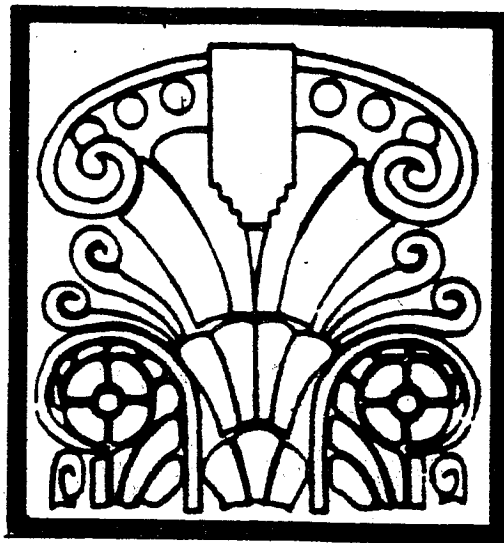


# **OCEAN DRIVE / COLLINS AVENUE**

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION DISTRICT**

### **DESIGNATION REPORT**



**CITY OF MIAMI BEACH PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

**MARCH 1986**

OCEAN DRIVE/COLLINS AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT

DESIGNATION REPORT

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## I. REQUEST

At its November 14, 1985 meeting, the Miami Beach Historic Preservation Board voted to nominate the area bordered by 6th Street on the south, the Erosion Control Line on the east, Collins Court on the west, and roughly, 16th Street on the north for historic preservation district designation. The first 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.

At its January 3, 1986 meeting, the Historic Preservation Board reviewed the preliminary evaluation and directed staff to proceed with 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: The area is generally bounded by:

Erosion Control Line on the east; 6th Street on the south; Collins Court on the west; and the extension of the north lot lines of Lots 4 and 16, Blk 55, Fisher's First Subdivision of Alton Beach (FFSAB) on the north.

For detailed area, see attached map and legal description.

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

Present use: The majority of properties are currently in residential and hotel use. In addition, there are limited commercial uses.

Present zoning: In approximate order of total land area:  
RM-125: Multiple family, high density  
MU: Municipal Use  
C-4: Business  
C-5: General Business

Proposed zoning: Mixed Use Entertainment in place of the existing RM-125.

#### 2. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

A. Historical: The Ocean Drive/Collins Avenue Historic District is highly representative of a distinct period in Miami Beach's history. The area's development pattern and architecture is reflective of its physical setting, prevalent architectural styles of the 1930's, the aspirations of its original developers, and the changing economic conditions of the nation and the local community.

Nearly all of the proposed district's original plat, up to 15th Street, was first recorded by the Lummus Brothers' Ocean Beach Realty Company in 1912. The smaller portion to the north was recorded by Carl Fisher's Alton Beach Realty Company early in 1914.

The Lummus brothers had acquired all of this property from John Collins and had participated in several activities to promote development. Some of these promotions included investing with Collins in a bridge to the mainland, construction of the area's first streets and sidewalks, and a land

give-away scheme to individuals who would agree to build houses on the property.

The area itself was subdivided using a strict grid pattern with relatively small 50 x 130 foot lots and access via streets with 50-60 foot rights-of-way. The intended use for these properties was for development of small seaside cottages and related commercial uses and, accordingly, J.N. Lummus built his own house at 12th Street and Ocean Drive. As an additional amenity to their oceanside property, The Lummus brothers sold the beachfront portion, (eastward of Ocean Drive) to the City for \$40,000 in 1915.

Bathing casinos, such as Hardie's and Smith's in South Beach and the Miami Beach Casino at 22nd Street (all constructed prior to 1915), were a major attraction for the residents of the Miami mainland. It was near these casinos that the first modest hotel, rooming houses, small apartments, lunch counters, and small stores were developed.

