

CITY OF CORAL GABLES
405 BILTMORE WAY
CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA 33134

MEETING OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD

September 18th, 2025

4:00 p.m.

City Hall, Commission Chambers

Commission Members In Attendance:

ALEJANDRO SILVA

CESAR GARCIA-PONS

MICHELLE CUERVO-DUNAJ

DONA SPAIN

MARLIN EBBERT

ANA ALVAREZ

KELLY SCHILD

CITY ATTORNEY:

STEPHANIE THROCKMORTON

I wanted to give you all a brief refresher of the law and give a brief overview of what, in the Code, so that we ask proceed with this application appropriately.

So obviously, the decision as to whether or not to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition of this property is for the Board to make. The City Attorney's Office takes no position as to the merits of the issuance in this case. But I wanted to assist you in hearing this application, and giving you a little bit of background on the legal issues related to evaluating the undue hardship application and provide a brief background about this office's previous terminations.

So one of the criteria to be considered in the issuance of a Special Certificate of Appropriateness for Demolition is whether the application has demonstrated that retention of the building structure or site would create an unreasonable or undue economic hardship. That is a defined term in the zoning code.

The undue economic hardship is defined as an exceptional financial burden that would amount to the taking of property without just compensation or failure to achieve a feasible economic return in the case of income-producing properties.

(Excerpt of Meeting.)

MR. SILVA: We are back. Thank you all very much. We are going to hear our next case. This is case file COA SP 2024-027, an application for the issuance for a Special Certificate of Appropriateness for the property at 128 Obispo Avenue, Contributing Resource within the "Obispo Avenue Historic District," legally described as Lots 1 and 2, Block 3, Coral Gables Section E, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 8, Page 13 of the public records of Miami Dade County, Florida.

The application requests design approval for the demolition of an existing residence. The applicant is claiming economic hardship.

Before we begin, I think some of you all walked in late; if you haven't been sworn in, would you please rise and be sworn in, anyone who was not sworn in before and is going to speak.

(Swearing of those wishing to speak.)

MR. SILVA: Thank you. And also before we begin, I think Ms. Throckmorton was going to say, give a little bit of background or a briefing.

MS. THROCKMORTON: Of course. Thank you, Mr. Silva. Just given that this Board hasn't seen an undue hardship application in, I think over a decade,

Our office has previously determined in memos, I believe Ms. Spain was around the last time this came around, that when evaluating whether a historic designation causes an undue economic hardship such that a Certificate of Appropriateness should be issued, the claimed economic hardship should be evaluated under the standard that the U.S. Supreme Court has outlined in the Penn Central case.

We don't have to get into all the details and legalities of that taking jurisprudence, but generally, it requires that the adjudicating body evaluate the economic impact of the regulation on the Claimant, and particularly, the extent to which the regulation has interfered with distinct investment backed expectations, as well as the character of the governmental action. That means that you should consider whether it amounts to a physical invasion or if it instead affects the property interest through some public program, adjusting the benefits and burdens of economic life to promote the common good.

So the current jurisprudence on taking has found that diminution of property value standing alone doesn't generally constitute a taking. Designation of historic property is a valid exercise of the government's police power.

MR. SILVA: I'm sorry, Ms. Throckmorton, would you repeat that first line again, and a little more slowly.

MS. THROCKMORTON: Sure. It's a very legal -- Essentially, what applies to this and what would apply in an appellate review is a taking standard. So the broad basis of that is, given the language in our zoning code about whether or not that undue hardship is defined as an exception financial burden that would amount to the taking of a property without just compensation, that what applies to you all is the standard of taking; Takings Law. Which is a broad book of jurisprudence that is found in regulatory takings, physical takings, eminent domain. There is a whole law of takings that apply to that, that generally, the way our code defines that, is that it is the taking of a property without just compensation, but in the case of income-producing properties, a failure to achieve a feasible economic return. And that is one of the prongs for consideration in the issuance of a Special Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition.

As we move on, I'm happy to answer any more specific questions, but I just wanted to broadly state that the way that it has been upheld in courts, and

the way that we have defined undue economic burden in our zoning code, under economic hardship, excuse me, is in that realm of takings. And that's the sort of legal framework in which we are working here.

I know there is some background information that has been provided to you, that this item has come to you before, I'll let Ms. Pernas explain that and then let the applicant present their application for the SCOA.

MR. SILVA: Thank you. Ms. Pernas.

MS. PERNAS: Anna Pernas, Preservation Officer. I just wanted to give a brief description because this application has been before the Board for demolition and was previously denied. But this is application is different because it is including, inclusive of the claim of undue economic hardship.

So just a brief background on the property and then I'll let the applicants present their proposal.

In May 2008, the Obispo Avenue Historic District was listed in the Coral Gables Register of Historic Places. 1258 Obispo Avenue is considered a contributing structure within the District.

In 2014, a Special Certificate of Appropriateness was approved for a large one-story addition on the residence and it was never built, then the COA

expired. In 2019, a COA for addition and alterations to the residence and site work were approved, and multiple conditions by Historic Board. And again, that proposal was also never built.

In July 2021, the Board reviewed a request for the revision of the Special Certificate of Appropriateness For the removal and replacement of the roof and floor framing due to the poor condition. A replica of the historic roof was to be built and the floor was to be replaced with a lower concrete slab. The Board made a motion to defer the consideration of the revision and suggestion that the structural engineer, who is familiar with the residence, be present and participate at the next meeting.

The applicant did not return to the Board and the proposal did not proceed. Soon after is when the property owners purchased the property in October 2021. Staff met with the applicants prior to the purchase of the property, and explained the prior Board reviews and outcomes.

In December 2022, the Historic Preservation Board reviewed a request for the demolition of the existing structure. The Historic Preservation Board found that the proposed demolition is historically inappropriate, detracts from the integrity of the historic structure

and the historic district, and is inconsistent with the Secretary of Interior Standards for rehabilitation. The Board approved the motion to deny the application.

