

A RESOLUTION
OF THE CITY OF MIAMI HISTORIC AND
ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD (“HEPB”)
APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE ATTACHED MIMO
(MIAMI MODERN)/BISCAYNE BOULEVARD DESIGN
GUIDELINES

Approved June 2, 2009
City of Miami Historic and Environmental
Preservation Board

**MiMo (MIAMI MODERN)/BISCAYNE BOULEVARD
Historic District**

General Boundaries: Both sides of Biscayne Boulevard from NE 50th Street, north
to NE 77th Street

SPECIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

I. INTRODUCTION

Since 1982, the City of Miami has been promoting and protecting its historic heritage through the adoption of a Historic and Environmental Preservation Ordinance. To date, the city's staff and the Historic and Environmental Preservation Board (HEP Board), have identified, described and formally designated the following historic districts:

- Morningside Historic District
- Bayside Historic District
- Beverly Terrace Historic District
- Buena Vista East Historic District
- Lummus Park Historic District
- South River Drive Historic District
- Spring Garden Historic District
- Biscayne Boulevard/ MiMo Historic District (MiMo)
- Palm Grove Neighborhood Historic District

Prior to the designation of the MiMo Historic District, all of the previously designated historic districts were residential in character and their design guidelines addressed single and multi-family housing. Because the MiMo district is zoned for commercial use, and the buildings constructed there were almost all designed as commercial buildings (with the exception of a few residential structures, which have since been adapted to office/retail use), it is necessary to address the special characteristics of the MiMo Historic District.

Purpose/ Interpretation/ Conflicts / Priorities

The following guidelines represent suggested approaches to a variety of design situations; however, these guidelines cannot address every situation or circumstance. For those projects that have pre-existing non-conforming aspects, or in some way exhibit unusual circumstances, among them physical characteristics, site plan or location anomalies, the Historic and Environmental Preservation Board will consider these unique characteristics in making their decisions.

- ***These guidelines will be interpreted by the HEPB and the Preservation Officer (HEPB Officer) as being additional and supplemental to the Florida Building Code, Miami City Code & Zoning Ordinance, Historic Preservation Ordinances, Resolutions, HEPB Rules of Procedure adopted by the City of Miami or any of its Boards and to the Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation. In the event of an express or implied conflict between these guidelines and the foregoing Ordinances, the foregoing should govern in this order of precedence/ priority:***
- ***Florida Building Code***
- ***City of Miami City Code***
- ***City of Miami Zoning Ordinance***
- ***HEPB Ordinances***
- ***HEPB Resolutions***
- ***HEPB Rules of Procedure***
- ***Secretary of the Interior Standards***
- ***These guidelines providing the absence of a conflict with the foregoing ordinances, resolutions, rules and standards.***

Objectives

These guidelines are designed to assist both the property owner and the Historic and Environmental Preservation Board in making conscientious, but flexible, decisions when evaluating plans for additions, alterations, retrofits, adaptations for new uses, etc. for existing buildings, and when evaluating plans for new construction within the context of the MiMo district, so that compatible development will enhance the character of the historic district.

The qualities that are desired in the restoration, rehabilitation and new construction for buildings on the boulevard are the consistency and compatibility of their height, setbacks, scale, rhythm, spacing, directional emphasis (vertical, horizontal, or non-directional) and respect for the character and conditions represented in the historic buildings for the different eras. These design guidelines will be considered in conjunction with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, and where there is a conflict, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards shall take precedence.

MiMo (Miami Modern)/Biscayne Boulevard Historic District: A BRIEF HISTORY

Biscayne Boulevard began in 1925 as a project of Hugh Anderson and Roy C. Wright, the developers of Miami Shores, who sought a connection from their landholdings to downtown Miami. Spending millions on the acquisition of land, and the clearing of improved parcels, Hugh Anderson and Roy C. Wright, (who formed the Shoreland Company) envisioned a one-hundred foot boulevard with lush plantings focusing attention on the beauty of early Miami. Biscayne Boulevard began at SE 2nd Street and extended north until it reached NE 55th Street, where it merged to become U.S. Route 1. (In the 1920s, Route 1 was known as Federal Highway.)

