

# Don Crichlow & Associates

St. Augustine, Florida

Analysis and Report  
for  
Blue Ocean Motel/Magic Beach Motel  
50 Vilano Rd.  
Vilano Beach, Florida  
By  
Don Crichlow and Associates  
May, 2025

I have been retained by the prospective buyer of the property, located at 50 Vilano Rd. in Vilano Beach, Florida, to conduct an analysis of the structure on this site known as the Magic Beach Motel, as it relates to the Request for Demolition filed by the current owner.

As an Architect, I have been involved with historic properties for over 50 years. I have worked to preserve buildings and also to advocate for their demolition. Some of my projects locally include, the Collector Luxury Inn & Historic Gardens, the Fr. Miguel O'Reilly House Restoration, the Villa Flora Restoration, the Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine Renovation, and the Restoration of St. Benedict's School (St. Joseph Neighborhood Center). I want it understood that I do not "have a dog in this fight" as they say. I am not and will not be involved in providing architectural services for this project. I also want to make it clear that I will not provide an opinion on which way the decision should go concerning the demolition request. My goal is to provide facts and information that may be helpful to the Cultural Resource Review Board in reaching a decision.

I will not go into the historic aspects of this project since that information has been provided by others. Suffice it to say that the building was originally constructed in the early 1950's and over the years has received several renovations in 1962, 1999 and 2012. I will say that the possibility of this property being a candidate for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places is highly unlikely. Because of the modifications, additions and other added architectural features, and the fact that it is not in a historic district nor architect designed, I feel it would be ineligible for consideration.

I will not comment on any structural issues since these have been addressed in the reports by Fisher/Koppenhafer and the structural engineer. I will defer all structural findings to those reports.

The two most obvious issues I noticed during my inspection are: 1) The property appears not to be maintained at a high level. Signs of needed painting and wood rot repair is

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evident, especially in the rear of the building: 2) The finish floor elevations vary but are consistently below 8'0" mean high tide. This puts the property in FEMA Flood Zone X, which is defined as a flood prone area. The current St. Johns County Building Code requires that the finish floor elevation for all new structures in this Zone to be 10'0" minimum.

This existing finish floor elevation poses some serious problems. The options to address this issue are as follows: 1) Leave the finish floor elevation as is and continue to operate the motel in the flood prone area; 2) Raise the finish floor elevation to the required 10'0" elevation; 3) Demolish the existing building and re-build at the required 10'0" level.

Let's consider Option 1. If the building is left at the current elevation, flood insurance will be virtually impossible to obtain. The current owner does not have flood insurance at present. Because of this, there is no incentive to financially invest in the property knowing that a severe storm could wipe out your investment. I believe that is a logical assumption. Any renovations that exceeded 50% of the value of the property would require the finish floor to be raised. This means that the existing motel would continue to operate with minimal maintenance and improvements. This puts the motel at a considerable disadvantage competing with the new hotels on Vilano Rd.

Option 2 would be to renovate and raise the current finish floor level of the building. Raising the building, with its current concrete slab, would be financially unfeasible. I would guess in the millions. The architectural integrity of the structure would be compromised, and it would probably then not meet the requirements for a "Significant Cultural Resource".

Option 3 would be to demolish the building and construct a new building which has been proposed by the developer. This option would create a new building consistent with the new hotels on Vilano Rd. and add to the "new ambiance" of Vilano Beach Town Center. I realize that the Cultural Resource Review Board approved this property as a "Significant Cultural Resource" in 2021. I was not in any way part of that process although I have been retained by the County to provide architectural reviews for several of the new hotels, restaurants and other projects within the Town Center. I would guess that the distinctive architectural features, added as part of the renovations (Art Moderne) in 1999 and 2012, were a determining factor in the decision to designate it as a cultural resource. If the Review Board wishes to preserve these architectural elements, they could be incorporated into a future design as discussed in the Economic Feasibility Analysis by Fishkind Consulting.

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As I stated at the beginning of this report, I am not offering an opinion on which way this should go. I hope I have presented the facts and options available, and I hope this will be of use to the Review Board in making a decision.

Don Crichlow, AIA