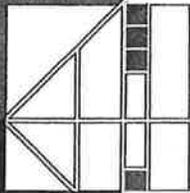


Letters of Support: 2 Casuarina Concourse



RANDOLPH C. HENNING, ARCHITECT

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9 August 2011

Ms. Kara Noelle Kautz, Historic Preservation Officer
City of Coral Gables
Historic Resources Department
2327 Salzedo Street, Second Floor
Coral Gables, FL 33134

Re: (Landon) Residence
2 Casuarina Concourse, Gables Estates
Coral Gables, FL

Dear Ms. Kautz:

Thank you for alerting me to the fact the Alfred Browning Parker designed Landon residence, located at 2 Casuarina Concourse in Gables Estates of Coral Gables, might be considered for demolition unless the home is found to be historically significant. As one of the foremost authorities of the life work of Alfred Browning Parker, I can, without equivocation nor hesitation, assure you that the Landon residence is both architecturally and historically significant. I do not support its demolition.

By way of a brief introduction, I have been researching and studying the life and work of Alfred Browning Parker for almost twenty years. The culmination of my work is the publication of the book The Architecture of Alfred Browning Parker: Miami's Maverick Modernist by the University Press of Florida, scheduled to be available late August 2011. It will be the singular most comprehensive resource on Parker's architectural life work. I have authored several additional articles published on Parker, as well as numerous articles, books, and lectures regarding Frank Lloyd Wright and early to mid twentieth century modern architecture. I am a licensed architect registered to practice in both Carolinas, Virginia, and Florida and am NCARB certified. My academic career culminated with a Bachelor of Design degree from the University of Florida and a Master of Architecture degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Regarding my experience with the residence in question, I met the Landon's and toured the residence in 1994, have studied its plans extensively and have discussed its specific history and design personally with Alfred Browning Parker on numerous occasions. My only regret is never having the opportunity to extensively interview the clients in any real depth. So my comments below are based almost entirely on input from Alfred Browning Parker, my visit to the house in 1994 and the intensive study I've accomplished on the project specifically as well as Parker's life work.

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CITY OF CORAL GABLES
HISTORIC PRESERVATION DEPT.

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The residence at 2 Casuarina Concourse in Gables Estates of Coral Gables was designed by Alfred Browning Parker in 1965 and is an example of an architect successfully fulfilling the dreams and vision of dedicated and passionate clients, in this case Kirk & B. Landon. Within the context of Parker's life work, this residence is considered a mature and highly refined architectural solution designed specifically for a sophisticated client's program and site. Parker always included this project as one of his better architectural projects. I agreed with his assessment and included it among the sixty-nine projects that my upcoming monograph of his life work features in more depth. Parker expressed to me often that he was extremely proud of the Landon residence and its clients. I'm convinced, with 100% confidence, that he would vehemently argue against demolition. Since he passed away on March 11, 2011, I will do so in his stead.

I believe the key to understanding the success and significance of this project is to remember that an architect (including Alfred Browning Parker) seeks appropriate solutions when given an opportunity by his or her client. Architects (including Alfred Browning Parker) design for clients specific to their site, program and budget. The client, in this case, wanted Parker to design for them a very specific residence, one that was predominantly focused inwardly for privacy and one that allowed them to display and enjoy their own collection of art and sculpture. Without any doubt, Parker designed the residence successfully fulfilling the requirements of his clients.

