good afternoon,

Please see email below from resident Maria Cristina Longo re: The Garden of our Lord Historic Designation.

Best,

Lina

### Lina Santiago

Commission Liaison  
Office of the City Commission  
405 Biltmore Way, 2nd Floor  
E: [lsantiago@coralgables.com](mailto:lsantiago@coralgables.com)  
O: 305-569-1817

---

**From:** Anderson, Rhonda <[randerson@coralgables.com](mailto:randerson@coralgables.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 17, 2023 10:18 AM  
**To:** Santiago, Lina <[lsantiago@coralgables.com](mailto:lsantiago@coralgables.com)>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Hello. The Garden of our Lord historic designation

Lina, please forward the email below to the Clerk for the record and copy Historic and the City Attorney's Office.

Rhonda

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**From:** Maricris Longo <[maricrislongo@gmail.com](mailto:maricrislongo@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 16, 2023 2:52:22 PM  
**To:** HIST <[HIST@coralgables.com](mailto:HIST@coralgables.com)>  
**Cc:** Karelia Carbonell <[karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com](mailto:karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com)>; Adams, Warren <[wadams@miamigov.com](mailto:wadams@miamigov.com)>; Anderson, Rhonda <[randerson@coralgables.com](mailto:randerson@coralgables.com)>; Lago, Vince <[vlago@coralgables.com](mailto:vlago@coralgables.com)>; Mena, Michael <[mmena@coralgables.com](mailto:mmena@coralgables.com)>  
**Subject:** Hello. The Garden of our Lord historic designation

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

My name is Maria Cristina Longo and I own a historic home at 16 Phoenetia Avenue, where I have resided for almost 7 years. Sixteen Phoenetia Avenue is about a 3-minute walk east from the Garden of our Lord. There are 4 historic homes on Phoenetia Avenue, including the historic John Douglas' home, and the rest of the properties on my block are multi-family buildings.

I know this section of my neighborhood intimately because I walk my dog Oliver everyday on the same route. First, we stroll to the west of my home on Phoenetia Avenue to Galiano Street; then we turn south on Galiano until we reach Sidonia Street; from Sidonia Street we walk east to East Ponce Blvd; and next we walk north on East Ponce straight to the women's Club and back home on Phoenetia Avenue.

I urge you to please designate the Garden of our Lord historic based on its significant aesthetic value to the neighborhood's character. The aesthetic significance is easily identifiable because this garden strongly complements the Women's Club and the green corridor on east ponce De Leon. The green corridor starts at the small park on the intersection with Sidonia Street and East Ponce De Leon Blvd.

The garden and its wall were designed by the notable architect Robert Fitch Smith, who is the same architect who designed the beautiful Nell Montgomery Garden at Fairchild Tropical Garden in 1949. The garden of our Lord was designed ***intentionally*** by Fitch Smith to complement the green corridor on East Ponce Blvd and the historic Women's Club. For example, the design and pattern of the coral rock on the garden wall and on the Women's Club walls are the same. Moreover, The garden is not just a gathering place, but it is also a key contributor to the historic streetscape and the pedestrian experience on the "green corridor".

I urge you to please evaluate this garden in the **context** of its aesthetic contribution to the green corridor and the neighborhood.

Additionally, the North Ponce Neighborhood faces the challenge that property owners of the multi-family properties on Phoenetia Avenue do not reside on the properties and a large majority do not even reside in Florida. Therefore, they do not know of the potential negative effect on the neighborhood's character and its aesthetic value if this garden is demolished and destroyed.

I greatly appreciate your time and your participation in this very important Board and I please urge you to have the moral fortitude to designate the Garden of our Lord historic.

Sincerely,  
Maricris Longo

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305.798.0156 | [maricrislongo@gmail.com](mailto:maricrislongo@gmail.com)

## Lyons, Nancy

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**From:** Santiago, Lina  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 17, 2023 3:15 PM  
**To:** Urquia, Billy; Suarez, Cristina; Ramos, Miriam; Adams, Warren  
**Cc:** Dacosta, Susan; Chen, Brigitte; Quintana, Gabriela  
**Subject:** FW: The Garden of our Lord Historic Designation

Good afternoon,

Please see email below from resident Thomas Spina re: The Garden of our Lord Historic Designation.

Best,

Lina

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**From:** Anderson, Rhonda <[randerson@coralgables.com](mailto:randerson@coralgables.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 17, 2023 10:05 AM  
**To:** Santiago, Lina <[lsantiago@coralgables.com](mailto:lsantiago@coralgables.com)>  
**Subject:** Fwd: The Garden of our Lord Historic Designation

Lina, please forward this to the Clerk, historic and the City Attorney.

Thank you,

Rhonda

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

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**From:** Thomas Spina <[thomas.spina@icloud.com](mailto:thomas.spina@icloud.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 17, 2023 9:43:21 AM  
**To:** HIST <[HIST@coralgables.com](mailto:HIST@coralgables.com)>  
**Cc:** [karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com](mailto:karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com) <[karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com](mailto:karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com)>; [wadams@miamigov.com](mailto:wadams@miamigov.com) <[wadams@miamigov.com](mailto:wadams@miamigov.com)>; Anderson, Rhonda <[randerson@coralgables.com](mailto:randerson@coralgables.com)>; Lago, Vince <[vlago@coralgables.com](mailto:vlago@coralgables.com)>; Mena, Michael <[mmena@coralgables.com](mailto:mmena@coralgables.com)>  
**Subject:** The Garden of our Lord Historic Designation

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Thomas Spina  
20 Phoenetia Ave.  
Coral Gables, FL 33134

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Thomas Spina and my family and I own a historic home at 20 Phoenetia Avenue since 2014. Our home is only a short walk to the Garden of our Lord and the Coral Gables Woman's Club where my wife is an active member. Although there are many multi - family homes on our block, there are 4 historic home owners that must fight to keep our area from being unrecognizable while while basic needs in our area like transportation from the Freebee are ignored because we are "out of range" yet building after building is being approved in the area.

Having come from working at the New York City Economic Development Corporation under the Bloomberg Administration, I am pro - development with a purpose and without changing the entire landscape of a neighborhood. As a building has already gone up next across from the Coral Gables Woman's Club, the few historic owners were forced to get Residential Parking Permits due to the overcrowding and parking on the streets from the smaller, older multi - family homes. Hearing of the new pending project just across the street from that building, up the block from our homes, across from the Historic Coral Gables Woman's Club seems really out of line with being historic neighborhoods. On top of that, this site is with the Garden of our Lord and Church. The simple aesthetic significance is so important to the meaning of our neighborhood and would urge you to reconsider this area for development. There is simply NO green space that someone could offer that could replace this historic location, especially next to the Coral Gables Woman's Club.

We put windows and doors on our home some years back and waiting for over 6 months from the historic board to approve our plans and we had to alter our plan because they didn't like what putting a door on our bedroom would do even though both historic homes on either side of mine have one. If residents are to be held to a standard that seems overbearing, it is time for you to put the same standard to these builders and for you to actually mean what you say when you are talking about historic preservation. I urge your o get a grip on this project and halt the historic garden. There is no need for me to give you a history lesson on it as we can all read the push to get this save this land for our neighborhood. It would be wonderful for the first time to feel that our area of Coral Gables is not left out and used as a designated high rise building area with little to no rhyme or reason other than to add more buildings.

Again, our area has many multi - family homes. Many of the residents are not from around here or do not stay long. Doing what you are planning especially in the direct area of the historic home owners is only destroying our property value in the future. We will be homes within a city leaving them undesirable. Will you then allow our historic designations to be removed so that we can sell to a developer to finish the job in our area and just build another building? I doubt that with what I went through with windows. Again, I urge you to please evaluate this entire area by starting with the garden and finally help the owners of this area that you oversee.

Thank you for your time in this matter and allowing me to express my feelings on this important topic and I urge you here to do the right thing by the people and the true history of what the Garden of our Lord represents to our neighborhood that is often glazed over.

Sincerely,

Thomas Janin



## Lyons, Nancy

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**From:** Karelia Carbonell <karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 17, 2023 12:00 PM  
**To:** Adams, Warren  
**Subject:** Fwd: 110 Phoenetia Ave, The Garden of our Lord historic designation

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

FYI  
FROM BONNIE BOLTON

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Art Kozyrovicius** <[artkozy@gmail.com](mailto:artkozy@gmail.com)>  
Date: Tue, Jan 17, 2023, 11:10 AM  
Subject: 110 Phoenetia Ave, The Garden of our Lord historic designation  
To: <[HIST@coralgables.com](mailto:HIST@coralgables.com)>  
Cc: <[karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com](mailto:karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com)>, <[vlago@coralgables.com](mailto:vlago@coralgables.com)>, <[mmena@coralgables.com](mailto:mmena@coralgables.com)>, <[randerson@coralgables.com](mailto:randerson@coralgables.com)>, <[kmenendez@coralgables.com](mailto:kmenendez@coralgables.com)>, <[jcason@coralgables.com](mailto:jcason@coralgables.com)>

The Honorable Mayor Lago, The City Commissioners and The Historic Preservation Board:

My name is Art Kozyrovicius and I would like to express my full support to designate 110 Phoenetia Avenue (The Garden of our Lord) as a historic property in the upcoming Historic Preservation Board meeting tomorrow.

My wife Solveiga and I own 24 Phoenetia Ave, a historic home a block away from the Garden of our Lord. We have lived here for over a year and bought our house because of the character of the property, the street and the surrounding neighborhood. We also chose Coral Gables as our residence because of the historical nature of the city and it's commitment to being green and protecting the history and the character that was planned and created from the City's inception.

We love to walk the streets of our neighborhood and other neighborhoods in Coral Gables with our daughter and enjoy the greenery and the history with all the unique features and character. My wife is also a member of the Woman's Club across the street which represents part of the rich history around.

The Garden of Our Lord is a tranquil place representing everything Coral Gables is about, and it is part of the "green corridor" which runs from East Ponce to the Douglas Entrance. The Garden is an essential part of the neighborhood, and we are surprised it has not been designated historic in the past. It has been designed by the notable architect Robert Fitch Smith with a specific intention and purpose, and we should make sure we treasure and protect it to honor those intentions and the identity of the neighborhood.

We believe that The Garden of our Lord has to be designated as a historic property, and no large residential/commercial development should be considered for the property beyond the improvements necessary to maintain the Garden and make it a historic and park facility accessible to the public for it's intended use.

We urge you to evaluate the Garden of our Lord in the context of it's historic and aesthetic contribution to the green corridor and the neighborhood.

Thank you for your attention and participation in this Board, and for your commitment to the City of Coral Gables differentiation qualities that respect history and nature.

Respectfully,  
Art Kozyrovicius  
Solveiga Vailionyte-Kozyroviciene

**Lyons, Nancy**

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**From:** Karelia Carbonell <karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 18, 2023 8:31 AM  
**To:** Adams, Warren  
**Subject:** Fwd: Petition for the Garden of Our Lord as a Historic Site

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

FYI  
FROM BONNIE BOLTON

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Maria Rodriguez Delgado** <[mapau\\_rodriguez@yahoo.com](mailto:mapau_rodriguez@yahoo.com)>  
Date: Wed, Jan 18, 2023, 8:11 AM  
Subject: Petition for the Garden of Our Lord as a Historic Site  
To: <[Karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com](mailto:Karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com)>

To the Coral Gable's Mayor, Commissioners, and the Historic Preservation Board,

Please protect the Garden of Our Lord on Phoenetia and E Ponce de Leon by granting it Historic Site status. For the past 70 years, this garden has been a part of our community. The origin of the plants, the stories embedded throughout the garden are significant and important. I truly believe that we must try to do our best to preserve the history and heritage of places such as this garden which are what makes the City of Coral Gables beautiful and unique.

Thank you for your attention.

Warm regards,

Maria.

**Lyons, Nancy**

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**From:** Karelia Carbonell <karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 18, 2023 8:00 AM  
**To:** Adams, Warren  
**Subject:** Fwd: Project Garden of Our Lord

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

FYI

ON BEHALF OF BONNIE BOLTON

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** JOHN KUCZWANSKI <[johnk3628@aol.com](mailto:johnk3628@aol.com)>  
**Date:** December 4, 2022 at 5:11:39 PM EST  
**To:** Gena Kuczwanski <[genak3628@gmail.com](mailto:genak3628@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** Project

To: Vince Lago

Historic Preservation Board

We support new construction and redevelopment in Coral Gables as long as it maintains the quality, beauty and history of our city. Good examples include the new Coral Gables Plaza and Douglas Entrance, both of which display beauty and quality, and preserve important historical features.

We hope you will insure the proposed Century project also displays quality, while preserving some of the community's most historic features. The developer should be required to protect the Garden of Our Lord and specimen trees. The Garden is precious to Coral Gables because of its historic and botanical features.

We are confident the developer can develop a quality project, realize reasonable profit and preserve historic and specimen assets. Proper preservation will also enhance the project's and the neighborhood's marketability.

Please continue your work preserving the quality and future of Coral Gables and our neighborhood.

Sincerely,

John and Gena Kuczwanski

1091 Galiano Street

Coral Gables, FL 33134

**Lyons, Nancy**

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**From:** Sandra Scidmore <sscidmore@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 15, 2023 3:44 PM  
**To:** Adams, Warren  
**Cc:** Urquia, Billy; City Clerk  
**Subject:** GARDEN OF OUR LORD - I support Bonnie Bolton re: historic designation

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Historic Preservation Board,

*I support Bonnie Bolton.*

The Garden of Our Lord qualifies for historic designation as a local historic landmark. As per the 270-page application, the Garden has significant character, interest or value as part of the historical, cultural, archaeological, aesthetic or architectural heritage of the City. A property must meet at least one (1) of the criteria outlined. The Code clearly states that properties which meet the criteria shall be designated. Experts have identified nine [9] criteria.

The Garden is a treasure in Coral Gables. It has great significance culturally, historically, aesthetically, ecologically, and architecturally as per expert narratives. Only one criterion is needed for the Garden to qualify for historic landmark designation.

*Sincerely,  
Sandra L. Scidmore*

Workplace:  
999 N Ponce De Leon Boulevard  
Coral Gables, FL 33134

**Sandra L. Scidmore**  
100 Lincoln Road, Apt. 423  
Miami Beach, Florida 33139  
786-566-0422 C  
sscidmore@hotmail.com

**Lyons, Nancy**

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**From:** Susan Medina <[symedina@suemedina.onmicrosoft.com](mailto:symedina@suemedina.onmicrosoft.com)>  
**Sent:** Saturday, January 14, 2023 10:35 AM  
**To:** Adams, Warren  
**Cc:** [symedina@bellsouth.net](mailto:symedina@bellsouth.net); [macburch@aol.com](mailto:macburch@aol.com)  
**Subject:** Garden of Our Lord Garden - Historic Preservation Support

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Members of the Historic Preservation Board,

The Villagers, Inc. was founded in 1966 to save the Douglas Entrance, which, believe it or not, was slated for demolition at the time to make way for a supermarket parking lot. As such, the North Ponce Neighborhood Conservation District, where the Douglas Entrance and The Garden of Our Lord are located, will always have a special place in our hearts. Since then, the Villagers have continued to advocate for the preservation of sites and structures.

The Garden of Our Lord is a one-of-a-kind contemplative garden that contributes to the unique ambience of the North Ponce District and historic fabric of Coral Gables, The City Beautiful. There is nothing else like it in the vicinity. Thus, we also celebrate the Garden as an outstanding work of Robert Fitch Smith, an architect and planner of national repute.

As stated in the Coral Gables Zoning Code, "the built environment reflects the beliefs, values, creative expressions, and technical capacity at a place in time in history. Historic preservation preserves those structures and spaces that tell the story of the community's historic past." Historic sites such as The Garden of Our Lord portray the City's story of progress, change and preservation; they are valuable, non-renewable resources that embody our collective heritage. The Garden of Our Lord clearly meets the criteria and should be preserved.

We are saddened by the recent loss of our beloved member, long-time Gableite and *preservationist extraordinaire* Sallye Jude but are honored to join the effort to ask for historic designation of The Garden of Our Lord, which was the last major preservation effort Mrs. Jude was involved with in Coral Gables.

Sincerely,

Sue Medina  
President, The Villagers, Inc.

