

Dacosta, Susan

From: Kristal Meyer <kristal@cnsportsgroup.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 3, 2025 1:17 PM
To: Urquia, Billy; City Clerk
Subject: RE: SAVE THE GARDEN OF OUR LORD

CAUTION: External Sender. Please do not click on links or open attachments from senders you do not trust.

Dear Mr. Urquia,

Thank you for your dedication and service to the city as our City Clerk.

My husband and I are proud residents of Coral Gables. One of the many reasons we chose to make our home in the City Beautiful is its lush landscape, defined by stately, mature trees that create the charm, character and historic significance our community is known for.

For this reason, we cannot support the plan to remove the Garden of Our Lord. I respectfully urge you to reconsider this proposal and explore alternatives that preserve the natural beauty and historic green spaces that make our city so special.

Protecting our canopy is essential to maintaining the Coral Gables we all cherish.

Sincerely,

Kristal & Stephan Meyer

Kristal C. Meyer, MBA, AJP

Dacosta, Susan

From: Roland J. Martinez <Roland@rjmpalaw.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 3, 2025 10:39 AM
To: City Clerk
Cc: Roland J. Martinez
Subject: Ref: Project at 110 Phoenetia Avenue (the Garden of Our Lord) - December 8 Appeal of Board of Architect's decision

CAUTION: External Sender. Please do not click on links or open attachments from senders you do not trust.

To Board of Architects Special Master,

I am writing this e-mail letter in reference to the Appeal to Board of Architect's decision scheduled for December 8, 2025.

I OPPOSE the project at 110 Phoenetia Avenue (The Garden of our Lord).

Our office is on Ponce De Leon Boulevard near the proposed project. I am not a fanatic that is opposed to new development in our beautiful city. New development is necessary but it has to be compatible to the city in which it is being built and compatible with the character of the surrounding neighborhood.

This project's architecture, scale, size, mass, and volume is not even close to being compatible to the surrounding neighborhood which includes the Historic Coral Gables Women's Club and residential streets.

Please consider all the aspects of this project and make a decision NOT TO APPROVE.

Thanks,

Roland

Roland J. Martinez, Esq.
Roland J. Martinez, P.A.
1102 Ponce de Leon Blvd.
Coral Gables. FL 33134
Ph.: 305-447-6999
Fax: 305-447-8363
roland@rjmpalaw.com

From: Maricris Longo <maricrislongo@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 3, 2025 9:50 AM
To: Maricris Longo <maricrislongo@gmail.com>
Subject: December 8 Appeal to Board of Architects– 110 Phoenetia Avenue (the Garden of Our Lord)

Dear Neighbors,

I'm writing to share an important update regarding the proposed project at 110 Phoenetia Avenue (The Garden of our Lord)

The appeal of the Board of Architects' decision will take place on December 8 at 2:00 p.m. at the City of Coral Gables – 427 Biltmore Way, First Floor.

The project was recently purchased by a Chicago development group, Fifield, who so far have shown no willingness to make reasonable *architectural* modifications regarding height, density, scale, and overall massing.

Please review the attached drawings that will be presented at the appeal. It is essential that we emphasize how the architecture, scale, massing, and volume of this proposal are not compatible with the character of the surrounding neighborhood, especially in relation to the Historic Coral Gables Woman's Club on Phoenetia and the adjacent residential streets.

Your participation is extremely important. If you cannot attend, please email a letter to the City Clerk at cityclerk@coralgables.com by Thursday at 4:00 p.m. so your comments are included in the official record.

CRYSTAL BOA RESUBMITTAL Architectural Plans 11-11-2022 (1) (1).pdf

SUBJECT: *December 8 Appeal – 110 Phoenetia Avenue – Please Share My Letter*

Thank you sincerely for your continued support and engagement.

Warm regards,

Maricris Longo

Global Sales Advisor | One Sotheby's International Realty
305.798.0156 | maricrislongo@gmail.com

Dec. 1, 2025

To: Willie Bermello,
George Hernandez,
Mitch Alvarez,
And Elected Officials

Re: The Garden of our Lord

My Name is Nereida Lopez, I'm an Architect.
I know the neighborhood and the project being
proposed.

