
MAGIC CITY PARK

6001-6005 NE 2ND AVENUE

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
MAGIC CITY PARK
AS A HISTORIC DISTRICT

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Research, Consultant

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Passed and
Adopted on _____

Resolution No. _____

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Historic Name:

Magic City Park, Magic City Tourist Court

Current Name:

Magic City Trailer Park

Location:

6001–6005 NE 2nd Avenue
Miami, Florida

Present Owner:

Magic City Properties
1320 South Dixie Highway, Suite 811
Coral Gables, FL 33146

Present Use:

Mobile Home Park

Zoning District:

C-1, I

Tax Folio Number:

01-3218-015-0210

Boundary Description:

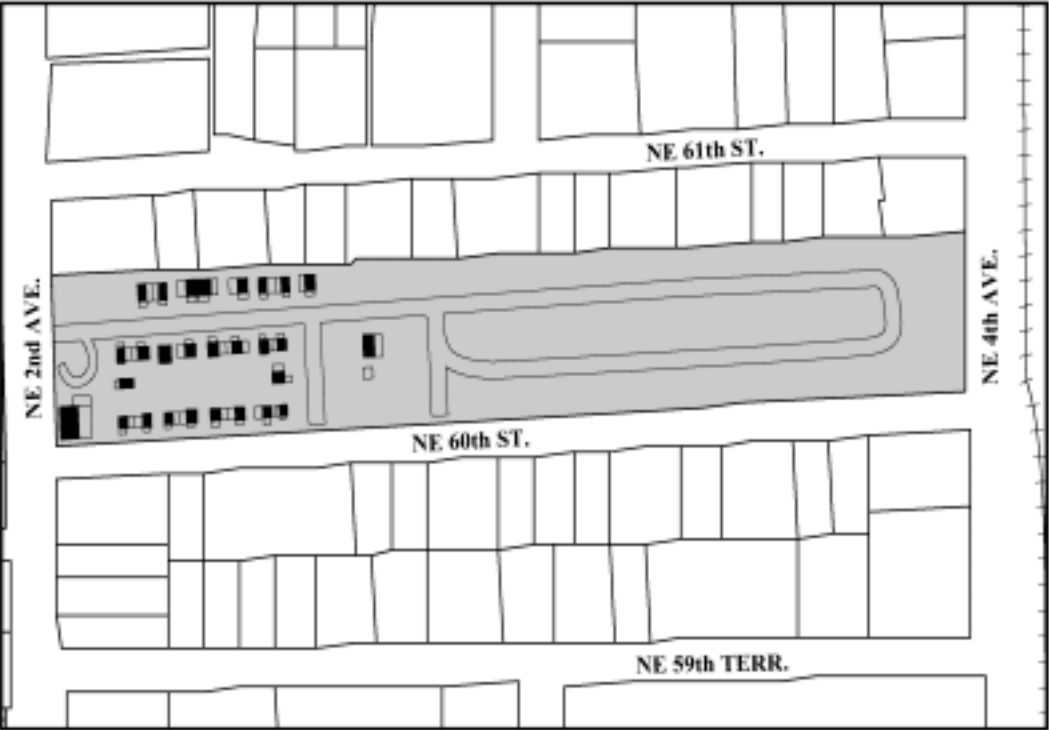
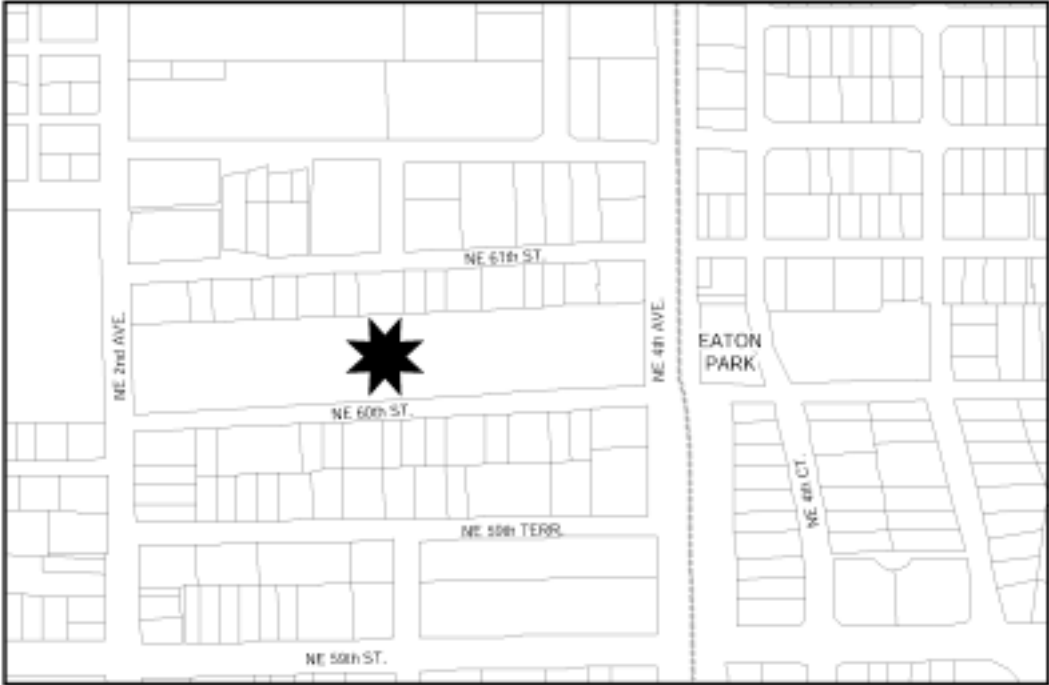
The boundary for the Magic City Park is shown as the shaded area on the attached map entitled "Magic City Park." The boundaries are further described as follows. Beginning 25' east and 304'6" south of northwest corner of the southwest quarter northeasterly parallel with Lemon Avenue 1266'6" to Railroad Avenue south 210' southwesterly along Brown Street 1266'6" north to the point of beginning, of the plat of PIERCE'S SUBDIVISION OF LEMON CITY, as recorded in Plat Book B at Page 43 and Plat Book 2 at Page 21, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County.

