

# **INTERNATIONAL INN 2301 NORMANDY DRIVE DESIGNATION REPORT**



*Postcard, Carnival Motel  
Constructed in 1956, Designed by Melvin Grossman*

**PREPARED BY  
CITY OF MIAMI BEACH PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
JUNE 10, 2019**

**CITY OF MIAMI BEACH**  
**HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATION REPORT**  
**INTERNATIONAL INN, 2301 NORMANDY DRIVE**

**PREPARED BY**

City of Miami Beach Planning Department

**MIAMI BEACH CITY COMMISSION**

Dan Gelber, Mayor

Commissioners:

Mickey Steinberg

Mark Samuelian

Michael Góngora

Kristen Rosen Gonzalez

Ricky Arriola

John Elizabeth Alemán

Jimmy L. Morales, City Manager

**CITY OF MIAMI BEACH HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD**

Stevan Pardo, Chair  
Jack Finglass  
Nancy Liebman  
Rick Lopez  
Scott Needelman  
Kirk Paskal  
John Stuart

**CITY OF MIAMI BEACH PLANNING BOARD**

Brian Elias, Chair  
Michael Barrineau  
Kareem Brantley  
Daniel Veitia  
Mark Meland  
Nick Gelpi  
David Wieder

**CITY OF MIAMI BEACH PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

**AUTHORS**

Debbie Tackett, Chief of Historic Preservation  
Jake Seiberling, Principal Planner

**EDITORS**

Thomas R. Mooney, AICP, Director  
Debbie Tackett, Chief of Historic Preservation  
Jake Seiberling, Principal Planner

**REPORT DESIGN AND PRODUCTION**

Debbie Tackett, Chief of Historic Preservation  
Jake Seiberling, Principal Planner

**CITY OF MIAMI BEACH**  
**HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATION REPORT**  
**INTERNATIONAL INN, 2301 NORMANDY DRIVE**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

I.	REQUEST .....	5
II.	DESIGNATION PROCESS.....	5
III.	RELATION TO ORDINANCE CRITERIA.....	6
IV.	DESCRIPTION OF BOUNDARIES .....	10
V.	PRESENT OWNERS.....	10
VI.	PRESENT USE .....	10
VII.	PRESENT ZONING .....	10
VIII.	HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .....	10
IX.	ARCHITECTURAL BACKGROUND.....	12
X.	BOUNDARY MAP .....	17
XI.	ZONING MAP .....	18
XII.	PLANNING DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS.....	19
XIII.	CURRENT PHOTOGRAPHS .....	20

## I. REQUEST

On May 9, 2017, the Historic Preservation Board directed Planning Department to prepare a Preliminary Evaluation and Recommendation Report relative to the possible designation of the property located at 2301 Normandy Drive as a local historic site.

On October 10, 2017, the Historic Preservation Board reviewed a Preliminary Evaluation and Recommendation Report relative to the possible designation of the International Inn Historic Site located at 2301 Normandy Drive and directed staff to prepare a Formal Designation Report for the International Inn Historic Site.

Pursuant to Section 118-591 of the City Code, on October 12, 2017 the City Commission was advised of the action of the Historic Preservation Board via LTC 488-2017.

## II. DESIGNATION PROCESS

The process of historic designation is delineated in Sections 118-591 through 118-593 in Subpart B of the Land Development Regulations of the City Code (Chapter 118, Article X, Division 4). An outline of this process is delineated below.

Step One: A request for designation is made either by the City Commission, the Historic Preservation Board, other agencies and organizations as listed in the Land Development Regulations of the City Code, or the property owners involved. Proposals for designation shall include a completed application form available from the Planning Department.

Step Two: The Planning Department prepares a preliminary evaluation report with recommendations for consideration by the Board.

Step Three: The Historic Preservation Board considers the preliminary evaluation to determine if proceeding with a designation report is warranted. The designation report is an historical and architectural analysis of the proposed district or site. The report:

- 1) describes the historic, architectural and/or archeological significance of the property or subject area proposed for Historical Site or District designation;
- 2) recommends Evaluation Guidelines to be used by the Board to evaluate the appropriateness and compatibility of proposed Developments affecting the designated Site or District; and
- 3) will serve as an attachment to the Land Development Regulations of the City Code.

Step Four: The City Commission is notified of the Board's decision and the initial boundaries proposed for designation. Within 60 days of the vote of the Historic Preservation

Board to direct the Planning Department to prepare a designation report, the City Commission may, by a five-sevenths vote, deny or modify the proposed request for designation.

Step Five: The designation report is presented to the Historic Preservation Board at a public hearing. If the Board determines that the proposed site or district satisfies the requirements for designation as set forth in the Land Development Regulations of the City Code, the Board transmits a recommendation in favor of designation to the Planning Board and City Commission.

Step Six: The Planning Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed designation, and shall consider the proposed historic designation as an amendment to the Land Development Regulations of the City Code and, subsequently, transmit its recommendation to the City Commission.