Even after the sale of a second portion of their holdings (west of Washington Avenue) to Carl Fisher, the Lummuses retained control over nearly half of South Beach, and all of the oceanfront portion. In contrast to Carl Fisher, the Lummuses continued with their promotion to the middle class. Accordingly, "This territory, with its small houses, public beach and bathing casinos never lost its proletarian character."<sup>1</sup>

"The Lummuses short of cash, with other businesses to manage, were not about to restrict anything on Ocean Beach. Anyone white and reasonably law-abiding could do pretty much what he pleased with his property, if he met the payments."<sup>2</sup>

This was very different from Fisher's development to the north. Fisher made extensive use of deed restrictions to control the size, type, architecture, and use of buildings. "An easygoing laissez-faire attitude prevailed on the Lummus property, giving South Beach a much more relaxed, though much less ritzy, atmosphere from the very beginning."<sup>3</sup> This development was very different in spirit from Fisher's fancy hotels, polo fields and golf courses for the wealthy.

Through the early 1920's, development was taking shape on South Beach. This development frequently took the form of the seaside bungalows; but, increasingly, development was becoming more ambitious as hotels began to take hold. It was in this period that the Ocean Drive hotel (760 Ocean Drive; 1925), Casa Grande (834 Ocean Drive; 1923), Martha Hill Apartments (850 Ocean Drive; 1922), The Collins Hotel (609 Collins Avenue; 1923), and the "El Patio" Apartments (1350 Collins Avenue; 1922) were constructed.

However, the most intensive period of development took place from the mid 1930's until WWII, following the disastrous years from the 1926 Hurricane through the Depression. It was during this period that the single

family residences were demolished, and the low-to-mid rise Art Deco seasonal hotels were constructed.

- B. Architectural: The primary visual image of the Ocean Drive/Collins Avenue District is imprinted with architectural styles commonly grouped under the category of Art Deco. The area was planned and developed as a resort mecca and built-up in a relatively short period of time. The result is visual cohesiveness and a high concentration of distinct resort architecture typical of the fashionable style of the 1930's period. The overall site development and layout of structures was influenced by the proximity to Lummus Park and the ocean. With an open front terrace, a standard design feature, the buildings were clearly designed to take advantage of the beach.

Locally, the term Art Deco has become synonymous with the many different architectural styles of the 1930's. These include Moderne, Streamline Moderne and Depression Moderne. Also visible on Ocean Drive and Collins Avenue are fine examples of other popular resort architectural styles of approximately the same period such as Mediterranean and Colonial Revival. Many buildings show combinations of more than one style.

In brief, the Art Deco style, as seen in the proposed district, was the contemporary architecture of the 1930's. This period represented a break with the predominantly classical architecture prevalent throughout Dade County in the 1920's. As with the Post-Modern movement of the 1980's, the Art Deco style incorporated classical themes (such as Egyptian and Mayan) in a thoroughly modern context. Common elements of the early Art Deco style are a strong verticality, angular forms, ornamentation in relief, and symmetry of fenestration. Examples include the Cavillier (1320 Ocean Drive; 1936), and the Marlin Hotel (1200 Collins Avenue; 1939).

In the later streamline buildings, there is a strong industrial influence in the use of materials such as chrome and glass block. The building forms are rounded and simplified similar to the aerodynamic design of automobiles, trains and airplanes of that time. There is a simplification of ornamentation as well in the form of raised 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. Examples include the Cardoza Hotel (1300 Ocean Drive; 1939) and the Essex House Hotel (1001 Collins Avenue; 1938).

The Ocean Drive and Collins Avenue buildings of the 1930's have several elements in common which result in an overall image referred to as Tropical Deco or Miami Beach Deco. These elements utilize tropical and nautical symbols which reinforce the popular image of the seaside resort. Palm fronds, fish, flamingos, and waves were popular subjects for building ornamentation as were port hole windows and ship-like pipe railings. Of a more practical nature, the cantilever window shades called "eyebrows" and

the deep, covered terraces which create a uniform street scale are well designed for the local climate. Another frequently used element is the elaborate finial, or crowning ornament, present on several buildings on Collins Avenue, which presents a futuristic image implying that Miami Beach in the 1930's was not only a tropical resort, but a thoroughly contemporary one, relatively untouched by the depression which gripped the rest of the country.

