SUNSET ISLANDS BRIDGES
Nos. 1, 2 AND 4

MIAMI BEACH
HISTORIC STRUCTURES
DESIGNATION REPORT

Sunset Islands Bridge #1, constructed in 1929.

Prepared By:
City of Miami Beach
Planning, Design and Historic Preservation Division
August 1996

CITY OF MIAMI BEACH

HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION REPORT

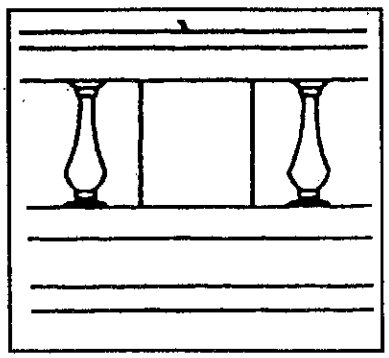
FOR

SUNSET ISLANDS BRIDGES #1, 2 AND 4
MIAMI BEACH HISTORIC STRUCTURES DESIGNATION

Prepared by:

CITY OF MIAMI BEACH PLANNING, DESIGN AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION

AUGUST 1996



Railing Detail, Sunset Islands Bridge #1

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SUNSET ISLANDS BRIDGES #1, 2 AND 4
MIAMI BEACH HISTORIC STRUCTURES

DESIGNATION REPORT

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I. REQUEST

At its February 8, 1996 meeting, the City of Miami Beach Historic Preservation Board noted the impact the development of the Sunset Islands I, II, III and IV has had on the history and development of the City of Miami Beach. The Board further noted the historic role the Sunset Isles Bridges have played in defining the special tropical island character of the Sunset Islands residential neighborhood. Bridges #1, 2 and 4 are not only the sole surviving original Mediterranean-themed public works engineering structures in the City of Miami Beach, but are also the only remaining bridges of their kind in South Florida. Citing the aesthetic, architectural, and historical importance of the bridges to the Sunset Islands neighborhood and the first major "boom" period of the City during the 1920's, the members of the Board expressed concern over the possible loss of these significant structures and their possible replacement with structures not sensitive to the special character and history of the Sunset Islands. Accordingly, the Board directed the staff of the Planning, Design and Historic Preservation Division to prepare a preliminary evaluation and recommendation relative to the local designation of Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 as historic structures.

At its June 11, 1995 meeting, the Historic Preservation Board reviewed an independent analysis of the historic significance of the bridges prepared by Janus Research of St. Petersburg, Florida, for the Florida Department of Transportation, as well as the preliminary evaluation and recommendation prepared by the staff of the Planning, Design and Historic Preservation Division. The Board concurred with both said reports that the Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 not only met the designation criteria listed in Section 19-5 of Zoning Ordinance No. 89-2665 for designation as Miami Beach historic structures, but were also eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The Board further noted the clear significance of the Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 to the successful development and defining character of the Sunset Islands and the City of Miami Beach, observing that these important historic structures could be dramatically altered or even lost in the near future if not afforded proper recognition and protection through historic designation.

Accordingly, the Board directed the staff to prepare a designation report relative to the group designation of the Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4. The Board further directed staff to schedule and publicly notice a September 1996 hearing to consider and vote on the proposed designation of the Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4. On September 12, 1996, the Historic Preservation Board unaminously approved a motion to recommend the designation of the Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 as Miami Beach Historic Structures in accordance with staff recommendations as reflected in this designation report.

II. DESIGNATION PROCESS

The process of historic designation is delineated in Section 19-5 of the Miami Beach Zoning Ordinance. An outline of this process is provided below:

Step One: A request for designation is made either by the City Commission, Historic Preservation Board, other agencies and organizations as listed in the Ordinance, or the property owners involved. Proposals for designation shall include a completed application form available from the Planning, Design and Historic Preservation Division.

Step Two: The Planning, Design and Historic Preservation Division prepares a preliminary review and recommendation for consideration by the Board.

Step Three: The Historic Preservation Board considers preliminary evaluation to determine if proceeding with a designation report is warranted.

The designation report is a historical and architectural analysis of the proposed district or site. The report:

1) describes the historic, architectural and/or archeological significance of the property or subject area proposed for Historical Site or District designation;

2) recommends Evaluation Guidelines to be used by the Board to evaluate the appropriateness and compatibility of proposed Developments affecting the designated Site or district; and

3) will serve as an attachment to the Zoning Ordinance.

Step Four: The designation report is presented to the Board at a public hearing. If the Board determines that the proposed district satisfies the requirements for designation as set forth in the ordinance, the Board

transmits a recommendation in favor of designation to the Planning Board and City Commission.

Step Five: The Planning Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed designation, and shall consider the proposed historic designation as an amendment to the zoning ordinance amendment and, subsequently, transmit its recommendation to the City Commission.

Step Six: The City Commission may, after two (2) public hearings, adopt an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance which thereby designates the Historic Preservation Site or Historic District.

III. RELATION TO ORDINANCE CRITERIA

In accordance with Section 19-5(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, eligibility for designation is determined on the basis of compliance with listed criteria set forth below.

1. The Historic Preservation Board shall have the authority to recommend that properties be designated as Historic Buildings, Historic Structures, Historic Improvements, Historic Landscape Features, Historic Interiors (architecturally significant public portions only), Historic Sites or Historic Districts if they are significant in the historical, architectural, cultural, aesthetic or archeological heritage of the City of Miami Beach, the county, state or nation. Such properties shall possess an integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling or association and meet at least one (1) of the following criteria:

    a. Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the history of Miami Beach, the county, state or nation;

    b. Association with the lives of Persons significant in our past history;

    c. Embody the distinctive characteristics of a historical period, architectural or design style or method of construction;

    d. Possesses high artistic values;

e. Represent the work of a master; Serve as an outstanding or representative work of a master designer, architect or builder who contributed to our historical, aesthetic or architectural heritage;

f. Have yielded, or are likely to yield information important in pre-history or history;

g. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places;

h. Consist of a geographically definable area that possesses a significant concentration of Sites, Buildings or Structures united by historically significant past events or aesthetically by plan or physical development, whose components may lack individual distinction.

