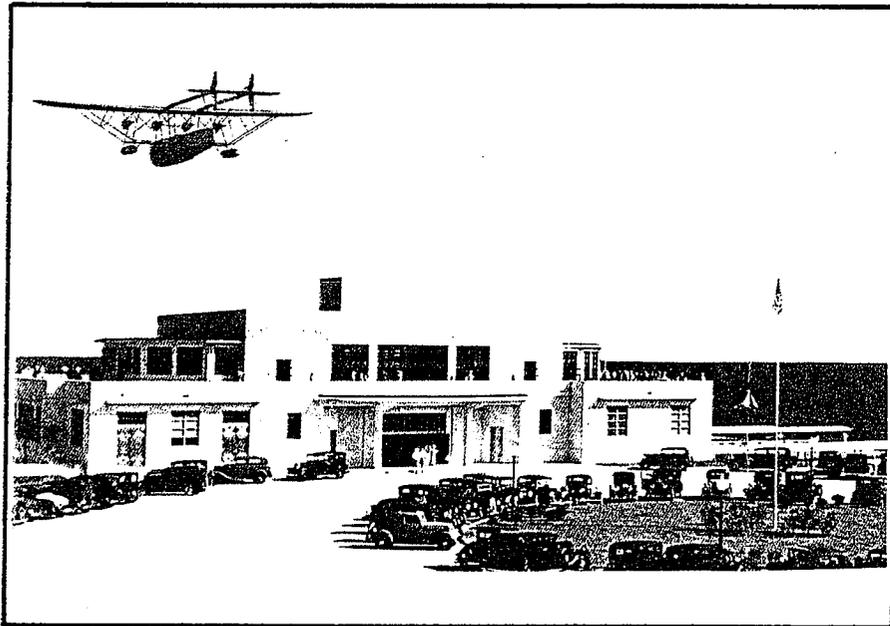

PAN AMERICAN SEAPLANE BASE AND TERMINAL BUILDING

3500 Pan American Drive

Designation Report



City of Miami

REPORT OF THE CITY OF MIAMI PLANNING, BUILDING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT
TO THE HISTORIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION BOARD
ON THE POTENTIAL AMENDED DESIGNATION OF
THE PAN AMERICAN SEAPLANE BASE AND TERMINAL BUILDING
3500 PAN AMERICAN DRIVE
AS A HISTORIC SITE

Amendment
Prepared by

Sarah E. Fator 10-8-93
Preservation Officer Date

Passed and
Adopted on

11-16-93

Resolution No.

HEPB-93-47

Approved by

A King Jr
Chairman, Historic and
Environmental Preservation Board

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Historic Name:

Pan American Seaplane Base and Terminal Building

Current Name:

Dinner Key

Location:

3500 Pan American Drive
Miami, Florida 33133

Present Owner:

City of Miami
3500 Pan American Drive
Miami, Florida 33133

Present Use:

Government, commercial

Zoning District:

PR

Tax Folio Number:

01-4122-002-0010

Boundary Description:

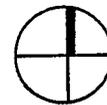
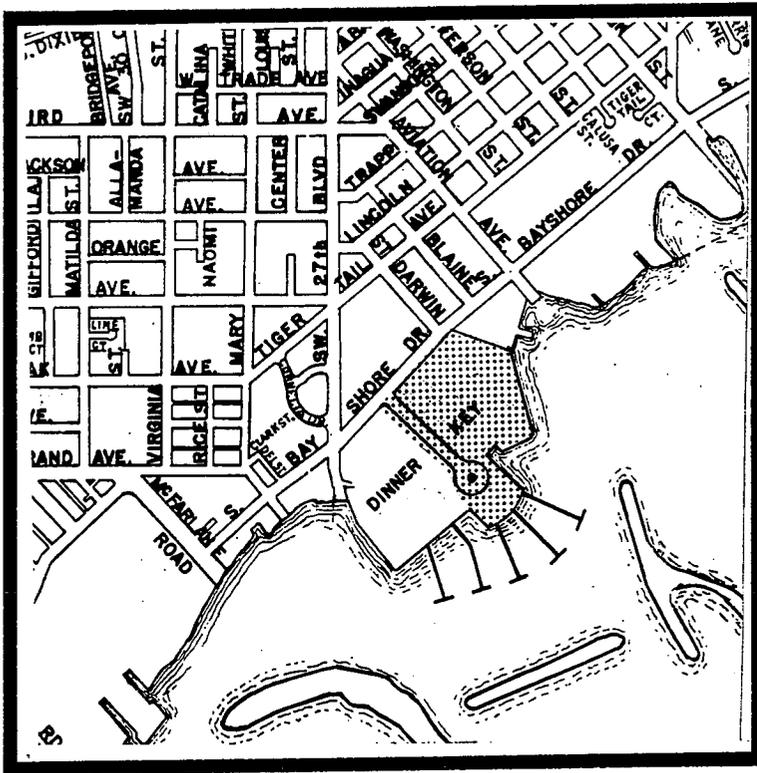
The boundaries of the historic site include a portion of Tract A of the plat of DINNER KEY, as recorded in Plat Book 34 at Page 2, of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida and are shown as the shaded areas on the attached site plan entitled "Pan American Seaplane and Terminal Building." It is the intent that the boundaries include the undedicated road known as Pan American Drive including the rows of royal palms on both sides; the area known as Clipper Circle; the building that was

