



## The City of Coral Gables

*Historical Resources Department*

**COA (SP) 2009-11  
JULY 16, 2009**

**STAFF REPORT  
SPECIAL CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS  
FOR THE DEMOLITION OF  
THE PROPERTY AT  
126 OAK AVENUE  
A CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE WITHIN  
THE "MACFARLANE HOMESTEAD SUBDIVISION HISTORIC DISTRICT"**

**Proposal:** The applicant is requesting approval for the demolition of the existing structure.

**Architect:** None

**Owner:** Samuel Demeritte (deceased) and Grace McCraney and Hilda Dorsey  
2350 NW 95 Street, Miami, Florida 33147-2416

**Legal Description:** Lot 18, Block 3-A, MacFarlane Homestead, as recorded in Plat Book 5, at Page 81, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida

**Site Characteristics:** This property is located on an interior lot. The main elevation of the building faces north onto Oak Avenue. Dimensions of the site are approximately 50 feet wide by 90 feet deep.

**Folio Number:** 03-4120-006-1500

### **BACKGROUND/EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The residence at 126 Oak Avenue was built circa 1929. It is listed as a contributing structure within the MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision Historic District – a locally and nationally designated Historic District. The residence is an example of the vernacular style of architecture prevalent in the district.

The original boundary line of the historic district was drawn at the rear property line on those structures which front onto Frow Avenue. Immediately behind them are structures which face onto Oak Avenue. Because the majority of these properties were non-contributing, they were excluded from the boundaries of the historic district. In August of 1998, the owners brought to the Historic Department's attention that the property at 126 Oak Avenue was not included and requested that an appraisal be made to determine whether it could be included within the district's boundary. On September 17, 1998 the district was amended (LHD 98-09) to include 126 Oak Avenue as a contributing structure.

In 1998, funds were set aside in the County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program for the use by the residents of MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision Historic District as a rehabilitation loan program. The property at 126 Oak Avenue was one of seven residences identified in the District in need of the CDBG assistance. Only a handful of properties were fully restored and the funding for this program no longer exists.

This property has been cited by the City of Coral Gables Code Enforcement "minimum housing" due to the deterioration of the structure. The case (#1207019) is still pending.

### **PROPOSAL**

The applicant is requesting approval for the demolition of the existing structure.

### **SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION**

The following Standards have application in this matter:

2. *The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*
5. *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*
6. *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*

### **STAFF OBSERVATIONS**

Section 3-1107 (D) of the Coral Gables Zoning Code entitled "Demolition," enumerates certain factors that should be taken into consideration by the Historic Preservation Board when a request for demolition of a historically designated property has been made. That portion of the Code is as follows:

D. In addition to all other provisions of this Division, the Board shall consider the following criteria in evaluating applications for a Special Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition of designated properties:

1. The degree to which the building, structure, improvement or site contributes to the historic and/or architectural significance of the historic site or district;
2. Whether the building, structure, improvement or site is one of the last remaining examples of its kind in the neighborhood, the county or the region;
3. Whether the loss of the building, structure, improvement or site would adversely affect the historic and/or architectural integrity of the historic site or district;
4. Whether the retention of the building, structure, improvement or site would promote the general welfare of the City by providing an opportunity for study of local history, architecture, and design or by developing an understanding of the importance and value of a particular culture and heritage;
5. Whether architectural plans have been presented to the Board for the reuse of the property if the proposed demolition were to be carried out, and the appropriateness of said plans to the character of the historic site or district, if applicable; and demonstration as well as the posting of a bond requirement that there are sufficient funds in place to carry out such plans;
6. Whether the building, structure, improvement or site poses an imminent threat to the public health or safety;
7. Whether the applicant has demonstrated that retention of the building, structure, improvement or site would create an unreasonable or undue economic hardship as described in Section 3-1115; and
8. Whether there is a compelling public interest requiring the demolition.

#### **BOARD OF ARCHITECTS**

This application was not reviewed by the Board of Architects.

#### **STAFF CONCLUSION**

The application presented requests design approval for the demolition of the property at 126 Oak Avenue. While Historical Resources staff is sympathetic to the plight of the homeowner and the condition of the current condition of the property, staff's opinion is that the granting of this request would continue to set a negative precedent for this district.

In reviewing the evaluation criteria set forth in Section 3-1107 (D) of the Coral Gables Zoning Code (and listed above), Historical Resources Staff finds the following:

1. The degree to which the building, structure, improvement or site contributes to the historic and/or architectural significance of the historic site or district;

This property is a contributing structure within a historic district listed on both the Coral Gables and National Registers of Historic Places. Its loss would be detrimental to the historic district.

2. Whether the building, structure, improvement or site is one of the last remaining examples of its kind in the neighborhood, the county or the region;

While not the last remaining example of its kind, this historic district is absolutely finite in its contributing resources. This district is the site of the only examples of this type of wood frame vernacular architecture found in the City.

3. Whether the loss of the building, structure, improvement or site would adversely affect the historic and/or architectural integrity of the historic site or district;

The loss of this property would be detrimental to the historic district and adversely affect the integrity of the district.

4. Whether the retention of the building, structure, improvement or site would promote the general welfare of the City by providing an opportunity for study of local history, architecture, and design or by developing an understanding of the importance and value of a particular culture and heritage;

If this property could be successfully restored and/or rehabilitated, the property would promote the general welfare of the City, this neighborhood and historic district.

5. Whether architectural plans have been presented to the Board for the reuse of the property if the proposed demolition were to be carried out, and the appropriateness of said plans to the character of the historic site or district, if applicable; and demonstration as well as the posting of a bond requirement that there are sufficient funds in place to carry out such plans;

No plans for the property have been presented to Staff for evaluation.

6. Whether the building, structure, improvement or site poses an imminent threat to the public health or safety;

Undetermined at this time.

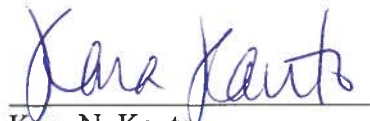
7. Whether the applicant has demonstrated that retention of the building, structure, improvement or site would create an unreasonable or undue economic hardship as described in Section 3-1115; and  
Undue economic hardship information has not been provided for evaluation.
8. Whether there is a compelling public interest requiring the demolition.  
This is unknown at the time of this report.

Therefore, staff recommends the following:

A motion to **DENY** design approval for demolition of the property at 126 Oak Avenue, a contributing structure within the "MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision Historic District" and **DENY** the issuance of a Special Certificate of Appropriateness

However, in the instance that the Historic Preservation Board feels that the property is too far deteriorated to be successfully restored, the Coral Gables Zoning Code allows for certain conditions that may be placed on the demolition should it be approved. Those conditions and requirements are set forth in Section 3-1107 of the Code, a copy of which is attached to this report.

Respectfully submitted,



Kara N. Kautz

Historic Preservation Officer