Constructed somewhat later, from 1939 to 1941, the hotels north of 15th street utilize similar design principles, but on a more impressive scale. Larger lots and direct ocean frontage created the setting for the next phase of resort architecture where buildings contained more private amenities; such as restaurants, nightclubs, and private pools and beaches.

The buildings emphasize the vertical elements on the front (west) elevations, and some (the St. Moritz, Shorecrest, and the Sands) also have tower-like appurtenances to increase the sense of building height. This evolution of local Art Deco architecture toward the skyscraper hotel continued until WWII when construction activities stalled and ended shortly after the war when the international style began to take hold.

### 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 first level is referred to as a Mandatory Criteria, which is required of all nominated sites or districts. The second level is referred to as Review Criteria. In compliance with at least one of several listed criteria is required. The Ocean Drive/Collins Avenue Historic District is eligible for designation as it complies with the criteria as outlined below.

#### A. Mandatory Criteria

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

Staff finds the nominated district to be in conformance with the mandatory criteria for the following reasons:

1. The nominated district is located within a National Register Architectural District;
2. The district is the primary tourist/hotel area constructed in the 1930's within the Architectural District and is thus a definable area based on land use;
3. The area possesses high consistency in architectural style, scale, setback, and materials; and
4. The area is dependant on, and well integrated with, the adjacent public oceanfront.

## B. Review Criteria

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:

The nominated district was the primary tourist/hotel area during the 1930's and 1940's, during which time Miami Beach was established as a premiere oceanfront resort city. Thus, this area and the individual buildings contained within, significantly contributed to the history and development of the City.

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

The nominated district contains a high concentration of buildings in the Art Deco-Moderne style. Also present are examples of the Mediterranean Revival style and many transitional (containing elements of both styles) buildings. These styles represent the dominant local architectural styles in the mid to late 1920's through the 1940's.

3. Possesses high artistic values:

The Art Deco-Moderne, as well as the Mediterranean Revival buildings within the nominated district, possess artistic value in building form and detail ornamentation.

4. Represent the work of a master:

Many of the local "master" architects are represented in the nominated district including Henry Hohausser, L. Murray Dixon, and Kiehnel and Elliot.

5. Significant entity whose components may lack distinction:

Consistency in land use, architectural style, scale, and period of development within the nominated district has created a significant example of twentieth century oceanfront resort architecture. Although some individual buildings are not of outstanding design, they and Lummus Park contribute to the overall quality of the nominated district.

## 4. **PLANNING CONTEXT**

- A. Present Trends and Conditions - The proposed Ocean Drive/Collins Avenue Historic District was the focus of Miami Beach's tourism and resort industry from the late 1920's through the early 1940's. The district has



survived the economic decline of a changing travel industry relatively intact, if somewhat deteriorated both physically and economically. As a result of a shift to a secondary market (that of an elderly, poorer, and more transient group of permanent and seasonal "one room apartment" dwellers) the historic buildings within the proposed district have remained to some extent occupied and in use. To a large degree, these demographic and economic conditions persist; however, in recent years, a new direction has taken shape.

Recognizing both the area's potential to make a significant economic change in terms of its market, and the aesthetic value of its rich historic and architectural heritage, the City, private citizens, and property owners have initiated efforts to improve and revive the neighborhood with historic preservation as the guiding principle. For its part, the City has embarked on a major planning effort which is described in detail in Ocean Drive: A Planning and Urban Design Strategy. This plan incorporates an extensive set of public improvements for Ocean Drive, the numbered cross streets, and Lummus Park. Designed to enhance the historic image of the area, these improvements include new streets, sidewalks, lighting, signage, street furniture, landscaping, and an extension of the Beachfront Park and Promenade. In addition, the zoning and other land use regulations are being revised in order to allow the smaller historic hotels to compete in the current tourist market with placement of outdoor recreation and entertainment uses, cafes and restaurants. Design guidelines for appropriate rehabilitation of the area's historic structures have also been established and several business assistance programs have been proposed.

