

January 20, 2023

Honorable City Planning Commission
Cincinnati, Ohio

SUBJECT: A report and recommendation on a proposed Local Historic Landmark designation of 700 Chalfonte Place in Avondale and North Avondale.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Location: 700 Chalfonte Place, Cincinnati, Ohio 45229
Applicant: Sullebarger Associates
Applicant's address: 1080 Morse Avenue, Glendale, Ohio 45246
Property Owner: Nadav Livne
Property Owner's Address: 11711 Princeton Pike, Suite 341, Cincinnati, Ohio 45246

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Location Map
Attachment B – Historic Designation Report
Attachment C – Historic Conservation Guidelines
Attachment D – Historic Conservation Board decision letter

BACKGROUND:

The petitioner is requesting a Local Historic Landmark designation for the La Ventura apartment building at 700 Chalfonte Place in Avondale and North Avondale. Developer Nadav Livne owns the building and is seeking this designation to make the building potentially eligible for state historic tax credits to renovate the building into twenty-three (23) work force apartment units. The current zoning on the property is Residential Multi-family (RM-1.2) which would allow up to 36 units by-right otherwise. There is an off-street parking lot on the property to serve the future residents of the building, where the applicant intends to provide a total of 36 parking spaces, whereas zoning only requires 35 parking spaces.

According to Chapter 1435-07-1 of the Cincinnati Zoning Code (Historic Preservation), certain findings must be made before a Local Historic District or Landmark can be designated by City Council. The proposed building must be found to have historic or architectural significance by having one or more of the following criteria below:

1. Are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
2. Are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
4. That has yielded or may be likely to yield information important in history or prehistory.

The applicant for this local historic landmark designation is nominating this landmark under Criterion 1 for its significant contributions to the broad patterns of our history and Criterion 3 for architectural

significance. The proposed Local Historic Landmark designation of the La Ventura apartment building is a significant Cincinnati resource as defined by Chapter 1435 of the Cincinnati Zoning Code because it meets two of the criteria listed above, which is described further below in this staff report.

On January 9, 2023, the Historic Conservation Board (HCB) voted unanimously to recommend the proposed Local Historic Landmark designation of the La Ventura Apartments at 700 Chalfonte Place under Criterion 1 (historical significance) and Criterion 3 (architectural significance) in Avondale and North Avondale to City Planning Commission and City Council.

HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:

Under Criterion 1, it has been determined by City staff to be significant as a reflection of the transformation of Cincinnati's Avondale neighborhood from one of large estates and single-family homes to multi-family housing as the area became accessible to new residents via streetcars and automobiles. It is also representative of the movement of Cincinnati's Jewish population from the West End to Avondale in the early 20th century.

Under Criterion 3, the building is architecturally significant as an example of the Mediterranean style as applied to an apartment building by the firm of architects S. S. Godley and his son George H. Godley, who designed numerous projects for Jewish clients in Avondale. The Designation Report in Attachment B details the historic and architectural significance of the building.

ANALYSIS:

In making a determination, the City Planning Commission shall consider all of the following factors:

- (1) The relationship of the proposed designation to the comprehensive plans of the city and of the community in which the proposed Historic Landmark, Historic District or Historic Site is located; and

The designation of 700 Chalfonte Place (La Ventura apartment building) as a Local Historic Landmark is consistent with Plan Cincinnati (2012). In the Sustain Initiative Area, a Goal states to "preserve our natural and built environment" and "preserve our built history with new development incentives and regulatory measures" (pages 193-194). This designation will eventually preserve and rehabilitate a vacant historic building.

- (2) The effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding areas and economic development plans of the city; and

Designating 700 Chalfonte Place (La Ventura apartment building) will assist in the renovation of the building by allowing the property owner to apply for the necessary historic tax credits. The revitalization of the building will have a positive impact on the community and economic development plans of the City by bringing a vacant building back to life and adding much needed work force housing units in Cincinnati.

- (3) Such other planning and historic preservation considerations as may be relevant to the proposed designation.

This designation will assist in the redevelopment of this building and this area of Avondale and North Avondale.

City staff believes that the proposed Local Historic Landmark designation of 700 Chalfonte Place in Avondale and North Avondale meets the requirements of Chapter 1435 of the Cincinnati Municipal Code (Historic Preservation). The documentation in the designation report (Attachment B) provides conclusive evidence that all required findings may be made for the proposed designation. This designation will help the renovation of the La Ventura apartment building and hopefully encourage more rehabilitation in this area of Avondale and North Avondale.

The Historic Conservation Board unanimously recommended approval of this proposed Local Historic Landmark designation to City Planning Commission and City Council at their January 9, 2023 meeting (Attachment D).

Per Chapter 1435- 07-2-C. - Adoption of Conservation Guidelines.

“At the time of designation of a Historic Landmark, Historic District or Historic Site, Council has the duty to adopt conservation guidelines for each Historic Landmark, Historic District or Historic Site. Conservation guidelines shall promote the conservation, development and use of the Historic Landmark, Historic District or Historic Site and its special historic, architectural, community or aesthetic interest or value. Insofar as practicable, conservation guidelines shall promote redevelopment and revitalization of Historic Structures and compatible new development within the Historic District. The guidelines shall not limit new construction within a Historic District to a single period or architectural style but may seek to preserve the integrity of existing Historic Structures. Conservation guidelines shall take into account the impact of the designation of a Historic Landmark, Historic District or Historic Site on the residents of the affected area, the effect of the designation on the economic and social characteristics of the affected area, the projected impact of the designation on the budget of the city.”

The proposed guidelines are attached to this staff report as Attachment C. The Historic Conservation Board and staff of the Department of City Planning and Engagement have determined that the proposed guidelines are acceptable to meet the goal of preserving the architecture of this Local Historic Landmark designation.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

A joint virtual public staff conference with the Historic Conservation Office and the Department of City Planning and Engagement was held on December 21, 2022. Notices were sent to property owners within a 400’ radius of the proposed Local Historic Landmark designation and the Avondale Community Council. Because this site is located in a Community Council Boundary Overlap Area, notice also should have been sent to the North Avondale Neighborhood Association (NANA). After this unintentional error was discovered, a notice was sent to NANA prior to the Historic Conservation Board meeting and City Planning Commission meeting. A couple of neighboring property owners and NANA expressed concerns about parking and the number of units with the development. The Avondale Community Council did not provide comment.

CONSISTENCY WITH PLANS:

The designation of La Ventura Apartments as a Local Historic Landmark in Avondale and North Avondale is consistent with *Plan Cincinnati* (2012). Specifically, within the Sustain Initiative Area, a Goal recommends to “preserve our natural and built environment” and “preserve our built history with new development incentives and regulatory measures” (pages 193-194). It is also consistent with the Live Initiative Area, Goal 3 recommends to “Provide a full spectrum of housing options, and improve

housing quality and affordability” (page 164). This designation will eventually preserve and rehabilitate a vacant historic building.

It is also consistent with *Avondale’s Quality of Live Movement Plan (2020)*. Specifically, within Goal 12, it states that “Revitalize Avondale with a diverse quality housing stock which meets the needs of existing seniors, owners and renters and attracts new residents” (pages 27, 56). This designation will provide new housing for additional residents in Avondale.

RECOMMENDATION:

The staff of the Department of City Planning and Engagement recommends that the City Planning Commission take the following actions:

1. **APPROVE** the proposed Local Historic Landmark designation of La Ventura Apartments at 700 Chalfonte Place in Avondale and North Avondale, as described in the “La Ventura Apartments Historic Designation Report” as seen in Attachment B;
2. **APPROVE** the map amendment designating the Local Historic Landmark as seen in Attachment A; and
3. **APPROVE** the “La Ventura Apartments Historic Conservation Guidelines” as seen in Attachment C.

