

**DRAFT REPORT OF THE CITY OF CORAL GABLES**

**HISTORICAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT**

**TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD**

**ON THE DESIGNATION OF**

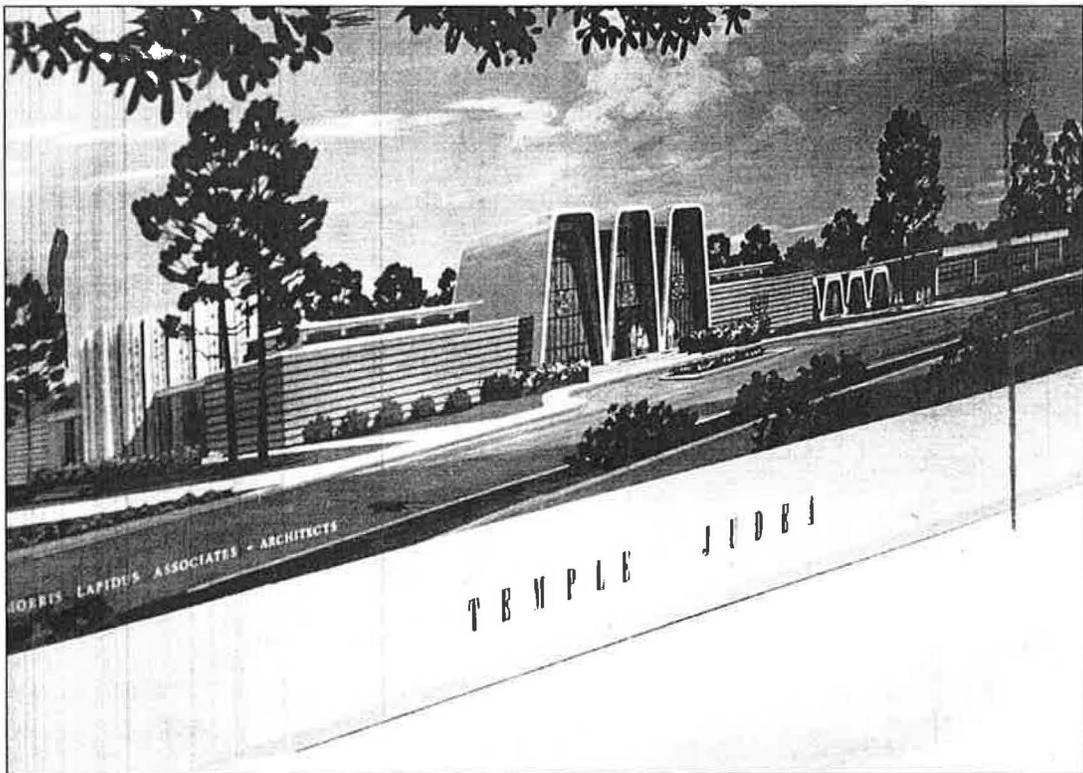
**TEMPLE JUDEA**

**THE PROPERTY AT**

**5500 GRANADA BOULEVARD**

**CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA**

**AS A LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK**



**Rendering of Temple Judea's Design**  
*Courtesy History Miami, Miami News Collection*



The City of Coral Gables

LHD 2013-009  
September 19, 2013

*Historical Resources Department*

**DESIGNATION REPORT  
TEMPLE JUDEA  
PROPERTY AT  
5500 GRANADA BOULEVARD  
(ORIGINALLY PERMITTED AS 950 S. DIXIE HIGHWAY)  
CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA**

Folio Number: 03-4129-026-0901

Legal Description: Block 135, Coral Gables Riviera Section, Including alley shown therein, according to the Plat thereof, recorded in Plat Book 28, Page 29, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida

Original Permit No.: 18890B

Date of Original Permit: November 30, 1965

Original Architect: Morris Lapidus

Original Builder: Polizzi Construction

Original Owner: Temple Judea

Present Owner: Temple Judea

Original Use: Temple

Present Use: Temple/School

Building Type: One-story Miami Modern (MiMo)

Site Characteristics: The property is located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Granada Boulevard and University Concourse. The primary elevation faces onto University Concourse.

**SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

In 1965, permit number 18890B was issued for the construction of Temple Judea at 5500 Granada Boulevard. Temple Judea has historically been the only Reform Jewish congregation in the City. It was the first Jewish congregation to construct a temple within Coral Gables (the original building at 320 Palermo Avenue), and the campus constructed in 1965 at 5500 Granada

Boulevard currently serves as the City's only temple. Temple Judea embodies the distinguishing characteristics of the MiMo style, and was designed by prominent architect Morris Lapidus. It meets the standard of "exceptional importance" for properties achieving significance within the past fifty years, as a rare excellent example of the MiMo style and the work of Morris Lapidus within Coral Gables. The property has maintained its historic integrity and continues to contribute to the historic architectural fabric of the City.

### **HISTORY OF TEMPLE JUDEA**

During the 1940s in Coral Gables there was no synagogue, and the Jewish members of the community were generally not in touch with each other (Sternlieb 2009). Sam and Helen Silver hosted a gathering at the Hillel Foundation at 3306 Ponce de Leon Boulevard, knowing that the Coral Gables community's Jewish families desired a way to meet each other, and what resulted was that the "guests came in droves" (Sternlieb 2009). The event received a large number of guests with, "pioneering spirit and enthusiasm" (Sternlieb 2009). Planning began in 1946 for the establishment of a Jewish Sunday school and house of worship or community center. Organizational meetings continued at residences and in Sam Weissel's office (above the current location of Starbucks at the southwest corner of Miracle Mile and Ponce de Leon Boulevard) (Sternlieb 2009). In June of 1947, they elected their first officers and committee chairpersons. In September of 1948, the group chartered the Coral Gables Jewish Center and joined the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The twenty original members of the Coral Gables Jewish Center included: Charles Adler, M. Arnold, Mike and Florence Baskin, Maurice and Sadie Corenblum, Ben Essen, Herman and Goldie Fisher, Herb and Dorothy Gelernter, Henry and Stella Hamersmith, Ben and Tina Harris, David and Hattie Hurwitz, Dewey Klein, Milton Klein, I.L. Kussner, Sidney Lewist, Sid and Eleonore Richman, Herman Rubin, Sam and Ann Schulefand, Sam and Helen Silver, Ted and Fern Wayne, and Sam and Mildred Weissel (Temple Judea 2009).

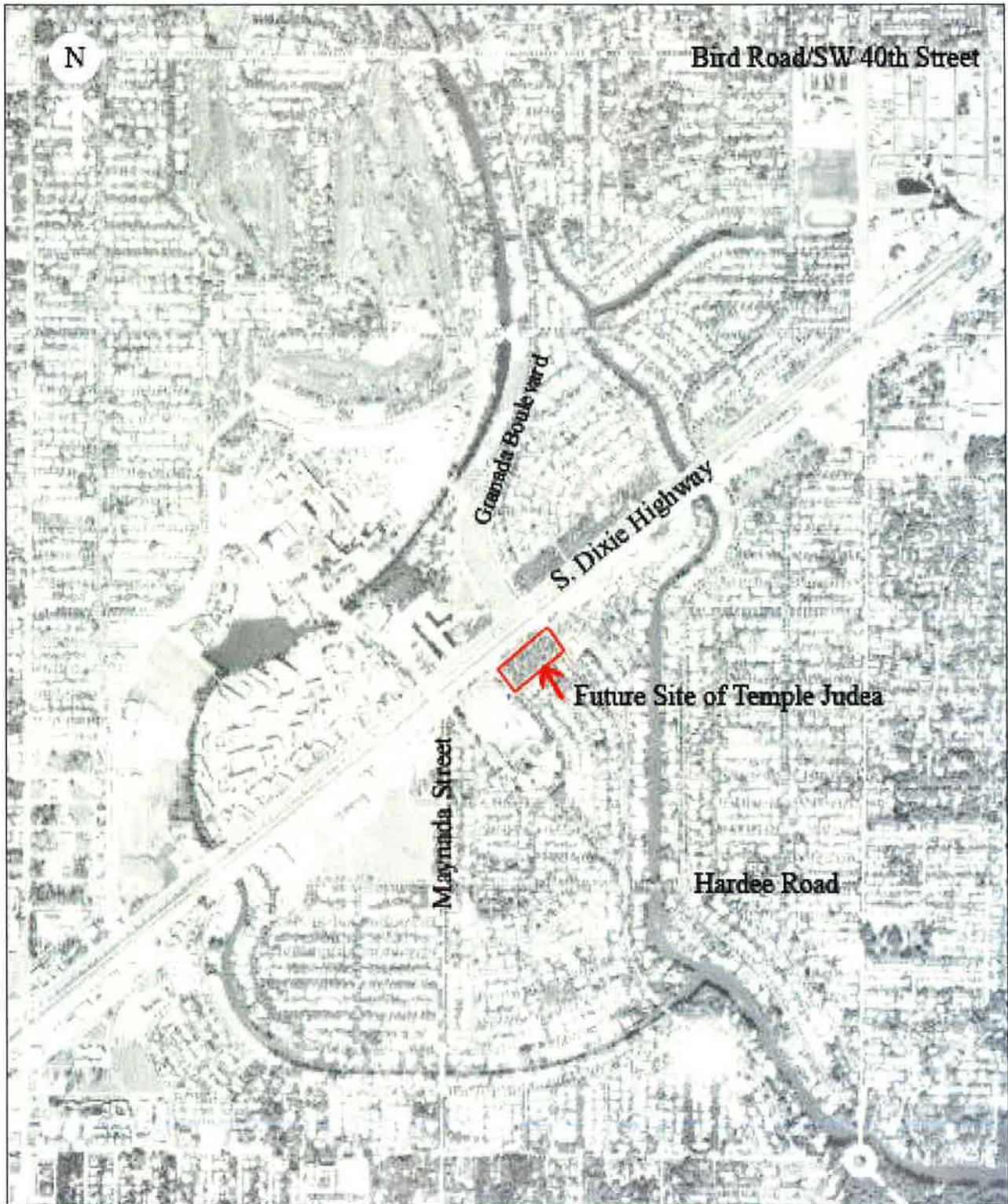
During the early years prior to the establishment of a permanent house of worship, services for the High Holy Days were held at the Coral Gables Woman's Club, and were at the Veteran's Administration Hospital at the Biltmore Hotel for Jewish Veterans (Sternlieb 2009). Regular Shabbat services took place at the University of Miami's Hillel House (Sternlieb 2009) and services were also held in members' homes. The first proposed site for a campus, two lots on the Country Club Prado near SW 8<sup>th</sup> Street, was met with zoning issues and public opposition during its review at the City Commission meeting (Sternlieb 2009). Another site was selected, 320 Palermo Avenue, and the land was purchased in November of 1948 in order to construct Coral Gables' first synagogue (Temple Judea 2009). The building committee was chaired by Sam Schulefand and Herbert Gelernter. Herbert Gelernter offered the services of his construction firm to clear and fill the site for construction (Temple Judea 2009). The congregation hired its first full-time Rabbi and Cantor (Gables Home Page 2013), and their first campus (at 320 Palermo Avenue) was constructed in 1950 (Figure 1). In 1956, the Coral Gables Jewish Center was renamed Temple Judea.