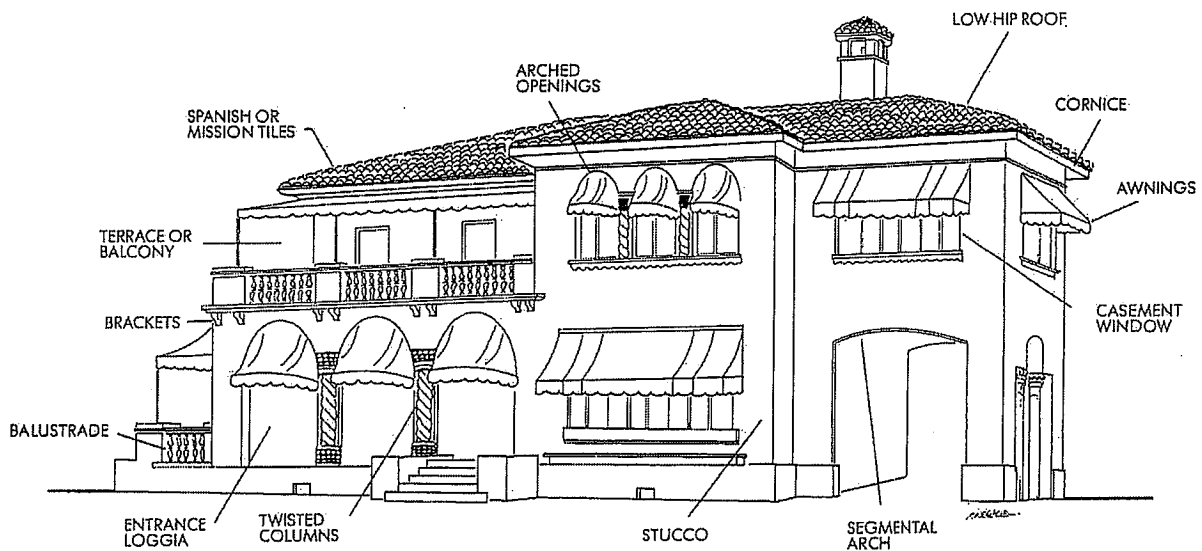
Only a small part of this ambitious plan was completed, as unfortunately Anderson and Wright began the project at the worst possible time when the economic bubble (that became known as the Florida Real Estate Boom) burst. Their interests were purchased by Henry Phipps of U.S. Steel, who finished the boulevard as the newly organized "Biscayne Boulevard Company."

The historic buildings that remain on Biscayne Boulevard reflect this cycle—very few buildings were constructed during the 1920s, but after 1934 the boulevard's growth escalated, culminating in the heyday of the 1950s, when thousands of tourists made their way to exotic Miami, and stayed at its many mid-century motels and tourist courts.

Common Styles

The following describes some of the recurring styles represented on the boulevard, and their particular characteristics.

MEDITERRANEAN REVIVAL STYLE



This style is usually associated with states with a Spanish Colonial heritage, and the term embraces a variety of sub-types, including Spanish Colonial Revival and Mission Revival. The style is eclectic and employs the building traditions of centuries-old buildings in countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. The style became infinitely popular in southern states following the 1915 Panama-California Exhibition in San Diego. In Florida, with a Spanish presence as far back as the 18th century, the style was particularly suited to the climate.

Features include:

Masonry construction; stucco finishes, applied ornament especially around windows and doors, a combination of roof slopes; arcades, loggias, courtyards, round arches.

MODERN STYLES: Art Deco and Art Moderne

Modern styles found on the boulevard are stylistic interpretations and derivations from the International Style. In their truest, archetypal forms, Art Deco and Art Moderne are very different from one another. In South Florida, and on Biscayne Boulevard, Art Moderne and Art Deco elements were combined to create unique, playful structures which combine the Streamline Moderne massing and Art Deco elements.

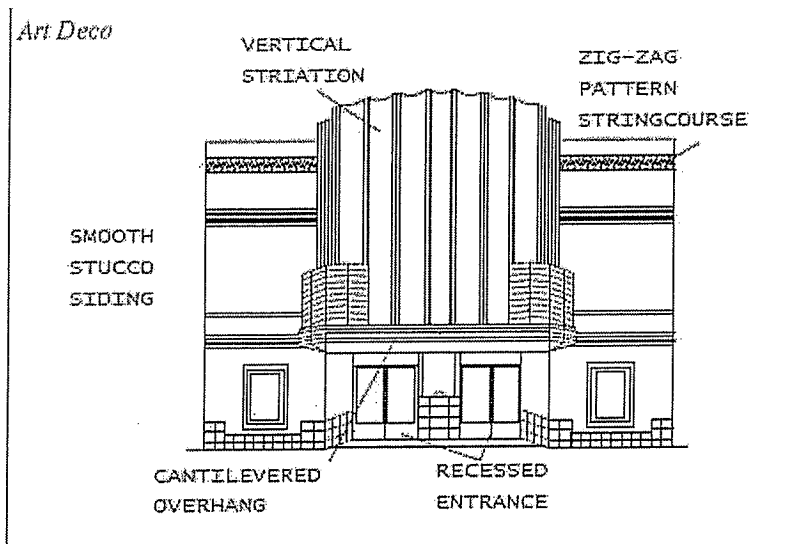
General features found in modern styles:

Flat roofs, smooth exterior surfaces, vertical striation or fluting, eyebrow windows (cantilevered overhangs), corner pivot windows, tiled and/or patterned courseways, applied ornament in the form of bas-relief panels or roundels made of cast concrete.

New materials used:

Vitrolite glass, stainless steel, and neon for signage and to emphasize architectural elements.

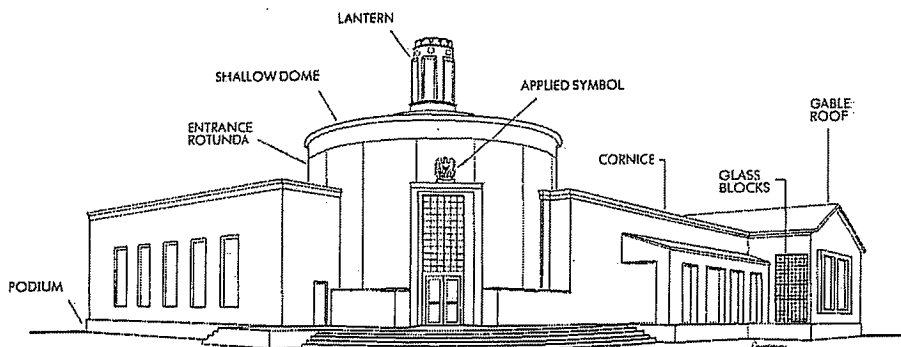
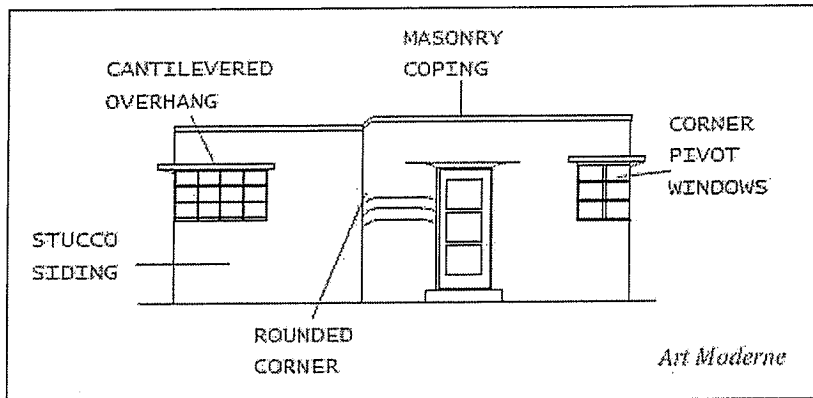
ART DECO



Art Deco is a modern style that emerged as a response to the perceived austerity of the International Style¹ and signaled a shift from the historicist traditions popular in the US. Art Deco is often associated more with a design style than an architectural one, and derives its name from the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs* held in Paris in 1925. Art Deco is decidedly angular and vertical in emphasis. A characteristic of the style is the use of applied decoration in angular patterns using motifs derived from Native American art, Cubism, and the newly found archaeological discoveries of ancient Egypt. In South Florida, the decoration incorporated tropical foliage, birds, and other design motifs that reflected the unique character of the region. Larger buildings are symmetrical in their composition and have a “wedding cake” massing, as their upper stories progressively step back from the street.

¹ The International Style is a term first used by architect Phillip Johnson, first director of architecture at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York. The term was coined at MOMA’s first architectural exhibition in 1932, entitled “Modern Architecture.” The International Style uses minimalism as its paradigm—emphasizing modernity and simplicity in design. Any non-essential decoration is eliminated and materials, such as glass and concrete, become the focus of the design.

