

C4 Y REFERRAL TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD A REQUEST FOR THE BOARD TO CONSIDER RE-CLASSIFYING THE SOUTH SHORE COMMUNITY CENTER, LOCATED AT 833 6TH STREET, FROM "NON-CONTRIBUTING" TO "CONTRIBUTING" IN THE CITY'S HISTORIC PROPERTIES DATABASE.

Applicable Area:



**COMMISSION MEMORANDUM**

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Commissioner Tanya K. Bhatt

DATE: September 11, 2024

TITLE: REFERRAL TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD A REQUEST FOR THE BOARD TO CONSIDER RE-CLASSIFYING THE SOUTH SHORE COMMUNITY CENTER, LOCATED AT 833 6TH STREET, FROM "NON-CONTRIBUTING" TO "CONTRIBUTING" IN THE CITY'S HISTORIC PROPERTIES DATABASE.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**BACKGROUND/HISTORY**

Please place the above item on the September 11, 2024 City Commission meeting agenda as a referral to the Historic Preservation Board ("HPB").

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.

Pursuant to Section 2.13.5 of the Miami Beach Resiliency Code, the "historic properties database may be revised from time to time by the historic preservation board . . . ." Before any revision may be made, a public hearing and 15-day newspaper notice is required. The Code defines a "contributing building, structure, improvement, site, or landscape feature" as:

. . . one which by location, scale, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling or association adds to a local historic district's sense of time and place and historical development. A building, structure, improvement, site or landscape feature may be contributing even if it has been altered if the alterations are reversible and the most significant architectural elements are intact and repairable.

I would like the City Commission to refer this matter to the HPB, so that the HPB may consider whether this building should be re-classified as "contributing" in the City's Historic Properties Database.

**ANALYSIS**

**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,  
pursuant to City Code Section 2-17?**

Yes

**Is this item related to a G.O. Bond  
Project?**

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 - Re-classify South Shore Community Center. (Bhatt)

10 June 2021

Amadeus Huff  
Aide to Commissioner Steven Meiner  
Office of the Mayor and Commission  
1700 Convention Center Drive  
Miami Beach, FL 33139  
[AmadeusHuff@miamibeachfl.gov](mailto:AmadeusHuff@miamibeachfl.gov)

Re: Opposition to proposed demolition of the South Shore Community Center, Miami, Florida

Dear Mr. Huff:

The Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) strongly opposes the destruction of the South Shore Community Center by the City of Miami Beach, Florida. The South Shore Community Center, designed by architect Morris Lapidus in 1969, is nationally significant for its role in the redevelopment of the City of Miami, and as an example of the City's public commitment to elderly individuals.

Morris Lapidus is an internationally -significant figure. While Lapidus is best known for his exuberant hotel designs, the South Shore Community Center represents an often-overlooked aspect his work and the evolution of his design philosophy. The Center is part of his personal struggle as an outsider in his profession, and stands as a physical example of his efforts to address social housing issues. The South Shore Community Center was a determined attempt by Lapidus to move beyond his reputation as the architect of the Edan Roc and Fontainebleau hotels, whose designs had brought him both popular acclaim and unwanted professional censure.

The South Shore Community Center is integral to an understanding of both Miami and national history in the 20th Century. It is both product and symbol of the rise of the elderly as a distinct and politically powerful social class in America. National issues related to aging were played out in microcosm in Miami Beach, and specifically at the Community Center, and were acted upon by the federal government because of local Congressman Claude Pepper. Pepper not only worked to transform the South Shore neighborhood of Miami Beach for his constituents, he employed it as a proving ground for the provision of services that addressed the whole range of human and social needs of the elderly. The South Shore Community Center housed these programs, serving as a national model for advancements in elder care, and was the site of a Congressional hearing on the persistent needs of the elderly chaired by Senator Edward Kennedy.

When the neighborhood demographics changed in the 1980s and 90s, the Community Center adapted with the times. The city enlisted the Little Havana Activities Center in merging the needs of the elderly community for social interaction with the needs of newer residents for childcare. The resulting program, the Rainbow Intergenerational Daycare Center, continues to operate in the Community Center to this day. Alterations to the building have not affected its architectural integrity, but rather illustrate how the neighborhood, its residents, and the city have evolved since 1969.

We write in opposition of efforts to demolish the nationally significant South Shore Community center, and in support of efforts to retain and preserve this landmark of American architecture. The South Shore Community Center is an important example of Morris Lapidus' architectural work, above and beyond the hotels for which he is best known, and represents a nationally significant and successful effort to provide dignified housing for aging Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B C G' followed by a horizontal line.

