



November 6, 2019

City of Miami Historic and Environmental Preservation Board
Chair William E. Hopper
Vice Chair Lynn Lewis
Members: Najeeb Campbell, Luis Prieto, Jordan Trachtenberg,
Christopher Cawley, Hugh Ryan, Todd Tragash, & Denise Turros

c/o Mr. Warren Adams
City of Miami Historic Preservation Officer
444 SW 2 Avenue
Miami, FL 33130

Re: Proposed Carrollton School at Villa Woodbine

Dear Chairman Hopper, Vice Chair Lewis and Members of the HEPB:

At the meeting of the Board of Trustees of Dade Heritage Trust held October 23, 2019 members heard presentations for and against the proposed Carrollton School for boys to be built on the site of the Historic Villa Woodbine at 2167 South Bayshore Drive in Coconut Grove.

Architect Richard Heisenbottle, representatives of the Carrollton School and other members of the team involved in the project presented details of the proposed new construction and renovation of the site for use as a school for 336 students. Attorneys Scott Silver and Lowell Kuvin representing Coconut Grove residents and neighbors opposed to the plan, expressed their concerns with the size, scale, increased traffic, loss of the tree canopy and other negative impacts of the proposed school on immediate neighbors and the broader Coconut Grove neighborhood.

The Board was impressed with the details of the renovation of the Villa and coral rock features located on the property as well as the credentials and reputation of the team assembled by Carrollton School for the project. The Villa is clearly in need of renovation and restoration. The Board is aware of Carrollton School's well-earned reputation for preservation and stewardship of El Jardin and other historic buildings on the campus of the Carrollton School for girls. The Carrollton School doubtless has the experience, resources and sensitivity to properly restore the Villa.

However, considering its mission "To preserve Miami-Dade County's architectural, environmental and cultural heritage..." Dade Heritage Trust has the following reservations and concerns with the proposed plan:

1. Decimation of the Tree Canopy

The 3.7-acre property extends from Tigertail Avenue to South Bayshore Drive, encompassing a portion of the Silver Bluff. According to Carrollton's presentation, the site contains a mature tree canopy of 173 trees. The proposed site plan requires the removal of 116 of those trees and provides for the relocation on the property of 7 trees. This will decimate the tree canopy and dramatically change the view of the site from neighboring property and from South Bayshore Drive. Also, tree removal plans will eliminate the benefits of an urban green space. Green spaces have been recognized for enhancing the health and wellbeing of people living in cities by improving air quality and reducing urban temperatures. Most importantly it will damage the bucolic setting that is an integral part of the historic and architectural character of the Villa.

2. Project's Effect on the Villa's Silver Bluff Setting

The site plan calls for a 9,975 SF swimming pool and lower deck and a 2,475 SF upper deck to be built either encroaching on the Silver Bluff or between the Bluff and South Bayshore Drive; no renderings were presented at the meeting. DHT is concerned that any building on or between the Bluff and South Bayshore Drive may have a negative impact on the important archaeological and environmental feature that is Coconut Grove's Silver Bluff.¹

3. Size and Scale of Project and Lack of Open Space

In addition to the pool and 2 decks, the new construction includes a 2-story school, an auditorium, a 3,632 SF covered walkway, courtyards and an extensive driveway for ingress and egress that traverses the property from Tigertail Avenue to South Bayshore Drive. According to the site plan the footprint SF of the new construction will be 8 times larger than the Villa and the volume CF of the new construction will be 6.6 times larger than that of the Villa. DHT is concerned that the size and scale of the new construction in proximity to the Villa and the lack of open space will further damage the setting and detract from the historic and architectural character of Villa Woodbine.

4. Impact on Drainage

The decrease in open space and vegetation and dramatic increase in concrete surfaces will impact drainage. The site plan provided does not describe any permeable surfaces or otherwise indicate how this problem will be dealt with.

5. Requirements of Historic Preservation Overlay District

The Villa Woodbine property is an Historic Preservation Overlay District pursuant to Ordinance 11876 adopted by the Miami City Commission 12/14/1999. In granting the change of zoning classification, the Ordinance set forth certain findings regarding the use of the property at the time of the zoning change and stated in pertinent part that it:

¹ "It is found that one of the most significant characteristics of Villa Woodbine is its setting on top of the limestone bluff along South Bayshore Drive." (Planning Dept. analysis for zoning change to Historic Preservation Overlay District, Nov. 16, 1999).

- “...(d) is not out of scale with needs of neighborhood or the city;
- (e) will not materially alter the population density pattern or increase or over tax the load on public facilities such as utilities, streets, etc.;
- (g) will not adversely influence living conditions on the neighborhood;
- (h) will not create or excessively increase traffic congestion or otherwise affect public safety;
- (i) will not create a drainage problem;
- (m) will not constitute a grant of special privilege to an individual owner to compromise the protection of the public welfare. ”

DHT encourages the HEP Board to take these requirements into account in evaluating the proposed project.

Thank you for considering the thoughts and concerns of Dade Heritage Trust in this matter.

Sincerely,



Vinson Richter, President
Dade Heritage Trust

cc: Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart
Richard Heisenbottle
Scott Silver
Lowell Kuvin