Step Seven: The City Commission may adopt an amendment to the Land Development Regulations of the City Code by a five-sevenths majority vote, which thereby designates the Historic Preservation Site or Historic District after one (1) public hearing for a parcel of land less than ten (10) contiguous acres or after two (2) public hearings for a parcel of land that is more than ten (10) contiguous acres.

### **III. RELATION TO ORDINANCE CRITERIA**

1. In accordance with Section 118-592 in the Land Development Regulations of the City Code, eligibility for designation is determined on the basis of compliance with the listed criteria set forth below.
  - (a) The Historic Preservation Board shall have the authority to recommend that properties be designated as historic buildings, historic structures, historic improvements, historic landscape features, historic interiors (architecturally significant public portions only), historic sites or historic districts if they are significant in the historical, architectural, cultural, aesthetic or archeological heritage of the city, the county, state or nation. Such properties shall possess an integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling or association and meet at least one (1) of the following criteria:
    - (1) Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the history of the city, the county, state or nation;
    - (2) Association with the lives of persons significant in the city's past history;
    - (3) Embody the distinctive characteristics of an historical period, architectural or design style or method of construction;
    - (4) Possesses high artistic values;

- (5) Represent the work of a master, serve as an outstanding or representative work of a master designer, architect or builder who contributed to our historical, aesthetic or architectural heritage;
  - (6) Have yielded, or are likely to yield information important in pre-history or history;
  - (7) Be listed in the National Register of Historic Places;
  - (8) Consist of a geographically definable area that possesses a significant concentration of sites, buildings or structures united by historically significant past events or aesthetically by plan or physical development, whose components may lack individual distinction.
- (b) A building, structure (including the public portions of the interior), improvement or landscape feature may be designated historic even if it has been altered if the alteration is reversible and the most significant architectural elements are intact and repairable.
2. The proposed International Inn Historic Site is eligible for historic designation as it complies with the criteria as specified in Section 118-592 in the Land Development Regulations of the City Code outlined above.

**Staff finds that the proposed International Inn Historic Site located at 2301 Normandy Drive possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling or association for the following reasons:**

The construction of the hotel building located at 2301 Normandy Drive in 1956, two years following the end of WWII, was clearly significant in the successful development historic of the City of Miami Beach. The proposed historic site still possesses the integrity of its original location at 2301 Normandy Drive, despite over sixty years of hurricanes, storms and economic downturns. Further, the building retains many of its historic materials, details and workmanship as well as the character of its 1950s period of construction.

- (a) Further, staff finds the proposed historic district to be eligible for historic designation and in conformance with the designation criteria for the following reasons:
- (1) **Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the history of the city, the county, state or nation.**

The construction of the International Inn directly reflects the turn of events in America following World War II (WWII). The advent of reliable and

affordable mass-produced automobiles and air transportation and the advent of air-conditioning during the early mid-century period, made year-round resort living in South Florida highly desirable and practical, as well as within the reach of America's middle class. Unprecedented development followed the American success in WWII when major new resort hotels and residential buildings were constructed. Development during this time was on a scale never before seen in South Florida. This event redefined the evolution of resort architecture in Miami Beach and Florida.

Furthermore, Miami Beach played a significant role as a training site and redistribution center for the U.S. Army-Air Forces during World War II. After the war, many veterans who had trained as recruits in Miami Beach returned here to vacation or to make their home.

(3) **Embody the distinctive characteristics of a historical period, architectural or design style or method of construction.**

The International Inn embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Post War Modern style of architecture, the style of choice used by successful developers in the period that followed World War II in Miami Beach as well as other areas of South Florida. The structure incorporates cubic massing, dramatic angles, large expanses of glass, pipe columns, large roof overhangs, decorative breeze block elements, and exterior catwalks and outdoor stairways. Further, its location adjacent to the 79th Street Causeway and exuberant neon roof signage facing Biscayne directly reflect the Post War automobile culture.

(4) **Possesses high artistic values.**

The International Inn, with its dramatic use of glass, acute angles and sweeping roof line, exemplifies high artistic values. A 2002 exhibit launched by the Municipal Art Society at the Urban Center Galleries on Madison Avenue entitled, "Beyond the Box – Mid-Century Modern Architecture in Miami and New York," which featured the International Inn, underscores the high artistic value of the architecture.

(5) **Represent the work of a master, serve as an outstanding or representative work of a master designer, architect or builder who contributed to our historical, aesthetic or architectural heritage.**

The International Inn was designed by Melvin Grossman, a prominent local architect who also designed the Seville, Deauville and Doral Beach hotels along Collins Avenue.



3. The historic preservation board shall consider if the historic buildings, historic structures, historic improvements, historic landscape features, historic interiors (architecturally significant public portions only), historic sites, or historic districts comply with the sea level rise and resiliency review criteria in Chapter 133, Article II, as applicable, pursuant to Section 118-592.

(a) Criteria for ordinances, resolutions, or recommendations:

- (1) **Whether the proposal affects an area that is vulnerable to the impacts of sea level rise, pursuant to adopted projections.**

The possible historic site area affects a property that is vulnerable to the impacts of sea level rise.

