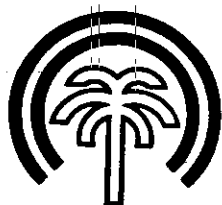
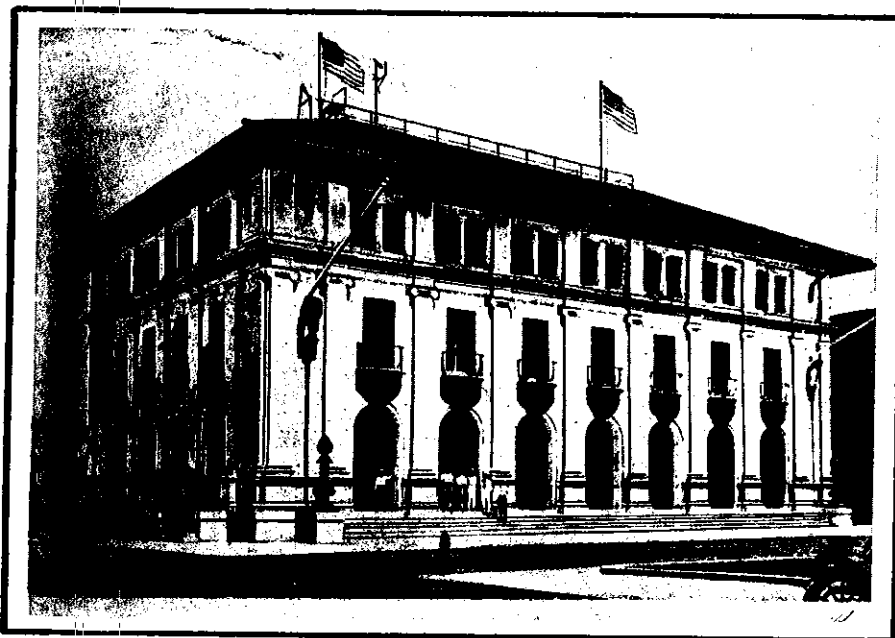

OLD U.S. POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE

100 N.E. 1 AVENUE

Designation Report



City of Miami

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI PLANNING DEPARTMENT
TO THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION BOARD
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF
OLD U.S. POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE
100 N.E. 1ST AVENUE
AS A HERITAGE CONSERVATION ZONING DISTRICT

Prepared by *David E. Eaton* 6-8-84 Date
Historic Preservation
Consultant

Accepted by *Paul Ward Chan* 10-25-84 Date
Chairman, Heritage
Conservation Board

Designated by the Miami City Commission

Ordinance No. _____

Date _____

CONTENTS

	Page
I. General Information	1
II. Significance	4
III. Historical Information	6
IV. Architectural Information	7
V. Planning Context	10
VI. HC Zoning Elements	11
VII. Bibliography	12

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Historic Name:

Old U.S. Post Office and Courthouse

Current Name:

AmeriFirst Federal

Location:

100 N.E. 1 Avenue
Miami, Florida 33132

Present Owner:

Briginvest N.V.
%Orion Investments
7100 N. Kendall Drive, Suite 203
Miami, Florida 33156

Present Occupant:

AmeriFirst Federal Savings and Loan Association

Present Use:

Commercial

Present Zoning District:

CBD-1/9

HC Zoning Overlay District:

HC-1

Tax Folio Number:

01-0110-50-1140

Boundary Description of HC Zoning District:

The easterly 33.3 feet of the southerly 112 feet of Lot 19, and the southerly 112 feet of Lot 20 of Block 105-N of the plat of MIAMI NORTH, as recorded in Plat Book B at Page 41, of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida.

HC Zoning Classification:

