

# CASTRO CONVERTIBLES SHOWROOM

2860 N. Federal Highway

## HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



**CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE**  
City of Fort Lauderdale  
Historic Preservation Board  
100 N. Andrews Avenue  
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33301

REPORT OF THE CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE  
TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD AND THE CITY COMMISSION  
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF THE PROPERTY NAMED

CASTRO CONVERTIBLES

LOCATED AT

2860 N. FEDERAL HIGHWAY

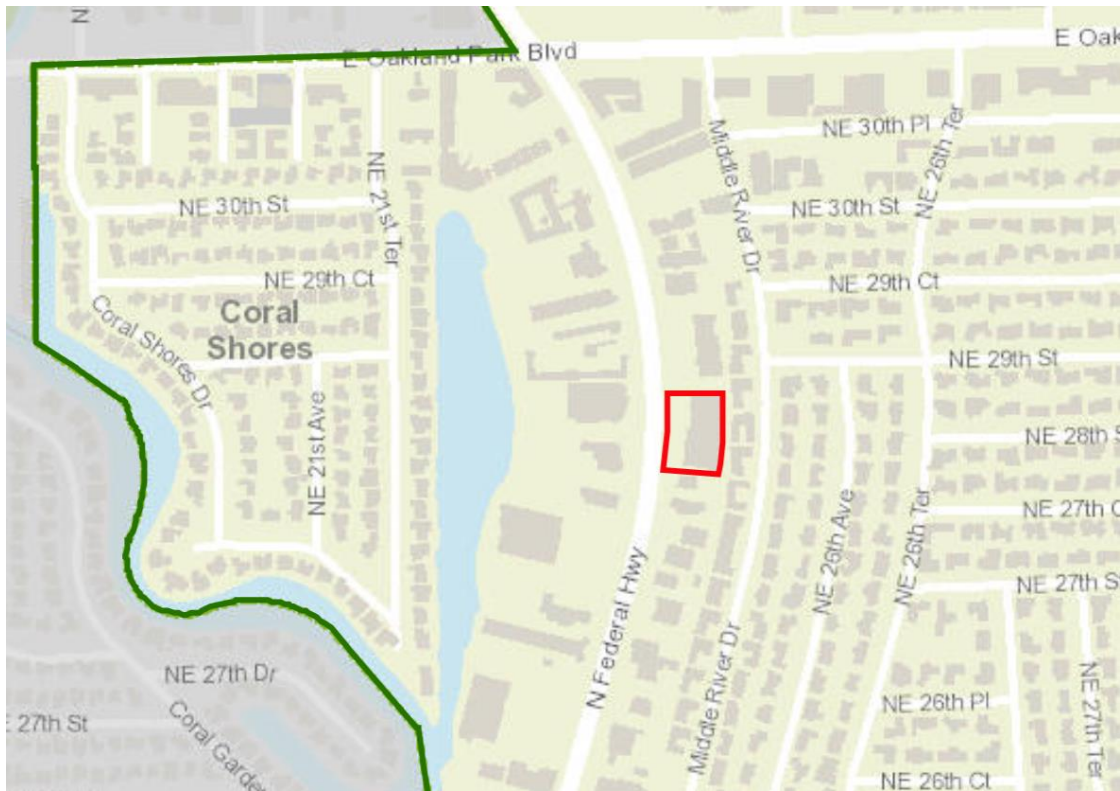
AS A HISTORIC LANDMARK

Prepared By: Trisha Logan and Ellen J. Uguccioni

Passed and Adopted On:

Resolution Number:

**LOCATION MAPS**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. General Information
- II. Statement of Significance
- III. Historic Context
- IV. Architectural Description
- V. Application of Criteria
- VI. Planning Context
- VII. Bibliography
- VIII. Photographs

