

DESIGNATION REPORT

CHAMBERS WEST ARCHAEOLOGICAL ZONE



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**Office of Historic Preservation
Regulatory and Economic Resources
Miami-Dade County**

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

NAME: **Chambers West Archaeological Zone
(8DA1080, 8DA11875)**

LOCATION: Miami-Dade County, Florida (Unincorporated)
Township: 52 South
Range: 40 East
Section: 9

PROPERTY OWNER: International Atlantic LLC

LEGAL DESCRIPTIONS: Chambers West (8DA1080)

A parcel of land lying in the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 9, township 52 South, Range 40 East, in Miami-Dade County, Florida, more particularly described as follows: Commence at the Northwest corner of Section 9-52-40; thence run East, as a basis for bearings, on the North line of said Section 9, for a distance of 900 feet; thence South for a distance of 100 feet, to a Point of Beginning; thence East 375 feet; thence South 450 feet; thence West 375 feet; thence North 450 feet to the Point of Beginning, containing 3.874 acres more or less.

Rising Pepper (8DA11875)

A parcel of land lying in the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 9, township 52 South, Range 40 East, in Miami-Dade County, Florida, more particularly described as follows: Commence at the Northwest corner of Section 9-52-40; thence run East, as a basis for bearings, on the North line of said Section 9, for a distance of 1275 feet; thence South for a distance of 450 feet, to a Point of Beginning; thence East 175 feet; thence South 175 feet; thence West 175 feet; thence North 175 feet to the Point of Beginning, containing .703 acres more or less.

TAX FOLIO NUMBERS: 30-2009-001-0320, 30-2009-001-0170

SIGNIFICANCE: The Chambers West Site (8DA1080) is classified as a habitation/human burial site and Rising Pepper (8DA11875) is considered a low-density artifact scatter/campsite. Both sites are likely to contain a largely intact set of well-preserved archaeological data with the potential to provide significant information about the region's prehistoric aboriginal chronological sequences, cultural patterns, and the environmental conditions under which they developed and evolved. The sites are associated with the Tequesta Tribe and the Glades Culture and may date to the Late Archaic Period. The Chambers West and Rising Pepper sites are two of only a few remaining tree islands in Miami-Dade County. Both are likely to yield important information on the cultural and environmental history of the Everglades, as well as information on burial practices and the health and mortality of prehistoric populations.

The Chambers West Archaeological Zone fulfills Criterion Sec. 16A-10(1)(a)(d),

(a) *Associated with distinctive elements of the cultural, social, political, economic, scientific, religious, prehistoric, paleontological and architectural history that have contributed to the pattern of history in the community, Miami-Dade County, south Florida, the State or the nation.*

(d) *Have yielded, or are likely to yield information in history or prehistory.*

IMPACTS:

Typically, any ground-disturbing activities within designated archaeological zones require application of a Certificate-to-Dig. Most approvals are handled in-house directly by the staff of the Office of Historic Preservation. Proposed substantial impacts require approval by the Miami-Dade County Historic Preservation Board. These would be concurrent with, or in addition to, any applicable cultural resource protection requirements imposed by the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, Bureau of Archaeological Research, and Tribal Agencies. The Chambers West site is known to contain unmarked human remains and the Rising Pepper site is likely to contain unmarked human remains, as similar site types have been known to contain such remains (Carr 2002).

II. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION / SETTING

The Chambers West Archaeological Zone is located in the NW quarter of Section 9, Township 52 South, Range 40 East, approximately 900 feet southeast of the Florida Turnpike and roughly 1000 feet west of Interstate 75 (Fig 1).

The proposed zone encompasses a large (Chambers West) and small (Rising Pepper) Everglades tree island that extend into the surrounding sawgrass prairie. Vegetation on Chambers West (8DA1080) and Rising Pepper (8DA11875) is dominated by the invasive non-native tree species Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*), a condition characteristic of tree islands that have been burned over by wildfire. The lowland area surrounding the sites is dominated by melaleuca (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*), another invasive exotic tree.

