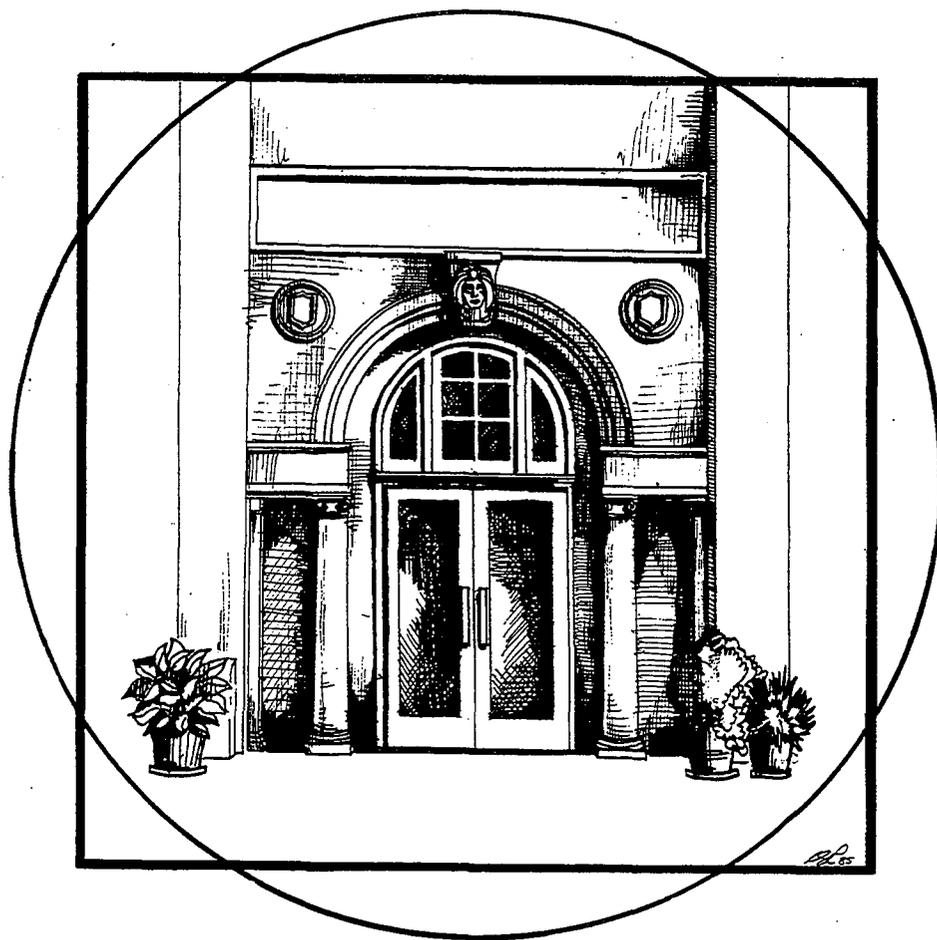


ESPANOLA WAY
HISTORIC PRESERVATION DISTRICT
DESIGNATION REPORT



CITY OF MIAMI BEACH PLANNING DEPARTMENT

MARCH 1986

ESPANOLA WAY HISTORIC DISTRICT

DESIGNATION REPORT

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I. REQUEST

At its February 6, 1986 meeting, the Miami Beach Historic Preservation Board voted (7-0) to nominate all properties abutting Espanola Way, including those four lots on Jefferson Avenue (private street) at the western terminus of Espanola Way for Historic Preservation District Designation. (See Appendix and Exhibits I and II for a legal description and map of the nominated district.)

The next step in the designation process was the preparation of a preliminary evaluation to determine the nominated district's general conformance with the criteria for designation listed in Section 22-5(B) of the Zoning Ordinance.

The Historic Preservation Board reviewed the preliminary evaluation at its March 6, 1986 meeting and directed staff to proceed with the preparation of this designation report.

II. DESIGNATION PROCESS

The process of historic designation is delineated in Section 22-5(A) 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 Historic Preservation Board, other agencies and organizations as listed in the Ordinance, or the property owners involved.

