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Historical Resources &
Cultural Arts

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**STAFF REPORT
SPECIAL CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
FOR THE PROPERTY AT
1409 ALHAMBRA CIRCLE
A CONTRIBUTING RESOURCE WITHIN
THE ALHAMBRA CIRCLE HISTORIC DISTRICT**

- Proposal:** The application requests design approval for an addition to the residence and sitework. Variances have also been requested from Article 2, Section 2-101 (4) d and Article 3, Section 3-308 (D) 2 of the Coral Gables Zoning Code for the minimum rear setback for mechanical equipment and pool equipment.
- Architect:** Callum Gibb Architects, PA
- Owner:** Alex Cantos and Christina Gautier
- Legal Description:** Lot 6 and the North ½ of Lot 7, Block 16, Coral Gables Section "E," according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 8, at Page 13, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.
- Site Characteristics:** The property is located on interior lots on the north side of Alhambra Circle between Cadiz Avenue and Ferdinand Street. It is just to the northeast of the Alhambra Water Tower. The primary façade faces southeast onto Alhambra Circle. The lot size is 79.6' x 119'.

BACKGROUND/EXISTING CONDITIONS

The "Alhambra Circle Historic District" comprises one- and two-story residential properties built between the 1920s and the 1950s and landscape features that abut Alhambra Circle. Also included within the district are the Alhambra Water Tower, Granada Plaza, and Alcazar Plaza. The district was designated in January 2008.

The district is defined by the wide median that runs through it. This landscape feature exists nowhere else in the City and helps to create the unique feel of this major boulevard. Alhambra Circle is the City's longest roadway running from Douglas Road to Campo Sano near the University of Miami campus to the south. This roadway, 120 feet wide with a lushly planted generous swale, was purposefully planned and integral to George Merrick's plan for the City of Coral Gables. The experience of this important thoroughfare is as dependent on the street's wide median as it is on the architecture of the homes that surround it.

The property located at 1409 Alhambra Circle is a Contributing Resource within the "Alhambra Circle Historic District." The home was constructed in 1930 and designed by architect Anthony Zink (Permit #4315). There have been no additions or significant alterations to the property since its construction.



Figure 1: ca. 1940s photo



Figure 2: February 2024 photo

PROPOSAL

The application requests design approval for a two-story addition to the rear of the residence and sitework. Three variances have also been requested from Article 2, Section 2-101 (4) d and Article 3, Section 3-308 (D) 2 of the Coral Gables Zoning Code for the minimum rear setback for mechanical equipment (A/C) and pool equipment.

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.*
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 scope of work contained in this application consists of an addition spanning the rear of the residence that is not visible from Alhambra Circle, the installation of a new pool and pool deck, and the relocation and addition of equipment on the property. The addition comprises a two-story projection at the northwest corner of the residence that mirrors an existing original one-story projection at the northeast corner of the residence. A second floor is proposed atop the existing one-story projection, creating a symmetrical façade at the rear. A new covered terrace spans between the two projecting corners. At the second-floor open terrace, a barrel tile-clad shed roof is proposed to span the two projecting bays.

North (Rear) Elevation – Sheet A3.2:

At the rear elevation, the proposed addition spans across the existing façade to create a symmetrical arrangement of two projecting bays flanking a covered terrace with open deck above. On the east side of the facade, a second story is proposed atop the existing one-story projecting bay. At the northwest corner, the east bay is replicated, matching features found on the existing residence such as the mouldings. Windows are to match the existing (installed in 2019). The stucco texture of the additions is noted to be smooth, and a smooth stucco frieze is introduced at the roof eave to differentiate the additions from the original. Spanning between the two projecting bays is a covered terrace with groups of three round, smooth precast columns at the northwest and northeast corners. Above the covered terrace is an open roof deck. The low wall surrounding the deck integrates with the existing moulding on the home. A barrel tile-clad shed roof structure is proposed for the roof deck that attaches to the existing wall of the house. Projecting approximately three or four feet, it can be seen in section on Sheet A3.4.