**Lyons, Nancy**

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**From:** Howard Berman <habdc@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 16, 2023 10:23 AM  
**To:** Adams, Warren  
**Cc:** Brett Gillis  
**Subject:** Garden of Our Lord

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

*Dear Historic Preservation Board,*

I wish to add my voice to those of the many Coral Gables neighbors who believe that The Garden of Our Lord qualifies for historic designation as a local historic landmark. As per the 270-page application, the Garden has significant character, interest or value as part of the historical, cultural, archaeological, aesthetic or architectural heritage of the City. A property must meet at least one (1) of the criteria outlined. The Code clearly states that properties which meet the criteria shall be designated. Experts have identified nine [9] criteria.

The Garden is a treasure in Coral Gables. It has great significance culturally, historically, aesthetically, ecologically, and architecturally as per expert narratives. Only one criterion is needed for the Garden to qualify for historic landmark designation.

*Sincerely,*

*Rabbi Howard A. Berman*

*501 Alcazar Avenue, Coral Gables*

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Sent from my iPhone



## Lyons, Nancy

---

**From:** Maricris Longo <maricrislongo@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 16, 2023 2:52 PM  
**To:** HIST  
**Cc:** Karelia Carbonell; Adams, Warren; Anderson, Rhonda; Lago, Vince; Mena, Michael  
**Subject:** Hello. The Garden of our Lord historic designation

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

My name is Maria Cristina Longo and I own a historic home at 16 Phoenetia Avenue, where I have resided for almost 7 years. Sixteen Phoenetia Avenue is about a 3-minute walk east from the Garden of our Lord. There are 4 historic homes on Phoenetia Avenue, including the historic John Douglas' home, and the rest of the properties on my block are multi-family buildings.

I know this section of my neighborhood intimately because I walk my dog Oliver everyday on the same route. First, we stroll to the west of my home on Phoenetia Avenue to Galiano Street; then we turn south on Galiano until we reach Sidonia Street; from Sidonia Street we walk east to East Ponce Blvd; and next we walk north on East Ponce straight to the women's Club and back home on Phoenetia Avenue.

I urge you to please designate the Garden of our Lord historic based on its significant aesthetic value to the neighborhood's character. The aesthetic significance is easily identifiable because this garden strongly complements the Women's Club and the green corridor on east ponce De Leon. The green corridor starts at the small park on the intersection with Sidonia Street and East Ponce De Leon Blvd.

The garden and its wall were designed by the notable architect Robert Fitch Smith, who is the same architect who designed the beautiful Nell Montgomery Garden at Fairchild Tropical Garden in 1949. The garden of our Lord was designed ***intentionally*** by Fitch Smith to complement the green corridor on East Ponce Blvd and the historic Women's Club. For example, the design and pattern of the coral rock on the garden wall and on the Women's Club walls are the same. Moreover, The garden is not just a gathering place, but it is also a key contributor to the historic streetscape and the pedestrian experience on the "green corridor".

I urge you to please evaluate this garden in the **context** of its aesthetic contribution to the green corridor and the neighborhood.

Additionally, the North Ponce Neighborhood faces the challenge that property owners of the multi-family properties on Phoenetia Avenue do not reside on the properties and a large majority do not even reside in Florida. Therefore, they do not know of the potential negative effect on the neighborhood's character and its aesthetic value if this garden is demolished and destroyed.

I greatly appreciate your time and your participation in this very important Board and I please urge you to have the moral fortitude to designate the Garden of our Lord historic.

Sincerely,  
Maricris Longo

305.798.0156 | [maricrislongo@gmail.com](mailto:maricrislongo@gmail.com)



## Lyons, Nancy

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**From:** mervol@aol.com  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 15, 2023 11:39 AM  
**To:** Adams, Warren  
**Cc:** Urquia, Billy; City Clerk  
**Subject:** Historic designation of The Garden of Our Lord

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

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From: mervol@aol.com  
To: wadams@coralgables.com  
Cc: burquia@coralgables.com, cityclerk@coralgables.com  
Sent: 1/15/2023 11:36:06 AM Eastern Standard Time  
Subject: Historic designation of The Garden of Our Lord

As you know, The Garden of Our Lord more than qualifies for historic designation as a local historic landmark. Now consider the equally historic consequences if the Garden is not designated historic and, in fact, disappears from its original place in the aesthetic, architectural, cultural, ecological, religious and commemorative fabric of Coral Gables.

Such a loss would be irreparable. Yet also preventable.

As custodians of The City Beautiful's patrimony, the Historic Preservation Board should support The Garden of Our Lord's historic designation application. Such an action will confirm not only the City's commitment to George Merrick's early 20th-century vision but also its identity as a multitudinous, enlightened city of the 21st century.

With such designation, The Garden of Our Lord could still be integrated as part of Sergio Pino's planned mixed-use development of this site, resulting in a potential public-private partnership benefiting all the participants, including historic preservationists and neighboring residents.

Thank you for your consideration of this point of view.

Bruce Fitzgerald  
Coral Gables resident since 2000

## Lyons, Nancy

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**From:** sheryl gold <shergoldcom@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 15, 2023 12:51 PM  
**To:** Adams, Warren  
**Subject:** Historic Preservation Board hearing - The Garden of Our Lord

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Mr. Adams,

Please forward to the HPB members.

Thank you,  
Sheryl Gold

*January 15, 2023*

*Dear Members of the City of Coral Gables Historic Preservation Board,*

*I support Bonnie Bolton and the historic designation of The Garden of Our Lord as a local historic landmark.*

*There should be no question that The Garden of Our Lord qualifies for historic designation. As documented in the 270-page application, the Garden has significant character, interest or value as part of the historical, cultural, archaeological, aesthetic or architectural heritage of the City. According to the City Code, a property must meet at least one (1) of the criteria outlined. In this case, multiple highly respected, objective experts have identified nine [9] criteria.*

*The Garden is unique in Coral Gables. It has great significance culturally, historically, aesthetically, ecologically, and architecturally as per the experts' narratives. Only one criterion is needed for the Garden to qualify for historic landmark designation.*

*As a long time advocate for historic preservation and greenspace who recently submitted an application for another deserving property that was curiously rejected by the Historic Resources Dept., I urge you to support this designation and not allow yet another property to be bulldozed and erased from history due to developer self-interests.*

*Sincerely,*

*Sheryl Gold  
721 Biltmore Way*

## Lyons, Nancy

---

**From:** vicki cerda <vicki\_cerda@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 16, 2023 9:13 AM  
**To:** Adams, Warren  
**Cc:** City Clerk; info@historiccoralgables.org  
**Subject:** Letter for the HPB members in support of the designation of the Garden of Our Lord as a historic landmark & in opposition to changing the zoning to commercial/residential

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Members of the Historic Preservation Board,

**As a long time resident of Coral Gables, I have been following this story and I strongly support the designation of the Garden of Our Lord as a historic landmark under many of the criteria established by the City — only ONE which is needed.**

Among other criteria it meets as outlined in detail in the 270-page application, it only needs to meet at least one (1) of the criteria outlined. It meets many including the one for cultural and historical significance. It also meets architectural significance criteria as the work of renowned South Florida architect, Robert Fitch Smith. I am in agreement with the respected Professors of Architecture at the University of Miami Joanna Lombard Hector, AIA and Rocco Ceo, FAIA who wrote the criteria for the Garden's architectural significance and who are the authors of Historic Landscapes.

The Garden also has tremendous aesthetic and ecological significance and the tree canopy is substantial and must be preserved. I also strongly object to the plan by the developer to remove the old growth trees with Spanish Moss from the swale on Antilla and East Ponce which is part of a vital "green corridor" in our city.

**I also strongly object to the developer receiving a variance to change the zoning of the Garden from SPECIAL USE to Residential/Commercial.** It was bought as it was, not to change the conditions later — this should not now or ever be approved.

**In summary I wholeheartedly agree with Ms. Bonnie Bolton and the many other concerned residents who support the designation of the Garden of Our Lord as the historic landmark that it is. It meets several criteria for designation. It is a unique landmark in the City of Coral Gables. The Garden of Our Lord must be designated historic. Please vote to support this designation.**

Sincerely,

Maria Cerda  
1216 Asturia Avenue, Coral Gables

## Lyons, Nancy

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**From:** Davis, Yolande  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 18, 2023 8:10 AM  
**To:** Santiago, Lina; Urquia, Billy; Suarez, Cristina; Ramos, Miriam; Adams, Warren  
**Cc:** Dacosta, Susan; Chen, Brigitte; Quintana, Gabriela  
**Subject:** RE: 110 Phoenetia Ave, The Garden of our Lord historic designation

Good Morning Lina:

Confirming receipt of your email below.

Thank you and have a wonderful day.

Best,

Yoli

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**From:** Santiago, Lina <[lsantiago@coralgables.com](mailto:lsantiago@coralgables.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 17, 2023 4:57 PM  
**To:** Urquia, Billy <[burquia@coralgables.com](mailto:burquia@coralgables.com)>; Suarez, Cristina <[csuarez@coralgables.com](mailto:csuarez@coralgables.com)>; Ramos, Miriam <[mramos@coralgables.com](mailto:mramos@coralgables.com)>; Adams, Warren <[wadams@coralgables.com](mailto:wadams@coralgables.com)>  
**Cc:** Dacosta, Susan <[sdacosta@coralgables.com](mailto:sdacosta@coralgables.com)>; Davis, Yolande <[ydavis@coralgables.com](mailto:ydavis@coralgables.com)>; Chen, Brigitte <[bchen@coralgables.com](mailto:bchen@coralgables.com)>; Quintana, Gabriela <[gquintana@coralgables.com](mailto:gquintana@coralgables.com)>  
**Subject:** FW: 110 Phoenetia Ave, The Garden of our Lord historic designation

Good afternoon,

Please see email below from resident Art Kozyrovicius re: The Garden of our Lord Historic Designation.

Best,

Lina

**Lina Santiago**  
Commission Liaison  
Office of the City Commission  
405 Biltmore Way, 2nd Floor  
E: [lsantiago@coralgables.com](mailto:lsantiago@coralgables.com)  
O: 305-569-1817

---

**From:** Anderson, Rhonda <[randerson@coralgables.com](mailto:randerson@coralgables.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 17, 2023 11:36 AM  
**To:** Santiago, Lina <[lsantiago@coralgables.com](mailto:lsantiago@coralgables.com)>  
**Subject:** Fwd: 110 Phoenetia Ave, The Garden of our Lord historic designation

Good morning Lina. Please forward the email below to the Clerk, Historic and the City Attorney.

Thank you,

Rhonda

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**From:** Art Kozyrovicius <[artkozy@gmail.com](mailto:artkozy@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, January 17, 2023 11:10:43 AM

**To:** HIST <[HIST@coralgables.com](mailto:HIST@coralgables.com)>

**Cc:** [karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com](mailto:karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com) <[karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com](mailto:karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com)>; Lago, Vince <[vlago@coralgables.com](mailto:vlago@coralgables.com)>; Mena, Michael <[mmena@coralgables.com](mailto:mmena@coralgables.com)>; Anderson, Rhonda <[randerson@coralgables.com](mailto:randerson@coralgables.com)>; Menendez, Kirk <[kmenendez@coralgables.com](mailto:kmenendez@coralgables.com)>; Cason, James <[jcason@coralgables.com](mailto:jcason@coralgables.com)>

**Subject:** 110 Phoenetia Ave, The Garden of our Lord historic designation

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

The Honorable Mayor Lago, The City Commissioners and The Historic Preservation Board:

My name is Art Kozyrovicius and I would like to express my full support to designate 110 Phoenetia Avenue (The Garden of our Lord) as a historic property in the upcoming Historic Preservation Board meeting tomorrow.

My wife Solveiga and I own 24 Phoenetia Ave, a historic home a block away from the Garden of our Lord. We have lived here for over a year and bought our house because of the character of the property, the street and the surrounding neighborhood. We also chose Coral Gables as our residence because of the historical nature of the city and it's commitment to being green and protecting the history and the character that was planned and created from the City's inception.

We love to walk the streets of our neighborhood and other neighborhoods in Coral Gables with our daughter and enjoy the greenery and the history with all the unique features and character. My wife is also a member of the Woman's Club across the street which represents part of the rich history around.

The Garden of Our Lord is a tranquil place representing everything Coral Gables is about, and it is part of the "green corridor" which runs from East Ponce to the Douglas Entrance. The Garden is an essential part of the neighborhood, and we are surprised it has not been designated historic in the past. It has been designed by the notable architect Robert Fitch Smith with a specific intention and purpose, and we should make sure we treasure and protect it to honor those intentions and the identity of the neighborhood.

We believe that The Garden of our Lord has to be designated as a historic property, and no large residential/commercial development should be considered for the property beyond the improvements necessary to maintain the Garden and make it a historic and park facility accessible to the public for it's intended use.

We urge you to evaluate the Garden of our Lord in the context of it's historic and aesthetic contribution to the green corridor and the neighborhood.

Thank you for your attention and participation in this Board, and for your commitment to the City of Coral Gables differentiation qualities that respect history and nature.

Respectfully,

Art Kozyrovicius

Solveiga Vailionyte-Kozyroviciene

## Lyons, Nancy

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**From:** Thomas Spina <thomas.spina@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 17, 2023 9:43 AM  
**To:** HIST  
**Cc:** karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com; wadams@miamigov.com; Anderson, Rhonda; Lago, Vince; Mena, Michael  
**Subject:** The Garden of our Lord Historic Designation

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Thomas Spina  
20 Phoenetia Ave.  
Coral Gables, FL 33134

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Thomas Spina and my family and I own a historic home at 20 Phoenetia Avenue since 2014. Our home is only a short walk to the Garden of our Lord and the Coral Gables Woman's Club where my wife is an active member. Although there are many multi - family homes on our block, there are 4 historic home owners that must fight to keep our area from being unrecognizable while while basic needs in our area like transportation from the Freebee are ignored because we are "out of range" yet building after building is being approved in the area.

Having come from working at the New York City Economic Development Corporation under the Bloomberg Administration, I am pro - development with a purpose and without changing the entire landscape of a neighborhood. As a building has already gone up next across from the Coral Gables Woman's Club, the few historic owners were forced to get Residential Parking Permits due to the overcrowding and parking on the streets from the smaller, older multi - family homes. Hearing of the new pending project just across the street from that building, up the block from our homes, across from the Historic Coral Gables Woman's Club seems really out of line with being historic neighborhoods. On top of that, this site is with the Garden of our Lord and Church. The simple aesthetic significance is so important to the meaning of our neighborhood and would urge you to reconsider this area for development. There is simply NO green space that someone could offer that could replace this historic location, especially next to the Coral Gables Woman's Club.

We put windows and doors on our home some years back and waiting for over 6 months from the historic board to approve our plans and we had to alter our plan because they didn't like what putting a door on our bedroom would do even though both historic homes on either side of mine have one. If residents are to be held to a standard that seems overbearing, it is time for you to put the same standard to these builders and for you to actually mean what you say when you are talking about historic preservation. I urge your o get a grip on this project and halt the historic garden. There is no need for me to give you a history lesson on it as we can all read the push to get this save this land for our neighborhood. It would be wonderful for the first time to feel that our area of Coral Gables is not left out and used as a designated high rise building area with little to no rhyme or reason other than to add more buildings.

Again, our area has many multi - family homes. Many of the residents are not from around here or do not stay long. Doing what you are planning especially in the direct area of the historic home owners is only destroying our property value in the future. We will be homes within a city leaving them undesirable. Will you then allow our historic designations to be removed so that we can sell to a developer to finish the job in our area and just



build another building? I doubt that with what I went through with windows. Again, I urge you to please evaluate this entire area by starting with the garden and finally help the owners of this area that you oversee.

Thank you for your time in this matter and allowing me to express my feelings on this important topic and I urge you here to do the right thing by the people and the true history of what the Garden of our Lord represents to our neighborhood that is often glazed over.

Sincerely,

Thomas Janin



**MIAMI DESIGN PRESERVATION LEAGUE**

1001 Ocean Drive, Miami Beach, FL 33139  
P.O. Box 190180, Miami Beach, FL 33119-0180  
Phone 305-672-2014 [www.mdpl.org](http://www.mdpl.org)

1-12-22

Dear Mr. Adams and Members of the Historic Preservation Board,

Since the time Barbara Baer Capitman, John Capitman, Leonard Horowitz, and Lillian Barber identified the concentration of Art Deco buildings that would eventually become the Art Deco District, Miami Design Preservation League (MDPL) has been dedicated to preserving, protecting, and promoting the cultural, social, economic, environmental and architectural integrity of Miami Beach and surrounding areas.

