

OVERVIEW

Tarpon River is a geographically distinct neighborhood located in central Fort Lauderdale. It is bounded by the South Fork of the New River on the west and the New River on the north, South Andrews Avenue to the east, and Davie Boulevard to the south. The neighborhood is located just west and south of the downtown corridor of Fort Lauderdale. Present day Tarpon River consists of the original 1.5 square mile tract of the City of Fort Lauderdale and at least twenty different subdivisions, many of which were originally part of a subdivision owned by W.H. Marshall, Fort Lauderdale’s first mayor.¹ The neighborhood is a mix of commercial, light industrial, and residential use with more access to canals and rivers than many of the other neighborhoods in Fort Lauderdale. The area was named for the river that runs north/south through the area which was noted as being a “playground [for] the thousands of tarpon that make their home in the unusual body of water.”² Due to the number of small subdivisions located within primarily residential Tarpon River, there is a wide variety of housing styles and construction dates. Among the older properties, styles represented include Frame Vernacular, Masonry Vernacular, and Bungalow, however a majority of the structures are Mid-Century Modern or Modern Vernacular.³ The sections within close proximity to downtown Fort Lauderdale began modern development as early as 1911 and residential buildings dating to

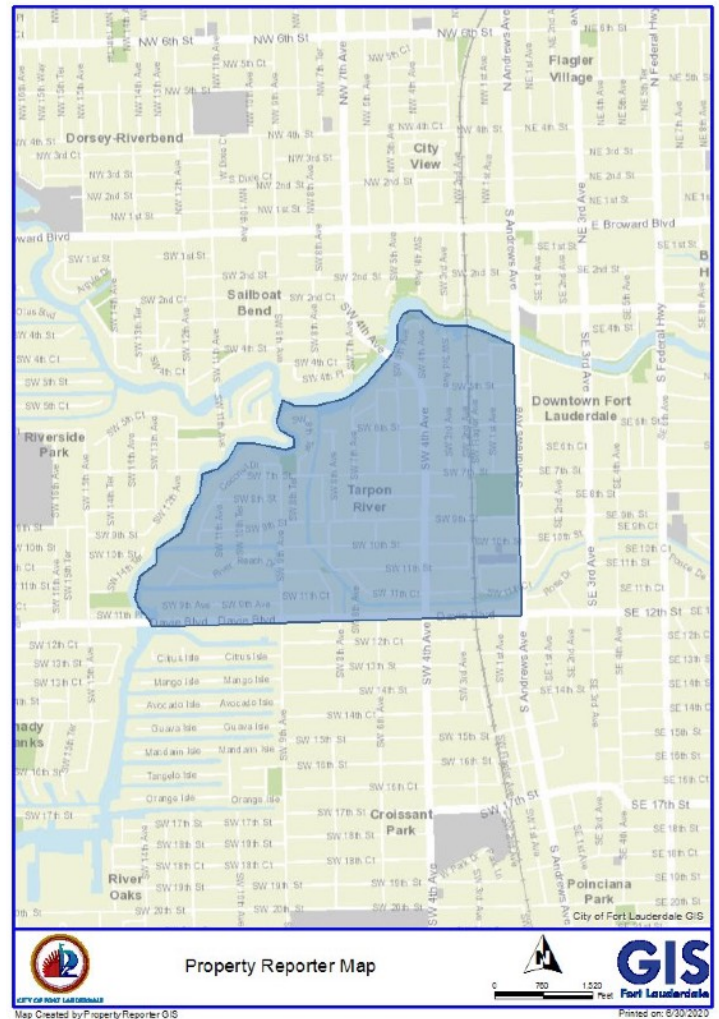


Figure 6B-1: Map of Tarpon River

¹ Trisha Logan, “Tarpon River,” *City of Fort Lauderdale Architectural Resources Survey, 2018*, (Miami: Vagabond Group Consulting, 2018), 178 and “608 SW 6th Avenue,” *Florida Master Site File*, (St. Augustine: Historic Properties Associates, Inc., 1985).