Side Elevations: East – Sheet A3.3 & West – Sheet A3.4:

The east and west facades of the additions are identical except that the existing first floor door on the east façade is replaced with a pair of casement windows on the west façade. Both second floor facades are void of fenestration. The truncated roof condition matches an existing original condition found on the west façade. A scoreline in the stucco demarcates the new from the old.

Sitework – Sheet A1.1

Site work proposed with this application includes the installation of a swimming pool and pool deck, and the addition of mechanical equipment for the auxiliary structure, the addition of pool equipment, and the relocation of mechanical equipment for the main house. To accommodate the new swimming pool, an existing fountain feature will be removed (see Figure 3 below).



Figure 3: Rear Façade and yard (courtesy of architect)

The location of the new A/C unit for the auxiliary structure is proposed to be behind (to the north) of the exterior stairs of the structure, approximately 6'-6" from the rear property line. The location of the new pool equipment is proposed to be at the rear of the auxiliary structure, approximately 4'-2" from the rear property line. The location of the two relocated A/C units for the main house (also seen in Figure 3) are proposed to be located at the rear of the auxiliary structure, approximately 2'-6" from the rear property line. The mechanical equipment encroaches into the required 10'-0" rear setback and the pool equipment encroaches into the required 5'-0" rear setback. Please note that a built-in element is shown on the site plan to the west of the exterior stairs of the auxiliary building, but no information or elevations have been provided for this feature and is, therefore, not part of this application.

VARIANCES

Variances have also been requested from Article 2, Section 2-101 (4) d and Article 3, Section 3-308 (D) 2 of the Coral Gables Zoning Code for the minimum rear setback for mechanical equipment and pool equipment. The following variances are requested in conjunction with this proposal:

1. *Grant a variance to allow the proposed mechanical equipment for the auxiliary structure to have a rear setback of approximately six feet, six inches (6'-6") vs. The minimum rear setback shall be 10 (10) feet as required by Article 2, Section 2-101 D (4) c of the Coral Gables Zoning Code.*

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The Coral Gables Zoning Code requires that all properties maintain a 10'-0" minimum rear setback. The Code also specifies that "If compatible with the neighborhood character, the Board of Adjustment or the Historic Preservation Board, as applicable, may allow a rear setback of five (5) feet for one-story structures." The proposed mechanical equipment is no closer to the rear setback than the auxiliary structure and does not make an existing non-conforming setback any worse. The Historical Resources staff finds that the following criteria, necessary for authorization of the variance, apply:

Criteria	Yes/No
1) 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.	Yes
2) That the special conditions and circumstances do not result from the actions of the applicant.	Yes
3) 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.	Yes
4) 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.	Yes
5) That the variance granted is the minimum variance that will make possible the reasonable use of the land, building or structure.	Yes
6) That granting the variance will not change the use to one that is different from other land in the same district.	Yes
7) 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.	Yes
8) That the granting of the variance is appropriate for the continued preservation of an historic landmark or historic landmark district.	Yes

2. *Grant a variance to allow the relocated mechanical equipment to have a rear setback of approximately two feet, six inches (2'-6") vs. The minimum rear setback shall be 10 (10) feet as required by Article 2, Section 2-101 D (4) c of the Coral Gables Zoning Code.*
3. *Grant a variance to allow the proposed pool equipment to have a rear setback of approximately four feet, two inches (4'-2") vs. The minimum rear setback shall be five (5) feet as required by Article 3, Section 3-308 (D) 2 of the Coral Gables Zoning Code.*

The Coral Gables Zoning Code requires that all properties maintain a 10'-0" minimum rear setback. The Code also specifies that "If compatible with the neighborhood character, the Board of Adjustment or the Historic Preservation Board, as applicable, may allow a rear setback of five (5) feet for one-story structures." Just recently, the Zoning Code was amended to allow a 5'-0" rear setback for pool equipment. The existing two-story auxiliary structure is approximately 6'-0" from the rear property line. The installation of pool equipment and the relocation of the two