2. A Building, Structure (including the public portions of the interior), Improvement or Landscape Feature may be designated historic even if it has been altered if the alteration is reversible and the most significant architectural elements are intact and repairable.

The Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 are eligible for designation as they comply with the criteria as outlined above.

1. Staff finds the Sunset Island Bridges #1, 2 and 4 to be eligible for historic designation and in conformance with designation criteria as specified in section 19.5 of the Zoning Ordinance for the following reasons:

   A. Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the history of Miami Beach, the County, state or nation:

   The Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 are associated with the early creation and development of Miami Beach's Sunset Islands neighborhoods, consisting of four of South Florida's first man-made dredged islands. The vital link of the Sunset Islands to each other and to the Miami Beach barrier island was the Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4, which significantly contributed to the realization and appeal of one of the City's earliest tropical residential island neighborhoods.

B. Association with the lives of Persons significant in our past history:

The Sunset Islands were developed by the Sunset Islands Company, headed by S. A. Lynch, President of Paramount Pictures. His presence significantly contributed to publicity efforts fueling the continued development of Miami Beach, helping make the Sunset Islands home to prominent citizens locally and nationwide. As a result of many of his efforts, several renowned film, entertainment and political personalities maintained residences on the Sunset Islands, as well as elsewhere throughout Miami Beach.

C. Embody the distinctive characteristics of a historical period, architectural or design style or method of construction:

The Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 possess characteristics illustrating 1920's "boom-time" Mediterranean Revival Style architecture, which was the original architectural style standard of the Sunset Islands, as well as the "style of choice" for early Miami Beach. The bridges are also the documented last remaining bridges in South Florida with continuous arched reinforced concrete girders which were cast on-site over the water.

D. Possess high artistic values:

The Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 represent one of the earliest architectural design styles in the progression of public works construction in Miami Beach. Further, they reflect the unique design origins of the Sunset Islands neighborhood. Each bridge consists of three massive, sweeping shallow arches with closed spandrels, and possess Classically influenced cast concrete urn-type guardrail balusters and railings. Crafted cast iron lamp posts sit on the top of solid guardrails at ends of each bridge. Collectively, these elements give the Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 a unique elegance and gracefulness characteristic of the historic era in Miami Beach during which they were built. The bridges are constructed of reinforced concrete, which utilized some of the earliest air entraining agents and methods for achieving enhanced durability and longevity.

E. Represent the work of a master designer, architect or builder who contributed to historical, aesthetic or architectural heritage:

In the context of the Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4, the term "Master" shall relate to architects and engineers. Construction drawings were prepared by locally renowned Miami engineer W.E. Reynolds and the Concrete Steel Bridge Company, whose involvement in other public works projects included the Pan American Air Base ramp approach at Dinner Key (Miami), Miami River Bridges (Miami Springs), the Biscayne Bay Turning Basin at Bayfront Park (Miami), and a fourth "sister" bridge to the Sunset Islands Bridges, which was constructed in Orlando, Florida in 1929.

F. Have yielded, or are likely to yield information important in pre-history or history:

The character, quality and detail of the Sunset Island Bridges #1, 2 and 4 illustrates one of the many social "faces" of Miami Beach and South Florida during the "boom-time" era from circa 1922 through 1929. The bridges' design connotes a discrete image of wealth, the prosperity enjoyed by some in Post World War I America, and the relative extravagance of the "Roaring Twenties" Era. In addition to the use of "high style" design elements in utilitarian projects engineering structures, the bridges' construction materials and techniques, some of the most expensive at the time, illustrate the general development consensus of the "boom-time" era in Miami Beach--producing the highest quality available, no matter at what cost.

G. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places:

Currently the Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 are neither individually nor collectively designated site(s) or structure(s) listed in the National Register of Historic Places, although in its July 1995 Cultural Resource Assessment Survey conducted for the Florida Department of Transportation, Janus Research of St. Petersburg, Florida, determined all three bridges to be eligible for listing.

H. Consists of a geographically definable area that possesses a significant concentration of Sites, Buildings or Structures united by historically significant past events or aesthetically by plan or physical development, whose components may lack individual distinction:

The Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 do not consist of a geographically definable area, but are individually contributing structures within the geographically definable area known as the Sunset Islands I, II, III and IV, and collectively form the links that unify the individual isles into a cohesive urban form. The bridges qualify as significant proposed historic structures as a group of components integral to the special historic character of the neighborhood.

