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# WALTER FLANDERS HOUSE

452 N.E. 39 STREET

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## Designation Report



City of Miami

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
TO THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION BOARD  
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF  
WALTER E. FLANDERS HOUSE  
452 N.E. 39<sup>th</sup> STREET  
AS A HERITAGE CONSERVATION ZONING DISTRICT

Prepared by Maria T. Temkin 4/29/88  
Consultant Date

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Historic Preservation Date  
Planner

Accepted by Arthur King 5/17/88  
Chairman, Heritage Date  
Conservation Board

Designated by Miami City Commission  
Ordinance No. 10552  
Date 2/23/89

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**I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

Historic Name:

Walter E. Flanders House

Current Name:

452 N.E. 39<sup>th</sup> Street

Location:

452 N.E. 39<sup>th</sup> Street  
Miami, Florida 33137

Present Owner:

Alice Wnenk (Deceased)  
452 N.E. 39<sup>th</sup> Street  
Miami, Florida 33137

Present Occupant:

Vacant

Present Use:

Vacant

Present Zoning District:

RG-2/4

HC Zoning Overlay District:

HC-3

Tax Folio Number:

01-3219-011-0210

Boundary Description of HC Zoning District:

Lot 20 of the plat of MAGNOLIA PARK, as recorded in Plat Book 5 at Page 25 of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida.

HC Zoning Classification:

Historic Site

Dade County Historic Survey Rating:

Architectural Significance - 1  
Historical Significance - 2  
Contextural Significance - 3

# WALTER FLANDERS HOUSE

452 N. E. 39 STREET

## II. SIGNIFICANCE

### Specific Date:

circa 1916

### Architect:

Unknown

### Statement of Significance:

The Walter E. Flanders House is primarily significant as an unusual example of Masonry Vernacular architecture in Miami and is particularly noteworthy for the excellence of its craftsmanship and detailing. The house is also significant for its association with Walter Flanders, a real estate developer who platted Magnolia Park.

The Flanders House is one of Miami's more unusual examples of Masonry Vernacular architecture and owes its inspiration to French country cottages. Built circa 1916, the house is characterized by steep gable roofs covered with green French tiles, a tiled second floor skirt, and multiple wood casement windows. The house has survived in a virtually unaltered state of preservation.

This residence is located in Magnolia Park and was originally the home of Walter E. Flanders and his wife, Hazel. Walter Flanders, a businessman from Detroit, Michigan, was responsible for platting Magnolia Park, in 1914, a subdivision of the town of Buena Vista.

Walter E. Flanders, known to be an auto manufacturer, was also involved in real estate. In 1912, he began assembling the parcels of land that were to become Magnolia Park. Flanders purchased the parcels from the early settlers of this area of Dade County, including those of two well-known pioneer families – the Merritts and the Gratignys. Originally, this area was part of the William H. Gleason Homestead Grant.

Magnolia Park includes the lots facing N.E. 38<sup>th</sup> Street (originally name South Drive) and N.E. 39<sup>th</sup> Street (originally named North Drive) from Biscayne Bay to Federal Highway. The Flanders House, constructed circa 1916, was built at a choice location in the subdivision. The living room of the house overlooked a park dedicated to the use of the residents of Magnolia Park. The park extended out to Biscayne Bay.

The subdivision of Magnolia Park, with its desirable location along the bay and just to the north of the City of Miami, soon attracted prosperous and well-known Miami families. Homes of various architectural styles were built in the subdivision. All of

the homes were large in size and represented fine examples of their particular style.

Magnolia Park's earliest residents included the following: Gaston Drake, President of the Drake Lumber Company; and several attorneys Fred Botts, E.B. Kurtz and Frank Smathers, the father of George Smathers, a former Florida Senator. Other Magnolia Park lot owners included Charles, Deering, the brother of James Deering, who owned all of the property which is today's Bay Point; T.V. Moore, who owned a pineapple plantation on property that is part of today's Miami Shores; and Laura Cushman. Cushman School first opened in 1924 in Magnolia Park on two lots facing N.E. 38<sup>th</sup> Street. By 1926, the lots on which the school stood, as well as other lots on the western fringe of the subdivision, were sold for the construction of Biscayne Boulevard. Roy H. Hawkins, operations manager of the Biscayne Boulevard Company, also owned a house in Magnolia Park.

In 1918, the Flander's House had been sold to James R. Blackwood and his wife, Nellie. James Blackwood was in the real estate profession. Although the Flanders House was owned by the Blackwood family up until the early 1940s, the house seems to have served as their personal residence for just a few years. From the late 1920s and up until 1942, the house was occupied by several different families.

In 1942, the Flanders House was purchased by Arnold M. Henderson and his wife, Lucille. Mr. Henderson was manager of the Congress Building in downtown Miami. The Bargel/Wnenk family has been associated with the Flanders House since 1954.

The subdivision of Magnolia Park has changed considerably since its inception. The neighborhood has been encroached upon by modern apartment buildings, office buildings, and roadway ramps. The homes remaining from the subdivision's beginnings serve as reminders of the area's past, once a prosperous and tranquil neighborhood.

#### Relationship to Criteria for Designation:

The Walter E. Flanders House is eligible for designation under the following criteria:

1. Is associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the past.

The Flanders House was the home of Walter E. Flanders and his wife, Hazel. Walter Flanders was responsible for platting, in 1914, the subdivision of Magnolia Park located in the town of Buena Vista.

5. Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction.

