

MIAMI SHORES / EL PORTAL

A MASTER REDEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE NEXT MILLENNIUM



A Citizen's Masterplan

CHARRETTE DRAFT REPORT

For Review by the Village Commissions, Staff and Citizens

May 18, 1999

TREASURE COAST
REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

FLORIDA DEPT. OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
An *Eastward Ho!* Initiative

SOUTH FLORIDA
REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

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FOREWORD

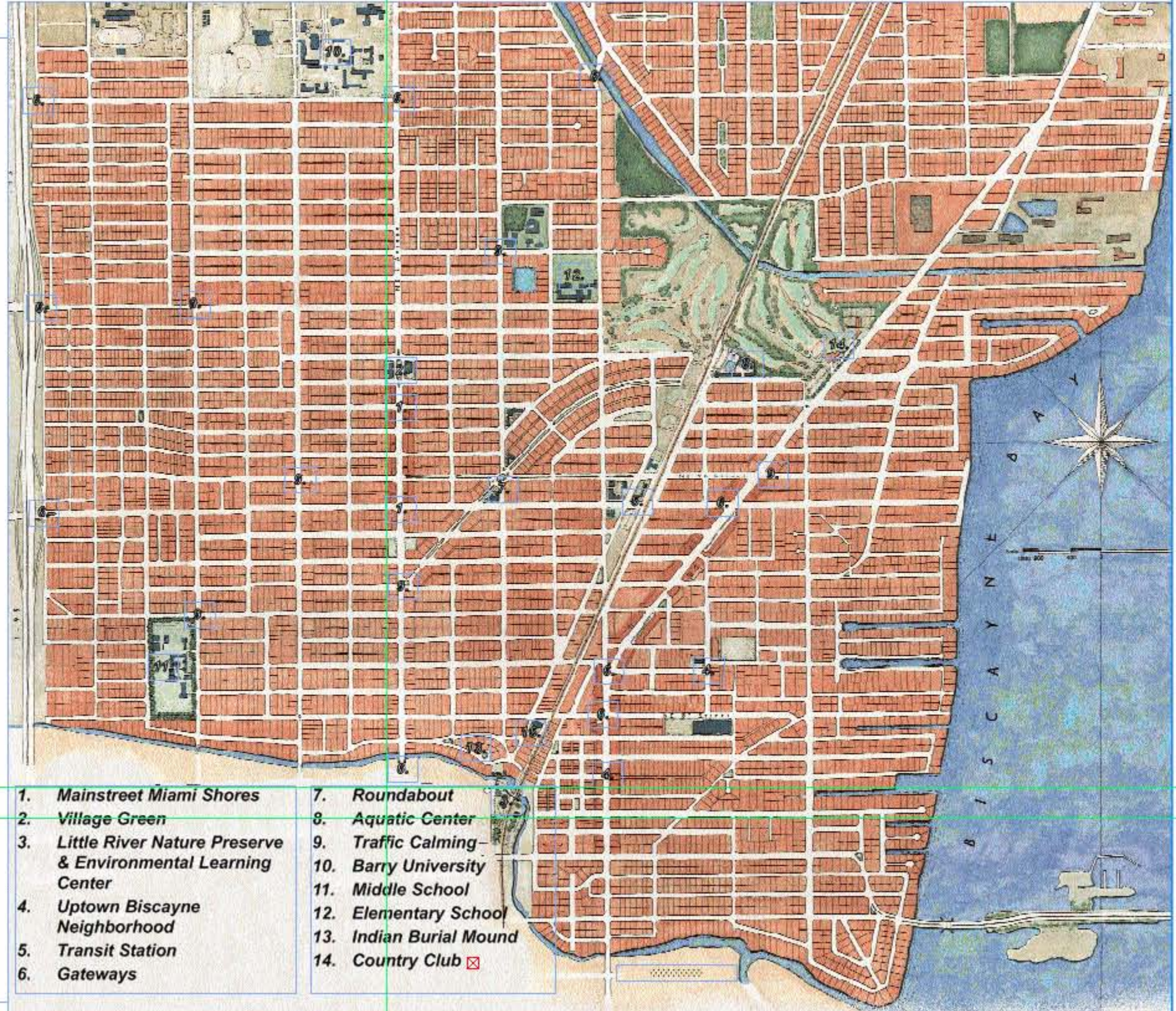
THE TWO TOWNS OF MIAMI SHORES AND EL PORTAL ARE INEXTRICABLY LINKED. Together, they tell the story of South Florida.

Collectively they share an interconnected, common street network with similar housing stock from the same era. These adjacent towns are also located along the dual spines of the historic Flagler Railroad (Florida East Coast Railroad) and Dixie Highway (Biscayne Boulevard). But this is not to say that they are identical or even ordinary.

The history of El Portal stretches back to the earliest days of Florida's settlements and their connection to the land and water. Miami Shores mirrors the enthusiastic growth of early 20th Century Florida. Each town offers something to the partnership which the other lacks. El Portal brings with it the still lush and relatively intact historic Little River and its character of quiet isolation. Miami Shores brings its still viable downtown street, NE Second Avenue, and a wealth of community and civic facilities and opportunities. Ultimately it is their differences that truly tie them together.

The redevelopment plan for the villages was created by the citizens to strengthen those ties. The plan is a series of ideas for the long-term improvement of both communities. The ideas proposed complement each other and should be applied together.

Right: The masterplan of Miami Shores and El Portal, drawn deliberately without their common border, shows the seamless-ness of their urban form. What the Masterplan cannot show is the distinct characteristics of the two towns and their residents. Rather than dividing the towns into isolated entities, these differences are tremendous opportunities that can be harnessed to create a strong ☒



- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. Mainstreet Miami Shores | 7. Roundabout |
| 2. Village Green | 8. Aquatic Center |
| 3. Little River Nature Preserve & Environmental Learning Center | 9. Traffic Calming |
| 4. Uptown Biscayne Neighborhood | 10. Barry University |
| 5. Transit Station | 11. Middle School |
| 6. Gateways | 12. Elementary School |
| | 13. Indian Burial Mound |
| | 14. Country Club ☒ |

The Miami Shores/El Portal Redevelopment Master Plan is the citizen's view of the ultimate growth and form of their villages. This document was prepared by the staff of the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council, with the assistance of the South Florida Regional Planning Council at the joint request of Miami Shores and El Portal and the Miami Shores Chamber of Commerce.

The main ideas were developed during a design charrette in November of 1998. The charrette was conducted at the Miami Shores Community Center on November

8th and was well attended by a cross section of the the communities. Work continued on the plan through the next week at the El Portal Village Hall.

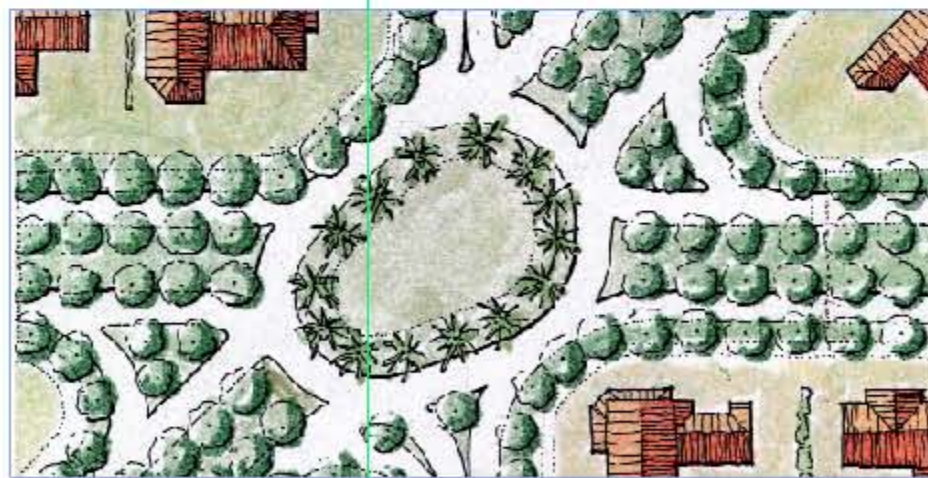
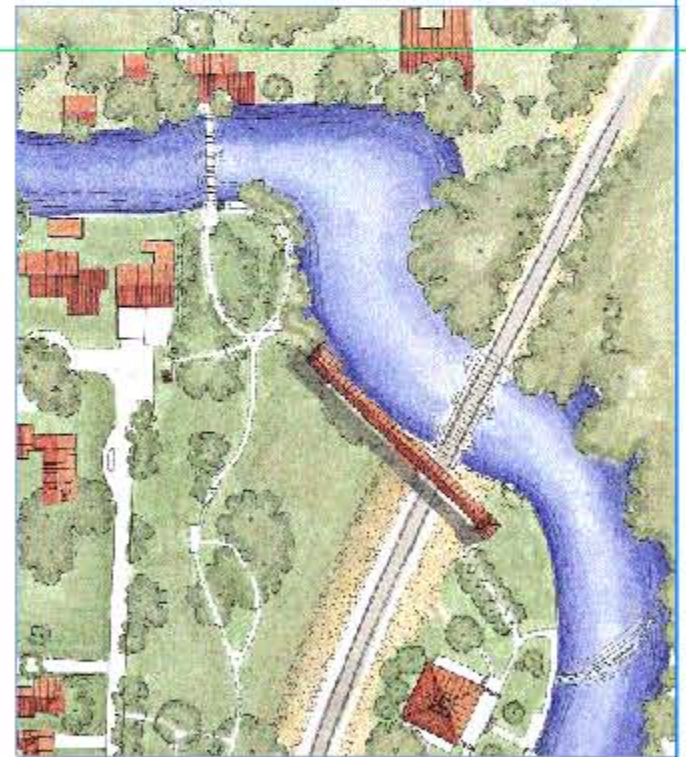
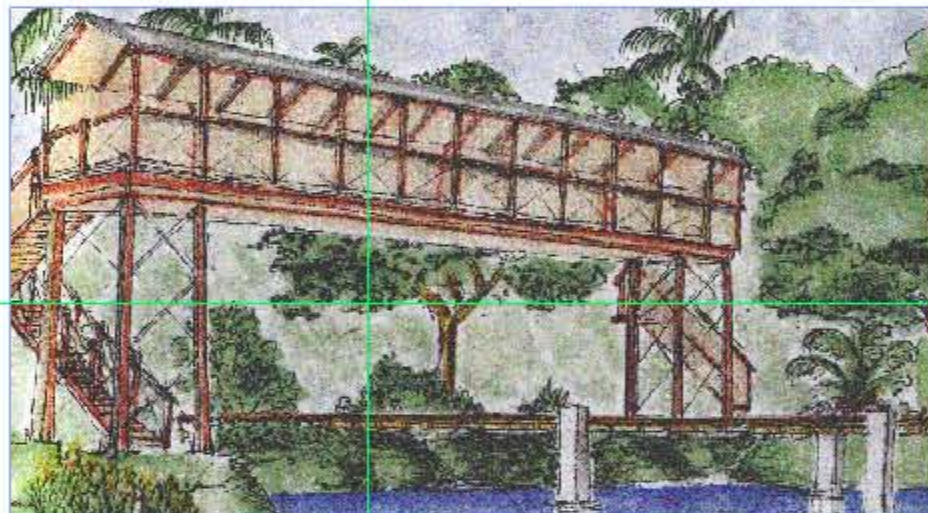
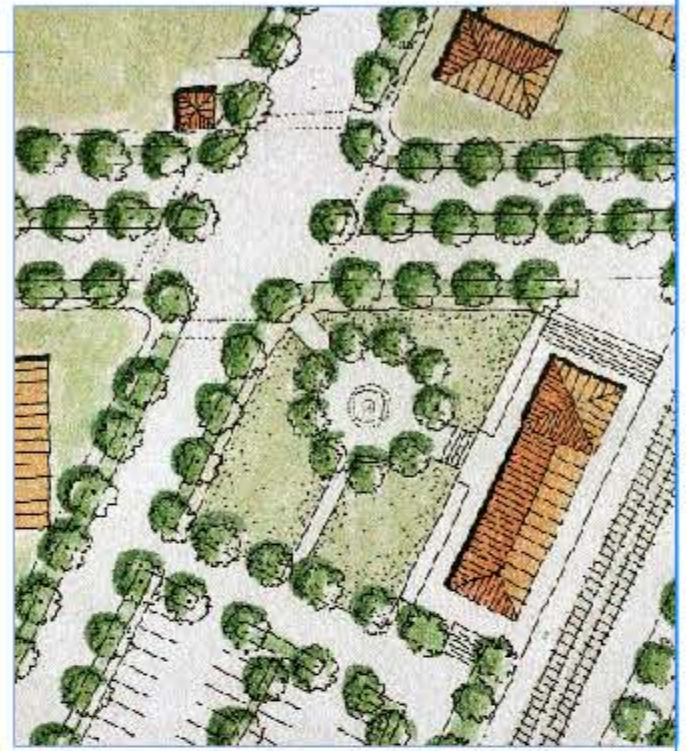
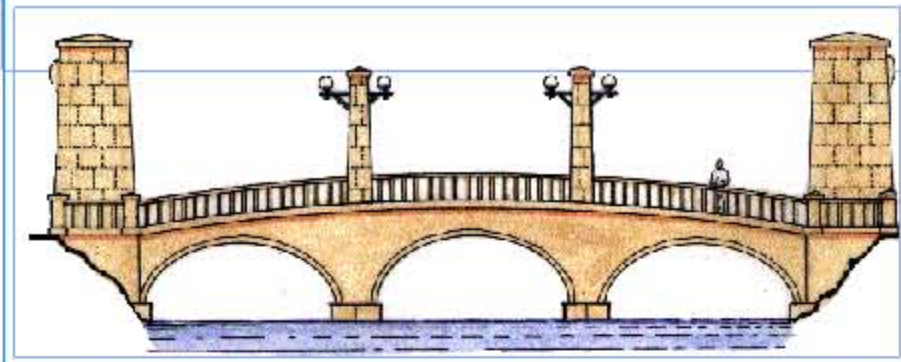
The Citizens, with the assistance of a professional team of designers, studied the many problems faced by their communities and proposed specific solutions. This document presented to the Villages in May 1999 is the first draft of the Master Plan for the area. It should be studied and reviewed carefully. A final draft by the Villages will take into account further citizen and professional input.



