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Sanborn Historic Map, 1920
Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Company
Introduction

Map showing present conditions

Coconut Grove, Florida

Scale: Each square = 40 acres
One inch = 1760 feet

Sanborn Historic Map, 1927
Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Company

Building:

- Bay Fronts: 35
- Other Dwellings: 310
- Shops & Offices: 178
- Churches: 5
- Schools: 1
- Cafes: 1
- Lodges & Clubs: 1
- Garages: 63
- Public Garage: 2
- Barns & Sheds: 23
- Banks: 1
- Hotels: 2
- Library: 1
- Post Office: 1
- City Hall: 1

Totals: 323
01 Introduction
The Center for Urban & Community Design

The United Nations Brundtland Commission set the following benchmark: “Sustainable development channels the preservation and creation of livable, inspiring, enduring and equitable places, where the quality of life and the long-term quality of human existence will be enhanced rather than depleted.”

The Center for Urban and Community Design has made it its mission to foster a collaborative interdisciplinary approach that engages the preservation, creation and retrofitting of communities and buildings; addressing the environment, culture, urban and building design in participatory planning processes in the South Florida region and beyond.

The University of Miami’s School of Architecture is a national leader in the arena of ‘sustainable’ urban design. The School’s Center for Urban and Community Design underlines that strength by collaborating on local and regional planning charrettes. The CUCD provides academically based community service with the goal of supporting communities, so the quality of life in towns, cities and villages may further improve and consequently all can reap the benefits.

For more information about the Center for Urban and Community Design, contact Sonia Chao, CUCD Director and Associate Professor in Practice, University of Miami School of Architecture, at 305-284-3439, schao@miami.edu.
Introduction

The Charrette Team

Steering Committee

Sonia Cháo, Faculty, University of Miami School of Architecture.
Director, Center for Urban and Community Design.

Jorge Hernandez, Faculty, University of Miami School of Architecture.

Charrette Leaders:

Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Dean and Distinguished Professor, School of Architecture, University of Miami.

She received her Masters of Science in architecture from Columbia University. Early in her career she worked in the offices of Robert A.M. Stern Architects and Kohn Pedersen, Fox. Living in Italy for five years, she pursued research in historic preservation and urban design, funded by the Living Heritage Fund. In 1992 she co-founded and became the first managing director for the Center for Urban and Community Design. She was a Graham Foundation Grant recipient for research conducted. The resulting exhibition and book, "Historic Preservation and Urban Design" was funded by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In 2001 she received the first National Prize for Historic Preservation. Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk is Dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Miami. She joined the faculty in 1985. In 2005 she was the recipient of the AIA National Honor Award for Work in Education. She is a registered architect in Florida.

Jorge Hernandez, Faculty, University of Miami. Leading Project Architect.

He holds a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Virginia's School of Architecture and a Masters of Architecture from Harvard University. He has served as the President of the American Institute of Architects, Florida Chapter. He is a registered architect in Florida.

Design Team Leaders:

Allan Shulman

He received his master of Architecture from The University of Miami in 1992 and his Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Miami in 1988. Shulman is a registered architect in the State of Florida. He is a member of the American Institute of Architects, Florida Chapter. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Derrick Smith

He received his Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Miami in 1993. He is a registered architect in the State of Florida.

Veruska Vasconez

She received her Bachelor of Architecture from The University of Miami in 1991. She is a registered architect in the State of Florida.

Sonia Cháo

She received her Masters of Science in architecture from Columbia University. Early in her career she worked in the offices of Robert A.M. Stern Architects and Kohn Pedersen, Fox. Living in Italy for five years, she pursued research in historic preservation and urban design, funded by the Living Heritage Fund. In 1992 she co-founded and became the first managing director for the Center for Urban and Community Design. She was a Graham Foundation Grant recipient for research conducted. The resulting exhibition and book, "Historic Preservation and Urban Design" was funded by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In 2001 she received the first National Prize for Historic Preservation. Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk is Dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Miami. She joined the faculty in 1985. In 2005 she was the recipient of the AIA National Honor Award for Work in Education. She is a registered architect in Florida.
Guest Architects:

Robert E. Chisholm
R.E. Chisholm Architects, Inc. was founded in 1982 by Robert E. Chisholm, AIA. In 1992 the firm was named “Architectural Firm of the Year” in Dade County and in 1996 Robert E. Chisholm was named fellow of the American Institute of Architects, the highest honor attainable in this 150 year old organization. The firm and its principals have received national, state, and local awards in architectural design, planning, graphics, urban design, and community service as early as 1976 and as recently as 2004.

Richard Heisenbottle
Mr. Heisenbottle has over 28 years experience in all aspects of architecture, which includes work for major developers and government agencies in South Florida including the School Board of Palm Beach County, the City of Miami, the State Board of Education, and the State Board of Governors. He has received many awards for restoration projects, including the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Florida Association of the Arts, the Miami chapter of the American Institute of Architects for restoring the Betty Shabazz Academy and adaptive use projects. The most notable of these restoration projects is the South Beach Freedom Tower Museum. The firm has received many awards for restoration projects, including the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Florida Association of the Arts, the Miami chapter of the American Institute of Architects for restoring the Betty Shabazz Academy and adaptive use projects. The most notable of these restoration projects is the South Beach Freedom Tower Museum.

Alyssa Kriplen
Alyssa Kriplen is an architect at Zyscovich Architects, in Miami, FL. She has extensive experience working as a project manager, project architect, and in various positions at architecture firms in New York City. Ms. Kriplen has been active in various professional organizations, including the American Institute of Architects and the Florida Association of Architects. Ms. Kriplen has also been involved in community service and charitable activities in New York City and Miami. She has served as a volunteer and board member for various charitable organizations and has been active in community service and charitable activities.

Center for Urban and Community Design Staff:

Carolina Moscoso
Luis Valdes Bartroli

CUCD Graduate Teaching Assistants:

Aaron Aeshliman
Juan Carvallo
Adam Mizrahi

Suburb and Town Design Program Graduate Students:

Guillermo J. Alfaro
Erin S. Andres
Christina M. Belmonte
Rafael Camacho
Joelle K. East
Jeffrey Hall
Troy J. Marrocco
Adam J. Rak
Joshua J. Rak
Evelyn Spencer
Collin L. Tinsley
Ying Wang
A. What is a Charrette
The charrette process brings together people and experts from various disciplines to identify and address the concerns of the project at hand. It is an opportunity for everyone with an interest in the site to work in a collaborative environment within compressed work sessions and give immediate feedback to the designers. It is in these short feedback loops that the community can voice their opinions and multidisciplinary professionals can identify supportive or opposing opinions that can then be crystallized into feasible plans. The Coconut Grove Playhouse Charrette was held March 19-21, 2008, at Ransom Everglades School.

B. Mission of the Coconut Grove Playhouse Charrette
As a result of financial problems, the Coconut Grove Playhouse closed its doors at the end of its 2005-2006 season. The Board of Directors of the Playhouse consulted with the Miami-Dade Department of Cultural Affairs' staff and concluded that it needed outside expertise with experience in helping a non-profit cultural organization navigate through and resolve critical management, artistic, governance and financial issues and site master planning.

The mission of the charrette was to identify design strategies that could catalyze the western end of the Grove, to re-establish a cultural anchor while respecting the history and ambiance of historic Coconut Grove. The charrette itself was the result of the efforts of the Coconut Grove Playhouse Board of Directors and the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs to re-establish a regional theater in Coconut Grove and to bring about an effective plan that best reflects the desires and responds to the needs of all interested parties. The University of Miami’s Center for Urban and Community Design (CUCD) coordinated and led all charrette-related activities. A steering committee was created to assist the CUCD in defining the timelines and charrette’s scope of work. Three pre-charrette sessions were held with local stakeholder groups in order to better define the charrette goals. The pre-charrette and charrette sessions were an opportunity to bring together merchants, preservationists, local citizens, institutions, architects, theater designers, government leaders, planners, developers and theater and cultural groups in order to develop a proactive plan that would re-envision the Coconut Grove Playhouse Theater and its adjoining land into a cohesive and state of the art complex that would serve as an example as one of the nation’s pre-eminent regional theaters.

C. Purpose of the Vision Report
Representatives from each segment of the community contributed towards the charrette process, coming together to address the many complexities faced in the redevelopment of the Coconut Grove Playhouse. A consensus was formed surrounding key issues that in turn informed initial schematic designs presented during the mid-term presentation on the second day of the charrette. These concepts were distilled down to three options. Each envisions a major regional theater complex that can serve community theater professionals and provide an entertainment and educational forum for South Florida residents and visitors.

The purpose of this report is to summarize the knowledge gathered during the charrette process, derived from research, analysis, pre-charrette and charrette meetings, as well as post-charrette work to provide recommendations based on those findings, which in turn identify site and building design criteria that could lead to the cohesive and viable redevelopment of the Coconut Grove Playhouse site in such manner that respects, complements and relates to the neighboring properties and positively contributes to the character of the Grove while achieving the goal of re-establishing a great regional theater.
Coconut Grove, originally named Cocoanut Grove, is a historic pioneer village. Once an independent city, it was annexed by the City of Miami in 1925. Coconut Grove was one of the first settlements in Miami-Dade County. It saw settlers as far back as the 1830s, with a Post Office established in 1873. Coconut Grove is also home to one of the oldest Black settlements, originally established by Bahamian craftsmen and sailors with their families. They came lured by the riches of salvaging wrecked ships and were later joined by fishermen and former slaves from the Carolinas. Edmund Beasley was the first landowner in Coconut Grove and applied for a homestead in 1868. Many of today’s residents are descendants of the original settlers and in some cases live in the houses built by them. E.W. Samp, one of Coconut Grove’s black pioneers, owned much of what is today downtown Grove, including the historic site where the Coconut Grove Playhouse now sits.

The Coconut Grove Playhouse was originally known as the Coconut Grove Theater and was built as a movie house in 1926. It occupies the corner of Main Highway and Charles Avenue and is the last stand of a grand era, a time when Coconut Grove was the place to be and the theater was the place to be seen. The initial building was designed by the architectural team of Kiehnel and Elliot, a well-renowned firm of national acclaim. Other local landmarks by this firm include: El Jardin, Miami Senior High School, Coral Gables Congregational Church and the Scottish Rite Temple.

Hailed as being the most elaborate movie palace of the region, it had 1500 seats, the most of any theater in Miami. The elaborate portal of the building celebrated the theater’s entrance and it is an example of the era’s prevailing Mediterranean Revival style. Even though it opened at one of the worst times in the history of Florida’s economy it enjoyed a nice stretch of success.

Eventually, audiences faded and the movie house was closed. After several years it was used as an army training facility, later boarded-up again. It was purchased by George Engle and underwent extensive interior renovation under Alfred Browning Parker. The Coconut Grove Playhouse opened as the first legitimate live theater of the Performing Arts in the region in January 1956, later garnering national recognition and becoming one of the most important regional theaters of its time. It became known as Broadway by the Bay and its stage was graced by leading national actors.

After closing in April of 2006, the theater’s Board of Directors has worked closely with the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs to ensure the re-opening of a viable, state of the art regional theater in Coconut Grove.
Historic Names:
Coconut Grove Theatre
Grove Theater

Current Name:
Coconut Grove Playhouse

Location:
3500 Main Highway
Miami, FL 33133

Present Owner:
Coconut Grove Playhouse LLC
3500 Main Highway
Miami, FL 33133

Present Use:
Performing Arts Theater

Present Zoning District:
G/I - Government/Institutional

Tax Folio Number:
01-4121-045-0140

Boundary Description:
That portion of Lot 10 located northerly and westerly of Ingraham Highway and northerly of Charles Street of the plat of MONROE'S PLAT, as recorded in Deed Book D at Page 253, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida; together with the easterly 140 feet of northerly 117 feet, and the easterly 52.5 feet less the northerly 117 feet of Block 29 of the plat of FLOW HOMESTEAD, as recorded in Plat Book B at Page 106, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida, together with Lots 1 and 2 of the plat of ENGLE SUBDIVISION, as recorded in Plat Book 64 at Page 43, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

Present Historic Preservation Classification:
Historic Site
03 Site Documentation & Research
Architecture
Original Building Design by Kiehnel & Elliott, 1926-1927
The grand opening of the Coconut Grove Theater was held on January 1, 1927. Located on an oddly shaped site along Ingraham Highway, the original design, by the architectural firm of Kiehnel & Elliot, was a playful Spanish Bococo movie theater, a noteworthy expression of the Florida Land Boom era. In addition to the theater, which seated 1,500 patrons, the building was lined by seven storefronts on the ground floor, offices on the second story, and apartments on the third.

The mass of the building was composed of two nesting elements, one which housed the theater and the other which was arranged as two wings that hugged the sidewalk, bridged by the highly ornamented entrance bay at the corner, intended as the focus of the composition. The main entrance was recessed from the two wings at the corner, lending it even greater prominence. At that chamfered corner, the ground floor featured cast concrete spiral columns that framed the entrance to the lobby and rose to meet an intricate projecting cornice.

