

# GILL ISLES HISTORIC DISTRICT

## 06a

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### **OVERVIEW AND BOUNDARY**

#### **DESCRIPTION**

Gill Isles is identified as a potential Historic District located within the Riverside Park neighborhood in the southwest quadrant of Fort Lauderdale. The boundaries of the potential Gill Isles Historic District follow the rectilinear boundaries of Southwest 4th Court to the north, the North Fork of the New River to the east, the south side of Southwest 5th Court to the south, and Southwest 18th Avenue to the west.

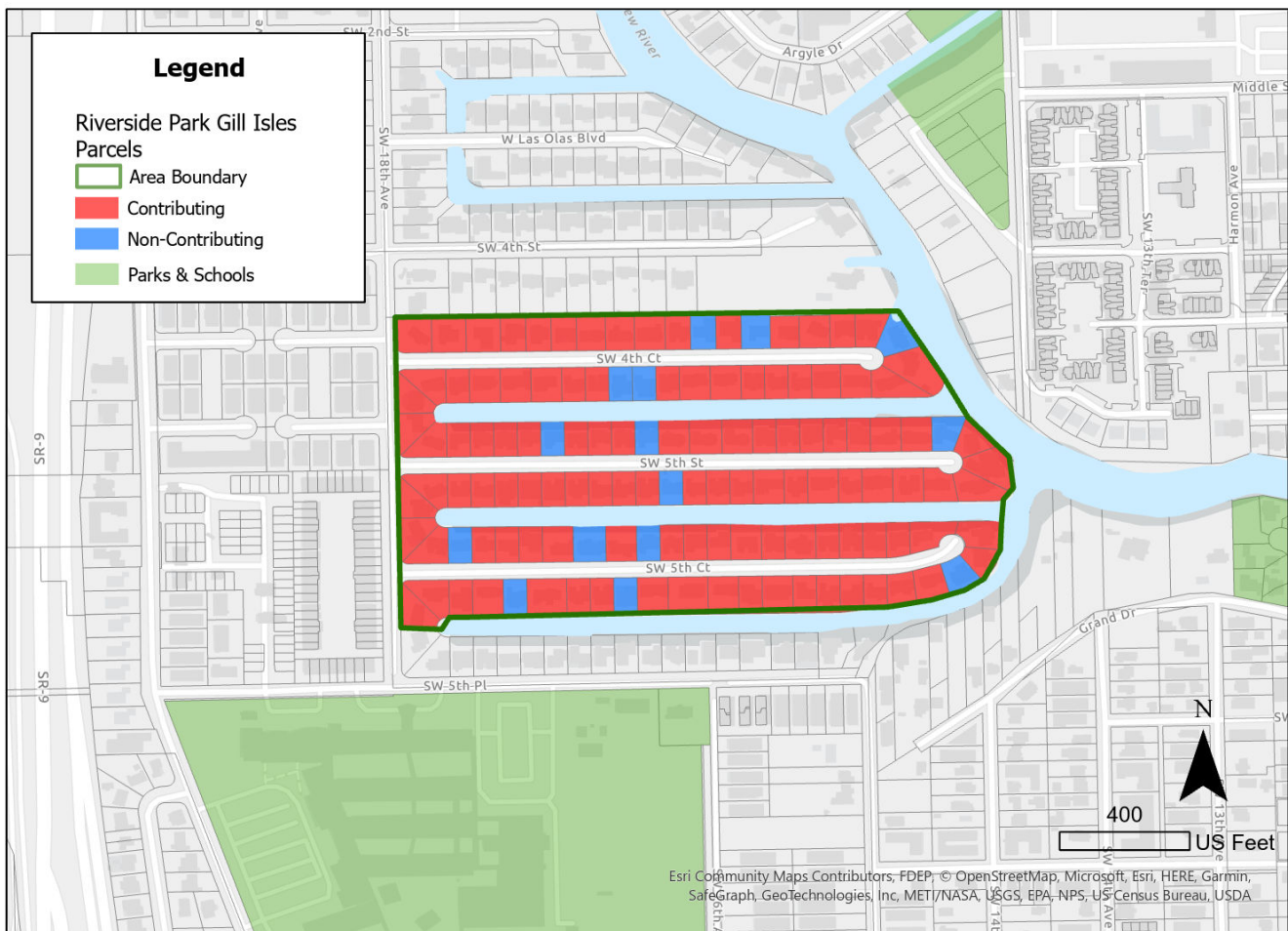
#### **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The proposed Gill Isles Historic District appears eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion A in the area of community planning and development as an intact example of early suburban development in Fort Lauderdale and under Criterion C in the area of architecture that represents a cohesive neighborhood of mid-twentieth century residential design. The district represents the latter years of the post-World War II land boom and reflects the corresponding shifts in construction methods and architectural expression. The structures retain a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The historic