Classification:

Historic District

MAGIC CITY PARK

6001-6005 NE 2ND AVENUE



II. SIGNIFICANCESpecific Dates:

1929

Architect:

Unknown

Builder/Contractor:

Unknown

Statement of Significance:

The Magic City Park, a collection of historic tourist cabins, a large, historic Frame Vernacular home/manager's office originally known as the Mikado Inn, and a number of trailers, is architecturally significant as a remarkably intact example of an early twentieth century tourist court in Miami. The cabins are particularly noteworthy for a design that incorporates the burgeoning car culture, as reflected in the attached carports. The manager's office is noteworthy for its detail, materials and craftsmanship, as reflected in its use of oolitic limestone and its parapet with flared ends. The tourist court is historically significant as a reflection of the development trends in Greater Miami during the early twentieth century.

The plan of Magic City Park embodies the distinctive characteristics of an early twentieth century tourist court, including a location removed from the central city, detached cabins set in a row-on-row pattern and an orientation toward car rather than pedestrian traffic. Tourist courts reflect one of the earliest stages in the development of the motel industry. The Magic City Park cabins all have front porches, which reflect an adaptation to the Florida weather. The manager's office itself was once a tourist-home facility or a small hotel around which the cabins were built, following the evolution of motels as a building type as set forth in Jackle, Sculle and Roger's *The Motel in America*.

The Magic City Tourist Court reflects the development trends of Greater Miami during the early twentieth century. Florida had been a haven for tourists as early as the mid-nineteenth century. Greater Miami steadily progressed from wilderness to a resort area. After Dixie Highway opened up in the 1910s, connecting Florida to the northern states, the automobile soon became the preferred method of reaching the City. To help bolster the industry, police "often ignored minor traffic violations by tourists." During the 1920s, Greater Miami became a popular

vacation destination. Travelers in search of adventure, a connection to nature and inexpensive pleasures would set up camp wherever and whenever they chose. In response, communities began delineating specific locations where camping was permitted and equipped the grounds with creature comforts such as toilets and commissaries. The amenities kept evolving until they began to offer weatherproof cabins with individual kitchens. Information gathered from Miami city directories of the 1920s and 1930s show dozens of tourist courts located throughout Greater Miami.

Magic City is located in the section of Miami that is called Lemon City, also known today as Little Haiti. At the time of Magic City Park's construction, the natural wonders preferred by tourist court travelers characterized this area. As a result, no less than four tourist court facilities operated successfully within blocks of each other. However, after peaking in popularity in the 1930s, tourist courts began to fall out of favor. Additionally, Lemon City soon lost much of the natural elements that attracted travelers in the first place. Today, little remains of its rural character. Among the tourist courts in Lemon City only two are still extant, Keystone and Magic City. Many camps soon became permanent homes as the original "tin-can tourists," those who lived out of their cars and trailers, began to take up permanent residence. Many modern-day trailer parks were once tourist courts.

Of the two remaining tourist courts in Lemon City, Magic City best maintains its significant historic elements. The wooded property evokes the natural character of Lemon City popular with "tin-can tourists." Additionally, Magic City Park is an excellent example of the trend from tourist court to trailer park. It is an important part of the City's history.

Relationship to Criteria for Designation:

As stated above, Magic City Park has significance in the historical and architectural heritage of the City of Miami; possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association; and is eligible for designation under the following criteria:

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

Magic City Park is the best remaining intact example of an early tourist court in Miami and exemplifies the early growth and development of accommodations for tourists once found in the City. It is an excellent example of the evolution of a 1920s tourist court from tourist accommodations to a community of permanent homes and trailers.