## I. General Information

<u>Historic Name:</u>	Castro Convertibles Showroom
<u>Current Name:</u>	Ferguson Plumbing: Bath, Kitchen & Lighting Gallery
<u>Date of Construction:</u>	1958; Addition 1959
<u>Location:</u>	2860 N. Federal Highway
<u>Original Owner:</u>	Castro Realty Corporation
<u>Present Owner:</u>	June 26 Properties LLC
<u>Present Use:</u>	Commercial
<u>Zoning:</u>	B-1 – Boulevard Business
<u>Folio Number(s):</u>	494225044620
<u>Legal Description:</u>	CORAL RIDGE GALT ADD NO 1 31-37 B POR LOT 3,4 BLK 61 DES AS BEG NE COR LOT 4,BLK 61 SLY 218.52,W 185,NLY 250,E 185,SLY 54.63 TO POB AS DESC IN OR 45071/1448
<u>Setting:</u>	Castro Convertibles is located on the east side of North Federal Highway between Sunrise Boulevard and Oakland Park Boulevard. This area of North Federal Highway contains a variety of commercial uses including retail, restaurant, and hotel. Most of the buildings within the immediate area are small in scale and range from one to two stories. The rear of this building abuts the residential neighborhood of Coral Ridge.
<u>Integrity:</u>	The showroom maintains a high level of integrity even after some additions and alterations. The basic configuration remains the same, expressing the <i>tour-de-force</i> entrance section designed by Charles McKirahan and the rectangular showroom extension that is set back and perpendicular to the entrance. In 1959 (just a year after its original construction,) the firm of Rude, Hosteller and Taylor extended the rectangular showroom into a considerably larger space but maintained the same lines as the original to be virtually indistinguishable. The angled windows of the original showroom were replaced with standard vertical types in 2007, but the most critical character-defining features remain intact.
<u>Period of Significance:</u>	The period of significance extends from construction of the building in 1958 until its sale in 2007, after Bernard Castro had passed and the decision to sell was made by heir, Bernadette Castro. The building remains a highly visible, prominent example of Mid-Century Modern design.

## II. Statement of Significance

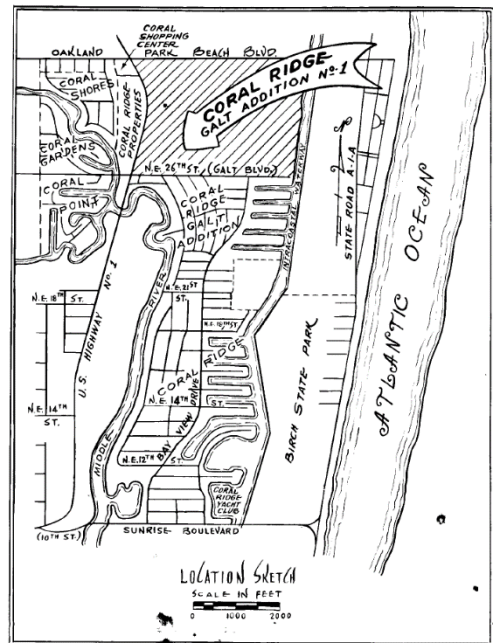
The Castro Convertible Showroom in Fort Lauderdale is significant for both its Mid-Century Modern architectural design by Fort Lauderdale master architect Charles McKirahan and for its association with Bernard Castro, an Italian immigrant who founded the furniture chain “Castro Convertibles” in 1931 beginning with a store in Manhattan. The relationship between noted architect McKirahan, and businessman and artisan Castro reflects the flamboyance and innovation they both shared and appreciated in each other. The high-end product Castro manufactured earned its cachet as a highly desirable and equally fashionable living room focal point. Beginning in the early 1950s Castro and his family in South Florida with a home in Fort Lauderdale (2300 N. Atlantic Boulevard--also designed by McKirahan,) and enjoyed the tropical lifestyle which included a yacht outfitted with Castro’s own furnishings. Displaying his memorable marketing style, Bernard Castro opened the Fort Lauderdale store with great fanfare, and catering to his local clientele, built a replica of a yacht to draw attention to his unique products.

## III. Historic Context

During the period immediately following World War II, South Florida experienced its most extensive “Boom Time” since its actual realization in the early 1920s. Not only had the State of Florida become militarily important throughout that war, (as scores of troops were trained, fed, housed, and medically treated while a number of strategically important bases were also built) but significantly, many of those same troops returned after the war to make the state their permanent home. During the period from 1950-1970, Florida’s population grew by over four million people, almost four times as fast as its growth from 1930-1950.<sup>1</sup> The suburbs quickly subsumed the downtown core.

Construction of innumerable gas stations, drive-in restaurants, drive-in movies, strip malls, motels, and the growth of suburbia are all evidence of a pervasive car-culture—made possible by the economic windfall after the war, allowing for disposable income to create an upward-reaching American middle class. In Broward County growth was explosive. The cost for formerly vacant land was at an all-time premium, and the county pushed westward with the newly created cities of Plantation and Tamarac. Between 1945 and 1955, twenty-two thousand and fifty new homes were constructed.<sup>2</sup>

Amidst this frenetic boom, land between the Middle River and the Intracoastal Waterway was platted in March 1953 by local developers James S. Hunt and Steven A. Calder who were aided by Arthur T. Galt from Chicago who sold them the land. The subdivision was named Coral Ridge, Galt Addition No. 1.



