

OVERVIEW

Harbour Isles is a neighborhood located in the southeastern part of the City of Fort Lauderdale. It is bounded on the east by the Atlantic beachfront, on the south by the Port Everglades inlet. It is bounded on the west by S. Ocean Drive and LakeMayan and on the north by the northern property lines of the Lago Mar Beach Club. The neighborhood is accessed via S.Ocean Drive. S. Ocean Drive and S. Ocean Lane form the backbone of the district and run north-south. They are crossed by Grace Drive and Anchor Drive. Properties along the east side of S. Ocean Lane front the beach and Atlantic Ocean. Sky Harbour East and Point of Americas Condominium front the Inlet.

The majority of the properties are residential, with the exception of the Lago Mar Beach Club which is a vacation resort. The residential buildings are all multiple dwelling buildings. They consist of rental apartments, condominiums, and cooperative apartments. The low- and mid-rise buildings along the beach are buffered from the street with low walls and fencing and surface parking. Point of Americas is also gated from public access. The other high-rise buildings are surface parking and moderate landscaping. All of the intact contributing buildings are in the Miami Modern style. Original significant features include tray balconies, concrete screen block railing and screen walls, textured masonry surfaces, bold vertical signage, deep roof overhangs, ribbon windows and curtain wall fenestration, exterior corridors, floating stairways, sculptural concrete entrance canopies. With some noted exceptions, the neighborhood and individual structures retain a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

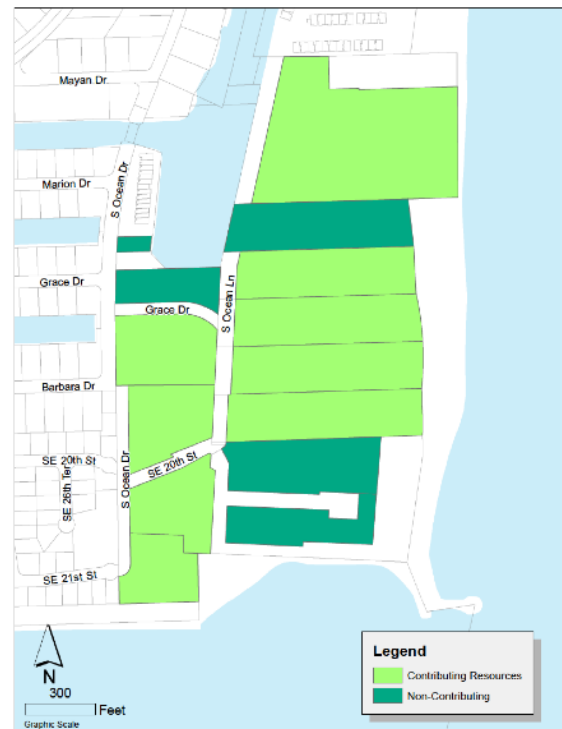


Figure 6E-1: Map of Harbour Isles. Map by Rollin Maycumber, City of Fort Lauderdale.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Harbour Isles neighborhood 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 post-war high-rise development and early cooperative housing development in Florida, and under Criterion C in the area of architecture as a cohesive neighborhood in the Miami Modern style planned by prominent local architect, Charles F. McKirahan. The district represents the housing

boom of the post-war period and the corresponding shifts in method of construction and architectural expression. The period of significance for the historic district is 1954 through 1969, the period of planning and construction of the development.



HERE'S WHAT \$16,000,000 BREAKWATER BEACH DEVELOPMENT WILL LOOK LIKE WHEN COMPLETED
 ... Harbor Beach residential area spreads through foreground, and Port Everglades is at right center

Resort Plans Speeded

Figure 6E-2: Rendering of the Breakwater Beach development at Harbour Isles, 1956. Image courtesy of Fort Lauderdale News.