The applicants did appeal that request, and the property owner submitted a notice of an intent to appeal to the Board to the City Clerk, and on February 7th, 2023, the property owner submitted the complete application.

The City Commission heard the appeal on February 28th, 2023, and the appeal hereby denied, and the decision of the historic was denied and the Historic Preservation Board's decision was affirmed by the City Commission. Since that decision was made, the applicant has been in touch with our office about the undue economic hardship application.

We have been working with them for about a year to over a year or so to get the application complete, and make sure that we had all the materials that we needed in order to review, to make a decision on whether it met the economic hardship requirements and to see whether or not we would require a third-party review of those materials. We have moved forward with the application since, and we are here to today to go forward with that. And I will let the applicant take

9 1 it from here. 2 MR. MESTRE: Thank you very much. My name is 3 Cesar Mestre, I'm here with co-counsel, Oscar de la 4 Rosa, and the owners of the property, Javier Avila and 5 Jennifer Ruiz. 6 As Staff said, they have been before you before, 7 kind of asking for something very similar to what's 8 happening now. 9 MS. PERNAS: Can we get the presentation up? And 9 10 this is just the 1940s photo of the property. 11 MR. MESTRE: So we are here on the property, 12 which is 1258 Obispo Avenue, owned by Javier Avila and 13 Jennifer Ruiz. It's very important to realize that 13 14 they purchased it in October of 2021. It's a 50,000 14 15 square foot property, with a home that was built in 15 16 1946. It's a two-bedroom, one-bath, one-story 16 17 property. They purchased it in October 21st, for 17 18 \$1,025,000. Last year's taxes, this is part of what 18 19 was submitted to the City, the taxes on that property 19 20 were \$30,000 last year. 21 When Mr. and Mrs. Avila Ruiz decided to buy this 21 22 property, they lived in Coral Gables, they wanted to 22 23 start a family, they wanted this to be their home. 23 24 They met with Warren Adams here in the City to ask 24 25 about the property and what was going on. There was 25	11 1 time. 2 He found out that these contractors coming out, 3 and they had several, they started with, you don't 4 just need this work, you need much more work. And 5 it's so bad that the contractors told him, I don't 6 even feel safe going in to do work on this side of the 7 house because I am afraid it's going to fall on me, 8 cause problems. They were reluctant to even do the 9 work that it needed to do, because it was much more 10 work that was needed than what was originally thought 11 of. 12 This is the bid for the repairs on just part of 13 the repairs that they need. This is for the floors 14 and the roof boards. This is \$175,000 that was quoted 15 to him at that time. This appraisal shows you that 16 the appraised value of the property was \$1,150,000. 17 The prior historical structure form, this is from the 18 City, and the part on the bottom reads as followings: 19 "This building," referring to the one that we are 20 talking about, "lacks sufficient architectural merit 21 and historical import for individual local designation 22 or national register historic property listing, but it 23 does contribute to the Obispo Avenue Historic District 24 as the example of domestic architecture from the 25 District's period of significance."
10 1 no discussion at that time regarding the structure 2 integrity of this property. As Staff said, this 3 property has already been approved for Special 4 Certificate of Appropriateness twice; one in 2014 and 5 one in 2019. The one in 2019 was actually a pretty 5 6 big addition, would make it almost 4,000 square feet. 6 7 I ask you to keep in mind that although the 7 8 owners at that time, and there have been three owners 8 9 over the last ten years, they never went forward with 9 10 that. And you ask yourself, why? Why would they go 10 11 through the trouble of coming here, doing all the 11 12 applications, spending all the money, and doing 12 13 everything they needed to do and then not follow 13 14 through with it. 15 The building valuation is, the land is worth, 16 \$1,455,000 and the building is worth about \$21,000. 16 17 When my client decided to buy the house after meeting 17 18 with Staff, finding out that they had these Special 18 19 Certificates of appropriateness that were granted, 19 20 they went to do the work. They hired contractors or 20 21 brought contractors out, and that's when to his 21 22 surprise, he found out that the structural integrity 22 23 of the property was not there. That not only was he 23 24 looking at these additions as the expense, but that 24 25 there was a serious problem with this house at that 25	12 1 So the City itself determined that this property, 2 this individual property is not historical but it's 3 part of the historical district. 4 This slide shows you a report from professional 5 engineer, Antonio Canelas, dated February 24th, 2023, 6 where he recommended that the home not be inhabited, 7 the possible repairs necessary to restore the 8 structural integrity of the house would over-exceed 9 the cost of new construction. 10 So this professional engineer says, nobody should 11 be living here, this is dangerous, and the cost of 12 fixing this is going to cost you more than what this 13 property is worth. 14 This is just showing that the Board does have the 15 power and the authority to grant the demolition 16 Certificate of Appropriateness. In your code, there 17 is a section 8-1078, which deals with demolitions. 18 Section D is the criteria set forth for you to 19 consider when discussing this type of matter. They 20 have one through eight, is the criteria that they 21 have. 22 In Staff's report, D(1), it says, "The degree to 23 which the building structure, improvement or site 24 contributes to the historic district." 25 One of the other criteria is, is this property,

is this house unique? Is it the last one that is this type of structure? And Staff's own report says, no, this is not the last one; there are others. But at the same time it says, that this house will affect the historic district. And it says, "This building is a contributing resource of the Obispo Avenue Historic District. Its removal would irreversibly and negatively impact the historical architectural significance of the District."

I took the time, and I counted the district from avenue to avenue, and I counted, approximately, about 124 houses that were contained within that historic district. To say that this would, I want to quote, "irreversibly and negatively impact the district," I think it's necessary to see how many other structures there have this type of architecture, how many of these structures were done by the same architect.

MR. SILVA: Excuse me, sir, just one minute. I would like to ask Ms. Throckmorton a question. So we are tasked with looking at this application in terms of economic hardship only, correct? We are not reevaluating the designation itself?

MS. THROCKMORTON: There are eight criteria that should be considered. It's not one or all required, but the eight criteria to be considered for

demolition. This Board has previously considered the seven of the eight, because there was not previously made an argument for undue economic hardship. It is coming before you now to be considered with all eight criteria.