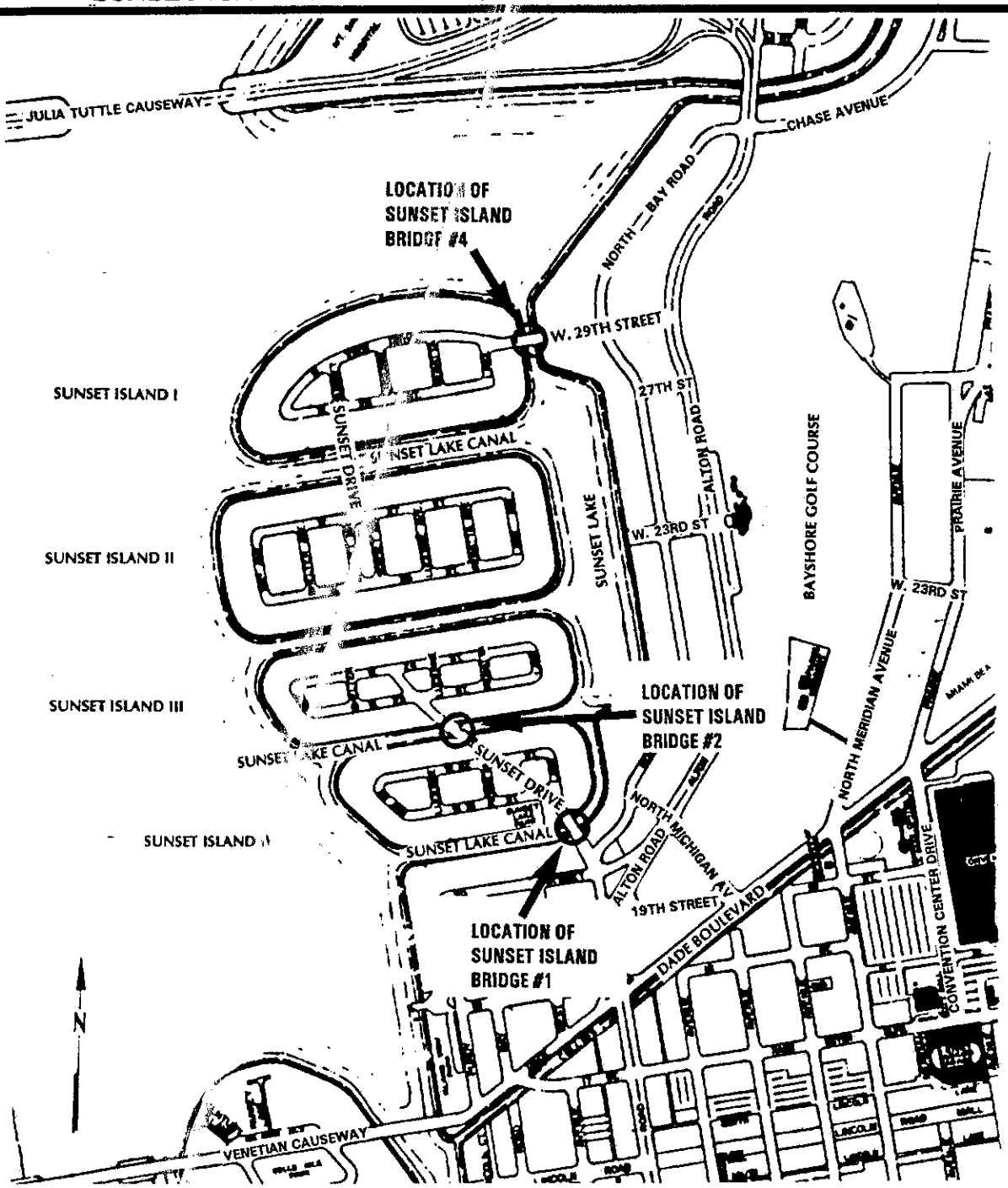
2. Altered structures proposed for designation in the City of Miami Beach may be designated historic structures if alterations are readily reversible and/or significant architectural elements are intact and repairable. In addition, staff expands its findings to include individual or collective groups of structures which are contributing, despite alterations, as important factors in representing the architectural or cultural history of Miami Beach or maintaining the special character of a neighborhood.

IV. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF LOCATION

The Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 are located in the Sunset Islands neighborhood, consisting of Sunset Islands I, II, III and IV of the Sunset Lake Platted Subdivision. Sunset Island Bridge #1 carries Sunset Drive over Sunset Lake Canal and links Sunset Island IV with the Miami Beach barrier island. Sunset Island Bridge #2 carries Sunset Drive over Sunset Lake Canal and links Sunset Island IV with Sunset Island III. Sunset Island Bridge #4 carries West 29th Street over the Sunset Lake Canal and links Sunset Island I with the Miami Beach barrier island. A detailed description of the bridges' locations, is as follows:

> Sunset Islands Bridge #1 commences at the northeast corner of Lot 22, Block 15A of the Island View Addition of the Sunset Lake Subdivision on the Miami Beach barrier island, ending at the southwest corner of Lot 7, Block 4 of Sunset Island IV in the Sunset Lake Platted Subdivision, running in a southeast-northwest direction. Sunset Islands Bridge #2 commences at the northeast corner of Lot 31, Block 4A of Sunset Island IV in the Sunset Lake Platted Subdivision, ending at the southwest corner of Lot 26, Block 3D of Sunset Island III in the Sunset Lake Platted Subdivision, running in a southeast-northwest direction. Sunset Islands Bridge #4 commences at the northwest corner of Lot 13, Block 12 of the Sunset Lake Platted Subdivision on the Miami Beach barrier island, ending at the northeast corner of Lot 1, Block 1 of Sunset Island I in the Sunset Lake Platted Subdivision, running in an east-west direction.

The described locations of the structures recommended for designation by the Planning, Design and Historic Preservation Division are shown on the following Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 Locator Map (Map 1).



Map 1: **Proposed Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 an 4 historic structure designation sites as recommended by the City of Miami Beach Planning, Design and Historic Preservation Division.**

V. PRESENT OWNERS

The Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 are the property of The State of Florida Department of Transportation. The bridges' maintenance is overseen by the District Six office of the Florida Department of Transportation, located in Miami, Florida.

VI. PRESENT USE

The predominant use of the bridges is as state roadways, providing access between the residential Sunset Islands I, II, III and IV and the Miami Beach barrier island.