Above the ground floor, the cast treatment extended only to the three windows in the center bay. The division of each floor was emphasized by a string-course that extended around to the sides of the building. The ornaments of the sidewalls were purposefully simpler as these were 'party walls'. On the ground floor, the rectangular storefronts were spaced evenly across the street facades, with their only embellishment a striped canvas awning. The second floor was left undecorated, the rhythm of the casement windows enlivening the composition. The third floor was punctuated by an arrangement of windows, featuring an elaborate cast surround that recalled the ornament of the front entrance.

The floor plan design by Kiehnel & Elliot activated the street with mixed uses as its theater interiors catered to the year-round Florida climate. On each side of the theater, the architects created a loggia, or narrow patio, eight feet in width that was framed by arches, with inset panels containing ornamental wrought iron grilles. A fountain element, banked in lush greenery, was a focal point of each of these flowering loggias.1

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1. Coconut Grove Playhouse Historic Designation Report

Source: Book titled "The Forgotten Frontier: Florida through the Lens of Ralph Middleton Munroe"

Source: Book titled "The Forgotten Frontier: Florida through the Lens of Ralph Middleton Munroe"
03 Site Documentation & Research
Architecture
Major Building Renovations by Alfred Browning Parker, 1955-1956

Grove Theater Conversion Begins

*Conversion of the old Coconut Grove Playhouse into a combination legitimate playhouse and restaurant began last week. A new lobby, which will provide additional space for the building, was to open Monday to elaborate and ornate.

Architect Alfred Browning Parker has been retained to design the new interior and exterior and to supervise the construction. Noyes Marquardt, who will handle the job, says that plans have been made for the renovation by the original architect.

The improvements will also be done in the addition of a new stage, which will be added by the addition of a new stage and to an additional stage. The new stage will be used for the production of plays and other theatrical events.

Canvas canopies will replace the ornate marquise.

Newspaper article
Source: The Herald, July 10, 1955

Historical photo of the Coconut Grove Playhouse
Source: Coconut Grove Playhouse, LLC

Photograph of the Coconut Grove Playhouse
Source: Coconut Grove Playhouse, LLC

Site visit photograph
Coconut Grove Playhouse, lobby, existing conditions
Source: CUCD, 2008

Newspaper article
Source: The Herald, July 10, 1955

Drawing by Alfred Browning Parker of the Coconut Grove Playhouse's mezzanine additions, ca. 1955
Source: Coconut Grove Playhouse, LLC
In 1955, after intermittent closings during the Depression Era and World War II, the movie theater was purchased by George Engle for $200,000. He retained Coconut Grove architect Alfred Browning Parker to convert the cinema into a playhouse for live performances. The renovation would cost $1 million. Parker’s alterations focused on the interior of the theater. To accommodate the new functions and retain seating for 1100, the design inserted a spacious lobby at grade and another on a new mezzanine seating level between the original auditorium space and the vestibule. This impacted the configuration of the main hall as the space was shortened. Primary decorative elements also disappeared as portions of the double arcades of spiral columns, flanking the original theater space, were buried in new service areas. Additional changes to the mezzanine and to the rake of the floor added to the altered silhouette of the space, as did the introduction of acoustical tiles in the ceiling. New seating and wall finishes were introduced. Travertine marble was veneered over the original vestibule and plastic panels with integral lighting were employed. Access to the revamped and enlarged restaurants were limited to the interior lobby. Back of the house and service areas were appended to the building, but concealed from the roads by the existing street-fronting wing structures.

Exterior alterations included the removal of all the storefronts, but their outlines were retained. The ornate zigzag roof line, at the chamfered corner, was leveled, terminating at the height of the adjoining cornice line. With these important exceptions, the great majority of the exterior of the wing buildings remain as it did when first designed by Kiehnel & Elliot. “There are one and two-story later additions [along the main facade] that seem out of character with the original theater building. Only the south and east facades possess architectural significance” according to the designation report prepared by the City of Miami Historic and Environmental Preservation office.

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1. Coconut Grove Playhouse, Historic Designation Report

Prepared by: COED, 2008
03 Site Documentation & Research

Existing Conditions

Center for Urban & Community Design, 2008

The following images and drawings were generated by the CUCD to document existing building and site conditions in preparation for the charrette.
View of Charles Avenue, north side
Source: CUCD, 2008

View of alley
Source: CUCD, 2008

View of Charles Avenue, south side
Source: CUCD, 2008
Existing site area and FAR condition

Source: CUCD, 2008

Site A  Site B
Lot Area 140,000 128,000
FAR
G/I (1.72) 240,000 220,000
SD2 (1.2 + (15% x 1.37)) 252,000 235,000

*Underground parking bonus (+60,000 Sq.Ft*)
**1 Sq Ft to 4 Sq Ft bonus for theater

Strategic area and FAR conditions
Source: CUCD, 2008

Existing ground floor plan
Source: CUCD, 2008, with drawing and information made available by R.E. Chisholm Architects and R.J. Haukeland Architects
According to the City of Miami Zoning Code, the Coconut Grove Playhouse site is at present a Government/Institutional site, located within the Coconut Grove Neighborhood Conservation District [NCD-3] and the Coconut Grove Central Commercial District [SD-2].

**Playhouse Site:**
- **Lot Area:** 108,734 sq. ft.
- **Gross Lot Area:** 127,744 sq. ft.
- **Minimum Lot Coverage:** 20,000 sq. ft.; with front, side and rear setbacks of 10' each.
- **Maximum Height:** Unlimited
- **Floor Area Ratio:** 1.72 x gross lot area = 219,720 sq. ft.
- **Maximum Building Footprint:** 0.40 x gross lot area = 51,098 sq. ft.
- **G/I Conditional Accessory Uses:** Limited retail may be allowed up to 10% of the gross lot sq. ft., by Class II Special Permit.
- **Off-Street Parking:**
  - Non-residential: 1 space/300 sq. ft. of gross sq. ft.
  - Lodgings: 1 space / 2 lodging units
  - General Assembly: 1 space for each 5 fixed seats and for 50 sq. ft. of area for movable seats.

**Playhouse Site and adjoining 2 parcels [all considered as G/I]:**
- **Lot Area:** 119,354 sq. ft.
- **Gross Lot Area:** 140,305 sq. ft.
- **Minimum Lot Coverage:** 20,000 sq. ft.; with front, side and rear setbacks of 10' each.
- **Maximum Height:** Unlimited
- **Floor Area Ratio:** 1.72 x gross lot area = 240,000 sq. ft.
- **Maximum Building Footprint:** 0.40 x gross lot area = 56,000 sq. ft.
- **G/I Conditional Accessory Uses:** Limited retail may be allowed up to 10% of the gross lot sq. ft., by Class II Special Permit.
- **Off-Street Parking:**
  - Non-residential: 1 space/300 sq. ft. of gross sq. ft.
  - Lodgings: 1 space / 2 lodging units
  - General Assembly: 1 space for each 5 fixed seats and for 50 sq. ft. of area for movable seats.

(See Appendix: City of Miami Zoning Codes)
Site Documentation & Research

Zoning
Analysis of neighborhood centers, 5 minute walk study
Source: City of Miami and Coconut Grove masterplan study, C/CEA, 2010
04 Visioning Process  
Pre-Charrette Sessions: Stakeholder Concerns & Expectations

Before the three day long meeting of the Design Team and the collection of public input, the organizers of the charrette first met with the community stakeholders to gather their concerns and expectations. The stakeholders were divided into 3 groups: 1) merchants; 2) preservationists, residential and community associations and local institutions and 3) cultural & theater interest groups. During each session, once gathered, everyone was asked to write on individual post it notes 5 assets, 5 weaknesses, 5 opportunities and 5 visions for the Playhouse site. These notes were then assembled and combined to produce a short list, which led to discussion, consensus and later informed the charrette's design process. It should be noted that there were several additional topics brought up as the discussions progressed. This report presents a summary of the ideas, suggestions and recommendations resulting from these 3 pre-charrette discussion groups.

Merchants

This meeting was led by CUCD members Sonia Chao and Jorge Hernandez, and attended by Sylvano Bignon, Charles Byrd, David Collins, Liliana Dones, Jorge E. Gonzalez, Rick Kalmar, Alyssa Kuplen, Robert Marishi, Ron Nelson, Gabriel Nino, Derrick Smith, Vincent Post, Larry Spring, Shelly Spirnak, Michael Spring, and Michele Walter.

a) Strengths/Assets
(1) The building and the site’s historic importance in the Grove.
(2) It is the historic presence of the use of the building that is of utmost importance, not necessarily the physical building.
(3) The front façade has sentimental value.
(4) The Coconut Grove Playhouse has a strong brand/reputation.

b) Weaknesses
(1) There is a lack of connectivity to Commodore Plaza and to Village West.
(2) There is a major lack of parking on site and at this end of Main Highway in general.
(3) The placement of the theater building on the site is awkward. As a result, the already oddly configured bow-tie shaped lot is sub-divided into two remnant areas, making the site’s development costly and its connection to the neighboring areas more complicated.
(4) In recent years, the theater had only been active 6 months out of the year and its cultural and educational programming had an inconsistent track record.
(5) There is a tricky balance between preservation concerns and development opportunities. The building’s historic designation serves as one of its strengths, as well as a deterrent for future development, as it makes the project more expensive.

c) Opportunities
(1) Adding ancillary/complementary uses on the site would help financially support the theater.
(2) A change of zoning requirements could allow for fewer restrictions, future flexibility and the addition of residential units.
(3) As an economic anchor it would activate the street and therefore invigorate the western end of Main Highway as it once did.
(4) The theater complex could be more financially diversified by having 2 theaters, a main stage and a black box.
(5) The removal of the bicycle shop would open that corner for better use and functionality of the overall site.
(6) Thomas Avenue can be readdressed.
(7) A pedestrian connection with Commodore Plaza could be established.
(8) The regular play prepared for the Grove by Duany Plater-Zyberk planners could be utilized to ensure a continuity of architectural and urban character.
(9) New outdoor public spaces can be created.

d) Vision
(1) The Coconut Grove Playhouse serves as an anchor to develop a lively, viable and sustainable community.
(2) No one owns another “Coconut Walk” at this end of the Grove.
(3) The theater should be partnered with educational institutions.
(4) The complex should not only be a theater, but also a Cultural Complex/Center.
(5) The Theater Complex should be a mixed use destination with at least 270 new parking spaces in addition to theater parking requirements.
(6) The Theater Complex has to be self-sustaining.
(7) The theater complex can attract mature clientele by underscoring and capitalizing upon the Grove’s artistic heritage and resources.
(8) Some possible complementary uses could include a small conference center, an educational center, a cultural center, a B&B or small boutique hotel, an anchor retailer, a Restaurant/Steak house, offices, and/or a jazz club.

In summary, the merchants all touched on the necessity to invigorate the southwest end of Main Highway. They emphasized the need to develop the site in a manner that utilizes mixed-use functions that would bring people and their purchasing power through the Grove as they pass from Coconut Walk to the Playhouse site. It is in this spirit that there was a general consensus that the Playhouse site would act as an anchor to the western end of Main Highway’s commercial district and the site should be programmed as such. Whereas additional retail spaces are not warranted, complementary uses on the site should target a more mature range of visitors and residents, interested in cultural and/or educational activities, thereby also connecting with the Grove’s artistic roots.
Photos of notes taken during this Pre-Charrette session, illustrating some of the comments and concerns that emerged from the group.
This meeting was led by CUCD members Sonia Chao and Jorge Hernandez and attended by Charles Chad, Robert Chisholm, Richard Heisenbottle, Rick Keburts, Alyssa Kimble, Barbara Lamb, Jim McMaster, Ellen Moceri, Ron Nelson, Vincent Post, Jihad Rashid, Ivan Rodriguez, Shelly Spivack, Michael Spring, and Michele Walter.

a) Strengths / Assets
(1) The Coconut Grove Playhouse has been designated a historic site.
(2) The building has many contributing elements worth restoring: critical street facades; it marks a very special place; prosenium arch; and ornamental details.
(3) The building and the site have cultural and historic value.
(4) The building has architectural significance because it is a Kiehnel & Elliott design.
(5) The Playhouse contributes to the vitality of urban life in Coconut Grove.
(6) The presence of a regional theater in Coconut Grove is of cultural significance.

b) Weaknesses
(1) The Playhouse lacks parking as it currently sits and this makes it difficult to attract theatergoers.
(2) There are mixed opinions about whether an architectural rehabilitation is financially feasible or not.
(3) The stage house, as it stands, is inadequate, limits productions and thus revenue streams.
(4) The original theater was designed as a 1500 seat movie house. The alterations by Browning Parker do not meet the physical back of the house needs of a live theater and this has greatly impacted the Playhouse’s offerings, most so in recent years, as productions increasingly become more elaborate and large.
(5) The auditorium is less than ideally shaped.

c) Opportunities
(1) The existing G-I zoning offers design flexibility.
(2) Due to the site’s ground elevation, 14-17 feet above sea level, underground parking could be incorporated, thus reducing its visible presence on the site.
(3) The site can potentially accommodate additional parking.
(4) Parking could be used as a source for additional revenue. Parking spaces could be increased and new alternate parking options developed (i.e. valet).
(5) Possible collaboration with Rummowny Everglades, New World and other schools and/or Universities would correspond with the Playhouse’s educational mission.
(6) Local schools can be engaged in the form of summer programs.
(7) Parking could be used as a source for additional revenue. Parking spaces could be increased and new alternate parking options developed (i.e. valet).
(8) Increased security can be achieved by activating the street both during the day and at night with compatible uses.
(9) Accessibility to Grand Avenue through a new alley could allow theatergoers easier access to neighboring parking areas and would relieve the traffic through the adjacent residential neighborhoods.
(10) Accessible to Grand Avenue through a new alley could allow theatergoers easier access to neighboring parking areas and would relieve the traffic through the adjacent residential neighborhoods.
(11) The re-introduction of a high caliber regional theater.

