

*Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century  
Historic District*

DESIGNATION REPORT



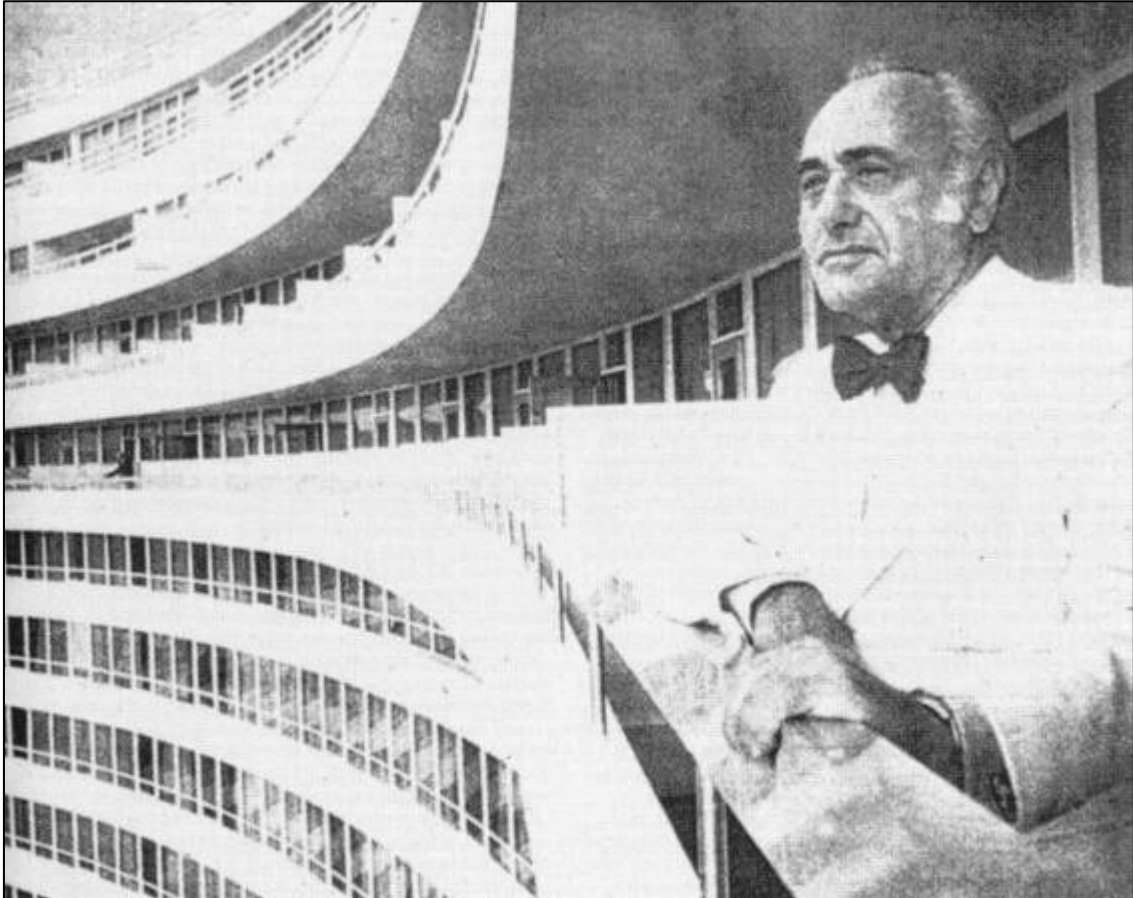
**PREPARED BY**

**CITY OF MIAMI BEACH PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

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*Morris Lapidus*

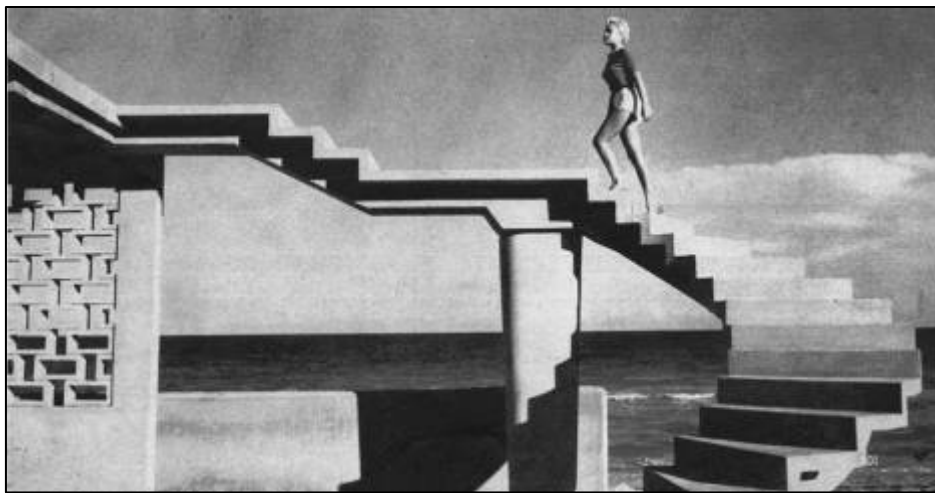
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**CITY OF MIAMI BEACH**

**MORRIS LAPIDUS / MID 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
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A dramatically built staircase swoops up to the second tier of cabanas near oceans edge. Fontainebleau Hotel, designed by Morris Lapidus. *Life Magazine, January 17, 1955*

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**CITY OF MIAMI BEACH**  
**MORRIS LAPIDUS / MID 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY HISTORIC DISTRICT**  
**DESIGNATION REPORT**



Seacoast Towers East, designed by Morris Lapidus

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# I. Introduction

United States Highway A1A forms the historic spinal cord of the east Florida coastline. From Miami Beach to Aventura it is known simply as “Collins Avenue” and also as one of the most fascinating, often glamorous, and well-heeled urban corridors in the nation - a part of it in Miami Beach still boasting the name, “Millionaires Row”. In its past, Collins Avenue has been home as well as host to the wealthy and the famous as well as to the middle and upper middle income classes - individuals seeking life, work, and leisure along this dramatic stretch of tropical Florida coastline.



Eden Roc Hotel, Lobby. May 2009

Named after John Stiles Collins (1837–1928), arguably the earliest pioneer developer of the desolate oceanfront lands that would become the City of Miami Beach, Collins Avenue is “the Beach’s longest and most important thoroughfare”<sup>1</sup>, extending from South Pointe Drive (originally “Biscayne Street”) to the City limit at 87<sup>th</sup> Terrace. In recognition of the historic role that Collins Avenue has played in the development history of Miami Beach, the Historic Preservation Board, in the mid-1990s, directed the Planning Department to commence the long range survey and research of the Collins Avenue corridor with the goal of providing recommendations for areas, structures, and sites that should be considered for local historic designation. Since that time, the Planning Department has carefully surveyed and researched almost all sections of this corridor that had not been previously protected by historic designation. As a result of this long-range process the Historic Preservation Board as well as the Planning Board have recommended to the Mayor and City Commission the creation of four unique local historic districts as well as one individual historic site on the Collins Avenue corridor. Accordingly, and with substantial public support, the City Commission accepted each of these recommendations and designated all four of these local historic districts and one individual site along the historic corridor. These designations included the following:

- **Ocean Beach Historic District** – designated 1996 – 1<sup>st</sup> Street through 6<sup>th</sup> Street
- **Harding Townsite/South Altos Del Mar Historic District** – designated 1996 - 73<sup>rd</sup> Street through 77<sup>th</sup> Street
- **The Bath Club Historic Site** – designated 1999 - 5937 Collins Avenue
- **Collins Waterfront Historic District** – designated 2001 – 22<sup>nd</sup> Street through 44<sup>th</sup> Street
- **North Beach Resort Historic District** – designated 2004 – 62<sup>nd</sup> Street through 71<sup>st</sup> Street

Prior to 1996, the City Commission had designated two local historic districts along the Collins Avenue corridor. In South Beach, the Mayor and City Commission designated in 1986 and expanded in 1992, the Ocean Drive/Collins Avenue Local Historic District from 6<sup>th</sup> Street to 22<sup>nd</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Russell Pancoast, Personal Memoirs, Family Collection.

Street (the first section of the Collins Avenue corridor to be locally designated and protected). And in North Beach, the original Altos Del Mar Local Historic District, from 77<sup>th</sup> Street to 79<sup>th</sup> Street (the City's first historic single family residential district to be protected), was designated in 1987 - both areas being prime contributors to the unique variety of historical development along the Collins corridor, from modest Mediterranean Revival winter bungalows to legendary Art Deco hotels. To present, extraordinary major redevelopment, new construction, and remarkable restoration work has occurred with great success in all seven of these locally designated historic districts and sites on the corridor, greatly bolstering the City's economy as well as its residential and visitor appeal, and demonstrating to its residents, the nation, and the world, that Miami Beach is a city that understands and values its remarkable history and continues to build upon and prosper by it.

### **The Historical Significance of Mid-Century Architecture**

Not since Carl Fisher built the Flamingo and Nautilus Hotels, and NBT Roney built the majestic Roney Plaza on Collins Avenue, in the decade following World War I, had hotels of such vast magnitude and far reaching consequence dared be imagined on Miami Beach. But once again, it was a post-war era in America – and anything was possible. Less than ten years after the close of World War II, Miami Beach and the nation were re-tooled and geared-up for an even brighter future.

National defense plants that a decade earlier had been manufacturing the high tech implements of war were now producing glamorous two tone “Fleetwood” Cadillacs with electric windows and leather seats. “Rocket” Oldsmobile's with V-8 engines, automatic transmissions, and hood ornaments almost predicting a lunar landing barely another decade later, streaked down new US highways. And affordable as well as highly reliable, “Bel-Aire” Chevrolets, began to explore the vast reaches of the American nation. On gleaming new Magnavox TV sets, Dinah Shore beckoned her fellow Americans relaxing in their living rooms to, “See the USA in Your Chevrolet”. This promotion of mid-century American values became possibly one of the most effective advertising jingles in modern American history<sup>2</sup>. America was calling.

In this turbo charged post-World War II atmosphere, two equally audacious and visionary individuals, Ben Novack and Morris Lapidus, found themselves unexpectedly intertwined in a high stakes development adventure that would redefine the modern American resort hotel and strongly influence the future of modern American resort apartment living. In so doing, they would also propel the new mid-century architecture of South Florida permanently into the national psyche.

Highly successful hotel developer Ben Novack wanted to build the biggest, most luxurious hotel in Miami Beach, and he had acquired the former Harvey Firestone Estate (originally the James Snowden Estate) in the “Millionaires’ Row” section of Collins Avenue, at 44<sup>th</sup> Street, for just that purpose. But in 1953 Novack still had no architect for the hotel he would soon name *The Fontainebleau*, after the grand Fontainebleau Palace, in France. Morris Lapidus, who had emigrated to the Lower East Side of New York City from Odessa, Russia, in 1902, with his parents at the age of nine months, had trained at Columbia University and become a confident architect and brilliant interior designer in high demand across the nation. But Morris had never designed an entire building from the foundations up, not to mention a 565 room luxury hotel. It was a match made in heaven, and hell, with Lapidus agreeing to work for a ridiculously low fee. But by the beginning of 1954 Lapidus had moved his drafting office into the living room of the old Harvey Firestone mansion, and work on construction documents for America's mid-century dream hotel commenced.

“I was not asking for a profit, I simply wanted to cover my costs. I was satisfied that my

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<sup>2</sup>General Motors Chevrolet Division advertising

profit would not be a monetary one. Ben kept telling me that this hotel would make me famous. Who else would have done what Ben had done – given an architect who had never designed a total building a commission to design a sixteen-million dollar hotel that would be the first great hotel completed since the Waldorf had opened in 1932?”<sup>3</sup>

And so began a new generation of major American resort architecture on Collins Avenue, as the Fontainebleau became the first major Miami Beach hotel to replace the former early 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial millionaires’ oceanfront estates north of 44<sup>th</sup> Street. Equally luxurious oceanfront apartment buildings of a scale never before seen on Miami Beach, and competing with each for outstanding mid-century design and level of amenity, would soon follow.

Contained within this one-mile long stretch of uninterrupted oceanfront land, bounded to the east by the dazzling waters the Atlantic Ocean and to the west by the tranquility of Indian Creek, are fourteen major properties. Twelve of these properties contain mid-20<sup>th</sup> century structures, all built between 1954 and 1966, that have been identified as “contributing” to the unique oceanfront urban resort character of the proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Local Historic District. The Code of the City of Miami Beach defines a “contributing” structure in a local historic district generally as follows:



*...one which by location, scale, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling or association adds to a local historic district’s sense of time and place and historical development.*

Left to Right: Mimosa Apartments, Eden Roc Hotel and Versailles Tower (North Addition) of Fontainebleau Hotel, c. 1963. Courtesy of Florida Photographic Collection

A remarkable five of these Contributing properties are home to among the most distinctive, grand, and architecturally dramatic mid-century structures to be designed by internationally acclaimed Miami Beach architect, Morris Lapidus. These include the following in chronological order:

- The Fontainebleau Hotel – 1954 (4441 Collins Avenue)
- The Eden Roc Hotel – 1955 (4525 Collins Avenue)
- The Crystal House – 1960 (5055 Collins Avenue)
- Seacoast Towers South – 1964 (5051 Collins Avenue)
- Seacoast Towers East – 1966 (5151-5161 Collins Avenue)

This extraordinary collection of five Morris Lapidus designed masterpieces, together with seven major contributing mid-century structures designed by other of South Florida’s most highly respected and successful architects, in a single mile of the historic Collins Avenue corridor, embodies the full aesthetic, social, economic and historic impact that this one single mile stretch would have on the evolution of “Post-War Modern” design, and indeed, the future of post war modern leisure and apartment living in South Florida and beyond.

In addition to Morris Lapidus, the other highly significant local architects who contributed to the unique and distinct character of the proposed historic district include Melvin Grossman, Morris

<sup>3</sup> Morris Lapidus, Too Much is Never Enough: An Autobiography; Rizzoli, New York, 1996, p.168



Lapidus' protégé and disciple and one of the most prolific and talented mid-century designers on the "Beaches"; stellar Delano Hotel architect, Robert Swartburg; Polynesian design theme superstar and exceptional architect, Charles Foster McKirahan, who delighted South Florida in 1954 with the MaiKai restaurant in Oakland Park (still operating successfully today under the same family ownership); A. Herbert Mathes, the talented naval and building architect who Ben Novack asked to design the controversial north (Versailles) tower addition to the Fontainebleau Hotel in 1958, with the instruction to eclipse (and literally put into shadow) Morris Lapidus' newly constructed Eden Roc Hotel immediately to its north, and; McKay & Gibbs, designers of many notable Art Deco structures in South Beach, including the Surfcomber and Seacomber hotels and the Sherbrooke Apartments.

While architectural critics, such as Ada Louise Huxtable, of the *New York Times*, derided Lapidus' flamboyant and unorthodox design for the Fontainebleau, the hotel's guests and show-business celebrities loved it. The Fontainebleau Hotel was an undisputed success, even if slightly over-the-top for some tastes. It delighted and gave new joy to mid-century America with its powerful embracing curves, spectacular ocean vistas, classical gardens, and exotic dining and meeting venues. Morris Lapidus' early interest in theater set design and his brilliant former career in retail store planning and interior design across America, had stood him in excellent stead to fully appreciate and design for the American post-war psyche. Morris would often say, "I designed for the people of my time"<sup>4</sup>, and his observations and understanding of human nature and how people moved and reacted in their built environment was clearly uncanny, as acknowledged by even his most severe critics.

Following close on the heels of the Fontainebleau's success, Harry Mufson, Ben Novack's former hotelier partner and now ambitious competitor, knew he too had to have a Morris Lapidus designed luxury resort masterpiece, and so he purchased the property immediately to the north of the Fontainebleau. It too would be an ultramodern state-of-the-art resort, with its own classical European references, and it would "scream luxury". Morris would quip decades later, "I didn't dare use sweeping curves in the design of the Eden Roc Hotel. After the Fontainebleau, the critics would have killed me"<sup>5</sup>. And so in direct and intentional contrast with the powerful curves of the Fontainebleau, Lapidus instead gave the much smaller Eden Roc Hotel a "Y"-shaped plan, exploring an architectural symphony of subtle angles, cantilevered balconies protecting radically out to sea, and dramatic 'towers' of aquamarine mosaic tiles symmetrically flanking the main facade and gradually changing in color from darker to lighter shades as they rose up the seventeen story height of the building to the sky. Memorably capping this modern masterpiece of ocean-side design would be the dramatic funnel of an ocean-liner graciously screaming "*Eden Roc*" in Morris Lapidus' own bold neon hand script.

Beyond the bold and daring aesthetic influence that the Fontainebleau, Eden Roc and Doral Beach hotels would have on the future of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century resort design in South Florida, the functional planning and programmatic organization of these lavish hotels, which were nearly completely independent resort facilities offering almost every imaginable amenity a guest could possibly desire, also strongly influenced and set a new standard for the grand mid-century residential apartment buildings that would soon follow, as higher incomes and more wealth moved into the region. Just as the grand mid-century hotels boasted amenities ranging from mind-boggling lobbies to suave retail stores, ballrooms, restaurants, coffee shops, heated swimming pools, spas, cabanas, classical fountains, and intimate lounges and card rooms, so did many of the new generation of luxury apartment buildings that rose along the coastline. These icons of mid-century architectural excitement, glamorous life style, and leisurely tropical living are now very much a highly valued part of Miami Beach's 20<sup>th</sup> century urban legacy on the "Billion Dollar Sandbar".

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<sup>4</sup> Morris Lapidus, personal conversations with William Cary, 2000

<sup>5</sup> Morris Lapidus, personal conversations with William Cary, 2000



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Snapshots of American Culture in 1955, Life Magazine, January 17, 1955

THE TWO BODIES of looking  
ONCE, STRANGELY GRASP EACH  
OTHER, SEEMING STRONG AND  
WEAK, AS THE HORNED HEAD OF  
THE GOD WHICH EXPANDS THE  
MINIMAL FORM OF THE UNIVERSE.

**BLIND MEN** (1951)  
oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm

## A Monumental Modern

ITALY'S CREMONINI JUMPS TO QUICK SUCCESS IN THE U.S. ART WORLD

In the field of contemporary art entering into the U.S. from abroad, the work of Lucio Fontana has become one of Europe's most successful and most rapidly accepted. Since his first New York exhibition in 1952, including and

Fontana's collection of modern abstraction with traditional forms. Drawing the bodies, heads and bodies (like at Fontana near Naples, he has succeeded them in truly original compositions of simple yet

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL CARS IN THE WORLD HAVE

*Body by Fisher*

FISHER GM

Snapshots of American Culture in 1955, *Life Magazine*, January 17, 1955

*Life's Visit*



LUNCH PATIO HAS WINDOW INTO POOL'S SIDE

# Miami's Costliest

## HOTEL ADORNS BEACH

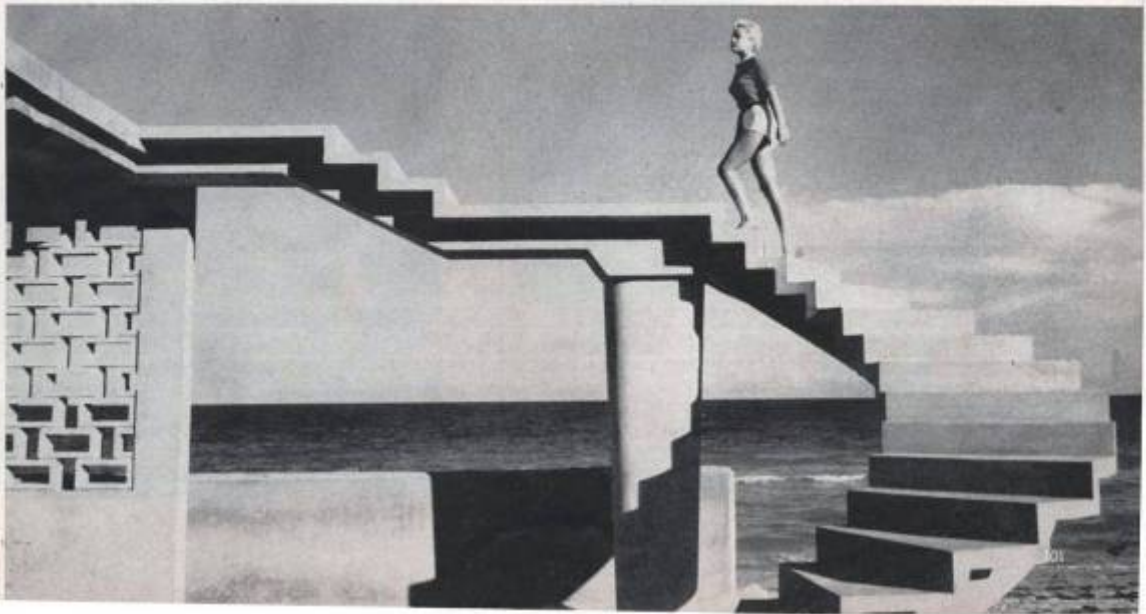
Miami Beach, with three quarters of its beach front already occupied by hotels, recently got its biggest and costliest addition, the \$15 million Fontainebleau. A 14-story edifice with a 1,000-foot beach, the hotel has 565 rooms (minimum: \$33 a day without meals). There are nine governor's suites (at \$160 a day), nine presidential suites (at \$185 a day) and a royal suite which will be even more expensive when finished. Fontainebleau has some striking architecture (opposite and below), two swimming pools, 265 cabanas and a million dollar boiler room. Some of the first guests found the hotel's outsized magnificence almost overwhelming. But the management has a staff of 850 or roughly one employe for each guest, and expects in time "everyone will feel like he is being carried around on his own little silver platter."

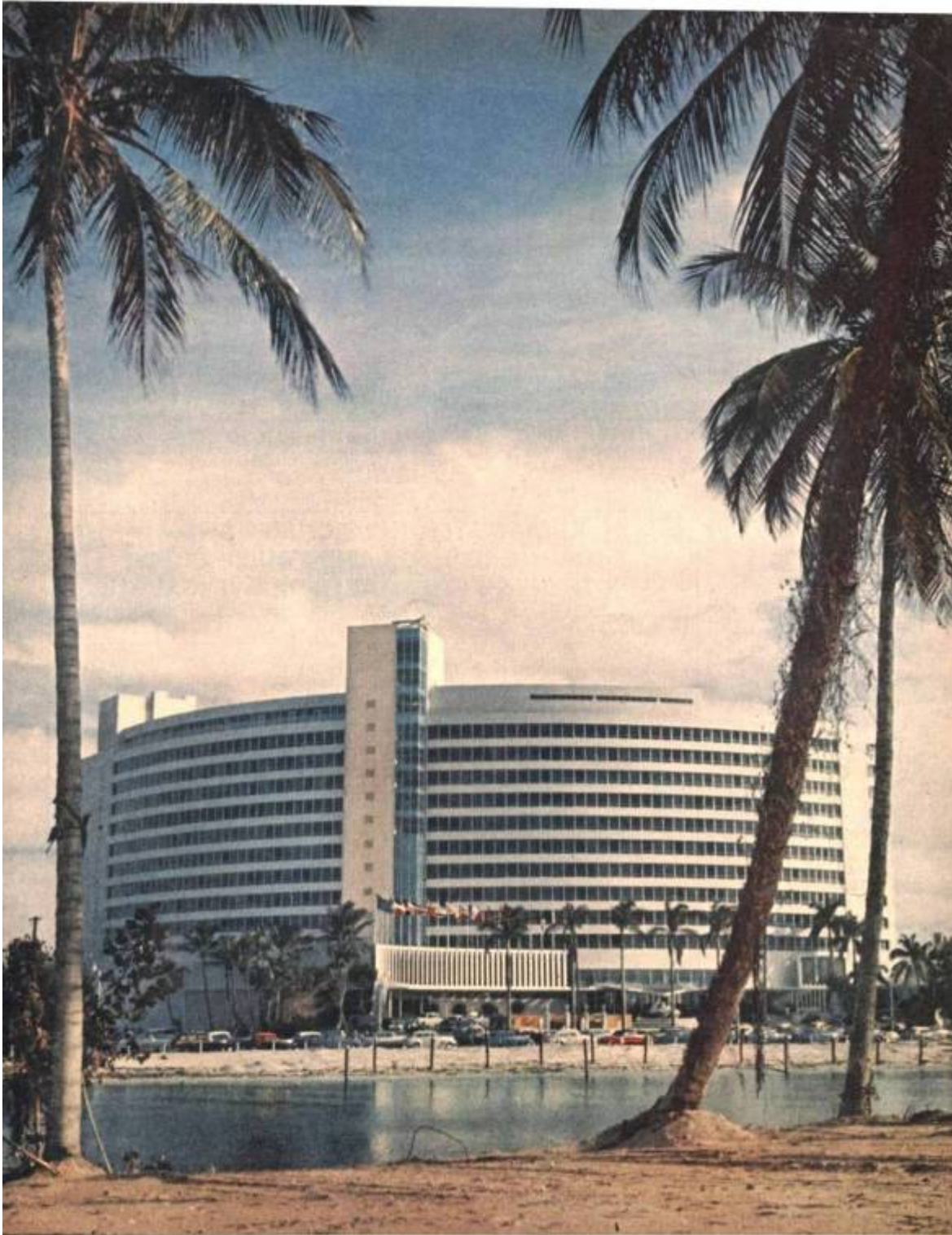


HOTEL NIGHTCLUB called La Ronde seats 500 in level-shaped, pillarless room. Here guests all get

good view of The Belmonts under chandelier 16 feet in diameter on the hydraulically lifted stage.