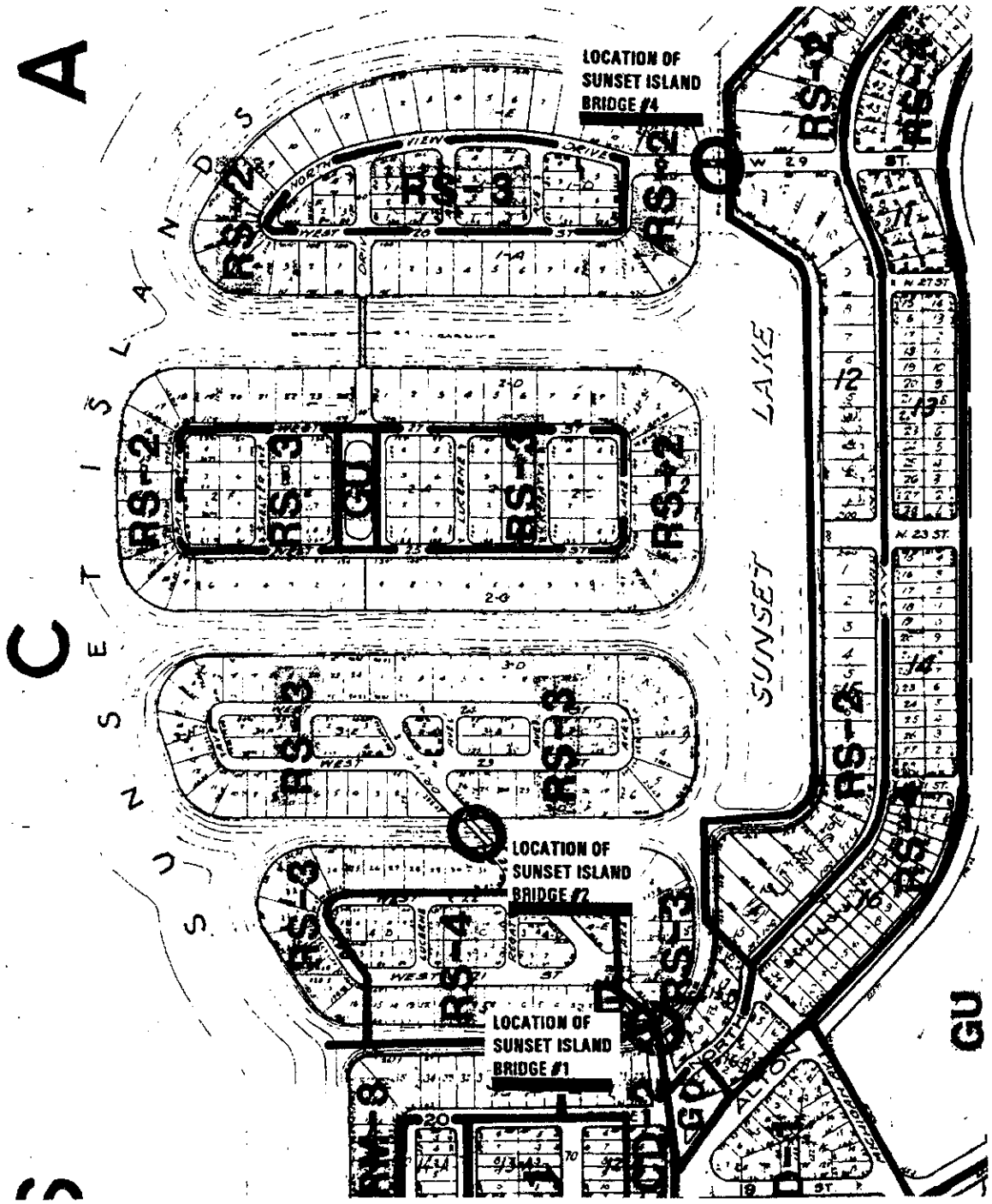
VII. PRESENT ZONING

The Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 sit within residential zoning districts of the City of Miami Beach. The Miami Beach Barrier Island landing of Sunset Islands Bridge #1, however, abuts a commercial district at the intersection of Alton and North Bay Roads.

Established Zoning Districts in which the Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 are sited in or adjacent to include:

CD-2	Commercial Medium Intensity
GU	Government Use
RM-2	Residential Single Family
RM-3	Residential Single Family

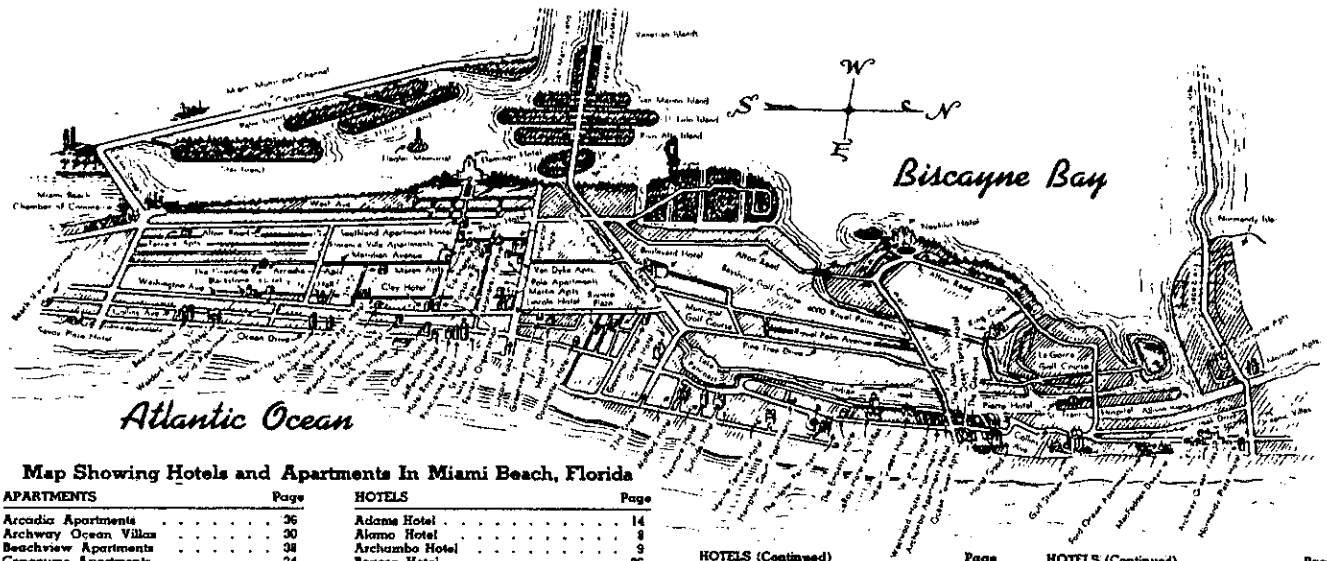
Please refer to the zoning map (Map 2) for further reference.



