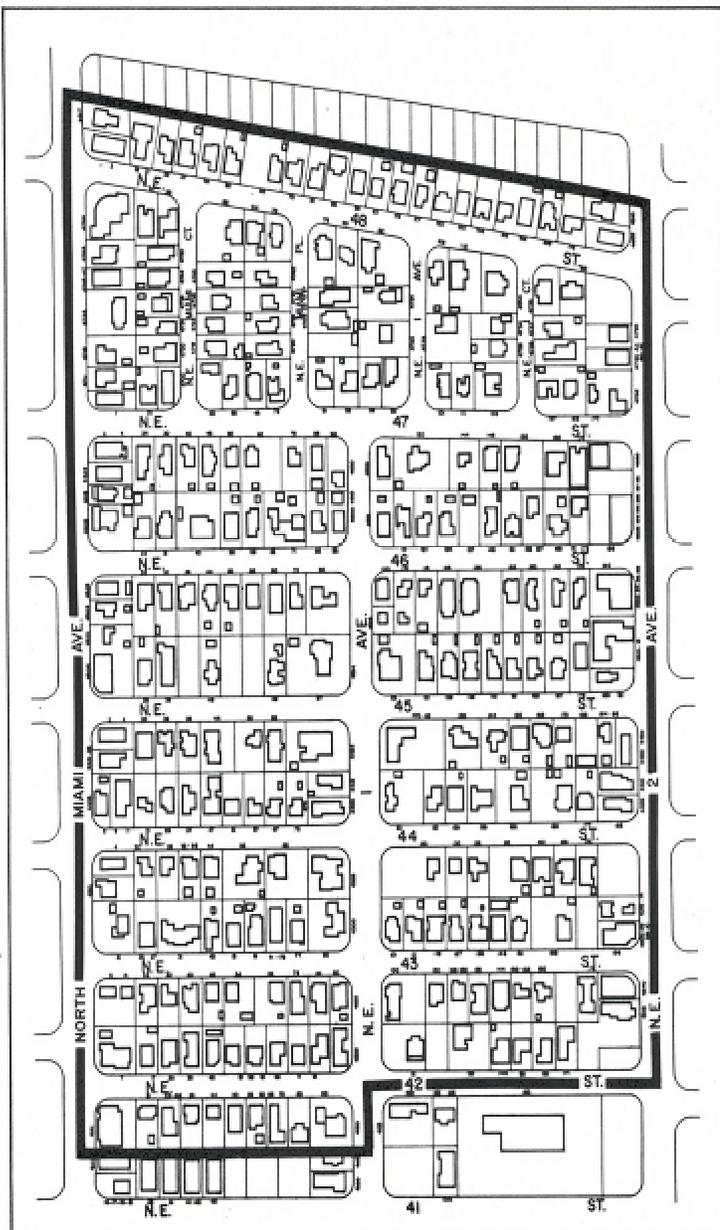

BUENA VISTA EAST HISTORIC DISTRICT

Designation Report



City of Miami

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI
PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT
TO THE HISTORIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF
BUENA VISTA EAST HISTORIC DISTRICT
AS A HERITAGE CONSERVATION ZONING DISTRICT

Prepared by Caridad Sala 07/01/87
Historic Preservation Date
Consultant

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Historic Preservation Date
Planner

Accepted by Arthur King
Chairman, Heritage
Conservation Board

Designated by the Miami City Commission
Ordinance No. 10213
Date 01/22/87

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Historic Name:

Biltmore and Shadowlawn

Current Name:

Buena Vista East Historic District

Location:

The area generally bounded by the rear lot line between N.E. 48th Street and N. E. 49th Street on the north; N.E. 2nd Avenue on the east; N. Miami Avenue on the west; and N.E. 42nd Street and the rear lot lines between 41st Street and N.E. 42nd Street on the south (see attached map).

Present Owner:

Multiple Owners – complete list of owners is available in the Planning Department.