The Estate, in their June 21, 2001 letter to The Historical Resources Department of the City of Coral Gables, subjectively "*cut and pasted*" from Parker's own quoted guiding principles to make a case that the residence was not consistent with his own philosophy, therefore making it less significant. To argue and justify demolition with Parker's own words, principles and the like (or the fact that someone can't see the waterfront nor bay), outside the specific context of this particular residence is disingenuous and misrepresents the truth. On page 2, they ask, ". . . *does the residence on its own architectural and design merits warrant being designated a historic property?*" That is an unfair question as the significance of Parker as its architect must always be part of the equation, as that, in itself, is one of the strongest reasons of proof for its significance. There are many extant projects designed by the world famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright that are significant mainly because they were designed by Wright, not because of how they stand alone outside that context. That does not mean they are any less significant (just ask the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy, whose main mission since their inception twenty one years ago has been to facilitate the preservation of all remaining structures designed by Wright). I disagree with the Estates position that, ". . . *the residence is not a good example of Alfred Browning Parker's work and is not representative of his architectural and design principles.*" Parker himself categorized this design as one of his better works and his clients loved the residence. The design solved

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the client's site, program and budget parameters (and solved them well). Parker's primary architectural mantra was always to make *it* useful and make *it* beautiful, with *it* being the residence in this case. The residence in question hits the mark squarely on each. The Estate again quoted Parker, "*Build simply. Build as directly as possible with no complications. Use materials at hand and keep them sparse. Let your building love its site and glorify its climate. Design for use. Make it beautiful.*" Again, based upon this and the residence, Parker hits a home run on all counts. Just because the client desires an introverted solution to create a sanctuary for living doesn't mean the solution doesn't love its site; doesn't glorify its site. On page four of their letter, the Estate again questions if the residence, in fact, loves its site or not, by actually stating, "*The most significant departure from these principles is the failure of the residence to "love its site".*". In the context of the client and their desire to live in a protected private environment, it does love its site and glorify its climate. The central pool and patio is an integral part of the design of the residence and the design successfully provides what the client wanted while loving its site (i.e. the part that was created by desire, purpose and choice) and glorifying its climate. The fact that they choose to turn their backs on the waterfront, waterways and bay view was their choice supported by the architect, with the final design as evidence. And, lastly, Parker saw the internalized courtyard design concept entirely consistent with and respectful of what he saw as a modern day expression of Spanish Mediterranean design for Coral Gables. The Estate, on page five of their letter, takes further issue with the red brick used as the predominant material in the residence. Again, this was a collective choice by the client and architect. While red brick isn't necessarily a popular choice by many living in South Florida, it was nevertheless purposefully used and used in a mature, sophisticated and refined manner. Its safe to say that the residence has stood up well against the hurricanes that have occurred throughout its forty five years of existence and I venture to say that the brick had a hand in that. Finally, the Estate, on page five of their letter, unfairly compares Parker's own residence at 140 Arvida Parkway (designed in 1962) with the later (not earlier) residence in question. It is clear the differences are because projects have two different clients, two different sites, two different programs, two different budgets, etc.

The number of homes designed by Parker is becoming legend by exaggeration. The 6,000 number used by the Estate in their letter, while most likely using sources that continue to inflate a number that should be static, is grossly inaccurate. By my count, Parker designed slightly over 500 projects. Some homes were prototypical, so the number of built works can be increased. But if we speak in terms of singular designs, the number remains slightly more than 500. And of the 500 designs only a portion of those were actually constructed. Given the fact that a great majority of those constructed have either been demolished or substantially negatively altered over the years, those remaining structures that exist in any acceptable condition to its original

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intent are few. The residence in question exists in an acceptable condition close to as it did when constructed, so that, in itself, makes its rarity and, as a surviving Parker designed residence, significant.