(12) The Playhouse complex should be an active mixed use cultural destination that includes educational, community, meeting, functional and arts center components that better root it to the community.
(13) The Playhouse should be self-sustaining.
(14) Complete rehabilitation or at least a partial rehabilitation are the best preservation alternatives. Maintaining only the facade along Main Highway is not desirable.
(15) Previous understandings with the community should be respected.

A Cocowalk-like shopping mall at this end of the Grove is unwarranted. Both its scale and its uses are undesirable.

(2) The Playhouse complex should be a regional theater, with both institutional and cultural partnerships that strengthen its presence.
(3) The Playhouse complex should be an active mixed use cultural destination that includes educational, community, meeting, functional and arts center components that better root it to the community.
(4) The Playhouse should be self-sustaining.
(5) A complete rehabilitation or at least a partial rehabilitation are the best preservation alternatives. Maintaining only the facade along Main Highway is not desirable.
(6) The site should better address the bordering historic neighborhood of Village West, where the back of the house side of the theater stands. It should present a "front" onto Thomas Street, with a band of 2-3 story townhouses that could mediate between the scale of the theater’s stage fly and the scale of the residential neighborhood.
(7) Previous understandings with the community should be respected.
In summary, even though this group touched on many other issues, its main concern was the viability of the facility as a well-functioning regional theater. The consensus was that to preserve the existing structure would be favorable, but not at the expense of having a full-scale regional theater that could muster national recognition.

Another topic discussed was the definition of preservation alternatives. Preserving only the facade skin or nothing at all were quickly discarded as options. Varying degrees of preservation strategies were explored from preserving the entire building to the preservation of the winged street-fronting building at a minimum were acceptable to this group. In the end, the first priority is to return a state-of-the-art theater to the Grove, while addressing heritage issues.
04 Visioning Process
Pre-Charrette Sessions: Stakeholder Concerns & Expectations
Culture and Theater Groups

This meeting was led by CUCD members Sonia Chao and Jorge Hernandez and attended by Robert Chisholm, Dave Collins, Corly Docter, Mike Edson, Rick Kahwati, Alyssa Kaplen, Jorge Luis Lopez, Ron Nelson, Robert Parente, Vincent Post, Derrick Smith, Shelly Spivack, Michael Spring, Money Trainer, Jacqueline Tykes, Michele Walter, Larry Wilker and Martin Zilber.

a) Assets
(1) The theater has already functioned as a neighborhood anchor.
(2) There are strong external design features.
(3) The Playhouse's historical prestige as a site for regional theater is of greatest significance. For decades it attracted highly acclaimed performers.

b) Weaknesses
(1) The size and configuration of the existing theater's stage and back of the house area have always been deficient for productions, limiting venue options. This is a critical issue.
(2) The oversized "size classification" of the auditorium hall, which is tied to union/labor laws, impedes the theater's profit-making ability.
(3) The theater has failed to have constant programming, and it needs year-round operation; it cannot go dark for too long.
(4) The Playhouse Board's leadership has been inconsistent.
(5) The right Artistic Director is of utmost importance, and has lacked in the past, except under Ferrer.
(6) The Playhouse's private and public visions never connected.
(7) It is missing a 'strong' educational component.

c) Opportunities
(1) The egress, circulation, and transportation between the two Groves must be addressed.
(2) The Coconut Grove Playhouse Complex could become a 'green-conscious' destination.
(3) A distinction between the Playhouse historic site, the building and/or events can be appreciated.
(4) The Playhouse's identity as a "cultural haven" should be emphasized and preserved.
(5) The theater can be branded as a regional hub.
(6) The Playhouse program can be updated.
(7) The Playhouse and the Grove can be targeted more specifically as a destination.
(8) Local and regional educational partnerships, can be a great asset to the area, not only to the theater.
(9) Local and regional educational partnerships, can be a great asset to the area, not only to the theater.
(10) Having an Arts Center in the community and a functioning theater, not necessarily the actual architecture of the physical building, is of utmost importance.
(11) Possible recuperation of the Grove House, as well as the introduction of educational and training facilities related to theater, a radio station, spa retreat, dance rehearsal site, bookstore, office spaces for cultural non-profit groups, or banquet hall, were all thought of as desirable complementary uses.

In summary, this group was most concerned with the overall cultural and pragmatic contributions of the Coconut Grove Playhouse to the Grove as a whole. They underlined the need for complementary uses that could be introduced, how these uses could activate the area, capitalizing on the Playhouse's previous stage reputation as well as expanding both its offerings and its connection to the local community. This group envisions a new theater that is above all else, economically sustainable, as this would ensure regional theater in Coconut Grove and it would complement the current offerings countywide. It was this group's estimation that the functional needs of the building should not be compromised for the sake of greater preservation of the existing structure. The preservation of a regional theater on the site is paramount and it can only be attained if the theater is state of the art.
Photos of notes taken during the Pre-Charrette session, illustrating some of the comments and concerns that emerged from the group.
04 Visioning Process

Preservation Options

Preservation: Standards, Designation Report, Documentation & Evaluation and Charrette Recommendations

The Secretary of the Interior is responsible for establishing standards for all national preservation programs under Departmental authority and for advising Federal agencies on the preservation of historic properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

PRESERVATION: Standards, Designation Report, Documentation & Evaluation and Charrette Recommendations

The Secretary of the Interior is responsible for establishing standards for all national preservation programs under Departmental authority and for advising Federal agencies on the preservation of historic properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Rehabilitation is defined as the process of returning a property to a state of utility, through repair or alteration, which makes it possible to maintain or to use the property in a manner that is consistent with its historic, architectural, and cultural values. The goal of rehabilitation is to preserve the historic character and integrity of a property.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

The Secretary of the Interior is responsible for establishing standards for all national preservation programs under Departmental authority and for advising Federal agencies on the preservation of historic properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Standards for Rehabilitation are a section of the Secretary's Standards for Historic Preservation Projects, which pertain to historic buildings of all materials, construction types, and occupancy. The Standards encompass the exterior and the interior of historic buildings, and also encompass related landscape features and the building's site and environment, as well as any related new construction.

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historic development shall be avoided.
3. New additions and other new construction shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural character of the existing building. The Secretary of the Interior is responsible for establishing standards for all national preservation programs under Departmental authority and for advising Federal agencies on the preservation of historic properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Coconut Grove Playhouse was designated a "Historic Site" by the City of Miami Historic and Environmental Preservation Board...

The designation report states that the Playhouse is "a noteworthy expression of the Florida Land Boom". The original design by the critically important architectural firm of Kiehnel and Elliot was a fanciful Spanish Rococo movie palace. The theater was intended to be Miami's most elaborate theater, with the largest seating capacity of any theater in Miami...

However, Parker chose to abandon any sense of historicism in his own designs, favoring instead an approach that capitalized on the environment, structure, and materials...
Option 1: Preservation of the entire existing building

Option 2: Placing a new theater in the existing auditorium footprint

Option 3: Preservation of the winged street-fronting building

Option 4: Preservation of facade (this option was discarded in the charrette process)

Option 5: Preservation of the function alone.
04 Visioning Process
Documentation of Historic District adjacent to Playhouse

Preface - Historic Designation Report prepared by the City of Miami

The one- and two-story buildings seem out of character with the original theater building, as the treatment of the connecting bay on Main Highway, while maintaining the rhythm of the bays, is fenestrated with a geometrically disproportionate window. The narrow windows of the second story of the end building also seem not to reflect the proportions of the original building, and the rustication of the exterior appears as an incongruous element.

The Playhouse is one of the very few remaining structures in downtown Coconut Grove that typify the flamboyant and frenetic era of the real estate boom of the 1920s.

When the State of Florida transferred ownership of the Playhouse to the Coconut Grove Playhouse LLC Inc. in 2004, it paved the way for the next phase in the evolution of the property. In order to provide a long-term endowment for the theater, the Playhouse has announced its intention to team with a developer to preserve as much of the exterior of the theater as possible, while constructing a new theater, condominiums, and a parking garage on the site.

Preservation Incentives:
Because of the nonprofit status of the Coconut Grove Playhouse LLC Inc., most historic preservation tax incentives are not applicable. The Playhouse, however, has been approved for $15 million from the 2004 Miami-Dade County Building Better Communities General Obligation Bond program. These bond funds will be paired with $5 million from a previous County bond issue to fund a program to restructure the Playhouse.

Pre-Charrette Documentation & Evaluation
During the Coconut Grove Playhouse pre-charrette sessions, held with local merchants, preservationists, residential and institutional representatives as well as theater and cultural groups, participants were asked to define their concerns and expectations related to the preservation of the Coconut Grove Playhouse building and site. A wide gamut of recommendations was made. These ranged from the conservative positions of returning the site to its original design by Kiehnel & Elliott, to the other end of the spectrum in which a highly pragmatic viewpoint only saw the preservation of the Main Highway ‘entrance portal’ façade as necessary.

Yet, in all cases, there was clear consensus around the notion of preserving the ‘theater use’ on the site and of coupling it with complementary uses that were respectful of the adjoining areas, in both scale and character.

These pre-charrette sessions were followed by a more in-depth analysis of the building’s history, designation report and transformations over the years, in an effort to identify and appreciate the salient characteristics of the historic structure and site, as well as the spirit of its fabric.

As there are no surviving floor plans of Kiehnel & Elliot’s project, a team of charrette designers visited the site on a ‘forensic’ reconnaissance, to better comprehend and document the building’s evolution.

Parallel investigations also led to the discovery of original drawings by Alfred Browning Parker, which assisted in identifying the degree of his intervention upon the original building. These drawings revealed the introduction of a new larger lobby, sandwiched between the original vestibule and main hall. This resulted in the loss of distinguishing ornamental features that were either bolted or removed from the interior of the theater. Drawings for more recent interventions and design proposals were also unearthed.

Studies of the existing building were then complemented by an analysis of the recommendations made by independent theater design consultants for the Coconut Grove Playhouse site. Those recommendations underlined the need to accommodate the physical exigencies of state-of-the-art theater, if the venue is to be financially and culturally sustainable in the long run. Additional transformations to the building would become necessary, in particular affecting the stage proper, the stage fly and back of the house areas and possibly the rake of the floor in the hall space. The building would also have to accommodate ADA requirements.

Charrette Recommendations
Four levels of preservation for the site were identified during the charrette.

The first scenario entails the reconstitution of the performance hall of the existing theater and the rehabilitation of the entire winged street-facing building, located along Main Highway and Charles Avenue. This option diminishes the number of underground parking spaces available. The resulting reduced revenue, coupled with the higher costs typically associated with rehabilitation, makes this the most expensive alternative.

The second scenario involves the introduction of a new theater smaller in footprint but in the same location as the existing hall, permitting greater flexibility to accommodate its functional exigencies. This proposal incorporates the rehabilitation of the entire winged street-facing building, located along Main Highway and Charles Avenue.

The third scenario would require the rehabilitation of the entire winged street-facing building, located along Main Highway and Charles Avenue and, would preserve the processional route through its corner entrance portal to a new public space, off of which a new theater would be accessed. This scenario allows for a more sympathetic response to the scale of the abutting historic neighborhood to the southwest of the site by placing the needed 85’ high fly-stage away from the neighborhood and along the existing service alley.

Scenarios two and three would permit pedestrian activity across the site, thus preserving and strengthening the traditional urban fabric of Coconut Grove.

