

REPORT OF THE CITY OF CORAL GABLES PLANNING DEPARTMENT

HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION

TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD

ON THE DESIGNATION OF

# THE ITALIAN VILLAGE

AS AN HISTORIC LANDMARK DISTRICT

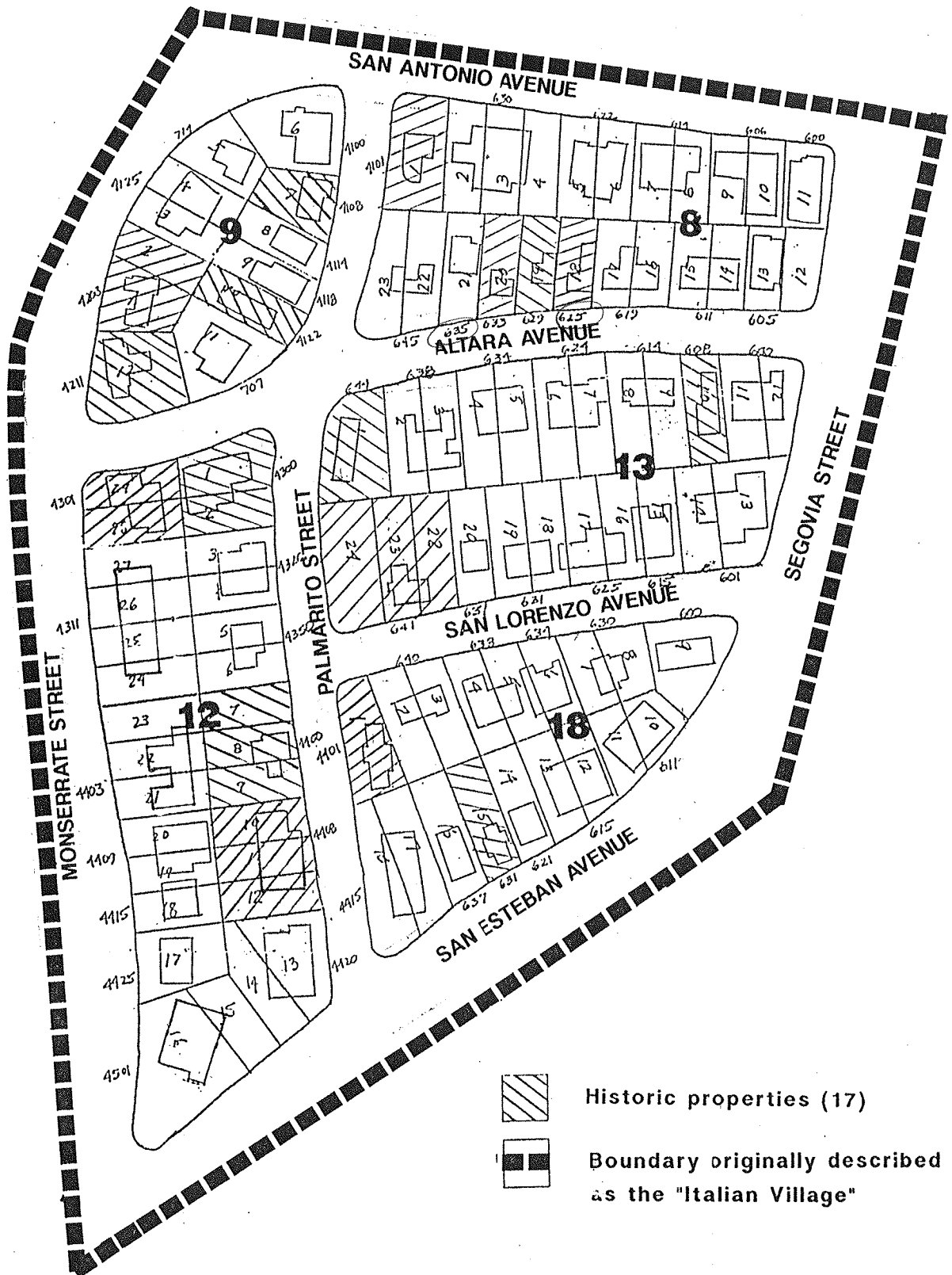
**Generally bounded by San Antonio Avenue on the north,  
San Esteban Avenue on the south, Monserrate Street on the west,  
and Segovia Street on the east**