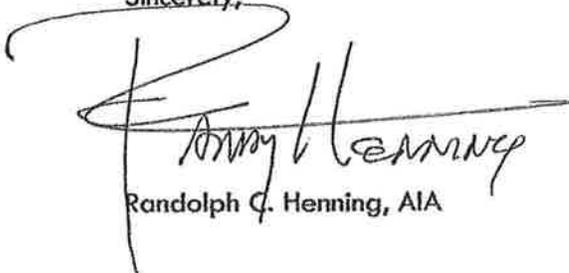
Regarding the Report prepared for the Estate by Rafael Portuondo, President of the architectural firm Portuondo Perotti Architects, I would urge its dismissal from any consideration. With all due respect, the report is basically a subjective narrative primarily addressing the residence's lack of views from within the residence outward towards the waterfront and distant bay. There is nothing presented of any depth that addresses the significance of the overall career of the residence's architect Alfred Browning Parker, nothing that addresses the significance of the architect's clients who were the residence's original owners, and nothing that addresses the residence's place in the context of Parker's career and the architecture of South Florida. The report lacks any proof of credentials that the author is an expert on the life work of Alfred Browning Parker nor has any idea as to how to determine architectural and/or historical significance, let alone the significance of this particular residence. In his conclusion, he deems the residence as non-historic, based primarily upon the introverted restrictive nature of the residence and that it is "*very difficult to appeal to most families today.*" His conclusion has nothing to do with the residence's architectural and/or historical significance. Given the author's lack of knowledge and ability to determine whether or not this residence is or is not historically significant, the report is flawed and should be disregarded.

The basic question begs clarification . . . is this residence historically significant? It certainly has nothing to do with judging the residence outside the context of Parker's involvement, the residence's current physical state and (inflated) costs of repair, its lack of views of the waterfront and bay, nor its value in the marketplace. The final built solution of the residence undoubtedly reflects the successful collective efforts of both architect and client. One cannot argue that it is a design by the renowned and celebrated architect Alfred Browning Parker, arguably Florida's most creative architect and undeniably one of its most lauded. It is certainly a refined example of the architect's mature period and its design is generally consistent with his mantra, "*Make it useful . . . make it beautiful.*" It was always included by Parker himself as one of his favorite works and it was certainly cherished by his clients, especially B Landon, who has been quoted as saying she desired only two things in life - a Henry Moore sculpture and a house designed by Alfred Browning Parker. She attained both. And one should not dismiss that its mere existence in a state substantially as designed is a rarity among surviving built works by Parker. Therefore one should not minimize its inherent historical nor architectural significance. It certainly is, in my stated expert opinion, that the residence, located at 2 Casuarina Concourse in Gables Estates of Coral Gables, is both architecturally and historically significant.

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If there is a need for any clarification or additional information, or if you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to help support the preservation of the architecture of Alfred Browning Parker in Coral Gables.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy Henning". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "R" that loops back under the first name. The second name, "Henning", is written in a cursive script. Below the signature, the name "Randolph C. Henning, AIA" is printed in a standard sans-serif font.

Randolph C. Henning, AIA

Quentin Dart Parker, Architect
ARCHWORK
1501 Daisy Avenue, Suite C
Long Beach, CA. 90813-1517

Tuesday, February 7, 2012

Kara Noelle Kautz
City of Coral Gables
Historical Resources Department
PO Box 141549
Coral Gables, FL 33114

Dear Kara,

Re: Kirk and B. Landon Residence Historical Preservation

Thank you for your effort and dedication in asking for Historic Preservation of the Landon Residence.

I am in full support of this endeavor, because so much of what my father accomplished in his illustrious career is *about this kind of architecture*. As a conservationist and devout environmentalist, his attention to design, to detailing, to the application of climate conditions and use of technological developments in materials, finishes and fixtures tells a broad story to those who wish to study his work.

With the Landon residence we have a prime example of Alfred Browning Parker's work at the prime of his career. With the large roof overhangs, double cantilevers, raised foundation, Persiana doors and sweeping, open vistas we participate in his site-specific vision- as it was created. Much of his work, commissions, projects have been altered in time by various owners with good intent, however often to the detriment of the original design concept. Here we have an original, prime example we should preserve for another generation to enjoy and understand.

When we look back at our society fifty years from today, I believe our children will ask us what we were thinking, as we opulently squandered both resources and gregarious lifestyle with excessive depletion and thoughtless abandon to our future generations. This example will show how a true visionary offered some of his exceptional talent to preserve the environment, engage in a design sustainability and with the use of site-natural material, offered a solution to conservation and functional aesthetic appeal.