² “Tarpon Bend at Fort Lauderdale.” *The Miami Herald*, March 11, 1923, 11.

³ Logan, 178.



Figure 6B-2: 505 SW 6th Street is one of the earlier extant houses in Tarpon River, likely dating to between 1918 and 1924. Photo by Trisha Logan.

circa 1918 can still be found in some sections of the neighborhood. In recent years, development pressure has resulted in the loss of many of the older structures, particularly the residential buildings, to be demolished in favor of newer, higher-density housing.

TARPON RIVER HISTORY

While there is archaeological evidence that members of the Tequesta Tribe formed camps along the New River, these camps appear to be slightly further east of the area that would become Tarpon River.⁴

The Tequesta were eventually driven out of South Florida by the Muscogee, a branch of whom would eventually evolve into the Seminole Tribe of Florida.⁵ As described in the Fort Lauderdale history section of this report, skirmishes between the United States military and the Seminoles forced European settlers to largely abandon the area. European development resumed slowly in the 1870s, and then grew rapidly between the 1890s and 1915.

A.L. Knowlton, a civil engineer for Henry Flagler, first platted the area that would become Fort Lauderdale and a portion of Tarpon River in 1895.⁶ An 1896 map (see **Figure 6B-3**) created by Knowlton notes that William B. Brickell and his wife, Mary Brickell, owned, described, and subdivided the area to be known henceforth as Fort Lauderdale, including the blocks that would become the Elva A. Truax section of Tarpon River.⁷

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

Within Tarpon River, both residential and commercial buildings exist. Most existing historic buildings were constructed between the late 1910s through the 1960s. Earlier buildings still extant tend to be residential, while the later historic buildings, those built after World War II,

⁴ Daniel Hobby, *Architectural and Historical Survey of Fort Lauderdale: Original Town Limits*, (St. Augustine: Historic Property Associates, 1985), 27.

⁵ Hobby, 27-29 and "A Timeline of Survival: 500 Years of Seminole History," *Seminole Tribe of Florida*, <https://www.semtribe.com/STOF/history/timeline> Accessed on June 15, 2020.

⁶ "608 SW 6th Avenue," *Florida Master Site File*, (St. Augustine: Historic Properties Associates, Inc., 1985).

⁷ A.L. Knowlton, "Dade 'B'-40 Trans 4 Map of Fort Lauderdale," 1896, 3.