Location Sketch of Coral Ridge, Galt Addition No. 1<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Slife, Ericka. “Buildings turning 50, But Are They Historic?” South Florida Sun Sentinel, 12 February 2007. 1B

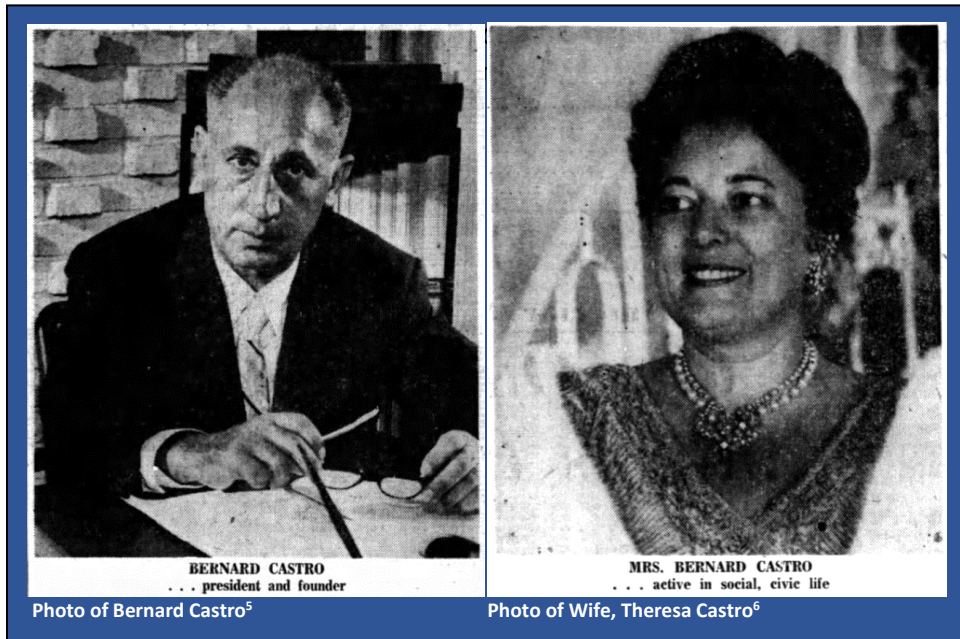
<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> McLaughlin, J.W., *Coral Ridge Galt Addition No. 1*. Scale 1” = 100’. Fort Lauderdale, Broward County, Florida. Plat Book 31, Page 37. March 1953.

Importantly, the west side of the plat was directly adjacent to land earmarked for a shopping center. The new residents demanded that the products and services once available to them downtown, be brought to suburbia. The new shopping centers not only accommodated this, but also provided expansive, free parking for the shoppers.<sup>4</sup>

### **Bernard Castro (1904-1991) “The First to Conquer Living Space”**

Bernard Castro was yet another example of America’s promise to immigrants who, with grit, determination, and ability could realize financial success and create a legacy for future generations. Bernard Castro exceeded those expectations founding a retail furniture and real estate empire that quickly expanded throughout the United States. Providentially, Castro opened his first store on Fifth Avenue in Lower Manhattan in 1931.



Castro was born in the Italian town of Corleone in the metropolitan City of Palermo in Sicily but came to the United States at age 15 in 1919 following World War I (WWI). Arriving in New York through the immigration station at Ellis Island, the country was welcoming to its immigrant population who had endured the conflagrations of the “Great War.” Castro, whose Italian family had considerable wealth but purportedly lost much of it, was prepared to embrace his new country entirely—learning English at night school as his immediate priority. Graduating from the New York School of Industrial Arts and honing his design sensibilities by visiting the extraordinary collections of fine and decorative arts available in New York City, Castro eventually found himself in the employ of an upholsterer in New York and became a cutter of the heavy fabric.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Weidling, Phillip and August Burghard. *Checked Sunshine—The Story of Fort Lauderdale, 1793-1955*. Wake-Brookehouse. Fort Lauderdale, Florida 1974. p 252

<sup>5</sup> “Rags to Riches” Story On “Conquering of Space.” *Fort Lauderdale News*. Fort Lauderdale, Florida. June 15, 1960. Page 27.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Bernadette Castro Oral History Interview of Bernard Castro; *Castro Convertibles*. October 19, 2016.

<https://www.homefurnishingshalloffame.com/bernard-castro-castro-convertibles>. Accessed November 30, 2021.

On Valentine's Day, 1942, the 30-year-old Bernard married Theresa Barabas from McKeesport, Pennsylvania. She became an integral part of the business and led the family's generous philanthropic ventures.

In a 2016 oral interview for the *American Home Furnishings Hall of Fame*, daughter Bernadette Castro recalled that while at Mr. Cohen's New York upholstery store Bernard was asked to reupholster davenports.<sup>8</sup> The davenport provided Castro with the idea for an improved sofa that concealed a bed. While the bulky davenport was not heretofore considered a living room piece, Castro's sofas would be so fashionable that they would be welcomed into every living room and easily compete with any standard, sole-purpose the convertible line, incontrovertible proof that the sofa mechanism could be released by the slightest of touches.<sup>9</sup> Castro opened his first store in Lower Manhattan on Fifth Avenue.