The Chambers West Site (8DA1080) is characterized by large midden deposit covering an area approximately 250 feet (SW/NE) by 200 feet (NW/SE). This midden represents the accumulated refuse of centuries of human occupation of the tree island, largely during pre-Columbian times. The midden consists of a highly organic black soil matrix containing animal bone, shell, carbonized wood, pottery fragments, and other artifacts in their original cultural context. The midden deposit is most prominent at the north end (head) of the tree island where it rises approximately 2-3 feet above the surrounding lowland area with gradually decreasing elevations towards the south (tail). Scattered aboriginal ceramic, fragments of marine shell, and animal bone are visible on the surface of the midden and in the root balls of overturned trees in various locations on the site. The eastern boundary of the designated Donna Camp Archaeological Zone is located approximately 100 feet west of Chambers West (Fig 2 and Fig 4).

The Rising Pepper Site (8DA11875) is considered a low-density artifact scatter/campsite and is likely associated with Chambers West (8DA1080) and other existing tree island sites in the area. Although small, the site has the potential to yield material suitable for radiocarbon dating. Further, it is considered eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places due to the potential relationship to nearby tree island sites, the relationship between similar sites outside of the survey area, and the potential for yielding significant information important to South Florida history or prehistory.

The area delineated as the Chambers West Archaeological Zone, as shown in Figures 1 and 3, encompasses both Chambers West and Rising Pepper and is based upon the 2010 Janus and 2015 Archaeological Consultants, Inc. (ACI) cultural resources assessment surveys (CRAS) and a non-intrusive field assessment of the sites, evaluation of aerial photographs, and site models developed and based upon investigations of other tree island sites with similar physical and topographic characteristics. The zone includes a buffer into the surrounding sawgrass prairie to ensure that it captures inundated site components that may lie within the area immediately surrounding the tree island. These components may include lost or discarded cultural materials and mortuary preparation areas and grave sites. These are all commonly used and professionally accepted methods for determining significance and eligibility of archaeological designations. Inclusion of a buffer is also common practice when designating archaeological zones. A future boundary amendment may be possible, through additional coordination with Office of Historic Preservation staff and approval by the Historic Preservation Board.



Figure 1. 2016 Aerial Map Chambers West Archaeological Zone. (Image Credit: Google Earth).