formerly the Pan American Terminal Building and is now the Miami City Hall; the grass area and asphalt drives around the said building; and those portions of the Dinner Key property bounded by Pan American Drive on the southwest, South Bayshore Drive on the northwest, the former U.S. Coast Guard Station (now the Elizabeth Virrick Gym) property on the northeast, and the shoreline of Biscayne Bay on the southeast.

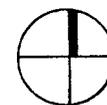
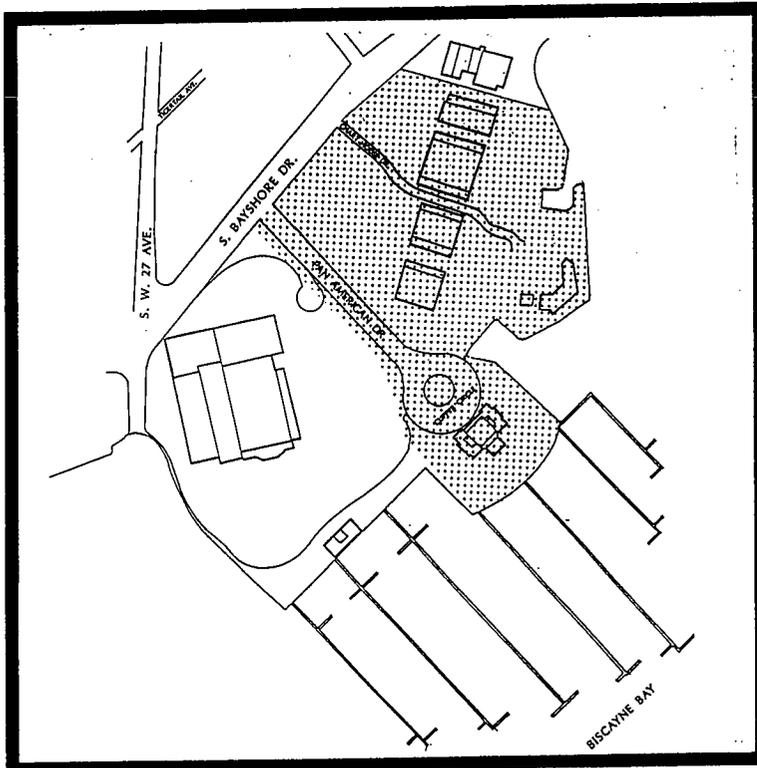
Classification:

Historic Site

PAN AMERICAN SEAPLANE BASE AND TERMINAL BUILDING

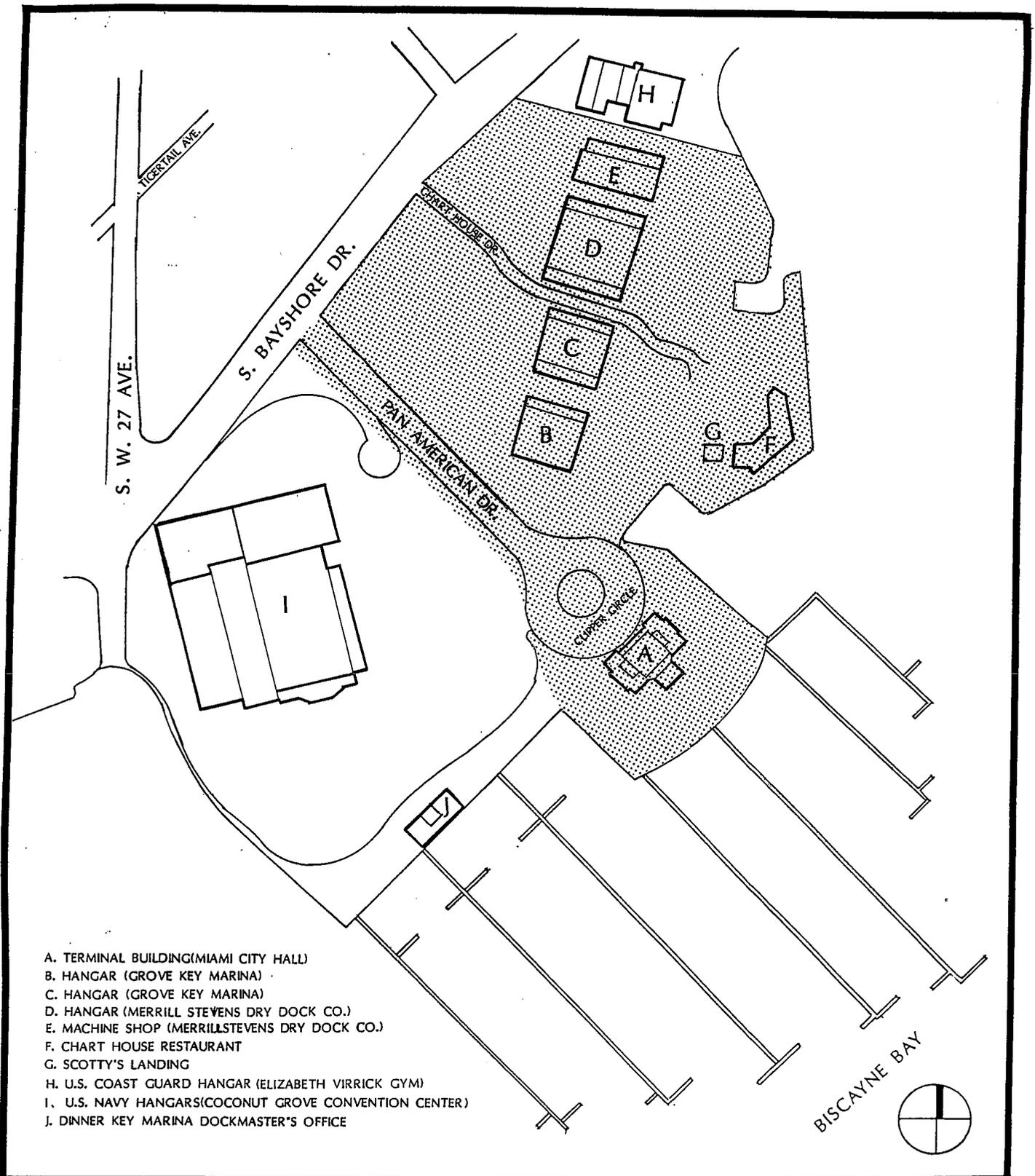


location



site plan

PAN AMERICAN SEAPLANE BASE AND TERMINAL BUILDING



- A. TERMINAL BUILDING(MIAMI CITY HALL)
- B. HANGAR (GROVE KEY MARINA)
- C. HANGAR (GROVE KEY MARINA)
- D. HANGAR (MERRILL STEVENS DRY DOCK CO.)
- E. MACHINE SHOP (MERRILLSTEVENS DRY DOCK CO.)
- F. CHART HOUSE RESTAURANT
- G. SCOTTY'S LANDING
- H. U.S. COAST GUARD HANGAR (ELIZABETH VIRRICK GYM)
- I. U.S. NAVY HANGARS(COCONUT GROVE CONVENTION CENTER)
- J. DINNER KEY MARINA DOCKMASTER'S OFFICE

II. SIGNIFICANCE

Specific Dates:

Hangar "B"	- 1931
Hangar "C"	- 1932
Terminal Building "A"	- 1933-1934
Hangar "D"	- 1937-1938
Machine Shop "E"	- 1937-1938

Architects:

Delano and Aldrich

Statement of Significance:

The Pan American Seaplane Base and Terminal Building at Dinner Key is significant both in the history of modern air transportation and as an outstanding example of air terminal design. The Dinner Key base was the nation's busiest commercial seaplane terminal during the 1930's. Often described as the "Air Gateway Between the Americas," the base linked the United States with Latin America by way of air transportation, opening up major trade and passenger routes.

Dinner Key, a small island in Biscayne Bay, was joined to the mainland during World War I to provide a training ground for the U.S. Navy. The buildings comprising the U.S. Naval Air Station, however, were virtually destroyed by the 1926 hurricane. In 1930, Dinner Key was selected by the newly-formed Pan American Airways System as the base for its inter-American operations. The lack of land-based facilities for planes in Latin America forced Pan American to utilize flying boats and amphibious aircraft for its operations. Pan American erected its first hangar at Dinner Key in 1931 and used a houseboat obtained in Havana, Cuba as its first passenger terminal.

The site plan developed by Pan American for the seaplane base was designed for both the aerial and land view. The plan called for the construction of a "V" shaped line of hangars to be used for machine shops, maintenance, operation, and storage. A terminal building was planned for the apex of the "V," at the end of a long driveway, thus forming a shape reminiscent of an airplane.

As air operations expanded, Pan American began its \$700,000 improvement program. A deeper channel, one mile long and 700 feet wide, was dredged, additional land at the base was filled in, and an additional hangar was erected. In 1933, construction began on the "ultramodern" terminal building.

