

MIMO



A BRIEF HISTORY OF MIMO

Biscayne Boulevard began in 1925 as a project of Hugh Anderson and Roy C. Wright, the developers of Miami Shores, who sought a connection from their landholdings to downtown Miami. Spending millions on the acquisition of land, and the clearing of improved parcels, Hugh Anderson and Roy C. Wright, (who formed the Shoreland Company) envisioned a one-hundred foot boulevard with lush plantings focusing attention on the beauty of early Miami. Biscayne Boulevard began at SE 2nd Street and extended north until it reached NE 55th Street, where it merged to become U.S. Route 1. (In the 1920s, Route 1 was known as Federal Highway.)

Only a small part of this ambitious plan was completed, as unfortunately Anderson and Wright began the project at the worst possible time when the economic bubble (that became known as the Florida Real Estate Boom) burst. Their interests were purchased by Henry Phipps of U.S. Steel, who finished the boulevard as the newly organized “Biscayne Boulevard Company.”

The historic buildings that remain on Biscayne Boulevard reflect this cycle—very few buildings were constructed during the 1920s, but after 1934 the boulevard’s growth escalated, culminating in the heyday of the 1950s, when thousands of tourists made their way to exotic Miami, and stayed at its many mid-century motels and tourist courts.

COMMON STYLES OF MIMO DISTRICT

The following describes some of the recurring styles represented on the boulevard, and their particular characteristics.

MEDITERRANEAN REVIVAL



This style is usually associated with states with a Spanish Colonial heritage, and the term embraces a variety of sub-types, including Spanish Colonial Revival and Mission Revival. The style is eclectic and employs the building traditions of centuries-old buildings in countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. The style became infinitely popular in southern states following the 1915 Panama-California Exhibition in San Diego. In Florida, with a Spanish presence as far back as the 18th century, the style was particularly suited to the climate.

Features include:

Masonry construction; stucco finishes, applied ornament especially around windows and doors, a combination of roof slopes; arcades, loggias, courtyards, round arches.

Modern styles found on the boulevard are stylistic interpretations and derivations from the International Style. In their truest, archetypal forms, Art Deco and Art Moderne are very different from one another. In South Florida, and on Biscayne Boulevard, Art Moderne and Art Deco elements were combined to create unique, playful structures which combine the Streamline Moderne massing and Art Deco elements.

General features found in modern styles:

Flat roofs, smooth exterior surfaces, vertical striation or fluting, eyebrow windows (cantilevered overhangs), corner pivot windows, tiled and/or patterned courseways, applied ornament in the form of bas-relief panels or roundels made of cast concrete.

New materials used:

Vitrolite glass, stainless steel, and neon for signage and to emphasize architectural elements.

MODERN STYLES: Art Deco and Art Moderne



Art Deco is a modern style that emerged as a response to the perceived austerity of the International Style¹¹ and signaled a shift from the historicist traditions popular in the US. Art Deco is often associated more with a design style than an architectural one, and derives its name from the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs* held in Paris in 1925. Art Deco is decidedly angular and vertical in emphasis. A characteristic of the style is the use of applied decoration in angular patterns using motifs derived from Native American art, Cubism, and the newly found archaeological discoveries of ancient Egypt. In South Florida, the decoration incorporated tropical foliage, birds, and other design motifs that reflected the unique character of the region. Larger buildings are symmetrical in their composition and have a “wedding cake” massing, as their upper stories progressively step back from the street.

Also referred to as Streamline Moderne and Depression Moderne, Art Moderne is another modern style that developed in the 1930s. The style grew out of Art Deco and was, in contrast, a streamline style that embraced the “machine aesthetic” and is characterized by smooth concrete and materials, rounded corners, aerodynamic surfaces echoing features and shapes of cars, boats, and airplanes. Moderne is decidedly horizontal and achieves this emphasis with the placement of horizontal railings, horizontal scoring (also referred to as racing stripes) on building surfaces, as well as porthole windows as design elements which are evocative of ocean liners and airplanes. A character defining trait of many Moderne buildings is how they “wrap around” the corner so that the entrance is at the corner, often detailed as a rotunda.