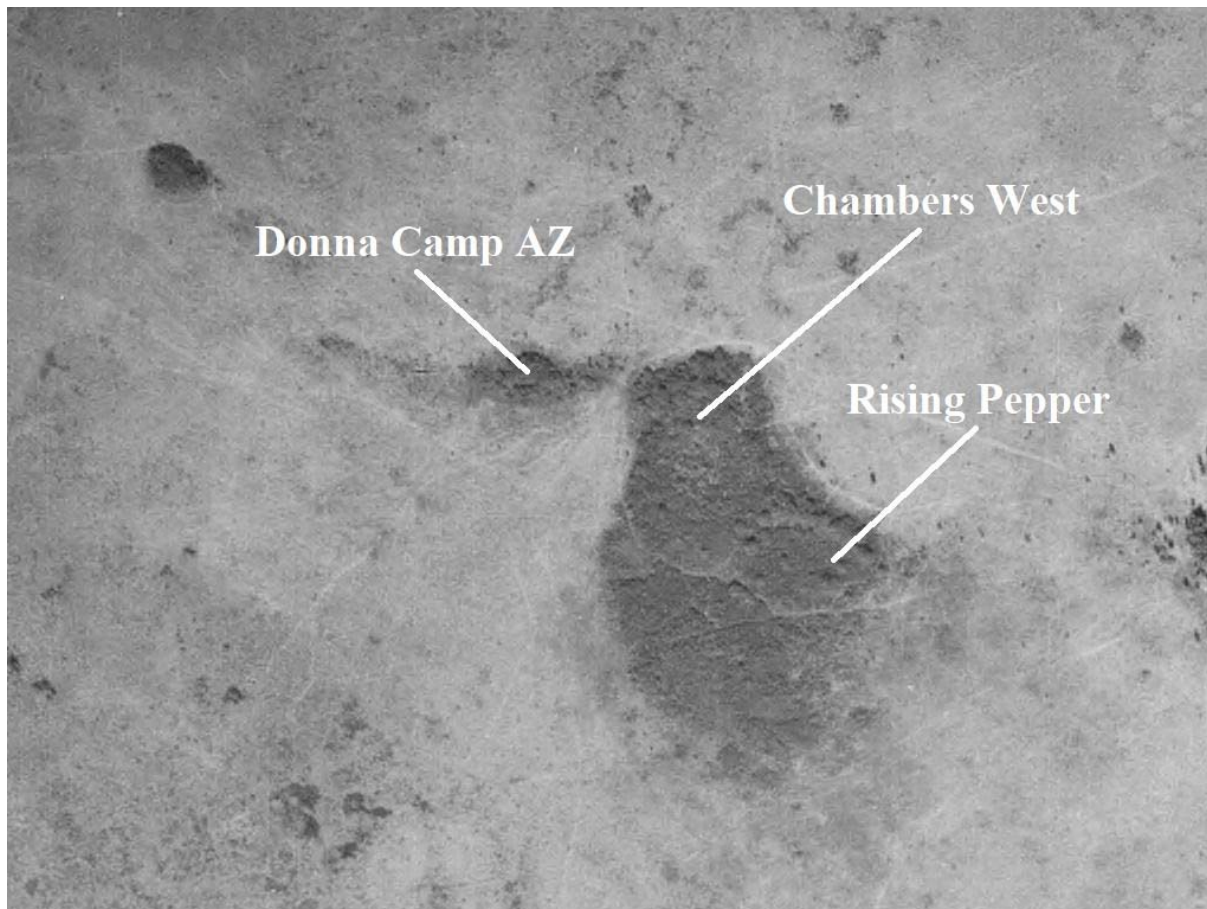


Figure 2. 1963 Chambers West, Rising Pepper, and Donna Camp Archaeological Zone. (Base aerial courtesy of Publication of Archival, Library & Museum Materials, State University Libraries of Florida).

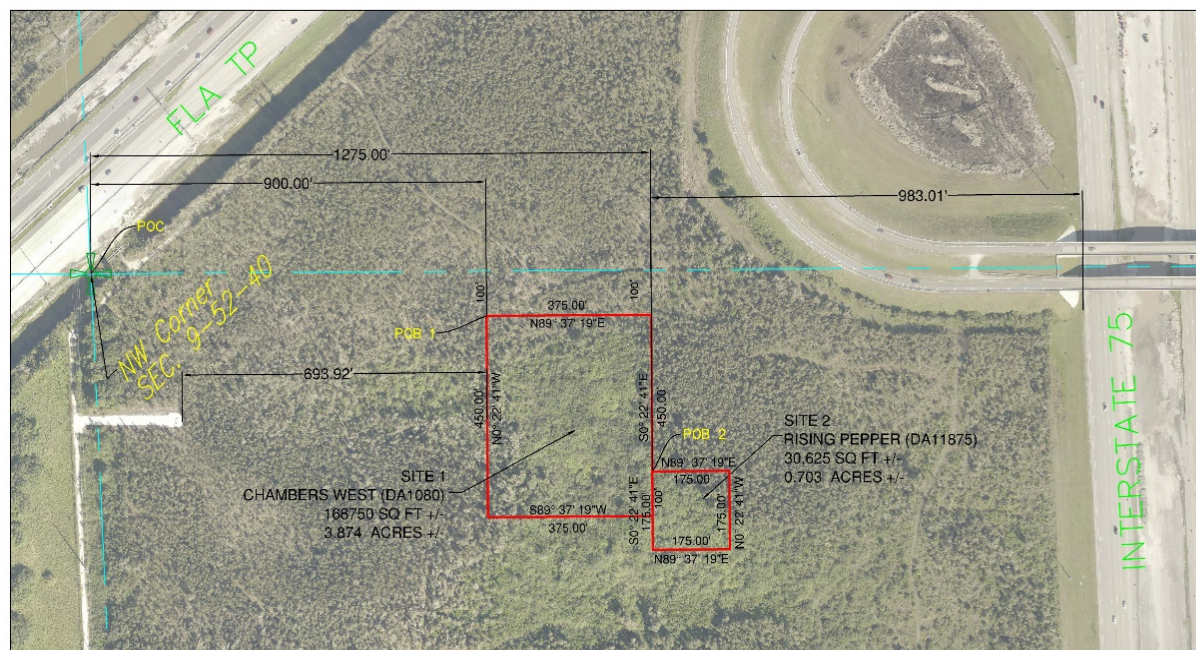


Figure 3. Contemporary Aerial GIS Map Chambers West Archaeological Zone (Chambers West 8DA1080 and Rising Pepper 8DA11875). (Photo Credit: Miami-Dade County Office of Historic Preservation).

