

March 13, 2023

To the Mayor of Coral Gables and The City Commissioners

Dear City Officials:

As you are aware, The Garden of Our Lord, located in the north Gables, is among the most unique landmarks of the City of Coral Gables.

The Garden of Our Lord is part of a “green corridor” running from East Ponce to the Douglas Entrance. It is lined with specimen trees covered with Spanish Moss. The Garden is an essential part of the neighborhood, and it meets the city’s criteria for historic designation under the category of “aesthetic significance” since it “is an easily identifiable feature of its neighborhood.” Sadly, it is under siege at this moment as a developer who has purchased the property it stands on, wants to demolish the Garden, as well as remove the specimen trees that line the swale on Antilla Avenue and East Ponce. He’s already begun taking actions

The Garden also merits historic designation because of its design. The architect was Robert Fitch Smith, one of the area’s most important, accomplished mid-1900s architects.

Further, the zoning for the block hosting the Garden is designated “Special Use.” This zoning category for that block was never meant for live/work or a residential use. It is located

in a residential neighborhood, and offices should not encroach into a residential neighborhood. The city opposes the developer in his attempt to secure a variance to change the zoning from "Special Use."

I ask you, as the City Beautiful's elected leaders, proud helmsmen and helmswomen of one of the most beautiful planned communities in America, to remember the spirit and vision of George Merrick and those that followed in carefully planning and preserving a verdant garden city, of which The Garden of Our Lord represents an integral element of this legacy, to support its preservation. Thank you.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Paul S. George, Ph.D.  
Historian

## Urquia, Billy

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**From:** Karelia Carbonell <karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 14, 2023 8:00 AM  
**To:** Lago, Vince; Anderson, Rhonda; Cason, James; Mena, Michael; Menendez, Kirk; City Clerk; Urquia, Billy  
**Subject:** Fwd: Letter Garden of Our Lord -- Item F-1  
**Attachments:** The garden of our Lord--march 13.docx

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear City Clerk,  
Please see the letter attached. Dr. George requests that it be read into record at Commission meeting March 14  
Thank you.

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

**From:** Paul George <miamihistorian@gmail.com>  
**Date:** Mon, Mar 13, 2023 at 10:18 PM  
**Subject:** Letter  
**To:** Karelia Carbonell <karelia.m.carbonell@gmail.com>

Hi Karelia, How are you? Please give the attached letter to, hopefully, be read tomorrow at the Commission meeting. I think that Bonnie Bolton is the finest person on the planet!! And you are special, too! thank you. Paul George

## Urquia, Billy

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**From:** Brandon Biondo <bbiondo@mwbm.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 14, 2023 7:16 AM  
**To:** Iglesias, Peter; Suarez, Cristina; Urquia, Billy; Adams, Warren  
**Subject:** Item 23-5403 - Appeal of HPB Decision

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mayor Lago and the Members of the Coral Gables City Commission:

I am writing in reference to the above noted item, which is on this Tuesday's (March 14, 2023) City Commission agenda, pertaining to an appeal of the Historic Preservation Board's denial of a request to designate the "Garden of Our Lord," at 110 Phoenitia Avenue as an historic site.

As both a Coral Gables property owner and parent to an autistic child who currently attends The Crystal Academy, I would like to share with you my perspective on the site under review.

My son, Harrison, began attending the Crystal Academy back in 2010. As an 18-month old newly diagnosed with autism, we as parents, had no idea what to do. There is not a map or playbook that exists that tells you how to cope or move forward. Harrison was not able to communicate with anyone and it was a very scary time. The Crystal Academy offered us a path forward; an onsite therapy center where Harrison could learn the every day tasks of a toddler. Over time, he began to learn basic functions around communication, including how to talk, how to take care of his basic needs, and how to assimilate with the outside world.

The power of the Crystal Academy program is the immersion in the Coral Gables community. The site of the school has provided ample opportunities to learn from and interact across Coral Gables. It is helping the residents of the City learn more about these neurodiverse individuals, while at the same time, providing an opportunity for these children to learn and grow.

During our time at Crystal Academy, we have never seen any resident observe, enjoy or spend time at the referenced wall/garden. In fact, it is not accessible to the public streets directly indicating that is not a spot for residents to enjoy.

I am hopeful that you will uphold your decision made on January 18, 2023, as it was the correct one. We need to allow the Crystal Academy the ability to continue their great work at this site for not only our children, but for the greater good of Coral Gables.

Thank you,

Rebekah and Brandon Biondo

135 San Lorenzo Ave; Suite 710

Coral Gables, FL 33146

## Urquia, Billy

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**From:** Ari <arisilva68@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 13, 2023 11:34 PM  
**To:** Anderson, Rhonda; Cason, James; Lago, Vince; Mena, Michael; Menendez, Kirk  
**Cc:** Urquia, Billy; Maricris Longo  
**Subject:** The Garden of the Lord

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Commissioners:

We're asking the City of Coral Gables officials to designate The Garden of our Lord as a historic landmark to protect its cultural, historical, architectural, aesthetic, and ecological significance.

For these reasons, we object vehemently to the zoning change of the Garden from Special Use to Residential/Commercial.

This change in the zoning will have an aggressive ecological and environmental impact by removing the tree canopy and old-growth trees with Spanish moss from the garden swale on Antilla and East Ponce and from Ponce until almost the Douglas Entrance, as this is a vital green corridor in our city.

We also lose a significant cultural, historical, and architectural part of our city by removing the work of the renowned South Florida architect, Robert FitchSmith, that created this peaceful sanctuary for the public use of us as citizens.

The Garden qualifies for the Special Use designation under many criteria established by the City of Coral Gables, and we encourage everyone involved in the decision to consider how this zone changes would affect the lives of the people living here.

Best regards,

Arileida Silva

Phoenetia Ave. Resident

Sent from my iPhone

## Urquia, Billy

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**From:** Diana Vidal <dianaartaudvidal@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 13, 2023 11:11 PM  
**To:** Anderson, Rhonda; Cason, James; Lago, Vince; Mena, Michael; Menendez, Kirk; Urquia, Billy  
**Subject:** Letter of Support for Historic Designation of The Garden of Our Lord

CAUTION: External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Sent from my iPhone

Dear Coral Gables Mayor and Commissioners

This letter is in support of granting historic designation for The Garden of Our Lord.

This landmark meets several criteria for historic designation and is a unique feature of The City Beautiful.

The Garden of Our Lord is part of a green corridor running from East Ponce de Leon Boulevard to Douglas Entrance and is a priceless component of Coral Gables heritage.

Sincerely  
The Vidal Family  
301 Alesio Avenue

## Urquia, Billy

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**From:** Jennifer Durocher <jennifersdurocher@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 13, 2023 3:44 PM  
**To:** Suarez, Cristina; Urquia, Billy; Iglesias, Peter  
**Cc:** Adams, Warren

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mayor Lago and the Members of the Coral Gables City Commission (bcc'd)

I am writing regarding **Item 23-5403 - Appeal of HPB Decision**, which will be heard at the March 14, 2023 City Commission meeting and which is appealing the decision to deny a designation of 'Garden of Our Lord' (110 Phoenitia Avenue) as a historic site.

Not only am I a resident of Coral Gables, I am intimately familiar with Crystal Academy, a private school operating on the grounds of 110 Phoenitia Avenue, as I currently serve on the Crystal Academy Board.