**Figure 1: Circa-1950s Photograph of the Campus at 320 Palermo Avenue**

The greater Miami area's Jewish community was growing during the 1960s, and young families were moving south prompting the need for expanded facilities (Temple Judea n.d.). In 1964, Rabbi Morris Kipper was hired by the congregation. Rabbi Kipper was known for his understanding of the needs of young families, and later founded the Alexander Muss High School program in Israel. Under his leadership and that of temple president Joseph Krefetz, planning for a new state of the art facility was undertaken. Congregation member Al Jacobson engineered the deal to purchase the land that is currently the site of Temple Judea, 5500 Granada Boulevard (previously addressed as 950 South Dixie Highway) (Temple Judea 2009). Al Jacobson knew University of Miami President Dr. Henry King Stanford, and arranged for a land swap to occur. The University of Miami offered the City of Coral Gables land under its ownership in exchange for the site at 5500 Granada Boulevard, and subsequently the University sold it to Temple Judea (Temple Judea 2009).

At the time of its purchase, the land was at a prominent location surrounded by development (Figure 2). S. Dixie Highway was established as a major transportation thoroughfare and commercial hub, and the building site was surrounded by religious and educational facilities. The nucleus of the University of Miami's campus to its northwest had been constructed during the period from the 1940s through the early 1960s. Coral Gables Baptist Church was located to its northeast, and Ponce de Leon Junior High School (subsequently Ponce de Leon Middle School) was located to its southwest. Residential neighborhoods in the greater area surrounding the building site were virtually built-out.



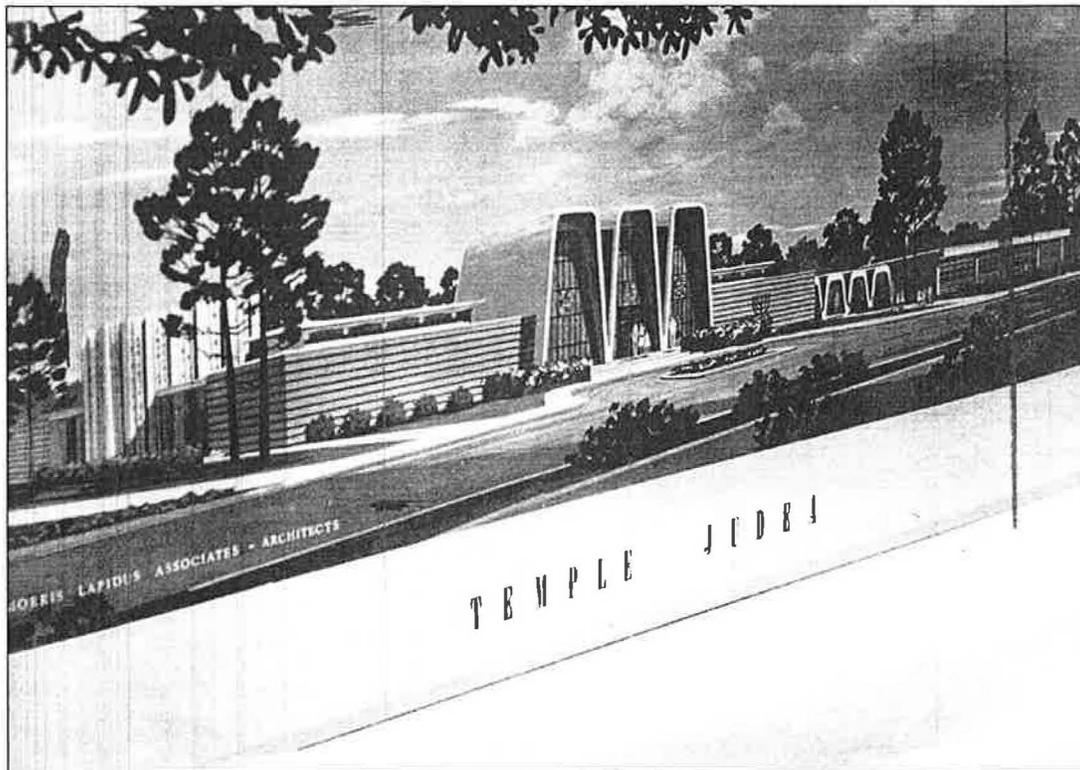
**Figure 2: 1963 Aerial Photograph Showing Future Site of Temple Judea**  
*Aerial Photograph Courtesy Aerial Photography: Florida Collection,  
University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries*

When describing the planning of Temple Judea's new facility at 5500 Granada Boulevard, temple president Joseph Krefetz stated that they, "built for the present and future needs of the Coral Gables Jewry... We have built not for ourselves, but for our children and our children's children and for the everlastingness of Jewish life" (Sternlieb 2009). When news of Temple Judea's new campus got out, so many new members joined the congregation that a temporary and controversial limit on membership had to be implemented (Temple Judea 2009).

Architect Morris Lapidus was commissioned to design Temple Judea. By this time in his career, Morris Lapidus had a reputation for creating buildings that were appealing to the masses and inviting with unorthodox designs and lavish embellishment. Lapidus was most well-known for the theatrical designs of his hotels which were intended to provoke emotions and awe in the buildings' users. This type of emotive architecture was perfectly suited to a religious space. When describing his design for Temple Judea, Morris Lapidus noted that,

*Through the thousands of years that the Jewish people have built their temples of worship, the styles have changed to fit the times during which these temples were built, but the basic emotional impact was something that architects and designers were always striving to achieve through the use of brick, mortar, wood, and stone. It is this emotional impact that I, as the architect for Temple Judea, felt must be incorporated in your new temple building... I wanted to create a feeling of light and welcome to the religious, social and educational facilities which make Temple Judea a complete center of activity for the entire congregation (Sternlieb 2009).*

Morris Lapidus envisioned a building which would be both "emotionally stirring" and "soul satisfying" (Sigler 2004). Rabbi Kipper rejected Lapidus' original drawings. He claimed that they looked too much like a motel, and that they were "not acceptable" (Sternlieb 2009 and Temple Judea 2009). Rabbi Kipper called Morris Lapidus to complain, and Lapidus quickly submitted new plans for the structure with the prominent triple arch (Figure 3). The triple arch was symbolic of Rabbi Kipper's vision for the future of the synagogue and its three purposes as a house of education/study, house of meaningful prayer experiences, and a house of assembly (Temple Judea 2009).



