



COA (SP) 2025-011
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Historical Resources &
Cultural Arts

2327 SALZEDO STREET
CORAL GABLES
FLORIDA 33134

☎ 305-460-5093
✉ hist@coralgables.com

**STAFF REPORT
SPECIAL CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
FOR THE PROPERTY AT
126 OAK AVENUE
A VACANT PARCEL WITHIN THE
“MACFARLANE HOMESTEAD SUBDIVISION HISTORIC DISTRICT”**

Proposal: The application requests design approval for infill construction of a new single-family residence and sitework.

Architect: JAS Group (James Smith)

Owner: Tarell Alvin McCraney

Folio Number: 03-4120-006-1500

Legal Description: Lot 8, Block 3-A, MacFarlane Homestead, according to the Plat thereof, 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 on the south side of Oak Avenue between US1 and Brooker Street. The primary façade faces north onto Oak Avenue. Site dimensions are approximately 50 feet wide by 90 feet deep.

BACKGROUND/EXISTING CONDITIONS

In 1892, Flora McFarlane purchased 160 acres of land in what is today the City of Coral Gables and Coconut Grove (City of Miami). During the next three decades, McFarlane sold off parts of this 160-acre plot to various owners. In 1925, the Coral Gables Securities Corporation (comprised of George Merrick, Telfair Knight, Charles F. Baldwin and Clifton D. Benson) purchased 19.61 acres of land which had been part of McFarlane’s original 160-acre land holding.

This 19.61-acre area was then annexed to Coral Gables as “MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision.” (Note: Although the correct spelling of Flora McFarlane does not include an “a,” records from the 1920s consistently use the spelling MacFarlane to describe the subdivision and is therefore used in this report.)

The boundaries which define the district include some vacant parcels which, when built upon, come under the jurisdiction of the Historic Preservation Board. The “Coral Gables Zoning Code” defines Historic Landmark District as follows:

...a geographically defined area possessing a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of landmarks, improvements, or landscape features united by historic events or aesthetically by plan or physical development, and which area has been designated as an Historic Landmark pursuant to procedures described in Article 3, Division 11, of these regulations; said district may have within its boundaries non-contributing buildings or other structures that, while not of such historic and/or architectural significance to be designated as landmarks, nevertheless contribute to the overall visual character of the district.

This is a non-contributing property within the historic district. The Zoning Code defines a non-contributing property as follows:

...a building or property which does not add to a historic district's sense of time and place and historical development; or one where the location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and association have been so altered or have so deteriorated that the overall integrity of the building has been irretrievably lost. Unless otherwise specified, exterior alterations, additions, demolitions, etc. to non-contributing structures or properties with historic landmark districts shall be reviewed and approved by the Historic Preservation Board and/or Historical Resources Department.

The MacFarlane Homestead Historic District was added to the Local Register in 1989 and the National Register in 1994.

In 2003 the boundaries of the MacFarlane Homestead Historic District were expanded and extended to include not only many residential structures and vacant parcels that, although they were non-contributing, would impact the historic integrity of the district if altered, but also the commercial properties on Grand Avenue.

PROPOSAL

The applicant is requesting design approval for the construction of a new two-story approximately 2,070 SF residence and sitework on a vacant parcel within the historic district.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

ARCHITECTURAL TYPES

The houses within the MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision were in most cases built by their owners without the assistance of an architect. They are considered a “vernacular” architectural type, meaning that they do not reflect the influence of any particular architectural style but rather reflect local building trends. The two most prevalent types of residential architecture depicted in the district are frame or concrete block bungalow and the “shotgun” house.

Bungalow Style

The bungalow type of residence features a steeply pitched front gabled roof with exposed rafters, a full-width front porch with a gable or hip roof and sash windows. In some of the bungalows in the MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision the porches have been enclosed to create more living space, and sash windows have been replaced with awning or jalousie windows.

Building permit records indicate that many of the bungalows in the MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision were constructed in the 1930s and some in the late 1920s.

“Shotgun” Style

The other common building type seen in the MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision, the “shotgun” house, is characterized by its steeply pitched front gable roof and full-width front porch which is also frequently a gable roof. The plan of the house is narrow and rectangular and only one room wide. Some of the “shotgun” houses in the MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision are a variation of the type and are two shotguns joined together to form a duplex.

The origin of this residential type has been traced to the West Indies and Africa and is a common building type in Haiti and the Bahama Islands. In the southeastern United States, the “shotgun” was popular from ca. 1880 to ca. 1930, and many were built by black freedmen who migrated to southern urban centers following the Civil War. The origin of the term “shotgun” is not clear, although it most likely refers to the long, narrow shape of the house. Popularly, reference is made to the fact that one could stand at the door, fire a shot gun, and the bullet would pass through to the rear with no obstructions.