The fourth possible scenario, involving only the preservation of the Main Highway and Charles Avenue facades was not considered, nor was it recommended as a viable preservation option at this time, and is not reflected in any of the final charrette design schemes.
Documentation of Historic District adjacent to Playhouse along Charles Avenue

Source: CUCD, 2006

Legend

- H - Historic Structures
- F - Number of Stories
- V - Vacant
- S - Stucco
- W - Wood
- Vacant Lot V (not used as parking area)
- Parking Lot
- Coconut Grove Playhouse Historic Site
Coconut Grove Playhouse Charrette

A Community Charrette to Revitalize State of the Art Regional Theater at the Playhouse

RESTORING THE COCONUT GROVE PLAYHOUSE

All are invited to attend and participate throughout the entire charrette. Please come and share your ideas as part of the community vision.

Random Everglades School, 3375 Biscayne Blvd, Miami, FL 33133

Presentations, Open Forums and Public Pin-ups will take place in the Performing Arts Building, at the Random Everglades Campus.

Friday, March 28

9:30 - 10:00 Welcome/Introduction
10:00 - 11:00 Presentations
11:00 - 12:00 Q&A Open Forum
1:00 - 3:00 Team Work Sessions

Saturday, March 29

8:30 - 12:30 Team Work Sessions
12:30 - 3:00 Public Pin-Up
2:00 - 4:00 Site Open for public visits
5:00 - 10:00 Team Work Sessions

Sunday, March 30

8:30 - 5:00 Team Work Sessions
5:00 - 8:00 Public Presentation of Team Work

* The public is welcome at all Team Work Sessions to see the team progress and to discuss any individual questions or concerns.
* All Team Work Sessions take place in the Playhouse Building, at the Random Everglades Campus.

Parking Locations:
Mayfair Parking Garage
Cocowalk Parking Garage
Playhouse Parking Lot
Street Motors
Playhouse Charrette Schedule

Coconut Grove Playhouse Charrette Team Schedule

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Coconut Grove Playhouse Charrette Public Schedule, March 28-30 2008

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The General Public is welcome to visit the Design Team during the Work Sessions.
Charrette Design Process
Mid-Term Public Pin-up

After more than 12 hours of work, 3 teams brought together the product of the Pre-Charrette Visioning Process and developed over 20 viable schemes. Following careful deliberation, these schemes were organized into 3 major concepts with several variations.

It is important to note that there were no Financial Feasibility Studies done as part of the charrette. As a result, the schemes presented are purely design options developed with no financial considerations.

In all of the schemes there is sensitivity to the adjoining neighborhoods and how the building mass and the daily operational functions of the Playhouse and complementary uses would impact it. There was consideration to the placement of the “fly” stage mass as to not overshadow the neighboring residences. There were some pedestrian connections made and a limited residential component added along William Street to mediate between the theater building's larger mass and that of the adjacent residential neighborhood to the southwest. All of the schemes addressed the necessity to activate the western end of Main Highway’s commercial district and to reestablish the theater as an anchor. There was a conscious effort to incorporate flexible auxiliary spaces to accommodate a variety of uses extending the useful life of the complex.
Distilling Priorities

The preliminary designs were presented on Saturday, March 29, 2008 by charrette leaders Sonia Chao and Jorge Hernandez. Schemes were organized by their proposed degree of preservation for the existing building. The concepts are as follows:

1. **Keeping the Existing Playhouse Footprint**

   This scheme would entail the preservation of the existing winged street-facing building, the front of the house with minimal reworking of the theater and stage while reworking the back stage and proscenium.

   Because of the reduction of the seating from 1100 seats to 600 seats this solution has the option of either: pulling the seats in for better site lines or keeping the existing walls where they are. Although this design strategy would accommodate the point of the preservationists it has to address the issue of a very large volume where the acoustics would be a challenge and the overall economic and artistic viability of the theater would be challenged. The other variation of this scheme is to move and replace the walls. The negative here is that once walls are moved the preservation of the theater becomes negligible.

   In this option, the parking would be severely impacted. Because of the delicate nature of the existing structure it would be impossible to dig beneath it to accommodate the parking requirements. That would force the missing parking to be accommodated above ground, impacting the overall public enjoyment and functionality of the space, or result in a much reduced number of parking spaces.
05 Charrette Design Process
Distilling Priorities

2. Placing a New Theater in the Existing Auditorium Footprint

This would entail the preservation of the existing winged street-facing building, situated along Main Highway and Charles Avenue, and the construction of a new theater that shadowed the footprint of the existing theater. Because it would be a smaller theater it would pull the fly stage further away from the back of the property and therefore further away from the residential neighborhood that borders it. It would also allow for an association of experiences that are similar to the existing experience, allowing for more extensive underground parking and a more modern theater that could accommodate a better range of current production needs.

There are a few variations that include a courtyard to improve the public experience, connection to the adjoining residential neighborhood and a strong connection to Commodore Plaza.
3. Courtyard / Garden in Place of the Auditorium Footprint

This option would only preserve the winged street-facing building, to be used as a point of entry to the Theater Complex. The visitor would then proceed through the building to a public space that would then connect to the theaters and other complementary use buildings.

Two variations on this scheme surfaced as the most desirable ones. In both of them the courtyard would maintain a memory of the existing stage and the proscenium arch, and could be used for outside performances.

3a. Theater Footprint

The first variation would hold the space left by the demolition of the existing theater in its pure footprint. The surrounding buildings would then adjust themselves to reinforce the memory of the original shape of the theater.

3b. Octagonal Courtyard

The second variation would maintain an octagonal shape to the Courtyard and adjust the surrounding buildings, allowing forms that are required to best serve their function. Because of the odd nature of the site's shape there would be many small residual shapes that would need to be addressed, designed and accounted for.
The G/I additional accessory uses would allow for Limited Retail up to 10% of gross square footage, by class II Special Permit.

Off-street Parking Requirements for General Assembly uses is for 1 space for each 5 fixed seats and for 50 square feet for movable seats.

Off-street Parking Requirements for nonresidential uses is 1 space for every 300 square feet of gross area.

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There is also a NCD/3 Coconut Grove Neighborhood Conservation Overlay on the property. Its objective is to provide a land use and zoning tool to preserve the neighborhood's character and promote compatible development.

Miami 21 is a proposed Form Based Code concerned with respect the adjacents fabric of the city. Its general principles were taken into consideration in most design schemes, in case it is adopted. Architectural schemes assume a future T6 zoning, proposing 3 story liner buildings along all parimeters of the site, except along the alley and with accommodations made to allow for the needed 80 foot high fly stage.

G. Contextual Concerns and Opportunities

Amongst the concerns voiced in the pre-charrette and initial charrette open forum sessions were those that deal with the scale of the project and the uses that would be brought to the site. There was also interest in maintaining the circulation patterns generated by the uses of this site for both pedestrian and vehicular functions. In particular, there was concern over the service area and also how parking would be accommodated.

In response to these concerns the current Building and Zoning Codes were analyzed and the Charrette Team asked the firm of Duany Plater-Zyberk Town Planners to share with them the possible implications for this site should Miami 21 be adopted as well as the recommendations of pre-Research Planning for Coconut Grove also developed by DPZ.

Given the scale of the adjoining historic neighborhood there needs to be a lower scale liner building at the edge of the site that would mitigate between the scale of this historic residential neighborhood and the theater's need for an approximately 80-foot high fly stage. There is also the desire to respect the 3 story height limit on Main Highway and the existing front volume of the Playhouse structure. By introducing similar massing and proportions the Playhouse site can possibly contribute to the character of the street, while being mindful of the adjacent buildings, the commercial corridor, and the sidewalks across the way.

H. Coconut Grove Civic Anchor

In order for the Coconut Grove Playhouse to act as a Civic Anchor it has to be an economically viable Theater.  It needs to be a redesign of the stage and the 'back of the house' to meet the needs of a fully functional Regional Theater.

Complementary uses could cement the site's civic role within the community. Community stakeholders identified a preference for a possible small community center, B&B, an educational facility, professional offices, a radio station and/or Jazz/Dinner Club, with a minor presence of retail and residential.

The G/I additional accessory uses would allow for Limited Retail up to 10% of gross square footage, by class II Special Permit.

Off-street Parking Requirements for General Assembly uses is for 1 space for each 5 fixed seats and for 50 square feet for movable seats.

Off-street Parking Requirements for nonresidential uses is 1 space for every 300 square feet of gross area.

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Off-street Parking Requirements for nonresidential uses is 1 space for every 300 square feet of gross area.
"It is the general consensus that the "tail-end" of the Grove needs an injection of activity and the Playhouse could act as the anchor. From its inception this charrette process is "a neighborhood project, a contextual project, a project that celebrates what the Grove is and has been for many many people over the years."

Jorge Hernandez

There are many issues to contend with on this site and each of the proposed schemes generates its own opportunities as well as creates other subsequent concerns. In designing suitable alternatives for the Playhouse project, one of the largest hurdles addressed was the actual shape of the site. During the charrette it became known as the "bowtie." The site flares out from a narrow center with the Playhouse notched in the middle, creating odd shapes to deal with on either saddle. Another issue that all of the schemes contended with is the need for an 80' foot high fly stage, in order to meet the demands of a regional theater. It is a formidable mass to negotiate on the site, in particular because of the contextual issues of the surrounding neighborhood.

The schemes have different strategies as to where the large theater is placed and its relationship to preservation intent - a central design consideration, as was the accommodation of a state of the art theater and its needed ancillary functions. All the schemes propose underground parking, which although more costly, and in some schemes complicated by the existing Playhouse footprint, it would eliminate this function's presence along the street facades and permit complementary uses in its place. Finally, the schemes were designed in such manner that they can succeed with or without the two additional parcels on the west corner, currently under different ownership.
Design Scheme I

This scheme keeps and restores the greatest amount of existing structure and fashions the rest of the program on the remainder of the site. In brief, this design saves the single street-fronting building, restores the existing theatre, places the small theater to the north, and places the 'back of the house' functions on the alley to the north and places the complementary uses to the western edge and along the two flanking streets. The issue at hand is how to configure the large theatre, with the reduction of seats. The seats are brought to the center of the existing mass for better lines of sight to the stage but this scheme also must contend with shortening the audience area and lengthening the stage area to accommodate the needs of regional theatre. All schemes accommodate semi-trucks and back of the house functions and introduce a 3 story residential liner at William Avenue.

It accommodates the needed theater square footage as well as allows for ample complementary uses. The proposal sacrifices parking spaces below grade under the existing theater, so as to not compromise its foundations. Thus the scheme falls short in the number of parking spaces, which can be resolved with valet parking.

The overall mix of uses and square footage numbers make this a viable scheme for further exploration. Valet parking utilizes a garage more compactly and thus its incorporation could make up for the difference, but would represent a costlier alternative.
Preservation:

This scheme recommends retaining the existing winged street-fronting building, and significantly reworks portions of the auditorium by shortening it and building a new stage and back of the house.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHEME 1</th>
<th>TOTAL SQ FT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THEATER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Stage</td>
<td>99,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Floor</td>
<td>10,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Floor</td>
<td>4,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back Box</td>
<td>9,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Floor</td>
<td>5,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Floor</td>
<td>3,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back Of House</td>
<td>44,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Floor</td>
<td>28,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Floor</td>
<td>14,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobby</td>
<td>11,775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Floor</td>
<td>6,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Floor Support</td>
<td>1,775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Floor (50%)</td>
<td>3,925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Uses</td>
<td>18,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Floor</td>
<td>9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Floor</td>
<td>9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPLEMENTARY USES</td>
<td>65,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial/Institutional</td>
<td>66,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Floor</td>
<td>26,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Floor</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Floor</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>5,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Floor</td>
<td>1,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Floor</td>
<td>1,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Floor</td>
<td>1,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL 1st FLOOR SQ FOOTAGE</td>
<td>81,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SQ FOOTAGE</td>
<td>165,760</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parking:

45,760 SF @ 1 space/300 SF = 133
20,000 SF @ 1 space/150 SF (restaurant) = 133
3 residential units = 6

* 1 space/5 seats = 180
** Commercial
Process sketches of Scheme I produced during the charrette.
07 Action Plan

Scheme II

Design Scheme II

This scheme places the new 600 seat auditorium on the footprint of the demolished auditorium and fashions the rest of the program on the remainder of the site. In summary, this design saves the winged street-fronting 3-story building situated along Main Highway and Charles Avenue. This scheme proposes building a new main auditorium, places the smaller theater to the west, the "back of the house" function behind a 3-story liner residential building facing onto William Avenue and places complementary uses on both sides of the bowtie site. This scheme also includes two courtyards/gardens, one to the west that serves as a small gathering space and one to the north that acts as a pedestrian connection from the adjoining residential neighborhood to Main Highway. By placing the complementary uses on both sides of the site it opens the option of having a physical connection to Commodore Plaza and functionally connecting the site to surrounding neighborhoods.

It accommodates the needed theater square footage as well as allowing for ample complementary uses. The proposal sacrifices parking spaces below grade under the stage areas and the winged street-fronting building, so as to not compromise its foundations. Valet parking utilizes a garage more compactly and thus its incorporation could make up for the difference, but would represent a costlier alternative.
Preservation:
The scheme preserves the 3 story winged street-fronting building alone, and locates the new theater on the footprint of the demolished theater.