The main conclusions of the Masterplan are:

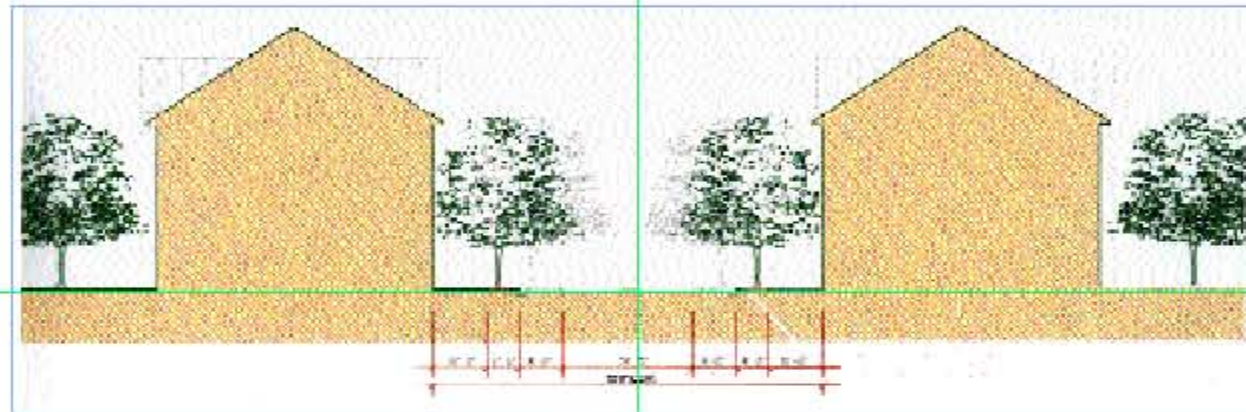
- **Support the commonality of the two villages.**
Make efforts to eliminate separation of resources and promote cooperation
- **Redevelop Downtown Miami Shores**
Turn NE Second Avenue back into Mainstreet
- **Establish a Nature Preserve on the banks of the Little River**
Protect a vulnerable piece of South Florida's history for education.
- **Enhance Gateways and Calm Traffic**
Reinforce community identity and explore alternatives to barricades.
- **Redevelop Biscayne Boulevard**
Develop its function as a mutual gateway and commercial resource.
- **Improve 87th Street**
Make the street more pedestrian friendly.
- **Redevelop the Little Farm trailer park neighborhood**
Anticipate it's future as part of the new Biscayne Boulevard.
- **Anticipate passenger service on the FEC Railway**
Designate a site and design and build a multi-use train station.
- **Improve the network of Public Spaces**
Create a central village green as a gateway into the rejuvenated downtown.

...These are the keys to the overall success of the plan.



Specific Proposals: Miami Shores/El Portal Masterplan

RECONSTRUCT NE 2ND AVENUE AS A TRADITIONAL MAINSTREET The long-term future of NE 2nd Avenue is as a two-lane, tree lined street with wide sidewalks, parallel parking and a mix of uses along its edges. The quality of future development on NE 2nd Avenue will rely largely upon how well you rebuild the street. This is *critical*, and will determine the ultimate character of downtown Miami Shores. Fortunately, aside from constructing sewers, expanded development on mainstreet will not require increasing building heights, constructing parking structures or any other radical infrastructure improvements. A significant amount of expansion capacity already exists within the four story "volume" already available to most mainstreet buildings. Simple, traditional "streetwall" buildings



that come right up to the sidewalk, filling out the fronts of their lots, are in fact the best suited and most flexible building types for stable, thriving downtowns. Some buildings may be expanded vertically, while others may be rebuilt entirely. Others, such as the Shores Theater, may not be touched at all.

Parking – depending on the way buildings mix uses internally – can be accommodated on land already allocated. The Village could help make downtown parking even more efficient by helping to coordinate "shared parking" amongst downtown landowners. Moreover, introducing apartments above shops and offices makes efficient use of a building's "envelope" while increasing tax revenue and creating a true "24-hour" town, while drawing little on existing parking facilities.





CHANGE YOUR CODES Development and design guidelines will direct - not merely control - development and growth in downtown Miami Shores. Examples on the following pages show options for building configurations based on parking capacities and diagrams which translate those options into clear and unambiguous graphic codes. These codes can be written as broadly or as restrictively as the Villages deems appropriate. If done correctly, these documents will be self-explanatory, requiring a minimum of interpretation.

Well executed design guidelines ensures that the intent of the Masterplan is carried out, helping to avoid unexpected results. Avoiding unexpected results reassures nearby homeowners that their property values will remain stable and predictable. Likewise, predictability is as much a factor for developers as is location. Prospective developers and tenants often consider community sentiments when evaluating a project's viability. Knowing limits up-front helps also minimize risks associated with public permitting and enables more accurate planning.

MAINSTREET DIAGRAMS

Diagram 1:
No extra parcels needed to accommodate parking.

3 Story Single Use Building: 19,000 sf. 34 parking available
Floor Area Ratio: 1.27

3 floors: Residential 18 units @ 1,050 sf. 27 req'd.

2 Story Mixed Use Building: 12,650 sf. 34 parking available
FAR: 0.85

1st Floor: Retail 6,325 sf. 25 req'd.
 2nd Floor: Residential 6 units @ 1,050 sf. 9 req'd.

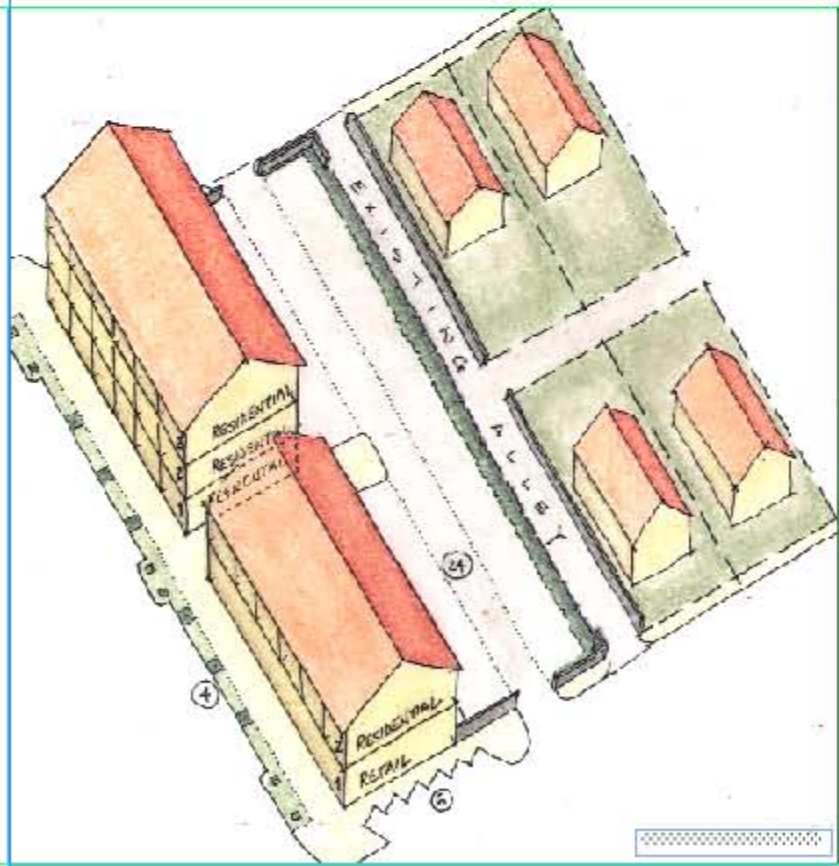


Diagram 2:
One building parcel taken from residential area.

4 Story Mixed Use Building: 25,300 sf. 54 parking available
FAR: 1.13

1st floor: Retail 6,325 sf. 25 req'd.
 2nd, 3rd, 4th fl: Residential 18 units @ 1,050 sf. 27 req'd.

3 Story Mixed Use Building: 19,000 sf. 54 parking available
FAR: 0.84

1st floor: Retail 6,325 sf. 25 req'd.
 2nd floor: Office 6,325 sf. 19 req'd.
 3rd floor: Residential 6 units @ 1,050 sf. 9 req'd.

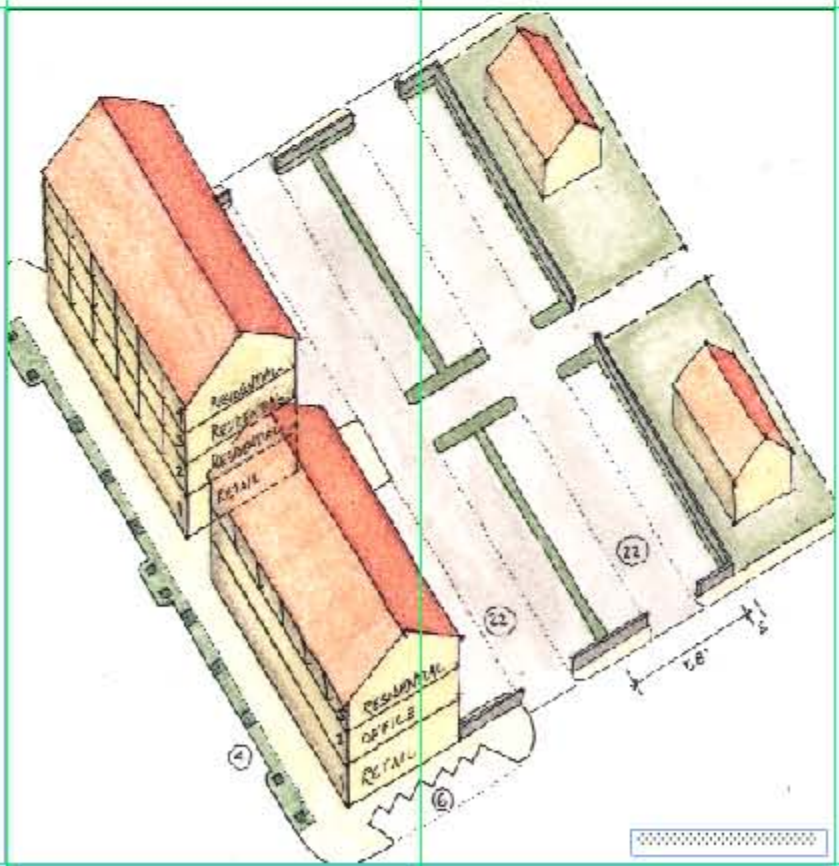
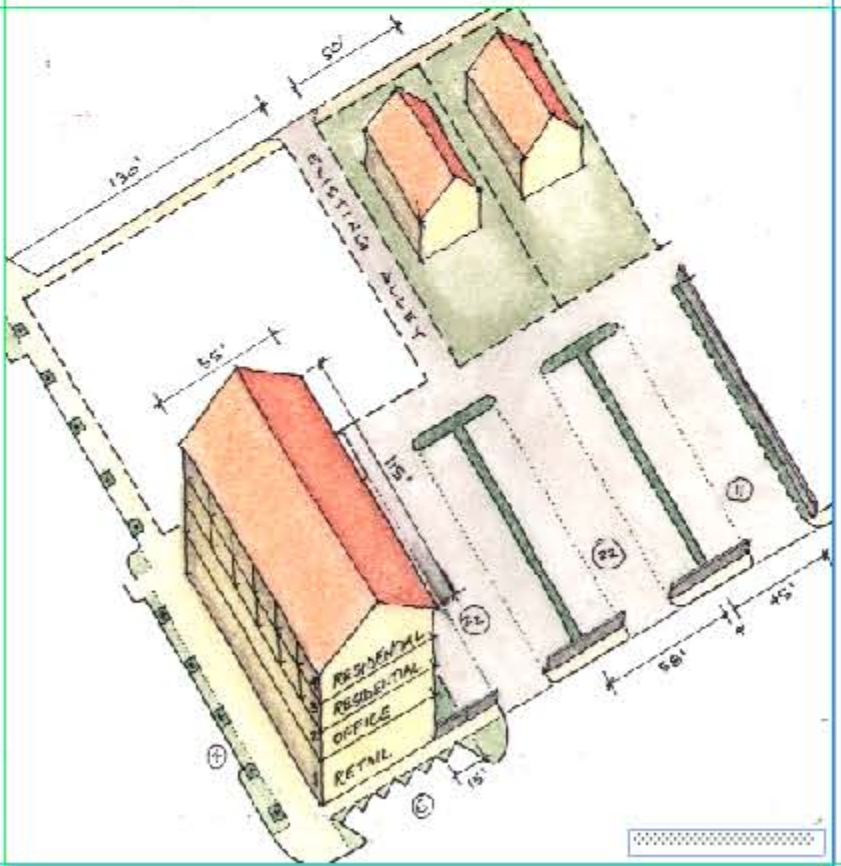


Diagram 3:
Two building parcels taken from residential area.

4 Story Mixed Use Building: 25,300 sf. 65 parking available
FAR: 0.90

1st floor: Retail 6,325 sf. 25 req'd.
 2nd floor: Office 6,325 sf. 19 req'd.
 3rd, 4th fl: Residential 12 units @ 1,050 sf. 18 req'd.



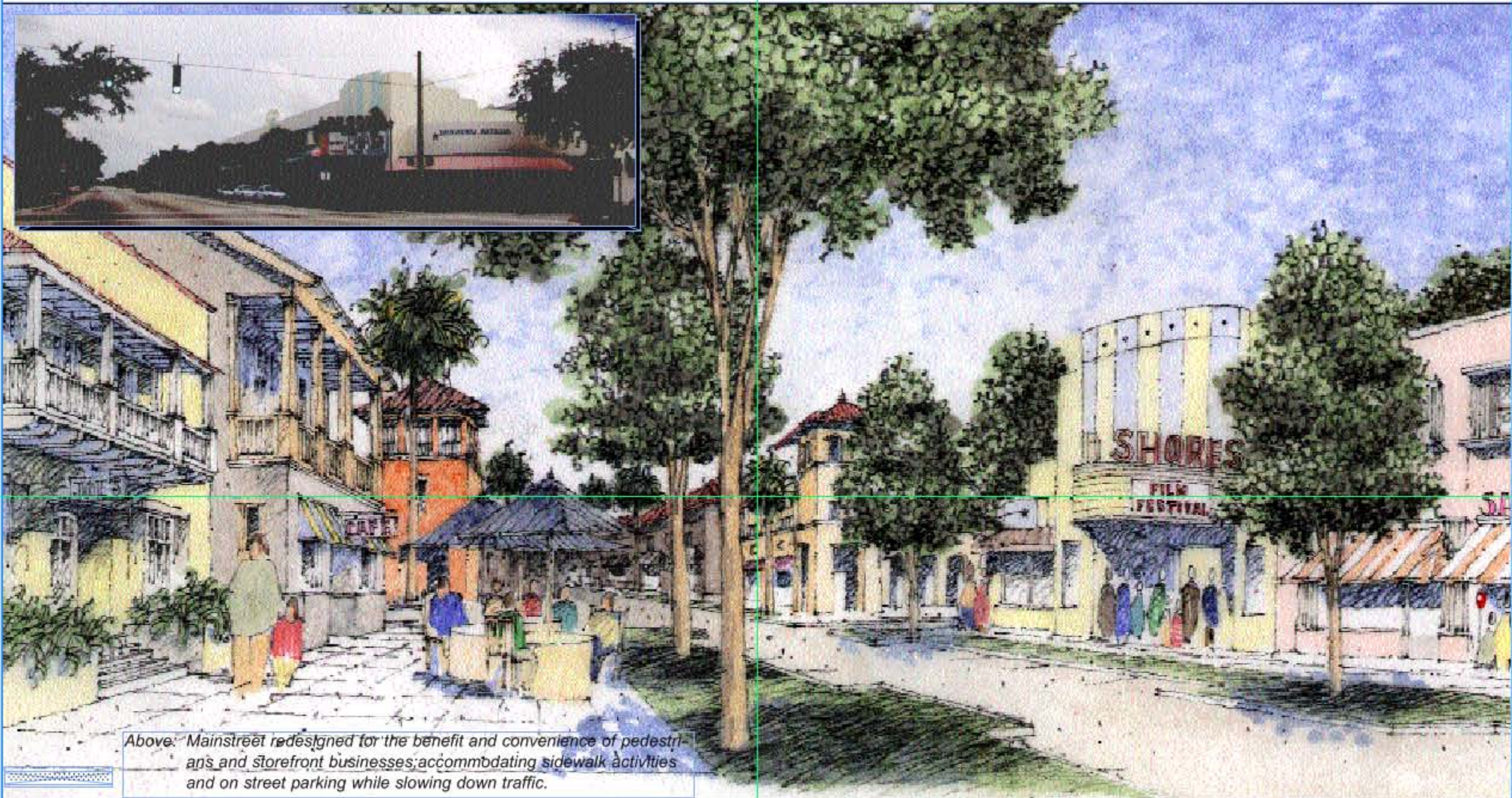
ESTABLISH NEW DESIGN GUIDELINES Clear and precise building and street dimension ensure that design goals can be understood and adhered to by developers, engineers and planners. The diagram of NE 2nd Avenue, above, shows travel lanes, parallel parking lanes, planting strips sidewalks and building placement along a typical section of the Mainstreet. Placement standards like those indicated here clearly show the important regulating dimensions of Mainstreet buildings, such as building heights, placement and allowable mix of uses.

