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# CHAILLE BLOCK

401-447 N. MIAMI AVENUE

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## 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  
CHAILLE BLOCK  
AS A HERITAGE CONSERVATION ZONING DISTRICT

Prepared by Sarah E. Eaton  
Historic Preservation Planner

Accepted by Arthur King  
Chairman, Heritage Conservation  
Board

Designated by the Miami City Commission

Ordinance No. 10530  
Date 12/15/1988

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**I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

Historic Name:

Chaille Block

Current Name:

Chaille Block

Location:

401-447 North Miami Avenue  
Miami, Florida 33130

Present Owner:

Elias and Zelda Brinberg  
1746 Cleveland Road  
Miami Beach, Florida 33141

Sabina, Jose and Bernard Smith, Trustee  
887 N. Shore Drive  
Miami Beach, Florida 33141

John Frohock, et al  
340 N.E. 129 Street  
North Miami, Florida 33161

Present Use:

Commercial, Residential

Zoning District:

CBD-1/9

HC Zoning Overlay District:

HC-1

Tax Folio Numbers:

01-0107-080-1090

01-0107-080-1100

01-0107-080-1110

Boundary Description of HC Zoning District:

Lots 9, 10, 11, and 12, less the easterly 10 feet of the southerly 50 feet of Lot 9, of Block 78 of the plat of MIAMI NORTH (PB B-41)

HC Zoning Classification:

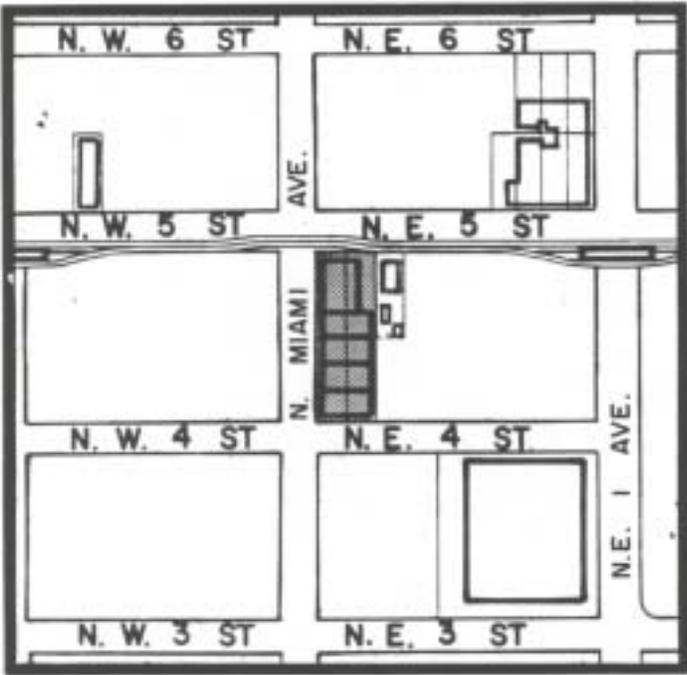
Historic District

# CHAILLE BLOCK

401-447 NORTH MIAMI AVENUE



  
location



  
site plan

## II. SIGNIFICANCE

### Specific Dates:

1914-1919

### Architect:

Unknown

### Statement of Significance:

The Chaille Block is architecturally significant as the only intact commercial streetscape in downtown Miami dating from the second decade of the twentieth century. The visual composition of the five buildings comprising the streetscape represents a fine example of the Masonry Vernacular style of architecture. The buildings comprising the Chaille Block also possess important historical associations with the early commercial development of downtown Miami.

The appearance of the Chaille Block serves to characterize a popular stylistic trend of the pre-1920s in South Florida. The design of the buildings is particularly noteworthy for the adaptation to the area's climate through the utilization of projecting arcades, canopies, and open balconies. The external appearance of the Chaille Block provides a unique record of commercial design in Miami as evidenced through the scale, proportion, and masonry detailing of the building elevations.

