

---

# MiMo/BISCAYNE BOULEVARD HISTORIC DISTRICT

---

## Designation Report



City of Miami

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI  
PRESERVATION OFFICER  
TO THE HISTORIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD  
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF THE  
MiMo/BISCAYNE BOULEVARD HISTORIC DISTRICT  
(FROM NE 50<sup>TH</sup> STREET TO NE 77<sup>TH</sup> STREET)

Prepared by Ellen J. Uguccione for Janus  
Research, Consultants \_\_\_\_\_

Passed and Adopted on \_\_\_\_\_ June 6, 2006 \_\_\_\_\_

Resolution No. \_\_\_\_\_ 2006-59 \_\_\_\_\_

CONTENTS:

I. General Information	3
II. Significance	4
III. Description	11
IV. Planning Context	21
V. Contributing and Non-Contributing Structures	22
VI. Bibliography	28

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Historic Name: Not applicable

Current Name: MiMo/Biscayne Boulevard Historic District/  
(area also known as The Upper East Side)

Location:

Both sides of Biscayne Boulevard from Northeast 50<sup>th</sup> Street, north to  
NE 77<sup>th</sup> Street

Present Owner:

Multiple Owners: Complete list of owners available from the Planning  
Department

Present Zoning District: Mixed: office, residential, commercial

HC Overlay District: HC-1

Tax Folio Numbers: Multiple Numbers, A complete list of tax folio numbers is  
available in the Department of Planning and  
Development

HC Zoning Classification: Historic District



## II. SIGNIFICANCE

### Statement of Significance:

The importance of Biscayne Boulevard cannot be overemphasized as it began and still remains a principal north/south artery through Miami. The buildings constructed along this wide corridor illustrate Miami's changing fortunes; its changing demographics and the resultant change to the character of this principal thoroughfare.

The construction of Biscayne Boulevard from Downtown Miami northward did not begin until 1925. Before that travelers from the north would enter Miami on West Dixie Highway along NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, angling across the FEC Railroad tracks at NE 36<sup>th</sup> Street. The realization of Biscayne Boulevard was the result of millions of dollars of private capital, a stunning demonstration of entrepreneurship during a period when the financial health of Miami was in great jeopardy.

*The abrupt fall of the Miami boom was cushioned in the first part of 1926 by the conception of Biscayne Boulevard. Like the anesthesia which prepares our nerves for the shock of the surgeon's knife, the creation of Biscayne Boulevard kept Miami going during the summer of 1926 despite the discovery that \$50,000 lots no longer could be sold for one-tenth of that amount or that the "summer tourist season" of 1925 was nothing but a delusion.*

--Kenneth Ballinger *Miami Millions* 1936

The men responsible for the construction of Biscayne Boulevard, Hugh Anderson and Roy C. Wright, partners in the Shoreland Company, had made huge investments in the Miami area. In 1924, Anderson purchased a 1,600-acre tract north of Little River to build "America's Mediterranean," the community of Miami Shores. When sales were opened on December 4, 1924, over more than \$2.5 million in real estate was sold. Only ten months later, the Miami Shores Company sold over \$33 million of land. With this capital in hand, the partners prepared to address a critical component in their formula for success—the creation of a boulevard that would serve the residents of Miami Shores by connecting them to Downtown Miami.

During the real estate boom, the building of roadways in Miami simply could not keep up with the frantic pace of development. As a result, traveling conditions were less than ideal. Kenneth Ballinger described it like this:

*Traffic conditions were so bad during April 1925 that motorists and officials alike ran temperatures all day long. Originally adapted to horse and mule*

*vehicles, Miami streets during the early motor age had little bothersome congestions. But suddenly, these streets were filled with vehicles from every other state, including the Bronx, all competing with the home boys to get somewhere in a terrific hurry.*

--Ballinger, *Miami Millions*, 1936

For Anderson and Wright the building of Biscayne Boulevard was a monumental task as its course ran through both improved and unimproved sections of the city, and required millions of dollars to complete. The partners could not begin the project until they acquired a tract of land owned by Charles Deering that encompassed some nine-city blocks starting at NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. On December 5, 1925 the sale was finally completed.

Ten days later, construction began on this impressive roadway that would be 100 feet wide and feature the finest of architectural designs for buildings containing a rich variety of goods and services intended for an upscale clientele. In order to build Biscayne Boulevard the Shoreland Company purchased not only land, but also blocks where buildings already existed. Biscayne Boulevard began at SE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street at the gateway to the gardens of the former Royal Palm Hotel. To accommodate the new boulevard eighty-five buildings were demolished, at least 12 houses were moved to new locations, and several houses were cut in half or had their front porches removed.

Unfortunately the Shoreland Company was unable to complete the work, and in 1926, was bought out by Henry Phipps of the U.S. Steel Corporation. The Phipps family formed the Biscayne Boulevard Company, later known as Bessemer Properties, and completed construction of the Boulevard. They also purchased most of the property fronting on Biscayne Boulevard between NE 13<sup>th</sup> Street and NE 40<sup>th</sup> Street, with the intention of making it the premier shopping area in Miami. Biscayne Boulevard was opened to automobile traffic in March 1927.

The Boulevard extended north until it reached NE 55<sup>th</sup> Street, where it merged to become US Route 1. At the time, US 1 was known as Federal Highway. The highway was still under construction and would eventually be built through to Jacksonville.

The construction of buildings fronting onto Biscayne Boulevard Street did not begin in earnest until the 1940s. For the most part, construction in the northeast was limited to single family residences. Beginning in 1921, a series of plats were filed that did include a few buildings on the boulevard, but they were incidental to the residential subdivisions described in these plats. Those plats included Bay Shore Unit #4, Belle Meade, Baywood and Aqua Marine.