<p>Height</p>		<p>The Building shall be no more than 20 ft to 16 stories. Any sign building or extending shall be no more than 10 ft to 10' maximum parapet.</p> <p>Any setback portion of the lot frontage shall have a fence or garden wall, between 3 and 5 ft in height, wall along it.</p> <p>The ground floor elevation shall be no more than 6 inches above the finished sidewalk elevation.</p> <p>The ground floor shall have at least 12 ft clear height. The second story shall have at least 8 ft clear height.</p>
<p>Siting</p>		<p>The required Primary Building Line (PBL) is 6 meters off the Property Side lot line.</p> <p>The maximum Open Side Setback is 6 meters.</p> <p>Where multiple units are built together the setback back to the street.</p> <p>Therapeutic, parking for vehicles, loading, loading, etc., use the Architectural Code, page 11 shall be kept within the designated area.</p>
<p>USES</p>		<p>A Front, depth between 8 and 11 ft and width at least 40% of the lot width, is required along the street building line (SBL) Architectural Code, page 11</p> <p>A Front Yard Fence, 30 to 40 in height, is required along the street frontage and any remaining lot lines for at least 10 ft beyond the Required Building Line.</p> <p>Accessory Dwelling, maximum 8 ft in height, may use the remainder of the property (see Architectural Code, page 11)</p>

Synsfracted Building length is relative to the street frontage elevation from main drive frontage for vehicle design. Floor height is smaller in the adjacent parcel. Lot 20 ft wide lots have 6 m side setback and the pit is the side lot line. Primary Side Mainstreet will apply.

Siting The building shall occupy only the indicated area of the lot. No part of a building, including overhanging eaves, porch, deck, and other light and/or roofed garden structure may occupy the remaining area.

Corner lot The street frontage for corner lots is back front and side street.
Re: Frontage Requirements, corner lots have the option, along their side street, to substitute a Primary Fence for the Front Yard Fence beginning no more than 10 ft from the building corner of the frontage street.



Above: Mainstreet redesigned for the benefit and convenience of pedestrians and storefront businesses; accommodating sidewalk activities and on street parking while slowing down traffic.

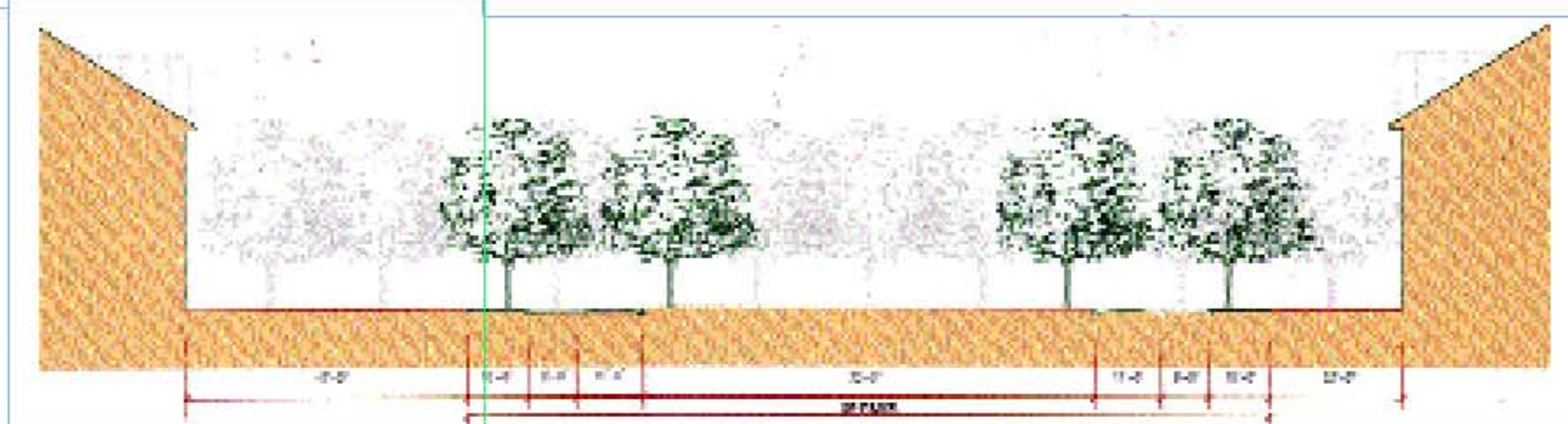
IMPROVE MAINSTREET INFRASTRUCTURE Providing public sewer service on NE 2nd Avenue is critical to allow Mainstreet to realize its full potential. Downtown development is extremely limited by the outdated individual septic systems currently in place. The installation of sewers along NE 2nd Avenue will enable the re-introduction of true downtown uses such as restaurants, cafe's, shops and stores as well as improved office space and residential apartments. To support this new growth, the downtown

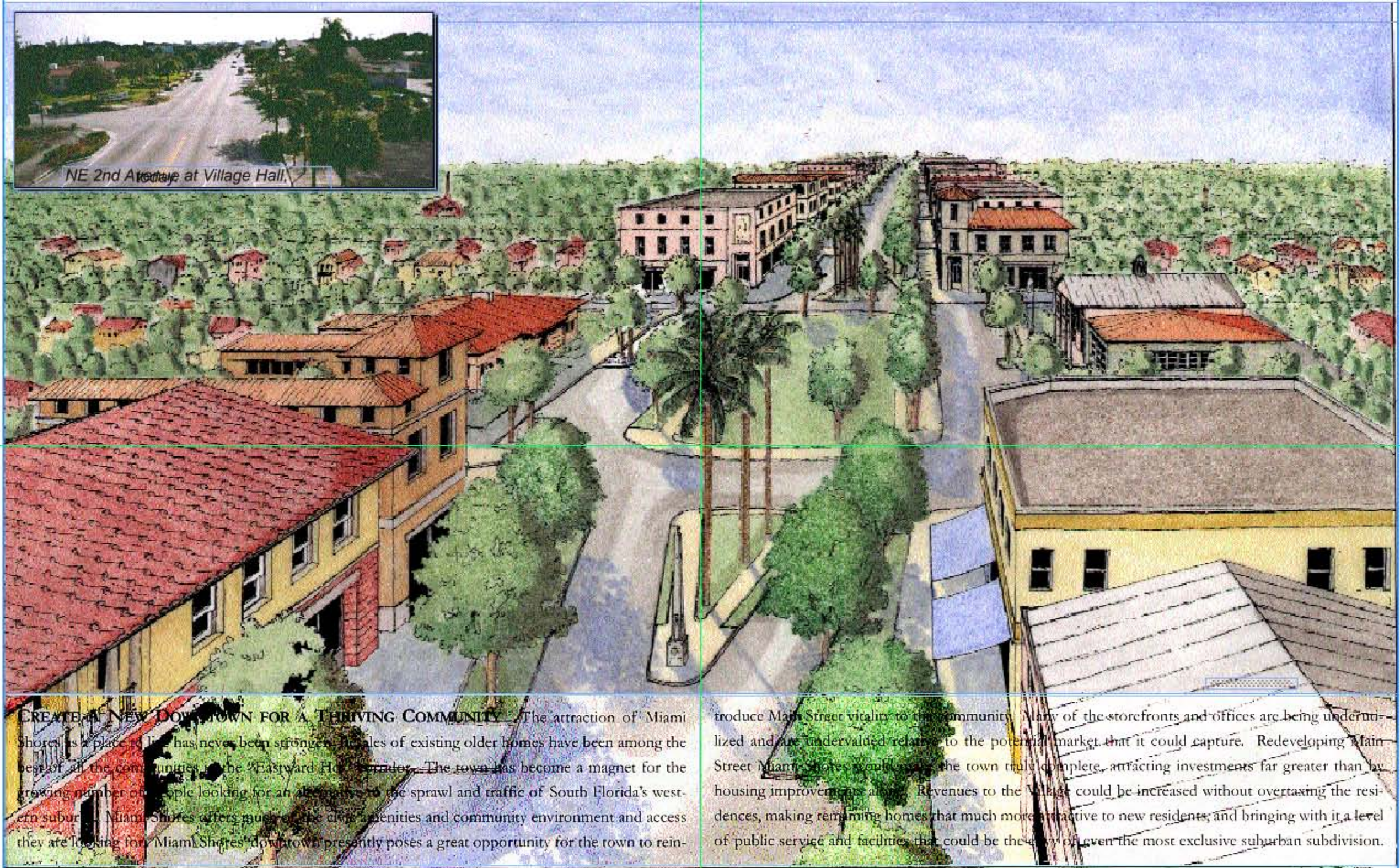
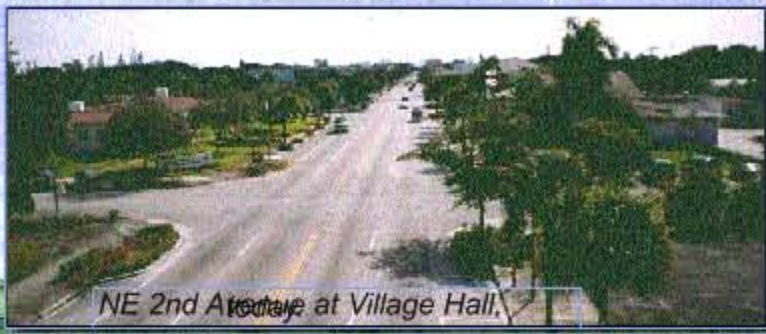
streetscape also needs to be improved. Reducing the speed of traffic on NE 2nd Avenue is critical to enhancing the mainstreet environment there. Through careful design, reducing traffic volumes will not be necessary. Larger sidewalks with better shade trees and narrower travel lanes to calm traffic, combined with proscriptive design guidelines controlling the architectural character of new development, will all help to create an atmosphere attractive to investors and a downtown the community can be proud of.

CONSTRUCT A NEW VILLAGE GREEN

Set between two of Miami Shores' most important civic buildings, Village Hall and the Brockway Memorial Library, is a new village green. The Village Green is both ceremonial and functional. It

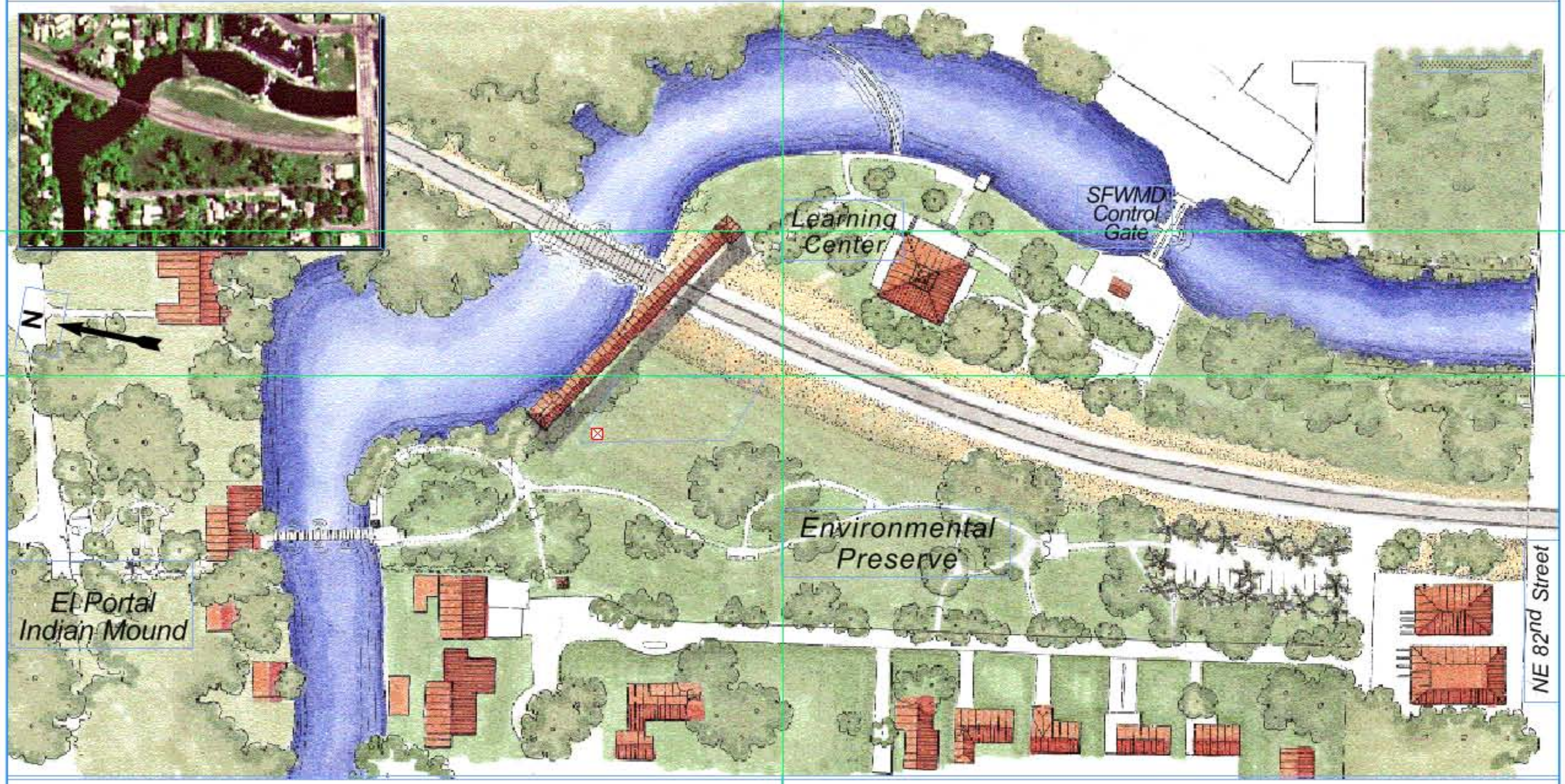
marks the figural center-point of the town and creates a gateway into downtown. It also serves to calm traffic entering downtown as well as those about to pass through into nearby residential districts.





