

Presentation regarding
TOWER APARTMENTS
A 1925 Mediterranean Revival Building
Designed by Architect Francis Luis Abreu
Historic Designation Report
Fort Lauderdale City Commission Meeting
November 17, 2015

PREPARED BY: MSSD CONSULTING INC.

**Historic Designation Application
Towers Apartments/
Towers Retirement Home
824 SE 2 Street
Fort Lauderdale, Florida**



Applicant: Broward Trust for Historic Preservation, Inc.

Tower Apartments

824 SE Second Street

Constructed in 1925

Located in Beverly Heights Subdivision

Designed by Francis Luis Abreu

Constructed for Ida A. Erkins, and her son Albert W. Erkins

Consisted of 12 large apartments, 14 smaller apartments (efficiencies) and 9 hotel rooms

Rented in 1925-1927 for three month seasonal rate of \$2,700 for the large apartments and \$1,800 for the small apartment

Annex building contained 3 apartments and a manager's apartment



Tower Apartments

824 SE Second Street

Mediterranean Revival Architecture

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS

Flat roof, hip roofs, gable roofs, or a combination

Parapets

Barrel tile

Arched openings

Stucco facades

Casement or double hung windows

Decorative ceramic tile

TOWER APARTMENTS

Combination with conical roofs above towers

Parapets covered in barrel tile

Barrel tile on gable, hip (pent), conical and parapet

Arched openings into entrance porch-originally

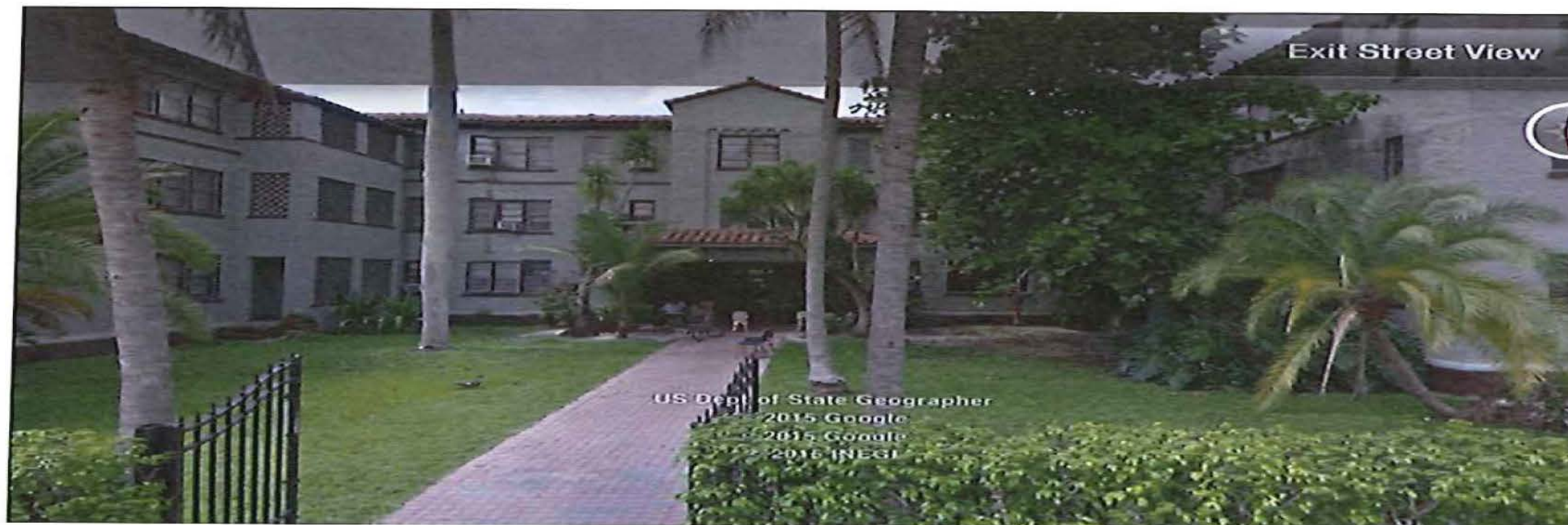
Smooth stucco exterior façade

Double hung (6/6) wood frame windows-originally

No exterior tile detected; scalloped design at entrance and various window recesses