Historic sites are special places, valuable resources. The Garden of Our Lord is undoubtedly one of these. The Coral Gables Zoning Code confirms that the eligibility of any potential local historic landmark shall be based on meeting one or more of the criteria, and the Garden of Our Lord meets several:

- historical** (for exemplifying the historical, cultural, political, economic, or social trends of the community as one of the first biblical gardens in America),
- architectural** (for the site's connection to its designer, prominent architect Robert Fitch Smith; and for embodying those distinguishing characteristics of the method of construction of a biblical garden; and for the the innovation or adaptation of a garden to the South Florida environment and implementation and treatment of native coral rock),
- aesthetic significance** (as an environmental feature/green oasis in the midst of an urbanized neighborhood; and as an easily identifiable visual feature of a neighborhood).

We join Professors Ceo and Lombard and countless other members of the community in recommending that you designate the exceptionally unique and significant Garden of Our Lord as a historic site so that it is preserved for future generations.

Sincerely,

Daniel Ciraldo  
Executive Director  
Miami Design Preservation League

## Lyons, Nancy

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**From:** zully pardo <pardovi@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 24, 2022 3:58 AM  
**To:** Lago, Vince; Anderson, Rhonda; Menendez, Kirk; Adams, Warren; Dr Karelia Carbonell; Granell, Chelsea; Santiago, Lina  
**Subject:** 'The Garden of our Lord' 110 Pheonetia Ave - Historic Designation

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Jaime and ZullyPardo  
49 Campina Court  
Coral Gables, FL 33134

*Dear City Of Coral Gables,*

*We support Bonnie Bolton and the historic designation application of The Garden of Our Lord.*  
The Garden is a treasure in Coral Gables. It has great significance culturally, historically, aesthetically, ecologically, and architecturally as per well respected Professors of Architecture at the University of Miami, Rocco Ceo and Joanna Lombard. Only one criterion is needed for the Garden to qualify for historic landmark designation.

*Sincerely,*

*Jaime and ZullyPardo*  
*305-803-1506*

Sent from my iPhone

# STEPHEN D. PEARSON

10665 SW 62 Avenue  
Miami, Florida 33156

Ph: (305) 233-3619  
wadadasaw@gmail.com

January 11, 2023

To Members, Historic Preservation Board

Re: The Garden of our Lord  
110 Phoenetia Avenue  
Coral Gables, Florida

Dear Members of the Historic Preservation Board:

I am writing to express my support for preserving The Garden of the Lord. I am not an architect so cannot speak much for the value of the architecture, although to me it is very beautiful. However, as a leader in the horticulture community and a former Director of the Gifford Arboretum at the University of Miami, I can speak on the value of plants and green spaces.

I feel strongly that the garden aspects of the site deserve to be preserved not only for their historic significance, but also because of their value to the environment and to the mental health of our residents. Far too many projects are being approved in Coral Gables that are basically sidewalk to sidewalk concrete and I feel that Coral Gables has lost its way from its historic vision of creating the City Beautiful. I cannot do anything to undue the significant harm that has already been done by so many recent projects, but I want to express my conviction that, at the very least, the garden aspects of the Garden of Our Lord be protected. It is noteworthy, that the coral rock parts of the garden are also of historic importance. One of John Gifford's legacies was to encourage the use of local building materials in our buildings and coral rock was very much part of that historic legacy that should be preserved.

I hope that you will preserve the entire Garden of Our Lord, but at the very least, please preserve the garden portions of this historic site.

Very truly yours,

  
Stephen D. Pearson

## Lyons, Nancy

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**From:** Robert A. Burr <rob@quantumleap.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 29, 2022 11:19 AM  
**To:** Lago, Vince  
**Cc:** Mena, Michael; Anderson, Rhonda; Menendez, Kirk; Adams, Warren; Iglesias, Peter  
**Subject:** Create Historic Zone around Gables Woman's Club and the Saint James Church

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

### Create Historic Zone around Gables Woman's Club and the Saint James Church

Honoring the legacy of key properties along East Ponce de Leon Boulevard should be a goal for all who appreciate and respect the historical foundations of this city, specifically the depression-era Coral Gables Woman's Club and the Saint James property and sacred garden.

Thankfully, the Woman's Club has found a means of support in the rental of the property for special events, a business model that serves the purpose of maintaining the property in perpetuity while sharing it with the public as a special place for celebrations.

Rather than a stark redevelopment of the historic Saint James block that would forever disturb the tranquility of the neighborhood, I challenge the city to be creative in imagining the best possible use of the sacred land which properly maintains the character of the peaceful garden and historic edifice, respecting the fine architecture of Robert Fitch Smith.

As this northeast Gables neighborhood evolves with grandiose visions of luxury high rise towers, carve out a small section that will forever reflect the simple times, the proud history of the neighborhood in perpetuity.

Engage with a non-profit organization, similar to the deal which saved the Miracle Theatre, to operate the property as a public venue for special events, sharing and appreciating this marvelous and majestic space, rather than transforming the block into a modern ivory tower.

Yes, it takes imagination, it takes a lot of work and it won't be easy, but neither was the campaign to save the Biltmore Hotel or the valiant effort which restored the Pinewood Cemetery. As a city, we can be profoundly proud of these accomplishments.

Respect and decency pays off in the long run when a city manages to first recognize -- then save -- its most valuable assets.

Create a historic zone around these two blocks on East Ponce de Leon Boulevard. Maximize the potential for these venerable properties and take a bow for the effort to respect history.

Robert A. Burr  
Quantum Leap Network  
Great Gables Guide  
Miami Pioneers and Natives of Dade  
Email: rob@quantumleap.net  
Cell: 305-439-1376



## Lyons, Nancy

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**From:** Karelia Carbonell <karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 11, 2023 12:07 PM  
**To:** Adams, Warren  
**Subject:** Fwd: The Garden of Our Lord

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

On Behalf of Josephine Johnson in support of Bonnie Bolton's application:

On Sun, Jan 8, 2023 at 9:15 PM Josephine Johnson <[jada39@gmail.com](mailto:jada39@gmail.com)> wrote:

I wish to add my support for the historic preservation of The Garden of Our Lord; despite its sale by the Lutheran church. Thus far, Coral Gables is not a community in which desacralized churches are preserved and reimagined for housing, or school buildings rethought for multi-family homes and artists' studios.

My reasons for support are threefold: First, the honoring of intellectual property. Second, the opportunity to enrich the City's green space for the residents of and visitors to the Garden District. Third the important matter of our City's ethics and the State's directions regarding burial sites. The following, three examples complement my concerns.

In this instance honoring intellectual property refers to burial directions or spoken wishes of those who expected their ashes to remain in the Lutheran church "Garden" in perpetuity, two words often ignored where there is financial gain. Miami historian Arva Moore, UM Trustee and editor of Tequesta, published an account of a forgotten cemetery in the Florida Keys: Cheeca Lodge developers in Islamorada were endeavoring to remove human remains from the beach in order to build further condo development. Human remains were scheduled to be sent for reburial in Homestead. However, discovery of old papers and government records, reconfirmed by oral histories, proved that the site in question had been deeded in the 1800s to the nearby Methodist Church. Development was put on immediate hold; remains of pioneers beneath hurricane- damaged burial markers and statuary and those in unmarked graves would never be shipped to Homestead. After reconstitution, the Methodist church re-sacralized the land in perpetuity, the eventual historic marker would be monitored by the State of Florida.

The outcome of this historic preservation is one of giving and mindfulness, providing long-lasting benefits to all the players. It united community support; brought generous cooperation from Cheeca Lodge; their contractors improved sub-structure, fencing and landscape of the newly sacralized and reconstituted cemetery; the enriched seascape is a welcome haven for pioneer families. Cheeca guests and visitors are now aware of Key history and of the pioneers who made it happen.

Another example is relevant in CG's Ponce Plaza development, We recall the issue of the homestead across the driveway from Loewe's Hotel; how the developers offered the homesteader a rich sum of cash and attractive auto to vacate his property. Yet the rights of intellectual and physical property prevailed. The inclusion of this homely homestead midst the grandeur of its surroundings provides a useful pause. Perhaps its forlorn image reminds us of the unfortunate deterioration of the Garden of Our Lord or because the homesteader unknowingly offers much for contemplation and perspective - about where we are in our own histories and ethics and what each respects, or not, of Coral Gables history.

Last - within the soil of the Coral Gables Congregational Church small garden lie the ashes of residents whose families trust they will rest in perpetuity. One particular atheist resident attended weekly services at the church, he explained, for reasons of contemplation, inspiration, community and



fellowship. I can no more imagine the transport of his ashes to Homestead than I can the remains of 1800s and 1900s pioneers from Islamorada, or one lone outlier shifting to a room at Loewe's Hotel. Beyond sparing the environment wherever possible, "The Garden," close to the East Ponce historic fountain, the green space commemorating Jose Marti, as well as the neighboring Women's Club provide a very strong aesthetic for the Garden District and its neighbors, a sense of history and continuity being critical to the human psyche.

With its plantings of saplings and seeds from holy land, "The Garden" waits to give solace, hope and aesthetic comfort again. One cannot trivialize or minimize these qualities of life in any community. I hope our City and the present buyer-developer will rethink the multitude of benefits inherent in preservation for a community wavering in what is most valuable to its integrity.

Respectfully,  
Josephine Johnson, PhD  
Co-Founder Deerborne School, Coral Gables, 1952  
Professor Emeritus and Chair Emeritus,  
University of Miami, Coral Gables.

## Lyons, Nancy

---

**From:** Lisa M <leemarie10@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, November 27, 2022 1:46 PM  
**To:** Lago, Vince; Anderson, Rhonda; Menendez, Kirk; Eaizenstat@coralgables.com; rbehar@coralgables.com; jgrabriel@coralgables.com; CMiro@coralgables.com; LReuelta@coralgables.com; VTorre@coralgables.com; WWithers@coralgables.com; jcarty@cartyarchitecture.com; pkiliddjian@coralgables.com; cgibb@coralgables.com; ljauregui@coralgables.com; gpratt@coralgables.com; Rodriguez, Haroldo; dsackman@coralgables.com; Adams, Warren  
**Subject:** The Choice is Clear, We Must Save The Garden of Our Lord

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear City of Coral Gables Mayor, Commissioners, Planning and Zoning, Board of Architects, City Planner, and all concerned.

It has recently been brought to my attention that a developer plans to demolish the Garden of our Lord and the specimen oak trees on this property so rich in history. It is a shameful and sad state of affairs that the city of Coral Gables would allow the Garden of our Lord created in 1951, located at the corner of East Ponce and Phoenicia Avenue to be torn down, disassembled or relocated. Any of those options is an absurdity.

The church, school, playground, 100 + year old live oak, (that cannot survive being moved), the architecture of Robert Fitch Smith, the Garden of Our Lord's significance as a burial ground, a botanical treasure of plants mentioned in the Bible, a repository of plaques commemorating military and civic heroes, and a key component of the green corridor that runs from Ponce to the Douglas Entrance just to name a few are clearly the markings of an historical site. Allowing this important unique landmark to be destroyed or moved would be a travesty and a complete embarrassment to our city.

Actually, by all rights this unique landmark already is clearly an historical site set in a neighborhood that should also be deemed historic as well. Bonnie Bolton presented her 130-page application to the city asking for the Garden of our Lord to be designated historic. Thoughtfully naming 9 qualifying criteria (only 1 criteria is required to be deemed historic) and clearly pointing out all the markings of an historical site. Now it is just the city that must officially recognize it as such, in order to save it from being destroyed by an out of place 9 story high rise mixed-use apartment building.

This hidden in plain site jewel in our great city is one of the original entrance ways into the city of Coral Gables from its founding. Complete with a green corridor lined with specimen trees impressively leading into the city's north entrance as the original founders intended. Robert Fitch Smith incorporated coral rock into the Garden's bench wall, grotto and walkways to complement The Women's Club which sits on the adjacent block. The Garden is an essential part of the neighborhood and it meets the cities criteria for historic designation under the category of aesthetic significance because it "is an easily identifiable feature of its neighborhood." Altering this historic site will have an irreversible, detrimental and terribly negative impact on the surrounding area including The Coral Gables Women's Club right across the street, and forever changing the aesthetic fabric and charm of this oasis like neighborhood filled with rich history and tranquility.

If the city leaders were not so blinded by overdevelopment goals, giving developers carte blanche, creating out of place developments of mixed-use high rises, "the bigger the better" and weren't so deaf to the cry's of its residents craving preservation of our historic city, this magnificent 1.5 acre property that the garden sits on, has the potential and notoriety of a landmark site, such as a botanical garden, on the scale of a Matheson Hammock and Fairchild Tropical Gardens. This unique landmark should be preserved and cherished the same way the city of Pincrest fought to preserve

Pinecrest Gardens. Imagine if some of our beloved and prized historic landmarks that we know today, such as the Merrick House, Biltmore Hotel, Venetian Pool, City Hall, The Women's Club, and the list goes on, were thoughtlessly torn down and disregarded by our predecessors “in the name of progress.” What if our predecessors didn’t make the right choice to preserve these cherished historic sites. How sad it would be for us today without them. Often times, in order to successfully move forward with a clear and wise vision, we must respectfully reflect back upon history. If we don’t choose correctly now, this priceless unique landmark will be lost forever. This is our time in history to shine and make the right choice too.

It is my understanding that the developer purchased this property knowing it was zoned for Special Use, and therefore did not have As of Right zoning to build a 9 story apartment mixed-use high rise project, but seems he may have taken it for granted that the city officials would oblige. Since It was not zoned for residential, commercial or mixed use and it was zoned for special use only, the city should stand firm and not give in to this developers change of use request. This zoning needs to remain as special use and it is in the city’s power to do so. The city has every moral, legal and ethical obligation to uphold its own laws and ordinances, residents wishes and the founding fathers original intentions of this unique landmark by enforcing that the special use zoning remains intact in order to historically preserve this very valuable, sacred unique landmark in our city beautiful.

History will prove that in the past, lawsuits had to be brought by residents against the city just to get the proper result for the community, many times winning the court’s ruling and proving the city’s choices to be unlawful. It is time for the city to stop selling out the heart and soul of Coral Gables one development after another and govern for the residents. It is time for the city to represent our community well by standing up, being our voice, making choices for the well being of the residents quality of life and not continuing to enrich the pockets of the wealthy developers.

In light of the historic application presented to the city by Bonnie Bolton, any choice the city would make other than standing it’s ground to preserve this historic unique landmark from becoming another oversized out of place mixed-use development would be an absolute mistake on the city’s part and reflect an absence of moral fiber and an appearance of greed. The city would have no excuse for its allowance. The residents know it and the city knows it.

Bonnie Bolton should be celebrated by the city as the one bringing all of the valuable hidden treasures of this Coral Gables jewel to light (with an equitable governing body she would be).

Now this unique landmark just needs the city’s blessing and stamp of approval to make it all official. The city officials have a moral, legal and ethical obligation to govern according to its own laws and ordinances, residents wishes and the founding fathers original intentions to do make the right choice. Certainly they should not allow this unique landmark, which is well deserving of historic designation, to be destroyed and replaced with a 9 story mixed-use apartment building that does not fit in or belong in that neighborhood. If you have any doubt about it being a very special unique landmark, please request a personal tour from Bonnie Bolton. You will be fascinated.

The choice is clear, we must save the Garden of our Lord. It is my strong belief that any other choice the city would make, other than approving its historic designation and denying the developers zoning change request, will live in infamy forever and ever as the worst mistake ever made by any mayor and commissioners in the history of the City Coral Gables. I feel that all city officials, in fact, need to make the right choice, use wisdom and fight with all their might to preserve this beautiful block of history by standing firm against overdevelopment and choosing to make this unique landmark historic.

Sincerely,  
Lisa Maroon,  
Life long resident

## Lyons, Nancy

---

**From:** Lynne Blustein <lynneguini@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, December 11, 2022 2:06 PM  
**To:** Adams, Warren  
**Subject:** The garden

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr. Adams,  
Please do some soul searching and realize the garden in question is important in so many ways. I urge you to declare it an historical place.  
Your legacy will be an honorable one if you do.  
Thank you kindly,  
Lynne Blustein

*"Here's to all the dreamers, may our open hearts find rest."*

*Nanci Griffith*

December 26, 2022

To the Mayor of Coral Gables, The City Commissioners and the  
Historic Preservation Board

Dear City Officials:

The Garden of Our Lord, located in the north Gables, must be designated historic for a host of reasons I will discuss below. Many residents of the city, as well as others outside of Coral Gables, support its historic designation application primarily because it meets several criteria for designation, and is among the most unique landmarks of the City of Coral Gables.

