

MIAMIBEACH

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Staff Report & Recommendation

Historic Preservation Board

TO: Chairperson and Members
Historic Preservation Board

DATE: April 14, 2026

FROM: Thomas R. Mooney, AICP
Planning Director

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For TRM

SUBJECT: HPB25-0645, **235 Washington Avenue**

An application has been filed requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for the total demolition of the existing 2-story structure, and its replacement with the construction of a new recreation field for the abutting, previously approved school, located at 251 Washington Avenue.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The applicant has filed a revised application that includes a front setback variance for the May 12, 2026 meeting. As such, staff recommends that the Board review the proposed interpretive facade element and provide comments and feedback on the proposal, and continue the application to the May 12, 2026 meeting.

EXISTING STRUCTURES	
Local Historic District:	Ocean Beach
Classification:	Contributing
Architect:	B. Kingston Hall
Construction Date:	1938

ZONING / SITE DATA

Folio:	02-4203-003-1070
Legal Description:	Lot 7, Block 95, of the Ocean Beach Addition No. 3 Subdivision, according to the plat thereof, recorded in Plat Book 2, Page 81 of the public records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.
Zoning:	RPS-3, Residential Performance Standard, Medium-High Density
Future Land Use:	RPS-3, Residential High Density Residential Performance Standard (R-PS-3)
Lot Size:	6,500 sq. ft.
Existing Use:	Hostel
Proposed Use:	Recreational open space and playground

THE PROJECT

The applicant has submitted plans entitled “235 Washington Avenue”, as prepared by Ryan Alderman Architect, dated January 11, 2026, along with supplemental concept images, submitted on April 3, 2026.

COMPLIANCE WITH ZONING CODE

A preliminary review of the project indicates that the application appears to be consistent with the applicable provisions of the Land Development Regulations of the City Code (LDRs).

This shall not be considered final zoning review or approval. These and all zoning matters shall require final review and verification by the Zoning Administrator prior to the issuance of a Building Permit.

CONSISTENCY WITH 2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A preliminary review of the project indicates that the proposed recreational use is **consistent** with the Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan.

COMPLIANCE WITH SEA LEVEL RISE AND RESILIENCY REVIEW CRITERIA

Section 7.1.2.4(a)(1) of the Land Development Regulations establishes review criteria for sea level rise and resiliency that must be considered as part of the review process for board orders. The following is an analysis of the request based upon these criteria:

- A. A recycling or salvage plan for partial or total demolition shall be provided.
Not Satisfied
- B. Windows that are proposed to be replaced shall be hurricane proof impact windows.
Not Applicable
- C. Where feasible and appropriate, passive cooling systems, such as operable windows, shall be provided.
Not Applicable
- D. Resilient landscaping (salt tolerant, highly water-absorbent, native or Florida friendly plants) shall be provided, in accordance with Chapter 4 of the Land Development Regulations.
Satisfied
- E. The project applicant shall consider the adopted sea level rise projections in the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Action Plan, as may be revised from time-to-time by the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact. The applicant shall also specifically study the land elevation of the subject property and the elevation of surrounding properties.
Not Applicable
- F. The ground floor, driveways, and garage ramping for new construction shall be adaptable to the raising of public rights-of-ways and adjacent land and shall provide sufficient height and space to ensure that the entry ways and exits can be modified to accommodate a higher street height of up to three (3) additional feet in height.
Not Applicable

- G. In all new projects, all critical mechanical and electrical systems shall be located above base flood elevation. Due to flooding concerns, all redevelopment projects shall, whenever practicable, and economically reasonable, move all critical mechanical and electrical systems to a location above base flood elevation.
Not Applicable
- H. Existing buildings shall be, where reasonably feasible and economically appropriate, elevated up to base flood elevation, plus City of Miami Beach Freeboard.
Not Applicable
- I. When habitable space is located below the base flood elevation plus City of Miami Beach Freeboard, wet or dry flood proofing systems will be provided in accordance with Chapter of 54 in General Ordinances.
Not Applicable
- J. In all new projects, water retention systems shall be provided.
Not Applicable
- K. Cool pavement materials or porous pavement materials shall be utilized.
Not Applicable
- L. The project design shall minimize the potential for a project causing a heat island effect on site.
Satisfied