The adopted projections are the following:

At Mean High Water, Sea Level Rise is projected to be (NGVD Elevations):

- 2.31 to 2.64 by 2030 (near-term)
- 2.98 to 3.98 by 2060 (mid-term)
- 4.39 to 6.89 by 2100 (long-term)

ESTIMATED from LIDAR and 1995 Partial Building Records indicates the following for the property located at 2301 Normandy Drive:

- Average Existing Crown of Road – 4.96 NGVD
- Future Crown of Road – 5.26 NGVD
- Average Existing Edge of Pavement – 4.26 NGVD
- Future Edge of Pavement – 5.06 NGVD
- Average Ground Elevation – 4.46 NGVD

The estimated Lidar data indicates the subject property has a ground elevation that is currently at a level below the future crown of road elevation.

- (2) **Whether the proposal will increase the resiliency of the City with respect to sea level rise.**

In order for the historic site designation to increase the resiliency of the City, substantial alterations, adaptive re-use and/or redevelopment of the property will likely be required. A suitable level of flexibility will be necessary in reviewing applications for Certificates of Appropriateness for alterations, demolition, additions and new construction in order for the properties to meet current and future Building Codes and the City's resiliency standards.

- (3) **Whether the proposal is compatible with the City's sea level rise mitigation and resiliency efforts.**

In order for the historic site designation to be compatible with the City's sea level rise mitigation and resiliency efforts, substantial alterations, adaptive re-use and/or redevelopment of the subject properties will likely be required. A suitable level of flexibility will be necessary in reviewing applications for Certificates of Appropriateness for alterations, demolition, additions and new construction in order for the property to meet current and future Building Codes and to be consistent with the City's resiliency initiatives.

#### **IV. DESCRIPTION OF BOUNDARIES**

The proposed historic site is located at 2301 Normandy Drive on Lots 15 thru 18, Block 40 of Miami View Section – Isle of Normandy Part 3, as recorded in Plat Book 40, Page 33 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida. **(MAP 1)**

#### **V. PRESENT OWNERS**

The present owner of the property is Tsay International Inc.

#### **VI. PRESENT USE**

Hotel (Legal Non-Conforming)

#### **VII. PRESENT ZONING**

The established zoning district within the boundaries of proposed historic site is as follows:

RM-1 Residential Multifamily, Low Intensity

Please refer to the zoning map for more detailed information. **(MAP 2)**

#### **VIII. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

In 1923, Henri Levy purchased the area which would become Normandy Isles from Carl Fisher. Originally named Meade-Warner Island, the tract comprised 450 acres on two natural mangrove islands in Biscayne Bay. Much of the land was initially under water and for over two years, huge dredges pumped up the bay bottom to create additional land mass. In 1925, Henri Levy's Normandy Beach Properties Corporation began development of Normandy Isles. Isle of Normandy, the southernmost of the two islands shown in the photograph on the proceeding page, required two years to clear land, construct seawalls and dredge. The final and most challenging phase of the project was dredging and filling a swampy land mass directly to the west extending the islands further in Biscayne Bay.



*Aerial photograph, 1923*



*Aerial photograph, 1929*

Levy then worked on realizing his dream of connecting his Miami Beach properties to the mainland with a causeway across Biscayne Bay linking North Beach to mainland Miami's growing northern subdivisions. The Miami Beach City Council endorsed the causeway project in December 1925, making it possible to proceed with preliminary work. The causeway, completed in 1929, can be seen in the photograph above.

It is called the 79th Street Causeway for its western connection at 79th Street in Miami; at its eastern end it connects to 71st Street on Normandy Isle and Miami Beach. When completed in 1929, this causeway was a much needed new automotive link across Biscayne Bay, with the County Causeway farther south.

Although conceived, planned and themed in the 1920's, and initially developed in the 1920's and 30's, Normandy Isles was largely urbanized in the post-World War II period.



View looking west, 79<sup>th</sup> Street Causeway, 1955

## IX. ARCHITECTURAL BACKGROUND

### Post War Modern

The Post War Modern style of architecture in South Florida, which spans from approximately 1945 to the mid-1960s, is often interchangeably referred to as Miami Modern (MiMo) or Mid-Century Modern, the latter being a more nationally recognized term. Regardless of name, the historic design impact of this mid-20th century style can be seen today throughout South Florida and beyond. In order to better understand the Post War Modern or style of architecture, it is important to view this architectural movement in the context of the historical, political, social, economic, and technological changes that were taking place during this period worldwide, nationwide, and locally.