The construction of the buildings between 1914 and 1919 reflects the commercial expansion of downtown Miami in a northerly direction during the second decade of the twentieth century. The mixed usage of the buildings reflects a time when residential units and commercial establishments were sheltered under the same structure. The block is also associated with the productive life of William H. Chaille, a pioneer who arrived in Miami from Ocala in 1900. Chaille was active in various civic affairs and served one term on the Miami City Council. He operated the Racket Store, known as the city's first "dimestore," from which he sold tinware, crockery, lace, souvenirs, bathtubs, machinery, and clothing. The two northernmost buildings of the Chaille Block were developed by Chaille, who lived just behind the building in a house facing N.E. 5<sup>th</sup> Street (demolished).

### Relationship to Criteria for Designation:

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

The Chaille Block possesses important historical associations with the early commercial development of downtown Miami.

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

The Chaille Block provides a unique record of commercial design in downtown Miami during the 1910s and is the only intact commercial streetscape from that decade of the twentieth century.

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

The five buildings comprising the Chaille Block represent a fine example of the masonry Vernacular style of architecture.

7. Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship of outstanding quality or which represent a significant innovation or adaptation to the South Florida environment.

The design of the Chaille Block is particularly noteworthy for the adaptation to the area's climate through the use of projecting arcades, canopies, and open balconies.

### III. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The Chaille Block is comprised of five masonry structures constructed during the early years of the twentieth century. The five buildings are adjacent to each other and face the east side of North Miami Avenue between N.E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street and N.E. 5<sup>th</sup> Street. There are two, two-story structures; two, one-story structures; and one, three-story structure. Proceeding from north to south the five buildings comprising the Chaille Block are described as follows:

#### **Chaille Block and Dennis Apartments** **433-447 North Miami Avenue, Miami, Florida**

This building is a two-story masonry structure with a projecting arcade parallel to North Miami Avenue. The "Chaille Block and Denis Apartments" building was constructed circa 1914 in the Masonry Vernacular style of architecture. The principal elevation is divided into five storefronts at the sidewalk level. The projecting arcade in front of the storefronts provides an open balcony of the second story. The second story elevation is characterized by 11 structural bays containing a combination of single and paired window openings. The openings contain a majority of one-over-one windows set within double-hung wooden frames. The storefront entrances are characterized by recessed central entrances flanked by angled display windows. The projecting arcade wraps around the corner toward the north elevation and is supported by masonry piers. The entire first floor was used for commercial purposes while the second floor was used for residential purposes. Atop the second story is a stylized masonry cornice containing shallow brackets. The building is capped by a masonry parapet containing the inscription "Chaille Block 1914." Although there have been minor modifications to the building's architectural fabric, the original design intent is readily perceived. Some of the storefronts contain architectural elements that would allow the remaining storefronts to be restored to their original appearance.

#### **Commercial Building** **425-427 North Miami Avenue, Miami, Florida**

This commercial building is a one-story structure constructed circa 1914. The building's principal elevation is divided into three evenly spaced storefronts that contain recessed entrances flanked by large glass display windows. Originally, the storefronts were entered through a pair of wood and glass double doors. Although two of the storefronts have had their double doors replaced, one set of doors still remains. The building is plain in appearance and is capped by a low masonry parapet wall. The visual composition of the building is representative of the Masonry Vernacular style of architecture. The interiors of the storefronts contain the original pressed metal ceilings throughout. There are also visible signs of the presence of the overhead monitors which provided for natural ventilation and added light. The interiors are simple rectangular spaces on axis with the storefront entrances and extending in an east-west direction.

**George Furniture Company**  
**419 North Miami Avenue, Miami, Florida**

This building was the original home of the George Furniture Company and was constructed in 1919. The visual composition of the building represents an example of the Masonry Vernacular architectural style. The two-story masonry structure is divided into five bays across its principal elevation. The fenestration of the ground floor has been somewhat altered by the placement of a metal overhead door where there was once a storefront. Consequently, there is only one surviving storefront on the ground floor with a recessed entrance flanked by two large glass display windows. The second story contains a single window opening at the center bay and paired window openings within the remaining bays. All the windows of the second floor appear to be set within wooden frames. There is a simple masonry cornice above the lintels of the second floor windows. A masonry parapet wall with an arched pediment caps the building. Over the years, modifications to the interior of the building have obliterated any significant interior spaces. Although the overhead door has been installed at the first story level, the original design intent of the building's exterior is readily perceived.