COMPLIANCE WITH CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS CRITERIA

A decision on an application for a certificate of appropriateness shall be based upon the following:

- 1. Evaluation of the compatibility of the physical alteration or improvement with surrounding properties and where applicable, compliance with the following criteria pursuant to section 2.13.7(d)(ii)(1) of the Land Development Regulations (it is recommended that the listed criteria be found Satisfied, Not Satisfied or Not Applicable, as so noted):
 - a. The Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings may be amended from time to time.
Not Satisfied – See Staff Analysis
 - b. The Secretary of Interior's Standards for Reconstruction as may be amended from time to time.
Not Applicable
 - c. Other guidelines/policies/plans adopted or approved by resolution or ordinance by the city commission.
Satisfied

The Secretary of Interior's Guidelines for Rehabilitation are intended as an aid to assist in applying the Secretary of Interior's Standards but are not binding on their own and are not meant to give case-specific advice or to address exceptions of unusual conditions.

- 2. The examination of architectural drawings for consistency with the criteria pursuant to section 2.13.7(d)(ii)(2) of the Land Development Regulations and stated below, with

regard to the aesthetics, appearances, compatibility, safety, and function of any new or existing structure, public interior space and physical attributes of the project in relation to the site, adjacent structures and properties, and surrounding community. The criteria referenced above are as follows (it is recommended that the listed criteria be found Satisfied, Not Satisfied or Not Applicable, as so noted):

- a. The location of all existing and proposed buildings, drives, parking spaces, walkways, means of ingress and egress, drainage facilities, utility services, landscaping structures, signs, and lighting and screening devices.
Satisfied
- b. The dimensions of all buildings, structures, setbacks, parking spaces, floor area ratio, height, lot coverage and any other information that may be reasonably necessary to determine compliance with the requirements of the underlying zoning district, and any applicable overlays, for a particular application or project.
Satisfied
- c. The color, design, surface finishes and selection of landscape materials and architectural elements of the exterior of all buildings and structures and primary public interior areas for developments requiring a building permit.
Satisfied
- d. The proposed structure, or additions to an existing structure are appropriate to and compatible with the environment and adjacent structures, and enhance the appearance of the surrounding properties, or the purposes for which the district was created.
Not Satisfied; See Staff Analysis.
- e. The design and layout of the proposed site plan, as well as all new and existing buildings and public interior spaces shall be reviewed so as to provide an efficient arrangement of land uses. Particular attention shall be given to safety, crime prevention and fire protection, relationship to the surrounding neighborhood, impact on preserving historic character of the neighborhood and district, contiguous and adjacent buildings and lands, pedestrian sight lines and view corridors.
Satisfied
- f. Pedestrian and vehicular traffic movement within and adjacent to the site shall be reviewed to ensure that clearly defined, segregated pedestrian access to the site and all buildings is provided for and that any driveways and parking spaces are usable, safely and conveniently arranged and have a minimal impact on pedestrian circulation throughout the site. Access to the site from adjacent roads shall be designed so as to interfere as little as possible with vehicular traffic flow on these roads and pedestrian movement onto and within the site, as well as permit both pedestrians and vehicles a safe ingress and egress to the site.
Satisfied
- g. Lighting shall be reviewed to ensure safe movement of persons and vehicles and reflection on public property for security purposes and to minimize glare and

reflection on adjacent properties and consistent with a city master plan, where applicable.

Satisfied

- h. Landscape and paving materials shall be reviewed to ensure an adequate relationship with and enhancement of the overall site plan design.

Satisfied

- i. Buffering materials shall be reviewed to ensure that headlights of vehicles, noise, and light from structures are adequately shielded from public view, adjacent properties and pedestrian areas.

Satisfied

- j. Any proposed new structure shall have an orientation and massing which is sensitive to and compatible with the building site and surrounding area and which creates or maintains important view corridor(s).