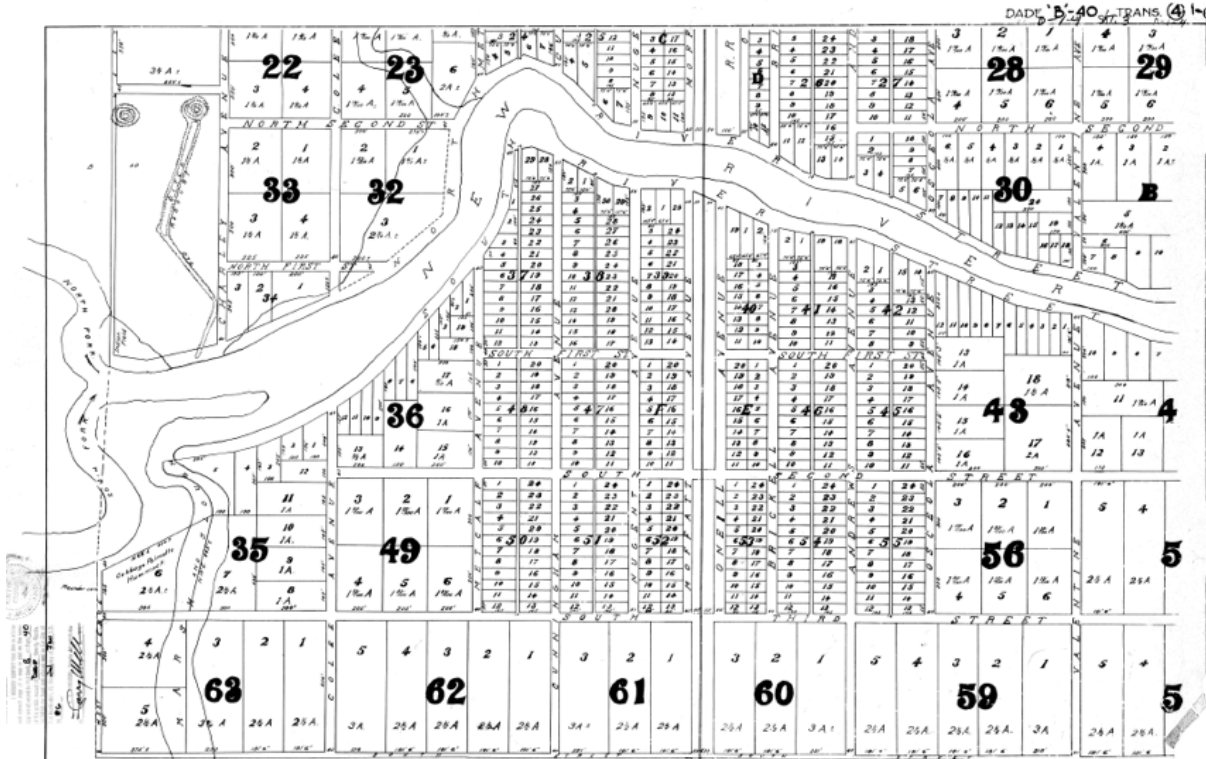


Figure 6B-3: 1896 Map of Fort Lauderdale courtesy of City of Fort Lauderdale.

are a mix of residential and commercial. This intensive-level survey identified primarily residential buildings within the area, however several commercial buildings were identified as potential individual resources and they tend to reflect the same architectural trends as the residential buildings. The primary styles within Tarpon River are:



Figure 6B-4: The house at 610 SW 5th Place is an example of the Craftsman style. Photo by Trisha Logan.

Craftsman: The Craftsman style was popular beginning in the early 1900s through the 1930s. The style was the predominant fashion for smaller houses and spread throughout the country via pattern books and magazines.⁸ It typically features a low-pitched gable or clipped-gable (jerkinhead) roof, exposed rafters or beams, and porches with square battered columns or piers. Within Tarpon River, the examples often include wood siding, slatted gable vents, and exposed rafter tails, and knee braces. Typically some, if not all, of the windows have been replaced.

⁸ Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 2nd Ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017), 568.



Figure 6B-5: The house at 1008 SW 7th Street is an example of the Mission style. Photo by Vagabond Consulting Group.

Mission: The Mission style rose in popularity beginning in the 1890s and continued being used into the 1920s. The style, which was used less frequently in Florida than Spanish and Italian Renaissance-revival styles, began in California as a reflection of that area’s colonial past.⁹ Although plan books often included examples of the Mission style, it was rarely used outside of the southwestern states.¹⁰ Within Tarpon River, the style includes decorative roof parapet, scuppers, and bell-tower inspired chimney caps.



Figure 6B-6: The house at 528 SW 5th Avenue is an example of the Minimal Traditional style. Photo by Vagabond Consulting Group.

Minimal Traditional: The Minimal Traditional style exemplified the Depression-era and Post-World War II ‘instant communities.’¹¹ During the 1930s and 1940s, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) limited the maximum sales price of houses they would insure. The houses, defined by simplicity, needed to maximize floor plans and minimize ornamentation, as both of these impacted costs. The style often featured a small house, typically one-story, with minimal architectural details, and often featured a gabled roof and was popularized by a flood of house plans and pattern books published between 1935 and 1950.¹²

⁹ McAlester, 512.

¹⁰ McAlester, 512.

¹¹ McAlester, 588.

¹² McAlester, 589.