The terminal building was designed in the Streamline Moderne architectural style, considered especially appropriate for air terminals and other structures relating to high-speed travel. At the time of its construction, the terminal was the largest and most modern marine air terminal in the world. Said to be one of the best planned terminal buildings constructed for either land or marine airports, it was noted for its innovative layout plan for traffic handling and for its scientific design. This design allowed for the simultaneous handling of four airliners, a feature not previously found in air terminals.

Architects for the Pan American Terminal Building were Delano and Aldrich of New York City. The basic design of the building has been attributed to Fred J. Gehaus, Airport Engineer for the Caribbean Division of the Pan American System, and his assistant, B. W. Reeser. William Adams Delano and Chester Holmes Aldrich, both graduates of Ecole des Beaux Arts, organized the firm of Delano and Aldrich in 1903. They specialized in various revival styles and developed an extensive practice in town and country houses for wealthy clients, principally in the New York City area. They also designed nonresidential buildings, particularly for private schools and colleges. No architect has been identified for the hangars.

The facilities at Dinner Key were the first constructed exclusively for commercial passenger seaplane service and served as a model for those that followed in Rio de Janeiro, New York, and San Francisco. The construction of the seaplane base also marked the first time the Congressional Rivers and Harbors Committee approved an appropriation expressly for dredging a navigable channel for airline activity. In addition, the development of Dinner Key marked the first time in aviation history that an airline was granted eminent domain to reserve its rights to the land, thus setting a precedent for land granting procedures for airlines.

During the mid 1930's and early 1940's, approximately 50,000 passengers per year flowed through the Dinner Key terminal. In addition, the terminal averaged more than 30,000 visitors per month, with as many as 100,000 in the winter months. A third hangar and machine shop were added during this period to house some of the larger planes that were being employed.

During World War II Dinner Key again served as a base for the U.S. Navy, which constructed two large hangars west of the terminal building. In 1943, President Roosevelt arrived at Dinner Key to board a seaplane for Casablanca. The trip marked the first time a President traveled in an aircraft while in office. The appearance of landing fields in Latin America during the war decreased the need for seaplanes, and on August 9, 1945, Pan American's last flight to Dinner Key took place.

Dinner Key was purchased by the City of Miami in 1946 for use as a waterfront park. In 1950, the terminal building was converted into a

restaurant and marina office. In 1954, the building was adapted for use as Miami's City Hall. The four original Pan American hangars were leased for marine-oriented uses, while the U.S. Navy hangars were joined to create an exhibition center.

Relationship to Criteria for Designation:

As stated above, the Pan American Seaplane Base and Terminal Building has significance in the historical and architectural heritage of the City, state, and nation; possesses integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association; and is eligible for designation under the following criteria:

3. Exemplifies the historical, cultural, political, economic, or social trends of the community.

The Pan American Seaplane Base represents one of the most significant sites in South Florida in the history of transportation. Known as the "Air Gateway Between the Americas," the Pan American Seaplane Base linked the United States with Latin America by way of air transportation, opening up major trade and passenger routes. This event thus marked a significant milestone in Miami's emergence as an international city.

5. Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction.

The Pan American Terminal Building was designed in the Streamline Moderne architectural style, considered especially appropriate for air terminals and other structures relating to high-speed travel. At the time of its construction, the terminal was an outstanding example of air terminal design. Its innovative layout plan and scientific design served as a model for other terminal buildings in the United States and Latin America. The hangars are fine examples of steel frame industrial architecture, a rarity in South Florida.

III. DESCRIPTION

Present and Original Appearance:

Setting:

The Pan American Seaplane Base and Terminal Building is located on a large tract of land in Coconut Grove commonly known as Dinner Key. The terminal building, which faces west, is approached by a wide, palm-lined boulevard called Pan American Drive. The boulevard ends in a traffic circle, known as Clipper Circle, directly in front of the terminal building entrance. The terminal building is the center point of a "V" shaped line of hangars, which originally served as maintenance and machine shops for the seaplane base. Directly behind the terminal building on Biscayne Bay is the Dinner Key Marina, serving more than 300 small boats.

Terminal Building:

The Pan American Terminal Building, constructed in 1933-1934, features a two story central block flanked by one story symmetrical wings. This rectangular structure, with 11 bays across the west (front) facade, is topped by a flat roof with parapet. The building is of steel frame construction, reinforced with concrete, and is supported with pilings. The exterior walls are covered with smooth stucco.

The main entrance is located in the center of the west facade and is covered by a wide curving overhang. This modern entrance, with glass and aluminum doors, replaces the original recessed entrance which featured elaborate bronze doors topped with bronze grilles. This alteration to the original entrance incurred in 1951.

All original windows on the building have been replaced, and most are now fixed plate glass or aluminum awning windows set in precast concrete frames. The second story west facade, however, features large windows of translucent glass block.

A frieze of winged globes and rising suns, connected at the corners by sculptured eagles, encircles the building. The words "Miami City Hall," appear above the main entrance. A beltcourse embellished with circular designs is located above the first story windows and extends outward as a border on the window canopies.