**Figure 3: Rendering of Temple Judea's Design,**  
*Photo Courtesy History Miami, Miami News Collection*

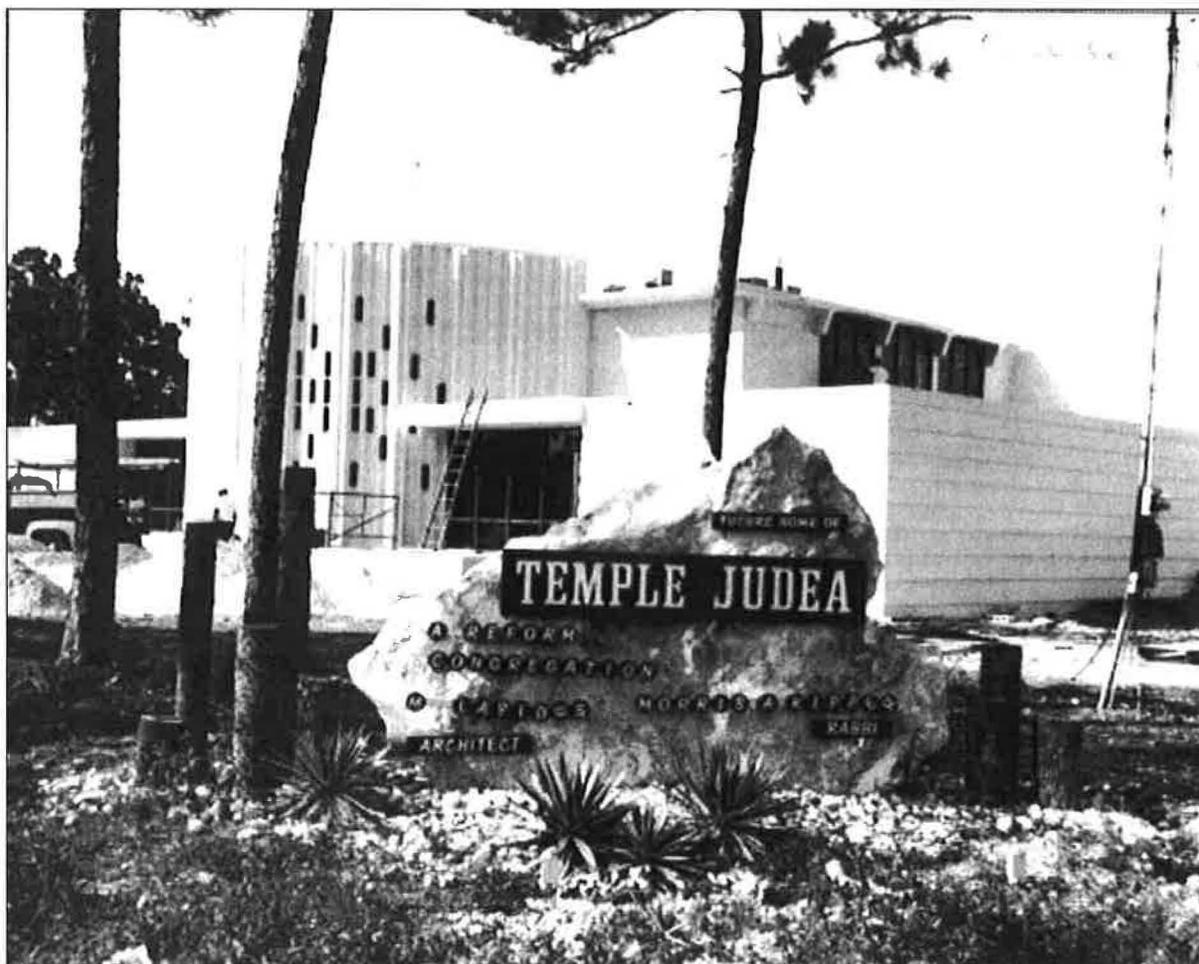
The \$560,000 project included a new sanctuary and religious school building (Miami News October 28, 1965). Temple Judea was designed to complement the buildings on the University of Miami's campus, while retaining its identity as a religious institution (Desilets 2010). One of the unique interior features of Lapidus' design was that the floor sloped up to the bema (altar), while it is more typical for the floor to slope down in the theater type style in which the sanctuary was designed. It was thought that Lapidus created this deviation in order for people to feel like they were rising to God (Sigler 2004).

Several hundred people attended the groundbreaking for the new facility in October of 1965 (Figure 4). At the time of the building's construction, Temple Judea had a six hour per week school program, confirmation classes were holding retreats, and they developed a strong youth program (Temple Judea n.d.). The Temple's membership was over 300 families, and they launched a campaign to increase it to 400 families in 1966 (Miami News August 18, 1966).

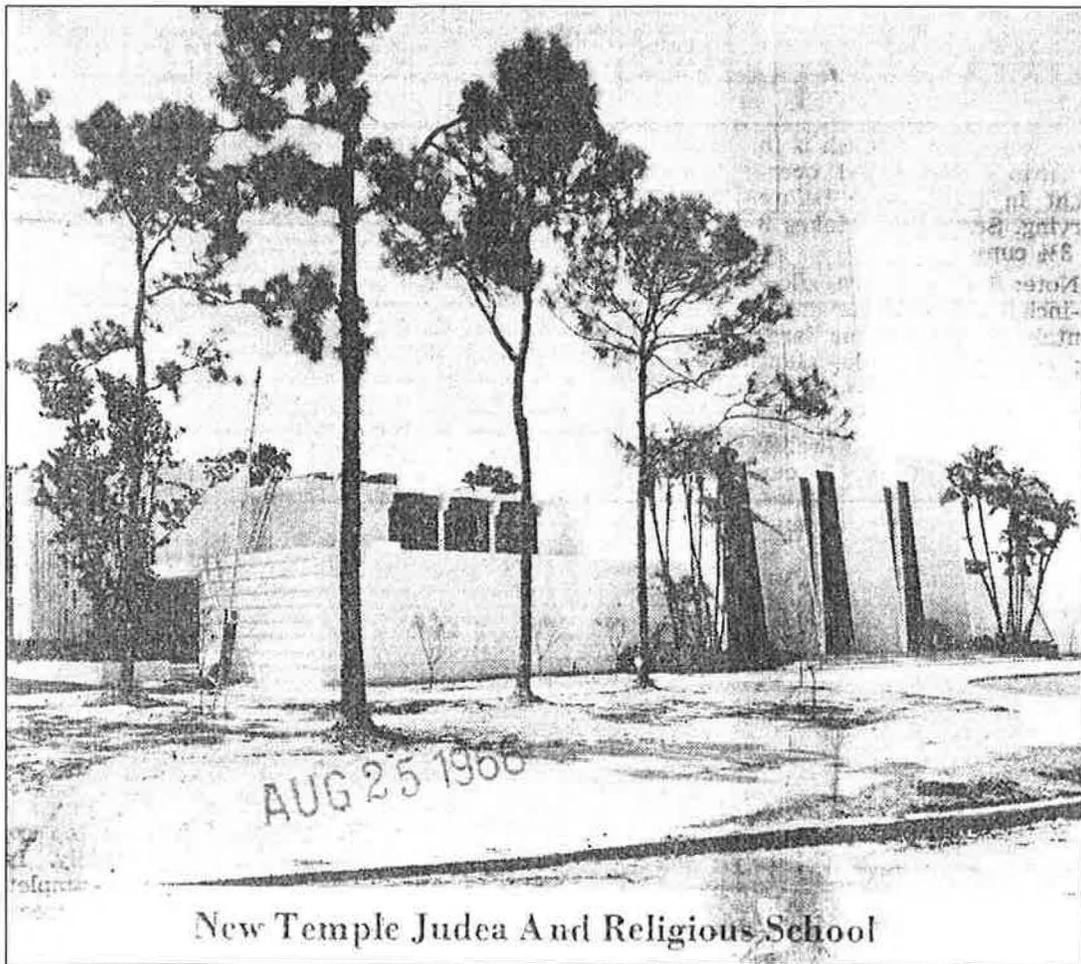


**Figure 4: Groundbreaking for Temple Judea, (left to right) Albert Jacobson (chairman groundbreaking committee), Joseph Krefetz (temple president), Morris Lapidus (architect), Rabbi Morris A. Kipper, and Victor Reiter (chairman of the fundraising committee) Photo Courtesy History Miami, Miami News Collection**

The final worship services were held at Temple Judea's 320 Palermo Avenue location on August 19, 1966 (Miami News August 18, 1966). The new synagogue at 5500 Granada Boulevard was dedicated on September 11, 1966, and the Hebrew School and Sunday School opened in the new facility during the same month (Miami News August 10, 1966) (Figure 5-7). In newspaper advertisements during the 1970s, Temple Judea was described as the "Friendly Reform Congregation." Adult education, cultural activities, youth groups, religious school, and special High Holy Day youth services were all advertised at Temple Judea.



**Figure 5: 1966 View of Temple Judea Under Construction (Gables Home Page 2013)**



New Temple Judea And Religious School

**Figure 6: View of Temple Judea in August of 1966**  
*Photo Courtesy History Miami, Miami News Collection*



**Figure 7: Undated Historic View of Temple Judea**  
*Photo Courtesy History Miami, Miami News Collection*

In 1972, Rita Shore became the Cantor at Temple Judea, and she was believed to be the first woman Cantor in Jewish history (Miami News February 10, 1977). Ms. Shore left the position in 1976, and in 1977 Sheila May Cline became the congregation's Cantor. Sheila May Cline was one of only three women in the country to have completed training as a cantor. She completed a five year program at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York, and spent two months in Israel, prior to taking over the Cantor duties at Temple Judea (Miami News February 10, 1977).

Throughout its history, Temple Judea's programming has expanded to include additional social outreach, education, and youth programming. In order to meet the needs of the growing congregation, Temple Judea's facilities grew and expanded, as is discussed further in the Additions section of this report. Rabbis throughout the congregation's history included Morris Skop, Mordecai Podet, Morris Kipper, Michael Eisenstat, Edwin Goldberg, and Judith Siegal (Temple Judea 2009). Today, Temple Judea has over 600 member families (Gables Home Page 2013).

## CRITERIA FOR SIGNIFICANCE

*a. Historic, cultural significance:*

5. *Is associated in a significant way with a past or continuing institution, which has contributed, substantially to the life of the City*

Temple Judea was the first Jewish congregation to construct a temple within Coral Gables. It was historically the only reform Jewish congregation within the City of Coral Gables, and is currently the only temple within the City. While there was historically a conservative Jewish congregation within Coral Gables at Temple Zamora (44 Zamora Avenue), its building was permitted a year later (permit #9122B May 9, 1950) than Temple Judea's original facility at 320 Palermo Avenue (permit #8694B July 1, 1949) and that congregation no longer has a temple in Coral Gables.