Respectfully submitted:



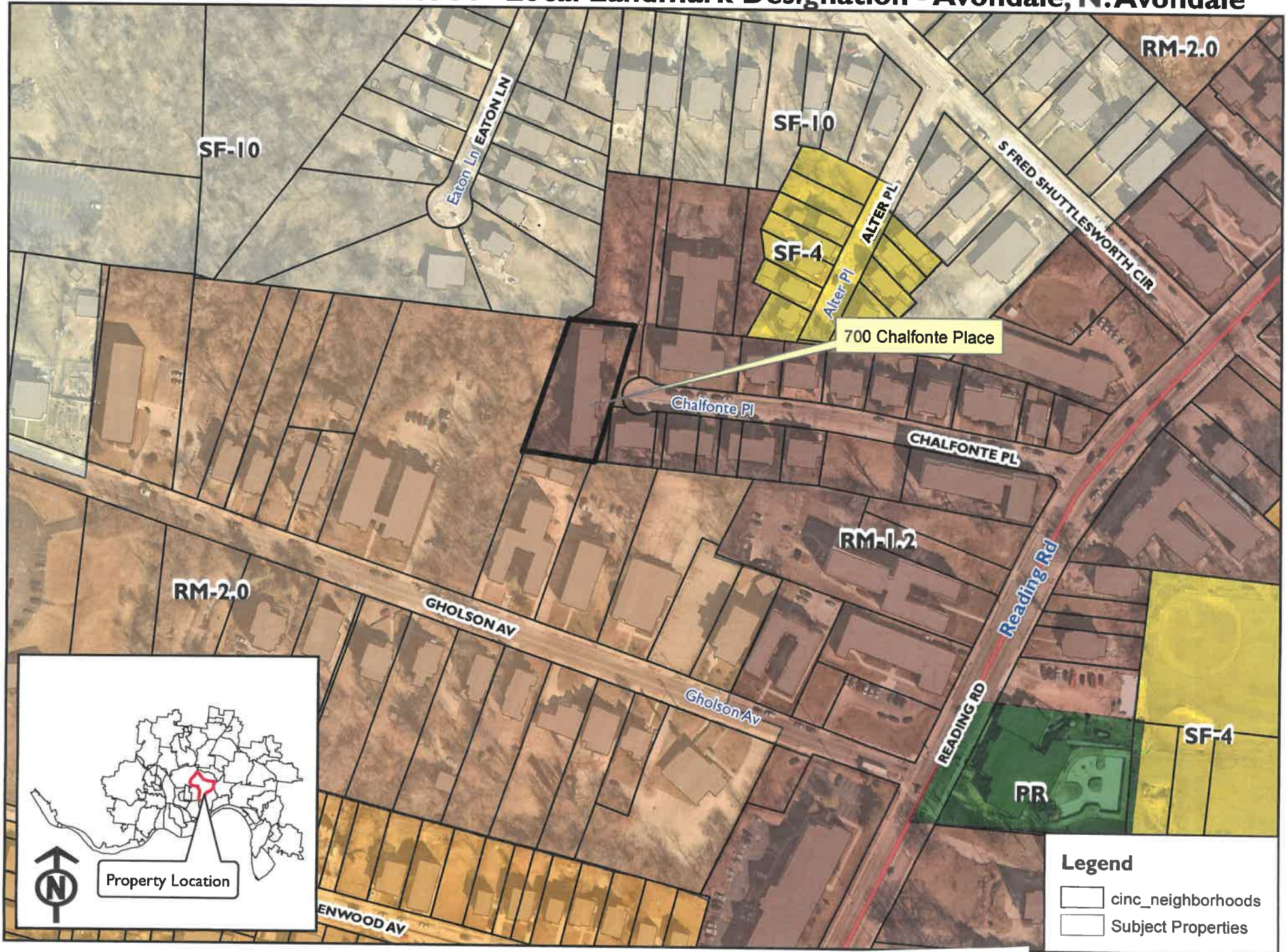
Caroline Hardy Kellam, Senior City Planner
Department of City Planning and Engagement

Approved:



Katherine Keough-Jurs, FAICP, Director
Department of City Planning and Engagement

La Ventura - 700 Chalfonte Pl - Local Landmark Designation - Avondale, N. Avondale



Introduction

This report presents the findings and recommendations for a local landmark designation of the La Ventura apartment building at 700 Chalfonte Place in Avondale. The purpose of this designation report is to establish the building's significance as an individual landmark. This report was prepared by Beth Sullebarger of Sullebarger Associates at the request of the owner, 700 Chalfonte Holdings LLC.

Background

Overview of Designation Process

This designation report is supported by the owner, Nadav Livne, owner of YOLO Investments, who plans to rehabilitate the building using state and federal tax credits for historic preservation as 700 Chalfonte Holdings LLC.

Research Methodology

Archival research was conducted online through the Cincinnati-Hamilton County Public Library, Hamilton County Recorder's Office, Hamilton County Auditor, Ohio Public Library Information Network (OPLIN). Among the sources consulted were historic maps, atlases, photographs, local histories, federal census, newspaper articles and city directories, which provided information about the building, the builder and architect, and the surrounding neighborhood. Additional information about George Miller, the builder, was obtained in a phone interview with his grandson, Marvin Kaplan, on October 3, 2022.

Description

Site

The La Ventura occupies a lot at the west end of Chalfonte Place, a cul-de-sac that runs west from Reading Road. The building stands on a parallelogram-shaped site, measuring 102.85 feet by 215.40 feet by 102.81 feet by 215.56 feet containing 0.4947 acres, which is proposed for landmark designation. No other structures are present on this parcel. (See plat in Figure 1.) While the builders acquired several other parcels that are now combined with the original parcel into a consolidated lot totaling 0.995 acres, the additional pieces are mostly vacant, except for a concrete slab, and do not contribute to the historic or architectural significance of La Ventura.

Setting

The La Ventura is located at the west end of Chalfonte Place, a cul-de-sac that runs west from Reading Road in Avondale (Photo 1). The building faces east on axis with the street, which is lined with other 3-story apartment buildings and 2-family homes built between 1928 and 1965, mostly in the Tudor style. The setting is relatively unchanged except that a one-story parking garage on the north side of the building was removed by 2006 and all that remains of it is a slab. A driveway runs around the north side of the building to a paved parking area in the rear. Woods further west and to the south screen La Ventura from neighboring properties on those sides.

Building

The structure is a three-story, 23-unit walkup Mediterranean-style apartment building built in 1928. It has a long front elevation parallel to the street comprising three sections, each with its own entrance. The building has a smooth yellow brick exterior, multi-light steel casement windows, and a flat roof enclosed by a low parapet with terra cotta coping. The façade is enlivened by three projecting entrance bays, which contain stairways. Unified by a rise in the parapet, the center section is more elaborate and wider than the others at five bays vs. three bays. The entrance has a porch with a round-arched opening flanked by pilasters and an entablature above. The center of that entablature is incised with the name of the building—La Ventura, surmounted by a fan-shaped cap (Photo 2). The pilasters are capped by ball finials, one of which is missing. The central entrance is further dramatized with curved wing walls with stone coping. Above is a slightly projecting tower with an octagonal window at the second floor. The tower is topped by a belvedere with round-arched openings, a pyramidal terra cotta tile roof and a shallow corbelled balcony in the front. The tower is flanked by paired steel casement windows and wrought-iron balconies with French doors. The balcony on the third floor left of the tower has a pent roof, which appears to be an alteration; the corresponding balcony on the right has none.

The projections at the ends are three-bays-wide with porches flanking the central stair tower. Each has a simple doorway at the ground floor, an octagonal window at the second and a tall window at the third floor. The tower has a hipped terra cotta tile roof with a front gable. The porches are detailed differently at each floor—with straight lintels and solid railings at the ground floor, round-arched openings and wrought-iron railings at the second floor, and solid railings with twisted colonnettes at the third floor. The fenestration varies between paired steel casements and wider windows with casements flanking a stationary section in the center, all with transoms and soldier-course lintels, except for blind arches in four bays at the third floor on each side of the center section.