Let's remember this for the very reasons we have historic preservation, and honor both client and architect for their vision, talent and perseverance. Thank you,

Sincerely,

Quentin Dart Parker, AIA

Historical Resources Department
City of Coral Gables
2327 Salzedo Street
Coral Gables, Florida 33134

REF: Support 2 Casuarina Concourse Designation

Gainesville, February 8 2012

Dear Sir/Me,

I am writing to you in support of the designation of the Alfred Browning Parker designed residence at the above address. We greatly appreciate the uniqueness of Mr. Parker's work in South Florida and the importance to preserve the most significant examples as a testimony of the history of the City and as a legacy for future generations. We, at the University of Florida, are the keepers of Mr. Parker's collection of his lifetime work, and it is consulted by numerous scholars, because of its unique contributions to the Florida Modern. Parker's Collection is the most important component of the Architecture Archives' Special Collection at George .A. Smathers Library.

The residence in 2 Casuarina Concourse is unique in its environmental location and setting, its interactions with the landscape and the climate, the special qualities of its spaces, and the integration of inside and outside areas.

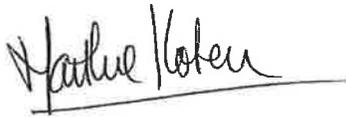
It is the prime example as well of the "complete" design of the interiors, as well as the exteriors, incorporating spectacular wood ceilings, mahogany detailing in bookshelves, closets, and state of the art for its time of kitchens and bathrooms. Its materials are carefully selected and specially manufactured for this residence.

I congratulate you on the excellent report that really allows for the full understanding of the object of the Historical Designation proposal.

Please feel free to contact me if needed.

Kind regards,

Martha Kohen, Dipl. Arch. Cantab
Professor
SOA Director 2003-2008

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martha Kohen". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.



Arva Parks & Company

Thematic & Interpretive
Design • Publications

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February 10, 2012

Members of the City of Coral Gables Historic Preservation Board
Historical Resources Department
2327 Salzedo Street
Coral Gables, Florida 33134

Dear Chairman and Members of the Board:

It has come to my attention that 2 Casuarina Concourse is up for historic designation. I had the privilege of being in the home more than 30 years ago when Kirk Landon and his former wife Bea lived there. It is an architectural masterpiece. I also had the opportunity to interview Alfred Browning Parker on several occasions and have read all the important books, articles and testimonials about his work. He is a genius of our time. His work as an early Miami Modern architect is without peer.

Kirk and the late Bea Landon Carlin are also an important part of the story. Kirk Landon has given back to Coral Gables in so many ways. He gave the initial funding to start the Coral Gables Museum. Other South Florida institutions have benefitted from his largesse. The same is true of Bea—especially her donation to preservation of the Coral Gables Congregational Church and her involvement in the original Miami Art Museum at the Biltmore. The Landons built the house working directly with the architect so this important home is really a combination of the Landons and talent of Alfred Browning Parker. At the time it was built, Gables Estates was a new luxury area of Coral Gables so this home also represents one of the earliest homes in that section of Coral Gables.

I encourage you to consider one thing. Does it meet the criteria for historic designation? Of course the answer is a resounding yes. Coral Gables has led the way in historic preservation. Today is an opportunity to be true to the ordinance's purpose and values and stand firm. I am confident you will.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Arva Moore Parks

ROBIN ZACHARY PARKER, ARCHITECT

February 15, 2012

Kara Noelle Kautz
City of Coral Gables
Historical Resources Department
P.O. Box 141549
Coral Gables, FL 33114

Dear Kara:

I am very pleased to learn that the City of Coral Gables' Historical Resources Department would like to preserve the home that my father, Alfred Browning Parker, designed for Kirk and Bea Landon at 2 Casuarina Concourse, Coral Gables. This is commendable and necessary.

