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# BUENA VISTA POST OFFICE / MOORE FURNITURE BUILDING 4000-4040 NE 2<sup>ND</sup> AVENUE

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## Designation Report



City of Miami

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI  
PRESERVATION OFFICER  
TO THE HISTORIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD  
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF THE  
BUENA VISTA POST OFFICE / MOORE FURNITURE BUILDING  
AS A HISTORIC DISTRICT

Prepared by Kisa Hooks for Janus Research, \_\_\_\_\_  
Consultant

Prepared by Sarah E. Eaton, Preservation Officer

Passed and  
Adopted on \_\_\_\_\_

Resolution No. \_\_\_\_\_

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Historic Name:

Buena Vista Post Office / Moore Furniture Building

Current Name:

Old Buena Vista Post Office / Moore Furniture Building

Location:

4000-4040 NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue  
Miami, Florida

Present Owner:

Buena Vista Post Office:  
SDBM Inc  
6655 Brevity Lane  
Miami Beach, FL 33141

Moore Furniture Building:  
Dacra Design Moore LLC  
1632 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Miami Beach, FL 33139-7713

Present Use:

Commercial

Zoning District:

SD-8 Miami Design District Special District

Tax Folio Numbers:

01-3124-027-0010  
01-3124-027-0020

Boundary Description:

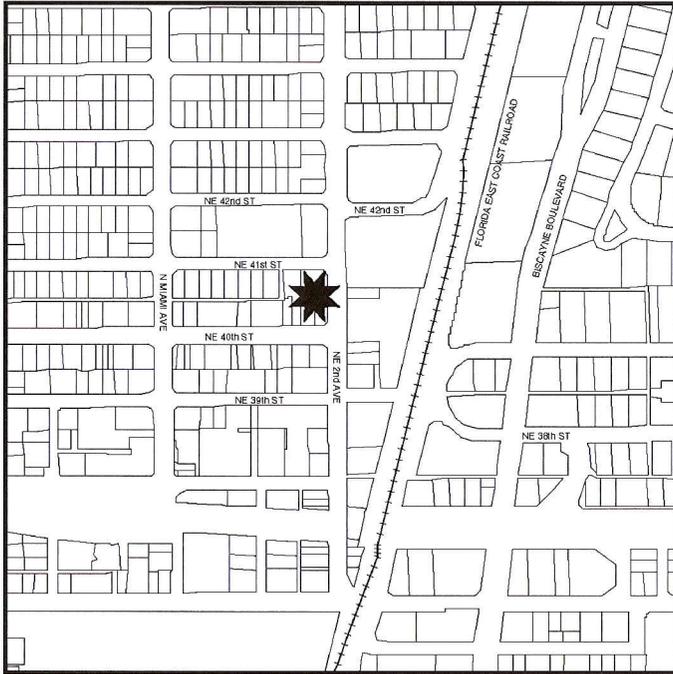
Lot 1, less the easterly five feet, and Lots 2 through 4 of Block 1, of the plat of COMMERCIAL BILTMORE, as recorded in Plat Book 6 at Page 132, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida; together with Lots 1 and 2 of Block 10 of the plat of BILTMORE SUBDIVISION, as recorded in Plat Book 6 of Page 67, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida; together with Lots 3 and 5 of

BILTMORE SUBDIVISION AND COMMERCIAL BILTMORE SUBDIVISION, as recorded in Plat Book 45 of Page 55, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

