Preliminary Designation Report

Alhambra Heights Residence

577 NW 120 Street Miami-Dade County, Florida Built: c. 1926





Prepared by: Adrienne Burke, AICP, Esq.

Principal Planner
Office of Historic Preservation
Regulatory and Economic Resources Department
Miami-Dade County

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

NAME: Alhambra Heights Residence

LOCATION: 577 NW 120 Street

Miami, FL 33168 Township: 52 Range: 41 Section: 25

ARCHITECT: Edgar Albright

CONSTRUCTION: c.1926

PROPERTY OWNERS: Eber Oroz and Elias Polanco

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: ALHAMBRA HEIGHTS PB 17-54

W1/2 LOT 27 & ALL LOT 28 BLK 10

LOT SIZE 75X135

OR 20677-4863 07 2002 1

TAX FOLIO NUMBER: 30-2125-018-0880

SIGNIFICANCE: History/Context: The residence is a physical representation of a classic 1925

Florida land boom development that illustrates the pattern of history in Miami-Dade County. The Alhambra Heights Residence fulfills Criteria Sec. 16A-10(1)(a), Associated with distinctive elements of the cultural, social, political, economic, scientific, religious, prehistoric, paleontological and architectural history that have contributed to the pattern of history in the community, Miami-

Dade County, south Florida, the State or the nation.

Architecture: The Spanish Revival architecture typifies the overall Mediterranean Revival architecture that was so commonly associated with Florida land boom developments. The Alhambra Heights Residence fulfills Criteria Sec. 16A-10(1)(c), Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, style or method of construction or work of a master; or that possess high artistic value; or that represent a distinguishable entity whose components may

lack individual distinction.

IMPACTS: The Miami-Dade County Office of Historic Preservation is required to approve

any exterior changes and/or additions, demolition, or new construction to the designated resource. Most approvals are handled in-house directly by the staff of the Office of Historic Preservation. Major alterations require approval by the County Historic Preservation Board. Additional details are included in *Section VI*:

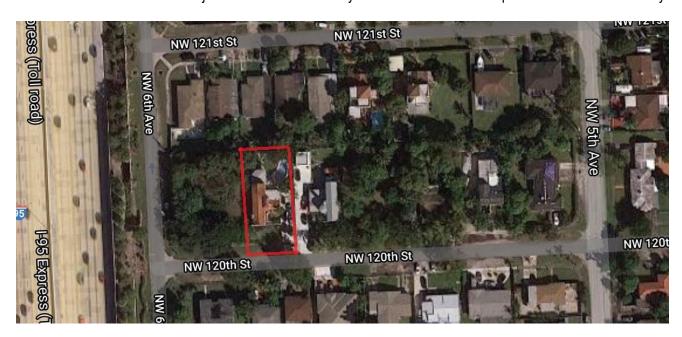
Standards for Certificates of Appropriateness.

Designated resources are eligible to take part in the County's Ad Valorem Tax

Exemption program.

II. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION / SETTING

577 NW 120 Street is located adjacent to I-95 near the City of North Miami in unincorporated Miami-Dade County.



As noted from construction dates of surrounding structures on the same block, most of the homes in the neighborhood were built in the 1950s and 1960s, decades after Alhambra Heights was platted. Several lots remain vacant. The dates listed below are from the Property Appraiser; as will be discussed later, it is unlikely the subject property and neighboring property date to 1924, but more likely date to 1926 given that Alhambra Heights was not platted until September 1925. It is possible that 577 and 565 NW 120 Street were built prior to plat approval, but that seems unlikely. These two properties take up exactly 1 and ½ lots, just like the remaining structures built in 1926 and 1927 on the same block.



Aside from the several homes constructed around the same time, most of the homes in the vicinity were built in the 1950s and 1960s, or later. The rights-of-way are wide, and the immediate block has numerous large trees. The property to the west of 577 NW 120 Street is vacant, which currently provides a landscaped buffer between the home and I-95.



Looking east on NW 120 Street from the front of the residence.



Looking west on NW 120 Street towards I95 from the residence.



Immediate neighbor to the east at 565 NW 120 Street, also designed by Edgar Albright as part of initial Alhambra Heights development.



View from second story of residence looking southeast onto NW 120 Street.



Subject property (left) and neighboring property, showing proximity and placement.



Home across the street, illustrating later infill development of Alhambra Heights subdivision.



Another home across the street, illustrating later infill development of Alhambra Heights subdivision.

The catchall term of "Mediterrnean Revival" architecture is often used to describe the style of architecture associated with 1920s Florida development boom. (See more information in the Historic Significance and Context section below.) Using A Field Guide to American Houses, the Alhambra Heights residence is more specifically defined as Spanish Revival, popularized from 1915-1940. McAlester notes that "[d]uring the 1920's, many new communities in Florida and southern California were planned in the Spanish Revival style..."²

Identifying features of Spanish Revival architecture are: "low-pitched roof, usually with little or no eave overhang; red tile roof covering; typically with one or more prominent arches placed above door or principal window, or beneath porch roof; wall surface usually stucco; wall surface extends into gable without break (eave or trim normally lacking beneath gable); façade normally asymmetrical. The Alhambra Heights residence is one of the five principal subtypes identifed by McAlester, the cross-gabled roof subtype. According to McAlester, "about 50% of Spanish Revival houses have cross-gabled roofs with one prominent, front-facing gable. These are usually L-plan houses; one-story and two-story forms are both common, as are examples with wings of differing heights." This house fits the L-plan description well, with the smaller one-story wing projecting from the prominent two-story, front-facing gable.