MR. SILVA: All eight again?

MS. THROCKMORTON: I believe so.

MS. PERNAS: So in order for them to claim the undue economic hardship, it has to come to the Board with a Special Certificate of Appropriateness. So you are reviewing a Special Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition and the economic, and claim of undue economic hardship.

MR. SILVA: Thank you.

MS. THROCKMORTON: To the extent that there has been any change in position in any of those factors, I think they would be considered. It is essentially a de novo review of that COA, but the COA was previously denied when considering those seven other criteria.

MR. SILVA: Thank you. Thank you for clarifying.

MR. MESTRE: Thank you. Glad you cleared that up. Criteria number two, it was determined that the building was not one of the last remaining examples of its kind in the neighborhood, in the county or in the

region.

Criteria number three, whether the loss of the building structure, improvement or site would adversely affect the historic and or archeological integrity of the historic site or district. Again, here, the loss of the building would adversely affect the historic architectural integrity of the district, and would result in one less contributing structure.

Again, I think here it is extremely important to see, there is one less, but out of the 124 houses, how many houses are left that have the same type of structure.

Number four, whether the retention of the building structure improvement or site, would promote the general welfare of the City by providing opportunity for study of local history. The response or the observation from Staff was, as the building retains much integrity, it provides an opportunity for study of local history, architecture, design of that particular culture or heritage. Again, it's just a determination that this one -- if this one structure goes, it's going to negatively impact the entire district, and we don't agree with that.

On the reuse, which is your item number five, your criteria, talks about plans for reuse of the

property. I can tell you that the owner has gotten renderings that were made, and this is what they are proposing. They are trying to keep as much as possible, and I know that this was a very important item for them, the same type of style, which I believe is Mediterranean Revival with the property that's due.

This is what they envisioned when they bought the property. This is what they would like to do there. But of course, that's all going to depend on your decision today.

Number six in the criteria is whether the building structure, improvement or site possesses an imminent threat to public health or safety.

There have been photographs that were submitted with the Letter of Intent, which is part of the application, which shows the condition of the property. Although, my client, after he purchased it, he did repair some windows, they did some caulking they tried to do some Band-aid damage to keep the water intrusion from incurring, but it has holes in the floor, holes in the roof. It's eaten by termites. All the trusses need to be replaced. The floors need to be replaced. There is a picture showing, like, a cinder block that's holding up part of the house.

So our position, and what I would argue to you is

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1 that, this property, although it has not been
2 officially declared an unsafe structure, we do have
3 the engineer's report that says, nobody should be
4 living there. This is a nuisance, this is an actual
5 danger to the community. We know that children like
6 to go into empty houses. So I believe that this is a
7 danger, and it is a public necessity to demolish this
8 house.

9 The economic hardship. The property was
10 purchased for \$1,025,000. The interest payments on
11 this property are \$99,000 a year. The taxes for the
12 last year were \$30,000. There is a list that has been
13 submitted with estimates of all of the items that
14 would need to be repaired in order to bring this
15 property, this 1,300 square foot, two-bedroom,
16 one-bath house into compliance and up to date, and it
17 would be in excess of \$650,000. So I argue to you
18 that, in his eyes, in his financial situation, in his
19 inability to use this property because of the cost
20 that it would cost to bring it up to par, it is a
21 taking, because he has not been able to use this
22 property since 2021. He has been paying for it. He
23 been paying the upkeep. He's been paying \$5,000 a
24 year to cut the grass, but he is unable to use it, and
25 can't even get anybody to go in there to fix it,

18
1 because they are afraid it's going to fall on them and
2 it's going to be a hazard.

3 Again criteria number eight, that there is a
4 compelling interest. I repeat to you, I believe this
5 is an eyesore, dangerous to children, dangerous to the
6 community. Interestingly, again, there was a house of
7 yeah, there was a house located directly east. This
8 is a corner house, the second house from the corner,
9 was demolished, and it is under construction. They
10 are almost finished with that. So that house was
11 either partially or fully demolished, and it was our
12 neighbor's house.

13 There have been, as I told you, three owners
14 since 2013. The first sale was \$260,000 in 2013. The
15 second sale was 2017, was \$750,000. And then my
16 client bought in 2021 for \$1,025,000. If you noticed
17 when Staff was telling you the background, the prior
18 owner came here, I believe, in July of 2021 before
19 this Board. And this Board deferred the item, saying
20 we want you to come back but come back with a
21 structural engineer. Instead of coming back here,
22 that gentleman, whoever that owner was, instead of
23 coming back here with the structural engineer as he
24 was asked to do, he turned around and sold it to my
25 client. He bought it four months later for a lot more

19
1 money than what he had paid for.

2 So although he had permission to do the
3 additions, requested to come here because he wanted to
4 change the Special Certificate that he had, he never
5 came back with the structural engineer. That is the
6 big, big problem which has nothing to do with my
7 client's conduct. The property is falling apart,
8 literally. It is structurally unsound, and it's going
9 to cost way too much money to make this make sense.

10 So in conclusion, we would ask you to find that
11 we have met the undue economic hardship criteria, that
12 based on the facts as I have presented them to you, it
13 doesn't make any economic sense to do what he needs to
14 do to make this property up to par. That this is a
15 taking in the sense that they have been unable, and
16 will continue to be unable to use the property in any
17 fashion because it is uninhabitable and no contractor
18 is willing to go out there and do the work.

19 Allow us to do what our neighbor did, and allow
20 us to demolish the property. We respectfully ask you
21 for a vote of approval. And if you have any questions
22 for me or my client or co-counsel, we would be happy
23 to answer them.

24 MR. SILVA: Thank you. Does anyone on the Board
25 have a question?

20
1 MS. PERNAS: If I may do the Staff report. So as
2 mentioned previously, the demolition, when considering
3 a request for demolition of a structure with the
4 historic district, the following sections of the code
5 apply and staff comments have been provided below.