Figure 6B-7: The house at 927 SW 8th Street, constructed in 1936, is an example of the Vernacular style. Photo by Vagabond Consulting Group.



Figure 6B-8: The house at 500 SW 6th Avenue is an example of the Art Moderne style. Photo by Trisha Logan.

Vernacular: Unlike other architectural styles, the Vernacular style tends to be simpler or without embellishment and constructed without the use of an architect. The forms are simple and often have a covered porch with unadorned supports and railings.¹³ They are typically built of one dominant material, and in Tarpon River the examples are either wood-clad or concrete block with stucco.

Art Moderne: While Art Deco and Art Moderne were popular during the same time period of the 1920s through the 1940s, Art Moderne was more prevalent in domestic architecture and the style prevailed longer.¹⁴ The Art Moderne style often has a smooth stucco wall surface, flat roof, and the emphasis is on the horizontal, with grooves, lines, and simple decorative elements reinforcing the horizontal. Within Tarpon River, the buildings designed with this style typically have simple, projecting horizontal door or window eyebrows, prominent copings, and simple horizontal patterns incised or projecting on the wall surface.

¹³ McAlester, 753.

¹⁴ McAlester, 581.



Figure 6B-9: The house at 636 SW 7th Avenue is an example of the Transitional Ranch style. Photo by Vagabond Consulting Group.

Transitional Ranch: The Transitional Ranch (sometimes “minimal Ranch”) style is represented by the later houses in the neighborhood built in the late 1930s and early 1940s. They bridge the gap between the small Minimal Traditional style of the 1930s and 1940s and the sprawling Ranch homes of the 1950s and 1960s. Their small scale is a vestige of the planning and financing guidelines developed by the FHA during the Great Depression and World War II, but incorporate modern design elements of the Ranch style. The Transitional Ranch is one-story high with a low-pitched or flat roof and typically features moderate or wide eave overhangs, large picture windows, and sheltered entrances. The type typically has a carport which is frequently integrated into the roofline of the house.



Figure 6B-10: The house at 800 SW 8th Terrace, designed by William Redden in 1950, is an example of the Contemporary style. Photo by Vagabond Consulting Group.

Contemporary: The contemporary style was inspired by the modern movement and Frank Lloyd Wright’s Usonian house paradigm. The Contemporary style is defined by its widely overhanging eaves, roof beams, obscured or recessed entries, and windows located in gable ends or tucked under the eaves. The style has many variants in plan and roof forms, but typically include either a low-pitched, flat, and/or slanted roof. Window placement is generally dictated by intentional views or light access, rather than symmetry or traditional convention.¹⁵

¹⁵ McAlester, 629-646.



Figure 6B-11: The house at 905 Coconut Drive is an example of the Ranch style. Photo by Vagabond Consulting Group.

Ranch: The Ranch style first developed in the 1930s in California, and was embraced by builders and homeowners in the 1950s and 1960s. The type took hold as FHA financing was revised to allow for larger loans and large house sizes compared with depression- and wartime-era guidelines.¹⁶ The Ranch style is defined by its broad one-story shape, and low-pitched roof. It typically features moderate or wide eave overhangs, large picture windows, and off-centered sheltered entrance. It often incorporates an attached garage that is a visible component of the facade. Other features found on examples within Tarpon River include awning

and jalousie windows, masonry and brick veneer wall texture variation, and long primary facade.