ART MODERNE



DEPRESSION MODERNE

Also referred to as Streamline Moderne and Depression Moderne, Art Moderne is another modern style that developed in the 1930s. The style grew out of Art Deco and was, in contrast, a streamline style that embraced the “machine aesthetic” and is characterized by smooth concrete and materials, rounded corners, aerodynamic surfaces echoing features and shapes of cars, boats, and airplanes. Moderne is decidedly horizontal and achieves this emphasis with the placement of horizontal railings, horizontal scoring (also referred to as racing stripes) on building surfaces, as well as porthole windows as design elements which are evocative of ocean liners and airplanes. A character defining trait of many Moderne buildings is how they “wrap around” the corner so that the entrance is at the corner, often detailed as a rotunda.

MIAMI MODERN

Miami Modern (MiMo) is a local adaptation of the Mid-Century Modern Style of architecture that emerged in the US after the Second World War². Also having its antecedents in the International Style, MiMo architecture utilized modern materials and new building technologies, and carried over many of the design features from both Art Deco and Moderne Styles. Advances in glass manufacturing allowed for design features such as glass curtain walls, large picture windows, and sliding glass doors creating a greater relationship with the outdoors—a hallmark of the style. The Post-War era in the U.S. was a time of unparalleled prosperity; this collective sense of optimism permeated in architectural creation. As with previous adaptations of the International Style, mid-century styles created themed variations such as Polynesian influenced Tiki designs, space age modern designs, and tropical resort designs that spoke to the 50's era and looked towards the future. Miami Modern (MiMo) architects added elements which were not only suited for the tropical climate, but also tropical-themed whimsical decorative elements.³

Common MiMo Materials:

Aluminum, concrete block and stucco (exposed concrete), field stone, keystone, mosaics (glass or ceramic), oolitic limestone, plate glass, roman brick, and slump brick.

MiMo Architectural and Design Features:

Acute angles, aggregate, asymmetry in design, awning windows, boomerangs, brise soleils, built-in planters, canted windows, catwalks, clerestories, cutouts, cantilevered beam & projections, cheeseholes, compressed arches, concrete canopies, curtain wall construction, decorative railings, egg crate facades, eyebrow windows, floating staircases, folded plates, hyperparabaloids, intersecting planes, louvers, metal grilles, pilotis, porte -cocheres, ribbon windows, rounded eaves, sawtoothed floor plates, space-age imagery, textured stucco, jalousie windows.⁴

² The term "MiMo" was coined by Randall Robinson and Teri D'Amico as "shorthand" for Miami Modern."

³ Eric P. Nash and Randall Robinson, *MiMo Miami Modern Revealed* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books), 2004

⁴ We are indebted to Robert Powers and Teri D'Amico for their assistance in compiling this list.

Common Areas / Streetscape

While there are a significant number of different property types, their relationship to the street, their landscaping, parking, and signage affects the entire district. Attentiveness to the buildings within the immediate context will insure compatibility and reduce visual "clutter."

II. DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

General

The replication of any historic building is inappropriate and should not be permitted, unless a majority of the HEP Board members determine that the replication serves a valid preservation purpose because the property was demolished illegally or as a result of demolition by neglect.

Scale

The scale should complement the existing streetscape, and contribute to the character of the neighborhood.

Height

The allowable height on the boulevard is governed by the use, size of the lot, and underlying zoning. However, in order to create a more harmonious and less disruptive juxtaposition of buildings along the streetscape, additional height for new buildings should be limited by the buildings immediately adjacent on either side of the proposed building site. The principal face of the new construction should be allowed to extend no more than one-third as high as the average height of the adjacent buildings before it steps back away from the boulevard to achieve its permitted height.

Rhythm and Spacing

The rhythm refers to the spaces between buildings that create continuity along the boulevard, and should conform to the rhythm established by existing buildings as much as possible.

Directional Emphasis

The main face of the building should respect the orientation of the buildings directly adjacent and in proximity to it; the directional point of entry should be well defined as it relates to the street front.

Architectural Style

New construction should be a product of its own time, but employ references to the styles commonly found on the boulevard. Those references should be subtle, and should be abstracted details so there is no appearance of replicating the detail.

Surface Materials

Materials that face a building, or are employed for decoration are encouraged to complement and reinforce materials found on the historic buildings within the district.

A sample of these materials include:

Concrete Block and Stucco

Keystone veneers/ Block

Stucco—rough or Smooth textured

Aluminum (A later material, often employed for canopies)

Glass and Ceramic Mosaic Tile (decorative accent)

Plate Glass (Storefronts)

Slump Brick (a concretious mixture that is scored to give the appearance of brick) _____

Parking

Off-street parking should not be placed in required open space fronting onto Biscayne Boulevard. Parking should be located at the back of the building, and appropriately screened from the neighboring residential district.

