

**STAFF REPORT
SPECIAL CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
FOR THE PROPERTY AT
1200 ANASTASIA AVENUE
A LOCAL AND NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK**

*Historical Resources &
Cultural Arts*

2327 Salzedo Street
Coral Gables
Florida, 33134

P: 305-460-5093
E: hist@coralgables.com

Proposal: The application is requesting design approval for the demolition and reconstruction of the Gondola Building.

Architect: Gurri Matute PA

Owner: City of Coral Gables

Folio Number: 03-4118-006-2282

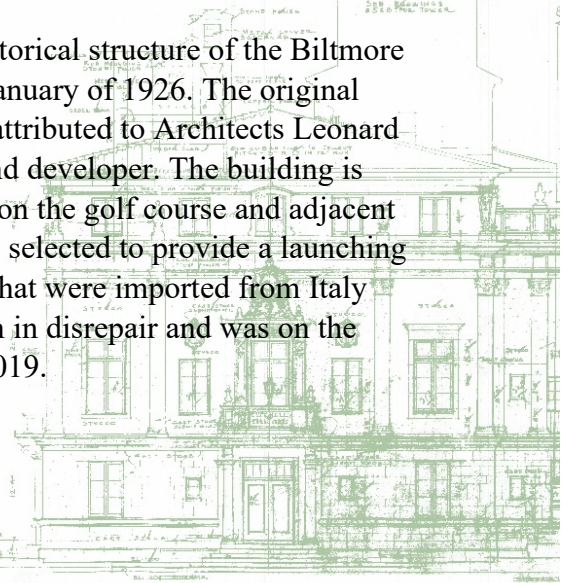
Legal Description: a lengthy legal description is on file in the Historical Resources Department.

Site Characteristics: The subject structure is located on the Biltmore Hotel Golf Course just south of the canal, adjacent to Hole #3.

BACKGROUND/EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Miami-Biltmore Hotel and Country Club represents the culmination of the dreams and efforts of George E. Merrick, founder of Coral Gables. It is significant for its relationship to historic persons important in the development of Coral Gables; its impact socially and economically on the City of Coral Gables; and the magnificence of its architectural integrity. In all aspects, the Miami-Biltmore Hotel is considered the pre-eminent landmark in the City of Coral Gables. The property was designated as a Local Historic Landmark on January 13, 1976, and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on September 27, 1972.

The Gondola Building is an original accessory historical structure of the Biltmore Hotel Complex built in 1925 and inaugurated in January of 1926. The original design of the hotel and its accessory structures is attributed to Architects Leonard Schultze and S. Fullerton Weaver, a contractor, and developer. The building is located within the Biltmore Hotel's 19.8 acre site on the golf course and adjacent to original hole # 3. The location was strategically selected to provide a launching area and service for the facilities 15-25 gondolas that were imported from Italy along with their gondoliers. The property has been in disrepair and was on the Dade Heritage Trust "endangered dozen" list in 2019.



PROPOSAL

The application is requesting design approval for the demolition and reconstruction of the Gondola Building.



Aerial Photo



Gondola Building, December 2017



Gondola Building, December 2021



Gondola Building, September 2024

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR RECONSTRUCTION

The following Standards have application in this matter:

1. *Reconstruction will be used to depict vanished or non-surviving portions of a property when documentary and physical evidence is available to permit accurate reconstruction with minimal conjecture and such reconstruction is essential to the public understanding of the property.*
3. *Reconstruction will include measures to preserve any remaining historic materials, features, and spatial relationships.*
4. *Reconstruction will be based on the accurate duplication of historic features and elements substantiated by documentary or physical evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different features from other historic properties. A reconstructed property will re-create the appearance of the non-surviving historic property in materials, design, color and texture.*
6. *Designs that were never executed historically will not be constructed.*

STAFF OBSERVATIONS

The proposal consists of the demolition and reconstruction of the existing Gondola Building. The building will be reconstructed in the same location as it currently sits on the property. The property will be an exact replication of the exterior of the existing structure, using accurate documentation of the structure from an assessment in 2017 and existing physical evidence.

In 2017, the City contracted RJ Heisenbottle Architects to complete a building assessment and recommendation report for the Gondola Building (Exhibit A, Attached). The building was in poor condition and roof was failing. The structure needed immediate attention, their recommendation was to stabilize and repair the building to prevent further damage. In 2021, the structure partially collapsed.

The proposal consists of the demolition of the remaining structure and the reconstruction of the Gondola Building in its original location. A Conservator has been to the site to document and salvage any materials for reuse and replication. Gurri Matute Architects have created a set of construction documents based off the building assessment and historic evidence provided to them. The proposed reconstruction meets the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Reconstruction.

VARIANCES

No Variances are being requested with this application.

BOARD OF ARCHITECTS

The proposal was reviewed and approved by the Board of Architects on November 14, 2024.

STAFF CONCLUSION

The Gondola Building is an original accessory historical structure of the Biltmore Hotel Complex built in 1925 and inaugurated in January of 1926. The location was strategically selected to provide a launching area and service for the facilities 15-25 gondolas that were imported from Italy along with their gondoliers. The waterway canals-gondolas concept was well within George E. Merrick's "City Beautiful" vision. In addition, the gondola-canal experience gave the Hotel a level of unsurpassed elegance and exclusivity for that era.

After years of neglect, the building has partially collapsed and cannot be salvaged. A grant application for the rehabilitation of the Gondola Building was applied for in June 2019 from the Department of State Division of Historical Resources. The City has been working with the State to use these funds to reconstruct an exact replica of the structure in its original location. The proposal meets the State's grant funding requirements and the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Reconstruction.

Therefore, Historical Resources Department Staff recommends the following:

A motion to **APPROVE** the design proposal for the demolition and reconstruction of the Gondola Building on the property located at **1200 Anastasia Avenue**, the Biltmore Hotel, a Local and National Historic Landmark, a lengthy legal description is on file in the Historical Resources Department, and **APPROVE** the issuance of a Special Certificate of Appropriateness with the conditions noted above.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anna C. Pernas", written over a horizontal line.

Anna C. Pernas
Historic Preservation Officer