Bernadette Castro explained the reason why her father's product earned him such success in the *Hall of Fame* interview:

*They [davenports] opened up but they looked very bulky. I'm thinking that the mechanism was inserted in such a way that it was ridiculously obvious that the sofa opened into a bed. It did not look like a nice living room piece of furniture. The concept of the sofa or seating surface becoming a bed goes back to King Tut's tomb. There was an actual cement bench engineered to expand into a sleeping surface. Then there was a piano that somehow concealed a bed. There's old posters featuring that one. The concept of having something become a sleeping product was not Dad's. He gets credit for the design of a piece of furniture that concealed a bed. A stylish sofa that you could have in your living room.<sup>10</sup>*

Armed with a desirable product, Bernard Castro would become one of the first to use the nascent television media as a major platform for his marketing strategy, selling the new "Castro Convertible."

At the time, the City of New York was served by only three television stations and had virtually no advertisements for local businesses. Castro would pioneer in the medium and create enthusiastic consumers for his product, returning a considerable amount of his early profits into his radio and television advertising.

By 1960, Mr. Castro had six Florida stores, 45 retail stores across the United States, and was earning \$20 million annually.<sup>11</sup> He manufactured his own products which included the initial sofa line as well as dining room tables, coffee tables, and ottomans that also transformed to offer additional utility in size and function. Castro manufactured his own products with three factories located on Long Island, New York,

<sup>8</sup> The "davenport" was once the name in common usage for a sofa or a writing desk. It was also used as the term to describe a sofa sleeper. The sofa was hinged so that it could extend to become a sleeping surface. The name comes from its manufacturer—the A.H. Davenport Company, active in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, who in 1900 created an iconic "boxy" design for their sofa in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Davenport Company produced high end, custom furniture for such famed New York architects as Stanford White and H.H. Richardson.

<sup>9</sup> Bernadette Castro Oral History Interview of Bernard Castro; Castro Convertibles. October 19, 2016.

<https://www.homefurnishingshalloffame.com/bernard-castro-castro-convertibles>. Accessed November 30, 2021.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> "Castro Business at \$20 Million Dollar Mark." *Fort Lauderdale News*. Fort Lauderdale, Florida. June 15, 1960. Page 27.



one in Danbury, Connecticut and another in Boca Raton, Florida.<sup>12</sup> In 1951, Bernard and Theresa Castro purchased a home and began to winter in Fort Lauderdale. They also purchased their 93-foot, six-crew yacht, the “Southern Trail”, which became a floating showroom.<sup>13</sup> The Castro’s also later purchased some 3,500 acres of land in Ocala, Marion County, Florida for their ranch.

### **Bernadette Castro “The Most Televised Girl in America”**

The young girl who opened her father’s fold away bed at the age of 4, became the company spokesperson with a commercial that aired over 40,000 times. Not only did it earn her fame, as perhaps the first child to be featured in a TV commercial, but it also met with the sincerest form of flattery, when both popular comedians Milton Berle and Jackie Gleason made her the subject of their humor.<sup>14</sup> Ms. Castro had a multifaceted career in her adult life, making her mark as a recording artist, a political force, and an astute businesswoman who inherited the family furniture and real estate empire.



**Bernadette Castro “The Most Televised Girl in America”<sup>15</sup>**

Ms. Castro (Mrs. Peter Guida, married in 1979, a second marriage) earned a Bachelor of Arts in Radio and Television, and a Master of Arts in Education from the University of Florida, and has resided during her adulthood in the family home in Lloyd Harbor, Long Island, New York and while growing up at properties located in Fort Lauderdale and Ocala, Florida where her family made their homes. In the 1960s, Ms. Castro became a recording artist and was connected to the family business in several roles, including marketing of the products. She later entered the political realm becoming a rising star in the Republican party.

In 1994, she ran against Daniel Patrick Moynihan who was running for his fourth term in the U.S. Senate. Though unsuccessful, Ms. Castro had enormous support for the campaign and became a well-known and respected political figure. In 1995, she was appointed to the Cabinet of New York Governor George E. Pataki who named her as Commissioner of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. She held the post for 12 years. In 2001, President George W. Bush appointed her as Vice-Chairman of the national Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. She remains a member of the advisory board of the New York Landmarks Conservancy.<sup>16</sup>

After her father’s death in 1991, Ms. Castro sold the Castro Convertible business to Krause Furniture, a California based chain. Later, in 2009 she and her family bought back the Castro Convertibles furniture business and the company now sells two different sizes of ottomans that convert into a single bed. Ms. Castro has been honored with numerous awards for her work in conservation and historic preservation and is a well-known philanthropist in a number of charities, some founded by her mother.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> “Roomy Yacht is Comfortable.” Fort Lauderdale News. Fort Lauderdale, Florida. March 8, 1959. Page 94.