A DRAMATICALLY BUILT STAIRCASE SWOOPS UP TO THE SECOND TIER OF CABANAS NEAR OCEAN'S EDGE. FONTAINEBLEAU'S ARCHITECT IS MORRIS LAPIDUS





THE CURVED AND MANY-WINDOWED FACADE OF THE FONTAINEBLEAU HOTEL GLEAMS IN THE MIAMI BEACH SUN. IN FOREGROUND IS PART OF YACHT BASIN

*Life Magazine, January 17, 1955*

## II. Request

On May 4, 1998, the Historic Preservation Board requested Planning staff to commence with detailed historic survey and research work along the Collins Avenue corridor north of the **Miami Beach National Register Architectural District** (aka *Art Deco District*), from 22<sup>nd</sup> Street to 87<sup>th</sup> Terrace, including Indian Creek Drive, Harding Avenue, the cross streets from 22<sup>nd</sup> Street to 87<sup>th</sup> Terrace, and the Lake Pancoast multi-family residential neighborhood due west of Lake Pancoast, for the purpose of identifying and initiating the designation of historic sites, structures, and districts along this stretch of the historic Collins Avenue corridor that should be afforded historic designation protection. The Planning Department commenced its survey and research work at 22<sup>nd</sup> Street and has continued this intensive study since then, resulting in the following preservation actions by the Historic Preservation Board and the City Commission:

On January 31, 2001, the City Commission approved the designation of the **Collins Waterfront Historic District**. The historic district extends from 22<sup>nd</sup> Street to 44<sup>th</sup> Street along Collins Avenue, and includes as well Indian Creek Drive, the Indian Creek waterway, Lake Pancoast, and the Lake Pancoast multi-family residential neighborhood east of Pinetree Drive.

On March 17, 2004, the City Commission approved the designation of the **North Beach Resort Historic District**. This historic district extends from 62<sup>nd</sup> Street to 71<sup>st</sup> Street along Collins Avenue, and includes all but one property on the east side of Collins Avenue as well as properties on both sides of Collins at 63<sup>rd</sup> Street.

On June 8, 2004, the Historic Preservation Board requested that an item be placed on the board's August agenda for the Board to consider directing Planning staff to commence the process for the possible designation of the **Fontainebleau Hotel**, located at 4441 Collins Avenue, as a local historic site, due the property's immense historical significance.

On July 13, 2004, a legal representative of the owner of the **Fontainebleau Hotel** requested the Historic Preservation Board to grant a continuance for the possible commencement of the historic designation process for the **Fontainebleau Hotel** property at the Board's upcoming August meeting. The Board approved a motion to continue this item to the September 14, 2004, meeting.

On July 13, 2004, the Historic Preservation Board also approved a motion to direct staff to proceed with research and prepare a preliminary evaluation and recommendation report for the possible designation of the **Eden Roc Hotel**, located at 4525 Collins Avenue, as a local historic site, after a discussion of the property's historic value and significance.

On September 14, 2004, the Historic Preservation Board discussed directing staff to initiate the process for the possible designation of the **Fontainebleau Hotel** as a local historic site. The owner, Hotelorama Associates, advised the Board that although they recognized the historical and architectural significance of the hotel site, they were in the process of completing a phased redevelopment project for the property that had been previously approved by the Design Review Board. The owner requested that the Board defer the possible historic designation of the hotel site until such phased project was completed, with the assurances that the ownership would remain the same and no major demolition would occur on the property. The Board approved a motion to defer the possible designation of the **Fontainebleau Hotel** as a local historic site to an unspecified date.

On January 11, 2005, the Historic Preservation Board approved a motion to direct staff to place an item on their March agenda relative to the possible designation of the **Doral Beach Hotel** (then known as the Wyndham Hotel), located at 4833 Collins Avenue, as a local historic site, as a

consequence of the property's historic value and significance.

In February of 2005, it was announced that the **Fontainebleau Hotel** site would likely be sold to Turnberry Associates but that the new ownership intended to maintain the assurances made to the Board by Hotelarama Associates that the hotel site would eventually be designated.

On March 8, 2005, the Historic Preservation Board discussed the historical and architectural significance of the **Doral Beach Hotel**. The Board considered that although the subject property might be eligible for designation as an individual historic site, the **Doral Beach Hotel** might also be considered as part of a possible expansion of the Collins Waterfront Historic District. The Board approved a motion not to initiate the process for the possible designation of the (former) **Doral Beach Hotel** as an individual historic site. The Board instead directed staff to place an item on their next available agenda, at which time the Board would consider directing Planning staff to commence with the historic designation process for the possible northward expansion of the Collins Waterfront Historic District, to include several historically significant properties, the **Fontainebleau Hotel** and **Eden Roc Hotel** among them as well as other properties with significant historic structures from the mid-century Miami Beach era, designed by Morris Lapidus and other prominent Florida architects.

The possible historic district expansion area, which the Board wished to explore and consider, was generally bounded by the northern terminus of the Collins Waterfront Historic District, at approximately 44<sup>th</sup> Street to the south, the eastern bulkhead line of Indian Creek to the west, the southern terminus of the North Beach Resort Historic District, at approximately 63<sup>rd</sup> Street to the north, and the erosion control line of the Atlantic Ocean to the east.

There were approximately 52 properties located within the boundaries of the possible historic district expansion area described above (from 44<sup>th</sup> Street to 63<sup>rd</sup> Street), all of which were located within the general confines of the historic Collins Avenue corridor. The Board could choose to direct Planning staff to commence the designation process for this entire area, or for a smaller area.

Consequently, Planning staff studied the larger historic Collins Avenue corridor area in two distinct parts, **Part "A" (the southern part)**, – from 4380 to 5255 Collins Avenue, and **Part "B" (northern area)** – from 5301 to 6080 Collins Avenue, and from 4381 to 6086 Indian Creek Drive.

In reviewing **Part "A"** which spanned from the **Fontainebleau Hotel** property on the south to the **Imperial House** (at 5255 Collins Avenue) on the north, staff noted the very distinct and direct relationship of this area's buildings to open waterfront on both sides. To the west, all of the buildings directly faced Indian Creek, affording a spectacular panoramic vista of their primary facades with direct visual access from the water as well as from the land. To the east, the Atlantic Ocean formed an immediate and natural geographic boundary. Staff also noted that this area possessed a most remarkable collection of highly individualistic, historic architecture which reflected the changes in American tourism patterns and hotel design as well as residential life style aspirations in Miami Beach and South Florida in the era of renewed development following World War II. Further, the buildings were each designed to take maximum advantage of their waterfront views to both their east and west sides, directly influencing their respective designs. Miami Beach became the cutting edge of modern resort hotel architecture with the opening of the **Fontainebleau Hotel** in 1954. And the **Fontainebleau** further set the standard for the future of redevelopment of this stretch of the historic Collins Avenue corridor from its former private residential estates to the larger scale hotel and oceanfront apartment architecture for which it became world famous in the 1950s and 1960s through to the present.

Staff noted that the relatively compact one mile stretch of the Miami Beach "sandbar", located in **Part "A"**, was so richly endowed in historically significant mid-century modern architecture that it

was home to five (5) major works by Morris Lapidus, including the **Fontainebleau Hotel** (1954), the **Eden Roc Hotel** (1955), the **Crystal House** apartments (1960), the **Seacoast Towers South** apartments (1963), and the **Seacoast Towers East** apartments (1965). Staff also noted that this area represents the single largest concentration of the Morris Lapidus' individual major works located anywhere in the world today.

Staff further noted that the list of historic architectural notoriety located within the **Part "A"** area does not end with Morris Lapidus. This area also includes three (3) very fine mid-century modern works by local architect Melvin Grossman: the **Mimosa** apartments (1962), the **Doral Beach Hotel** (1962), and the **Imperial House** apartments (1961). Furthermore, the design genius of one of Miami Beach's most distinctive architects, B. Robert Swartburg (architect of the **Delano Hotel**), was represented in the compact but highly spirited architecture of The **Executive** apartments (1959). Another highly individualistic work of design, one that encompassed the integration of art and architecture into its memorable Collins Avenue façade, was the **Alexander** (1962), which was originally constructed by the Muss Family as **Seacoast Tower North** before its later conversion to a hotel. It was designed by Charles McKirahan & Associates.

Just as the currently designated Collins Waterfront Historic District traces the chronological progression of the City's architectural design continuum from south to north over time, the stretch of Collins Avenue located in **Part "A"** perhaps epitomized the highest levels of architectural design achievement attained in Miami Beach during the 1950s and 1960s. If it was not for the direct physical relationship of these properties along Collins Avenue to the open waterfronts of both the Atlantic Ocean and Indian Creek, affording spectacular water views east and west, it may not have been possible to have financed and constructed this caliber of architecture in Miami Beach.

In reviewing **Part "B" (the northern part)**, which would have generally extended from the **Amethyst** at 5313 Collins Avenue on the south to **Le Trianon**, at 6061 Collins Avenue on the north, staff noted a dramatic shift in the defining character of the historic Collins Avenue corridor from **Part "A"**. The strong direct relationship of Collins Avenue to the open waterfront of Indian Creek, to the west, was completely lost at approximately the 5500 block of Collins Avenue. There, the development tracts to each side of Collins Avenue become narrow and elongated, and the resulting large scale architecture was stretched out linearly from south to north, creating an almost continuous "canyon" wall effect on both sides. Indeed, staff noted, in driving along Collins Avenue through much of this area, it was not possible to discern any visual relationship to either the Atlantic Ocean or Indian Creek. Although the area contained some fine examples of architecture from the early to late 1960s, staff noted that it could not recommend to the Historic Preservation Board to direct it to proceed with commencing the process for historic designation of the area, **Part "B"**, extending along Collins Avenue from approximately the 5300 Block to the 6300 Block at that time.

On May 10, 2005, the Historic Preservation Board held a fully noticed public hearing to consider the possibility of expanding the **Collins Waterfront Historic District** northward from 44<sup>th</sup> Street to approximately 63<sup>rd</sup> Street. Following a presentation by Planning staff of the above analysis, the Board voted unanimously to direct staff to commence the detailed survey of **Part "A"**, the one mile stretch of Collins Avenue between approximately 44<sup>th</sup> Street and the 5200 Block (south of Fire Station No. 3) only, and to proceed with the additional research necessary to prepare a formal evaluation and recommendation report relative to the historical and architectural significance of this area for designation either as one or two separate local historic districts, rather than as a northern expansion of the Collins Waterfront Historic District. The Board chose not to direct staff to initiate the designation of **"Part B"**, between 5313 Collins Avenue (the Amethyst) and 63<sup>rd</sup> Street, at that time.



Between May 10, 2005 and the present day, the Historic Preservation Board and Planning staff have reviewed and approved all proposed major renovation, restoration and new construction for the **Fontainebleau Hotel, Eden Roc Hotel, Miami Beach Resort and Spa (Former Doral Beach Hotel)**, and **Mimosa** properties, as well as all other properties within this one mile stretch of Collins Avenue (*see Proposed Historic District Boundaries Map*). This construction has resulted in approximately one billion dollars of new development and redevelopment with the proposed **Morris Lapidus Mid-Century Historic District** as well as a high caliber of historic preservation.

On December 18, 2008, upon substantial completion of renovation, restoration, and new construction, the **Fontainebleau Hotel** was individually listed on the **National Register of Historic Places** at the request of its owners, further validating the historical significance of this section of Collins Avenue at a national level.

On May 12, 2009, the Historic Preservation Board held a meeting to consider a Preliminary Evaluation and Recommendation Report relative to the proposed **Morris Lapidus Mid-Century Historic District** to include all properties on the east side of Collins Avenue between 44<sup>th</sup> Street and 5255 Collins Avenue. At this meeting, where all property owners of record within the proposed district were provided written notice 15 days in advance, the Board directed the Planning Department to prepare a formal Historic Designation Report for the proposed **Morris Lapidus Mid-Century Historic District**. The Board further directed staff to extend the proposed district northern boundary northward to include two (2) City-owned lots containing the surface parking lot immediately to the south of Fire Station No. 3, at the request of the Imperial House Condominium Association. The condominium association wished to ensure that any new development of the public parking lot to their north would be subject to Historic Preservation approval so that it would be “appropriate” and have no adverse impact upon the quality of life on their property. The Board directed staff not to include Fire Station No. 3 within the proposed historic district boundaries.

On July 14, 2009, the Historic Preservation Board reviewed the designation report and unanimously approved a motion (7 to 0) to recommend approval of the designation of the proposed historic district and further directed staff to modify the name of the district to **Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District**.

On July 28, 2009, the Planning Board reviewed the designation report and unanimously approved a motion (7 to 0) to recommend approval of the designation of the proposed **Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District**.

On September 9, 2009, the Mayor and City Commission unanimously approved the designation (7 to 0) of the **Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District** on first reading public hearing and scheduled the second reading public hearing for October 14, 2009.

On October 14, 2009, the Mayor and City Commission adopted the designation (7 to 0) of the **Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District** on second reading public hearing.

### *III. Designation Process*

The process of historic designation is delineated in Sections 118-591 through 118-593 in Subpart B of the Land Development Regulations of the City Code (Chapter 118, Article X, Division 4). An outline of this process is delineated below.

Step One: A request for designation is made either by the City Commission, the Historic Preservation Board, other agencies and organizations as listed in the Land Development Regulations of the City Code, or the property owners involved.

Proposals for designation shall include a completed application form available from the Planning Department.

Step Two: The Planning Department prepares a preliminary evaluation report with recommendations for consideration by the Board.

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

The designation report is an 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 Land Development Regulations of the City Code.

Step Four: The City Commission is notified of the Board's decision and the initial boundaries proposed for designation. Within 60 days of the vote of the Historic Preservation Board to direct the Planning Department to prepare a designation report, the City Commission may, by a five-sevenths vote, deny or modify the proposed request for designation.

Step Five: The designation report is presented to the Historic Preservation Board at a public hearing. If the Board determines that the proposed site or district satisfies the requirements for designation as set forth in the Land Development Regulations of the City Code, the Board transmits a recommendation in favor of designation to the Planning Board and City Commission.

Step Six: The Planning Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed designation, and shall consider the proposed historic designation as an amendment to the Land Development Regulations of the City Code and, subsequently, transmit its recommendation to the City Commission.

Step Seven: The City Commission may adopt an amendment to the Land Development Regulations of the City Code by a five-sevenths majority vote, which thereby designates the Historic Preservation Site or Historic District after one (1) public hearing for a parcel of land less than ten (10) contiguous acres or after two (2) public hearings for a parcel of land that is more than ten (10) contiguous acres.

## *IV. Relation to Ordinance Criteria*

1. In accordance with Section 118-592 in the Land Development Regulations of the City Code, eligibility for designation is determined on the basis of compliance with the listed criteria set forth below.
  - (a) 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, the county, state or nation. Such properties shall possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling or association and meet at least one

(1) of the following criteria:

- (1) Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the history of the city, the county, state or nation;
  - (2) Association with the lives of persons significant in the city's past history;
  - (3) Embody the distinctive characteristics of an historical period, architectural or design style or method of construction;
  - (4) Possesses high artistic values;
  - (5) 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;
  - (6) Have yielded, or are likely to yield information important in pre-history or history;
  - (7) Be listed in the National Register of Historic Places;
  - (8) 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.
- (b) 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.

2. The proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District is eligible for historic designation as it complies with the criteria as specified in Section 118-592 in the Land Development Regulations of the City Code outlined above.

**Staff finds that the properties listed as *contributing* within the proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling or association for the following reasons:**

*The Planning Department Staff has surveyed fourteen (14) private properties and two (2) city-owned properties within the proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District boundaries and has found that twelve (12) of the fourteen (14) private properties within the proposed boundaries fully satisfy the requirements of Section 118-592 (a) of the Land Development Regulations of the City Code. Each of the fourteen (14) private properties is located within a highly unique waterfront setting situated between Indian Creek and the Atlantic Ocean affording direct and unparalleled waterfront views in both directions, both to and from the water. This fact dramatically impacted the unique design and success of the architecture of*

each of the structures. The twelve (12) contributing properties, while highly individualistic in design, both with regard to their exterior architecture and public interior features, are constructed of similar materials and possess design characteristics which collectively define mid-20<sup>th</sup> century architecture in Miami Beach. A very high level of workmanship and craftsmanship is demonstrated in both exterior and interior features as well as evidenced by their structural and functional over more than a half a century in an intense marine environment. The properties clearly demonstrate a strong feeling and association with the dramatic change that occurred along this stretch of Collins Avenue, including most particularly the radical shift in zoning, from private estates to hotels and high intensity residential. This is reflected in both the scale and modern design of these opulent, first-class resort hotels and resort apartment houses which could only have been conceived and built following the successful close of World War II. While each contributing property is highly unique in plan and design, collectively they form a cohesive and concentrated ribbon of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century design along this tropical stretch of Florida's coastline. A list of properties is shown in Appendix A. Further, the proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District satisfies the following designation review criteria:

- (a) Further staff finds the proposed historic district to be eligible for historic designation and in conformance with the designation criteria for the following reasons:

- (1) **Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the history of the city, the county, state or nation;**

**Satisfied**

***Redirection of War Defense Economy to Domestic Economy***

*The advent of reliable and affordable mass-produced automobiles and air transportation, as well as the introduction of central air condition during the early mid-century period made year-round resort living in South Florida highly desirable and practical, as well as within the reach of America's middle and upper-middle income classes. This was a direct result of the redirection of the nation's war defense economy to the domestic economy.*

***Major Mid-Century Change in Zoning Intensity***

*Between 1949 and 1957, several major lawsuits were brought against the City of Miami Beach claiming Zoning Ordinance No. 289 of 1930 to be arbitrary, unreasonable and confiscatory. This ordinance classified the properties located on the east side of Collins Avenue from 44<sup>th</sup> Street north to 60<sup>th</sup> Street as RAA, 'Estate District.' The only permitted use within this strip of oceanfront land was single-family residences with a minimum lot area of 40,000 square feet for each family. During this development period (1949-1957) the population of Miami Beach had greatly increased, many hotels and apartment buildings had been built south of 44<sup>th</sup> Street, and the current economic conditions left this strip of Collins Avenue north of 44<sup>th</sup> Street unfavorable for additional large single family estates and adversely impacted the expected quality of life on the existing estates. The first of such cases to reach the Florida Supreme Court was *City of Miami Beach v. First Trust Co.* on July 5, 1949. The First Trust Co., owners of the Firestone Estate, argued that the erection of hotels and apartment houses on the properties south to 30<sup>th</sup> Street caused their property to be less valuable and desirable for Estate Use due to the increase in traffic and loss of privacy.*

The court ruled that the zoning restriction placed on the property in 1930 was “too harsh,” and “the ordinance should be modified and made to fit the changed conditions,”<sup>6</sup> The rulings in this case paved the way for subsequent complaints arguing the same, and led to the grand hotel and apartment district present today within this strip of oceanfront land.

### **Post World War II Boom**

The twelve (12) contributing properties within the proposed historic district directly reflect the turn of events in America following World War II (WWII). The twelve properties were all constructed within a 13 year period between 1954 and 1967. Unprecedented development followed the American success in WWII when major new resort hotels and residential resort architecture were contemplated. Development during this time was on a scale never before seen in South Florida. This event redefined the evolution of resort architecture not only in Miami Beach and Florida but as well set a new standard for glamour, amenity and luxury for such architecture across the nation. The Fontainebleau Hotel, which was designed by Morris Lapidus, and opened in 1954, was the first major luxury resort hotel constructed in the United States since the Waldorf Astoria opened in New York City in 1932.

Furthermore, Miami Beach played a significant role as a training site and redistribution center for the U.S. Army-Air Forces during World War II. After the war, many veterans who had trained as recruits in Miami Beach returned here to vacation or to make their home, often with their brides.

### **The McCarthy Era**

The McCarthy Era and the beginning of the Cold War fostered the championing of capitalism and the celebration of the American way. The economy was thriving and gave rise to the growing middle class. Suddenly, luxury items were flooding the market and becoming affordable to many more Americans for the first time. New hotels located within the proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District such as the Fontainebleau Hotel and Eden Roc Hotel, established the concept of the American Plan; a one-stop resort experience, where all long term needs of the guest were accommodated on a single hotel property, including dining, shopping, entertainment and recreation.

### **Strong Precedent in Land Use Case Law**

A landmark land use lawsuit concerning the Fontainebleau and Eden Roc Hotels (*Fontainebleau Corporation v. 4525 Inc.*) filed in 1959 had a significant impact on future land development in Miami Beach as well as on jurisdictions throughout the country and is referenced in the curriculums of educational intuitions nationwide. The case, brought by the owners of the Eden Roc Hotel claimed that Fontainebleau developer Ben Novack spitefully constructed a forbidding 14-story annex along the northern property line of the Fontainebleau site. The claim alleged that Novack’s intended effect of this notorious “Spite Wall” was to cast a shadow on the Eden Roc’s swimming pool for most of the day. The Florida State Supreme Court ruled

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<sup>6</sup> City of Miami Beach v. First Trust Co.

in favor of the owners of the Fontainebleau Hotel, stating that there is “no legal right to the free flow of light and air from adjoining land.”

### ***Beginning of the Space Age***

The first Sputnik was launched in 1957. Rivalry with the U.S.S.R. led to the space race. Futuristic, flamboyant, fun design elements showed up in cars, furniture, and buildings. Automobiles sprouted wings and depicted rocket motifs. The small globe with protruding antennae reminiscent of the Sputnik became a common design detail. Cheese holes, woggles and boomerangs (terms the famous post war architect Morris Lapidus chose to define his style) began to appear in Miami Beach’s architecture. Perhaps, nowhere else in the City is the influence of the ‘Space Age’ more highly developed than within this one mile stretch of Collins Avenue. Where complete buildings are rounded and radically cantilevered balconies are scientifically engineered.

### ***Impact of the Cuban Revolution and Influx of More Diverse Cultural Groups***

The Cuban Revolution in 1959 prompted an unprecedented mass immigration of Cubans to the United States, and specifically to Miami and Miami Beach. Further, more diverse cultural groups began to visit and reside in Miami Beach. This included not only North Americans, but Europeans, South Americans, Central Americans and Latins from the Caribbean. At the same time, Miami Beach became more popular as a retirement community with its warm, tropical climate and beautiful beaches, appealing to all of these groups. The need for housing, retail, and services to accommodate these different growing segments of the population, as well as tourists, increased. During the 1950s and 1960s, the typical postcards of Miami Beach showed large, fanciful resort hotels against a backdrop of sun, sea, and palm trees. They conveyed the image of an affordable world of tropical delight that appealed to visitors, retirees, and transplants from the north, the Caribbean Basin and abroad.