¹¹ The International Style is a term first used by architect Phillip Johnson, first director of architecture at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York. The term was coined at MOMA’s first architectural exhibition in 1932, entitled “Modern Architecture.” The International Style uses minimalism as its paradigm—emphasizing modernity and simplicity in design. Any non-essential decoration is eliminated and materials, such as glass and concrete, become the focus of the design.

Miami Modern (MiMo) is a local adaptation of the Mid-Century Modern Style of architecture that emerged in the US after the Second World War¹. Also having its antecedents in the International Style, MiMo architecture utilized modern materials and new building technologies, and carried over many of the design features from both Art Deco and Moderne Styles. Advances in glass manufacturing allowed for design features such as glass curtain walls, large picture windows, and sliding glass doors creating a greater relationship with the outdoors—a hallmark of the style. The Post-War era in the U.S. was a time of unparalleled prosperity; this collective sense of optimism permeated in architectural creation. As with previous adaptations of the International Style, mid-century styles created themed variations such as Polynesian influenced Tiki designs, space age modern designs, and tropical resort designs that spoke to the 50's era and looked towards the future. Miami Modern (MiMo) architects added elements which were not only suited for the tropical climate, but also tropical-themed whimsical decorative elements. ¹

¹ The term “MiMo” was coined by Randall Robinson and Teri D’Amico as “shorthand” for Miami Modern.” Eric P. Nash and Randall Robinson, *MiMo Miami*

MIAMI MODERN



Common MiMo Materials:

Aluminum, concrete block and stucco (exposed concrete), field stone, keystone, mosaics (glass or ceramic), oolitic limestone, plate glass, roman brick, and slump brick.

MiMo Architectural and Design Features:

Acute angles, aggregate, asymmetry in design, awning windows, boomerangs, brise soleils, built-in planters, canted windows, catwalks, clerestories, cutouts, cantilevered beam & projections, cheeseholes, compressed arches, concrete canopies, curtain wall construction, decorative railings, egg crate facades, eyebrow windows, floating staircases, folded plates, hyperparabaloids, intersecting planes, louvers, metal grilles, pilotis, porte -cocheres, ribbon windows, rounded eaves, sawtoothed floor plates, space-age imagery, textured stucco, jalousie windows.¹²



¹² We are indebted to Robert Powers and Teri D'Amico for their assistance in compiling this list.

I. DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION (MIMO)

General

The replication of any historic building is inappropriate and should not be permitted, unless a majority of the HEP Board members determine that the replication serves a valid preservation purpose because the property was demolished illegally or as a result of demolition by neglect.

Scale

The scale should complement the existing streetscape, and contribute to the character of the neighborhood.

Height

The allowable height on the boulevard is governed by the use, size of the lot, and underlying zoning. However, in order to create a more harmonious and less disruptive juxtaposition of buildings along the streetscape, additional height for new buildings should be limited by the buildings immediately adjacent on either side of the proposed building site. The principal face of the new construction should be allowed to extend no more than one-third higher than as the average height of the adjacent buildings before it steps back away from the boulevard to achieve its permitted height.

Rhythm and Spacing

The rhythm refers to the spaces between buildings that create continuity along the boulevard, and should conform to the rhythm established by existing buildings as much as possible.

Directional Emphasis

The main face of the building should respect the orientation of the buildings directly adjacent and in proximity to it; the directional point of entry should be well defined as it relates to the street front.

Architectural Style

New construction should be a product of its own time, but employ references to the styles commonly found on the boulevard. Those references should be subtle, and should be abstracted details so there is no appearance of replicating the detail.

Surface Materials

Materials that face a building, or are employed for decoration is encouraged to complement and reinforce materials found on the historic buildings within the district.