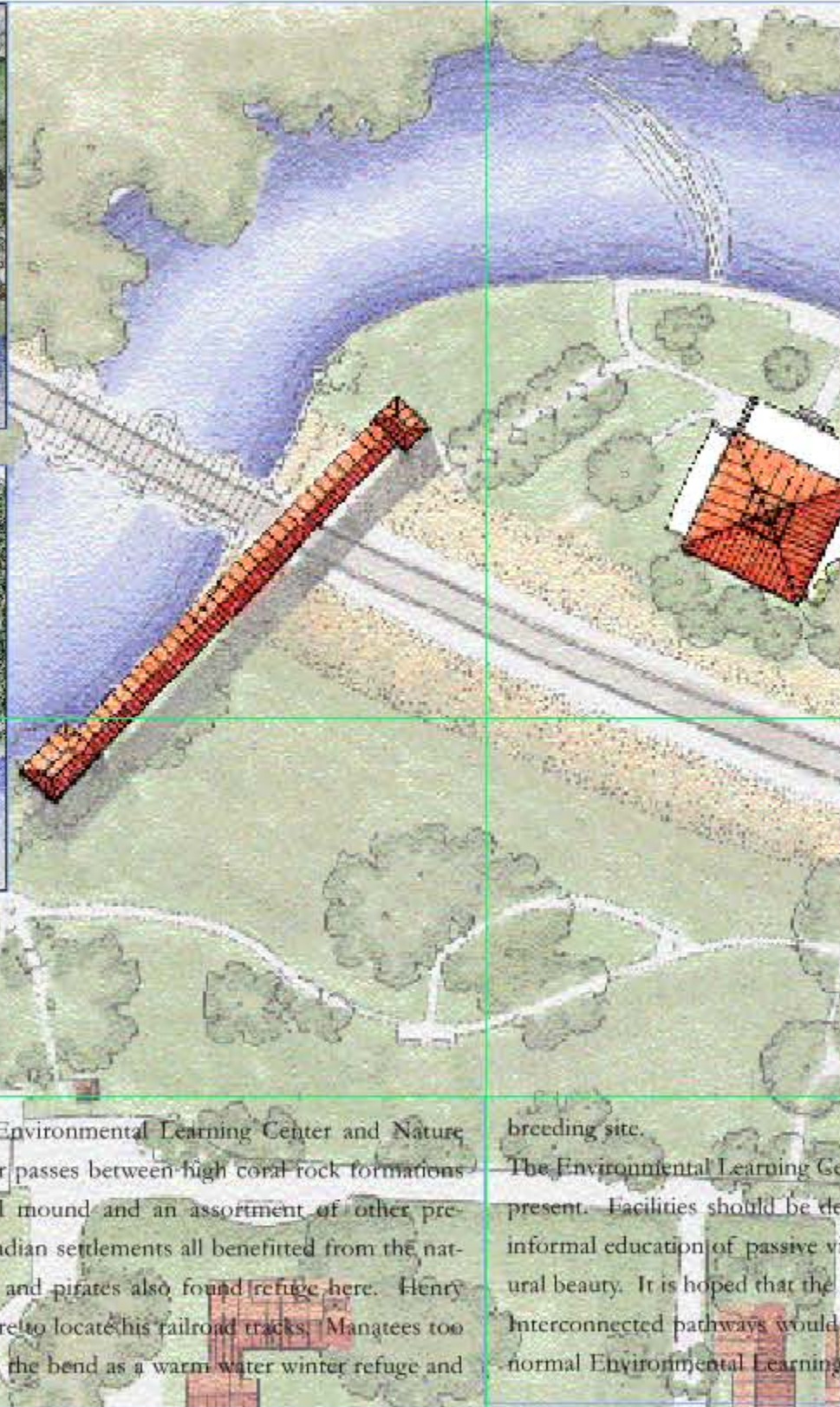
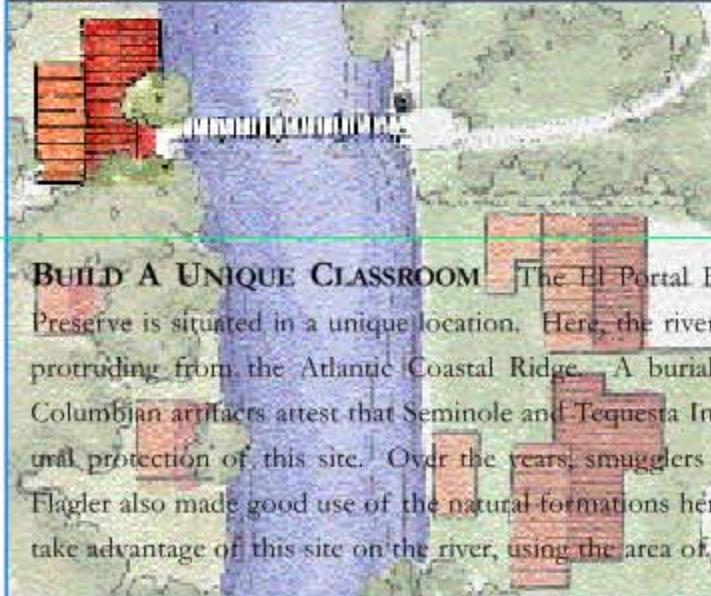
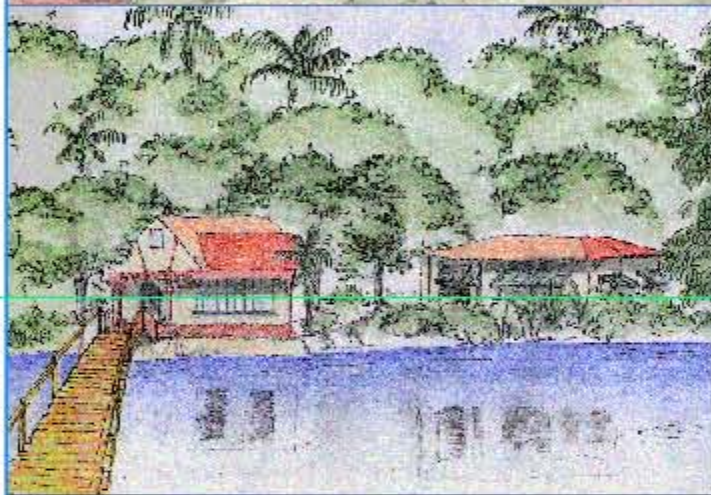
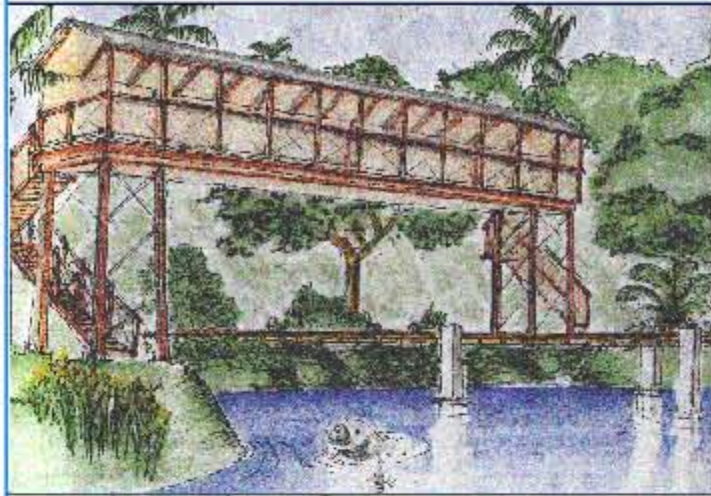
CREATE A NEW DOWNTOWN FOR A THRIVING COMMUNITY The attraction of Miami Shores is a place to live has never been stronger. Sales of existing older homes have been among the best of all the communities in the "Eastward Ho" corridor. The town has become a magnet for the growing number of people looking for an alternative to the sprawl and traffic of South Florida's western suburbs. Miami Shores offers much of the city amenities and community environment and access they are looking for. Miami Shores' downtown presently poses a great opportunity for the town to rein-

roduce Main Street vitality to the community. Many of the storefronts and offices are being underutilized and are undervalued relative to the potential market that it could capture. Redeveloping Main Street Miami Shores would allow the town to complete, attracting investments far greater than by housing improvements alone. Revenues to the Village could be increased without overtaxing the residences, making remaining homes that much more attractive to new residents, and bringing with it a level of public service and facilities that could be the envy of even the most exclusive suburban subdivision.

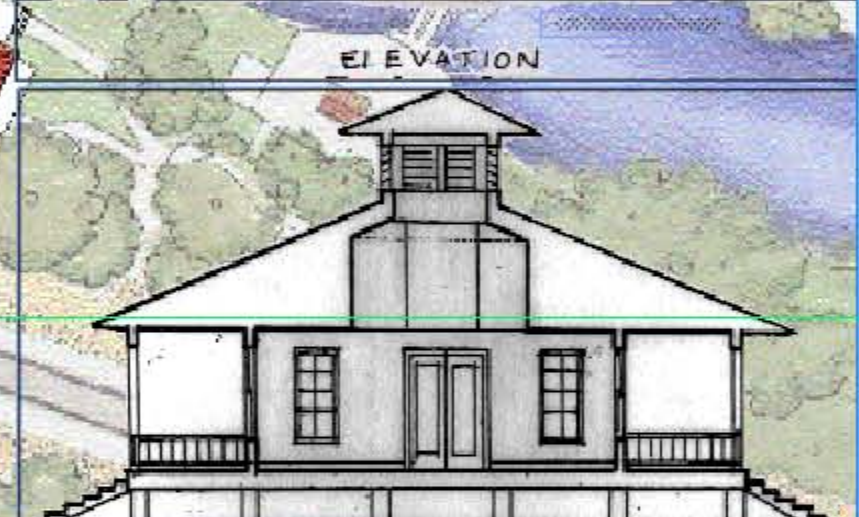


ESTABLISH AN OASIS IN THE MIDST OF URBANITY The Village of El Portal is unique in this very urbanized region. The heart of this community is not in its civic buildings or other large institutions, but in its river. Almost unknown to even nearby residents, the Little River flows along the length of El Portal, to defining its character even today. Located on a scenic bend in the river, the Little River Nature Preserve and Environmental Learning Center will be a window onto geologic and cultural history. Currently, the largest part of the site, on the south bank of the river in the City of Miami is unoccupied and somewhat degraded, rendering it vulnerable to criminal activity and misuse.

It is, however, also a place of rest and refuge for groups of manatee that live in the region. That function will be enhanced as a nature preserve. It will also serve as a center of education for all aspects of its special estuarine ecosystem. Connections back into the neighborhoods as well as new pedestrian bridges will allow the preserve to be well monitored. Establishing stewardship of the land under the direction of a not-for-profit foundation will ensure it's continuance as a cultural and community amenity for the foreseeable future.