SE Elevation/Rear of 824 SE 2nd Street



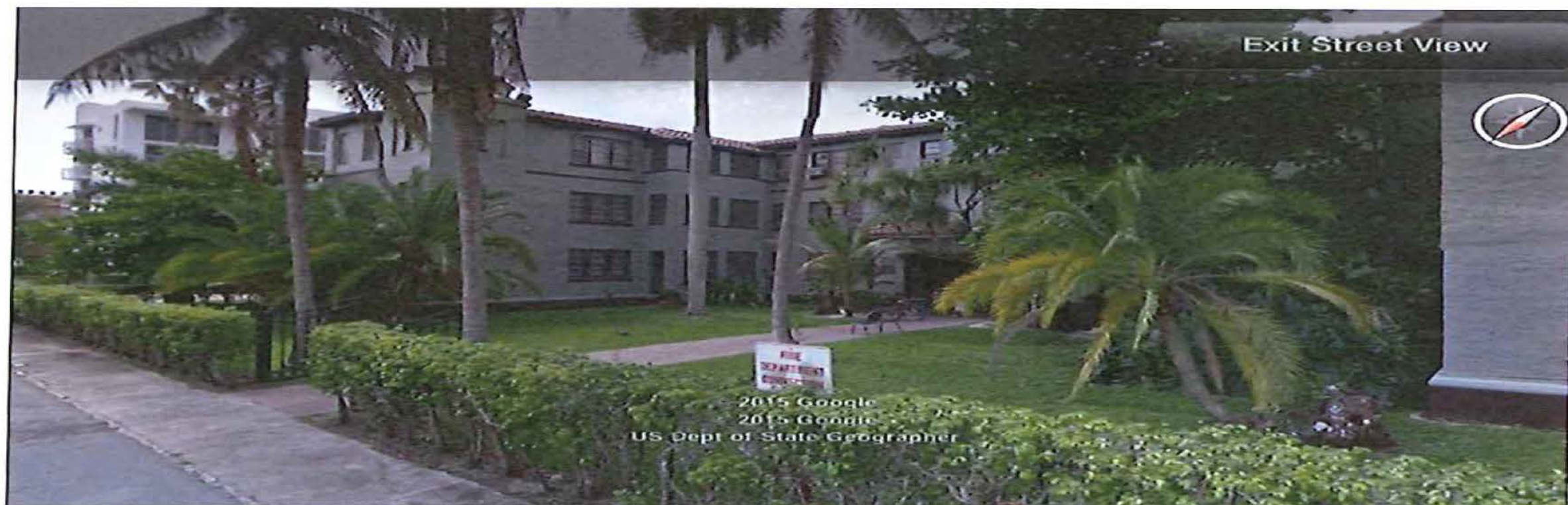
North Elevation/Front Façade of 824 SE 2nd Street



NW Elevation of 824 SE 2nd Street



SE Elevation/Rear of 824 SE 2nd Street



NW Elevation/ Front of 824 SE 2nd Street



East Elevation/ Side of 824 SE 2nd Street

Tower Apartments

824 SE Second Street

ULDR Sec. 47-24.11.B.6. applicable criterion

Criteria A- Value as a significant reminder of the cultural heritage of the city, state or nation

Criteria C- Identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the city, state or nation

Criteria D- Identification as the work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual work has influenced the development of the city, state or nation

Criteria E- Value as a building recognized for the quality of its architecture, and sufficient elements showing its architectural significance

Criteria F- Distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, method of construction or use of indigenous material

Tower Apartments

824 SE Second Street

Criteria A- Value as a significant reminder of the cultural heritage of the city, state or nation

From its onset the City of Fort Lauderdale attracted members of high society as seasonal visitors who wanted to escape the harsh winter weather in a more tropical environment

Seasonal visitors are recognized as a part of the cultural heritage of Fort Lauderdale

Tower Apartments was built to attract this echelon of seasonal tourists

The fact that there were hotel rooms in addition to apartments as part of the original floor plan attests to this as the primary purpose of this building

Rental rates were documented in 1925-1927 at \$2,700 for the large apartments and \$1,800 for the small apartments for a three month seasonal period

Tower Apartments

824 SE Second Street

Criteria C- Identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the city, state or nation

Albert W. Erkins (1896-1985) made significant contributions to the development of the City of Fort Lauderdale

Accomplishments included:

- Sunset Theater (1922) 800-seat venue adjacent to the Sweet Building at Las Olas Blvd. and Andrews Ave. with partner M. A. Hottt, Mayor of Fort Lauderdale from 1934-1935
- Tower Apartment (1925) the biggest apartment building in Fort Lauderdale until after World War II
- Sunset Investment Company (1923)
- Beautification Committee (after 1926 hurricane)
- Lauderdale Apartment Association (1930)
- Community Chest (1929) later became the United Way
- Fogg Field Airport named for his friend and aviation pioneer Merle Fogg (1898-1928)
- Fort Lauderdale Historical Society, a founding member