The Temple Judea congregation was founded during a period where religious prejudice permeated much of South Florida, including the Coral Gables community. The establishment of the congregation provided the Coral Gables Jewish community support, and eventually its first permanent place of worship. Since its 1948 founding as the Coral Gables Jewish Center, Temple Judea has served as a center of Jewish life within the City facilitating prayer, education, and assembly. The 1965-1966 construction of the campus at 5500 Granada Boulevard and its subsequent expansion and adaptation over time echoes Temple Judea's growth and expansion of its services within the Coral Gables community.

*b. Architectural significance:*

1. *Portrays the environment in an era of history characterized by one (1) or more distinctive architectural styles*
2. *Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction*

The initial planning and development of the City of Coral Gables during the 1920s was guided by George Merrick's desire to create a community evocative of a centuries old Mediterranean city. Following the hurricane of 1926 and the collapse of the 1920s Florida Land Boom, the community's construction slowed. Buildings constructed within Coral Gables during the later 1920s through the early 1940s saw the influence of "new" styles which were becoming popular in other communities such as Art Deco and Art Moderne, but the community was slow to shift its architectural paradigms and much of what was constructed during this period still exhibited elements of Mediterranean architecture.

Construction began to boom again in Coral Gables following the conclusion of World War II. By 1946 there was enough interest in non-Mediterranean architecture within Coral Gables that the City Commission held multiple discussions regarding the City's style requirements, and eliminated the zoning requirement for Mediterranean architecture. The relaxation of the community's design regulations paved the way for the Modern design of Temple Judea.

While architects were slow to move away from Mediterranean inspired designs in Coral Gables during the period, in the greater South Florida area local architects were embracing Modern design principles, and adapting them to the local climate. In recent years there has been an effort to classify this strain of Modernism, and Post-World War II Modern architecture in Miami has

come to be known as Miami Modern, or MiMo. The term, MiMo, was coined by Randall C. Robinson Jr. and Teri D'Amico, and its elements and characteristics are explored in the book *MiMo: Miami Modern Revealed* which Robinson co-wrote with Eric P. Nash.

Nash and Robinson describe the development of MiMo architecture by stating that,

*Postwar prosperity put Modernism on a collision course with the public's desire for luxury and display. Art Deco was old hat, but the mass market would never accept the idea that less was more. The fecund and fearless imagination of Morris Lapidus wrote the recipe for Resort MiMo in his iconoclastic Fontainebleau in 1954. The public embraced his academic heresies of highly ornamented interiors, stairways to nowhere, and columns that didn't support anything" (Nash and Robinson 2004:37).*

The book *MiMo: Miami Modern Revealed* features Temple Judea's design in its chapter "Monumental MiMo." The building's design incorporates the characteristic MiMo emphasis on blending, and creating continuity from indoors to outdoors. The building's design is low and integrated into the landscape, with multiple courtyards. Portions of the building have large expanses of windows. One of Temple Judea's most striking and decorative features is its use of compressed arches, one of the common elements in MiMo designs. Its design also incorporates the typical MiMo features of ribbon windows, low-slung lines, flat roofs with overhanging eaves, clerestory windows, stucco banding, mosaic tile, eyebrows, and integral planters.

- e. *Criteria considerations: Ordinarily cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past fifty (50) years shall not be considered eligible for the Coral Gables Register of Historic Places. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories.*
  6. *A property achieving significance within the past fifty (50) years if it is of exceptional importance.*

Temple Judea is of exceptional significance as a rare excellent example of MiMo architecture designed by prominent architect Morris Lapidus within Coral Gables.

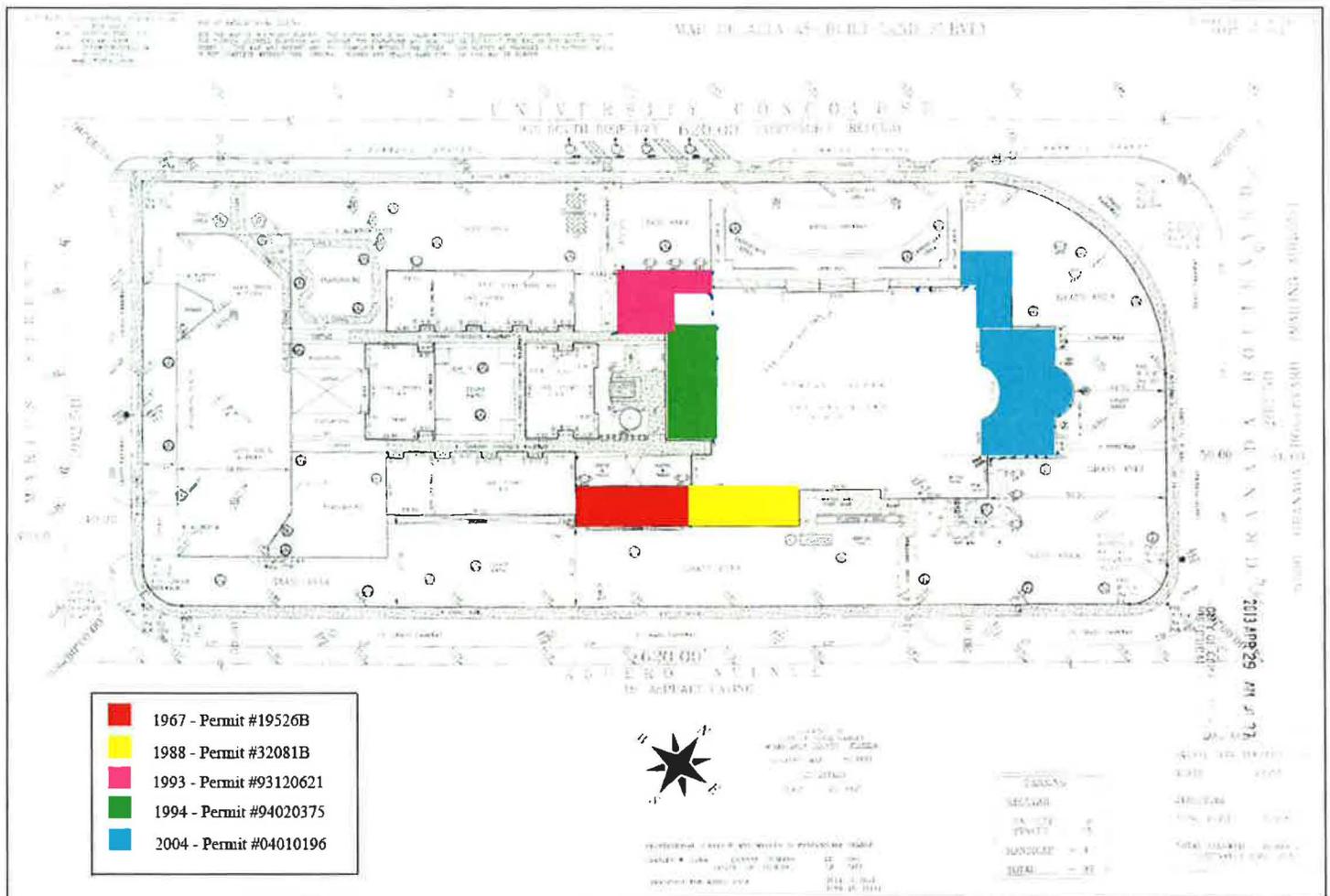
Morris Lapidus was a seminal figure within the Modern movement. Architectural critic Joseph Giovannini acknowledged that this country's architectural tradition is rooted in breaking out of the box and pushing boundaries (2001). Morris Lapidus fully embraced this role as an architect, and by doing so did not receive critical acclaim during many of his years in practice. The predominant architectural philosophy during his early years of practice adhered to the tenet of "form follows function," and designs were simple and unadorned. Morris Lapidus countered the prevailing Modern designs with striking ornamental features, and a design philosophy of "too much is never enough." In the foreword to *Morris Lapidus: The Architecture of Joy*, Ian Schrager described Lapidus as, "one of the most important architects of our time, not because of what he built – although brilliant – but because of the way he thought and his willingness to break rules" (Desilets 2010).

Morris Lapidus did not back down when his designs were not immediately met with critical praise, and he understood the importance of choreographing the users' experiences within his designs. Today, he is widely described as the first Postmodernist architect, and a pioneer who was not afraid to combine Modern forms with opulent, theatrical embellishment. Within South Florida, Lapidus was most well-known for his large scale high rise designs for hotels and apartment buildings. Temple Judea is a unique religious design within Morris Lapidus' portfolio, and is one of approximately thirteen Jewish communal or religious facilities he designed throughout the country. It is also one of only four known examples of his work within Coral Gables. One of Lapidus' other works in Coral Gables which is also less than fifty years old, 400 University Avenue, has previously been designated by the City. The other two known works within the City are on the University of Miami's campus.

By the time that the City of Coral Gables' requirements regarding Mediterranean architectural designs were relaxed, its identity as a Mediterranean Revival city was firmly established. City leaders, the Board of Supervising Architects, and locally practicing architects were slow to introduce Modern designs. Although the architecture transitioned to other styles, Mediterranean inspired designs continued to predominate within the community. As a result, few excellent examples of Modern architecture were constructed and remain today within the City of Coral Gables, and Temple Judea is a rare excellent example of MiMo architecture within the community.

### ADDITIONS / ALTERATIONS

The available original plans (permit #18890B) for Temple Judea were obtained from the City of Coral Gables Microfilm Division. The original building was designed by Morris Lapidus and constructed by Polizzi Construction. Since its construction, the building has undergone a series of minor additions, schematically shown in Figure 8.



