

# Florida Historic Landmarks at Risk: New Bill May Destroy Coastal Landmarks

*A bill defeated last session is back again - and lovers of history and local control are sounding the alarm as it makes its way to Tallahassee*

MIAMI, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, January 22, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Lovers of historic buildings around Florida are alarmed about two unprecedented State Legislature bills targeting Florida's historic coastal neighborhoods that they worry will lead to widespread demolition and redevelopment. These bills follow last year's failed attempt to override local protections regarding development and historic preservation in Florida.



Art Deco buildings in Miami Beach like these could be demolished under a new proposal in the Florida State Legislature

A new group has been formed, "[Florida Conservatives for Coastal Preservation](#)" to oppose the bills that they say would remove protections for thousands of historical landmarks and neighborhoods throughout the state.

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Both Republicans & Democrats of my city cannot believe that a Conservative delegation would treat our prized historic landmarks & neighborhoods with such utter disregard.”

*Andrea Spiridonakos*

"My name is Andrea Spiridonakos & I moved to Miami Beach 25 years ago to dance for Miami City Ballet. Being a staunch conservative, with a lifetime in the arts, I am in a position to see both worlds... and I can assure you that there is NOTHING that unites both FL Republicans & Democrats more than their contempt for politicians who take away their rights. I'm devastated by the actions of the Miami Dade Delegation in the past legislative session."

"It's as if there's a small cabal of you that are doing secret

back door bidding for real estate developers, hoping to erase our historical landmarks. Both Republicans & Democrats of my city cannot believe that a Conservative delegation would treat

our prized historic landmarks & neighborhoods with such utter disregard."

"The Unsafe Structures Bill, which would have destroyed historic districts throughout FL, began from a Miami Springs Senator, Brian Avila. As if that weren't bad enough, the Dade Delegation head, Senator Ana Maria Rodriguez, snuck in language to an unrelated bill (SB 718) which stripped the power from us voters to have a say on major development projects. This was a right that us citizens have had in our City's charter since the mid-90s. This happened at the last minute, on purpose, without input from OR outreach to, our most impacted communities."

"Senator Alexis Calatayud spearheaded the Live Local Act which now threatens to allow 50-story towers looming over Ocean Drive in our historical Art Deco District, taking away local control. These laws could place even more developments directly in harm's way on our hurricane-prone barrier islands. I beg you to amend this act to allow barrier islands to opt-out."

Regarding the historic preservation bills, the proposal could label many older buildings as "nonconforming" if they do not meet the latest new construction requirements under the National Flood Insurance Program - despite that program and the Florida Building Code providing exemptions to accommodate for historic structures. This new law would effectively void historic preservation laws around the state - rendering thousands of buildings throughout Florida suddenly "nonconforming" and leading to speculative demolition.

Other provisions in the bills would remove local governments' powers to discourage "demolition by neglect," preventing them from requiring neglected historic structures to be maintained, reconstructed, or rebuilt.

If passed, the bills could spell the end of our valued historic neighborhoods and districts - many of which have stood for over a century amidst hurricanes, economic crises, wars, and more. Miami Beach, St Augustine, Key West, Tampa, St Petersburg, Jacksonville, Coral Gables, Palm Beach, Fernandina Beach, and beyond - all these historic places would be at risk by this wide-sweeping proposal.

Miami Beach, for instance, is home to the famous Art Deco Historic District, which includes over 800 buildings, many of which are in the noted architectural style. Miami Beach was the Wartime Training Center for the Army Air Forces during WWII, when soldiers stayed in the newly built Art Deco hotels and neighborhoods.

"We urge all stakeholders to join together to spread the word about this terrible bill while we work on amendments to exempt historic places and discourage demolition by neglect," says Daniel Ciraldo, Executive Director of the [Miami Design Preservation League](#).

"These proposals could impact historic property owners' ability to receive loans and grant funds, place our local governments out of compliance with the National Preservation Act best practices, lead to potential delisting from the National Register of Historic Places, and circumvent Florida's

80 Certified Local Governments who have made historic preservation a policy and invested taxpayer funds in furtherance of these goals," he continues.

The bill's Senate sponsor for SB1526 is Brian Avila (R- Miami Springs), and the House sponsor for HB1647 is Spencer Roach (R- North Fort Myers).

"Instead of destroying historic landmarks, the legislature should focus on providing incentives to help historic buildings remain resilient amid the impacts of climate change. Bulldozing our historic neighborhoods in the name of resiliency will leave our state with a negative economic impact: housing units will be demolished, exacerbating the affordability crisis, and visitors will go elsewhere to enjoy their vacations amidst a speculative demolition boom brought about by this bill," says Ciraldo.

Join us in opposing these bills and saving Florida's historic communities!

Contact:

Request an Interview with the group: [protectourheritage@fccpusa.org](mailto:protectourheritage@fccpusa.org)

Website: <https://fccpusa.org>

View the petition here: <https://www.change.org/savefloridashistoricplaces>

Groups who have expressed concerns/opposition to the measures as proposed initially

- National Trust for Historic Preservation
  - Miami-Dade County
  - City of Miami Beach
  - City of Palm Beach
  - City of Coral Gables
  - City of St Augustine
  - Florida League of Cities
  - Miami Beach Historic Preservation Board
  - Coral Gables Historic Preservation Board
  - Florida Trust for Historic Preservation
  - Miami Design Preservation League
  - Dade Heritage Trust
  - Palm Beach Preservation Foundation
  - Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables
  - The Villagers
  - 1000 Friends of Florida
- (list in progress)

Next Hearing:

1/22: Senate Community Affairs, 4pm

Watch on the Florida Channel <https://thefloridachannel.org/>

Andrea Spiridonakos

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