



COA (SP) 2017-006  
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Historical Resources &  
Cultural Arts

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**STAFF REPORT  
SPECIAL CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS  
FOR THE PROPERTY AT  
711 UNIVERSITY DRIVE  
A LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK**

**Proposal:** The application requests design approval for additions and alterations to the residence and sitework.

**Architect:** Robert S. Brown, br3 Architecture, P.A.

**Owner:** Rebecca Byam

**Folio Number:** 03-4117-004-2070

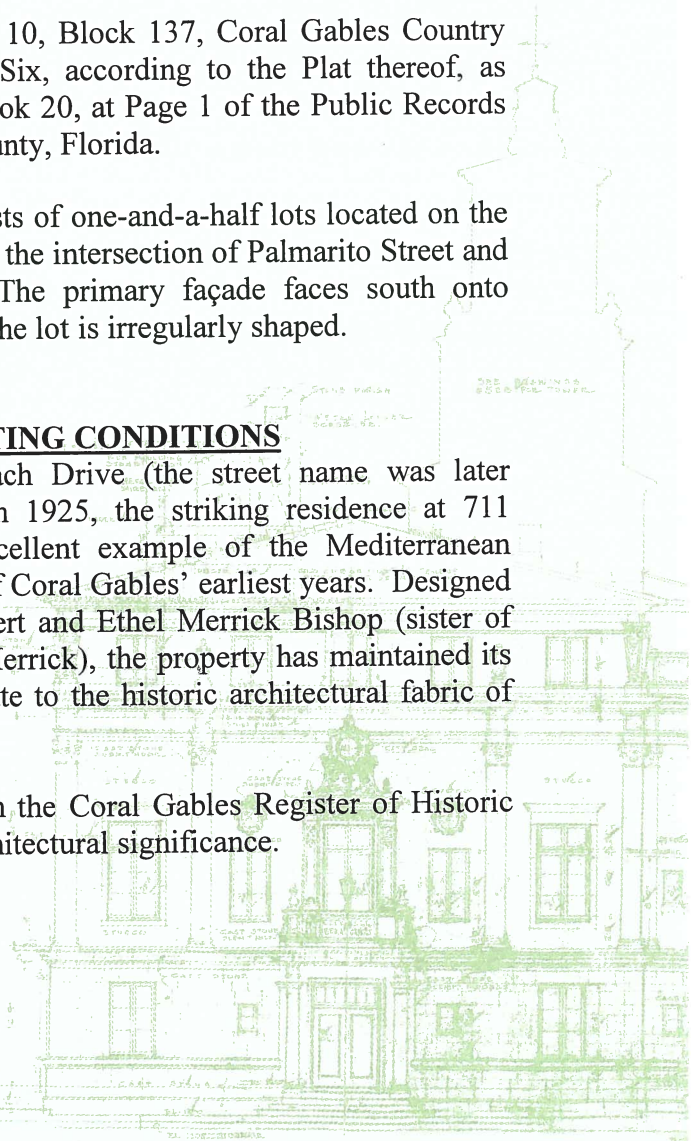
**Legal Description:** Lot 11 & S ½ Lot 10, Block 137, Coral Gables Country Club Section Part Six, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 20, at Page 1 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

**Site Characteristics:** The property consists of one-and-a-half lots located on the northwest corner of the intersection of Palmarito Street and University Drive. The primary façade faces south onto University Drive. The lot is irregularly shaped.

**BACKGROUND/EXISTING CONDITIONS**

Originally permitted as 3904 Ocean Beach Drive (the street name was later changed to University Drive by 1930) in 1925, the striking residence at 711 University Drive is significant as an excellent example of the Mediterranean architectural style which defined the City of Coral Gables' earliest years. Designed by architect Phineas Paist for Edwin Gilbert and Ethel Merrick Bishop (sister of City of Coral Gables founder George E. Merrick), the property has maintained its historic integrity and continues to contribute to the historic architectural fabric of the City.

In January 2017 the property was listed in the Coral Gables Register of Historic Places due to its historical, cultural and architectural significance.