The financial strength of the region was weakened by a series of events that began with the devastating hurricane of September 1926. From then on, the ceaseless real estate sales began to dwindle, finally ending in economic disaster. Building in the Greater Miami area was limited between 1928 and 1934, as the region struggled out of the Depression. In his 1949 book, "*History of Dade County*

*Florida*", Tracey Hollingsworth recounts the turbulent years of Dade County's construction activity. The value of building permits issued for the City of Miami in the two decades that spanned the Boom, Bust, Depression and Post War growth were:

1921:	5.4 million	
1924:	17 million	
1925:	60 million	(The height of the building boom)
1927:	9.9 million	(The end of the boom)
1928:	2.1 million	
1929:	3.9 million	
1930:	2.1 million	
1931:	3.2 million	
1932:	1.67 million	
1934:	2.2 million	
1948:	30 million	

Construction activity along Biscayne Boulevard, north of NE 50<sup>th</sup> Street follows the pattern expressed in these financial statistics. There are very few buildings that date from the 1920s (as the focus was on residential and not commercial construction), but after 1934 the growth of the Boulevard escalates to culminate in its heyday during the 1950s.

*The war that broke upon the people of the United States late in 1941 ushered in a new era in Florida that was to set off a postwar boom that would transform the economy, push the state far up the list in population rank, and create vast problems arising from rapid growth in every direction.*

--Carlton Tebeau, *A History of Florida*

By the mid-1950s, Americans abandoned the restraint that was a consequence of the Depression and World War II, to begin an era of unprecedented prosperity. Following World War II, America moved to the suburbs in droves, abandoning the inner city. The nation became an automobile culture, possessing a freedom of movement previously denied them. The increase in automobile travel led to the development of tourist courts and motels.

Biscayne Boulevard possesses a wealth of motor courts and motels constructed in the early 1950s. They are representative of a class of buildings that once dominated the streets of Miami.



## "The Motel Capital of Miami"

Because Biscayne Boulevard was also a part of U.S. Highway 1, the north-south artery leading from Key West to Maine, it guaranteed the Boulevard's strategic location as a place for motels catering to the automobile-borne tourist.

*The project (the construction of Biscayne Boulevard) is regarded as a striking evidence of the increasing influence of the automobile in bringing about the reconstruction of streets and boulevards and to meet the demands of automobile traffic.*

*--The New York Times, October 17, 1926*

In this 1926 article, the *New York Times* reflected on the challenge that more automobiles would bring to cities across the nation. Their concerns were prophetic, foreshadowing the phenomenon of the 1950s, when a new leisure class "hit the road".

The word "motel" is first thought to be associated with the Milestone Mo-tel in San Luis Obispo, California that opened in 1926. The word "motor" combined with "hotel" inferred that these accommodations were designed for the highway traveler. During the early development of the industry, there were also a number of other labels that described these highway respites, and included: motor court, tourist court, motel court, hotel court and cottage court.

The number of motels rapidly increased during the 1930s, and then again in the two decades following World War II. Not surprisingly, the number of motels closely aligned with the number of registered automobiles. In 1956, there were 24 million passenger cars, and by 1958, there were 57 million car registrations. Motel operators across the country promoted themselves with exotic associations that spoke directly to the fantasies of the travelers. Nowhere is this more evident than in Florida. Beth Dunlop, the *Miami Herald's* architecture critic said this about the motels in Miami:

*Once these were the motels of Miami's tourists—the ones who came not for the beach so much as the weather, for Spring Training or to see the Serpentarium or other long gone attractions; they were destinations, the first choice rather than the last stop.*

Motel designs were somewhat restrained by the requirements of economy. Designs had to account for parking spaces for each automobile, and often were organized so that the rooms were together in a linear arrangement under one roof. Often, rooms were arranged around a central motor court where the

swimming pool was also located. Another motel convention appeared that sought to bring not only visibility but also cachet to their establishments. Huge signs carried on vertical poles and often sporting a rainbow of neon tubing competed for attention along the "strips".

The success of a motel was dependent on a series of factors. They included climate, access to highways, and the attractiveness of the surroundings, sufficient parking space, and the proximity to tourist destinations. For each factor, the motels of Biscayne Boulevard excelled.

The buildings of Biscayne Boulevard illustrate a variety of types and styles that spanned decades. Together, they create a vision of Miami in transition and as such, are a remarkable collection that conveys a microcosm of Miami's history.

## Relationship to Criteria for Designation

The Biscayne Boulevard Historic District has significance in the historical and architectural heritage of the City of Miami; possesses integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association; and is eligible for designation under the following criteria:

### ***Criteria #3: Exemplify the historical, cultural, political, economical, or social trends of the community.***

The changing fortunes of Miami are no better illustrated than in that stretch of pavement called Biscayne Boulevard. While its construction began in 1925, the peak year of the Florida real estate boom, over the years the Boulevard would evolve and reflect the tumultuous economy and social trends of both Miami and the nation.

The buildings that remain portray the mixed-use character of the boulevard as it includes private residences, office buildings, retail buildings, and two churches, all of which provided service to the surrounding neighborhoods.

Surprisingly, much of the building stock was constructed during the lean years of the Depression. Following World War II and the burgeoning personal wealth of the nation, the Boulevard would be transformed into a vacation destination with a multitude of fanciful motels that catered to the increasing numbers of tourists.