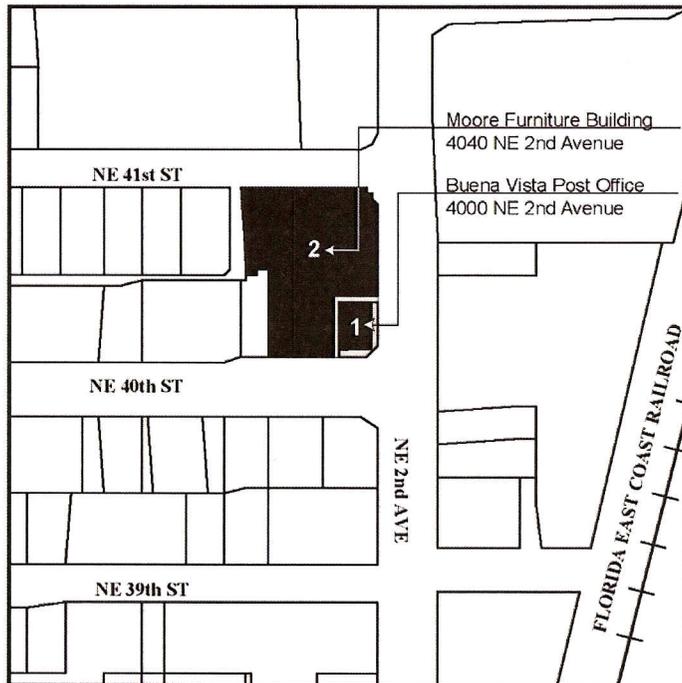
Classification:

Historic District

# BUENA VISTA POST OFFICE / MOORE FURNITURE BUILDING 4000-4040 NE 2<sup>ND</sup> AVENUE



  
location



  
site plan

## II. SIGNIFICANCE

### Specific Dates:

Buena Vista Post Office – 1921  
Moore Furniture Building – 1922

### Architect:

Buena Vista Post Office – David P. Davis  
Moore Furniture Building – David P. Davis

### Builder/Contractor:

Buena Vista Post Office – P. J. Davis  
Moore Furniture Building – P. J. Davis

### Statement of Significance:

The Buena Vista Post Office and the Moore Furniture Building are significant to the historical, architectural, and cultural development of the City of Miami. These two buildings were built during the Land Boom era of the 1920s to provide business amenities that served as an impetus for future commercial and residential development in the Buena Vista area. Renowned developer D. P. Davis and prominent local pineapple plantation owner Theodore Vivian (T. V.) Moore were the two like-minded individuals who took the initiative to build these building that soon marked the commercial core of the Buena Vista area. The Buena Vista Post Office and the Moore Furniture Building reflect the prosperity and frenetic pace of successful real estate development during the Florida real estate boom. These buildings are also noteworthy for their scale and materials of construction, which that distinguished them from their surroundings and made them architectural innovations of the time.

Settlement of Buena Vista began as early as 1892 when it was a small village adjoining, but not within the city limits of Miami; it was located about six miles north of the city. The development of the area, which was originally part of the homesteads of William Gleason and E. L. White, parallels that of Miami. Gleason, a prominent and somewhat notorious figure in early Dade County politics, arrived in Miami after the Civil War. He left the area in 1876 but retained his homestead for several years, eventually turning it over to his son. E. L. White homesteaded 160 acres from NE 41<sup>st</sup> Street to NE 54<sup>th</sup> Street between NW 2<sup>nd</sup> and NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenues. E. L. White and his family moved to Dade County from Georgia, via Quincy, Florida and claimed the area from which the Buena Vista Post Office and the Moore Furniture Building were carved in the early 1920s.

In 1902, ten years after the early settlement of Buena Vista, T. V. Moore, settled in the area via Indian River, Florida and began a pineapple plantation that would rival those commercial fruit groves started by the English and French settlers and other early homesteaders in Coconut Grove and Cutler. T. V. Moore was a descendent of the Honorable John Moore (1658-1732), an Englishman appointed Attorney General under William Penn during the colonization of the United States. For national defense purposes during the Revolutionary War, the United States purchased the land on which West Point now stands from Stephen Moore, T. V. Moore's great grandfather. T. V. Moore was a descendent of generations of scholars, theologians, agricultural experts and military leaders who helped found this country. By 1910, T. V. Moore continued the family tradition of excellence and was coined "The Pineapple King of Florida." The same year he turned his plantation, which had become too valuable for fruit cultivation, into a "sixty-two million dollar development of twenty-five hundred acres known as Miami Shores." This was the first of a series of developments and investments that would diversify and transition Moore's pineapple plantation into prime real estate.