Mr. Erkins in 1975 penned the book My Early in Days Florida 1905 with August Burghard (1901-1987)



Tower Apartments

824 SE Second Street

Criteria D- Identification as the work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual work has influenced the development of the city, state or nation

Francis Luis Abreu (1896-1969)

Graduated from Cornell School of Architecture in 1921 and moved to his father's home in Colee Hammock on the New River in Ft. Lauderdale

Became known as a “society” architect as many of his commissions were from friends or social connections

Ida A. Erkins and Albert W. Erkins, her son, were two such clients

Mrs. Erkins purchased the property identified as Beverly Heights 1-30B Lots 1-4 Block 8 and with her sons assistance engaged Francis Luis Abreu to design an apartment building for this site

Mrs. Erkins also hired Mr. Abreu to design her Spanish Eclectic riverfront estate known as Casa Sonriendo on 600 feet of filled land adjacent to the New River

Tower Apartments

824 SE Second Street

Criteria D continued- Identification as the work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual work has influenced the development of the city, state or nation

Some of his most significant buildings included:

Riverside Hotel (1936)

Himmarshee Court Apartments (1925)

St. Anthony Catholic School (1926) listed on the National Register in 1997

Sailboat Bend Fire Station No. 3 (1927) decommissioned in 2003 (now Fort Lauderdale Fire and Safety Museum)

Casino Swimming Pool (1928) Fort Lauderdale Beach

Dania Beach Hotel ((1925)

Needham House (1925)

Fort Lauderdale Country Club (1926)

Old Post Office-330 SW 2 Street (1933)

David E. Oliver House (c.1925)

Gypsy Grave House 1115 N. Rio Vista Blvd.

Juan Jacinto Jova House 3049 Alhambra St. (Casablanca Café)

Tower Apartments-subject property



RIO VISTA

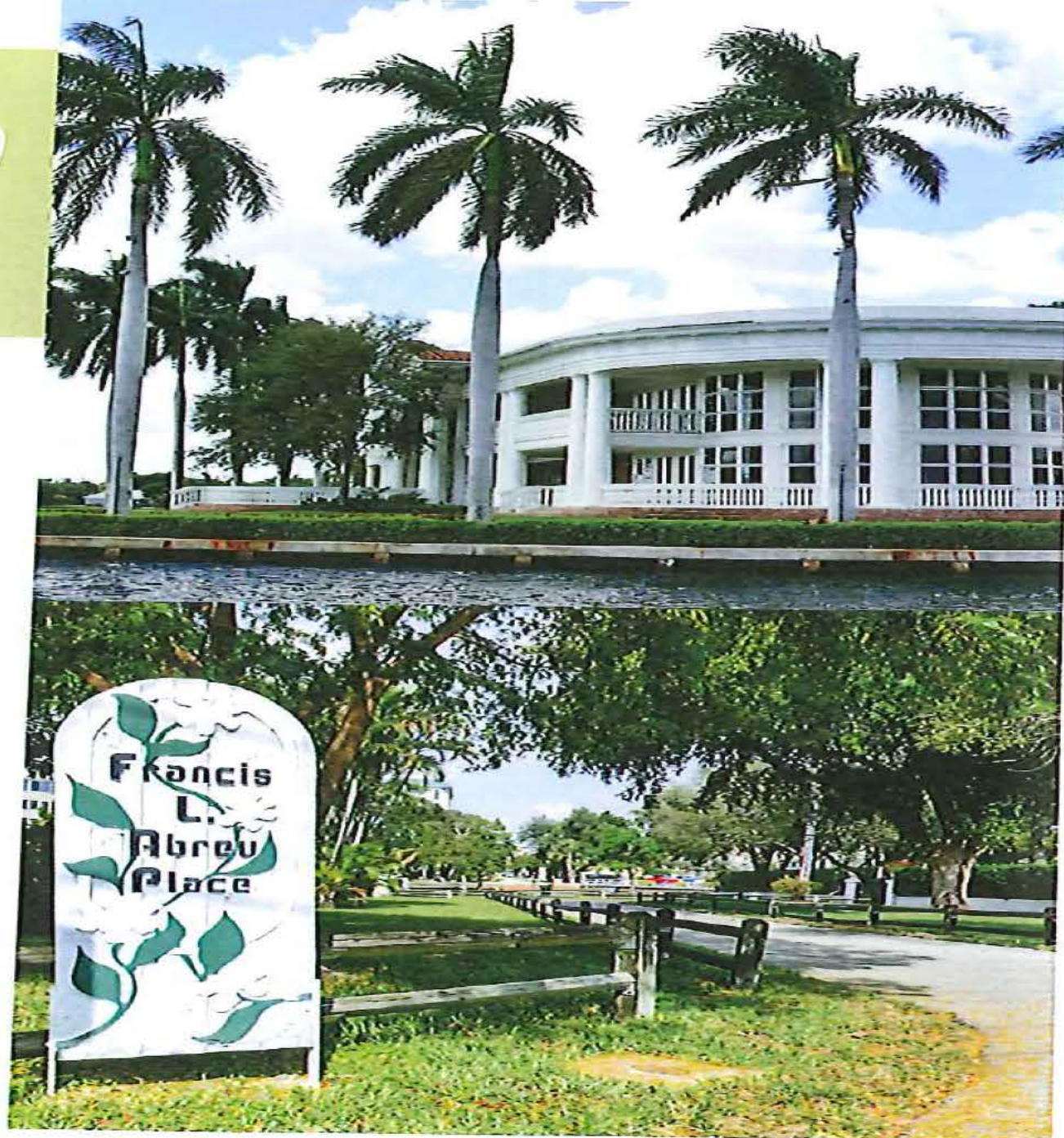
For many, Fort Lauderdale is a winter home, a stop along the way to another place. Residents in Rio Vista, though, are pretty much year rounders. It's an established neighborhood with established residents.