Homes section of this report, the barrier island was undeveloped prior to 1946. The development of Harbour Isles began following the completion of Breakwater Beach Surf Club

Homes. The oldest buildings in the district are low- and mid-rise buildings along the northeastern beach front. The four waterfront courtyard coop-buildings and part of the Lago Mar Beach Club were constructed between 1954 and 1956. The small apartment building at 1824 S Ocean Drive was also built during this time. At the time the Lago Mar Beach Club was named the Fort Lauderdale Beach Hotel which included earlier buildings. With the addition of the resort hotel, the area was an ideal winter getaway with a variety of pricing and commitment options. In the adjacent Breakwaters Homes subdivision, families were able to have a small house with a yard, but that also meant more of a commitment. The condo-style co-ops allowed northern tourists to own a piece of Fort Lauderdale without the worry of exterior maintenance -- it was the lock the

Figure 6E-3: Ad for Fort Lauderdale winter vacations, 1960 from the News Journal, Wilmington, Delaware.

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

The buildings in Harbour Isles were built during the post-World War II housing boom on a previously unoccupied area of beach north of the Port Everglades inlet. Contributing buildings were constructed between 1954 and 1969 during Fort Lauderdale's second great real estate boom. As described in the Breakwater Beach Surf Club

**Now is the time for that
 FORT LAUDERDALE
 vacation... at less cost!**

COME EARLY — December and January are delightful months to visit Fort Lauderdale. You have your choice of family-sized apartments, modern motels and full-service hotels at a considerable reduction of mid-season prices.

FULL PLEASURE — Though the cost is less, winter resort life is in full swing. Night spots and hotel entertainment are glowing with star acts. The only thing that's different from mid-season fun is the price. And that's all in your favor!

FINE WEATHER — Sunny days and balmy evenings prevail. Afternoon temperatures average a warm 74°—just right for beaching and bathing, or golf and tennis.

IT'S FISHING SEASON, TOO Early-winter runs of game fish keep offshore and tide-waters brimming with trophy catches. Deep-sea charter boats are all spruced up for winter's guests. Rent them by day or half-day and go trolling in the Atlantic. Or join a party-bust group for bottom-fishing over the mud-walk snapper and mackerel lurk.

GET FREE DETAILS — Send today for the brand new, full-color Fort Lauderdale brochure and start planning your visit. Rates and lodgings information let you see just what you save by vacationing here in December or January. It's a happy surprise to discover a grand Fort Lauderdale holiday costs no more than an ordinary one.

FORT LAUDERDALE... for the fun of it!

door and leave lifestyle and the resort hotel allowed visitors to rent the lifestyle without a long-term commitment. The Lago Mar Beach Club was extensively remodeled in the 1980s and 1990s, altering the original design, however the central portion of the hotel retains the original breezeblock.¹ This central portion of the hotel, along with the history of the hotel in the mixed-use development make it a contributing resource to the district.



Figure 6E-4: Breakwater Beach development at Harbour Isles; land cleared for Sky Harbour East, Point of Americas, Everglades House, Atlantic Towers and Breakwater Towers. Mid-rise co-ops in the foreground and Breakwater Beach Surf Club Homes beyond, 1957. Image courtesy of Fort Lauderdale News.

The remaining parts of the district were planned as a cohesive development, and constructed during the following decade. These highrise buildings were part of the Breakwater Beach development and were constructed between 1961 and 1969. Breakwater Beach was a large project first planned in the 1950s. The first stage of the development consisted of the 59 cooperative homes at the Breakwater Beach Surf Club completed in 1957. The second phase contained 34 apartment buildings ranging 15-22 stories, a hotel, an 18-hole golf course, Olympic-sized pool, parks, and tennis

courts. In 1958, the development was projected to cost \$16 million. The entire project was planned by the Investment Corporation of Florida under the company's president, Gilbert P. Edward. The golf course and other components were never built, but the high-rise apartment and cooperative buildings were constructed in some form. Charles F. McKirahan was the architect for the entire development.² Breakwater Towers, Atlantic Towers, Everglades House, Sky Harbour East, and Point of Americas are the ultimate result of the development. These buildings were built in the Miami Modern style and contained rental and cooperative apartments. Planned in 1958 and completed in 1962, Breakwater Towers was the first Section 213 co-op apartment building constructed in the state of Florida.³

¹ "Our Story," Lago Mar Beach Resort & Club Website. Accessed June 2020. <https://lagomar.com/about/our-story/>

² "Fort Lauderdale Project Plans Cooperative Houses," *Tampa Bay Times*. (St. Petersburg, FL: 13 January 1957).

³ Glenn Hoffer. "Federal Loan Set on Co-op," *Fort Lauderdale News*. (18 October 1958): 6-A.