Photographs from the Property Appraiser's records help piece together the evolution of the residence over time. It appears that the original windows were casement windows, which is one of the styles associated with Spanish Revival architecture, and that sometime after the 1950s, awnings were added. Also after the 1950s, the garage at the rear of the structure was converted into living space, and a garage addition extends from the rear of the house. With the garage at the rear, the driveway extended to the back of the house, where now there is a pool and the backyard space. A pool was added before the current owners rehabilitated the house, as evidenced from photos they provided. The original garage roof portion of the structure was also flattened after the 1970s, having been angled previously. Less detailed information is available about the original doors; however, the door openings appear to have remained largely the same.



c.1956 image from the Property Appraiser records.



c.1956 image from the Property Appraiser records.



c.1974 image from the Property Appraiser records.



c.1974 image from the Property Appraiser records.



c.1974 image from the Property Appraiser records.



Image of the house prior to rehabilitation, with what were likely original windows, courtesy of the current owners.



Another image of the home prior to rehabilitation, courtesy of the current owners.



Image of the rear of the structure and swimming pool area, courtesy of the current owners. This image shows that prior to rehabilitation, the home had a mixture of windows and doors, original and non-original.



Façade/southern elevation of the structure, 2020.



Façade/front portion of eastern elevation viewed from the driveway, 2020.

Façade/South Elevation

The façade/south elevation of the structure illustrates the Spanish Revival subtype as outlined by McAlester. The home is a two-story gable-roof structure with a projecting wing towards the east. From the façade view, the projecting portion of the structure is visible, which is simply adorned with a single window and single door. An exterior stair leading to an upstairs door is to the right of the projection, and the one-story wing is just visible, set back a distance from the façade elevation. Corners of the structure have a contrasting concrete or stone quoin that is visible against the stucco exterior. There are no eaves on the structure, as typical of the Spanish Revival style. The red barrel roof tiles of the small shed roof at the top of the exterior stair are visible, as is the roof on the one-story wing.



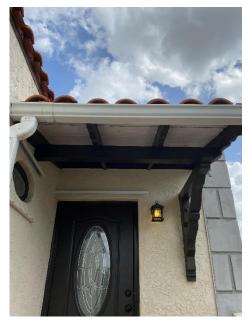
East elevation and knee wall visible from the front yard, 2020.



Remainder of east elevation, visible from the rear yard, 2020.



Exterior staircase leading to the second story entry, 2020.



Second story entry with shed roof, oval window, and sconce, 2020.

East/Side Elevation

From the east/side elevation view, a low masonry wall faced in stucco s visible, that creates a small courtyard effect. Also visible are other features common to the Spanish Revival-style: a solid plank entry door (perhaps original) covered by a small awning, a window with a "balconet" (described by McAlester as a full-length window and railing without projecting floor), exterior stairs to the second story, and the one-story wing characterized by multi-light windows.⁴ A small oval window is near the second-story entry. Portions of the red barrel tile roof are visible, a decorative wooden bracket under the second story shed roof, and vents near the roofline can be seen from this side. The remainder of the east/side elevation is behind a six-foot wooden fence and cannot be seen from the street. This portion relates to the back yard of the home, and features the rear of the one-story projecting wing, and the portion of the structure that originally housed the garage prior to its conversion into interior space. Doors and windows have been replaced on the entirety of the structure; however, many of the original doors and windows had been replaced prior to the current owners. Additionally, because this portion of the home is not visible from the street, the replacement of doors and windows does not significantly impact the integrity of the home or how it reads from the right-of-way. Doors lead to an outdoor patio space and swimming pool.



North/rear elevation, 2020. The garage is a likely addition from the original construction, but indicates a rear access driveway was present prior to construction of the houses on NW 121 Street.



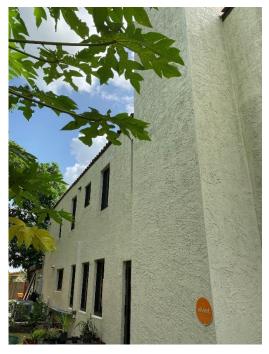
North/rear elevation showcasing unique garage construction with curved roof providing a covered outdoor work/storage space, 2020.

North/Rear Elevation

The north/rear elevation of the home is dominated by a single-car garage space with a unique extension that provides outdoor work and storage space underneath a curved roof. As noted in the photos and based on information from the Property Appraiser, this addition appears to have been constructed in 1966. The orientation of the garage suggests that entry was from NW 121 Street; however, homes were constructed there in 1965, so the access is unclear. From this elevation, the second story of the home is visible, with a single window mirroring the single second-story window visible on the façade. Additionally, the one-story projecting wing and barrel tile roof can be seen.



West/side elevation viewed from the rear of the property, 2020.



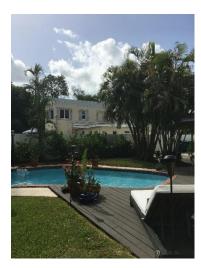
West/side elevation viewed from the front of the property with the chimney tower visible, 2020.