## **(2) Association with the lives of persons significant in the city's past history;**

### **Satisfied**

#### ***Ben Novack, Morris Lapidus and Harry Mufson***

Highly successful hotel developer Ben Novack wanted to build the biggest, most luxurious hotel in Miami Beach, and he had acquired the former Harvey Firestone Estate (originally the James Snowden Estate) in the “Millionaires’ Row” section of Collins Avenue, at 44<sup>th</sup> Street, for just that purpose. But in 1953 Novack still had no architect for the hotel he would soon name The Fontainebleau, after the grand Fontainebleau Palace, in France. Morris Lapidus, who had emigrated to the Lower East Side of New York City from Odessa, Russia, in 1902, with his parents at the age of nine months, had trained at Columbia University and become a confident architect and brilliant interior designer in high demand across the nation. But Morris had never designed an entire building from the foundations up, not to mention a 565 room luxury hotel. It was a match made in heaven, and hell, with Lapidus agreeing to work for a ridiculously low fee. But by the beginning of 1954 Lapidus had moved his drafting office into the living room of the old Harvey

*Firestone mansion, and work on construction documents for America's mid-century dream hotel commenced.*

*Following close on the heels of the Fontainebleau's success, Harry Mufson, Ben Novack's former hotelier partner and now ambitious competitor, knew he too had to have a Morris Lapidus designed luxury resort masterpiece, and so he purchased the property immediately to the north of the Fontainebleau. It too would be an ultramodern state-of-the-art resort, with its own classical European references, and it would "scream luxury". Morris would quip decades later, "I didn't dare use sweeping curves in the design of the Eden Roc Hotel. After the Fontainebleau, the critics would have killed me"<sup>7</sup>. And so in direct and intentional contrast with the powerful curves of the Fontainebleau, Lapidus instead gave the much smaller Eden Roc Hotel a "Y"-shaped plan, exploring an architectural symphony of subtle angles, cantilevered balconies protecting radically out to sea, and dramatic 'towers' of aquamarine mosaic tiles symmetrically flanking the main facade and gradually changing in color from darker to lighter shades as they rose up the seventeen story height of the building to the sky. Memorably capping this modern masterpiece of ocean-side design would be the dramatic funnel of an ocean-liner graciously screaming "Eden Roc" in Morris Lapidus' own bold neon hand script.*

### **Alexander Muss**

*Nationally-known developer Alexander Muss figures prominently in the story of this area. The Muss family started building housing in New York City in the 1880s; by 1966 it was said that "over 110,000 people live in Muss-built homes and apartments."<sup>8</sup> In the postwar years, Alexander Muss & Sons both built and managed apartment houses for long-term investment. Muss moved to South Florida after a vacation in 1962, seeing an unmet need for "moderately priced luxury apartments in prime locations." Seacoast Towers, South designed by Morris Lapidus, was his first Florida venture, and hiring Robert Turchin was the first time the Muss firm had ever subcontracted a project.<sup>9</sup> By 1969 the Muss firm had built five Seacoast buildings in Miami Beach, as well as a 16-story apartment house in Fort Lauderdale that was designed by Charles McKirahan, who has previously designed Seacoast Towers North (now the Alexander), in the proposed historic district..*

*In Miami Beach, the Muss organization is known and respected for personal family management. The Musses build and stay on for unprecedented personal involvement. The results can be seen at Seacoast Towers East, Seacoast Towers West, Seacoast Towers North, Seacoast Towers South, and the new Seacoast Towers V. Every Muss building has been a smashing success, opening fully rented. These successes can be attributed to the beauty of the buildings, their lavish resort facilities, the plush splendor of hotel-like lobbies and social rooms....Dreaming up creative new ways to make life more luxurious seems to be the keynote at the firm of Alexander Muss & Sons.<sup>10</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> Morris Lapidus, personal conversations with William Cary, 2000

<sup>8</sup> "Muss Builds, Manages Apartment Empire," *Miami Herald*, March 6, 1966.

<sup>9</sup> "He's Sold On Miami," *Miami Herald*, May 5, 1968.

<sup>10</sup> "This Tower Will Tower on Beach," *Miami Herald*, Nov. 9, 1969

### **Legendary Figures in Politics, Cinema and Entertainment**

*The Fontainebleau and Eden Roc Hotels played a significant role in the booming Mid-Century entertainment industry. They offered the finest in live entertainment to draw their guests as well as local residents and the guests of other hotels. On December 20, 1954, the Fontainebleau Hotel hosted a lavish 'Grand Ball' to celebrate its opening. "Patty Page sang the Fontainebleau Waltz, Liberace played an 1882 German Steinway Grand and Groucho Marx famously anointed the hotel, the Eighth Wonder of the World."<sup>11</sup> Throughout the 1950s and 1960s the hotel's register included some of the biggest names in show business, politics and popular culture, with performers such as Frank Sinatra, Joey Bishop, Dean Martin, Red Skeleton and Sammy Davis Jr. performing on the stage of the La Ronde Room. Miss Universe was crowned at the Fontainebleau and in 1972 the Republican and Democratic conventions were both held at the hotel.*

*Numerous celebrities of the time also flocked to the Eden Roc Hotel, which was a favorite vacation spot of Lucille Ball and Desi Arnez. Elizabeth Taylor, and Jerry Lewis also stayed there, while Milton Berle, Harry Belafonte, and Nat King Cole performed at nightly supper shows.*

**(3) Embody the distinctive characteristics of an historical period, architectural or design style or method of construction;**

#### **Satisfied**

*The Post-War Modern style in Miami Beach established a path of its own in terms of modern functional simplicity with a new and often dramatic vocabulary of pizzazz. Essentially the strong design personality of Art Deco, as it evolved over two decades in Miami Beach, lent to but at the same time significantly gave way to the changing dictates of use, function and scale in the era of the post-World War II luxury resort and high-rise residential architecture.*

*From about 1948 to 1966, the widely popular Post War Modern style was applied to hotels, commercial buildings, apartment houses, and single family homes throughout Miami Beach. Post-War Modern style buildings generally made an extensive use of glass, poured concrete and special materials such as ceramic tile mosaic, architectural breeze block, polished stone embedded surfaces, as well as expansive use of high-grade marble, and rare hardwoods on the public interiors. They often mixed two or more textured surfaces together (i.e. stucco with stone, brick, or mosaic tile as well as contrasting smooth and patterned stucco surfaces). The style featured such dramatic elements as accordion-like folded plate roofs and walls, acute as well as subtle angles, dynamic parabolas, delta wing shapes, sweeping curved walls, and soaring pylons. Other commonly occurring design elements and materials that were added to the architectural vocabulary of the Post-War Modern style structures included: brise soleil, architectural accents with exotic themes and often wall sculptures in relief, brick or stone faced feature areas, cast concrete decorative panels with geometric*

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<sup>11</sup> Mike Capuzzo, "The Sand Castle: The Famed Fontainebleau inspired by a French castle and a Miami Beach toilet seat, has seen – and barely survived- more than 10,000 nights," The Miami Herald, February 19, 1984.



patterns, and a remarkable use of architectural 'breeze block' in a wide variety of design patterns lending itself so well to natural air flow in this tropical environment . Architect Morris Lapidus further expanded the architectural language of this style when he made popular "cheese holes", "woggles", and "beanpoles".

The large hotels in the Post-War Modern style often incorporated an expansive use of glass curtain walls, cantilevered asymmetrical roofs, leaping arches, dramatic fin walls, floating planes, architectural bridges, and grand entrance porte cocheres. Primary facades were sometimes graced with bold neon signs or logos in order to catch the eye of passing motorists. Sometimes, "sky signs" were mounted on rooftop features or on parapet walls. Color was an essential ingredient of signage. The fenestration was often highlighted with boxed or corner windows, as well as continuous ribbon windows and eyebrows. The hotels often took on exotic or futuristic forms, using architecture as advertising in an effort to outdo one another in competing for business. This new architecture celebrated the satisfaction of announcing that the Post-World War II era in Miami Beach and America had arrived, and there was pride in it.

Beth Dunlop, a columnist for the "Miami Herald", Editor of "Home Miami", and a former member of the City of Miami Beach Historic Preservation Board, captures the essence of the Post-War Modern architectural movement when she writes:

*In the decades after World War II, these were the buildings that expressed our ebullience, our energy, our faith in the future. They were catchy, kitschy, eccentric, engaging, with loads of curbside appeal - our first auto age buildings, really, not to mention space age. We were going places then - to the suburbs, to the moon - and our buildings told us so. You could see it in roofs that cantilevered daringly, in facades that swooped saucily, in towers that took off like a Buck Rogers rocket ship, in aerodynamic fins and prows that seemed to lift otherwise mundane buildings right off the ground.<sup>12</sup>*

Collectively, new design forms, dramatically magnified scale, and the extraordinary use of new as well as traditional materials, defined and distinguished Post-War Modern Architecture as reflected in the contributing buildings within the proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District.

**(4) Possess high artistic values:**

**Satisfied**

*The Fontainebleau and Eden Roc Hotels themselves, defined a new level of artistic value that would be applied to new luxury resort hotels across America. The success and excitement generated by these two hotels inspired a new era of modern luxury hotel architecture not only in the United States but elsewhere. Achieving high artistic value and aesthetic delight*

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<sup>12</sup> Beth Dunlop, "The Mod Squad," Miami Herald, 30 September 2001.

was a major goal that Morris Lapidus had to meet with the understanding that the Fontainebleau Hotel was to be the first significant luxury hotel to be constructed in the United States since the Waldorf Astoria, which had been designed by prominent architects Shultz and Weaver, and was opened in New York City in 1932. Thus, the new standard for artistic value was set high by Morris Lapidus and this standard is still recognized, celebrated, and even emulated more than half a century later

A 2002 exhibit launched by the Municipal Art Society at the Urban Center Galleries on Madison Avenue entitled, "Beyond the Box – Mid-Century Modern Architecture in Miami and New York," underscores the high artistic value of this architecture. The Fontainebleau Hotel is the centerfold image of the exhibits' catalog. When Morris Lapidus' original cantilevered balcony design was threatened by inappropriate alterations in 2007, it caused a feature article in Miami Herald entitled the 'Loss of Eden'. The artistic value of this architecture influenced not only the other contributing buildings within the proposed historic district, but modern resort architecture internationally.

- (5) **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;**

**Satisfied**

Many prominent Miami Beach architects are represented in the proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District, as indicated below. For a complete listing of addresses and architects, refer to the Properties List in **Appendix I**.

**Morris Lapidus (1902- 2001)**

The people of the City of Miami Beach had in their midst for five decades, an internationally acclaimed architect, exemplary of the creative spirit and foresight which forged this city of design delights, making it unique among American ocean-side resorts.

Morris Lapidus graduated from Columbia University in 1927, and commenced his architectural career with an established New York firm; however, he soon found himself lured to moonlighting as a store designer, in order to generate a suitable income to support a new bride. Soon, he rose to the top of this field, making stores in the smallest American cities as architecturally dramatic as those on Fifth Avenue, employing design techniques that visually expanded space, drawing customers throughout.

By mid century, a newly emerging breed of hotel developers in Miami Beach began to see the potential for Morris' magical and compelling sense of design to transform a modern hotel interior into a world of delight far removed from the work-a-day life of its guests. While the sweeping curved walls, woggles, bean poles, cheese holes and bow ties, for which Morris became famous, shaped Post-War hotel interior architecture on the Beach, his passion to design the complete structure lingered on.

Hotelier Ben Novack had intended for Morris Lapidus to design the interior

*only of the fabulous Fontainebleau Hotel, to be located amidst the gardens of the Firestone estate; but Morris held secure to a greater dream, his moment to create the complete architecture, the total magic of delight and function. In 1953, Morris prevailed, completely designing America's foremost modern resort hotel, tailored to America's guests, their place in time, and their values. The architecture and decor of the Fontainebleau was coined radical by its critics, but the hotel was a brilliant success. The Fontainebleau Hotel played a pivotal role in revitalizing the ebbing image and vitality of Miami Beach following World War II; it further led to major commissions for Mr. Lapidus, including the fabulous Eden Roc, Seacoast Tower East, the Crystal House, the Dilido, and many others locally, nationally, and internationally.*

*In 1960, when Lincoln Road, once known as the Fifth Avenue of the South, had fallen into decline, Morris was called upon by City leaders to recapture the luster of this historic retail avenue. Morris boldly removed automobiles from Lincoln Road, maintaining, "a car never brought anything"; he replaced them with fountains, sculpture, joyful pavilions and flowers and trees, at once creating a new retail esplanade of unique and lasting design.*

*When Morris Lapidus died on January 18, 2001, his life's work was commemorated locally, nationally and internationally, some examples follow:*

*In a Miami Herald article published on January 19, 2001, William Lane, a Miami Beach architect who considers himself an intellectual descendant of the legendary designer, celebrated Lapius' life and career by stating the following:*

*Morris Lapidus was a true original. As an alchemist and poet, he blended style and design in ways that we have never seen before and will never see again.<sup>13</sup>*

*The Miami Design Preservation League issued a statement as follows:*

*Morris Lapidus, architect and South Florida icon, a man who once said he could never use a straight line and so created the sinuous silhouette of Miami Beach in dozens of buildings still treasured today, has died. Best known as the designer of postwar resort hotels in Florida, such as the Fontainebleau (1954) and the Eden Roc (1955) in Miami Beach. Mr. Lapidus left his mark from Miami Beach's Lincoln Road Mall to New York's Summit & Americana Hotels.*

*Our thoughts and prayers are with him & his loved ones.*

*The New York Times, in an article entitled, 'Morris Lapidus, an Architect Who Built Flamboyance Into Hotels, Is Dead at 98,' celebrated Lapidus' life and work through his own words:*

*When Ben Novack announced that he was building the Fontainebleau, it appeared in the New York*

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<sup>13</sup> *Daring Beach architect Lapidus dies.* [The Miami Herald](#). January 19, 2001.

*papers that I was to be the architect. But when I called him he said I wasn't chosen, that I never did a whole hotel and that he just needed a name at the time. It took me over a year to convince him. I moved heaven and earth to get that job. If there's one thing I'm going to do, I told myself, I'm going to do the Fontainebleau.<sup>14</sup>*

**Melvin Grossman** (d. 2003), an associate with Albert Anis in 1950, was also a protégé of master MiMo architect Morris Lapidus. In fact, all three collaborated on the Nautilus Hotel (now the Riande, 1825 Collins Ave.) in 1950<sup>15</sup> and a year later on the Biltmore Terrace Hotel (8701 Collins Avenue).<sup>16</sup> Grossman and Lapidus partnered in designing the DiLido Hotel (One Lincoln Road) in 1953.

According to MiMo authorities Nash and Robinson, Grossman began as an engineer working for Lapidus and then, after turning down an offer to become partners, struck out on his own to become Lapidus' biggest imitator.<sup>17</sup>

Influenced by both Anis and Lapidus, Grossman would go on to design the Seville Hotel (2901 Collins Avenue) in 1955, the 593-room Deauville (6701 Collins Avenue) in 1957, and the Doral Beach Hotel (4833 Collins Avenue) in 1962. He also exported the MiMo style in designing the original Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas and the Acapulco Princess Hotel in Mexico.<sup>18</sup>

**MacKay & Gibbs:**

Frederick Alton Gibbs was born in Miami in 1910 and studied at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh. He returned to Miami and worked in association with Henry Hohausser, 1934-41.<sup>19</sup>

Edward A. MacKay was born in Flint, Michigan in 1908 and graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1934.<sup>20</sup> The two formed a partnership in 1946, with an office at 927 41st Street in Miami Beach. Between 1947 and 1965, MacKay & Gibbs designed many fine buildings in the Postwar Modern style in Miami Beach, including.<sup>21</sup>

Sherbrooke Apts.	901 Collins Ave.
Amberlee Apts.	1520 Euclid Ave.
Surfcomber Hotel	1717 Collins Ave.
Hotel del Caribe	1725 Collins Ave.
Seacomber Hotel	1737 Collins Ave.
Tradewinds Apts.	2315-35 Pinetree Dr.

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<sup>14</sup> Morris Lapidus, *an Architect Who Built Flamboyance Into Hotels, Is Dead at 98*. The New York Times. January 19, 2001.

<sup>15</sup> M. Lapidus, Too Much Is Never Enough; Rizzoli, 1996, p.150; also "Hotel Roosevelt Plans Gala Birthday Opening," *Miami Herald*, Nov. 19, 1950

<sup>16</sup> Building Permit Card #27133 and Plans #37045, Miami Beach Building Department.

<sup>17</sup> Nash and Robinson, op. cit., p.73.

<sup>18</sup> Obituary, *Miami Herald*, November 12, 2003, p.4B.

<sup>19</sup> Application for AIA membership, "Gibbs, Frederick A.." AIA, Coral Gables, Fla.

<sup>20</sup> Application for AIA membership, "MacKay, Edw. A." AIA, Coral Gables, Fla.

<sup>21</sup> City of Miami Beach Bldg. Dept. records

Carriage Club North	5005 Collins Ave.
Carol Lee Apts.	7610-20 Harding Ave.

In the late 1960s the firm of **Gibbs & Wang** designed several larger apartment buildings, such as:<sup>22</sup>

Carriage Club South	5001 Collins Ave.
Seacoast Towers West	5700 Collins Ave.
Byron Hall	6900 Abbott Ave.

**A. Herbert Mathes** (1912-1977) graduated from New York University in 1937 and came to Miami Beach in 1944. Previously he had designed stores for the National Shoe Company, shoe exhibits at the 1939 New York World's Fair, packing plants in Kansas, film labs for 20th Century Fox, and Forest Park Gardens in Rye, New York. During World War II he designed ships for the U.S. Navy.<sup>23</sup> In Miami Beach he designed a number of commercial, residential and municipal buildings, including:

Golden Gate Apartments	2395 Flamingo Drive
Parisian Hotel	1510 Collins Avenue
Geneva Hotel	1520 Collins Avenue
Continental Hotel	4000 Collins Avenue
Allison Hotel	6261 Collins Avenue
Miami Beach Public Library	2100 Collins Avenue (demolished)
Revere Hotel	1100 Ocean Drive (demolished)

In the proposed Historic District, Mathes designed the north addition to the Fontainebleau, popularly known as the "spite wall," in 1958.

**Charles Foster McKirahan**

Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1919, McKirahan first studied at Oklahoma State University. During World War II he served for three years as a captain with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Australia, Hawaii, Guam, Japan, and the South Pacific, an experience that strongly influenced his later work. He completed a B.S. degree in architecture from the University of Illinois in 1947. He moved to Fort Lauderdale that same year, forming the partnership of Wilmer & McKirahan in 1951 and his own practice in 1953. One of his firm's first projects was the Polynesian-themed Mai Kai Restaurant, which is still intact and operating on US 1 north of Oakland Park.

As Broward County was growing in the Postwar years, the prominent Coral Ridge Properties development firm hired McKirahan to design hundreds of homes and apartments, including Coral Cove, Bay Club, Sunrise Bay Club, Maybury Mansions, Coral Ridge Towers (North and East), Royal Admiral Condominium, and Ocean Manors Hotel, as well as the Coral Ridge Country Club and Yacht Club.

Elsewhere in Fort Lauderdale he designed the Point of America Condominium, Everglades House, Sky Harbour East, Lago Mar Apartments, Marina Motor Inn, Ireland's Inn, the original Yankee Trader Hotel, Birch

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<sup>22</sup> ibid.

<sup>23</sup> "Portraits and Projects of Architects," *Florida Sun*, May 21, 1951.

Tower, Birch House, Sea Chateau Motel, and Manhattan Tower. In Dade County his work included the Castaways Hotel (also with a Far Eastern theme), the Seaquarium dome, Point View Co-op, Island House on Key Biscayne. His contribution to the proposed historic district is the original Seacoast Towers (now the Alexander), designed in 1962 for Alexander Muss.

In the Bahamas, McKirahan designed the Nassau Beach Lodge, Nassau Yacht Harbour Marina Hotel, Cotton Bay Club Beach House, and residences for actor Raymond Burr and artist Alexander Calder. He is also known to have worked in Ecuador, Honduras, Dominican Republic, and Brazil.

Sadly, this prolific and gifted architect was killed in an auto accident in West Palm Beach in 1964, at age 44. A colleague from Coral Ridge Properties has recently commented, "Chuck's genius was his ability to design with flair at a time with very tight budgets."

### **B. Robert Swartburg**

Born in New York in 1895, Swartburg "started to work in an architect's office when he was nine."<sup>24</sup> He was educated at Columbia University, at the American Academy in Rome, and at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. He worked in Florida briefly from 1925 to 1927, then returned to New York, but moved to Miami permanently in 1944. He worked here until his retirement in 1972, when he merged his firm with Grove-Haack & Associates and served as a consultant.<sup>25</sup> He died three years later at age 80. In his 35-year career he is said to have designed over 1000 buildings.<sup>26</sup>

In New York he is credited with designing Garden Bay Manor, a \$17 million housing project for the Federal Housing Administration. In Miami he designed municipal buildings such as the Miami Civic Center, the Metro Justice Building, and the former Miami Beach Convention Hall, as well as Riviera Junior High School and Ojus Elementary School.

In Miami Beach he is best known for the Delano Hotel at 1685 Collins Avenue, one of the first post-war hotels to be built on the beach. In the proposed historic district he is represented by the reconstructed façade of the Sorrento Hotel, designed in 1948 at 4391 Collins Avenue, now part of the Fontainebleau Resort; and by the Executive Apartments at 4925 Collins Avenue, built in 1959. His other hotels include the Vagabond Motel on Biscayne Boulevard and the Santa Anita in Sunny Isles. Mr. Swartburg was also an accomplished artist who painted for pleasure, and executed murals and sculptures to embellish his buildings.

(6) **Have yielded, or are likely to yield information important in pre-history or history;**

**Satisfied**

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<sup>24</sup> Obituary, *Miami Herald*, Dec. 8, 1975.

<sup>25</sup> "Two Firms In Merger," *Miami Herald*, Oct. 29, 1972.

<sup>26</sup> "Exhibition Hall Designer Created 1,000 Buildings," *Miami Herald*, Oct. 26, 1958.

The architectural resources within the proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District represent one of several major development periods within the City of Miami Beach's history, the Post World War II Development Boom. Development in Miami Beach commenced in the 1910s with simple vernacular, masonry/wood-frame structures. This type of development came to a halt during World War I and led to the period in 1920s when developments of spectacular Mediterranean Revival style buildings were constructed for both grand hotels and intimate residences. Following the crash of 1929 and the Great Depression, the design continuum began to reflect the changing economic times, and a modern style known as Art Deco and Streamline Moderne came into fashion in Miami Beach. This style reflected the latest stylistic development in Europe as well as rapidly changing technologies. Following World War II manufacturing was redirected from the defense to the domestic economy. Advanced and highly efficient mass production techniques resulted in new and affordable modes of transportation, a major change in tourism and residential living, and a consequent major change in the architecture of the Mid-Century period. Preservation and protection of this architecture which reflects these changes is critically important in informing residents, visitors and future generations of this important period in the City's dynamic history which represented a major shift in design concepts in Miami Beach.

(7) **Be listed in the National Register of Historic Places;**

**Partially Satisfied**

The Fontainebleau Hotel was individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places on December 22, 2008 due to its architectural and historical significance and its value to the nation as an historic site..

All of the contributing buildings located within the proposed Morris Lapidus Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District are between 42 and 55 years of age. The Planning Department believes the proposed historic district is eligible for listing National Register of Historic Places as a nationally significant mid-20<sup>th</sup> century historic district. (All of the contributing buildings located within the proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District are older than the Art Deco structures located within the National Register Architectural District at the time the district was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.)