### **PROPOSAL**

The applicant is requesting design approval for additions and alterations to the property that include:

- a one-story addition at the southwest corner of the residence at the location of an existing open (screened with an awning) terrace consisting of a media room
- a one-story addition at the west side of the wing of the residence that parallels Palmarito Street consisting of a half-bathroom and covered terrace with built-in bar on the first floor, an outdoor staircase and an open terrace surrounded by a low wall above
- substantial demolition of later non-original additions, paving, gates, and existing pool,
- new paver walkways and driveways
- new pool and pool deck
- relocation of septic tank
- new walls, fence, and gates
- interior remodeling of existing residence
- installation of new impact-resistant windows and doors
- blocking up or relocating original window or door openings
- reintroduction of an original covered loggia above the garage
- reintroduction of wood trellis at the second floor terrace above the living room

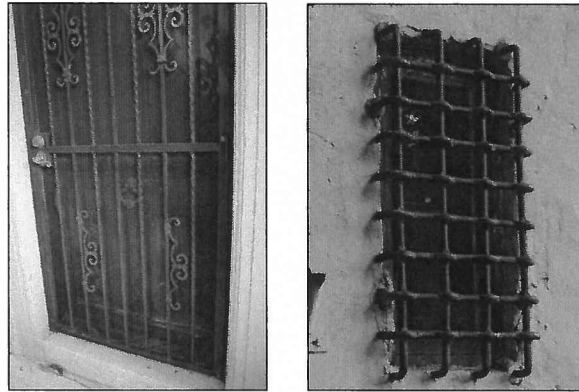
### **SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION**

The following Standards have application in this matter:

2. *The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*
3. *Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.*
9. *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*
10. *New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

### **STAFF OBSERVATIONS**

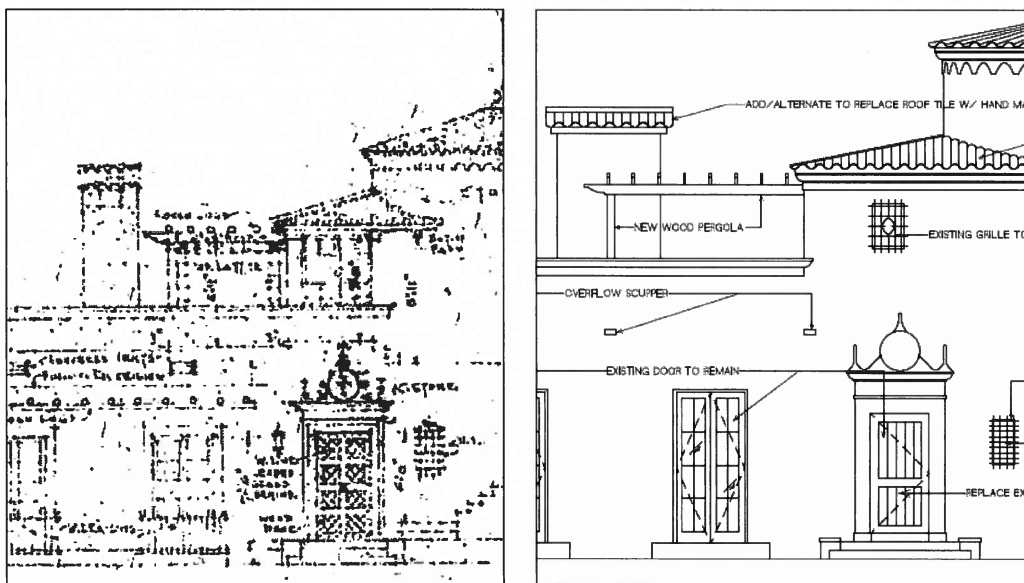
**Sheet A3.0** On the primary (south) façade facing University Drive, the existing front door and two pairs of French doors leading into the living room are to remain and be restored. The proposed elevation notes to “replace existing hurricane screen door” although it is unclear what this note means.



**Figures 1: Main Entry, 2017 - Original door behind security door [left]  
Existing casement window behind iron grille [right]**

The existing screen door is a non-original iron and screen security door, not hurricane protection (see Figures 1 left). The two original wrought iron picket railings for the balconettes are proposed to be removed. The existing iron grilles found on this façade are to remain. Two windows – one on the second floor window within the tower and one behind the iron grille on the first floor will be replaced with fixed windows. The existing tower window is believed to be a stained glass window although it is drawn without muntins. The first floor window is not depicted, but should have a single horizontal muntin to match what the existing window (see Figures 1 right).