I agree with the decision of the Historic Preservation board to deny application to designate the site as an historic site. I do know that evaluation is based on its historical, cultural significance, architectural significance, and aesthetic significance. With respect to the latter category, the site in question should be an "easily identifiable visual feature of a neighborhood" and "contribute to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhood." I believe that site in question fails to meet that criteria. I have visited the school frequently since it opened in 2009. Not only is it not easily identifiable as a garden when entering the property, it is used infrequently at best, as I have never seen a visitor at the site.

Designation of the 'Garden of Our Lord' as an historic site will also impede development planned at the site. This development will include expansion of the Crystal Academy school which will significantly benefit the residents of Coral Gables and the surrounding area. Expansion of the school will increase their ability to provide quality educational and therapeutic services to a larger number of children with autism and other developmental disabilities. Therefore, I encourage the City Commission to deny the appeal.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Durocher  
3180 S Le Jeune Rd.  
786-457-6427

## Urquia, Billy

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**From:** Art Kozyrovicius <artkozy@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 13, 2023 12:37 PM  
**To:** Lago, Vince; Anderson, Rhonda; Menendez, Kirk; Mena, Michael; Cason, James  
**Cc:** Urquia, Billy  
**Subject:** F.-1. 23-5403 The Garden of Our Lord 110 Phoenetia Ave HPB decision appeal  
**Attachments:** 2015 City of Coral Gables Vision for North Ponce Area.pdf

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

The Honorable Mayor Lago and The City Commissioners:

My name is Art Kozyrovicius and I am following up on my letter to the Historic Preservation Board on the same subject and would like to express my full support for the appeal and to overturn the decision of the Historic Preservation Board on January 18, 2023 to deny landmark designation of The Garden of Our Lord.

My wife Solveiga and I own 24 Phoenetia Ave, a historic home a block away from the Garden of our Lord. We have lived here for over a year and bought our house because of the character of the property, the street and the surrounding neighborhood. We also chose Coral Gables as our residence because of the historical nature of the city and it's commitment to being green and to protecting the history and the character that was planned and created from the City's inception.

We would like to focus your attention on the key points that we believe qualify The Garden of Our Lord as a historic property:

1. The Garden is an easily identifiable feature of our neighborhood because:

- it is large enough and visible enough from the street with mature trees that are visible from the streets
- it is part of the green corridor on East Ponce Blvd and it is the only easily identifiable European-style feature that complements the Historic Women's Club and the neighborhood
- It includes the garden wall designed in a classical style with coral stone by prominent architect Robert Fitch Smith . This garden wall also contributes to the character of the neighborhood because it complements the Historic Coral Stone Women's Club.
- The Garden is the only "Open Green Space" in this neighborhood with an important amount of large mature trees. There are no other open Green Spaces near this vicinity with this many trees. Wherever trees are established, wildlife and other plants are sure to follow, ensuring a healthier ecosystem.

2. The Garden of Our Lord is integral to the plan of the neighborhood and our city because:

- The city of Coral Gables was founded with the Garden City Principles following the Garden City urban planning movement in the early 20th century. Today you can find in The Coral Gables Website a caption that says "Coral Gables' founders imagined both a "City Beautiful" and a "Garden City," with lush green avenues winding through a residential city, punctuated by civic landmarks with playful architecture." The civic landmark is the Historic Women Club.



- In 2015 the city held a series of community meetings with residents of the North Ponce Area to establish a development vision for this area. As a result of this assessment the city published "The North Ponce Community Visioning Workshop Report – Executive Summary" with recommendations, which were presented in front of the city commission on October 27, 2015; and, amongst the findings of this report on Page 8 and 9 are:

- Page 8 - Letter D - Identify possible future locations for four neighborhood parks, to be included in the City Capital Improvement Plan.

- Page 9 - The city identified 4 locations on the Map of page 9 and amongst the 4 locations identified for future sites for parks is the East Ponce De Leon Blvd property, where the Garden of Our Lord and the playground for Cristal Academy are located. There is a 200-year old tree on the playground. (The report is attached for your reference)

We believe that the above clearly articulates that the Garden of Our Lord is both an easily identifiable feature of the neighborhood and also an integral part of the original city plan.

We love to walk the streets of our neighborhood and other neighborhoods in Coral Gables with our daughter and enjoy the greenery and the history with all the unique features and character. My wife is also a member of the Woman's Club across the street which represents part of the rich history around.

The Garden of Our Lord is a tranquil place representing everything Coral Gables is about, and it is part of the "green corridor" which runs from East Ponce to the Douglas Entrance. The Garden is an essential part of the neighborhood, and we are surprised it has not been designated historic in the past. It has been designed by the notable architect Robert Fitch Smith with a specific intention and purpose, and we should make sure we treasure and protect it to honor those intentions and the identity of the neighborhood.

We are not opposed to new developments that are well planned, designed to fit the architecture and the character of the area, and are located in the proper location. However, we are wholeheartedly opposed to rushed and haphazard attempts of developers interested only in profits and expansion at the cost of destruction of history, nature, and neighborhood character.

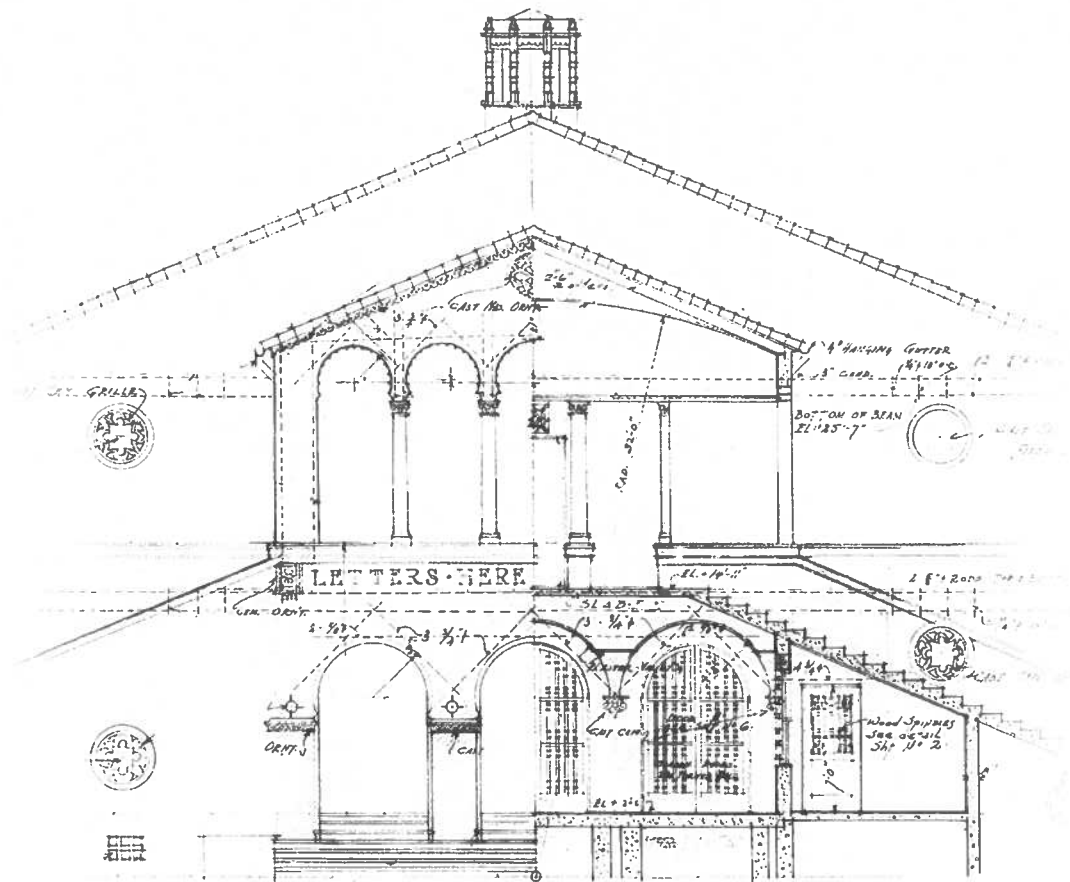
Thank you for your attention and participation in hearing this appeal, and for your decision to support what is right for the neighborhood and the City.