(8) **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;**

**Satisfied**

The proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District spans from the Fontainebleau Hotel property on the south to just north of the Imperial House (at 5200 Block) on the north. Within this area there is a significant concentration of contributing structures that are physically united by their distinctive and unique relationship to the waterfront on both sides. To the

*west, all of the buildings directly face Indian Creek, affording a spectacular panoramic vista of their primary facades with direct visual access from the water as well as from the land. To the east, the Atlantic Ocean forms a natural boundary with the buildings physically united by the beach. This area possesses a remarkable collection of highly individualistic, historic architecture which reflects the changes in American hotel design as well as large-scale residential apartment design in Miami Beach and South Florida in the era of renewed development following World War II. The contributing structures located within this area form a cohesive ribbon of Mid-Century American design treasures along the South Florida coastline.*

*A review of the fourteen (14) properties located in the proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District indicates that twelve (12) of these properties (or **86 percent**) are Contributing and two (2) properties (or **14 percent**) are Non-Contributing. Two additional properties within the proposed district are City-owned parking lots adjacent to public parks.*

- (b) **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.**

*Each of the twelve contributing buildings located within the Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District retain a substantial degree of original historic integrity and design features as well as integrity of original location.*

## V. Description of Boundaries

The proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District is generally bounded by the northern boundary of the Collins Waterfront Historic District at approximately 44th Street to the south, the eastern bulkhead line of Indian Creek to the west, the northern lot line of lot 24 of the First Ocean Front Amended Subdivision to the north, and the erosion control line of the Atlantic Ocean to the east (**Map 1**)

### **Legal Description for the Proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District**

Commence at the northwest corner of Lot 1, Block 39, AMENDED MAP OF THE OCEAN FRONT PROPERTY OF THE MIAMI BEACH IMPROVEMENT COMPANY, Plat Book 5, Page 8, Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida; thence run northerly, along the east right-of-way line of Collins Avenue for a distance of 75.00 feet to the POINT OF BEGINNING of the portion of land herein described; thence run easterly, parallel to the north line of the above mentioned Lot 1 and its easterly extension to the point of intersection with the Erosion Control Line of the Atlantic Ocean. Said Erosion Control Line of the Atlantic Ocean as recorded in Plat Book 105 at Page 62, Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida; thence run northerly, along said Erosion Control Line of the Atlantic Ocean for an approximate distance of 5197 feet to the point of intersection with the easterly extension of the north line of Lot 24, as said Lot 24 is shown in AMENDED PLAT OF FIRST OCEAN FRONT SUBDIVISION OF THE MIAMI BEACH BAY SHORE COMPANY, Plat Book 9, at Page 78, Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida; thence run westerly, along the north line of said Lot 24 and its easterly and westerly extension to the bulkhead line of Indian Creek; thence run southerly, along the



bulkhead line of Indian Creek to the point of intersection with the westerly extension of a line which is 75.00 feet north and parallel to the north line of the above mentioned Lot 1, Block 39; thence easterly along the last described course to the POINT OF BEGINNING. Said lands located, lying and being in Section 23, Township 53 South, Range 42 east, City of Miami Beach, Florida.

The location of these boundaries has been determined through careful investigation and research of building records and historical documentation. They define a geographic area which possesses a significant concentration of historic buildings.

## *VI. Present Owners*

The property located within the boundaries of the proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District is held by multiple owners.

## *VII. Present Use*

The current uses within the boundaries of the proposed historic district are primarily multi-family residential and hotel. Other uses represented in the district include municipal and private parking lots.

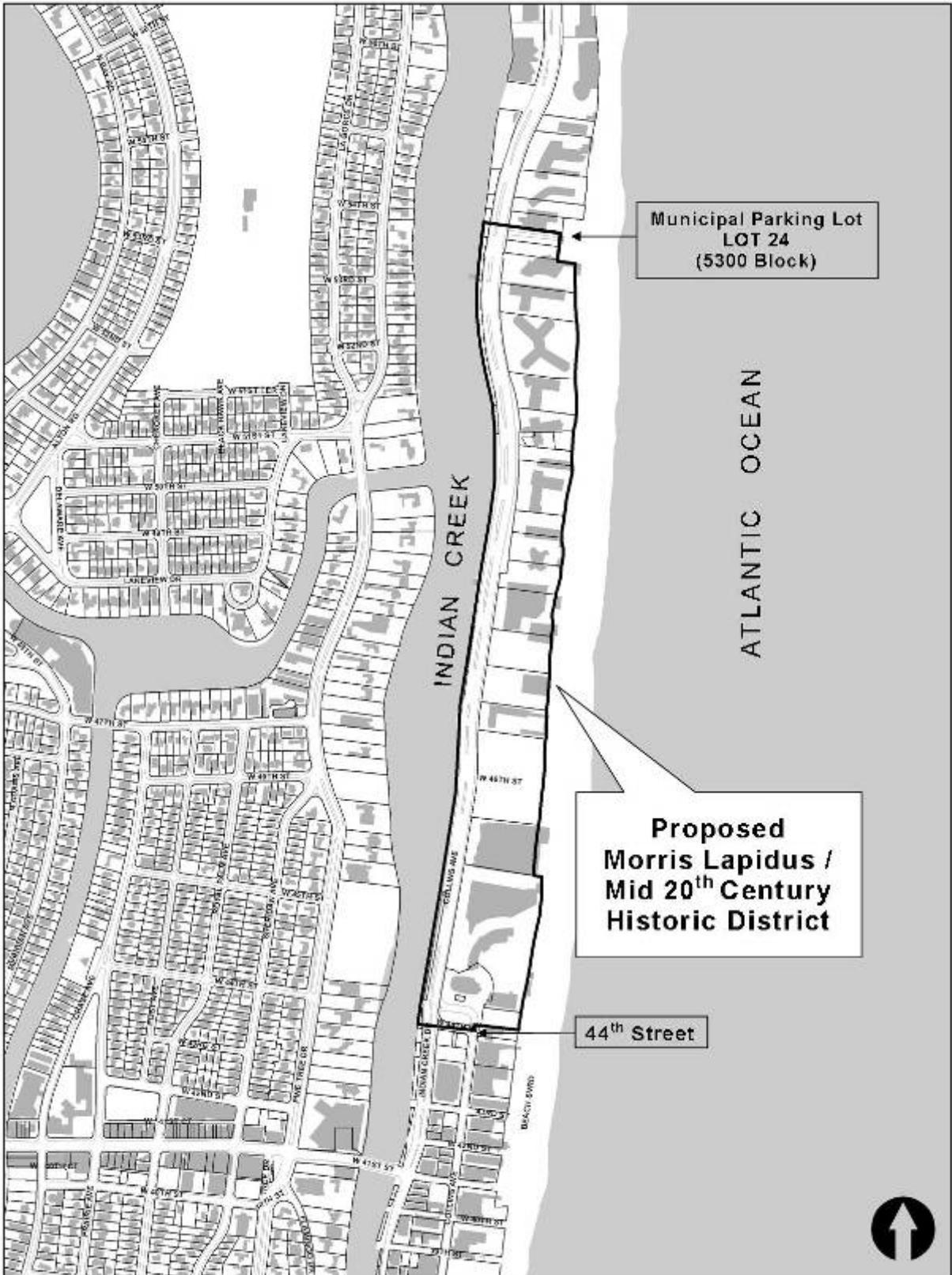
## *VII. Present Zoning*

The established zoning districts within the boundaries of the proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District are as follows:

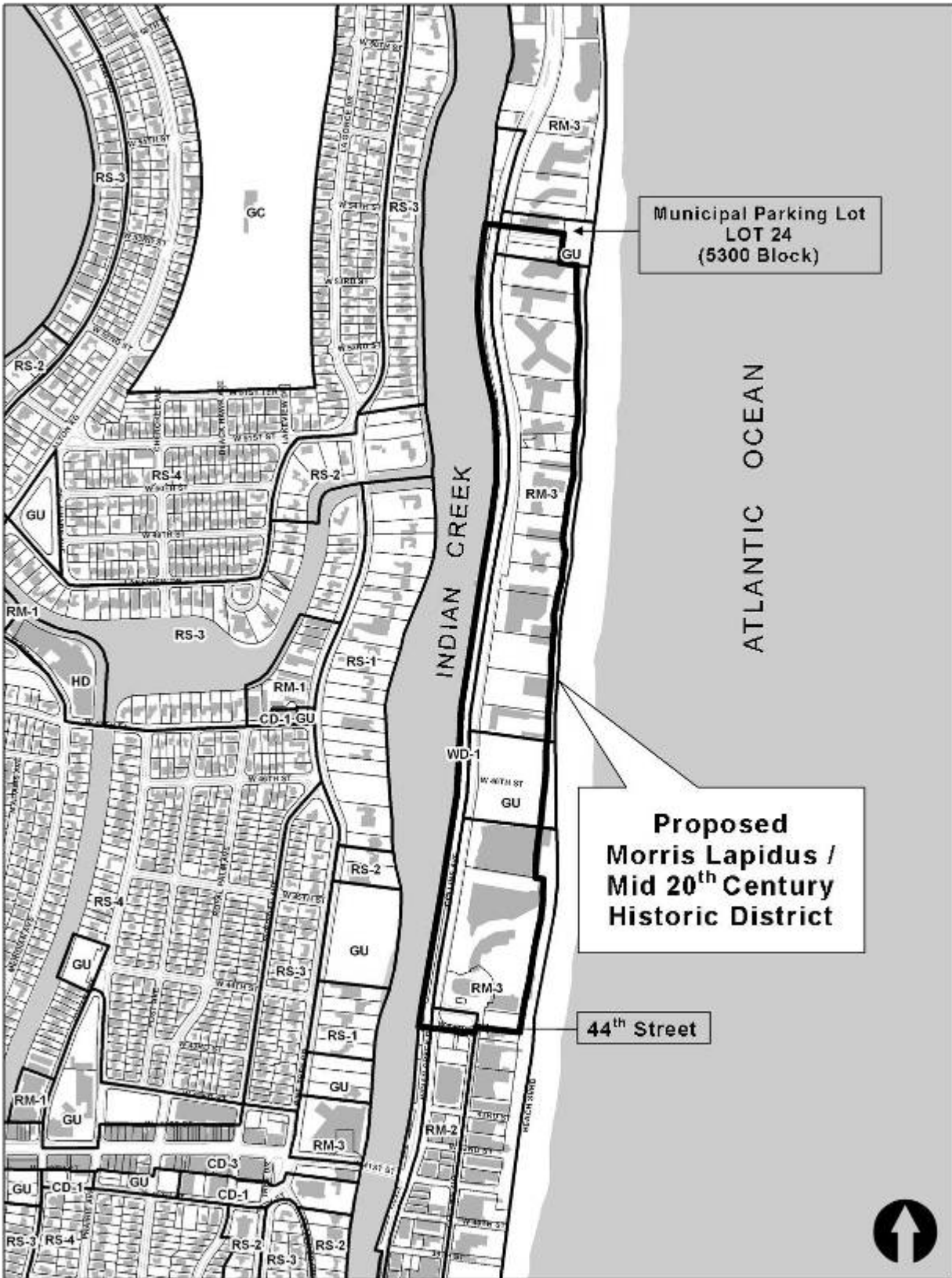
RM-3	Residential Multi-Family High Intensity
GU	Municipal Use

These zoning districts coincide with the boundaries of the proposed historic district. Please refer to the zoning map for more detailed information (**Map 2**).

**MAP 1: Proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District Boundaries**



**MAP 2: Zoning Districts within the Proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District Boundaries and the Surrounding Areas**

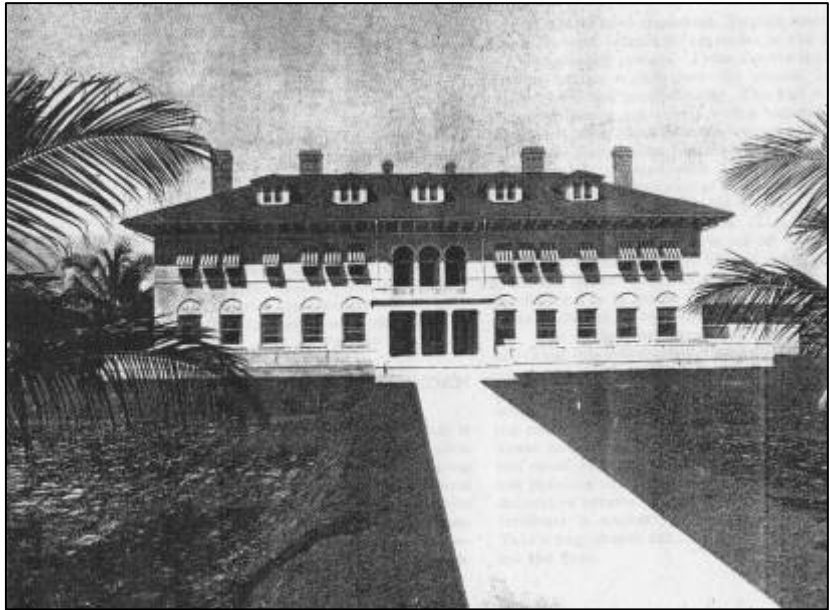


## IX. Historical Background

**Although the oldest structure in the proposed historic district -- the Chateau Building of the Fontainebleau Hotel -- dates to 1954, a look at the earlier history of this area helps in understanding its evolution.**

Coincidentally, the land where the Fontainebleau was built had also been the first homesite in this area. On April 3, 1915, just a week after the Town of Miami Beach was incorporated, James H. Snowden, “oil king from Oklahoma,”<sup>27</sup> and his wife Marian purchased sixteen acres of beachfront land from the Collins- Pancoast family’s Miami Beach Improvement Company.<sup>28</sup> This plot extended 1400 feet along the ocean, from about 44th to 46th Street. At that time, this was the location of the would extend Collins Avenue, which then ended at 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, an additional two blocks to the southern border of the property, and then turn it westward to Indian Creek.

A year later, on April 6, 1916, Snowden also purchased six acres of land on the west bank of Indian Creek,<sup>29</sup> across from the first parcel, that has now become Pine Tree Park. In the following year, 1917, Snowden built his winter residence, a magnificent beaux-arts mansion with formal gardens, on his oceanfront property.



Residence of James Snowden, 1917, designed by architects Herbert L. Bass & Company. Located on the site of current Fontainebleau Hotel at 4441 Collins Avenue

On March 5, 1920, Carl G. Fisher’s Miami Beach Bay Shore Company filed the First Ocean Front Subdivision, extending along the beach from present-day 49th to about 57th Street.<sup>30</sup> At that time this land lay in unincorporated Dade County, entirely outside the city limits of Miami Beach. A few years later, on May 25, 1923, the Bay Shore Company amended this subdivision,<sup>31</sup> changing the numbering system of the lots north of 54<sup>th</sup> Street in order to facilitate the separate sale of lots on the east and west sides of Collins Avenue. At the same time, on May 12, 1923, the Indian Beach Corporation, headed by James Snowden and Frank Shutts, filed the Indian Beach Subdivision. It comprised the land on both sides of Indian Creek from 44th Street (including the Snowden Estate) up to Fisher’s subdivision at 49th Street. Most of Indian Beach lay outside the boundary of Miami Beach as well.

The proposed historic district encompasses Lots A and 1 through 23 of the Indian Beach subdivision,

<sup>27</sup> “Millionaires Build Ocean Front Homes,” *Miami Herald*, July 28, 1929.

<sup>28</sup> Dade County Deed Book 140, p. 61.

<sup>29</sup> Dade County Deed Book 148, p. 458.

<sup>30</sup> Dade County Plat Book 6, p. 148.

<sup>31</sup> Dade County Plat Book 9, p.78.

and Lots 1 through 22 of the First Ocean Front Amended subdivision.

It was also in 1923 that Snowden sold his property to Harvey S. Firestone, the tire magnate from Akron, Ohio, and the house Snowden built is still most commonly remembered as “the Firestone estate.” Firestone and his sons kept horse stables on the parcel across the creek, where Firestone also experimented with other plant sources for tire material as an alternative to rubber. (In 1930, Thomas Edison, who was interested in the same subject, visited Firestone’s home and his “experimental rubber garden” on Pine Tree Drive.<sup>32</sup>)

What first spurred the development of the oceanfront land north of the Firestone estate was the expansion of the Miami Beach city limits to 87<sup>th</sup> Terrace on July 1, 1924. This was the result of a bitter dispute between Carl Fisher and Dade County over a shoreline roadway that the County had granted to the Tatum brothers in 1917, in order to access their property in Altos del Mar and beyond. Fisher was unable to create the “Millionaires Row” he envisioned for his Ocean Front subdivision while a public road ran along the waterfront, compromising the views and privacy. The County, responding to public sentiment, refused to close the road despite the nighttime building of barricades, dynamiting, and even, in April 1924, the construction of a house directly on the roadbed at 49th Street,<sup>33</sup> the southernmost lot in Fisher’s subdivision. (John D. Hertz from Chicago, of car-rental fame, bought the house in 1925.) The extension of the city limits was contested in court, but the eventual annexation of this land by the City of Miami Beach gave Fisher more control, and in short order he rerouted the road to run along Indian Creek rather than the ocean. Wealthy northern industrialists were soon buying Fisher’s large oceanfront lots, now with private beachfronts, for their winter homes.

This was not a new phenomenon; fancy winter residences had lined the bay and ocean in Miami Beach for years, on Fisher’s land south of Collins Park. It was the construction of the Bath Club on the ocean at 59<sup>th</sup> Street in 1927 that caused a migration of the elite northward:

The early building of ‘Millionaires’ Row’ centered from Fourteenth Lane north to Collins Park. ...Following the establishment of the highly exclusive Bath club (sic), ‘Millionaires’ Row’ transferred its building activities to the strip between the club and the Firestone estate. The Bath club became the most popular gathering place for the forces of wealth visiting Miami Beach, with the result that land in that vicinity became much more in demand among the tremendously wealthy than any other section of Miami Beach.<sup>34</sup>

Miami Beach’s first zoning ordinance, in 1930, classified this stretch of the beach as RAA, “Estate District,” codifying what was already here. By 1944, approximately 17 estates had been built on the 46 lots of the proposed historic district.<sup>35</sup> But times were changing, and during the Depression large estates staffed with servants became impractical. In 1938 Harvey Firestone Sr. died, leaving his estate to a new generation. During World War II, when much of Miami Beach was used as a military training camp, the Firestone mansion was used as U.S. Army officers’ quarters.<sup>36</sup> It was the building’s swansong, for everything was about to change.

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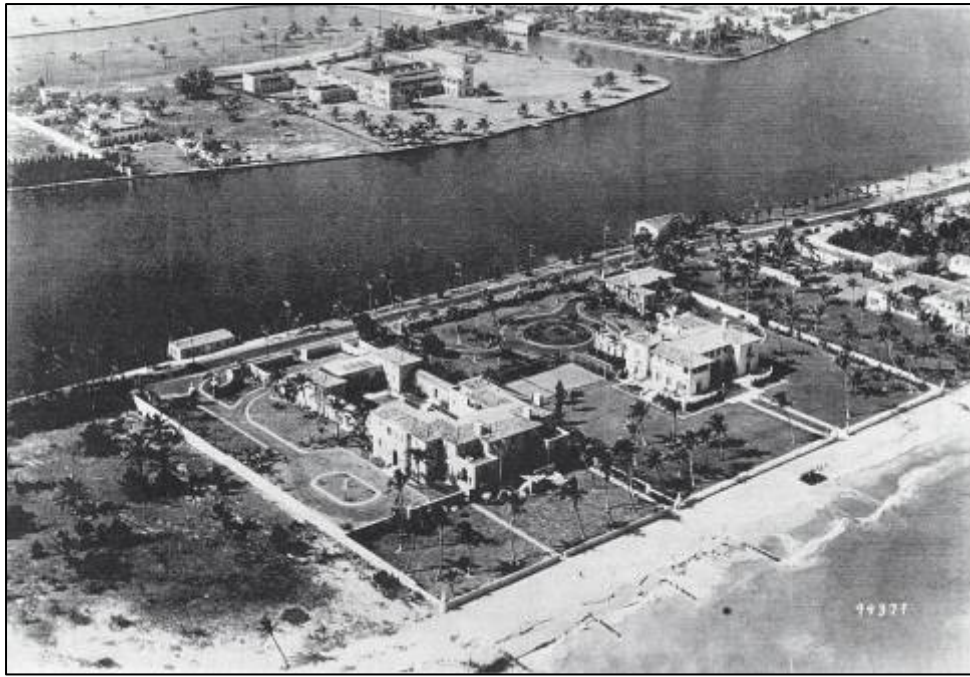
<sup>32</sup> “Edison Avers Rubber Plants are Advancing,” *Miami Daily News*, March 28, 1930.

<sup>33</sup> *Miami Herald*, June 15, 1924, front page.

<sup>34</sup> “Millionaires Build Ocean Front Homes,” *Miami Herald*, July 18, 1929.

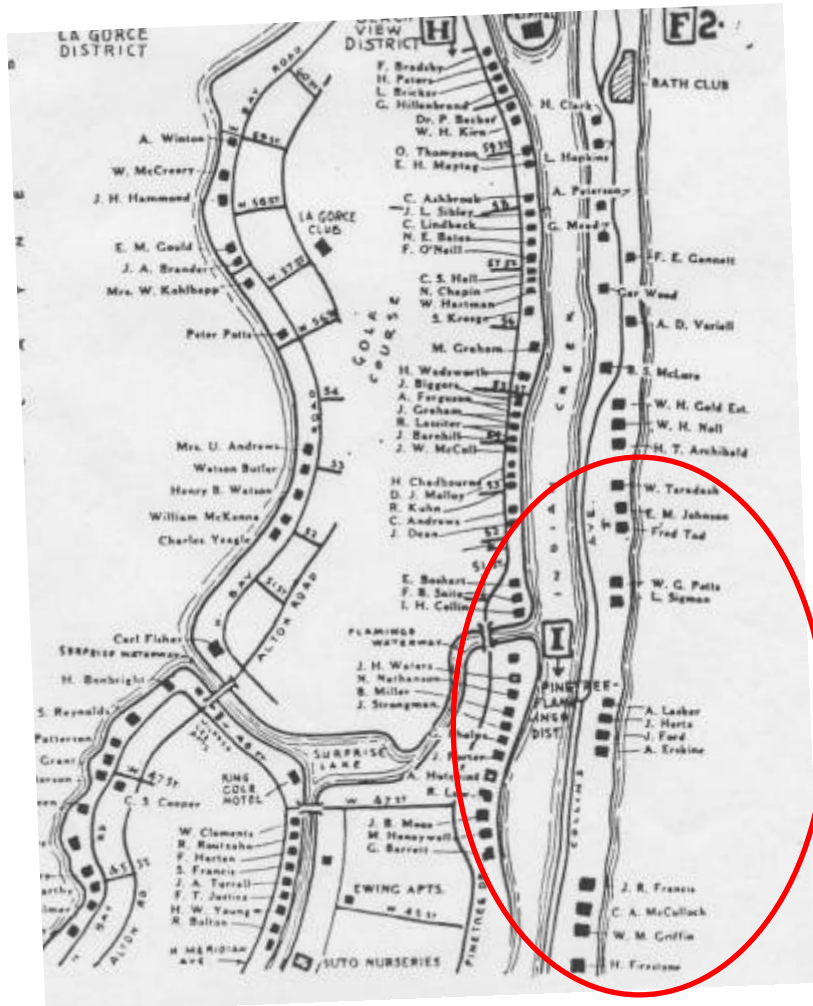
<sup>35</sup> City Atlas, 1944; Plates 10 & 12.

<sup>36</sup> Polk’s City Directory, 1944.