At the southwest corner of the residence an existing terrace surrounded by low walls will be removed. (The existing screen enclosure and awning are not original.) A new one-story addition housing a media room will occupy roughly the same footprint as the terrace but will be recessed off the corners of the existing residence, creating a visual break between the old and new. The addition will be topped with a flat roof with a parapet that steps down from the existing parapet wall. The drawings note that the decorative moulding at the parapet top is to match the moulding that exists on the house. A pair of French doors noted to match the existing French doors leads to the front yard from the addition.



**Figures 2: South Elevation - Original drawing showing pergola [left]  
Proposed pergola [right]**

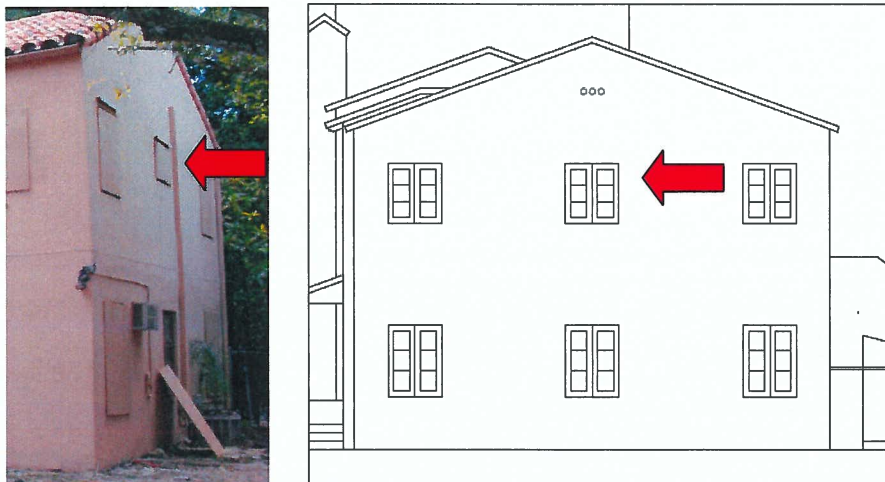
At the second floor roof terrace, a new wooden pergola is proposed to evoke the pergola shown in the original permit drawings (see Figures 2). The pergola is not visible in the earliest photograph located for the property (1940s), and it is not known if it was constructed and removed or eliminated during construction. Additional overflow scuppers are also proposed for the existing roof terrace.

**Sheet A3.1** At the east façade facing Palmarito Street, the existing doors and windows will be replaced with impact-resistant units that match the existing original windows. The existing side door is proposed to be removed. Note that the side door in the existing elevation does not depict what is actually on site. The existing door is obscured behind steel and screen security door and Staff is not able to verify if it is original to the residence at this time. The existing awnings is to be removed and a new wood canopy clad with two-piece barrel tile is proposed to provide protection for the door. Details were not provided for the canopy. The existing steps are to be replaced, but the material for the new steps was not provided. To the north, the existing garage doors (not original) will be replaced with new roll-up garage doors that are intended to give the appearance of carriage doors.



**Figure 3: Existing Side Door**

The most significant alteration on this elevation is the reintroduction of an original covered loggia above the garage. The loggia was enclosed at some point in the past and will be reopened. The details shown in the original drawings will be returned as will the wood column and railings. The existing wood rafters are noted to be repaired or replaced. The next bay to the north consists of a later addition to the residence. The existing roof structure will be removed and replaced maintaining the existing roof height. The existing second floor windows will be replaced and the first floor window and metal grille will be removed and the window is proposed as an arched window that appears to match the existing arched window on the residence. The top of the window is noted as fixed, but the type of the lower window is not clear. Further to the north, the side of a proposed trellis feature is visible in front of a new 5'-0" high wall. The trellis has concrete columns supporting the wood members.



**Figures 4: North elevation windows – 2016 photograph [left]; existing elevation [right]**

**Sheet A3.2** On the north elevation, the windows are to be replaced with the exception of the middle first floor window which will be enlarged and converted into a pair of French doors. Note that the middle second floor window is not depicted correctly on the existing elevation drawings and is smaller than the two flanking windows (see Figures 4). The proposed trellis spans two-thirds of this elevation over three round concrete columns. The one-story addition on the west elevation is visible behind a new 5'-0" wall with an iron picket gate. On the east side of this elevation, the new gate (similar the west side, but smaller) proposed for the perimeter wall is visible beyond.