Respectfully,  
Art Kozyrovicius  
Solveiga Vailionyte-Kozyroviciene

# DRAFT 10.02.15

## North Ponce

### Community Visioning Workshop Report Executive Summary



ELEVATION

HALF SECTION & STRUCTURAL  
1/4" SCALE DETAIL OF PONCE DE LEON BOUL.

A follow-up report to the Coral Gables City Commission  
on the findings and recommendations from the June 12 -  
June 13, 2015 North Ponce Community Vision Workshop

## Community Participation

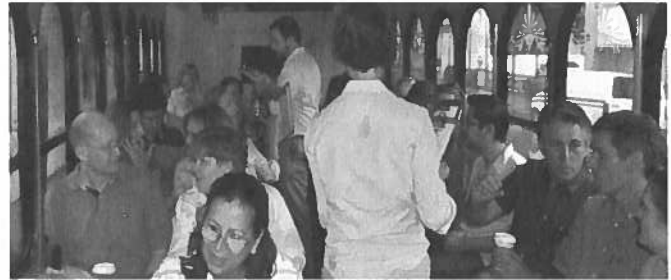
The City of Coral Gables initiated the June 12-13, 2015 public workshop to inform the future planning and development of the North Ponce area of the city. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Engage citizens, stakeholders and city staff in a dialog about the overall urban character of the area today and in the future, considering planning, design and policy issues related to the history, sense of place and quality of life of the North Ponce area of the city;
- Gather input from the public through a variety of individual and team activities;
- Identify key issues, challenges and opportunities in the study area, and;
- Generate recommendations for the City's consideration.

The workshop employed a variety of participatory methods for gathering public input including:

- The audience question and answer session at the kickoff presentation;
- A trolley/walking tour of the study area with facilitators and city staff
- Response cards that asked participants to characterize both the existing conditions and their vision for the future in one-word or short phrases.
- Survey forms with a series of short and open-ended questions
- A visual preference survey
- Group table discussions that produced written and verbal summaries

Many workshop participants are currently living and working in the study area. They are seeking a more pedestrian-oriented lifestyle, which is why they are choosing to live in or near the downtown. Many people work from their home, at a nearby office or in flex space, such as a coffee shop, at least part of their time. They use transit and bikes regularly and would walk, bike and use transit more if the conditions, destinations and service continue to improve and expand.



Participants took a trolley tour of the study area to be able to discuss urban design and planning ideas with direct knowledge of neighborhood needs.



The trolley tour included multiple stops where participants walked neighborhood streets to examine typical building types, streetscape, and quality of life issues.



Following the trolley and walking tour, participants worked together in table groups to discuss ideas and establish their vision for North Ponce.

## Community Input

Workshop participants expressed a desire, as evidenced in the visual preference survey results and presentations of the table discussion results, for building types that line the street and create attractive streetscapes – urban rowhouses, townhomes and apartment buildings – as opposed to the post-WWII multifamily buildings in the study area with deeper setbacks and frontages that fail to address the street.

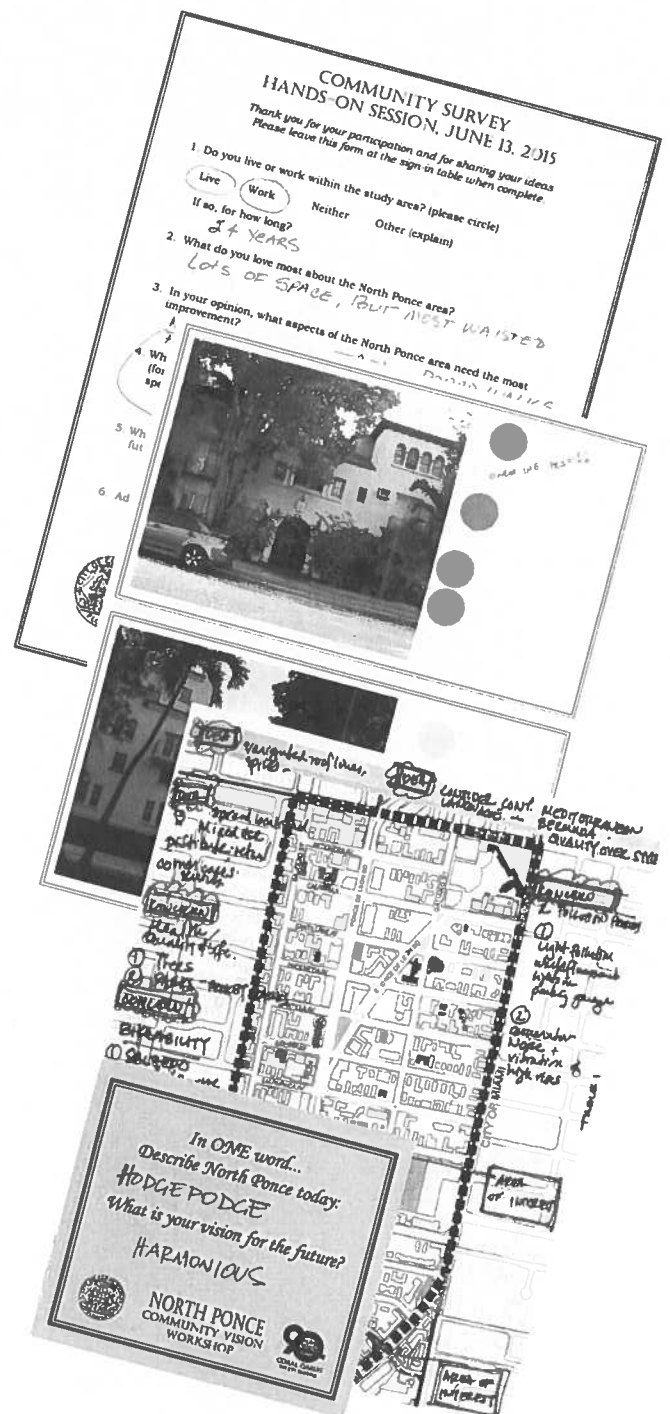
There was strong consensus amongst workshop participants who expressed a preference for a 2-4 story scale along the east-west residential streets, transitioning to taller mixed-use buildings on the major north-south corridors and the blocks closer to the downtown core (Alhambra Circle/Alhambra Plaza). When asked about the preferred characteristics and qualities of their ideal neighborhood concept for North Ponce, participants highlighted walkable mixed-use places with attractive streetscapes, sidewalks with shade trees, small parks, plazas and gathering places, and a mix of old and new buildings, historic and civic buildings.

There were concerns expressed over the encroachment of new, large-scale development into the residential side streets and how best to manage this development and transition from the commercial corridors to the residential areas.

The speed of traffic and the difficulty in crossing the major commercial corridors were a common complaint. Participants also noted the small number of public parks and gathering spaces in the study area.