**intersection of Aitara Avenue and Monserrate Street, looking east**



Photograph c. 1926 by Verne Williams

# ITALIAN VILLAGE



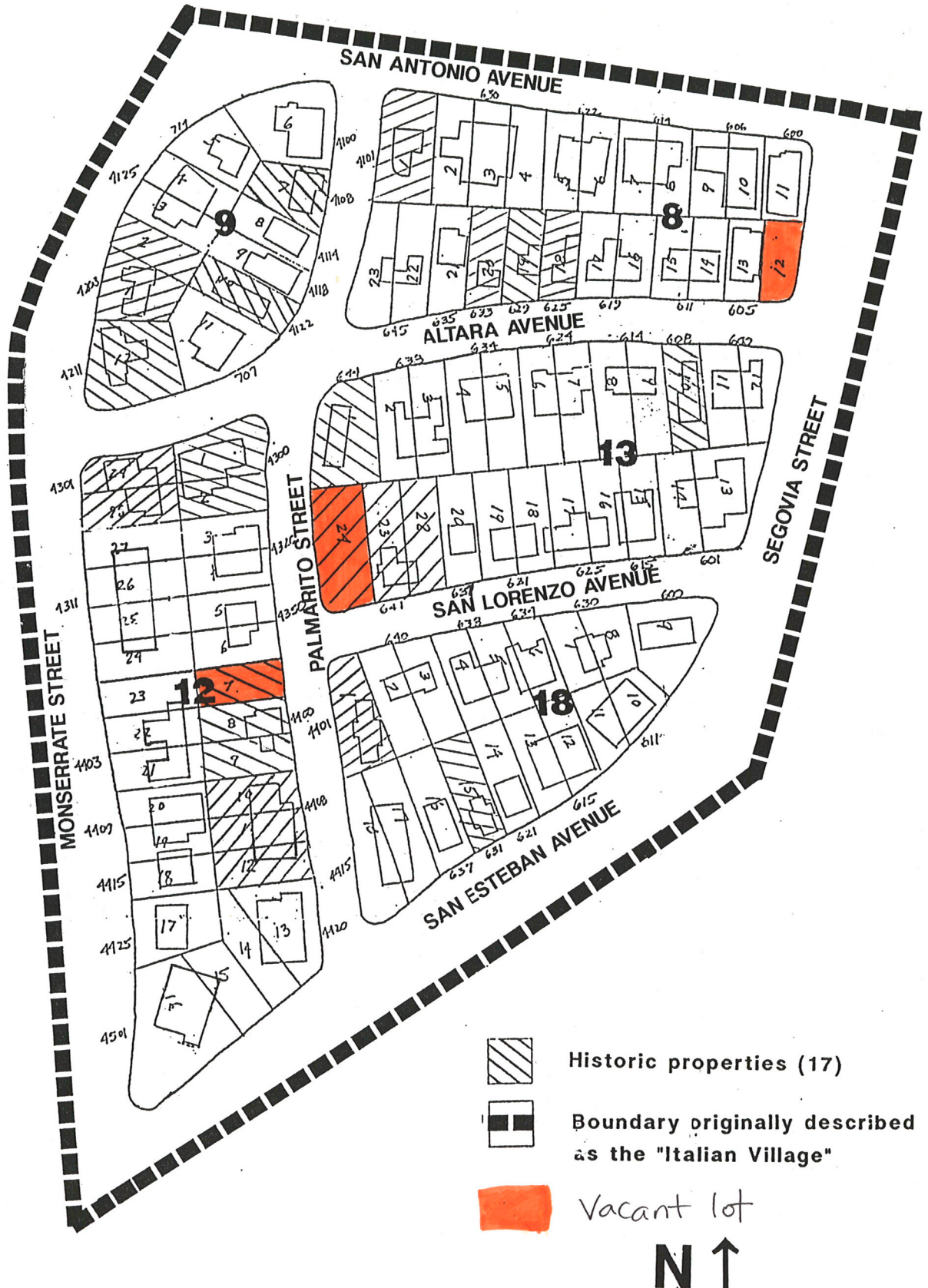
Historic properties (17)



