



COA (SP) 2024-033
November 20, 2024

**STAFF REPORT
SPECIAL CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
FOR THE PROPERTY AT
2523 ALHAMBRA CIRCLE
A CONTRIBUTING RESOURCE WITHIN
THE “ALHAMBRA CIRCLE HISTORIC DISTRICT”**

*Historical Resources &
Cultural Arts*

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- Proposal:** The application requests design approval for additions and alterations to the residence and sitework. Variances are also being requested from Article 2, Section 2-101 D (4) (b) (ii) and Article 3, Section 3-308 (I) of the Coral Gables Zoning Code for minimum street side setbacks and the location of the swimming pool.
- Architect:** Konover Sanchez Architecture & Development, LLC
- Owner:** Jacques and Joanna Ulvert
- Legal Description:** Lot 17, Block 11, Coral Gables Section “D,” according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 26, at Page 74, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.
- Site Characteristics:** The property is located on the northeast corner of the intersection of Alhambra Circle and Valencia Avenue. The primary elevation faces west onto Alhambra Circle. Dimensions of the site are approximately 49 feet wide by 180 feet deep.

BACKGROUND/EXISTING CONDITIONS

The “Alhambra Circle Historic District,” designated in 2008, comprises one- and two-story residential properties built between the 1920s and the 1950s and landscape features that abut Alhambra Circle. Also included within the district are the Alhambra Water Tower, Granada Plaza, and Alcazar Plaza.

The residence at 2523 Alhambra Circle is considered a Contributing Resource within the district. The residence was designed in 1936 (Permit #5035) by architect Willam H. Merriam. The design was unusual in that the main living area to the front was separated from the two bedrooms at the rear by a screened loggia that spanned the width of the house (since enclosed). The property maintains its architectural integrity and continues to contribute to the historic architectural fabric of the City.

PROPOSAL

The applicant is requesting design approval for the construction of a one- and two-story addition, alterations to the existing residence, and sitework. Variances are also being requested from Article 2, Section 2-101 D (4) (b) (ii) and Article 3, Section 3-308 (I) of the Coral Gables Zoning Code for minimum street side setbacks (pool and projecting balcony and the placement of the swimming pool closer to the side street than the residence).

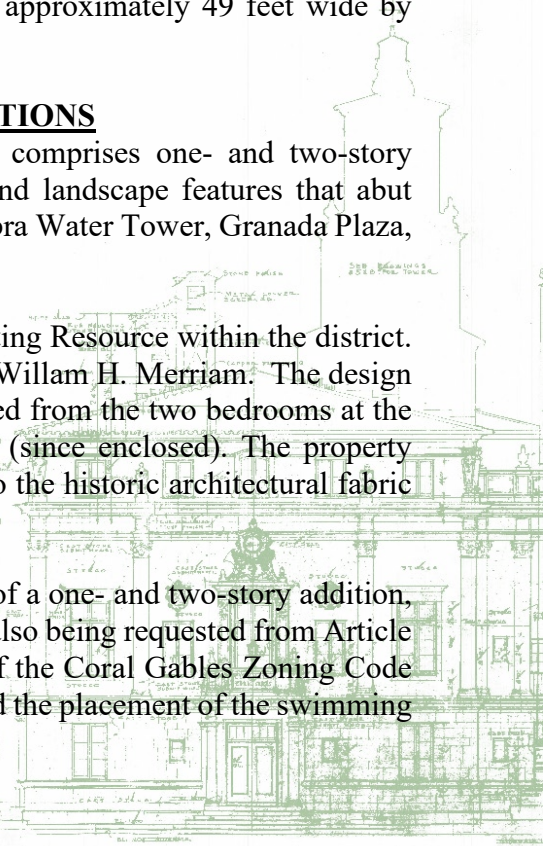




Figure 1: ca. 1940s photo



Figure 2: Current photo, 2024

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

The following Standards have application in this matter:

9. *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*
10. *New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

STAFF OBSERVATIONS

The scope of work contained in this application consists of a one- and two-story addition to the rear (east) of the residence that that will be visible from both Alhambra Circle, but also more significantly from Valencia Avenue, alterations to the existing residence, and sitework. The approximately 1,886 SF addition comprises a new family room within the one-story connector piece and a new den, two bedrooms with full bathrooms and an additional full bathroom on the first floor of the two-story addition. The second floor consists of the primary bedroom suite.