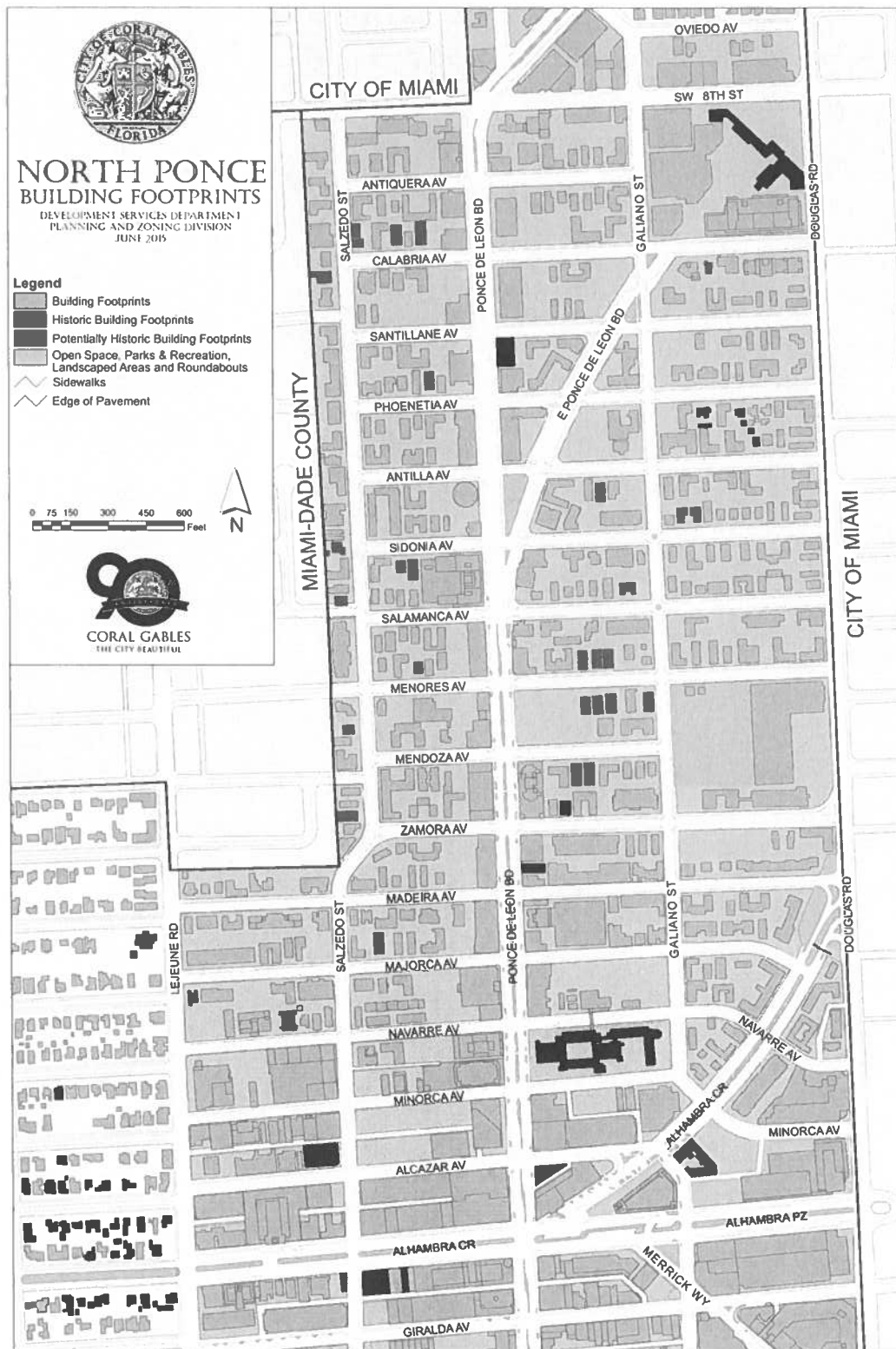
Many participants noted that older, multi-family buildings in the study area have provided some of the more affordable housing to be found in Coral Gables, and expressed concern about the loss of affordable housing as the area becomes more sought after and properties are rehabbed and redeveloped.

There was extensive discussion of ways to make the study area more pedestrian- and bike-friendly covering the full range of public realm topics including street design, connectivity, pedestrian paths/paseos, public gathering spaces, streetscapes, bike lanes and facilities, street trees, traffic, crosswalks, and lighting.



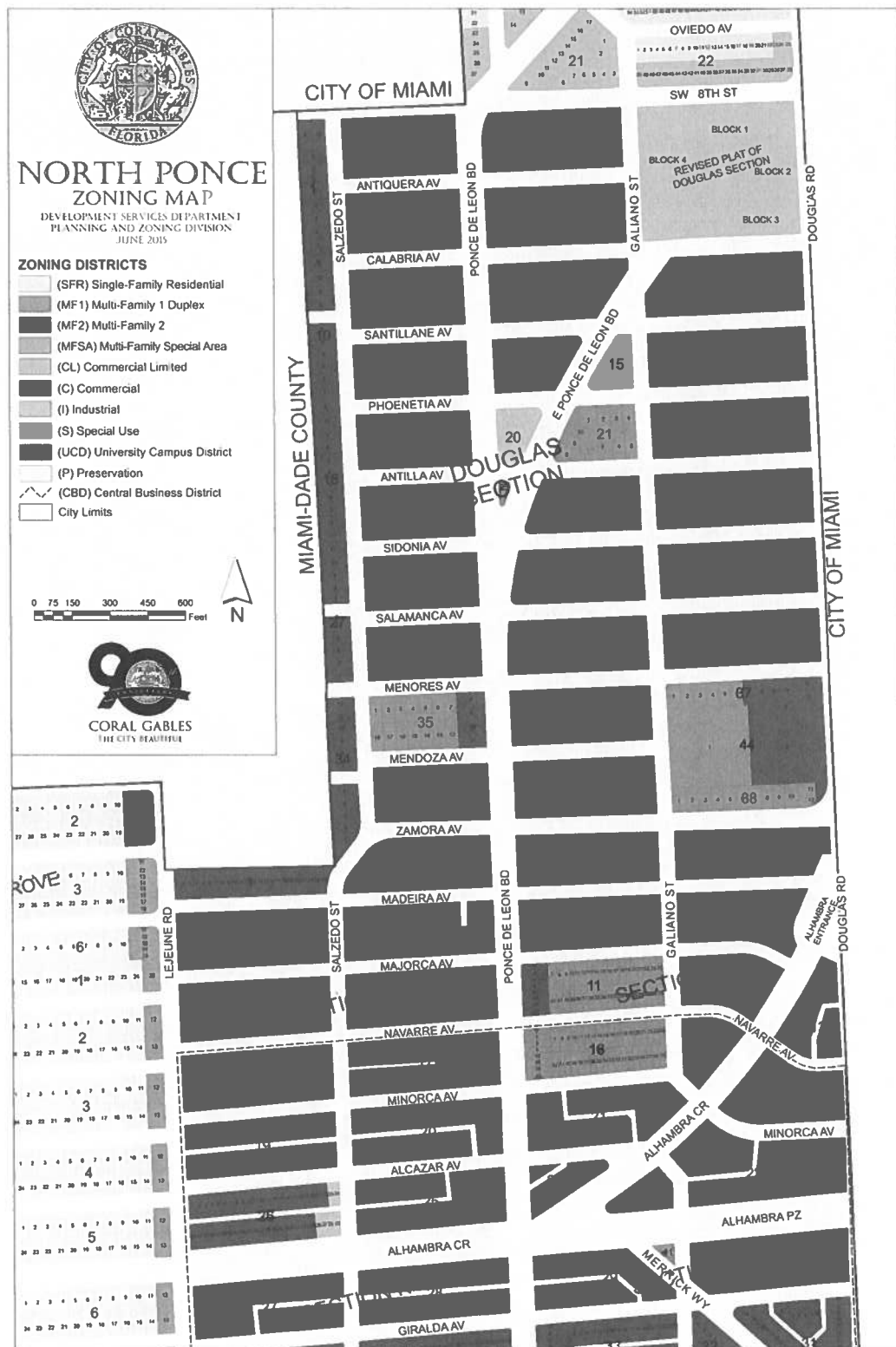
During the Community Visioning Workshop, participants provided feedback through written surveys, visual preference surveys, one-word cards, and by drawing their location-specific ideas on maps of the study area. Some examples of the written feedback received are shown above.