Material samples:

- Concrete Block and Stucco
- Keystone veneers/ Block
- Stucco—rough or Smooth textured
- Aluminum (A later material, often employed for canopies)
- Glass and Ceramic Mosaic Tile (decorative accent)
- Plate Glass (Storefronts)
- Slump Brick (a concretious mixture that is scored to give the appearance of brick)

Parking

Off-street parking should not be placed in required open space fronting onto Biscayne Boulevard. Parking should be located at the back of the building, and appropriately screened from the neighboring residential district.

However historic buildings, particularly the MiMo Motels --- which commonly featured a “U” or “T” shaped-plan, to accommodate parking in the front--- are grandfathered, as they express the fashion of the time. While not intended to negatively impact the adjacent neighborhood, waivers for parking should be granted under the terms of Chapter 23 of the City Code.

- **Temporary Parking Lots**

Black chain link should only be used when it is of a temporary nature to secure an unsafe structure or construction site.

The temporary lot should be screened with landscape materials that are maintained for the duration.

Vehicular (Driveway) Entrances

Biscayne Boulevard is a pedestrian friendly thoroughfare, and therefore any conflicts resulting from vehicles and pedestrians should be resolved in favor of the pedestrian. Vehicular entrances (and any new curb cuts) opening directly onto Biscayne Boulevard should be discouraged when access can be provided from other public right-of-ways.

- The desired effect along Biscayne Boulevard is to create a density of buildings, eliminating voids in the streetscape in exception of Traditional MiMo buildings.
- No vehicular bays should open onto Biscayne Boulevard, and the principal building should be designed so it is parallel to Biscayne Boulevard.
- No additional curb cuts on the boulevard side should be allowed unless there are no reasonable alternatives.

Streetscape Considerations

- A variety of shade trees and palms under story landscape is encouraged.
- Keep foot streetscape plants variety. The addition of trees on public or private properties is encouraged.
- Trees may project thru canopies.
- Canopies may project over right-of-way line

Setbacks

Because of the different types, styles, and ages of buildings, there are cases where the setback in one block should not be uniform. In such cases, new construction should match the average setback line of the adjacent or abutting buildings.

Storefronts

On retail frontages, seventy-five per cent (75%) of the façade at the sidewalk level should be permanently assigned to retail space and the remainder to pedestrian entrance(s). The greatest area of the wall mass should be dedicated to storefront windows.

Security Screens

All security screens covering windows, when used, should be transparent and mounted on the inside of the building if possible.

Garage Space Associated with New Construction

Garage Structures should be wrapped in commercial storefronts to minimize the visual impact of the garage to enhance continuity of the streetscape. The liner depth should be a minimum of fifteen (15) feet.

Materials

- No reflective or tinted glass should be used; all glass should be clear. Low “E” glass is acceptable without color.
- Basic construction materials should be masonry and finished in stucco, however decorative facing using indigenous materials such as oolitic limestone should be permitted.

Miscellaneous: Mechanical, Electrical, etc.

Solar panels and satellite dishes should not be installed so that they face onto Biscayne Boulevard. HVAC and utility meters should be located at a rear or side elevation, or if not possible, be screened from view.

Fences and Walls

Biscayne Boulevard is an urban experience even though there were a number of single and multi-family residences built during the boulevard’s historic past.

Because there was diversity in the types of properties (e.g. residences, commercial buildings, motels), no one standard for the construction of fences and walls will be appropriate for all.

To maintain the urban quality of the boulevard, walls or fences should be constructed of a material common to the main building(s). The location of the fence or wall will depend on pre-existing conditions, and the type of building, and should include other considerations.

The height of the fence or wall should be kept as low as possible on the side fronting Biscayne Boulevard; if security is an issue, the type of fencing or wall should be designed so that the building may be viewed.

A solid wood or masonry wall, measuring a minimum of six (6) feet should be installed at the rear perimeter of the property where it adjoins a residential district.

Chain link is not permitted for this purpose.