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existing A/C units to the rear of this structure increases the existing non-conformity on the property. The Historical Resources staff finds that the following criteria, necessary for authorization of the variance, apply:

Criteria	Yes/No
1) 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.	No
2) That the special conditions and circumstances do not result from the actions of the applicant.	No
3) 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.	No
4) 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.	No
5) That the variance granted is the minimum variance that will make possible the reasonable use of the land, building or structure.	No
6) That granting the variance will not change the use to one that is different from other land in the same district.	Yes
7) 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.	No
8) That the granting of the variance is appropriate for the continued preservation of an historic landmark or historic landmark district.	Yes

BOARD OF ARCHITECTS

The proposal was reviewed and approved by the Board of Architects on December 14, 2023.

STAFF CONCLUSION

The application requests design approval for an addition to the residence and sitework. Variances have also been requested from Article 2, Section 2-101 (4) d and Article 3, Section 3-308 (D) 2 of the Coral Gables Zoning Code for the minimum rear setback for mechanical equipment and pool equipment. Staff supports the addition to the rear of the property with the exception of the added shed roof element. If the doors that open onto the second-floor roof deck need protection, this could be solved with awnings, not with a permanent structure and adding a conjectural feature.

Staff supports the variance pertaining to the mechanical equipment for the reasons elaborated above. Staff does not support the placement of the equipment behind the auxiliary structure. The introduction of equipment in that area increases an existing rear setback non-conformity and places the equipment very close to the rear property line and the abutting neighbor's living space. Staff requested that the applicant consider placing the equipment in another location – either within the yard or to the west of the existing house (the residence on the abutting property is set far to the west of the lot). A variance might still be required for alternate locations, but options are available.

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Staff requests that the following condition be incorporated into any motion for approval:

1. Remove the shed roof at the north façade from the scope of work.
2. Window/door muntins are to be high-profile / dimensional.
3. Window/door glass to be clear/non-reflective/non-tint.
4. Roof tile is to be true two-piece barrel tile.
5. The existing window and door openings on the north façade are not to be widened when they become interior openings.
6. Material to be specified for the new pool deck.
7. A separate Standard Certificate of Appropriateness may be required for the swimming pool and deck if it is under a separate permit.
8. A separate Standard Certificate of Appropriateness may be required for the site feature to the west of the exterior stairs to the auxiliary structure.

Therefore, Historical Resources Department Staff recommends the following:

A motion to **APPROVE WITH THE CONDITION NOTED ABOVE** the design proposal for an addition to the residence and sitework on the property located at **1409 Alhambra Circle**, a contributing resource within both the "Alhambra Circle Historic District," legally described as Lot 6 and the North ½ of Lot 7, Block 16, Coral Gables Section "E," according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 8, at Page 13, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida, and **APPROVE** the issuance of a Special Certificate of Appropriateness with the condition noted above.

AND

A motion to **APPROVE** a variance to allow the proposed mechanical equipment for the auxiliary structure to have a rear setback of approximately six feet, six inches (6'-6") vs. The minimum rear setback shall be 10 (10) feet as required by Article 2, Section 2-101 D (4) c of the Coral Gables Zoning Code.

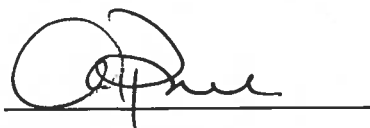
AND

A motion to **DENY** a variance to allow the relocated mechanical equipment to have a rear setback of approximately two feet, six inches (2'-6") vs. The minimum rear setback shall be 10 (10) feet as required by Article 2, Section 2-101 D (4) c of the Coral Gables Zoning Code.

AND

A motion to **DENY** a variance to allow the proposed pool equipment to have a rear setback of approximately four feet, two inches (4'-2") vs. The minimum rear setback shall be five (5) feet as required by Article 3, Section 3-308 (D) 2 of the Coral Gables Zoning Code.

Respectfully submitted,



Anna C. Pernas
Historic Preservation Officer