



TDR 2022-008
SENDING SITE
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Historical Resources &
Cultural Arts

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STAFF REPORT

CERTIFICATE OF TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS FROM THE PROPERTY AT 2506 PONCE DE LEON BOULEVARD “THE H. GEORGE FINK OFFICE AND STUDIO” A LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

SENDING SITE

<u>Proposal:</u>	The application requests approval of the maintenance/preservation plan.
<u>Owner:</u>	City of Coral Gables
<u>Legal Description:</u>	Lots 22 & 23, Block 7, Coral Gables Crafts Section, as recorded in Plat Book 10, at Page 40 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.
<u>Date of Construction:</u>	1925
<u>Date of Designation:</u>	July 24, 1984
<u>Siting:</u>	The subject property is located on interior lots on the west side of Ponce de Leon Boulevard between Andalusia Avenue and Valencia Avenue. The lot dimension is 50 feet by 105 feet.
<u>Rights Available for Transfer:</u>	<u>Unused Development</u> 2,630 square feet
<u>Amount requested to be transferred:</u>	2,630 square feet (Note: in 1999, approval was given transfer 11,178 square feet. The above numbers reflect the remaining square feet available for transfer).

BACKGROUND / EXISTING CONDITIONS

The H. George Fink Office and Studio was designated as a Local Historic Landmark on July 24, 1984. On October 19, 2017, the Historic Preservation Board approved an amendment to the designation to include significant architectural features of the interior of the original structure.

The H. George Fink Office and Studio was built in 1925 at a cost of \$35,000. The property now houses the City of Coral Gables Economic Development Department

The most dominant feature in terms of massing is the centrally located two-story tower with low pyramidal roof. This tower, which houses the stairs leading to the second story of the building, is virtually unadorned except for a double-banded reed molding defining the entablature. Above this is a series of relief shields creating a frieze. Near the base of the tower on the front is a narrow rectangular window with a frame of geometrically designed masonry mullions set in front.

Projecting forward from about two-thirds of the face of the tower is a one-story portion of the building which features a gable roof with ridge running perpendicular to the street. Centrally located on the front wall of this portion of the building is a grouping of three elongated leaded glass windows. The windows are rectangular but set in front of them is an elaborate “silhouette” type of framing which gives the appearance of three highly detailed arched windows separated by slender columns. Directly above the window grouping and centrally located in the apex of the gable end is a round vent with quatrefoil insert frame.

Abutting the two-story tower on the north side and set back slightly from the front face of the tower is a highly ornamented wing two stories in height. The original main entrance to the building is located on the front of this wing. Featured is a four-foot-wide elaborate wood door flanked by high relief waffle patterned framing. Each “waffle” block has a bull’s eye element. Above the entranceway is another door which opens out onto a shallow balcony. The door is flanked by two narrow, decorated columns which rise to support a segmentally arched pediment. Overlooking the top edge of the pediment are several figure heads supported on stylized acanthus leaves. The central figure is that of a lion’s head while the remaining figure heads appear to be human. To either side of the small balcony, which features a delicate wrought iron balustrade, are relief shields identical to those at the top of the tower. On the front, northeast corner of this wing near the eave of the roof is a projecting gargoyle. The roof of this portion of the building features an overhanging eave with boxed cornice. The soffits of the eaves are coffered and supported by delicate scroll figured wrought iron brackets.

The primary interior spaces of the original H. George Fink Office and Studio building, as detailed on the 1925 building permit comprised of Fink’s private office at the southeastern portion of the building, a reception and secretary area at the northeast, and a large drafting room to the west. The small second story space in the tower was accessed only by a turned staircase in Fink’s private office.

The original footprint of the structure was roughly T-shaped with the private office and reception spaces forming the top of the “T” and the large drafting room forming the stem of the “T”. To the

north and south of the large drafting room were originally exterior garden spaces. Additions in 1938, 1951, and 1977 infilled these garden spaces. The building footprint is now rectangular.

Fink's Private Office space contains the most prolific interior architectural features. As described below, centered on each wall is a dramatic feature. Originally one entered the Private Office space at its northwest corner after processing through a double archway supported by ornate Florentine-inspired columns in the Reception space to a colorfully painted paneled door.

With the exception of Fink's Private Office, the ceiling heights of the interior spaces are in the vicinity of nine feet. The Reception and Secretary spaces have the lowest ceiling heights at 8'-8". As one originally processed through these two spaces prior to entering Fink's Private Office, these lower ceiling heights aided in enhancing the impact of his office.