The side and rear elevations are simpler and utilitarian in design. The north elevation has a square chimney that rises well above the roof (Photo 3). The land slopes down at the north end and rear, exposing the poured concrete foundation. The fenestration on the rear (Photo 4) includes double paired windows that light the kitchens, paired casements that light the bedrooms and rear stairways, and single casements that light the bathrooms. Similarly sized windows at the foundation provide light into basement apartment units.

On the interior, each of the three sections is divided down the middle by a front stair and back stair, with a 2-bedroom apartment on each side on each floor, for a total of 18 units on the first through third floors. The basement holds five additional units, for a total of 23. Beyond a small entrance vestibule with glazed brown tile wainscot, the front stairs are steel with molded newel posts and stringers, wood handrails, steel risers and concrete treads and landings. Accessed from the kitchens by two-panel metal doors, the back stairs are cast concrete with simple pipe railings. The walls of the front stairs are plaster, while those in the back stairs are glazed brick.

Boundary

The property boundary for the purpose of landmark designation is that conveyed per Deed Book 1452 Page 392, as follows: Starting at the northwest corner of Lot six (6) of the Robert Andrews Subdivision and recorded in Plat Book 4, pages 306-307, of the Hamilton County Recorder; then eastwardly along the north line of Lot six (6), one hundred two and 85/100 (102.85) feet to the northeast corner of Lot six (6); thence northwardly two hundred fifteen and 40/100 (215.40) feet; thence westwardly one hundred two and 81/100 (102.81) feet; then southerly two hundred fifteen and 56/100 (215.56) feet to the place of beginning, containing 0.4947 acres of land.

Justification of Boundary

The above-listed boundary delineates the original property on which the La Ventura stands and for which designation is being requested. No other structures are present on this piece. The boundary excludes adjoining properties that were acquired separately but consolidated into a 0.995-acre parcel.

Statement of Significance

La Ventura is significant under Criteria 1 and 3. Under Criterion 1, it is significant as a reflection of the transformation of Cincinnati's Avondale neighborhood from one of large estates and single-family homes to multi-family housing as the area became accessible to new residents via streetcars and automobiles. It is also representative of the movement of Jews from the West End to Avondale in the early 20th century. Under Criterion 3, the building is architecturally significant as an example of the Mediterranean style as applied to an apartment building by the firm of architects S. S. Godley and his son George H. Godley, who designed numerous projects for Jewish clients in Avondale.

Historical Significance

La Ventura

Built in 1928, La Ventura is significant under Criterion 1 for exemplifying the development of the Avondale neighborhood as it transitioned from an area of large estates to a suburb of upscale single-family homes, to a mixed-income neighborhood of streetcar apartment buildings and finally to a low-income neighborhood where single-family homes were converted to multi-family dwellings. It also is representative of the movement of Jews from the West End to Avondale in the early 20th century, who were followed by African Americans beginning circa 1930.

Just three years after the Chalfonte Place Subdivision was recorded in 1925 (Figure 3), La Ventura was built by George Miller (1893-1962), owner of Miller Properties, a contractor and developer (Figure 4.) The son of Lithuanian Jews, Miller immigrated to the US (1940 US Federal Census). In 1924, George married Ohio-born Libbye Leitz (1900–1961)(See Figure 5 for obituary.), daughter of Russian Jewish immigrants Julius and Ida B. Leitz (1910 US Federal Census).

Despite completing just one year of high school, George Miller was a successful entrepreneur in demolition, construction and real estate development. According to his grandson, Marvin

Kaplan, George and his brother Norman started a paint and wallpaper business known as Miller Brothers (which is still in business, although under different owners, as the largest independent dealer of coatings in Southwest Ohio). Miller avidly salvaged materials from his demolition business that he then reused in his construction projects.

Miller and his wife Libbye acquired the site for La Ventura from Beatrice T. Kaichen on January 1, 1928 (Deed Book 1452, Page 392), being part of Lot 6 in the Robert Andrews Subdivision, which was recorded in 1876. In 1927, the Millers moved into a Tudor Revival house they built at 3604 Eaton Lane in the newly recorded J. G. Cooper's Eaton Lane Subdivision (Plat Book 31, Page 13). This property, where the Millers lived until 1948, adjoins the La Ventura property to the northwest (Hamilton County Auditor). They acquired several more pieces of land around La Ventura, including a curved piece around the circle of the cul-de-sac and a large rectangular lot to the north, which, according to a 1963 article about the sale of the building, had a one-story concrete-block garage with space for 50 cars (demolished by 2006). (See Figure 6.) (These additional parcels are not proposed for designation.)

Continuing in an entrepreneurial mode, Miller recorded the George Miller Subdivision (also a cul-de-sac off Reading Road in Avondale) in 1940. He named it Debbe Lane (after his daughter) and developed it with seven apartment buildings. He configured Debbe Lane very similarly to Chalfonte Place and anchored its west end by building the Bonheur (971 Debbe Lane), a massive three-story buff-brick Norman Revival apartment building with a central tower, half-timbering, and terra cotta tile roof, in 1937. He built six other apartment buildings there, in the 1930s. Marvin Kaplan believes that the Bonheur and other apartment buildings (four extant) that followed on Debbe Lane were all designed by S. S. Godley and/or his son George. In their final years, the Millers lived at 974 Debbe Lane, a modern apartment building built in 1951 of brick salvaged from their wrecking business.¹

Development of Avondale

The neighborhood of Avondale, approximately five miles north of downtown Cincinnati and comprising 800 acres, evolved as a single suburban village but over the years the movement of different social, economic, and ethnic groups in and out of the community altered and eventually fragmented its identity. Today Avondale is split into two neighborhoods, North and South Avondale (often referred to simply as Avondale). Avondale is bounded on the north by the City of St. Bernard and Avon Field Golf Course, on the east by the City of Norwood and the I-71 expressway, on the south by Walnut Hills and Corryville, and on the west by Clifton. Glenwood Avenue, where 818 stands, delineates the boundary between North Avondale and South Avondale.

Avondale's first wave of construction began in the 1830s when members of the merchant class began building large single-family dwellings on extensive parcels and commuting to work in the city. As more wealthy Cincinnatians began to construct suburban residences, Avondale landholders further divided their large holdings for sale as residential lots. Examples are

¹ After the death of George and Libbye Miller, their son Frederick, an architect who participated in the family business, inherited a lot from them at 710 Chalfonte Place in 1963 and built a three-story modern apartment building in 1965.

Jonathan Dayton, who subdivided his property, known as Clinton, in 1846, and James Corry, who subdivided a tract called Locust Grove soon after (Giglierno & Overmyer, 380). In 1852, Samuel Cloon's Subdivision created 37 lots to the north of the future Chalfonte Place, with streets originally named Dennis and Duffield streets, later to be North and South Crescent avenues and finally North and South Fred Shuttlesworth Circle. These lots ranged in size from .68 acres to 10.7 acres, so still fairly large.

The village of Avondale incorporated in 1864. One of the major factors behind that decision was an attempt to control issues that plagued the community between the 1870s and early 1890s, including burglaries, vagrants, public drunkenness, and brawling. These efforts were largely unsuccessful, much to the dismay of Avondale's upper-class residents. The village did have more success, however, with its public works programs, such as road improvement and the laying of sewer lines (Giglierno & Overmyer, 380).

Beginning in 1870, the City of Cincinnati began annexing communities, including Avondale, in hopes of regaining population, and the associated tax income that had been migrating to the suburbs. This measure was approved by only a small majority of voters, and its opponents contested the results. The Ohio Supreme Court declared the law under which the election was held to be illegal, but annexation ultimately did occur in 1896. Despite the original opposition, annexation afforded some benefits to Avondale residents. The improved police and fire protection that Cincinnati provided significantly reduced Avondale's crime problem within only a few years, and the suburb became generally a safer, more pleasant place to live (Giglierno & Overmyer, 381).