This plan was developed both in response to current preservation activities and as an incentive to new rehabilitation projects. Area buildings which have recently undergone or are currently undergoing rehabilitation include the Carlyle Hotel (1250 Ocean Drive), the Cardozo (1300 Ocean Drive), the Waldorf Towers (860 Ocean Drive), the Locust Apartments (818 Ocean Drive), and the Alamac (1308 Collins Avenue). In this way, public and private efforts are being directed towards the goal of establishing this district (including Ocean Drive, Lummus Park, and Collins Avenue) as a popular tropical historic resort and recreation area which will attract tourists, day visitors, and new residents.

- 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 Ocean Drive: A Planning and Urban Design Strategy 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 undesirable alteration;
3. to enable the Ocean Drive/Collins Avenue 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 RECOMMENDATION**

##### **I. DISTRICT BOUNDARIES**

- A. The Planning Department recommends the Historic Preservation Board vote in favor of the designation of the Ocean Drive/Collins Avenue Historic Preservation District to be established within the following boundaries:

**South: Centerline of 6th Street**

The Department recommends 6th Street as the southern boundary as it is also the boundary of the National Register District. Ocean Drive and Collins Avenue architecture is consistent through 6th Street, but Historic District Regulations would conflict with South Pointe Re-development goals and regulations if a more southerly boundary was selected.

**East: the Erosion Control Line**

The Department recommends the Erosion Control Line as the eastern boundary as it contains Lummus Park and the complete sites of the north Collins Avenue buildings, it is the line separating municipal and private ownership from State ownership of the beach, and (due to State regulations) it is unlikely that any future construction will occur east of this line.

**North: Centerline of 16th Street**

The Department recommends the centerline of 16th Street rather than the Historic Preservation Board's original recommendation of a boundary north of 16th Street because 1) the City parking lots and vacant land comprises 52.4% of the total area; and 2) the centerline of 16th Street is the boundary of the RM-125 and C-4 districts.

**West: Collins Court or the western property lines of all buildings abutting Collins Avenue from 6th Street to 16th Street.**

For the reasons stated more fully within the report, the Department recommends Collins Avenue be included in the designation of any

Ocean Drive district. The buildings on Collins Avenue were developed during the same period, by the same architects, and for the same use as Ocean Drive. Collins Avenue contains buildings of equal architectural quality as Ocean Drive and are of the same styles and scale. The two streets functioned jointly as the tourist/hotel district of Miami Beach in the 1930's. The recommended boundary ensures all Collins Avenue sites are included within the 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.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Polly Redford, Billion-Dollar Sandbar (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1970). p. 94
2. IBID. p. 96
3. IBID.