Warren Sturman had just married when he moved to the area almost 25 years ago. He wanted to start a family and figured that Rio Vista was ideal.

The neighborhood dates back to Stranahan's time. Rio Vista back then was sprinkled with a handful of homes. "They didn't have a bridge or tunnel and the only way to cross the river was the ferry that Stranahan had over there. So that goes back to the 1800s. In the early 1920s, a lot of the older homes were built," Sturman says.

As Fort Lauderdale transitioned from an agricultural community to a resort town, the Rio Vista area garnered attention and activity. Even after a 1926 hurricane devastated the area, WWII veterans settled in the reconstructed community years later.

Francis Abreu – a park in Rio Vista bears his name – was a local architect who designed a lot of the homes built in the 1920s. On South Ponce de Leon Dr., a few of the older homes are still standing, and tend to be smaller. One exception sits near Francis Abreu park. "Rumor has it that Al Capone was there and Harry Truman stayed over there



distance of the house from the river, the house is still standing.

Tower Apartments

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Criteria E- Value as a building recognized for the quality of its architecture, and sufficient elements showing its architectural significance

The ninety year old Tower Apartments is a excellent example of Mediterranean Revival style

Architect Francis Luis Abreu is recognized as having designed buildings of exceptional quality

The Tower Apartments a three-story building demonstrates a quality of architecture that other architects tried to replicate

The building contains features of Mediterranean Revival style still in existence unless otherwise noted:

- A combination of flat, pent, gable and conical roofs
- A parapet
- Barrel tile on pent, gable and conical roofs and parapet
- Stucco exterior facades
- Double hung wood frame sash windows (6/6) which have been replaced
- Two polygonal corner towers with conical roofs
- Decorative blind arch recessed panels
- Arched openings at main entrance porch
- Square columns
- Central courtyard

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Criteria F- Distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, method of construction or use of indigenous material

The Tower Apartments is an excellent example of a 1920s Mediterranean Revival building constructed during the boom time period of Fort Lauderdale's early development.

Mediterranean Revival architecture gained popularity in the 1920s as a result of Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue and the Panama-California Exposition held in Balboa Park, San Diego in 1915. This style of architecture flourished in California, the southwestern and southern United States and Hawaii.

The opportunity to study and celebrate the ninety year old Towers Apartments that is part of the fabric of early Fort Lauderdale offers insight into the 1920s boom time period of history. This was the time of Model Ts, Prohibition, rumrunners, bootleggers, speakeasies, flappers, the Charleston and illicit casinos. As the largest tourist apartment building at the time, if only these walls could talk, the stories that would be told..

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Tower Apartments 824 SE Second Street Recommendation

We respectfully request that the Fort Lauderdale City Commission uphold the unanimous recommendation of the Historic Preservation Board and designate the Tower Apartments as an historic landmark based on the ULDR Sec. 47-24.11.B.6. Criteria A, C, D, E and F.