### Table: Scheme II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theaters</th>
<th>Total sq ft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Stage</td>
<td>10,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Floor</td>
<td>11,935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Floor</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back Box</td>
<td>9,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Floor</td>
<td>5,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Floor</td>
<td>3,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back Of House</td>
<td>39,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Floor</td>
<td>25,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Floor</td>
<td>14,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobby</td>
<td>8,775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Floor</td>
<td>6,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Floor (50%)</td>
<td>2,925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Uses</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Floor</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Floor</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complementary Uses</th>
<th>Total sq ft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial/Institutional</td>
<td>63,685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Floor</td>
<td>37,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Floor</td>
<td>22,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Floor</td>
<td>22,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>5,115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Floor</td>
<td>2,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Floor</td>
<td>2,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Floor</td>
<td>2,765</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total 1st Floor sq footage:** 88,580

**Total sq footage:** 191,930

### Parking Spaces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Spaces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Required</td>
<td>522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playhouse*</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial (24/7)</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided (out Valet) (underground)</td>
<td>568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided (with Valet on 1st floor)</td>
<td>624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burjans (without Valet)</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burjans (with Valet)</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*1 space/300 SF = 213
20,000 SF @ 1 space/150 SF (restaurant) = 133
3 residential units = 6
Process sketches of Scheme II produced during the charrette.
07 Action Plan

Scheme III

Design Scheme III

This scheme moves the new theaters to one side off center to create a large courtyard or garden and fashions both theaters and the rest of the program around this central space. The scheme preserves the processional sequence through the preserved 3 story winged street-facing building and introduces an outdoor arrival and possible performance space. This scheme saves the front building and proposes a new main theater and a smaller theater to the north side of the site, with "back of the house" functions located towards the alley behind Commodore Plaza, and complementary uses placed to the west of the site. Although this scheme also has two courtyards it is much more ample in the amount of exterior space. Another accomplishment is the moving of the fly stage to the alley; this allows for the great height extension of the 80' fly stage mass without negatively impacting the residential neighborhood to the west. By nesting next to the taller structures on the alley they somewhat camouflage its overall impact on the area. Some secondary features of this scheme include the ability to connect the small theater visually to the street when desired and the memory of the original proscenium arch could stand as a sculpture in the Lobby of the main theater.

This scheme accommodates the necessary theater square footage as well as allowing for ample complementary use square footage. This scheme allows for a surplus of parking spaces.
Preservation:
This scheme preserves the three story winged street-fronting building alone.
Post-Charrette Study

After the charrette concluded, the UM Center for Urban & Community Design was commissioned to analyze the original charrette schemes and determine the viability of replacing the proposed 300 seat proscenium theater in each design with a larger 300 seat stand alone proscenium theater, capable of housing a smaller producing theater company. The study has revealed that two of the three original schemes can accommodate the change without significant alterations to the design concepts or impacting the preservation goals of the original proposals.

The two schemes which can absorb the larger small theater are referred to here forth as Scheme 'Ia' and 'IIa'. Scheme I is the least affected by the change in the nature of the 300 seat theater. Scheme IIa shifts the orientation of the smaller theater in order to fit its larger footprint. But, due to space limitations on the eastern side of the site, resulting from the original design, charrette Scheme III is not able to accommodate a larger 300 and a 600 seat theater as well as the needed back of the house requirements. A new fourth scheme, very similar in configuration to charrette Scheme III illustrates instead a new 300 seat main stage theater, and, as proposed in the original design, a smaller theater of 150 seats situated along Main Highway.

By replacing the originally proposed 250-300 seat theater with a larger 300 seat venue, Schemes Ia and IIa have a slightly reduced number of parking spaces available due to the impact below grade of a larger stage footprint. Both schemes also result in slightly reduced square footages for complementary uses. Conversely, Scheme IV results in a slightly larger back of the house area and it does not reduce either the number of parking spaces or the area identified for complementary uses.

Current zoning for the site is “G/I” and in all cases would require special permits and review under the current code. As with the original schemes, these revised designs have been developed conscious of a possible future Miami 21 code. Yet, as Miami 21 codes have continued to evolve since the charrette was held and have not been finalized at the time of this final submission, future accommodations to these proposals may be required in order to meet a new code, if and when it is adopted.

A phasing diagram has been included for each of the three revised schemes. These diagrams do not reflect the only phasing options available to the Playhouse, as others may be just as viable, depending on revenue streams and possible development partnerships.
Scheme Ia

Preservation:
This scheme recommends retaining the existing winged street-facing building, and significantly reworks portions of the auditorium by shortening it and building a new stage and back of the house.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme Ia</th>
<th>Original Scheme I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theater</td>
<td>Total SQ FT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st floor</td>
<td>32,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd floor</td>
<td>16,535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd floor</td>
<td>12,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th floor</td>
<td>14,533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basement</td>
<td>12,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 1st floor SQ footage</td>
<td>94,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total SQ footage</td>
<td>189,720</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Complementary Uses

**Commercial/Institutional**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Floor</th>
<th>Original Scheme I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st floor</td>
<td>19,290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd floor</td>
<td>13,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd floor</td>
<td>7,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th floor</td>
<td>6,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total SQ footage</td>
<td>46,060</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parking Spaces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Original Scheme I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theater</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel (types)</td>
<td>463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal Without Valet</td>
<td>1,005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal With Valet</td>
<td>1,538</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scheme 1a:**
1 space/5 seats = 200
Commercial: 32,875 SF @ 1 space/300 SF = 109
3,000 SF @ 1 space/150 SF (restaurant) = 20
3 residential units = 6

**Scheme 1:**
1 space/5 seats = 180
Commercial: 40,000 SF @ 1 space/300 SF = 133
20,000 SF @ 1 space/150 SF (restaurant) = 133
3 residential units = 6
Parking diagram
Total parking spaces: 398

Parking Diagrams

Phase I:
- Construction of 300-seat theater and auxiliary buildings.
- Underground parking on west side of lot.

Phase II:
- Construction of auxiliary buildings and underground parking.
- New loading area.

Phase III:
- Rehabilitation of existing Playhouse and winged street-fronting building.
- Construction of new loading area.

Phasing Diagrams
Preservation:
The scheme preserves the 3 story winged street-fronting building alone, and locates the new theater on the footprint of the demolished theater.
Parking diagram

Total parking spaces: 458

T-6 zoning diagram

Phase I:
Partial demolition of ancillary wings of existing Playhouse.

Phase II:
Construction of west side of property, including 300 seat theater and all parking below grade.

Phase III:
Construction of complementary uses on east side of property.

Phase IV:
Partial demolition of Playhouse building and rehabilitation of same. Construction of additional complementary uses.

Phasing Diagrams
Preservation:
This scheme preserves the 3 story winged street-fronting building alone.
Phase I: Demolition of existing theater stage, seating area and ancillary buildings. Rehabilitation of front bar building. All parking construction below grade.

Phase II: Construction of ancillary buildings on west side of site.

Phase III: Construction of 300 seat theater, 150 seat theater and ancillary buildings on east side of site.
**Introduction**

On Wednesday March 22, 2007, FDA visited the Coconut Grove Playhouse to participate in an assessment of the existing conditions of the building. FDA was asked to consider various possibilities for the re-use of the property, including reopening the Playhouse in the current building, in essentially its current condition; undertaking a major renovation of the existing building, but preserving the basic structure and envelope; or demolishing the building and constructing an entirely new Performing Art Center on the site. For the purpose of this walkthrough, value judgments about the historic qualities or requirements of the site were not weighed. Additionally, we are not qualified to comment on the structural integrity or building systems (MEP) conditions, and so we have not included that in our assessment.

No one from the Playhouse was on the site to guide us through the building, however Rem Cabrera from Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs joined FDA and was able to provide insight about operations and production methods of the Playhouse.

**General Impressions**

The Coconut Grove Playhouse is in a state of functional disrepair: although the building has recently functioned as a theater, it can hardly be considered to be in acceptable conditions. Now that the building has fallen into disuse, it seems unlikely that another willing tenant could be found. Like a house that has had a long-term owner, the Playhouse has worked around its issues and come to love its “quirks.” When viewed publicly, those quirks appear as deficiencies, and a new tenant may be hard to find. The building still appears to be occupied, as if the staff simply got up one day and left, and no one has returned to move out. Therefore the building remains essentially as it was that day, with dishes in the sink, laundry in the costume shop washing machine and paper on desks awaiting action. The floors in the office and apartment areas are uneven and have numerous soft spots. In several places, significant water damage has occurred, and at least two locations we found active leaks. Mold is beginning to take hold in places. The plaster walls are crumbling, and some doors do not close properly due to settling. Generally, the offices, apartments and shops are in poor conditions. The auditorium is in a stage of disrepair. The majority of the seats are damaged. Many do not self-rise and have torn upholstery or damaged arms, backs or parts. Several are broken to the point of being unusable. The finishes within the hall have deteriorated significantly. The ceiling is cracked in places and has pieces missing. Plaster has chipped off the walls exposing the unpainted plaster behind. The entire room is very dirty. Entry and exit doors are damaged and outside light and sound intrudes on the room. It is our understanding that the balcony has not been used in recent years. We were unable to turn on the house lighting, and thus could not be evaluated or the egress lighting. There are numerous building and ADA code violations.

The stage is rather functional; especially considering the conditions of the rest of the building. The stage equipment appears to be functional, although some removal of recent maintenance is evident. The backstage is very cramped, and hard to maneuver around, and there is no ADA compliance backstage. A larger stage with expanded wings would be a huge improvement. Although the stage lighting system is on the older side, it appears to be in good conditions. We were unable to turn it on and test it carefully because the main service had been turned off. We did not closely examine the condition of the electrical wiring, although if it is similar vintage as the stage dimmers, it should be acceptable. Backstage is dismal. The dressing rooms are cramped. Dirty, non-ADA (and possibly bound of health complaint) compliant, and lack toilets and showers. There is a dressing area for an adequate number of performers, but the real challenge would be convincing them to change there. There is a green room that is adequately sized for the number of dressing spaces, but again, it needs a lot of cosmetic attention. There are no accommodations for backstage staff or stage crew at all. The rehearsal hall and dressing accommodations are not acceptable either in terms of size or conditions for either use. The balcony lobby has been converted into a rehearsal room, and though not ideal, it is the best space in the building for this purpose. We were also told that this room is used occasionally for receptions.

**Considerations for RE-USE**

As previously mentioned it seems rather unlikely to us that another tenant will be found that is willing to use the building as-is. A modest renovation could go a long way towards improving the facility.

**Minimum to RE-OPEN / Major RENOVATION**

At the minimum, the offices and apartment areas need to be changed, painted and re-carpeted. The leaky need to be stopped and the floors reinforced as necessary. Windows that are broken should be repaired and plastered, either repaired or covered with drywall. The apartments could be converted to more office space or renovated as guest lodging.

At the minimum the auditorium needs new seats and new paint. Part of the re-seating effort would have to include making the hall and its surrounding spaces ADA compliant. The house and egress lighting require further evaluation. Ultimately though, the auditorium’s long-term value is based more on its structural integrity (and the economic model). The new theater can currently seat about 1250 many more than more small professional theaters need.

The stage is in almost usable conditions right now. The stage lighting and rigging systems should be inspected and repaired before it is passed into service and a structural review of the stage house should be undertaken. The stage floor may need replacement. The backstage area is in desperate need of expansion. Even if a full cosmetic renovation were to take place. It simply isn’t large enough to provide the sort of accommodations that a professional cast and crew should have, nor it is ADA compliant.

The second space is usable in its current conditions, though it is really not an ideal space for anything except cabaret style performances. The rest of the front of house areas (lobby, box office, donors lounge) need cosmetic improvements, but are adequately sized and are not in need of complete renovation.

**Major Renovation / Complete Replacement**

The next step would essentially require the complete replacement of the theatres. The facade, lobby, offices and apartments are adequate in terms of size and layout and assuming no great structural problems, could be preserved. Beyond that however, the replacement of the new performance and backstage spaces would be a major improvement. A proper flexible theater would replace the cabaret space and the main stage would be “right-sized” and outfitted with modern stage house and backstage. A rehearsal hall could be included as well.
08 Appendix
Theater Templates by Fisher Dachs Associates
Progress Report

The Coconut Grove Playhouse and the Future of Professional Theatre in Miami-Dade County

Prepared for:
Coconut Grove Playhouse
Miami Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs

April 2007

Prepared by:
AMS Planning & Research Corp.

Introduction

In October of 2006, AMS Planning & Research was engaged to assist the Coconut Grove Playhouse in developing a recovery plan for this landmark theater. Funds for this engagement were provided through an allocation by the Miami-Dade Department of Cultural Affairs. This report provides an update on the significant progress being made on this work and outlines the next steps being undertaken by AMS Planning & Research to complete the recovery plan for the Playhouse.