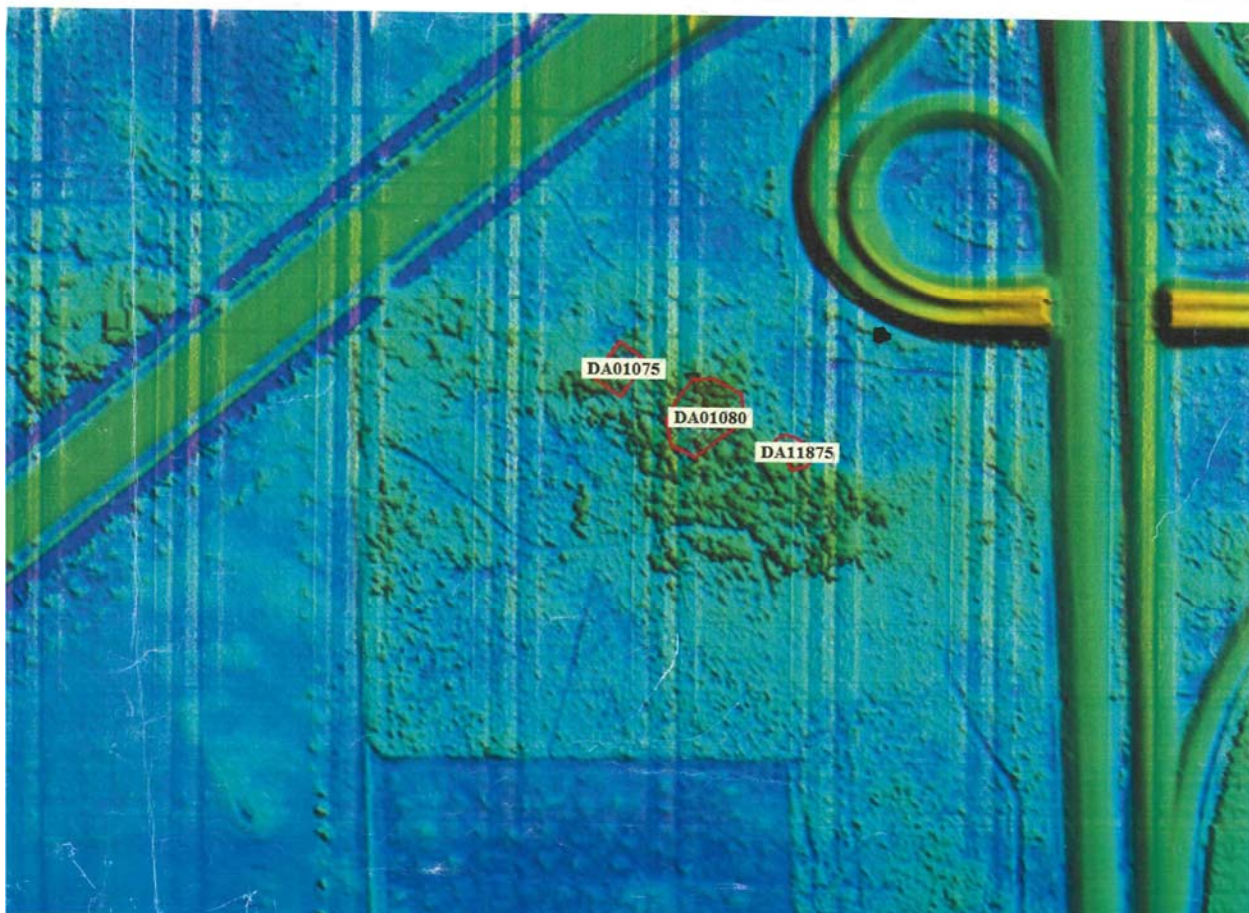


Figure 4. LIDAR Imagery of Chambers West (8DA1080), Rising Pepper (8DA11875), and nearby Donna Camp Archaeological Zone (8DA1075). Green represents higher elevations and blue lower elevations. (Courtesy of Florida Department of State Bureau of Archaeological Research).

III. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Chambers West site (8DA1080) and Donna Camp (8DA1075) were recorded in 1975 by archaeologist Calvin Jones for the Florida Division of Archives, History, and Records Management as part of the Interstate 75 corridor cultural resource survey. The Chambers West site was described as unaltered and in excellent condition. The Donna Camp Archaeological Zone (8DA1075) was designated by the Miami-Dade County Historic Preservation Board in 1982.

In 2010, systematic testing of 8DA1080 was conducted by Janus Research in advance of a proposed Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) interchange and Park and Ride facility of the Homestead Extension of the Florida Turnpike. Human remains were located at 8DA1080; one additional site, Rising Pepper (8DA11875), was recorded during this survey.

A 2015 phase I cultural resource assessment was conducted on behalf of International Atlantic, L.L.C., to locate any cultural resources that could be impacted by the proposed development of a retail and entertainment center known as the American Dream Miami (ACI 2015). This survey reassessed Chambers West, Rising Pepper, and the nearby Donna Camp Archaeological Zone. The 2015 (ACI) survey determined that all three sites were likely “culturally affiliated” and eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Chambers West Archaeological Zone contains two tree island middens, Chambers West (8DA1080) and Rising Pepper (8DA11875). Both sites contain a largely intact set of well-preserved archaeological data with the potential to provide significant information about the region's prehistoric aboriginal chronological sequences, cultural patterns, and the environmental conditions under which they developed and evolved.

The midden deposits present within the Chambers West Archaeological Zone have the potential to yield important information on the cultural and environmental history of the Everglades region. Midden found on tree island sites typically contains aboriginal material culture, including examples of bone, shell and stone tools, ornaments, ceramic fragments, and other artifacts. Well-preserved archaeological materials related to subsistence are especially abundant and include large quantities of animal bone and shell refuse, wood charcoal, and carbonized plant remains. This material is particularly useful in answering questions about aboriginal subsistence practices such as resource selectivity, hunting and fishing methodologies, use of plant resources, and food preparation techniques. The identification of well-preserved plant and animal remains can also provide valuable data about past environmental conditions within the region, information that may be especially relevant to efforts to restore the Everglades.

Former Miami-Dade County Archaeologist, Robert Carr (2002), best defines the significance of tree islands:

These finite archaeological resources are environmental and cultural time capsules that preserve the record of man's adaptation and modifications to a changing Everglades. We have a collective responsibility to increase our knowledge of tree island attributes, both natural and cultural, and to work together to develop management strategies that avoid destroying a precious environment and archaeological record while also meeting the challenges of preserving the Everglades into the 21st Century.

The significance of the Chambers West Archaeological Zone is heightened by the fact that it contains two of the few well preserved tree island sites in Miami-Dade County that remain outside of Everglades National Park. The fate of these remaining sites, including Chambers West and Rising Pepper, is likely to become more uncertain with future development within the region.

The Chambers West Archaeological Zone contains undisturbed black dirt midden sites that are a result of native aboriginal habitation and subsistence practices. The sites are located on Everglades tree islands within an area of undeveloped wetlands, which previous studies have demonstrated to be largely undisturbed. To date, only phase I archaeological boundary surveys have been conducted; therefore, limited definitive information is available concerning cultural chronology. Similar sites in the region have produced evidence of extensive occupation dating from the Late Archaic (3000-500 BC) through the Glades (500 BC-AD 1763) and the Seminole-Miccosukee Period beginning in ca.1825 (Carr 2002), a span of time exceeding 3000 years. The Chambers West site (8DA1080) has yielded human remains and is therefore considered to have a high potential of containing additional human graves. The Rising Pepper site is also likely to contain unmarked human remains, as similar site types have been known to contain such remains (Carr 2002). Based on this author's experience with tree island surveys, unmarked human remains are typically found in midden deposits and within deep solution holes in the underlying bedrock.