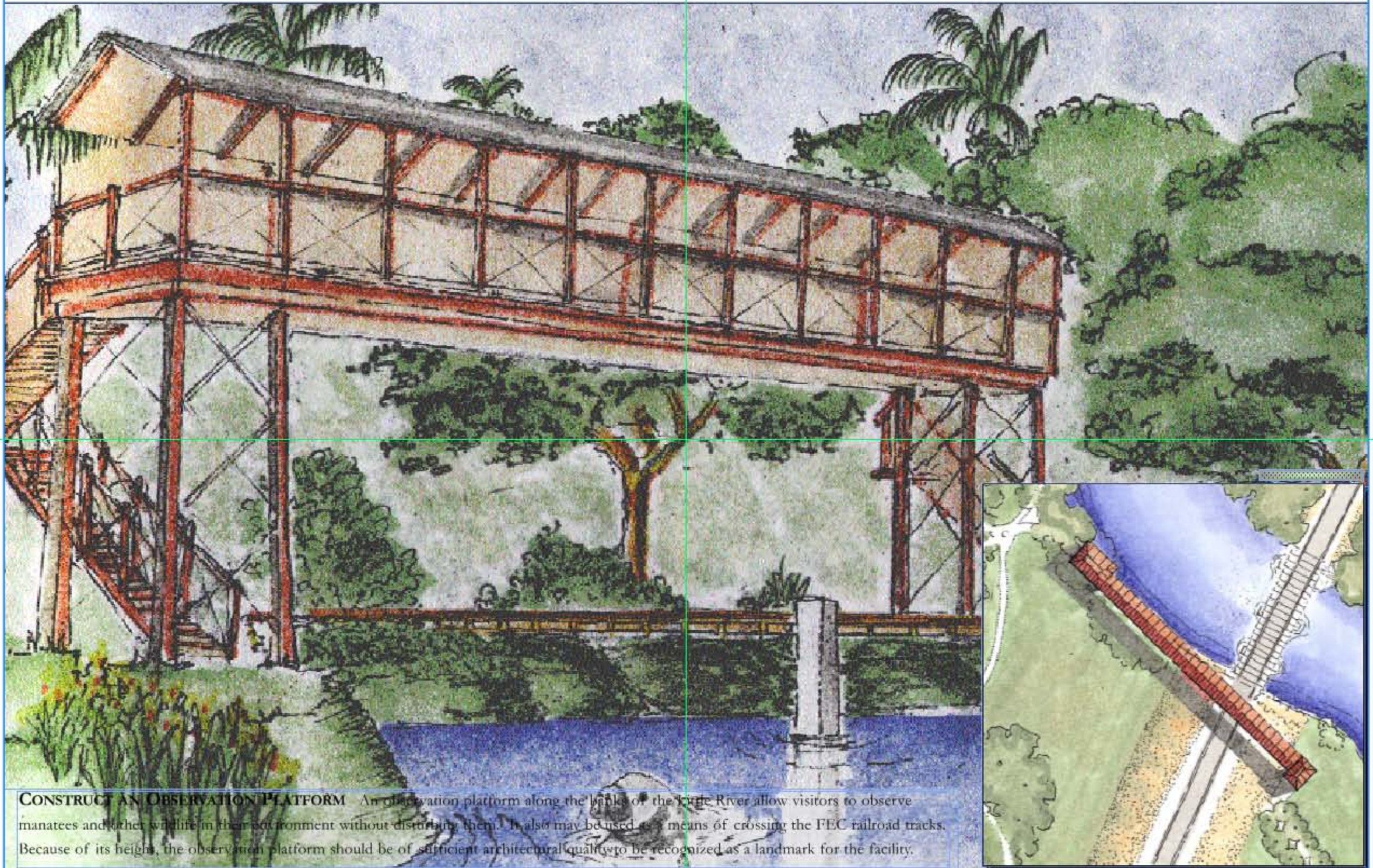
ELEVATION



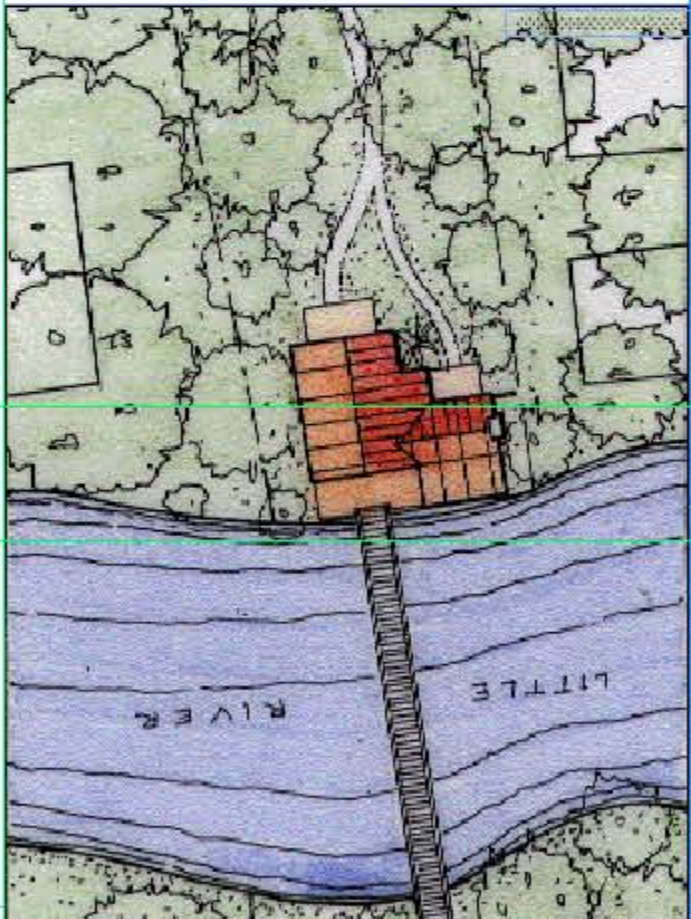
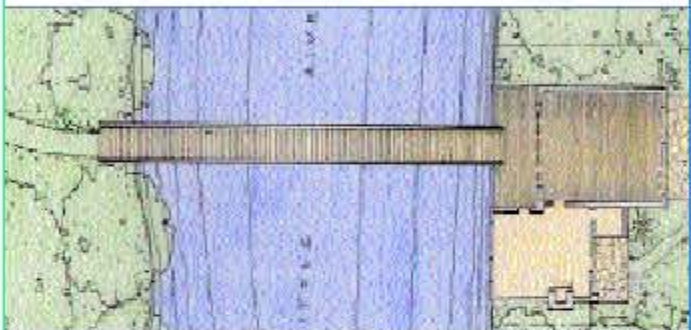
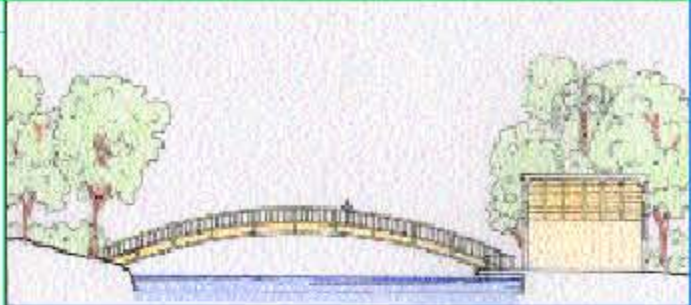
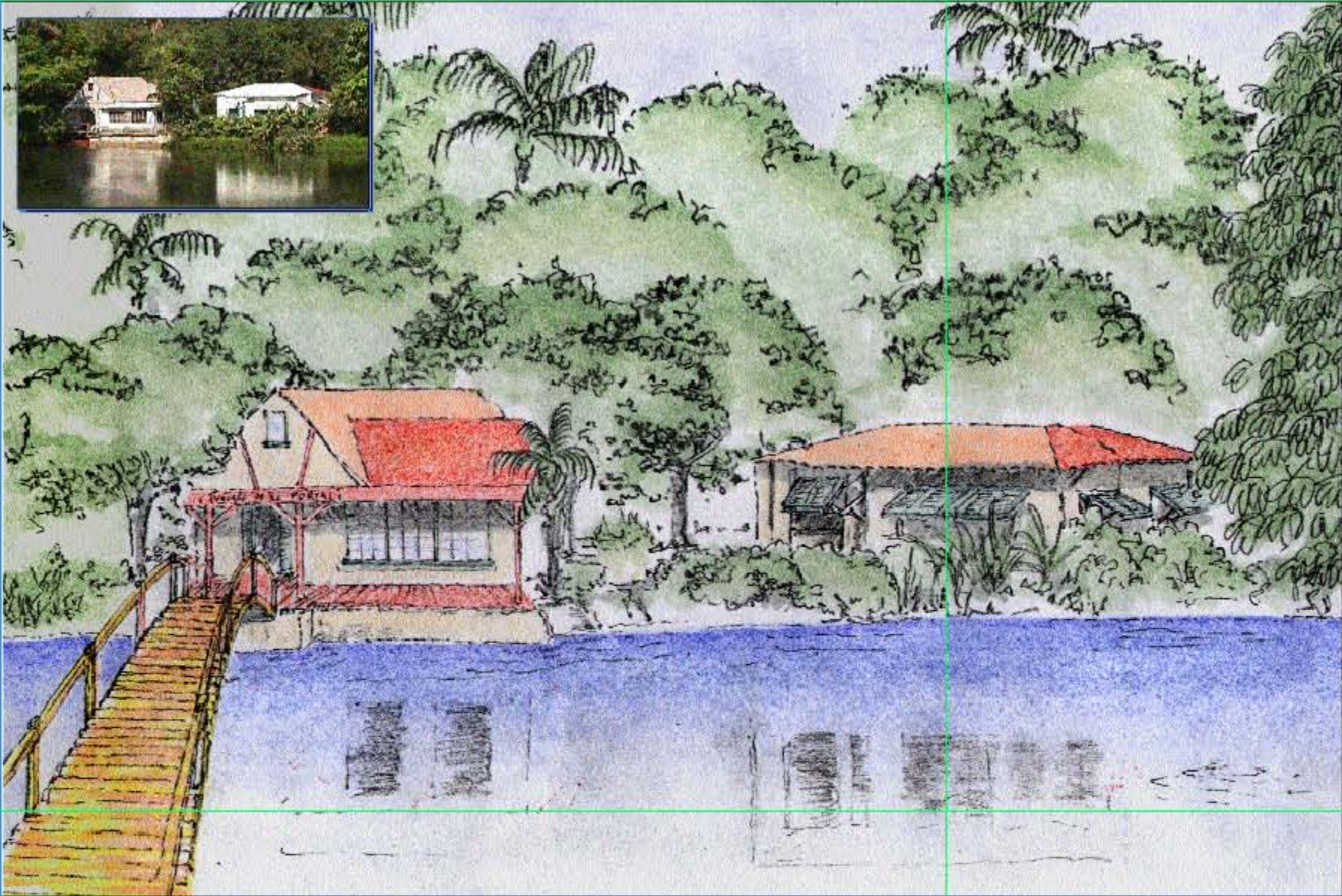
SECTION

BUILD A UNIQUE CLASSROOM The El Portal Environmental Learning Center and Nature Preserve is situated in a unique location. Here, the river passes between high coral rock formations protruding from the Atlantic Coastal Ridge. A burial mound and an assortment of other pre-Columbian artifacts attest that Seminole and Tequesta Indian settlements all benefitted from the natural protection of this site. Over the years, smugglers and pirates also found refuge here. Henry Flagler also made good use of the natural formations here to locate his railroad tracks. Manatees too take advantage of this site on the river, using the area of the bend as a warm water winter refuge and

breeding site. The Environmental Learning Center will bring all of these aspects of history and ecology back to the present. Facilities should be designed to accommodate not only organized student groups, but the informal education of passive visitors who initially may only be attracted there for its scenic and natural beauty. It is hoped that the Preserve could function as a neighborhood green and amenity as well. Interconnected pathways would keep the preserve active with neighborhood visitors even outside of normal Environmental Learning Center hours.



CONSTRUCT AN OBSERVATION PLATFORM An observation platform along the banks of the Yulee River allow visitors to observe manatees and other wildlife in their environment without disturbing them. It also may be used as a means of crossing the FEC railroad tracks. Because of its height, the observation platform should be of sufficient architectural quality to be recognized as a landmark for the facility.



ESTABLISH A PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION for El Portal and Miami Shores to the Little River Nature Preserve. A pedestrian connection across the Little River can be accomplished by securing the old “Boathouse”, improved as a welcome/information center for the Preserve and building a bridge at that location. Area residents from both municipalities which border the site, have already expressed their support of the Nature Preserve and Environmental Learning Center at this location on the Little River. Not only does it retain a valuable natural and cultural resource for future generations, but it instills a level of maintenance and security to what is essentially the neighborhood’s “back door”. The preservation of this natural and cultural asset and the inherent security of the site will also serve to enhance the value of the homes in the neighborhoods surrounding it.

Above: A pedestrian bridge connects the Preserve on the Miami side of the river on the south bank with the Boathouse in El Portal on the north side.

CELEBRATE ENTRIES TO THE COMMUNITY There is little differentiation between communities in the vast urbanity of South Florida stretching from North Palm Beach to South Kendall. Many places that once were discrete towns along the old Dixie Highway and Flagler Railroad have either grown together or been entirely surrounded by other larger cities. It has become harder to distinguish between towns because - with only a few exceptions - no place is special. Tucked away amidst the urban sprawl, however, there are special places with character that deserve



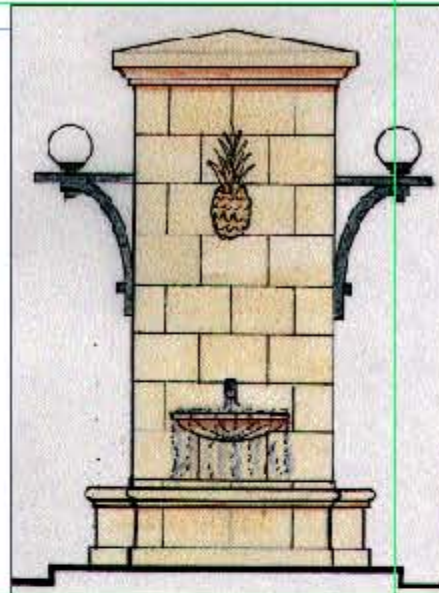
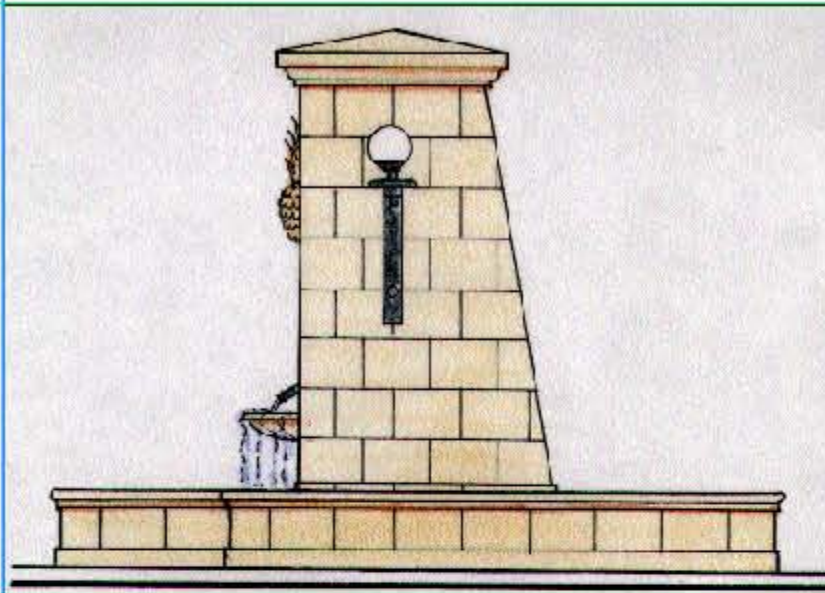
Near NE 6 Avenue and NE 87 Street

notice, like Miami Shores and El Portal. Appropriately located and designed, gateways can show the villages at their best. Key gateways to be improved under the masterplan include: Biscayne Boulevard near NE 6th Avenue and at NE 87th Street, NE 2nd at the Village Green and at the Little River Bridge, and the western entries on NW 95th and NW 103rd Streets.

A gateway can be as simple as a stone marker or as elaborate as an entire district. What is important is that the gateway unambiguously celebrates the community. Entering into, or passing through a gateway, visitors form their first impressions. Potential residents, investors and shoppers are more inclined to remember and want to return to a place with an awareness of its own identity. Gateways also help the visitor to perceive that they are on someone else's "turf". Once "inside", everyone should be welcome to participate in and contribute to the life of the village.

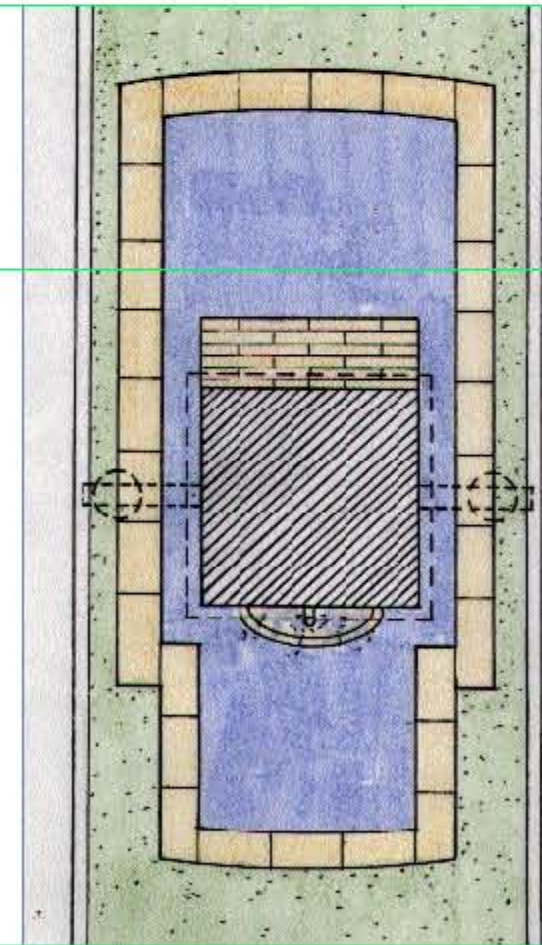
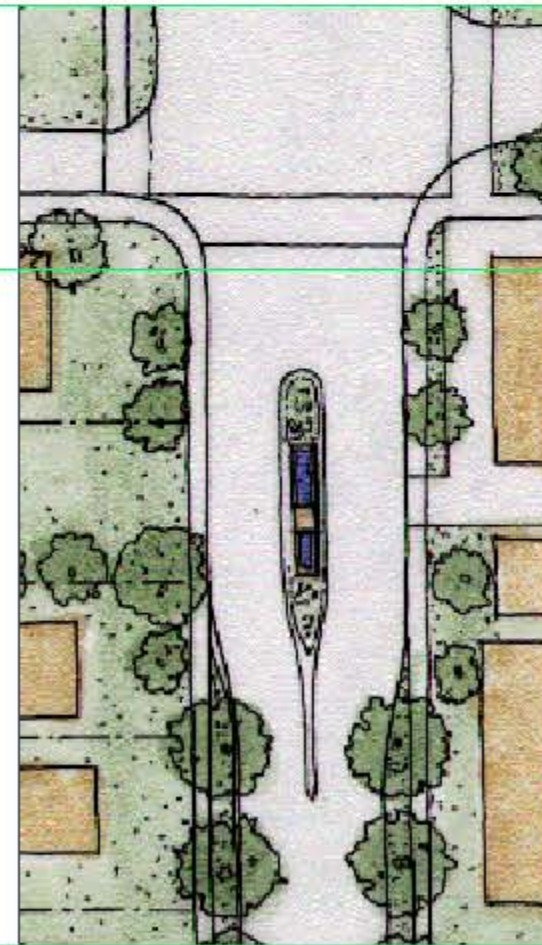
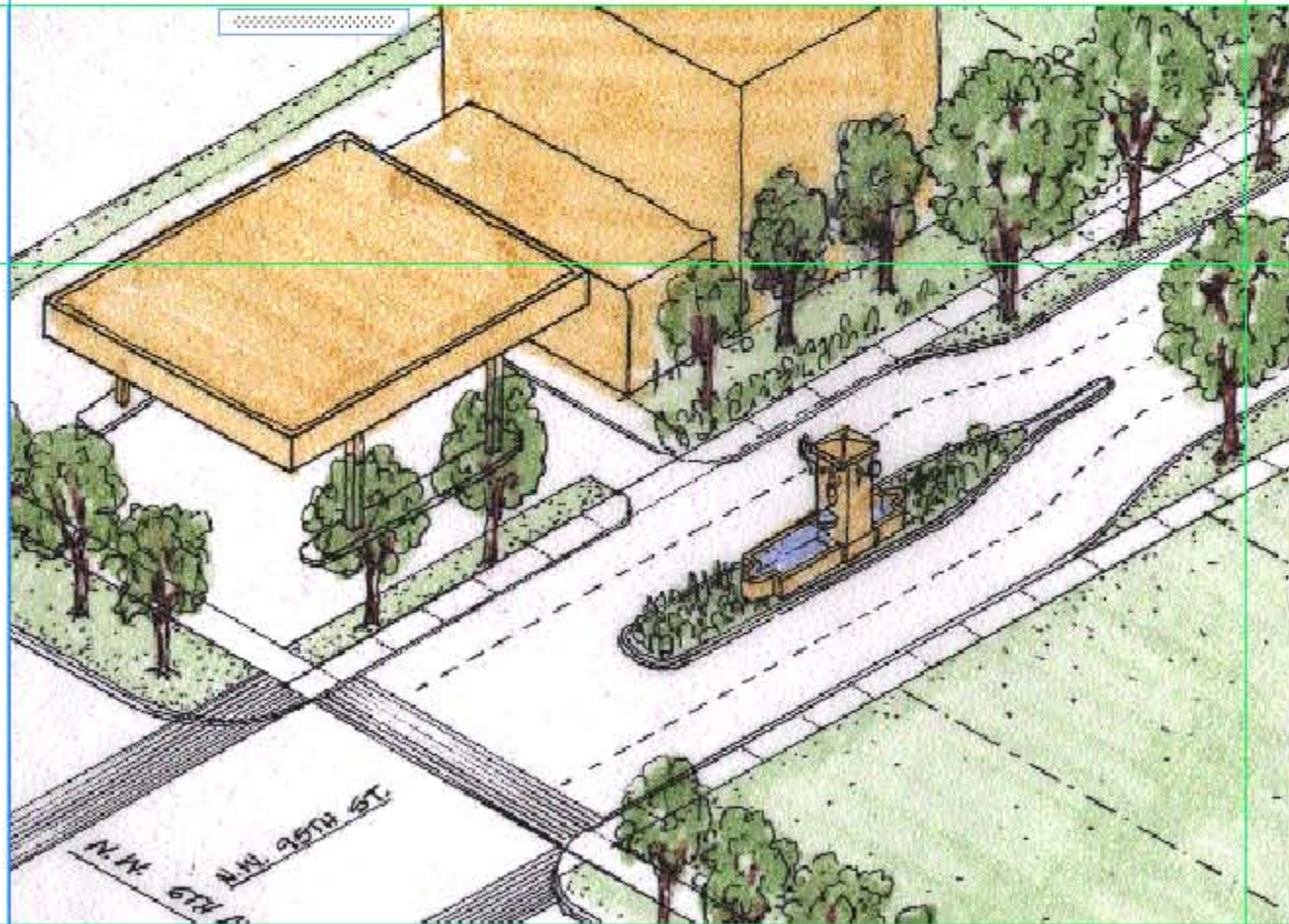