The evolution of Biscayne Boulevard as it runs its course northward from Miami's downtown, demonstrates the dynamics of a changing economic and social base. In 1926, when the boulevard was first opened to traffic, the region was still anticipating the same meteoric growth that was experienced during the peak of the real estate boom in 1925. During that period, the platting of residential subdivisions on either side of Biscayne Boulevard was of paramount importance.

Following the recovery from the economic collapse of the boom and a national depression, building along Biscayne Boulevard during the thirties and forties was focused on commercial and retail businesses. Some of the commercial buildings also included residential accommodations, resulting in a "mixed-use" character to the boulevard.

It was not until after World War II that the physical character of Biscayne Boulevard exhibited its most dramatic change, as the premier location for tourist hotels. Those motels represent the inestimable importance of private automobiles that opened entirely new realms of opportunities for the traveler.

***Criteria #4: Portray the environment in an era of history characterized by one or more distinctive architectural styles, or period, or method of construction.***

Because the buildings along the boulevard span a thirty-year period during a rapidly changing era of growth, they reflect then current trends in architectural style. The Boulevard possesses fine examples of residential and commercial design that include vernacular, Mediterranean Revival, Art Deco and Miami Modern styles.

***Criteria #5: Embody those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction.***

As America moved from a historicist eclecticism in its building design, so too did Miami with its own version of what is generically called the “Modern” movement. Beginning with the Art Deco designs of the late thirties and forties, architects began to look for a more unique expression and one that related to a sense of place. In Miami the Art Deco designs featured maritime motifs and native flora and fauna in the building ornament.

In the 1950s, the area experienced the greatest change when the personal automobile enabled mobility for the average citizen. In Miami the consequences were enormous, as millions took to the roads in search of exotic destinations. The result was the building of hundreds of motels throughout the state, which evidenced not only new building technologies, but also a spirit and identity. For Miami that identity has been characterized as Miami Modern, or MiMo. Biscayne Boulevard contains a high number of surviving motels from this era that are quintessential reminders of this age and architectural expression.

### III. DESCRIPTION

#### Present and Original Appearance

##### Setting:

The Biscayne Boulevard Historic District includes both sides of Biscayne Boulevard from NE 50<sup>th</sup> Street north to NE 77<sup>th</sup> Street.

##### Description:

Although Biscayne Boulevard is considered a major commercial artery within the City of Miami, there were once a number of single-family residences and apartments that added another dimension to its character. The mixed-use concept of residential close to commercial enterprises was expressed in the original concept for Biscayne Boulevard. The buildings fortunate enough to face this grand thoroughfare were expected to be of a significant scale and design. The period of significance for the Biscayne Boulevard Historic District extends from 1923 through 1965.

##### Residential:

Within the proposed historic district, there are several single-family homes that illustrate the high caliber of their design. The residence at 5801 Biscayne Boulevard, constructed in 1932 possesses a wealth of detail, from the compound arch of the center window facing Biscayne, to its complicated corner entry and intersecting roof slopes (Figure 1). At 6000 Biscayne Boulevard another residence built on a corner, artfully spans the juncture with a one-story entrance porch, opening to the two story wings of the main house.

While in the previous two examples, the single-family character is retained despite their conversion to commercial enterprises, in other cases the conversion has resulted in the loss of the original physical integrity. The residence at 5601 Biscayne Boulevard (445 NE 56<sup>th</sup> Street) built in 1929, was originally a textbook example of an elaborate Mediterranean Revival design. Today, its conversion to an office use has led to the elimination of windows and loss of details.

##### Retail Stores

Biscayne Boulevard was, above all else, a boulevard offering shops and services. The majority of these retail establishments were built between the late 1930s and into the 1940s. The functional requirements for a retail use, (i.e. generous storefronts, multiple entry points and height limited to a single story), usually resulted in simple buildings of rectangular form. The retail buildings along Biscayne Boulevard reflect this simplicity, but usually include some features or details that place it firmly in a particular stylistic era. This is true of the building at 7400 Biscayne Boulevard, built in 1936 (Figure 2). The rounded corners and vertical fluting of the parapet, identify it as an Art Deco design. Another good

example of the treatment of retail space is the building at 6101 Biscayne Boulevard, now a supermarket, constructed in 1945.

### Houses of Worship

There are two churches within the Biscayne Boulevard Historic District. They are the New Mount Pleasant Baptist Church at 7610 Biscayne Boulevard built in 1951 (Figure 3) and the Bayshore Evangelical Lutheran Church at 5051 Biscayne Boulevard constructed in 1946.

### Commercial / Office Buildings

Offices for major corporations appear on Biscayne Boulevard, some of which are architecturally significant and represent changing stylistic trends. The Maule Building, located at 5220 Biscayne Boulevard and built in 1954 is a particularly important example of modern architecture located on the boulevard (Figure 4). The firm of Pancoast, Ferendino, Skeels and Burnham designed it.

Russell Pancoast, a principal of the firm, was the son of Thomas Pancoast, who came to Miami Beach during the teens to become the Vice-President of John Collins' Miami Beach Improvement Company. Pancoast was instrumental in the success of the City of Miami Beach. His son Russell became one of the premier designers of buildings in Miami Beach and founded the architectural firm that added partners throughout its history and later evolved into the Spillis, Candela and Partners architectural firm.

Maule Industries manufactured concrete building materials and chose to showcase the versatility and variety of the material in a building especially designed for them. Scholars of the Miami Modern architectural movement consider the Maule building a fine representative of Minimalist Miami Modern; especially in the way it integrates symbolic and structural elements.