The original four covered passageways, which led from the lower level to the landing stations have been removed. Small additions have been made to the building, including a one story addition on the east facade and a small addition on the southeast corner of the building over the second story deck area. Both additions occurred in 1958.

Despite the alterations of windows and doors, the basic integrity of the building remains uncompromised. In addition, the building has survived without major additions to its original form.

Hangars "B" and "C":

In addition to the terminal building, four massive utility structures constructed by Pan American occupy the site. Three served as hangars for the seaplanes, while the northernmost one was a machine shop. Hangars "B" and "C" (see site plan) were constructed in 1931 and 1932 and were the first permanent structures on the site. Identical in size and floor plan, each is 140 feet square and is of steel frame construction on a concrete foundation. Entrances are 29 feet wide with a clearance of 128 feet.

Hangars "B" and "C" have been altered by the replacement of their original corrugated steel shells with a contemporary aluminum corrugated sheeting. This new fabric is similar in appearance to the original except for the color, which is beige instead of metallic. Despite these alterations, the hangars retain their form, setting, and original structural frame, and are an integral part of the 1931 site plan for the seaplane base.

Hangar "D" and Machine Shop "E":

These two structures, which appear to be in almost entirely original condition, were added to the site between 1937 and 1938 in accordance with Pan American's original site plan. The structures are rectangular in plan and are comprised of central high-bay areas which front onto a common concrete apron and Biscayne Bay to the east.

The high bay of hangar "D," which measures 210 feet by 180 feet, is spanned by a petit-braced Warren truss system of riveted, rolled steel sections. The southern bay contains three stories of workshop areas, while the northern bay contains two stories. The central bay is opened to the bottom cord of the truss and is accessible on both ends through double sets of three leaf, full height, sliding steel frame doors. The north and south facades are articulated with bands of nine paned double hung windows.

The high bay of machine shop "E," which measures 100 feet by 180 feet, is spanned by a Pratt truss system of riveted rolled steel sections. The north and south workshop bays are both one story high, allowing a clerestory along the length of the high bay. The east/west cross section is modified with a lower bay facing west and a higher bay facing east.

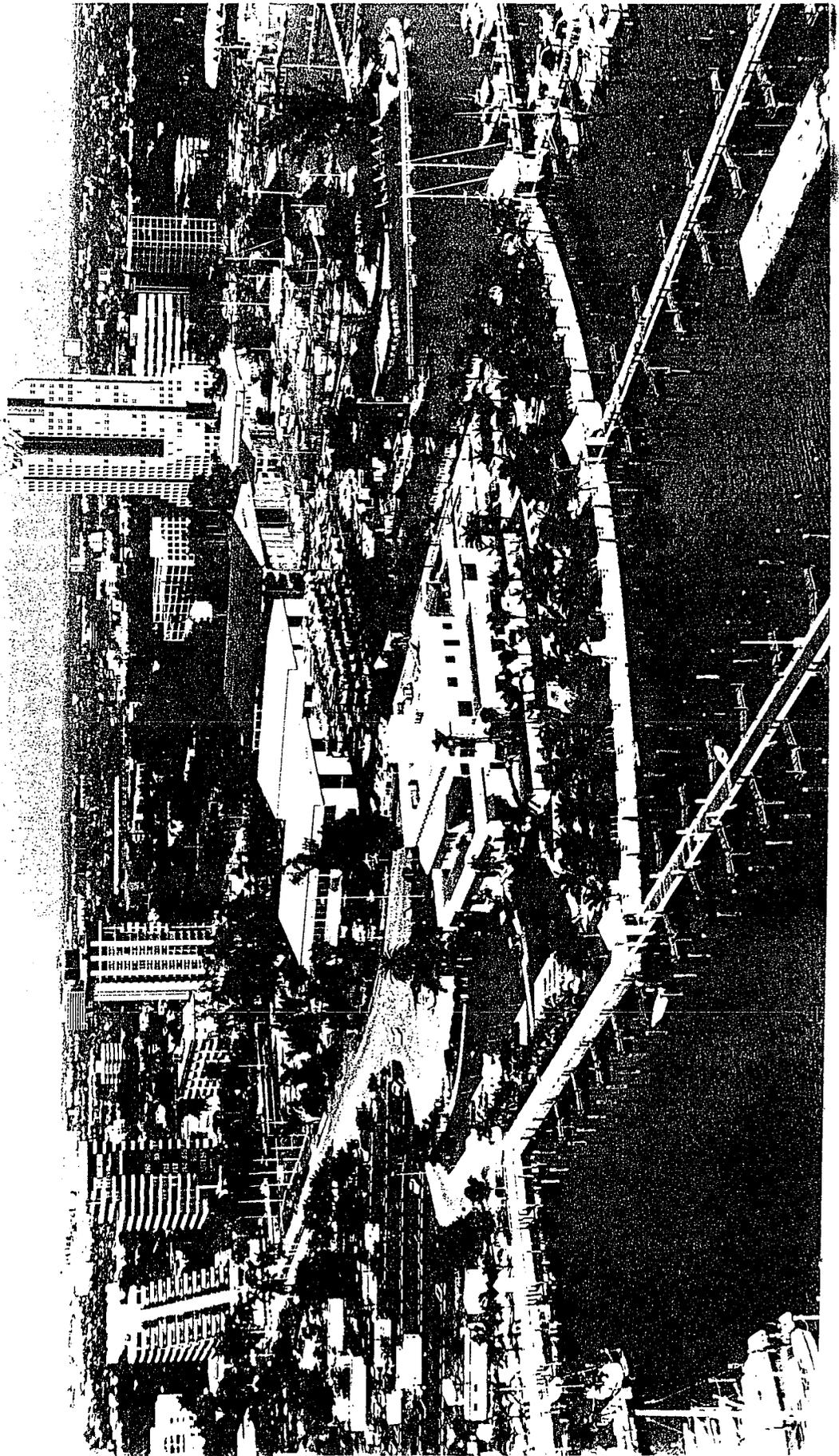
The steel frames of both hangers are clad in heavy gauge corrugated steel, which is protected by an integral bitumen based, fiber reinforced, proprietary system.