TARPON RIVER HISTORIC DISTRICTS

ELVA A. TRUAX HISTORIC DISTRICT

Overview

The proposed Tarpon River Elva A. Truax Historic District is roughly bounded by the New River and SW 5th Street, SW 5th Avenue, SW 7th Street, and SW 6th Avenue. It contains lots along the north side and south side of SW 5th Place, the south side of SW 5th Street, portions of both sides of SW 5th Avenue, both sides of SW 6th Avenue, and one lot on the east side of SW 7th Avenue. The area is laid out primarily in a regular street grid, with Avenues running north/south and Streets running east/west. SW 5th Place runs on a diagonal, roughly parallel to the New River. Mature street trees and landscaping line most streets, particularly SW 6th Avenue. All of the properties within the potential historic district are residential and consist of one- to two-story free-standing houses or low-density

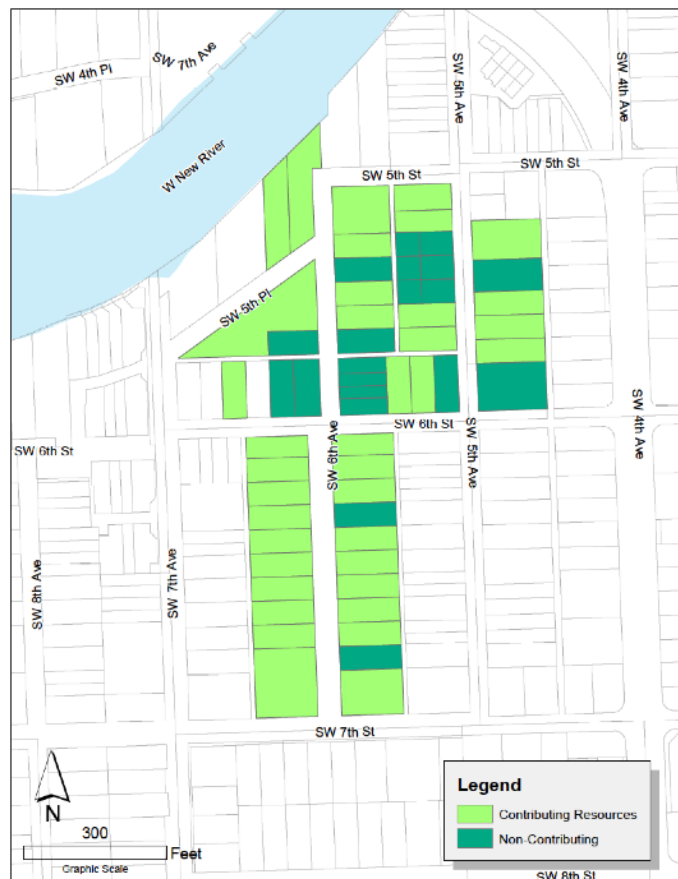


Figure 6B-12: Map of proposed Elva A. Truax Historic District. Map by Rollin Maycumber, City of Fort Lauderdale.

¹⁶ McAlester, 597-603.

multi-family dwellings. The proposed district contains 40 contributing resources and 7 non-contributing buildings. In addition there are five vacant lots within the proposed district.

Statement of Significance

The proposed Tarpon River Elva A. Truax historic district appears eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of community development as an intact example of early residential development in downtown Fort Lauderdale and under Criterion C in the area of architecture as a cohesive grouping of early twentieth century style residential buildings. The district represents the earliest years of incorporated Fort Lauderdale development, the boom years of the 1920s, the lean years of the Great Depression, and the second boom directly following World War II. The structures retain a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The period of significance for the historic district is from 1911 through 1950.

