

**COA (SP) 2004-04
APRIL 15, 2004
JUNE 17, 2004**

**STAFF REPORT
SPECIAL CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
FOR AN ADDITION/ALTERATION TO
THE PROPERTY AT
308 ROMANO AVENUE
A LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK**

Proposal: The applicant requests design approval for the construction of an addition, alteration of the existing residence and the installation of a swimming pool. The applicant is also requesting variances for setbacks.

Architect: Alfredo Pou

Owner: Ileana Varela and Alberto Rodriguez

Legal Description: Lots 18, 19, 20, and 21, Block 8, Coral Gables Coconut Grove Section Part One

Site Characteristics: Two structures are located on the property-a one-story residence, located near the middle of the site and a two-story auxiliary building, located in the southwestern most corner of the property. The primary elevations of the structures face north onto Romano Avenue. Dimensions of the site are approximately 100 feet wide by 100 feet deep.

Zoning Classification: HLR-5

Date Designated: June 19, 2003

BACKGROUND/EXISTING CONDITIONS

Constructed between 1925 and 1926 at the height development for the City the residence at 308 Romano is a good example of the type of Mediterranean Revival style architecture that was being designed. This residence was designed by H. George Fink, one of the key designers in the original development team.

On April 15, 2004, the Historic Preservation Board reviewed this application for design approval and the issuance of a Special Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of a two-story addition, minor alterations and the installation of a pool. Additionally the applicants requested a variance from the Zoning Code for setbacks. The Board deferred the application, requesting a redesign of the addition.

PROPOSAL

The applicant is requesting design approval for the construction of a two-story addition, minor alterations to the existing residence and the installation of a new pool. Variances for setbacks are also requested.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

The following Standards have application in this matter:

9. *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*
10. *New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

STAFF OBSERVATIONS

The main structure on the historic property is composed of two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a kitchen, living room, dining room, and den. The addition will add a new family room, supporting spaces and a new master bedroom suite within a two-story structure. Because of the placement of the existing structures on the property, the proposal attempts to maintain the spatial relationship of the main house to the auxiliary structure by focusing on the northeast corner of the residence. This configuration also continues to provide vehicular access to the auxiliary structure (the garage).

The historic residence is an example of the Mediterranean Revival styled architecture that was being constructed throughout the City of Coral Gables. This home utilizes its detailing and massing in order to convey the visual typology. Subtle and simplistic applications of detailing help to characterize the building. The new addition extrapolates from the historic fabric through its use of barrel tile, stucco, parapet roof and casement windows.

The two story addition will be constructed along the eastern wall of the existing residence. The northern bedroom window will be enclosed and the southern window within the room will be converted into a doorway for an under-the-stair closet. A new opening will be created in the location where the bedroom's closet is currently, providing access to the new family room and support spaces. Within the family room is a stair that leads to the second floor master bedroom suite. The family room also provides access to the new swimming pool and deck, which is located to the east of the existing house and south of the new addition.

Two areas will be altered to resemble the original drawings found on microfilm. Wrought iron railings will be installed on the front porch, similar to the ones found in the elevations and photograph and a window opening, which was altered, will be reconfigured to reflect in concept those that had been removed.

VARIANCES

The following variances are requested from the following sections of the Coral Gables "Zoning Code":

Zoning Code Section 3-1(f) 2. Side Setbacks

Inside lots in R-Use districts shall have minimum side setbacks which total twenty (20%) percent of the width of the lot measured across the front setback line up to a maximum of twenty (20) feet. A minimum side setback of fifteen (15) feet shall be required and maintained from any side line of a building site that abuts upon a street, provided, however that buildings on corner lots which have one side abutting upon a street on which other lots in the same block face, shall setback a minimum distance from such side street. In no case shall a side shall a side setback be less than five (5) feet. Building sites, where a reduction in the minimum square foot floor area of the building was permitted as set forth in Section 3-1(i), shall be required to maintain a minimum side setback of ten (10) feet on each side.

This design proposes a side setback of approximately 7.0 feet from the east, while maintaining the existing setback on the west of 5.45 feet. The total side setback is therefore approximately 12.45 feet.

Zoning Code Section 5-12. Private swimming pool

A private swimming pool shall be permitted as an auxiliary-use to any R, D, A, C or S-Use subject to the following conditions and restrictions:

(d) Setback:

2. Minimum side setback. Fifteen (15) feet on each side, except on certain properties provided for under Article 4 Site Specific Regulations. [See Section 4-25(e) and Section 4-26(g)].