These improvements generated a wave of subdivisions named for Wayne, Krohn, Wilson, and the Avondale and the Cincinnati & Avondale syndicates, comprising two or three hundred acres. This was followed by the subdivision of over a hundred acres of the original Woodward property, which had been divided among his three daughters—Mrs. Hutchins, Mrs. Gallup and Mrs. Cleveland. The former Woodward tract was crossed by a narrow-gauge railroad, which had been abandoned by the company so that when the streets were improved, the cuts at the crossings were filled in and railroad bridges removed. In 1876, Robert Andrews made a small subdivision of seven lots on Gholson Avenue to the south of the still future Chalfonte Place. In 1892, Robert Mitchell began to develop the Rose Hill subdivision to the north

Most of Avondale's population during the nineteenth century were merchant class of Protestant English or German ancestry. Only a small number of its inhabitants were middle or lower class, and only 8-10% were black. Beginning in the 1890s, however, well-to-do German Jewish families began moving into the northern part of Avondale (Giglierno & Overmyer, 380).

By the turn of the twentieth century electric railway was on the precipice of changing the character of the neighborhood again. *C. S. Mendenhall's Standard Guide Map of Cincinnati* published in 1903 shows an electric railway running up Reading Road, a stone's throw away from La Ventura to Clinton Springs Avenue where it turned west, continuing along Mitchell Avenue to Winton and Spring Grove Cemetery. By the early 20th century transportation innovations stimulated the market for more housing in the desirable neighborhood of Avondale, which led to construction of apartment buildings. For instance, circa 1905, the Beaux-Arts-style Alameda Flats (NR # 14000293) was built at 3580-3586 Reading Road; circa 1908, the

Romanesque-inspired Poinciana (NR# 14000294) was erected at 3522 Reading Road; and in circa 1911, the Mediterranean-style Crescent apartments (NR# 14000336) was built at 3719 Reading Road just around the corner from La Ventura.

Although these early apartment buildings were built for members of the upper-class, several other apartments for the growing middle-class were erected in Avondale, allowing for the community to become more diverse. These new residents included many Greek Americans and Eastern European Jews, particularly following a general exodus of the Jewish population from the declining West End in the early 20th century and would profoundly change the character of the community. Between the 1920s and the end of World War II, Avondale was known as the "gilded ghetto," with Jewish inhabitants making up 60% of the suburb's total population. A variety of Jewish institutions and businesses, many of which originated in the old Jewish neighborhoods of the West End, also took up residence in Avondale at this time (Giglierno & Overmyer, 381-382).

Resulting from this exodus of the middle-class to Avondale, its community development pattern shifted away from the construction of large residences on spacious lots to the construction of high-density suburban apartment buildings erected near streetcar lines. It was during this period of suburban expansion that the Chalfonte Place subdivision was created from the former Alms property (Figure 2) in 1925 by the Realty Equity Company by C. C. Weber President and subsequently developed with apartments buildings and two-family residences (Figure 3).

During the 1930s Avondale's community development pattern began to change, once again. As outlined in the "North Avondale Community Master Plan," published in 1970 by the Cincinnati City Planning Commission, the land use pattern and density increased substantially in Avondale from 1930 to 1970 (40). It was common for the large single-family dwellings to be subdivided into apartments. In addition to the subdivision of dwellings, the increase of renter-occupied housing resulted from the development of vacant land zoned for high-density development.

During this transition in the community development pattern, many of the community's younger residents bought more modern homes in the newer suburbs, taking advantage of low mortgage rates. Older residents, whose large homes were becoming too difficult to maintain, also began to move away. These departing residents were often replaced by middle-income black families who were willing to pay inflated prices to live in one of the few "decent" neighborhoods available to them.

Some white homeowners panicked and left Avondale as the black population grew, a process that was encouraged by opportunistic realtors. As property values fell, Avondale became even more accessible to lower-income residents, including black families that had been displaced by urban renewal efforts elsewhere in the city. By 1959, the southern portion of Avondale, which had been predominantly Jewish, had become mostly black, particularly after the Cincinnati Department of Relocation settled 220 black families in the neighborhood, often in larger houses that had been illegally subdivided into multi-family dwellings (Giglierno & Overmyer, 382). In addition to the subdivision of single-family dwellings into multi-families, the increase of renter-occupied housing resulted from the development of vacant land zoned for high-density development, which changed the community development pattern.

North Avondale did not experience the dramatic racial turnover and reduction of property values. The North Avondale Neighborhood Association (NANA) was formed in 1960 for the express purpose of actively fighting blockbusting and improving community relations. The group's efforts helped racially and economically integrate North Avondale, a process that had not occurred in South Avondale. As a result, North and South Avondale became increasingly separate neighborhoods.

Architectural Significance

Under Criterion 3, the building is architecturally significant as an example of the Mediterranean style as applied to an apartment building by the firm of architect S. S. Godley and George H. Godley. La Ventura is one of a dozen handsome apartment buildings built in the first half of the 20th century on or near the Reading Road corridor in Avondale. As mentioned above, the Beaux-Arts-style Alameda Flats (NR#14000293) was built circa 1905 at 3580-3586 Reading Road; the Romanesque-inspired Poinciana (NR#14000294) was erected at 3522 Reading Road circa 1908; and the Mediterranean-style Crescent Court apartments (NR#14000336) was built at 3719 Reading Road circa 1911, creating ample precedent for an undertaking such as La Ventura.

La Ventura Apartments is an excellent example of a Mediterranean-style apartment building. Typical characteristics of that style include its yellow brick exterior, steel casement windows, arched motifs, porches and balconies, central tower and terra cotta roof tiles. Besides Crescent Court, another example of a Mediterranean-style apartment building in Avondale is the Ambassador (NR#14000356), built at 722-724 Gholson Avenue in 1929, slightly later than La Ventura. Like La Ventura, the Ambassador is a three-story brick building with wrought-iron balconies and terra-cotta tiled roofs.

The architect of La Ventura was Cincinnati architect S. (Samuel) S. Godley (1858-1941), who designed several buildings in Avondale for Jewish clients. S. S. Godley practiced with his son George H. Godley (1889-1961) from 1921 to 1931, when La Ventura was built. Educated at the Farmers' College in College Hill, S. S. Godley "received his practical education in the offices of local architects," including Edwin Anderson, Henry Bevis, and James W. McLaughlin. He opened his own office in Cincinnati in 1888, expanded it in 1893, practiced on his own, and with his son George in the 1920s, as mentioned above.

According to architectural historian Walter E. Langsam, S. S. Godley was "one of the most sophisticated designers of residences for both the Jewish and Gentile elites of the city for several decades. His residential clients included members of the Doepke, Duttonhofer, Feiss, Fleischmann, Freiberg, Heinsheimer, Herschede, Jacob, Kuhn, Mack, Mitchell, Prichard, Resor, Steinau, Strader, Wise, Wolf, and Workum families, all of whom had leading roles in the economic, social, and cultural life of the city." Many of these homes were in the Cincinnati neighborhood of Avondale, including the handsome Beaux-Arts Frank Herschede mansion (1908), which stood at 3886 Reading Road. S. S. Godley also designed a few apartment buildings in Avondale, including a three-story Tudor Revival-style court apartment building at 603-613 Forest Avenue. It appears that S. S. Godley was also the architect for the Bonheur at the end of Debbe Lane, which is very similar to La Ventura in its siting, massing and materials.

George H. Godley clearly benefitted from his father's long association with Avondale and by adopting his father's profession. After Samuel's death in 1941, the son practiced under his own name until his death 20 years later in 1961. His design of the South Crescent Arms (now known

as The Redding) in 1950 continued the firm's residential commissions in Avondale but reflected the dramatic changes in scale and style that occurred after World War II. About the same time as the South Crescent Arms, George Godley designed a few low-scale modern brick apartment buildings on Debbe Lane for George Miller circa 1950-51.

