

Explore the North Beach Resort Historic District

Miami Beach's North Beach Resort Historic District was designated historic by the City of Miami Beach Commission in 2004. This district spans from just south of 63 Street up to 71 Street and is bounded to the east by the Atlantic Ocean and to west by Collins Avenue. Seven (7) of the 11 contributing historic properties within the district contain mid-20th century structures, all built between 1947 and 1957.

History

On March 26, 1915, Miami Beach was incorporated as a Town, with a northern boundary set between today's 46-47 Streets. Miami Beach was re-incorporated as a City on May 1, 1917 with the same boundaries. Later, as a result of a lengthy debate over County ownership of the beachfront road, the City limits were extended three miles northward to their present location at 87 Terrace on July 1, 1924.

Meanwhile, Carl Fisher's land development companies had acquired all the oceanfront land south of present-day 69 Street to about 49 Street. This stretch of empty oceanfront land was subdivided by Fisher along with the Lummus Brothers and the Collins family in the early 1920s.

By the mid 1920s, the Deauville Casino, constructed at 6701 Collins Avenue and the Gulfstream Apartments located at roughly 6039 Collins Avenue were almost completely isolated in the area. Apparently seclusion appealed to some in the social set, especially during Prohibition. Within a few years, two

private clubs also appeared in this area: the Bath Club at 5937 Collins Avenue and the Surf Club at 9011 Collins Avenue (in what is now the Town of Surfside).

The Deauville Casino, with its concept of a grand hotel and entertainment center on a large oceanfront site, set the precedent for the glamorous resort hotels that appeared in the North Beach Resort Historic District after World War II. The Deauville Casino, however, was built ahead of its time and the isolation of this area ultimately doomed its attempts to attract a large socialite crowd. During World War II, the old Deauville was used by the Coast Guard for anti-invasion beach patrol, and served briefly as quarters for Army officers. It was later condemned. Only 30 years old and never recovering to its former glory, the original Deauville Casino was demolished in 1956 to make way for the new Deauville Hotel, designed by Melvin Grossman.

Following World War II, there were large tracts of land in this area of North Beach that still remained undeveloped; they were the perfect sites for new, glamorous resort hotels that were in popular demand. The booming post war economy as well as the retooling of America's war plants to peacetime industries gave a growing middle class more leisure time, expendable income, and affordable automobiles; these factors brought a flood of tourists to Miami Beach. Other new technologies (such as air conditioning, advanced structural systems, highly developed glass and glass framing components, and the increasingly sophisticated use of aluminum as a building material) gave rise to a new type of architecture, known as Post War Modern. The adaptation of this style to the local tropical resort environment is known as Miami Modernism, or MiMo.

Several of these resort hotels sought to play a significant role in the booming entertainment industry.