resources surveyed and researched retain their original materials and character-defining features. The Period of Significance is from 1957 through 1958.

As a potential Historic District, Gill Isles is an intact example of a mid-century subdivision within the City of Fort Lauderdale that capitalized on its unique environment situated adjacent to the New River and providing water access to all properties. Within the Gill Isles Historic District geographic boundaries there are 68 residential structures representative of the Transitional Ranch style and 44 residential structures representative of the Tropical Modern Tri-Level style.

In the thirty years from 1940 to 1970, Fort Lauderdale's population increased tenfold from 17,996 to 139,590." New master planned developments formed to follow a growing middle-class which transplanted post-World War II veterans to settle permanently in Fort Lauderdale. Dredge and fill technologies provided waterfront access for single-family residences, particularly in the development of Gill Isles, while maintaining a moderate price for homeownership.



## Riverside Park - Gill Isles

### **DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT**

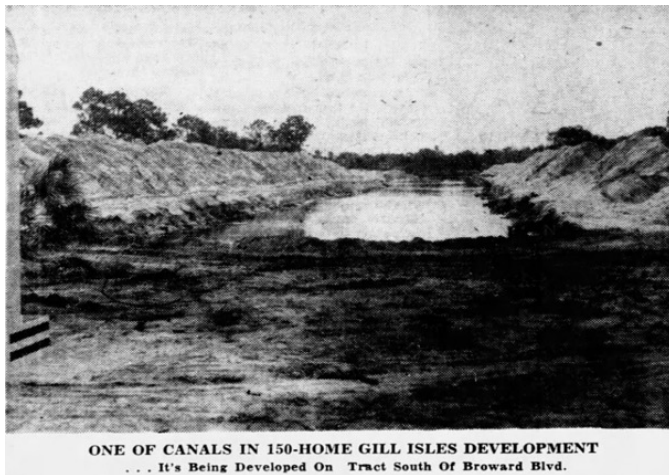
Gill Isles was developed by Bob Gill, owner of Gill Construction and the popular Gill Hotels which included the Escape, Jolly Roger, and Yankee Clipper. Originally from Chicago, the family vacationed in Fort Lauderdale prior to World War II and decided to settle permanently after the war with the building boom. Gill Construction developed Lauderdale Pines, 250 homes, Pine Ridge, 300 homes, Northwood, 350 homes, Lauderdale Harbors, 300 homes, River Bend and Tuskegee, 100 homes, Lauderdale Isles, 100 homes, second Lauderdale Isles, 700 homes, and Gillcrest, 300 homes. In 1957, Gill Construction began Gill Isles, a 150-home waterfront subdivision. The model homes had “floor-to-ceiling jalousies featured in every combination of Florida-living room,

time-saver kitchens, tiled baths, paved driveways, and all tile roofs.”