To accommodate the two-story addition, an existing window on the east façade will be enlarged to provide access into to the addition. Other alterations to the home include: the installation of impact-resistant windows and doors, removal of clamshell awnings (not original), demolition of exterior steps at the north and south of the original screened loggia (original), replacement of the existing flat, white tile roof for barrel tile (as seen in the 1940s photo), infill of the original loggia opening on the north side of the home, and interior reconfiguration of some spaces (including the restoration of the garage currently used as living space).

Site work includes: new perimeter wall and fence with pedestrian and vehicular gates, new hardscape including driveway with connected walkway (note that the original coral rock stepping stone front walkway exists and is barely visible under the front lawn grass), new swimming pool and pool deck to the south of the connector, relocation of mechanical equipment, and landscaping.

Note that no elevations were provided for the site fencing and walls besides the renderings. Full drawings showing the full elevations (with and without the residence in the background) will be required for permit review.

All existing elevations are found on Sheet A2 and all proposed elevations on Sheet A5.

West (Front) Elevation:

At the front elevation, the existing home is visible in the foreground with the proposed two-story addition rising above in the background. At the existing residence, the new impact-resistant windows that match the configuration of the original steel casements will be installed. A new garage is proposed that reflects the original drawings. The front door is not specified to remain or be replaced, but it and the screen door are original and are to be retained. The addition beyond (also seen in the section 3/A5) has a series of windows across its south façade, the center assembly mimicking the corner window at the southwest corner of the historic home.

South (Valencia-facing) Elevation:

The existing home will receive new windows that replicate, except for the original screened loggia, the original window configuration. No opening will be resized. The original steps at the loggia will be removed. To the east the addition consists of a recessed one-story connector piece, lower than the existing residence, with two flat-roofed “hyphens” that connect it to the home and two-story portion of the addition. It reads as a stand-alone connection bridging the two. Folding and true French doors span the connector and a deep roof overhang with exposed rafter ends faces the pool. Further to the east, the two-story addition projects to the south property line, creating a courtyard between it and the existing residence. At the first floor, single and pairs of casement windows are symmetrically placed without window sills. Note that the that the submitted renderings depict window sills on the addition. A scoreline incised into the stucco runs around the addition but it is unclear why as it does not engage with the windows or provide any sort of base for the elevation.

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Above a balcony with rounded edges and stucco moulding detailing projects from the center of the façade. It is also inset into the façade by approximately 4'-6." An aluminum picket railing encloses the balcony. The uppermost band of the moulding continues around the other elevations of the addition. The hipped roof projects over the cantilevered balcony with exposed rafter ends. Single windows flank the projecting balcony.

Rear (East) Elevation:

The east elevation is wholly the new two-story addition. The stucco scoreline and moulding continue as on the south elevation. Various single and double casement assemblies are placed throughout.

North (Side) Elevation:

The interior side elevation is devoid of ornamentation and clearly the "back" of the house. Various single and double casement assemblies are placed throughout.

VARIANCES

Variations have also been requested from the Coral Gables Zoning Code. The following variations are being requested in conjunction with this proposal:

Grant a variance to allow the second floor balcony to project approximately three feet (3'-0") over the required fifteen feet (15'-0") side street setback where all Single-Family Residential building setbacks shall be as per the Coral Gables Zoning Code Article 2, Section 2-100 D (4)(b)(ii), Residential District Table and shall meet the following requirements: Side street: Fifteen feet (15'-0").