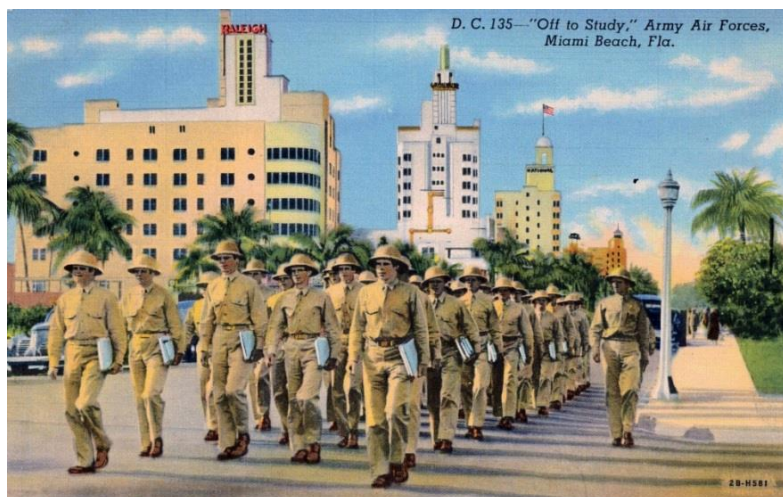
The United States emerged as a world power following World War II. After years of deprivation during the Great Depression and wartime, the end of the war brought a sense of joyful optimism to many Americans. The Baby Boom was the result of the eagerness to get this new generation underway, while the legislation of the G.I. Bill helped to provide education and prosperity for war veterans.

Miami Beach played a significant role as a training site and redistribution center for the U.S. Army-Air Forces during World War II. The immediate availability of the City as a training center in 1942 is credited with reducing the length of the war effort by six to eight months and saving the government \$6 million in building costs.<sup>1</sup> After the war, many veterans who had trained as recruits in Miami Beach returned here to vacation or to make their home. This, in addition to the Cuban Revolution in 1959, which prompted an unprecedented mass immigration of Cubans to Miami, resulted in a need for housing, retail, and services to accommodate the different growing segments of the population increased.

---

<sup>1</sup> "Army Life on Beach in Second Year," Miami Herald, 19 February 1943.





Postcard depicting Army Air Force soldiers marching on Collins Avenue.

America redirected its enormous industrial capacity from the defense economy back to the domestic economy following the war. There was no longer a perceived need for rationing, conserving, and recycling. The economy was thriving and gave rise to the growing middle class. New electric appliances and gadgets with push buttons began to appear in many households. Air conditioning was introduced as a modern convenience that tremendously added to the

comforts of living in Florida. It became especially important because air conditioning allowed for a year-round economy and freed architects from having to adapt their buildings to the hot, humid climate.

It was the beginning of the space age. The first Sputnik was launched in 1957. Rivalry with the U.S.S.R. led to the space race. Futuristic, flamboyant, fun design elements showed up in cars, furniture, and buildings. Automobiles sprouted wings and depicted rocket motifs. The small globe with protruding antennae reminiscent of the Sputnik became a common design detail. Cheese holes, woggles and boomerangs began to appear in architecture everywhere in Miami Beach.

After a hiatus in construction due to World War II, the Post War Modern style picked up where Art Deco left off with the added influences of a booming Post War economy, new technologies, the prevalence of the sophisticated, affordable, and reliable new automobiles, and a feeling of national optimism. The local expression of this style was dubbed Miami Modern or MiMo by the Greater Metropolitan Miami area's Urban Arts Committee in about 2004.

From about 1948 to 1965, the widely popular Post War Modern style was frequently applied to hotels, commercial buildings, apartment houses, and single family homes throughout Miami Beach. Post War Modern style buildings generally made an extensive use of glass and poured concrete. They often mixed two or more textured surfaces together (i.e. stucco with stone, brick, or mosaic tile as well as contrasting smooth and patterned stucco surfaces). The style featured such dramatic elements as accordion-like folded plate roofs and walls, acute as well as subtle angles, dynamic parabolas, delta wing shapes, sweeping curved walls, and soaring pylons. Other commonly occurring design elements and materials that were added to the architectural vocabulary of the Post War Modern style structures included: brise soleil, architectural accents with exotic themes and often wall sculptures in relief, brick or stone faced feature areas, cast concrete decorative panels with geometric patterns, and a remarkable use of architectural 'breeze block' in a wide variety of design patterns lending itself so well to natural air flow in this tropical environment.

The hotels and motels in the Post-War Modern style often incorporated an expansive use of glass curtain walls, cantilevered asymmetrical roofs, leaping arches, dramatic fin walls, floating planes, architectural bridges, and grand entrance porte cocheres. Primary facades were sometimes graced with bold neon signs or logos in order to catch the eye of passing motorists. Sometimes, "sky signs" were mounted on rooftop features or on parapet walls. Color was an essential ingredient of signage. The fenestration was often highlighted with boxed or corner windows, as well as continuous ribbon windows and eyebrows. The hotels often took on exotic or futuristic forms, using architecture as advertising in an effort to outdo one another in competing for business.

## **Architect**

**Melvin Grossman** (1914-2003) was an associate with Albert Anis in 1950 and was also a protégé of master Post War Modern architect Morris Lapidus. In fact, all three collaborated on the Nautilus Hotel (1825 Collins Avenue) in 1950<sup>2</sup> and a year later on the Biltmore Terrace Hotel (8701 Collins Avenue).<sup>3</sup> Grossman and Lapidus partnered in designing the DiLido Hotel (One Lincoln Road) in 1953.