Boundary originally described as the "Italian Village"



# ITALIAN VILLAGE



# THE CITY OF CORAL GABLES



PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION

CITY HALL 405 BILTMORE WAY  
CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA 33134

LHD 91-05

## DESIGNATION REPORT

### THE "ITALIAN VILLAGE HISTORIC DISTRICT"

Generally bounded by San Antonio Avenue on the north, San Esteban Avenue on the south, Segovia Street on the east and Monserrate Street on the west. (These five blocks contain seventeen residences built as the "Italian Village" which are the subject of this designation report.)

Date of Construction: 1925-27

Legal Description: Individual legal descriptions described on following pages; all are contained within Blocks 8, 9, 12, 13 and 18, inclusive, Riviera Section Part 1

Architect: A. L. Klingbeil, John and Coulton Skinner, R. L. Ware, Robert Law Weed

Builder: George E. Batcheller, American Building Corporation  
George Glover Boake

Applicant: Planning Department

Zoning Classification: R-7, R-14

### SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The "Italian Village" was one of many thematic housing developments planned in 1925 for the City of Coral Gables but survives as only one of the few that were actually realized. Seventeen houses were constructed between 1925-26 on five adjacent blocks as part of the originally conceived development. They share many similar design qualities, and although discontiguous, are still recognizable as an ensemble of a distinctive type.

### Explanation of Boundaries/Definition of Historic Property

Dade County Deed Book 1304 records that the Coral Gables Corporation originally specified an Italian Village to be built on Blocks 8, 9, 12, 13 and 18, Riviera Section Part One. However, only seventeen residences were actually built between 1925-1927 as a part of this original Italian Village development. Over time, forty-five additional residences were built on these five blocks, however, they are considerably later in date.

An historic property is defined by its age (over fifty years,) and its relationship to the early development of the city. Therefore, while the Italian Village was to have encompassed a five block area, only those properties constructed in the mid-twenties are described for the purpose of local historic designation.



The properties under consideration for designation are as follows.

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| 1. <u>608 Altara Avenue</u><br>Architect: A. L. Klingbeil<br>Date of Construction: 1926                | Lot 10, Block 13, Riviera Section 1<br>Owners: <del>Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Comrie</del><br><i>Judith Crowell, Kenneth Goodman</i> owners 4/96  |
| 2. <u>625 Altara Avenue</u><br>Architect: Robert Law Weed<br>Date of Construction: 1925                | Lot 18, Block 8, Riviera Section 1<br>Owners: Mr. and Mrs. John Quinones   |
| 3. <u>629 Altara Avenue</u><br>Architect: Robert Law Weed<br>Date of Construction: 1925                | Lot 19, Block 8, Riviera Section 1<br>Owners: Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Requate, Jr.   |
| 4. <u>633 Altara Avenue</u><br>Architect: Robert Law Weed<br>Date of Construction: 1925                | Lot 20, Block 8, Riviera Section 1<br>Owner: Mr. Rodolfo Gil   |
| 5. <u>644 Altara Avenue</u><br>Architect: Robert Law Weed<br>Date of Construction: 1925                | Lot 1, Block 13, Riviera Section 1<br>Owners: Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Diliberto   |
| 6. <u>4203 Monserrate Street</u><br>Architects: John and Coulton Skinner<br>Date of Construction: 1926 | Lots 1 and 2, beginning northeasterly corner Lot 12, southeast 14 feet, northwesterly 38.88 feet, east 33.1 feet to point of beginning, Block 9, Riviera Section 1<br>Owner: Mercedes Hernandez                |
| 7. <u>4211 Monserrate Street</u><br>Architect: Robert Law Weed<br>Date of Construction: 1925           | Lot 12 less beginning northeasterly corner Lot 12, southeasterly 14 feet, northwesterly 38.83 feet, east 33.1 feet to point of beginning, Block 9, Riviera Section 1<br>Owners: Iliana Ruiz and Leonor Delgado |
| 8. <u>4301 Monserrate Street</u><br>Architect: R. F. Ware<br>Date of Construction: 1926                | Lot 28 and 29, Block 12, Riviera Section 1<br>Owners: Richard Pollock and Eric Risberg   |
| 9. <u>4101 Palmarito Street</u><br>Architect: A. L. Klingbeil<br>Date of Construction: 1927            | Lot 1, Block 8, Riviera Section 1<br>Owners: Mr. and Mrs. Edward Waldron   |
| 10. <u>4108 Palmarito Street</u><br>Architects: John and Coulton Skinner<br>Date of Construction: 1926 | Lot 7, Block 9, Riviera Section 1<br>Owners: Mr. and Mrs. Jim Dockerty   |