COOPERATIVE LIVING

Many of the high-rise apartment towers were planned as cooperative housing buildings rather than following the traditional model of home ownership. While each resident occupies their own apartment, they are actually part-owner shareholders of a non-profit housing corporation that collectively owns the entire development. Shareholders have an exclusive lease on their residence and all maintenance and amenity expenses are shared by the corporation. This provides many of the benefits of home ownership (the shareholders have equity in the property) while providing access to common amenities and minimal individual maintenance. Co-ops were popular in New York City and elsewhere prior to World War II, but did not become practical in other areas until the 1950s. In 1942, Section 216 of the IRS code put cooperative tax implications in line with traditional homeownership, and in 1950, Section 213 of the National Housing Act authorized the Federal Housing Administration to insure mortgages on middle-income cooperatives.⁴

PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURAL FIRMS

Charles Foster McKirahan was a prominent Fort Lauderdale-based architect who left an astounding architectural legacy in South Florida and beyond. McKirahan was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1919. He first studied at Oklahoma State University. He served during World War II, spending three years as a captain with the US Army Corps of Engineers. He was sent to the Pacific theater where he spent time in Australia, Hawaii, Guam, Japan, and the South Pacific. He returned to school after the war, earning his B.S. in Architecture from the University of Illinois in 1947. He moved to Fort Lauderdale soon after graduation.⁵

McKirahan worked briefly as chief draftsman at the office of Gamble, Pownall & Gilroy before forming a partnership, Wilmer & McKirahan, in 1951. He soon launched his own firm in 1953. An early project of McKirahan was the Mai Kai Restaurant in Fort Lauderdale. The renowned Polynesian-themed restaurant drew on McKirahan's experience in the Pacific.⁶

McKirahan's first projects were small. In 1953, he designed Manhattan Tower in Fort Lauderdale as a General Motors corporate retreat. The building is notable for its sculptural outdoor "birdcage" stairway. McKirahan soon became the preferred architect of Coral Ridge Properties, a prolific and powerful Broward County developer. McKirahan designed hundreds of homes and apartments for the developer including the Coral Ridge Country Club, Coral Ridge Yacht Club, Coral Cove, Bay Club, Sunrise Bay Club, Coral Ridge Towers (North and East), and Ocean Manors Hotel.⁷

⁴ "A History of Cooperatives," National Cooperative Law Center Website. <http://nationalcooperativelawcenter.com/national-cooperative-law-center/the-history-of-housing-cooperatives/3/> Accessed May 2020.

⁵ "Architects Biographies," MiMo on the Beach. City of Miami Beach. Accessed April 2020. www.mimoonthebeach.com

⁶ "Architects Biographies" and "Uncovering McKirahan," *Tropic Magazine*. (April 2015): 18-25.

⁷ "Architects Biographies," and "Uncovering McKirahan," 18-25.

Works within the survey district include the Point of Americas Condominium, Everglades House, Sky Harbour East, Lago Mar Apartments, Breakwater Towers, and Atlantic Towers. Additional Fort Lauderdale works were Birch House, and Sea Chateau Motel. Other South Florida work included the Castaways Island Hotel, the Seaquarium dome, Point View Co-op, Island House on Key Biscayne, Bay Harbour Club and Bay Harbour Continental co-ops, and Seacoast Towers (now the Alexander).⁸ He also designed the Playboy Club in Miami and the Gill Sheraton Hotel.⁹

McKirahan's international work included buildings in the Bahamas, Ecuador, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, and Brazil. He designed residences for actor Raymond Burr and artist Alexander Calder. He also designed six residences that are the anchor of the Mid-Century Modern Historic District in Norwich, Vermont.¹⁰ At its height, McKirahan's firm employed over 100 people and he had satellite offices in the Bahamas, Brazil, and Chicago.¹¹ His prolific career was cut short when he was tragically killed in a car accident in West Palm Beach on February 12, 1964 at the age of 44.¹²