Upon entry one steps onto a one-step landing which provides a 'platform' from which to view the room. The combination of the higher ceiling of 15' as well as the ornate ceiling beams arranged to give the impression of a coffered ceiling draws the viewer's eye upward and makes the room appear larger than its 25'-8" x 14'-10" size. The Spanish-styled wooden beams were painted with geometric colorful patterns and wood brackets shaped as grimacing human figures support the larger north-south beams.

Decorative beam ceiling assemblies are also found in the Reception and Secretary areas as well as the private second floor rooms. A decorative ceiling feature of particular note occurs on the beam running along south wall on the second story. This beam contains the letters C, G, and P. Each letter is within a circular golden divot which are arranged in a triangle.

Original ceramic tiles decorate the floors and the stairs of the Private Office, the southern second story room, as well as the Reception and Secretary spaces. The tile floor of the Private Office space is comprised of brick-sized terracotta-colored tiles in a basketweave pattern with colorful square corner tiles whose symbols represent various historic Spanish kingdoms. The original plans indicate that the drafting room floor was to be Steadman [sic Stedman] flooring. This was a rubber-based flooring tile patented in the mid-1920s.

Centered on the north wall of the office space is a cascading turned staircase with a round vaulted ceiling. The 1926 Miami Daily News and Metropolis article states that it is a "faithful copy of the stairway of El Greco at Toledo." The stairs are clad in colorful tile. Nearly each riser of the staircase has a different floral or geometric pattern, culminating with an inscription on the top which was the motto of the Nasrid Rulers who built the Alhambra, and is translated as "There is no victory except for God." [Note it appears to have been installed upside down] The staircase is accessed through an arched opening with delicately turned wrought iron handrails. On the north wall of the office three stepped arched openings springing from columns provide light to the upper portion of the staircase.

Other features that have the effect of miniaturizing the visitor and making the interior space of the Private Office appear larger are the oversized masonry mantle and the tripartite tracery window which are centered on the south and east walls respectively. The masonry mantle rises to a height of approximately seven feet. While the main body of the mantle appears classical in nature, the

strategically placed whimsical ornamentation elevates the visual interest of this feature. Highly stylized undulating Venetian-inspired composite columns with acanthus leaves and floral elements support the mantle shelf. Two pairs of grimacing creatures, similar to those on the ceiling brackets, support portions of the mantle. A centrally placed crest in the shape of a coat of arms is painted with a winged creature (e.g., Phoenix, eagle, griffin) as if rising from the flame below. The smooth surfaces of the mantle and the crisp detail of the ornamentation contrast harmoniously with the textured plastered walls.

Other significant interior architectural features include a pointed arch built-in niche with doors centered on the west wall of the original Private office space as well as a double round arched built-in shelf niche on the south wall of the landing space between the original Private Office, File Room and Toilet Room. In addition, a series of colorfully painted original doors, some with original hardware, are extant.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS

The City of Coral Gables Public Works Department has submitted a Maintenance/Preservation Plan which includes existing conditions, details of the recent restoration, and a maintenance schedule. The building is currently undergoing complete renovation at an estimated cost of approximately \$2.6 million, including the building's envelope, roof, electrical and HVAC systems, as well as the restoration of the building's prominent historical features. Most openings have been replaced with impact resistant doors and windows, except those deemed to be historically relevant which will be protected with either shutters or armor screens as appropriate.

The Maintenance/Preservation Plan includes procedures for the long-term maintenance of the site which include yearly building inspections, roof inspections twice a year, roof replacement, HVAC maintenance and replacement, and annual visits by Historical Resources and Cultural Arts Department Staff for inspection of historically significant features.

CALCULATION OF AVAILABLE TDRs

PROPERTY ADDRESS	2506 Ponce de Leon Boulevard
LOT SIZE	5,250 SF
PERMISSIBLE FAR	5,250 SF X 3.5 = 18,375 SF
EXISTING FAR OF BUILDING	4,567 SF
TOTAL AIR RIGHTS	18,375 – 4,567 = 13,808 SF
LESS PREVIOUSLY TRANSFERRED	13,808 – 11,178 = 2,630
AVAILABLE TDRs	2,630 SF

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Staff recommends the following:

APPROVAL of the Maintenance/Preservation Plan for the property located at **2506 Ponce de Leon Boulevard**, legally described as Lots 22 & 23, Block 7, Coral Gables Crafts Section, as recorded in Plat Book 10, at Page 40 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

Respectfully submitted,



Warren Adams
Historic Preservation Officer