



COA (SP) 2020-0013  
October 21, 2020

Historical Resources &  
Cultural Arts

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**STAFF REPORT**  
**SPECIAL CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS**  
**FOR THE PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY ADJACENT TO**  
**244, 250, 272, AND VALENCIA AVENUE AND**  
**247 AND 297 ALMERIA AVENUE**

**Proposal:** The application requests a recommendation of approval for an amendment to the City Plan for the vacation of the alley.

**Architect:** N/A

**Owner:** City of Coral Gables

**Legal Description:** Legally described the west 265 feet of alley, Block 10, Coral Gables Crafts Section, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 10, at Page 40, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

**Site Characteristics:** The subject property consists of the west 265' of the public right-of-way (alley) running east-west bisecting Block 10. Block 10 lies between Salzedo Street and Ponce de Leon Boulevard.

**BACKGROUND/EXISTING CONDITIONS**

An amendment to the Coral Gables Zoning Code to allow for the designation of the city plan as historic was adopted by the City Commission on April 24, 2018. That amendment is found in Article 3, Division 11, Section 3-1104 (D) entitled "Procedure for Designation of the City Plan and Amendments to such Plan." The Coral Gables Historic City Plan was designated as a local historic landmark on June 21, 2018.

The Zoning Code requires that any material amendments to the City Plan shall be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Board, who will make a recommendation for a Special Certificate of Appropriateness to the City Commission. The City Commission will ultimately render the decision whether to grant or deny the issuance of the Special Certificate of Appropriateness.

Please note: each request for an amendment to the City Plan will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, as is the normal process for any Certificate of Appropriateness application. Approval of one amendment by the Historic Preservation Board will not be used as a precedent or blanket approval for other applications.

### **PROPOSAL**

In accordance with section 3-1104(D)(2) of the City of Coral Gables Zoning Code, the application requests a recommendation of approval to the City Commission for an amendment to the City Plan for the vacation of the alley that is adjacent to 244, 250, 272, and 290 Valencia Avenue and 247 and 297 Almeria Avenue.

### **SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION**

The following Standards have application in this matter:

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**

Section 3-1104 (D) 2 of the Coral Gables Zoning Code reads as follows:

2. In the event that the City Plan is designated historic, any material amendments to the City Plan, including but not limited to, the closing of streets and any developments that would affect such City Plan, shall be in accordance with the following procedure notwithstanding any provisions in this Article to the contrary:
  - a. The Historic Preservation Board, at a public hearing, shall review and make recommendation for a Special Certificate of Appropriateness on any proposed amendments to the City Plan under a balancing of interests weighing the following factors: historic integrity, development, and public purpose; provided, that any development that would cause an amendment to the City Plan having first been reviewed for a recommendation by the Planning and Zoning Board.

As required by Code, the application was reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Board on October 14, 2020. The project is summarized in the Planning and Zoning Staff Report (attached) as follows:

The request is to vacate, abandon, and close that portion of approximately two hundred sixty-five feet (265') in length of a twenty-foot (20') wide public alleyway generally running east-west of Block 10, Coral Gables Crafts Section, containing approximately 5,300 square feet. In conjunction with the Vacation, the Applicant proposes the dedication of a substitute perpetual access and utility easement located on Lot 35 and the easterly 10 feet of Lot 36, Block 10, Coral Gables Crafts Section, containing approximately 3,500 square feet. There is no project proposed at this time, but a new high-rise development is anticipated in the near future.

The Historic Preservation Board is tasked with considering the appropriateness of the amendment to the City Plan while taking into consideration: the historic integrity of the City Plan and the effect of the proposed amendment on the integrity, development, and the public purpose being served by the amendment.