<sup>14</sup> Barron, James. “The Girl from ‘Castro Convertibles’ Early Commercials is Back.” The New York Times. New York, New York. June 11, 2012.

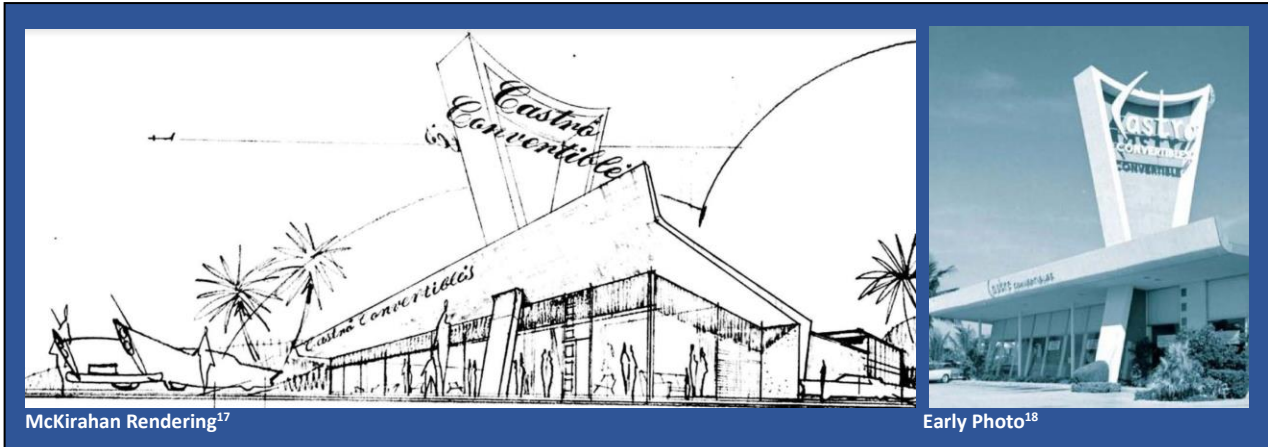
<sup>15</sup> <https://www.castroconvertibles.com/videos/>. Accessed January 28, 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Bernadette Castro. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernadette\\_Castro](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernadette_Castro). Accessed January 14, 2022

#### IV. Architectural Description

##### Building Design

Built in 1958 of concrete block, poured concrete and steel—the building’s design elements defy the very rigidity of the materials themselves. The main elevation (west) features a soaring, cantilevered concrete canopy that extends out horizontally beyond the (originally) angled plate glass windows of the showroom to terminate in an upturn. The preeminent feature of the building is its magnificent pylon sign—not only because of its prominence—but as an integrated design feature of the overall plan.



McKirahan Rendering<sup>17</sup>

Early Photo<sup>18</sup>

At approximately two-thirds of the way across the area occupied by the rectangular storefront, the sign, which extends to a height of fifty feet, is buttressed on the ground floor and then extends at an opposite angle to the buttress above the roof canopy. Its triangular (hourglass) shape is infilled with a solid material and the original letters attached on slats that created depth and shadow, spelling out “Castro Convertibles” in a typescript that architect McKirahan had used before for his projects at Birch Tower (3003 Terramar Street) and the Bayview Building (1040 Bayview Drive).



Faded Billboard Sign in New York<sup>19</sup> Quote<sup>20</sup>

“... my Dad was a firm believer in signage. When he first started, decades earlier, my father had very little money. His first \$400 was put into signage. Eventually we had that giant sign in Times Square.”



Times Square Billboard<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Charles F. McKirahan Collection, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society

<sup>18</sup> Tropic Florida Living and Design. Fort Lauderdale, Florida. March, 2017. Page 66-68.

<sup>19</sup> Forgotten New York. [www.forgottennewyork.com](http://www.forgottennewyork.com). Accessed January 6, 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Tropic Florida Living and Design. Fort Lauderdale, Florida. March, 2017. Page 66-68.

<sup>21</sup> What Life Was New York City 100 Years Ago. <https://stacker.com/stories/3941/what-life-was-new-york-city-100-years-ago>. Accessed January 6, 2022.

The second floor of the building extended eastward on the lot housing Mr. Castro's penthouse, and from there a rooftop "garden" became a gathering spot. Because of its location, the second-floor mass was less visible from the front of the building. Today, the custom planters in the front that were once a part of the overall design are gone, as is the rooftop fountain. The visual impact of the building was also lessened when Federal Highway was widened, decreasing the space between the building and the roadway.

### **Charles Foster McKirahan (1919-1964)**

Charles F. McKirahan was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma and began his studies at Oklahoma State University. As a Captain with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers during World War II (WWII), McKirahan was assigned to the Pacific Theater and was stationed in multiple ports of call including Australia, Hawaii, and Japan. McKirahan would use this first-hand knowledge of these exotic and foreign places to good end in his career as a designer.