Step Two: The Planning Department prepares a preliminary evaluation and recommendation for consideration by the Board.

Step Three: The Historic Preservation Board reviews the evaluation to determine compliance with the criteria for designation and then votes to direct the Planning Department to prepare a designation report.

The designation report is a complete historical and architectural analysis of the proposed district or site. The report 1) serves as the basis for a recommendation for nomination by the Board; 2) describes review guidelines to be utilized by the Board when a Certificate of Appropriateness is requested; and 3) will also serve as an attachment to the Zoning Ordinance creating the new zoning district.

Step Four: The designation report is presented to the Board at a public hearing during a regularly scheduled meeting. If the Board determines that the proposed designation meets the intent and criteria set forth in the Ordinance, they transmit a recommendation to the Planning Board.

Step Five: The Planning Board processes the proposed designation as a Zoning Ordinance amendment.

As such, the Planning Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed designation and, subsequently, transmit its recommendation to the City Commission.

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

III. PLANNING DEPARTMENT ANALYSIS

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Location: All properties fronting on or abutting Espanola Way from Collins Avenue on the east, to and including lots 1-4 on the west side of Jefferson Avenue (private street) on the west.

For detailed area, see attached map and legal description (Appendix I and Exhibits I & II)

Present Owners: Multiple owners, a complete list is available from the Miami Beach Planning Department.

Present Use: Land Use on Espanola Way reflects the transition from the retail/commercial corridors of Collins and Washington Avenues on the east with the residential blocks near and abutting Flamingo Park on the west.

Espanola Way, as a result, becomes increasingly residential as one moves westward, from the entirely commercial block between Collins and Washington Avenues, through the Commercial/Residential Mixed-Use blocks of the Spanish Village, to the single-family style neighborhood between Meridian and Jefferson Avenues at the street's western terminus.

Additionally, the Ida M. Fisher School site and the Jewish Community Center form a transitional institutional use between the semi-commercial and single-family residential on Espanola Way.

Present Zoning: Espanola Way is equally divided between the following:

C-5: General Business

RM-60: Multiple family, medium density

2. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

- A. Historic Information - Espanola Way sits on land which formed the northern boundary of Ocean Beach, the first recorded plat in what was to become Miami Beach, as recorded by the pioneer Lummus Brothers' Ocean Beach Realty Company in 1912. The street was built by Francis F. Whitman in 1922 as "Whitman's Spanish Colony." The undeveloped land consisting of 20 corner lots and 40 inside lots was purchased by N.B.T. Roney and the Spanish Village Corporation in 1925 at the peak of the first great Florida land boom. Roney, one of the most prolific builders in early Miami Beach envisioned creating an artists' colony... "where artists and lovers of the artistic might congregate amid congenial surroundings."¹ The idea of such a bohemian village was first suggested to Mr. Roney by former New Yorkers who mentioned that Miami Beach lacked an area with a creative atmosphere for artists as one would find in New York's Greenwich Village, or the artists' quarter in Paris.

Roney and his architect, Robert A. Taylor, with financial backing from Francis Whitman, chose to duplicate a miniature Spanish Village "a Latin Greenwich Village of... fiestas and song, mantillas and lace."² Spanish architecture was used throughout, both to enhance the appeal and atmosphere of a village, and because it was predicted that "the predominating architectural note in Southern Florida will eventually be if not already, in the Spanish design."³

Taylor modeled the Spanish Village after San Sebastian and Fontarable on the coast of Spain, as well as Biarritz, Cannes, and Mentone in France. The project consisted of one block of development between Washington and Drexel Avenues, spilling across to include the western corners of Drexel Avenue as well. Construction totalled 16 buildings including two fifty-room hotels, apartment buildings and shops, and cost an estimated \$1,500,000. The Donathan Building Company constructed the hotels, while the J.C. Gaffney Company erected the apartment buildings.