Development and Architectural Context

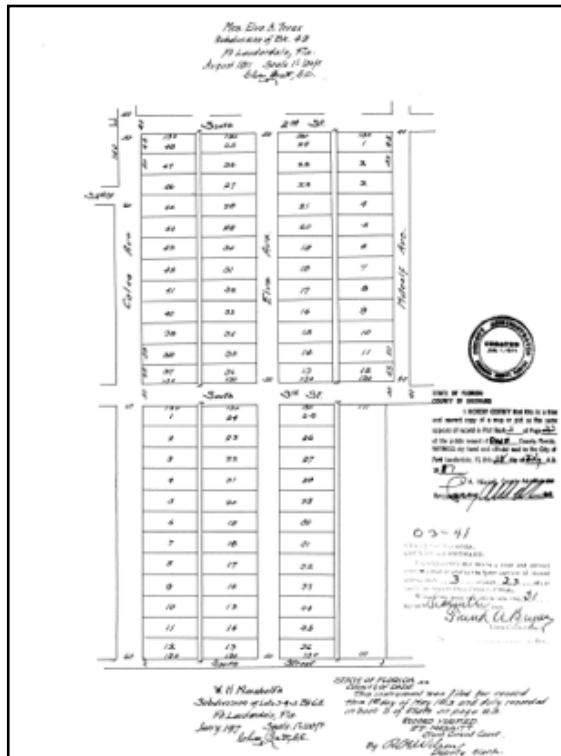


Figure 6B-13: 1911 map of Elva A. Truax subdivision courtesy of City of Fort Lauderdale.

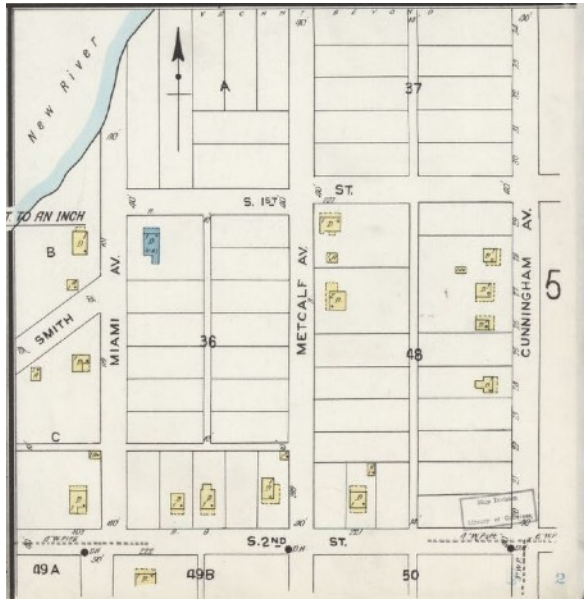
In 1911, the same year that the City of Fort Lauderdale was incorporated, Mrs. Elva A. Truax subdivided city block 49 (see Figure 6B-13), including the construction of present day SW 6th Avenue (originally named Elva Avenue and later Miami Avenue).¹⁷ Little is known about Elva A. Truax, however it is likely that she was the wife of a Philadelphia businessman, J. Fletcher Truax, who represented Chase & Company of Florida.¹⁸ Former Fort Lauderdale mayor, W.H. Marshall, developed several lots on the block south of present day SW7th Street (former S. 3rd Street) in 1917.¹⁹ There are no census or map records between 1917 and 1924, however a 1924 Sanborn map of the area shows several houses already constructed in the area, including present-day 519 SW 6th Avenue, 500 SW 6th Avenue, and 502 SW 5th Avenue.

The houses constructed before the Great Hurricane of 1926 include Craftsman and Vernacular houses. While the construction boom ended in South Florida with the hurricane which

¹⁷ "Dade 3-23, 3-41 Map," 1913.

¹⁸ "Obituary Notes, J. Fletcher Truax," *The Morning News*, Wilmington, Delaware, Sept. 2, 1924. 2. and "Mrs. Elva A. Truax," *The News Journal*, Wilmington, Delaware, May 5, 1948. 27.

¹⁹ "Dade 3-23, 3-41 Map," 1913.



plunged the area into an economic depression before the rest of the country, modest development continued in the historic district. Between 1926 and the mid-1940s, a number of houses were constructed in the area. These tend to be smaller houses designed in the Craftsman, Minimal Traditional, and Transitional Ranch styles. By the end of World War II, the country was facing a nation-wide housing shortage and areas with developable lots saw a second housing boom. While single-family houses were still constructed, the focus shifted to include more modern-style multifamily dwellings. In this way, the residential buildings with the Elva A. Truax Historic District represent the changing social and economic realities of the first half of the twentieth century.



Figure 6B-14: 1924 Sanborn maps of Elva A. Truax subdivision courtesy of the Library of Congress.