

Public Works, Greenspace Management Division, Staff Opinion

Date: May 15, 2025

Project: **THE GEORGE**

729 Valencia Avenue, Coral Gables, Florida 33134

Architect: de la Guardia Victoria Architects & Urbanists, Inc.

Landscape Architect: H.L. Martin Landscape Architect, P.A.

The following is staff's opinion of landscape architectural plans signed and sealed April 2, 2025 submitted to the City for code compliance review of Chapter 82 by the Greenspace Management division of Public Works. Sheets submitted for this review are: LA-01 Landscape Plan; LA-02 Tree Survey, Disposition & Protection Plan, and IR-01 Irrigation Plan, as well as certified arborists reports.

Tree relocation feasibility study background:

The applicant submitted four arborists reports that collectively concluded that the relocation of 6 existing Live Oaks to an off-site location was not feasible due to various logistical challenges due to the age, size and health of the trees. In synopsis, the arborist reports documented logistical concerns with successful relocation: The sizes of the Oaks would require pruning and removal of more than 25% percent of canopy, which is not recommended by arboricultural standards for the health of the trees. Pruning more than 25% of canopy would diminish the success rate of survival after relocation, exposing the tree to pathogen entry into the vascular system. Moving trees of this large size would require that the trees be transported standing upright on flatbed trucks through a clear route to the relocation site, identified as the Granada Golf Course. FPL power line conflicts on Cardenas, conflicts with other mature trees in public right of way on surrounding streets, and the position of historical markers prevent open clearance to the Granada Golf Course.

1. Staff concurs that relocation of all (6) of the Oaks would not be logistically feasible. However, relocating Oak Tree # 41 could possibly be accomplished in a triangle within public right of way East of the construction site at the intersection of Valencia and Cardenas. In order to make this option viable, four smaller Oaks existing in this location would be required to be relocated to the Granada Golf Course, which would be possible due to the small size of these trees. If relocated successfully, Oak # 41 in this location would require extensive bracing by means of cable systems that would need to be left in place until tree establishment, which would be a few years. There would be no guarantee that the tree would survive due the advanced age and health of the tree, but Oaks as a species are resilient and have been known to relocate successfully under similar conditions. *A more detailed engineering study would be necessary to determine the structural design and layout of the staking system necessary to support tree #41 in public right of way to ensure the health and safety of the public in this location.*

Proposed Tree Removal and Mitigation:

Due to the logistical challenges outlined above, the applicant has chosen to remove existing trees within the private property with the exception of one Gumbo Limbo tree #45, which can be relocated to the off -site location on the Granada Golf Course. The canopy square footage of 61,637 square feet of canopy is proposed to be mitigated by a contribution to the City's tree trust fund in the amount of \$245,000, which mitigates 98 trees at the cost of \$ 2,500. per tree.

2. Staff concludes the tree disposition plan and mitigation proposed meets City Code of Ordinances, Chapter 82 Vegetation, Section 82-9 Article II, Tree Protection and Preservation as described below:

Sec. 82-39. Tree trust fund.

(a) Creation of the tree trust fund. There is hereby created a city tree trust fund, the purpose of which is to acquire, protect and maintain natural forest communities in the city and to plant trees on public property.

(b) Tree mitigation contribution in lieu of or in addition to tree mitigation. For tree mitigation not otherwise provided in this article, the city shall charge and collect trust fund contributions at \$2,500.00 for every 500 square feet or portion thereof of replacement tree coverage, which amount may be amended by separate resolution by the city commission. The total amount of tree mitigation contribution may be adjusted by the tree preservation agency based on factors such as the condition and age of the tree(s) considered for removal or the tree mitigation plan proposed, subject to approval by the tree preservation agency, board of adjustment, city manager or designee.

3. Staff concludes that an alternative site plan footprint exploring a building with a taller volume preserving more open greenspace on site to retain or relocate trees to has not been presented and should be explored.

(d) Alternate design. If, upon review of the factors enumerated in section 82-30(b), the applicant determines that a specimen tree cannot reasonably be preserved under the proposed plan, the tree preservation agency may require that the applicant provide an alternate plan which shall include preservation of the specimen tree and design alternatives of removing the specimen tree. The alternate plan that includes the specimen tree may depict the site constraints and design limitations due to the specimen tree, which may include any or a combination of the following: an adjustment of the building orientation, requests for potential variances; or a reduction of developable area. The applicant bears the burden of proving hardship why the preservation of the specimen tree at its present location is not reasonable by utilizing the evaluation factors enumerated in section 82-30(b).

Landscape / Planting Plan Compliance: Reference Zoning Code, Article 6.

4. Staff concludes that the proposed landscape plan meets minimum requirements of Zoning code, article 6.

(24) Shade trees are required, and (50) are provided. (26) Surplus trees will go toward mitigation of tree removal.

(188) Shrubs are required, and (331) are provided.

(10) Street trees at 16' height are required, but (7) at a larger size of 20'-22' height are proposed in order to allow for on-street parking. Staff agrees to the street tree layout with larger Oaks as proposed.

(98) trees in the site are to be mitigated at \$2,500 tree trust fund payment for each tree = \$245,000 fee.

If Oak # 41 will be relocated instead of removed as recommended, a mitigation credit of 6036 square feet can be applied. (12 trees or \$30,000) for a tree trust fund payment total due of \$ 215,000.

Respectfully submitted,

Deena Bell Llewellyn, ASLA, ISA
Assistant Public Works Director, Greenspace Management Division

CORAL GABLES

THE CITY BEAUTIFUL

1.