

COLLINS CANAL HISTORIC STRUCTURE



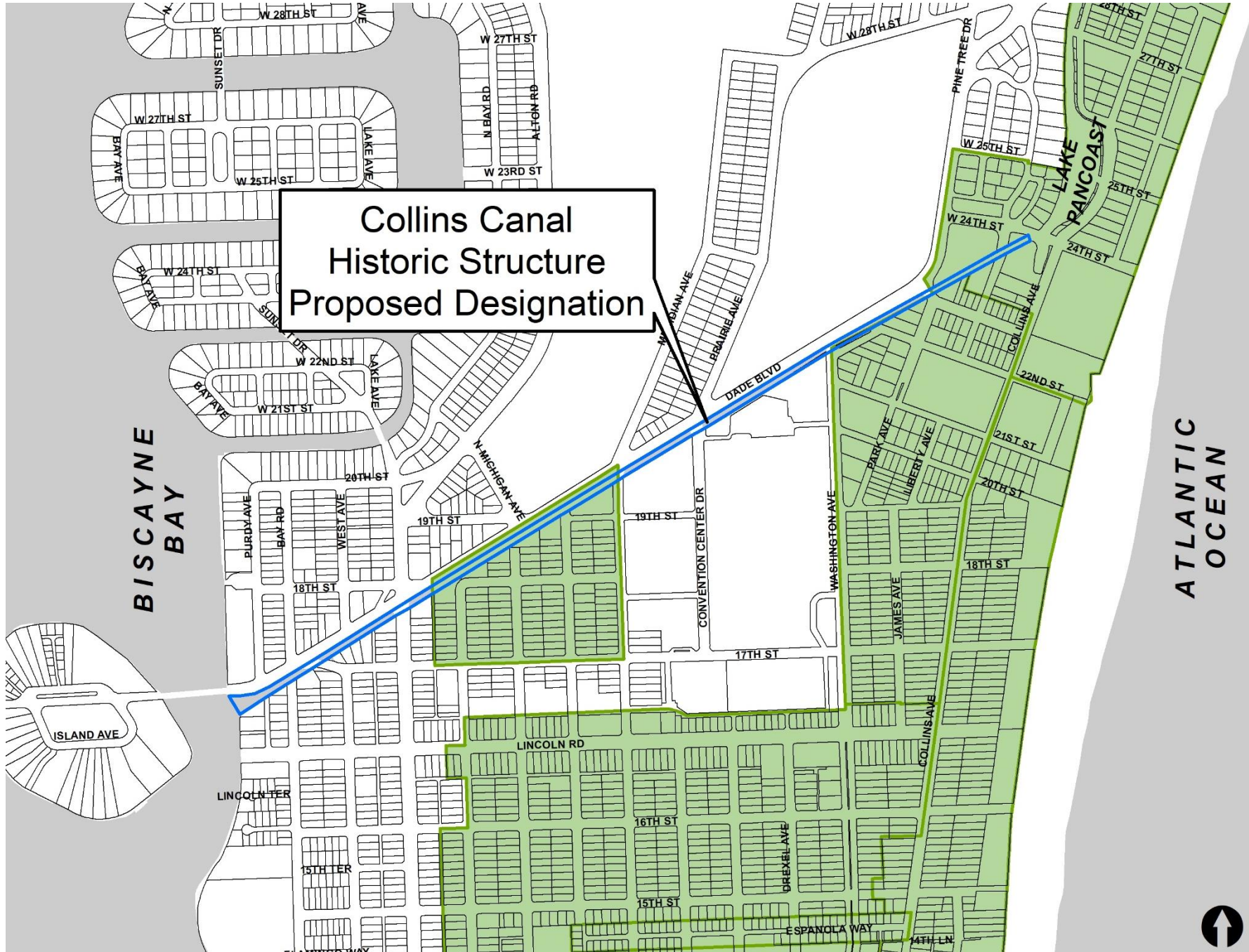
View of palms on Collins Canal, 1931

CITY OF MIAMI BEACH PLANNING DEPARTMENT
June 13, 2023

COLLINS CANAL HISTORIC STRUCTURE

PROPOSED BOUNDARIES

The boundaries of the proposed historic structure include that portion of Collins Canal from Biscayne Bay on the west to Lake Pancoast on the east (excluding seawalls or similar structures and bridges).



COLLINS CANAL HISTORIC STRUCTURE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Miami Beach was initially developed in 1883 as part of a coastal coconut plantation that was to be planted from Key Biscayne to Jupiter.

By 1886, over 300,000 coconuts were planted, and it was at this point John Collins invested \$5,000 in the project; however, shortly after the plantation failed.

In 1896, Collins traveled to Miami to investigate the failed project. He eventually acquired all of the property from today's 14th to 67th Streets.

In 1907, Collins, a horticulturalist, established an avocado farm west of Indian Creek between present day 30th and 46th Streets.



1883 Photograph of workers clearing the land for planting coconut trees

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The farm was a success producing avocados, mangoes and grapefruit. However, transporting the fruit to the mainland was a tedious process. The produce was brought overland to the western edge of the island where it was then barged up a seven-mile loop around the shallows of Biscayne Bay to Miami.



Ca. 1908 Photograph of the Collins Farm

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1911, to move crops more easily to market, Collins decided to build a canal. The canal was cut from a grass-covered pond on the southern edge of Lake Pancoast, southwest to Biscayne Bay.



1917 Aerial photograph of Miami Beach and the Collins Canal

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The completion of the Canal not only afforded transportation of Collins' agricultural produce, but also allowed landfill and building materials to be brought by barge into the center of the island.