IV. CURRENT CONDITION AND PRESERVATION QUALITY

The Chambers West Archaeological Zone is currently in an excellent state of preservation. The preservation quality and significance of the Chambers West (8DA1080) and Rising Pepper (8DA11875) sites make them eligible for designation as a Miami-Dade County Archaeological Zone, as well as for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Preservation quality is a major criterion for determining a site's potential for scientific research (Carr 1981). The Chambers West Archaeological Zone is considered largely intact with little or no subsurface disturbance.

V. CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

The Chambers West Archaeological Zone is significant under the following criteria, as set forth in Section 16A-10 of the Miami-Dade Historic Preservation Ordinance:

(a) Criteria Sec. 16A-10(1)(a), Is associated with distinctive elements of the cultural, social, political, economic, scientific, religious, prehistoric, paleontological and architectural history that have contributed to the pattern of history in the community, Miami-Dade County, South Florida, the State or the nation.

(d) Criteria Sec. 16A-10(1)(d), Have yielded, or are likely to yield information in history or prehistory.

The Chambers West Archaeological Zone meets the requirements of criteria “a” and “d” of Section 16A-10 of the Miami-Dade County Historic Preservation Code and is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

VI. PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS/DEVELOPMENT

As per Section 16A-10(4), designation reports shall address, to the extent applicable, any projected or proposed development plans. The proposed Chambers West Archaeological Zone is located within a portion of the proposed American Dream Miami entertainment and retail complex property. Designation of the proposed Chambers West Archaeological Zone would be limited to the discrete areas identified by the legal descriptions set forth in this report and would not preclude development of the overall property outside of those discrete boundaries. If the proposed designation is approved, however, further coordination and modification would be required as to one area of the conceptual plans for the development, because that one area is encompassed within the boundaries of the zone. To date, no construction plans have been submitted to Miami-Dade County for permit review.

VII. STANDARDS FOR CERTIFICATE TO DIG

If designated, the Chambers West Archaeological Zone would be subject to preservation requirements as set forth in Chapter 16A of the Miami-Dade County Historic Preservation Ordinance. These would be concurrent with, or in addition to, cultural resource protection requirements currently imposed by the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, Bureau of Archaeological Research, and Tribal Agencies. Due to the high probability for locating additional unmarked human burials in the zone, *Florida Statute Section 872.05* (Florida's Unmarked Human Burial Act) and *Florida Administrative Code Chapter 1A-44* (Procedures for Reporting and Determining Jurisdiction over Unmarked Human Burials) shall apply, regardless of the proposed designation of the sites.

VIII. STAFF EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION

Staff has conducted site visits to the Chambers West and Rising Pepper sites and has determined that the Chambers West Archaeological Zone meets the objective criteria for designation. This evaluation is based on the cultural context of the sites, as they are representative of centuries of human occupation of tree islands once found throughout the Everglades and are likely to yield significant information on the cultural and environmental history of the Everglades, as well as information on burial practices and the health and mortality of prehistoric populations. Based on the cultural context, and the application of two objective criteria for designation, Staff recommends that the Chambers West (DA1080) and Rising Pepper (DA11875) sites be designated as a Miami-Dade County Archaeological Zone.

IX. REFERENCES CITED

Archaeological Consultants Inc. (ACI)

2015 *Cultural Resource Assessment Survey of the American Dream Miami Property, Miami-Dade County, Florida*. On file, Miami Dade County Office of Historic Preservation.

Carr, Robert S.

1981 *Dade County Archaeological Survey Final Report*. On file, Miami Dade County Office of Historic Preservation.

Carr, Robert S.

2002 The Archaeology of Everglades Tree Islands. In *Tree Islands of the Everglades*, edited by Sklar and Van der Valk, pp. 187-206. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Boston.

Janus Research

2010 *I-75 Project Development and Environmental Study from State Road 826 to North of Florida Turnpike (HEFT), Miami-Dade County*. On file, Miami Dade County Office of Historic Preservation.