As an Architect I am well-aware of our community's enduring loss when the few samples of its finest architectural heritage are demolished for economic reasons. This should not happen.

During my studies to become an Architect, I worked in my father's office as a draftsman on the Landon home; much of the interior built-ins I designed. In 1966 the residence was a masterpiece of site-planning, architecture and interior design that beautifully and harmoniously exploited the benefits afforded its location, climate and materials of construction to the joy of the Landon family.

Today it is an irreplaceable masterpiece, whose value and legacy cannot be estimated. Honduras mahogany (*Swietenia Mahagoni*), the most highly prized of all woods, is not available today; the species is endangered and cannot be harvested. The rounded, one-of-a-kind handmade and hand-laid brick walls are invaluable... And, most importantly there will be no more homes designed by Alfred Browning Parker.

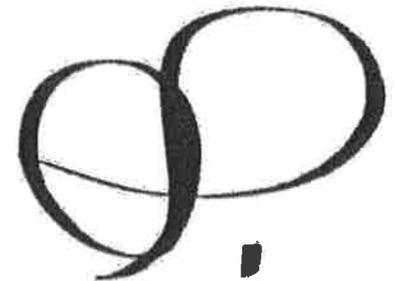
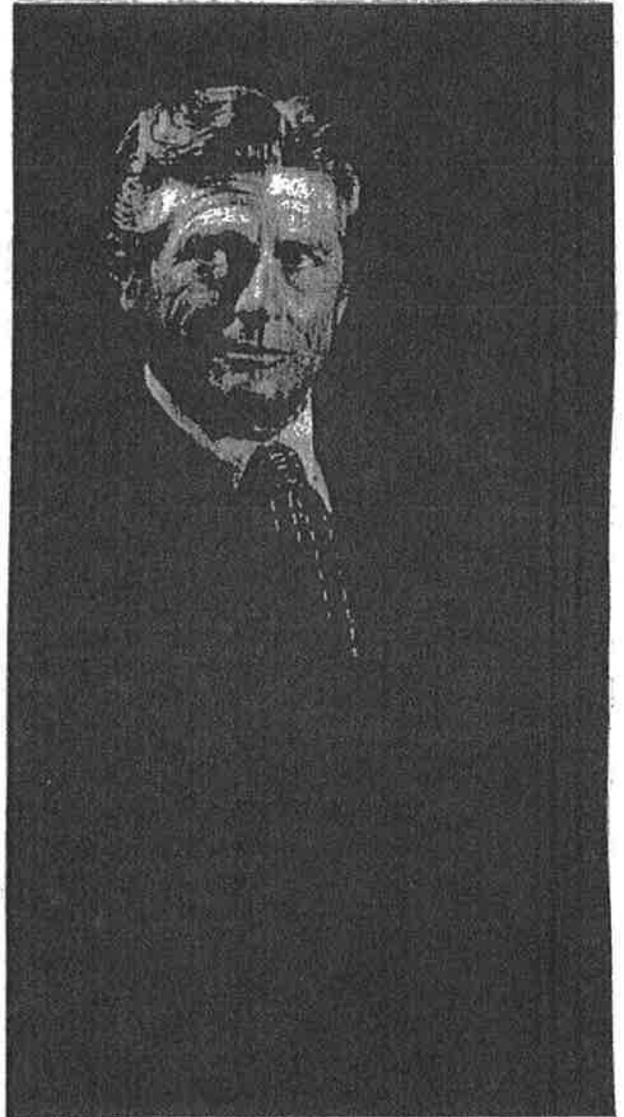
I've attached *Aphorisms for Architects* from THE FLORIDA ARCHITECT from the same period of the Landon Residence, which guided Alfred Browning Parker, the Architect. The Miami Herald ran two distinguished obituaries on my father; however, I prefer the one he wrote himself... Truly vintage Al Parker, the man.