Summary

La Ventura is significant under Criteria 1 and 3. Under Criterion 1, it reflect the transition of Cincinnati's Avondale neighborhood from one of large estates and single-family homes to multi-family housing as the area became accessible to new residents via streetcars and automobiles. As the project of a Jewish builder and real estate developer, it also is representative of the movement of Jews to Avondale in the early 20th century. Under Criterion 3, the building is significant as an example of Mediterranean-style architecture reflected in its yellow brick, steel casement windows, arch motifs, its porches and balconies, central tower and terra cotta roof tiles. It is further significant as the work of architect S. S. Godley and his son George H. Godley, who designed numerous projects for Jewish clients, like George Miller, in Avondale.

Findings

According to Chapter 1435 of the Cincinnati Zoning Code (Historic Preservation) certain findings must be made before a historic structure can be designated by City Council. The structure must be found to have historic significance. Historic significance means that the attributes of a district, site or structure possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

1. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
2. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
3. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
4. That has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

Planning Considerations

Compatibility with Plan Cincinnati

"Plan Cincinnati", the current Master Plan adopted by City Council in 2012, supports and encourages historic preservation:

"As housing demand increases in the oldest neighborhoods, the City's broad and reputable historic building stock should be preserved...."

Historic Conservation is considered a fundamental component in Cincinnati's future with policy principles including:

"Preserve our resources and facilitate sustainable development."

“Cincinnati is known for our historic built character and spectacular natural beauty. The City will focus on preserving and protecting our unique assets and reverse the modern trend of ‘disposable’ development.”

Cincinnati’s Zoning Code includes a commitment to historic preservation through its goals and policies. Three specific purposes of historic preservation, according to the current Zoning Code Section 1435-03 include:

“to safeguard the heritage of the city by preserving districts and landmarks which reflect elements of its history, architecture and archeology, engineering or culture,”

“to conserve the valuable material and energy resources by ongoing use and maintenance of the existing built environment,”

“to maintain the historic urban fabric of the city.”

Thus, landmark designation of the La Ventura Apartments, which allows for preservation of the building, is compatible with city plans and consistent with policy and code.

The La Ventura Apartments has historic significance according to Chapter 1435 as defined under Criterion 1. It is significant as a reflection of the transformation of Cincinnati’s Avondale neighborhood from one of large estates and single-family homes to multi-family housing as the area became accessible to new residents via streetcars and automobiles. It also is representative of the movement of Jews from the West End to Avondale in the early 20th century. The building also meets Criterion 3 as a significant example of a Mediterranean-style apartment building by S. S. Godley and his son George, a locally renowned architectural firm that served many clients in Avondale.

Summary of Findings

The designation of the La Ventura Apartments meets the requirements of Chapter 1435 of the Cincinnati Zoning Code (Historic Preservation). The documentation in this designation report provides conclusive evidence that all required findings may be made for the proposed designation.

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La Ventura, Front Elevation, looking west