Architect Charles F. McKirahan<sup>23</sup>

Upon his return stateside, McKirahan completed his studies at the University of Illinois earning a Bachelor of Science in Architecture in 1947. McKirahan began his Fort Lauderdale career shortly after his college graduation as a draftsman in the office of Gamble, Pownall & Gilroy. By 1951, he had formed a partnership becoming Wilmer & McKirahan, and by 1953 had started his own firm.<sup>22</sup>

An early work (1953) which became one of his most well-known is the Mai Kai Restaurant in Fort Lauderdale (listed in the National Register of Historic Places). Clearly, McKirahan's wartime experiences gave him both the inspiration and the first-hand knowledge to create this Polynesian sense-of-place. But his enormous reputation as a designer came from his designs which reflected "modern" sensibilities—a total departure from any historicist references or any particular culture, and one which embraced the capabilities and versatility of new materials and a space age where technological innovations were so quick in coming that the world changed almost overnight.

McKirahan became a leader in the design for a variety of projects which included commercial, residential, retail, and resort properties. They included: the Premiere Hotel, 625 North Fort Lauderdale Beach Boulevard; the Sea Chateau (now the Alcazar Resort), 543 North Birch Road; Manhattan Tower, 701 Bayshore Drive; Birch Towers, 3003 Terramar Street; The Jolly Roger (now the Ramada Sea Club), 619 N. Atlantic Boulevard; Coral Reef Yacht Club, 2800 Yacht Club Boulevard; Coral Ridge Country Club, 3801 Bayview Drive; Breakwater Towers, 1900 South Ocean Drive; and the Ocean Manor Resort, 4040 Galt Ocean Drive.

<sup>22</sup> "Uncovering McKirahan." Tropic Magazine. April 2015. Pages 18-25.

<sup>23</sup> "Architect." The Miami Herald. Miami, Florida. Sunday, July 21, 1963. Page 10-BR.

## Mid-Century Modern Design

It was a new age, no longer were there the physical constraints of an “earth-bound” planet--- the world entered a space race with limitless expectations, and by 1969 the United States had actually landed on the moon. Technologies were increasingly changing lives—in Florida during the 1950s, economically available air conditioning would enable an exponential growth in the state. Ever-increasing economies and innovation in manufacturing allowed for the fabrication of housing in record time.

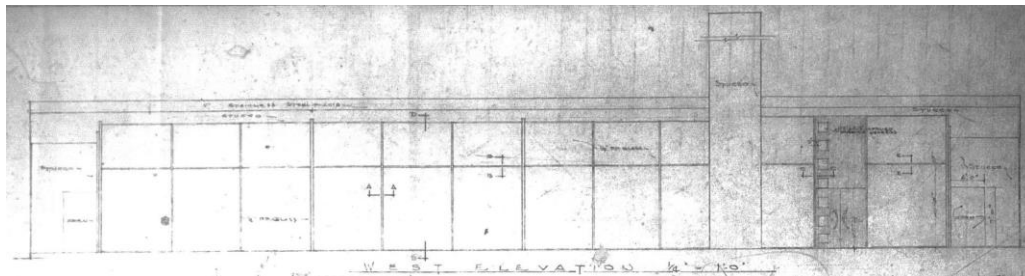
In architecture, European emigres Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe influenced countless architecture students at Harvard and the Illinois Institute of Technology in assuming their positions in 1938 and 1939, respectively. Both are considered Modernists who challenged traditional designs, methods and modes of construction, freeing designers from historicist conventions. By the 1950s, simpler, minimalistic forms were favored along with large expanses of glass and the manipulation of the structure itself into malleable, moldable forms. In Florida, particularly in resort architecture, whimsy, color, and playfulness was mastered to create formerly unimaginable works of design.

The method of construction also changed during the period following WWII which allowed for innovative design solutions. Mass manufacturing and standardization allowed for buildings to be constructed with precast concrete, modular units, and pre-fabricated assemblies. Key features associated with these new building technologies include: modular concrete screen block, sculptural concrete entrance canopies, concrete tray balconies, and curtain wall and window wall assemblies.<sup>24</sup> (Quote)<sup>25</sup>

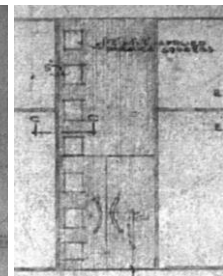
**“The Architect had a bravura style that often threw caution to the wind in favor of visual excitement. What could have been a bland showroom took [sic] became vibrant with windows canted at an 80-degree angle to match the bottom line of the hourglass-shaped pylon.”**

McKirahan specified everything on the final drawings from the stainless-steel cladding of the fascia to the elongated “C” shaped door handles and glass mosaic tiles. He used a stylized lettering for the Castro logo, similar to that used in Birch Tower (3003 Terramar Street) and the Bayview Building (1040 Bayview Drive).