West/Side Elevation

The west/side elevation is an expanse of wall with varied fenestration, that is largely not visible from the street, being behind a 6' wooden fence. Towards the façade, a small outdoor space and patio with double doors leads into the home. The prominent feature on this elevation is the chimney. The top of chimney has a style similar to those described in McAlester as typical for Spanish Revival; it is noted a "small house-shaped chimney capping is a favorite Spanish Revival detail." 5

Roof

The roof is a cross-gable subtype, with red barrel tile. The roof has been barrel tile since construction. As noted above, the roof at the rear addition was changed at some point after the 1970s from a low-pitch shed to a flat roof.



Swimming pool in the rear yard, 2020.



Concrete slabs in the rear yard; one of which likely was part of a driveway, 2020.

Exterior Details

Notable exterior details include the exterior stucco wall at the front of the home; a walled entry courtyard is a common element of Spanish Revival architecture.⁶ Decorative iron sconces are another common feature to this architectural style; the home has small sconces at the entry doors on the first floor and the second floor, although they are likely replacements. At the rear of the home, a swimming pool and concrete slabs are present in the back yard. One of the slabs is likely a remnant of the driveway that originally extended from NW 121 Street.

III. HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE & CONTEXT

Historically, the land where 577 NW 120 Street sits today is the land of the Tequesta and Seminole people. After forced removal of the indigenous people, the land was in part portioned off by the United States government to various homesteaders through a series of land grants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In the immediate vicinity of Alhambra Heights, there were five land grants issued by the U.S. government..⁷ In 1894, 160 acres were granted to William Freeman, in 1897, 160 acres were granted to Frances E. Tuttle, and in 1898, 160 acres were granted to Mary Niles (formerly Mary Moffat). In 1901, 160 acres were granted to the heirs of Robert. B. Burgoyne Moffat, and in 1902, 160 acres were granted to Hiram B. Meyers.

The 1920s Florida Land Boom

After the land grant era, and with the engineering of South Florida to turn previously wet land into dry land, development pressures intensified. By the early 1920s a variety of factors turned a spotlight on South Florida, including a post-World War I recession that came to an end around 1923.8 Real estate was seen as an accessible investment for most people that could offer a substantial return on investment.9 Other factors that led to a land boom in Florida by the mid-20s included the rise of automobiles that were more available to the middle class, stories of wealthy Americans wintering in Florida, exotic vegetation, wildlife, and landscapes, and a state ban on income and inheritance tax in 1924.10 These circumstances were highlighted through major marketing and promotional materials created by Miami and other jurisdictions in Florida.11

Developers also used publicity and marketing to draw attention to their projects. One of the early success stories in the Florida land boom was Coral Gables, established c.1921. "Although at first sales of the new Miami suburb were not brisk, they greatly increased as the project began to receive publicity and praise. Frequent full-page newspaper ads, high-powered salesmen, and buses that transported visitors to the townsite, served to enliven sales." Many other developers employed similar tactics such that it became a formula for promotion and a trademark of many Florida developments during this era. Hollywood-by-the-Sea, Miami Shores and Miami Beach were other significant developments of this era. Hollywood-by-the-Sea, Miami Shores and Miami Beach

Another distinctive element of many of the 1920s land boom developments was the use of Mediterranean architecture. This style contributed to Florida's mystique as an exotic locale and evoked Spain, Italy and North Africa. The first use of Mediterranean architecture in Florida is believed to have been the construction of Villa Zorayda, the winter home of wealthy Bostonian Franklin Smith, built at St. Augustine in 1882. Other notable examples followed, such as Ponce de Leon hotel in St. Augustine, Plant's Tampa Bay Hotel and Vizcaya. It was not until after World War I that this style was made into an accessible style for the middle class. Addison Mizner and his work in Palm Beach and George Merrick and his development in Coral Gables helped solidify the use of this architecture in boomtime developments.¹⁵

Dade County was the center of the mid-20s land boom.¹⁶ This was only even possible due to the state's program of Everglades "reclamation" in the early 1900s that turned previously undevelopable land into land suitable for building.¹⁷ In fact, Miami's population and real estate market were already rapidly growing pre-1925.¹⁸ The combination of factors that precipitated the boom, also helped fuel increased tourism in the area, which in turn further fueled the local real estate boom.¹⁹

While signs pointed to the boom starting in 1924, 1925 kicked off the biggest boom year. Miami and Dade County recorded over twice the number of real estate transactions in January as they had the year before, and numbers rose throughout the year.²⁰ The Miami Herald in 1925 had more advertising space than any newspaper in the world.²¹ And also in 1925, a series of annexations grew the City of Miami from 13 to 43 square miles.²² That same year, the state legislature required subdivisions be prepared by civil engineers and gave city and county governments the right to approve plans.²³ It is estimated that a majority of the buyers were speculators waiting for a return on their investment, and most purchasers were not single owners looking for a home.²⁴

The boom was not sustainable. By the spring of 1926, signs of a downturn were evident and land prices were falling. Because of the binder deposit system that only required a small down payment up front, thousands of second payments on lots were not made in 1926.²⁵ This left developers unable to make their financial commitments. A ship that sank in January 1926 at the entrance to the Miami harbor prohibited the movement of building construction goods into the city for almost two months.²⁶

More factors contributed to a quick bust. Despite the boom, there was actually a housing shortage at the time, and this prevented laborers so necessary to the boom from coming.²⁷ Other states passed laws prohibiting the sale of Florida real estate or actively campaigned against the boom activity in Florida in an effort to discourage people from leaving, and the National Better Business Bureau launched an investigation into dubious real estate practices.²⁸ The hurricane in September 1926 was the final nail in the coffin on the land boom.²⁹ In 1926, Dade County recorded 98,504 real estate transactions, 43 percent less than during 1925.³⁰ Things continued to decline thereafter, with another devastating hurricane in 1928, and the stock market crash of 1929.