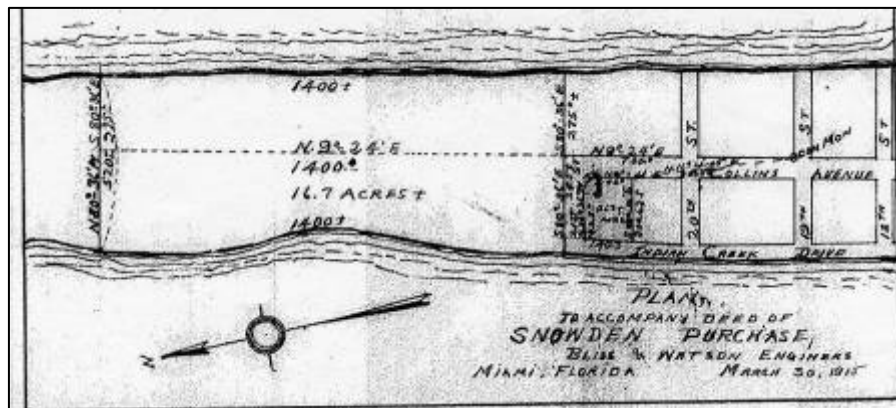


Top: The Esquire and Ford Estates on the Ocean in 1930, Indian Creek and Flamingo Waterway in Background. *Matlack Archive, Historical Museum of Southern Florida (HMSF)*

Below: Map of "Millionaire's Row" from 1932 with proposed historic district circled, identifying wealthy Northern Industrialists who made Miami Beach their winter homes. *FF Stearns, "Along Greater Miami's Sun-Sea-Ara," HMSF*



- WILLIAM TARADASH**  
Real Estate, Chicago, Illinois  
5225 Collins Avenue
- E. MEADE JOHNSON, SR.**  
Medical Supplies, New Brunswick, N.  
5209 Collins Avenue
- FREDERICK TOD**  
Steel, Youngstown, Ohio  
5197 Collins Avenue
- W. G. POTTS**  
Chicago, Illinois  
5021 Collins Avenue
- LEON SIGMAN**  
Scotch Woolen Mills, Chicago  
5005 Collins Avenue
- ALBERT D. LASKER**  
Advertising, Chicago  
4925 Collins Avenue
- JOHN HERTZ**  
Yellow Cabs, Chicago  
4901 Collins Avenue
- JOHN B. FORD**  
Chemicals, Detroit  
4855 Collins Avenue
- ALBERT E. ERSKINE**  
Studebaker and Pierce Arrow Cars  
South Bend, Indiana  
4815 Collins Avenue
- MRS. J. RICHARD FRANCIS**  
Marvel Carburetors, Detroit  
4621 Collins Avenue
- CHARLES A. McCULLOUGH**  
Banker, Chicago  
4545 Collins Avenue
- WILLIAM M. GRIFFIN**  
Wayne Pump Co., Fort Wayne, Ind.  
4537 Collins Avenue
- HARVEY S. FIRESTONE**  
Firestone Tires, Akron, Ohio  
4400 Collins Avenue



Map of James Snowden's Oceanfront land in 1915



1929 view of the estate Snowden Built and Harvey Firestone purchased in 1923. Courtesy, Arva Moore Parks.



Same site 50 years later, showing left to right, the original Sorrento Hotel, the Fontainebleau Chateau and the 'smoke stack' of the Eden Roc Hotel. Planning Department Archive.

## **POSTWAR REZONING**

Between 1949 and 1957, several major lawsuits were brought against the City of Miami Beach claiming the Zoning Ordinance No. 289 of 1930 to be arbitrary, unreasonable and confiscatory. This ordinance classified the properties located on the east side of Collins Avenue from 44<sup>th</sup> Street north to 60<sup>th</sup> Street as RAA, 'Estate District.' The only permitted use within this strip of oceanfront land was single-family residences with a minimum lot area of 40,000 square feet for each family. During this development period (1949-1957) the population of Miami Beach had greatly increased, many hotels and apartment buildings had been built south of 44<sup>th</sup> Street, and the current economic conditions left this strip of Collins Avenue north of 44<sup>th</sup> Street unfavorable for additional large single family estates. The rulings in these cases paved the way for the grand hotel and apartment district present today within this strip of oceanfront land.

### **City of Miami Beach v. First Trust Co.**

The first of such cases to reach the Florida Supreme Court was *City of Miami Beach v. First Trust Co.* on July 5, 1949. The First Trust Company, owner of Firestone Estate, current site of the Fontainebleau, expressed a wish to rezone the property from the single family 'R-AA,' also known as the 'estate district,' to a zoning classification which would permit hotel use. By the same ordinance, enacted December 3, 1930 (Ordinance No.289), the property existing to the south of the estate fell in 'Area District #15' and 'Use-District R-E' also known as 'multiple-family district' and consequently could be used for all residential purposes including hotels and apartments, the requirement being only 2,800 square feet for each family unit if used for single family homes.

The Firestone property was occupied as a residence from 1917 until 1942, and meanwhile the population of the City of Miami Beach had greatly increased. During this time, the City had experienced a tremendous influx of hotels and apartment buildings. The steady march of these buildings was halted abruptly at the south line of the Firestone Estate property. It was argued by the property owner that the changes brought by the developments to the south had destroyed the character of the property in question, and that they should be permitted to construct a hotel on the site. By 1949, the Surrey Hotel and the Broadripple Hotel were located on a lot of land at the southwest intersection of Collins Avenue and 44<sup>th</sup> Street. The Surrey Hotel faced east on Collins Avenue and was separated from the western portion of the Firestone property by 44<sup>th</sup> Street. The Broadripple Hotel faced west on Indian Creek Drive, and was separated from the western portion of the Firestone property by 44<sup>th</sup> Street. The ocean front Sovereign Hotel was located approximately 125 feet south of the south eastern portion of the Firestone property. The Sovereign erected a canvas cabana colony along the north side of the hotel which abuts the Firestone property.

Owners of the Firestone Estate argued that the erection of aforementioned Hotels and apartment houses on the properties south to 30<sup>th</sup> Street caused their property to be less valuable and desirable for Estate use due to the increase in traffic and loss of privacy.

On March 10, 1950, the Supreme Court of Florida stated that:

*The development of the hotel district, the erection and operation of the Broadripple Hotel, the Surrey Hotel and the ocean front Sovereign Hotel, with its bathing beach and the changes in Collins Avenue and 44<sup>th</sup> Street increased traffic, the use of the adjoining lot as a cabana colony and bathing beach and other changes and developments, have destroyed the privacy, outlook and view, quiet and comfort of Lot A (Firestone Estate), and its suitability and usefulness, and materially impaired its value, for single family, private residence purposes.<sup>37</sup>*

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<sup>37</sup> *City of Miami Beach v. First Trust Co.*, Supreme Court of Florida, en Banc. July 5, 1949, On Rehearing March 10, 1950, Rehearing Denied April 25, 1950. 45 So.2d. 681.



Furthermore, the court found that the 1930 zoning restrictions had reduced the value of the property by three-fourths, noting that with the 'R-AA' zoning the subject property was worth \$400,000 and if permitted to be used as apartment houses and hotels, the property had a value of \$1,750,000.

The court ruled that the zoning restriction placed on the property in 1930 was "too harsh," and "the ordinance should be modified and made to fit the changed conditions," stating that "the price of progress has destroyed the original character and its natural use is now different from then."<sup>38</sup> The ordinance was declared unconstitutional and null and void. Therefore, the 8.13 acres to the north of 44<sup>th</sup> Street bounded by Collins Avenue on the west and the Atlantic Ocean to the east was rezoned 'R-E,' multiple family district, see City of Miami Beach Zoning Maps 1941 and 1951.

### **City of Miami Beach v. Kay et al.**

On December 11, 1953, a second case was heard by the Florida Supreme Court regarding Lots 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the Indian Beach Corporation's Amended Subdivision, *City of Miami Beach v. KAY et al.* The owner of these lots located north of the Firestone Estate on the east side of Collins Avenue argued that the current zoning of 'R-AA' was unreasonable. The court found that if Lots 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11, Indian Beach Corporation's Amended Subdivision were acquired by City of Miami Beach for public purposes, as was planned (*Miami Beach v. Hogan* 63 So.2d 493), it would form a natural barrier across to the north of the property owner which would isolate and leave it in the same situation as the Firestone Estate. Therefore, all of the elements that induced the removal of zoning restriction within the Firestone property would then apply to the property in question. The Supreme Court of Florida ruled that Lots 1-5 mentioned above should be rezoned to 'R-E,' see City of Miami Beach Zoning Map dated October 1, 1955.<sup>39</sup>

### **City of Miami Beach v. Lachman**

At the same time the Kay case (Eden Roc Hotel site) was submitted to the court, ten different property owners in Miami Beach brought separate similar suits against the enforcement of the City's Zoning Ordinance of 1930. The properties are within the narrow strip of ocean frontage approximately a mile and a half from the present Eden Roc Hotel site north to the former Royal York Hotel, 5875 Collins Avenue. The 86 total lots in question were found to be similarly affected by the ordinance and were thus consolidated and heard by the court as one case. The main question here, whether the R-AA zoning classification of 1930 was unreasonable, was the same as in the Firestone Case. There are however, some major differences. Instead of being presented with a single isolated tract of land, as was in the Firestone case, the court was concerned here with ten tracts of land interspersed among 86 lots. The court found that the amount of property involved was so great that to change its classification would be to necessarily affect the entire general zoning plan of the city and ruled to leave the determination of zoning up to the City of Miami Beach. The court recommended the City Council hold public hearings within a reasonable time on the question of rezoning the 'strip' to a classification other than R-AA.<sup>40</sup> According to a *Miami Daily News* article, "Miami Beach officials have attempted to forestall wholesale hotel development of the strip north of the Eden Roc Hotel, but that they do not disapprove of a gradual hotel development."<sup>41</sup> The City believed that gradual development would result in a higher quality building stock, according to a *Miami Daily News* article dated May 9, 1956.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *City of Miami Beach v. First Trust Co.*

<sup>39</sup> *City of Miami Beach v. KAY et al.*, Respondents, Supreme Court of Florida, en Banc. December 11, 1953. 71 So.2d 725.

<sup>40</sup> *City of Miami Beach v. Lachman et al.*, Supreme Court of Florida, En Banc. December 11, 1953. 71 So.2d 148.

<sup>41</sup> More Oceanfront lots opened for Hotel Sites, *Miami Daily News*, May 9, 1956.

<sup>42</sup> More Oceanfront lots opened for Hotel Sites, *Miami Daily News*, May 9, 1956

**City of Miami Beach v. Prevatt, Dahlberg, and Tedland Realty Corporation**

Several years later, on May 9, 1956, Circuit Court Judge Grady L. Crawford ruled that a large portion of the oceanfront land on Collins Avenue north of 46<sup>th</sup> Street could be developed with hotels and apartment buildings. Three property owners had brought the suit against the city claiming the zoning classification of R-AA to be unreasonable. Crawford found that “there has been such a change in the neighborhood of this property...that the continued enforcement of the present zoning has become wholly impractical.”<sup>43</sup> This decision led to a more widespread zoning change within in the surrounding properties. The City of Miami Beach Zoning Maps of 1958 and 1959 shows the land from the Eden Roc Hotel site north to 60<sup>th</sup> Street rezoned from RAA to RE-A, Multiple Family District, which was only slightly more restricted than the RE zoning classification.

These legal rulings only served to invalidate the Estate District classification, preventing the City from enforcing it. The courts did not establish new zoning; that was done by the City Council. This was done in sections over time. The five lots of the Kay-Haas suit were rezoned RE on June 2, 1954.<sup>44</sup> Judge Crawford’s ruling in 1956 applied only to a three-lot tract south of 50<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>45</sup>

In 1958, in the wake of the rezoning battles, the City of Miami Beach commissioned a citywide survey by Harland Bartholomew & Associates titled “A Report on Neighborhoods.” It described the area from 44<sup>th</sup> to 58<sup>th</sup> Streets between Indian Creek and the Ocean as Neighborhood #10:

This area which includes ‘the strip’ is predominantly a single family district developed before 1940. However, only one home has been built within it in the last sixteen years. It now contains 37 residences, 47 multiple family units and 849 hotel rooms. There is continual pressure to convert the property to a more intensive use, specifically hotel. The land is definitely in transition and unusually valuable. It should be developed carefully with quality construction and with adequate parking and open space for maximum citywide benefit. High quality multiple family dwelling units are recommended.

The Commission apparently took this advice to heart, for within the next ten years, nine apartment buildings and two additional hotels were constructed on this stretch of the beach.

Whether as the cause or the result of the rezoning, a sea change occurred in the City’s tourist trade about 1958 that manifested itself especially in this neighborhood. Demand suddenly increased for rental apartments, for both long and short terms, and these apartments took the form of towering high-rises:

The dramatic switch from hotel to apartment construction came between 1958 and 1962, building department records show. In that period 170 apartments were under construction or completed, about 20 of them structures of 15 to 20 stories. Big companies found apartment buildings would provide year around facilities, either for entertaining customers or for vacationing employees. Many firms lease whole floors of the new apartments 12 months of the year.

In addition to the booming Post-war economy, two factors that might have brought about this trend were the advent of air conditioning, which opened up year-round tourism, and jet air travel, which made frequent “quickie vacations” feasible.

An increasing number of more affluent sun-seekers along Florida’s Gold Coast are abandoning glamorous hotels to lease space in one of a score or more posh high-rise apartments that have leaped skyward in recent years. For about the same amount of money that it costs for a lengthy

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<sup>43</sup> More Oceanfront lots opened for Hotel Sites, *Miami Daily News*, May 9, 1956.

<sup>44</sup> “Beach OKs Oceanfront Rezoning,” *Miami Herald*, June 3, 1954, p. 2-C.

<sup>45</sup> “More Oceanfront Lots Opened For Hotel Sites,” *Miami Daily News*, May 9, 1956, p. B-1.

winter vacation at a leading resort hotel, guests can rent an apartment year-round that is fully as splendid. Names like Seacoast Towers, Crystal House, Harbour House, Carlton Terrace, and Executive House are becoming almost as well known to Miami patrons as Fontainebleau, Eden Roc, Deauville, Carillon, and Doral Beach.<sup>46</sup>

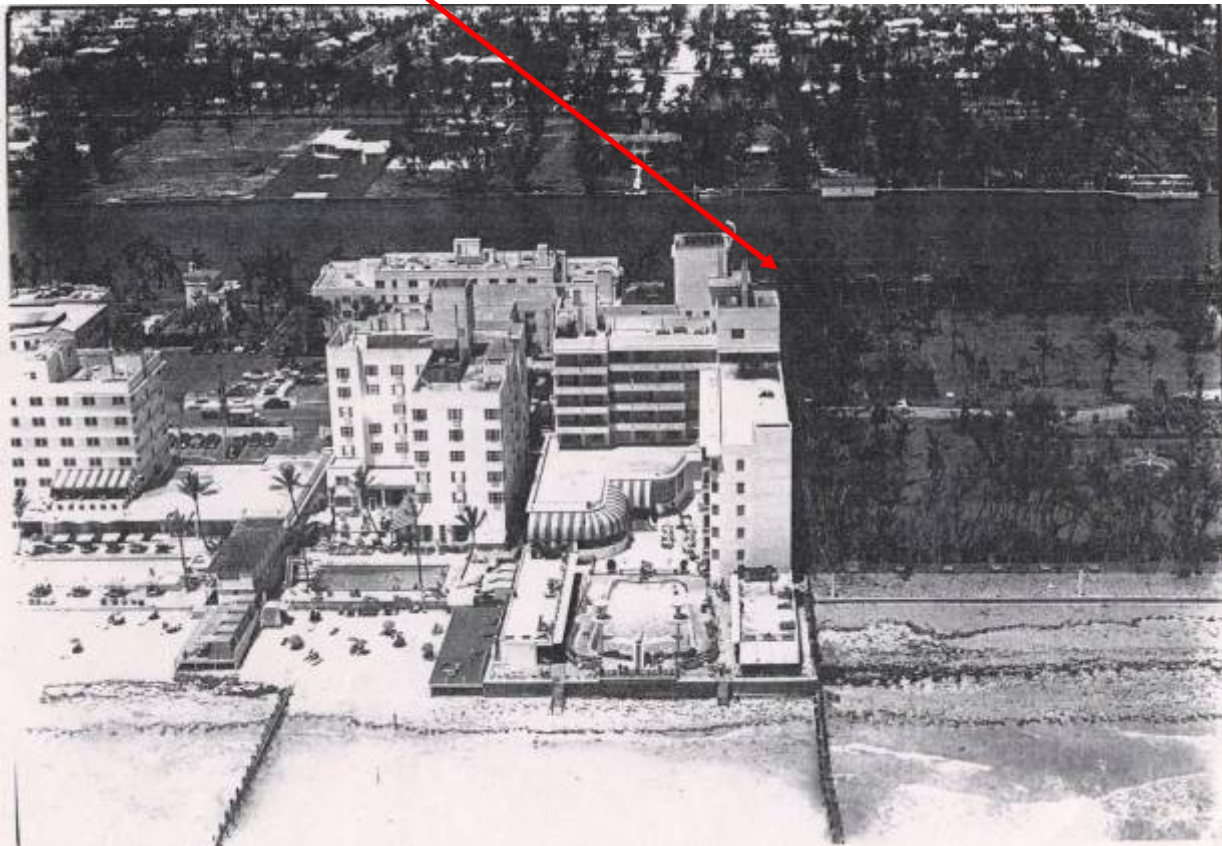
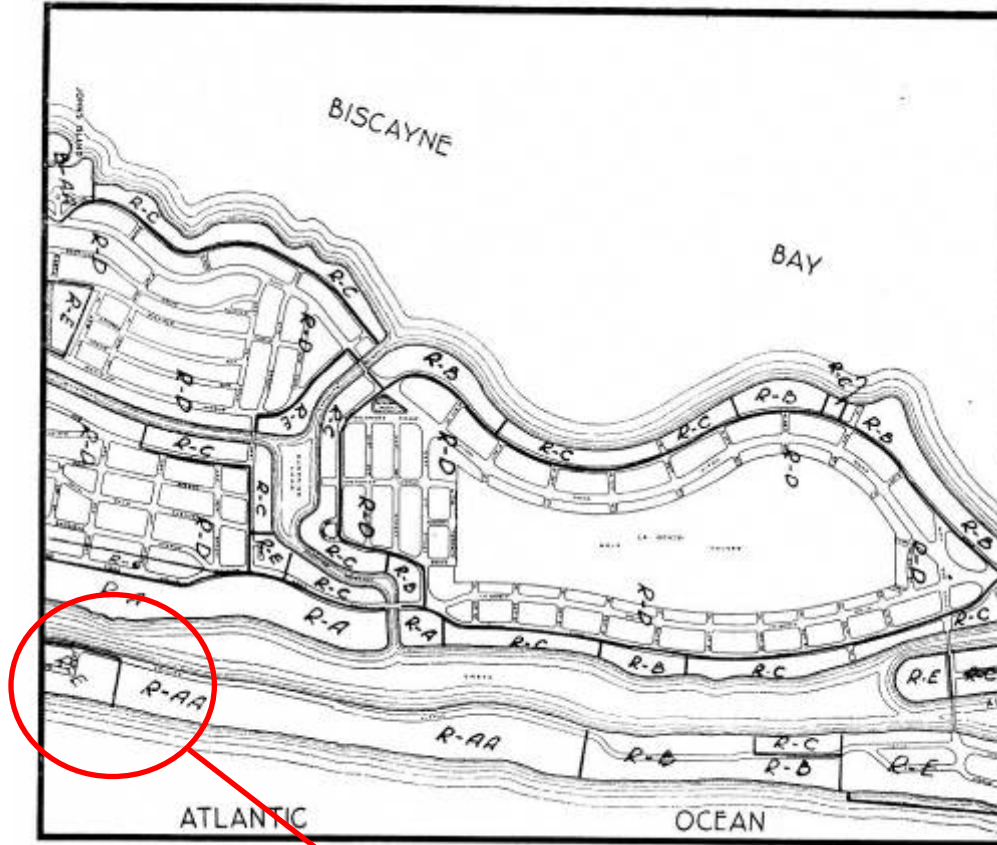
In no section of the Beach is this page in the City's history more graphically memorialized than in the high-rise buildings, now condominiums, in this proposed historic district.



Press coverage of the 1956 lawsuit disputing the zoning classification of the former Eskine, Ford and Hertz Estates. *Miami Daily News*, May 9, 1956.

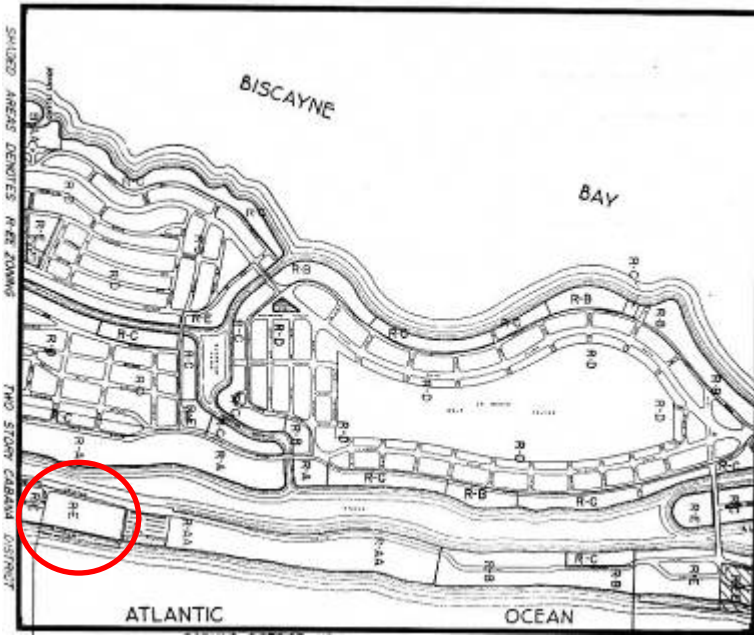
<sup>46</sup> "Why Miami's visitors sign up for the year," *Business Week*, October 14, 1967.