I urge you to reject the plans. The project is out
of context with the neighborhood, It's massing
scale and density are out of proportion. The
setbacks fail to follow the city code.

There are many reasons to reject this project,
these are just a few.

Thank you for your consideration.

Nereida Lopez



Re: *The Garden of Our Lord*, Ponce de Leon Boulevard and Phoenetia Avenue, Coral Gables

I write with particular sadness as I reflect on the extensive analysis of the significance of the aspects of *The Garden of Our Lord* supporting its designation as a historic site worthy of restoration and preservation that was rejected first, by the Board of Architects, members of whom asked if the garden could be considered separate from the entire site and were told that it could not, and then by the City Commission in a subsequent hearing that affirmed the early determination by its then director, Warren Adams, that the garden did not merit designation.

One of the advocates for preservation of the garden was the renowned architect, Robert A.M. Stern who died just this week (*please see attached letter*). After the Commission hearing, I shared the news of the garden's designation rejection with Mr. Stern. He responded to say that he was "sorry to hear the sad news about the garden, but my experience is that every battle is worth fighting." He believed this because once these places are lost, we are the poorer for neglecting to keep alive the aspirations of those who come before us, and we communicate to future generations that our work in the present day also will be similarly fated.

The loss of the garden defeats the aspirations evident in its original design and its use over the life of its founders. Its architect, Robert Fitch Smith, one of just 43 architects elected in 1960 to the AIA College of Fellows, expertly applied a range of architectural styles. His unique response to each site and project can be seen in work ranging from the historic *Java Head*, longtime home of leading preservationist Sallye Jude, projects in Miami Beach and Miami Shores, and the residence he designed for Thomas Hayes, the present day "Doc Thomas House."

Fitch Smith's drawings and ultimately construction of the garden wall in its form and materials-- local oolitic rock, planar stucco surfaces, classical mouldings in the capitals supporting cast stone urns—associate the wall with remembrance and stability. At the same time the details and scale respond to the architecture of H. George Fink's landmark structure for the Coral Gables Woman's Club which preceded and faces the garden from across Phoenetia Avenue.

I would like to think the history of a people and place matters. And in this regard, even beyond the particulars of its designation status which have been used to diminish rather than protect the garden, the beloved status of this garden throughout its history and to the present day should matter. Given that the project that replaces the garden could have been designed to maintain the garden as an amenity for its residents, the destruction of the garden and its iconic wall seems even more unfortunate.

I very much hope that you might find a way to enable a reconsideration that would preserve the key attributes of *The Garden of Our Lord* and its associated wall. I don't know of another such walled garden in the City of Coral Gables. I believe its history merits its continued life.



Joanna Lombard, AIA, ACSA Distinguished Professor

School of Architecture, University of Miami, 1223 Dickinson Drive, Coral Gables, FL 33146

28 November 2025

13 March 2023

RAMSA

Re: Letter of Support to Save *The Garden of Our Lord*

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

I am writing to support the efforts to preserve “The Garden of Our Lord” – which
regrettably, I remember only once having seen from a passing car, but I have gotten to
know it better through its site plans, elevations, history and photographs that have
recently been sent to me for my review. From those documents and my passing
encounter, I feel safe in saying that the garden is an important architectural asset and
deserves to be saved as part of the larger plan to redevelop the block.

My best,



Robert A.M. Stern, FAIA
Founding Partner, Robert A.M. Stern Architects
Dean Emeritus, Yale School of Architecture

RAMS/mkm

Sent Electronically To: Mayor Vincent Lago, Vice Mayor Michael Mena, Commissioner
Rhonda Anderson, Commissioner Jim Carson and Commissioner Kirk Menendez



Fwd: TO: WILLIE BERMELLO, MITCH ALVAREZ, JORGE HERNANDEZ , MAYOR LAGO AND COMMISSIONERS

From **bonnie bolton** <bonniebolton3@gmail.com>

Date Mon 12/1/2025 3:05 PM

To City Clerk <CityClerk@coralgables.com>

1 attachment (209 KB)

Garden letter.pdf;

CAUTION: External Sender. Please do not click on links or open attachments from senders you do not trust.