The Coral Gables Zoning Code stipulates that all properties with frontages on a side street maintain a 15'-0" setback. There is nothing unusual about this lot that would prevent the setback from being maintained. The balcony can be shortened to meet the minimum side street setback.

The Historical Resources staff finds that the following criteria, necessary for authorization of the variance, apply:

Criteria	Yes/No
1) That special conditions and circumstances exist which are peculiar to the land, structure or building involved and which are not applicable to other lands, structures or buildings in the same zoning district.	No
2) That the special conditions and circumstances do not result from the actions of the applicant.	No
3) That granting the variance requested will not confer on the applicant any special privilege that is denied by this Ordinance to other lands, buildings or structures in the same zoning district.	No
4) That literal interpretation of the provisions of the Zoning Code would deprive the applicant of rights commonly enjoyed by other properties in the same zoning district under the terms of the Zoning Code and would work unnecessary and undue hardship on the applicant.	No
5) That the variance granted is the minimum variance that will make possible the reasonable use of the land, building or structure.	No

6) That granting the variance will not change the use to one that is different from other land in the same district.	Yes
7) That the granting of the variance will be in harmony with the general intent and purpose of the Zoning Code, and that such variance will not be injurious to the area involved or otherwise detrimental to the public welfare.	Yes
8) That the granting of the variance is appropriate for the continued preservation of an historic landmark or historic landmark district.	No

Grant a variance to allow for the swimming pool edge to have a side street setback of approximately ten feet, two inches (10'-2") vs. All Single-Family Residential building setbacks shall be as per Section 2-100, Residential Districts Table, and shall meet the following requirements: Side street: fifteen (15) feet as required by Article 2, Section 2-101 D (4) (b.ii) of the Coral Gables Zoning Code.

Grant a variance to allow the swimming pool to be located closer to the side street of a lot or building site than the main or principal building vs. In no case shall a swimming pool be located closer to the front or side street of a lot or building site than the main or principal building as per Article 3, Section 3-308 D (1) of the Coral Gables Zoning Code.

Article 2-101 D (4) has to do with the required setbacks for “accessory uses” to a single-family residence. The setbacks for these items (pools, decks, equipment, etc.) must meet the same setbacks as required for the residence, which in this case is 15'-0” from the side street property line. Because the addition is one story and set back behind the existing residence to create a transition between the original house and the new two-story addition, the pool and deck, are encroaching into the side setback. Staff supports the granting of this variance.

Similarly, the Zoning Code requires that “accessory uses” to a single-family residence not be located closer to any front or side street than the residence. Because the addition is one story and set back behind the existing residence to create a transition between the original house and the new two-story addition, the pool is closer to the side street than the addition. Staff supports the granting of this variance.

The Historical Resources staff finds that the following criteria, necessary for authorization of the variance, apply:

Criteria	Yes/No
9) That special conditions and circumstances exist which are peculiar to the land, structure or building involved and which are not applicable to other lands, structures or buildings in the same zoning district.	Yes
10) That the special conditions and circumstances do not result from the actions of the applicant.	Yes
11) That granting the variance requested will not confer on the applicant any special privilege that is denied by this Ordinance to other lands, buildings or structures in the same zoning district.	Yes

12) That literal interpretation of the provisions of the Zoning Code would deprive the applicant of rights commonly enjoyed by other properties in the same zoning district under the terms of the Zoning Code and would work unnecessary and undue hardship on the applicant.	Yes
13) That the variance granted is the minimum variance that will make possible the reasonable use of the land, building or structure.	Yes
14) That granting the variance will not change the use to one that is different from other land in the same district.	Yes
15) That the granting of the variance will be in harmony with the general intent and purpose of the Zoning Code, and that such variance will not be injurious to the area involved or otherwise detrimental to the public welfare.	Yes
16) That the granting of the variance is appropriate for the continued preservation of an historic landmark or historic landmark district.	Yes