Bryan Clark Green, Ph.D., LEED AP BD+C  
Chair, Society of Architectural Historians Heritage Conservation Committee

cc: Florian Boiteux; Steven Meiner; Mr. Kenneth Breisch, Ph.D.; Mr. Jeffrey Cody, Ph.D.; Mr. Anthony Cohn, AIA; Mr. David Fixler, FAIA; Ms. Priya Jain, AIA; Mr. Theodore H. Prudon, Ph.D., FAIA, Ms. Pauline Saliga; Ms. Deborah Slaton; Ms. Victoria Young, Ph.D.; Members, SAH Heritage Conservation Committee.

# FLORIDA TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION



July 14, 2021

Dr. David McKinney  
[daviddmckinney@yahoo.com](mailto:daviddmckinney@yahoo.com)

Dear Dr. McKinney:

On behalf of the Florida Trust I want to thank you for your commitment to Florida's historic resources, and for taking the time to nominate a property that is important to you for the 2021 Florida's 11 to Save. We are grateful for people like you working to protect the special places that make Florida extraordinary.

As you know, the Florida's 11 to Save is an annual listing of the most endangered historic places in the state, as nominated by the people of Florida. The list serves as a guide for the Florida Trust's advocacy and education initiatives for the year. This year we received a very high volume of nominations, and we are happy to share with you that the location you nominated made the list!

The 2021 Florida's 11 to Save will be announced at the Preservation on Main Street Conference in New Port Richey at the opening session on July 21, at 9 a.m. and available on Facebook.

On July 21 we will issue a state-wide press release announcing the 11 to Save locations. We ask that you do not share publically that your location has been placed on the list until after that time. Once the press release has gone out, please feel free to share the news of the listing with your local media – and let us know if we can help!

After the conference, we will reach back out with you and share a Florida Trust ambassador that will work with you to learn more about the location. The goal of that communication is to gain a deeper understanding of the unique history and challenges surrounding the property. We hope to work with you to identify ways the Florida Trust could help the property.

As a reminder, being listed on the 11 to Save is a good thing – it means people in your community care about a historic place, and are seeking support to save it. Our goal is to work with property owners and the community to save these historic resources and share those unique stories only your community can tell.

Thank you again for taking the time to nominate a property for the 11 to Save.

Sincerely,

Melissa Wyllie  
CEO & President





## MIAMI DESIGN PRESERVATION LEAGUE

1001 Ocean Drive, Miami Beach, FL 33139

P.O. Box 190180, Miami Beach, FL 33119-0180

Phone 305-672-2014

[www.mdpl.org](http://www.mdpl.org)

June 9, 2021

Chair and Members  
Historic Preservation Board  
City of Miami Beach  
Via email

Dear Chair Finglass and members:

As instructed by a vote of the Board of Directors of the Miami Design Preservation League, I request that the Historic Preservation Board seek the reclassification of two structures as contributing. (HPB members Jack Finglass and Nancy Liebman, who are also MDPL Board members, recused themselves from the discussion and vote on this item before the MDPL Board.) The buildings (listed below) are located within the Flamingo Park Historic District and owned by the City of Miami Beach. Their significance lies in their architectural merit, contextual relationship with the neighborhood and city, and association with an important era in Miami Beach history.

Both buildings were designed by Morris Lapidus and Associates and are owned by the City of Miami Beach, which has recognized Lapidus for his contribution to its built environment by naming a historic district in his honor and inducting him into its Hall of Fame. While these buildings do not share the reputation of Lapidus' hotels, they are examples of how Lapidus' designs were influenced by Miami Beach environs and his personal struggle of being an outsider in his profession. As noted in Gabrielle Esperdy's important study, the decade of the 1960s was a period of soul searching for Lapidus as to what direction he should take his architectural practice. In 1969, the *Miami Herald* quoted Lapidus as saying "I don't always want to be referred to as the architect of the Fontainebleau." Alison Hotten in her Ph.D. dissertation outlined how Lapidus' work shows a decided move toward modernism in the 1960s. Moreover, Lapidus, in his autobiography, stated that his architectural principles could be expressed in unadorned concrete.

1. Fire Station Number 1, 1051 Jefferson Avenue, designed by Morris Lapidus Associates in 1966.

**Historical Significance:** Coming after significant criticism of the "Miami Beach style" at the American Institute of Architects Convention in 1964, the city seeks a new image for civic architecture. The fire station was one in a series of buildings (including the South Shore Community Center) that followed prevailing architectural trends and culminated in Miami Beach's embrace of the brutalist style for the new city hall by Bouterse, Perez, and Fabregas.

**Architectural Significance:** The fire station was the first of this building type designed by the firm. While Lapidus is celebrated for his exuberant designs, the firm did “all styles of buildings.” The building also demonstrates the influence of Robert Swedroe on Lapidus’ practice who was chief designer for the firm and principal for the fire station. Swedroe experimented with a stylized gable roof on the station which is further developed in the design of 930 Washington Avenue in 1967. (The outlining of Swedroe’s contribution to the Lapidus firm also provides a foundation for understanding his substantial contribution to the architectural landscape of southern Florida.)