6 So if you want to follow on page 3 of your staff
7 report, I'm going to read through each one. I know
8 it's a little time-consuming, but it's important for
9 it to be on the record. I also want to state that
10 this was considered previously, and these are the same
11 conditions that were discussed and the same comments
12 that were discussed within that staff report besides
13 some updates that were just, more of the timing
14 didn't align. And I will go through and discuss that.

15 But there has no been no significant change to
16 the building that has altered its significance in the
17 historic district. Staff still recommends denial of
18 the Special Certificate of Appropriateness for the
19 demolition. It's still a contributing structure
20 within the Historic District that should be restored
21 and salvaged. And as mentioned, no alternative plans
22 have been submitted since the last two years the
23 application was previously denied.

24 So as per Section 8-107 demolition, Staff --
25 there is A. So there is certain criteria that's going

21

1 to be listed, and I will just go to Section D, which 1
2 is in addition to all the provisions of this Article, 2
3 the Board shall consider the following criteria in 3
4 evaluating applications for Special Certificate of 4
5 Appropriateness for demolition of designated 5
6 properties. 6
7 The degree to which the building, structure, 7
8 improvement or site contributes to the historic and or 8
9 architectural significance of the historic site or 9
10 district. The building is a contributing resource 10
11 within the Obispo Avenue Historic District. Its 11
12 removal will be irreversible and negatively impact the 12
13 historic and architectural significance of the 13
14 District. No change has been made to those comments 14
15 Whether the building structure, improvement or 15
16 site is one of the last remaining examples of its kind 16
17 in the neighborhood, in the country or the region. 17
18 This building is not one of the last remaining 18
19 examples of its kind in the neighborhood, the county 19
20 or the region; this can be applied to many structures 20
21 the same comment. 21
22 Number three, whether the loss of the building, 22
23 structure, improvement or site would adversely affect 23
24 the historic and or architectural integrity of the 24
25 historic site or district. The loss of the building 25

22

1 would adversely historic and architectural integrity 1
2 of the district and would result in one less 2
3 contributing structure. 3
4 Number four, whether the retention of the 4
5 building, structure improvement or site would promote 5
6 the general welfare of the City by providing an 6
7 opportunity for study of local history, architecture 7
8 and design or by developing an understanding of the 8
9 importance in value of a particular culture and 9
10 heritage. As the building retains much of its 10
11 integrity, it provides an opportunity for study of the 11
12 local history, architecture and design, and by 12
13 developing an understanding of the importance and 13
14 value of the particular culture and heritage. 14
15 Number five, whether architectural plans have 15
16 been presented to the Board for the reuse of the 16
17 property if the proposed demolition were to be carried 17
18 out, and the appropriateness of said plans to the 18
19 character of this historic site or district, if 19
20 applicable. And demonstrations as well as the posting 20
21 of a bond requirement that were sufficient funds in 21
22 case to carry out such plans. The applicant has not 22
23 provided plans for reuse of the property as part of 23
24 this application. 24
25 Whether the building, structure, improvement or 25

23

1 site poses an imminent threat to the public health of 1
2 safety. The building does not pose an imminent threat 2
3 to the public health or safety, as it has not been 3
4 determined to be an unsafe structure. Whether the 4
5 applicant has demonstrated the retention of the 5
6 building, structure, improvement or site, would create 6
7 an unreasonable, undue, economic hardship as described 7
8 in Section 8-115. The applicant is claiming that, and 8
9 I will go over those criteria once I get to these 9
10 items. 10
11 And number eight, whether there is a compelling 11
12 public interest requiring demolition. There is no 12
13 compelling public interest requiring the demolition, 13
14 as demolition would negatively impact the historic 14
15 district. As mentioned, these are the same eight 15
16 criteria that were considered in the previous 16
17 application, that were rejected by the Historic 17
18 Preservation Board and upheld by the City Commission. 18
19 As for the undue economic, a claim for undue 19
20 economic hardship may only be asserted in conjunction 20
21 with an application for historic resources department 21
22 with an application for a special certificate of 22
23 appropriateness in accordance with Section 8-106, 23
24 which shall be considered by the Historic Preservation 24
25 Board at public hearing. So that's why we are here 25

24

1 today with the special certificate for the demolition. 1
2 At a minimum, the applicant shall provide at the 2
3 time of the application, the following information for 3
4 all property: One, the amount paid for the property, 4
5 the amount paid for the property, the date of purchase 5
6 and the name of the previous property owner. The 6
7 property was purchased from Mr. Igor Nunez on October 7
8 1st, 2021 for a total of \$1,025,000. See executed 8
9 seller's document and property appraiser's information 9
10 attached. 10
11 Number two, the assessed value of the land and 11
12 all improvements, therein according to the two most 12
13 recent Miami Dade County Property Assessment records. 13
14 See documents attached titled, "Miami Dade Property 14
15 Appraiser 09-10-25. I tried to be clear on the 15
16 attachments, just because I know there was a lot to go 16
17 through, and I don't know if you can follow with 17
18 what's on the application on line. 18
19 Number three, the real estate taxes for the 19
20 previous two years. The applicant had provided copies 20
21 of the property taxes for 2021 and 2022. The annual 21
22 debt service, if any, for the previous two years. No 22
23 copies were provided. As per an e-mail from the 23
24 property owner, the home is financed under a hard 24
25 money personal loan, therefore, they do not have a 25

25
1 bank statement to offer.
2 Number five, all appraisals obtained in the
3 previous two years by the property owner or applicant
4 in connection with the purchase, financing or
5 ownership of the property. No copies were provided.
6 As per an e-mail from the property owner, they do not
7 have the appraisal prior to the purchase.
8 Number six, any property sale, listing of the
9 property for sale or rent, price asked and offers
10 received, if any. Please see the document attached,
11 titled, Zillow listing history. The property has been
12 on and off the market multiple times over the last few
13 years. According to Zillow, the lasting listing was
14 advertising a 4,550 square foot home of five bedrooms
15 and six bath, for approximately, \$2,395,000.
16 The existing building located at 1258 Obispo
17 Avenue is approximately 1,350 square feet, two
18 bedrooms, one bath. In an e-mail, the applicant
19 confirmed that the property is currently not for sale.
20 When it was on the market, the owners did receive two
21 offers for 2,200,000 but they fell through as soon as
22 they spoke with the City during due diligence period.
23 No back up materials were provided.
24 Number seven, any consideration by the property
25 owner as to profitable adaptive uses for the property.