**Commercial Building**  
**411-415 North Miami Avenue, Miami, Florida**

This commercial building is a one-story structure constructed circa 1914. The building's principal elevation is divided into three evenly spaced storefronts that contain recessed entrances flanked by large glass display windows. Originally, the storefronts were entered through a pair of wood and glass double doors. Although two of the storefronts have had their double doors replaced, one set of doors still remains. The building is plain in appearance and is capped by a low masonry parapet wall. The visual composition of the building is representative of the Masonry Vernacular style of architecture. The interiors of the storefronts contain the original pressed metal interiors of the storefronts contain the original pressed metal ceilings throughout. There are also visible signs of the presence of the overhead monitors which provided for natural ventilation and added light. The interiors are simple rectangular spaces on axis with the storefront entrances and extending in an east-west direction.

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display windows. The second story contains a single window opening at the center bay and paired window openings within the remaining bays. All the windows of the second floor appear to be original to the building and consist of double-hung, one-over-one sash, set within wooden frames. There is a simple masonry cornice above the lintels of the second floor windows. A masonry parapet wall with an arched pediment caps the building. Over the years, modifications to the interior of the building have obliterated any significant interior spaces. Although the overhead door has been installed at the first story level, the original design intent of the building's exterior is readily perceived.

### **Commercial Building**

**411-415 North Miami Avenue, Miami, Florida**

This commercial building is a one-story structure executed in the Masonry Vernacular style of architecture and constructed circa 1919. The building's principal elevation is characterized by two original storefronts that are capped by a fixed projecting canopy suspended by chains from a low masonry parapet. The storefronts contain the original entrances which consist of double wood and glass doors flanked by large glass display windows. The masonry parapet wall is unadorned except for five panels created by a simple masonry band. The interiors of the building contain many original features such as the wooden floors and the original pressed metal ceilings. In all, this is the most unaltered building within the Chaille Block.

### **Dade Apartments**

**401-405 North Miami Avenue, Miami, Florida**

The "Dade" consists of a three-story masonry structure executed in the Masonry Vernacular style and constructed in 1918. The principal elevation, parallel to North Miami Avenue, is characterized by a two-story projecting masonry arcade supported by square masonry posts. The lower portion of the arcade wraps around the corner toward the south elevation. The first floor contains the original storefronts that are entered through double wood and glass doors flanked by large glass display windows. The second and third floors of the principal elevation are characterized by five bays containing a combination of single and paired window openings and door openings. The two-story projecting arcade provides an open balcony for the third floor. The upper floors of the building were entered by a door on the south elevation, which provided stairway access to central corridors above. The upper floors contained apartments that were accessible through the central corridors. A large portion of the window openings retain the original double-hung, one-over-one sash, windows set within wooden frames. A simple masonry cornice wraps around the building and above it is a low parapet wall embellished with a raised arched pediment containing the inscription "1918 Dade Apartments."



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#### IV. PLANNING CONTEXT

##### Present Trends and Conditions:

The Chaille Block is currently deteriorated, and little attention has been paid to the buildings. Many of the storefronts are underutilized.

The Chaille Block is located within close proximity to the new Sports Arena and to a Metromover station. A new federal building is proposed for construction immediately east of the historic buildings. The existing federal courthouse is located south of the block.

The Chaille Block has been identified in the Downtown Miami Development of Regional Impact (DRI) as a historic site. The block has also been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. If listed in the National Register, the property owners would be eligible for a 20 percent investment tax credit for rehabilitation costs.

##### Preservation Incentives:

Because of the unique character of the Chaille Block and its importance to the history of downtown Miami, every effort should be made to find an economically feasible way of preserving these buildings. Because of the proximity of the block to other nearby attractions and transportation sources, the potential for reuse as restaurants and bars appears to be feasible.

Additional incentives should also be identified to encourage the adaptive use.

These conservation objectives can best be achieved by maintaining the present zoning of the property. An HC-1 zoning overlay district will maintain the existing zoning, requiring only the review of physical changes to the property. If incentives are identified later, however, an amendment to the HC overlay should be considered.

## V. HC ZONING ELEMENTS

### Boundaries:

The boundaries of the HC zoning district have been drawn to include all historic buildings on the east side of North Miami Avenue between N.E. 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets.

### Major Exterior Surfaces Subject to Review:

The west (front), north, and south facades shall be considered major exterior surfaces subject to review.

### Major Landscape Features Subject to Review:

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