Map 2: **Zoning Districts within which the proposed Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 Historic Structures are located.**

VIII. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 are the oldest bridges remaining in their original form in South Florida, and are three out of the four last remaining bridges of their kind in the State of Florida.[1] The bridges link the Sunset Islands neighborhood with the Miami Beach barrier island and provide a unique tropical island residential neighborhood unlike any other in Miami Beach and the greater Miami area. The bridges span over the Sunset Lake Canals and are located West of North Bay Road, Alton Road and the Bayshore Golf Course. The Sunset Islands are also the last islands to be constructed in the first archipelago of man-made dredged residential islands in Florida.



Map Showing Hotels and Apartments In Miami Beach, Florida

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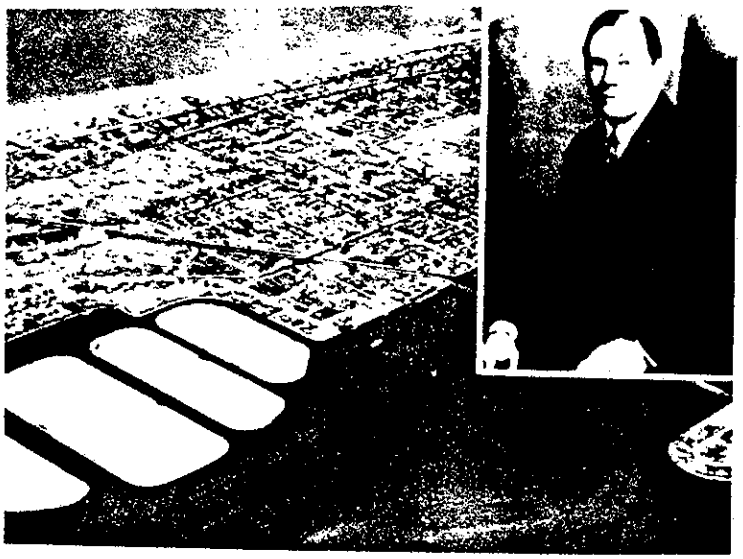
The Sunset Islands Neighborhood is portrayed in the 1939-1940 Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce Hotel and Apartment Guide as the only residential tropical island neighborhood truly close to the"heart of it all," so exclusive that only one bridge was originally planned for access to the Sunset Islands from the Miami Beach barrier island. **HASF.**

The Sunset Islands were developed by the Sunset Islands Company, headed by S. A. Lynch, President of Paramount Pictures. Through his influence and presence, Mr. Lynch succeeded in making the Sunset Islands home to famous entertainers and renowned businessmen and politicians from across America. As the last quarter of the 20th Century comes to a close, the Sunset Islands Bridges remain as some of the only remaining examples in Miami Beach of the wealth and glamour of the first "boom-time" era in the City and of early 20th Century America.

Each bridge is approximately 150 feet long, forty feet wide and possess a sidewalk along at least one of its railings. All three bridges feature low, open, symmetrical railings over and through which the view of the islands, Sunset Lake and Biscayne Bay is unobstructed. The bridges link the different islands, but all four isles are not equally accessible: Sunset Islands III and IV are linked to each other, with Island IV linked to the Miami Beach barrier island, and Sunset Islands I and II are linked to each other, Island I being linked to the Miami Beach barrier island. However, Sunset Islands II and III are separated by the Sunset Canal.



Sunset Isles as viewed from the air with S. Lynch, inset ca. 1932 Klienberg, 1996.

Though designed simultaneously, the bridges were constructed as lots on the different islands were sold. Sunset Islands Bridges #1 and 4 were built in 1927, linking Sunset Islands I and IV to the Miami Beach barrier island, and Sunset Islands Bridge #2 in 1929.[2] This was actually the cornerstone of Lynch's marketing and development strategy: the Sunset Islands Company would sell lots on the islands closest to the Miami Beach barrier island, "closing-in" on Islands II and III.[3] Once Lynch filled Islands I and IV with prominent residents, Islands II and III would

become even more desirable as exclusive addresses, since the properties would already be surrounded by the likes of prominent businessmen, film and entertainment personalities. In fact, Lynch understood what was the essence of the Miami Beach land boom:

> Lavish though they were, great houses and the big spenders that lived in them did not make the Florida boom. Left to themselves, the Stotesburys and Firestones would have created only a few isolated enclaves for the wealthy--as Hobe Sound is today. What made Florida's fortune in the twenties, (and again in the fifties and sixties,) was the average man's desire to play along with the rich, and his belief that he had an inalienable right to do so.[4]

By 1936, Lynch was on a steady and successful sales course and marketing campaign. The Sunset Islands Company's 1936 Portfolio of Estates described the Islands:

> For you who have dreamed of a tropical "South Sea Island" home, this portfolio has a story to tell–a story of how scores of America's business and social leaders are making similar dreams come true.
>
> The setting for our story is one of almost legendary beauty–a group of four islands lying in famed Biscayne Bay, literally at the heart of Miami Beach, yet secluded and sheltered by broad, picturesque waterways. Lavishly landscaped, groomed to perfection over a period of twelve years during which they were withheld from the market, Sunset Islands were finally opened two brief years ago–and immediately won a sensational acceptance from an amazed public.
>
> Here, then, was no bare "development" or "subdivision"–but an impressive, park-like residential area with permanent improvements completed at a cost of over a million and a half dollars, carefully restricted and ready for immediate construction of homes and estates reflecting the magic of the "Lure of the Tropics."
>
> The pages [of the portfolio] which follow complete the story. Nearly four million dollars have to date been invested in property and building–an overwhelming endorsement of the Islands and the advantages they offer for winter estates or year-round homes. It is our sincere hope that "reading between the lines" of the story told here, you will find the answer to your problems of location, environment and congenial neighbors for your permanent "Place in the Sun"–on Sunset Islands.[5]

The portfolio included a list of residents, a venerable "Who's Who" of local and national civic and business leaders. In 1936, the isles were already home to James L. Knight of the Miami Herald; Irving Reuter, Reuters News Service; Charles Sears McCulloh, heir to the Sears fortune; W. Bruce MacIntosh, renowned American artisan and craftsman and the Baron Gerard Limnander de Niewenhove of Austrio-Hungarian Niewenhove Metalworks fame. Throughout

the 1940's and the early post-World War II years, the likes of Tony Bennett, Desi Arnaz, Steve Allen, Jimmy Durante, Carmen Miranda and many other celebrities maintaining winter addresses on the isles ensured properties on the Sunset Islands remained some of the most desirable and exclusive in Miami Beach--so exclusive, that it was unfortunately not until 1972 that all remaining restricted ownership policies were ended on some of the properties.

Sightseeing homes of the famous, the Nikko Sightseeing Boat appears to pass under Sunset Islands Bridge #1 circa 1934. Ira Elegant, Personal Collection.

The Sunset Islands Company was not solely responsible for the construction of the Sunset Islands. Although platted in 1925 and the Sunset Canals dredged in 1926, construction of residences did not begin to rapidly occur until ten years later. This was due in part to the actions of Miami Beach developer Carl Fisher, who felt threatened by the possible competition of land sales by the Sunset Islands Company.[6] Fisher widened the canal between the islands and the mainland, creating Sunset Lake, and was able to use his influence to delay applications by the Sunset Islands Company for building bulkheads and filling in the area for land improvement.[7] The islands could not be developed until the bridges were constructed between 1927 and 1929.

Dredge fill from the newly created Sunset Lake, eastern shore Florida Historical Archives.

By the time the Sunset Islands began to develop into an exclusive Mediterranean Style tropical island residential neighborhood, the boom-time era of Miami Beach real estate was beginning to deflate.[8] The subdivision remained mostly undeveloped until after the land boom crash and the early 1930's Depression era. Substantial development of the Sunset Islands began during the late 1930's, prior to the effects of World War II and the construction boom that followed it.

However, the quality and detail of the Sunset Island Bridges #1, 2 and 4's design and construction well illustrates the prosperity of Miami Beach's and Florida's "boom-time" era from circa 1922 through late 1929. The bridges' design illustrates a discrete image of wealth, the prosperity of Post World War I America and the extravagance of the "Roaring Twenties" Era through the use of the Mediterranean style in utilitarian public works structural design. The bridges' construction materials and techniques, some of the most expensive at the time,[9] illustrate the general development consensus of the "boom-time" era in Miami Beach--producing the highest quality available, no matter at what the cost.

Construction drawings were prepared by locally renowned Miami engineer W.E. Reynolds and the Concrete Steel Bridge Company, whose involvement in other public works projects included the Pan American Air Base approach at Dinner Key (Miami), Miami River Bridges (Miami Springs), and the Biscayne Bay Turning Basin at Bayfront Park (Miami). The company also built the only other remaining bridge similar to the Sunset Islands Bridges, the Washington Street Bridge in Orlando, Florida:

> A $10,400 proposal by the Concrete Steel Bridge Company of Miami Beach was chosen. The Washington Street Bridge was constructed of reinforced concrete. It contains three arches with closed spandrels. The upper part of the bridge, with its heavy piers, balusters and light standards are of the Beaux Arts [term often used in describing Mediterranean Revival style features] style of architecture. The wide massive sweeping arches are typical of this style as well.[10]

IX. ARCHITECTURAL BACKGROUND

The Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 represent one of the earliest architectural design styles in the progression of public works construction in Miami Beach, as well as reflecting the unique design origins of the Sunset Islands neighborhood. The bridges are constructed of reinforced concrete, manufactured with some of the earliest air entraining agents for durability.[11] Each bridge consists of three massive, sweeping arches with closed spandrels and possess classical cast concrete urn-type guardrail balusters. Crafted cast iron lamp posts sit on the top of the guardrails at each end of the bridges. Collectively, these elements give the Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 a unique appearance and high aesthetic quality.

Significant advancements in construction technology were introduced to South Florida and Miami Beach during the first quarter of the twentieth century, particularly in the use of reinforced concrete. The use of concrete in constructing arched bridges was established at the turn of the nineteenth century with a steel mesh system patented in 1894 by Chicago engineer Josef Melan. This development dramatically reduced the amount of steel girders previously required in vehicular bridges. As the understanding of reinforced concrete construction developed, the highly efficient and durable concrete deck-girder bridge system was introduced by industrial architects Albert and Julius Kahn of Detroit, Michigan. Concrete deck-girder bridges were more economical to construct than those involving arched girders alone, and soon evolved into the cantilevered girders which today are the basis of modern bridge and elevated roadway support design. The Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 are the recorded last remaining concrete girder bridge structures poured on-site in South Florida, a process since eliminated by transit-mixed concrete, pre-stressed and/or pre-fabricated slabs and girders.[12]

The Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 are also some of the first recorded reinforced concrete structures in South Florida to utilize small quantities of admixtures and modifiers such as the air-entraining agent FerroBond,[13] dramatically improving the concrete's strength, durability and curing characteristics in the salt water of Biscayne Bay and the tropical climate of Miami Beach.