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1 No consideration as to profitable adaptive uses for
2 the property have been evidenced by the property owner
3 or the applicant.
4 Number eight, two appraisal completed by two
5 separate State of Florida certified appraisers,
6 completed within six months of the application
7 submittal. So the applicant did provide three
8 appraisals dated from 2023 to 2024. So I'll kind of
9 go over the conclusion just to wrap up and have it on
10 the record, again.
11 This is an application request desired approval
12 for the demolition of an existing residence. The
13 applicant is claiming undue economic hardship. The
14 house is a contributing resource within the Obispo
15 Historic Avenue, Historic District. The demolition
16 any contributing resource will result in a negative
17 and irreversible impact to the District, as a
18 contributing resource will be lost.
19 After reviewing the evidence provided by the
20 applicant, the Historic Resource Department staff has
21 determined that the claim for undue economic hardship
22 has not been substantiated. Further, Staff concludes
23 that the request for the demolition of the structure
24 should be denied due to this determination. Article
25 16, the definitions of the Coral Gables Zoning Code

27
1 defines undue economic hardship as an exceptional
2 financial burden that would allow to the taking of a
3 property without just compensation or failure to
4 achieve a feasible economic return in the case of
5 income-producing properties.
6 When addressing claims of undue economic
7 hardship, one has to determine whether or not the
8 level of economic impact rises to the level of
9 economic hardship. A historic designation and denial
10 of the Certificate of Appropriateness application may
11 have an economic impact on a property owner, but is it
12 severe enough to become an economic hardship. In all
13 claims of economic hardship, the burden of proof rests
14 entirely on the applicant.
15 As listed above, many of the materials requested
16 have not been provided, and Staff does not believe the
17 criteria have been met.
18 Economic hardship is generally accepted as being
19 consistent with the taking of the property. The legal
20 standards for a constitutional regulatory taking
21 requires property owners to establish that he or she
22 has been denied all reasonable, beneficial use or
23 return of the property as a result of the Commission's
24 denial of a permit for alterations or demolition.
25 There is an attachment as a resource for you all to

28
1 look at as a reference.
2 In 2019, a Special Certificate of Appropriateness
3 for additions and the alterations to the structure was
4 reviewed and approved by the Historic Preservation
5 Board. This addition would have allowed a 3,859
6 square foot addition to the existing 1,000 and to
7 correct, the house is 1,546 square feet. And no other
8 plans for renovation, restoration or adaptive use of
9 the property have been submitted since. Historic
10 Preservation case law has strongly taken the stance
11 that the property owner is not entitled to the highest
12 and best use of the property. What has been
13 consistently and legally upheld is that there is no
14 undue economic hardship or taking, the property can
15 realize a reasonable return on investment, and whether
16 a viable use of the property remains.
17 Does a viable use for the property remain? Yes.
18 The property remains viable as a single family home.
19 The owners can continue to use the property as a
20 single family residence with the historic designation
21 in place. And if the demolition request is denied, it
22 is feasible that alterations could occur but no such
23 consideration had been given to the residents.
24 The city Commission has adopted the ad valorem
25 tax exemption incentive for property owners, that

would allow tax exemptions for the restoration, renovation and rehabilitation of historic properties. The exemption shall apply to 100 percent of the assessed value of all improvements to historic properties which result from the restoration, renovation and rehabilitation made on or effective date of this article. This would help ease the economic burden the applicant is claiming. Without the economic hardship claimed, there is no compelling reason to improve the demolition of the residence.

As stated before, there has been no evidence presented that supports the need to demolish the property due to any material defect in the property. As noted above, it is the opinion of Staff that the request meets only two of the eight criteria in Section 8-107(d), demolition of the City code, and pursuant to this section of the code, the Board shall consider the criteria. As further noted above, it is the opinion of Staff, that based on the structural report, the structure suffers from seven of the ten defects in 8-108.B1, demolition by neglect of the City Code.

The applicants have been aware of these conditions since 2021, and no repairs have been made. Therefore, based on the above and the demolition is

inconsistent with the Secretary of the Interior standards and will result in a negative, irreversible impact of the Obispo Avenue Historic District, the structural report indicates the structure can be repaired, and the request is not consistent with the requirements of the code, Staff recommends the following: A motion to adopt Staff's finding and report, and to find the application has not demonstrated the requirements for a Special Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of the property, and to, sorry, in reading it I got off track. This needs to be reworded, I apologize.

So the first portion of the motion is that Staff does not, to reject the claim for undue economic hardship and a motion to deny the Special Certificate of appropriateness for the demolition. And that concludes my presentation.

MR. SILVA: Thank you, Ms. Pernas. Does anyone on the Board have any questions for the applicants? Now, I am going to open up the public hearing. Is anyone here who wishes to speak for or against or on Zoom as well? We have some letters that were distributed to us as well.

MS. PERNAS: We did receive letters of support of Staff's recommendation to deny the demolition. These

were from Karelia Carbonell on behalf of the HPACG, Mr. Brett Gillis, Ms. Zully Pardo and Ms. Vicki Cerda.

MR. SILVA: Is there anyone on Zoom? No? So seeing no one from the public, I am going to close the public hearing and open for Board discussion, questions, comments.

MR. GARCIA PONS: I did have a question for the applicant. I'm sorry, I didn't catch your last name although I caught your first name.

MR. MESTRE: Mestre.

MR. GARCIA PONS: So can I get confirmation on two things, please?

MR. MESTRE: Yes.

MR. GARCIA PONS: One, the home was purchased in October of 2021?

MR. MESTRE: Correct.

MR. GARCIA PONS: The structure report from Mr. Canales, there was a second one, is from November of 2021 through December of 2021.