Present Use:

Residential, commercial

Present Zoning District:

RG-1/3, RG-2/4, RS-2/2, CR-2/7

HC Zoning Overlay District:

HC-1

Boundary Description of HC Zoning District:

A portion of Section 24 Township 53 South Range 41 East of Dade County, Florida, more particularly described as follows: Commence at the intersection of the centerline of N.E. 42nd Street (Greenridge Boulevard) with the centerline of N.E. 2nd Avenue (Biscayne Drive) as shown on the plat of BILTMORE, as recorded in Plat Book 6 at Page 67 shof the Public Records of Dade County, Florida; thence westerly along said centerline of N.E. 42nd Street to its intersection with the centerline of N.E. 1st Avenue (Moore Parkway) as shown on the said plat of BILTMORE; thence southerly along said centerline of N.E. 1st Avenue to its intersection with a line extended easterly from the southeasterly corner of Lot 1 of Block 8 as shown on the said plat of BILTMORE; thence westerly along the southerly lot lines of Lots 1 through 10 inclusive and Lot 12 of Block 8 as shown on the said plat of BILTMORE to its intersection with the centerline of N. Miami Avenue (Avenue

D) as shown on the said plat of BILTMORE; thence northerly along said centerline of N. Miami Avenue as shown on the said plat of BILTMORE and on the plat of SHADOWLAWN, as recorded in Plat Book 6 at Page 47 of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida, to the northerly boundary of said plat of SHADOWLAWN; thence southeasterly along the northerly boundary of said plat of SHADOWLAWN to its intersection with the centerline of N.E. 2nd Avenue (Biscayne Drive) as shown on said plat; thence southerly along said centerline of N.E. 2nd Avenue as shown on the said plats of SAHDOWLAWN and BILTMORE to the Point of Beginning. All in Miami, Dade County, Florida.

This area includes all of the plat of:

SHADOWLAWN 6-47

Blocks 1 through 6 inclusive and Lots 1 through 12 inclusive of Block 8 of BILTMORE 6-67.

HC Zoning Classification:

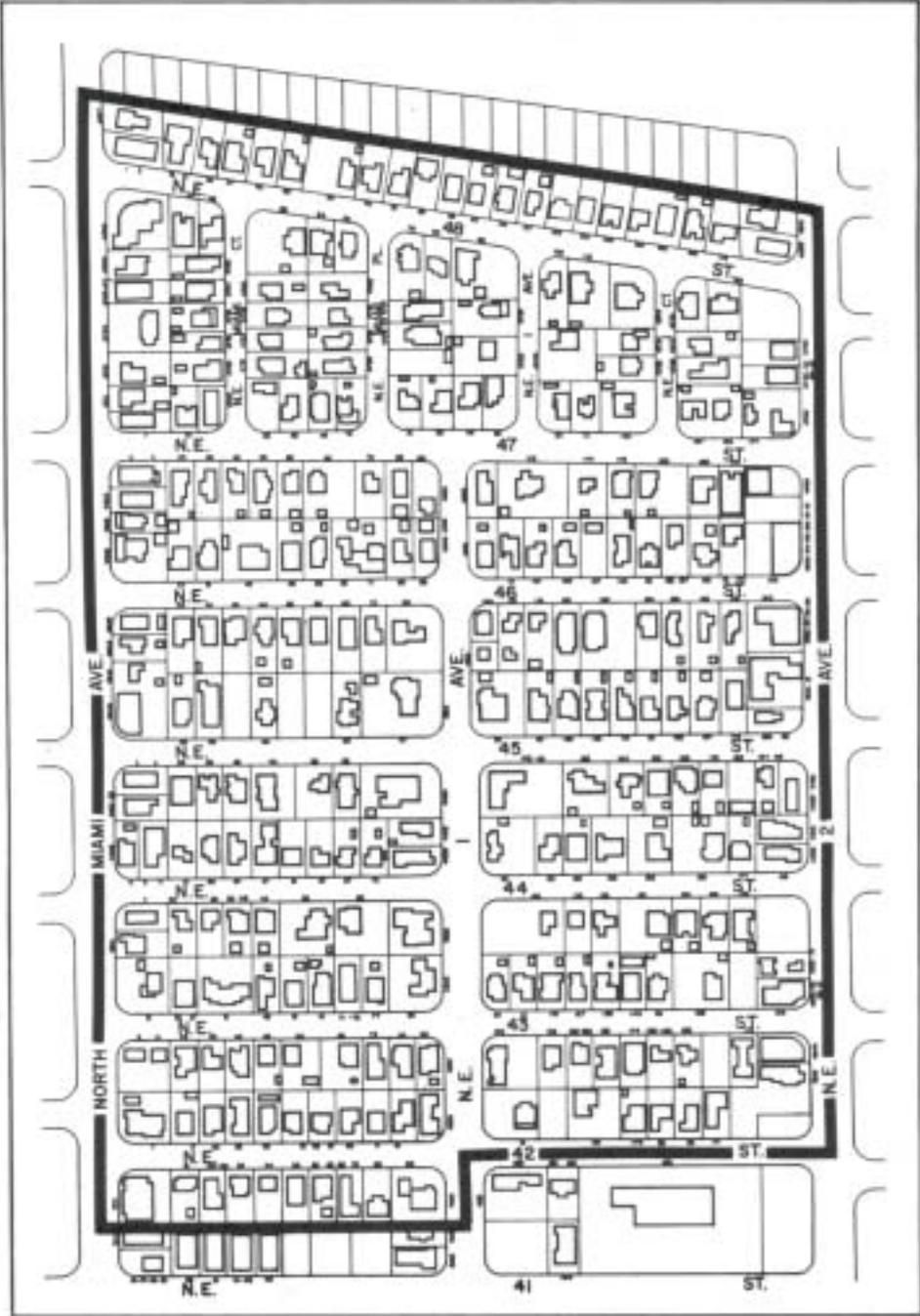
Historic District

BUENA VISTA EAST HISTORIC DISTRICT



location

BUENA VISTA EAST HISTORIC DISTRICT



Site plan

BUENA VISTA EAST HISTORIC DISTRICT



Shadowlawn Subdivision Plat - 1920

BUENA VISTA EAST HISTORIC DISTRICT



Biltmore Subdivision Plat - 1920

II. SIGNIFICANCE

Statement of Significance:

The Buena Vista East Historic District is significant to the historical, architectural, and cultural development of Miami and Dade County. The Buena Vista East Historic District was developed during the Boom era of the 1920s to provide homes for the tremendous influx of "cracker" migrants who came to Miami from Georgia, the Carolinas, and points further north. The area, however, soon became the mecca of businessmen who traded in the nearby commercial establishments on N.E. 40th Street and built homes to match their rising social status. Their houses reflect the eclecticism that dominated American residential architecture in the early twentieth century and include fine examples of Mediterranean Revival, Mission, Pueblo, Bungalow, Art Deco, and vernacular style buildings.

Relationship to Criteria for Designation:

Buena Vista, Lemon City, and Little River were founded before the turn of the nineteenth century and represent some of the earliest settlements in the history of Dade County. The area known as Buena Vista was once a small village adjoining, but not within the corporate limits of, Miami proper. Although preceded in age by pioneer Lemon City, a town located a little further north, the small village of Buena Vista dates its birth, development, and growth along with Miami's. The founding of Buena Vista dates back to the days when the immense rock ridge extending between the Atlantic Ocean and the Florida Everglades was covered by a dense pine forest. The earliest history of the village is recorded in a survey made by government surveyors, and the locations of the land tracts are to this date still founded on this early document.