According to MiMo authorities Nash and Robinson, Grossman began as an engineer working for Lapidus and then, after turning down an offer to become partners, struck out on his own to become Lapidus' biggest imitator.<sup>4</sup>

Influenced by both Anis and Lapidus, Grossman would go on to design the Seville Hotel (2901 Collins Avenue) in 1955, the 593-room Deauville (6701 Collins Avenue) in 1957, and the Doral Beach Hotel (4833 Collins Avenue) in 1962. He also exported the MiMo style in designing the original Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas and the Acapulco Princess Hotel in Mexico.<sup>5</sup>

## **2301 Normandy Drive – International Inn**

The International Inn is located at the western edge of Normandy Isles immediately adjacent to the 79<sup>th</sup> Street Causeway. This location was likely strategically chosen to capture motorist's attention as they were traveling eastward from the City of Miami into Miami Beach. The property consists of three lots and contains a surface parking lot on the eastern portion of the site and a pool deck along the western portion facing Biscayne Bay.

The International Inn has an I-shape plan, with the central guest room bar flanked on the north by an additional guest room wing and on the south by a lobby and restaurant. Originally named the Carnival Motel, the existing 2-story building was constructed in 1956 and designed by architect Melvin Grossman in the Post War Modern style of architecture. City Building Department records indicate the property was originally built as an Apartment-Motel, with 34 1-bedroom, 2-bathroom apartments and 3 hotel rooms, and also contained a lobby and coffee shop.

---

2 M. Lapidus, Too Much Is Never Enough; Rizzoli, 1996, p.150; also "Hotel Roosevelt Plans Gala Birthday Opening, *Miami Herald*, Nov. 19, 1950

3 Building Permit Card #27133 and Plans #37045, Miami Beach Building Department.

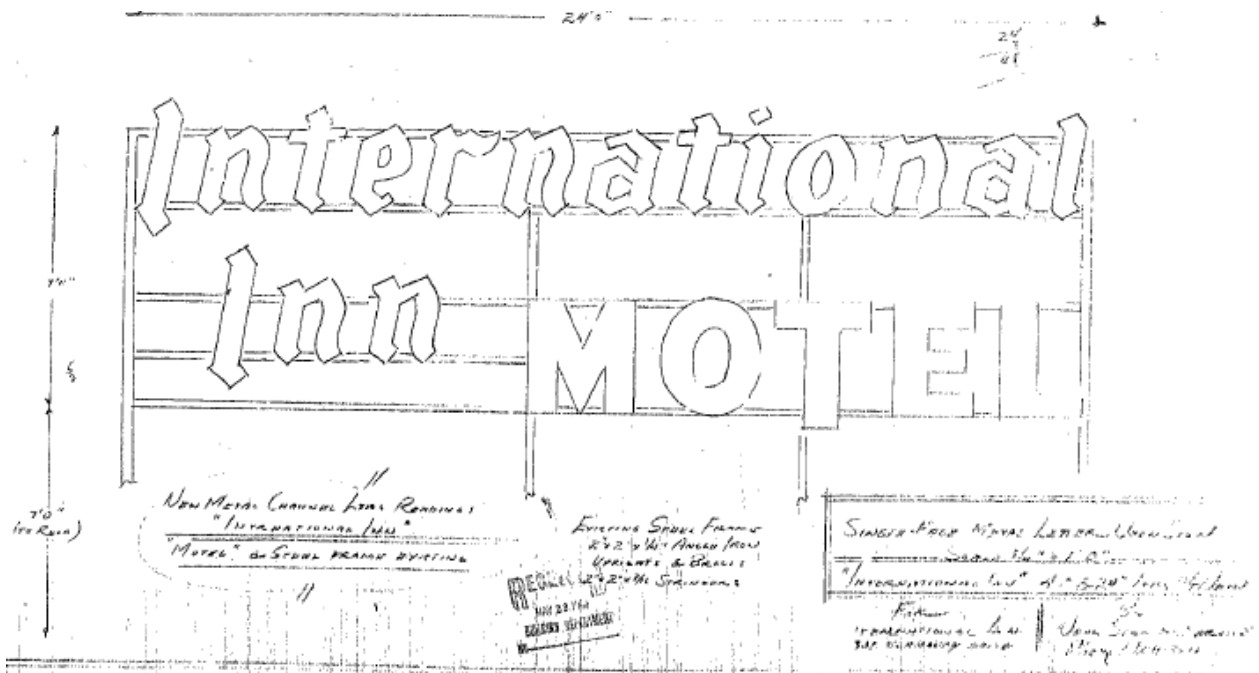
4 Nash and Robinson, op. cit., p.73.

