



MARCH 17, 2021

**REPORT OF THE CITY OF CORAL GABLES  
HISTORICAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT  
TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD  
ON THE WAIVER OF THE ART IN PUBLIC PLACES FEE  
FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE PROPERTY AT  
2901 PONCE DE LEON BOULEVARD  
A LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK**

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**Proposal:**

The application requests a recommendation of approval to waive the Art in Public Places Fee requirement providing for the restoration of the historic resource in an amount equal to or greater than the amount of the Art in Public Places Fee that otherwise would be required, in accordance with Section 3-2103 (B) 3 of the City of Coral Gables Zoning Code.

**Owner:**

Agave Plaza Trustee LLC c/o Agave Holdings LLC  
Trust Number AP 2018

**Legal Description:**

Tract "E" of "PLAZA CORAL GABLES," according to the plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 173 at Page 78, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida

**Folio Number:**

03-4117-086-0050

**Date of Construction:**

1925

**Date of Designation:**

February 24, 1987

**Siting:**

The property is located on a triangular island of land within the Plaza Coral Gables development. Coconut Grove Drive is to the south. The primary elevation faces northwest towards Ponce de Leon Boulevard.

**BACKGROUND / EXISTING CONDITIONS**

In 1925, permit number 1246 was issued for the construction of the commercial building at 2901 Ponce de Leon Boulevard. Designed by Phineas Paist, the building was one of the first constructed in the Crafts Section of the city. Known as the Art Center Building, it was built for the Coral Gables Corporation whose members were City Founder George Merrick, Artistic Director Denman Fink, Architect H. George Fink, Illustrator Bob Fink and Architect Phineas Paist. Paist, the first registered architect in Miami and the third in the state of Florida, worked on the development of Coral Gables from his office housed in the building. The property has maintained its architectural integrity and continues to contribute to the historic architectural fabric of the City.

**CORAL GABLES ZONING CODE SECTION 3-2103**

Section 3-2103 (A) of the Coral Gables Zoning Code entitled “Art in Public Places Fund Requirements, Waivers, and Exemptions” establishes the City’s Art Acquisition Fund and sets forth developer requirements for contributions into that fund. It reads:

The Developer of any Non-Municipal Construction Project with an Aggregate Project Value of one million dollars (\$1,000,000.00) or more and not exempted as provided in subsection C below, shall contribute One percent (1.0%) of the Aggregate Project Value to the Art Acquisition Fund established by the City. A Developer may seek a waiver of the requirement of this Section as provided in subsection B below. Application of this Fund shall be in accordance with the Guidelines and Master Art Plan.

B. Waiver of the Art in Public Places Fee. A Developer of a Non-Municipal Construction Project that is not exempt as set forth in subsection C below may petition to waive the Art in Public Places Fee requirement by one or more of the following:

1. Acquiring or commissioning artwork, which has an appraised value equal to or greater than the amount of the Art in Public Places Fee that otherwise would be required, with such artwork to be incorporated within the Developer’s project; or
2. Donating and installing artwork to the City with an appraised value equal to or greater than the amount of the Art in Public Places Fee that otherwise would be required, and providing for the perpetual maintenance of such artwork; or
3. **Causing the purchase, designation, restoration, or perpetual maintenance of historically significant buildings in an amount equal to or greater than the amount of the Art in Public Places Fee that otherwise would be required; or**
4. Causing the purchase of parcels identified in the City’s Parks and Open Space Inventory Analysis in an amount equal to or greater than the amount of the Art in Public Places Fee that otherwise would be required and donating such parcels to the City.

As stipulated in the Code, any developer seeking a waiver under B (3) of this section shall submit the request to the City Commission for approval with a recommendation of the Historic Preservation Board.

**SCOPE OF PROPOSED RESTORATION WORK**

Restoration work proposed for the property, as reported by the applicant, includes:

**A. General restoration/renovation**

- Restoration of the original first floor “Consultation Room” in the north wing to its original two-story height by removing an existing flooring structure that was added in 2006 to subdivide the space
- Restoration of the open three-story porch on the south wing within the courtyard
- New impact-resistant casement windows and doors to match original configuration
- Roof repairs
- Exterior paint analysis and painting
- Repair wall fountain at the NE corner of the building
- Replacement of the exterior columns (not original) at the entry to more historically accurate columns
- Replacement of the entry steps and railing

**B. Site improvements**

- Demolition of Air-conditioning area – slabs and walls

### **STAFF OBSERVATIONS**

The applicant is requesting a recommendation of approval to waive the Art in Public Places Fee requirement providing for the restoration of the historic resource in an amount equal to or greater than the amount of the Art in Public Places Fee that otherwise would be required.

To date, The Plaza development project has received Commission approval for the purchase and installation of sculptural artworks by Tony Cragg, Michele Oka Doner, and Jean-Michel Othoniel. Resolutions: 2019-316, 2020-157, and 2020-227 approve the artworks in partial fulfillment of the project's Art in Public Places requirement for an estimated total of \$2,775,649.00. This application notes a project value of approximately \$1,068,807 for the restoration work on the structure at 2901 Ponce de Leon Boulevard.

This application represents the first request of a waiver in accordance with Section 3-2103 (B) 3 of the City of Coral Gables Zoning Code. This building is both important to the early history of the City of Coral Gables and is the defining structure of the Crafts Section. The designation report for the property is attached for reference.

The work outlined in the submitted narrative seeks to restore aspects of the building that have been altered over the years and bring it closer to its original appearance. The most significant component to this application is the restoration of the three-story open-air balcony at the interior courtyard. Staff questioned the removal of the second floor addition as the interior of the building is not designated. However, the restoration of the two-story interior volume impacts the exterior of the building and allows for the restoration of the original window configuration on the north façade. Staff finds that the demolition of exterior air-conditioning area is not a restoration expense and should be removed from the waiver amount.

Please note that The Plaza has not yet engaged an architect (noted as Gurri Matute, PA in the project narrative) to prepare restoration/renovation drawings. This request relies on the scope of work as submitted in the application materials. Staff recommends approval of the request with the condition that the restoration return as a Certificate of Appropriateness for review by the Historical Resources and Cultural Arts Staff or the Historic Preservation Board as determined by the Historic Preservation Officer.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

The Historic Preservation Staff recommends the following:

A motion **RECOMMENDING APPROVAL** of the Art in Public Places waiver request by The Plaza development project for the restoration of the historic resource located at **2901 Ponce de Leon Boulevard**, a Local Historic Landmark, legally described as Tract "E" of "PLAZA CORAL GABLES," according to the plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 173 at Page 78, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida, with a requirement that the development team submit a Certificate of Appropriateness application for the restoration of the building.

Respectfully submitted,



Warren Adams

Historic Preservation Officer