Shops present on the street during the 1920's included purveyors of antique jewelry, rare books, fine clothes, painting, furniture and decorative arts "of the period of the Spanish Don",⁴ as well as ladies dress and hat shops where merchandise, it was touted, was "aimed to set the style for Paris, rather than to imitate it."⁵ Restaurants and tea houses were available to satisfy most tastes, including, in addition to the expected Spanish, those serving English, French, and Chinese cuisine.

In 1930, William Whitman independently developed four single-family homes fronting on Jefferson Avenue at the western terminus of Espanola Way, at

a cost of \$5,000 each. This second planned development was also in the Spanish style.

The Millco Investment Company built all but three of the homes in the single family residential neighborhood between Meridian and Jefferson Avenues in 1935 and 1936. L. Murray Dixon and Harry O. Nelson were the predominant architects, and the style, a transitional mix between Spanish and the emerging Art Deco.

The remainder of Espanola Way's development was concentrated in the period 1933-1940, following recovery from the devastating 1926 hurricane and ensuing Great Depression, and before the onset of World War II. A number of prominent local architects participated in the street's creation, in the then dominant Art Deco and Streamline Moderne architectural styles. Among these are Henry Hohaus (1444 and 1450 Collins Avenue, and 724 and 735 Espanola Way), L. Murray Dixon (525 and 531 Espanola Way, 1436 Pennsylvania Avenue, and 1435 Meridian Avenue), Roy F. France (1440 Euclid Avenue), and Carlos Schoepel (446 Espanola Way). R.A. Taylor, architect of the Spanish Village, designed 1440 Pennsylvania Avenue for himself as a residence and studio.

Espanola Way elicited great expectations. "The Spanish Village of Miami Beach is destined to become a famous place among the artists and intellectuals of the nation" raved the Miami News in 1925. But artists and their associates never seemed to adopt the street, with its carnival atmosphere as their own. Rather, the Spanish Village attracted a more raucous crowd, who would dance at block parties in the roped off streets, frequent bookies and bootleggers, witness the infamous Al Capone or attend the Port of the Missing Men, a popular nightspot.

By the late 1930's, however, "the street had begun its seedy slide." Bookies, winos, and prostitutes now called the street home. The infamous S & G Gambling Syndicate is reputed to have been created and run from Espanola Way until its demise in the 1950's.

As throughout Miami Beach, the hotels on Espanola Way housed soldiers training here during World War II. After the war, the Spanish Village briefly revived its tarnished image, as dance studios cropped up along the street to spread the rhumba craze, said to originate there. Espanola Way, at that time, was known as "The Rhumba Capital of the World", perhaps the last time the street produced anything near the bohemian atmosphere Mr. Roney envisioned.

- B. Architectural - The architecture on Espanola Way is an outstanding example of the close relationship between setting and style. Development on the street responded to small lot size and narrowness of right-of-way with maximum lot coverage and enhanced pedestrian amenities.

Given the confines of the site, its sub-tropical locale, and the Spanish Village's intended use, the Mediterranean-Revival style was a logical choice for the street's original development for several reasons. First, not only was the Spanish idiom the most expressive of the village atmosphere Roney sought, it was also the prevailing architectural style of the 1920's - the period of the first great Florida land boom - a style whose popularity, it was believed, would soon dominate the southern portion of the state. Additionally, the Mediterranean style deftly responded to the sub-tropical climate with large overhangs, covered galleries, maximum ventilation and light, thick stuccoed walls and generous use of native materials. While not being a pure re-creation of any particular style, Mediterranean Revival combined "elements common to Spanish, Moroccan, Italian, and French architecture...to create a fantasy image."⁸

All buildings in the Spanish Village are remarkable for their authentic reproduction of the Mediterranean style, including the Clay Hotel (briefly renamed the Martha Washington), the Village Hotel (now the Cameo Hotel), the Grace Hotel, the Barcelona Hotel (now the Sinclair Hotel) and the Matanzas Hotel. The concentration, alignment and design of these buildings and the narrowness of the street all combine to create a realistic impression of a Mediterranean Village.

