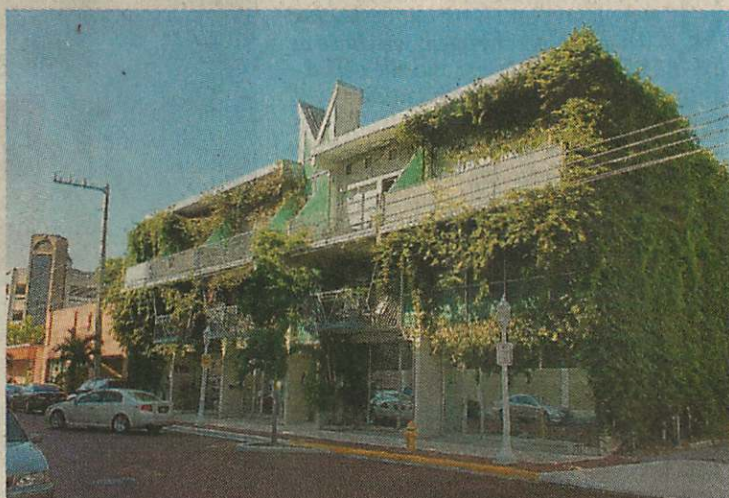


FORT MYERS ARCHITECTURE



A 1961 telephone company building in downtown Fort Myers. It has the space age styling of the day. Gundersen & Wilson was the architect.



A contemporary residential building in Fort Myers. Gundersen & Wilson designed the first floor, with the top two floors added by Mike Sheeley.



Gundersen & Wilson designed this building, where Joyce Owens has her office. She has researched the city's midcentury modern buildings.



The city's old post office, built in 1933, is now being used as an arts facility. In front are new sculptures cut with the Latin names of local flora.

Beyond Edison and Ford

Story and Photos By HAROLD BUBIL *Real Estate Editor*

Fort Myers is not an A-list destination for architecture buffs, but Joyce Owens feels it is worth at least a side trip. Those making the *petit tour* of Sarasota to see its midcentury architecture — or even locals looking for an unusual day trip — might also make the drive south to Sanibel Island to see Paul Rudolph's 1953 Walker Guest House, recently voted the state's top house of the past 100 years in an online poll conducted by the American Institute of Architects.

While passing through Fort Myers, suggests Owens, archi-tourists may wish to take in a few modernist delights in a town best known for the century-old winter estates of Thomas Edison and Henry Ford.

"There really is more here than you would imagine," said Owens, an architect who has a "bay" in a lawyer's downtown office that she remodeled. So she has become something of a promoter, extolling Lee County's architectural virtues in her weekly column in the News-Press. Fort Myers has a delightful, historic downtown section, dotted with trendy lunch bistros and nightclubs, that recently has been revitalized. But it does not have a concentrated section of modernist architecture, such as Lido Shores in Sarasota.

But if you know where to look . . .

During a recent auto tour, Owens proudly pointed out a classic early-1950s house, by Ralph Twitchell, perhaps during his partnership with Paul Rudolph, that has Ocala block walls topped by clerestory windows and a flat roof. "But you have to promise not to write about it, because the owner is very private. Nobody knows it is here." OK, we promise to leave out the details.

Fortunately, that house is not alone among interesting gems in the Historic Riverside neighborhood west of downtown.