**Figure 8: Schematic Depiction of Additions to Temple Judea on Current Site Plan**

The first addition was permitted in 1967 (permit#19526B), designed by Morris Lapidus and Associates, and constructed by Miller and Solomon. It was a small, one-story, library addition at the south (Aguero Avenue) side of the building between the existing temple and school buildings (Figures 9-10). The next addition occurred in 1988 (permit #32081B) and was designed by Joe Greenberg. It was a small, one-story, store room addition at the south of the building, east of the library addition (Figure 11). On May 29, 1988, Temple Judea dedicated a group of stained glass windows depicting six “Moments of Faith” (Miami News May 28, 1987). The windows, designed by Joan of Art Studio in Hollywood, each consist of eighteen panels measuring two by six feet.



**Figure 9: Current View of 1967 Library Addition on South Elevation (permit#19526B)**



**Figure 10: Current View of North Elevation of 1967 Library Addition, from within the Courtyard**



**Figure 11: Current View of 1988 Storage Room Addition on South Elevation (permit #32081B)**

In 1992, a sculptural installation by Kenneth Treister was added within the temple courtyard (Figures 12-13). From 1993 to 1994 two other additions occurred. The first (permit #93120621) was designed by Joe Greenberg. It was a small, one-story, music room/meeting room addition to the north, just west of the main entrance to the temple (Figures 14-15). The design left the form of the compressed arches which formerly created an open-air breezeway apparent, and preserved evidence of Lapidus' original design intent from within the courtyard (Figure 16). The next addition was designed by Gerald F. DeMarco (permit #94020375). It was also a small, one-story addition which served as a social hall and pre-function room (Figure 17). Each of these additions incorporated design elements present in Morris Lapidus' original design, and was complementary to the original design of Temple Judea.



**Figure 12: Current View of 1992 Kenneth Treister Sculpture Installation within the Temple Courtyard, facing southwest**



**Figure 13: Current View of Stained Glass within 1992 Kenneth Treister Sculpture**



**Figure 14: Current View of 1993 Addition on North Elevation (permit #93120621)**



**Figure 15: Current View from Courtyard towards South Elevation of 1993 Addition (Beyond the Original Arched Breezeway)**



**Figure 16: Current View of 1993 Enclosure to the North of the Temple Courtyard, Which Retains the Form of the Formerly Open Arches**



**Figure 17: Current View of 1994 Social Hall and Pre-Function Room, View of West Elevation from the Temple Courtyard**

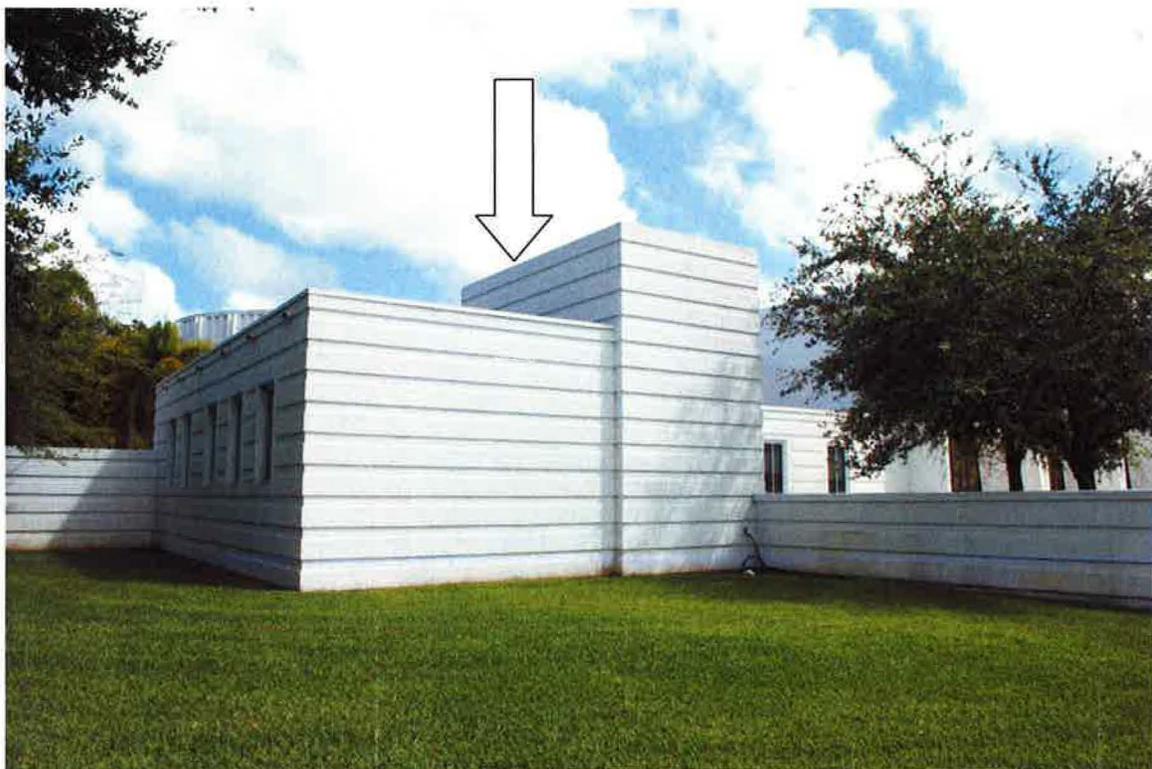
In 2004, multiple other small additions were constructed, and interior renovation and restoration work was undertaken. These alterations were designed by Jorge Hernandez (permit #04010196), and are compatible with Temple Judea's original design. The 2004 project was aimed at "re-creating the light, airy feeling" of Lapidus' original design for Temple Judea (Sigler 2004). One element of the building which was restored at this time was the interior of the bema/altar. Plywood had covered the openings on the interior for the previous twenty years, and this was removed to reveal Lapidus' original blue glass openings, and sculptural treatment of the space (Figure 18). One feature of Lapidus' original design which was removed at this time was the floor sloping up towards the bema/altar, as the floor within the sanctuary was made level. A walled courtyard meditation garden was added at the east end of the building (Figure 19). One-story rabbi's offices were added at the east end of the north elevation, and windows were added along the building's main (north) elevation (Figures 20 and 21). Access ramps were also added at the main (north) entrance to the temple.



**Figure 18: Current View of the Bema/Altar**



**Figure 19: Current View of 2004 Walled Meditation Garden Addition at the East (permit #04010196)**



**Figure 20: Current View of 2004 Rabbis Offices Addition at the Northeast (permit #04010196)**



**Figure 20: Current View of Windows Added in 2004, at the North Elevation East of the Main Entrance (permit #04010196)**

While the interior is not included as part of the historic designation, two of its most striking original interior features which were repeated throughout portions of the building were book-matched oak paneling, and an exposed t-beam ceiling covered in gunite. The book-matched oak paneling was removed, as much of it was damaged as a result of water intrusion. The t-beam ceiling treatment has been covered/replaced with a new ceiling treatment in some areas, but is still visible throughout portions of the building. The building's original terrazzo flooring remains under the carpeting in the social hall.

A review of building permit records revealed other exterior alterations which include painting, replacement of the hot water heater and air conditioning system, electrical wiring and installation of a closed circuit television system, awning repair and recovering, roof replacement and resealing of the flashing, landscaping, and the installation of rain gutters and downspouts, a walkway, fence, and handrails. None of the alterations detract from the architectural integrity of this property.

### **ARCHITECT**

Morris Lapidus was born in Russia and immigrated to New York as a child. He recalled that the first time he felt an "emotional surge" about architecture was standing on an elevated platform at Coney Island at dusk and seeing all of the lights go on, and that he never outgrew the delight in that type of showmanship (Giovannini 1999). Lapidus studied at New York University and graduated from the Columbia University School of Architecture in 1927. His original intention

was to become a stage designer, but he began his career in retail design. In his first twenty years of practice Lapidus was responsible for the retail design of over 500 stores (Rothstein 2001).

During the late 1940s, Morris Lapidus began his involvement in hotel design in Miami Beach. He worked as an associate architect on the Sans Souci Hotel, the Nautilus, the Algiers, the Biltmore Terrace, and the diLido before being commissioned to design one of his most prominent works, the Fontainebleau Hotel. Lapidus' work was characterized by drama and showmanship. When explaining the importance of the exterior details, Lapidus described a building as like a cake, "it's the frosting that makes one cake sell and another one just sit on the baker's shelf" (The Southeast Missourian January 10, 1956). His designs were lavish and emotive. Features such as dramatic "stairways to nowhere," long sweeping curves, and innovative forms he named woggles (amoeba-like shapes), cheeseholes (circular cutouts), and beanpoles (thin ornamental metal rods) became common in his designs. He designed every detail within his hotels including the bellhop uniforms. Although the hotel designs are some of his most widely known works, Lapidus' architectural career was varied and included designs for apartment buildings, residences, interiors, the Lincoln Road pedestrian mall, hospitals, commercial buildings, public facilities, and buildings on the University of Miami's campus, in addition to Temple Judea.

By the fall of 1959, Morris Lapidus had designed seventy-five million dollars worth of luxury hotels (The Portsmouth Times September 1959). His practice continued, and in 1963 alone he was reported to have designed sixty-five million dollars of buildings (Miami News February 27, 1964). Lapidus calculated that from the time he went out on his own in 1943 through the time of his retirement in 1984 he earned over fifty million dollars in fees (Rothstein 2001). Over the course of his career Lapidus designed 1,200 buildings including 250 hotels (Boca Raton News January 20, 2001).

