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Gables Construction Group lovingly restores old Spanish-style homes

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Reflecting a rich architectural heritage, Coral Gables' old Spanish-style homes are community "jewels." Fortunately, many are receiving new leases on life following impeccable renovations that also carefully preserve their historical integrity.

Assuring that is the case is the Coral Gables Historical Preservation Board. Its rigorous rules and regulations ensure that any construction project within the city limits protects a historic structure's "original" period of architecture.

While approaching the process for historic-construction approval may be a bit daunting for some, in contrast, Marisol Arboleda-Diaz, vice president of Gables Construction Group, and her husband, Alberto Diaz, the company's president, know the ropes.

"To us, it's a labor of love in assuring these homes are renovated in a responsible way," Arboleda-Diaz said.

Many of these Spanish-style homes were built in the 1920s or 30s. Making interior changes and all-new modern interior finishes often are okay (depending on the individual project), but "for the exterior, you must renovate the home to 'the period,'" Arboleda-Diaz explained. "That's what it's all about — maintaining the integrity of a historic home."

So, if a clay-tile roof needs replacing, what happens?

"If you take a tile roof off, you have to put it back. Period," she noted. "Putting in a metal roof, for example, to replace a clay-tile one, would be considered a huge 'no-no' here in the Gables."

Most notably, "experience counts," she emphasized. "We've been doing this so long that we know not to bypass the city's historic preservation rules and regulations in any way, shape, or form. We're going to get things done right the first time around — and much more efficiently than other firms."

For instance, "you can't take a historic home and use flat stucco to put on a new exterior if the house previously had some type of texture," she said. "They're going to make you match the process — there's no coloring outside the lines, so to speak!"

Moving to Coral Gables at the age of 19, Arboleda-Diaz first started renovating the area's old Spanish-style homes in 2002-03. Then, in



PICTURED (L-R) ARE GABLES CONSTRUCTION GROUP VICE PRESIDENT MARISOL ARBOLEDA-DIAZ, PRESIDENT ALBERTO DIAZ, AND VICE PRESIDENT OF ARCHITECTURE JORGE L. ESTEBAN.

2013, she and her husband founded Gables Construction Group and these renovations became one specialty.

Today, the company is based in Coral Gables at 1200 Anastasia Ave., quite appropriately within the executive businesses wing of The Biltmore Hotel, a designated U.S. National Historic Landmark.

As for the project management team, that consists of Diaz, a certified general contractor; Arboleda-Diaz, a certified roofing contractor; a certified architect the company employs, and a compact team of several other talented experts.

As Gables Construction Group has proven its mettle in historic home renovations, though it also has expanded into other lines of business.

"In Pinecrest, Miami Beach and elsewhere in Florida, we've built 3,000 new luxury homes, each between 5,000 and 20,000 square feet," said Arboleda-Diaz, who also serves as an executive board member of the Builder's Association of South Florida and a board member of the Florida Homebuilders Association."

In addition, Gables Construction does a significant amount of commercial renovation and

construction, including building new cement plants throughout Florida for a major corporate client. "Currently we're also building a 41-unit, five-story residential building in Hialeah," she added.

That said, "It's those old Spanish-style Gables homes that still enchant," she said. "I live, work, and play in Coral Gables, so driving by those lovely historic homes that we've restored over the years is truly rewarding. They're jewels to be cherished, a reflection of our city's rich architectural heritage."

From single-family homes to commercial buildings, Gables Construction Group has the hands-on experience necessary to successfully meet the challenges inherent in developing multiple building types, including new construction, additions and renovation of significant private residences, estates, commercial projects and historic restoration.

Gables Construction Group is located at 1200 Anastasia Ave., #207, Coral Gables, FL 33134. For information visit www.gablesconstructiongroup.com or call 305-459-1177.