The land which became Buena Vista was originally part of the homesteads of William Gleason and E.L. White. Gleason, a prominent and somewhat notorious figure in early Dade County politics, arrived in Miami after the Civil War was elected Lieutenant Governor of Florida, a post from which he was soon ousted. Although very influential, he did not enjoy much popularity, and was often referred to as the ultimate "carpetbagger" during those trying reconstruction times. He left the area in 1876 but retained his homestead for several years, eventually turning it over to his son.

E.L. White and his family moved to Dade County from Georgia, via Quincy, Florida. As early as 1892, he homesteaded the area from N.E. 41st Street to N.E. 54th Street between N.W. 2nd Avenue and N.E. 2nd Avenue. This was the area from which the Biltmore and Shadowlawn Subdivisions, which comprise the Buena Vista East Historic District, were carved in the early 1920s. E.L. White was as prominent as his well-known and respected father, the Honorable Judge Pleasant Woodson White, and it is said that Julia Tuttle, the so-called "mother of Miami," once grew pineapples on his plantation.

The arrival of the railroad in 1896 marked the end of an era for the pioneer bayfront village of Lemon City, which had enjoyed tremendous importance to the Miami area by virtue of its docks. Now the train brought much needed supplies to the rest of Dade County, and lured people away from the bayfront community to Miami and its outlying areas. The Lemon City depot, built in 1896, drew business further west away from the bay, and the small village of Buena Vista gradually developed. One of the earliest subdivisions in the Buena Vista areas was the Buena Vista Biscayne Badger Club Subdivision, which was developed in 1910 as a bayfront community with a private water plant, streets, and a park with recreation dock on the bay. However, it was inland where the village took shape. By 1910, suburban Buena Vista could boast of one hotel known as the Courley House, its very own railroad depot on the Florida East Coast Railway line, a small post office building, tropical fruit groves, a fruit-packing house, a grocery store, and one religious institution, the Holy Cross Episcopal Church.

The community prospered, and on March 24, 1910, a group of public spirited Buena Vistans met and organized as the Buena Vista Improvement Association. This group made notable improvements, including the acquisition of a plot for a park, the building of a public dock, and the erection of an elaborate archway for the formal opening in 1915 of the then new Dixie Highway, the first continuous highway from the North to Miami. On the momentous day, the gala procession of Dixie Highway officials and the motorcade headed by Carl Fisher arrived and were greeted at the arched entrance by Miami Mayor John Watson and cheering residents of Buena Vista.

Other prominent citizens acquired land in Buena Vista. Among them was the millionaire, Charles Deering, who purchased a large tract of bayfront land east of the railroad. This land is where the exclusive Baypoint subdivision is now located. Much of the area fronting the bay was naturally wooded, and here Deering created an arboretum and sanctuary for birds and animals. There were no public roadways in the area east of the railroad, and since Deering strongly opposed the opening of such streets, the area was preserved in its pristine, virgin state for many years.

It was in this climate – half expansion and half preservation of the natural environment of marsh lands and mangroves – that the Buena Vista subdivisions were developed. As the population of Miami grew between the late 1910s through the Boom era of the early 1920s, new areas reached northward along the old Dixie Highway (N.E. 2nd Avenue) and Avenue D (N. Miami Avenue), which was extended northward from N.E. 36th Street. The northern city limit of Miami was moved to N.E. 38th Street, and this took in a part of Buena Vista. Finally, on August 4, 1924, the new town of Buena Vista was incorporated and, together with the other incorporated areas of Coconut Grove and Silver Bluff, was annexed to the City of Miami the following year.

The Buena Vista East Historic District is comprised of two early subdivisions in the northeast Miami, Biltmore and Shadowlawn, both of which were originally part of

the E.L. White homestead. Biltmore was subdivided in 1920 by T.V. Moore and his wife Mary, and by Z.T. Merritt and his wife Polly. Shadowlawn was subdivided in 1920 by David P. Davis and his wife Margorie.