The building is a *tour-de-force* in its combination of heavy and lighter ornamental concrete to achieve its sleekness and striking geometry. There are a total of 374 pre-cast concrete louvers that function as a *brise-soleil*, to block unwanted sunrays. The three-story Maule Building was constructed at a cost of \$275,360.00. ***(Editor's note: This building was recently demolished in February of 2006.)***

Another exceptional building of the modern era is the General Tire Building at 5600 Biscayne Boulevard. Architect Robert Law Weed, who was then with the firm of Weed Russell Johnson Associates, designed the building that was constructed in 1956. Weed was a prodigious architect who in 1930 designed the exceptional Shrine Building/ Boulevard Shops at 1401 Biscayne Boulevard. During the 1940s Weed was one of the principal designers of the University of Miami campus in Coral Gables. Those designs conveyed the influence of the International style and a departure from a historicist tradition. The General Tire Building is clearly a product of the 1950s and is considered an influential and important modern design within the Biscayne Boulevard Historic District.

### Mixed-Use Buildings

Biscayne Boulevard features a considerable number of significant buildings that contain office and/or retail space in combination with residential quarters. The combination reflects the urban living concepts that were expressed from the very beginning of Biscayne Boulevard's construction. Generally, the retail and/or office space was contained on the first floor where storefronts revealed the type or merchandise or service that the establishment offered. The second story of the building was designed as an apartment, often for the proprietor of the store or office below.

The mixed-use building at 7240-46 Biscayne Boulevard was constructed in 1935, and is dramatically sited on a corner. The building curves on the corner, offering a series of storefront bays, and then extends along the street with frontage on both Biscayne Boulevard and NE 73<sup>rd</sup> Street. The building's geometry, along with the horizontal score lines that extend across the façade characterize the building's Art Deco style (Figure 5.) In a similar, but much larger scale mixed use program, the building at 7235 Biscayne Boulevard (602 NE 72<sup>nd</sup> Terrace), remains as finely designed example of thirties style.

The previous example illustrates a building that more resembles a commercial than residential building. In another example, the building reflects the opposite. At 7550 Biscayne Boulevard (Figure 6), the building was originally both an office and residence. Built in 1935, this frame residence with its wood shingle roof, prominent chimney and gable roofed dormers disguises the fact that the building contained offices inside.

### Biscayne Boulevard Motels

Biscayne Boulevard possesses a wealth of motor courts and motels constructed during the 1950s. They are representative of a class of buildings that once dominated the principal thoroughfares in Miami. The following describes all of the buildings along that portion of Biscayne Boulevard described in this report that were used as motels, even though some have been adapted to other uses. In a few instances, buildings that were not designed as motels have been converted to that use.

#### **Bayside Motor      5101 Biscayne Boulevard      1952**

The two-story building contained nineteen units, and was built at a cost of \$55,300.00. The courtyard plan and the sheltered porch areas are typical of the motel designs of the period.

#### **Former Cadillac Motel      5201 Biscayne Boulevard      1947**

Present use: Apartment

Now exclusively an apartment building, originally this building was constructed as the Cadillac Motel and Apartments. Today, the building retains a remarkable

degree of integrity. The rectangular mass of the building is slanted outward in an unusual treatment. The two stories are fenestrated with broad rectangular window areas that feature an eyebrow ridge that extends across the main elevation. The result is a sleek, modern approach to motel design.

**Former Motel            5445 Biscayne Boulevard   1954    (*recently demolished*)**  
Present Use: Apartment

Originally this 23-unit motel was built at a cost of \$73,400.00. The pool was added in 1957. Because of its alterations the building has been classified as non-contributing due to its loss of integrity.

**Former Motel            5501 Biscayne Boulevard   1948    (*recently demolished*)**  
Present Use: Apartment

Miami-Dade County Assessor's records indicate that this building was constructed in 1948 with a total of twelve living units.

**Former Sea Cove Motel    5750 Biscayne Boulevard   1952    (*rec. demolished*)**  
Present Use: Apartment

Originally this building operated as a motel with the name "Sea Cove Motel". Although considerably altered the buildings still convey its original central courtyard plan, with the office characterized by a dramatic curvilinear two-story volume mass at the entrance to the courtyard.

**Seven Seas Motel    5940 Biscayne Boulevard                    1955**

The Seven Seas with its two stories and "L" shaped plan is typical of 1950s motel design. The building also features a pylon sign with bold neon lettering.

**Carl's El Padre Motel            5950 Biscayne Boulevard                    1951**

This one story, ten-unit hotel is one of the simpler designs on the Boulevard. During the 1950s, the motel was called "Carl's El Padre Hotel", and advertised modern hotel rooms and efficiencies. The owners were Mr. and Mrs. Carl Talazko.

**Sinbad Motel            6150 Biscayne Boulevard                    1953**

The building permit for the Sinbad Motel was for a twelve-unit apartment built at a cost of \$108,350.00. The Sinbad consists of a rectangular block without the amenity of a swimming pool. The building has been considerably altered, as the original fenestration of the first floor has been enclosed, and a heavy metal picket balustrade now frames the simple terrace that extends around the building. In a 1950s postcard the caption read in part: "Cathedral beamed ceilings—Foam rubber bedding—Tub baths with showers."



lobby columns and piers that support the second story. A continuous balcony consisting of a pipe rail grid extends around the sides of the building. At some time, the building became associated with the New Yorker but was also known independently during the 1950s as the Motel Champlain. A postcard from the late 1950s had this caption: " WE OFFER YOU—Swimming Pool, 51 rooms –Air Conditioned/ Heated—Kitchenettes (Efficiency) available, COLOR TV in all rooms, convenient to all Race Tracks, Shopping, Fishing and Airport, 10 minutes to beaches (Ocean) 24 hr. telephone service, Special Daily, Weekly and Monthly Rates, Free Parking."