Background

The Playhouse ceased operations at the end of its FY2005-2006 season as a result of severe financial problems that threatened the theater’s survival. In consultation with the Miami-Dade Department of Cultural Affairs’ staff, the Board of Directors of the Playhouse concluded that it needed outside expertise with experience in helping major non-profit cultural organizations resolve critical management, artistic, governance and financial issues.

AMS’s scope of services includes work to address the Playhouse’s immediate issues and to develop mid-term and long-range recovery plans focused on establishing operational and financial stability, and returning great regional theater to Coconut Grove.

Assessment and Short-Term Strategies

With support by the Coconut Grove Playhouse’s Board, pro-bono services were secured to complement AMS’s work. This includes legal services provided by Berger Singerman; accounting assistance through Morrison Brown Argiz & Farra; and communications help through ColiniHarris.

The first priority was to develop a concise summary of current conditions; to understand the financial position of the Playhouse, obligations to creditors, the status of subscribers and other ticket purchasers, the condition of the facility, and any potential legal exposure faced by the Playhouse.

A key component of the work was to assess the most immediate pressing issues and to develop effective strategies to address them. The goal was to establish a more stable financial environment and to ensure that there is enough time to develop solutions for the management, artistic, governance and financial issues essential to the recovery of the Playhouse. A clear and focused communications strategy to key stakeholders and the public was a critical component of this effort.
The following items highlight the accomplishments of this work:

- The AMS and the Playhouse board has worked cooperatively with the City of Miami’s Offstreet Parking Authority (which manages the parking lot next to the Playhouse) to receive a six month advance of parking revenues. These limited funds were used by the Playhouse Board to address the key financial issues outlined below:
  - salary and out of pocket expenses owed to former employees were paid;
  - necessary utilities and building insurance bills were paid; and
  - a repayment plan for the revoked, $125,000 Department of State Cultural Facilities Grant was initiated.

- In cooperation with the Florida Department of State, the Playhouse Board came to an agreement on a payback plan for $125,000 of State Cultural Facilities Grant funds; the first quarterly payment pursuant to this plan was made to the State in January 2007. Representatives of the Department of State Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Department of Land Management are being provided with regular updates on the progress of work on the recovery plan.

- The Playhouse Board has worked with City of Miami to accept the City’s historic designation of the property and currently, is working with the City to explore the feasibility of utilizing the Federal Historic Tax Credit Program for future capital improvements.

- In January 2007, Miami-Dade’s local theater companies worked with the Miami-Dade Department of Cultural Affairs and AMS on a program to provide donated tickets for upcoming shows to Playhouse subscribers. Ticket vouchers were sent to approximately 2,000 subscribers, with a cover letter from the Playhouse. The goal of this initiative was to help restore the good relationship between the Playhouse and its patrons. Participating theaters included: Actors’ Playhouse; City Theater; GableStage; The M Ensemble Company; New Theater; and Teatro Avante. These theaters continue to report an enthusiastic response from theater patrons regarding the redemption of the vouchers.

- Considerable positive press was received for these efforts in regard to payment of wages owed to the former employees and the theater ticket voucher offer to subscribers.

- The consultant team makes regular visits to the building to ensure that it is secure.

- With the assistance of the pro bono accounting and law firms, the Coconut Grove Playhouse Board and AMS assessed the cumulative debt, estimated to be approximately $4.2 million. The Playhouse Board is regularly updating creditors on progress regarding a recovery plan. It should be noted that most creditors are long-term supporters of the Coconut Grove Playhouse, appreciate the efforts being made and acknowledge the benefit of providing the Playhouse with more time to develop a long-range recovery plan. The expectation is that creditors will be willing to participate in a plan to resolve the amounts owed to them once a new vision and realistic plan for returning theater to the Stage of the Playhouse is offered.

The Miami Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs has been an ongoing partner with the Playhouse Board, AMS and the pro bono consultants in developing the recovery plan. It should be noted that the Coconut Grove Playhouse’s Board of Directors has completed a re-organization, resulting in a small working group of volunteers dedicated to the recovery of the theater and a smooth transition to its next era of service to the community.

Feasibility Analysis

Based on the momentum of these short-term accomplishments, AMS Planning & Research, the Playhouse Board and the Department of Cultural Affairs have worked on developing and evaluating realistic options for re-establishing great regional theater at the Coconut Grove Playhouse.

Internal Interviews

As an initial step AMS conducted more than a dozen interviews with current and former board members to gain an understanding of the relative importance of a flagship, professional theater company in Miami-Dade County; the value of tangible and intangible assets inherent in the Coconut Grove Playhouse organization and facility; the market and competitive environment faced by the Playhouse and its successor organization; and views on artistic, administrative and trustee leadership required to succeed. Responses were remarkably consistent and included the following observations:

- There is tremendous value inherent in the brand, history and longevity of the Coconut Grove Playhouse.
- A reinvigorated theater should remain at the site of the Coconut Grove Playhouse; however, the current facility is inadequate in several ways and requires either significant renovation or a completely new structure (retaining the historic façade).
- In order to succeed the artistic product must be of the highest caliber, viewed as diverse, exciting and excellent locally and nationally.
- Future management structure must include administrative leadership in balance with artistic leadership.
- Neither the previous nor the existing board of directors is the appropriate governing body for the future. This statement was made by virtually every board member interviewed.
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Next Steps

[Text begins]

The government is committed to addressing the concerns of the community and the stakeholders. A national conference will be convened to discuss and find solutions to the issues raised. The government is also committed to providing regular updates on the progress of the decision-making process. Please feel free to contact us with any further questions or concerns.

[Text ends]
1) Further develop each of the two directions being explored. Each will be illustrated by a “Strawman” concept which will highlight key financial, legal and governance assumptions. These concepts will be illustrated by case studies of similar operations and tested with the potential successor theater company. A central element of this task will be building consensus around the artistic, community and operating goals for a new institution.

2) Prepare a preliminary facility redevelopment strategy including a review of current conditions, definition of facility requirements for a fully functional flagship, professional regional theater in Coconut Grove, a recommended building program and conceptual capital cost estimates.

3) Explore existing facility and site utilization strategies in consultation with the potential successor theater company.

4) Undertake, in collaboration with the potential successor theater company, due diligence on current financial issues and develop a strategy for resolution and execution by the Playhouse Board.

5) Solicit community input, as a preferred approach emerges, by continuing the focus group meetings that have already begun, and expanding the conversation to include other interested parties. With the benefit of community input, the concept would be finalized and tested once again with the potential successor theater company.

6) Prepare a detailed implementation plan that includes a defined governance structure, a business plan, a marketing strategy, a financing blueprint and a facility development plan. Using these guiding tools, the transition to a new theater enterprise would begin.

Conclusion
There is considerable support for the re-emergence of a flagship regional professional theater company in Miami-Dade County. The history and brand of the Coconut Grove Playhouse are strong assets that should be retained. The potential for new and invigorated leadership as well as a significant community partnership is significant, and the on-going commitment of the Department of Cultural Affairs (both staff and financial resources) is key to ensuring success.

In addition to the research and development of a strong business plan, continued management of the short-term issues and resolution of the outstanding debt are critical components to ensure success in the future.
Appendix
Regulatory Considerations
Existing Zoning Codes
Appendix

Miami 21

The following updated information regarding Miami 21 was provided after the charrette concluded. Presentations by planners from Duany Plater-Zyberk and Company were made at the beginning of the charrette. The following articles may deviate in detail but not in principle from those shared and followed during the charrette.
5.6 URBAN CORE TRANSECT ZONES (T6)

5.6.1 Building Disposition (T6)

a. Newly platted Lots shall be dimensioned according to Illustration 5.6.

b. Lot coverage by any Building shall not exceed that shown in Illustration 5.6.

c. Buildings shall be disposed in relation to the boundaries of their Lots according to Illustration 5.6.

d. Buildings shall have their principal pedestrian entrances on a Frontage Line or from a courtyard at the Second Layer.

e. For the minimum Height, Facades shall be built parallel to the Principal Frontage Line along a minimum of seventy percent (70%) of its length on the Setback Line as shown in Illustration 5.6. In the absence of Building along the remainder of the Frontage Line, a Streetscreen shall be built co-planer with the Facade to shield parking and service areas. In the case of two (2) or three (3) Principal Frontages meeting at Thoroughfare intersections, the Building corner may recede from the designated Setback up to twenty percent (20%) of the Lot length.

f. At the first Story, Facades along a Frontage Line shall have frequent doors and windows; pedestrian entrances shall occur at a maximum spacing of seventy-five (75) feet. Vehicular entrances shall occur at a minimum spacing of sixty (60) feet unless approved by Waiver.

g. Setbacks for Buildings shall be as shown in Illustration 5.6. Frontage Setbacks may be adjusted to conform to the existing adjacent Frontage Setbacks by Waiver. Frontage Setbacks above the eighth floor for Lots having one (1) dimension measuring one hundred (100) feet or less may be a minimum of zero (0) feet by Waiver. For T6-36, T6-60 and T5-60, the Frontage Setbacks above the eighth floor shall not be required for a Frontage facing a Civic Space or a Right-of-Way seventy-five (75) feet or greater in width. At property lines Abutting a lower Tier Transect Zone the Setbacks shall reflect the transition as shown in Illustration 5.6.

h. Above the eighth floor, minimum building spacing is sixty (60) feet, except that where the Building abuts T5, the sixty (60) feet required spacing shall be above the fifth floor. For T6-24, T6-30, T6-30 and T6-60 Lots having one dimension one hundred (100) feet or less, side and rear Setbacks above the eighth floor may be reduced to a minimum of twenty (20) feet by Waiver. For T6-36, T6-60 and T5-60 above the eighth floor in the Second Layer, at a setback of ten (10) feet, an additional two stories of habitable space may extend a maximum sixty percent (60%) of the length of the street Frontages. For T6-24, T6-30, T6-30 and T6-60 above the eighth floor in the Second Layer, an additional six feet of non-habitable space may be allowed without additional setback to accommodate depth of swimming pools, landscaping, transfer beams, and other structural and mechanical systems.

i. For sites with three hundred hundred and forty (340) feet Frontage length or more, a cross-Block passage shall be provided as follows: If the Frontage Line of a site is at any point more than three hundred and forty (340) feet from a Thoroughfare intersection, the Building shall provide a cross-Block Pedestrian Passage as a public amenity. If the Frontage Line of a site is at a point six hundred and fifty (650) feet from a Thoroughfare intersection, a vehicular cross-Block passage shall be provided as a public amenity. Such a cross-Block Pedestrian Passage may be covered above the first floor by a maximum of twenty-five percent (25%) of its length with structures connecting buildings, such as a terrace, pedestrian bridge or vehicular bridge. In T6-36, T6-60 and T5-60 a Pedestrian Passage may be roofed and shall be lined with frequent doors and windows.

j. Maximum Lot size as shown in Illustration 5.6 may be increased by Exception for Uses that serve the Neighborhood.