Gill Construction created the “Talking House,” a tri-level design serving as a model home to provide modern efficiencies with the latest architectural advances. Located within Gill Isles, the model home attracted thousands of visitors to the area. Advertisements featured safety through electrical upgrades including, “...built-in electric oven and range, electric refrigerator, automatic electric water heater, automatic electric washer and clothes dryer.” Swimming pools and access to the ocean through the canals of the development, which flow into the New River’s north fork, were popular features to ensure home sales.

Of the 145 total structures surveyed, 43 residential structures were designed by Architect Charles McKirahan and 87 residential structures were designed by Architect Tony Sherman. Generally, McKirahan was credited with designing the multi-level Tropical Modern Tri-Level style homes and Sherman was credited with designing the single-story Transitional Ranch residences.

In evaluating the Gill Isles Historic District the other structures located within the defined boundaries were examined.



Source: "Group of Model Homes Being Constructed in Southwest Section's New Gill Isles," Fort Lauderdale News, June 29, 1957. Style



Source: "Gill Isles Project," Fort Lauderdale News, February 1, 1958.



Source: "Gill Isles Builds Up," Fort Lauderdale News, October 20, 1957.

# DOCK YOUR BOAT IN YOUR BACK YARD!

The invitation which brought luxurious waterfront living to 3,500 homeowners in Fort Lauderdale is extended again in the **NEW Gill Isles**

1737 S. W. 4th Ct., Cor. of S. W. 18th Ave.  
Tropical living at its very finest may be found in these new Gill Isles homes where "dock your boat in your back yard" reaches a new peak of authority. Floor to ceiling jalousies in every combination Florida-living room bring the cooling tradewinds for year round comfort and relaxation.

The TRI-LEVEL home with the distinctive Personality!

DEEP, WIDE CANALS, PRE-CAST SEA-WALLS, WITH NO FIXED BRIDGES FROM YOUR OWN DOCK TO THE OCEAN ON DEEP, EASILY NAVIGABLE NORTH NEW RIVER.

**Gill**

3 BR. 2 BATHS - 2 BR. 2 BATHS  
from \$16,500 to \$22,200

Source: "Advertisement—New Gill Isles," Fort Lauderdale News, June 29, 1957.



Source: "Row of Waterfront Homes," Fort Lauderdale News, January 17, 1959. Source: "Talking House" Built in Gill Isles," Fort Lauderdale News, October 20, 1957.

# WIRE BEATS FIRE!

in the amazing "TALKING HOUSE"!

See—and hear—why you LIVE BETTER, ELECTRICALLY! The remarkable new "Talking House" has 100-amp electric service that means Full Housepower ... and it actually tells you about all its modern better-living features: built-in electric oven and range, electric refrigerator, automatic electric water heater, automatic electric washer and clothes dryer. It speaks for itself ... don't miss it!

**FREE ADMISSION!**

**SAFEST!**  
Electrically there you're safer than the handle of a knife ... than a bare wire ... than a loose electric wire ... than a heating coil ... than an old electric light bulb!

**CLEANEST...** No dirt, no mess, no smoke, no steam, no odors, no noise, no fumes, no gas, no fire, no explosion, no danger.

**COOLEST...** No heat, no steam, no smoke, no fumes, no gas, no fire, no explosion, no danger.

**CHEAPEST...** It costs less to run than a gas stove, a gas refrigerator, a gas water heater, a gas clothes dryer.

**SIMPLEST, TOO!** No complicated wiring, no special permits, no special inspections, no special regulations.

LOCATION: "Gill Isles,"  
1737 S. W. 4th Ct., Fort Lauderdale  
Built by  
**GILL CONSTRUCTION CO.**  
Open daily from Sunday, October 20,  
through Sunday, October 27  
SUNDAYS—2 p.m. to 9 p.m.  
WEEKDAYS—2 p.m. to 6 p.m.

\*See more on air conditioning, too ... get greater comfort from smaller units ... and lower installation and operating costs!

Source: "Advertisement—Wire Beats Fire!" Fort Lauderdale News, October 20, 1957.