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

From: **Frank Gonzalez** <terraconsultinginc@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, Dec 1, 2025 at 9:43 AM

Subject: Re: TO: WILLIE BERMELLO, MITCH ALVAREZ, JORGE HERNANDEZ , MAYOR LAGO AND COMMISSIONERS

To: **bonnie bolton** <bonniebolton3@gmail.com>

Hi Bonnie,
See the attached letter. Let me know what you think.

*Francisco J. Gonzalez, PE
Terra Consulting, Inc.
251 Valencia Ave # 143458
Coral Gables, FL, 33134*

From: **bonnie bolton** <bonniebolton3@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, November 28, 2025 8:16 PM

To: **Frank Gonzalez** <terraconsultinginc@gmail.com>

Subject: Fwd: TO: WILLIE BERMELLO, MITCH ALVAREZ, JORGE HERNANDEZ , MAYOR LAGO AND COMMISSIONERS

GREETINGS JOSE!!! IT WAS A PLEASURE TO SPEAK WITH YOU ON THE PHONE TONIGHT!! I GREATLY APPRECIATE YOUR HELP WITH THE GARDEN!! THE LETTER SHOULD BE SENT TO THE >>CITYCLERK@CORALGABLES.COM !!!!

PLEASE ADDRESS IT TO WILLY BERMELLO, JORGE HERNANDEZ, MITCH ALVAREZ ,MAYOR LAGO AND COMMISSIONERS!!! PLEASE STATE THAT THE PLANS MUST BE DENIED BECAUSE THEY VIOLATE THE CITY CODE !! ALSO FOCUS ON THE ARCHITECTURAL DEFICIENCIES OF THE PLANS !!! ONE OR TWO SHORT PARAGRAPHS WOULD BE FANTASTIC AND GIVE THEM YOUR ADDRESS!!! THE LETTER MUST BE RECEIVED BY THURSDAY AT 4 PM!!! THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP!!!

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

From: **bonnie bolton** <bonniebolton3@gmail.com>

Date: Fri, Nov 28, 2025 at 7:19 AM

Subject: Fwd: TO: WILLIE BERMELLO, MITCH ALVAREZ, JORGE HERNANDEZ , MAYOR LAGO AND COMMISSIONERS

To: <typeople@ymail.com>, <titoq555@gmail.com>, bonnie bolton <bonniebolton3@gmail.com>, Brett Gillis <brett.gillis@gmail.com>

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

From: **bonnie bolton** <bonniebolton3@gmail.com>

Date: Fri, Nov 28, 2025 at 6:52 AM

Subject: TO: WILLIE BERMELLO, MITCH ALVAREZ, JORGE HERNANDEZ , MAYOR LAGO AND COMMISSIONERS

To: Omer Oner <omeroner@gmail.com>, Karelia Carbonell <karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com>, <gleeguiford@bellsouth.net>, <francis.fournier@hotmail.com>, Nicholas Frankovich <nf2@caa.columbia.edu>, connie_crowther@msn.com <connie_crowther@msn.com>, <GordonS360@aol.com>, bonnie bolton <bonniebolton3@gmail.com>

The plans for the Garden of our Lord must be denied because they dramatically deviate from our building code! 110 Phoenetia Avenue has two extraordinarily unique features. The Garden of our Lord and the Two hundred year old tree. The Garden was one of the first three biblical gardens in America, it is a military memorial and a cemetery. Some of the trees and bushes which grow in the Garden today came as seeds from Gethesemane! The Garden was designed by acclaimed architect Robert Fitch Smith and it was designed to complement the Historic Woman's Club which is immediately adjacent to it! The proposed project seeks to demolish the Garden, remove specimen trees with Spanish moss from the swale and move the Two hundred year old tree. Experts from Viscaya, Fairchild, Montgomery, the Gifford Arboretum, Tropical Audubon Society and various arborists state with authority that the ancient tree will die if it is moved. For that reason a lawsuit has just been filed against the city to save the tree !