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| 11. <u>4122 Palmarito Street</u><br>Architect: Robert Law Weed<br>Date of Construction: 1925   | Lot 10, Block 9, Riviera Section 1<br>Owner: Shirley Anne Tomback                                |
| 12. <u>4300 Palmarito Street</u><br>Architect: Robert Law Weed<br>Date of Construction: 1925   | Lots 1 and 2, Block 12, Riviera<br>Section 1<br>Owners: Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Smith               |
| 13. <u>4400 Palmarito Street</u><br>Architect: A. L. Klingbeil<br>Date of Construction: 1926   | Lots 7 through 9, Block 12, Riviera<br>Section 1<br>Owner: Ernest Coscia                         |
| 14. <u>4401 Palmarito Street</u><br>Architect: A. L. Klingbeil<br>Date of Construction: 1926   | Lot 1, Block 18, Riviera Section 1<br>Owners: Mr. and Mrs. Brett Smith                           |
| 15. <u>4408 Palmarito Street</u><br>Architect: A. L. Klingbeil<br>Date of Construction: 1926   | Lots 10 through 12, Block 12, Riviera<br>Section 1<br>Owners: Dr. and Mrs. Sergio Gonzalez-Arias |
| 16. <u>631 San Esteban Avenue</u><br>Architect: Robert Law Weed<br>Date of Construction: 1925  | Lot 15, Block 18, Riviera Section 1<br>Owner: Jacqueline Boyd                                    |
| 17. <u>641 San Lorenzo Avenue, and<br/>adjacent unimproved property<br/>at Lot 24, Block 13, Riviera<br/>Section 1</u><br>Architect: Robert Law Weed<br>Date of Construction: 1925 | Lots 22, and 23, Block 13, Riviera<br>Section Part 1<br>Owner: Jordan B. Peck, et ux             |

### Historical Background

The "Villages of Coral Gables" (so named because of their similar design and physical proximity,) built between 1925-27 by the American Building Corporation and the Myers Y. Cooper Company of Ohio, feature architectural types inspired by foreign destinations and different centuries. They added architectural diversity to Coral Gables, where the prevailing character was a Mediterranean Revival type. Although there were many more villages planned, the only others built in Coral Gables by the American Building Corporation and the Myers Y. Cooper Company were the Chinese Village, the Dutch South African Village, the Florida Pioneer Village, the French Country Village, the French Normandy Village (all listed in the Coral Gables Register of Historic Places,) and the French City Village.

### Architectural Type

While the architecture of the Italian Village has inherent qualities we associate with the Mediterranean Revival type in Coral Gables, they are nonetheless recognizable as a group. That identity comes from a similar design, and the deliberate placement of the properties on the blocks with a concern to their physical relationship, one to the other.