La Ventura, Front Elevation Detail



La Ventura, East (Front) and North (Side) Elevations



La Ventura, West (Rear) Elevation

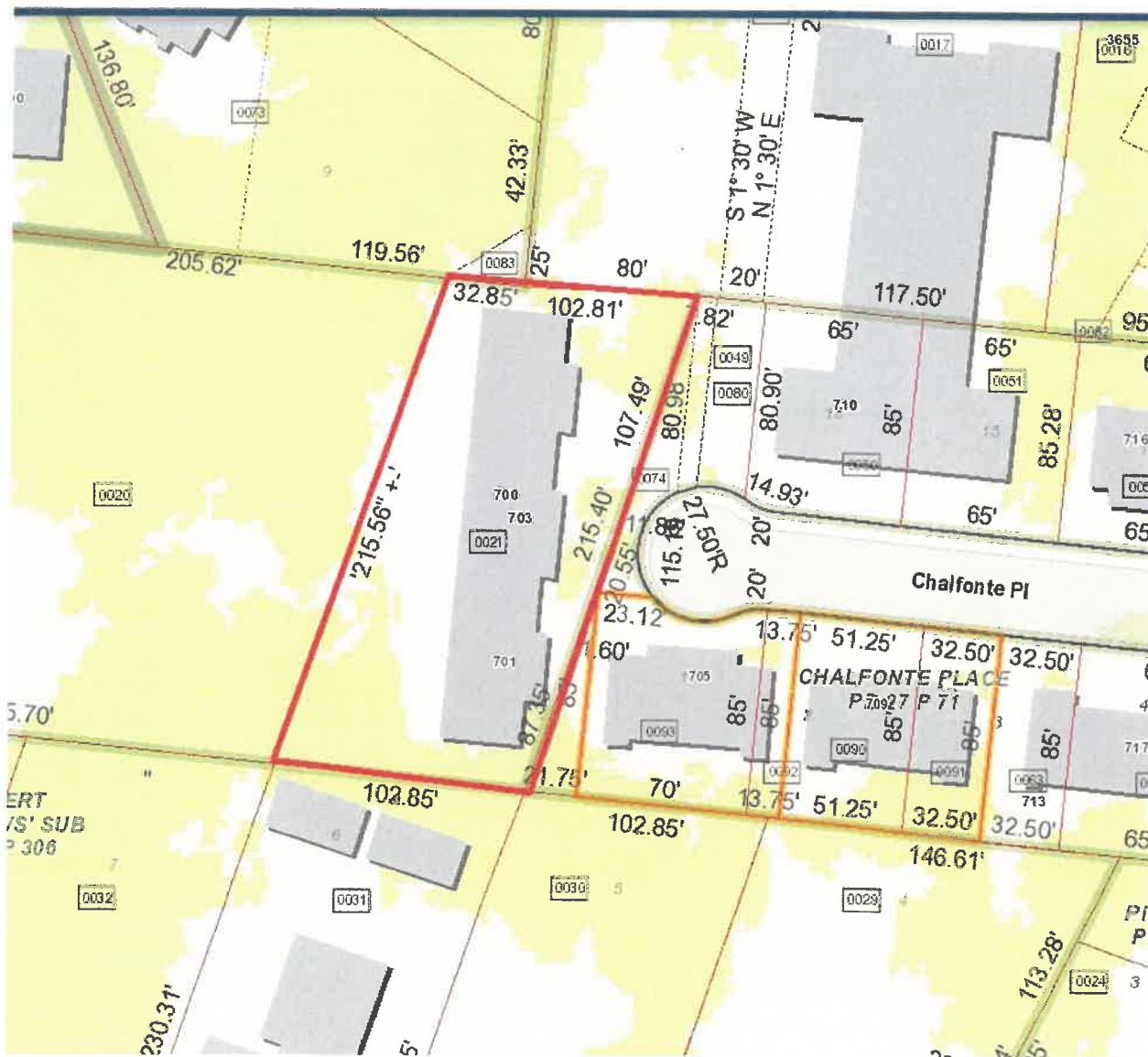


Figure 1. Parcel map, CAGIS, 2022

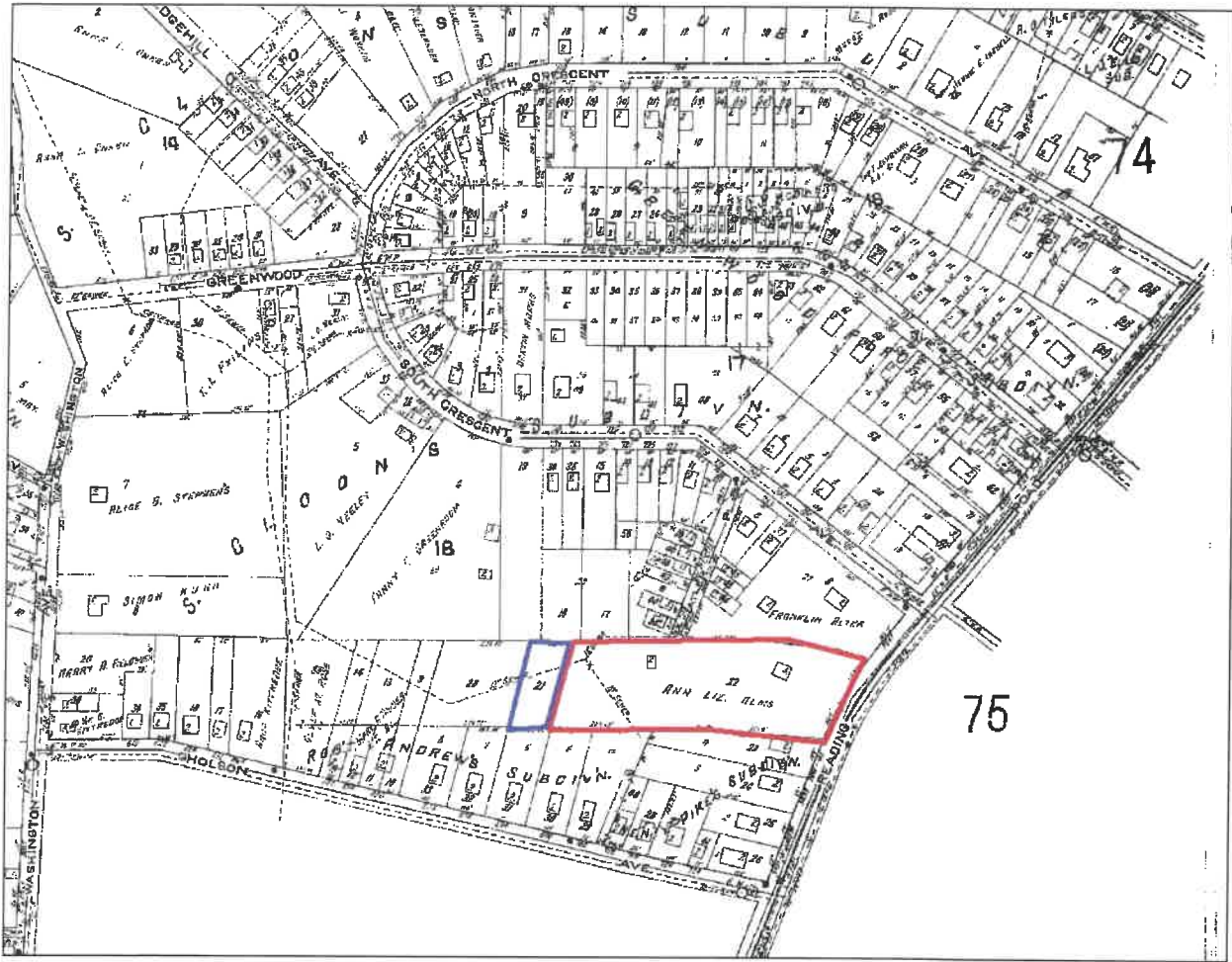


Figure 2. 1922 Sanborn Map, Vol 2, Plate 74, showing the Alms estate, future site of the Chalfonte Place Subdivision, outlined in red, and future site of La Ventura outlined in blue, being part of Lot 6 in the Robert Andrews Subdivision.

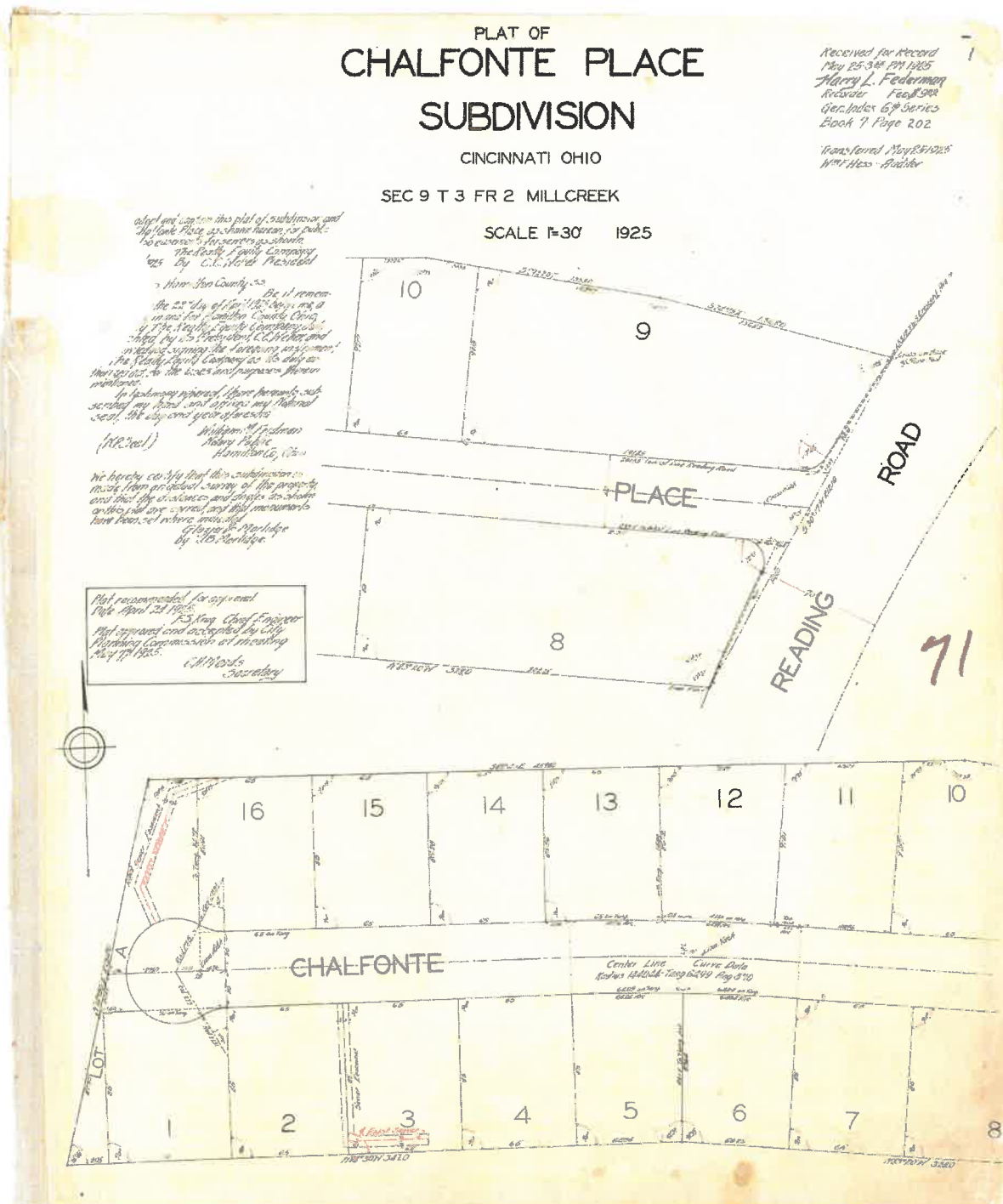


Figure 3. Plat Map of Chalfonte Place Subdivision, Plat Book 27, Page 71,
 Recorded May 25, 1925

George Miller

George Miller, 70, a retired building contractor who resided at 973 Debble Ln., North Avondale, died yesterday at Jewish Hospital.

Survivors include a son, Fred H. Miller; two daughters, Mrs. Arthur Kaplan and Mrs. Albert Lane; a brother and sister, Norman S. Miller and Mrs. Harry Elias of Dayton; a sister, Mrs. Ralph Rothenburg of Los Angeles, and eight grandchildren.

Services will be at 1:30 p. m. today at the Well Funeral Home, 3901 Reading Rd., North Avondale. Burial will be in Kneseth Israel Cemetery, Covedale.