Some background: The Garden of Our Lord is part of a “green corridor” running from East Ponce to the Douglas Entrance. It is lined with specimen trees covered with Spanish Moss. The Garden is an essential part of the neighborhood, and it meets the city’s criteria for historic designation under the category of “aesthetic significance” since it “is an easily identifiable feature of its neighborhood.” Sadly, a developer who has purchased the property it stands on, wants to demolish the Garden, as well as remove the specimen trees that line the swale on Antilla Avenue and East Ponce.

The Garden also merits historic designation because of its design. The architect was Robert Fitch Smith, one of the area’s most important mid-1900s architects, whose work remains in

many Miami and S. Florida communities. Smith employed oolite limestone in the building of the Garden's bench, wall, grotto and walkways to complement the nearby Coral Gables Woman's Club compound.

The Garden has received many kudos over the decades. Two University of Miami architecture professors, Joanna Lombard and Rocco Ceo, have lauded it for its design while insisting also that it must be historically designated.

Further, the zoning for the block hosting the Garden is designated "Special Use." This zoning category for that block was never meant for live/work or a residential use. It is located in a residential neighborhood, and offices should not encroach into a residential neighborhood. The city opposes the developer in his attempt to secure a variance to change the zoning from "Special Use."

I support with great enthusiasm the application of The Garden of Our Lord for historic designation.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Paul S. George, Ph.D.  
Historian



HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
ASSOCIATION OF CORAL GABLES

November 27, 2022

Landmarks Advisory Board Meeting November 28, 2022

**Discussion Item: 4929 "The Garden of Our Lord"**

On behalf of the Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables, please accept this letter in **support** of the Garden of Our Lord historic designation application. It meets several criteria for designation. It is a unique landmark in the City of Coral Gables.

The Garden of Our Lord is part of a "green corridor" which runs from East Ponce until the Douglas Entrance. It is lined with specimen trees covered with Spanish Moss. The Garden is an essential part of the neighborhood and it meets the city's criteria for historic designation under the category of aesthetic significance because it "is an easily identifiable feature of its neighborhood."

The Garden is also more than worthy of historic designation because of its architecture. It was designed by noted architect, Robert Fitch Smith. Smith incorporated coral rock into the Garden's bench, wall, grotto and walkways to complement the historic Woman's Club which sits on the adjacent block. Joanna Lombard and Rocco Ceo wrote the architectural criteria for the Garden's historic designation. We agree with the well-respected Professors of Architecture at the University of Miami, Ceo and Lombard, that the Garden meets historic designation under the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance.

We also want to state that the zoning for the block upon which the Garden sits is designated Religious/Institution. The zoning for that block was never meant for live/work or residential use. It is in a residential neighborhood and commercial offices should not encroach into a residential neighborhood. The Commission should deny a zoning variance. Again, we stress our support of the Garden of Our Lord's historic designation application.

The Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables promotes the understanding and the importance of historic resources and their preservation in Coral Gables. We ask the Landmark Advisory Board to support the Garden of Our Lord's historic designation application.

Respectfully submitted,

Karella Martinez Carbonell, President Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables

**Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables**  
**Post Office Box 347944, Coral Gables, Florida 33234**  
**info@historiccoralgables.org**  
**www.historiccoralgables.org**

# FLORIDA TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION



January 6, 2023

Re: The Garden of our Lord  
110 Phoenetia Avenue  
Coral Gables, FL 33134

Mayor of Coral Gables Vince Lago  
City Commissioners  
Historic Preservation Board  
405 Biltmore Way  
Coral Gables, FL 33134

Dear City Officials,

Sallye Jude, a longtime Coral Gables resident, one of the founding members of the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation as well as an Emeritus Board Member and an incredible champion for historic preservation in Florida, sadly passed away in late December.

In my role as CEO of the Florida Trust, the statewide nonprofit dedicated to protecting and advocating for our state's extraordinary history and heritage, I have been honored to work with Sallye since first beginning with the organization at the end of 2016. Over the years we spoke about preservation policy and initiatives at the state and national level, how we could do a better job connecting the work of historic preservation with resiliency and protecting our environment. We also spoke about local preservation issues she cared about, like preserving the Marjory Stoneman Douglas House and the Coconut Grove Playhouse. She never stopped working to protect Florida's historic places – and she never forgot the meaning those places had for the people who had once been connected to them.

We have learned that just a few days prior to her passing, Sallye was advocating for the preservation of The Garden of Our Lord, on the grounds of St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church located in the North Gables. The Garden is in jeopardy of being lost to a developer. In an effort to honor Sallye's remarkable legacy, we are joining with members of the community to ask that you please consider the preservation of this meaningful garden and green space and designate the site as historic.

In addition to her leadership and impact with the Florida Trust, Sallye was deeply involved in preservation in the Miami area where she lived. She served on the boards of the Dade Heritage Trust, the Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables and the Deering Estate Foundation (among





## FLORIDA TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION



others). She also helped to create the Land Trust of Miami-Dade County and was an advisory board member of the State and National Board of the Trust for Public Land. In 1996, she was awarded the Florida Trust's Carl Weinhardt Award, since renamed the Legacy Award, to recognize her achievements in leadership in both state and national historic preservation. This is the highest award we share to recognize those who are preservation heroes in Florida. This year, to honor her commitment connecting preservation with environmental issues, we renamed our Florida Preservation Award recognizing this work the Sallye Jude Award for Resilient Preservation.

Sallye was certainly one of my preservation heroes. Like Sallye, the Florida Trust strongly supports the preservation of The Garden of our Lord. Together, I hope we can give her one last preservation win.

Thank you for your consideration, and for all you do to protect your community's history and heritage. Should you have any questions or request any additional information, I can be reached at 850-224-8128 or [mwyllie@floridatrust.org](mailto:mwyllie@floridatrust.org).

Sincerely,

Melissa Wyllie  
CEO & President





Nanette Martinez <nmartinez@nmprojects.org>

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## Historic Designation of Garden of our Lord Property

1 message

**Cheryl Jacobs** <cheryl@aiami.org>

Fri, Dec 16, 2022 at 10:11 AM

To: "Lago, Vince" <VLago@coralgables.com>, "mmena@coralgables.com" <mmena@coralgables.com>, "randerson@coralgables.com" <randerson@coralgables.com>, "kmenendez@coralgables.com" <kmenendez@coralgables.com>

Cc: Nanette Martinez <nmartinez@nmprojects.org>, Craig Aquart <caquart@mcharry.com>

Dear Mayor Lago, Vice Mayor Mena, Commissioner Anderson, and Commissioner Menendez:

On behalf of the AIA Miami Board of Directors and our 900+ members, we are writing in support of historic designation for the Garden of our Lord Property. Attached is a letter from our 2022 Board President, Craig Aquart, AIA.

Feel free to reach out if you have questions. Happy Holidays!

Cheryl H Jacobs

Executive Vice President



WE'VE MOVED!

2800 Ponce de Leon Suite 1300

Coral Gables, FL 33134

305-448-7488



Historic Designation Garden of Our Lord Property.pdf

69K



December 16, 2022

2022 Board of Directors

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Craig Aquart, AIA

President Elect  
Amanda Barton, AIA

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Cheryl H. Jacobs

Mayor Vince C. Lago  
Coral Gables City Commission  
Coral Gables City Hall  
405 Biltmore Way  
Coral Gables, FL 33134

Dear Mayor Lago and City Commissioners:

On behalf of the Miami Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, we are urging the city to move forward with the historic designation of the Garden of Our Lord property, adjacent to St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church, 110 Phoenetia Avenue, in the north part of Coral Gables. We believe the property has both historical and ecological value; its demolition would be a loss to the community and to the wildlife that inhabit the property.

The garden's (and church's) architect, Robert Fitch Smith, was a respected member of AIA and the community. Additionally, the garden includes numerous historical and memorial plaques. Smith has an impressive legacy. As one of the first six graduates of the University of Miami's Architecture program in 1931, Smith also was an involved community member serving on a variety of civic boards. He was also active in local and national AIA committees.

Another quite important reason to conserve and restore the garden is its value to the local environment. Its tree canopy and vegetation, as well as the mature trees along the property's perimeter swale, are an important aspect of the "green" corridor in north Coral Gables. The conservation of significant green spaces is crucial in helping to mitigate against climate change and simply to provide restful outdoor spaces for our increasingly urban population. We encourage you to find a way to preserve this valuable and historic green space: the garden itself and the adjacent trees.

Sincerely,

AIA MIAMI

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "C. Aquart", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Craig Aquart, AIA  
Chapter President

AIA Miami  
2800 Ponce de Leon Blvd, Suite 1300  
Miami, FL 33134  
Phone: 305.448.7488  
Email: [info@aiamiami.org](mailto:info@aiamiami.org)

To The Mayor of Coral Gables, The City Commissioners and the Historic Preservation Board,

The Garden of our Lord must be designated historic. We support its historic designation application. It meets several criteria for designation. It is a unique landmark in the city of Coral Gables.

The Garden of our Lord is part of a "green corridor" which runs from East Ponce until the Douglas Entrance. It is lined with specimen trees covered with Spanish Moss. The Garden is an essential part of the neighborhood and it meets the city's criteria for historic designation under the category of aesthetic significance because it "is an easily identifiable feature of its neighborhood." Not only does the developer want to demolish the Garden but he also wants to remove the specimen trees which line the swale on Antilla avenue and East Ponce. We strongly object to the developer removing all the trees from the swale on Antilla avenue and East Ponce.

The Garden is also more than worthy of historic designation because of its architecture. It was designed by noted architect, Robert Fitch Smith. Smith incorporated coral rock into the Garden's bench, wall, grotto and walkways to compliment The Woman's Club which sits on the adjacent block. Joanna Lombard and Rocco Ceo wrote the architectural criteria for the Garden's historic designation. We agree with the well respected Professors of Architecture at the University of Miami Ceo and Lombard that the Garden must be designated historic.

We also want to state that the zoning for the block upon which the Garden sits is designated SPECIAL USE. The zoning for that block was never meant for live/work or residential use. It is in a residential neighborhood and offices should not encroach into a residential neighborhood. The city must not allow the developer to get a variance to change the zoning from SPECIAL USE.

We support The Garden of our Lord's historic designation application.

Nahshon White, Architecture Student

Inchara Alaghatta, Architecture student

Alejandro Lecos, Architecture Student

Adrice Galloway, Architecture Student

Chelsea Cameron, Architecture Student

Emely Acobo, Architecture Student

Laura Arias, Architecture Student

Mariana Zora, architecture student

LUCIENNE WAMPOLÉ, ARCHITECT

Laura Pérez, Architecture Student

Nicole Galvizo, Architecture Student

ANDREA CROZIO, DESIGNER.

Jamie MacNizhol, Architect

Iasmine Rocha, Architecture student

ARCHITECTURE  
STUDENT

ASTHEV D. RODRIGUEZ ^

Tiffany Montañes, Architectural

Professional  
Rayda Almonte; Architect

Sandra Kustelus; Arch. Designer

BRIANNA MESA, ARCHITECTURE  
STUDENT

COOPER COPETAS, ARCHITECT

Chryshen Wallace Architect Student

STEFANO FALBO - ARCHITECT

DAVID SER, ARCHITECT

Kevin Falbo, ARCHITECT

GUEN SANTAYANA - SIB ARCHITECT

1300 Ponce de Leon Boulevard Apt. 506

Coral Gables, FL 33134

December 12, 2022

Coral Gables Historic Preservation Board

405 Biltmore Way

Coral Gables, FL 33134

Subject: Garden of Our Lord (Phoenetia Avenue)

Dear Board Members:

The purpose of this letter is to respectfully request that you take action to preserve the integrity of the Garden of Our Lord property, at its current location very near my residence.

My wife Alicia and I, now retired seniors, graduated from Coral Gables High School many years ago and love the City. As an environmental engineer with an additional certification in urban planning, working for a national firm, I have had the privilege of managing projects (notably the Stormwater Utility implementation) for the City under General Consulting contracts. The professionalism of the City's staff and elected officials made the City a valued client over the years.

After my wife and I recently moved to this neighborhood as a result of downsizing, it was a pleasure to learn about the Garden. To me, this property (wall, inscriptions and garden) has a very special character which enhances the identity and desirability of the area. In my opinion the wall's design and appearance integrate very well with the nearby Women's Club. I believe that if the Garden, already an important part of the "green corridor", were to be open to the public in the future, it would add great aesthetic and educational value to a neighborhood that is becoming increasingly urbanized.

My understanding is that a reputable developer has bought the entire property of which the Garden is a part. My hope is that ultimately a preserved Garden and an economically successful building can coexist in the property, by means of planning tools such as Planned Area Development and Transfer of Development Rights.

I regret not being able to attend your January 18, 2023 Board Meeting, because of preexisting medical care commitments. I thank you very much for your attention and wish you success in your deliberations.

Respectfully yours,



Armando I. Perez, PhD

To The Mayor of Coral Gables, The City Commissioners and the Historic Preservation Board,

The Garden of our Lord must be designated historic. We support its historic designation application. It meets several criteria for designation. It is a unique landmark in the city of Coral Gables.

The Garden of our Lord is part of a "green corridor" which runs from East Ponce until the Douglas Entrance. It is lined with specimen trees covered with Spanish Moss. The Garden is an essential part of the neighborhood and it meets the city's criteria for historic designation under the category of aesthetic significance because it "is an easily identifiable feature of its neighborhood." Not only does the developer want to demolish the Garden but he also wants to remove the specimen trees which line the swale on Antilla avenue and East Ponce. We strongly object to the developer removing all the trees from the swale on Antilla avenue and East Ponce.

The Garden is also more than worthy of historic designation because of its architecture. It was designed by noted architect, Robert Fitch Smith. Smith incorporated coral rock into the Garden's bench, wall, grotto and walkways to compliment The Woman's Club which sits on the adjacent block. Joanna Lombard and Rocco Ceo wrote the architectural criteria for the Garden's historic designation. We agree with the well respected Professors of Architecture at the University of Miami Ceo and Lombard that the Garden must be designated historic.

We also want to state that the zoning for the block upon which the Garden sits is designated SPECIAL USE. The zoning for that block was never meant for live/work or residential use. It is in a residential neighborhood and offices should not encroach into a residential neighborhood. The city must not allow the developer to get a variance to change the zoning from SPECIAL USE.

We support The Garden of our Lord's historic designation application.

Nahshon White, Architecture Student

Inchara Alaghatta, Architecture student

Alejandro Lecos, Architecture Student

Adrice Galloway, Architecture Student

Chelsea Cameron, Architecture Student

Emely Acobo, Architecture Student

Laura Arias, Architecture Student

Mariana Zora, architecture student

LUCIENNE WAMPOLÉ, ARCHITECT

Laura Pérez, Architecture Student

Nicole Galvizo, Architecture Student

ANDREA CROZIO, DESIGNER.

Jamie MacNizhol, Architect

Iasmine Rocha, Architecture student

ARCHITECTURE  
STUDENT

ASTHEV D. RODRIGUEZ ^

Tiffany Montañes, Architectural

Professional  
Rayda Almonte; Architect

Sandra Kustelus; Arch. Designer

BRIANNA MESA, ARCHITECTURE  
STUDENT

COOPER COPETAS, ARCHITECT

Chryshen Wallace Architect Student

STEFANO FALBO - ARCHITECT

DAVID SER, ARCHITECT

Kevin Falbo, ARCHITECT

GUEN SANTAYANA - SIB ARCHITECT

.....  
From the desk of Dr. Brett Gillis.....  
.....historian and preservationist.....  
.....

Members of the Historic Preservation Board and City Commission,

I am deeply troubled by the fact that the Crystal developer has no apparent plan to preserve the Garden of our Lord.

Think of the message you would send if this sacred garden were destroyed. You would destroy part of the North Ponce extension/green corridor. You would erase a sacred space - one of the first biblical gardens in America. You would remove tributes to our founder and soldiers that fought valiantly for America. You would demolish the work of acclaimed architect Robert Fitch Smith, AIA.

The Coral Gables Zoning Code states that *"the purpose of the designation of historic landmarks and districts is to promote the educational, cultural, and economic welfare of the public by preserving and protecting historic structures or sites, portions of structures, groups of structures, manmade or natural landscape elements, works of art, or integrated combinations thereof, which serve as visible reminders of the history and cultural heritage of the City, region, state or nation."*

How does The Garden of Our Lord not qualify? Are you kidding me? This is a no-brainer.