Contributing Structures and/or Landscape Features:

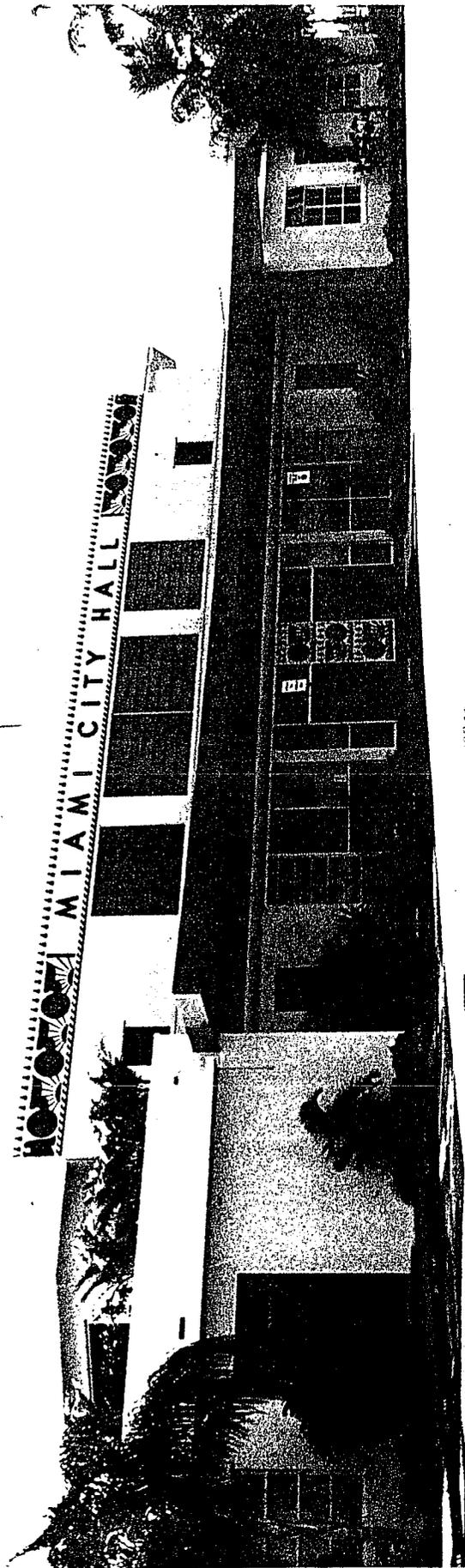
Contributing structures within the site include the following: Pan American Terminal Building (City Hall), Hangars "B," "C," and "D," and Machine Shop "E". The buildings housing the Chart House Restaurant and Scotty's Landing are noncontributing structures.

Contributing landscape features include the present and historic configuration of Clipper Circle and Pan American Drive, as well as the rows of royal palms lining both sides of Pan American Drive.