MR. MESTRE: The one from Canales that showed you in the presentation?

MR. GARCIA PONS: There were two but there was one before the purchase, but there was one subsequent by the homeowner, by the new homeowner, was November, December of 2021.

MR. MESTRE: No, I have February 4th, 2023, the one by Antonio Canales.

MR. GARCIA PONS: There is not another one from 11/25/21 through 12/03/21?

MR. MESTRE: I know there is one from before he purchased.

MS. PERNAS: There was one included in the application for the demolition in 2021 by Mr. Canales, so there was a report included there that was dated from 2021.

MR. GARCIA PONS: And it was addressed to whom?

MS. EBERT: To the applicant.

MR. GARCIA PONS: So to whom, what's the name?

MS. EBERT: Javier Avila.

MR. GARCIA PONS: Is that the applicant, is that the new owner?

MR. MESTRE: Yes, yes it is.

MR. GARCIA PONS: So the owner received the structure report from Mr. Canales a month after he purchased the home?

MR. MESTRE: Correct.

MR. GARCIA PONS: And then the third, it's one of the items, says there was no appraiser prior to purchase or we weren't provided with an appraisal prior to purchase; is that correct?

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1 MR. MESTRE: That is correct.

2 MR. GARCIA PONS: So those three confirmed. It

3 was purchased in October for a certain in 2021. There

4 was no appraisal prior to the purchase, and the

5 structural report was commissioned, was begun, I don't

6 know if it's commissioned, and provided between

7 November and December of that year, 2021.

8 MR. MESTRE: Correct.

9 MR. GARCIA PONS: Thank you. And then one

10 question for Ms. Pernas; subsequent to the October

11 2021, notwithstanding this application, has there been

12 any COA application from this applicant to the

13 Historic Preservation Board?

14 MS. PERNAS: No.

15 MS. THROCKMORTON: Excuse me, Mr. Garcia Pons,

16 just to correct, there was a previous COA for

17 demolition. He was saying between '21.

18 MS. PERNAS: Between 2021 and today, right?

19 MR. GARCIA PONS: Correct.

20 MS. THROCKMORTON: Correct, there was an

21 application.

22 MR. GARCIA PONS: Yeah, that's right. Sorry.

23 The one that was denied.

24 MS. PERNAS: Right. Sorry. I took it as that

25 denial. Since then there has been none.

34

1 MR. GARCIA PONS: So I'll rephrase the question.

2 Since that application, has there been another COA

3 application?

4 MS. PERNAS: There has no other COAs requested

5 from the applicant.

6 MR. GARCIA PONS: Has there been a COA

7 application since 2021 for anything other than

8 demolition?

9 MS. PERNAS: No.

10 MR. GARCIA PONS: Thank you.

11 MS. EBERT: So this house was purchased in 2021,

12 has anyone ever lived in this house or done any

13 repairs or nothing? And there was no home inspection

14 before you bought it?

15 MS. THROCKMORTON: Ms. Ebert, if I can ask that

16 we have anybody who is answering questions, please

17 come up to the dais so that the record is clear about

18 who is answering which question.

19 MS. EBERT: I'm sorry.

20 MS. PERNAS: And just state your name and

21 address.

22 MR. AVILA: Javier Avila. What was your question

23 again?

24 MS. EBERT: My question was, so you purchased

25 this property without any home inspections before you

35

1 purchased it?

2 MR. AVILA: Correct. The intention was to do the

3 addition that was pre-approved by the City. Javier

4 Avila.

5 MS. SCHILD: Have there been any, is there an

6 appraisal available that is six months, within the

7 last six months.

8 MR. AVILA: That we've provided to the Historic

9 Preservation Office, multiple appraisals. I don't

10 when was the last one, but I think we've done like

11 four.

12 MS. SCHILD: I have '21 and '23.

13 MS. PERNAS: There is one from May 2024. I will

14 say this, it's been a process of getting the materials

15 in, so it was within the submittal -- at the time of

16 the submittal of the application, it was within the

17 six months but since scheduling the hearing, it's a

18 little bit off.

19 MS. SCHILD: So one of them was within six

20 months?

21 MS. PERNAS: Yes. Yes. The most recent one that

22 you had included was May 2024.

23 MS. SCHILD: And one more question. There were

24 quite a few repairs requested in the inspection report

25 of December of '21. Have any of those been

36

1 accomplished; the tenting, the subfloor, the walls,

2 the roof?

3 MR. AVILA: No ma'am. That's why I am here;

4 economic hardship.

5 MS. SPAIN: I just have a clarification for the

6 attorney. I think you were reading from the Historic

7 Structural Form, and you said, at the very end it

8 says, "This building lacks sufficient architectural

9 merits and historical import for the individual local

10 designation.

11 MR. MESTRE: Correct.

12 MS. SPAIN: Or to be put on the national listing

13 but it does contribute to the Obispo Avenue Historic

14 District as an example of domestic architecture from

15 the District's period of significance. That does not

16 mean that it's not historically significant. In fact,

17 that last portion of that means that it is historical

18 significant. It just means it's a contributing

19 structure within the historic district.

20 So all of the advantage of historic preservation,

21 the ad valorem, application, all of that is equivalent

22 to being individually designated. It just doesn't

23 qualify for individual designation. I just need to

24 make sure you understood, anybody reading these

25 transcripts would understand that this building is

historically significant as a contributing structure.

MR. MESTRE: Correct. I just wanted to point out that it wasn't individually.

MS. SPAIN: That's right.

MR. MESTRE: Thank you, Mr. Avila. Is there any other questions or any other discussion before we open this up for a motion?

MR. GARCIA PONS: So one question for Ms. Pernas, when you are reading the Staff recommendation for the proposal you said for the motions, you said there was a discrepancy of some kind.

MS. PERNAS: So motion to adopt the Staff's findings and report and to find the applicant has not demonstrated undue economic hardship.

MS. THROCKMORTON: Mr. Garcia Pons, we would like a motion on the undue economic hardship as well as a motion on the Certificate of Special, a COA for demolition. So it may be helpful to, because you could issue an SCOA with making a finding of undue hardship, so you can make two separate motions on each separate issue.