The Garden of our Lord meets the criteria and, thus, should be designated as a historic landmark, as per our code. The Garden's integrated combination of the aforementioned factors is remarkable. It is a unique site like the Alhambra Water Tower and De Soto Fountain. All are unique in their own way, with their own layers of significance. With its high level of integrity and value, the Garden has significant character, interest and value as part of our heritage.

The Garden meets several of the criteria for historic designation, even though only one (1) is necessary for designation.

With registration as a cemetery, it would qualify additionally for its association with historical events and distinctive design features.

I look at the list of the other historically designated sites in Coral Gables, and I do not see how you could, in good faith, turn this one down.

Like Reverend Theo Bartus spoke about at the Garden's groundbreaking.....the Garden of Our Lord is truly "A Venture in Faith." Though you have at times made it difficult for me to have faith, I must trust that with this one you will do the right thing and preserve this garden as a visible reminder for future generations. Its historical, cultural, architectural, aesthetic, educational, and green/environmental value must be preserved.

Sincerely,  
Brett Gillis

## THE SECRET GARDEN OF CORAL GABLES

In a "City Beautiful" where the lush greenscape is as much a defining characteristic as its celebrated 1920s Mediterranean Revival architecture, is it possible that a vintage religious memorial garden is now hiding in plain sight before it disappears forever?

"The Garden of Our Lord," designed in the City's early days by renowned South Florida architect Robert Fitch Smith, is a small, devotional outdoor sanctuary commemorating local pioneer families and featuring classical coral rock details similar to those found at Vizcaya's Farm Village. Situated in the North Ponce district of Coral Gables, the Garden is now closed to the public, having been purchased by a local developer who wishes to utilize a zoning variance to demolish this neighborhood landmark as part of a new mixed-use real estate project

Given the symbolic significance of "The Garden of Our Lord" and its status as an outstanding example of the work of a prominent local designer, we urge the City to grant historic designation to this hallowed site, with the possibility that it be sensitively incorporated into the developer's overall design plan.

Or will be until a special variance is granted to a local developer who plans to demolish this once-revered historic site?

The "Garden of Our Lord"

Bruce Fitzgerald



**CAROL DAMIAN, PH.D.  
1010 PALERMO AVENUE  
CORAL GABLES, FL 33134  
305-607-4150; CAROLDAMIAN9@GMAIL.COM**

September 15, 2022

To the Mayor of Coral Gables, The City Commissioners, and the Historic Preservation Board:

I am writing this letter in support of The Garden of Our Lord for historic designation and preservation in an area of Coral Gables (zoned Special Use) that is environmentally, aesthetically and spiritually significant to our City Beautiful. Designed by noted architect Robert Fitch Smith, the garden incorporates a coral rock wall, a grotto, and walkways through decades-old trees and memorial plots. To destroy these would be an insult to architectural history, and the neighborhood. The imposition of another high-density, oversized development is certainly against the wishes of the residents of the area, and beyond.

As the many letters of support for the Garden's designation attest, there is considerable interest in this project and its outcome, beginning with the need for historic designation. I join in asking for your support in recognizing the Garden and its future.

Thank you,  
Carol Damian  
**Vincent E. Damian**

Carol Damian  
Art Historian  
1010 Palermo Avenue

Cc: Bonnie Bolton; Karelia Carbonell

City of Coral Gables  
405 Biltmore Way

Re: Garden of Our Lord

St James Church Coral Gables

Dear Mayor Lago, Commissioners, and Historical Preservation Board,

I read 2 articles recently about the Garden of Our Lord at St James Lutheran Church property in East Ponce that has been sold to Century Homebuilders . This property has a very special garden created In 1951 with plants grown with seeds from Jerusalem, a marble statue of Christ, a grotto and many mature trees. All of this will be demolished by the developer.

This property must be designated Historic and Saved in situ.

-It was designed by Robert Fitch Smith who also designed the Tropical Audubon House

-Seeds for the plants were collected by UM faculty member, H. Westby

-At 70 years old it is not only a religious site but a War Memorial

-There are many mature trees that will be destroyed including those on the parkway

-I went to see this special garden but could only look over the gate.

PLEASE FIND THE GARDEN ELIGIBLE FOR PRESERVATION AS IT IS ZONED FOR SDPEICAL USE!

50 yr resident

Respectfully,  
Cheryl Akerman,

816 Sorolla Ave

Coral Gables City Commissioners  
Mayor Vince Lago  
Historic Resources Department

September 27, 2022

Dear Mr. Lago,

Many years ago as a small child I recall seeing a photo of a plaque and I asked my mother what it was. She said it was a memorial plaque for my Uncle Bill who was killed in World War II and it was in a memorial garden in Florida. Until recently that is all we knew about 'The Garden of Our Lord' in Coral Gables.

After reading all the articles from the Miami Herald and other information received from Bonnie Bolton I became aware of how the Garden has been purchased by a developer who wants to demolish it and build a large structure.

My grandfather, Charles William Carbeau, was one of the founders of the Garden and carefully established memorials for his son (my uncle) Captain Charles William Carbeau Jr. along with ALL other local service men who served and gave their lives during the war. One would expect that a memorial such as this, along with its unique vegetation, would be forever be acknowledged and honored by the City Historic Resources Department of the city of Coral Gables.

While I do not live in the area, I cherish the efforts and intentions of my grandparents and others who created the Garden for everlasting recognition of our military service people. Through all the years our family always honors my Uncle Bill and others on Memorial Day and other holidays throughout the year.

With so many unique aspects of the Garden along with the historical references to honor the local military combatants who served during the war the necessary continued preservation of the Garden is vital.

We support the application of Historic Designation for the Garden of Our Lord.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cindy Caldwell". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Cindy" and last name "Caldwell" clearly distinguishable.

Cindy Caldwell



# Coral Gables Neighbors Association

## Memorandum

Date: October 7, 2022  
To: Mayor Vince Lago, Vice-Mayor Mike Mena, Commissioners Rhonda Anderson,  
Jorge Fors, Kurt Menendez  
Re: The Garden of Our Lord

The Board of the Coral Gables Neighbors Association strongly supports Historic Designation by the City of Coral Gables for the Garden of our Lord located at Phoenetia Avenue and E. Ponce de Leon Boulevard.

We believe the overwhelming religious significance as well as the memorialization of Coral Gables' pioneers and veterans, in addition to the city's founding father, qualify this site as historic and should be appropriately designated and preserved.

The CGNA Board implores the City of Coral Gables to act accordingly.

Sincerely,

*Sue Kawalerski*

Sue Kawalerski, President  
& Coral Gables Neighbors Association Board of Directors  
CoralGablesNeighbors@gmail.com

Dear Honorable Mayor Lago and City Commissioners, History Preservation and City Planner,

I and my family have lived and owned property in the North Ponce Historic Garden apartment district since the 1980 's. My Grandfather, Dr. Rafael Diaz- Veira, First purchased property in this neighborhood. My mother Eneida Diaz and my sister and I live here. I and my family have lived in this neighborhood because of its natural beauty.

I am deeply concerned by the proposed project at 110 Phoenetia Ave. I do not want the zoning for that block to be changed from Special use. I want the Garden of our Lord to be designated Historic and preserved by the city. The City must purchase the property and make it a part of the City of Coral Gables parks Department.

The Garden is one of the Unheralded Trophy properties in our City, the Garden is a very easily identifiable feature of the North Ponce Historic Garden apartment district. Please designate and preserve the Garden.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'DEB' followed by a stylized flourish.

Deborah Escalona



Karelia Carbonell <karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com>

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**Fw: Our Garden of the Lord**

1 message

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**Dolly MacIntyre** <macbirch@aol.com>

Tue, Sep 27, 2022 at 3:19 PM

Reply-To: Dolly MacIntyre <macbirch@aol.com>

To: Karelia Carbonell <karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com>

Karelia,

At Bonnie Bolton's request, I am sending you a copy of a letter that Sallye and I sent to the commissioners regarding the Garden of Our Lord. She said you would give it to her for her presentation packet.

Thanks,

Dolly MacIntyre

The Garden of the Lord is the highest and best use of the land on which it sits. What higher use could there be than a garden dedicated to God. Surely the developer can be creative in his design for luxury condos and make use of the Garden as an amenity for the project. Or better yet, how about affordable housing for people who work in religious or academic institutions. Do we really need any more luxury condos?

We urge the Commission to consider this carefully to be sure your decision really is the best one for the community.

Sallye Jude, [416 Viscaya Avenue, Coral Gables](#), 305-667-3233

Dolly MacIntyre, [409 Viscaya Avenue, Coral Gables](#), 305-460-0157

Dear Mayor and Commissioners,

Re Item:

**G.-2. 22-4617** Presentation concerning the "The Garden of our Lord" located at 110 Phoenetia Avenue. (Sponsored by Commissioner Menendez)

The Garden of Our Lord is worthy of historic designation status and I support its historic designation application. The Garden is a treasure in Coral Gables. It has great significance culturally, historically, aesthetically, ecologically, and architecturally. Yet above all, the Garden is part of a " green corridor" which runs from East Ponce until the Douglas Entrance. It is lined with specimen trees covered with Spanish Moss. The Garden is an essential part of the neighborhood and it meets the city's criteria for historic designation under the category of aesthetic significance because it "is an easily identifiable feature of its neighborhood."

### **Worthy of Preserving**

I commend Ms Bonnie Bolton for her relentless and selfless advocacy on behalf of the preservation of the Garden of Our Lord and I agree with Miami Herald journalist Ms Bea Hines when she observes, "some things are worthy of preserving."

And this Gables garden is worthy. It is no ordinary piece of land. It holds as much emotional aura as it does historical flora. Entering the walled enclave, one feels the spirit. And yes, as developer Mr Pino states in Hines' Miami Herald piece, it should "be handled with the utmost respect."

A garden sitting on consecrated ground should not only be respected but revered.

Founded in 1951 by parishioners as a biblical garden, seeds brought back from the Garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem germinated into plants that included date palms and clumps of bulrushes. Plantings also included hyssop and cypress, cassia, red sandalwood, apple, camphor and cedar of Lebanon, the oleander, mulberry, fig, myrtle, the balm tree and the spikenard shrub used for special anointing. Walking among the trees and shrubs native to the Holy Land, one is transported to an otherworldly experience hard to explain. An eden in the midst of our garden city. It is a memorial garden, and also a cemetery--a final resting place for some families. A sacred ground.

Seventy plus years ago, the Garden of Our Lord was one of only three biblical gardens in the United States, created as a sanctuary for prayer and meditation. Grieving families carved out a garden as a place of spiritual comfort. It is fitting it should stand in perpetuity not fall to indifference or a multi-story condo.

The understanding is that the parcel where the garden sits still remains designated as Religious/ Institutional land until a zoning change is approved. Some things are worthy of a miraculous intervention.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Karelia Martinez Carbonell

Local resident and preservation advocate

To The Mayor of Coral Gables, City Commissioners and The Historic Preservation Board,

My name is Edwin Cruz and I strongly support The Historic Designation Application for the Garden of Our Lord. It meets several criteria for designation.

I have resided on Phoenetia Avenue in Coral Gables for over 30 years across the street from St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church and The Garden of Our Lord. What attracted me to this neighborhood was the picturesque tress overlapping the roads, also the family oriented friendly people that would greet you as you walk on by. Therefore in June 1990, I became a resident of Coral Gables. The Garden of Our Lord was the first place that caught my eye. A hidden gem, an oasis in the middle of the city that would welcome anyone who was willing to go in. I fell in love with the garden right away. When my father Isidoro Cruz moved in with me from Puerto Rico in 1996 I spoke to him about the Garden of Our Lord. He went in one day that I was working and continued going in more and more often. For my dad the garden was a place to meditate and reflect on his life while feeling closer to God and nature. My mother Carmen Rivera would visit me on weekends and also loved The Garden of Our Lord. She would sit there for hours captivated by the beauty and aroma of the flowers, trees and shrubs. When my nephew Ronnie Cruz age 5 went to live with my mother she would bring him on weekends as well. As he grew closer to me I would take him to The Garden of Our Lord. The garden provided my nephew with a cultural and historical education. The plaques are a memorial to heroes that served in the military, medicine and the community surrounded by the beauty of the garden.

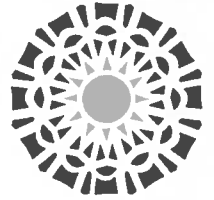
It's a real shame if The Garden of Our Lord was demolished. An icon of Coral Gables that dates back for more than 70 years destroyed, vanished from history for a man's financial gain. We would lose the block to high-rise apartments and offices. The city must not allow the zoning for that block to be changed and destroy a family oriented neighborhood.

Therefore I strongly support the Historic Designation Application for The Garden of Our Lord.

Sincerely,  
Edwin Cruz



# FLORIDA TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION



January 6, 2023

Re: The Garden of our Lord  
110 Phoenetia Avenue  
Coral Gables, FL 33134

Mayor of Coral Gables Vince Lago  
City Commissioners  
Historic Preservation Board  
405 Biltmore Way  
Coral Gables, FL 33134

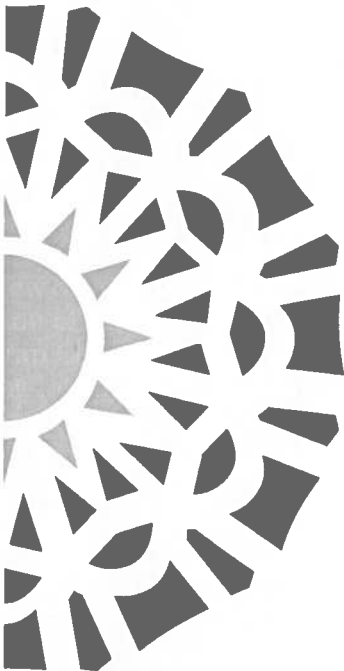
Dear City Officials,

Sallye Jude, a longtime Coral Gables resident, one of the founding members of the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation as well as an Emeritus Board Member and an incredible champion for historic preservation in Florida, sadly passed away in late December.

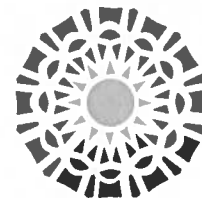
In my role as CEO of the Florida Trust, the statewide nonprofit dedicated to protecting and advocating for our state's extraordinary history and heritage, I have been honored to work with Sallye since first beginning with the organization at the end of 2016. Over the years we spoke about preservation policy and initiatives at the state and national level, how we could do a better job connecting the work of historic preservation with resiliency and protecting our environment. We also spoke about local preservation issues she cared about, like preserving the Marjory Stoneman Douglas House and the Coconut Grove Playhouse. She never stopped working to protect Florida's historic places – and she never forgot the meaning those places had for the people who had once been connected to them.

We have learned that just a few days prior to her passing, Sallye was advocating for the preservation of The Garden of Our Lord, on the grounds of St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church located in the North Gables. The Garden is in jeopardy of being lost to a developer. In an effort to honor Sallye's remarkable legacy, we are joining with members of the community to ask that you please consider the preservation of this meaningful garden and green space and designate the site as historic.

In addition to her leadership and impact with the Florida Trust, Sallye was deeply involved in preservation in the Miami area where she lived. She served on the boards of the Dade Heritage Trust, the Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables and the Deering Estate Foundation (among



## FLORIDA TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION



others). She also helped to create the Land Trust of Miami-Dade County and was an advisory board member of the State and National Board of the Trust for Public Land. In 1996, she was awarded the Florida Trust's Carl Weinhardt Award, since renamed the Legacy Award, to recognize her achievements in leadership in both state and national historic preservation. This is the highest award we share to recognize those who are preservation heroes in Florida. This year, to honor her commitment connecting preservation with environmental issues, we renamed our Florida Preservation Award recognizing this work the Sallye Jude Award for Resilient Preservation.

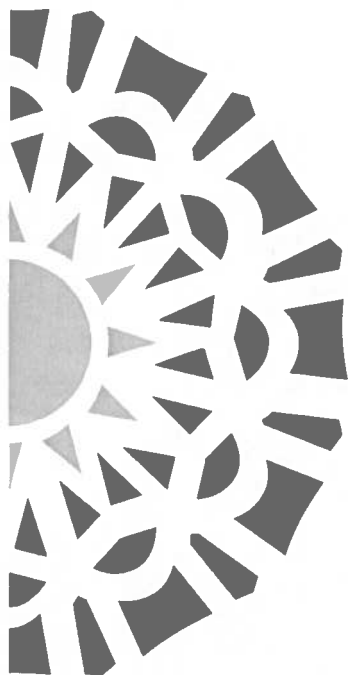
Sallye was certainly one of my preservation heroes. Like Sallye, the Florida Trust strongly supports the preservation of The Garden of our Lord. Together, I hope we can give her one last preservation win.