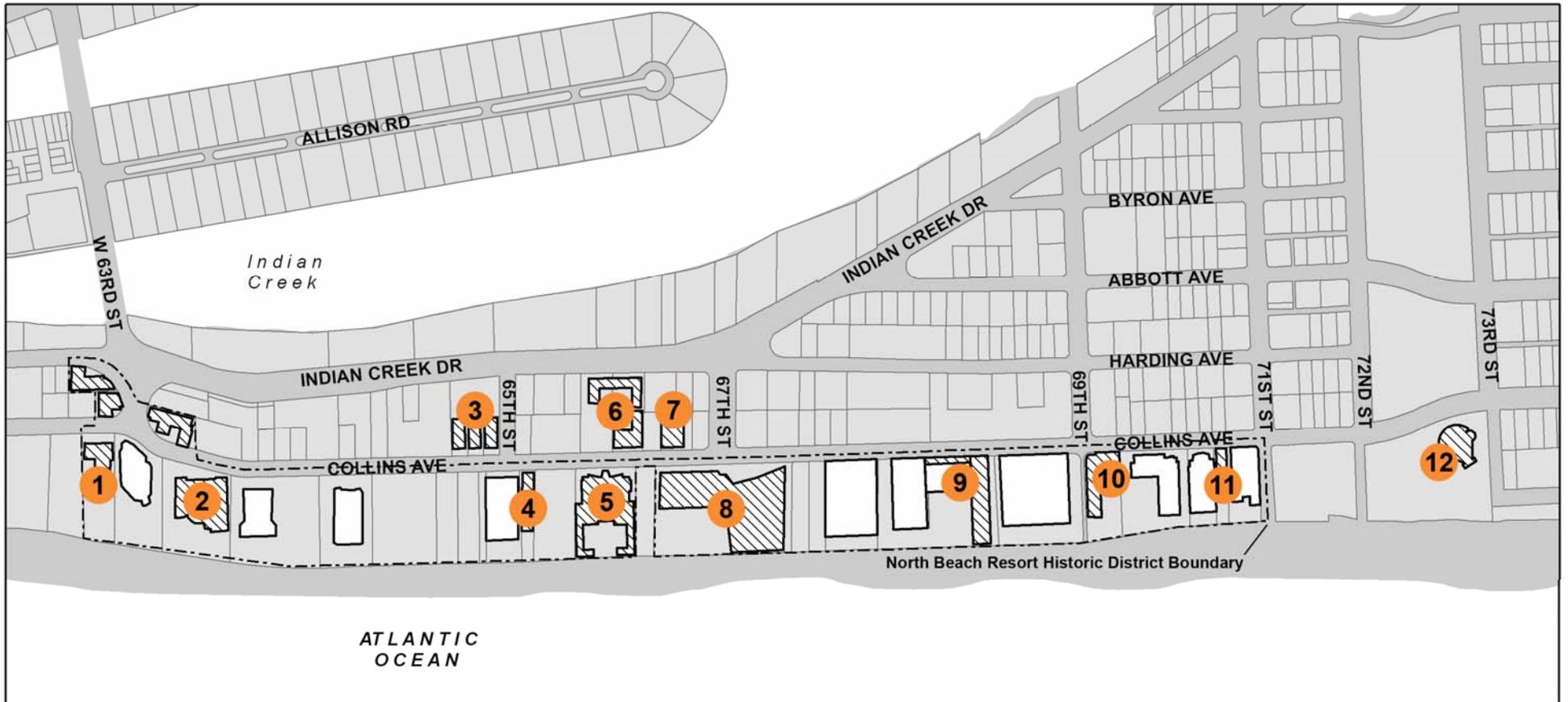
They offered the finest in live entertainment to draw their guests as well as local residents. The new Deauville Hotel, in particular, became a magnet for major entertainment artists. On February 16, 1964, Ed Sullivan hosted the Beatles in a live telecast via satellite from the Napoleon Room of the hotel on his widely watched evening television show. The hotel was also a favored venue for many notable entertainers of the 1950s and 1960s including Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., Dean Martin, Tony Bennett, Bing Crosby, and Judy Garland. Other post war hotels that provided a meaningful role in the entertainment industry in Miami Beach were the Carillon, Casablanca and Sherry Frontenac as well as the famous Fontainebleau and Eden Roc Hotels located to the south within the Morris Lapidus / Mid 20th Century historic district.

Architecture

The resort hotels usually featured grand lobbies, cocktail lounges, supper clubs, themed restaurants, ballrooms, banquet halls, retail shops, meeting rooms, spa facilities, enormous swimming pools, expansive outdoor sun decks, and a sweeping array of private beach cabanas. This new American plan provided everything for a total guest experience without the need to leave the hotel for the duration of the visitor's stay.

This collection of buildings incorporates expansive use of glass curtain walls, cantilevered asymmetrical roofs, arches, dramatic fin walls, floating planes, and grand entrance porte cocheres. Primary facades are sometimes graced with bold neon signs, and sky signs were mounted on rooftop features. These hotels and apartment buildings took on futuristic forms, using architecture as advertising in an effort to outdo one another in competing for business. This new architecture celebrated the satisfaction of announcing that the Post World War II era in Miami Beach and America had arrived.