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

Established in the late 1920s, the plan of Magic City Park typifies one phase in the evolution of twentieth century motels as a building type as set forth in Jackle, Sculle and Roger's *The Motel in America*.

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

The Frame Vernacular cabins all have front porches, which reflect an adaptation to the Florida weather. Additionally, the manager's office incorporates native oolitic limestone on its decorative elements.

III. DESCRIPTION

Present and Original Appearance:

Setting:

Magic City Park is located on the block bound by NE 61st Street to the north, NE 60th Street to the south, NE 4th Avenue to the east and NE 2nd Avenue to the west. The lot occupies the lower two-thirds of the block, which is approximately 265,965 square feet. The main entrance of the tourist court is on the west side at NE 2nd Avenue. The entire lot is surrounded by commercial, residential and industrial structures.

Architectural Description:

Magic City Park is a collection of historic tourist cabins, a large, historic Frame Vernacular home/manager's office and a number of trailers. The one-story, Frame Vernacular cabins all display the same architectural elements. They are rectangular, wood-framed cottages sitting on concrete block pier foundations with lattice infill. The exterior fabric is weatherboard. The cabins have either front-gabled or side-gabled roofs covered in composition shingles. The majority of the windows are original wood, one-over-one, double-hung sash, although some have been boarded. Some of the window openings have been altered with the addition of air conditioning units. Most of the wood doors appear original. Exterior ornamentation on the cabins includes cornerboards, wood window and door surrounds and metal awnings.

There are two different kinds of porches on the cabins. They are all partial-width front porches on concrete slabs with one step, wood supports and wood rails. Some, however, have gabled roofs while others have shed roofs. Some porches have lattice ornamentation, but the design varies from cabin to cabin. All the cabins have shed-roofed carports, some of which connect freestanding buildings. There is one duplex and the rest are single units. The cabins remain in fair condition, although some are in poor condition.

The manager's office is a rectangular, two-story, Frame Vernacular building that sits on a continuous concrete block foundation. The exterior fabric is vertical wood siding. The front-gabled roof is covered in composition shingles and has unusual flared parapets at the northern and southern ends. Some original windows have been replaced with metal, two-light awning windows. Others have been boarded. The chimney is located on the north elevation of the building and is made of native oolitic limestone. Exterior ornamentation on the manager's office includes cornerboards, ornamental bars on the first floor windows and metal awnings. There is a one-story, gable-roofed addition that wraps around the north

and east sides. The addition has a full-width porch with a gable front, square brick supports and a concrete knee wall. The building is in fair condition.

Plan:

Magic City Park is a row-on-row tourist court with a large, Frame Vernacular manager's office located at the southwest corner of the property. The cabins are located at the west end of the property. There are approximately 45 non-historic, metal trailer homes, primarily located at the east end of the property. They are set in a row-on-row pattern following the original tourist court plan.

The streets within the park retain their original configuration. From the entrance at the west end of the property, the main street travels easterly, and then loops around to create a "P" shape. Two small secondary roads extend from the main one. There is also a circular drive at the manager's office just south of the entrance.

Contributing Structures and/or Landscape Features:

The contributing structures for Magic City Park include all wood frame tourist cabins and the manager's office building. Contributing landscape features include all specimen trees on the property, the green spaces surrounding the cabins and the streets within the tourist court, including the circular drive at the entrance.

The trailers located on the property are considered to be noncontributing structures.



Magic City Park
6001-6005 NE 2nd Avenue
South and East Façades
2002



Magic City Park
6001-6005 NE 2nd Avenue
South and West Façades
Circa 1945

Photograph of historic postcard courtesy of Larry Wiggins

IV. PLANNING CONTEXT

Present Trends and Conditions:

Magic City Park is located along NE 2nd Avenue in Lemon City/Little Haiti, in an area where the majority of the historic buildings have either been demolished or significantly altered. Additionally, due to the large industrial buildings now surrounding Magic City Park, the original setting of the area is no longer extant. Most of the Frame Vernacular cabins in Magic City Park are in fair to poor condition, requiring a notable amount of repair.

The property is located in an area identified as a potential location for a new Little Haiti Park. Because the property remains as such an important example of an early twentieth century tourist court in the City of Miami, the rehabilitation and rescue of the buildings should be incorporated into plans for the park.

Preservation Incentives:

Based on the rarity of intact examples of Lemon City's early history and tourist courts within the City of Miami, the preservation of these types of resources should be a priority.

If the property remains in private hands and should the owners wish to invest in the upgrade of the buildings, the increased property tax resulting from a higher assessed value could be deferred for a period of ten years under the Miami-Dade County ad valorem tax incentive ordinance. Additionally, if Magic City Park were substantially rehabilitated and listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the owners would be eligible for a 20% Investment Tax Credit.

V. Bibliography

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