Figure 4. George Miller Obituary, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 5/13/1962, 45:2

Obituaries

Mrs. Libbye Miller

Services for Mrs. Libbye Miller, 974 Debbe Ln., North Avondale, will be at 1 p. m. today at the Weil Funeral Home. Burial will be in Kseseth Israel Cemetery, Covedale. Memorial week will be observed at the home of a daughter, Mrs. Arthur Kaplan, 3918 Wess Pk., Avondale. Mrs. Miller, who was 60 years old, died yesterday at Jewish Hospital.

She was a member of Hadassah and the National Council of Jewish Women. She also is survived by her husband, George Miller, retired building contractor; another daughter, Mrs. Albert Lane, Cincinnati; a son, Frederick Miller, Cincinnati; a sister, Mrs. Dena Reiter, Cincinnati; two brothers, Louis Lertz, Cincinnati, and Martin Lertz, Canton, Ohio, and eight grandchildren.

Figure 5. Libbye Miller Obituary, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 8/2/61: 35.



La Ventura Apartments Sold

Julius and Frances Clayton have purchased the La-Ventura Apartments at 700 Chalfonte Pl., Avondale, from Natalie Biers, Gerald Smith and Sarah Smith. The sale of the 23-apartment building was handled by Harry Farber, chairman, and Allen Nagler of Fred's A. Schmidt, Inc. in co-operation with David Kanter associated with Harold O. Kling, Inc. The three-story brick building has a detached reinforced concrete garage with a capacity of approximately 50 cars. Attorneys in the transaction were Sol Goodman and Samuel J. Ginsburg representing the sellers and Harry Rockwern acting for the purchaser.

Figure 6. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 3/31/1963

HISTORIC CONSERVATION GUIDELINES

La Ventura Apartments, 700 Chalfonte Place

Cincinnati, Ohio 45219

General Terminology

Within the context of these historic conservation guidelines, “La Ventura Apartments” or “La Ventura” refer to the building located at 700 Chalfonte Place. Hierarchy of design, arched openings, terra-cotta tile, porches and wrought-iron balconies are defining characteristics of the Mediterranean style design of this building, and preservation of these attributes is critical to its integrity. The front of the building, which faces east on Chalfonte Place, is defined as the primary façade within the context of these guidelines. The other three sides of the building—south, west and north, which are plain and utilitarian in design, are defined as nonprimary or secondary elevations.

Intent and General Guidelines

The following guidelines are adapted and comply with *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation*. When a proposed change is not addressed by the guidelines, *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, Interpreting the Standards Bulletins and Preservation Briefs* will be used as guiding documents.

These guidelines are intended to ensure that rehabilitation will maintain significant features of the La Ventura. Guidelines are intended not as strict rules but are used by the Historic Conservation Board as a guide to assess the compatibility and appropriateness of proposed rehabilitation changes. Reviews by the Board are limited to exterior changes proposed for the buildings. Repair and maintenance not changing significant features and clearly complying with the intent of these guidelines does not require review by the Board. Interior alterations are not the purview of the Board and are not subject to review.

The following general approaches are recommended:

1. **Repair and Maintenance.** Ordinary repair and maintenance of like and kind to match the original construction, where visible, and which does not change the appearance of the building, is acceptable under these guidelines. Rehabilitation may include preservation, restoration, reconstruction, or a combination of these, as appropriate and reasonable for the building.

2. **Maintenance.** Existing visible features that contribute to the overall character of the building in good condition should be maintained and, where possible, preserved or conserved. Damaged visible features that can be repaired shall be repaired rather than replaced wherever possible.
3. **Replacements.** Replacements of significant features damaged beyond repair, deteriorated beyond reasonable repair, or missing shall sensitively harmonize with characteristics of the original feature. Replication is appropriate, but not required.

Specific Guidelines

The following specific approaches to elements, features, and visible components are recommended:

1. **Materials:** Materials for visible features that are badly damaged, deteriorated beyond reasonable repair, or missing shall be replaced with materials or components that closely match the style, shape, color, treatments, and texture of elements replaced. Composition, type of joint, size of units, visible measures, placement, and detailing shall be appropriate for the building. Synthetic materials, where closely matching the existing characteristics, may be utilized.
2. **Masonry Repointing:** Repointing of deteriorated and/or missing mortar shall match the existing historic mortar as close as possible. Elements of the new repointing mix shall be consistent with the existing mortar in formulation, aggregate size, texture, color, and method of application. It is recommended that test patches be applied adjacent to existing mortar and allowed to dry. An assessment should be made of new repointing mix with respect to varied constituents to be matched. The sample that closely matches the original mortar should be used for the repointing. Refer to Preservation Brief #1 (PB #1) for general approach to undertaking masonry repointing.
3. **Masonry Cleaning:** Sandblasting diminishes the integrity of building materials. It is not an approved cleaning method. Should cleaning of exterior materials be undertaken, no harm should result from the approach taken to do the work. In the event that cleaning of building materials is undertaken, use the gentlest method possible to accomplish good results. Scrubbing with a bristle brush and a mild non-ionic detergent is recommended. Should this method be found ineffective, the use of approved chemical cleaning application can be used only after test patches have determined the gentlest means with respect to composition of cleaning agent, method of application, and cleaning results. Refer to PB #1 for general approach to masonry cleaning.
4. **Water-Repellent Coatings:** Use of water-repellent coatings on historic buildings is not permitted. The problem is water-infiltration into a building is associated with structural or maintenance issues. Water-repellent coatings compound problems because the coating encapsulates moisture and does not allow it to evaporate naturally.
5. **Door and Window Openings:** Among the important features of the La Ventura are its window and door openings. The size and location of openings are an essential part of their overall design and an important feature of the architectural design. Original wall

openings shall not be significantly altered or filled in on primary facades. On secondary facades, original wall openings shall not be significantly altered without consideration of their impact to the overall character of the original design.

6. **Doors and Window Sash:** Original doors and window sashes shall be repaired rather than replaced where feasible and where appropriate access and security can be achieved in compliance with building codes. If replacement of doors or windows becomes necessary due to deterioration or to replace missing or nonconforming units, new doors and windows on primary facades shall fill the original openings and be compatible with the building in size, scale, materials, configuration, style and color. Minor variations in mullion and sash frame dimensions of replacement windows may be considered. Vinyl replacement windows or glass block windows shall not be used.
7. **Ornamentation:** Significant architectural features of the La Ventura include the following: limestone ornamentation including door and window surrounds, and entablatures; yellow brick running-bond walls; terra cotta roof tiles; steel windows; wrought iron balconies, and wood French doors. These features and other ornamental elements shall be preserved or conserved. Do not make replacements or substitutions of different scale, size, design, or incompatible materials. Replace ornamentation to match originals in character, scale, configuration, style, size, texture, and color. Some synthetic materials, including fiberglass castings or composite materials, may be considered.
8. **Roofs:** Parapets and other architectural features that define the roofline of the building, such as the central belvedere, shall be preserved. On the primary facade, vents, skylights, rooftop utilities, mechanical equipment, and new roof elements shall be placed or screened so they are inconspicuous from view.
9. **Painting:** Do not paint stone and masonry elements that have historically not been painted. Use colors that are appropriate to the building's age, history, and style.
10. **Outside Attachments:** Exterior light fixtures should be appropriate to the style of the building, or simple and contemporary. Mercury vapor, high-pressure sodium, and other light sources that impart distortions of color when illuminated are not appropriate to primary facades. Exterior light fixtures shall be mounted or constructed so as not to cast undue glare onto neighboring buildings or damage the building on which they are mounted. Signs are addressed under Site Improvements.

Additions and Exterior Alterations

1. **Additions:** Additions shall follow new construction guidelines, codes, and regulations and shall be limited to the non-primary façades. Any addition shall be compatible in character with the original building, with sensitivity to existing massing and scale, site, and appearance within the building's original context. Additions shall be sympathetic, may be complementary, but need not be imitative in design. Additions shall be designed to relate architecturally and not overwhelming to the original building. Rooftop additions shall be set back to minimize visibility.