"Henry Villard, writing for *The Nation*, described their [development project] remains as he viewed them along the Dixie Highway north of Miami in the spring of 1928:

'Dead subdivisions line the highway, their pompous names half obliterated on crumbling stucco gates. Lonely, white-way lights stand guard over miles of cement sidewalks, where grass and palmetto take the place of homes that were to be. Street signs--where a "Ponce de Leon Boulevard" was planned to intersect with an "Avenue Alcazar"--point forlornly skyward. Instead of billboards flamboyant with the name of some super subdivision or dream-development, the advertisements read virtuously of motor cars, or--more reassuring still--native dairies and agricultural products."31

Alhambra Heights Plat

The Alhambra Heights subdivision is a textbook example of a 1920s Florida land boom development, kicked off in 1925, but in decline by late 1926. The original three plats for the subdivision are dated August 1925 and were approved by Dade County under their newly granted authority to do so, on September 1, 1925. The three plats total 50 blocks, and were platted by the Commercial Bank and Trust Company.³²

Alhambra Heights Section 1 was originally 32 blocks and bounded by NW 119th Street (south), NW 127th Street (north), NW 5th Avenue (east), and NW 9th Avenue (west). 577 NW 120 Street is located in Section 1. Section 2 was originally ten blocks and bounded by: NW 119th Street (south), NW 124th Street (north), NW 2nd Avenue (east),

and NW 5th Avenue (west). Section 3 was originally eight blocks and bounded by: NW 127th Street (south), NW 131st Street (north), NW 7th Avenue (east), and NW 9th Avenue (west).

Comparing these sections of the Alhambra Heights plat to the land grants illustrates how the properties changed from the early 20th century to development just a couple of decades later. Section 1 of the Alhambra Heights plat incorporates the Tuttle land grant on the west half, and the Meyers land grant on the east half. Section 2 of the plat incorporates the rest of the Meyers land grant, and Section 3 also incorporates the Tuttle land grant.

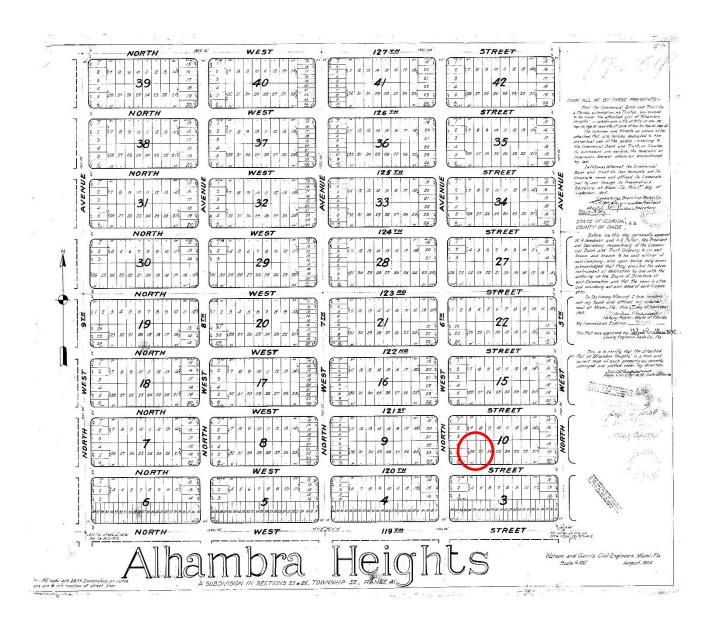


Map illustrating overlap between land grants and Alhambra Heights subdivision, courtesy of Jeff Ransom, County Archaeologist.

Later Alhambra Heights sections were platted twenty years after the land boom by Pan American Properties Inc. in 1948 through the town of North Miami and Dade County (Section 5) and Dade Broward Land Company in 1949 through the town of North Miami and Dade County (Section 6). Section 4 does not appear to exist in the records of the Miami-Dade County Clerk of the Courts.

The signers for Commercial Bank and Trust Company on the Alhambra Heights Plat were W.H. Goodman, Vice President and A.E. Fuller, Secretary. Because of the new requirement by the state to have plats prepared by civil engineers, the Alhambra Heights plat was prepared by Watson and Garris Civil Engineers. This firm was started in 1923 by P.L. Watson and William B. Garris.³³ Offices were located at 300 Hill Building. Garris was the engineer in charge of platting Biscayne Island on the Venetian Causeway in 1936.³⁴

The 1925 state law regarding subdivisions also gave Dade County the authority to approve the plats. The Alhambra Heights plat were approved by Hobart Crabtree, the Dade County Engineer. Prior to being the County's engineer, Crabtree had a private firm in the Sewell Building with another engineer, C.H. Zoll.³⁵ Hobart was part of the initial surveying efforts for portions of the Tamiami Trail in 1915³⁶, and rode in the first car that crossed the newly opened Macarthur Causeway in 1920.³⁷ Crabtree would have been the signer for all of the land boom plats.



c.1925 Alhambra Heights (Section 1) plat with lots highlighted showing 577 NW 120 Street.