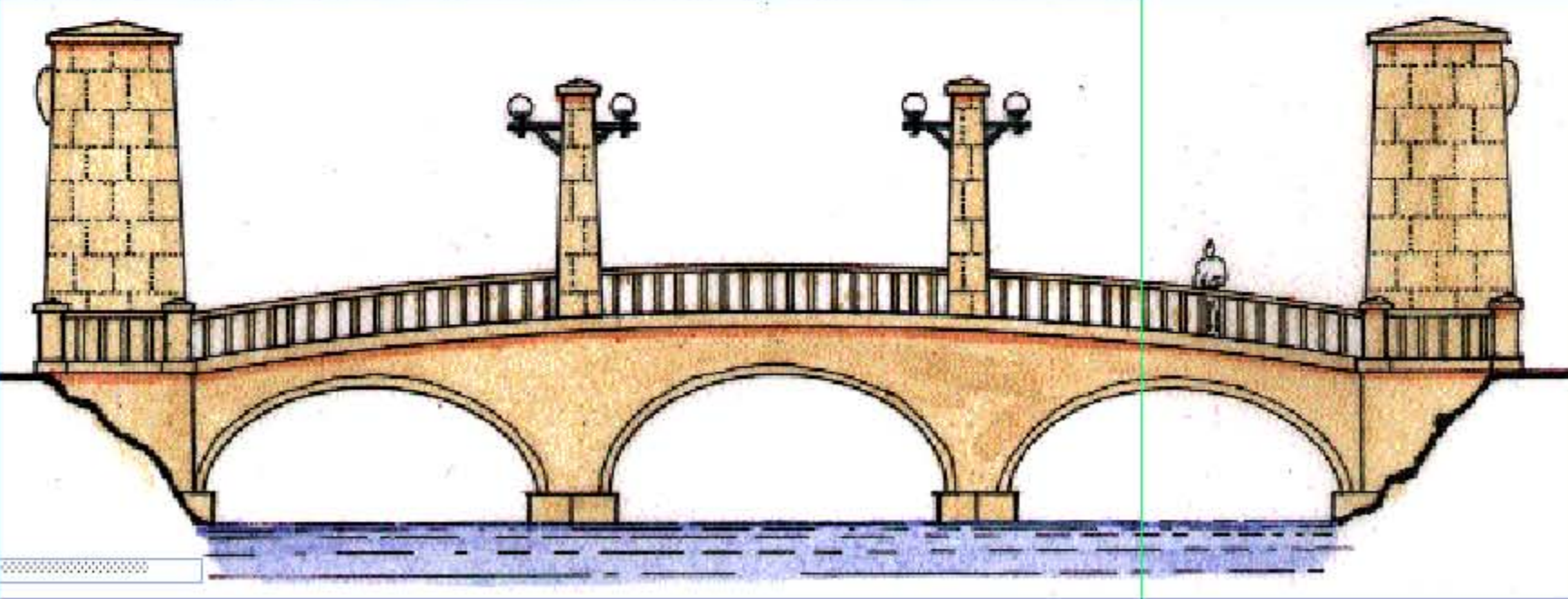
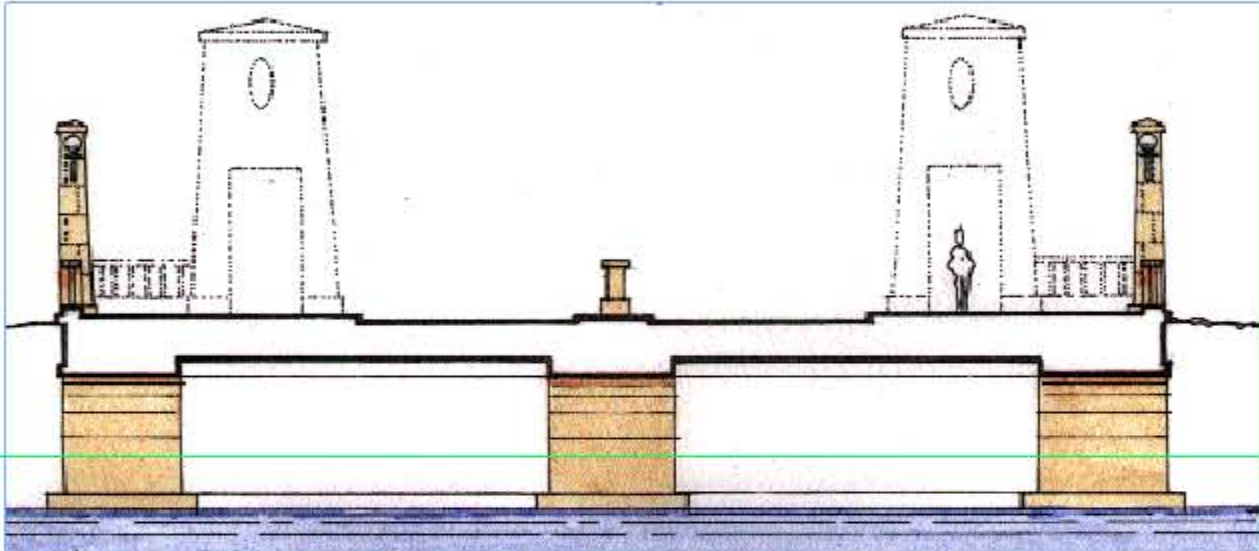
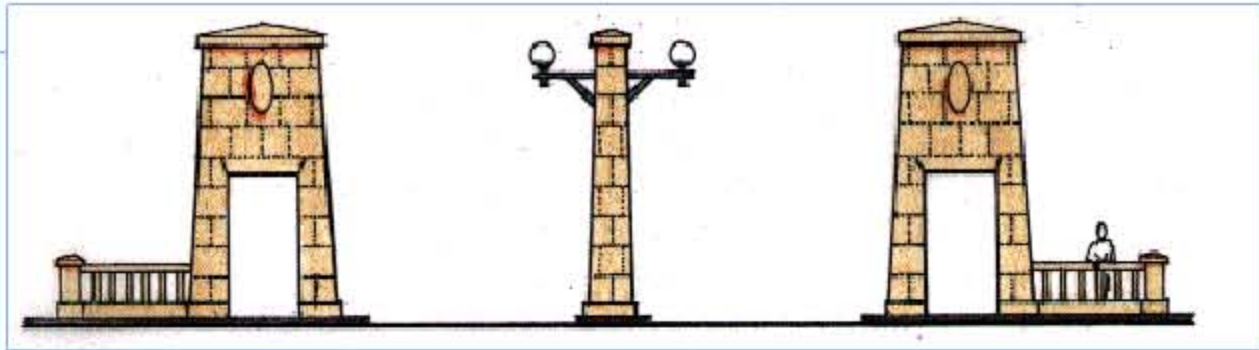
Revitalized gateway into the community focusing on the intersection of NE 87 Street and Biscayne Boulevard. Redevelopment here includes new storefronts, apartments and off-street parking.



IMPROVE ENTRANCES at NW 103rd and NW 95th Streets. Towns, cities and villages should celebrate their entrances. A gateway's architecture should announce to visitors and residents their arrival to a special place, and express the impression the community seeks to present to the public. These particular images from the Masterplan are suggestive of how Miami Shores could announce and identify its main western entries at NW 103rd Street and NW 95th Street. Acknowledging El Portal's history may inspire a more rustic self expression whereas Miami Shores may show a more mediterranean revival face in keeping with its early aspirations.

Depending on their location and construction, gateways also may serve as traffic calming devices. Decorative bollards, traffic islands and paving treatments accompanied by specific landscaping treatments and curb details can all contribute to the overall goal of slowing down traffic. Sometimes, simply the awareness of having passed through a gateway is enough to persuade drivers to be more attentive and careful - which is the ultimate goal of traffic calming.





RECONSTRUCT THE LITTLE RIVER BRIDGE TO IMPROVE IDENTITY OF PLACE Passage over the Little River marks a significant transition point for travelers on NE 2nd Avenue. Past this point one enters into the communities of El Portal and Miami Shores. Announcing themselves at this gateway sends the statement that the communities immediately north of this point take pride in their identities and are a welcome destination for visitors and residents. A redesigned bridge, such as the one seen here, is a natural and dramatic way to celebrate this crossing point.

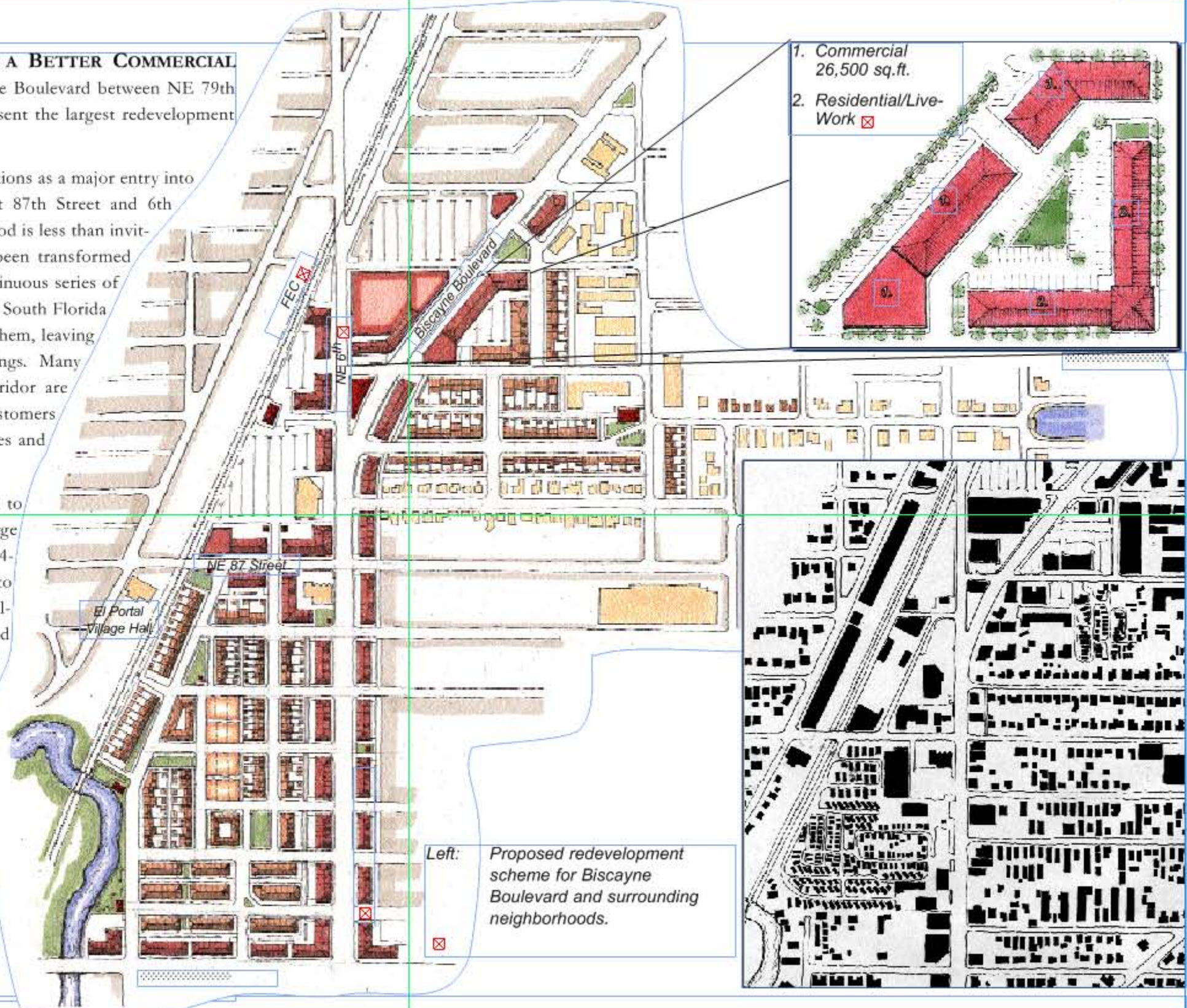
REDEVELOP BISCAYNE BOULEVARD AS A BETTER COMMERCIAL RESOURCE The area in and around Biscayne Boulevard between NE 79th Street and approximately NE 93rd Street represent the largest redevelopment opportunity within the two villages.