5 Obituary, *Miami Herald*, November 12, 2003, p.4B.



Carnival Motel Postcard, undated

The name of the motel was changed to the International Inn in 1963, as evidenced in Building Permit #69448 for the new roof signage. While the signage has been modified to remove the word 'Motel', it remains today.



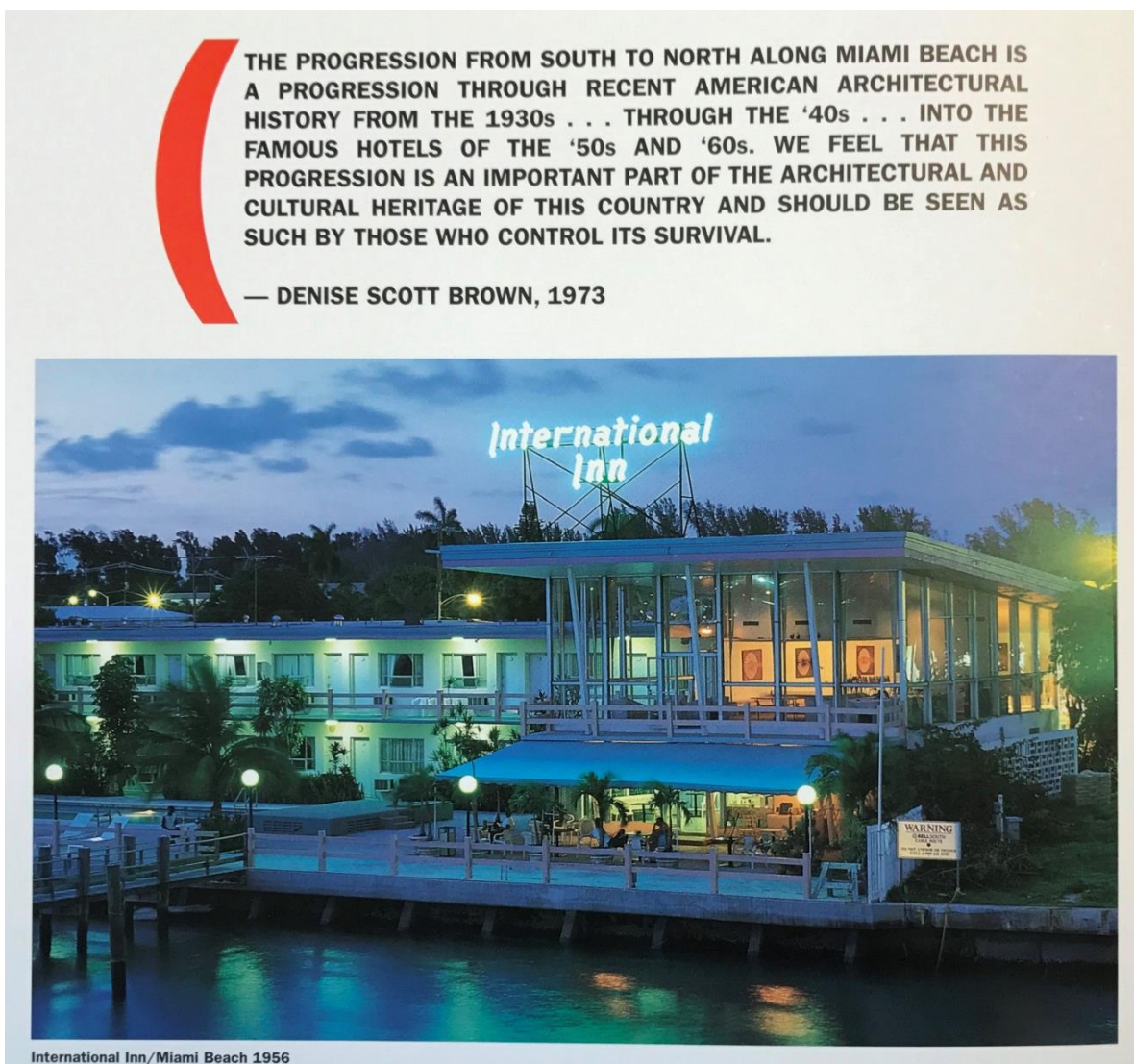
Sign Elevation, Permit #69448, 1963



The existing building and site appear to be almost entirely consistent with the original design. Existing significant architectural features indicative of the Post War Modern style of architecture include exterior walkways and second floor catwalks accessing guest rooms, breeze block details, overhanging roof eaves, exuberant neon roof signage and a dramatic 2-story lobby with floor to ceiling glass, angled columns and sweeping roof structure.

A 40-year recertification (BR160143\_40YR2016-00130) approved on August 10, 2016, indicates the building is in good structural condition.