However historic buildings, particularly the MiMo Motels --- which commonly featured a "U" or "T" shaped-plan, to accommodate parking in the front--- are grandfathered, as they express the fashion of the time. While not intended to negatively impact the adjacent neighborhood, waivers for parking should be granted under the terms of Chapter 23 of the City Code.

Temporary Parking Lots

Chain link should only be used when it is of a temporary nature to secure an unsafe structure prior to demolition. The temporary lot should be screened with landscape materials that are maintained for the duration.

Vehicular (Driveway) Entrances

Biscayne Boulevard is a pedestrian friendly thoroughfare, and therefore any conflicts resulting from vehicles and pedestrians should be resolved in favor of the pedestrian. Vehicular entrances (and any new curb cuts) opening directly onto Biscayne Boulevard should be discouraged when access can be provided from other public right-of-ways.

Driveway entrances should be minimized on the side streets and limited to no more than ten feet in width for a one-way drive and no more than twenty feet for a two-way drive.

Driveways within a single building site should not be located closer than twenty-five feet to each other.

Streetscape Considerations

The desired effect along Biscayne Boulevard is to create a density of buildings, eliminating voids in the streetscape. Therefore, no vehicular bays should open onto Biscayne Boulevard, and the principal building should be designed so it is parallel to Biscayne Boulevard. No additional curb cuts on the boulevard side should be allowed unless there are no reasonable alternatives.

Setbacks

Because of the different types, styles, and ages of buildings, there are cases where the setback in one block should not be uniform. In such cases, new construction should match the average setback line of the adjacent or abutting buildings.

Storefronts

On retail frontages, seventy-five per cent (75%) of the façade at the sidewalk level should be permanently assigned to retail space and the remainder to pedestrian entrance(s). The greatest area of the wall mass should be dedicated to storefront windows.

Security Screens

All security screens covering windows, when used, should be transparent and mounted on the inside of the building if possible.

Garage Space Associated with New Construction

Garage Structures should be wrapped in commercial storefronts to minimize the visual impact of the garage to enhance continuity of the streetscape. The liner depth should be a minimum of fifteen (15) feet.

Materials

No reflective or tinted glass should be used; all glass should be clear.

Basic construction materials should be masonry and finished in stucco, however decorative facing using indigenous materials such as oolitic limestone should be permitted.

Miscellaneous: Mechanical, Electrical, etc.

Solar panels and satellite dishes should not be installed so that they face onto Biscayne Boulevard. HVAC and utility meters should be located at a rear or side elevation, or if not possible, be screened from view.

Fences and Walls

Biscayne Boulevard is an urban experience even though there were a number of single and multi-family residences built during the boulevard's historic past.

Because there was a diversity in the types of properties (e.g. residences, commercial buildings, motels), no one standard for the construction of fences and walls will be appropriate for all.

To maintain the urban quality of the boulevard, walls or fences should be constructed of a material common to the main building(s). The location of the fence or wall will depend on pre-existing conditions, and the type of building, and should include other considerations.

The height of the fence or wall should be kept as low as possible on the side fronting Biscayne Boulevard; if security is an issue, the type of fencing or wall should be designed so that there are voids in the design, allowing the building to be seen.

A solid wood or masonry wall, measuring a minimum of six (6) feet should be installed at the rear perimeter of the property where it adjoins a residential district.

Chain link is not permitted for this purpose.

Signage

Over the years, buildings with multiple tenants have chosen to install any and all types of signs. The result is chaotic and produces visual clutter. The guidelines for signage in this document are not intended to create an undesirable plainness or standardization. The boulevard itself reflects many eras and sign styles, however, in any era the signage should be well thought out in terms of the type of its letter; the illumination of the letters; the size of the letters; etc.

For those signs that were installed on the motels and 50's structures that can be stylistically classified as "MiMo" [Miami Modern], the signage should reflect the sense of drama, flamboyance, and prominence which they originally had.

The applicant will be guided by the provisions of the Zoning Code in regard to the allowable area that the sign should occupy given its size, except when exempted through the historic sign conditions codified in Chapter 23 of the Miami City Code. **Each occupant of commercial space fronting onto Biscayne Boulevard should be allowed one sign only.**

Free-standing, pole mounted or monument signs should be discouraged.