All three Sunset Island Bridges #1, 2 and 4 are virtually identical. Each roadbed rests on a substructure of concrete girders across the width of the bridge, featuring shallow segmental arches at each of the spans. The arched girders are framed into concrete cross-beams which rest on rectangular concrete piers (two piers per beam). The guardrails above feature pre-cast concrete urn-type balusters, with guardrail bays divided by solid square concrete posts. Rectangular posts are used to divide the bays at each arched end. The end bays of each guardrail are solid concrete with one large rectangular recessed panel.[14]

Ornamental cast-iron lamp posts rest on top of the guardrails. The fluted cast-iron lamp posts, surrounded by acanthus leaves at the bottom, rests on a square pedestal in plan (rectangular in height) which is flanked by decorative volutes (upright scroll brackets). Additional acanthus leaves encircle the upper portion of the post which supports the electric light fixtures, each post having a single upright Boulevard-type globe made of textured opaque glass.[15]

A stuccoed guardhouse located at the northeast corner of Sunset Islands Bridge #4 was probably built in the 1940's. It is still utilized today for a guard to monitor the access gate which allows cars onto the islands. The guardhouse abuts the bridge's guardrail but is visibly separate from it. Designed in the Moderne Style, it features a flat, built-up roof. Its unusual plan consists of an angled facade wall oriented toward the southeast.[16]

Mediterranean Revival Style

ca. mid 1910s - early 1930s

Sunset Island Bridge #1 as seen looking toward Sunset Island IV from the Miami Beach barrier island, 1995.

Mediterranean Revival architecture was the "style of choice" for the first major boom period in Miami Beach, particularly in the Sunset Islands. Its connotation of Mediterranean resort architecture, combining expressions of Italian, Moorish, North African and Southern Spanish themes, was found to be an appropriate and commercially appealing image for the new Floridian seaside resort.

During the mid 1910s through the early 1930s the style was applied to hotels, apartment buildings, commercial structures, residences and public works engineering structures. Its architectural vocabulary was characterized by stucco walls, low pitched terra cotta and historic Cuban tile roofs, arches, scrolled or tile capped parapet walls and articulated door surrounds, sometimes utilizing Spanish Baroque decorative motifs and Classical elements. Feature detailing was occasionally executed in keystone.

Application of the architectural vocabulary in the Sunset Islands ranged from sparing to modestly exuberant. The Sunset Islands Bridges demonstrated the quiet wealth of "boom-time" Miami Beach simply and elegantly.

X. PLANNING CONTEXT

Historic District Designation Promotes:

Continuous Neighborhood Enhancement

The Sunset Islands neighborhood is characterized by a significant number of "contributing" buildings and public works engineering structures reflective of distinctive architectural and development patterns from the earliest days of Pre-World War II "boom-time" Miami Beach to the present. The Sunset Islands I, II, III and IV and the Sunset Island Bridges still appear much as they did throughout their rich past, despite the effects of dramatically changed times. Many significant structures, once neighbored by open spaces, Biscayne Bay, or buildings and structures of complimentary scale and character, remain very much dependent upon a compatible and supportive environment in the future, which promotes sensitively designed new projects.

The review and approval of projects under the City's Design Guidelines and the Historic Preservation Ordinance will ensure smart development which is sensitive to the unique aesthetic character of the area and respectful of its early origins. Miami Beach has one of the finest and most progressive historic preservation ordinances in the nation. It was custom designed to address the special needs of a rapidly redeveloping historic seaside resort community with a view toward wise management of historic resources in tandem with appropriate new development. Historic designation will reinforce and promote continuous quality enhancement of the Sunset Islands neighborhood, just as it has done with remarkable success in the National Register Historic District in south Miami Beach.

Increased Architectural Consideration

Historic structure designation is a means of maintaining the special character of a place through increased architectural consideration when the construction of new buildings or other structures or additions to existing buildings or other structures are proposed.

Buildings, individual public works/engineering structures, and natural landscape features, old and new, are usually the major defining elements in the makeup of a neighborhood's character. The special character of a neighborhood can be maintained and reinforced by highlighting and preserving the significant architectural

features of its contributing buildings and landmarks and by understanding and being considerate of those special qualities in the design of new construction.

Although some buildings and structures are more representative of specific "styles" than others, there is a sizable collection of twentieth century modern architectural periods on the Sunset Islands from the late 1920's to the present day, with the Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 representing the start of the progression of architectural styles with the Mediterannean Revival Style.

In other instances a single contributing structure may not seem to possess a special significance when viewed by itself, but when viewed together with its neighboring buildings and/or structures, it reinforces a unified image of a distinct and attractive neighborhood contributing to the special character of the community's urban fabric. This is evident throughout the Sunset Islands with the Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4.

Historic District designation does not preclude the opportunity for appropriate new development to occur at a site, it simply promotes compatible quality construction there.

Sensitive New Construction

New buildings, public works engineering and additions to existing buildings and structures can blend into a neighborhood without imitating or trying to replicate an historic architectural period. By incorporating the important architectural qualities of a particular neighborhood into contemporary design and properly siting the building, a new structure or addition can blend with its surroundings and be compatible with the neighborhood. In addition, by following existing design guidelines, renovations deemed appropriate by the Design Review and/or Historic Preservation Boards can be accomplished without being detrimental to the established character of the structure or to the neighborhood as a whole.

A number of elements work together to define not only a building's or structure's character, but also a neighborhood's. These elements include a scale, proportion, massing, materials and details. These basic elements are found in all architecture and may vary to create different styles.