This stretch of Biscayne Boulevard already functions as a major entry into the community, with two additional entries at 87th Street and 6th Avenue. As a gateway, however, the neighborhood is less than inviting. Over the years, Biscayne Boulevard has been transformed from its roots as the “Dixie Highway” to a continuous series of commercial strips. As the population centers of South Florida shift westward, the retail businesses went with them, leaving behind a sea of dilapidated and unsightly buildings. Many of the businesses left along the Biscayne corridor are either barely surviving or attract undesirable customers or have a minimal presence, such as small offices and storage facilities.

The goal for the redevelopment of this area is to reintroduce a balanced mix of small and large retail, offices and residences to create a true “24-hour” neighborhood. The approach here is not to try to compete with newer strip commercial developments but to offer something more stable and flexible.

This can be achieved by employing well founded urban principles:

- Permitting mixed-use buildings, with retail uses on the ground floor, with offices and/or residences above.
 - Changing setback requirements to allow buildings to be built up to their front property lines, and laying out shared parking facilities to the rear of lots.
- Additionally, a separate, landscaped “service lane” can be added along Biscayne Boulevard, easing parking conflicts.



REDEVELOP THE LITTLE FARM TRAILER PARK Within the overall redevelopment of the Biscayne Neighborhood is the Little Farm trailer park. With approximately 200 units, it represents almost 500 residents, many of whom are on 'fixed' incomes. As the largest contiguous residential parcel in the neighborhood, it is adjacent to the intersection of NE 87th Street and Biscayne Boulevard – the "100% corner" as it would be called amongst retail developers. This makes the property valuable for future development.

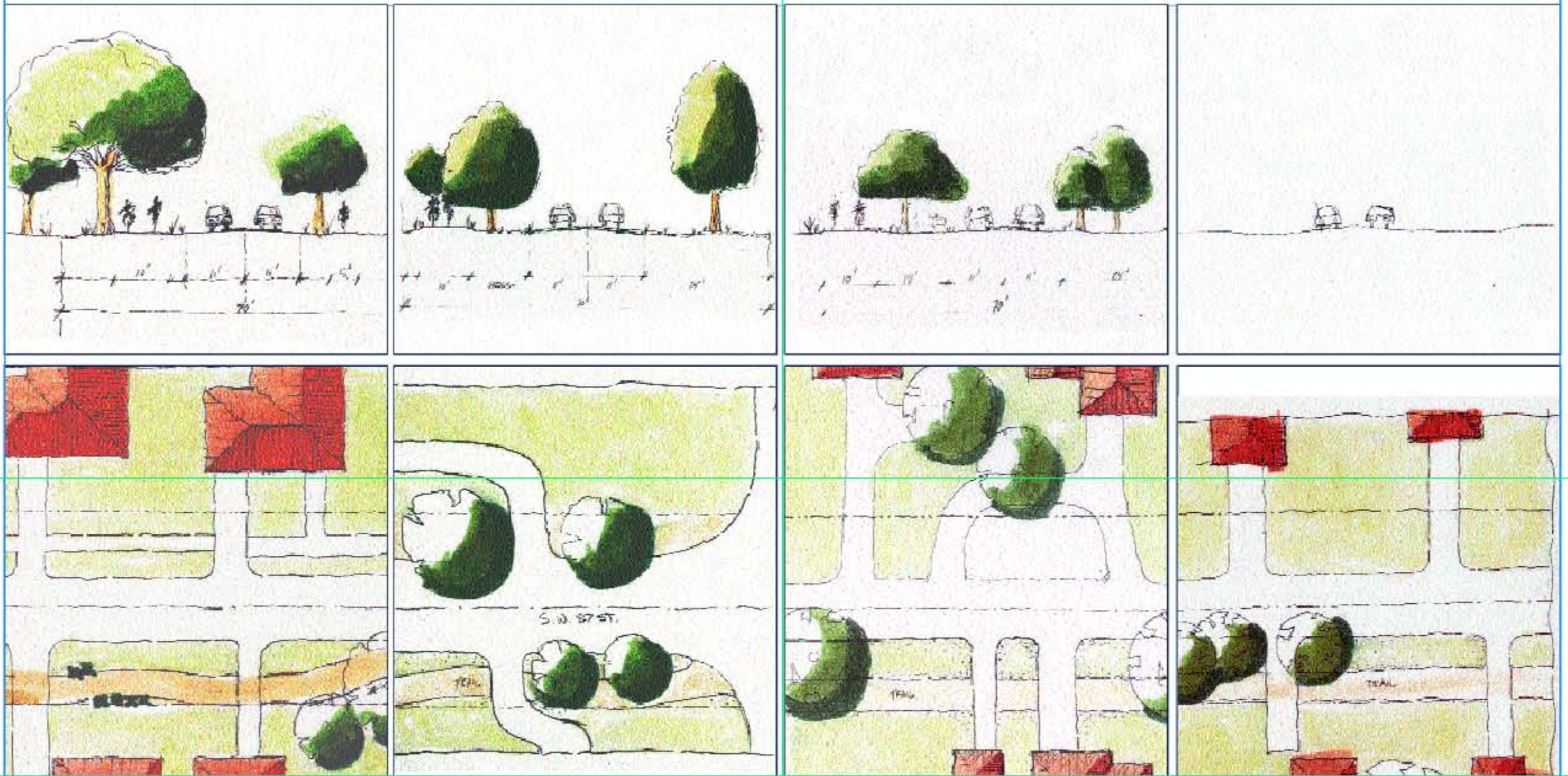


The initial redevelopment illustrated on the left, adapts the trailer park to a more traditional street layout. This better organizes the space and allows for the introduction of a neighborhood green. The study on the right shows how new streets can connect the neighborhood back into the mixed-use and commercial properties that will line Biscayne Boulevard. Mobile homes and other building types can also work in this plan without significantly changing it.

PHASE 1

FULL BUILD-OUT





IMPROVE NE AND NW 87TH STREET FOR PEDESTRIANS

Improvements to the NE and NW 87th Street streetscapes include a new multi-use path which will make the heavily used connection between schools safer for students and more secure for residents.

The FEC Railroad running parallel to Biscayne Boulevard is a natural transit corridor. This site, along NE 96 Street can accommodate a station and parking with already existing infrastructure. The structure can also perform other functions.



DESIGNATE A SITE AND BUILD A MULTI-USE STATION Although never built, Miami Shores has always had a grand vision of how it would send off and receive visitors and residents traveling by rail. When passengers were removed from the FEC line in the 1960's the idea of a grand station for Miami Shores was forgotten. The possibility of restoring passenger service along this rail line is enjoying a revival. At the moment, it is no longer a question of if service will be restored, but when. With this in mind, those communities prepared with plans, or better yet, an actual built station along the rail line will have the advantage of securing a rail stop for its citizens. With travel by car becoming less reliable and enjoyable, many citizens are looking for other transportation and commuting options. The FEC corridor offers one of the best new opportunities. The masterplan suggests building a simple, but well designed, open building structure along the railway on the southwest corner of NE 96th Street and the FEC tracks. This will position the village for a future commuter stop. In the meantime, the structure can serve to accommodate community oriented functions, such as a green market, art shows and fairs.

REMOVE BARRICADES AND REPLACE THEM WITH MORE EFFECTIVE AND ATTRACTIVE TRAFFIC CALMING DEVICES

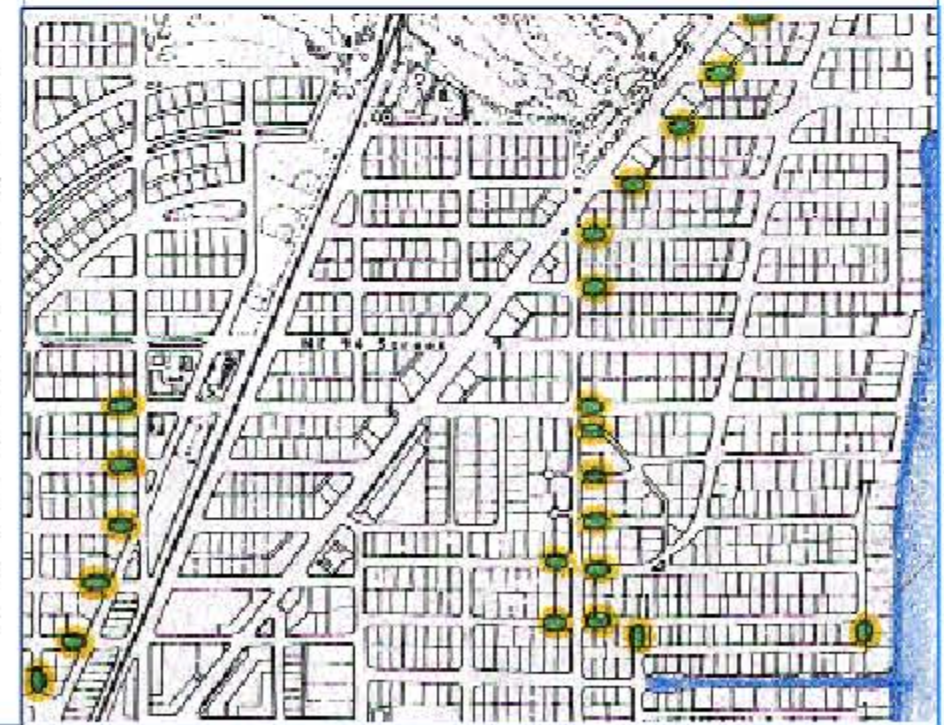
The key motivating factor to most citizen-initiated street closing policies is “crime prevention” and the elimination of speeding “cut-through” traffic. Redirecting the Village’s policy towards one of “traffic calming” is, perhaps a more effective long-term means of controlling crime and cut through traffic.

Traffic calming is considered anything that slows down traffic. A few examples of which are illustrated here and on other pages of this report. Many traffic calming devices also serve multiple purposes. Bridge piers, vegetated medians, parking “bump-outs”, crosswalks and street trees are all elements that can function as traffic calming devices in certain situations. They can become part of an enhanced landscaping plan, help improve pedestrian access and serve as neighborhood gateways.



Traffic calming devices can be as big and dominating as the roundabout proposed for Grand Concourse, or as small and inconspicuous as textured pavers on a crosswalk. The most important thing is that they force drivers to become more attentive, slowing down the speed of traffic, and making the streets quieter and safer for pedestrians and bicyclists.

A traffic calming approach may actually be more effective at controlling crime and protecting housing values. While closing streets will reduce certain kinds of crime like drugs and prostitution, other crimes like burglaries may actually increase because of the reduced casual surveillance offered by passing motorists. Moreover, while house values “inside” of barricades may be protected, barriers actually reinforce lower values on the other side. Homes that could support better neighbors some day are actually prevented from doing so by being permanently “excluded”, necessitating a continued reliance on barriers. Barriers are also an additional impediment to police and fire-rescue access. Combine these factors with the dramatic increase in congestion on the non-barricaded streets and the impact that has on those resident’s quality of life, and the benefits that traffic calming has over street closures becomes even more apparent.