The Flanders House is an unusual example of Masonry Vernacular architecture, owing its inspiration to French country cottages.

7. Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship of outstanding quality or which represent a significant innovation or adaptation to the South Florida environment.

The Flanders House is particularly noteworthy for the excellence of its craftsmanship and detailing, and for its use of materials, embodied in such features as its steep gable roofs covered in green Ludovici tiles, its tiled second floor skirt, and its fenestration.

### III. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

#### Description of Building:

The Walter E. Flanders House is an unusual example of Masonry Vernacular architecture, owing its inspiration primarily to French country cottages. The building's most notable feature is its steep gable roofs, taller than the height of the ground floor space. The house's distinguishably tall proportions give it a northern character. Within its one and one-half-story configuration is really a full two-story structure, the second story disguised by the roof structure.

Construction is of reinforced concrete faced in smooth stucco, an unusual use of materials for such an early structure in Miami. The tall gable roofs are covered by green Ludovici tiles. The tiles are of the French type or flat corrugated in profile. Ludovici tiles, very popular in the early years of this century, were of high quality usually with a green or blue glaze fired into them, and ornamental ridge caps.

The house is built on a T-shaped plan. The top bar of the "T" is the main mass, built on a north-south orientation. This part of the house is an unusually tall one and one-half stories. The base of the "T" is the living room wing, attached to the east side of the main mass and laid out on an east-west orientation. This mass is slightly lower. Still, the results are a very tall living room ceiling with exposed rafters.

The main roof has three dormers, two on the east slope, flanking the living room mass, the third on the west slope. The dormers have steep gable roofs, exposed rafter ends, and casement windows. There are green tile diamond shaped insets on the gable ends of dormers on the west elevation. A tiled skirt or apron on the north and south gable ends of the main mass, just at the second floor level, continues the gable overhang on all four sides. Exposed rafter ends embellish the eaves of the roofs. There are decorative caps on gable ends indicating the interior location of roof purlins.

The main entrance is on the north corner of the west elevation. A French door is enhanced by sidelights and a flat, multi-paned transom. In front is a wood framed screen door with small "gingerbread" brackets.

Windows are wood casement, with eight lights. Some of the windows have the original wood shutters with clover leaf cutouts. The north elevation of the main mass has three sets of quadruple casement windows on the ground floor. Above, another set of four casement windows occupies a prominent place on the gable end and provides good light and ventilation to a second story bedroom. A small louvered attic vent is centered above the second story windows. The same fenestration is repeated on the gable end of the south elevation. The openings on the ground floor of the south elevation have been altered. The rear porch has been enclosed with jalousie windows and doors.

The living room mass is of special note. Its north and south walls extend beyond the east wall plane to form a sort of concave flared buttress. The living room space is open by a double French door with sidelights and a flat multi-paned transom on the east, facing the bay. The south side of the living room wing has two sets of double French doors with flat multi-paned transoms. All French doors on the east and south sides open out to a concrete patio. The patio is surrounded by a low concrete wall. Square concrete planters top the wall at corners and points where the wall breaks to give access to the yard. There is an oolitic limestone fireplace in the living room and exposed wood rafters on the ceilings. A stuccoed chimney stack sits atop the roof ridge of the living room mass. Another chimney on the south end of the main mass ventilates a cooking hearth in the kitchen.

Description of Site:

The Flanders House is located on the south side of N.E. 39<sup>th</sup> Street between Biscayne Boulevard and Biscayne Bay. The site is overgrown with vegetation. There are large trees in the backyard. The immediate neighborhood consists of houses from the 1920s and 1930s, and more recent apartment buildings and townhouses that deprive the Flanders House of its former view over Biscayne Bay.



Walter E. Flanders House  
452 N.E. 39<sup>th</sup> Street  
North and West Elevations  
1988



Walter E. Flanders House  
452 N.E. 39<sup>th</sup> Street  
East Elevation  
1988

#### IV. PLANNING CONTEXT

##### Present Trends and Conditions:

The Walter E. Flanders House is located on N.E. 39<sup>th</sup> Street between Biscayne Boulevard and Biscayne Bay. The character of the area has changed considerably in recent years because of the construction of the nearby Julia Tuttle Causeway, which exits onto N.E. 38<sup>th</sup> Street, and the construction of multi-family housing nearby. The commercial usage on the Biscayne Boulevard has begun to spread east, with parking lots to service the commercial uses.

Because of its location, it is unlikely that the Flanders House can be sold for use as a single family residence. However, it is likely that the building could be preserved and reused if a zoning bonus were given to allow a change of use from residential to professional office. This economically productive adaptive use would allow the building to be preserved.

##### Conservation Objectives:

In order to encourage the preservation of the Walter E. Flanders House, a change of use should be allowed to permit the existing building to house professional offices. This use would be compatible with adjacent existing and potential uses and would not cause an undue negative impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

These conservation objectives can best be achieved by applying an HC-3: Residential-Office Heritage Conservation Overlay District to the property. The HC-3 overlay district permits a residential property to be used for professional office.

This change of use would apply to the historic building only, which is the only building of historic significance on the site.

## V. HC ZONING ELEMENTS

### Boudaries:

The boundaries of the HC zoning district have been drawn to include the entire tract of land under a single ownership.

### Major Exterior Surfaces Subject to Review:

All four facades shall be considered major exterior surfaces subject to review.

### Major Landscape Features Subject to Review:

The major landscape features subject to review shall include all features which are subject to requirements for tree removal permits, as set forth in Chapter 17 of the City Code.

## VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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