The Italian Village was to take its design inspiration from Italian farm house prototypes, and each featured such details as cylindrical towers, balconies supported by rustic brackets, half-timbering in projecting bays, and a combination of one and two-story sections with intersecting roof angles.

### Architectural Integrity

Most of the residences within the Italian Village have undergone few alterations. Such alterations include, but are not limited to:

- replacement or original casement windows with sash or multi-paned awning windows.
- enclosure or alteration of existing window openings.
- relocation of primary entrance.

Having considered those changes, the Staff is of the opinion that the properties have maintained sufficient architectural integrity so as to be considered for local historic designation.

### Architects

The houses within the Italian Village were designed by five architects, Alfred L. Klingbeil, John and Coulton Skinner, R. F. Ware, and Robert Law Weed. Little has been discovered about architects R. F. Ware and Alfred L. Klingbeil; however, John and Coulton Skinner and Robert Law Weed were widely known local architects who designed many significant buildings in the Miami area.

#### Alfred L. Klingbeil:

This architect lived in Coral Gables, and was employed by the firm of Robert Law Weed.

Alfred L. Klingbeil designs: 608 Altara Avenue, 4101 Palmarito Street, 4400 Palmarito Street, 4401 Palmarito Street, 4408 Palmarito Street.

#### John and Coulton Skinner

Originally from Ohio, these brothers established a Miami architectural firm in 1925, and designed many large residences in Miami and Coral Gables. In addition to their work in the Italian Village, John and Coulton Skinner also designed the French Normandy Village on LeJeune Road, and the Florida Pioneer Village on Santa Maria Street. In 1941, the Skinners formed a partnership with Harold Steward, and designed many prominent Miami buildings including the Miami Seaquarium, Mercy Hospital, and the Miami Public Library (demolished).

John and Coulton Skinner designs: 4203 Monserrate Street, 4108 Palmarito Street.

R. F. Ware:

According to early building permit records, this architect designed residences and commercial buildings in Coral Gables during 1925-1926.

R. F. Ware design: 4301 Monserrate Street

Robert Law Weed

Originally from Pennsylvania, Weed came to Miami in 1919 and opened an architectural office in 1922. Weed designed residences and commercial buildings, including department stores for Sears and Burdines, as well as the Dadeland Mall. Weed is also known for his work on the University of Miami master plan in the late 1940's - early 1950's.

Robert Law Weed designs: 625 Altara Avenue, 629 Altara Avenue, 633 Altara Avenue, 644 Altara Avenue, 4211 Monserrate Street, 4122 Palmarito Street, 4300 Palmarito Street, 631 San Esteban Avenue, 641 San Lorenzo Avenue.

Earliest Residents

The residents of the Italian Village during the 1920's-'30's collectively represented the professions of law, finance, business, medicine, construction, real estate, and engineering.

Additionally, two particularly notable residents of the Italian Village in the 1930's were Ralph Wilkins and George E. Batcheller. Wilkins was president of the Granada Shops (a Coral Gables company which manufactured and sold reproduction antique furnishings) and lived at 608 Altara Avenue, and later 4122 Palmarito Street.

George E. Batcheller was president of Batcheller Construction Company, which built many of the residences in the Italian Village during 1925-27. Batcheller lived at 4401 Palmarito Street.

Staff Recommendation

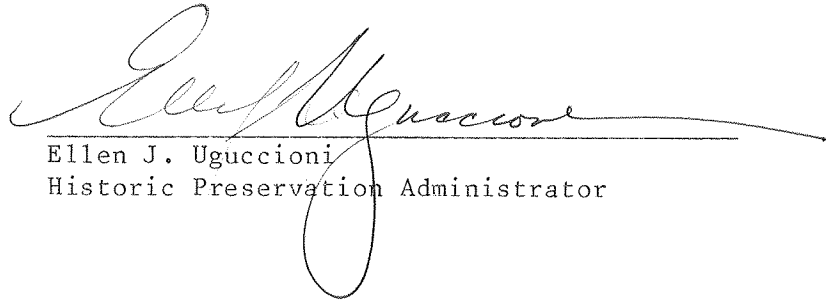
Staff finds that the district meets the criteria for significance in its distinctive architecture; its association with the early history of Coral Gables, as one of the thematic villages to be constructed; and its connection with persons significant to our local history.