T.V. Moore was a prominent Buena Vista citizen who came from Indian River and developed pioneer plantings in the area. His pineapple plantation rivaled those commercial fruit groves started by the English and French settlers and other early homesteaders in Coconut Grove and Cutler. Moore was called "The Pineapple King of Florida," until his plantation became too valuable for fruit growing and was turned into a "sixty-two million dollar development of twenty-five hundred acres known as Miami Shores." Moore also founded the Moore Furniture Store, a pioneer institution located on N.E. 40th Street, and he lived in an outstanding Mediterranean Revival mansion located at 4515 Moore Parkway (N.E. 1st Avenue), the main avenue traversing the Biltmore Subdivision. His daughter, Pauline Moore Fazell, lived at 4424 N.E. 1st Avenue.

Z.T. Merritt, who came to South Florida via Kentucky and Indiana, became superintendent of Dade County schools. His Sister, Ada Merritt was a famous Lemon City educator, and together they left a lasting impression in the field of education in Dade County.

David P. Davis worked for United Realty Company, but was also the president of D.P. Davis, Inc. his own real estate firm.

One of the first real estate brokers to operate in Buena Vista was Dr. Charles Montgomery, who came to this section to establish a grove and then started doing business in the old village. A.D.H. Fossey arrived at about the same time. Fossy, who had one of the largest real estate businesses in the north part of the city, became president of the Co-Operating Sales association, a branch organization formed in the Miami Realty Board.

Buena Vista pioneer Josiah Chaille, a Miami councilman in 1920, devised the present quartered street-numbering system that was adopted and put into effect in 1921. This system carries over the entire north-south length and most of the breadth of Dade County. It includes important municipalities in Greater Miami, starting from the intersection of Flagler Street and Miami Avenue. On recommendation of the Miami Memorial Committee of which Mr. Chaille was a member, the street intersection was named "Josiah F. Chaille Memorial Center."

The Buena Vista East Historic District was developed between 1920 and 1923 primarily to accommodate the growing population of Miami as well as to provide homes for the tremendous "cracker" influx of migrants who came down from Georgia, the Carolinas, and points further north. The area, however, soon became the mecca of businessmen who traded in the nearby Biltmore commercial establishments and built homes to match their rising social status. An article in the Miami Weekly Metropolis in 1922 extolled the merits of Biltmore as "the fastest growing community adjacent to Miami... and Buena Vista as the future

business center of Miami.” A promotional advertisement placed in the same newspaper in 1922 by the developer, D.P. Davis, boasts of homes and business buildings constructed in eighteen months totaling \$590,000 in volume, a sum unheard of at the time.

Although the subdivisions could not match the amenities offered in the exclusive residential communities that were being developed along the bay, the area nonetheless offered finished homesites along paved and curbed streets planed with flowering trees, foliage, and shrubbery. An article entitled “Pretty Buena Vista,” published in the Miami Herald on April 19, 1925, described Buena Vista as the prettiest and fastest developing section north of Miami. The same article stated:

The more rapid growth of Buena Vista dates from the time of the building of the railway yards and shops adjacent to the town, which was around ten years ago, but the rapid advance in volume did not start until the territory between in it and Miami became settled up. For a number of years past values in the limits of Buena Vista have advanced by a geometrical ration, each year the values practically doubling over the values the year previous.

There has been some confusion caused on account of the incorporation of a new town of Buena Vista a year ago. This new town should not be confused the old Buena Vista which has become a part of the cit of Miami and the new corporation is formed from subdivisions adjoining the old town on the north.

The newest development plans within the limits of old Buena Vista, which means the establishing of new business centers in that section of the city have started real estate prices on another big advance, which some of her citizens believe will be the greatest in her history.

Architectural Significance:

The Buena Vista East Historic District reflects the diversity of architectural design and taste in America during the 1920s, the Depression era, and the early 1930s. It abounds in fine examples of Mediterranean Revival, Mission, Pueblo, Bungalow, masonry Vernacular, and Art Deco style buildings.

Although a great period of activity occurred before World War II, the area’s major period of architectural significance lies between 1922 and 1929 when two thirds of the contributing buildings were erected.