Morris Lapidus' designs got mixed reviews and were not immediately met with critical acclaim. The disconnect between the public and architects reactions to Lapidus' work is summarized in a 1959 newspaper article which stated that, "his hostilities often have a stunning impact on the public, sometimes an annoying one on fellow architects" (Ocala Star-Banner September 3, 1959). Frank Lloyd Wright commented that Lapidus' hotel designs, and particularly the Fontainebleau Hotel, looked like an "anthill," and it was not intended as a compliment. Serge Chermayeff, Yale professor and Museum of Modern Art consultant, once said that, "you can like Lapidus' work, if you're blind" (Giovannini 1999), and he was described as "our most controversial architect" in the Miami News (October 6, 1956). Lapidus was aware of the criticism his work received and modest about his designs, even after designing the Fontainebleau Hotel, stating "I doubt if I'll ever design a masterpiece... I don't think I'm a master" (The Southeast Missourian January 10, 1956).

The primary criticism of Lapidus' work was that it included too much ornament, during a period when sparse Modern architecture was in fashion. He was "accused" of designing for the masses, a criticism he fully embraced stating, "let's stop trying to educate the human race. Let's just make them happy" (Ocala Star-Banner September 3, 1959). Lapidus felt that the, "love of adornment fills a basic need in people, a need as basic as food or sex" (Ocala Star-Banner September 3, 1959). When describing the criticism Lapidus faced earlier in his career in New York Magazine in 2001, Joseph Giovannini stated, "that bend and all the other folds and curves and swoops and woggles in his long career eluded a generation of architecture critics. Unable to

see the buildings for the cherubs and chandeliers, they so reviled the architect that his name became an adjective of derision.”

Morris Lapidus described himself as a, “modernist who has reformed” (Miami News October 6, 1956). A 1956 newspaper article stated that he, “is all for the innovations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But he has softened his contemporary designs with lavish interiors representing the cultures of other nations and other ages” (Miami News October 6, 1956). Lapidus described his conversion from strict Modernism as a result of a stubborn client who wanted a fireplace which Lapidus did not feel was necessary within the Modernist concept of function and practicality. After a visit to their home to sit around the fireplace with the family he said, “the hell with what’s functional, modern and scientific. There are certain human emotions involved in living fully that cannot be ignored” (Miami News October 6, 1956).

While Morris Lapidus is most well-known for his hotel designs, his abilities were also recognized by his acceptance in the Guild for Religious Architecture in 1967, following his design of Temple Judea. The Guild included over 400 professional architects, craftsmen, and clergymen “dedicated to the advancement of better design and better function in religious architecture” (Miami News October 7, 1967).

Regardless of how he was regarded by the period’s critics, by the 1960s Lapidus was credited with having changed the face of both Miami and New York (Miami News February 12, 1961). The first exhibit of his work occurred in 1967 at the University of Miami’s Lowe Art Museum: “Forty Years of Art and Architecture.” In 1970, an exhibit of his work, “Morris Lapidus: Architecture of Joy” at the Architectural League’s Gallery in New York City, was billed as exploring ideas of good and bad taste, and accompanied by a series of forums on taste (Village Voice October 15, 1970). After being criticized in the New York Times in 1979 for his “style of calculated insubstantiality,” Lapidus responded that he wasn’t ashamed of his work, and that he saw himself as the father of a new era of architectural glamour (Miami News October 23, 1979). Despite the criticism he received, Lapidus stuck to his design philosophy later in his life stating that, “I do still believe in ornament and strong color, and I *still* hate boxes” (Giovannini 2001).

During the 1980s as Postmodernism came into fashion, Morris Lapidus began to receive more critical praise and acceptance within the architectural community. In the summer of 1980, Lapidus was featured in an exhibit at the University of Art and Industrial Design in Linz, Austria as one of ten architects and designers whose concepts have shaped modern living space. Still, Lapidus was “deeply hurt” by the criticism and controversy his work created (Allen and Rubin 2000). Morris Lapidus closed his practice in 1984, after having “given up trying to explain” his designs and sent “truckloads” of drawings to the incinerators (Schwartz 2000 and Giovannini 1999). After a period of retirement, he began lecturing across the country during the mid-1990s, and got back into architectural practice in partnership with Deborah Desilets.

Morris Lapidus had not thought that he would live to see the day magazines and newspapers would be writing praising his work (Allen and Rubin 2000). To his surprise, during the 1990s and early 2000s, Lapidus was “feted by the architectural profession in ways that he never enjoyed at the peak of his career” (Allen and Rubin 2000). In response to the renewed interest in his work during the 1990s, Lapidus stated that, “the attention I’m getting, it’s very pleasant, as if people never knew me” (Giovannini 1999). In 1995, Lapidus was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award from New York University. The merits and influence of Lapidus’ work

were further acknowledged recently in two publications, *Morris Lapidus: Architect of the American Dream* (1992) and *Morris Lapidus: The Architecture of Joy* (2010). On December 15, 2000, just before his death on January 18, 2001, Morris Lapidus was vindicated with the acceptance of an American Original Award in the first National Design Awards Gala at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum. His son described the receipt of the award after a career which faced so much critical derision, as the “most important thing in his life” (Giovannini 2001).

### **OWNERSHIP HISTORY**

According to the real estate records on file with the City of Coral Gables Historical Resources Department, the property was in private ownership and was sold to the City of Coral Gables during the 1940s. The University of Miami purchased the land on July 9, 1964, and sold it to Temple Judea on October 29, 1964. The property has been in singular ownership by Temple Judea since its purchase in 1964.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Permitted for construction in 1965, the property at 5500 Granada Boulevard (legally described as Block 135, Coral Gables Riviera Section, Including alley shown therein, according to the Plat thereof, recorded in Plat Book 28, Page 29, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida) is significant to the City of Coral Gables’ history based on the following criteria found in the Coral Gables Zoning Code, Article 3, Section 3-1103:

- a. Historic, cultural significance:
  - 5. Is associated in a significant way with a past or continuing institution, which has contributed, substantially to the life of the City
- b. Architectural significance:
  - 1. Portrays the environment in an era of history characterized by one (1) or more distinctive architectural styles
  - 2. Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction
- e. Criteria considerations: Ordinarily cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past fifty (50) years shall not be considered eligible for the Coral Gables Register of Historic Places. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories.
  - 6. A property achieving significance within the past fifty (50) years if it is of exceptional importance.

**Staff finds the following:**

The property located at 5500 Granada Boulevard is significant to the City of Coral Gables history based on:

**HISTORICAL, CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

**ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

**Therefore Staff recommends the following:**

A motion to **APPROVE** the Local Historic Designation of the property at **5500 Granada Boulevard** (legally described as Block 135, Coral Gables Riviera Section, Including alley shown therein, according to the Plat thereof, recorded in Plat Book 28, Page 29, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida) based on its architectural significance.

Respectfully submitted,



Dona M. Spain  
Historic Preservation Officer

Report written by Emily Sheckels Ahouse

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Zoning Map from the City of Coral Gables Planning Department.

Location Map



## REVIEW GUIDE

**Definition:** The Review Guide lists some of the more prominent features, which contribute to the overall character of a structure and/or district. It is not intended to be all-inclusive, as photographic documentation fully illustrates the present physical character of the property.

**Use:** The Review Guide may be used to address the impact of new construction, additions/modifications/alterations and/or renovations which may become the subject of some future Certificate of Appropriateness consideration....and

The Review Guide by describing EXISTING physical characteristics may be used to determine whether or not elements which create the character of the structure and/or district is present and/or whether or not later additions or alterations have so changed that character so as to cause the property (ies) to become ineligible for listing.

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Property Address: 5500 Granada Boulevard