The Garden and the Tree located on the playground of the property were identified in the Coral Gables Visioning Workshop as sites that need to be purchased by the City to serve as much needed park space in this the most densely populated area of our city! The property is also part of the North Ponce Neighborhood Conservation District Overlay. The NPCO code was passed by the commission to preserve and enhance the garden apartment character of the North Ponce residential district. The plans for this project overtly contradict this initiative. Additionally, this neighborhood is currently being studied for potential designation as the Historic North Ponce Garden Apartment District. The plans for this project starkly

contradict our City's efforts to preserve this unique and lushly canopied neighborhood.

The architecture of this project flagrantly violates the most fundamental tenets of our building code! The project received the Mediterranean Bonus because the standards for it were very lax at the time of its approval. Under the new and revised standards it would not be qualified for it. The plans for this project are absurdly out of context and lack compatibility with the surrounding structures. In Section 5-103, of our City code it explicitly defines context as, "the architectural context of an area includes height, scale, massing, separation between buildings and style, in regard to how buildings and structures relate to each other within a specified area." Our code strongly emphasizes context and compatibility with existing structures which these plans obviously fail to do! On Phoenicia, within feet of the project there are 3 Historic 1920's single family homes and the only Historic bed and breakfast in our City! On Antilla Ave., directly across the street from the project there is a single family home and a Historic 2 story apartment building. The plans design, volume, height, massing, scale and proportions are grotesquely out of context with this a residential neighborhood and defy our Code!

It is very important to note that this residential neighborhood lacks the infrastructure for this project. It seriously ignores our Code's requirement for setbacks. And, even though the project seeks Planned Area Development PAD in exchange for public green space it only provides an insufficiently small interior courtyard which is to serve primarily as a playground for the school which is to be located on the property. Thus, they will only be providing an occasional green space which will only be available to the public after 4pm Monday and Friday. There are a plethora of reasons why this project must be denied, it utterly disregards the sacredness of The Garden of our Lord and the Two hundred year old tree and it is an abomination and repugnant violation of our Code!

Dear Coral Gables Commission and Architectural Board:

My name is Frank Gonzalez, and I have been a resident of Coral Gables for over 20 years. I am writing to support the preservation of the Garden of Our Lord. I believe Bonnie Bolton presents a strong case for why this should be a decision that the City of Coral Gables should make, benefiting both the residents near the Garden and the city as a whole. My letter aims to support her efforts to save the Garden.

Along with Ms. Bolton's points, I think that from a community planning standpoint, it would be the right decision for the City of Coral Gables. The expected growth in residential development would benefit from the available open space. The Garden would offer a planned increase in green, shady areas for residents to gather, which would help promote a healthy community.

If we lose this open space, the additional buildings that will likely follow won't have much green space within walking distance. In my opinion, maximizing open green space in that part of the city would demonstrate the City's willingness to think of development in Coral Gables in a comprehensive way, rather than the spot development we often see throughout Miami Dade County.

I respectfully request that you preserve the Garden and its mature trees, not only for their historical importance but also for their value to future residents who will live nearby and greatly benefit from it. The alternative would be a neighborhood resembling government housing from the old Soviet Union.

Respectfully,

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

Francisco J. Gonzalez, PE
1310 S. Greenway Dr.
Coral Gables , Fl



Garden project

From Brett Gillis <brett.gillis@gmail.com>
Date Sun 11/30/2025 11:02 PM
To City Clerk <CityClerk@coralgables.com>

CAUTION: External Sender. Please do not click on links or open attachments from senders you do not trust.

Please transmit to the Special Master Panel:

The proposal continues to defy the community's request to preserve The Garden of Our Lord and mighty oak as codified by the North Ponce overlay.

Furthermore, I object to the process (better described as incongruent sidesteps to avert a dignified public process).

The Board of Architects reviewed this project in detail and clearly specified objections. This panel should not usurp their hard work. It gets to a point where residents and neighbors cannot continue to miss work, school, etc. to attend these meetings. It's totally unreasonable to continue to expect the same level of participation meeting after meeting, but you should consider the incredible outcry related to this project to date. The special master (and now panel of masters) was always intended to resolve VERY MINOR issues with the code, not usurp an entire process to pass a huge development like this).

Please accept my full-hearted objections and reject this invidious project.

Sincerely,

Brett Gillis

Historian & Preservationist