Therefore the Staff would recommend that the seventeen historic properties named in this report, be designated as an historic district, and that if designated they be subject to Historic Preservation Board/Division review of changes to the properties (Ordinance Required).



Further, because the original intent of the developers of the City was to create an Italian Village on all of Blocks 8, 9, 12, 13 and 18, Riviera Section Part One, it is recommended that should new construction or additions which exceed eighty percent (80%) of the existing square footage occur, that the design of such construction comply with the standards associated with the Italian Village and summarized in the accompanying Review Guide (Resolution Required).

Respectfully submitted,



Ellen J. Uguccione  
Historic Preservation Administrator

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PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION



CITY HALL 405 BILTMORE WAY  
CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA 33134

LHD 91-05

## REVIEW GUIDE

**Definition:** The Review Guide lists some of the more prominent features which contribute to the overall character of a structure and/or district. It is not intended to be all-inclusive, as photographic documentation fully illustrates the present physical character of the property.

**Use:** The Review Guide may be used to address the impact of new construction, additions/modifications/alterations and/or renovations which may become the subject of some future Certificate of Appropriateness consideration...and The Review Guide by describing EXISTING physical characteristics may be used to determine whether or not elements which create the character of the structure and/or district is present and/or whether or not later additions or alterations have so changed that character so as to cause the property(ies) to become ineligible for listing.

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### General Characteristics:

#### A. Construction Materials

The contributing structures within the Italian Village are constructed of concrete block, with a rough-textured stucco finish. On some of the buildings, pecky cypress half-timbering is used to accent projecting secondstory bays; (coral rock, oolitic limestone) is also used on some of the buildings to distinguish corners.

#### B. Roof Slopes/Roofing Materials

The roof slopes are gabled and frequently intersect. Houses with two-story cylindrical towers have conical roofs. Roofs are covered with clay or cement barrel tiles.

#### C. Height

The contributing structures in the Italian Village are two stories in height (in some cases, the second story does not extend the entire length of the first story).