**Stardust Motel            6730 Biscayne Boulevard            1956**  
**Maurice S. Weintraub, Architect**

The Stardust remains as an independently owned motel that is characterized by an idiosyncratic design. This 54-unit motel was constructed at a cost of \$112,700, and opened in 1956. The design is based on the classic motel "H" plan shape with two story wings that wrap around the center court with its swimming pool. The focal point of the Stardust fronting on Biscayne Boulevard is its office component, a two story half-pyramid shape. The acute angle of the roof slope eventually terminates as the roof of the porte-cochere. The termination of the arm of the "H" plan at the opposite end of the motel is a two-story block that also defies stylistic convention. The first floor of the square plan consists of a flat-roofed block with an almost mansard-looking extension that begins at the base and extends across the length of the block. The second story is set back and is unremarkable. The swimming pool was heated and considered Olympic size. The complex included a coffee shop, T.V. Room and Card Room.

**Motel            6789 Biscayne Boulevard            1952 (*recently demolished*)**

This motel is one of the simplest on the Boulevard as it is simple narrow linear arrangement of rooms. The eleven-unit block was constructed at a cost of \$22,000.00. An additional two units were added in 1968.

**Saturn Motel            6999 Biscayne Boulevard            1952**

The Saturn was built in 1952 with sixteen units. Although a simple rectangular plan, the motel sports an ornamental cornice and the fanciful fin shapes frequently associated with 1950s design.

**The Sir William Hotel            7100 Biscayne Boulevard    1939    Altered 1960**  
**(Non-Contributing)**

In 1939 this three-story building was constructed to house stores and offices. There were two stores on the ground floor, and three apartments, apparently one per floor. During the mid-1940s the building was known as the "Sir William Hotel". A 1947 postcard had this as a caption: " One of the most beautifully furnished and Modern Hotels in the Miami Area—All outside rooms with Private Bath and Shower—Elevator Service—Patio—Coffee Shop—Free Parking Space--- Convenient to all activities."

The building, with its rounded corners, eyebrow lintels, and wrap around corner windows evoked the Art Deco style. Unfortunately, in 1960 the building was converted to offices, obliterating the main elevation with a screen, and significantly altering the storefronts. Because of the degree of these alterations, the building has been classified as non-contributing, due to the loss of its physical integrity.

**The Camelot Inn      7126 Biscayne Boulevard      1938**

Originally the Miamian Hotel, This three-story building, constructed before the advent of the motel age,( and hence the lack of parking on-site), still continues the traditions of a more formal hotel setting. Built at a cost of \$26,000 this narrow building has a thirty-five foot frontage on Biscayne Boulevard and then extends back seventy feet. The detail of the building is clearly a product of the Art Deco aesthetic with its main façade detailed with a strict geometry produced by the compound vertical fluting of the center bay, and the corner windows at either end. The original building permit indicates that there were twenty-two units contained in the building. A post card from the 1950s has this as its caption: "Located on Biscayne Boulevard in Exclusive Northeast Section...10 minutes to Beach, Modern and Homelike... Catering to a Restricted Clientele".

**Vagabond Motel      7301 Biscayne Boulevard      1953**  
**B. Robert Swartburg: Architect (Figure 9)**

A City of Miami Historic Landmark, the 53 unit Vagabond Motel is considered an exemplary portrayal of the Miami Modern style for its open-air plan, jalousie windows, geometric designs, overhanging roof lines, and open air verandah with catwalk. Swartburg was one of the leading Modernist architects in Miami, and he began his career in Miami during the mid-1920s. Swartburg also designed the Metro Justice Building and the Delano Hotel in Miami Beach.

**Sunshine Motel (former Alda Rochester Motel)      7350 Biscayne Boulevard      1939, remodeled. 1952; 1954 (Figure 10)**

The design for this 22 unit building, constructed during the lean years following a nation-wide depression, takes full advantage of its corner location on Biscayne and NE 74<sup>th</sup> Street. Its three-story mass takes the form of a rectangle with a mere 25' of frontage along Biscayne Boulevard, with the major portion of the building with a frontage of 113' on NE 74<sup>th</sup> Street. Unlike the motels built in the 1950s, the Sunshine Motel is a product of the Art Deco era. The curved three-story front on the corner provides the intersection for the wings that extend from it. The fenestration pattern is composed of narrow rectangular windows that are shaded by the projecting masonry eyebrow lintels above them. The spandrels between the floors are decorated with a zigzag motif, a popular device in Art Deco architecture. Bands of incised score lines wrap around the building adding to the definition of its geometry.

In 1952 modifications to the entrance were made, and in 1959 the entrance canopy was added. A patio and pool were added in 1961. A postcard from the 1950s had this as its caption: "The Alda Rochester Hotel, 7350 Biscayne Boulevard. On US#1, Motel rooms—Comfortably, Modernly furnished—Tile Baths, Tub and Showers—Modern Air-Conditioning—Central Heating--- Daily Maid Service—TV Lounge—Swimming Pool—Close to Shopping Churches, Restaurants, Theaters, Race Tracks and All Points of Interest—Minutes from Beach Causeways—Free Parking—Open Year'Round"  
Russell & Esther Fustanio—Managers

**Knoxon Drive-In Hotel      7411 Biscayne Boulevard      1951**  
**Norman M. Giller, Architect**

Located on the northeast corner of NE 74<sup>th</sup> Street and Biscayne Boulevard, the present Royal Motel was actually designed for use as individual apartments, apparently the reason it is called a hotel. The two-story building contained a total of twelve apartments, some of which contained kitchenettes and pulmanettes. While the lobby fronts on Biscayne Boulevard, the mass of the building extends along NE 74<sup>th</sup> Street. The building takes a simple rectangular shape with identical detail on the first and second floors. The impression of sleekness is created by the cantilevered balcony roof along with the cantilever of the roof that projects from the lobby. The most dramatic detail is the wall that extends perpendicularly above the second floor roof and carries the signage for the motel.