“Where R-E meets R-AA.” 1951 Zoning Map



Multifamily zoning comes to an abrupt end where the Sorrento Hotel abuts the formal gardens of the Firestone Estate in April, 1951. *Hoit Archive, HMSF.*

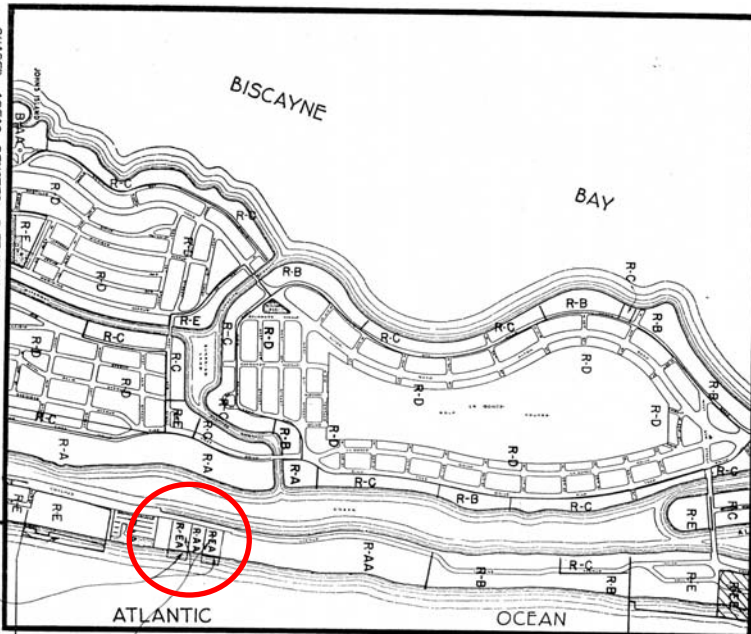
**Evolution of Zoning during the Mid-Century showing the changes relevant to the proposed historic district**



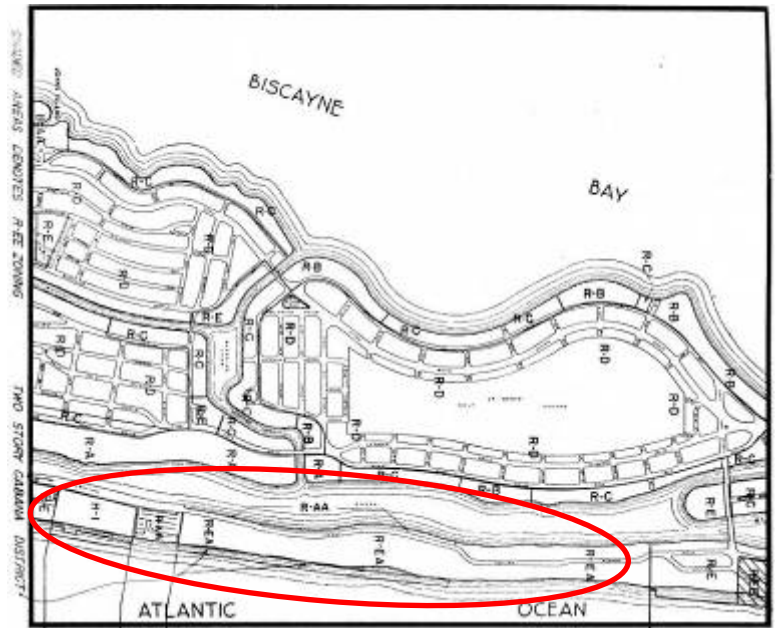
City of Miami Beach Zoning Map - 1955

**Zoning Districts**  
**City of Miami Beach Zoning Code, 1951-1959**

- RAA – Estate District, 40,000 sq ft lot area per family
- RA – Estate District, 30,000 sq ft lot area per family
- RB – Estate District, 18,000 sq ft lot area per family
- RC – Estate District, 10,000 sq ft lot area per family
- RD – Single-Family District, 6,000 sq ft lot area per family
- REA – Multiple Family District
- RE – Multiple Family District
- H1 – Multiple Family District Including Hotels with accessory uses permitted



City of Miami Beach Zoning Map - 1958



City of Miami Beach Zoning Map - 1959



View looking South from Executive at 50<sup>th</sup> Street in 1961 before the Doral and Mimosa were built. A few of the old estates remain among the Montmartre, Eden Roc and Fontainebleau Hotels. The Executive was the first apartment house to be built within the proposed historic district. *City Clerk Archive.*



View looking North from 52<sup>nd</sup> Street, in 1962. From left to right: Mimosa Apartments, Montmartre Hotel, Doral Beach Hotel, Executive, Crystal House and Imperial House. *City Clerk Archive.*

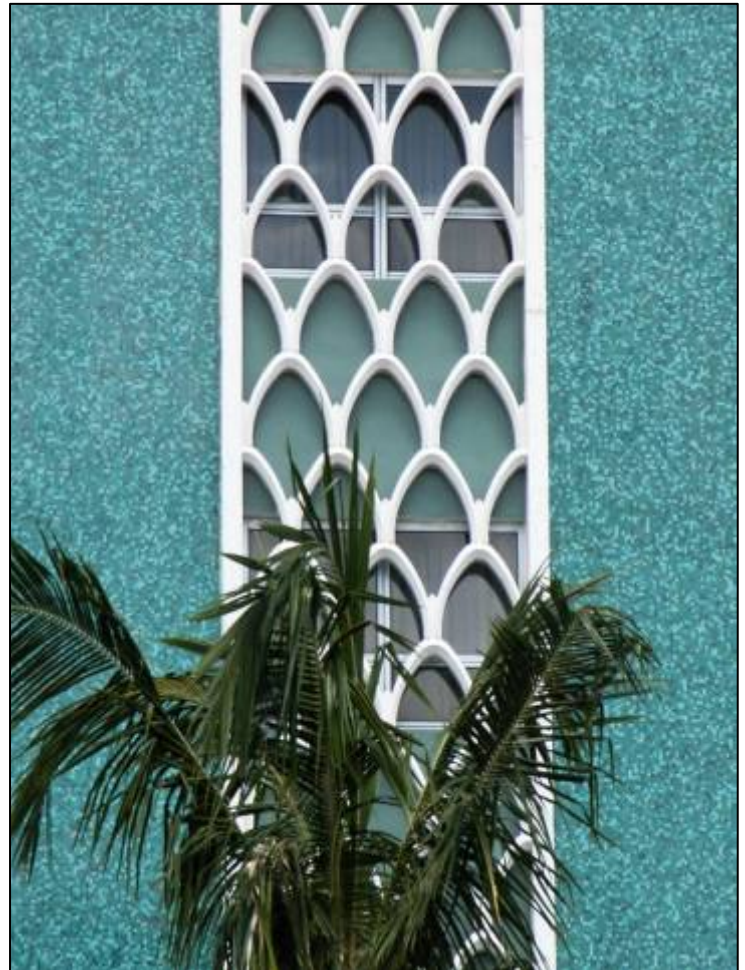
## X. *Architectural Background*

### **The Post-War Modern Style of Architecture in Miami Beach** (about 1945 to 1967)

**Historical Context** - In order to better understand the Post-War Modern or Miami Modern (MiMo) style of architecture, it is important to view this architectural movement in the context of the historical, political, social, economic, and technological changes that were taking place during this period worldwide, nationwide, and locally.

The United States emerged as a world power following World War II. After years of deprivation during the Great Depression and wartime, everyone dreamed of a carefree, better world for themselves and their children. The Baby Boom was the result of the eagerness to get this new generation underway, while the legislation of the G.I. Bill helped to provide education and prosperity for war veterans.

Miami Beach played a significant role as a training site and redistribution center for the U.S. Army-Air Forces during World War II. The immediate availability of the City as a training center in 1942 is credited with reducing the length of the war effort by six to eight months and saving the government \$6 million in building costs.<sup>47</sup> After the war, many veterans who had trained as recruits in Miami Beach returned here to vacation or to make their home, often with their brides.



Detail of molded concrete tracery and glass mosaic tile panel on the front façade of the Eden Roc Hotel.

America redirected its enormous industrial capacity from the defense economy back to the domestic economy following the war. There was no longer a perceived need for rationing, conserving, and recycling. It was the age of exuberance and abundance. The disposable society was born. The McCarthy Era and the beginning of the Cold War fostered the championing of capitalism and the celebration of the American way. The economy was thriving and gave rise to the growing middle class. Suddenly, luxury items were flooding the market and becoming affordable to the masses for the first time.

New electric appliances and gadgets with push buttons began to appear in many households. Air conditioning was introduced as a novel modern convenience that tremendously added to the comforts of living in Florida. It became especially important because air conditioning allowed for a

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<sup>47</sup> "Army Life on Beach in Second Year," *Miami Herald*, 19 February 1943.

year-round economy and freed architects from having to adapt their buildings to the hot, humid climate. But the technological advance that had perhaps the greatest impact on America was the television. It forever changed mass communications and entertainment. The television came into every household with programs portraying harmonious, happy families living perfect lives in beautiful homes. These TV show characters became society icons. Rock-and-roll emerged as mainstream pop music for carefree, fun-loving American teenagers, brought directly into their homes on the radio or television. It was the age of innocence.

The automobile increased its role as the main mode of transportation as a result of highly efficient, rapid mass production systems and the development of new technologies. Radical new car designs responded to this age of exuberance. Together these factors produced highly desirable and dependable automobiles that were affordable to much of America's rapidly expanding middle class. Gasoline was plentiful and affordable. As a result, people became more mobile. They were better able to afford a home and fulfill the American dream. They were also able to afford travel, and began to drive to more and more distant vacation destinations across America as the nation greatly upgraded its highway system.

Residential developments sprouted in the outskirts of cities. The interstate highway system commenced construction, making it easier for people to live in suburbia and commute to work as well as to travel great distances across the nation conveniently and comfortably. Leisure became a reality for more people. Automobile manufacturers very successfully promoted the sales of these truly new personal vehicles with slogans like "See the USA Today in Your Chevrolet." The advent of the jet passenger plane in 1957 made air travel tremendously faster, more comfortable, and eventually within the financial reach of the upper-middle class. Gradually, the burgeoning seaside resort of Miami Beach became the ultimate high-status vacation destination, synonymous with glitz and glamour.

The Cuban Revolution in 1959 prompted an unprecedented mass immigration of Cubans to the United States, and specifically to Miami. This event added to the American-Soviet animosity and the fear of nuclear war. At the same time, Miami Beach became more popular as a retirement community with its warm, tropical climate and beautiful beaches. The need for housing, retail, and services to accommodate the different growing segments of the population increased. During the 1950s and 1960s, the typical postcards of Miami Beach showed large, fanciful resort hotels against a backdrop of sun, sea, and palm trees. They conveyed a whimsical world of fantasy that appealed to visitors, retirees, and transplants from the north.

It was the beginning of the space age. The first Sputnik was launched in 1957. Rivalry with the U.S.S.R. led to the space race. Futuristic, flamboyant, fun design elements showed up in cars, furniture, and buildings. Automobiles sprouted wings and depicted rocket motifs. The small globe with protruding antennae reminiscent of the Sputnik became a common design detail. Cheese holes, woggles and boomerangs (terms the famous post war architect Morris Lapidus chose to define his style) began to appear in architecture everywhere in Miami Beach.

**Architectural Description** - After a hiatus in construction due to World War II, the Post- War Modern style picked up where Art Deco left off with the added influences of a booming post-war economy, new technologies such as air conditioning, the prevalence of the sophisticated, affordable, and reliable new automobiles, and a feeling of national optimism. The local expression of this style was dubbed Miami Modern or MiMo by the Greater Metropolitan Miami area's Urban Arts Committee in about 2004 (much as the term Art Deco was first applied about 1965 when the style actually first appeared in the 1920s).



Today, the Post-War Modern style of architecture in South Florida, which spans from approximately 1945 to the mid-1960s, is often interchangeably referred to as MiMo or Mid-Century Modern, the latter being a more nationally recognized term. Regardless of name, the historic design impact of this mid-20<sup>th</sup> century style can be seen today throughout South Florida and beyond. It has become a topic of university design studios, scholarly studies, museum exhibitions, and elegant coffee table books.



Morris Lapidus' marble-clad lobby of the Crystal House complete with Barcelona Chairs, as pictured in his autobiography, *Too Much Is Never Enough*.

The Post-War Modern style in Miami Beach established a path of its own in terms of modern functional simplicity with a new and often dramatic vocabulary of pizzazz. Essentially the strong design personality of Art Deco, as it evolved over two decades in Miami Beach, lent to but at the same time significantly gave way to the changing dictates of use and function in the era of the post-war seaside resort and residential architecture.

From about 1948 to 1966, the widely popular Post War Modern style was frequently applied to hotels, commercial buildings, apartment houses, and single family homes throughout Miami Beach.

Post-War Modern style buildings generally made an extensive use of glass and poured concrete. They often mixed two or more textured surfaces together (i.e. stucco with stone, brick, or mosaic tile as well as contrasting smooth and patterned stucco surfaces). The style featured such dramatic elements as accordion-like folded plate roofs and walls, acute as well as subtle angles, dynamic parabolas, delta wing shapes, sweeping curved walls, and soaring pylons. Other commonly occurring design elements and materials that were added to the architectural vocabulary of the Post-War Modern style structures included: brise soleil, architectural accents with exotic themes and often wall sculptures in relief, brick or stone faced feature areas, cast concrete decorative panels with geometric patterns, and a remarkable use of architectural 'breeze block' in a wide variety of design patterns lending itself so well to natural air flow in this tropical environment . Architect Morris Lapidus further expanded the architectural language of this style when he made popular "cheese holes", "woggles", and "beanpoles".

The large hotels in the Post-War Modern style often incorporated an expansive use of glass curtain walls, cantilevered asymmetrical roofs, leaping arches, dramatic fin walls, floating planes, architectural bridges, and grand entrance porte cocheres. Primary facades were sometimes graced with bold neon signs or logos in order to catch the eye of passing motorists. Sometimes, “sky signs” were mounted on rooftop features or on parapet walls. Color was an essential ingredient of signage. The fenestration was often highlighted with boxed or corner windows, as well as continuous ribbon windows and eyebrows. The hotels often took on exotic or futuristic forms, using architecture as advertising in an effort to outdo one another in competing for business. This new architecture celebrated the satisfaction of announcing that the Post-World War II era in Miami Beach and America had arrived, and there was pride in it.

Some of the large, Post War Modern hotels in Miami Beach were also resorts that fronted the Atlantic Ocean. These hotels were designed to accommodate a dramatically increased volume of guests and provide luxury service in an exotic style. The resort hotels usually featured grand lobbies, cocktail lounges, supper clubs, themed restaurants, ballrooms, banquet halls, retail shops, meeting rooms, spa facilities, enormous swimming pools, expansive outdoor sun tanning decks, and a sweeping array of private beach cabanas. The new American plan, resort hotel filled the large tracts of undeveloped oceanfront land as well as former private ocean front estate lands, such as “Millionaires Row” north of 44<sup>th</sup> Street on Collins Avenue, to provide everything for a total guest experience without the need to leave the hotel for the duration of the visitor’s stay. Beth Dunlop, a columnist for the “Miami Herald”, Editor of “Home Miami”, and a former member of the City of Miami Beach Historic Preservation Board, captures the essence of the Post-War Modern architectural movement when she writes:

*In the decades after World War II, these were the buildings that expressed our ebullience, our energy, our faith in the future. They were catchy, kitschy, eccentric, engaging, with loads of curbside appeal - our first auto age buildings, really, not to mention space age. We were going places then - to the suburbs, to the moon - and our buildings told us so. You could see it in roofs that cantilevered daringly, in facades that swooped saucily, in towers that took off like a Buck Rogers rocket ship, in aerodynamic fins and prows that seemed to lift otherwise mundane buildings right off the ground.<sup>48</sup>*

South Florida’s Post War Modern architecture has been compared to the Doo Wop style of resort hotels in several Atlantic coastal towns in New Jersey as well as the Googie style reflected in coffee shops, drive-ins, and motels in Southern California and the American Southwest. Unfortunately, many of these fabulous Post-War Modern style buildings have already been demolished at an alarmingly rapid rate in South Florida and elsewhere in the country. Almost none of the remarkable collection of Post-War Modern hotels in Sunny Isles remains. The Morris Lapidus designed Americana Hotel in Bal Harbor has also been demolished.

Whatever spirited label the style may be given (Post-War Modern, MiMo, Doo Wop, Googie, or Mid-Century Modern), the architecture of this unique period must be afforded protection in Miami Beach. There was indeed much to be celebrated in the years following the victory in World War II. If we do not protect these mid-century masterpieces of modern design, we will surrender the physical memory of much of the spirit of optimism and sense of fun and joy, which played such a major role in our City’s spectacular recovery after the war. Future generations of Miami Beach residents and visitors must also be able to see, feel, and directly participate in this architecture, not just read about “what it was”.

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<sup>48</sup> Beth Dunlop, “The Mod Squad,” Miami Herald, 30 September 2001.

## XI. *Building Descriptions*

“...Most modernist buildings were created during our lifetimes, or very shortly before our lifetimes. They are not part of ancient history. They are our history. I think we are not particularly inclined to value things created in our own time -- we remember the world without them, and we don't easily believe that these buildings can possibly possess the depth and resonance of 'true' history. As much as we may like to think of these buildings as new, they really do represent history by now, whether we like it or not. ... It can be instructive to look at the history of our views of art deco architecture, which was disdained by serious scholars, not to say preservationists, until the 1970s, largely on the grounds that it was somewhat vulgar and commercial and did not have the ambitions of serious architecture. Now we no longer fight about that. We no longer doubt the value of those buildings as a part of our cultural patrimony. I think we are moving rapidly toward the time when we will say the same thing about modernism in general.”

-- Paul Goldberger, “The Modernist Manifesto,” in *Preservation*, Magazine of the National Trust for Historic Preservation; May/June 2008, p.33.

In the first fifty years of its existence, this ten-block stretch of Collins Avenue was embroiled in turmoil and lawsuits: first it was the road closure, then the rezoning battles, labor disputes, and finally the Fontainebleau's “spite wall” and resulting litigation. By 1970, the twelve Contributing structures in the proposed historic district were completed and the neighborhood had achieved its enduring identity: a high-class, high-rise residential district, with a few hotels scattered in, that afforded the greatest amount of luxury to the greatest number of people. Some of the finest architects of their day were hired to design the buildings in the distinctive, cutting-edge Post-War Modern style that has now also come to be known as “MiMo” --- Miami Modern.



**Ratio of Contributing Properties**

The proposed historic district viewed from the north.

A review of the fourteen (14) properties located in the proposed historic district indicates that twelve (12) of these properties (or **86 percent**) are Contributing and two properties (or **14 percent**) are Non-Contributing. There are also two Municipal Parking Lots located within the proposed district. The Non-Contributing properties are the following:

Capobella, 5025 Collins Avenue (Ernest M. Mandel, 1992)

Blue Diamond, Green Diamond, and Clubhouse, 4779-4795 Collins Avenue (1999)

In addition to the two properties listed above, four recently constructed, Non-Contributing individual structures are located on Contributing properties within the proposed historic district, as listed below:

Fontainebleau II and III and Fontainebleau Spa, 4441 Collins Avenue (2002, 2005, 2008)

Eden Roc – South Tower, 4525 Collins Avenue (2007)

Grand Beach Hotel, 4835 Collins Ave. (north of Doral Beach Hotel ) (2007)

Notwithstanding the aforementioned Non-Contributing properties and parking lots, the proposed historic district possesses a significant concentration of Contributing properties defined and united aesthetically by their historic Mid-Century design and the post-World War II development era in Miami Beach. An inventory of the Contributing and Non-Contributing properties in the proposed Historic District follows:



Looking north from the Capobella on the beach side.

**Sorrento Hotel, 4399 Collins Avenue: B. Robert Swartburg, 1948**  
**(Non-Contributing-replicated façade)**

When the Collins Waterfront Historic District was under consideration in 2000, it was to extend from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 44<sup>th</sup> Streets and would include the Sorrento Hotel as a Contributing structure. At the same time, plans were underway for the large-scale renovation project at the Fontainebleau. This project called for the relocation of the 44<sup>th</sup> Street roadbed several feet to the south. When the Miami Beach City Commission approved the Collins Waterfront Historic District on January 31, 2001, the district's northern boundary was set at the centerline of the reconfigured 44<sup>th</sup> Street, and the Sorrento lay outside the boundary. The relocation of the district's boundary was contingent upon the property owners of the Sorrento entering into a Declaration of Restrictions to ensure the retention and renovation of the significant architectural features on the north, west, and south elevations of the building.

Subsequently, the original Sorrento was demolished but its front and side facades were replicated. Due to setback issues, the new structure stands a few feet north of the hotel's original site. The replicated facades are nearly identical to Swartburg's original design, including the sculptural signage on the south and west rooftops, but as part of the Fontainebleau III building, it is categorized as a Non-Contributing structure in the proposed Lapidus Mid-Century Historic District.



Postcard of the original Sorrento Hotel, 1953.



The front and side facades of the Sorrento Hotel, now Fontainebleau III, located at 4441 Collins Avenue, reconstructed in 2005



Details of the reconstructed façade of the former Sorrento Hotel.

**Fontainebleau Hotel, 4441 Collins Avenue: Morris Lapidus, 1954**

Volumes have been written on the Fontainebleau, one of America's most famous hotels. Not only was its architecture revolutionary (and sometimes reviled) in its time, it was the masterwork that established Lapidus' reputation worldwide as a hotel architect. The hotel became equally well-known for the celebrities who frequented it over the years, including Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Ford. The iconic C-shaped original structure, now known as the Chateau Building, and A.H. Mathes' 1959 North Addition (see below) have recently been listed in the National Register of Historic Places.



Morris Lapidus designed 'Stairway to Nowhere,' Restored 2008.

Construction of the original 15-story Fontainebleau building on its 14-acre site cost \$14 million, took exactly a year and employed 1200 workers, a project comparable in scale to the creation of Vizcaya in Miami 40 years earlier. The Snowden/Firestone mansion remained intact, serving as construction headquarters, until it finally fell to the wrecking ball in October 1954. The hotel opened two months later:

The first major luxury hotel built in the United States since the construction of the Waldorf Astoria. This resort hotel has 550 rooms (1126 beds), extensive Gardens, a large Pool, Pool Deck and Cabana complex, and full dining facilities ranging from a Coffee Shop to a luxury Restaurant, Convention Hall, Cocktail Lounge, and Supper Club.<sup>49</sup>

No description can equal the experience of entering the Fontainebleau lobby. No other locale in the City better evokes the extravagance of the Postwar Boom of the 1950s, even as it has been expanded and updated to the 21<sup>st</sup> century in its recent \$1 billion multi-phase project. Lapidus, a master of the psychology of architecture, designed it as a grand stage set. The experience begins with the curved driveway sweeping past the fountain adorned with its original sculpture. Inside, the "drop-dead" lobby is a vast open space, supported by gold-trimmed marble pillars and floored in shining white marble accented with Lapidus' signature black bow-ties. The enormous crystal chandeliers are new. There are sensuous curves everywhere, and the legendary floating "stairway to nowhere." The undulating east wall of glass gives full view to the gardens and open sky.



1955 Curteich color postcard of the new Fontainebleau Hotel with formal gardens and serpentine cabana structure.

The developer who built the Fontainebleau was New Yorker Ben Novack, who had been a hotelier in Miami Beach since 1940. He was a colorful personality, and the turbulence of his relationship with Lapidus is legendary. It came to a climax when one of Novack's former business partners, Harry Mufson, purchased the 3 ½ lots directly north of the Fontainebleau and took out a permit in February 1955 for the construction of a 14-story, \$3.2 million rival luxury hotel -- the Eden Roc -- to be designed by none other than Morris Lapidus. Novack was so

<sup>49</sup> Lapidus firm promotional material, City of Miami Beach Planning Dept. archives.

enraged with this perceived betrayal that he retaliated by building a forbidding 14-story annex along the northern property line of the Fontainebleau. The intended effect of this notorious “Spite Wall” was to cast a shadow on the Eden Roc’s pool for most of the day. In response, the Eden Roc brought the landmark lawsuit, *Fontainebleau Corporation v. 4525 Inc.* of 1959 that is still taught in law schools, striking down the Eden Roc’s legal right to sunlight on its pool deck.

**The North Addition to the Fontainebleau Hotel** was designed by architect A. Herbert Mathes. A permit was issued for its foundation on July 31, 1958, but construction was tied up by the legal dispute. The building permit was issued in May 1959, and the building was completed on March 8, 1959. It consisted not only of the slab-like tower containing 339 new hotel rooms, but also of the distinctive “cheese hole” wall fronting Collins Avenue, with 17 round arches filled with a random pattern of porthole windows.



Fontainebleau Hotel, ‘Cheese Hole’ wall designed by A. Herbert Mathes

Ben Novack lived in a 4-bedroom penthouse apartment in this annex until he left the Fontainebleau in bankruptcy in 1977. The hotel was purchased the following year by Stephen Muss, son of Miami Beach developer Alexander Muss (see below, under “The Alexander”). The “Spite Wall” and its unpleasant history have now disappeared behind the Eden Roc’s new south addition.



Fontainebleau Hotel. Morris Lapidus designed Chateau (1954) and A. Herbert Mathes designed North addition (1959), located at 4441 Collins Avenue





Fontainebleau Hotel. Morris Lapidus designed Chateau (1954), located at 4441 Collins Avenue.



Fontainebleau Hotel, relocated Apollo sculpture



Fontainebleau Hotel, fountain facing Collins Avenue



Main Lobby, Fontainebleau Hotel with restored marble 'bow-tie' floor, 2008



Morris Lapidus designed 'Stairway to Nowhere,' Restored 2008.



A. Herbert Mathes 'Cheese-Hole' Wall viewed from the Interior of the North Addition to the Fontainebleau Hotel, 2008



Garden Lobby with original gold mosaic tile columns and original skylights, Fontainebleau Hotel, 2008.

## **Eden Roc Hotel, 4525 Collins Avenue: Morris Lapidus, 1955**

Compared to the Fontainebleau, the Eden Roc appears somewhat restrained, although it still lives up to Harry Mufson's mandate to "just get me plenty of glamour and make sure it screams luxury."<sup>50</sup> Its front façade is folded gently inward and features two full-height vertical panels of perforated masonry on a background of Italian glass tile in graduated shades of green. Nautical reference is seen in its distinctive rooftop "smokestack." It is actually a T-shaped structure, with a projecting wing in the rear. Projecting balconies on the side and rear elevations have solid masonry elements that repeat the concave "folding" of the front façade.



Eden Roc Hotel, designed by Morris Lapidus, 1956. *Courtesy of the Florida Photographic Collection*

The street entrance is highlighted with a projecting porte-cochere, French lampposts, and a cast-stone balustrade.