Many of the houses constructed in the Buena Vista East Historic District reflect the eclecticism that dominated the style of American buildings in the early twentieth century. The earlier houses in the district are predominantly Mediterranean Revival or Mission style, while structures built in the 1930s and 1940s are either

Masonry Vernacular or Art Deco. Outstanding examples of each of these styles are found here.

A variety of local materials, such as keystone, oolitic limestone, and decorative blocks are utilized in many buildings to denote tropical motifs. Especially prevalent are wrought iron screen doors and precast or molded concrete forms depicting palm trees, flamingos, and pelicans. In addition, stucco coats of arms or medallions are often used in Mission style buildings, while concrete urns and decorative garlands are used to adorn the more sumptuous Mediterranean Revival dwellings.

Also notable in a few houses are Frank Lloyd Wright's reknowned "eyebrow shutters," here made out of the impregnable Dade County pine which is termite resistant.

A wealth of architectural features distinguishes the many styles that are represented in the district. Large, two-story Mission style buildings and simpler, one-story Pueblo style houses predominate in the area. These feature curved or pedimented parapets with sloping Mission tiles topping flat surfaces; hand-molded shapes formed with textured stucco; thick walls and buttress-like pilasters; flat roofs with drain pipes or exposed beam ends piercing through; bracketed balconies with wrought iron railings; round-arched openings; and barrel-vaulted chimneys. Variations are common in the shape of arched openings, some of which distinctly depict more fanciful shapes found in Moorish architecture of southern Spain and northern Africa.

Mediterranean Revival style dwellings, generally two stories in height, are also well represented with outstanding examples. These buildings feature arched openings; bracketed cornices or eaves; decorative tiles; elaborate frontispieces or entrances flanked by columns; arcaded garlands of stucco; quoins; and balconies with wrought iron railings. The style is used in large-scale, opulent residences which, in their eclecticism, embrace the gamut of architectural styles from staid Renaissance to flamboyant Mannerist, Baroque, and Rococo.

Several fine examples of Bungalow type dwellings are found throughout the area. This architectural style was one of the most popular middle-class residential styles used around the country in the early twentieth century. Most are one and one-half story modest houses built primarily from mail-order house plans published in California where the style originated. The main features of the style are gable roof with sweeping eaves; open entrance porches; stoops; massive stone-faced pilasters; and porte-cocheres.

A profusion of Masonry Vernacular style houses were built throughout the area's development. Most are devoid of ornamentation and depend on bold and massive surfaces to define their character. A few examples feature a combination of styles, using clay tile, cement block, and limestone to express varied motifs.

Several houses in the district reflect the Art Deco or Depression Moderne or Streamline Moderne styles so typical of Miami and Miami Beach architecture of the 1930s. The buildings features applied and stylized decoration based on nautical or tropical symbols placed around windows and elaborate doorways; cantilevered slabs or “eyebrows” over windows to minimize sun penetration; a contrast of smooth-faced walls with details of terra cotta, metal, colored concrete, glass block, or neon lighting; horizontal massing; banding of windows; racing stripes; portholes; sun decks; and pipe railings.

Although the majority of the buildings in the Buena Vista East Historic District have been altered, the original massing of most houses has remained virtually unchanged. Typical alterations consist of the installation of contemporary windows, doors, roofing, and awnings, or the enclosure of porches and addition of garages or porte cocheres. However, despite these alterations, the integrity of the historic fabric and its character is still preserved.

Today, the Buena Vista East Historic District stands as one of Miami’s most intact historic neighborhoods. This is due, in part, to the fact that the majority of post-war buildings are small, single-family dwellings which are not intrusive but, rather, respect the earlier structures in scale, materials and workmanship. The majority of neighborhood residents recognize the special character of the area and desire its continued preservation.