The repeated square motif by the front entrance, that is no longer extant, echoed that used in McKirahan’s Patton’s Insurance Building on NE 4th Avenue finished in 1958. When asked about his choice of an architect who was known for an innovative form of Modernism Bernadette explains “This was a big project and a significant investment at the time. My father was NOT afraid of change. He truly wanted to make a statement.”<sup>26</sup>



Original Plans: West Elevation (Facing N. Federal Highway)



Close-up of Entrance

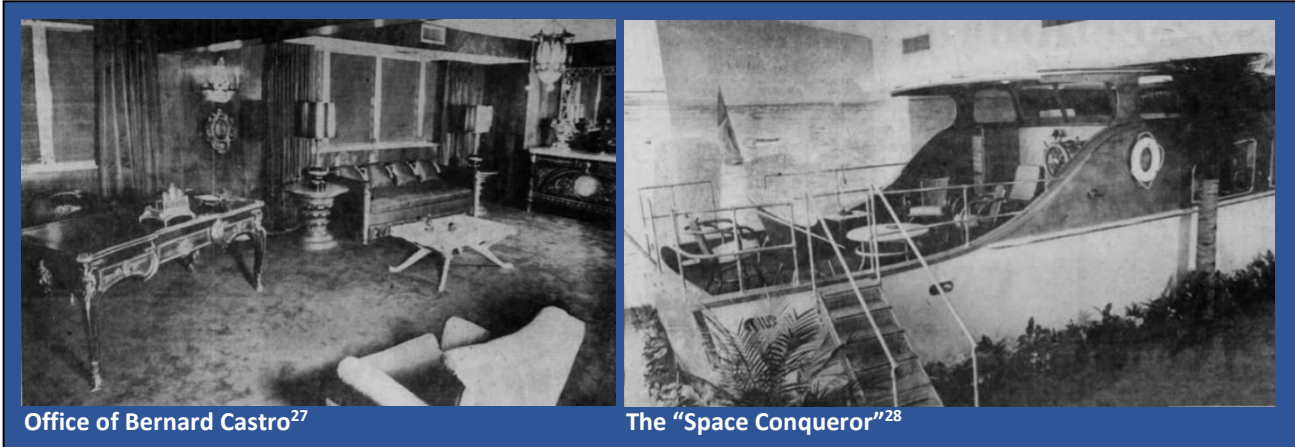
<sup>24</sup> “Intensive Level Architectural Resource Survey: Fort Lauderdale, Florida.” Erica Mollon Consulting. City of Fort Lauderdale, Department of Sustainable Development. 2020.

<sup>25</sup> Tropic Florida Living and Design. Fort Lauderdale, Florida. March, 2017. Pages 66-68.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

### **Showroom Interior**

The Castro Convertible Showrooms were themselves an experience. The showrooms featured the Castro products of course but were outfitted with the finest of furnishings and finishings to further enhance the shopper's appreciation. Period-style furniture, tile floors, or extravagant carpets and wall hangings were set-up to create enviable "living" rooms.



Opened on January 30, 1959, the 10,000 square foot Fort Lauderdale store included a European antique store, a Penthouse, Italian tile floors, a Polynesian Room, Colonial Room, and French Provincial Room.<sup>29</sup> Keeping in mind his target audience with his space-saving furniture, Castro appealed to the boating community. To illustrate its practicality as well as desirability, Castro constructed and furnished thirty feet of a forty-eight-foot yacht. A reporter noted "[the yacht] is docked there at a patio into which the craft is headed."

### **The Closing of the Fort Lauderdale Showroom**

Castro Convertibles, the furniture business, was sold to Krause's Furniture and the Fort Lauderdale Showroom remained operational as "Castro Convertibles" until 2001. In 2002, the interior space was divided to accommodate two tenants that would take over the space.

In 1986, 2860 N. Federal Highway was sold by Bernard and Theresa Castro to Bernadette Castro. Bernadette then sold the building in 2007 to 2860 N. Federal Highway, LLC.

### **Summary of Additions and Alterations**

<b>1959</b>	8,000 Square Foot Addition <sup>30 31</sup>	<b>2002</b>	Divide space for Two Tenants
<b>1967</b>	Remodel, Interior	<b>2007</b>	New Storefront and Windows/Doors
<b>1994</b>	Interior Alterations: Krause Sofa Factory	<b>2019</b>	Ferguson Showroom Interior Remodel

<sup>27</sup> Wilson, Wanda "New Castro Showroom Is Unique, Exciting." Fort Lauderdale News. Fort Lauderdale, Florida. January 25, 1959. Page 88.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Arthur Rude, Architect (Rude, Hostettler and Taylor. The addition which extends northward is rectangular in plan and is attached at a perpendicular to the 1958 showroom, almost doubling the original space. The addition included additional showroom space, offices for Vice-President, Paul J. Barabas and a workroom.