MR. GARCIA PONS: So the first one is about the demolition and the economic hardship?

MS. THROCKMORTON: Correct.

MR. GARCIA PONS: And the second one is the COA

stuff?

MS. THROCKMORTON: So one is finding whether or not that criteria is met for undue economic hardship, the second is finding, regardless of what you find about the economic hardship, if you think that there should be a COA for demolition. Because you could find a SCOA for demolition whether or not you find there is an undue economic hardship based on those other criteria.

MS. PERNAS: So we are recommending that you reject the claim for undue economic hardship and deny the Special Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition.

MS. THROCKMORTON: Based on all the criteria.

MS. PERNAS: Right, and the Staff report.

MS. THROCKMORTON: And the Staff report.

MS. SPAIN: I also think that we should point out that there has been approved by this Court, in previous applications, large additions to this property. So that certainly, you are able to do additions on the lot, and that this Board has approved them. It's not a situation where it's so oddly situated on the lot that it's hard to do an addition

MR. SILVA: So I do want to bring up, so we are looking at eight different conditions. One second.

So there is seven that were considered previously to this, right, in relation to the Certificate of Appropriateness. I don't see that anything has really changed on those original seven, right? The house is still the house, it's still a contributing structure within the District, that had been decided. It had been appealed, and the appeal was denied as well. So on those seven, I am very comfortable with proceeding on those seven that those are still in place and still hold true. Mr. Avila?

MR. AVILA: Let me explain something to all of you guys. So when I purchased this house, it was never an intent to demolish anything. I think in an e-mail we got from Anna, it said that, I knew about the structural issues prior to purchasing the house, and that is completely untrue.

If you go back to the transcripts from the previous meeting with the Commission, Warren Adams made it very clear, that in my meeting with him, it was about two things, colonial grids and changing the French doors in the back to sliding glass doors. There was never a talk about demolishing anything, because I didn't know at the time that I had a problem. So when you talk about, when we are talking about economic hardship, we are talking about the cost

to repair the existing structure supercedes the value of the structure. At least, that's what I've been told all this time that the economic hardship means, or am I wrong or am I right? Can somebody explain to me?

Because I am going to be honest, I don't think anybody in here, including Ms. Pernas, knows the real true meaning of the economic hardship. I think we are all learning as we go right now. Let's figure this out, because my understanding of what I've been told is that the economic hardship is the cost to repair the existing structure is worth more, it's more than the structure itself.

MS. DUNAJ: Ms. It's the taken that deprives one of reasonable use of the property, that would be one way to look at it.

MR. AVILA: Okay. So just alone, just to fix the structural repair, forget about subflooring, forget about flooring, forget about electrical, plumbing, paint, stucco, drywall, forget about all that. Just the structural repair, I'm out one hundred and something dollars. It's already worth more than the structure itself.

So listen, you guys are going to vote however you want. I already know how this is going to go. I just

41
1 wanted to share that with you, and best of luck to all
2 you guys.
3 MS. PERNAS: I do want to clarify that in the
4 report where it does say that the applicants did meet
5 with Warren Adams and previous staff prior to the
6 purchase, I did not mention the condition of the
7 building. I wasn't aware that Warren even knew the
8 condition of the building. I'm not sure if he even
9 stepped foot inside of the building. It's was just
10 that I knew that they had a meeting and discussed the
11 procedures and the previous approval of the property.
12 MR. SILVA: And to address your point, Mr. Avila,
13 I don't think that the undue economic hardship is a
14 simply equation like that. It's not the property
15 appraiser says that building is worth 20,000 and the
16 repairs are 175, structural, again, and that is less
17 than that, therefore there is economic hardship.
18 That's not how the ordinance is written nor is how
19 it's meant to be interpreted. And Ms. Throckmorton,
20 you can correct me if I'm wrong.
21 MS. THROCKMORTON: That's correct. In the past
22 when we've had undue economic hardship applications,
23 this Board has considered things, like, the value of
24 the property after the repairs are constructed, and
25 look at appraisals for homes that have been repaired

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1 and looked at comparable homes and those appraisals.
2 So yes, I think Mr. Mestre summarized the
3 jurisprudence about taking. It's a broad and vague
4 standard; I understand that. It's not a simple math
5 equation, which can make it very difficult for people
6 to predict what is and is not an undue economic
7 hardship, and I completely sympathize and understand
8 that. Yes, I am happy to answer any other specific
9 questions.
10 MS. PERNAS: And I think that, you know, it being
11 a regulatory taking and whether or not the property
12 has any additional uses, is we have kind of already
13 approved that there has been other options of how the
14 property can be used. It's going to cost money to
15 renovate a building. It's going to happen at any
16 property. But again, if I am putting in, you may be
17 putting in \$600,000 but your return on the investment
18 when you go to put that property on the market, again,
19 you may not be making the most. You know, like it's
20 mentioned, you might not make the most money but you
21 are going to make a just, it's just a just
22 compensation that's required here.
23 And even today, just based off the appraisal that
24 was submitted to us in May, the opinion of value of
25 the property was 1.6 million dollars, that's already

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higher than what the purchase price of the property
was when they purchased the building in 2021 in the
current condition.
MS. DUNAJ: And you also provide some evidence in
the record about what some of his Zillow listings
were. I think the highest was at 2.9 million, and
there was an offer of 2.2; it didn't go through.
MS. PERNAS: Right. So the Zillow listing, and
that's why I included that, like history. And there
is also a photo of what was being marketed. So we had
received a bunch of calls and e-mails because they
were concerned that we had already approved the
demolition. But it was the rendering of the new home
that was being proposed here today. And so, it was
being marketed as the new home at 1258 Obispo Avenue
at 2.56 million dollars, which when you go to the
property and see the 1,300, 1,500 square foot house,
is about \$1,700 per square foot. And for a property
that, you know, the proposal that I've read that they
are marketing, had not gone before BOA, had not been
before this Board either.
So I think if a property owner came to us because
they put in a request for -- or put in an offer, the
would call our office asking questions about it; was
this already approved, was the demolition approved?