Bancroft Sales Agency

The Alhambra Heights subdivision was promoted by the Bancroft Sales Agency. The Bancroft Sales Agency moved offices several times during this period: 130-1 NE 1st Street, 109 NE 2nd Street, and 125 NE 2nd Street, with offices still in existence as late as 1930.38 Flagler Street was noted as the epicenter of the boomtime real estate agents, and home to notorious "curbside" real estate transactions that literally happened on the sidewalk.39 So Bancroft was not quite in the heart of the real estate fever pitch, but adjacent to the action.

C.R. Bancroft, N.B. Hickey and M.P.J. Hickey were members of the sales agency, and Joseph T. Burns was a sales manager in 1926.⁴⁰ The 1930 City Directory for Miami lists a Charles "H" Bancroft in real estate living at 312 NE 29th Street, but it cannot be confirmed that this is the correct C. Bancroft.⁴¹ The 1930 census has the same

Bancroft living at another address, but still in real estate and listed as being from Ohio.⁴² Unfortunately, not much information is readily available about the men involved with the Bancroft Sales Agency.

The Bancroft Sales Agency was involved with other boomtime developments in the area. Ads in the *Miami Herald* reference Seminole Lawn at NW 30 Avenue and 54 Street and Highridge Park at 54 Street NW between 23 and 24 Avenue.⁴³ Advertisements for these developments predate Alhambra Heights and appear earlier in 1925. However, neither of these developments appear to have received the same promotional attention as Alhambra Heights, which looks to be the central development promoted by Bancroft.

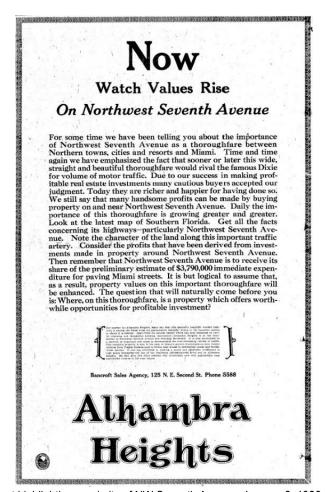
Bancroft followed the promotional formula for boomtime developments in Florida. During the fall of 1925 and into 1926, the agency took out many full-page ads in the *Miami Herald*, appearing at least a couple of times a week. The ads reference cars that would take prospective purchasers to visit the site, and that the agency had an office downtown.

These prolific advertisements employed a variety of messaging to entice prospective investors to the subdivision. Key points that were repeatedly mentioned include: easy access to downtown Miami, in part because of improvements to NW 7 Avenue; wide, paved streets, white way electric lighting, ornamental parkways, and the tropical landscape. The beauty of the area and the proposed architecture was also highlighted. Holiday advertising encouraging purchasing lots for children.⁴⁴ One advertisement titled "16 Reasons Why" explained in detail the reasons for purchasing property in Alhambra Heights: ideal location for a home, 20 minutes from Flagler Street, close to business center, highly improved, near recreational centers, Miami Shores Causeway, easy access to beaches, surrounded by new roads, profusion of tropical trees, close to social centers, a splendid investment, on the sport center road, near the Dixie Highway, ideal home living, wide paved streets, and "he will drive you out" – a reference to the sales people who would shuttle interested parties to the property.⁴⁵

Other advertisements reference improvements such as broad cement sidewalks and a water system, in addition to "high class improvements and high class restrictions." Although the advertisement is not explicit about what high class restrictions means, it is likely a signal to the reader that the property was for whites only. Miami in the 1920s followed Jim Crow-era racial restrictions. The plat does not itself contain language noting such restrictions (as does a later replat of Alhambra Heights, addressed below), but it is possible that individual deeds for the properties may have such language. Due to Covid-related restrictions at the time of writing this report, visiting the Clerk's office to review historic deeds was not available.



"Street view of Alhambra Heights billboard and office," c.1925.47



Miami Herald Advertisement highlighting proximity of NW Seventh Avenue, January 6, 1926, p.60.



Ideal Location for a Home



20 Minutes from Flagler St.

Close to Business Center

Highly Improved

Near Recreational Centers



Miami Shores Causeway



Easy Access to Beaches



Surrounded by New Roads

On the Sport Center Road



Profusion of Tropical Trees



Close to Social Centers



A Splendid

He Will Drive You Out



Ideal Home Living



Wide Paved Streets, etc.



Bancroft Sales Agency, 125 N. E. Second Street. Phone 5588

At the Intersection of N. W. Seventh Avenue and Gratigny Boulevard

Miami Herald Advertisement, December 14, 1925, p.105.

SEMINOLE LAWN SALES TOTAL \$45,000 FIRST DAY

The Bancroft Sales Agency announces the sale of 29 lots in Seminoic Lawn, aggregating \$45,000, the first day the sale of this beautiful subdivision at Thirtieth avenue and Fifty-fourth street was re-opened. The lots sell for \$700 to \$2,000 each and have all improvements.

Absence of rocks and palmettos caused the new subdivision between Hialeah and Miami to be called a lawn, for the rich soil is covered with grass.