Building permits indicate that many of the shotgun houses in the MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision were constructed in the 1930s and 1940s.

The Review Guide summarizes the basic characteristics of the district as follows:

A. Construction Materials

Both the bungalow and “shotgun” houses in the MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision share common construction characteristics not seen in other structures in Coral Gables, such as concrete pier foundations and asbestos shingle or metal roofs. Alterations present in these housing types include enclosed porches, awning windows, and occasional additions which utilize a building material different from that of the original structure (e.g. concrete block addition to a wood frame building).

B. Roof Slopes / Roofing Materials

The roof slopes are pitched hip or gable roofs covered with asbestos shingles or metal roofs.

C. Height / Stories

The contributing structures in the MacFarlane Homestead subdivision are primarily one story in height.

D. Building Plan Shape:

The majority of the structures within the MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision are rectangular in plan.

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

This parcel was not included within the boundaries of the “MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision Historic District” when it was established in 1989. In 1998, the owners of the property (Hilda Dorsey-Demeritte and Grace McCraney) requested that the property be considered for inclusion in the district. In September 1998, the district boundaries were amended to include the structure at 126 Oak Avenue as a Contributing Resource (LHD 98-09). At the time of designation, a one-story wood frame bungalow constructed ca. 1929 was located on the property.



Figure 1: Photo 1998



Figure 2: Photo November 2, 2003



Figure 3: Photo August 13, 2009

In 2009, the Historic Preservation Board approved a request to demolish the structure due to its deteriorated state and photographic evidence presented that illustrated its condition. The structure was demolished shortly thereafter, and the parcel has remained vacant.

For context, various new two-story residences have been approved by the Historic Preservation Board since the designation of the historic district (106 Florida Avenue - Case File COA (SP) 2011-009, 112 Florida Avenue - Case File COA (SP) 2019-010, 126 Frow Avenue – Case File COA (SP) 2022-036)

The proposed residence is C-shaped in plan around an open courtyard and consists of 2,070 square feet of floor area (1,035 SF on each floor). The first floor consists of a shallow 8'-0" deep covered entry porch, foyer/sitting area/living room, powder room, laundry and storage rooms, and a kitchen with a dining nook. To the east of the residence is a 10'-0" x 22'-2" one-story shed-roofed carport. The second floor consists of three bedrooms and two bathrooms. A small balcony at the southwest corner of the residence is accessible from the master bedroom.

The structure has been designed with many of the characteristics present in the existing historic vernacular homes in the district including a front porch with shed roof supported by columns, a crawl-space, hipped v-crimp metal roof, single-hung windows with appropriate trim pieces, Hardie Plank siding to mimic wood siding, brackets, and rafter tails.

Site work is minimal and includes a "random cut keystone slab" walkway, pervious shell driveway with concrete approach, and rear patio with gridded pavers.

VARIANCES

No variances have been requested with this application.

BOARD OF ARCHITECTS

The proposal was reviewed and approved by the Board of Architects on January 30, 2025, with the following comments, which were incorporated in the Historic Preservation Board submittal:

- 1) ADDITIONAL WINDOW HEIGHT AT GROUND FLOOR.
- 2) ADJUST CARPORT OVERHANG TO MATCH FRONT PORCH.
- 3) ADD WING/RETURN ON REAR PORCH TO MATCH SIDE ELEVATION.
- 4) BOA APPROVES HARDIE BOYS SIDING.

STAFF CONCLUSION

The application presented requests design approval for the construction of a new residence and sitework on the property at 126 Oak Avenue.

The proposed new residence does not detract from the overall integrity of the historic district. Staff requests that the following conditions be incorporated into the approval of the proposed application:

1. The proposed metal roof is not to be painted.
2. Window glass is to be clear/no tint/no reflectivity/no low-e.
3. Window muntins are to be high-profile. Samples to be provided.
4. Indicate paint colors for all materials in the permit set or obtain a color palette review as a separate permit.
5. Provide a sample of the proposed plank siding profile for approval.

Therefore, Historical Resources Department Staff recommends the following:

A motion to **APPROVE WITH THE CONDITIONS NOTED ABOVE** the design proposal for infill construction of a new single-family residence and sitework on the property located at **126 Oak Avenue**, a vacant parcel within the "MacFarlane Homestead Historic District," legally described as Lot 8, Block 3-A, MacFarlane Homestead, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 5, at Page 81, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida and **APPROVE** the issuance of a Special Certificate of Appropriateness with the conditions noted above.

Respectfully submitted,



Kara Kautz

Acting Historic Preservation Officer