The combination of a devastating hurricane in 1926 and the Great Depression of 1929 put a halt to the seemingly endless and luxurious development on Miami Beach, and marked a major change in the City's tourist business as well. "The emphasis shifted from a luxury market to a more middle class market, with corresponding changes in architectural style."⁹ The elaborate Mediterranean Revival style, while both environmentally appropriate and stylistically accomplished, was simply too costly to continue to serve the now working and middle class tourists.

The contemporary architecture of the 1930's, the related Art Deco and Streamline Moderne movements, became the dominant style for future construction, both on Espanola Way, and around the City. Both are rooted in, and expressive of the machine aesthetic. "The Art Deco style incorporated classical themes (Egyptian, Mayan, Ancient Greek, and Roman) in a thoroughly modern context. Common elements of the early Art Deco style are a strong, unbroken verticality, angular forms, ornamentation in relief (particularly themes abstracted from nature) and symmetry of fenestration. Examples of the Art Deco style on Espanola Way include Henry Hohausser's Allen Apartments of 1936 (611 Espanola Way),

and the Chester Apartments (1435 Meridian Avenue) designed in 1937 by L. Murray Dixon.

In the later Streamline buildings, the forms are rounded and simplified similar to the aerodynamic design of transportation vehicles of that time. There is a simplification of ornamentation in the form of raised or incised banding (called racing stripes) which takes the place of elaborate friezes seen on earlier buildings. The Streamline buildings, while still possessing a strong vertical emphasis utilize more horizontal elements in their design, such as Henry Hohaus's Hoffmans Cafeteria of 1940 (1450 Collins Avenue), and the Penway Apartments at 1443 Pennsylvania Avenue (Nadel, 1939).

3. RELATION TO ORDINANCE CRITERIA

In accordance with Section 22-5(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, eligibility for designation is determined on the basis of compliance with listed criteria. There are two levels of criteria. The primary category is Mandatory Criteria, required of all sites and districts, and consisting of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and association. At the second level, Review Criteria, compliance with at least one (1) of several listed criteria is required. The Espanola Way Historic District is eligible for designation as it meets all mandatory and most review criteria as outlined below.

A. Mandatory Criteria

Integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and association.

Based upon our preliminary analysis, staff finds the nominated district to be in conformance with the mandatory criteria for the following reasons:

1. The nominated district is located entirely within the National Register Architectural District and forms an important east-west pedestrian route between Flamingo Park and the interior district properties with the oceanfront.
2. Repetition of familiar Mediterranean-inspired architectural elements such as archways, towers, quoins, pilasters and bracketed balconies produce a strong coherence and integrity of design.
3. Narrowness of the right-of-way, consistency of scale and setbacks, courtyards and pedestrian orientation all produce a setting which, in combination with the building styles, reinforces the development concept of a Spanish village.

4. Use of barrel tile, wrought iron, relief-work, decorative Spanish tile and heavy masonry walls give the impression of age and solidity, and are highly evocative of a Mediterranean Village.
5. Creation of the Spanish Village particularly, and of Espanola Way generally, required the talents of some of the area's finest architects, and the embellished facades and attention to detail are evidence of the quality of workmanship of the craftsmen and artisans involved.
6. The Spanish Village was developed by N.B.T. Roney, one of the most prolific developers in early Miami Beach, and his Spanish Village Corporation in 1925. Designed by R.A. Taylor, Roney envisioned the project as a bohemian artist's colony. In addition, the talents of some of the best known local architects were employed on the remainder of Espanola Way's properties, including Henry Hohouser, Roy F. France, and L. Murray Dixon.

B. Review Criteria

Based upon a preliminary analysis, staff finds the nominated district in conformance with the following review criteria:

1. Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history:

Espanola Way served as the northern boundary for Ocean Beach, the forerunner of present-day Miami Beach, platted by the pioneer Lummus brothers as the first recorded subdivision in 1912. As one of the first large-scale, authentic Mediterranean Revival development in the city, the Spanish Village demonstrated the architectural style's suitability for sub-tropical living, and served in popularizing it as the dominate stylistic expression of the 1920's.