My best regards,



APHORISMS FOR ARCHITECTS

- Choose clients.
- Design down to no one.
- If your work is worth anything get paid for it. Once you have accepted an assignment don't keep an eye on the office budget.
- Building codes, zoning, regulatory agencies, financing institutions, etc. should contribute to a design. If they hinder the proper realization of a project, fight.
- Courage is when you do something you are afraid to do. With liability insurance rates on the increase such a quality is required in our profession.
- A budget is an old friend and should be cherished as such. This does not mean to imply that one cannot, upon occasion, differ with a friend.
- Architects should be more loving.
- Unfortunately many buildings appear as though the owner's wife designed them. She usually does the interiors.
- Seek in the problem for the answers, not in your ego. The "i" in architecture is a small letter.
- If you can't be a great artist at least be a good carpenter . . . or a good mason . . . or a good plumber . . . etc.
- Love humanity, it's what you belong to, but don't ignore life. It is larger and wiser than we are.
- Do not make excuses; emphasize your strengths for our environment needs all the help it can get.
- Do not adapt too perfectly to your environment. You must be able to change.
- Live harmoniously but don't underrate the shocks.
- If you have large environmental responsibilities move slowly and carefully for at best our hands are far too heavy and nature's balance is a fragile equilibrium.
- We should know enough of symbiosis to apply in our daily work. Enough of heterozygosity to bless the variant among us . . . and to look up words we don't understand.
- Leave plenty of stones unturned. Earthworms are still our salvation.



ALFRED BROWNING PARKER

September 24, 1916 – March 11, 2011

Alfred Browning Parker is dead. His life was an unusually fortunate one. The only child of loving parents, he was also blessed with a host of doting, hardworking relatives who inspired him with their interest and their humor. As he was learning to walk, his mother also taught him to read. This lifetime reading habit was an advantage in his educational process. His many teachers were all friends and never failed to challenge his mind by their dedication to his education.

A true Homo Faber from childhood, he found pleasure in making things. This felicitous discovery was a constant source of satisfaction to him and frequently to others. He earned his keep as an Architect, possessing a reasonable degree of diligence and a capacity for work. As a conservationist of both human and physical resources, he sought to understand our incredibly beautiful balanced eco-system. He helped in the evolution of an energy conversion system to eliminate the need for fossil fuels, one that would be economical, abundant and non-polluting.

In some matters he was obstinate, willful, stubborn, and pertinacious. Nevertheless his wives, children and grandchildren were devoted to him beyond reason and apparently have not unduly suffered from their delusions.

Recalling his often expressed desire for a going-away party, lovely Euphrosyne will celebrate her husband's demise with a wake. She describes the social event as a memorial to those living, not for but from the deceased. The party, complete with food and drink, will include music and storytelling. All attending should remember at least one humorous story and be prepared to stay as long as they have the strength to laugh and dance.

The departed was aware of his kinship with earth and its inhabitants, human and otherwise. When he was small, an animal once gave him fleas, but he considered it inconsequential compared with the pleasure of snuggling a puppy. The underlying harmony evident throughout the universe was a constant source of amazement and delight to him. Although never fully expressed, he had gratitude without limit for love, family, friends, work and freedom. As he expired, those witnessing his passing believe they heard him whisper "Life is generous."

by: Alfred Browning Parker

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
SCHOOL of
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February 15, 2012

Dear Sir or Madame:

I am writing in strong support of the designation of 2 Casuarina Concourse in Coral Gables. The designation report prepared by the City of Coral Gables Historic Resources Department lays out in excellent detail the significance of the Alfred Browning Parker-designed structure and its eligibility for designation.

The home is an exceptional work by one of Miami's preeminent Modern masters. While Coral Gables (and Miami in general) can boast a great number of talented architects, few and perhaps none have achieved the national and international significance and reputation of Alfred Browning Parker. Parker's work was artistic, yet more importantly it was inspired by an underlying philosophy of organicism that connects not only with the spirit of the age but with a distinctly tropical/Miami identity. Parker, held up by national magazine editors as a regionalist modern architect, was the most extensively published Miami architect of the modern period.