Interior-lit cabinet signs should be discouraged. Illumination should come from an external source.

Channel letters (either reverse with internal illumination) or channel letters that are lit from the exterior should be the preferred signage type.

Signage should be permitted on awnings and canopies, but should be restricted to the name of the business only. No product advertising is permitted.

Motel buildings designed in the MiMo style, when neon lighting was popular, should be allowed to repair/restore those signs provided they meet the criteria established for historic signage established in Chapter 23 of the Miami City Code.

Paper signs applied to windows, banners, roof-top balloons or any other attention gaining devices should not be permitted.

Awnings and Canopies

Note: Canopies are a type of covering that extends out from the wall, sheltering a space. Awnings are designed to cover a window(s) or door(s).

The shape of awnings should follow the shape of the window or door head. For example, a window within an arch should use a bell-shaped awning. The material should be canvas.

Outdoor cafés should be encouraged to use table awnings (without commercial advertising); the HEP Board should approve a canopy or a material other than canvas when practical issues require a rainproof condition.

Lighting

Fluorescent lighting on the exterior of a building should be discouraged.

Lighting should be designed to enhance the pedestrian experience which includes the lighting of shop windows.

Buildings should be encouraged to light their facades by exterior up lighting.

Backlit awnings should be discouraged.

III. GUIDELINES FOR ADDITIONS/ ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING STRUCTURES

Additions:

The addition should be recognizable as a product of its own time, as required by the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

In creating these additions, the following should be considered:

1. The addition should be consistent/compatible with the original building's scale, form and massing.
2. New materials should be used but should be compatible with the surrounding buildings and the original building. If the same materials are used, care should be taken to distinguish them from those used on the main building; frequently that is accomplished by the stylization of ornamentation, the use of a different pattern in the fenestration, and by setting the addition back from the main mass of the building.
3. The scale of the new addition should be subordinate to the main structure so it does not overwhelm or affect the character of original building or the street.
4. The height of the new addition should relate to the main structure and to its surroundings.
5. It is always preferable to locate the addition behind the main mass of the original building.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is defined as:

The act or process of returning a property to a state of utility through repair or alterations which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions or features of the property which are significant to its historic, architectural and cultural values.

Before any design options are considered, the objective should be to identify those "character-defining" features that give the property its identity. (For example--- a commercial building should be distinguished by its flat roof, rounded corner entrance, fluted pilasters at the entrance bay, lintels in cast concrete below each of the prominent storefront windows, etc.) By avoiding these features, the rehabilitation process respects the original architecture yet provides necessary adaptations for contemporary or sometimes, a new use.

The following are prominent character-defining features that are prominent on the boulevard:

Courtyards

Courtyards should not be enclosed as they are not only a significant design element, but provide for breezes and shaded areas.

Railings (Balustrades)

Railings should be restored rather than replaced when possible; or accurately replicated in form and material. Where the height of the railing height, or the intervals of the balusters are not consistent with the South Florida Building Code, the design for the extension to raise the height should be minimally intrusive and visually subordinate to the original railing.

Windows

Windows are perhaps the one most important character-defining feature in any building. As such the dimensions of the window openings should not be changed or filled in, and any replacement windows should be as close as possible to the originals in visual appearance.

Open Air Corridors/ Existing Balconies

These open air spaces should remain open.

Roofs

Roof replacement should be executed using the original roofing materials and follow the same slope(s) as the original building.

Surface Ornament/Applied Decoration

Details are especially important to historic buildings. Applied ornament, cast ornament, and any other designed surface treatment should be retained and repaired if necessary. When the ornament is lost, vintage photographs should be useful in designing a stencil or form from which the piece can be recast.

Paint Color

The Miami HEP Board has adopted a policy whereby less intense colors (as evidenced by the first three intensities of a color strip) should be approved administratively. For darker colors, approval should come from the HEP Board.

For buildings designed in the MiMo Style, the Preservation Office maintains a selection of mass and trim colors that were conceived by an interior designer and an authority on MiMo architecture. These colors *should* be selected, and provide a wide spectrum of choices.

Miscellaneous: Mechanical, Electrical, etc.

All mechanical equipment, including air conditioning compressors, electrical boxes, etc. should be located away from the Biscayne Boulevard side of the building.

Acknowledgements:

These guidelines are a collaborate effort between the Historic Preservation staff, the Historic and Environmental Preservation Board, and the MiMo/Biscayne Boulevard Association. We are greatly indebted to all for their support.