Thank you for your consideration, and for all you do to protect your community's history and heritage. Should you have any questions or request any additional information, I can be reached at 850-224-8128 or [mwyllie@floridatrust.org](mailto:mwyllie@floridatrust.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melissa Wyllie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Melissa Wyllie  
CEO & President



September 11, 2022

To the Mayor, City Commissioners, and members of the Historical Resources Department of Coral Gables,

For your consideration, I extend my whole-hearted support for the application to bestow "The Garden of Our Lord", located at St. James Lutheran Church, a much-deserved Historic Designation.

As one of the few remaining Bible-centric gardens throughout our United States, —the others being St. Gregory's Episcopal Church Bible Garden in Long Beach, The Biblical Garden of the Cathedral of St. John the Devine in New York, and the Rodef Shalom Biblical Garden in Pittsburgh— its importance as a botanical sanctuary binds it to the Holy Land through its landscaping elements brought over from the Garden of Gethsemane. It has provided decades of comfort as a peaceful oasis and is still as relevant today and should remain so for generations to come.

Coral Gables does not need another high-rise building, especially one at this particular location. Residents of this community want to protect their limited green space, and in doing so this humble request is presented to you as this issue is within your decision-making authority.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Glenn Wallace", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Glenn Wallace



HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
ASSOCIATION OF CORAL GABLES

September 12, 2022

City Commission Meeting September 13, 2022

**G.-2. 22-4617 Presentation concerning the "The Garden of our Lord" located at 110 Phoenetia Avenue.  
(Sponsored by Commissioner Menendez)**

On behalf of the Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables, please accept this letter in **support** of the Garden of Our Lord historic designation application. It meets several criteria for designation. It is a unique landmark in the City of Coral Gables.

The Garden of Our Lord is part of a " green corridor" which runs from East Ponce until the Douglas Entrance. It is lined with specimen trees covered with Spanish Moss. The Garden is an essential part of the neighborhood and it meets the city's criteria for historic designation under the category of aesthetic significance because it "is an easily identifiable feature of its neighborhood."

The Garden is also more than worthy of historic designation because of its architecture. It was designed by noted architect, Robert Fitch Smith. Smith incorporated coral rock into the Garden's bench, wall, grotto and walkways to complement the historic Woman's Club which sits on the adjacent block. Joanna Lombard and Rocco Ceo wrote the architectural criteria for the Garden's historic designation. We agree with the well-respected Professors of Architecture at the University of Miami, Ceo and Lombard, that the Garden must be designated historic.

We also want to state that the zoning for the block upon which the Garden sits is designated Religious/Institution. The zoning for that block was never meant for live/work or residential use. It is in a residential neighborhood and offices should not encroach into a residential neighborhood. The Commission should deny a zoning variance.

We support The Garden of Our Lord's historic designation application.

The Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables promotes the understanding and the importance of historic resources and their preservation in Coral Gables. We ask the City Commission to support the Garden of Our Lord's historic designation application.

Respectfully submitted,

Karella Martinez Carbonell, President Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables



HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
ASSOCIATION OF CORAL GABLES

November 27, 2022

Landmarks Advisory Board Meeting November 28, 2022

**Discussion Item: 4929 "The Garden of Our Lord"**

On behalf of the Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables, please accept this letter in **support** of the Garden of Our Lord historic designation application. It meets several criteria for designation. It is a unique landmark in the City of Coral Gables.

The Garden of Our Lord is part of a "green corridor" which runs from East Ponce until the Douglas Entrance. It is lined with specimen trees covered with Spanish Moss. The Garden is an essential part of the neighborhood and it meets the city's criteria for historic designation under the category of aesthetic significance because it "is an easily identifiable feature of its neighborhood."

The Garden is also more than worthy of historic designation because of its architecture. It was designed by noted architect, Robert Fitch Smith. Smith incorporated coral rock into the Garden's bench, wall, grotto and walkways to complement the historic Woman's Club which sits on the adjacent block. Joanna Lombard and Rocco Ceo wrote the architectural criteria for the Garden's historic designation. We agree with the well-respected Professors of Architecture at the University of Miami, Ceo and Lombard, that the Garden meets historic designation under the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance.

We also want to state that the zoning for the block upon which the Garden sits is designated Religious/Institution. The zoning for that block was never meant for live/work or residential use. It is in a residential neighborhood and commercial offices should not encroach into a residential neighborhood. The Commission should deny a zoning variance. Again, we stress our support of the Garden of Our Lord's historic designation application.

The Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables promotes the understanding and the importance of historic resources and their preservation in Coral Gables. We ask the Landmark Advisory Board to support the Garden of Our Lord's historic designation application.

Respectfully submitted,

Karelia Martinez Carbonell, President Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables

**Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables**  
**Post Office Box 347944, Coral Gables, Florida 33234**  
**info@historiccoralgables.org**  
**www.historiccoralgables.org**

**Item G-2 : Historic Designation Application of "The Garden of Our Lord."**

**To the City Commission and the Historic Preservation Board,**

**I strongly support the historic designation application for the Garden of Our Lord located at 110 Phoenetia Ave, Coral Gables.**

**Upon reading and researching the application one must surely agree to it's historic significance for numerous reasons and I urge you all to consider this matter with great gravitas.**

**The disappearance of such an architectural and cultural place of importance would be a great loss to our City's history and heritage. Please use your power and patrimony to save the Garden of Our Lord.**

**Respectfully,**

**Jane E Maranos.**

**1261 Milan Avenue**

**Coral Gables 33134**

**September 9th 2022**

November 22, 2022

Mayor Lago  
Vice Mayor Mena  
Commissioner Anderson  
Commissioner Menendez  
Historical Preservation Board Members  
City of Coral Gables  
405 Biltmore Way  
Coral Gables, FL 33134

Dear Members of the City Commission and Historical Preservation Board:

As a long-time Coral Gables resident, Merrick House docent/governing board chair, and huge fan of George's vision for the City Beautiful, I strongly support the designation of the Garden of Our Lord on Ponce de Leon Boulevard as a historic landmark. The Garden, designed by respected architect Robert Fitch Smith, qualifies for designation under many of the criteria established by the City--namely cultural, historical and architectural significance. Smith incorporated coral rock into the Garden's bench, wall, grotto and walkways to complement The Woman's Club, which sits on the adjacent block. I've always felt a marked sense of calm when I reach this area of Ponce. It's low-rise structures, green spaces and statues/markers bring one out of the hustle-bustle. I can just picture Eunice Merrick pulling up to the Women's Club in her 1926 roadster! Suffice it to say that I heartily concur with UM professor of architecture Joanna Lombard Hector and Rocco Ceo, who wrote the architectural significance report on the Garden.

The Garden also has tremendous aesthetic and ecological significance. Its tree canopy is substantial and must be preserved. I am more than dismayed by the development plan to remove trees from the swale on Antilla and East Ponce. This is a vital "green corridor" in our city. In an era when development is absolutely rampant, we must do all we can to preserve and protect that which contributes to a sense of neighborhood as well as animal habitat (as a volunteer at Pelican Harbor Seabird Station, I am very aware of how habitat loss affects the avian population in this city that is *supposed* to be a bird sanctuary).

I also vehemently object to the developer receiving a variance to change the zoning of the Garden from Special Use to Residential/Commercial. Please consider these factors as you determine historic landmark designation.

Sincerely,



Joanne Meagher  
1225 Valencia Avenue

November 20, 2022

Dear Mayor Vince Lago,

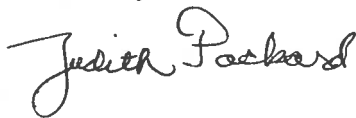
As a resident of Coral Gables for the last 39 years, I was sadly disappointed to hear that the Garden of Our Lord will be taken down and replaced with offices and condos. This historic site is not only a charming and beautiful oasis of the city, but it also serves an important educational purpose: teaching the public about botany, biblical history and honoring heroic individuals.

The Garden of Our Lord is a place of peace and tranquility, a respite from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. If it is demolished, it can never be replaced. Coral Gables is known for its green spaces and historic sites, and destroying the Garden of Our Lord will only further take away from the city's origins and vision.

It has been suggested that the garden be moved to The Church of the Little Flower, however this is not achievable due to the fact that the grotto, coral rock benches, coral rock stepping stones, and mature trees can not be moved. Nothing can replicate the original garden.

I ask you to please reconsider this decision, and to preserve this important piece of Coral Gables history for all of us and future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judith Packard". The signature is fluid and elegant, with the first name "Judith" being more prominent than the last name "Packard".

Judith Packard



**From: Katie Blankenship** <[kat12birdy@gmail.com](mailto:kat12birdy@gmail.com)>

**Date:** Sat, Nov 26, 2022, 2:17 PM

**Subject:** Preserve the Garden of our Lord

**To:** <[cgranell@coralgables.com](mailto:cgranell@coralgables.com)>, <[lsantiago@coralgables.com](mailto:lsantiago@coralgables.com)>, <[pherrara@coralgables.com](mailto:pherrara@coralgables.com)>

**Cc:** [karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com](mailto:karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com) <[karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com](mailto:karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com)>

Good afternoon,

I am a citizen of Coral Gables, and I write to urge you to take steps to preserve the Garden of our Lord, the church, and the rest of the buildings on the block that are at risk of being torn down by developers. I reside at 20 Calabria Ave, #302, Coral Gables, FL 33134, and my daughter and I enjoy visiting the Garden often. It is a beautiful and historic part of Coral Gables that should be preserved by the city. It also offers a place of tranquility and history that is important for our children.

It would be an incredible shame to deprive Coral Gables of this historical and beautiful location. Please take steps to preserve the Garden of our Lord and stop developers from destroying this beautiful part of our community.

Thank you,

Katie Blankenship

From: Lisa M <[leemarie10@hotmail.com](mailto:leemarie10@hotmail.com)>

Page 1

Date: Sun, Nov 27, 2022, 1:45 PM

Subject: The Choice is Clear, We Must Save The Garden of Our Lord

To: [vlago@coralgables.com](mailto:vlago@coralgables.com) <[vlago@coralgables.com](mailto:vlago@coralgables.com)>, Anderson, Rhonda

<[randerson@coralgables.com](mailto:randerson@coralgables.com)>, [kmenendez@coralgables.com](mailto:kmenendez@coralgables.com) <[kmenendez@coralgables.com](mailto:kmenendez@coralgables.com)>, [Eaizenstat@coralgables.com](mailto:Eaizenstat@coralgables.com) <[Eaizenstat@coralgables.com](mailto:Eaizenstat@coralgables.com)>, [rbehar@coralgables.com](mailto:rbehar@coralgables.com) <[rbehar@coralgables.com](mailto:rbehar@coralgables.com)>, [jgrabel@coralgables.com](mailto:jgrabel@coralgables.com) <[jgrabel@coralgables.com](mailto:jgrabel@coralgables.com)>, [CMiro@coralgables.com](mailto:CMiro@coralgables.com) <[CMiro@coralgables.com](mailto:CMiro@coralgables.com)>, [LRevuelta@coralgables.com](mailto:LRevuelta@coralgables.com) <[LRevuelta@coralgables.com](mailto:LRevuelta@coralgables.com)>, [VTorre@coralgables.com](mailto:VTorre@coralgables.com) <[VTorre@coralgables.com](mailto:VTorre@coralgables.com)>, [WWithers@coralgables.com](mailto:WWithers@coralgables.com) <[WWithers@coralgables.com](mailto:WWithers@coralgables.com)>, [jcarty@cartyarchitecture.com](mailto:jcarty@cartyarchitecture.com) <[jcarty@cartyarchitecture.com](mailto:jcarty@cartyarchitecture.com)>, [pkiliddjian@coralgables.com](mailto:pkiliddjian@coralgables.com) <[pkiliddjian@coralgables.com](mailto:pkiliddjian@coralgables.com)>, [cgibb@coralgables.com](mailto:cgibb@coralgables.com) <[cgibb@coralgables.com](mailto:cgibb@coralgables.com)>, [ljauregui@coralgables.com](mailto:ljauregui@coralgables.com) <[ljauregui@coralgables.com](mailto:ljauregui@coralgables.com)>, [gpratt@coralgables.com](mailto:gpratt@coralgables.com) <[gpratt@coralgables.com](mailto:gpratt@coralgables.com)>, [hrodriguez@coralgables.com](mailto:hrodriguez@coralgables.com) <[hrodriguez@coralgables.com](mailto:hrodriguez@coralgables.com)>, [dsackman@coralgables.com](mailto:dsackman@coralgables.com) <[dsackman@coralgables.com](mailto:dsackman@coralgables.com)>, [wadams@coralgables.com](mailto:wadams@coralgables.com) <[wadams@coralgables.com](mailto:wadams@coralgables.com)>

Dear City of Coral Gables Mayor, Commissioners, Planning and Zoning, Board of Architects, City Planner, and all concerned.

It has recently been brought to my attention that a developer plans to demolish the Garden of our Lord and the specimen oak trees on this property so rich in history. It is a shameful and sad state of affairs that the city of Coral Gables would allow the Garden of our Lord created in 1951, located at the corner of East Ponce and Phoenicia Avenue to be torn down, disassembled or relocated. Any of those options is an absurdity.

The church, school, playground, 100 + year old live oak, (that cannot survive being moved), the architecture of Robert Fitch Smith, the Garden of Our Lord's significance as a burial ground, a botanical treasure of plants mentioned in the Bible, a repository of plaques commemorating military and civic heroes, and a key component of the green corridor that runs from Ponce to the Douglas Entrance just to name a few are clearly the markings of an historical site. Allowing this important unique landmark to be destroyed or moved would be a travesty and a complete embarrassment to our city.

Actually, by all rights this unique landmark already is clearly an historical site set in a neighborhood that should also be deemed historic as well. Bonnie Bolton presented her 130-page application to the city asking for the Garden of our Lord to be designated historic. Thoughtfully naming 9 qualifying criteria (only 1 criteria is required to be deemed historic) and clearly pointing out all the markings of an historical site. Now it is just the city that must officially recognize it as such, in order to save it from being destroyed by an out of place 9 story high rise mixed-use apartment building.

This hidden in plain site jewel in our great city is one of the original entrance ways into the city of Coral Gables from its founding. Complete with a green corridor lined with specimen trees impressively leading into the city's north entrance as the original founders intended. Robert Fitch Smith incorporated coral rock into the Garden's bench wall, grotto and walkways to complement The Women's Club which sits on the adjacent block. The Garden is an essential part of the neighborhood and it meets the cities criteria for historic designation under the category of aesthetic significance because it "is an easily identifiable feature of its neighborhood." Altering this historic site will have an irreversible, detrimental and terribly negative impact on the surrounding area including The Coral Gables Women's Club right across the street, and forever changing the aesthetic fabric and charm of this oasis like neighborhood filled with rich history and tranquility.

If the city leaders were not so blinded by overdevelopment goals, giving developers carte blanche, creating out of place developments of mixed-use high rises, "the bigger the better" and weren't so deaf to the cry's of its residents craving preservation of our historic city, this magnificent 1.5 acre property that the garden sits on, has the potential and notoriety of a landmark site, such as a botanical garden, on the scale of a Matheson Hammock and Fairchild Tropical Gardens. This unique landmark should be preserved and cherished the same way the city of Pincrest fought to preserve Pinecrest Gardens. Imagine if some of our beloved and prized historic landmarks that we know today, such as the Merrick House, Biltmore Hotel, Venetian Pool, City Hall, The Women's Club, and the list goes on, were thoughtlessly torn down and disregarded by our predecessors "in the name of progress." What if our predecessors didn't make the right choice to preserve these cherished historic sites. How sad it would be for us today without them. Often times, in order to successfully move forward with a clear and wise vision, we must respectfully reflect back upon history. If we don't choose correctly now, this priceless unique landmark will be lost forever. This is our time in history to shine and make the right choice too.