BOARD OF ARCHITECTS

The proposal was reviewed and approved with conditions by the Board Architects on May 9, 2024. The BOA notes were as follows:

05/09/2024 BOA MEETING. * MOTION TO APPROVE AS NOTED WITH THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS: 1) REVISE BALCONY DETAILING. 2) REVISE ROOF EXTENSION DETAILING. 3) REMOVE ROOF EXTENSION OVER SMALLER BALCONY FACING POOL. 4) DETAIL ROOF RAFTER EXTENSION & USE OF FASCIA – IF FASCIA TO REMAIN PLEASE SHOW SECTION.

The comments have been incorporated into the plans.

STAFF CONCLUSION

The application requests design approval for additions and alterations to the residence and sitework. Variances are also being requested from Article 2, Section 2-101 D (4) (b) (ii) and Article 3, Section 3-308 (I) of the Coral Gables Zoning Code for minimum street side setbacks and the location of the swimming pool. The massing and location of the addition are the most appropriate for a modest home like this one, being separated and to the rear. In order to differentiate the addition, staff requests clarification on the stucco texture of the addition and whether the window sills are to be incorporated or not. Staff suggests exploring the elimination of the score line at the two-story addition.

Staff requests that the following condition be incorporated into any motion for approval:

1. Window/door muntins are to be high-profile / dimensional.
2. Window/door glass to be clear/non-reflective/non-tint.
3. Roof tile is to be true two-piece barrel tile.
4. Material to be specified for the new pool deck.
5. A separate Standard Certificate of Appropriateness may be required for the swimming pool and deck if it is under a separate permit.
6. Provide NOA for proposed garage door at time of permitting.
7. Similarly, provide NOAs for the impact-resistant windows and ensure that the configuration shown in the submitted drawings can be installed.

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8. The original tile at the front steps is to remain.
9. The front door and screen door are to remain.
10. Provide a separation between the new driveway and the new walkway.
11. If the septic drainfield needs to be larger, the front walkway is not to be eliminated.
12. Staff to review the proposed perimeter wall and fencing. If not acceptable to staff, this item will return to the Historic Preservation Board for review.
13. Explore eliminating the stucco score line at the addition.

Therefore, Historical Resources Department Staff recommends the following:

A motion to **APPROVE** the design proposal for additions and alterations to the residence and sitework on the property located at **2523 Alhambra Circle**, a Contributing Resource within the “Alhambra Circle Historic District,” legally described as Lot 17, Block 11, Coral Gables Section “D,” according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 26, at Page 74, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida, and **APPROVE WITH THE CONDITION NOTED ABOVE** the issuance of a Special Certificate of Appropriateness.

AND

A motion to **DENY** a variance to allow the second floor balcony to project approximately three feet (3’-0”) over the required fifteen feet (15’-0”) side street setback where all Single-Family Residential building setbacks shall be as per the Coral Gables Zoning Code Article 2, Section 2-100 D (4)(b)(ii), Residential District Table and shall meet the following requirements: Side street: Fifteen feet (15’-0”).

AND

A motion to **APPROVE** a variance to allow for the swimming pool edge to have a side street setback of approximately ten feet, two inches (10’-2”) vs. All Single-Family Residential building setbacks shall be as per Section 2-100, Residential Districts Table, and shall meet the following requirements: Side street: fifteen (15) feet as required by Article 2, Section 2-101 D (4) (b.ii) of the Coral Gables Zoning Code.

AND

A motion to **APPROVE** a variance to allow the swimming pool to be located closer to the side street of a lot or building site than the main or principal building vs. In no case shall a swimming pool be located closer to the front or side street of a lot or building site than the main or principal building as per Article 3, Section 3-308 D (1) of the Coral Gables Zoning Code.

Respectfully submitted,



Anna Pernas

Historic Preservation Officer