## Building Footprints Map



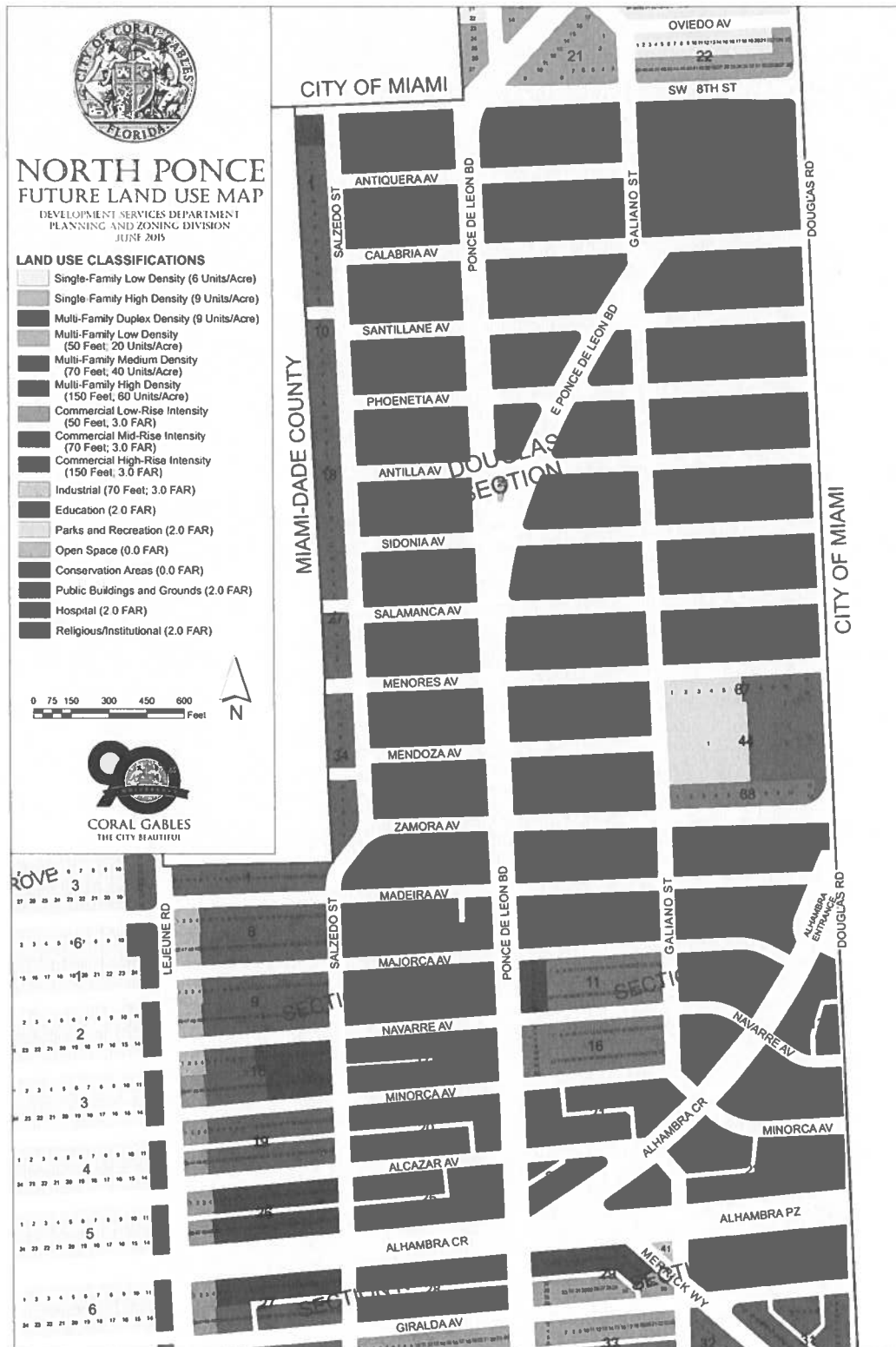
[illegible]

# Zoning Map





# Future Land Use Map





## Recommended Short-Term Action Steps

### 1. Historic Preservation

- (A) Verify accuracy of maps. Create an interactive map for public information, as a 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary project.
- (B) Prepare marketing documents for Transfer of Development Rights.

### 2. Public Space, Streets and Pedestrian-Friendly Design

- (C) Arrange a design studio for Ponce de Leon Park and its vicinity with Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk. **(In progress)**
- (D) Identify possible future locations for four neighborhood parks, to be included in the City Capital Improvement Program.
- (E) Identify possible future locations for four neighborhood parking lots, to be included in the City Capital Improvement Program.

### 3. East Ponce Boulevard Quadrant

- (F) Identify two neighborhood streets for enhanced sidewalks and landscaping, to be included in the City Capital Improvement program.

### 4. Alhambra Circle Corridor/Quadrant

- (G) Review proposed changes of land use or zoning based on input from workshop. Proposed land uses for North Ponce project located within the Central Business District should not exceed Commercial Mid-Rise Intensity.
- (H) Require enhanced pedestrian features, such as arcades, paseos and enhanced sidewalks, through the site plan review process.