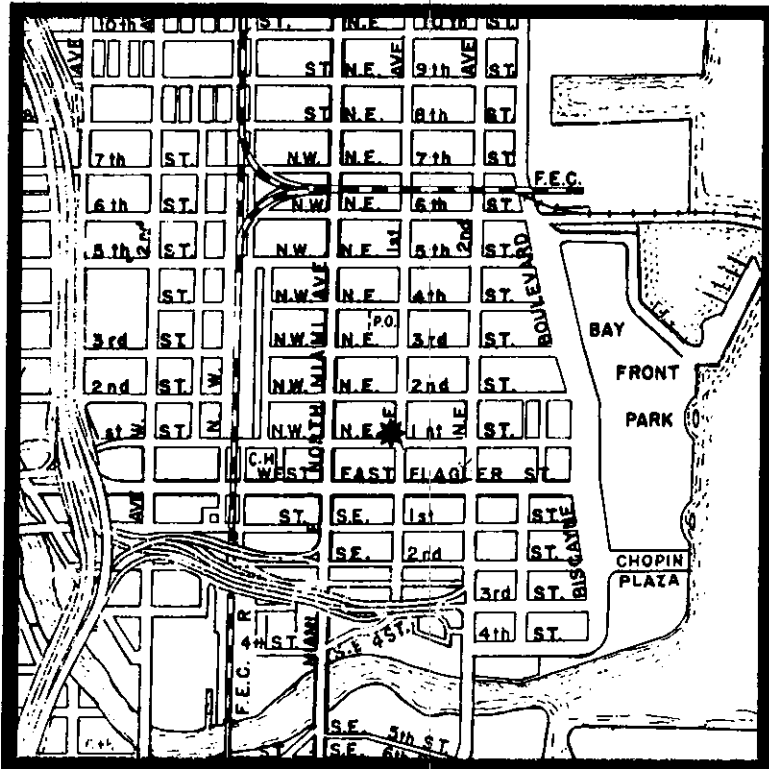
Historic Site

Dade County Historic Survey Rating:

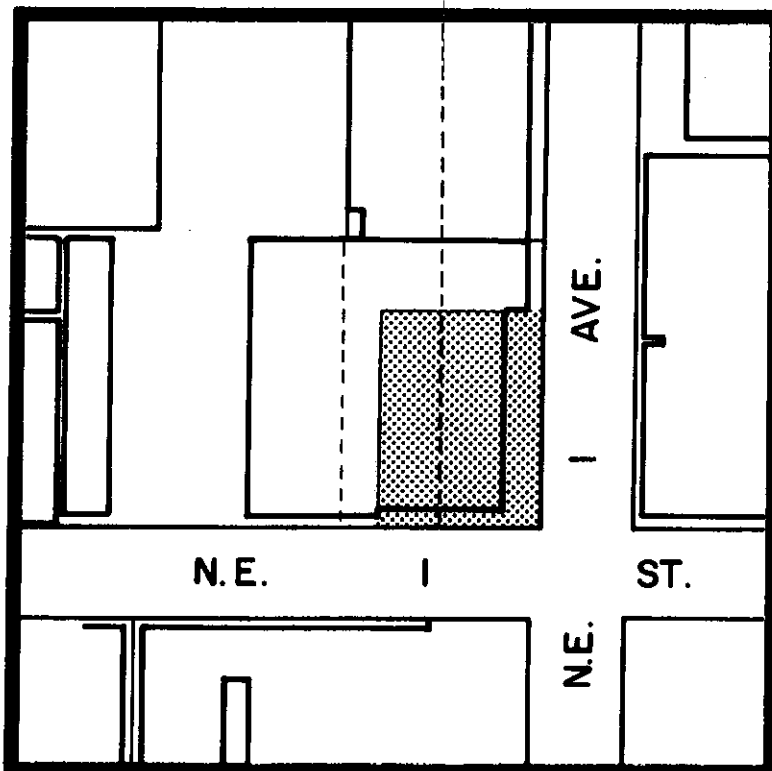
Architectural Significance -	1
Historical Significance -	1
Contextural Significance -	2

OLD U.S. POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE

100 N.E. 1 AVENUE



location



site plan

II. SIGNIFICANCE

Statement of Significance:

The Old U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is significant in the history of architecture, government, economics, and community development in Miami. Built between 1912 and 1914, the building was the first major Federal Building to be constructed in Miami. The City's growth and development in the first two decades of the twentieth century quickly overtaxed the existing facilities of the post office, and the U.S. Government acknowledged the need to construct a modern facility. Designed to house the post office, courts, and other Federal agencies, the building was touted as the most modern and up-to-date Federal Building south of Washington, D.C. The building met the needs of the government until the frenzied development of Miami's boom years necessitated the erection of a new structure in 1931.

The old U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was purchased in 1937 by First Federal Savings and Loan Association as its permanent home. Organized by Dr. William H. Walker in 1933, First Federal was the first federal saving and loan association in the country to be granted a charter by the U.S. Government. The headquarters of First Federal (now AmeriFirst Federal) until 1937, the building is now a branch office and remains the historic building most closely associated with this important Miami institution.

The Old U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is also significant as an outstanding example of Neo-Classical style architecture. Particularly noteworthy for its restrained, classical composition, the building employs such features as monumental pilasters, arched openings, and an enriched entablature. The building's classical features, however, are adapted to the South Florida environment through the use of wide, overhanging eaves and a red tile roof. The building is therefore unique on the downtown skyline.

Relationship to Criteria for Designation:

The Old U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is eligible for designation under the following criteria:

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

The Old U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was the first major Federal building to be constructed in Miami and was said to be the most modern government building in the South at that time. The building later became home to First Federal Savings and Loan Association (now AmeriFirst Federal), the first chartered savings and loan association in the country.