MAP



Historic MiMo Buildings - in and around the North Beach Resort Historic District



1 Comfort Inn (Allison Hotel)
6261 Collins Avenue
A. Herbert Mathes, 1951

The front elevation of this hotel features a fabulous projecting concave wall with a fluted stucco finish and boxed ribbon windows. The curved wall is supported by columns with floating planes. A dramatic porte-cochere features neon signage in the spirit of the post war automotive age.



4 Mimosa Hotel (Brazil Hotel)
6525 Collins Avenue
Albert Anis, 1953

This 4-story hotel features a simple rectilinear concrete and stucco frame which divides the building into 3 bays. The front entry porch is detailed with mosaic tiles on the walls and decorative columns with an abstract design.



2 Casablanca Hotel
6345 Collins Avenue
Roy France, 1950

Features a 2-level lobby area with an L-shaped tower of guest rooms above, ribbon windows with continuous eyebrows and corner windows with wrapping eyebrows. This hotel was a landmark in exotic fantasy. It adapted to the post war automotive age with huge neon signage and a porte-cochere supported by four turbaned figures (telamons).



5 Sherry Frontenac Hotel
6565 Collins Avenue
Henry Hohausler, 1947

Features twin 9-story towers connected by a central 3-story lobby. The saw-tooth shaped plan of the towers provide many of the rooms with views of the ocean and allow for maximum sunlight. Guests are treated to a sweeping porte-cochere upon arrival.



3 Broadwater Beach Apartments
6490—6498 Collins Avenue
August Swarz, 1950

This grouping of 3 complementary garden-apartment buildings is an excellent example of Post War Modern style as applied to low-scale residential structures. Notice the mermaid who is being chased by 3 dolphins on the parapet wall. This is one of several MiMo buildings on this tour that is not within the historic district.



6 Hotel Rowe
6600 Collins Avenue
David T. Ellis, 1939

In 1956, Carlos Schoepl designed the great gabled addition that wedged itself in the old Hotel Rowe and transformed it from a Streamline Modern style hotel to a Post War Modern style motel. The merging of these two different styles of architecture is an interesting example of preserving the past while embracing the future.

Historic MiMo Buildings - in and around the North Beach Resort Historic District



7

Retail Building

6616—6638 Collins Avenue
Lester Avery, 1948

Features an exuberant parabolic arch which was added sometime between 1957 and 1958. Although not original to the building, the arch responds to the evolution of Post War Modern designs and has acquired an architectural significance of its own over time.



8

Deauville Hotel

6701 Collins Avenue
Melvin Grossman, 1958

This 12-story hotel features a sweeping frontage along Collins Avenue. A vertical panel of blue porcelain tile accentuates the height of the tower, and contrast with the horizontal eyebrows shading the guestrooms. The Deauville became a landmark for more than just its architecture; it was also the site of the Beatles' second performance in the U.S.



9

Carillon Hotel

6801 Collins Avenue
Norman M. Giller, 1957

One of the first all-inclusive resort hotels in North Beach. Giller repeated the original folded-plate or accordion design detail on the roof of the porte-cochere as well as the front façade of the ballroom wing. The top of the hotel features neon signage and four great circular openings (originally intended for a bell carillon but never completed).



10

Golden Sands Hotel

(Bombay Hotel)
6901 Collins Avenue
Norman M. Giller, 1951

The front elevation features a dramatic fin wall for neon signage and a rounded corner wall with a scalloped surface between two continuous eyebrows. A framed wall with vertical concrete fins was located above five storefronts facing Collins Avenue.



11

Normandy Plaza Hotel

6979 Collins Avenue
L. Murray Dixon, 1936

Designed in the Art Deco style, this hotel features beautiful bas relief in the central vertical panels on the front elevation as well as pierced masonry grilles of the roof parapet wall. The Normandy Plaza served as military quarters for the U.S. Army-Air Forces during World War II.



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North Beach Bandshell

7251 Collins Avenue
Norman M. Giller, 1961

The bandshell's streamlined stage proscenium, circular pylons, cantilevered entrance canopies and embracing walls featured big band concerts, dancing under the stars, an occasional stage for TV broadcasts of the Mike Douglas Show and many more civic, cultural and social events in mid-century North Beach.