Landscape Buffers

- A multi-layered landscape buffer of palms, trees, shrubs, and/or groundcover shall be planted between residential and commercial land uses.
- No spillover lighting shall be allowed. Lighting fixtures shall be full cut off style.

Signage

Over the years, buildings with multiple tenants have chosen to install any and all types of signs. The result is chaotic and produces visual clutter. The guidelines for signage in this document are not intended to create undesirable plainness or standardization. The boulevard itself reflects many eras and sign styles, however, in any era the signage should be well thought out in terms of the type of its letter; the illumination of the letters; the size of the letters; etc.

- For those signs that were installed on the motels and 50's structures that can be stylistically classified as "MiMo" [Miami Modern], the signage should reflect the sense of drama, flamboyance, and prominence which they originally had.
- The applicant will be guided by the provisions of the Zoning Code in regard to the allowable area that the sign should occupy given its location and size, except when exempted through the historic sign conditions codified in Chapter 23 of the Miami City Code. **Each occupant of commercial space fronting onto Biscayne Boulevard should be allowed one sign only.**
- Free-standing, pole mounted or monument signs should be discouraged.
- Interior-lit cabinet signs should be discouraged. Illumination should come from an external source.
- Channel letters (either reverse with internal illumination) or channel letters that are lit from the exterior should be the preferred signage type.

- Signage should be permitted on awnings and canopies, but should be restricted to the name of the business only. No product advertising is permitted.
- Motel buildings designed in the MiMo style, when neon lighting was popular, should be allowed to repair/restore those signs provided they meet the criteria established for historic signage established in Chapter 23 of the Miami City Code.
- Paper signs applied to windows, banners, roof-top balloons or any other attention gaining devices should not be permitted.

Historic Signs

Historic Signs shall be permitted to remain and to be repaired, restored, structurally altered, reconstructed, or relocated utilizing the Certificate of Appropriateness process. Historic Signs may possess intrinsic importance, or acquire that importance as a result of their association with the historic resource through which they have become associated. In determining whether a sign qualifies as “historic”, the HEPB shall consider whether it is:

- Associated with historic figures, events or places;
- Significant as evidence of the history of the product, business, or service advertised;
- Significant as reflecting the history of the building or of the development of the historic district. (A sign may be the only evidence of a building’s historic use);
- Characteristic of a specific historic period, such as gold leaf on glass, neon, or stainless steel lettering;
- Integral to the building’s design or physical fabric, as when a sign is a part of a storefront made of Carrara glass or enamel panels, or when the name of the historic firm or the date are rendered;
- Outstanding examples of the sign maker’s art, whether because of their excellent craftsmanship, use of materials or design;
- Recognized as a local landmark, because of its prominence and popular recognition as a focal point in the community;

- Assists in defining the character of a district, as for example marquees in theater districts, or prominent neon signs associated with the proliferation of motels dependent upon the tourism industry.

Historic Pole Signs¹³

A characteristic of the car culture and a prevalent feature in post World War II commercial districts, pole signs shall be permitted in the MiMo / Biscayne Boulevard Historic District, provided that the signs meets the criteria for a historic sign, as established in section 23-7(4) "Signage" of the City Code, and that:

- There is evidence, photographic or physical (as in the retention of/or the remnants of the original poles), or other evidence that conclusively proves that a pole sign(s) existed at the historic resource. No new pole signs shall be permitted on sites where there is no historic evidence of an existing pole sign.
- The applicant shall apply for a special Certificate of Appropriateness and obtain Board approval for the installation and reconstruction of a pole sign;
- The Board shall apply the Historic pole Signs criteria to determine that the proposed signage is historic before a determination of the appropriateness of the design for a pole sign can be conducted.
- Where evidence of the original design for a pole sign is unavailable, the design of the sign shall reflect a design that is sympathetic to the stylistic character of the main building on site, and use materials and lighting techniques from the historic period (e. q. neon tubing)
- For poles signs that still exist but have fallen into disrepair, the applicant shall restore/repair such sign; but shall be given the option of duplicating the original name of the business or using the name of the current business on the signage;
- No more than one (1) pole sign shall be permitted on a property.

