

April 8, 2021

The Hon. Dan Gelber  
Mayor of Miami Beach

Mr. Jack Finglass, Chair  
Historic Preservation Board  
City of Miami Beach

Dear Mayor Gelber and Chairman Finglass:

I write to urge the City of Miami Beach to preserve the South Shore Community Center. The Center is an extremely significant aspect of the work of the architect Morris Lapidus and is important nationally in understanding the evolution of Lapidus' career in the 1960s and 70s. While the Community Center is not as well-known as Lapidus' hotels, the building is an extraordinary example of how Lapidus adapted his designs to meet the demands of different clients and urban settings. The Center is extremely significant, indeed internationally important for its architect Morris Lapidus, its role in the major redevelopment of the City, and as example of public commitment to elderly individuals.

Your city's historic preservation regulations emphasize the importance of the evolution of design throughout the history of the city. For the work of Morris Lapidus, the city is in the unique position of having examples of his work across the decades that he practiced. If the Community Center is lost, the city's architectural landscape is diminished and how Lapidus designed buildings for one of the City's most significant constituencies -- its elderly population of the 1960s and 70s -- will be erased.



The building also relates to national history. Designed as part of a pioneering urban development program for older Americans, the Center became a proving ground for the provision of services that addressed the entire spectrum of human and social needs of the elderly. The South Shore Community Center housed these programs, served as a national model for advancements in aging, and was the site of a Senate hearing on the needs of the elderly chaired by Edward Kennedy with the participation of Congressman Claude Pepper.

Please reconsider the city staff's decision and preserve the South Shore Community Center. In so doing, you will be preserving both Miami Beach and a significant part of American architectural history.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Guy Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Richard" being the most prominent.

Richard Guy Wilson

Commonwealth Professor Emeritus in Architectural History  
University of Virginia