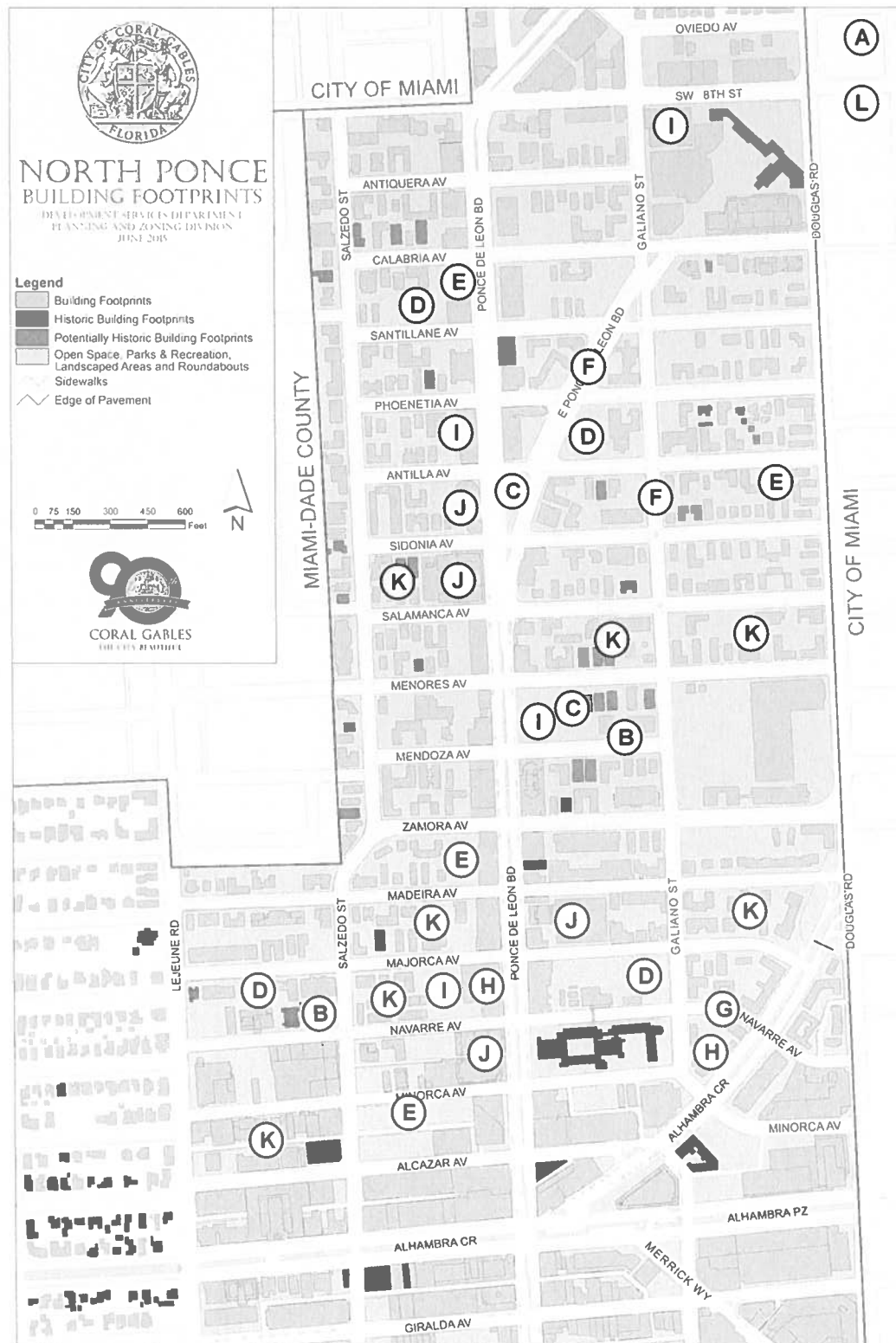
### 5. Large Scale Development on Major Commercial Corridors

- (I) Propose shared parking, including remote residential parking in the evening. **(In progress)**
- (J) Revise parking requirements for small restaurants and delis located at the ground floor of mixed-used buildings. **(In progress)**
- (K) Eliminate parking requirements for existing and new buildings under 1.45 FAR.

### 6. Public Outreach

- (L) Continue to engage residents and property owners on North Ponce planning efforts.
  - Host public Commission Workshop (for example, at the Coral Gables Museum) to continue the discussion of the future of the North Ponce area with the community.
  - Establish quarterly meetings with the community.
  - Send meeting invitations and questionnaires to all residents and property owners within the study area boundary.
  - Create a North Ponce study webpage with an online survey for community members to provide feedback.
  - Create an email listserve of community members interested in North Ponce and send area-specific email updates.

## Illustrative Master Plan - Recommended Short-Term Action Steps



## Recommended Long-Range Action Steps

### 1. Historic Preservation

- Ⓐ Promote historic preservation of existing small apartment buildings as an affordable housing strategy.

### 2. Public Space, Streets and Pedestrian-Friendly Design

- Ⓑ Develop neighborhood park and landscape master plan.

### 3. East Ponce Boulevard Quadrant

- Ⓒ Study design of neighborhood streets, with an emphasis on reducing pavement, enhancing tree cover and widening sidewalks.

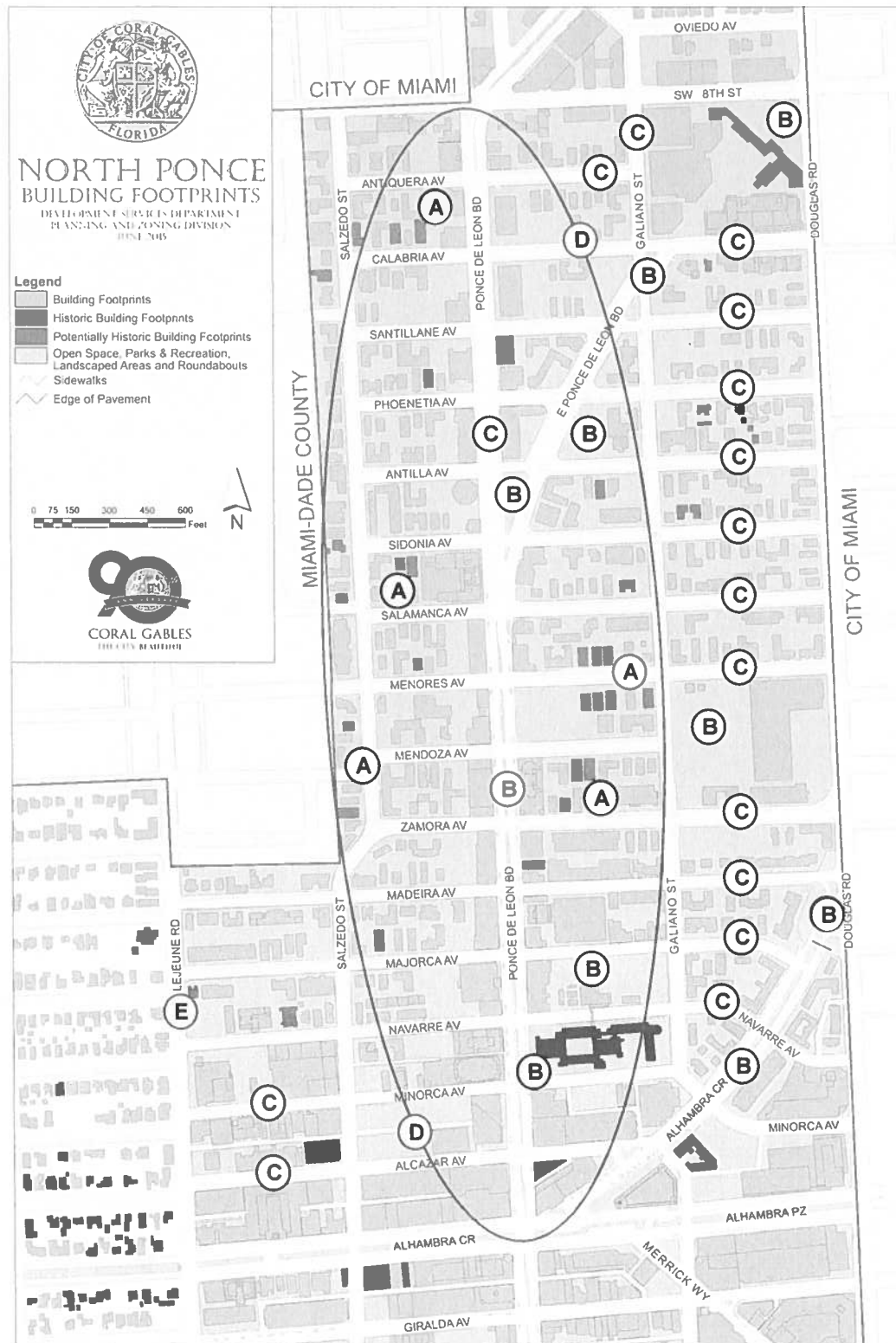
### 4. Large Scale Development on Major Commercial Corridors

- Ⓓ Prepare Ponce Mixed-Use Zoning Overlay, which should include:
  - Requirements for building massing and setbacks to limit overall building bulk
  - Guidelines for paseos and public space
  - Parking requirements, including shared parking strategies
  - Flexible uses, including bed and breakfast and live-work units
  - Incentives for more affordable housing typologies
  - Preservation Incentives for historic multi-family buildings

### 5. Public Outreach

- Ⓔ Continue to engage residents and property owners on North Ponce planning efforts.
  - Continue quarterly meetings with the community.
  - Monthly updates of a North Ponce study webpage with an online survey for community members to provide feedback.
  - Email listserve of community members interested in North Ponce with area-specific email updates.