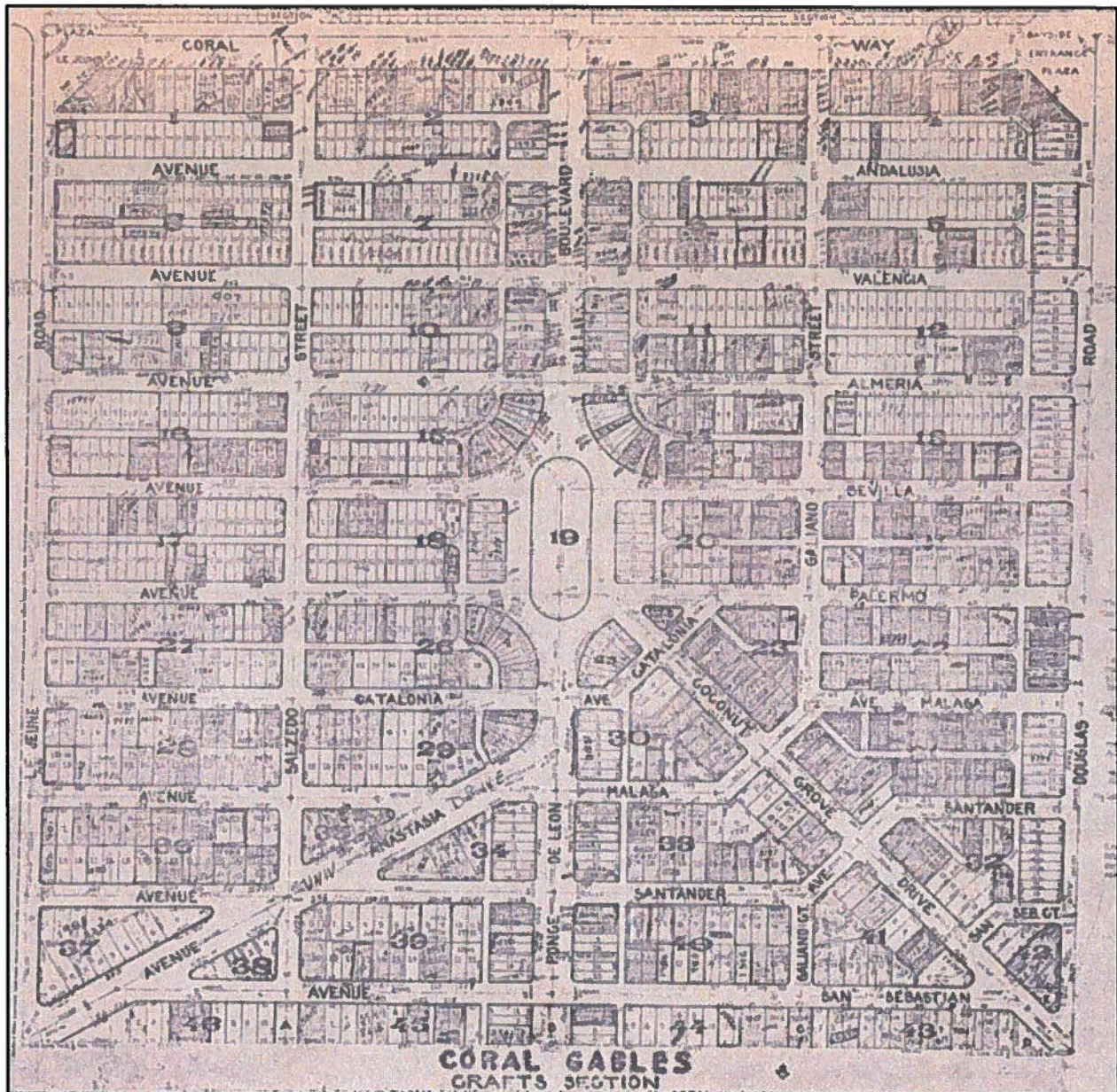
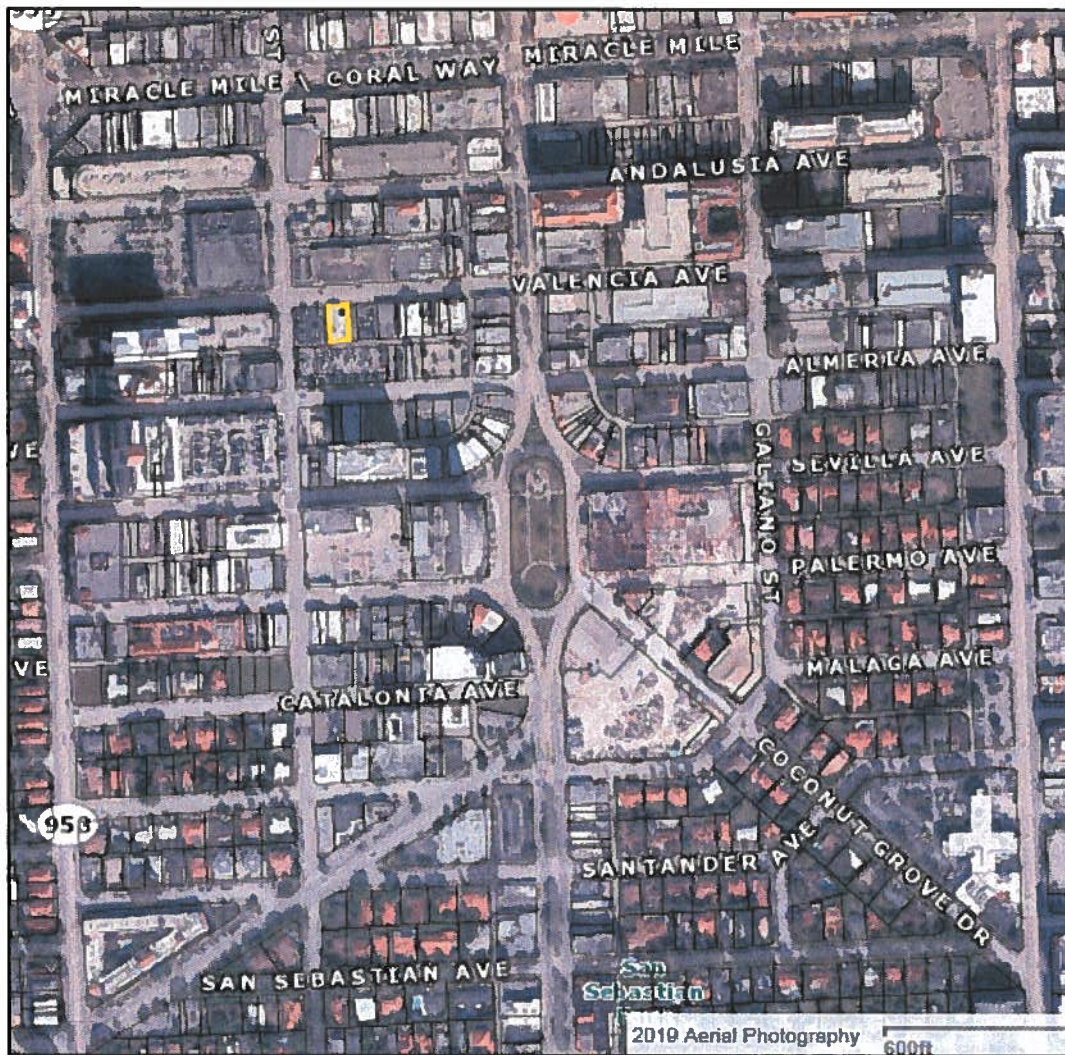