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Then we would explain that, no demolition has been
approved and explain the history of the process and
the facts of the case already.
MR. AVILA: So the description on the listing,
okay, talked about a preliminary design. It didn't
say that there was anything that was approved, it was
a preliminary design. and what we were listing on the
property, on the Zillow or realtor, was the actual
layout that had already been previously approved. And
what we said was, it's a preliminary design. We
didn't say that it was approved. There was none of
that in the 40-something, 100 square feet of structure
that was listed on there is what the proposed, the
preliminary design would have if it was built, that
was it. .
MR. SILVA: All right. Does anyone else have any
other questions?
MS. SPAIN: I have one question. So this house
was purchased and then a month later, a structural
report was requested; did I hear that right? Is that
right? I was just wondering what prompted that.
MR. MESTRE: My understanding is, he purchased
it, wanting to make the addition that had already been
approved. As part of that, they had to do that. And
that's when they found out all of the issues that

there was with the property.

And the reason they haven't done any of the repairs is that the contractors that went for pricing told him, we will not work on this property the way it is. We can't guarantee our safety, we will not work on it.

MS. PERNAS: May I ask a question? Because it says that they did meet with Staff prior to the purchase of the property any explained the Board reviews and outcomes. So I am not sure if in that meeting with the previous preservation officer, if they were aware of the Board's decision to defer with the request of the engineer coming to the meeting.

MR. MESTRE: I believe and he just testified to that a minute ago, was they talked about two different things, and they were related to doing the addition and keeping the integrity of the architectural design. So I think that if he had known that there was a structural issue, he would have never --

MS. PERNAS: Right, but he was aware that there was a proposal for an addition of the property, on the property, which is the discussion that was had before the Board. So Warren did explain to them about that addition being in process with the Board.

MR. MESTRE: He knew that there was an addition

that was approved.

MS. PERNAS: Well, in 2019, but there was one more recently that was a deferred in July. So were you aware of the deferral in July, I guess is my question.

MR. GARCIA PONS: That would be a matter of public record, the meeting. The meeting results and the agenda --

MS. PERNAS: Oh yes.

MR. GARCIA PONS: -- would be a matter of public record.

MS. PERNAS: Oh, yes.

MR. SILVA: All right. So back to the Board.

MS. SCHILD: I make a motion to reject the claim of economic hardship because it's not been established that the owner has been denied all reasonable beneficial use or return on the property.

Oh, and a second one two? Oh, two different ones?

MS. THROCKMORTON: I would suggest doing two separate motions, if that's okay.

MS. SCHILD: Okay.

MS. DUNAJ: And on this motion, as a friendly amendment, could you include that you are adopting Staff's findings in the report?

MS. SCHILD: Yes.

MR. SILVA: Does that mean that you are going to second, Ms. Dunaj?

MS. DUNAJ: I will second the motion.

MR. SILVA: So we have a motion by Ms. Schild and a second by Ms. Dunaj. Any other discussion?

Please call the roll.

THE SECRETARY: Ms. Alvarez.

MS. ALVAREZ: Yes.

THE SECRETARY: Ms. Schild.

MS. SCHILD: Yes.

THE SECRETARY: Mr. Garcia Pons?

MR. GARCIA PONS: Yes.

MS. SPAIN: Yes.

THE SECRETARY: Ms. Ebert?

MS. EBERT: Yes.

THE SECRETARY: Ms. Dunaj.

MS. DUNAJ: Yes.

THE SECRETARY: And Mr. Silva.

MR. SILVA: Yes.

MS. THROCKMORTON: Is there a motion regarding the issuance of the SCOA for demolition.?

MS. SCHILD: I can continue, if you want. I make a motion to deny the issuance of the Special Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition.

MR. GARCIA PONS: And?

MS. SCHILD: And adopt the Staff findings in their report.

MR. GARCIA PONS: And deny the issuance of a Special Certificate of Appropriateness?

MS. EBERT: Yes, that's what she said.

MR. GARCIA PONS: Design proposal, and it's two.

MS. SCHILD: Both design or just the demolition?

MR. GARCIA PONS: I thought I just heard one, and I heard that you did both of them.

MS. DUNAJ: She did do both.

MR. SILVA: So we have a motion, do we have a second?

MS. DUNAJ: I will second.

MR. SILVA: Motion by Ms. Schild, second by Ms. Dunaj.

Can we call the roll, please?

THE SECRETARY: Ms. Ebert.

MS. EBERT: Yes.

THE SECRETARY: Ms. Spain.

MS. SPAIN: Yes.

THE SECRETARY: Ms. Dunaj.

MS. DUNAJ: Yes.

THE SECRETARY: Ms. Alvarez.

MS. ALVAREZ: Yes.

THE SECRETARY: Mr. Garcia Pons.

MR. GARCIA PONS: Yes.

THE SECRETARY: Ms. Schild.

MS. SCHILD: Yes.

THE SECRETARY: And Mr. Silva.

MR. SILVA: Yes. Both motions pass unanimously.

MS. SCHILD: And I have a comment, if you would allow me. Would it be appropriate to ask the Historic Preservation Staff and the building officials to inspect the property, that was included in the report. The interior and exterior to establish the condition, the current condition of the property.

MS. SPAIN: That's a great idea. I have done that multiple times.

MS. PERNAS: Yes, and it was included in the report and in the previous reports as well.

MR. SILVA: Thank you all for your time.

MR. MESTRE: Thank you.

(End of excerpt of meeting.)

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Avonne White, a Notary Public and Reporter for the State of Florida, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the proceedings as taken stenographically by and before me at the time, place, and on the date herein before forth.

I DO FURTHER CERTIFY that I am neither a relative, nor employee, nor attorney, nor counsel of any of the parties to this action, and that I am neither a relative nor employee of such attorney or counsel, and that I am not financially interested in the action.

Avonne White

Notary Public State of Florida

Commission No.: HH489503

Commission Expires: February 6th, 2028