**Sheet A3.3** On the west elevation, moving north to south, the first bay consists of the later addition. The existing concrete staircase, balcony and small protruding room on the first floor will be removed. On the first floor a new window and French door will added. At the second floor, the middle window will be removed and the door to the south will be converted into a window. At the next bay, later additions and alterations will be removed including removing an existing exterior staircase. A one-story addition is proposed consisting of a half-bathroom and covered terrace with built-in bar on the first floor, an outdoor staircase and an open terrace surrounded by a low solid wall above. The first floor terrace has three equally-spaced openings with corner details to match the existing second floor loggia on this façade. The half-bath has a single casement window facing west. On the first floor, a small casement will be blocked up to accommodate the new staircase and a new French door will replace an existing door, but shifted slightly to the north to center it within the new terrace opening. On the second floor, the existing door will be blocked up and a new French door added to the north.

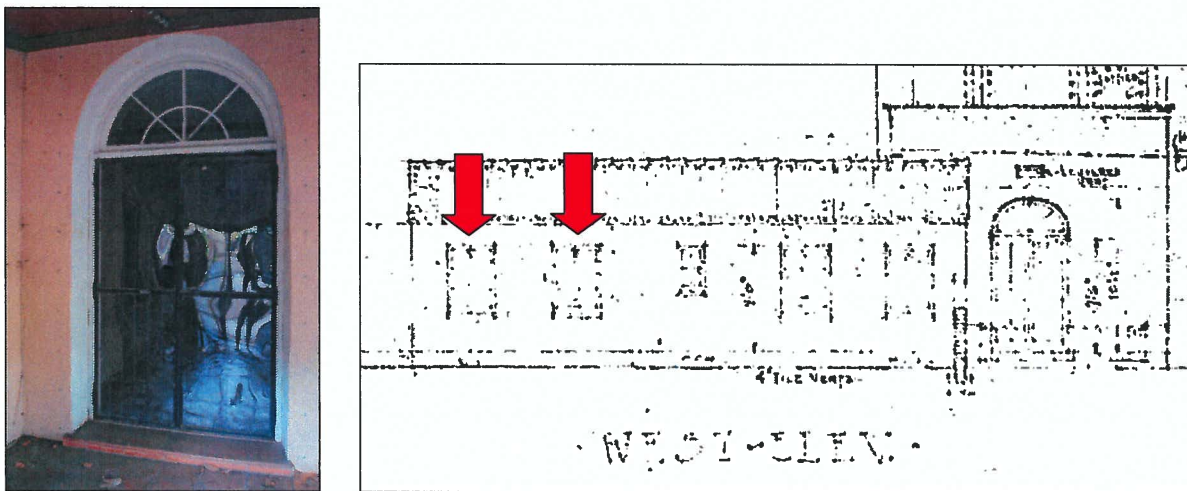
Further to the south on the west façade, a series of shed roofs supported by pipe columns and a one-story addition (all non-original) will be removed. On the first floor an existing door will be removed to accommodate the new staircase, a pair of casements is proposed to be reduced to a single casement and be relocated to align with a casement window on the second floor. An existing door will be replaced with a French door and relocated slightly to the north, presumably to provide symmetry. An existing French door into the dining room and the opening into the removed addition will be converted to large-scale windows that appear as if they are French doors. On the second floor, the existing covered loggia will be enclosed. A fixed window system will be set behind the existing wood railings and wood framework (from the original screens). Note that existing wood rafter ends exist above that are not depicted in elevation. The protruding rafter ends are to remain.

**Sheet A3.4** The south elevation of the proposed covered terrace addition features a single opening similar to the triple openings on the west elevation of the addition. The same corner detail is found on this elevation. To the east of the opening is a rectangular "window" opening covered with a "metal screen to match existing." The French door leading into the half-bath is visible beyond.

**Sheet A3.4** At the northwest façade, the existing French doors are to remain. The barrel tile hoods above them are not original and will be removed. To the east of the French doors, a window in the tower that was previously blocked up will be reopened and a new casement window installed. At the balconette above, the non-original metal railing is to remain and the French doors are to be replaced. It should be noted that the existing/original French doors were inswinging with an outswinging screen door. It is assumed that the depth of the balconette can

accommodate the outswinging doors. The existing iron grille will remain and the second floor pergola is also visible on this elevation. To west, the only alteration proposed is to remove an existing door within the loggia and replace it with a “niche.” This alteration is not noted in plan and the outline depicted does not correspond with the door opening.