Understanding these elements and their relationship to each other is essential for designing compatible renovations, additions, and new buildings. Along with current

Design Guidelines, historic designation promotes an understanding of such design features and does not require or recommend reproductions of period architecture. To the contrary, compatible contemporary design is encouraged for new construction and additions.

Historic designation affirms the Design Guidelines based on simplicity and design quality, and helps property owners make the most appropriate improvements to their properties with the least adverse effect possible to property values.

Compatibility With the Character of the Historic Sunset Islands Neighborhood, Which Positively Influences:

Proportion and Scale

Proportion deals with the relationship of the height to the width of the bridge structure and with the relationship of each part to the whole. Scale deals with the relationship of each bridge structure to the other buildings and structures in the area, the part to the whole, as well as the scale of the pedestrian. When there is a combination of structural building types surrounding a project site, scale and proportion of the buildings closest to the proposed construction should be observed. Additions and/or structural reconstruction should respect the original scale and proportions.

Massing

Massing deals with the volumes created by the sections of a building or a structure. For example, a simple Moderne structure may be one mass but a Mediterranean Revival building with a tower, wings, hip roof, etc., has varied massing. Placing a boxlike structure in a neighborhood of high quality articulated buildings may not be appropriate. Renovations or additions to structures should respect the massing of existing buildings and neighborhood character.

Materials and Details

Materials and details used on a structure form an important part of a structure's style and character. Materials used on the walls and other surfaces of new projects should be compatible with those on existing buildings and other structures. The use of

appropriate materials and textures helps new construction fit into existing neighborhoods and helps additions to blend with the original architecture.

XI. PLANNING, DESIGN AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Criteria for Designation:** The Planning, Design and Historic Preservation Division finds the Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 in compliance with the Criteria for Designation listed in Section 19-5 (B) of the Miami Beach Zoning Ordinance, Ordinance Number 89-2665.

2. **Site Boundaries:** The Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 within the Miami Beach City Limits (complete legal description provided in ***Section IV, General Description of Location;*** location of bridges is shown on ***Map 1***)

   Upon careful research and investigation, staff determined that the aforementioned Sunset Island Bridges were indeed of local, regional and historical significance, having an impact not only on local development history, but also modern construction technology.

   The Historic Preservation Board, at its September 12, 1996 meeting, adopted the recommendations of the City of Miami Beach Planning, Design and Historic Preservation Division as described within the Sunset Islands Bridges #1, 2 and 4 Historic Designation Report, and recommends historic designation in accordance with Section 19-5 of the Miami Beach Zoning Ordinance 89-2665 with locations shown on Map 1 and more fully described in Section IV (General Description of Boundaries).

3. **Areas Subject to Review:** All bridge elevations and plans, including structural and architectural features, gate houses, lighting fixtures, site and landscape features, as well as public rights-of-way, including bridge roadways and approaches.

   Regular maintenance of public utilities, drainage, and mechanical systems, sidewalks and roadways shall not require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

4. **Review Guidelines:** The Planning, Design and Historic Preservation Division recommends that a decision on an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness shall be based upon compatibility of the physical alteration or improvement with surrounding properties and where applicable in substantial compliance with the following:

   a. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings as revised from time to time;

   b. Other guidelines/policies/plans adopted or approved by resolution or ordinance by the City Commission;

   c. All additional criteria as listed under Section 19-6 (C,2) of City of Miami Beach Zoning Ordinance 89-2665;

   d. City of Miami Beach Design Guidelines as adopted by the Joint Design Review/Historic Preservation Board October 12, 1993, Amended June 7, 1994, and as may be expanded upon in the future.

ENDNOTES

1. Florida Bridges and Roadways Database. State of Flroida Internet Web Site, Histroic Resources Collection. State of Florida Secretary of State, State Historic Preservation Office, Tallhassee, FL. 1996.

2. Construction Permit Records, 1927-1929. City of Miami Beach, Public Works Division. Miami Beach, Florida.

3. Letter from Daniel Read to Rudolph Van Der Bregan of the Atlanta Retail Credit Company, February 3, 1932. Miami Beach Letters Collection. Historical Museum of South Florida Archives, Miami, Florida.

4. Redford, Polly. Billion-Dollar Sandbar. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York. 1970. p. 149.

5. Portfolio of Estates. Sunset Islands Company, 1936. p. 3.

6. Carl Graham Fisher. Personal Letters Collection and Other Documents. Historical Museum of South Florida Archives, Miami, Florida.

7. Ibid.

8. Tax assessment records, 1927-1935. City of Miami Beach and Metro-Dade County Property Tax Assessment Office. Miami Beach, Florida and Metro-Dade County, Florida.

9. Florida Bridges and Roadways Database. State of Flroida Internet Web Site, Histroic Resources Collection. State of Florida Secretary of State, State Historic Preservation Office, Tallhassee, FL. 1996.

10. H.H. Dickenson Azalea Park and the Washington Street Bridge Designation Report. Lawsona/Ferncreek Neighborhood Association, Orlando, Florida. 1996. p. 2.

11. Senkavitch, Anatolv. Director, Graduate Program in Historic Preservation Planning. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Personal Interview, August 1996.

12. Cultural Resource Assessment Survey of the Sunset Islands Bridge #876708 in Dade County, Florida. Janus Research, St. Petersburg, Florida, for the Florida Department of Transportation, District Six, Miami. July 1995.

13. Senkavitch, Anatolv. Director, Graduate Program in Historic Preservation Planning. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Personal Interview, August 1996.

14. Cultural Resource Assessment Survey of the Sunset Islands Bridge #876708 in Dade County, Florida. Janus Research, St. Petersburg, Florida, for the Florida Department of Transportation, District Six, Miami. July 1995.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.