Not Applicable

- k. All buildings shall have, to the greatest extent possible, space in that part of the ground floor fronting a sidewalk, street or streets which is to be occupied for residential or commercial uses; likewise, the upper floors of the pedestal portion of the proposed building fronting a sidewalk street, or streets shall have residential or commercial spaces, or shall have the appearance of being a residential or commercial space or shall have an architectural treatment which shall buffer the appearance of a parking structure from the surrounding area and is integrated with the overall appearance of the project.

Not Applicable

- l. All buildings shall have an appropriate and fully integrated rooftop architectural treatment which substantially screens all mechanical equipment, stairs and elevator towers.

Not Applicable

- m. All portions of a project fronting a street or sidewalk shall incorporate an amount of transparency at the first level necessary to achieve pedestrian compatibility.

Satisfied

- n. The location, design, screening and buffering of all required service bays, delivery bays, trash and refuse receptacles, as well as trash rooms shall be arranged so as to have a minimal impact on adjacent properties.

Satisfied

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR DEMOLITION EVALUATION CRITERIA

Section 2.13.7(d)(vi)(4) of the Land Development Regulations provides criteria by which the Historic Preservation Board evaluates requests for a Certificate of Appropriateness for Demolition. The following is an analysis of the request based upon these criteria:

- a. The building, structure, improvement, or site is of such design, craftsmanship, or material that it could be reproduced only with great difficulty or expense.

Partially Satisfied

The existing structure is designated as Contributing within the Ocean Beach Local Historic District, but it would not be difficult or costly to reproduce.

- b. The building, structure, improvement, or site is one of the last remaining examples of its kind in the neighborhood, the county, or the region, or is a distinctive example of an architectural or design style which contributes to the character of the district.

Satisfied

The existing building is a distinctive example of the Art Deco style of architecture which contributes to the district.

- c. Retention of the building, structure, improvement, landscape feature or site promotes the general welfare of the city by providing an opportunity for study of local history, architecture, and design, or by developing an understanding of the importance and value of a particular culture and heritage.

Satisfied

The retention of the buildings is critical to developing an understanding of an important Miami Beach architectural style.

- d. In the event an applicant or property owner proposes the total demolition of a contributing structure, historic structure or architecturally significant feature, there shall be definite plans presented to the board for the reuse of the property if the proposed demolition is approved and carried out.

Satisfied

The applicant is presenting plans for a recreational open space and playground as part of this application.

- e. The county unsafe structures board has ordered the demolition of a structure without option.

Not Applicable

The Miami-Dade County Unsafe Structures Board has not ordered the demolition of the structure.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Prior Board Discussion

This application was initially reviewed by the Historic Preservation Board on March 17, 2026. Staff recommended approval of the demolition, subject to a condition requiring that an architectural expression recalling the mass and character of the original structure be incorporated into the front perimeter along Washington Avenue, with the design to be reviewed either administratively or returned to the Board at the May meeting.

At the March 17, 2026 HPB Meeting, the following options were discussed:

1. Retain the existing facade in place using an exoskeleton support system.
2. Demolish the structure and reconstruct an identical or near-identical front façade.
3. Approve demolition conditioned on the return of a modern design concept recalling the original structure.

The applicant indicated that retaining the existing facade in place was not feasible given constraints posed by reinforced concrete electrical poles along the rear property line, which preclude conventional rear demolition access. The applicant requested a one-month continuance to the April 14, 2026 meeting to allow time to prepare design documentation addressing the Board's conditions.

The applicant is proposing the total demolition of the existing building and the construction of a recreational playground for the adjacent Basecamp305 school. The existing 2-story structure located at 235 Washington Avenue, which is classified as contributing in the historic properties database, was constructed in 1938 and designed by architect B. Kingston Hall in the Art Deco style of architecture. Notable design features include a central bay with an aluminum double-leaf storefront door flanked by large, fixed metal windows with simulated muntins. Each outer bay contains a single-leaf entrance door and one fixed-light metal window, also with simulated muntins. A shallow eyebrow canopy caps the central bay, while the outer bays are covered by individual canopies set at a lower elevation than the central canopy.

The second level maintains a similar symmetrical arrangement, consisting of a central metal window positioned above the primary entrance and two metal windows on each side, all with simulated muntins. The central second-level window is framed by a painted concrete disk, while the flanking windows are visually tied together by four vertically stacked, painted concrete panels. These panels extend to the outer edges of the facade and wrap around the corners. Access to a covered walkway is provided at the south end of the front facade.