During the 1910s, following the explosive growth of Miami to the south, the Buena Vista area was poised for an expansion that paralleled that of Miami. By 1915, the City of Miami Beach had been incorporated, and new highways were constructed that linked the region with other parts of the state and the nation. In 1916, Villa Vizcaya, James Deering's magnificent Mediterranean-inspired estate on Biscayne Bay was completed. The pace increased exponentially after that, and by 1921, Downtown Miami real estate was selling at a premium. It was in this climate that T. V. Moore and area newcomer D. P. Davis would begin development in the Buena Vista area that would transform it into a commercial and residential hub.

By the 1920s, both T. V. Moore and D. P. Davis were independently involved in the Buena Vista area that had previously included the Biltmore and Shadowlawn subdivisions. In 1920, T. V. Moore and his wife Mary and Z. T. Merritt and his wife Polly platted the Biltmore subdivision. Moore and his family lived in a Mediterranean Revival mansion located along Moore Parkway, the main avenue traversing the Biltmore subdivision.

Around the same time, entrepreneur, architect, and financier, D. P. Davis, envisioned developing the area now known as Buena Vista. This event preceded his development of Davis Islands, the state's largest land development project in Tampa. David P. Davis, a native of Green Cove Springs, Florida, worked for United Realty Company, but was also the president of D. P. Davis, Inc., his real estate firm. In 1907, his real estate career began in Jacksonville but was interrupted when he traveled to Panama, where the Panama Canal was under construction. He worked as a merchant supplying various necessities to the canal workers. Davis returned to Jacksonville at the beginning of World War I and left for Miami after the Armistice of 1918 to be a real estate salesman. Thriving on the competitive nature of real estate and promotion, Davis gained a reputation for his successful marketing of properties that other men were unable to move. He often used his

personal capital to acquire and then sell off languishing subdivisions and used the profits to develop his own projects, like the construction of the Buena Vista Post Office. In 1920, Davis and his wife Marjorie subdivided the Shadowlawn area of Buena Vista. Two years later in his usual fashion, Davis sold Shadowlawn to finance the construction of the Buena Vista Post Office. Davis hoped to spawn commercial development in the Buena Vista area by constructing space for essential services like the post office.

D. P. Davis and T. V. Moore began a joint-development at the northwest corner of NE 40<sup>th</sup> Street and Biltmore Avenue (currently NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue). Davis built the Buena Vista Post Office in 1921 and then persuaded Moore to build the Moore Furniture Building around the post office. The post office, a simple Masonry Vernacular structure with strong Neoclassical features, represented the larger vision held by Davis. Davis cleverly employed the Neoclassical style in the design of the post office which elevated it to the status reserved primarily for prominent civic buildings and homes for the elite. In doing so, he set the stage for future development in the area.

When Moore agreed to let Davis design the Moore Furniture Building, Davis followed the precedent set by his post office design for the building and used a pragmatic design that artistically combined a furniture showroom and warehouse within the four-story edifice. The Moore Furniture Company was a pioneer institution as one of the first stores devoted strictly to furniture in the United States. Remarkably it took only ninety-four days to construct the Moore Furniture Building, a feat accredited to the construction ability of P. J. Davis and the mild Florida climate. Windows dominate the front façade of this fireproofed, reinforced concrete building. Limestone trim along the arched, outer bays, and buff brick facing along the cornice line lend to the building's overall attractive appearance. The interior makes as much a statement by day as it did by night thanks to the impressive four-story atrium illuminated by a skylight and the lighting campaign adopted by the company. The Biscayne Electric Supply Company won the contract to light the building, a symbiotic relationship that led to hundreds of other contracts for Biscayne Electric and thousands in sales for the Moore Furniture Company.

At the time, the joint-venture was speculative but proved successful as the two buildings became the epicenter of the commercial core of the Buena Vista area. By 1926, the Moore Furniture Company built a north extension to their building designed in the same style as the 1922 original. Similarly, this commercial area attracted more businesses, and therefore, required residential fabric to support the growing area. This resulted in the remarkable residential neighborhood of single-family housing, small apartment buildings, and commercial buildings that now comprise the Buena Vista East Historic District.

