

January 9, 2025

1414 Galiano Street Summary of Expert Testimony for Appeal Hearing

RJHA and Willy Bermello reviewed the transcript of the October 16, 2024, Historic Preservation Board Meeting. They concluded that the Board's vote to approve the designation did not comply with the essential requirements of the applicable law and was not supported by competent substantial evidence.

According to Section 8-103 of the Coral Gables Zoning Code, properties are eligible for historic landmark designation if they possess significant integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, or association, and must reflect historical, cultural, archaeological, aesthetic, or architectural value. The necessary level of significance was not established during the hearing.

To meet this requirement, the property must embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural period and exemplify a historic period. However, the architectural features of 1414 Galiano are neither exemplary nor particularly distinctive within the broader landscape of George Merrick's Coral Gables. The alterations made over time have further diluted its design integrity.

The building at 1414 Galiano does not significantly exemplify a defining trend in the city's history to warrant landmark status. Larger architectural trends of the era, such as the global influence of the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM), were shaping architectural design worldwide, and the property does not meaningfully represent these shifts.

During the Depression era (1929-1939), government-funded projects in Coral Gables, including the Police and Fire Station (1939) and Coral Gables Women's Club (1937), maintained harmony with the city's architectural standards. These Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects reflect the modern architectural influences that arose from shifting attitudes toward design. Small-scale buildings such as the homes at 1725 Country Club Prado and 633 and 728 Alhambra Circle demonstrate these same trends on a smaller scale. However, 1414 Galiano is by no means a notable example from this period.

When comparing 1414 Galiano to similar properties, it becomes clear it does not rise to the level of significance necessary for a historic landmark designation.

It is also important to consider how 1414 Galiano compares to other notable works by the same architectural firm, such as:

- Douglas Entrances
- The Colonnade
- The Deering Estate
- The Dyer Federal Courthouse
- Coral Gables City Hall
- 1101 North Greenway Drive

Preserving 1414 Galiano adds little value to the overall historic fabric of Coral Gables, as it does not truly represent this period in the history of Coral Gables.

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Our detailed analysis concludes that 1414 Galiano Street does not meet the rigorous criteria for local historic landmark designation. Numerous unsympathetic alterations have compromised its design integrity, and it lacks the architectural or historical significance to warrant landmark status. A copy of the presentation made to the historic preservation board is enclosed. We may reference some of these images during our testimony before the City Commission.