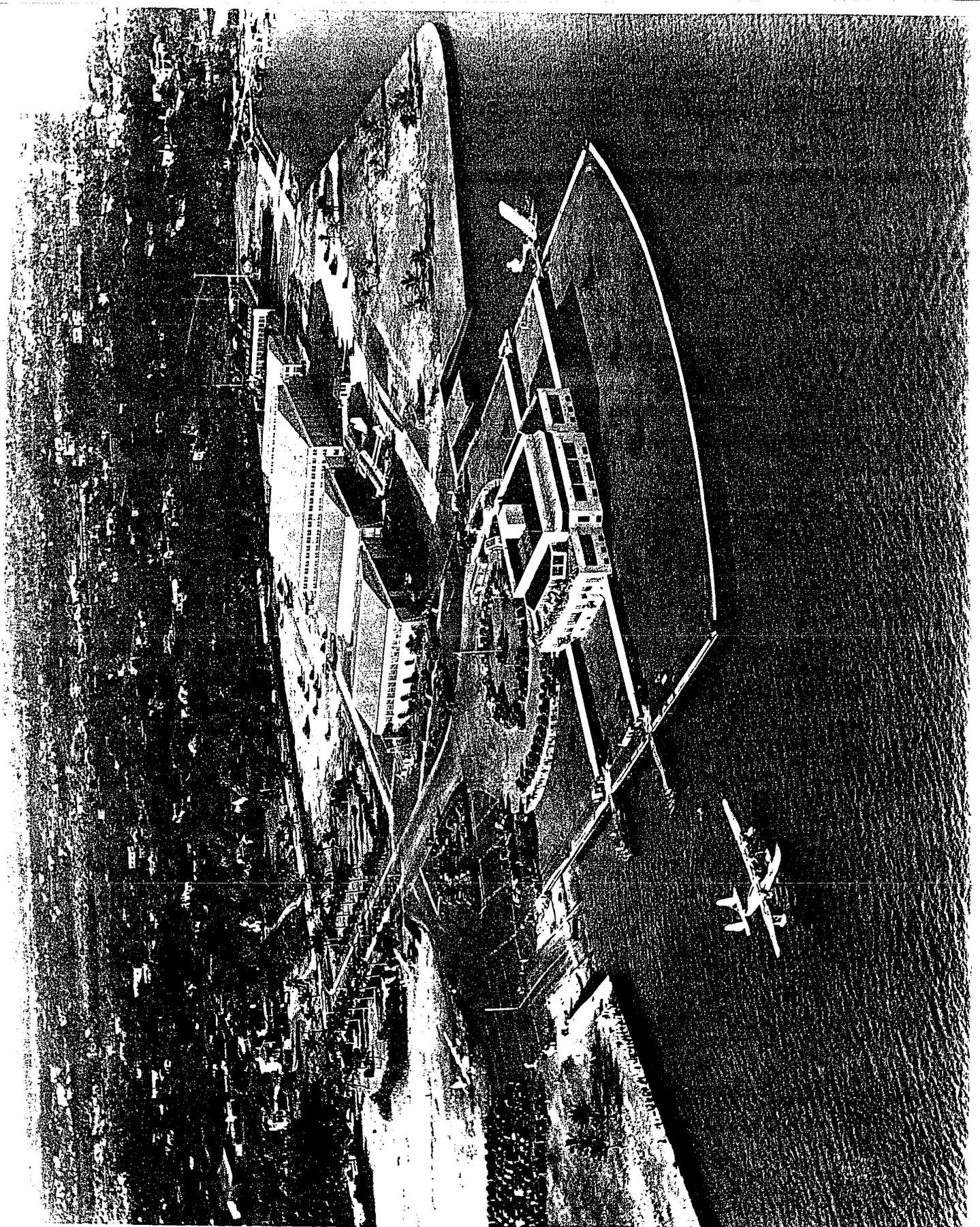
The Coconut Grove Convention Center is not included within the designation for two reasons. The two hangars comprising the center were constructed by the U.S. Navy, not Pan American, during World War II. In addition, because of recent alterations to the building, it no longer retains a sufficient degree of historic and architectural integrity to qualify for designation.