<sup>31</sup> "Castro Expands." Fort Lauderdale News. *Fort Lauderdale, Florida*. 22 November 22, 1959. Page 54.

## V. Application for Criteria for Designation

As per Unified Land Development Regulation (ULDR) Section 47-24.11.C.7, the designation of property as a landmark shall be based on one or more of the criteria and evaluated in conjunction with guidance provided within the National Register Bulletin series published by the National Park Service. For this application, the following criteria are applicable:

### **c. Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of city, state, or nation.**

The Castro Convertible Showroom is significant for its association with both the owner of the business, Bernard Castro and its architect, Charles F. McKirahan. Bernard Castro has been recognized as an innovator for his contributions to American furniture design, while Charles F. McKirahan has become an acknowledged master of Mid-Century Modern architectural design.

In 2014 Bernard Castro was inducted into the American Home Furnishings Hall of Fame. National in its scope, the Hall of Fame was established to celebrate "...exceptional individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to the U.S. home furnishings industry, and to create a new class of innovation and leadership."<sup>32</sup>

Charles McKirahan achieved prominence for his architectural designs on a statewide level and is acknowledged as one of the architects who created the character of Mid-Century Modern design in Florida.<sup>33</sup>

### **d. Its identification as the work of a master builder, designer, or architect whose individual work has influenced the development of the city, state, or nation.**

Charles F. McKirahan is the subject of considerable scholarship in Florida and is cited as one of the preeminent architects whose work made an indelible impact on Florida's Mid-Century Modern architecture. McKirahan's work is featured in the University of Florida's study "Florida's Mid-Century Modern Architecture (1945-1975)," funded in part by the Division of Historical Resources, Florida Department of State, and published in 2018. The publication selected fifty "flagship" structures that express the hallmarks of Mid-Century Modern design and includes McKirahan's 1960 Birch Tower. McKirahan's work is also featured on individual tours and is included in many scholarly references that address the quality of his architectural design. McKirahan's work is studied for its contribution to the uniqueness of Florida's historic architecture. His considerable, remaining work in Fort Lauderdale pays tribute to his ability to design all types of architecture including residential, both single-family and multi-family, commercial, and resort buildings.

<sup>32</sup> Bernadette Castro Oral History Interview of Bernard Castro; Castro Convertibles. October 19, 2016. <https://www.homefurnishingshalloffame.com/bernard-castro-castro-convertibles>. Accessed November 30, 2021.

<sup>33</sup> University of Florida, College of Design, Construction and Planning (Historic Preservation) "Florida's Mid-Century Modern Architecture (1945-1975)", Gainesville, Florida, October 2018, 26.

**f. Its distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials.**

The character of architecture during the seismic shift that was Post War America is evidenced by the change in building design. Initially influenced by European iconoclasts, America's Mid-Century Modern architectural design is uniquely recognizable. The design represents a departure from historicist references and the influence of a "modern" age.

With its shape, enormous pylon sign, cantilevered roof and emphasis on walls of windows and natural light, the Castro Convertible Showroom is an extraordinary example of Mid-Century Modern design.

**VI. Planning Context**

Castro Convertibles is located on the east side of North Federal Highway between Sunrise Boulevard and Oakland Park Boulevard. This area of North Federal Highway contains a variety of commercial uses including retail, restaurant, and hotel. Most of the buildings within the immediate area are small in scale and range from one to two stories. The rear of this building abuts the residential neighborhood of Coral Ridge.

## VII. Bibliography

"Alger Award Won By City Industrialist." *Fort Lauderdale News*. Fort Lauderdale, Florida. April 21, 1963. Page 21.

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Castro Convertibles Advertisement. *Fort Lauderdale News*. Fort Lauderdale, Florida. January 27, 1959. Page 33.

Castro Convertibles Advertisement. *Fort Lauderdale News*. Fort Lauderdale, Florida. March 1, 1959. Page 14.

Florida's Mid-Century Architecture (1945-1975) *University of Florida College of Design, Construction and Planning ( Historic Preservation)*. Gainesville, Florida , 2018.

"Holy Cross Gift." *Fort Lauderdale News*. Fort Lauderdale, Florida. February 27, 1955. Page 15.

*Intensive Level Architectural Resource Survey: Fort Lauderdale, Florida*. Erica Mollon Consulting. City of Fort Lauderdale, Department of Sustainable Development. 2020.

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VIII. Photographs



Front Elevation Looking Southeast



Front Elevation Looking Northeast



Front/South Elevation Looking Northeast



Front Elevation View from Street