It is my understanding that the developer purchased this property knowing it was zoned for Special Use, and therefore did not have As of Right zoning to build a 9 story apartment mixed-use high rise project, but seems he may have taken it for granted that the city officials would oblige. Since It was not zoned for residential, commercial or mixed use and it was zoned for special use only, the city should stand firm and not give in to this developers change of use request. This zoning needs to remain as special use and it is in the city's power to do so. The city has every moral, legal and ethical obligation to uphold its own laws and ordinances, residents wishes and the founding fathers original intentions of this unique landmark by enforcing that the special use zoning remains intact in order to historically preserve this very valuable, sacred unique landmark in our city beautiful.

History will prove that in the past, lawsuits had to be brought by residents against the city just to get the proper result for the community, many times winning the court's ruling and proving the city's choices to be unlawful. It is time for the city to stop selling out the heart and soul of Coral Gables one development after another and govern for the residents. It is time for the city to represent our community well by standing up, being our voice, making choices for the well being of

the residents quality of life and not continuing to enrich the pockets of the wealthy developers. Page 3

In light of the historic application presented to the city by Bonnie Bolton, any choice the city would make other than standing it's ground to preserve this historic unique landmark from becoming another oversized out of place mixed-use development would be an absolute mistake on the city's part and reflect an absence of moral fiber and an appearance of greed. The city would have no excuse for its allowance. The residents know it and the city knows it.

Bonnie Bolton should be celebrated by the city as the one bringing all of the valuable hidden treasures of this Coral Gables jewel to light (with an equitable governing body she would be). Now this unique landmark just needs the city's blessing and stamp of approval to make it all official. The city officials have a moral, legal and ethical obligation to govern according to its own laws and ordinances, residents wishes and the founding fathers original intentions to do make the right choice. Certainly they should not allow this unique landmark, which is well deserving of historic designation, to be destroyed and replaced with a 9 story mixed-use apartment building that does not fit in or belong in that neighborhood. If you have any doubt about it being a very special unique landmark, please request a personal tour from Bonnie Bolton. You will be fascinated.

The choice is clear, we must save the Garden of our Lord. It is my strong belief that any other choice the city would make, other than approving its historic designation and denying the developers zoning change request, will live in infamy forever and ever as the worst mistake ever made by any mayor and commissioners in the history of the City Coral Gables. I feel that all city officials, in fact, need to make the right choice, use wisdom and fight with all their might to preserve this beautiful block of history by standing firm against overdevelopment and choosing to make this unique landmark historic.

Sincerely,  
Lisa Maroon,  
Life long resident



Coral Gables City Commissioners

Mayor Vince Lago

Historic Resources Department

November 11, 2022

Dear Mr. Lago,

Our family has been made aware of "The Garden of Our Lord" and the risk of losing this special landmark to further housing and commercial development in Coral Gables, Florida. We have learned, through Bonnie Bolton and the Miami Herald articles that the property has been purchased to make way for a new high rise structure.

My grandfather, Charles William Carbeau, was a resident of Coral Gables during the 1940's and 50's, and helped establish The Garden on Our Lord as a memorial landmark to those who served and lost their lives in the Second World War. One plaque in particular, is designated and in remembrance of my uncle, CPT Charles William Carbeau, Jr. who died in the Philippines in 1944. One would expect that a memorial of this kind, along with its unique vegetation, would be honored and cherished, as well as preserved by the City Historic Resources Department and the city of Coral Gables.

With so many unique botanical aspects of the Garden, along with the historical references and permanent plaques to honor the servicemen who paid dearly for their country and family during the war, the necessary continued life of The Garden of Our Lord is necessary.

Please consider and approve the application of Historic Designation for preservation of this important landmark and Garden.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lore Carbeau Flynn", written in a cursive style.

Lore Carbeau Flynn

Amissville, VA



# MONTGOMERY BOTANICAL CENTER

Advancing Research, Conservation and Education through Living Plant Collections  
ESTABLISHED 1959

October 21, 2022

To the City of Coral Gables,

I was asked to provide my professional opinion on the very large, prominent Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*, a native species) located in the playground north of Antilla Avenue and east of E Ponce De Leon Blvd. I provide my opinion as a botanist with over 24 years of experience, and a botanic garden professional with over 22 years of experience.

I observed and photographed the tree in July 2022, from the public sidewalk on the north side of Antilla Avenue. Without directly accessing the tree, I cannot provide a direct measurement of it. Aerial photos suggest the canopy reaches over 100 feet in diameter, placing it well above average for the species, especially for our area. I was able to compare photographs of the tree's trunk to other large trees of the same species, and scale those photographs using the bark texture. By such method I estimate that the tree in question has an average trunk radius of between 25 and 28 inches (measured at 4.5 feet above ground level, per arborist protocol). These measurements can be easily confirmed if needed.

Growth factors documented for mature trees of this species range from 0.18 to 0.25 inches of trunk radius per year. This growth factor estimate places the tree somewhere between 100 and 155 years old.

Thus, this tree was likely here – in its current location – before the City of Coral Gables. By the virtue of its great size it provides a huge amount of shade and habitat, and a very significant amount of carbon sequestration. These are all important ecosystem services.

Beyond the important, valuable ecological services this tree provides, it also provides priceless cultural value and wonder to our City as a venerable, veteran Live Oak. This tree far exceeds the official criteria to be considered a "Specimen Tree," and should receive unique consideration above and beyond that category. My professional opinion is that this tree should be cherished and protected – this tree is not replaceable.

Sincerely,

M. Patrick Griffith, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

C: Montgomery Archive

To The Mayor of Coral Gables ,The City Commissioners and the Historic Preservation Board,

The Garden of our Lord must be designated historic. We support its historic designation application. It meets several criteria for designation. It is a unique landmark in the city of Coral Gables.

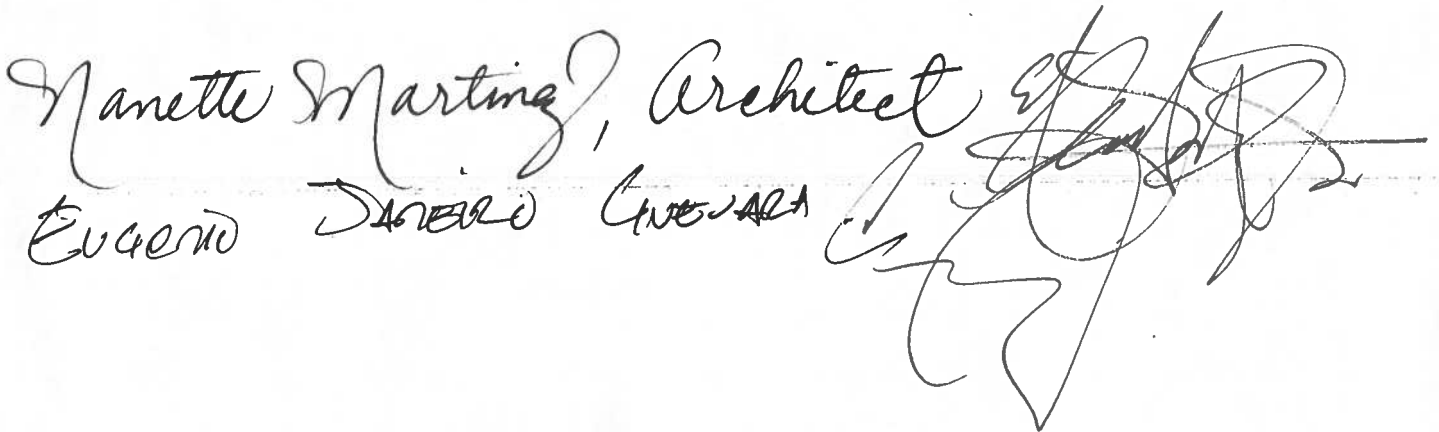
The Garden of our Lord is part of a " green corridor " which runs from East Ponce until the Douglas Entrance. It is lined with specimen trees covered with Spanish Moss. The Garden is an essential part of the neighborhood and it meets the city's criteria for historic designation under the category of aesthetic significance because it "is an easily identifiable feature of its neighborhood." Not only does the developer want to demolish the Garden but he also wants to remove the specimen trees which line the swale on Antilla avenue and East Ponce. We strongly object to the developer removing all the trees from the swale on Antilla avenue and East Ponce.

The Garden is also more than worthy of historic designation because of its architecture. It was designed by noted architect, Robert Fitch Smith. Smith incorporated coral rock into the Garden's bench, wall, grotto and walkways to compliment The Woman's Club which sits on the adjacent block. Joanna Lombard and Rocco Ceo wrote the architectural criteria for the Garden's historic designation. We agree with the well respected Professors of Architecture at the University of Miami Ceo and Lombard that the Garden must be designated historic.

We also want to state that the zoning for the block upon which the Garden sits is designated SPECIAL USE. The zoning for that block was never meant for live/work or residential use. It is in a residential neighborhood and offices should not encroach into a residential neighborhood. The city must not allow the developer to get a variance to change the zoning from SPECIAL USE.

We support The Garden of our Lord's historic designation application.

Nanette Martinez, Architect  
Eugenio DANIELO CIVERA





Dear Mayor Lago,

I am writing to express my deep disappointment and concern over the proposed demolition of the Garden of Our Lord. This historic property is a unique and essential part of the Coral Gables community, and its loss would be a tragic blow to the city.

I am aware there are talks of relocating certain parts of the garden to another location. However, I do not believe that moving the garden is a feasible option for saving the historic property. There is no way to move the plants and pond that have made up the garden for many years. The garden is an important part of our community, and I would like to see it remain in its current location.

I grew up in Coral Gables and have lived here all my life. The Garden of Our Lord is not just another piece of property – it is a burial ground, a sanctuary for biblical plants whose seeds were brought from Israel, and a place of great natural beauty. Its destruction would diminish the appeal of the area and would be a terrible loss for the people of Coral Gables.

I urge you to do everything in your power to save the Garden of Our Lord. This is a property that deserves to be preserved and protected, and I hope you will give it the consideration it merits.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Omar Yasseen".

Omar Yasseen

December 26, 2022

To the Mayor of Coral Gables, The City Commissioners and the  
Historic Preservation Board

Dear City Officials:

The Garden of Our Lord, located in the north Gables, must be designated historic for a host of reasons I will discuss below. Many residents of the city, as well as others outside of Coral Gables, support its historic designation application primarily because it meets several criteria for designation, and is among the most unique landmarks of the City of Coral Gables.

Some background: The Garden of Our Lord is part of a “green corridor” running from East Ponce to the Douglas Entrance. It is lined with specimen trees covered with Spanish Moss. The Garden is an essential part of the neighborhood, and it meets the city’s criteria for historic designation under the category of “aesthetic significance” since it “is an easily identifiable feature of its neighborhood.” Sadly, a developer who has purchased the property it stands on, wants to demolish the Garden, as well as remove the specimen trees that line the swale on Antilla Avenue and East Ponce.

The Garden also merits historic designation because of its design. The architect was Robert Fitch Smith, one of the area’s most important mid-1900s architects, whose work remains in

many Miami and S. Florida communities. Smith employed oolite limestone in the building of the Garden's bench, wall, grotto and walkways to complement the nearby Coral Gables Woman's Club compound.

The Garden has received many kudos over the decades. Two University of Miami architecture professors, Joanna Lombard and Rocco Ceo, have lauded it for its design while insisting also that it must be historically designated.

Further, the zoning for the block hosting the Garden is designated "Special Use." This zoning category for that block was never meant for live/work or a residential use. It is located in a residential neighborhood, and offices should not encroach into a residential neighborhood. The city opposes the developer in his attempt to secure a variance to change the zoning from "Special Use."

I support with great enthusiasm the application of The Garden of Our Lord for historic designation.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Paul S. George, Ph.D.  
Historian

To the Mayor and City Commissioner, Historic preservation board and city planner,

I live on Phoenetia Ave. I moved here because it is a Garden apartment district with a dense tree canopy. I love the shaded tree lined streets. I am writing to you because I have recently learned of the plans that Sergio Pino has submitted for the St. James Lutheran Church property.

I moved here because I wanted to live in a quiet neighborhood with mature trees and an abundance of open green spaces. Pino's plans for St. James threatens the entire North Ponce Garden Apartment district. I am opposed to the project Pino is proposing. It is much too large for this neighborhood.

Please do not change the zoning for the St. James property. Keep the zoning as special use as our founding fathers had designated. And please designate the Garden of our Lord as historic.

I support the historic designation application for the Garden of our Lord.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul Sanchez". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.



Karelia Carbonell <karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com>

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**Fwd: Karelia, would you please see that Bonnie Bolton receives a copy of this...On behalf of the Ponce de Leon Homeowners Group**

1 message

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**PoncedeLeon HG** <poncedeleonhg@gmail.com>

Fri, Oct 7, 2022 at 1:00 PM

To: "karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com" <karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com>

As you see, this has already been sent to the Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Commissioners! Thanks Karelia!

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **PoncedeLeon HG** <poncedeleonhg@gmail.com>

Date: Fri, Oct 7, 2022 at 6:58 PM

Subject: On behalf of the Ponce de Leon Homeowners Group

To: Anderson, Rhonda <randerson@coralgables.com>, <JFors@coralgables.com>, <Kmenendez@coralgables.com>, <MMena@coralgables.com>, <Vlago@coralgables.com>

Dear Mayor Lago, Commissioner Anderson, Vice Mayor Mena, Commissioner Fors, and Commissioner Menendez:

The membership in its entirety of the Ponce de Leon Homeowners Group advocates for the historic designation of the Garden of Our Lord property and gardens, located at Phonetia Avenue and Ponce de Leon Blvd.

Our organization supports the preservation of this important, historical landmark in our community which possesses several treasures that include: burial remains, designative and commemorative plaques, original esthetic features, and horticultural ancestral species that cannot be duplicated or replaced once erased from existence by a developer. This site **MUST** be preserved and heralded for all that it is and all that it represents in our community.

Please allow and support the historic designation of this property; there are not many like this left in Coral Gables to protect.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Gordon Sokoloff, DDS., David Fournier, Oscar Sosa, Sara Conde, on behalf of the entire PHG.

## **Create Historic Zone around Gables Woman's Club and the Saint James Church**

Honoring the legacy of key properties along East Ponce de Leon Boulevard should be a goal for all who appreciate and respect the historical foundations of this city, specifically the depression-era Coral Gables Woman's Club and the Saint James property and sacred garden.

Thankfully, the Woman's Club has found a means of support in the rental of the property for special events, a business model that serves the purpose of maintaining the property in perpetuity while sharing it with the public as a special place for celebrations.

Rather than a stark redevelopment of the historic Saint James block that would forever disturb the tranquility of the neighborhood, I challenge the city to be creative in imagining the best possible use of the sacred land which properly maintains the character of the peaceful garden and historic edifice, respecting the fine architecture of Robert Fitch Smith.

As this northeast Gables neighborhood evolves with grandiose visions of luxury high rise towers, carve out a small section that will forever reflect the simple times, the proud history of the neighborhood in perpetuity.

Engage with a non-profit organization, similar to the deal which saved the Miracle Theatre, to operate the property as a public venue for special events, sharing and appreciating this marvelous and majestic space, rather than transforming the block into a modern ivory tower.

Yes, it takes imagination, it takes a lot of work and it won't be easy, but neither was the campaign to save the Biltmore Hotel or the valiant effort which restored the Pinewood Cemetery. As a city, we can be profoundly proud of these accomplishments.

Respect and decency pays off in the long run when a city manages to first recognize -- then save -- its most valuable assets.

Create a historic zone around these two blocks on East Ponce de Leon Boulevard. Maximize the potential for these venerable properties and take a bow for the effort to respect history.

Robert A. Burr

Quantum Leap Network

Great Gables Guide

Miami Pioneers and Natives of Dade

Email: [rob@quantumleap.net](mailto:rob@quantumleap.net)

Cell: [305-439-1376](tel:305-439-1376)

October 31, 2022

Mayor and City Commissioners  
Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables

Re: Garden of Our Lord

Dear Honorable Mayor and City Commissioners,

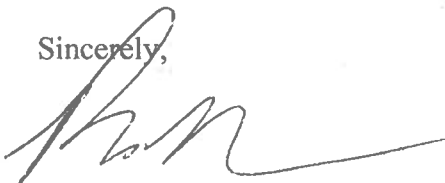
I'm writing today to express my support for the application for historic preservation submitted for The Garden of Our Lord in the North Ponce area. I have visited this site several times and am fascinated that it exists in our city. The question over its fate reminds me of several sites that were demolished, and future generations will only know in pictures, such as the Coliseum and Lasalle Cleaners. What a shame if the garden should join that list.