### Relationship to Criteria for Designation:

As stated above, the Buena Vista Post Office / Moore Furniture Building has significance in the historical and architectural heritage of the City of Miami; possesses integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association; and is eligible for designation under the following criteria:

3. Exemplifies the historical, cultural, political, economical, or social trends of the community.

In an era teemed with potential, D. P. Davis and T. V. Moore were predecessors to the development tycoons responsible for the Florida Land Boom era of the early part of the twentieth century. The construction of the Buena Vista Post Office and the Moore Furniture Building represents a moment of clairvoyance that raised the bar for the architectural quality and business standard of enterprises that would develop in the area. Consequently, these buildings reflect the historical and community development trend that established the commercial heart of Buena Vista. The Buena Vista Post Office and the Moore Furniture Building are also noteworthy for their speed of construction and use of materials that would come to represent the frenetic pace of real estate development during the Florida Land Boom era.

5. Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction.

Both the Buena Vista Post Office and the Moore Furniture Building represent high-style masonry vernacular construction with Neoclassical elements uncommon to South Florida in the early 1920s. The four-story atrium of the Moore Furniture Building serves as a design element that takes advantage of South Florida's abundant natural light and also provides a focal point for the ground floor showroom as it unifies the interior space. In addition, the layout and orientation of the buildings present a unique dialogue with each other and response to their physical location. Similarly, both buildings were constructed within one year of each other, which represents the speed of construction that made Miami nationally-acclaimed in terms of its extensive building program of the 1920s.

6. Is an outstanding work of a prominent designer or builder.

D. P. Davis designed both the Buena Vista Post Office and the Moore Furniture Building. D. P. Davis was a prominent Florida real estate developer, contractor, and architect responsible for many outstanding structures in Miami, including the Fairfax Theatre and Apartments. He also made a significant impact and contribution to the history of land development in Florida with Davis Islands, an unprecedented land development in Tampa.

### III. DESCRIPTION

#### Present and Original Appearance:

#### Setting:

The Buena Vista Post Office / Moore Furniture Building is located at the northwest corner of NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and NE 40<sup>th</sup> Street. The main elevation of the Buena Vista Post Office faces south onto NE 40<sup>th</sup> Street. The "L-shaped" Moore Furniture Building has two entrances: the original entrance faces south onto NE 40<sup>th</sup> Street, and the other faces east onto NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. The Buena Vista Post Office building occupies a 3,375-square-foot lot. The Moore Furniture Building occupies a 30,186-square-foot parcel.

#### Buena Vista Post Office:

The Buena Vista Post Office is a two-story, concrete structure with several Neoclassical architectural elements. This square building has a concrete structural system that rests on a continuous concrete foundation. The principal areas of elaboration include ornamentation around the windows, central doorway, and the doorway. The singular block of the building is articulated by projecting central bays on all facades. The primary façade (south) has symmetrically balanced windows flanking its double doors, and it is divided into three bays with the center bay receiving the most attention. The center bay is first articulated by pilasters that support a dentilated architrave with modillions; the frieze above is engraved with the words "Buena Vista." The doorway has elaborate decorative surrounds with a full, three-light transom, and a circular cartouche featuring a profiled bust of George Washington. The main entrance is accessed by tiered, marble stairs. In lieu of a cornice, the flat roof has a frieze that wraps around the entire building; the edges are inlaid with bas-relief swags. The recessed windows are of metal, single-hung sash type. The fenestration has been covered with steel security bars. Over time, the building has experienced changes in paint scheme and interior modifications to allow for more work space. Recently, the double doors were restored.

#### Moore Furniture Building:

The Moore Furniture Building is a four-story, L-shaped building that was constructed in two stages; the southern portion was completed in 1922, and the northern extension was completed in 1926. The first stage completed in 1922 surrounds the Buena Vista Post Office. The entire building spans the block between NE 40<sup>th</sup> and NE 41<sup>st</sup> Streets along NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. It is a masonry building that rests on a continuous concrete foundation. All principle facades are clad in buff colored brick and feature limestone trim; additional exterior finishing includes metal, tile, and stucco. Fenestration throughout is of metal, single-hung sash type and is

located on every floor and every bay. Due to the overall massing and shape of the building, it is divided into three parts: the main south elevation and entrance that faces NE 40<sup>th</sup> Street; the east elevation and secondary entrance that face NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue; and the northeast corner and north elevation that face NE 41<sup>st</sup> Street. Each of the sections is articulated differently due to its length and orientation. However, the placement and style of orientation throughout the building present a harmonious architectural statement.