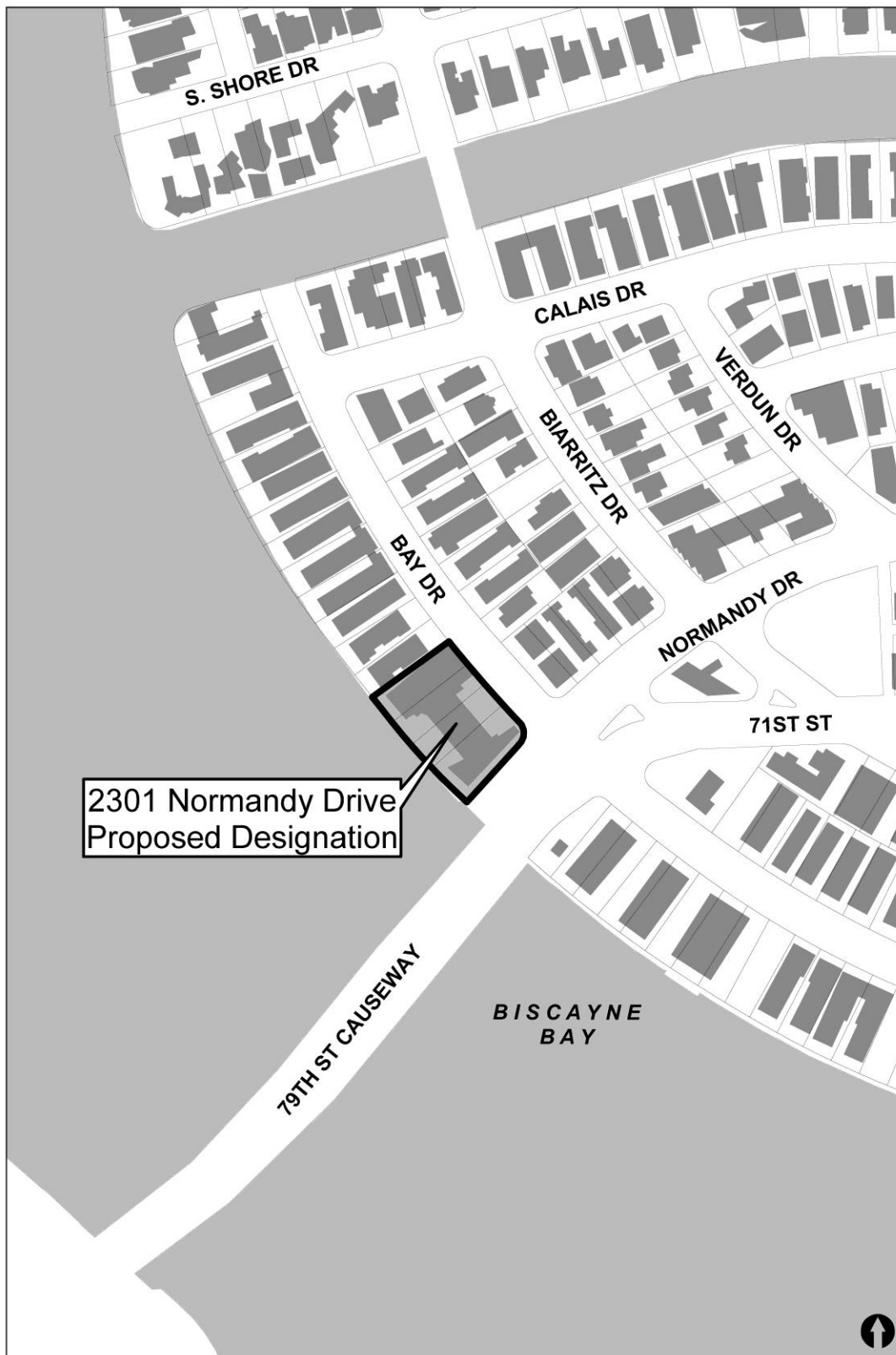
The International Inn was featured in 'Beyond the Box, Mid-Century Modern Architecture in Miami and New York', an exhibit curated by the Urban Arts Committee of Miami Beach and the Municipal Arts Society. The exhibit was showcased at the Municipal Arts Society of New York Urban Galleries between March 13th and May 8, 2002.