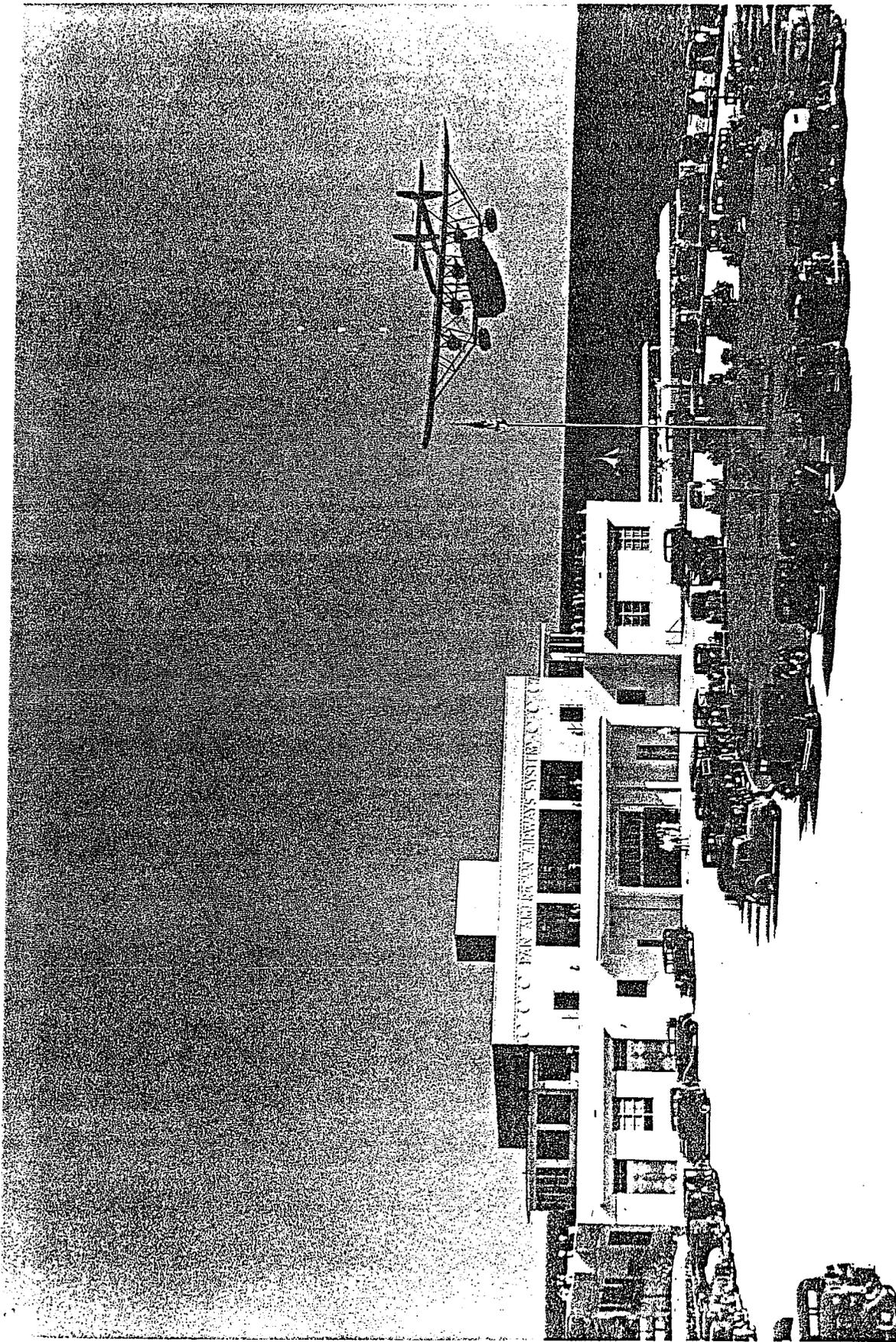
Pan American Seaplane Base and Terminal Building
3500 Pan American Drive
Aerial view showing Terminal Building (City Hall) and Hangars



Pan American Seaplane Base and Terminal Building
3500 Pan American Drive
Terminal Building (City Hall)



Pan American Seaplane Base and Terminal Building
3500 Pan American Drive
Aerial view showing Terminal Building and Hangars
c. 1940
(Courtesy of Pan American World Airways)



Pan American Seaplane Base and Terminal Building
3500 Pan American Drive
Terminal Building and Clipper Circle
c. 1934
(Courtesy of Pan American World Airways)



Pan American Seaplane Base and Terminal Building
3500 Pan American Drive
Pan American Drive
c. 1934
(Courtesy of Pan American World Airways)

IV. PLANNING CONTEXT

Present Trends and Conditions:

The Pan American Terminal Building was designated as a historic site by the City of Miami in 1983. The original designation included only the terminal building (City Hall) itself, Pan American Drive, and Clipper Circle. The Pan American hangars were not included. An amended designation to include the hangars was requested by the Coconut Grove Civic Club in 1993.

Dinner Key is a major public multi-use waterfront resource for the City of Miami. As such, it has undergone a series of adaptations from transportation to recreation use. Several projects have been completed or are underway, including construction of the Chart House Restaurant and waterfront walkway, renovations to the Coconut Grove Convention Center, and improvements to the Dinner Key Marina. The City's efforts to attract a development team to redevelop the hangar area, however, have been unsuccessful.

In October, 1993, the City Commission directed the City Administration to undertake a planning study of that portion of the Dinner Key area between Pan American Drive and Aviation Avenue. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the possible alternative uses for the site and the buildings located thereon and to make recommendations. The community will be asked to participate in the planning study, which is scheduled to be completed in December, 1993. The Historic and Environmental Preservation Board has appointed one of its members to assist with the study.

The Pan American Seaplane Base and Terminal Building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.

Preservation Incentives:

The Historic and Environmental Preservation Board should be prepared to work cooperatively with all concerned agencies in the development of a master plan for Dinner Key. The technical expertise of the Board members could be invaluable in this process.

Few preservation incentives are available for government-owned properties, with the exception of the limited historic preservation grant funds that are awarded each year. If a portion of the site were leased to a private developer, historic preservation tax credits and tax abatements could be helpful.

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