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

The Old U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is an outstanding example of Neo-Classical style architecture and demonstrates the adaptation of that style to the South Florida environment.

7. Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship of outstanding quality or which represent a significant innovation or adaptation to the South Florida environment.

This building is distinguished by its use of Indiana limestone and by its finely crafted exterior detailing.

III. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Date of Erection:

1912-1914

Architect:

The Old U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was designed by Oscar Wenderoth, supervising architect for the U.S. Department of the Treasury. The building was remodeled in 1937 by the well-known Miami firm of Kiehnel and Elliott.

Builder/Contractor:

The contractor for the Old U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was the F.G. Tarbell Company of St. Petersburg, Florida.

Historical Context:

Prior to the construction of the Old U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, the Miami post office was located in a small building on S. Miami Avenue at S.W. 1 Street. Still a second class facility, the post office did not achieve first class status until 1911. When the new building opened in 1914, the post office occupied the first floor and the courts, the second floor. Other government agencies, including customs, the weather bureau, and the immigration inspector, were housed on the third floor.

The Federal Government vacated the building in 1931 when a larger structure opened at 300 N.E. 1 Avenue. Between 1931 and 1937, the old post office was occupied by the Federal Arts project, as well as by other governmental units.

The building's purchase in 1937 by the First Federal Savings and Loan Association (now AmeriFirst Federal) marked a major step in that institution's growth. Originally opened in 1933 in room 711 of the Ingraham Building, the association moved to larger quarters at 33 N.E. 1 Avenue in 1935 when assets reached \$1 million. By 1937, First Federal had become Miami's largest savings and loan institution. Although criticized for his optimism in visualizing such growth that his association would utilize all the space of the large post office building, Dr. William H. Walker, AmeriFirst Federal's founder, soon proved his critics wrong. By 1947, the association had assets of \$17 million and required a large addition to the old building. AmeriFirst moved to its new 32-story building in 1973 but continues to utilize the old post office as a downtown branch.

IV. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Description of Building:

The Old U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is a three story rectangular structure with seven bays across the east facade and four bays across the south facade. Constructed of reinforced concrete and brick, the building is faced with Indiana limestone and is topped with a truncated hipped roof covered with Spanish tiles.

The building's classical composition features identical treatment on both facades. Two story, Ionic pilasters separate each bay and define the corners. Spaced between on the first story are monumental, round arched openings. The openings on the southeast corner contain the main entrances, while the other openings contain windows. When originally constructed, the building was approached by a series of six steps running the entire length of the east facade, and the arched openings here led into a six foot wide loggia. The openings were enclosed, and all but the corner steps were removed in 1937 when the building was converted to bank use.

On the second story, directly above the arched windows, are rectangular openings containing double doors. These doors open onto circular balconets with twisted iron railings. A full entablature separates the second story from the third story, which features paired casement windows. These windows are surrounded by engaged Doric columns and are flanked by plain pilasters corresponding with the ones below.

Other decorative features of the building include polychromed brackets under the wide, overhanging eaves and a cartouche on each end bay on the east facade.

Except for the enclosure of the loggia in 1937, the building has been virtually unaltered on the exterior. Changes to the building have respected its architectural integrity.

Description of Site:

The Old U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is located in the heart of downtown Miami and is situated on the northwest corner of N.E. 1 Avenue and N.E. 1 Street. The building is set back from the property line and is landscaped on both facades.

V. PLANNING CONTEXT

Present Trends and Conditions:

The Old U.S. Post Office and Courthouse has been well preserved since its purchase by First Federal Savings and Loan (now AmeriFirst Federal) in 1937. Few alterations have been made to the exterior of the building, and it continues to be well maintained.

Although still occupied by AmeriFirst, the building was sold in 1983 to a group of investors abroad. The building is locally managed.

Conservation Objectives:

Because this building is one of downtown Miami's major landmarks, its continued preservation should be a top priority. Any future changes to the building should respect its architectural integrity.

These conservation objectives can best be achieved by maintaining the present zoning of the property. An HC-1 zoning overlay district will maintain the present zoning, requiring only the review of physical changes to the property.

VI. HC ZONING ELEMENTS

Boundaries:

The boundaries of the HC zoning district have been drawn to include the entire tract of land under single ownership. This includes only the original U.S. Post Office and Courthouse building. Not included within the boundaries is the L-shaped addition to the building which is owned by a separate individual. Constructed in 1948, this addition is not a part of the original historic building but could be included within the HC zoning district at a later date, if desired.

Major Exterior Surfaces Subject to Review:

The south and east facades shall be considered major exterior surfaces subject to review.

Major Landscape Features Subject to Review:

The major landscape features subject to review shall include all features which are subject to requirements for tree removal permits, as set forth in Chapter 17 of the City Code.

VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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