Date of Construction Permit: 1965

### Photograph Year 2013



**East Portion, North Elevation**



**Northeast Corner**



**East Portion, North Elevation**



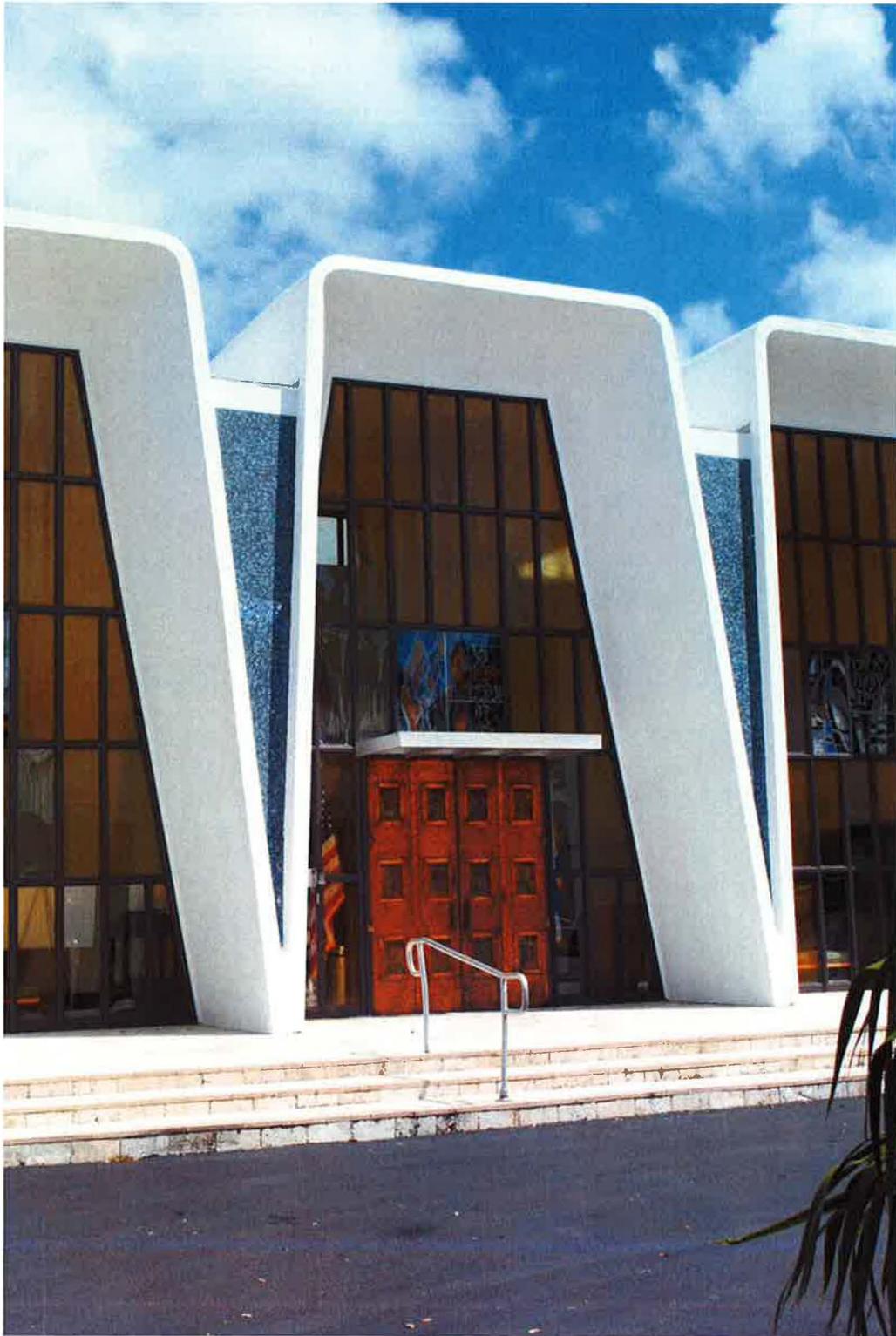
**East Portion, North Elevation**



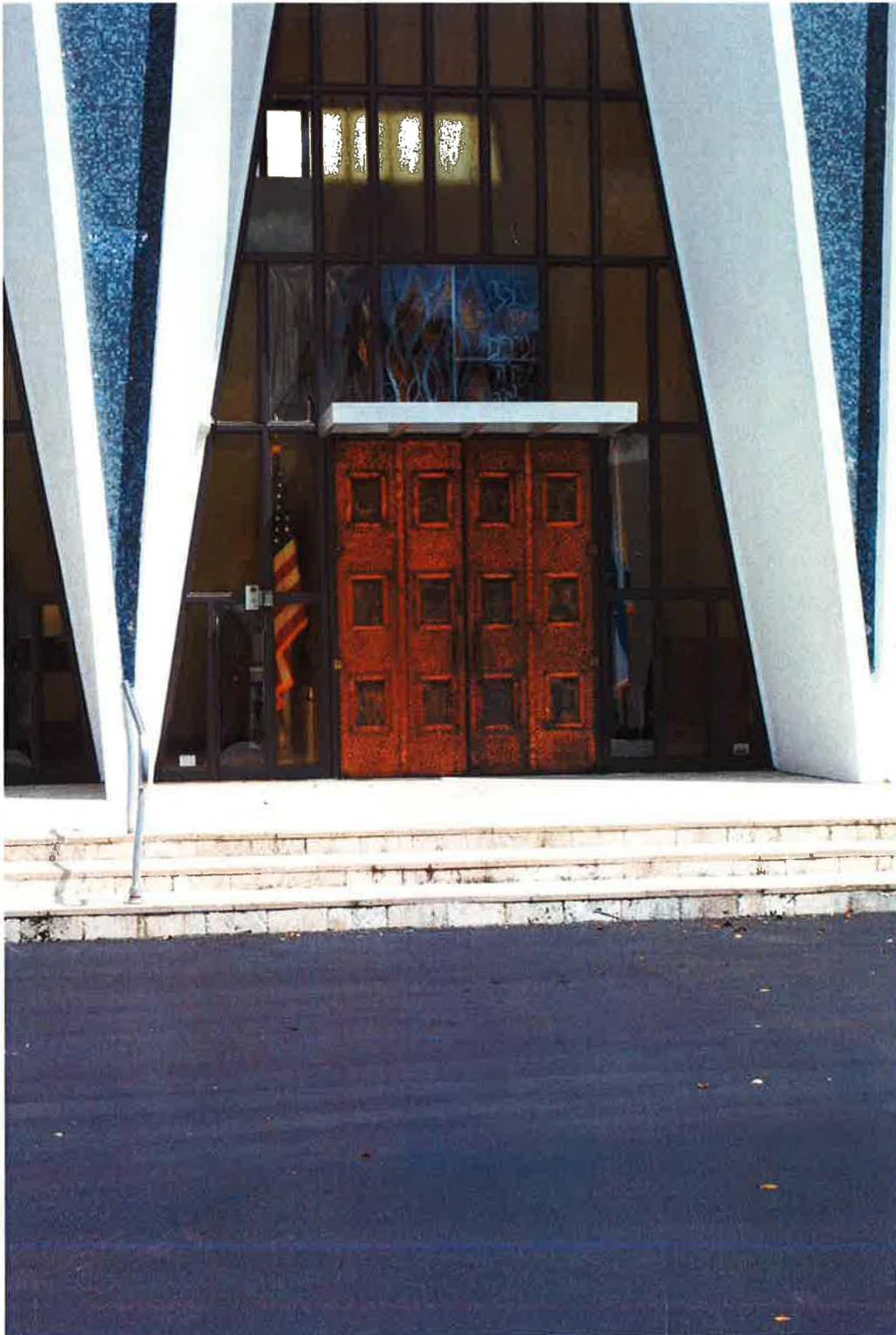
**Main Entrance, East Portion, North Elevation**