5.6.2 Building Configuration (T6)

a. Development within Private Frontages shall comply with Article 4, Tables 2 and 6 and Illustration 5.6.

b. Above the eighth floor, the Building Floorplate dimensions shall be limited as follows:

- 15,000 square feet maximum for Residential Uses in T6-24 and T6-30
- 18,000 square feet maximum for Residential Uses in T6-36, T6-60 and T6-80
- 20,000 square feet maximum for Commercial Uses and for parking
- 180 feet maximum length for Residential Uses
- 200 feet maximum length for Commercial Uses

Encroachments shall be as follows: At the First Layer, cantilevered Awnings and entry canopies may encroach up to one hundred percent (100%) of the depth of the Setback, except as may be further allowed by Chapter 54 of the City Code. Above the first Story, cantilevered balconies, bay windows, and roofs shall be at a maximum three (3) feet deep and may encroach up to three (3) feet of the depth of the Setback. Other cantilevered portions of the Building shall maintain the required Setback. At the Second Layer no encroachments are permitted, except that facade components promoting energy efficiency such as shading and Screening devices that are non-accessible may encroach a maximum of three (3) feet.

d. Galleries and Arcades shall be minimum fifteen (15) feet deep, shall encroach one hundred percent (100%) of the depth of the Setback and shall overlap the whole width of the Sidewalk to within two (2) feet of the curb. Permitted by process of a Special Area Plan.

e. All outdoor storage, electrical, plumbing, mechanical and communications equipment and appurtenant enclosures shall be located within the Second or Third Layer and concealed from view from any Frontage or Sidewalk by Linear Buildings, walls, Streetscreens, or opaque gates. These shall not be allowed as Encroachments.
f. Loading and service entries shall be within the Third Layer and shall be accessed from Alleys when available, and otherwise from the Secondary Frontage. Loading Docks and service areas shall be internal to the building. Where Lots have only Principal Frontages, vehicular entries, Loading Docks and service areas shall be permitted on Principal Frontages by Waiver.

g. Building Heights shall be measured in Stories and shall conform to Article 4, Table 2 and be allocated as required in Illustration 5.6. First-floor elevation shall be at average Sidewalk grade. A first level Residential Function or Lodging Function should be raised a minimum of two (2) feet and a maximum of three and a half (3.5) feet above average Sidewalk grade.

h. Mechanical equipment on a roof shall be enclosed by parapets of the minimum Height necessary to conceal it, and a maximum Height of ten (10) feet. Other ornamental Building features may extend up to ten (10) feet for T6-3 and T6-12 and an additional ten percent (10%) for T6-24 above the maximum Building Height. There shall be no limitation for decorative elements for T6-36, T9-50 and T6-80. Roof decks shall be permitted up to the maximum Height. Trellises may extend above the maximum Height up to fourteen (14) feet. Extensions above the maximum Height for stair, elevator and mechanical enclosures or decorative purposes only shall be permitted by process of Waiver.

i. All ground floor and roof top utility infrastructure and mechanical equipment shall be concealed from public view. At the building Frontage, all equipment such as backflow preventers, chimneys, and the like shall be placed within the line of the Facade or behind the Streetscreen. On the roof a screen wall shall conceal all equipment except antennas from lateral view. Exhaust air fans and louvers may be allowed on the Façade only on the Secondary Frontages above this first floor.

j. Streetscreens or fences shall be between three and a half (3.5) and eight (8) feet a Height and constructed of a material matching the adjacent building Façade or of masonry, wrought iron or aluminum. The Streetscreen may be replaced by a hedge. Streetscreens shall have openings no larger than necessary to allow automobile and pedestrian access. Streetscreens shall be located coplanar with the Building Façade Line. Streetscreens over three (3) feet high shall be fifty percent (50%) permeable or articulated to avoid blank walls.

k. Within the Second and Third Layers, fences and walls shall not exceed a Height of eight (8) feet.

5.6.3 Building Function & Density (T6)

a. Buildings in T6 shall conform to the Functions, Densities, and Intensities described in Article 4, Tables 3 and 4 and Illustration 5.6. Functions that do not conform to the requirements of Article 4, Table 3 shall require approval by Warrant or Exception. Consult Article 6 for any supplemental regulations.

b. The calculation of the FLR shall not apply to that portion of the building that is entirely below base flood elevation.

c. In T6-L and T6-O, first Story Commercial uses shall be permitted.

5.6.4 Parking Standards (T6)

a. Vehicular parking and loading shall be required as shown in Article 4, Tables 4 and 6.

b. On-street parking available along the Frontage Lines that correspond to each Lot shall be counted toward the parking requirement of the Building on the Lot.

c. Parking spaces should be accessible by an Alley. Parking spaces shall be accessible from the Secondary Frontage when available. Where Lots have only Principal Frontages, parking may be allowed from the Primary Frontages.

d. All parking, including drop-off areas and porte-cochères, open parking areas, covered parking, garages. Loading Docks and service areas shall be located within the Third Layer and shall be masked from the Frontage by a Linear Building or Streetscreen as illustrated in Article 4, Table 3. Underground parking may extend into the Second and First Layers only if it is fully underground and does not require raising the first-floor elevation of the First and Second Layers above that of the sidewalk. Ramps to underground parking shall be within the Second or Third Layers. Above ground parking may extend into the Second Layer a maximum of fifty percent (50%) of the length of the height of the Second Layer. Surface parking may extend into the Second Layer a maximum of twenty five percent (25%) of the length of the Primary Frontage up to a maximum of fifty (50) feet.

e. The vehicular entrance of a parking Lot or garage on a Frontage shall be no wider than thirty (30) feet and the minimum distance between vehicular entrances shall be sixty (60) feet. A ten percent (10%) deviation may be approved by Waiver.

f. Pedestrian entrance to all parking Lots and parking structures shall be directly from a Frontage Line. Only underground parking structures may be entered by pedestrians directly from a Principal Building.

g. Buildings using Lots shall provide parking for each use.

5.6.5 Architectural Standards (T6)

a. Only permanent structures shall be allowed. Temporary structures such as mobile homes, construction trailers, travel trailers, recreational vehicles and other temporary structures shall not be allowed except as per City Code and this Code.

b. The Facades on Retail Frontages shall be detailed as storefronts and glazed with clear glass no less than seventy percent (70%) of the sidewalk-level Story. Security screens shall be seventy percent (70%) open.

c. Roof materials should be light-colored, high Albedo or a planted surface.
d. The façade of a parking garage that is not concealed behind a Habitual Liner shall be screened to conceal all internal elements such as plumbing pipes, fans, ducts, and lighting. Ramping should be internalized wherever possible. Exposed spandrels shall be prohibited. The exposed top level of parking structures shall be covered a minimum of sixty percent (60%) with a shade producing structure such as, but not limited to, a visor pergola or retractable canvas shade structure.

5.6.5 Landscape Standards (T6)

a. The First Layer as shown in Article 4, Table 8 shall be paved and landscaped to match the Public Frontage as shown in Article 8.

b. Open Space shall be a minimum ten percent (10%) of the total Lot area. Ten percent (10%) of the Open Space provided in Second or Third Layer shall be landscaped.

5.6.6 Sign Standards (T6)

See Article 6.

5.6.8 Ambient Standards (T6)

a. Noise regulations shall be as established in the City Code.

b. Average lighting levels measured at the Building Frontage shall not exceed 20 fc (foot-candies).

c. Streetlights shall be of a type illustrated in Article 8, Table D. Lighting of building and contiguous Open Spaces shall be compatible with street lighting of Abutting public spaces as illustrated in Article 8. Interior garage lighting fixtures shall not be visible from streets.

d. The lighting fixtures of exposed rooftop parking shall be concealed by a parapet wall and shall not be seen from surrounding streets.
COCONUT GROVE PLAYHOUSE
3500 MAIN HIGHWAY

Designation Report

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI
PRESERVATION OFFICER
TO THE HISTORIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF THE
COCONUT GROVE PLAYHOUSE
AS A HISTORIC SITE

Prepared by
Ellen Uguccioni for Janus Research
Consultants

Prepared by
Sarah E. Eaton, Preservation Officer

Passed and Adopted on

Resolution No.
I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Historic Name:
Coconut Grove Theatre
Grove Theater

Current Name:
Coconut Grove Playhouse

Location:
3500 Main Highway
Miami, FL

Present Owner:
Coconut Grove Playhouse LLC
3500 Main Highway
Miami, FL 33133

Present Use:
Performing Arts theater

Zoning District:
G/I - Government/Institutional

Tax Folio Number:
01-4121-045-0140

Boundary Description:
That portion of Lot 10, located northerly and westerly of Ingraham Highway and northerly of Charles Street of the plat of MONROE'S PLAT, as recorded in Book 7 at Page 203, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida; together with the easterly 140 feet of northerly 117 feet, and the easterly 52.5 feet less the northerly 117 feet of Block 29 of the plat of FROW HOMESTEAD, as recorded in Plat Book B at Page 106, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.
II. SIGNIFICANCE

Specific Dates:
1926
1955 - Remodeling

Architects:
Kleinert and Elliott – 1926
Alfred Browning Parker – 1955

Builder/Contractor:
Albert V. Peacock – 1926

Statement of Significance:

The Coconut Grove Playhouse is a noteworthy expression of the Florida Land Boom that has survived to the present day. The original design by the critically important architectural firm of Kleinert and Elliott, was a fanciful Spanish Roccoco movie palace. The theater was intended to be Miami’s most elaborate theater with the largest seating capacity of any theater in Miami. In 1955, under the hand of noted architect Alfred Browning Parker, the theater was remodeled to accommodate the Coconut Grove Playhouse, Miami’s first live, legitimate theater, which evolved into one of the most important regional theaters in the country. In many ways, the Coconut Grove Playhouse embodies the metaphorical Boom and Bust cycles that Florida has experienced, and continues as a signature building reflecting the heyday of Coconut Grove.

On January 15, 1926, ground was broken for a new theater at the corner of Main Highway and Charles Street in Coconut Grove. The theater was a project of the Irving J. Thomas Company, which had been brokering real estate in Coconut Grove as early as 1912.

Almost one year later, before its opening, Thomas turned over the theater to Paramount Enterprises, Inc., the moving picture studio and theater builders. Mr. Thomas explained that with Paramount running the movie house, it would better serve the citizens of Coconut Grove, as they were likely to have access to more attractions. The Coconut Grove Theater became the eleventh Paramount Theater to open in southeastern Florida.

In the announcement for the theater’s construction, the article boasted that the auditorium would contain more seats than any other theater in Miami, and would be equipped with the latest model of an orchestral pipe organ. The building would be climate controlled year-round through the use of a “pressure system of ventilation” that could produce cool air during the hottest of days. The building was designed for mixed uses, and included seven storefronts on the ground floor, and offices on the second. The third floor contained apartments.

On Saturday, January 1, 1927, actor Adolph Menjou headlined D. W. Griffith’s production of The Sorrows of Satan, the opening night feature at the Coconut Grove Theater. Accompanying the movie was the 12-piece orchestra at Arnold Johnson, and Cellia Santen playing the Wurlitzer Concert Grand Organ. The theater accommodated 4,500 patrons anxious to experience the fantasy world created by the moving pictures. The Reverend J. D. Kuykendall of Plymouth Congregational Church gave the dedicatory address, comparing the growth of the motion picture industry with that of Coconut Grove itself. The house was packed for both showings of the film.

The theater opened at perhaps the worst possible time, as the financial climate in South Florida was at an all time low. The theater managed to stay open until the 1930s, after which it closed. The theater served a new purpose during World War II, when it was used as a school to train Air Force navigators.

Following the war, the building was shuttered, and would remain so until 1955, when George Engle purchased the theater for $200,000 with the intent of creating a legitimate performing arts theater. Finding the theater in an advanced state of disrepair, Engle hired Coconut Grove architect Alfred Browning Parker to refurbish it and designate it for a more contemporary era. The cost of the alterations was estimated at $700,000. Renamed the Coconut Grove Playhouse, the renovated theater reopened on January 3, 1956, with the U.S. premiere of Samuel Beckett’s existential play, Waiting for Godot.

Engle found the succeeding years disappointing in terms of financial success and attracting audiences. He closed the theater in 1960. After leasing the building for several years, producer Zev Buffman bought the building in March 1966 for more than $1 million. In 1970, the Playhouse changed ownership again when former actor Eddie Bracken and his associates purchased the building. When Bracken’s group failed to pay its debts, the Playhouse was ordered sold at auction on the steps of the county courthouse.

The Playhouse survived destruction when Arthur Canton and Robert Fishko managed to buy the theater, which reopened for the 1971–72 winter season. Canton and Fishko sold their interests to the Players Repertory Theater in 1977, which renamed the theater as the Players State Theater.

The State of Florida acquired the playhouse in 1980 by purchasing its $1.5 million mortgage. The State contracted with the Coconut Grove Playhouse, Inc. to operate the theater, and in 2004 transferred the title to the Coconut Grove Playhouse LLC.
When it was built, the Coconut Grove Playhouse was an extraordinary example of the style that relied on architectural prototypes from around the Mediterranean Sea. The design became the preeminent choice for architecture in South Florida during the Florida Land Boom of the 1920s. At the time, journalists described it as “Spanish,” “Spanish Revival,” and even as “Domicile Spanish” types produced in Valenza and Catalonia along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea during the 12th century.”

In an article entitled “The New Mediterranean Architecture of Florida,” written by Mattlock Price and published in the June 1925 edition of House Beautiful, the author describes the style that became the pre-eminent choice for buildings in Florida during the Land Boom of the 1920s. He begins by describing the Spanish-derived forms in California, specifically referencing the Mission Revival, and then continues to Arizona and Texas to describe Pueblo designs.

It is Mr. Price’s contention that the “Mediterranean style” is a composite of the trends occurring in California and the West that has a singular character expressed only in Florida, and particularly the Greater Miami area. He states:

It might be said that the architects of Coral Gables recognized, as California recognized, the rightful heritage of Spain, but they did not confine their vision, and scanning the shores of the Mediterranean, perceived certain elements of Italian architecture could be effectively blended with Spanish, and that were other lands on the horizon, as well, lands full of excellent architectural material.

When Mr. Price spoke of “other lands on the horizon,” he was referring to Italy, the French and Italian Riviera, as well as the northern coast of Africa, which had a rich Moorish heritage.

The Mediterranean Revival style was not limited to Florida, but finds examples across the country, notably in California, Arizona, and Texas. Contemporary architectural historians have differed in their choice of names for this Florida phenomenon, but all agree that there is an eclecticism that capitalizes on a number of design traditions.