Miami Herald Advertisement, March 18, 1925, p.3.



Miami Herald Advertisement, June 14, 1925, p.59.

577 NW 120 Street and the neighboring house (565 NW 120 Street) appear to have been the two intial spec houses for the neighborhood, appearing in advertisements in the *Miami Herald*. The Property Appraiser data has the house constructed in 1924, but given that the plat was not approved until September 1925, the house is more likely c.1926. Other houses on the same block were built in 1926 as part of the first push for development. Unfortunately, being platted in September 1925 and with major advertising pushes in late 1925 and early 1926, Alhambra Heights was already on the downhill slope of the boom.

Subsequent Changes to the Plat

One of the major selling points of the development as touted in the advertisements was the location, just twenty minutes from Miami, and in the northern portion of the city that was bound to grow. In particular, ads focused on the predicted future importance of NW 7 Avenue as a major northern connection point and thoroughfare. The Bancroft Sales Agency was not wrong there would be a significant corridor here, connecting Miami to the North. It just happened to be two other roads – first 441 and then I-95. I-95 wiped out a portion of the Alhambra Heights plat, but the plat does still continue today on the other side of I-95 to NW 7 Avenue/441.

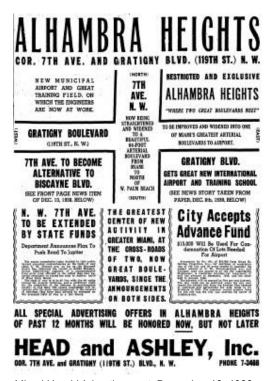
Whereas the 1925 Alhambra Heights plat once continued beyond NW 7 Avenue west to NW 9 Avenue, the properties beyond NW 7 Avenue have seen changes. Not long after the original subdivision in 1925, the blocks west of NW 7 Avenue were turned into individual tracts in 1930. Each tract was an entire block ranging from 3.4 to 3.7 acres, and the streets as platted in the 1925 subdivision remained.⁴⁸ A second replat accomplished the same with the exception of Block 45 which retained the original lot configuration, between NW 7 to 9 Avenues and NW 127 to 131 Streets, which was the original Alhambra Heights Section 3 plat.⁴⁹ These replats were done for Helen S. Pearson, a widow in Illinois.

The majority of these lots are now part of another plat, North Shore Heights, that was platted as a "resubdivision" in 1940. This replat was done for Lillian Jeffries, a widow in New York. This plat contains racially restrictive language: "No lot, nor any parcel thereof, nor any interest therein, shall be sold, leased, rented, or otherwise conveyed to any person other than the Caucasian race."⁵⁰

Lots were similiarly returned to large block-sized tracts from NW 2 Avenue to NW 7 Avenue and NW 121 Street to NW 127 Street in 1930 by the Biscayne Securities Corporation.⁵¹ However, it appears that the majority of this area was built out according to the original lots platted in the 1925 plat. The Section 2 plat appears to have remained the same since 1925. Sections 5 and 6 seem to have remained the same as well.

Evolution of Alhambra Heights

The Alhambra Heights subdivision has evolved over the decades. Consistent with the land boom and bust pattern, lots in the subdivision were going up for auction in 1927, which continued into the 1930s.⁵² Also in 1927, the *Miami Herald* reported that eleven vacant houses in Alhambra Heights were robbed of fixtures, hardware and lumber, with losses reported at \$7000.⁵³ In 1937, a developer from Tampa purchased 718 lots in Alhambra Heights, and put the lots into a company called Head and Ashley, Inc. in partnership with Mrs. C.R. Ashley of Barnsville and Valdosta, Georgia.⁵⁴ The lots were purchased for \$30,000. It is not clear if Head and Ashley restored the original Alhambra Heights Section 1-3 plats to the original lot configuration, after they had been replatted in 1930.



Miami Herald Advertisement, December 18, 1938.

DEVELOPMENT BEGINS In Alhambra Heights

Head & Ashley Report 651 Lots Sold and the First 50 Residences Completed

Sale of 651 lots in Alhambra Heights since January 1 at an average of \$500 each, and completion of the first residence of a scheduled 50, was reported Saturday by J. G. Head, president of Head & Ashley, developers of Alhambra Heights. Head said all but 61 of 712 lots

placed on the market about the first of the year in the section between 119th and 127th streets, and N. W. Second and Seventh avenues, have been sold to prospective home builders. Few of the lots were sold for speculation purposes, he said.

The development program that will include 50 homes in that section, Head said, will specialize in homes in the \$5,000 and \$6,000 class.

All homes will be constructed according to FHA regulations and Miamt city building code. All will be of concrete block and stucco, with all timber termite-treated. The roofs will be placed over 90-pound felt. The residence will include all brass hardware, cedar-lined closets, tile front porch and steps, rear entrance floor and steps of tile, wrought fron railings, duplex-solar heatet, 86 gallon tank, city water

651 Lots Sold, Miami Herald, May 22, 1938.

In the 1940s, Alhambra Heights appears in the *Miami Herald* primarily in lot sale and home sale ads in the real estate sections. Advertisements in the late 1940s reference the neighborhood being a "CBS restricted area for discriminating families." CBS stands for concrete block structure; the restricted area for discriminating families likely references racial deed restrictions. Advertisements into the 1950s continue to reference the "exclusive" neighborhood.