In contrast to the experience of entering the Fontainebleau, where the widescreen lobby is instantly appreciable, one enters the Eden Roc through a vestibule space that is partially screened from the lobby by the volume of the reception area. A glimpse of the lobby around the reception space beckons the visitor inward. The moment of arrival is deliciously drawn out. Not until the arriving guest is afforded a carefully choreographed 270-degree view of the drum-shaped lobby space with a bar, a sunken lounge, picture windows facing on the ocean, and a staircase to nowhere does the elevator bank stand revealed.<sup>51</sup>

Lapidus himself collaborated in the restoration of the Eden Roc lobby shortly before his death. Here the floor is white terrazzo with large black fleur-de-lis motifs. The oval sunken center section of the lobby is encircled by oval columns of rosewood ridges interspersed with gold bands. They support a sculptural dropped ceiling. The stairway has Lapidus' signature zigzag steps and original "ribbon" motif metal railing, now brought to building code compliance with glass backing. The original reception desk opening, facing eastward from the inner lobby wall, was retained when a new reception desk was constructed on the south side of the lobby in 2008.

<sup>50</sup> Howard Kleinberg, *Miami Beach: A History*, p. 165.

<sup>51</sup> E. Nash and R. Robinson, *MiMo: Miami Modern Revealed*; Rizzoli, 2004, p. 72.



Eden Roc Hotel designed by Morris Lapidus in 1955 and Eden Roc South Tower constructed in 2007 located at 4525 Collins Avenue



Eden Roc Hotel designed by Morris Lapidus, 1955, located at 4525 Collins Avenue, 2009. Collins Avenue façade.



Eden Roc Hotel designed by Morris Lapidus, 1955, located at 4525 Collins Avenue, 2009. Oceanfront façades.



Eden Roc Hotel with cantilevered balconies, ships roof-top funnel, mosaic tiles and molded concrete tracery.



Eden Roc Hotel lobby alcove, 2009



Eden Roc Hotel Main Lobby, 2009



Eden Roc Hotel, Main Lobby, original Fleur de Lis motif and marble floor, 2009



Eden Roc Hotel, Main Lobby, original elevator doors and marble surrounds, 2009

Another part of this history that is now lost was the \$2.1 million Montmartre Hotel, built in 1958 at 4775 Collins Avenue, on five lots that had been rezoned in 1956. It was a four-story, 300-room building, of striking modern design by Melvin Grossman. It was demolished in January 1982. The Blue and Green Diamond project was built on the site in 1995.

The contractor for the Montmartre was Robert L. Turchin, an important figure to be introduced at this point. Son of pioneer hotelier Ben Turchin, he graduated from Miami Beach High School and Tulane University, majoring in engineering. After serving in the Navy during World War II, he became one of the foremost building contractors in Florida. His buildings abound in Miami Beach, including eight in the proposed historic district. He was elected to the Miami Beach City Council in 1963.<sup>52</sup> In 1968 it was said of him, “Turchin is a veteran at changing the Miami Beach skyline, having built at least half of the major apartment buildings in the city.”<sup>53</sup>



Postcard of Melvin Grossman's Montmartre Hotel, 1958. *Courtesy of Larry Wiggins.*

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<sup>52</sup> *Miami Beach Daily Sun*, March 25, 1955; June 3, 1963; June 30, 1963.

<sup>53</sup> “He’s Sold on Miami,” *Miami Herald*, May 5, 1968.

### **Executive Apartments, 4925 Collins Avenue**

The 1928 Lasker estate was demolished in April, 1954, to be replaced by this first, and still one of the finest, apartment buildings in this area. Designed in 1959 by B. Robert Swartburg for hotelman Charles L. Martel, the Executive had 101 rental apartments in its 12 stories, plus a swimming pool, cabanas, and coffee shop. In 1960, studios rented for \$3600 per year; two-bedrooms for \$9000.<sup>54</sup>

The Executive is most striking for its X-shape floor plan and its full-length vertical panels of perforated masonry. The entry has a V-shaped porte-cochere and a curved, covered walkway reminiscent of Roy France's Saxony. The front wall is brown marble, and the doorway has a Classical Revival style broken pediment of white and purple marble. Blue tiled walls flank the door, and incorporate ceramic mask sculptures that were originally waterspouts that spilled into pools below, now converted into planters. The original lobby floor is green and white terrazzo with panels of purple marble mosaic. Low flights of steps lead to left and right over former water features in the lobby. There is a dropped ceiling "biscuit" in sculptural shape.

While the Executive House relies heavily on traditional Miami Beach masonry construction, the crisp detailing of its fenestration, the full-height vertical banks of screen block to either side of the entry, and the aerodynamic porte-cochere are concise expressions of its time and place.

The X-shaped plan simultaneously provides maximal views for the units and creates exterior visual interest. The vertical tower massing allows for views of the sky over the ocean from the street. The condominium's pleasing proportions were rarely equaled in the area's subsequent build-out.<sup>55</sup>



The Executive designed by Robert Swartburg in 1959 located at 4925 Collins Avenue

<sup>54</sup> *Miami Herald*, Aug. 17, 1960.

<sup>55</sup> E. Nash and R. Robinson, *MiMo: Miami Modern Revealed*; Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 2004, p.133.





Detail of Swatburg's porte-cochere at the Executive



Lobby at the Executive

### **Crystal House, 5055 Collins Avenue**

The third Morris Lapidus creation in the proposed historic district, the 13-story Crystal House was designed in 1960 as a luxury apartment house. Embodying the International style, it lacks the exuberance of Lapidus' hotels, but has an impressive glass front and articulated porte-cochere. "The owner liked the work of Mies van der Rohe," Lapidus wrote; "I didn't, but I convinced him that this was my version of Mies."<sup>56</sup>



Crystal House designed by Morris Lapidus in 1960, located at 5055 Collins Avenue.

Crystal House appears as a rather sober and elegant slab type residential tower on Collins Avenue. Similar to Mies' Seagram Building, it is not a simple slab, but actually a "T" in plan. Its exterior walls are curtain wall glass interlaced with a concrete structural frame. The austere lobby was originally composed of marble floors, marble and glass walls, and colonized with Mies' iconic Barcelona chairs and benches. ...An interesting feature is the circular restaurant structure that commands views of the pool and ocean. It is almost entirely glassed and sheltered by a conical folded-plate concrete roof.<sup>57</sup>

Curtain walls, which are hung from the building frame rather than supporting their own weight, were not a new principle, but became popular in the 1950s. Thinner and lighter materials were developed that saved both cost and space, culminating in sheer walls of glass as seen here, reminiscent of the U.N. Secretariat Building in New York.<sup>58</sup>

The entrance to Crystal House is flanked by panels of perforated masonry in a pattern of regimented cheese-holes. The front steps and pillars are of gray granite, while gray-veined marble predominates inside.



Crystal House, panels of perforated masonry in a pattern of regimented cheese-holes, fronting Collins Avenue.

<sup>56</sup> Morris Lapidus, *Too Much Is Never Enough*; Rizzoli, New York, 1996; p. 221.

<sup>57</sup> J. Donnelly, R. Robinson, A. Shulman; *Miami Architecture Discussion Draft*, MBCDC, Nov. 2003, #mb62.

<sup>58</sup> "Curtain' Walls Change Look of U.S. Cities," *Miami Herald*, May 28, 1950

A 1965 newspaper ad reads:

Those who wish to avoid overcrowded institutional living choose the award-winning Crystal House, for there are only 162 spacious apartments built on 350 feet of beautifully landscaped private ocean frontage...and planned so that no other building will ever cast its shadow on Crystal House....Annual rentals from \$375 per month....Only the affluent few can say with pride, 'I live at the Crystal House.'<sup>59</sup>



Crystal House, view from beach

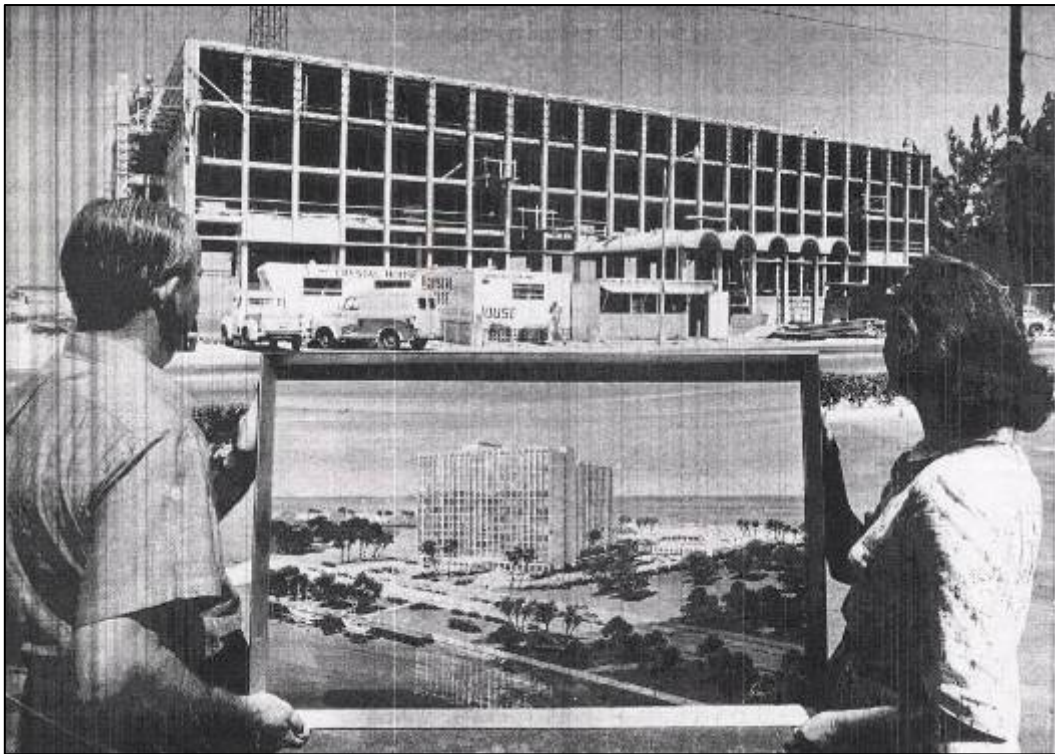


Crystal House, beach side restaurant

<sup>59</sup> *Miami News*, March 26, 1965, p. 41-D.



Crystal House, Lobby



Crystal House under construction in 1961 with rendering in foreground. *Miami Daily News*, May 16, 1961, HMSF.

## **Imperial House, 5255 Collins Avenue**

Warren Wright, who founded Calumet Farms of horse racing fame, had built a 25-room mansion here that was torn down in 1961 for the construction of the 14-story Imperial House, designed by Melvin Grossman. Miami Beach Councilman Samuel Halperin had bought the Wright estate for \$350,000 and built Imperial House together with a Chicago investment group.<sup>60</sup> Robert L. Turchin was the general contractor.

The aim of the developers is to create the atmosphere of a private club. They are spending more than \$5 million to achieve it. There will be living quarters for maids, private dining room with kitchen facilities for room service, beauty and barber shop. A solarium and health club will share the roof with two penthouses.<sup>61</sup>

Architecturally, the building “resembles a smaller version of the Fontainebleau Hotel,”<sup>62</sup> but “instead of the customary balconies, architect Melvin Grossman has provided a Florida room for each of the 128 apartments.”<sup>63</sup>



Water wall at entrance of the Imperial House. Restored 2009.



Imperial House lobby

The Imperial House employs the basic stucco and cantilevered sunshade elements of Miami Beach’s late 1930s masonry Modern vernacular. A Fontainebleau-inspired curve and Eden Roc-inspired tile mosaics add the necessary touches of ostentation. Unique to the Imperial, however, is its dramatic entry. On either side of the doorway are water walls, of undulating blue porcelain tile, which cascade down to a pool lined in mosaic tile. Round openings in the porte-cochere allow sunlight onto the cascading water. The doors are approached on a bridge over the pool, intricately detailed with gold anodized aluminum balustrades.<sup>64</sup>

Inside this striking entrance is an equally striking split-level round lobby, with floors combining white marble and terrazzo. Three steps lead to the upper level, bordered with a metal “ribbon” railing. The walls of tan marble have veining set in diamond patterns. Two square pillars are currently faced in smoked mirrors, and a crystal chandelier tops it all.

<sup>60</sup> “High-Riser For Beach,” *Miami Herald*, January 8, 1961, p. 4-G.

<sup>61</sup> “Imperial House,” *Miami Herald*, January 9, 1961.

<sup>62</sup> Photo caption, *The Miami News*, Feb. 26, 1961.

<sup>63</sup> “High-Riser For Beach,” *op. cit.*

<sup>64</sup> Miami Architecture Discussion Draft, #mb63.



Oceanside View of Imperial House to Go Up at 5255 Collins Avenue

# High-Riser For Beach

THE 28-ROOM mansion that cost the late Warren Wright \$350,000 will be torn down to make way for a 128-unit luxury apartment building to be called Imperial House. On the cover of the Home Section you'll find a color picture showing how it will look from Collins Avenue.

Wright, who founded Calumet Farms, died in December, 1950, and the oceanfront estate was sold for \$300,000 a year later to hotel man Irving Kipnis.

He rented it for three years to Louis Chesler, the Canadian banker who put General Development Corp. together.

Kipnis then sold the property to Miami Beach Councilman Samuel Halperin for \$300,000.

Law suits blossomed when the oceanfront residential strip north of the Fontainebleau Hotel was zoned by the city council for hotels and apartments. The rezoning was upheld.

Halperin is developing Imperial House in association with Harry Collins and Rosert Street of Miami Beach, plus a Chicago investment group headed by Ben Smiering.

There will be underground parking for 200 cars and the building will be set back 180 feet from Collins Avenue to provide additional parking area.

Instead of the customary balconies, architect Melvin Gussman has provided a Florida room for each of the 128 apartments.

Completion is scheduled for November.



Former Warren Wright Mansion Will Come Down

Miami Herald Staff Photo by BILL STARLETON

Press coverage of the Imperial House prior to construction. Miami Herald, January 8, 1961.



Imperial House, 1961. *The Miami News*, January 9, 1961.



Imperial House detail of roof-top feature



Imperial House designed by Melvin Grossman in 1961, located at 5255 Collins Avenue.



Curved front façade of the Imperial House with continuous masonry eyebrows.



Dramatic entry porte-cochere at Imperial House, reconstructed 2009.



Imperial House, detail of breeze-block and 'eyebrows'



## **Doral Beach Hotel, 4833 Collins Avenue (now Miami Beach Resort & Spa)**

Built in 1962, the Doral Beach Hotel was designed by Melvin Grossman and constructed by Robert L. Turchin at a cost of about \$11 million. The hotel was named for its original owners using the first letters of their names, Doris and Alfred L. Kaskel. The 17-story building was originally permitted for 429 hotel rooms and 429 parking spaces. Guest amenities offered at this all-inclusive, resort hotel included a cocktail lounge, a dining room, a coffee shop, a beauty salon, a barbershop, retail shops, a card room, a convention hall, meeting rooms, a rooftop solarium, a swimming pool, a pool deck bar, and cabanas.<sup>65</sup> One of its most popular attractions was the Starlight Roof Supper Club on the top floor of the hotel overlooking Indian Creek. Here thousands of miniature lights still twinkle down from the ceiling above.

Kaskel spared no expense for this luxurious hotel since he wanted it to be in the same class as the Eden Roc Hotel, where guests were willing to pay extra for special treatment that they expected to get. The interiors of the Doral Beach Hotel were executed on a grand scale with a Spanish Baroque theme in contrast to its modern glass exterior. This design device may have been influenced by Morris Lapidus' Fontainebleau and Eden Roc Hotels with their thematic Old European interiors and Post War Modern style exteriors. Many of the furnishings in the Doral Beach Hotel were antiques imported from Spain or made by its craftsmen. The lobby space featured massive crystal chandeliers suspended from vaulted ceilings, marble-faced columns, marble chip floors, an ornate fireplace and mantel, a console table supporting an elaborately framed mirror, heavy wood paneled doors with brass hardware, floating scissor stairs with wood-turned balusters, and a mural painted domed ceiling<sup>66</sup> – all of which still exist today.



Doral Beach lobby with crystal chandeliers, vaulted ceilings, marble-faced columns and marble chip floors, still intact today. *Florida Architecture*. 1964.

The Doral Beach Hotel opened on February 15, 1963, about a year after Kaskel opened his Doral Country Club just west of the Miami International Airport. The hotel and country club were a joint operation in which guests could enjoy the amenities of both facilities. Kaskel sought to combine a luxury oceanfront hotel with its own country club for recreation. Guests were shuttled back and forth in special limousines to enjoy golfing, horseback riding, tennis, and sailing at the country club or to use the pool and cabana area, beach access, and other resort amenities at the hotel.<sup>67</sup> In fact, in 1964, the Miami Beach City Council approved a special permit to allow helicopter service to take the guests of the Doral Beach Hotel to the Doral Country Club.

Kaskel, who emigrated from Poland in 1920, was a wealthy real estate developer who owned many apartment houses and parking garages in New York City. By 1963, his Carol Management

<sup>65</sup> City of Miami Beach, Building Department, Building Permit Records, Building Card No. 20004, 4833 Collins Avenue.

<sup>66</sup> Miami-Dade Public Library, Florida Room, "Resort Hotel," *Florida Architecture*, 31<sup>st</sup> Edition, circa 1963, pp. 82-87.

<sup>67</sup> Marc Reardon, "Doral Sets High Luxury Standard," *Miami Beach Daily Sun*, 17 February 1963.

Corporation owned and operated about \$200 million worth of New York real estate properties and an additional \$200 million worth of developments that were under way or in the planning stages.<sup>68</sup> In Miami Beach, he was the developer of the Doral Beach and Carillon Hotels. Reportedly named for Kaskel's niece, Carol, the Carillon Hotel at 6801 Collins Avenue was designed by Norman Giller in the Post War Modern style in 1957.<sup>69</sup> The Doral Beach Hotel was sold in 1997 and renamed the Westin Resort and then again in 1998 became the Wyndham Hotel.

The Doral Beach Hotel was designed in the New Formalism style of architecture, a movement inspired from the International and Miesian styles.<sup>70</sup> The building has an overall symmetrical design with a strong vertical emphasis. It is composed of a central tower with a low pedestal. The slender tower features a projecting roof slab above continuous glass curtain walls, affording spectacular floor-to-ceiling water views from its guest rooms. The tower's window bays are separated by slender piers of precast quartz stone that rise uninterrupted to the roof, further stressing its verticality.



*The Starlight Roof Supper Club at the Doral Beach Hotel with its vibrant magenta, blue, maroon and black décor and 10,000 ceiling lights. Postcard courtesy of Larry Wiggins.*

The window bays are highlighted with low arches and framed by projecting fins at the top floor of the tower and at the pedestal. The suites floor, beneath the Starlight Roof Supper Club, originally featured elegant projecting balconies that were apparently removed in 1997. The hotel's grand porte cochere appears to float over the entrance driveway with its cantilevered canopy of continuous arches. On either side of the porte cochere, a waterfall originally spanned the length of the building and cascaded from below the main lobby windows into a ground level pool below. They have since been removed and filled in with landscaping. The Doral Beach Hotel was carefully designed from its exterior elevations and outdoor areas to its interior spaces. This fine attention to detail is further evidenced by the similar Spanish Baroque-inspired patterns on the pedestal roofs of the hotel and cabana structures, in the light channels on the underside of the porte cochere, as well as in the marble chip and terrazzo floor in the lower lobby.

Announcements of the new Doral Beach Hotel were published in local newspapers in February of 1963 with headlines that read: "From Doral Beach to Doral CC [Country Club]: Highway to Pleasure!" and "Doral Sets High Luxury Standard." A glowing architectural review of the luxurious resort hotel was also published in Florida Architecture magazine, which states in part:

A seventeen story rise of sophisticated exterior beauty, combined with interiors that symbolize the elegance and beauty of Old Spain, eloquently tell the story of The Doral Beach Hotel... The building is an outstanding example of "flat plate" concrete construction. Exterior facades of precast stone, plus true curtain wall treatment, serve to give this structure a unique position among local buildings...<sup>71</sup> The Doral Beach Hotel is an outstanding structure, inasmuch as it incorporates imagination

<sup>68</sup> Larry Birger, "From Doral Beach to Doral CC: Highway to Pleasure!" Miami Daily News, 10 February 1963.

<sup>69</sup> Howard Kleinberg, Miami Beach: A History (Miami, Florida: Centennial Press, 1994), p. 167.

<sup>70</sup> Marcus Whiffen, American Architecture Since 1780 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 260-266.

<sup>71</sup> Miami-Dade Public Library, Florida Room, "Resort Hotel," Florida Architecture, 31<sup>st</sup> Edition, circa 1963, p. 83.

and practicability on the part of both the architect and interior designer. These basic concepts are self evident on a visit to this magnificent structure.<sup>72</sup>



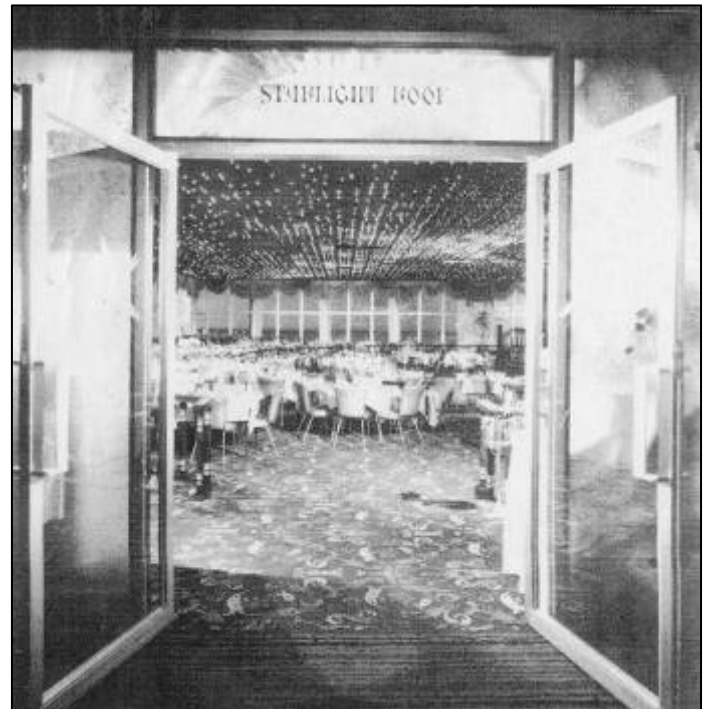
Doral Beach Hotel, now Miami Beach Resort and Spa, designed by Melvin Grossman in 1962, located at 4835 Collins Avenue



Doral Beach Hotel entry with a cantilevered canopy of continuous arches.



1964 rendering of the Doral Beach Hotel. *Florida Architecture, 31<sup>st</sup> Addition, Florida Room, Public Library.*



Starlight Roof Supper Club at the Doral Beach Hotel, which is still intact today. *Florida Architecture, 1964.*

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

## **Mimosa Apartments, 4747 Collins Avenue**

Construction started in April 1962 for yet another Grossman-designed building, the Mimosa. Fourteen stories high with 220 rental apartments, it was a \$4.5 million project by a group of developers from Washington DC. The general contractor was Robert L. Turchin.<sup>73</sup>

Melvin Grossman made a quintessentially Miami Beach statement with the Mimosa by elevating the humble prewar Miami Beach elements of cement block, stucco, punctured openings, and continuous eyebrows into high style. Grossman simply stretched that skin, using superior and more precise construction methods, over the much larger massing of a high-rise condominium. As in the Crystal House, a prominent, rhythmic porte-cochere provides a foil for the spare lines of the tower. Grossman would explore this formula fully in his Imperial House a few years later.<sup>74</sup>



Decorative breeze-block detail at the Mimosa condominium.

The entrance to the Mimosa is flanked by planter bins of green marble, and the lower exterior walls are faced in large, light green ceramic tiles with a leaf pattern in bas-relief. In the lobby, green marble predominates on pillars and elevator wall, while great plate-glass windows open the view to the east.



Mimosa condominium designed by Melvin Grossman in 1962, located at 4747 Collins Avenue

<sup>73</sup> "Ceremony At Beach Site For Mimosa," *Miami News*, April 27-29, 1962, Realty section p. 2D.