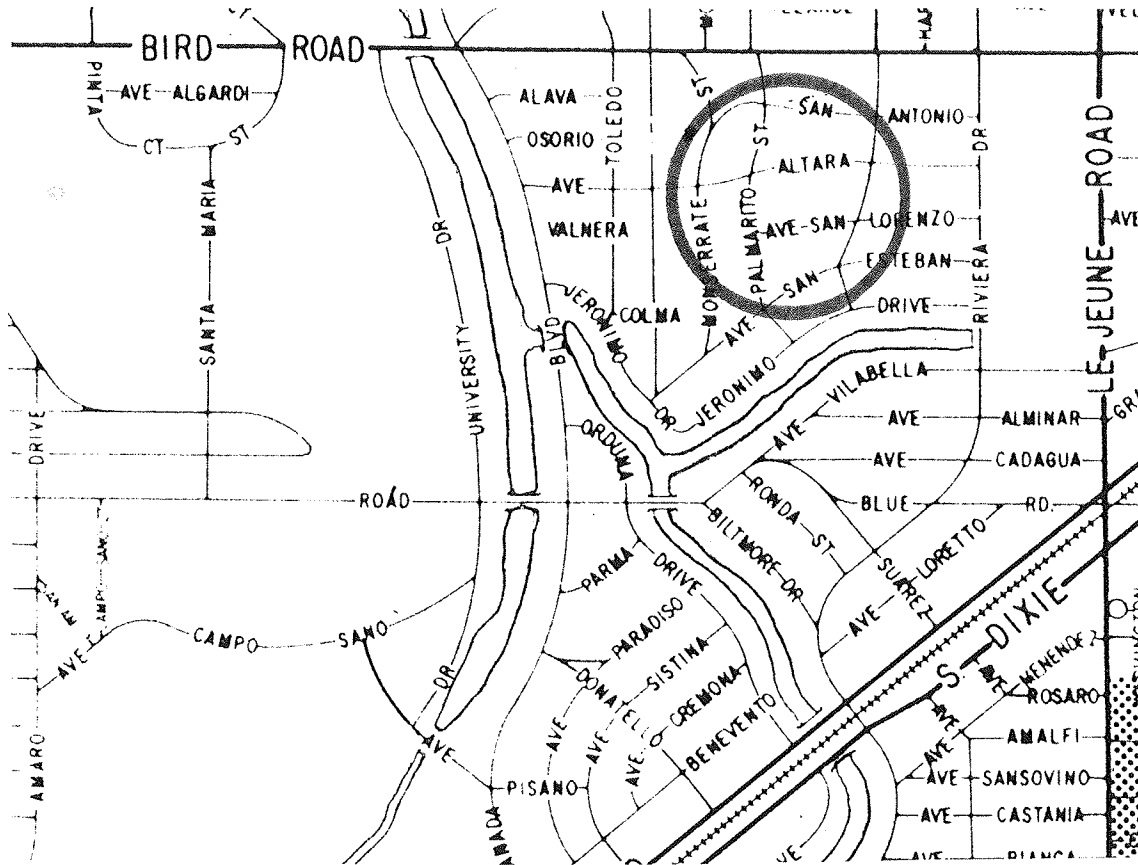
#### D. Plan Shape

The majority of the Italian Village properties are asymmetrical, and irregular in plan. The modified "L" plan is the most commonly recurring plan type.

#### E. Spatial Relationship

Although the Italian Village was never completed, and many of the properties are thus not contiguous, corner residences at the intersection of Monserrate Street and Altara Avenue, and Palmarito Street and Altara Avenue are distinctly oriented to each other, and illustrate the relationship envisioned by the architects.

# ITALIAN VILLAGE



location map

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## Review Guide

The following photographs and descriptions illustrate qualities that recur throughout the Village and help to characterize the property types.



4300 Palmarito Street                      north elevation (partial)

- 1) Building close to property line and follows curve created by the corner location.
  - 2) double-leafed doorway prominent surround.
  - 3) shallow gabled, with intersecting rooflines
- NOTE: windows are 6 over 6 sash and were originally casements.



4300 Palmarito Street                      north elevation (partial)

- 1) side gabled roofs of varying pitches, covered with barrel tile.
- 2) half-timbering (partially obscured by palm tree in this photograph).
- 3) rough-textured stucco finish.
- 4) round arch opening, full height garage entrance.



4301 Monserrate Street

north elevation

- 1) half-timbering on second story projecting bay.
- 2) prominent chimney extending beyond the roofline.
- 3) wooden shutters.
- 4) round arched doorway with quoining.
- 5) Lugsills

NOTE: The window treatment was a later alteration.





644 Altara Avenue

north elevation

- 1) Two-story cylindrical tower entrance, with conical roof covered with barrel tile.
- 2) Gabled chimney with rectangular vents
- 3) Pointed-arch window.



644 Altara Avenue,  
north elevation

- 1) rectangular doorway with prominent surround.
- 2) wrought iron, multi-paned transom with diamond patterned glass.
- 3) Vertical planked doorway with decorative hinges.



4203 Monserrate Street

west elevation

- 1) Multi-level roofs.
- 2) Entrance courtyard.

NOTE: Multi-paned sash windows (later addition)



4203 Monserrate Street  
west elevation, detail

- 1) Ventilation pipes.
- 2) Oculus window
- 3) coral rock  
(oolitic limestone)
4. Decorative staircase  
windows which "step  
down".