Figure 1: Coral Gables Crafts Section, Plat Map (1924)





**Figure 2: Coral Gables Crafts Section, Current Context (2019)**  
*Courtesy of Miami-Dade County Property Appraiser*

**VARIANCES**

No variances have been requested with this application.

**BOARD OF ARCHITECTS**

The proposal does not require Board of Architects review.

**PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD**

The proposal was reviewed the Planning and Zoning Board October 14, 2020. The Board approved a motion to recommend denial of the application to the City Commission. The motion was largely based on the absence of a site plan to review in conjunction with the alley vacation request and thereby not knowing what public benefit is being derived by vacating the alley.

**STAFF CONCLUSION**

The proposed alley vacation does not substantially or negatively impact the overall historic integrity of the Historic City Plan. In terms of the intentional hierarchy of streets and open spaces purposefully inherent in the City Plan, the vacation of this portion of the subject alley does rise to the level of being detrimental to the overall plan.

The alleys were part of the original design of the City and are visible in the plat of the Crafts Section (see Figure 1). They serve the purpose of allowing for “back-of-house” service areas for the businesses that line the streets. As is visible in Figure 2, multiple instances of the alleys being vacated for development exist within the Crafts Section, and also the Central Business District beyond. Note that these vacations were made prior to the City Plan being designated.

The alleys found in the City exist only in the commercial sections and are intended to service the properties that abut them. According to the plans submitted, an alternate easement perpendicular to Almeria Avenue will provide access to the remainder of the existing alley on the east end of Block 10.

**The Historical Resources Department Staff recommends the following:**

A motion to **APPROVE** the request for a recommendation of approval to the City Commission for an amendment to the City Plan for the vacation of the alley on the property adjacent to 244, 250, 272, and 290 Valencia Avenue and 247 and 297 Almeria Avenue, legally described the west 265 feet of alley, Block 10, Coral Gables Crafts Section, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 10, at Page 40, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida and **RECOMMEND APPROVAL** of the issuance of a Special Certificate of Appropriateness.

Respectfully submitted,



Kara N. Kautz

Interim Historic Preservation Officer