<sup>74</sup> *MiMo: Miami Modern Revealed*, p. 134.

## **The Alexander, 5225 Collins Avenue (originally named Seacoast Towers)**

The 1920s estates of realtor William Taradash and medical supplier E.Meade Johnson were torn down at this site in November 1962. Within a few months, construction began on the first of five apartment towers (three of them in the proposed historic district) by New York developer Alexander Muss. This was the original Seacoast Towers, now called The Alexander. At fourteen stories, it was built with 238 rental apartments that started at \$210 per month, including central air conditioning and heat; facilities included a pool, sun deck and cabanas, solariums, coffee shop, uniformed doorman, a laundry room on each floor, and a 357-car underground garage.<sup>75</sup> Its architecture remains distinctive:

Fort Lauderdale modern master (architect) Charles F. McKirahan made the most of the limited visibility of this narrow slab set perpendicular to the street by covering the Collins facade in a full-height abstract painted stucco relief reminiscent of Polynesian art. McKirahan's other major contribution in Miami was the legendary Castaways Island Hotel in Sunny Isles. Perhaps both buildings were inspired by the time McKirahan spent in the South Pacific....<sup>76</sup>



The Alexander, balcony detail

Rather than the typical porte-cochere, the Alexander has a drive-through tunnel entrance from the street into a two-story enclosed atrium with round arches and coffered ceilings. Brown granite benches and planter bins (now with fountains) stand before the front door. In the lobby, earth tones predominate, with wood-paneled walls, French doors along the north wall, and a grand staircase leading to the mezzanine. The floor was recently done in Italian marble.



The Alexander designed by Chas. McKirahan & Associated in 1962, located at 5225 Collins Avenue

<sup>75</sup> "Beach To Get A New Entry," *Miami Herald*, Jan. 25, 1963.

<sup>76</sup> *MiMo: Miami Modern Revealed*, p.136.

Nationally-known developer **Alexander Muss** figures prominently in the story of this area. The Muss family started building housing in New York City in the 1880s; by 1966 it was said that “over 110,000 people live in Muss-built homes and apartments.”<sup>77</sup> In the postwar years, Alexander Muss & Sons both built and managed apartment houses for long-term investment. Muss moved to South Florida after a vacation in 1962, seeing an unmet need for “moderately priced luxury apartments in prime locations.” Seacoast Towers was his first Florida venture, and hiring Robert Turchin was the first time the Muss firm had ever subcontracted a project.<sup>78</sup> By 1969 the Muss firm had built five Seacoast buildings in Miami Beach, as well as a 16-story apartment house in Fort Lauderdale that was also designed by Charles McKirahan.

In Miami Beach, the Muss organization is known and respected for personal family management. The Musses build and stay on for unprecedented personal involvement. The results can be seen at Seacoast Towers East, Seacoast Towers West, Seacoast Towers North, Seacoast Towers South, and the new Seacoast Towers V. Every Muss building has been a smashing success, opening fully rented. These successes can be attributed to the beauty of the buildings, their lavish resort facilities, the plush splendor of hotel-like lobbies and social rooms....Dreaming up creative new ways to make life more luxurious seems to be the keynote at the firm of Alexander Muss & Sons.<sup>79</sup>



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<sup>77</sup> “Muss Builds, Manages Apartment Empire,” *Miami Herald*, March 6, 1966.

<sup>78</sup> “He’s Sold On Miami,” *Miami Herald*, May 5, 1968.

<sup>79</sup> “This Tower Will Tower on Beach,” *Miami Herald*, Nov. 9, 1969

**Carriage Club North, 5005 Collins Avenue**

MacKay & Gibbs, 1964; Robert L. Turchin, contractor

With 14 stories and 308 units, this mammoth apartment house cost \$3 million. First known as “The Seasons,” it was joined by “Seasons South” next door in 1967 (see below). Not to be confused with the Carriage House, built in 1967 at 5401 Collins Avenue. It has a large, rectilinear porte-cochere with plain round pillars. Red quarry tile on the front steps and lobby floor appears to be the only original feature.

The big-city proportions of the Carriage Club are a far cry from the quaint beachfront Surfcomber and Seacomber hotels on Collins between Seventeenth and Eighteenth Streets, designed by the same firm in 1948. The great length and height of the Carriage Club facade, set parallel and close to the avenue, recall the monumentality of residential buildings of New York’s Upper West Side.<sup>80</sup>



Carriage Club North designed by MacKay & Gibbs in 1964 and, located at 5005 Collins Avenue

Next came two more of Alexander Muss’ projects, both designed by Morris Lapidus and built by Robert L. Turchin:



<sup>80</sup> MiMo: Miami Modern Revealed, p.134.

**Seacoast Towers South (now Seacoast Suites), 5101 Collins Avenue**

Built on 2½ vacant lots in 1964 (completed 1965), this is a T-shaped building with 238 units in its 14 stories. The west façade has vertical rows of projecting balconies; the rectilinear porte-cochere has a pre-cast cornice repeated on the building parapet. Floor and walls at the entrance are faced in yellow- and blue-veined marble. A planter bin remains to the right of the door, but one to the left has been altered for an ADA ramp. The lobby is a symphony of black and white marble, in floor patterning, pillars, and a fountain centerpiece beneath a cove ceiling.



Seacoast Suites, Lobby.



Seacoast Suites, left, designed by Morris Lapidus in 1963, located at 5101 Collins Avenue





Seacoast Suites, views of Collins Avenue (top) from the beach (bottom)

## **Seacoast Towers East, 5151-5161 Collins Avenue**

Built in 1966 by Alexander Muss, on the site of the former Walter Briggs estate, this was the fifth Morris Lapidus designed building to be constructed in the proposed historic district. Seventeen stories tall, it had 444 units, ranging in size from studios to 1, 2, and 3 bedroom units, and cost \$13 million to construct. Lapidus compared its unusual shape to a cloverleaf. It was the first time in the twelve years since the completion of the Fontainebleau that Lapidus had employed the use of sweeping curves into his architecture on this stretch of Collins Avenue. More than any of his other structures represented in the proposed historic district, Seacoast Towers East shares much of the architectural drama of the Fontainebleau. From its four grand rotundas to its capacious multi-level sun-drenched lobby, wedge-shaped ballroom, and vast landscaped oceanfront pool deck, Seacoast Tower East redefined grand oceanfront apartment building architecture and ushered in a new level of leisurely tropical lifestyle and amenity for its residents.

At Seacoast East a large lot allowed Lapidus to employ a sprawling X-shaped plan. Lapidus' adept use of concrete for sculptural effect is evident in the flowing lines of the continuous masonry balconies at the juncture of the four wings and at their boldly bull-nosed ends. The southeast wing is shorter than the other three to allow sufficient sunlight onto the pool area.<sup>81</sup>

*Alexander Muss's subsequent two projects, Seacoast Towers West at 5600 Collins Avenue, and Seacoast Towers V at 5700 Collins Avenue, are outside the proposed historic district.*



Seacoast Towers East, Lobby.

<sup>81</sup> Miami Architecture Discussion Draft, #mb63.



ARCHITECT'S RENDERING of Seacoast Towers East, Alexander Muss & Sons' newest luxury apartment building on Miami Beach. Designed by famed architect Morris Lapidus and now under construction, the apartments will open in October 1966, with 444 units. It is the third Seacoast Towers ocean-front apartment building on Collins Avenue.

## Seacoast Towers East A Lapidus Masterpiece



*Miami Herald, January 25, 1966, Florida Room,  
Miami Public Library.*



Seacoast Towers East designed by Morris Lapidus in 1965 located at 5151-5161 Collins Avenue

## **Carriage Club South, 5001 Collins Avenue**

Originally called the Seasons South, an adjunct to The Seasons next door, this 16-story apartment house was designed by Gibbs & Wang and completed in 1968. Its most notorious resident was retired racketeer Meyer Lansky, who moved here in 1969.<sup>82</sup> The *Miami Herald* advertised:

New luxury awaits you at the Seasons South, an inspired apartment resort complex....138 one- and two-bedroom apartments and luxurious penthouse suites, all waterview, all with terraces, furnished or unfurnished.<sup>83</sup>

Vertical rows of balconies originally had pre-cast concrete rails, now replaced with blue glass. A rectilinear porte-cochere is supported by five round pillars; beneath it, a subterranean garage entry opens to the street. The main entrance and lobby are awash in white marble: floors, pillars, walls, planter boxes; lit by crystal chandeliers and wall sconces.



Carriage Club South designed by Gibbs & Wang in 1967, located at 5001 Collins Avenue

<sup>82</sup> *MiMo: Miami Modern Revealed*, p.135.

<sup>83</sup> *Miami Herald*, Sept. 1, 1968.

In subsequent years were built the following Non-contributing buildings:

Capobella, 5025 Collins Avenue (Ernest M. Mandel, 1992)

Blue Diamond, Green Diamond, and Clubhouse, 4779-4795 Collins Avenue (Robert Swedroe, 1999)

Fontainebleau II and III, 4441 Collins Avenue (Nichols Brosch, 2002, 2005)

Eden Roc – South Tower, 4525 Collins Avenue (Nichols Brosch, 2007)

Grand Beach Hotel, 4835 Collins Ave. (north of Doral Beach Hotel ) (Stewart Cohen, 2007)



Capobella, constructed 1992  
5025 Collins Avenue



Fontainebleau II, constructed 2002  
4441 Collins Avenue



Eden Roc South Tower, constructed 2007  
4525 Collins Avenue



Grand Beach Hotel, under construction  
4835 Collins Avenue



Blue and Green Diamond, built in 1995, located at 4775-4779 Collins Avenue, stands on the site of the demolished Montmartre Hotel (below)



Postcard of Melvin Grossman's Montmartre Hotel, 1958. Courtesy of Larry Wiggins.

## XII. Architects Biographies

### **Morris Lapidus (1902- 2001)**

Emigrating from Russia to New York as a child, Lapidus graduated from Columbia University and started his career in New York in retail design. His storefronts were masterpieces of consumer psychology, with inventive shapes, curvilinear forms, and receding show windows to draw shoppers in.

He first came to Miami Beach in 1929 on his honeymoon. After World War II, he returned here to pursue his ambition to design hotels, trading salesmanship for showmanship. His first major project here was to design the interior of the Sans Souci Hotel (3101 Collins Avenue) for fellow New Yorker Ben Novack and his partners, Harry Mufson and Harry Toffel. This was followed by more interior work on the Algiers, Nautilus, DiLido, and Biltmore Terrace Hotels; but in 1954, as rezoning was underway, Novack again hired Lapidus to design an entire hotel project on the site of the Firestone estate. Their relationship was stormy:



Morris Lapidus designed Crystal House.

Upon hearing that Novack had publicly announced that the interior design of the Fontainebleau would be French Provincial, Lapidus considered resigning. 'I had devoted my entire career to modern architecture, twentieth-century architecture,' he complained. 'Now to go back to corny traditional? This was a disaster.' He mulled his options and decided compromise was best for all....Instead of traditional French Provincial columns, he created oval columns; he created a feeling of luxury by using marble trimmed with thin rods of gold metal. Out of his creativity emerged Miami Beach's most favored, most adored, most panned, most reviled hotel.<sup>84</sup>

In the following year, Novack's partner Harry Mufson hired Lapidus to design the Eden Roc Hotel next door to the Fontainebleau, resulting in legendary turmoil but also another landmark hotel design. Even before it opened, Lapidus won his third hotel commission, to design the Americana Hotel in Bal Harbour for the Tisch brothers.<sup>85</sup> This magnificent structure was severely altered over the years and was demolished in 2008. Lapidus' next major project was the conversion of Lincoln Road to pedestrian mall in 1960. Shortly after that he began the Seacoast Towers buildings for Alexander Muss. Elsewhere, Lapidus designed the Americana (now Summit) Hotel in New York City, resort hotels throughout the Caribbean, and finally the Daniel Tower Hotel in Israel.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Howard Kleinberg, *Miami Beach: A History*; Centennial Press, Miami, 1994, p. 163.

<sup>85</sup> Kleinberg, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

<sup>86</sup> Deborah Desilets, *Morris Lapidus*; Assouline, 2004, p.11.

Lapidus eventually became one of Miami Beach's most beloved architects. His approach to design can best be summed up in the titles of two of his books: The Architecture of Joy and Too Much Is Never Enough. In 1970, Polly Redford prophetically wrote:

After the Fontainebleau, Lapidus pretty well took over Beach architecture, adding to the half-dozen hotels he'd already doctored by doing the Eden Roc and the Americana.... Morris Lapidus Associates now has some twenty-five architects and draftsmen working on apartment houses and condominiums throughout the Beach and South Florida; the firm is also responsible for eye-catchers like the Crystal House on Collins Avenue and the Americana Hotel in New York. Forty years from now this will be known as the Lapidus era.<sup>87</sup>

**Melvin Grossman** (d. 2003), an associate with Albert Anis in 1950, was also a protégé of master MiMo architect Morris Lapidus. In fact, all three collaborated on the Nautilus Hotel (now the Riande, 1825 Collins Ave.) in 1950<sup>88</sup> and a year later on the Biltmore Terrace Hotel (8701 Collins Avenue).<sup>89</sup> Grossman and Lapidus partnered in designing the DiLido Hotel (One Lincoln Road) in 1953.

According to MiMo authorities Nash and Robinson, Grossman began as an engineer working for Lapidus and then, after turning down an offer to become partners, struck out on his own to become Lapidus' biggest imitator.<sup>90</sup>



Doral Beach Hotel with its slender piers of precast quartz stone

Influenced by both Anis and Lapidus, Grossman would go on to design the Seville Hotel (2901 Collins Avenue) in 1955, the 593-room Deauville (6701 Collins Avenue) in 1957, and the Doral Beach Hotel (4833 Collins Avenue) in 1962. He also exported the MiMo style in designing the original Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas and the Acapulco Princess Hotel in Mexico.<sup>91</sup>

### **MacKay & Gibbs:**

Frederick Alton Gibbs was born in Miami in 1910 and studied at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh. He returned to Miami and worked in association with Henry Hohausser, 1934-41.<sup>92</sup>

Edward A. MacKay was born in Flint, Michigan in 1908 and graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1934.<sup>93</sup> The two formed a partnership in 1946, with an office at 927 41st Street in Miami Beach. Between 1947 and 1965, MacKay & Gibbs designed many fine buildings in the Postwar Modern style in Miami Beach, including:<sup>94</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Polly Redford, Billion Dollar Sandbar; E.P.Dutton, New York, 1970, p. 241.

<sup>88</sup> M. Lapidus, Too Much Is Never Enough; Rizzoli, 1996, p.150; also "Hotel Roosevelt Plans Gala Birthday Opening," *Miami Herald*, Nov. 19, 1950

<sup>89</sup> Building Permit Card #27133 and Plans #37045, Miami Beach Building Department.

<sup>90</sup> Nash and Robinson, op. cit., p.73.

<sup>91</sup> Obituary, *Miami Herald*, November 12, 2003, p.4B.

<sup>92</sup> Application for AIA membership, "Gibbs, Frederick A.." AIA, Coral Gables, Fla.

<sup>93</sup> Application for AIA membership, "MacKay, Edw. A." AIA, Coral Gables, Fla.

<sup>94</sup> City of Miami Beach Bldg. Dept. records



Sherbrooke Apts.	901 Collins Ave.
Amberlee Apts.	1520 Euclid Ave.
Surfcomber Hotel	1717 Collins Ave.
Hotel del Caribe	1725 Collins Ave.
Seacomber Hotel	1737 Collins Ave.
Tradewinds Apts.	2315-35 Pinetree Dr.
Carriage Club North	5005 Collins Ave.
Carol Lee Apts.	7610-20 Harding Ave.

In the late 1960s the firm of **Gibbs & Wang** designed several larger apartment buildings, such as:<sup>95</sup>

Carriage Club South	5001 Collins Ave.
Seacoast Towers West	5700 Collins Ave.
Byron Hall	6900 Abbott Ave.

**A. Herbert Mathes** (1912-1977) graduated from New York University in 1937 and came to Miami Beach in 1944. Previously he had designed stores for the National Shoe Company, shoe exhibits at the 1939 New York World's Fair, packing plants in Kansas, film labs for 20th Century Fox, and Forest Park Gardens in Rye, New York. During World War II he designed ships for the U.S. Navy.<sup>96</sup> In Miami Beach he designed a number of commercial, residential and municipal buildings, including:

Golden Gate Apartments	2395 Flamingo Drive
Parisian Hotel	1510 Collins Avenue
Geneva Hotel	1520 Collins Avenue
Continental Hotel	4000 Collins Avenue
Allison Hotel	6261 Collins Avenue
Miami Beach Public Library	2100 Collins Avenue (demolished)
Revere Hotel	1100 Ocean Drive (demolished)

In the proposed Historic District, Mathes designed the north addition to the Fontainebleau, popularly known as the "spite wall," in 1958.

### **Charles Foster McKirahan**

Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1919, McKirahan first studied at Oklahoma State University. During



The Alexander designed by Charles McKirahan, with coffered detail at Collins Avenue façade.

World War II he served for three years as a captain with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Australia, Hawaii, Guam, Japan, and the South Pacific, an experience that strongly influenced his later work. He completed a B.S. degree in architecture from the University of Illinois in 1947. He moved to Fort Lauderdale that same year, forming the partnership of Wilmer & McKirahan in 1951 and his own practice in 1953. One of his firm's first projects was the Polynesian-themed Mai Kai Restaurant, which is still intact and operating on US 1 north of Oakland Park.

<sup>95</sup> ibid.

<sup>96</sup> "Portraits and Projects of Architects," *Florida Sun*, May 21, 1951.

As Broward County was growing in the Postwar years, the prominent Coral Ridge Properties development firm hired McKirahan to design hundreds of homes and apartments, including Coral Cove, Bay Club, Sunrise Bay Club, Maybury Mansions, Coral Ridge Towers (North and East), Royal Admiral Condominium, and Ocean Manors Hotel, as well as the Coral Ridge Country Club and Yacht Club.

Elsewhere in Fort Lauderdale he designed the Point of America Condominium, Everglades House, Sky Harbour East, Lago Mar Apartments, Marina Motor Inn, Ireland's Inn, the original Yankee Trader Hotel, Birch Tower, Birch House, Sea Chateau Motel, and Manhattan Tower. In Dade County his work included the Castaways Hotel (also with a Far Eastern theme), the Seaquarium dome, Point View Co-op, Island House on Key Biscayne. His contribution to the proposed historic district is the original Seacoast Towers (now the Alexander), designed in 1962 for Alexander Muss.

In the Bahamas, McKirahan designed the Nassau Beach Lodge, Nassau Yacht Harbour Marina Hotel, Cotton Bay Club Beach House, and residences for actor Raymond Burr and artist Alexander Calder. He is also known to have worked in Ecuador, Honduras, Dominican Republic, and Brazil.

Sadly, this prolific and gifted architect was killed in an auto accident in West Palm Beach in 1964, at age 44. A colleague from Coral Ridge Properties has recently commented, "Chuck's genius was his ability to design with flair at a time with very tight budgets."

## **B. Robert Swartburg**

Born in New York in 1895, Swartburg "started to work in an architect's office when he was nine."<sup>97</sup> He was educated at Columbia University, at the American Academy in Rome, and at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. He worked in Florida briefly from 1925 to 1927, then returned to New York, but moved to Miami permanently in 1944. He worked here until his retirement in 1972, when he merged his firm with Grove-Haack & Associates and served as a consultant.<sup>98</sup> He died three years later at age 80. In his 35-year career he is said to have designed over 1000 buildings.<sup>99</sup>

In New York he is credited with designing Garden Bay Manor, a \$17 million housing project for the Federal Housing Administration. In Miami he designed municipal buildings such as the Miami Civic Center, the Metro Justice Building, and the former Miami Beach Convention Hall, as well as Riviera Junior High School and Ojus Elementary School.

In Miami Beach he is best known for the Delano Hotel at 1685 Collins Avenue, one of the first Postwar hotels to be built on the beach. In the proposed historic district he is represented by the reconstructed façade of the Sorrento Hotel, designed in 1948 at 4391 Collins Avenue, now part of the Fontainebleau Resort; and by the Executive Apartments at 4925 Collins Avenue, built in 1959. . His other hotels include the Vagabond Motel on Biscayne Boulevard and the Santa Anita in Sunny Isles. Mr. Swartburg was also an accomplished artist who painted for pleasure, and executed murals and sculptures to embellish his buildings.

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<sup>97</sup> Obituary, *Miami Herald*, Dec. 8, 1975.

<sup>98</sup> "Two Firms In Merger," *Miami Herald*, Oct. 29, 1972.

<sup>99</sup> "Exhibition Hall Designer Created 1,000 Buildings," *Miami Herald*, Oct. 26, 1958.



Detail of the Crystal House

### *XIII. Planning Department Recommendations*

1. **Criteria for Designation:** The Planning Department finds the proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District to be in compliance with the Criteria for Designation listed in Section 118-592 in the Land Development Regulations of the City Code.
2. **District Boundaries:** On May 12, 2009 the Historic Preservation Board reviewed the preliminary evaluation and recommendation report and adopted the boundaries as recommended by the Planning Department and extended the proposed district northern boundary to include the two (2) City owned lots, containing the surface parking lot, immediately to the south of Fire Station No. 3, (Fire Station No. 3 is not included within the proposed historic district.) for the proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District (see **Map 1**). (Refer to **Section IV, Description of Boundaries**, for more information.)
3. **Areas Subject to Review:** The Planning Department recommends that the areas subject to review shall include all exterior building elevations and public interior spaces, site and landscape features, public open spaces and public rights-of-way, and all vacant or parking lots included within the boundaries of the proposed Morris Lapidus / Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Historic District. Regular maintenance of public utilities, drainage, and mechanical systems, sidewalks, and roadways shall not require a Certificate of Appropriateness.
4. **Review Guidelines:** The Planning Department 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 deemed 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 Sections 118-564(b) and 118-564(c) in the Land Development Regulations of the City Code;
- d. City of Miami Beach Design Guidelines as adopted by the Joint Design Review/Historic Preservation Board on October 12, 1993, amended June 7, 1994, as may be revised from time to time.



Seacoast Suites, left and Crystal House, right.

# Appendix I

## PROPOSED MORRIS LAPIDUS / MID 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY HISTORIC DISTRICT

4441	Collins Avenue	Fontainebleau Hotel	Morris Lapidus	1954	C
		Fontainebleau - north addition	A. Herbert Mathes	1959	C
		Fontainebleau II condominium	Nichols Brosch	2002	NC
		Fontainebleau III <i>(Reconstructed façade of Sorrento Hotel: B. Robert Swartburg, 1948)</i>	Nichols Brosch	2005	NC
4525	"	Eden Roc Hotel	Morris Lapidus	1955	C
		Eden Roc - South Tower	Nichols Brosch	2007	NC
4621	"	Indian Beach Park / Municipal Parking Lot			
4747	"	Mimosa Condominium	Melvin Grossman	1962	C
4775-4779	"	Blue & Green Diamond	Robert Swedroe	1995	NC
4835	"	Miami Beach Resort & Spa (Doral Beach)	Melvin Grossman	1962	C
		Grand Beach Hotel	Stuart Cohen	(under constr.)	NC
4925	"	The Executive	B. Robert Swartburg	1959	C
5001	"	Carriage Club South (Seasons South)	Gibbs & Wang	1967	C
5005	"	Carriage Club North (Seasons)	MacKay & Gibbs	1964	C
5025	"	Capobella	Ernest M. Mandel	1992	NC
5055	"	Crystal House	Morris Lapidus	1960	C
5101	"	Seacoast Suites (Seacoast Towers So.)	Morris Lapidus & Assoc.	1963	C
5151-5161	"	Seacoast Towers East	Morris Lapidus	1965	C
5225	"	The Alexander (Seacoast Towers)	Chas. McKirahan & Assoc.	1962	C
5255	"	Imperial House	Melvin Grossman	1961	C
	Lots 23-24 (5300 Block)	Beach View Park / Municipal Parking Lot			