**Sheet A3.5** At the northeast elevation, the existing loggia and decorative columns will remain while the doors and window within the loggia will be replaced. An existing window will be converted into a pair of French doors and centered within the arch. The existing solid wood center door will be replaced with a French door. (Note that the door shown on the existing elevation is not the type of door that exists. It is an original wooden plank door.) The door depicted as a sliding glass door in the existing elevation will be replaced with a French door.



**Figures 5: Southwest elevation – existing condition (leading into living room) [left]; Original drawings showing elongated windows [right]**

**Sheet A3.6** The media room addition is visible at the south end of the southwest façade. A pair of French doors with an arched transom above lines up with the same door configuration that exists on the current southwest façade now within the addition (see Figure 5). To the north, the existing windows will be replaced and the two northernmost windows will be elongated to match the other longer windows on this façade. It appears from the existing sills that these windows were shortened from the original size at some point. The proposed alteration returns the windows to their correct size.

Site work proposed includes removing existing pavers, walkways, driveway, concrete pool deck and the existing pool. A new paver driveway is proposed as are a new front walkway, walkway to the north leading to the rear yard, a new pool and paver deck. Materials were not specified. This plan also proposes alterations to the existing perimeter walls, new gate, a new 5'-0" masonry wall and a trellis. Landscaping work is assumed as well. A trellis, pool, Jacuzzi, and pool deck are proposed for the rear of the property.

### **VARIANCES**

No variances have been requested in conjunction with this application.

### **BOARD OF ARCHITECTS**

The proposal was reviewed and approved by the Board of Architects on May 4, 2017 with the following notations: reduce the height of the addition at the southwest corner (media room) and utilize 12" concrete block rather than 8", consider adding a muntin at the arched transom of the new French doors at the southwest elevation, revise the trellis details to increase the column width to 12" or more and increase the size of the rafters from 2" to 3", eliminate a railing on the new open terrace addition by raising the CMU wall, eliminate proposed pickets from existing and proposed masonry walls at the north of the residence and raise wall to 60", overflow scuppers to be copper, restudy iron gate designs, roof tile to be handmade true barrel tile, all muntins to be high-profile, and correct a muntin detail on the east elevation. Staff believes all of these items were implemented with the exception of the 12" concrete block at the media room addition. See attached copy of BOA comments for clarification.

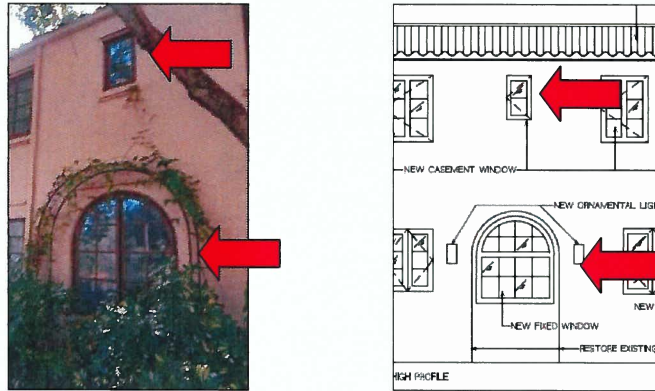
### **STAFF CONCLUSION**

The application presented requests design approval for two additions and alterations to the residence, installation of a swimming pool and deck, walls and gates, and paver walkways and driveway, restoration of historic features, and interior alterations for the residence at 711 University Drive.

The one story additions are appropriate in scale not only to the residence but also for the impact on the street. As a whole, the project takes design cues from the existing historic residence and "cleans up" the rear of the residence that had numerous alterations. Differentiation between the old and the new can be achieved with the elimination of the window sills on the additions and changes in stucco texture.