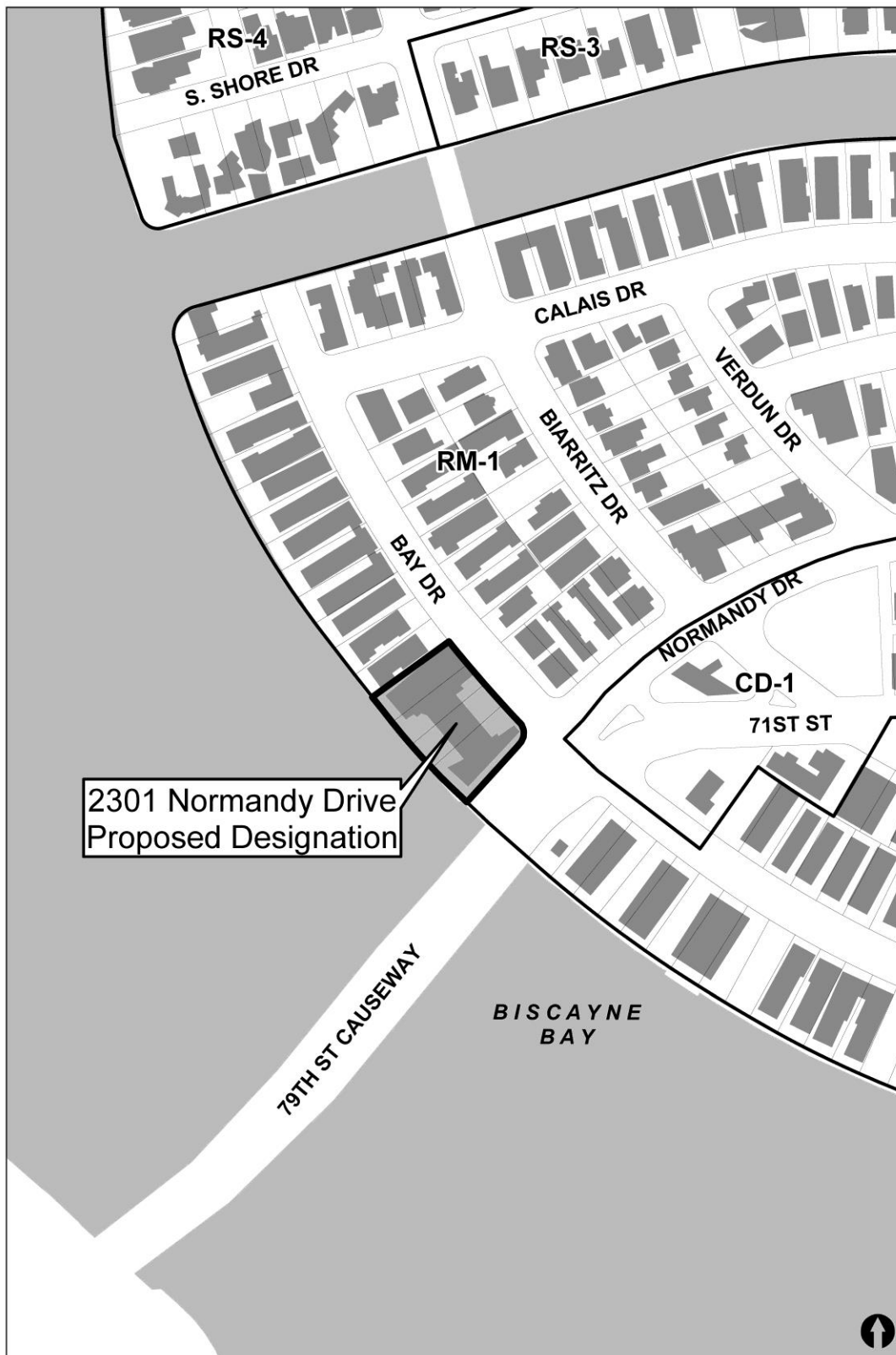
*Beyond the Box, Mid-Century Modern Architecture in Miami and New York' Exhibition Catalog 2002, Page 14*



### MAP 1: Proposed International Inn Historic Site Boundaries



**MAP 2: Zoning Districts within and surrounding the proposed International Inn Historic Site.**



## **X. PLANNING DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **Criteria for Designation:** The Planning Department finds the proposed International Inn Historic Site to be in compliance with the Criteria for Designation listed in Section 118-592 in the Land Development Regulations of the City Code.
2. **Site Boundaries:** The Planning Department recommends that the boundaries of the historic site consist of the entire property located on Lots 15 thru 18, Block 40 of Miami View Section – Isle of Normandy Part 3, as recorded in Plat Book 40, Page 33 of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida. **(MAP 1)**
3. **Areas Subject to Review:** The Planning Department recommends that the areas subject to review shall include all exterior building elevations and public interior spaces, site and landscape features.
4. **Review Guidelines:** The Planning Department recommends that a decision on an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness shall be based upon compatibility of the physical alteration or improvement with surrounding properties and where deemed applicable in substantial compliance with the following:
  - a. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, as revised from time to time;
  - b. Other guidelines/policies/plans adopted or approved by resolution or ordinance by the City Commission;
  - c. All additional criteria as listed under Sections 118-564(b), 118-564(c) and 133-50(a) in the Land Development Regulations of the City Code;
  - d. A suitable level of flexibility will be necessary in reviewing applications for Certificates of Appropriateness for alterations, demolition, and additions in order to ensure the revitalization and resiliency of this unique and low-lying area of the City;
  - e. City of Miami Beach Design Guidelines as adopted by the Joint Design Review/Historic Preservation Board on October 12, 1993, amended June 7, 1994, as may be revised from time to time.

## XI. CURRENT PHOTOGRAPHS



2301 Normandy Drive, view looking northeast, 2018



2301 Normandy Drive, view looking northeast, 2018





2301 Normandy Drive, view looking northwest, 2018



2301 Normandy Drive, lobby view looking southwest, 2018



2301 Normandy Drive, lobby view looking northeast, 2018



2301 Normandy Drive, mezzanine view looking northeast, 2018