1913 Photograph of the Collins Canal at Meridian Avenue

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As the canal was nearing completion in 1912, Collins began construction of a 2.5-mile-long wooden bridge across Biscayne Bay from the mainland to Belle Isle, terminating at the outlet of the Collins Canal.

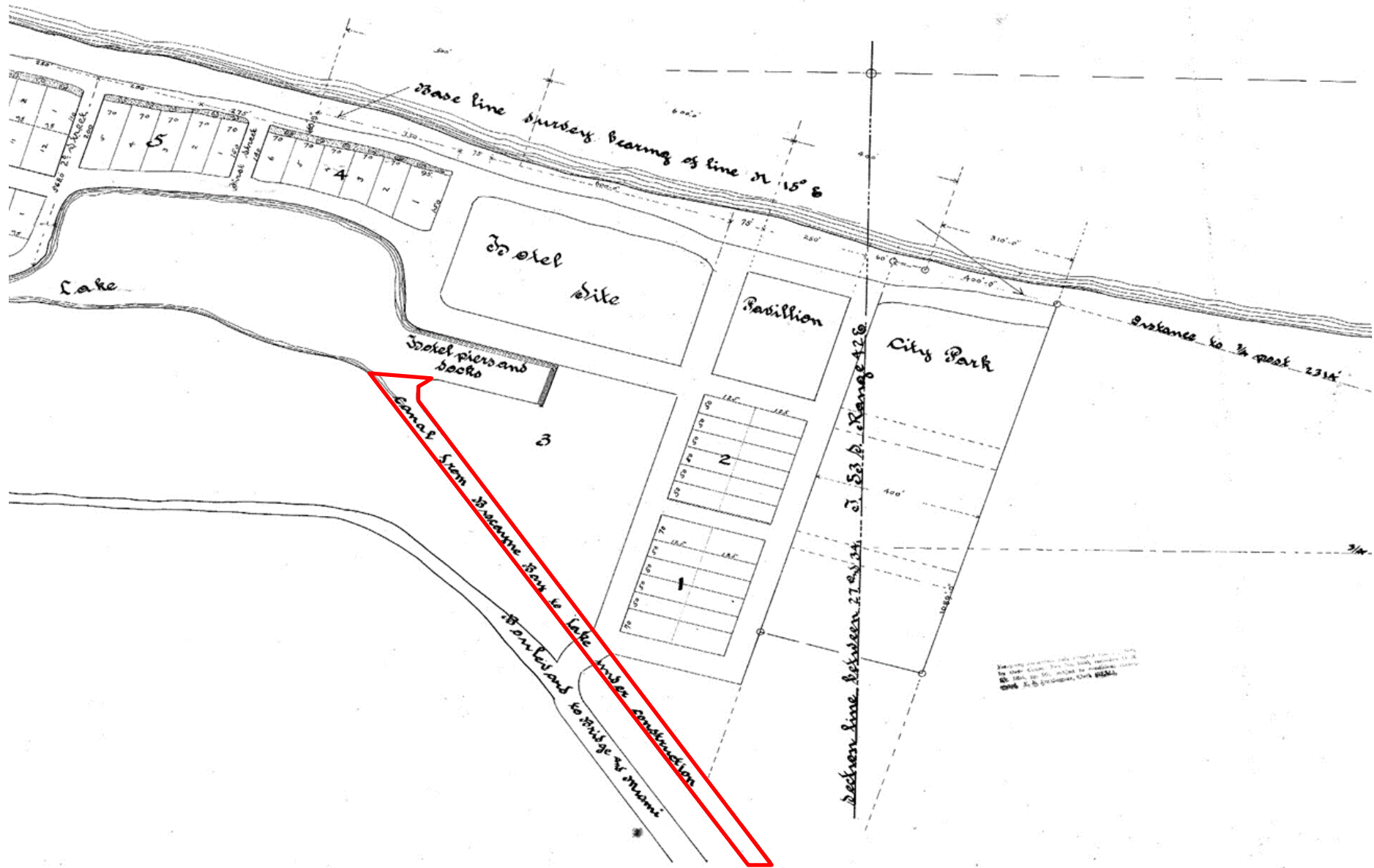


1920 Photograph of the Collins Canal, Collins Bridge and Belle Isle

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The bridge was finished in 1913 with the financial aid of Carl Fisher in exchange for 200 acres of land. The fill from Collins Canal was used to create Dade Boulevard making the last connection from the mainland to Collins' newly plated subdivision along the ocean.



1912 Plat of the Miami Beach Improvement Company Subdivision, Sheet 1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND



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Today, the approximately 1.2-mile-long canal is primarily used for recreation and is crossed by 7 vehicular bridges and 2 pedestrian bridges. The Collins Canal, completed in 1912, survives as the oldest manmade structure in Miami Beach and serves as a reminder of the extraordinary history of the City.



Collins Canal at Washington Avenue (looking west)

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HISTORIC DESIGNATION CRITERIA

The proposed Collins Canal Historic Structure is eligible for historic designation as it complies with the following criteria as specified in Section 2.13.9(b) of the Land Development Regulations:

1. **Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the history of the city, the county, state or nation.**

The Collins Canal, completed in 1912, is the oldest surviving manmade structure in the City of Miami Beach and is associated with the initial development period of City as agricultural farmland.

2. **Association with the lives of persons significant in the city's past history.**

The construction of the Collins Canal was part of John Collins' agricultural project that began over a century ago. The Collins Canal, Collins Avenue, Collins Park and the John S. Collins Memorial Library (now the Bass Museum of Art) were all named for this visionary Miami Beach pioneer.

7. **Be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.**

A portion of the Collins Canal is located within the Collins Waterfront Architectural District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places on November 15, 2011.



John Stiles Collins