The south elevation is five bays wide; it has a dentilated parapet, and its outer bays are articulated by monumental vertical arches. The name "Moore Furniture Co" is inscribed in cast stone in the parapet of the three central bays. The center bays are further defined by four-story pilasters. Fenestration is grouped in triplicate. The space above the fourth story windows of the outer bays is topped with panels featuring bas-relief swags. The central entrance leads to the four-story atrium inside the building, which is another of the building's finest architectural features. The central entrance once featured a copper and glass marquee.

The east elevation is three bays wide and features the same dentilated parapet. Although this side is much longer than its southern counterpart, the rhythm of the façade differs due to its fenestration and shape of its outer bays. The outer bays are articulated by similar monumental vertical arches. Windows are grouped in triplicate in the outer bays and individually for the five central bays. The secondary entrance is marked by a five-arch loggia that corresponds to the five central bays.

The rounded northwest corner is four-bays wide and is articulated by two-story pilasters. A third entrance has been recently added to the corner; it is covered by a cloth awning. The north and west elevations are unadorned and covered in stucco; the windows are much smaller and paired.

The Moore Furniture Building features an impressive main interior space. The main (south) entrance leads into a four-story atrium that is topped by a skylight. Ivory-colored, Ionic columns serve a structural and aesthetic function and draw the eye upward to the skylight. An ornate metal railing is found on each of the upper floors. The skylight features a dentilated base and has a grid support screen that allows light to diffuse into the interior.

The main entrance has been changed numerous times from its original copper and glass marquee. It once featured a flat, projecting canopy that has since been removed. The south entrance is now recessed and two-stories high. The ground-level storefronts to the west of south entrance have cloth canopies that feature the store's company name. Similarly, an entrance has been added to the rounded northwest corner. Recently, the building has been cleaned and rehabilitated to reflect its original architectural splendor.

Contributing Structures and/or Landscape Features:

The contributing structures within the site are the Buena Vista Post Office and the Moore Furniture Building as described in the preceding text.

Because of its exceptional architectural importance, and because it is customarily open to the public the atrium of the Moore Furniture Building shall be considered as an interior space subject to regulation. Those features subject to review shall be limited to the open atrium itself, the skylight, and those elements that provide enclosure to the atrium including the columns and railings. Any alterations shall be guided by the U. S. Secretary of the Interior's "Standard for Rehabilitation." Any offices/spaces beyond the atrium shall not be subject to review.

There are no contributing landscape features on the site.



Buena Vista Post Office / Moore Furniture Building  
4000-4040 NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue  
Photograph, facing northwest  
2003



Buena Vista Post Office / Moore Furniture Building  
4000-4040 NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue  
Aerial photograph circa 1923, facing northeast  
*Courtesy of the Historical Museum of Southern Florida*



Buena Vista Post Office  
4000 NE 2nd Avenue  
Photograph, facing north  
2003



Moore Furniture Building  
4040 NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue  
East and north elevations  
2003



Moore Furniture Building – Interior Atrium and Skylight  
4040 NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue  
Facing north  
Circa 2000

#### IV. PLANNING CONTEXT

##### Present Trends and Conditions:

The Buena Vista Post Office experienced a programmatic change in the 1960s and has since been used as office space for law firms, insurance agencies and is currently occupied by the "o8o" Studio Showroom. The Moore Furniture Building is owned Dacra and occupied by various interior design and furniture companies. The Moore Furniture Building underwent a major two-year rehabilitation from 1997 to 1999, which restored it to its original splendor. The buildings are located in the City of Miami Design District.

##### Preservation Incentives:

The Buena Vista Post Office and the Moore Furniture Building serve as models illustrating the opportunities for economic investment in historic buildings and appropriate adaptive reuse. Historic site designation should be used as a tool to preserve the physical character of both buildings, and thereby, maintain neighborhood and create a sense of pride and community throughout the City of Miami Design District.

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