Relationship to Criteria for Designation:

The Buena Vista East Historic District is eligible for designation under the following criteria:

1. Is associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the past.

Many prominent and influential citizens of early Miami had established homesteads or resided in the land which became known as Buena Vista. Perhaps the best known was T.V. Moore, who came from Indian River and developed pioneer plantings in the area. His pineapple plantation rivaled those commercial fruit groves started by the English and French settlers and other early homesteaders in Coconut Grove and Cutler. Other individuals who settled in the area were important in the fields of politics, local government, education, commerce, community planning, and law.

3. Exemplifies the historical, cultural, political, economic, or social trends of the community.

The Buena Vista East Historic District typifies the type of real estate development prevalent in Miami during the Boom era of the early 1920s. It is also one of the most intact historic neighborhoods of the city.

4. Portrays the environment in an era of history characterized by one or more distinctive architectural styles.

Reflecting the diversity of architectural design and taste during the 1920s and 1930s, the Buena Vista East Historic District abounds in fine examples of Mediterranean Revival, Mission, Pueblo, Bungalow, and Masonry Vernacular style buildings. Also found are a few dwellings featuring stylized Art Deco motifs.

5. Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction.

Architectural features such as arched openings, balconies, twisted columns, bracketed eaves and cornices, volutes, and decorative tiles which distinguish the Mediterranean Revival style are prevalent in the district, while hand-molded shapes, textured stucco finishes, tiled roofs, curved parapets, and barrel-vaulted chimneys characteristic of the Pueblo and Mission styles are equally evident. Stylized and decorative motifs are seen in the represented Art Deco style buildings, while low hipped roofs, sweeping eaves, and porte cocheres with stonefaced pilasters distinguish the Bungalow type residences.

8. By being part of or related to a subdivision, park, environmental feature, or other distinctive area, should be developed or preserved according to a plan based on a historic, cultural or architectural motif.

The Buena Vista East Historic District embodies two representative subdivisions of the early 1920s in Miami. As such, the district's distinctive historic and architectural fabric, so characteristic of this bygone era, should be preserved.

III. DESCRIPTION

The Buena Vista East Historic District remains a well-defined residential area located in northeast Miami between N.E. 2nd Avenue and N. Miami Avenue. Encompassing approximately 100 acres, the District includes 288 buildings, most of which are detached, single-family houses aligned with ample setbacks along tree-lined street, avenues and courts. Landscaped yards, flowering trees, and lush foliage abound, and in the month of June the brilliant red blossoms of the Royal Poinciana trees emblaze the scene in every direction.

The Buena Vista East Historic District is comprised of two early subdivisions, Biltmore and Shadowlawn, which were platted in 1920. Its streets were laid out in a regular gridiron pattern, 50 feet in width. A broad, tree-lined avenue once called Moore Parkway (N.E. 1st Avenue), 70 feet in width including a landscaped island, traverses the Biltmore Subdivision, while narrower courts, 40 feet wide, define the smaller Shadowlawn blocks. With only one exception, Shadow Drive (N.E. 47th Street), all streets were called boulevards, and enticing names like Claremont (N.E. 41st Street), Greenridge (N.E. 42nd Street), Englewood (N.E. 43rd Street), Sweetwater (N.E. 44th Street), Lucerne (N.E. 45th Street), Sweetbrier (N.E. 47th Street), and Bellaire (N.E. 48th Street) were used. In Shadowlawn, Moore Parkway was called Rose Court after traversing Lucerne Boulevard, and other courts were named Fairmont (N. Miami Court), Druid (N. Miami Place), Palmwood (N.E. 1st Avenue), and Flamingo (N.E. 1st Court). Lots were generally 50 feet in width, with a handful of larger lots, 60 feet in width, at some corners.

The majority of houses in the District were constructed between 1922 and 1941, an era representing the area's prime period of development. Approximately 127 dwellings were built during the Boom era (1922-1926), while only about 33 houses were constructed during the Bust and Depression era (1927-1935). Although a great period of activity occurred before World War II, with approximately 94 homes built between 1936 and 1941, the area's major period of architectural significance lies between 1922 and 1929, when more than two thirds of the contributing buildings were erected. When construction resumed after the War, only a few buildings were constructed.