**Motel      7481 Biscayne Boulevard 1948; remodeled 1960 (Non-contributing)**

The original permit for this building indicates that it was built as a motel, and later converted for offices. Because the conversion eliminated or reconfigured doors and windows, the building is considered to have lost its integrity.

## STYLES OF ARCHITECTURE

Because construction on Biscayne Boulevard spans the period from the 1920s through the 1950s, there are examples of the styles of architecture most popular during each of those decades. While the majority of the buildings within the Biscayne Boulevard Historic District date from after the real estate boom of the mid-twenties, the use of Mediterranean Revival style continues even into the 1930s. The Art Deco style then supplanted the Mediterranean Revival as the favored means of architectural expression into the 1940s. The "Modern Period", generally considered to date from after World War II and into the 1950s, reflects a departure from historicist references towards a truly novel aesthetic. The Biscayne Boulevard Historic District includes some unique modern commercial buildings, as well as the largest collection of "Miami Modern" motels in Miami.

## Mediterranean Revival

The Mediterranean Revival style of architecture was the predominant stylistic choice for the region during the Florida Land Boom of the 1920s. The style is an eclectic derivation that relied on the inspiration of Spanish, Italian and Moorish architecture. This type of design, which in California during the previous decade was called "Spanish Colonial", was perfectly suited to the climate of South Florida. Perhaps more importantly, it created a theme and romantic identity for South Florida's newly created suburbs. Plan shapes often created a courtyard; and arcades, loggias and porches provided easy access to the outdoors.

The Biscayne Boulevard Historic District includes both residential and commercial examples including the residences at 5859 Biscayne Boulevard, constructed in 1924 (Figure 11) and the commercial buildings at 7120 Biscayne Boulevard, 7235 Biscayne Boulevard.

## Art Deco

Many of the buildings along Biscayne Boulevard were constructed during the mid 1930s into the mid 1940s. The preeminent choice of architectural style during that period was Art Deco. Art Deco is considered one of the first of the modern styles, as it is a deliberate move away from the historicist styles, to a new expression that sought to complement the machine age. Designs for Art Deco buildings were often stark. Ornamentation was concentrated at the parapet, and the shapes of the windows, scored lines, and curving wing walls emphasized the building's geometry. Excellent examples of this style are found at 7222 and 7240 Biscayne Boulevard (Figure 5).

## Miami Modern ( MiMo)

MiMo or Miami Modern is the name coined by Randall Robinson and Teri D'Amico to describe the architecture that flourished in South Florida from 1945 until the late 1960s. In their words:

*MiMo is not a single style, but rather a confluence that includes the world-renowned Resort glamour of Morris Lapidus, the sublime Subtropical Modernism of Igor B. Plevitzky, and the flamboyant Latin infusion of Enrique Gutierrez, the architect of one of the Southland's Modernist masterpieces, the Bacardi USA building. The common denominator is a time—the heady decades after the war—and a place-- the subtropical environs of South Florida.*

Miami Modern is further classified into two distinct strains, Resort MiMo and Subtropical Modernism. The visual "lineage" for both the resort and subtropical versions of Miami Modern can be traced to Miami's emerging modern movement beginning in the 1930s. Local architects adapted elements of the International,

Streamline Moderne and Art Deco styles in their versions of contemporary buildings. Resort MiMo of the 1950s is a product of these experimentations, best represented by the vivid scenographic expressions of Miami Beach architects.

Resort MiMo is associated with the 1950s and 1960s and the influences of Hollywood set design, automobile styling, military jets and the space race. The American fascination with Futurism was a pervasive influence in the designs of Resort MiMo. It was realized in architectural form by acute angles, boomerangs and trapezoid forms.

Subtropical Modernism was a strain of the modern movement that recognized the needs of a year-round population rather than solely the demands of the winter-resort guests. As a result, designers addressed the humidity and heat of summer by making accommodations for breezy corridors, covered galleries and shady courtyards. Subtropical Modernism also employed elements associated with the International Style of architecture that included glass walls and low-slung lines, flat roofs and wide eaves and free-flowing interior spaces.

Many of the motels along Biscayne Boulevard are impressive examples of Resort Miami Modernism. Their surviving numbers and the quality of their designs contribute greatly to the Biscayne Boulevard Historic District's significance (Figures 7, 8, and 9).

#### IV. PLANNING CONTEXT

##### Present Trends and Conditions:

During the 1970s, the upper east side of the city along Biscayne Boulevard began an economic decline. In most recent years, Biscayne Boulevard has been the subject of considerable investment. The City of Miami, in facilitating both growth and appropriate development, has held charettes to receive citizen input on the Boulevard's redevelopment. The historic district designation of Biscayne Boulevard will aide this redevelopment by the identification of historic resources. Historic district designation will insure that any new buildings constructed will be required to consider the architectural context of the existing neighborhood. That provision enables an exciting mix of the old and the new.