The ambition and quality of this intact Parker home certainly qualify it for designation according to both local and national standards. While it does not technically meet the common "fifty year rule" (it is 46 years old), the National Register of Historic Places and City of Coral Gables make specific allowance for building of the "recent past" (less than 50 years old). For instance, under the National Register's Criteria Consideration G, properties younger than fifty years old can be listed on the National Register if they are of exceptional significance at the national, state or even local level. The National Register also published Bulletin No. 22: Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years. This bulletin suggests that comparative and scholarly evaluation may be used as techniques to evaluate the significance of buildings of the recent past. The large amount of recent scholarship about Alfred Browning Parker, including an essay that I authored in 2010 ("Alfred Browning Parker's Organic Florida Homes" in Miami Modern Metropolis) and a more recent book by Randolph C. Henning, The architecture of Alfred Browning Parker: Miami's maverick modernist, have established Parker singular role in the modern movement in Florida. The Henning book features the 2 Casuarina Concourse home specifically.

Parker was a "green" architect before the popularization of the term. He believed in conservation of resources, by which I believe he meant cultural as well as physical. The design, development and construction of a home as complex as 2 Casuarina Concourse required an array of resources and talents. The home is literally irreplaceable. The demolition of other Parker homes, like the Manus House in 2008, renders the few remaining grand homes all the more precious. While Coral Gables is well known for the Mediterranean Revival vision put forward by founder George Merrick, it is incontestable that the City (and the Gables Estates area in particular) thrived in the postwar period. Coral Gables accordingly comprises some excellent examples of the architecture of that period. The survival of 2 Casuarina Concourse enriches the city by completing the historical picture of the City's development. The postwar development of Gables Estates, and Parker's role in that development, is certainly part of that picture.

I urge the City to approve the designation of 2 Casuarina Concourse and protect the structure as an important cultural resource.

Sincerely,

Allan Shulman FAIA
Associate Professor
University of Miami School of Architecture

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February 15, 2012

Historical Resources Department
City of Coral Gables
2327 Salzedo Street
Coral Gables, Florida 33134

This letter is in support of the historic designation of the property located at 2 Casuarina Concourse, Coral Gables, Florida.

The house is of significance for various reasons. Firstly, it was designed by internationally acclaimed architect Alfred Browning Parker. A leading architect in the post-war era, his buildings were often awarded prizes and set as example of innovative design. His most important contributions to the profession and to our region are in the designs of houses. His designs continue to inspire generations of architects for their organically inspired forms, their sustainably minded designs, the innovative use of materials and his incorporation of design features, tempering South Florida's climate. His buildings are enigmatic examples of an architecture anchored to place, time and the spirit of its inhabitants.

The house at 2 Casuarina Concourse serves as a paradigmatic example of Modern Regionalist architecture rooted in the tropics and inspired by the principles of organic architecture. The grouping of buildings is testimony of an architecture defined by and connected to context. The ambiguity between inside and outside spaces speaks to an architecture that could only be realized in this region. The combination of materials and their handsome detailing reinforce the overriding concepts. The thoughtful consistency between the macro and micro scales of design are unique, to be celebrated and worthy of protection.

Parker is well known for his use of Cuban inspired 'persianas'. His use of the traditional persiana doors was reinterpreted, producing breathable walls, which allowed buildings to take advantage of the prevailing breezes and to be lit naturally. It is thus an excellent example of a sustainably minded architecture, which bridges between tradition and innovation.

Parker had a prolific career and yet many of his projects have fallen victim to the bulldozer. It would be unconscionable for such an important project as this to fall prey as well.

Sincerely,

Sonia R. Chao, LEED AP, C.N.U., A.I.A.
Director, Center for Urban & Community Design
Research Assistant Professor,
University of Miami School of Architecture
1223 Dickinson Drive, Building 49-B
Coral Gables, FL 33146