I first heard of the Garden of Our Lord on a bike tour that I helped work with Bike Walk Coral Gables several years ago. The Garden became a stop on one of our tours called, 'Secret Gardens.' It was then that I first saw this jewel of greenery hidden behind a stone wall. The plaques, trees and paths provide an experience to visitors that says this place has history, serenity, nature.

I am hopeful that the application for historic preservation will be approved, so that this special greenspace can be protected. Perhaps the developer can get credit for leaving it and, even better, the city can take it over as a public park with a proper entrance for residents – sharing the beauty of this secret space with the larger community. Whatever happens and whatever backroom deals are cut, I hope it will eventually lead to keeping this jewel in our city and to an adjacent development that respects and interacts with the neighborhood.

Thank you for your service and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Ruano', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robert Ruano  
1544 Murcia Ave  
Coral Gables, FL 33134

# Rotary Club of Coral Gables



PO Box 141446  
Gables, FL 33114-1446

(305) 441-8063 Coral  
rotarycoralgables@gmail.com

October 4, 2022

Hon. Vince Lago, Mayor  
City of Coral Gables  
405 Biltmore Way  
Coral Gables, FL 33134

RE: Historic Designation for the Garden of Our Lord

Dear Mayor Lago:

The Rotary Club of Coral Gables strongly supports the designation of the Garden of Our Lord as a historic landmark for the City of Coral Gables. The Garden qualifies for designation under numerous criteria established by the City:

- The Garden has cultural and historical significance.
- The Garden has architectural significance. It is the work of renowned South Florida Architect, Robert Fitch Smith. Smith incorporated coral rock into the Garden's bench, wall, grotto and walkways to complement The Woman's Club which sits on the adjacent block. We concur with the University of Miami Professors, Joanna Lombard Hector, AIA and Rocco Ceo, FAIA who authored the criteria for the Garden's Architectural Significance.
- The Garden also has tremendous aesthetic and ecological significance. The City of Coral Gables is known as Tree City USA. The tree canopy provided by the Garden is substantial and must be preserved. We recognize and appreciate the environmental significance of the Garden and the trees on its swale.

We object to the developer receiving a variance to change the zoning of the Garden from SPECIAL USE to Residential/Commercial. We wholeheartedly support the application for the designation of the Garden of Our Lord as a historic landmark. The Garden is a treasure for Coral Gables. It has great significance culturally, historically, aesthetically, ecologically, and architecturally. We appreciate the support of your Office and the Commission. Thank you.

Yours In Rotary Service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ana M. Fournaris", enclosed within a blue oval shape.

Ana M. Fournaris  
President 2022-23



14 October, 2022

Dear Honorable members of the City Commission, Historical Board,

Peace! I write regarding the "Garden of Our Lord." There is a cultural significance to the garden. The word "cultural" comes from the term "cult" which is a reference to worship, but also not unrelated to cultivation or agriculture. The worship of God, throughout the ages has given birth to culture throughout the Earth. How many prayers have been offered in the Garden of the Lord over the years? The first-fruits have historically been used as an offering to the Almighty (cf. Exodus 23:16; Leviticus 23:5).

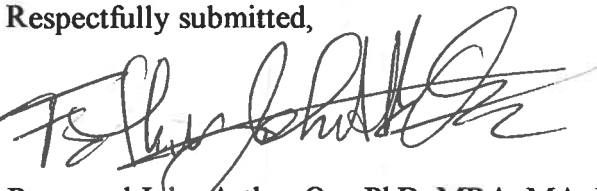
There is an educational significance to the garden. Preservation of the Garden of Our Lord would assist in both the living memory and historical memory. The plants<sup>1</sup> gathered in the garden remind us that though separated by miles from the Holy Land we have a visual reminder, here and now, of those plants which were familiar to Moses, David, Jesus Christ and the apostles.

Because the Garden of Our Lord makes present in our midst the plants of the Holy Land, Coral Gables is blessed to have such a valuable resource for peace between peoples (Jews, Christians, Muslims).

The late Jaroslav Pelikan (+2006) wrote that "Jesus Christ is the Man Who Belongs to the World."<sup>2</sup> In a similar vein, the Garden of the Lord belongs not only to the people of Coral Gables but as a beacon for the world, lest we forget. For these reasons, and more, please consider granting the Garden of Our Lord historical status within the City Beautiful, without any change to current special use zoning classification.

I write as a native son of Coral Gables, having been born at Doctor's Hospital. My mother and late grandmother (+2011) have lived in and around Coral Gables for nearly eighty-four years, including houses on Coral Way, Country Club Prado, Segovia Street, N. Greenway Drive, Cardina Street, and Navarre Avenue.

Respectfully submitted,



Reverend John Arthur Orr, PhD, MBA, MA, MDiv, PhB

Pastor

Saint Mary Catholic Church

1291 E. Madison Avenue  
Athens, TN 37303

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gardner, Jo Ann. *Seeds of Transcendence: Understanding the Hebrew Bible Through Plants*. Mt Vernon, NY: Decalogue, 2014; Osborn, Henry S. *Plants of the Holy Land with their Fruits and Flowers*. Philadelphia, PA: Parry & McMillan, 1860.

<sup>2</sup> *Jesus Through the Centuries*. New York: Harper & Row, 1987, 221.

**Dear Ms. Santiago:**

**First, it would be so greatly appreciated if you would be kind enough to distribute this email letter to our mayor and the commission, as well as the city manager and staff, and the Historic Preservation Board.**

**Although, and just to put this into perspective, I am just an ol' South Florida hillbilly, we having moved to the Miami area in 1946; I am also America's senior collector of Florida East Coast Railway, Florida transportation memorabilia, Miami memorabilia and Floridiana (this past May started my 65th year of collecting all this junque!), the owner of the largest collections of FEC Railway and Florida transportation memorabilia in the world (larger than the state museum's collection—of like items, of course, not their entire collection—and larger than the Flagler Museum's collection, the same disclaimer applying) as well as our holding, here at The Bramson Archive, the largest collection of Miami memorabilia and Floridiana in private hands in the country, and, at that, larger than many of the smaller local museums, the collection including a major collection of Coral Gables historic memorabilia with what might possibly be the only complete collection of the "Merrick Gold" postcards in private hands in the country. In addition, I am America's single most-published Florida history book author, including the history of Coral Gables, and now working on my 34th, the history of North Lauderdale. Further, though, I am the only person in the country who bears the official title of Company Historian with an American railroad, and my book, **SPEEDWAY TO SUNSHINE: THE STORY OF THE FLORIDA EAST COAST RAILWAY**, is our company's official history.**

**The above is for the purpose of providing credentials in regard to this email and its importance to the City, Miami-Dade County, the State and preservation in general.**

**St. James Lutheran Church is "the home" of one of the most historic entities in the country, the fabled Garden of Our Lord, one of the first three Biblican Gardens in the United States when it was established, within that sanctuary, and its preservation and the maintaining of the Garden, there, in that spot, and not allowing it to be "moved," which would, essentially, destroy its very being, is one of the most important historic issues and items which has ever been brought to the attention of Council and Historic Review Board.**

**The Garden was put in place in 1950, now 72 years ago, and was designed by famed architect Robert Fitch Smith, he of international as well as local renown. His work in "The City**

**Beautiful” is legendary and rather than include a list, one edifice will, hopefully, suffice: the headquarters of the Tropical Audubon Society on Sunset Drive.**

**The walls, the walkway, the grotto and the coral rock bench are, indeed, all tremendously historic, but, and what might not be as well known as it should be, is that a number of the trees in the Our Garden of the Lord grew from seedlings which came from the Garden of Gethsemane of Jesus in Jerusalem.**

**As Miami’s and Florida’s senior historian, I urgently request that you move with all due speed to maintain and preserve this true American treasure in its present location.**

**Very truly yours,**

**Seth H. Bramson, MBA, MS**

**Adjunct Professor of History and Historian in Residence, Barry University**

**Adjunct Professor of History, Nova Southeastern University Lifelong Learning Institute**

**Adjunct Professor of History, Road Scholar (formerly Elderhostel) Program**

**Company Historian, Florida East Coast Railway**

**Member, Miami Shores Village Historic Review Board**

**President and Co-founder, Miami Memorabilia Collectors Club**

**President and Co-founder, Greater North Miami Historical Society**

**Honorary Life Member, Miami Springs Historical Society and Museum**

**Co-Founder and Honorary Life Member, Florida East Coast Railway Society**

# TROPICAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

SOUTH FLORIDA'S VOICE OF CONSERVATION



September 7, 2022

Mayor Vince C. Lago  
Coral Gables City Commission  
Coral Gables City Hall  
405 Biltmore Way  
Coral Gables, FL 33134

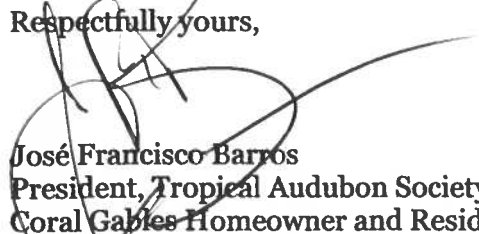
Dear Mayor Lago and Coral Gables City Commissioners:

As representatives of Tropical Audubon Society and as concerned community members, we support the historic designation application for the Garden of Our Lord property, adjacent to St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church, 110 Phoenetia Avenue, in the north part of Coral Gables. We believe the property has both historical and ecological value; its demolition would be a loss to the community and to the birds and other native wildlife that inhabit the property.


The historical value of the garden, in part, is due to its numerous historical and memorial plaques and to the reputation of Robert Fitch Smith, the architect of the church and the garden's physical structures. At Tropical Audubon Society, we are very aware of Smith's impressive legacy. As one of the first six graduates, in 1931, of the University of Miami's architecture program (in Coral Gables), Smith designed the Doc Thomas House, which has been the historic headquarters of Tropical Audubon since 1976. Smith was a highly-respected and prolific local architect who also distinguished himself by serving on local planning/zoning boards as well as on national AIA committees.

Perhaps an even more important reason to conserve and restore the garden is its value to the local environment. Its tree canopy and vegetation, as well as the mature trees along the property's perimeter swale, are an important aspect of the "green" corridor in north Coral Gables. As a county, we need to conserve as many significant green spaces as possible to help mitigate against climate change and simply to provide restful outdoor spaces for our increasingly urban population. We encourage the city of Coral Gables to find a way to preserve this valuable and historic green space: the garden itself and the adjacent trees.

Respectfully yours,

  
José Francisco Barros  
President, Tropical Audubon Society  
Coral Gables Homeowner and Resident

  
Terrence "Rock" Salt  
Executive Board, Tropical Audubon Society  
Coral Gables Homeowner and Resident

  
Lauren Jonaitis  
Senior Conservation Director  
Tropical Audubon Society

  
Daniel C. Jones  
Chapter Historian/Board Member  
Tropical Audubon Society

To The Mayor of Coral Gables, The City Commissioners and the Historic Preservation Board,

The Garden of our Lord must be designated historic. We support its historic designation application. It meets several criteria for designation. It is a unique landmark in the city of Coral Gables.

The Garden of our Lord is part of a "green corridor" which runs from East Ponce until the Douglas Entrance. It is lined with specimen trees covered with Spanish Moss. The Garden is an essential part of the neighborhood and it meets the city's criteria for historic designation under the category of aesthetic significance because it "is an easily identifiable feature of its neighborhood." Not only does the developer want to demolish the Garden but he also wants to remove the specimen trees which line the swale on Antilla avenue and East Ponce. We strongly object to the developer removing all the trees from the swale on Antilla avenue and East Ponce.

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We also want to state that the zoning for the block upon which the Garden sits is designated SPECIAL USE. The zoning for that block was never meant for live/work or residential use. It is in a residential neighborhood and offices should not encroach into a residential neighborhood. The city must not allow the developer to get a variance to change the zoning from SPECIAL USE.

We support The Garden of our Lord's historic designation application.

Mary W. Jackson  
AKA GINGER

3615 Quince Ct  
Coral Gables, Fla 33134

Jose Marano

J. MARANOS, CORAL GABLES  
LANDMARKS ADVISORY BOARD  
(VICE-CHAIR).

Bruce H. Giddens

Member, Historic Preservation  
Association of Coral Gables

Brett Gillis

International Affairs Coordinating Council  
of Coral Gables

Carli Clark

36 Phoenix Ave.

The Historic Bed & Breakfast

Marlin Ebbert - Sustainability Board Chairman

Joanne Meagher - Coral Gables Merrick House & The Villagers



November 22, 2022

To: Mayor of Coral Gables, City Commissioners, Historic Preservation Board

I am writing to express my grave concern for the planned demolition of the Garden of Our Lord, located at 110 Phonetia Avenue, and the relocation of the very large Live Oak tree in the adjacent property. I strongly support conservation of the garden and preservation of the Live Oak in situ.

My area of expertise is in historic gardens and their associated resources such as large trees and historic architecture and structures. I've been in public horticulture for more than 20 years and am very well versed in their myriad benefits to the public and the cities they are located in. Particularly in overdeveloped locations such as South Florida, green space is a precious commodity, and green space with a strong story to tell about its location even more so. It is critical these spaces are preserved. Indeed, if Miami Dade County had not stepped in and purchased Vizcaya for a sum of \$1 million in 1952, it would have been razed and developed – and this world renowned treasure would have been lost. In Coral Gables, "The City Beautiful", which prides itself on its strong historic preservation ethic and gorgeous properties like the Biltmore and the Venetian Pool, why would a precious historic garden and ancient tree not be saved as well – especially on a green corridor?

A garden is as good as its trees – and the rare treasure sitting immediately next door could easily be preserved as a green space. This enormous Live Oak predates the City – it is easily 200 years old – and certainly is larger than any Live Oak that Vizcaya has in its untouched forests. This tree has endured several lifetimes' worth of hardships – hurricanes, development, drought – but it cannot endure relocation. This tree is far too large – its huge girth would break apart from the pressures put upon it and its root system spreads over the entire park it occupies. Relocation would spell certain death and be a waste of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Better to preserve it in place and let the residents of your fine city enjoy it and the garden it graces.

I ask that you very strongly consider my recommendation to preserve the Garden and the tree. I am available via phone and email if you'd like to discuss this further. Please do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience.

Best Regards,

Ian Simpkins  
Senior Director, Horticulture & Sustainability  
Vizcaya Museum and Gardens  
[ian.simpkins@vizcaya.org](mailto:ian.simpkins@vizcaya.org) / 305-860-8430



## ← Letter to Mayor Lago

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[www.GFWCCoralGablesWomansClub.org](http://www.GFWCCoralGablesWomansClub.org)

[f](#) [@CoralGablesWomansClub](#)

**CORAL GABLES**  
*Woman's Club* 

November 21, 2022

Mayor Vince Lago  
405 Biltmore Way  
Coral Gables, FL 33134

Dear Mayor Lago,

Hope this finds you and your family well. Here's wishing you beautiful Thanksgiving with many continued blessings.

I am writing to you as a concerned resident of Coral Gables and as the president of the Coral Gables Woman's Club. It has come to my attention that the Garden of our Lord, across the street from our property, is scheduled to be torn down as part of a new development in that space. This would be most unfortunate as the garden has great historic, cultural and architectural significance. The garden was designed by renowned architect Robert Fitch Smith.

Additionally, there is a strong ecological concern in that the tree canopy provided by the Garden and its swale is substantial and needs to be preserved. Coral Gables has been designated as a Tree City USA for the past 34 years. It would be most unfortunate to remove trees from this significant garden and swale. I understand that Sergio Pino, owner of Century Home Builders has not made any kinds of concessions for this part of the 1.47 acre property he has bought. Wouldn't it be possible to incorporate the garden of our Lord into the plans for his luxury condos and new school? The garden would continue to provide an educational environment.

Club members are concerned that the traffic and parking situation in the adjacent area would affect the parking for our rentals.

The rental of our clubhouse is crucial to our financial well-being in order to maintain the services provided by our Children's Dental Clinic and the necessary upkeep of our historic ballrooms. Loss of revenue resulting from any new construction will be devastating to the club. We will be celebrating 100 years of service to our community next year and would hate to see that affected in any way.

We support Bonnie Bolton's request for the Garden of our Lord to be designated as a historic landmark.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and thank you in advance for any favorable consideration in this matter.

Respectfully,  
***Ruth Martinez***

Ruth Martinez, President  
Coral Gables Woman's Club

**1001 & 1009 East Ponce de Leon Boulevard  
Coral Gables, FL 33134**

In existence since 1923, GFWC Coral Gables Woman's Club is a 501c3 organization with a free children dental clinic on premise. EIN # [59-0565862](#) is a Public Charity.