Request for Total Demolition

The existing building appears relatively intact based upon microfilm plans and elevation drawings and has undergone little in the way of exterior modification since its initial construction. The only permitted and completed exterior work has been for windows, doors, and signage, as well as minor maintenance improvements. The interior has undergone numerous modifications, including a permit in 2020 to renovate all guest rooms and the lobby, as well as improvements to accommodate a restaurant.

The applicant has submitted a report prepared by Youssef Hachem Consulting Engineering, entitled "Structural Condition Assessment 235 Washington Avenue," dated December 19, 2025, outlining the building's current structural condition. In summary, this report concludes the following:

"Structure does not comply with today's building code, and even when certain parts of it were built. The materials of the structural systems are compromised and cannot support the loads imposed on it; we recommend demolition of the structure."

The structural engineer's report concludes that total demolition is required. Based on this finding, the retention of original materials, features, or finishes does not appear to be feasible. The Board should consider whether the structural assessment is sufficient to support the requested demolition of the existing structure.



235 Washington Avenue, 2025 photograph

The replication of demolished structures is generally discouraged, and reconstruction has been considered in the past under extenuating circumstances. Where replication is determined to be appropriate, reconstruction is expected to closely reflect the original dimensions, scale and massing of the demolished structure. In this particular instance replicating the subject building, in a usable manner, would be very challenging as the first floor could not be used for any type of habitable use. Raising a replicated structure to meet current base flood elevation and freeboard requirements would result in a highly awkward building that does not properly reflect the scale, massing and design of the original structure.

Although the existing structure is classified as 'contributing' it contains only modest design details, and the replication of the structure is not recommended. Given the advanced state of structural decline, substantiated in the engineering report, staff is supportive of the request for total demolition.

New Recreational Playground

The applicant is proposing to replace the existing structure with an open space area for use by students of the school, which is currently under construction at 251 Washington Avenue. The proposed improvements include recreational open space, seating areas, hardscape elements, perimeter fencing, and landscaping.

The perimeter design includes a seven-foot aluminum picket fence with solid aluminum gates, consistent with the fence at the abutting school. Benches are proposed within the open space area, which is proposed to be surfaced with a pervious artificial turf system (TigerTurf Everglade Spring Pro), striped to accommodate two mini soccer fields.

April 2026 Update

In response to Board and staff comments at the March 17, 2026 hearing, the applicant has submitted supplemental drawings dated April 2026, prepared by Ryan Alderman Architect, depicting a proposed interpretive architectural element along the front (west) perimeter of the property facing Washington Avenue.

The proposed element consists of a glazed ceramic block facade with fiber-reinforced concrete eyebrow elements extending horizontally through the composition. Color variations in the ceramic sunbreaks indicate the locations of former window openings, a circular element, and horizontal banding reflective of the original facade composition. The eyebrow projections recall those of the original structure and are integrated into a concealed structural framework. The assembly maintains approximately 55 percent openness, allowing airflow while preserving visual permeability from the street. The element transitions at the rear to an aluminum picket fence consistent with the perimeter fencing proposed for the remainder of the site.

Staff finds the proposed interpretive element responsive to the direction discussed and favored at the March 17 hearing. The ceramic sunbreak units and fiber-reinforced concrete eyebrows reference the modular composition and horizontal articulation of the original facade while clearly reading as a contemporary installation. The degree of openness maintains visual permeability consistent with the recreational use of the site and avoids a blank masonry wall condition along Washington Avenue. With further detailing, staff is supportive of this direction and believes it can be successful.

The application has been amended to include a front setback variance for the proposed two-story interpretive facade element, which has been advertised for the May 12, 2026 Historic Preservation Board meeting. Staff requests that the Board provide comments and feedback on the proposed design, and continue the application to May 12, 2026.

RECOMMENDATION

In view of the foregoing analysis, staff recommends that the Board review and provide comments on the proposed interpretive facade element, and that the application be **continued to the May 12, 2026 meeting**, to allow for advertisement and final review of the amended application, including the front setback variance.