2. Association with the lives of persons significant in our past:

Espanola Way was the product of the collaboration of financier William F. Whitman and developer N.B.T. Roney, both early and influential participants in the development of Miami Beach. Roney in particular was widely known for both the Spanish Village and the near simultaneous creation of the oceanfront Roney Plaza Hotel, touted as Florida's greatest hotel achievement. In addition, a number of outstanding local architects

participated in Espanola Way's development, including Henry Hohouser, L. Murray Dixon, Carlos Schoepfel, and Spanish Village designer R.A. Taylor who also designed and maintained a house/studio on the street.

3. Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction:

The nominated district contains a high concentration of early Mediterranean Revival Architecture. Also present are examples of the Art Deco/Moderne style, as well as several transitional buildings (those containing elements of both styles).

5. Represent the work of a master:

In addition to the Spanish Village design by architect R.A. Taylor, the works of several other local master architects are represented in the nominated district, including those of Henry Hohouser (1444 and 1450 Collins Avenue, and 724 and 735 Espanola Way), Roy F. France (1440 Euclid Avenue), L. Murray Dixon (525 and 531 Espanola Way, 1436 Pennsylvania Avenue, and 1435 Michigan Avenue) and Carlos Schoepfel (446 Espanola Way).

4. PLANNING CONTEXT

- A. Present Trends and Conditions - Although Espanola Way is a relatively short street, it is comprised of four functional subsections, each with a distinct, recognizable character.

1. Collins to Washington Avenue - This block is purely commercial and forms an important link between Espanola Way, the commercial corridors of Collins and Washington Avenues, and via 14th Lane, Ocean Drive and the Atlantic Ocean. Two fine Streamline Modern Buildings, Hoffman's Cafeteria (briefly the Warsaw Ballroom) at 1450 Collins Avenue, and 1444 Collins - designed to accommodate ten shops (both by architect, Henry Hohouser, 1940) form a distinctive entry to Espanola Way.
2. The Spanish Village from Washington Avenue to (and including) the western corners of Drexel Avenue - Though the space, particularly retail, may be considered under-utilized, the Spanish Village retains much of the appeal, color and activity N.B.T. Roney envisioned on the street in 1925, and remains the

primary force of Espanola Way, and the critical element in the revitalization of the street.

3. Drexel Avenue to Meridian Avenue (excluding those structures included in the Spanish Village - Primarily residential in character, and heavily influenced by the public schools and other institutional uses in the area, this sub-section enjoys lower density and more open space than found elsewhere on Espanola Way. Fine examples of Mediterranean Revival architecture are present, continuing the visual interest of the architectural style westward from the Spanish Village. Among them are the Lucile Court Apartments, (L. Murray Dixon, 1933) at 525-31 Espanola Way, and the Grandora Apartments, 724 Espanola Way (Henry Hohausser, 1935). Fine Streamline Moderne Design is represented by the Penway Apartments (M.J. Nodel, 1939) at 1443 Pennsylvania Avenue, and the Billas Apartments (Roy F. France, 1935) at 1440 Euclid Avenue).
4. Meridian to Jefferson Avenues - Although now zoned multi-family (RM-60), this neighborhood still retains the appearance of a single-family residential neighborhood, for which it was originally intended. The close proximity to Flamingo Park heavily influenced this neighborhood.

The Planning Department has long recognized the unique character of Espanola Way and its exciting potential as a key element in the revitalization of southern Miami Beach.

In order to develop a more complete understanding of the street, and to organize the neighborhood for positive action, the Department encouraged the formation of the Espanola Way Task Force, a key group of Espanola Way property owners, interested citizens, residents, and civic organizations.

As a result, the City embarked on a major planning effort, including the creation of the study "Espanola Way, Renaissance of the Spanish Village." This study was a complete examination of the problems and opportunities facing Espanola Way, including vehicular and pedestrian circulation, repairs to the municipal right-of-way, lighting, private property improvements, program improvements, and economic potential. In addition, amendments to the City Ordinance were recommended to allow for certain amenities, sundrads, restaurants, nightclubs, and outdoor cafes, to create an active pedestrian environment and to contribute to the financial feasibility of a rehabilitation project.