Virginia and Lee McAuliffe, in their best seller A Field Guide to American Architecture, begin their explanation with a section entitled “Eclectic Houses 1800-1940.” They then call out variants of what has been generally called Mediterranean Revival. They include the following styles: Italian Renaissance, Mission, Spanish Eclectic, Monterey, and Pueblo Revival.

Professor David Gebhard, in his article for the Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians entitled “The Spanish Colonial Revival in Southern California,” provides a simpler explanation. He states that in the broader application, the style is best called “Spanish Colonial Revival.” He then notes that the Spanish Colonial Revival had two distinctive variations, first the Mission Revival and later the Mediterranean Revival.

In South Florida historians are comfortable with the stylistic identity of Mediterranean Revival. The Coconut Grove Playhouse is indeed a particularly fine example. The hallmark of the Mediterranean Revival style includes mercury construction with broad areas of uninterupted surfaces covered with stucco that is frequently textured; cast stone or concrete ornament, typically reserved for the embellishment of windows and doorways; a combination of roof slopes including flat, gabled and sometimes hipped; the use of arcades, loggias, and colonnades to provide sheltering, yet open areas; the juxtaposition of one and two stories; clay barrel tile roofing; awnings; decorative ceramic tiles; and wrought iron accents.

The Coconut Grove Playhouse expresses the style of the Mediterranean Revival in its dramatic entrance portal, which is emphasized by the use of cast ornament that continues to the third floor. The spiral or twisted columns and the classically-inspired entablature that runs above the entrance doorway are also characteristic of the style. The loggias on each side of the theater express a key concept of the Mediterranean Revival style as they allow an open, yet sheltered area that maximizes the opportunity to be outdoors.

Richard Kienhol (1884-1944) studied at the University of Breslau (Germany) and L’Ecole Nationale des Beaux Arts. In 1906, he began a practice with John B. Elliott in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Kienholz was named as the designer, and apparently Mr. Elliott dealt with the construction end of the projects. His first commission in Florida came in 1916 when John Blandy, President of Pittsburgh Steel, decided to build a home in Coconut Grove. The home, dubbed “El Jardin,” was completed in 1917.

Some architectural critics note that El Jardin is one of the earliest, if not the earliest, Mediterranean Revival designs in South Florida. The home, now a part of the Coral Gables School for Girls complex, fronts directly on Biscayne Bay, and is a magnificent Italian renaissance palace featuring a wealth of picturesque design detail, including the highly intricate Spanish Churriguerean ornament associated with Baroque architect Joaquin de Vaca Churriguera. Their lavish surface ornamentation, that some call “over decoracion,” was a hallmark of the Spanish Baroque style, and can frequently be seen in the works of Richard Kienholz.

An obituary published in the Miami Daily News notes:

It is with deep regret that the Miami Daily News notes the passing of Richard Kienholz, one of the most gifted architects of his time, monuments to his genius are the many prominent Miami buildings he designed. Other architects were quick to follow his leadership in design, thus he may truly be called the father of Miami’s distinctive architecture.

Kienholz’s designs include:

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Alfred Browning Parker (1916–) is the architect who made the change from Richard Kiehncl’s Mediterranean movie palace interiors to the stark modernity that characterized his own era. Parker, considered one of the outstanding and precedent-setting architects from the 1950s and beyond, was in fact a contemporary of Kiehncl and, at one time, they both were associated with the magazine Florida Architecture and Allied Arts. In 1955, Kiehncl was the first publisher of the magazine, and he served on the editorial board until his death. In 1947, Parker became a member of the editorial staff along with Kiehncl, Robert Law Wood, Robert M. Little, Wahl Snyder, G. Clinton Camblle, and Frederick C. Sandman.

Alfred Browning Parker received his B.S. in Architecture at the University of Florida in 1939. He served as an associate professor at the school from 1942 until 1946, the year he began his architectural practice in Miami.

Parker was certainly aware of the South Florida predilection for buildings of an Art Deco or Mediterranean design. However, Parker chose to abandon any sense of historicism in his own designs, favoring instead an approach that capitalized on the environment, structure, and materials.

Parker became a leading voice in the new contemporary architecture of Florida. He was a prolific writer and expressed his opinions in the American Institute of Architects Journal, the Architectural Forum, and the Architectural Record. In 1965, he published You and Architecture, a book that dealt with good architectural design targeted at the laymen.

Parker has designed residential, commercial, religious, and institutional buildings during his long career. He is probably most noted for his residential designs. In 1954, House Beautiful magazine chose a Parker design for its “Place Setter House.” The 1958–59 edition of Florida Architecture magazine published the Don Gayer House in Coconut Grove. Herb Parker separated the living and sleeping quarters with an outdoor living space.

Parker’s alterations focused on the interior of the theater. Exterior alterations were limited to the removal of the ornamental parapet in the center and side bays of the entrance and the removal of the store fronts, although the reveal of the storefront is still present. The roofline is now straight, with ornamental tile coping terminating the wall.

Relationship to Criteria for Designation:

As stated above, the Coconut Grove Playhouse has significance in the historical and architectural heritage of the City of Miami, possesses integrity of design, setting, materials, craftsmanship, 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.

The Coconut Grove Playhouse exemplifies the historical, cultural, economical, and social trends of Coconut Grove during the twentieth century, particularly the boom and bust cycles that characterize the history of Miami. The theater was built as the Coconut Grove Theater during the heyday of the 1920s real estate boom. Designed in a flamboyant “Spanish Baroque” style, the theater reflects the optimism and disposable wealth of Miami’s citizens and the fascination with Mediterranean architectural precedents. Kebon in 1955 as the Miami’s first live, legitimate theater, the Coconut Grove Playhouse evolved into one of the most important regional theaters in the country.

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

The design of the Coconut Grove Playhouse embodies the Mediterranean Revival style, and featured a highly decorative entrance, enriched window surrounds, and decorative detail associated with the design. Despite a few alterations, the Playhouse still retains enough integrity to convey its original Mediterranean Revival style and still exhibits its major character-defining elements.

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

The Coconut Grove Playhouse is associated with two of South Florida’s most prominent architects. Richard Kiehncl, who designed the original building, is considered one of South Florida’s most outstanding architects. Kiehncl completed much of his work during the real estate boom of the 1920s, but also went on to make contributions into the 1930s and 1940s. As editor of the publication Florida Architecture and the Allied Arts, Kiehncl also influenced generations of new architects. Alfred Browning Parker is considered an outstanding living architect whose work is more aptly described as “Modernist.” Parker remodeled the interior of the theater, dramatically changing its style from a highly decorative Mediterranean Revival tour de force to a building that reflected the “clean,” unadorned, geometrically defined architecture of the era in which he belonged.
DESCRIPTION

Present and Original Appearance:

Setting:
The Coconut Grove Playhouse is located on the northwest corner of Main Highway and Charles Avenue. The main entrance is centered at the junction of the two streets. A parking lot is located immediately to the north.

The building has a zero-foot lot line, and is directly adjacent to the sidewalk.

Original Appearance:
A Miami Herald article, dated January 1, 1927, announced the grand opening of the Coconut Grove Theater. The physical description of the theater in the article was quite detailed and allows a thorough understanding of the subsequent changes.

In addition to the theater, which could seat 1,500 patrons, the building housed seven storefronts on the ground floor, ten offices on the second story, and apartments on the third story. The mass of the building was arranged as two wings that hugged the sidewalk, bridged by the highly ornamental entrance bay, which was centered at the corner.

The entrance bay was intended to be the focus of the composition, and was recessed from the two wings at the corner, lending it even greater prominence. The ground floor featured cast concrete spiral columns that framed the entrance to the lobby and terminated in an elaborate cornice. Above it, the cast treatment extended only to the three windows in the center bay. The third floor was dowered in elaborate window surrounds in anticipation of the termination of the building, an elaborately shaped parapet that extended well beyond the roof. The division of each floor was emphasized by a projecting stringcourse that extended around the sides of the building.

The design by Kohnert and Elliott maximized the year-round Florida climate. On each side of the theater, the architects created a loggia, or patio, eight feet in width that was framed by arches with panels containing ornamental wrought iron grilles. A fountain element banked in lush greenery was a focal point on both sides of the patio.

The ornamentation of the sidewalks was proportionately simpler. On the ground floor, the rectangular storefronts were spaced evenly across the sides, with their only embellishment a striped canvas awning. The second floor was left unadorned, with only the rhythm of the casement windows enlivening the space. The third floor was the most decorated with a tripartite arrangement of windows, featuring

an elaborate cast surround that mimicked the ornament of the front entrance, placed intermittently across the facades.

Present Appearance:
In 1955, Coconut Grove architect Alfred Browning Parker was hired by then-owner George Engel to redesign the theater. The great majority of the exterior of the building, however, remains as it did when first designed. The most obvious change is the loss of the ornamental parapet in the center and side bays of the entrance. The roofline is now straight, with ornamental tile coping terminating the wall.

Although the entrance bay originally terminated in an elaborately shaped parapet, the building still expresses its Spanish identity by the flat roof and barrel tile coping that extends across the now unadorned parapet and the original cast ornament surrounds. The storefronts were removed, although the original reveal remains.

Adoptions:
Although somewhat inconclusive, a comparison of available building records, photographs, and newspaper clippings seems to reveal that what had previously been free-standing, independent buildings were incorporated into the main theater building sometime in the early 1970s. A one-story hyphen connects the north wall of the theater with a two story building that fronts on Main Highway and the adjacent parking lot immediately north.

These one- and two-story buildings seem out of character with the original theater building, as the treatment of the connecting bay on Main Highway, while maintaining the rhythm of the bays, is fenestrated with a geometrically disproportionate window. The narrow windows on the second story of the end building also seem not to reflect the proportions of the original building, and the junction of the extension appears as an incongruous element.

Contributing Structures and/or Landscape Features:
Contributing structures within the site include the Coconut Grove Playhouse itself. Only the south and east facades possess architectural significance. There are no contributing landscape features.
Present Trends and Conditions:

The Coconut Grove Playhouse ranks high among the landmark buildings in Coconut Grove, along with the Plymouth Congregational Church and The Barnacle (Commodore Ralph Monroe Estate). The previously mentioned buildings represent the nineteenth century pioneering era and the early twentieth century, when Coconut Grove was a sleepy residential enclave. The Playhouse is one of the very few remaining structures in downtown Coconut Grove that typify the flamboyant and frenetic era of the real estate boom of the 1920s.

When the State of Florida transferred ownership of the Playhouse to the Coconut Grove Playhouse LLC Inc. in 2004, it paved the way for the next phase in the evolution of the property. In order to provide a long-term endowment for the theater, the Playhouse has announced its intention to team with a developer to preserve as much of the exterior of the theater as possible, while constructing a new theater, condominiums, and a parking garage on the site.

Preservation Incentives:

Because of the nonprofit status of the Coconut Grove Playhouse LLC Inc., most historic preservation tax incentives are not applicable. The Playhouse, however, has been approved for $15 million from the 2004 Miami-Dade County General Obligation Bond program. These bond funds will be paired with $5 million from a previous bond issue to fund a program to restructure the Playhouse.

V. Bibliography


Defunct theater pursues revival strategy

The nonprofit organization that operates the Playhouse is struggling to keep doors open.
Three new scenarios crafted for Playhouse in Coconut Grove

Professional and student architects developed three plans for the future of the Coconut Grove Playhouse, envisioning a combination of cultural and commercial uses for the site.

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Envisioning a future cultural and commercial campus on the site of the shuttered Coconut Grove Playhouse, teams of professional and student architects have unveiled three scenarios for the embattled theater’s board of directors to consider proposing.

Though they differ, each plan includes two theaters — a main stage with 600 seats and a second venue with 200 — and room for underground parking garages and some combination of office, retail and residential space.

The plans were drafted over three days and two nights this past weekend by local architects and University of Miami graduate architecture students, during public workshops led by UM’s Center for Urban and Community Design.

There is no timeline for reopening the Playhouse, which is saddled with $4 million in debt. However, there is an encouraging sign in the work of Miami-Dade County’s Department of Cultural Affairs, outlined in the final presentation at Ransom Everglades School on Sunday.

"We will take up to eight weeks for the Center for Urban and Community Design to generate a final version of their results," said TURN TO THEATER, 28

Three new scenarios crafted for closed Grove Playhouse

Spring calls for "clear and balanced comprehensive development agreements" that include site improvements, development of public spaces, and a "truly" comprehensive approach to the neighborhood buildings. He said that the Playhouse will be "an inspiration for the future" in the neighborhood.

The scenarios include: a cultural center with live theater and music, a mixed-use development with retail and commercial spaces, and a "transparent" community space with a focus on education and arts.

While the scenarios differ in their specific details, they all envision a diverse and vibrant future for the Playhouse area, with a focus on community engagement and cultural enrichment.

"I believe the Playhouse has a very bright future," Spring said. "We are all working together to ensure that the Playhouse will continue to be a vital part of the community for many years to come."
University of Miami, School of Architecture
Center for Urban & Community Design