##### Preservation Incentives:

The historic district designation will further enhance the stability of the neighborhood. Design review of new construction that may be built in the neighborhood will assist in maintaining aesthetic harmony. Further, for residents as well as income producing property owners, Miami-Dade County allows an ad valorem tax exemption for the rehabilitation of historic structures.

If a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places were written for all or part of this proposed district, upon listing, the depreciable buildings would become eligible for a 20% Investment Tax Credit. The credit is applied against the owners' income tax liability when a "substantial" rehabilitation of a building is undertaken.

## Contributing and Non-Contributing Structures

### 5000 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

5020 Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1949	Non-Contributing
5040 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1946	Non-Contributing
5046 Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1950	Non-Contributing
5050 Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1952	Non-contributing
5050 Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1968	Non-contributing
5051 Biscayne Blvd.	Bayshore Lutheran Evangelical Church	1946	Contributing
5061 Biscayne Blvd.	Office/Retail	1947	Contributing
5080 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1946	Non-contributing
5084 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1950	Non-contributing

### 5100 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

5101 Biscayne Blvd.	Bayside Motor Inn	1952	Contributing**
5120-40 Biscayne Blvd.	Office/Retail	1950	Non-Contributing

### 5200 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

5201 Biscayne Blvd.	Former Cadillac Motel	1947	Contributing
5215 Biscayne Blvd.	Budget Inn Motel	1947	Contributing
5255 Biscayne Blvd.	Best Value Inn	1947	Contributing

### 5300 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

5398 Biscayne Blvd.	Restaurant	2002	Non-Contributing
5305 Biscayne Blvd.	Apartment	1947	Contributing**

### 5400 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

5400 (5402) Biscayne Blvd.	Gas Station	1956	Contributing
----------------------------	-------------	------	--------------

---

### 5500 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

5555 Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1973	Non-Contributing
5599 Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1952	Contributing
5556 NE 4 <sup>th</sup> Court	Restaurant	1938	Contributing
5580 -5584 NE 4 <sup>th</sup> Court	Retail	1948	Contributing

### 5600 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

5600 Biscayne Blvd.	General Tire (Andiamo's Pizza)	1954	Contributing
5601 Biscayne Blvd. (aka 445 NE 56 <sup>th</sup> Street)	Former residence	1929	Contributing
5615 Biscayne Blvd.	Residential	1974	Non-Contributing
5631 Biscayne Blvd.	Former residence	1938	Contributing
464 NE 57 <sup>th</sup> Street	Residential	1960	Non-Contributing

### 5700 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

None

\*\* Indicates a Permit has been applied for prior to the designation process

5800 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

5800 Biscayne Blvd.	Apartments	1935	Contributing
5801 Biscayne Blvd.	Former residence	1932	Contributing
5810 Biscayne Blvd.	Residence	1940	Contributing
5841 Biscayne Blvd.	Former residence	1924	Contributing
5850 Biscayne Blvd.	Residence	1940	Contributing
5859 Biscayne Blvd.	Former residence	1924	Contributing

5900 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

5940 Biscayne Blvd.	7-Seas Motel	1955	Contributing
5943 Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1933	Non-Contributing
5950 Biscayne Blvd.	Motel	1951	Contributing
5963 Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1968	Non-Contributing
5995 Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1974	Non-Contributing
5999 Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1989	Non-contributing

6000 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

6000 Biscayne Blvd.	Residence	1930	Contributing
6075 Biscayne Blvd. (aka 620 NE 61 <sup>st</sup> Street)	Gas Station	1965	Non-Contributing
6050 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1946	Contributing

6100 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

6100 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1963	Non-Contributing
6150 Biscayne Blvd.	Sinbad Motel	1953	Contributing

6200 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

6200 Biscayne Blvd.	Shalimar Motel	1950	Contributing**
6201 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1938	Contributing
610-NE-63 <sup>rd</sup> Street	New Construction	2003	Non-Contributing

6300 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

6300 Biscayne Blvd.	South Pacific Motel	1953	Contributing
6301 Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1958	Non-Contributing
6320 Biscayne Blvd.	Stephens Int'l Motel	1946	Contributing

6400 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

6400 (6414) Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1965	Contributing
6443 Biscayne Blvd.	Former residence	1940	Contributing**
6444 Biscayne Blvd.	Office/Retail	1951	Non-Contributing
6599 Biscayne boulevard	Police Substation	1995	Non-Contributing

6500 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

6500 Biscayne Blvd.	Davis Motel	1953	Contributing
6580 Biscayne Blvd.	Davis Motel	1954	Contributing

6600 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

6600 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1941	Non-Contributing
6621 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1936	Non-Contributing