By the 1960s, real estate advertisements describe the neighborhood as being in the Barry College area. Building and lots sales continued into the 1970s, noting it as a popular area. In the 1980s, most real estate ads were for resale of existing homes.

Alhambra Heights was not unique to only Dade County. Ultimately, the subdivision had a similar fate to other neighborhoods across the state that followed the same patterns of the mid-1920s land boom – ambitious developers, grand plans, large-scale advertisements, Mediterranean Revival architecture, and a bust before they could be fully realized. These neighborhoods, like Alhambra Heights, failed to materialize in the 1920s, but filled in over time, reflecting a diversity of architectural styles and telling their evolving community development stories. These other similar developments include: Venetia, Lake Shore, Lake Forest, Hyde Park and San Jose (Jacksonville), Davis Shores (St. Augustine), Davis Islands (Tampa), Coquina Highlands/Daytona Highlands (Daytona), Cleveland Heights (Lakeland), and part of the Woodlawn neighborhood in St. Petersburg.⁵⁵

Prior Residents at 577 NW 120 Street

In 1934, the Biscayne Securities Corporation sold 577 NW 120 Street to F.C. McAlpine. ⁵⁶ According to City Directories, F.C. McAlpine was Frank McAlpine, married to Frankie McAlpine; Frank was listed as an insurance agent, and Frankie was listed as a representative of the Equitable Life Assurance Society. ⁵⁷ Information from the 1930 census indicates that Frank was born in Alabama in 1881, and Frankie was born in West Virginia in 1895. ⁵⁸ They had one son, Frank Clarke McAlpine, Jr. City directories indicate that Frankie lived at the home after Frank's death until at least the late 1950s. ⁵⁹



Frank Clarke McAlpine, Jr., c.1936. Photo appears to have been taken at 577 NW 120 Street on the exterior stairs. Photo from ancestry.com.



Frank Clarke McAlpine, second row left. Frankie McAlpine, front row right. Frank Clarke McAlpine, Jr., front. c.1932. Photo from ancestry.com.

In the early 1960s, city directories indicate that Carrie E. Kilgore and Donna V. Clemens lived at the home; however, no information was readily available about either Kilgore or Clemens.⁶⁰

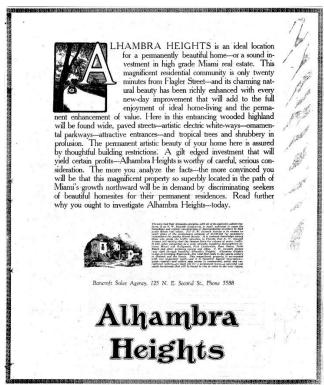
By 1967, 577 NW 120 Street was home to Henry and Lucille McGinnis. Dr. Henry McGinnis was the founding Dean of the Barry College of Social Work in 1966, where he served as Dean until 1970, when he went into private practice. ⁶¹ Prior to arriving in Miami, Dr. McGinnis had worked in New York City at Fordham University and early in his practice at the Leon County Mental Health Clinic in Tallahassee. ⁶² The McGinnis family lived at 577 NW 120 Street until 1996. ⁶³ Afterwards they moved to Tamarac, where they lived until 2002. ⁶⁴

IV. ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

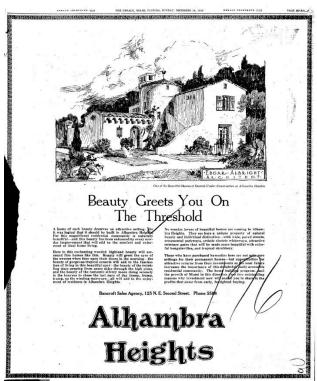
Edgar Albright is the presumed architect of 577 NW 120 Street, based on his name being included in advertisements for the subdivision. Albright was born in Richwood, Ohio on September 19, 1899. He received a B. Arch. from Ohio State University in 1922 and from Columbia University in 1923. He received the Columbia Alumni Association medal of architecture in 1923, and a medal in 1923-24 from the Beaux Arts Institute of Design in Manhattan. Albright arrived in Miami Beach in 1925, and appears to have practiced here only in 1925-26. He went on to a long career with firms in New Jersey and New York City, before retiring to Phoenix in 1970. Albright died in 1971.⁶⁵



Rendering of 577 NW 120 Street as featured in an advertisement for Alhambra Heights, *Miami Herald*, January 13, 1926. Edgar Albright's name appears at lower right.



Miami Herald advertisement featuring 577 NW 120 Street, January 13, 1926.



Miami Herald advertisement featuring 565 NW 120 Street and Edgar Albright's name, December 13, 1925.

During his time in Miami, Albright also designed structures in Coral Gables. The French Country Village section of Coral Gables was one of the themed sections of the community designed to add diversity to the predominantly Mediterranean Revival style, and homes are styled after 18th century rural French architecture. ⁶⁶ Eleven homes were built in 1925-1926 as part of the French Country Village. Five of the structures in this section are attributed to Albright: 508 Caligula Avenue, 516 Caligula Avenue, 501 Hardee Road, 517 Hardee Road, and 541 Hardee Road. For a time in the early 1930's, 541 Hardee Road served at the University of Miami's Phil Alpha Fraternity House.