The proposed swimming pool is located approximately 10.2 feet from the east property line.

As specified in Section 21-22 Variances for historic landmarks, the Historic Preservation Board shall follow the same rules, procedures and evaluation criteria as the Board of Adjustments that are cited under Sections 24-6 through 24-7. The following criteria must be utilized for the evaluation of the variance request:

- (a) That special conditions and circumstances exist which are peculiar to the land, structure or building involved and which are not applicable to other lands, structures or buildings in the same zoning district.
- (b) That special conditions and circumstances do not result from the actions of the applicant.
- (c) That granting the variance requested will not confer on the applicant any special privilege that is denied by this Ordinance to other lands, buildings or structures in the same zoning district.
- (d) That literal interpretation of the provisions of the Zoning Code would deprive the applicant of rights commonly enjoyed by other properties in the same zoning district under the terms of the Zoning Code and would work unnecessary and undue hardship on the applicant (see also definition of necessary hardship).
- (e) That the variance granted is the minimal variance that will make possible the reasonable use of the land, building or structure.

- (f) That granting the variance will not change the use to one that is different from other land in the same district.
- (g) That the granting of the variance will be in harmony with the general intent and purpose of the Zoning Code, and that such variance will not be injurious to the area involved or otherwise detrimental to the public welfare.

The existing proximity of the two-story auxiliary structure to the side and rear property lines to the southwest of the site create a situation that does not allow by code the construction of the proposed addition. Because the property has a frontage of 100 feet, it is required by the Zoning Code to have a combined total of 20 feet in setbacks from the side property lines, with no one side setback having less than 5 feet of setbacks. The existing auxiliary structure is set approximately 5.45 feet away from the west property line. With a side setback of approximately 7.0 feet, the new addition would be in compliance with the Zoning Code requirements for side setbacks if the historic auxiliary structure were no longer there. In the effort to retain historic fabric and their original use, the applicant is requesting a variance to construct the addition approximately 7.0 feet from the east property line versus the required 14.55 feet, which together with the setback of approximately 5.45 feet on the west would equal 20.0 feet as required by the Zoning Code.

Additionally, the proposed swimming pool is located within the east side yard of the property within the "L" created by the new addition and the existing structure. The requirements for setbacks are 15 feet from any side and 5 feet from the rear. The pool is approximately 10.20 feet from the east and will have a rear setback of approximately 10 feet. The pool is roughly dimensioned at 25 feet long by 15 feet wide, tapering down to about 13 feet in width, minimizing the visual impact.

BOARD OF ARCHITECTS

This submittal was reviewed by the City of Coral Gables Board of Architects on May 6, 2004. The Board has approved without comments the new proposal.

STAFF CONCLUSION

The application presented requests design approval for the construction of a two-story addition to the northeast side of the property, alterations to the existing residence, and the installation of a swimming pool and decking.

Although the new addition is two-stories tall, the massing and proportioning do not overwhelm the existing architecture. While the detailing of the exterior of the addition has been kept to a minimum, the simple sills that are located beneath several of the new windows are not consistent with each other and create a disharmony in the elevation. The application of the sills should be similar wherever they are introduced in the design.

The overall design of the addition is in keeping with the architecture and does not detract from the historic nature of the existing structures.

Variances from Section 3-1(f) 2 and Section 5-12 of the Coral Gables Zoning Code have been requested. Because of the proximity of the existing structures on the property in relation to the side setbacks, they are the minimal variances that will make possible the reasonable use of the land while retaining the historic fabric of the structures. Granting the variance will not be detrimental to the historic nature of the residence.

Staff recommends the following:

A motion to grant design approval for the construction of the addition incorporating staff's comments in regards to the window sills, the alterations, and the installation of a swimming pool on the property at 308 Romano Avenue, a local historic landmark and APPROVE the issuance of a Special Certificate of Appropriateness

And

A motion to grant variances from Section 3-1(f) 2 and Section 5-12 of the Coral Gables Zoning Code. The variances will allow

- (a) the property to have a total side setback of approximately 12.45 feet versus the property having a total side setback of 20 feet as required by section 3-1(f)2 of the Coral Gables Zoning Code.
- (b) the proposed swimming pool to have a side setback of approximately 10.2 feet versus the swimming pool having a side setback of 15 feet as required by Section 5-12 of the Coral Gables the Zoning Code.

Respectfully submitted,

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Historical Resources Director

Written by: Simone C. Chin