

MIAMI BEACH

COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Commissioner Tanya K. Bhatt

DATE: September 11, 2024

TITLE: A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, INITIATING THE PROCEDURE FOR HISTORIC DESIGNATION SET FORTH IN SECTION 2.13.9 OF THE MIAMI BEACH RESILIENCY CODE, AND REQUESTING THE DESIGNATION OF THE SOUTH SHORE COMMUNITY CENTER AT 833 6 STREET AS AN INDIVIDUAL HISTORIC SITE.

RECOMMENDATION

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

Please place the above Resolution on the September 11, 2024 City Commission meeting agenda.

The South Shore Community Center ("SSCC") at 833 6th Street is located within the Flamingo Park Local Historic District and the Miami Beach Architectural District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The SSCC was designed by Morris Lapidus and constructed in 1970-1975. The SSCC is currently listed as "non-contributing" in the City's Historic Properties Database.

The SSCC represents a very important point in time in the history of Miami Beach. It was designed and built to address the issues of urban decline related to the City's aging population during the 1960s and 70s. This period and the issues related to the aging population have received national attention recently in the documentary "The Last Resort" and regionally by exhibitions of photographs from that period at History Miami and Old City Hall (Cinematheque exhibition space). This period of Miami Beach history is also highlighted daily in MDPL tours.

The SSCC was developed jointly by the City and the federal government as a paradigm shift in the provision of services to populations in urban settings. It was recognized nationally at the time of its design as a model for providing services to the elderly and as a strategy to reverse the decline of urban areas. The SSCC was highlighted in testimony before the U.S. Senate in 1971 and in the study Developments in Aging. It was also referenced at the 1971 White House Conference on Aging.

Seven years later (November 1977), the SSCC was the site of Congressional hearings featuring Sen. Edward Kennedy and Rep. Claude Pepper on the health care needs of the elderly. Once again, it was cited as a model for providing community services for underprivileged and under-represented constituencies.

There are numerous voices calling for the historic designation of this building, attached and linked. Thanks in particular to David McKinney for his advocacy.

Pursuant to Section 2.13.9(a) of the Miami Beach Resiliency Code, the “requests for designation of an individual historic site or district may be made to the historic preservation board by motion of the board, the city manager, by resolution of the planning board or city commission, by any property owner in respect to his own property, by a majority of property owners of record within a proposed district, by resolution of the county historic preservation board, or by resolution of any organization whose purpose is to promote the preservation of historic sites.”

The Historic Preservation Board has 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 of the following criteria:

- A. Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the history of the city, the county, state or nation.
- B. Association with the lives of persons significant in the city's past history.
- C. Embody the distinctive characteristics of a historical period, architectural or design style or method of construction.
- D. Possess high artistic values.
- E. 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.
- F. Have yielded, or are likely to yield information important in pre-history or history.
- G. Be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- H. 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.

ANALYSIS

The South Shore Community Center is highly characteristic of the Brutalist style of architecture. and the original building layout had three parts:

- A symmetrical 2-story central volume containing offices at the ground level and activity rooms at the second level;
- A 1-story auditorium wing to the west; and
- A 1-story recreation wing to the east.

Covered walkways from 6th Street lead to a concourse through which all areas of the building can be accessed. An exterior monumental stair that wraps the central elevator tower provides access to the second level. Below the stair is a multi-level water feature surrounded by built-in planters.

The auditorium wing constructed c.1975 features a symmetrical west facade and entrance terraces on the south and east sides of the building. The east wing features ribbon windows with projecting eyebrows and an expansive symmetrical glass façade that opens onto the eastern terrace. In 1977, the second level loggia facing 6th Street was enclosed.

While significant alterations have been made to the structure over time, the building still has distinctive architectural features and finishes including rough board form concrete finish, smooth concrete finish, exposed concrete blocks in a stacked bond with raked joints and exposed precast concrete beams. These elements are all characteristic of the Brutalist style of architecture.

I would like the City Commission to refer this matter to the HPB, so that the HPB may consider whether this building would satisfy the criteria to be designated as an individual historic site.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

Does this Ordinance require a Business Impact Estimate? (FOR ORDINANCES ONLY)

If applicable, the Business Impact Estimate (BIE) was published on:

See BIE at: <https://www.miamibeachfl.gov/city-hall/city-clerk/meeting-notice/>

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

CONCLUSION

Applicable Area

Citywide

Is this a “Residents Right to Know” item, to City Code Section 2-17? Project?

Yes

Is this item related to a G.O. Bond pursuant

No

Was this Agenda Item initially requested by a lobbyist which, as defined in Code Sec. 2-481, includes a principal engaged in lobbying? No

If so, specify the name of lobbyist(s) and principal(s):

Department

Office of Commissioner Tanya K. Bhatt

Sponsor(s)

Commissioner Tanya K. Bhatt

Co-sponsor(s)

Condensed Title

Ref: HPB – Possible Historic Site Designation – South Shore Community Center. (Bhatt)