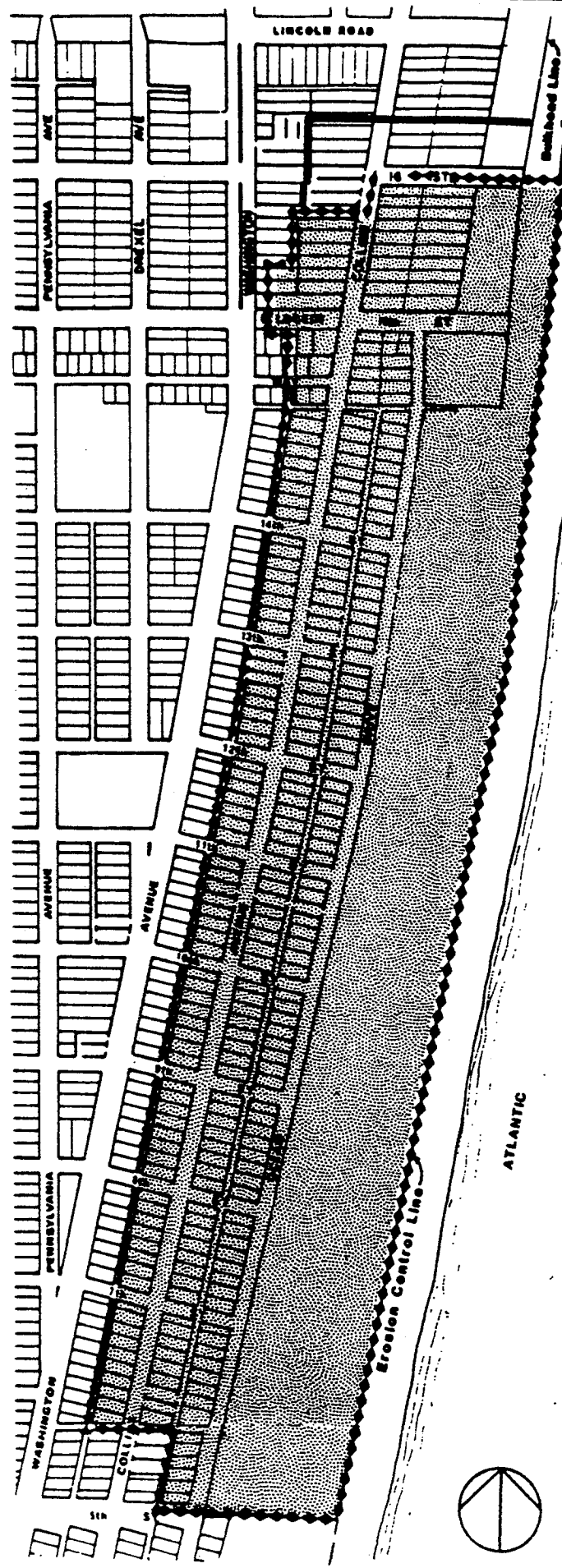
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1. City of Miami Beach Development Services Division  
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2. City of Miami Beach Planning Department  
Historic Preservation Computer Data Base, 1985.
3. Lummus, J.N. The Miracle of Miami Beach.  
Miami: Miami Post Publishing Co., 1952.
4. Redford, Polly. Billion Dollar Sandbar.  
New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1970.
5. Rickles, Richard S., ed. Ocean Drive: A Planning and Urban Design Strategy.  
Miami Beach: City of Miami Beach Planning Department, 1984.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION

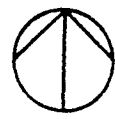
Beginning at the intersectin of the centerlines of 6th Street and Collins Court. Proceed east along centerline of 6th Street to the Erosion Control Line as described in plat book 105 page 62, Public Records of Dade County. Proceed north along the Erosion Control Line to the intersection of the eastern extension of the center line of 16th Street. Proceed west along said line to the intersection of the centerline of Collins Avenue, proceed south along said line to the intersection of the north lot line of Lot 7, Blk 57, Fisher's First Subdivision of Alton Beach Proceed west along said line to the intersection of the west boundary of said lot. Proceed south to the intersection of the centerline of Lot 19, Blk 57, Fisher's First Subdivision of Alton Beach. Proceed 75 feet west along said centerline. Proceed south to north lot line of Lot 4, Blk 76 (Fisher's First Subdivision of Alton Beach). Proceed south until the north lot line of Lot 2, Blk 2-A, Espanola Villas. Proceed west to west lot line of said lot. Proceed south to centerline of Espanola Way. Proceed west along said centerline to the centerline of Collins Court and thence south along said centerline to point of beginning.

PREPARED BY THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH PLANNING DEPARTMENT



OCEAN

ATLANTIC



PLANNING DEPARTMENT BOUNDARY



HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD BOUNDARY



# PROPOSED HISTORIC DISTRICT