\*\* Indicates a Permit has been applied for prior to the designation process

6630 Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1950	Non-Contributing
6660 Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1960	Contributing
<u>6700 Block of Biscayne Boulevard</u>			
6700-08 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1974	Non-Contributing
6701 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1940	Non-Contributing
6730 Biscayne Blvd.	Stardust Motel	1956	Contributing
<u>6800 Block of Biscayne Boulevard</u>			
6800 Biscayne Blvd.	Gas Station	1990	Non-Contributing
6807 Biscayne Blvd.	Mixed Use	1936	Non-Contributing
6815-25 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	2003	Non-Contributing
<u>6900 Block of Biscayne Boulevard</u>			
6900 Biscayne Blvd.	Former residence	1923	Non-Contributing
6901-09 Biscayne Blvd. (aka 607 NE 69 <sup>th</sup> Street)	Retail	1947	Contributing
6910-16 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1958	Non-Contributing
6925-27 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1955	Contributing
6928-30 Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1940	Non-Contributing
6999 Biscayne Blvd.	Saturn Motel	1952	Contributing
<u>7000 Block of Biscayne Boulevard</u>			
7001 Biscayne Blvd.	Restaurant	1945	Non-Contributing
7005 Biscayne Blvd.	Restaurant	1961	Non-Contributing
7011 Biscayne Blvd.	Restaurant	1945	Non-Contributing
7015 Biscayne Blvd.	Restaurant	1945	Non-Contributing
7030 Biscayne Blvd.	Restaurant	1946	Contributing
<u>7100 Block of Biscayne Boulevard</u>			
7100 Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1939	Non-Contributing
7101 Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1939	Contributing
7111 Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1936	Non-Contributing
7120 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1938	Contributing
7126 Biscayne Blvd.	Camelot Inn	1938	Contributing
7150 Biscayne Blvd.	King Motel	1953	Non-Contributing
<u>7200 Block of Biscayne Boulevard</u>			
7200-08 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1948	Contributing
7201 Biscayne Blvd.	Restaurant	1968	Non-Contributing
7222-26 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1947	Contributing
7228-32 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1947	Contributing
7235 Biscayne Blvd. (aka 602 NE 72 <sup>nd</sup> Terrace)	Retail/Apartment	1935	Contributing
7244 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail/Apartment	1935	Contributing
7251 Biscayne Blvd.	Restaurant	1954	Non-contributing
7281 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1969	Non-Contributing
7295 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1969	Non-Contributing

\*\* Indicates a Permit has been applied for prior to the designation process

7300 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

7300 Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1964	Contributing
7301 Biscayne Blvd.	Vagabond Motel	1953	Contributing
7310 Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1956	Non-Contributing
7320 Biscayne Blvd.	Office/Residential	1953	Contributing
7326 Biscayne Blvd.	Former hotel	1940	Contributing
7350 Biscayne Blvd.	Sunshine Motel	1939	Contributing

7400 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

7400 (7400-04) Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1936	Contributing
7411 Biscayne Blvd.	The Royal Motel	1951	Contributing
7414-18 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1948	Contributing
7420 Biscayne Blvd.	Office	1952	Contributing
7422 Biscayne Blvd.	Royal Budget Motel	1952	Contributing
7481 Biscayne Blvd.	Former Motel	1948	Non-Contributing

7500 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

7501 Biscayne Blvd.	Restaurant	1966	Non-Contributing
7521 Biscayne Blvd.	Office/Apartment	1948	Contributing
7550 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1935	Contributing
7541-51 Biscayne Blvd.	Retail	1952	Non-Contributing

7600 Block of Biscayne Boulevard

7601 Biscayne Blvd. (aka 615 NE 76 <sup>th</sup> Street)	Former gas station	1939	Contributing
7610 Biscayne Blvd.	Church	1951	Contributing
7613-17 Biscayne Blvd.	Mixed Use	1937	Contributing
7625 Biscayne Blvd.	Apartment	1940	Contributing
7630 Biscayne Blvd.	School	1955	Contributing
7644-48 Biscayne Blvd. (aka 592-98 NE 77 <sup>th</sup> Street)	Retail	1942	Contributing
7657 Biscayne Blvd.	Duplex	1935	Non-Contributing
7699 Biscayne Blvd.	Residential	1935	Non-Contributing







V. Bibliography

---

Ballinger, Kenneth. Miami Millions (Miami: Franklin Press) 1936

City of Miami, Building & Zoning Department, Building Permit Records

City of Miami, Building & Zoning Department, Plat Maps for "Belle Meade"; Replat of Belle Meade; Knight Addition; North Gate; Federal Way Amended; Aqua Marine; Baywood 1<sup>st</sup> Addition; Lipshin Manor; Bayshore Plaza Unit 4; Bayshore Plaza Unit 5.

Dunlop, Beth. "Photos Capture Motel Magic" *Miami Herald*, 26 October 2003, 4M

Dunlop, Beth. "Street Smart" *Miami Herald*, 22 June 2003, 3M

Eaton, Sarah E. "Biscayne Boulevard Thematic Group" Nomination, National Register of Historic Places.

Jacke, John A., Keith A. Sculle and Jefferson S. Rogers. The Motel in America (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press), 1993.

Nash, Eric P. and Randall C. Robinson Jr. MiMo Miami Modernism Rediscovered. (San Francisco: Chronicle Books), 2003.

Motel Postcards. Private collection of historian Larry Wiggins.

Sanborn Insurance Maps of Miami Florida, Vol. 2 and 3, New York: Sanborn Map Company



Figure 1.  
5801 Biscayne Boulevard, 1932 Mediterranean Revival



Figure 2.  
7400 Biscayne Boulevard, 1936 Moderne



Figure 3. New Mount Pleasant Baptist Church  
7610 Biscayne Boulevard, 1951 Sub Tropical Modernism



Figure 4. Originally The Maule Building (now demolished)  
5220 Biscayne Boulevard, 1954



Figure 5.  
7244 Biscayne Boulevard, 1935 Art Deco



Figure 6.  
7550 Biscayne Boulevard, 1935



Figure 7. The Shalimar Motel  
6200 Biscayne Boulevard, 1950 Miami Modern



Figure 8. Originally The New Yorker Hotel  
6500 Biscayne Boulevard, 1953 Miami Modern



Figure 9. The Vagabond Motel  
7301 Biscayne Boulevard, 1953 Miami Modern



Figure 10. The Sunshine Motel  
7350 Biscayne Boulevard, 1939 Art Deco



Figure 11. Originally a Single Family Residence  
5859 Biscayne Boulevard, 1924 Mediterranean Revival