- B. Conservation Objectives: Historic Designation would serve to compliment and reinforce the efforts currently being made by the City, citizens, and property owners to revitalize the area through preservation. The City's plan Espanola Way: Renaissance of the Spanish Village outlines an ambitious program of zoning and public improvements intended to promote and guide preservation, rehabilitation, and development of new compatible uses.

Historic designation, linked with this planning program, will aid in the achievement of several important goals for the district which include:

1. to preserve its character and architectural integrity;
2. to safeguard district buildings, streetscape, and open space from unsympathetic, undesirable alteration;
3. to enable the Espanola Way District to serve as the model in a continued program to encourage and develop historic preservation opportunities throughout the City; and
4. to promote the economic viability of the hotels and businesses in the proposed district through appropriate rehabilitation, public improvements, and compatible new uses and to demonstrate the viability of preservation as a means to successful neighborhood revitalization.

IV. PLANNING DEPARTMENT REVIEW

1. DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

The Planning Department recommends the Historic Preservation Board vote in favor of the designation of the Espanola Way Historic Preservation District to be established within the following boundaries:

All properties fronting on or abutting Espanola Way, including those 4 lots on Jefferson Avenue (private street) at the western terminus of Espanola Way.

Narrowness of the right-of-way, small lot size, similar scale, setback, amenities, and the dominance of Mediterranean Revival architecture all contribute to Espanola Way's appearance as a unique and distinct entity. As stated in the Planning Department's Renaissance of the Spanish Village report, the chief revitalization opportunities on Espanola Way lie exactly in this ability to be seen and understood as a visually harmonious, recognizable district.

2. REVIEW STANDARDS

In accordance with Section 22-5(A)(3) of the Zoning Ordinance, the Planning Department recommends the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Structures be adopted as the review standards for buildings within the Ocean Drive/Collins Avenue Historic Preservation District.

JK:CH:cmf
Deb-Hist Pres

1. "Espanola Way to Offer Unique Cultural Center," Miami Daily News,
July 26, 1925
2. Marjorie M. Klein, "Street of Dreams," Miami Herald Tropic Magazine,
8 June 1980 p. 14.
3. "Espanola Way to Offer Unique Cultural Center," Miami Daily News,
July 26, 1925
4. IBID
5. IBID
6. IBID
7. Marjorie M. Klein, p. 14
8. "Renaissance of the Spanish Village" (Miami Beach, Florida: City of Miami Beach
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9. IBID p. 9

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The Miami Herald, July 26, 1925.
2. KLEIN, Marjorie M., Street of Dreams, Tropic Magazine,
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3. LUMMUS, J.N. The Miracle of Miami Beach,
Miami: Miami Post Publishing Company, 1952
4. Miami Beach, City of, Development Services Division, Unpublished.
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5. Miami Beach, City of, Planning Department, Espanola Way, Renaissance of the Spanish
Village, March, 1985
6. Miami Beach, City of, Planning Department, Unpublished
Historic Properties Data Base

VI

ESPANOLA WAY

Current Zoning Districts: C-5, RM-60

Legal Description:

Beginning at a point at the intersection of the center line of Collins Avenue and the eastern extension of the southern lot line of lot 2-B, Espanola Villas, north to the eastern extension of the northern lot line of lot 2-A, Espanola Villas, west to the rear lot line of lots 1-4 of that unnumbered tract lying west of blocks 7-A and 7-B and Espanola Way, First Addition to Espanola Villas, south to the southern lot line of lot 4 of said unnumbered tract, then east to point of beginning. More specifically, this includes lots 1-4 of that unnumbered tract lying west of Blocks 7-A and 7-B and Espanola Way, First Addition to Espanola Villas, Blocks 3-A through 7-A and 3-B through 7-B, First Addition to Espanola Villas, and Blocks 2-A and 2-B, Espanola Villas.