It should be noted that Charles's first wife, Lucile W. McKirahan, a pioneering woman in architecture in her own right, helped found the McKirahan firm, which she led successfully through the 70's and 80's with her architect son, Charles. F. McKirahan Jr. Lucile graduated from the University of Illinois School of Architecture in 1940. That same year, she was the first woman to win first place in the Ecole de Beaux Arts Paris Prize in 1940. Her proudest accomplishment was a design for a prefabricated farm house, a humanitarian project during the Great Depression, thousands of which were constructed throughout the United States. Lucile was particularly strong at developing renderings to win projects for the firm. Charles and Lucile divorced, although it appears she remained active at the firm. Her contribution to the Harbour Isles project is unknown, but it is likely that she played a role in its development.¹³

Morton T. Ironmonger received his architectural degree at Cornell University, as did so many other local architects. He was first mentioned as an architect working in Fort Lauderdale in 1942 and last listed in the local telephone directory in 1962. He designed numerous homes in the Colee Hammock North and Beverly Heights neighborhoods and also in Sailboat Bend.¹⁴ Within

⁸ "Architects Biographies"

⁹ "McKirahan Dies in Pike Auto Wreck," *Fort Lauderdale News*. (13 February 1964): 13.

¹⁰ "Architects Biographies"

¹¹ "Uncovering McKirahan," 18-25.

¹² "McKirahan Dies in Pike Auto Wreck," 13.

¹³ "McKirahan, Lucile W. [Obituary]," *Chicago Tribune*. (25 June 2005).

¹⁴ Uguccioni, Ellen. "Architects in the SBHD." *Sailboat Bend Historic District Architectural Resource Survey*. (City of Fort Lauderdale: 2020).

the survey district, Ironmonger designed the Mayan Beach Club Co-op, the Ocean Lane Villas Co-op, and the La Coquina Condominium.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

Architectural expression in the mid-twentieth century was heavily influenced by the Modern movement. The International style was born out of mostly European influences of the Bauhaus school and swiss architect Le Corbusier. Many prominent architects within this movement fled Europe during the war and obtained teaching positions at prestigious American universities, bringing modernism into the United States mainstream.

While there were modern single-family homes built in the international style, modernism was most predominantly expressed through Ranch and Contemporary-style houses. Federal housing and loan guidelines heavily favored more traditional and conservative designs for single-family homes. The high-rise buildings of the Breakwater Beach development fully embraced modernism. Their straight towering forms are a direct result of the Tower-in-the-Park scheme promoted by Le Corbusier and embraced by American architects and planners. The International style tower was used for innovative buildings ranging from the corporate Seagram Building and Lever house, to American embassies abroad and the United Nations headquarters in New York City. The tower became the standard for all high rise construction in the US, and local influences in South Florida gave rise to the Miami Modern style (often abbreviated as MiMo).

The post-World War II period saw the rise of mass manufacturing and standardization that allowed large buildings to be built with precast concrete, modular units, and prefabricated assemblies. This is reflected in many of the features found in these high-rise structures including: modular concrete screen block, sculptural concrete entrance canopies, concrete tray balconies, and curtain wall and window wall assemblies.

Nearly all of the properties within the survey area are residential (the only exception being the Lago Mar Beach Club). The residential buildings are low-, mid-, and high-rise apartment buildings consisting of traditional rental apartments and cooperative apartments. Their designs are in the Miami Modern style.



Figure 6E-5: Breakwater Towers located at 1900 S Ocean Drive is an example of the Miami Modern (MiMo). Photo by Vagabond Consulting Group.

Miami Modern (MiMo): The Miami Modern style emerged in post-war South Florida as widespread automobile infrastructure, air conditioning, and jet travel lead to tourism, glamour, and prosperity in the area as the International style and the modern movement reached its mid-century zenith. Playful space-aged futurism and tropical design considerations like cross-ventilation and sun-shading were applied to modernist trends to create the flamboyant local style. MiMo buildings often have courtyards and exterior corridors to take advantage of ocean breezes. Hotels and high-

rises often have a pedestal and superstructure configuration. They often feature groupings or ribbons of windows and dramatic roof shapes often involving deep shading overhangs. Other typical features are tray balconies, textured masonry or stucco, concrete block or metal screens, brise-soleils, eave cutouts, boomerang and delta wing shapes, murals and mosaics, dramatic vertical signage, exposed concrete, and curtain wall construction.¹⁵

¹⁵ "Design Guidelines," MiMo on the Beach. City of Miami Beach. Accessed April 2020. www.mimoonthebeach.com