Other homes in Coral Gables were designed by Albright: 1225 Valencia Avenue, 1212 Mariana Avenue, 1216 Mariana Avenue, 1220 Mariana Avenue, 501 Minorca Avenue, 5309-13 Ferdinand Drive (now Alhambra Circle), 1553 Malaga Avenue, and 1256 Pinta Court (now 4128 Pinta Court). The home at 1553 Malaga Avenue bears more than a passing resemblance to the home at Alhambra Heights with similar features including a two-story structure with exterior angled staircase, a low exterior wall, and an L-shaped wing/garage. The similarity of this structure as a validated building by Edgar Albright further corroborates his work as the architect for Alhambra Heights.⁶⁷



1553 Malaga Avenue, Coral Gables. This structure has similar architectural features to 577 NW 120 Street.

Albright's work in Alhambra Heights is significant for its representation of a mid-1920s Florida land boom development that relied on Mediterranean Revival architecture. The use of this architectural style for the subdivision is part of the standard formula for the land boom subdivisions, and showcases the accessibility of this style of architecture for more than just the ultra-wealthy in the post-WWI era.

V. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Sec. 16A-10(4) regarding the designation process requires that, to the extent applicable, designation reports shall address the following:

- any projected, proposed, or existing public improvements and developmental or renewal plans;
- any private plans for development or redevelopment of the property or area under consideration, including any new architecture or features proposed for the same location;

- any applicable neighborhood or community revitalization goals, plans, or objectives, including any existing
 policies in the local government's comprehensive plan or other planning initiatives pertaining to, among
 other things, economic development, transportation, and housing;
- any impacts on the availability of affordable or workforce housing in the community due to historic
 designation or proposed redevelopment of the property or area under consideration; and
- the possible adaptive use of the property after designation, based on applicable local government zoning regulations and other building code requirements.

No current zoning or Comprehensive Master Development Plan applications exist in the immediate vicinity of the property. The property has already been restored by the current owner, and is still in use as a residence, so adaptive reuse is not applicable. The historic designation of this individual property would not impact availability of affordable or workforce housing. The property is adjacent to I-95, and could be potentially impacted by any future widening projects.

VI. PROPERTY VULNERABILITY

As Miami-Dade County works to address the impending challenges of increased flooding, sea level rise, and more frequent severe weather events, it becomes increasingly important to assess the vulnerability of historic and cultural resources to these threats. Utilizing the matrix developed in association with the County's Historic Site Vulnerability Assessment, historic properties can be evaluated for their level of vulnerability. Factors related to a property's flood zone, elevation, storm surge, sea level rise, king tides, and proximity to water are a sampling of the environmental factors that are included in determining a site's vulnerability. Property use is also included.

Utilizing information in the County's Flooding Vulnerability GIS-based mapping system, 577 NW 120 Street is in a X flood zone, and has a parcel mean elevation of 9.88'. The property does not show vulnerability to storm surge inundation or king tide flooding, nor does it have predicted vulnerability to sea level rise. As such, this property is not a highly vulnerable property. Standard mitigation options for protecting the property from storm events are recommended.

VII. FLORIDA MASTER SITE FILE

At the time of designation, no Florida Master Site Form exists for this property and a new form will need to be submitted to the Florida Division of Historical Resources.

VIII. CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

The Alhambra Heights Residence is significant under the following criteria, as set forth in Section 16A-10 of the Miami-Dade Historic Preservation Ordinance:

(a) Criteria Sec. 16A-10(1)(a), Is associated with distinctive elements of the cultural, social, political, economic, scientific, religious, prehistoric, paleontological and architectural history that have contributed to the pattern of history in the community, Miami-Dade County, south Florida, the State or the nation.

Criteria Sec. 16A-10(1)(c), Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, style or method of construction or work of a master; or that possess high artistic value; or that represent a distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

IX. STANDARDS FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Standards for Certificates of Appropriateness will follow the general guidelines as recommended for historic sites, as detailed in *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* as developed in 1992 and codified as 36CFR Part 68 in the July 12, 1995, *Federal Register* (Vol. 60, No. 133). However, ordinary maintenance and minor repairs/alterations will not be subject to review.

X. CONTRIBUTING FEATURES

The Alhambra Heights Residence maintains a high degree of its historic integrity. Despite replacement windows and doors, which had mostly taken place prior to the current owner, all exterior elevations of the building are contributing resources, including the window and door openings, roof, exterior stucco wall, and exterior stairs. Any proposed alterations to the features that contribute to the significance and integrity of the Alhambra Heights require submittal of a Certificate of Appropriateness.

The interior spaces of the Alhambra Heights Residence have not been evaluated for purposes of this designation. As such, alterations to these interior spaces would not require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

XI. STAFF EVALUATION & RECOMMENDATION

Staff has performed a site visit to document the Alhambra Heights Residence, as well as performed research into the historic context of the building. Staff has determined that the Alhambra Heights Residence, located at 577 NW 120 Street, meets the objective criteria for designation. The residence is a physical representation of a classic 1925 Florida land boom development that illustrates the pattern of history in Miami-Dade County. The Spanish Revival architecture typifies the overall Mediterranean Revival architecture that was so commonly associated with these land boom developments. Despite updates to the windows and doors, the structure retains a high level of integrity. Based on its historic context, and the application of objective criteria for designation, Staff recommends that procedures be initiated to consider the Alhambra Heights Residence for designation as a Miami-Dade County Historic Site.

XII. ENDNOTES

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