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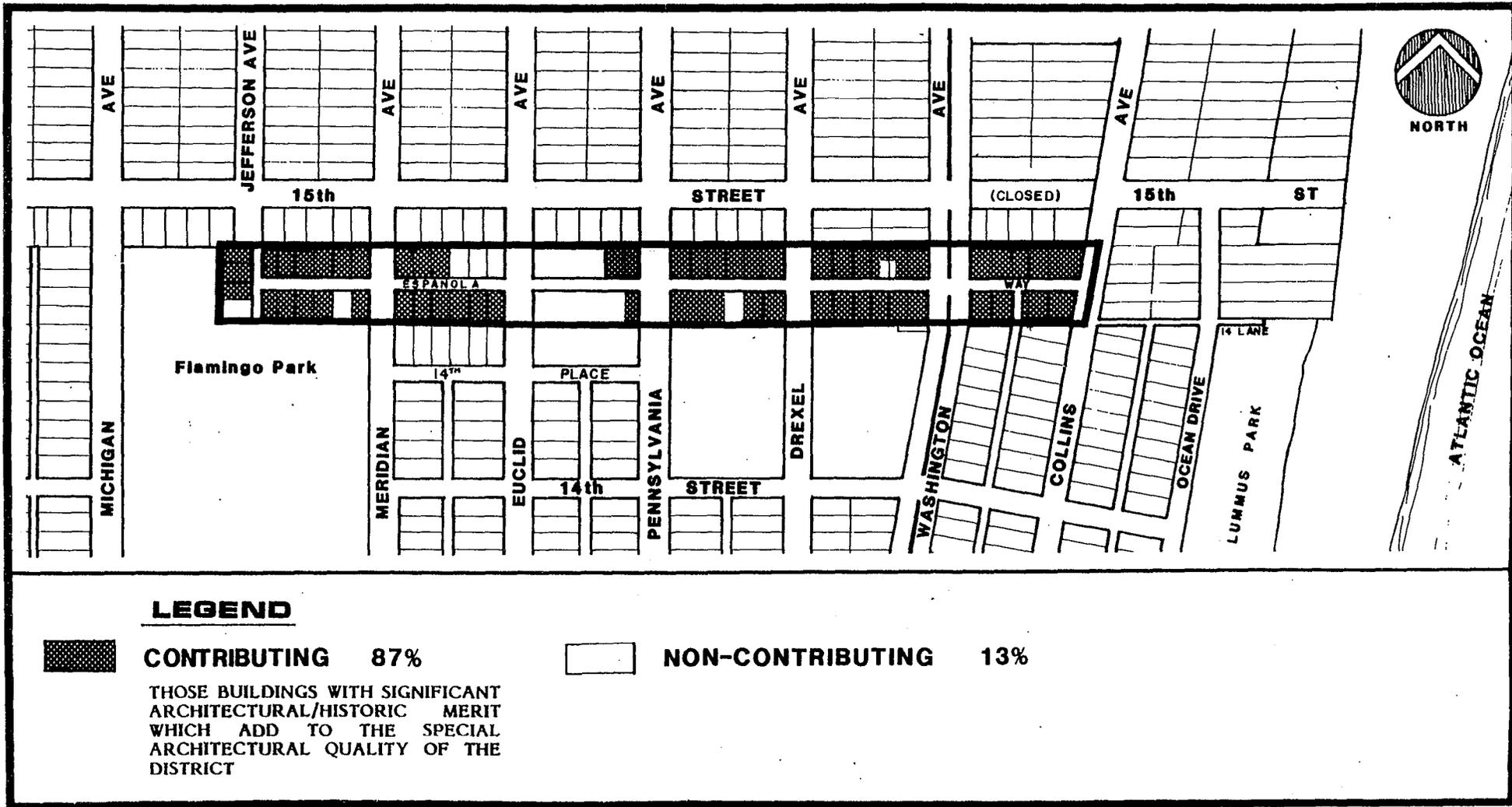


FIGURE 1

PREPARED BY THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH PLANNING DEPARTMENT