The neighborhood has retained its distinct character, with the majority of post-war buildings being small, single family residences designed to conform with, rather than detract from, the historic and cohesive architectural fabric. The few intrusions within the district are restricted to small-scale apartment buildings and modest single-family dwellings.

The Buena Vista East Historic District reflects the diverse and eclectic architectural styles prevalent in America in the early twentieth century. These styles include: Mission, Pueblo, Mediterranean Revival, Bungalow, Masonry Vernacular and Art Deco.

IV. PLANNING CONTEXT

Present Trends and Conditions:

The Buena Vista East Historic District is a residential neighborhood of detached single family houses, small apartment buildings, and commercial uses along N. Miami Avenue and N.E. 2nd Avenue. Until the early 1960s, Buena Vista was a stable, predominantly white middle income neighborhood. As a result of desegregation and the construction of I-95, the racial characteristics of the area changed, although the socio economic level of the population remained the same.

During the late 1960s, the first outward manifestations of neighborhood decline began to emerge with a weakening of the housing market, a decline and deferral of structural maintenance and repairs, an increase in absentee ownership, and an increase in the legal and illegal subdivision of single family residences. Recently, the area has been negatively impacted by a large number of low income families, particularly Haitians, who in many instances, due to their extremely poor economic condition, overcrowded the existing housing units. Other problems include a declining image of the area, the unkempt appearance of many streets, and high levels of actual and perceived crime.

In 1978, Buena Vista was included within the City of Miami's Great Neighborhood Program that was aimed at the preservation and improvement of basically sound neighborhoods. The program entails housing rehabilitation assistance, concentrated code enforcement, intensification and upgrading of public services, new infill housing, and the establishment of a strong community organization.

Directly south of the Buena Vista East Historic District is the Miami Design District, which is one of the top interior design centers in the nation. While this area has undergone significant growth, it has had only minimal impact upon the adjacent residential areas.

The Buena Vista East Association is an active neighborhood group that monitors neighborhood activities and lobbies for improvements. As one of its efforts to improve the image of the neighborhood and to increase its stability, the Association requested that Buena Vista East be designated as a historic district.

Conservation Objectives:

Historic district designation should be used as a tool to preserve the character of Buena Vista East, improve the image of the neighborhood, and to create neighborhood pride and a sense of community. The City should continue its revitalization plan to stress rehabilitation of existing housing, promote home ownership, step up code enforcement, improve the delivery level of public

services, emphasize crime prevention, improve the overall condition of streets, and maximize participation of area residents in the revitalization process. All available federal, state, and local resources should be utilized to implement the planning objectives.

The most appropriate HC zoning overlay district for the Buena Vista East Historic District is HC-1. An HC-1 zoning overlay district would maintain existing zoning, requiring only the review of physical changes to the properties.

V. HC ZONING ELEMENTS

Boundaries:

The boundaries of the Buena Vista East Historic District have been drawn to include that portion of the present Buena Vista East neighborhood that contains a predominance of buildings constructed between 1922 and 1941. The boundaries also generally follow the plats of the original Biltmore and Shadowlawn subdivisions, platted in 1920.

Specifically, the rear lot lines between N.E. 48th Street and N.E. 49th Street were selected as the northern boundary because of the historical factors mentioned above and because the area to the north contains few historic buildings. N. Miami to the west and N.E. 2nd Avenue to the east are historic boundaries, as well as physical barriers. An irregular boundary between N.E. 41st Street and N.E. 42nd Street on the south was selected to exclude those non-contributing buildings that are more closely related to the Miami Design District.

Major Exterior Surfaces Subject to Review:

The major exterior surfaces subject to review shall include all facades visible from a public right-of-way.

Major Landscape Features Subject to Review:

The major landscape features subject to review shall include all features which are subject to requirements for tree removal permits, as set forth in Chapter 17 of the City Code.

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