2. **Alterations:** Alterations shall follow construction guidelines for alterations, codes, and regulations. Alterations shall not change or alter significant architectural features on primary facades. On the secondary facades, alterations shall be designed to minimize impact on the overall character of the facade on which the alteration occurs.
3. **Appropriateness:** The appropriateness of design solutions for additions and alternations shall include the following:
 - a. How well the proposed design for the addition or alteration relates to the original building.
 - b. How closely the proposed addition or alteration meets the general and specific intentions of these guidelines.

Site Improvements and Alterations

1. **Signs.** Signs should be designed for clarity, legibility, and compatibility with the building. Signs should not cover or obscure any significant architectural features. Billboards and roof-top signs are not permitted. Temporary signage is permitted without review by the Historic Conservation Board.
2. **Fences and Walls.** New fences and walls should be compatible with the character of the building. New fences should be metal and simple and contemporary in design. Chain-link, concrete block, unfaced concrete, plastic, vinyl, fiberglass, or plywood fences and walls are inappropriate. Solid (privacy) fences, including "stockade" fences, are discouraged except where necessary for screening storage areas. Concrete and brick are appropriate for new walls.
3. **Parking and paving.** Asphalt paving is appropriate, if kept to a minimum. New parking lots or parking lot expansion should be sufficiently screened to minimize the public view of parked cars.
4. **Landscaping.** New landscaping should be scaled to complement the building. The design of new site features should be simple and contemporary.

Demolition

Any demolition, alterations, or modifications to the property and minimum maintenance requirements, are governed by Section 1435-09: Alterations and Demolitions; Certificates of Appropriateness; Minimum Maintenance, of the Cincinnati Zoning Code, ordained by Ordinance No. 217-2012, §1, effective July 20, 2012. Any updates, modifications or amendments to this section of the Cincinnati Zoning Code or legislation that supersedes Chapter 1435 of the Cincinnati Zoning Code, which is established as the "Historic Preservation Code," shall be considered the governing law.

January 12, 2023

Cincinnati City Planning Commission
II Centennial Plaza
805 Central Avenue, 7th Floor
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

Honorable Members of the City Planning Commission:

The Historic Conservation Board (“Board”) transmits herewith the following items for your consideration concerning the proposed La Ventura Apartment Building Historic Landmark Designation Application:

1. Local Historic Landmark Designation Report.
2. Proposed Historic Landmark Conservation Guidelines.
3. Historic Conservation Office Staff Report dated December 22, 2022.

Summary:

Sullebarger Associates has applied to designate the La Ventura Apartment Building located at 700 Chalfonte Place in the Avondale neighborhood (the “Building”) as a Local Historic Landmark pursuant to Cincinnati Municipal Code (“CMC”) Section 1435-07-2-A.

Upon review of the designation application pursuant to CMC Sections 1435-07-1(a)(1) and 1435-07-1(a)(3), the Urban Conservator, prepared a report recommending approval of the landmark designation and the associated conservation guidelines. The Board then, at its regular meeting on January 9, 2023, held a public hearing on the proposed designation at which it heard from the Urban Conservator, proponents, and opponents of the designation whether the Building qualifies for landmark designation. Upon considering the designation application (including the designation report and conservation guidelines), the Urban Conservator’s report, and comments received at its public hearing, a majority of the Board’s members present throughout the hearing and constituting a quorum voted to recommend designation of the Building as a Local Historic Landmark finding that the Building represents an association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history and embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, and method of construction or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction and thus satisfies CMC Sections 1435-07-1(a)(1) and 1435-07-1(a)(3) and further resolved to recommend approval of the associated conservation guidelines.

Aye

Mr. Sundermann

Mr. Zielasko

Mrs. McKenzie

Mrs. Smith-Dobbins

Mr. Weiss

Mr. Yung

Nay

Absent

Mr. Voss

The Historic Conservation Board

/s/Allison McKenzie

Allison McKenzie
Historic Conservation Board Chair

/s/David Sturkey

David Sturkey, Staff Attorney
Historic Conservation Board

To Whom It May Concern:

City of Cincinnati Planning Department, inc.

Historic Conservation Board

Re: Hearing on 700 Chalfonte Historic Status Application

Jan 9, 2023

I am writing regarding the proposed status change of 700 Chalfonte to an historically preserved/protected building. Firstly, I want to thank the City of Cincinnati and the boardmembers here today, as well as the decision makers working on this case, for giving us members of the public a chance to give input on this project. It is greatly appreciated.

I am the concerned citizen that worked with a city of Cincinnati lawyer/employee (Jonathan Roach) to get this building into receivership, out of the hands of the prior slumlord, and get 700 Chalfonte on people's radars; this process has taken approximately 2 ½ to 3 years, thanks to Mr. Roach's very hard work. As my property on S Fred Shuttlesworth touches this property, myself and my neighbors' concern for what happens next at 700 Chalfonte is extremely high.

I disagree strongly with the idea of using historically preserved status as a kind of leverage to obtain tax breaks to put below market housing units into 700 Chalfonte. I believe it is a perversion of the work of the historic board, who are simply trying to do their job, and I believe trying to cram additional below market housing on Chalfonte will further degrade the existing situation on Chalfonte beyond repair, creating a public safety situation that is dangerous to those living on Chalfonte and surrounding streets.

Let me mention a few specifics: let me start with the guns/safety issue. As I stated verbally to Caroline and Douglas, Chalfonte was the scene of the worst shoot-out in Cincinnati in 2020. This is the news link to that:

<https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/crime/2022/03/03/official-murder-trial-ends-plea-after-witnesses-dont-cooperate/9358504002/>

This spilled out onto our properties on S Fred Shuttlesworth, such that a SWAT team was in my backyard trying to contain this scene. As a result, my neighbors, and one of the houses within 400 feet of this property, chose to move their family with 4 kids away within the month.

I could provide additional links to incidences of other shots fired, etc. here, which happen on an every other week basis, however I think I make my point.

Let me move on to the fire safety issue: there is a single fire hydrant down there at the end of Chalfonte cul-de-sac, and it gets constantly blocked by parked cars, because of a car overcrowding issue going on at the end of the street. I can't imagine

adding even a single car into this situation, let alone cars from 20 or whatever additional active units, even knowing the fact that there is a parking lot for 700 Chalfonte. Because cars are allowed to park on both sides of this street, because some of the existing buildings are only relying on off-street parking, it sometimes becomes difficult to impossible for two cars to pass on this street, that's already an issue, again, I can't imagine adding more car traffic into this.

Thirdly, knowing this investor is going for public tax credits for low income housing, my question is one of handicapped accessibility for this building, it currently is not configured for that at all.

Fourth, I don't find that this application addresses or successfully argues its points for being considered a historically preserved building. It merely gives a history of the building, and a description of it, without convincingly arguing that has significance under it's own points 1 and 3 that it is applying under. Also, I disagree that putting low income housing in here is within in "Plan Cincinnati 2012" at all, simply because it's creating an unsafe, overcrowded environment. This street, and the buildings on it, were never laid out and created with today's realities/lifestyles in mind, they were created when Cincinnatians were using cable cars and horse drawn buggies pretty much.

For all these reasons, in addition to the substantial capital outlay it would take to make this building liveable again (ie it is currently a shell with no HVAC, no plumbing, and heavily degraded/tampered with 100 year old knob and tube type wiring, and blown-out walls, etc. etc etc), I have to advocate for a very different pathway forward for 700 Chalfonte, one that puts people, the neighborhood, and safety first. Whether that is demo'ing the building, or perhaps configuring it into a significantly smaller number of condo units sold at market rate, (as was done to great success at 3862 Reading Rd and others), we have to be very, very careful about what comes next here.

I also believe that failure to act on the input of concerned citizens that are living with the situation on Chalfonte day in and day out sets up a situation that could be construed as criminal negligence by city officials knowingly ignoring input that could make the people of the street safer.

I respectfully ask that this letter become part of the official record of this application.

I do not believe 700 Chalfonte should be granted Historical Status, for the above reasons. Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sarah Lahti