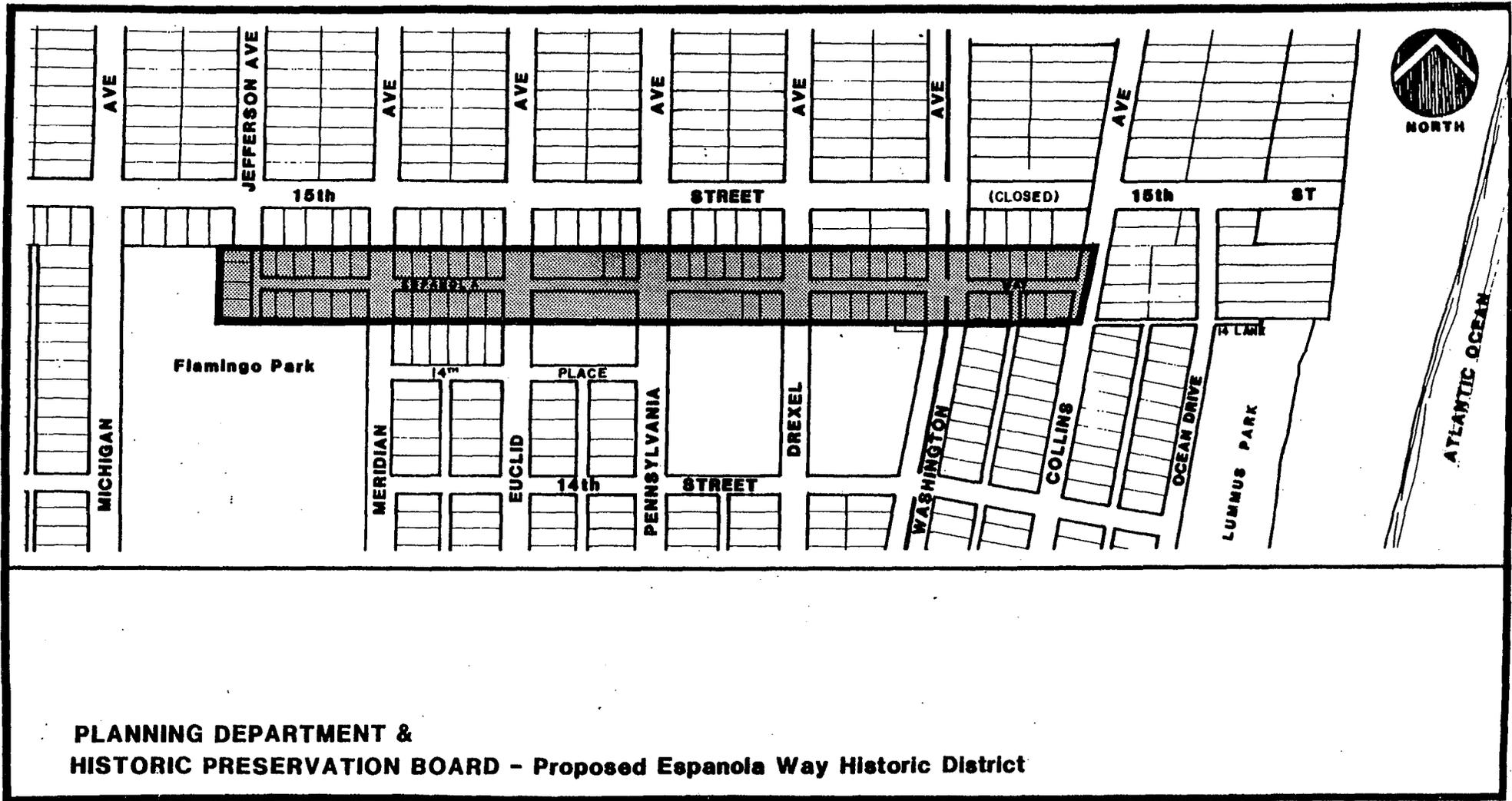


FIGURE 2