## Recommended Illustrative Master Plan - Long-Range Action Steps



## Urquia, Billy

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**From:** Robert Stern <r.stern@RAMSA.COM>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 13, 2023 10:51 AM  
**To:** Anderson, Rhonda; Cason, James; Lago, Vince; Mena, Michael; Menendez, Kirk  
**Cc:** Lombard, Joanna L.; Urquia, Billy  
**Subject:** The Garden of Our Lord: 110 Phoenetia Avenue  
**Attachments:** 20230313\_Garden of Our Lord.pdf

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

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

Attached, please find a letter to you from Robert A.M. Stern regarding The Garden of Our Lord.

If there is any difficulty with the receipt of this transmission, please contact me asap for my assistance.

Sincerely,  
Mary Kate

**Robert Stern**  
Senior Partner  
Robert A.M. Stern Architects, LLP  
**One Park Avenue, New York, New York 10016**  
Phone: 212 967 5100  
r.stern@RAMSA.COM  
[www.ramsa.com](http://www.ramsa.com)

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13 March 2023

RAMSA

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

Dear Mayor Lago, Vice Mayor Mena, Commissioner Anderson, Commissioner Carson,  
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.

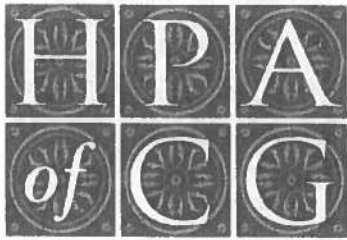
My best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R.A.M. Stern". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

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



HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
ASSOCIATION OF CORAL GABLES

March 13, 2023

City Commission Meeting March 14, 2023

**F.-1. 23-5403 An Appeal to the Coral Gables City Commission from the decision of the Historic Preservation Board on January 18, 2023**

Dear Mayor and Commissioners,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables, we ask the City Commission side with the appellant Bonnie Bolton and *overturn* the decision of the Historic Preservation Board on January 18, 2023 to deny landmark designation of The Garden of Our Lord.

HPACG supports The Garden of Our Lord's historic designation. It meets several criteria for designation. It is a unique landmark in the City of Coral Gables. The Garden of Our Lord is part of a "green corridor" which runs from East Ponce until the Douglas Entrance. It is lined with specimen trees covered with Spanish Moss.

The Garden is an essential part of the neighborhood consistent with George Merrick's garden city concept documented in the historic city plan [a landmark] and it meets the city's criteria for historic designation under the category of aesthetic significance because it "is an easily identifiable feature of its neighborhood." The Garden's wall is also more than worthy of historic designation because of its architecture. It was designed by noted architect [and landscape and urban planner] and AIA Fellow, Robert Fitch Smith, whose design and creative philosophy is explained in his own words: "*Where does the house end and where does the Garden start? Need there be a definite line?*" Smith incorporated coral rock into the Garden's bench, wall, grotto and walkways to complement the historic Woman's Club which sits on the adjacent block. The Garden also meets the historical and cultural significance criteria.

Professors of Architecture at the University of Miami, Joanna Lombard and Rocco Ceo wrote the architectural criteria for the Garden's historic designation. We agree with the experts that The Garden meets historic designation under the City's Historic Preservation. Again, we stress our support of The Garden of Our Lord's historic designation as per the criteria stated above.

The Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables promotes the understanding and the importance of historic resources and their preservation in Coral Gables. We ask the City Commission to side with the appellant Bonnie Bolton and *overturn* the decision of the Historic Preservation Board on January 18, 2023 to deny landmark designation of The Garden of Our Lord.

**Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables  
Post Office Box 347944, Coral Gables, Florida 33234  
info@historiccoralgables.org  
www.historiccoralgables.org**

Respectfully submitted.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Karella Martinez Carbonell'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Karella' being more prominent.

Karella Martinez Carbonell

President Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables

**Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables**  
**Post Office Box 347944, Coral Gables, Florida 33234**  
**[info@historiccoralgables.org](mailto:info@historiccoralgables.org)**  
**[www.historiccoralgables.org](http://www.historiccoralgables.org)**



**Urquia, Billy**

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**From:** Cari Childers <childers820@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 13, 2023 10:11 AM  
**To:** Urquia, Billy  
**Subject:** Garden of our Lord support

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Commissioners,

I own 36 Phoenetia Avenue, Coral Gables Fl. My property is designated historic as the "Douglas- Trager House" built in 1926. It is the city's first operating Bed & Breakfast and is on the same street as this project. I support the decision of the Garden of Our Lord's historic designation. It meets several criteria for designation. It is a unique landmark in the City of Coral Gables. It is lined with beautiful specimen trees covered with Spanish Moss and has the same Rock Wall as my home does.

The Garden is an important part of the neighborhood and it meets the city's criteria for historic designation under the category of aesthetic significance because it "is an easily identifiable feature of its neighborhood." The Garden's wall is also more than worthy of historic designation because of its architecture. It was designed by noted architect, Robert Fitch Smith. Smith incorporated coral rock into the Garden's bench, wall, grotto and walkways to complement the historic Woman's Club which sits on the adjacent block.

Professors of Architecture at the University of Miami, **Joanna Lombard** and **Rocco Ceo**, wrote the architectural criteria for the Garden's historic designation. We agree with the **experts** that The Garden meets historic designation under the City's Historic Preservation Again, we stress our support of The Garden of Our Lord's historic designation as per the criteria stated above..

We ask the City Commission to side with the appellant **Bonnie Bolton** and **OVERTURN** the decision of the Historic Preservation Board on January 18, 2023 to deny landmark designation of The Garden of Our Lord.

Thank you,

Cari Childers

Owner of The Douglas Trager House

**Cari Childers**

US Cell, FaceTime/Audio, WhatsApp:

+1 (352) 223 - 0493

[childers820@gmail.com](mailto:childers820@gmail.com)

## Urquia, Billy

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**From:** vicki cerda <vicki\_cerda@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 12, 2023 11:41 PM  
**To:** Anderson, Rhonda; Cason, James; Lago, Vince; Mena, Michael; Menendez, Kirk  
**Cc:** City Clerk  
**Subject:** Please listen to the EXPERTS & save The Garden of the Lord!