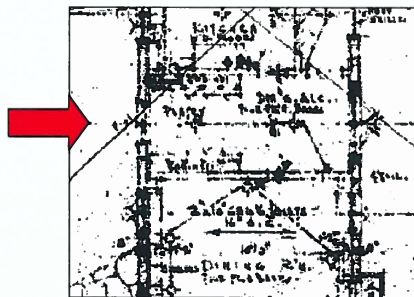
Staff would like the following comments incorporated as conditions of approval:

- None of the original protruding sills are depicted in either the demolition or proposed elevations. The existing sills are to remain in place. Any new window openings should not have sills or they should be differentiated from the existing.
- The two iron railings at the balconettes on the south elevation (facing University Drive) should remain and be restored.
- The stained glass window in the tower is to remain and can be mounted behind a fixed impact-resistant unit.
- Because the existing window openings of the residence are boarded up, Staff cannot verify that each of the windows shown on the existing and proposed elevations is correct. Discrepancies were noted between the listing photographs and the drawings (see Figure 6 for example). The existing window openings are to remain unchanged throughout (unless noted) and Staff wants the opportunity to verify that the existing windows are being matched.



**Figure 6: East elevation windows – listing photograph [left]; proposed elevation [right]**

- Additionally, the windows and doors are not depicted as they would actually look (i.e. no muntin depth, no true frame thickness, etc.). It is difficult to ascertain how the proposed windows will actually look from the proposed drawings. In reality, a fixed window will have a smaller frame profile than an operable window but that is not depicted in the drawings. Staff requires that the windows depicted in the permit set of drawings be rendered accurately according to the manufacturer's details.
- The details of the new additions (stucco mouldings, corner details) are to be differentiated from the existing and not match exactly. A detail of the moulding profile is required.
- The historic house is not to be restuccoed and stucco on the proposed additions it to have a different texture.
- The new French door at the south façade of the media room addition is noted to match existing. If the intention is to match the existing wood windows of the living room, the new impact doors will never look correct next to them. Staff would like this studied.
- The new wood pergola at the second floor terrace should be shortened in length to achieve a proportion more consistent with the original permit drawings (see Figures 2).
- All overflow scuppers are to be copper per the BOA recommendation.
- If Staff determines that the side door facing Palmarito Street is original, it is to remain.



**Figure 7: Location of existing door to remain in place;  
note the horizontal line indicating alignment of door and window**

- On Sheet A3.3, the existing casement windows into the kitchen are to remain in the current location and not shifted to align with a window on the second floor and the



existing door location into the proposed kitchen is to remain as it is intended to align with the arched window on the east façade.

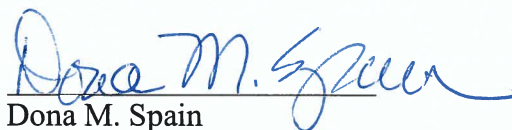
- Staff cannot require that the non-original balconette at the second floor of the northwest façade be replaced with simple straight pickets as depicted in the original drawings, but would encourage the owner to consider the change.
- On Sheet A3.4 – the proposed niche within loggia should be an indentation that indicates the location and size of the existing door.
- The terracotta tiles found within the existing one-story loggia (northeast elevation with pointed arches) are original and are to remain in place.
- The muntins of the new arched transom on the southwest elevation of the media room addition should match the original configuration found within (see Figures 5).
- The majority of the residence is clad in true, two-piece barrel tile, any new roofs and/or replacement of the existing roof (noted as an add/alternate) are to utilize handmade two-piece barrel tile.
- While the pool and deck are shown on the site plan, a separate Standard Certificate of Appropriateness will be required for them as they are not detailed enough for complete review and should be done with a separate permit.
- No elevations were provided of the existing or proposed perimeter wall and gates that exist at the south and east property lines. Partial demolition and new gates are proposed that cannot be reviewed at this time. Unless the Board wants to review these items at a later date, a separate Standard Certificate of Appropriateness will be required for the alterations to the perimeter wall along University Drive and Palmarito Street.

Overall, the proposed additions and alteration does not detract from the historic integrity of the property. The property has been neglected for quite a long time and Staff is enthusiastically awaiting the revival of this grand residence.

**Therefore, Historical Resources Department Staff recommends the following:**

A motion to **APPROVE** the design proposal for the additions, alterations and sitework on the property at 711 University Drive, a Local Historic Landmark, legally described as Lot 11 & S ½ Lot 10, Block 137, Coral Gables Country Club Section Part Six, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 20, at Page 1 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida, and **APPROVE with conditions noted above** the issuance of a Special Certificate of Appropriateness.

Respectfully submitted,



Dona M. Spain

Historic Preservation Officer