2. South Shore Community Center, 833 Sixth Street. Designed in 1969 and completed in two phases by Morris Lapidus Associates.

**Historical Significance:** The South Shore Community Center is integral to local and national history of the 20th Century. It is both product and symbol of the rise of the elderly as a distinct and politically powerful social class in America. National issues related to aging were played out in microcosm in Miami Beach at the Community Center and were acted upon by the federal government because of local Congressman Claude Pepper. Pepper not only worked to transform the South Shore neighborhood of Miami Beach for his constituents, he employed it as a proving ground for the provision of services that addressed the whole range 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 Congressional hearing on the persistent needs of the elderly, which was chaired by Senator Edward Kennedy. When the neighborhood demographics changed in the 1980s and 90s, the Community Center adapted with the times. The city enlisted the Little Havana Activities Center in merging the needs of the elderly community for social interaction with the needs of newer residents for childcare. The resulting program, the Rainbow Intergenerational Daycare Center, continues to operate in the Community Center to this day.

**Architectural Significance:** The South Shore Community Center is the embodiment of Lapidus’ architectural principles stripped of ornamentation. Lapidus noted that his designs “form follows function,” borrowing a famous architectural maxim. But Lapidus thought his designs went further. They were in sync with their location and conformed to the needs and mindset of the people who visited them. The architectural historian Gabrielle Esperdy noted that “Lapidus fused the functionalist tenets of modernism with a romantic responsiveness to human emotions, modulating the response according to his analysis of program and building type.” In the design of the South Shore Community Center, Lapidus creates a subtle interplay with the surrounding structures by his use of massing and through a reinterpretation of a prevalent Miami Beach building type (*i.e.*, garden court apartment building). Instead of restricting his design on the Community Center’s specified activities (*e.g.*, provision of programs and services), Lapidus looked beyond function to concentrate on the visitor experience. This also supported a goal stipulated in the HUD guidance for the building.



[N.B.: An in depth analysis of the South Shore Community Center is found on the MDPL website: <https://mdpl.org/blog/2020/09/south-shore-community-center-the-case-for-its-preservation/>]

These buildings are equally important to the city's overall architectural landscape. As noted in a letter to you from architectural history professor Richard Guy Wilson, "the city is in the unique position of having examples of [Lapidus'] work across the decades that he practiced," and the architect Denise Scott Brown has noted that Miami Beach is "a progression through recent American architectural history from the 1930s to the 1970s."

The preservation of the fire station and the community center will ensure that this progression remains intact. Just as the city had the forethought to recognize Art Deco and MiMo for their merit, MDPL believes that it is important that the city identifies the important structures of the 1960s and 70s as part of the city's historic fabric.

We urge you to seek the reclassification of these buildings and offer our assistance to document and preserve these important architectural landmarks.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Jack D. Johnson, Chair  
Miami Design Preservation League

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

## Time to right the wrong - Fire Station 1

Barry Klein <barrysklein@gmail.com>

Tue 1/30/2024 8:29 PM

To: Fernandez, Alex <Alex@miamibeachfl.gov>; Suarez, David <David@miamibeachfl.gov>; Magazine, Joe <Joe@miamibeachfl.gov>; Dominguez, Laura <Laura@miamibeachfl.gov>; Bhatt, Tanya <Tanya@miamibeachfl.gov>; Rosen Gonzalez, Kristen <Kristen@miamibeachfl.gov>; Meiner, Steven <StevenMeiner@miamibeachfl.gov>

Some people who received this message don't often get email from barrysklein@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

**[ THIS MESSAGE COMES FROM AN EXTERNAL EMAIL - USE CAUTION WHEN REPLYING AND OPENING LINKS OR ATTACHMENTS ]**

Dear Mayor and Commissioners,

While on the historic preservation board, I argued that destroying the South Shore Community Center building for the out of scale proposed Fire house 1 was wrong for two very basic reasons:

1. Destroying this still useful South Shore Community Building is wrong, an act against the community and ignores its historic importance and compatibility to its surrounding neighborhood.

The HPB members were told over and over that we had no choice but to agree with the demolition because the commission had already made that determination. Our role turned to design and compatibility.

The proposed design is a slap in the face the surrounding neighborhood. The fire station pays no respect to the surrounding close residential buildings. Beyond the noise generated, there will be strong fire truck lights shining into residential units. The elevation of the truck docks are completely out of scale to its surrounding buildings.

2. The fire station is more suitable and useful on a wider street. These large trucks require great maneuverability and the ability to drive past stopped cars. A stopped car on 6th or Meridian could cause a fatal delay in reaching their destination.

Therefore, I suggest, Alton Road, 1260 Washington or Terminal Island as much better locations.

Please right this wrong.

Respectfully,

Barry Klein