**Easternmost Arch of Triple Arch Main Entrance, East Portion, North Elevation**



**Central Arch of Triple Arch Main Entrance, East Portion, North Elevation**



**Main Entrance Detail, East Portion, North Elevation**



**Westernmost Arch of Triple Arch Main Entrance, East Portion, North Elevation**



**Mosaic Tile Detailing at Main Entrance, East Portion, North Elevation**



**Portion of Building to the West of the Temple's Main Entrance, North Elevation**



**Typical Building Detailing, East Portion, North Elevation**



**Central Portion, North Elevation**



**Doors at Central Portion, North Elevation**



**West Portion, North Elevation**



**West Portion, North Elevation**



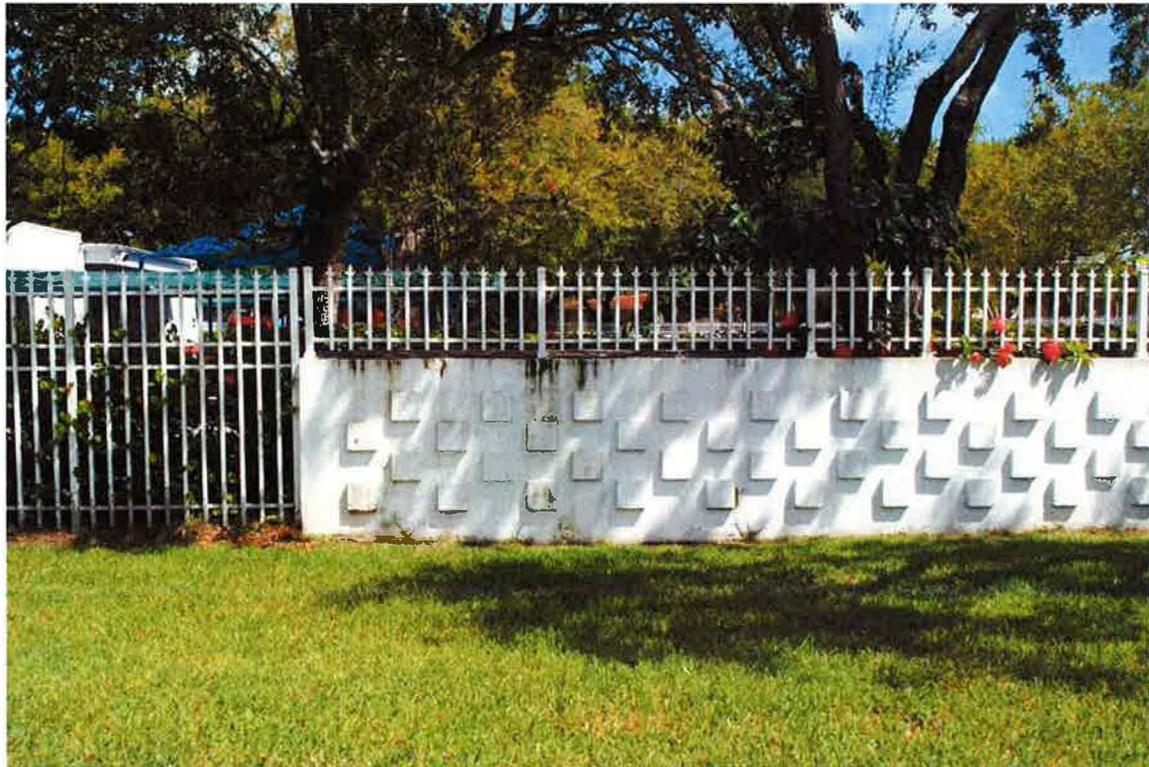
**West Portion, North Elevation**



**Typical Windows and Roof Overhang Detail, North Elevation**



**North Portion of Fence Enclosing Playground and Parking Lot, West End of Building**



**Fence Detail, West End, North Elevation**



**Walled and Gated Parking Lot and Playground, West End of Building**



**West Elevation and Wall**



**West Elevation and Wall**



**South Portion of Fence Enclosing Playground and Parking Lot, West End of Building**



**West Portion, South Elevation**



**West Portion, South Elevation (School)**



**Typical Windows, West Portion, South Elevation**



**West Portion, South Elevation**



**Central Portion, South Elevation**



**Central Portion, South Elevation**



**Roof Detail, South Elevation**



**East Portion, South Elevation**



**East Portion, South Elevation**



**Window Detail, East Portion, South Elevation**



**East Elevation and Meditation Garden**



**East Elevation and Meditation Garden**



**East Elevation and Meditation Garden**



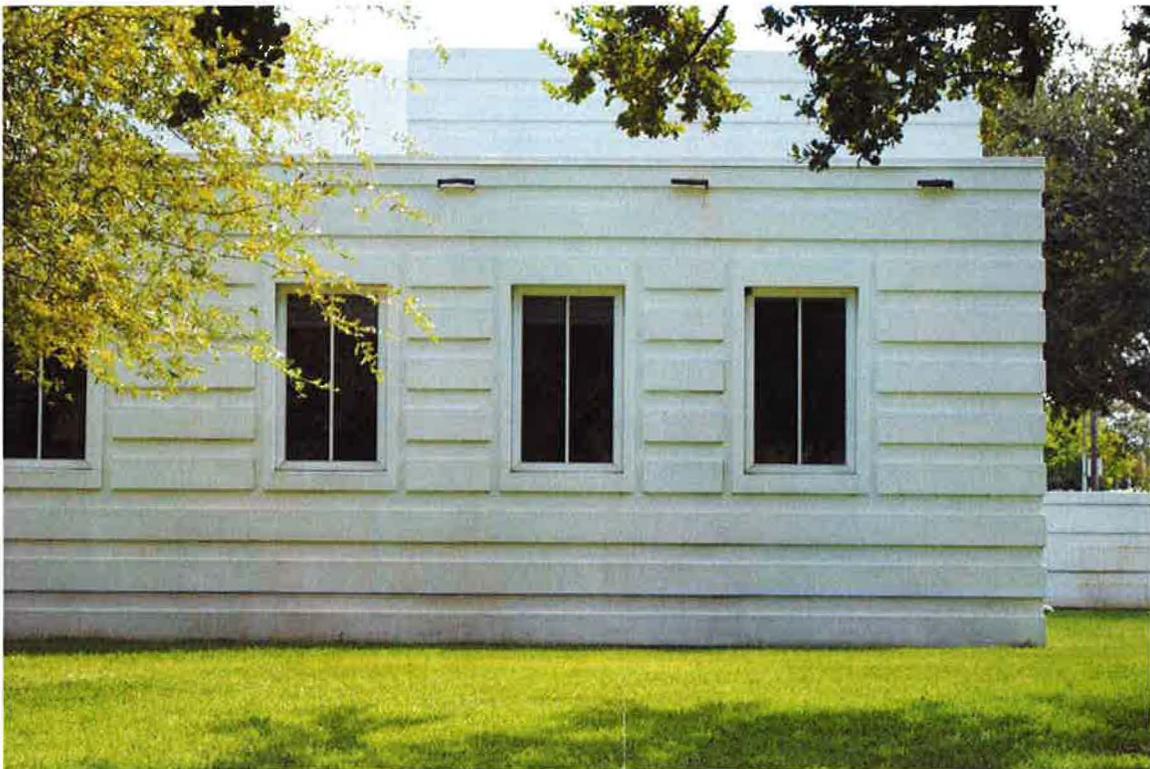
**East Elevation and Meditation Garden**



**East Elevation, Northeast Corner of Building (2004 Addition)**



**Northeast Corner of Building (2004 Addition)**



**Typical Windows in 2004 Addition/Alteration, East Elevation**



**Rock Signage at Northeast Portion of Property**



**Typical Gunite Finish on Portions of Temple Judea**



**Temple Courtyard, facing south**



**View of 1994 Social Hall and Pre-Function Room, West Elevation from within the Temple Courtyard**



**South Elevation of North Breezeway Connecting Temple and School  
(1993 Addition Visible to the North of the Breezeway)**



**South Elevation of North Breezeway Connecting Temple and School  
(1993 Addition Visible to the North of the Breezeway)**



**Typical Planter within Breezeways Flanking Temple Courtyard**



**Typical Planter within Breezeways Flanking Temple Courtyard**



**View within North Breezeway at Temple Courtyard**



**Mosaic Tile Detail within Temple Courtyard**



**North Elevation of 1967 Library Addition by Morris Lapidus,  
View from within Temple Courtyard**



**Typical Ceiling Arch within Breezeways Flanking the Temple Courtyard**



**Detail of Arch Supports within Breezeways Flanking the Temple Courtyard**



**South Breezeway at Temple Courtyard**



**School Courtyard, facing southwest**



**School Courtyard, facing northwest**



**Typical Planter within School Courtyard**



**Typical Exposed T-Beam Ceiling Detail within Walkways Surrounding School Courtyard**



**Ceiling and Covered Walkway Detail at School Courtyard**



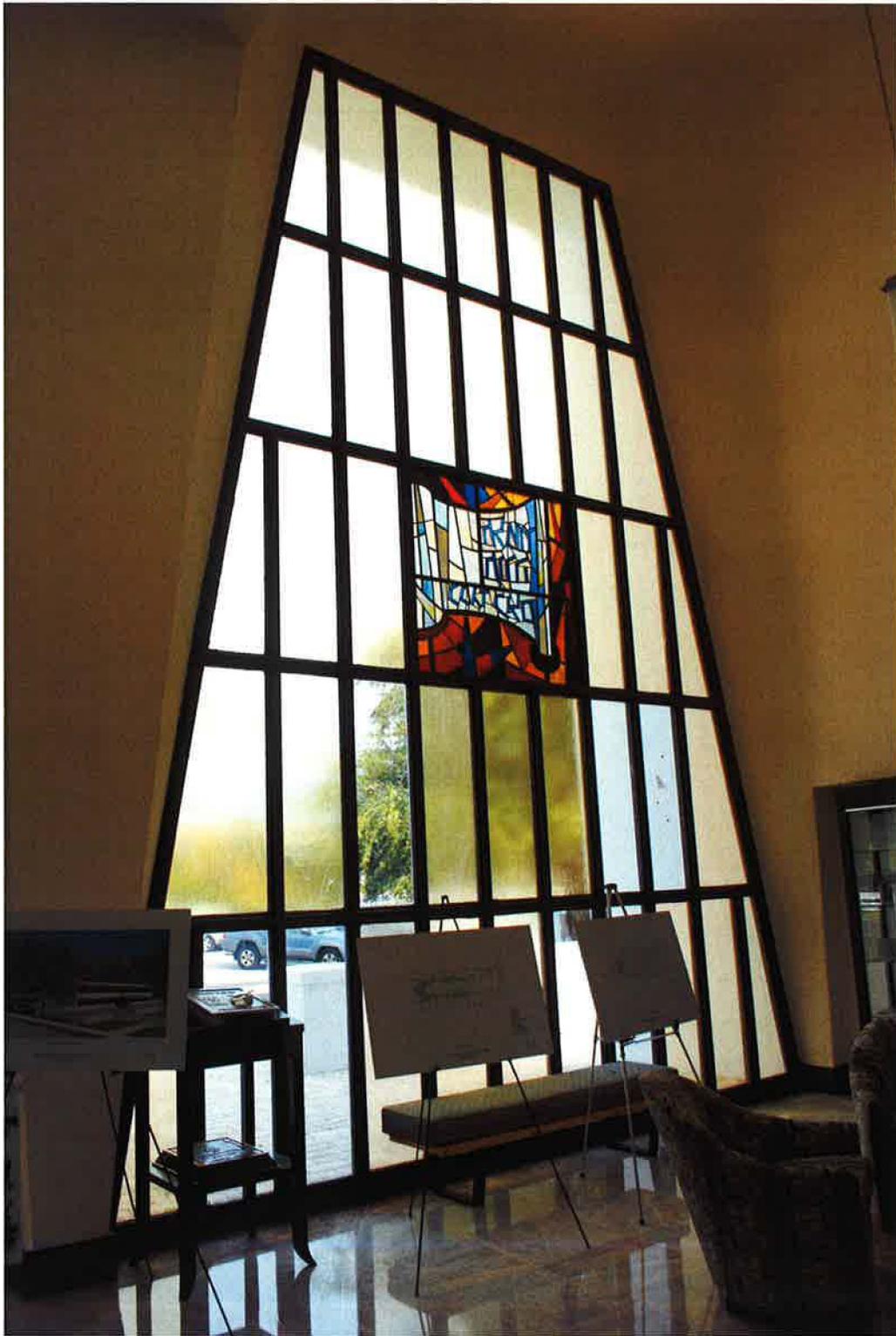
**Altar/Bema at the East End of the Temple**



**Ceiling and Wall Detail within the Altar/Bema at the East End of the Temple**



**Wall Detail within the Altar/Bema at the East End of the Temple**



**Interior View of Arch Openings on the North (Main) Temple Elevation (Easternmost Arch)**