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

[jcason@coralgables.com](mailto:jcason@coralgables.com);  
[vlago@coralgables.com](mailto:vlago@coralgables.com);  
[mmena@coralgables.com](mailto:mmena@coralgables.com);  
[kmenendez@coralgables.com](mailto:kmenendez@coralgables.com)

Dear all,

I am in agreement with the very respected Professors of Architecture at the University of Miami Joanna Lombard Hector, AIA and Rocco Ceo, FAIA who wrote the criteria for the Garden's architectural significance and who are the authors of "Historic Landscapes". As per the 270-page application, the Garden has significant character, interest or value as part of the historical, cultural, archaeological, aesthetic or architectural heritage of the City. A property must meet at least one (1) of the criteria outlined. The Code clearly states that properties which meet the criteria shall be designated. **These EXPERTS have identified nine [9] criteria. Yes, nine!**

Note that in addition to her other accolades, Ms Lombard has been named a Distinguished Professor in the 2023 Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) Architectural Education Awards. The Distinguished Professor Award is one of the highest honors the ACSA can bestow upon an educator and is given annually.

The Garden & its special tree canopy is indeed a treasure in Coral Gables!

**Please listen to the EXPERTS & save The Garden of the Lord!**

Maria Cerda  
Coral Gables Resident for over 35 years

**Urquia, Billy**

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**From:** Thomas Mooney <cityplan@bellsouth.net>  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 12, 2023 6:49 PM  
**To:** Iglesias, Peter; Suarez, Cristina; Urquia, Billy  
**Cc:** Adams, Warren  
**Subject:** March 14 2023 City Commission - Item 23-5403 - Appeal of HPB Decision

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mayor Lago and the Members of the Coral Gables City Commission (bcc'd)

I am writing in reference to the above noted item, which is on this Tuesday (March 14, 2023) City Commission agenda, pertaining to an appeal of the Historic Preservation Boards denial of a request to designate the 'Garden of Our Lord', at 110 Phoenitia Avenue as an historic site.

I have been a resident of Coral Gables since 2000, and a homeowner since 2002, and I am highly familiar with the north Gables area, in particular the area of the designation request. For transparency purposes, my son has attended the Crystal Academy, in some form, since 2010, and I serve on the Crystal Academy Board. I have also served, professionally, in the field of Historic Preservation for 30 years.

I was able to address the Historic Preservation Board on January 18, 2023, and I explained to the Board that while the efforts of the designation applicant are well intentioned, and the amount of research is noteworthy and interesting from a property history standpoint, the application for designation clearly did not meet the criteria for designation as an historic site. The City Historic Preservation Officer presented a detailed and thorough analysis of the proposal, and the conclusions reached were spot on. As such, the Historic Preservation Board made the correct decision in denying the application.

It is important to note that the designation of a site, or portion of a site in this case, as an individual historic site, is a VERY high benchmark and is a lot different than determining which structures would be classified as contributing or non-contributing within a local historic district. The Historic Preservation Board also carefully analyzed the criteria for designation, as set forth in the Coral Gables City Code, and after a lengthy discussion, including hours of public testimony, affirmed the recommendation of the City Historic Preservation Officer and denied the application for designation.

There was no error in the decision of the Board, and their decision was based on substantial competent evidence. As such, I would strongly recommend that the City Commission deny the appeal.

While I would love to address the Commission in person, unfortunately I may have a scheduling conflict on March 14, 2023. However, I would be happy to share with you my thoughts and experience as it pertains to the proposed designation of the site.

Thank you.

Thomas R. Mooney  
601 Navarre Avenue

## Urquia, Billy

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**From:** zully pardo <pardovi@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 10, 2023 7:11 PM  
**To:** Lago, Vince; Anderson, Rhonda; Menendez, Kirk; Mena, Michael; Cason, James; Urquia, Billy  
**Subject:** F.-1. 23-5403 110 Phoenetia Ave, The Garden of Our Lord. City Commission meeting, March 14th, 2023

CAUTION: External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Jaime and ZullyPardo  
49 Campina Court  
Coral Gables, Fl. 33134

Dear City of Coral Gables,

We respectfully request that The Garden of Our Lord be preserved and incorporated in any future proposed development for the area as a beautiful green space amenity.

As part of the 'green corridor' running from East Ponce de Leon to the Douglas entrance, The Garden holds aesthetics distinctive of the area. It is a characteristic feature of the neighborhood holding historical and cultural significance for our City and its residents. It is a testament to George Merrick's garden city precepts.

We thank you for your dedication and commitment. Please conserve The Garden.

Sincerely,  
Jaime and ZullyPardo  
305-803-1506

Sent from my iPhone

## Urquia, Billy

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**From:** zully pardo <pardovi@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 10, 2023 7:10 PM  
**To:** Lago, Vince; Anderson, Rhonda; Menendez, Kirk; Mena, Michael; Cason, James; Urquia, Billy  
**Subject:** F.-1. 23-5403 110 Phoenetia Ave, The Garden of Our Lord. City Commission meeting, March 14th, 2023

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We thank you for your dedication and commitment. Please conserve The Garden.

Sincerely,  
Jaime and ZullyPardo  
305-803-1506

Sent from my iPhone

## Urquia, Billy

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**From:** mervol@aol.com  
**Sent:** Friday, March 10, 2023 1:40 PM  
**To:** Anderson, Rhonda; Cason, James; Lago, Vince; Mena, Michael; Menendez, Kirk  
**Cc:** Urquia, Billy  
**Subject:** The GArden of Our Lord

**CAUTION:** External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Coral Gables Commission Members:

I wish to express my support of landmark designation for The Garden of Our Lord, which satisfies the City's criteria for designation under the categories of aesthetic, historical and cultural significance.

I ask you to put yourselves in the company of our original master planners -- George, Phineas, Denman and so many others who saw the past as a pathway to the future. The Garden of Our Lord should not only be preserved, but enshrined as a communal centerpiece of the North Ponce Garden District.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce Fitzgerald  
Coral Gables resident since 2000.



# FAIRCHILD TROPICAL BOTANIC GARDEN

March 13, 2023

Dear Commissioners:

This letter concerns the Appeal to the Coral Gables City Commission from the decision of the Historic Preservation Board on January 18, 2023. Aside from the historical architecture of the wall surrounding the garden, it also contains at least two Biblical trees from the early days: A carob tree (*Ceratonia siliqua*) which is mentioned several times in the Bible and a date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*) which was prominent in Biblical times. Though many of the other plants and trees within the garden in its present state are not of Middle Eastern origin, given the historic significance of the wall and the garden over time and given its significance as part of an important green corridor a prominent feature of its neighborhood in Coral Gables the garden could readily be restored to its former prominence as a place to showcase plants from the Middle East with religious significance. Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden (FTBG) is part of the Coral Gables community, would be eager to work with Coral Gables officials to donate and source plants that would restore the Garden of Our Lord. For example, we now have *Ficus sycamorus* 'Balami', the Biblical "sycamore" to share. Frankincense (*Boswellia sacra*) is thriving at FTBG and could readily be sourced for the Garden of Our Lord. Olive trees (*Olea europaea*) also grow well in South Florida and would fit the theme of this garden.

This unique garden has great potential as a historic, educational and beautiful feature of Coral Gables. I hope that the Coral Gables City Commission will consider this appeal and seize the opportunity to make beautiful and historic Coral Gables yet more beautiful and historic.

Sincerely,



Chad Husby, Ph.D.

Chief Explorer, Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden

email: [chusby@fairchildgarden.org](mailto:chusby@fairchildgarden.org)

phone: 305-667-1651 ext. 3518

cell: 321-474-2753