¹³ Pole sign shall mean any non-movable sign not affixed to a building, a self-supporting sign.

Awnings and Canopies

Note: Canopies are a type of covering that extends out from the wall, sheltering a space. Awnings are designed to cover a window(s) or door(s).

The shape of awnings should follow the shape of the window or door head. For example, a window within an arch should use a bell-shaped awning. The material should be canvas.

Outdoor cafés should be encouraged to use table awnings (without commercial advertising); the HEP Board should approve a canopy or a material other than canvas when practical issues require a rainproof condition.

Lighting

- Fluorescent lighting on the exterior of a building should be discouraged.
- Lighting should be designed to enhance the pedestrian experience which includes the lighting of shop windows.
- Buildings should be encouraged to light their facades with exterior up lighting.
- Backlit awnings shall be prohibited.
- Neon lighting is encouraged as architectural accent.



II. GUIDELINES FOR ADDITIONS/ ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING STRUCTURES (MIMO)

Additions:

The addition should be recognizable as a product of its own time, as required by the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

In creating these additions, the following should be considered:

- The addition should be consistent / compatible with the original building's scale, form and massing.
- New materials should be used but should be compatible with the surrounding buildings and the original building. If the same materials are used, care should be taken to distinguish them from those used on the main building; frequently that is accomplished by the stylization of ornamentation, the use of a different pattern in the fenestration, and by setting the addition back from the main mass of the building.
- The scale of the new addition should be subordinate to the main structure so it does not overwhelm or affect the character of original building or the street.
- The height of the new addition should relate to the main structure and to its surroundings.
- It is always preferable to locate the addition behind the main mass of the original building.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is defined as: *The act or process of returning a property to a state of utility through repair or alterations which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions or features of the property which are significant to its historic, architectural and cultural values.*

Before any design options are considered, the objective should be to identify those "character-defining" features that give the property its identity. (For example--- a commercial building could be distinguished by its flat roof, rounded corner entrance,

fluted pilasters at the entrance bay, lintels in cast concrete above each of the prominent storefront windows, etc.) By avoiding these features, the rehabilitation process respects the original architecture yet provides necessary adaptations for contemporary or sometimes, a new use.

The following are prominent character-defining features that are prominent on the boulevard:

- **Courtyards**

Courtyards should not be enclosed as they are not only a significant design element, but provide for breezes and shaded areas.

- **Railings (Balustrades)**

Railings should be restored rather than replaced when possible; or accurately replicated in form and material. Where the height of the railing or the intervals of the balusters is not consistent with the Florida Building Code, the design for the extension to raise the height should be minimally intrusive and visually subordinate to the original railing.

- **Windows**

Windows are perhaps the one most important character-defining feature in any building. As such the dimensions of the window openings should not be changed or filled in, and any replacement windows should be as close as possible to the originals in visual appearance.

- **Open Air Corridors/ Existing Balconies**

These open air spaces should remain open.

- **Roofs**

Roof replacement should be executed using the original roofing materials and follow the same slope(s) as the original building.

- **Surface Ornament/Applied Decoration**

Details are especially important to historic buildings. Applied ornament, cast ornament, and any other designed surface treatment should be retained and repaired if necessary. When the ornament is lost, vintage photographs should be useful in designing a stencil or form from which the piece can be recast.

- **Paint Color**

For buildings designed in the MiMo Style, the Preservation Office maintains a selection of mass and trim colors that were conceived by an interior designer and an authority on MiMo architecture. These colors *should* be selected, and provide a wide spectrum of choices.

The Miami HEP Board has adopted a policy whereby less intense colors (as evidenced by the first three intensities of a color strip) should be approved administratively. For darker colors, approval should come from the HEP Board.

Miscellaneous: Mechanical, Electrical, etc.

All mechanical equipment, including air conditioning compressors, electrical boxes, solar panels, etc. should be located away from the Biscayne Boulevard side of the building.