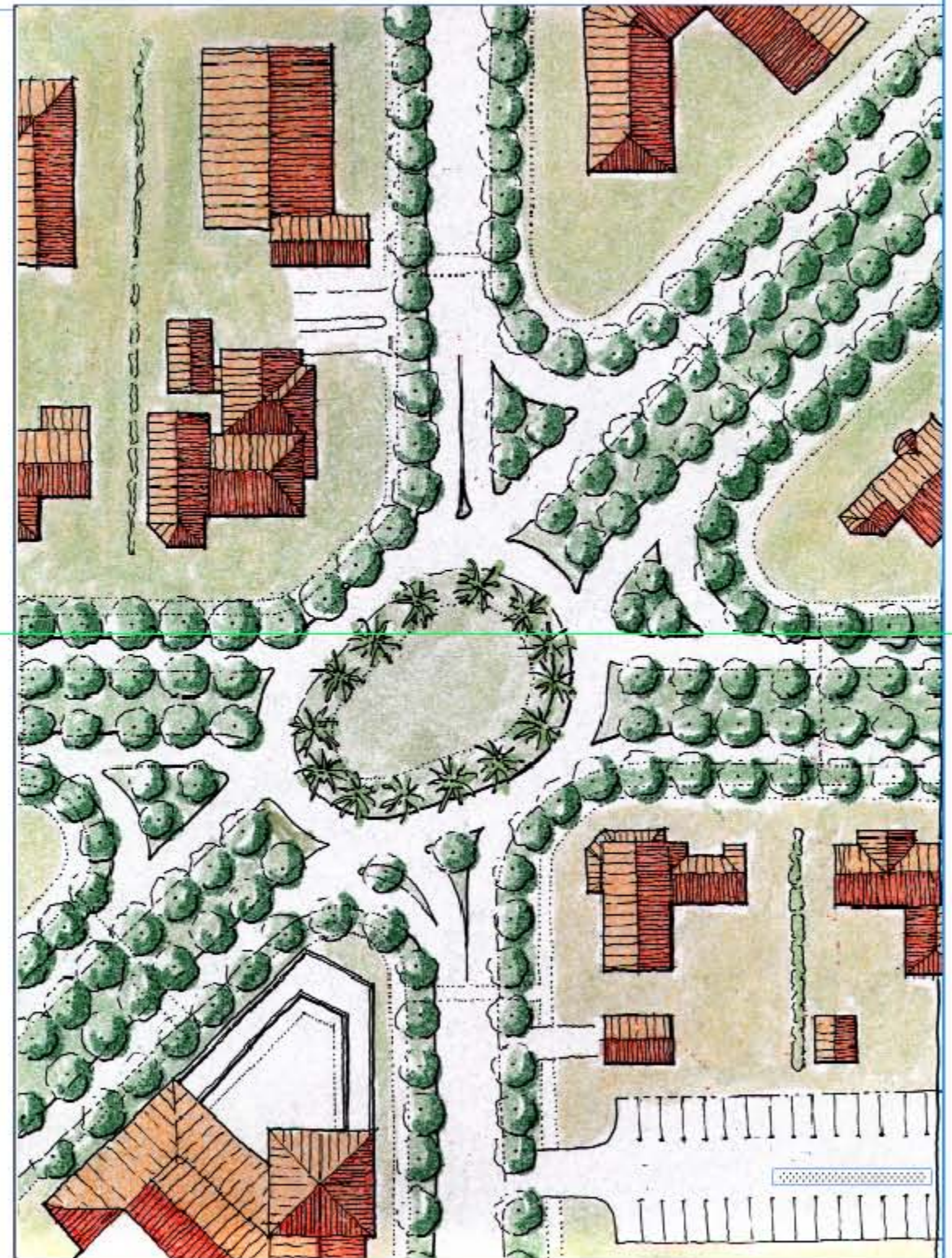


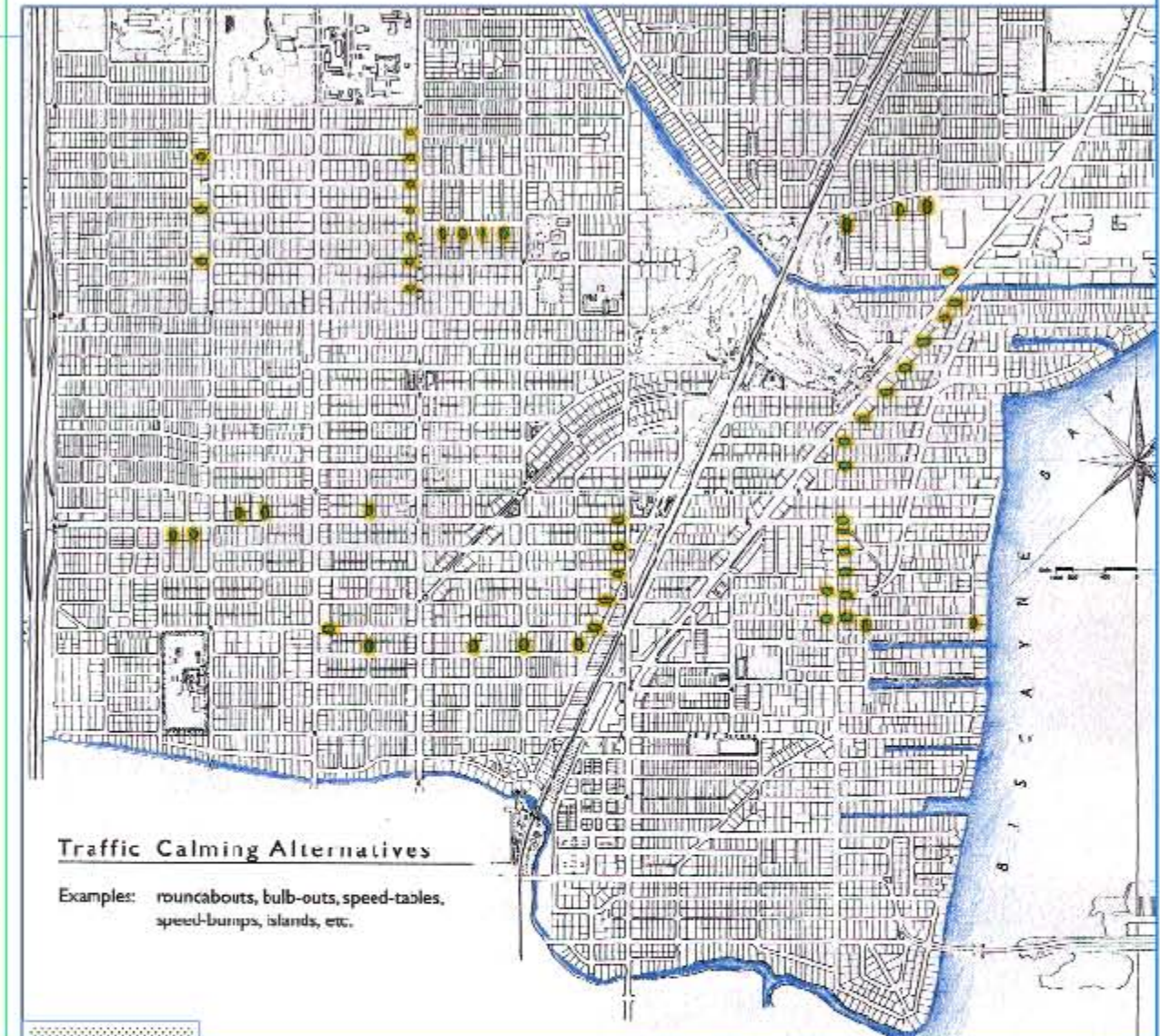
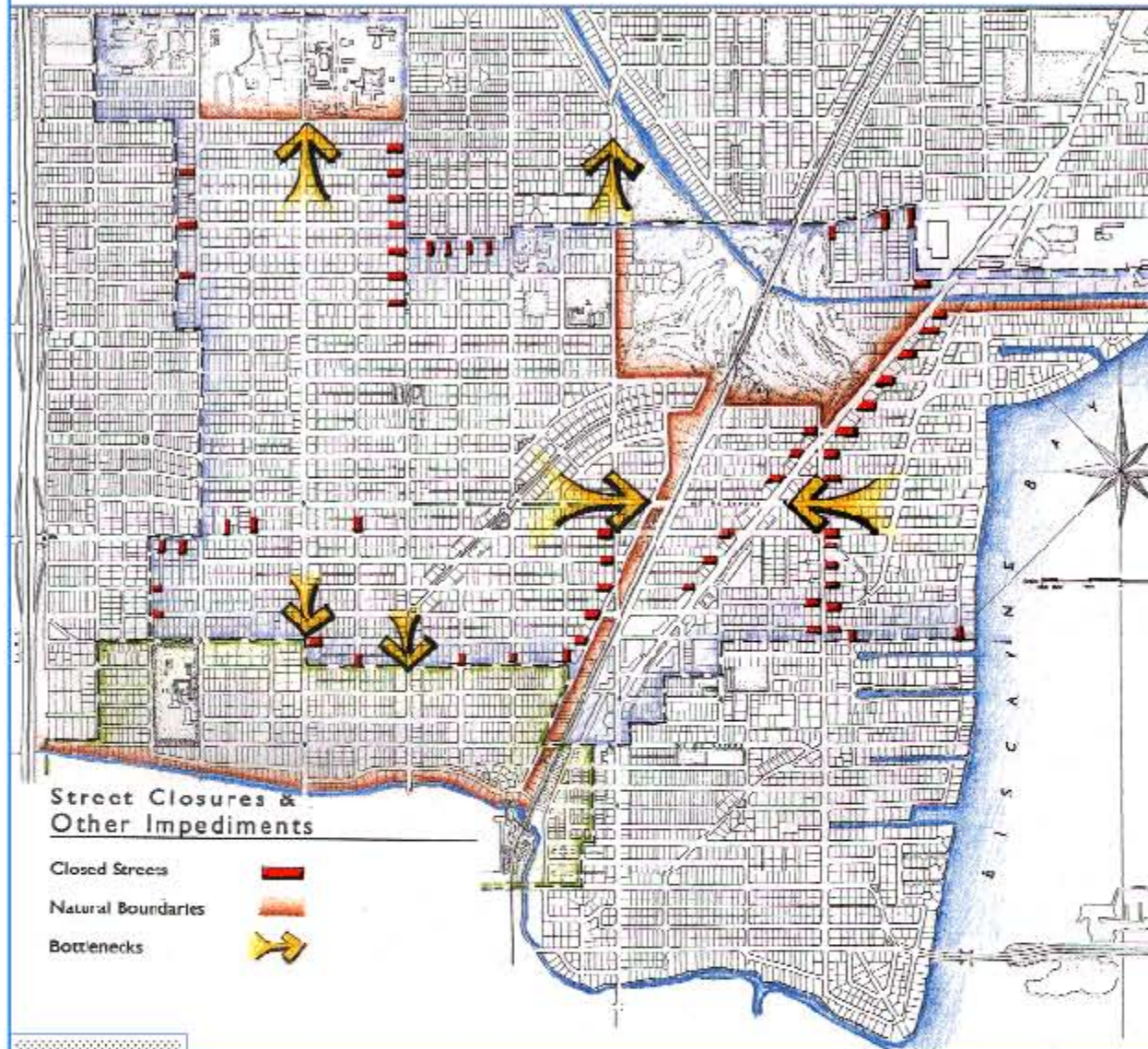


BUILD A ROUNDABOUT The five-way intersection of NE 96th S street with NE 4th Avenue and Grand Concourse today is very large and bleak. Its scale intimidates drivers and pedestrians alike. Originally designed as a grand canal extending out to Biscayne Bay, it instead has been built as a local street, but still retaining the original "boulevard" scale.

A modern "roundabout" should be built at this intersection to help enclose and organize this space. A generous median and turning islands help to "humanize" the scale of the street. The roundabout also makes the intersection safer for both cars and pedestrians by minimizing potential conflicts and carefully controlling speeds.

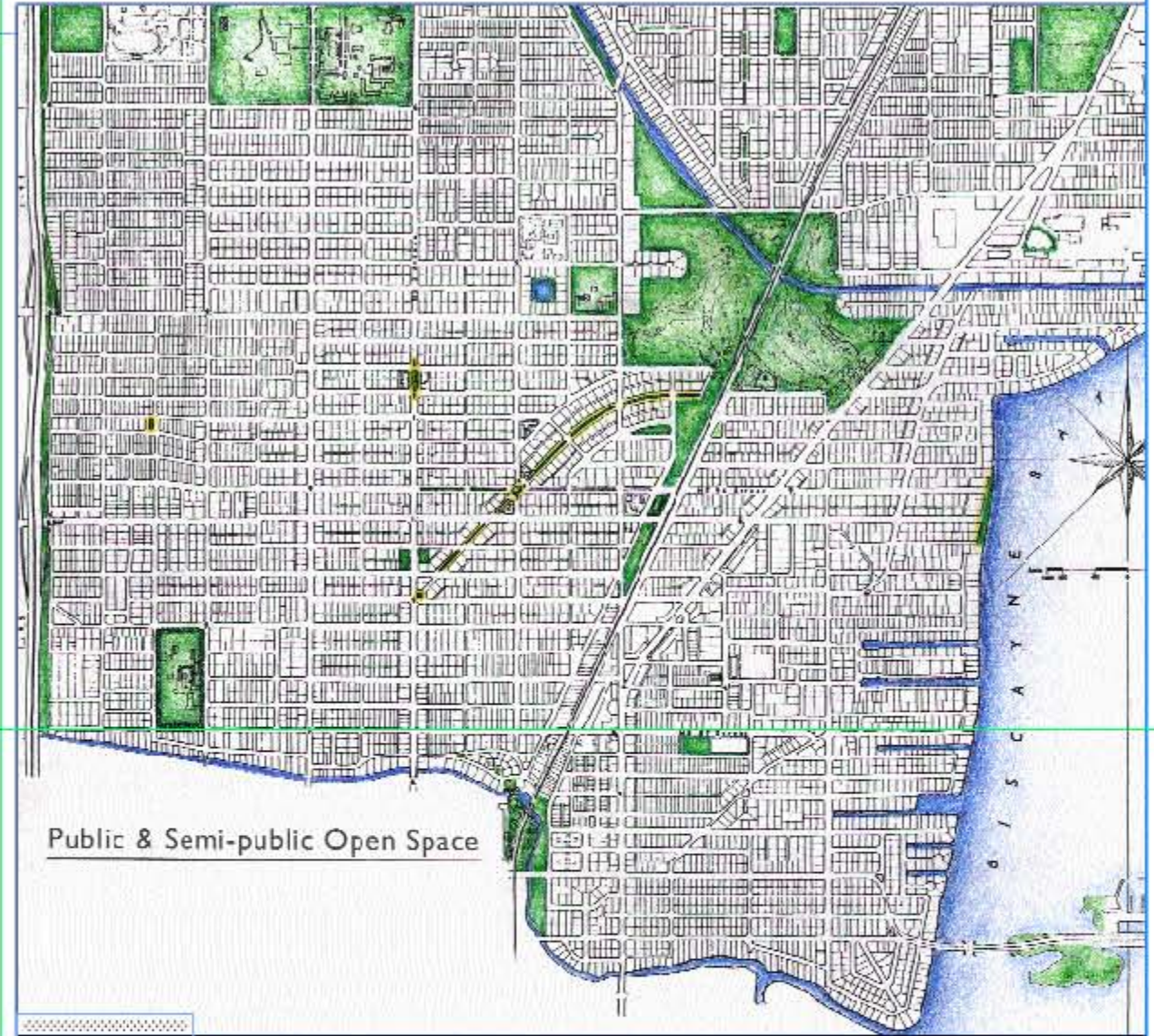
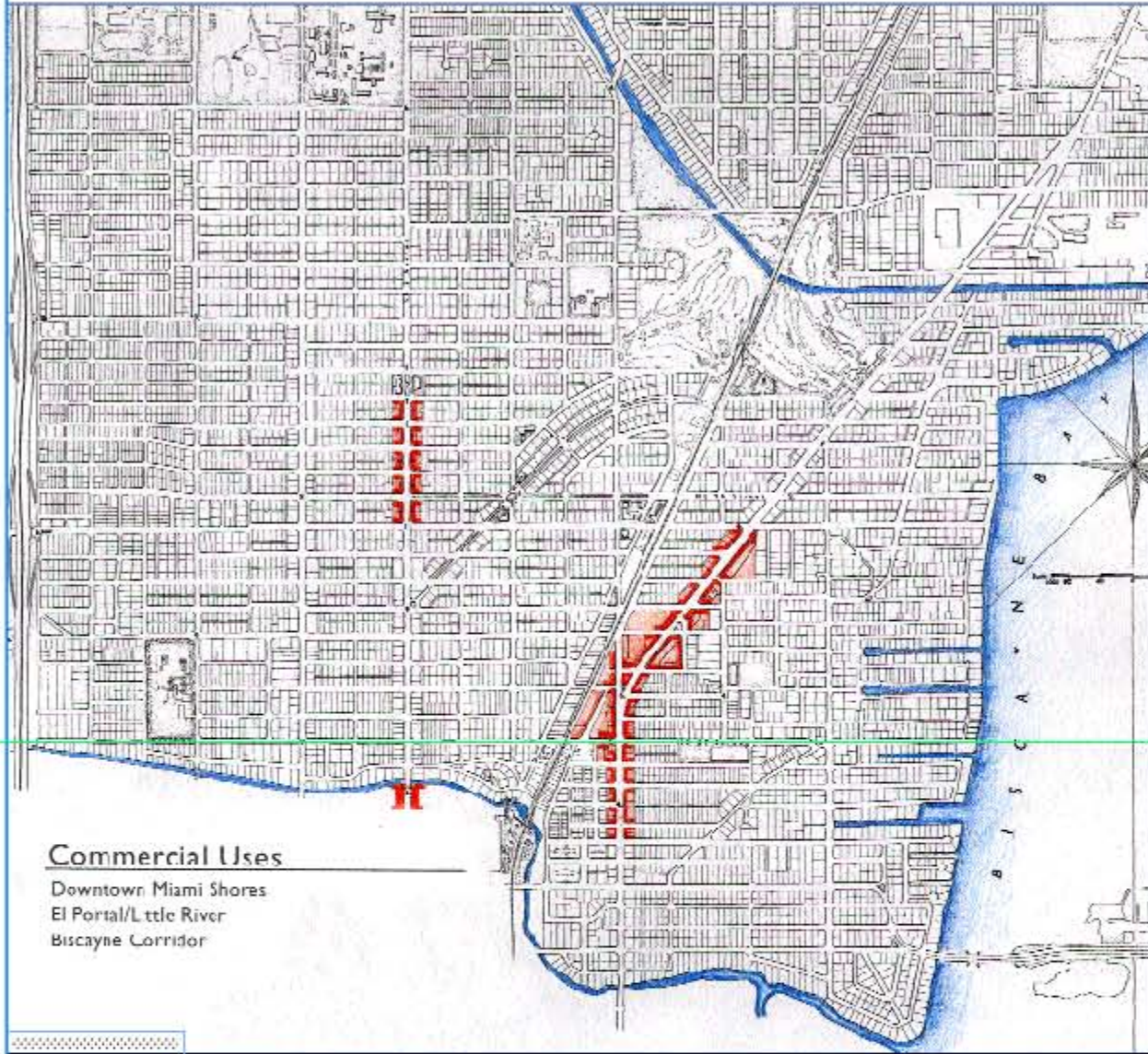
Not to be understated is the added value to an area that a grand, formal roundabout gateway would bring.

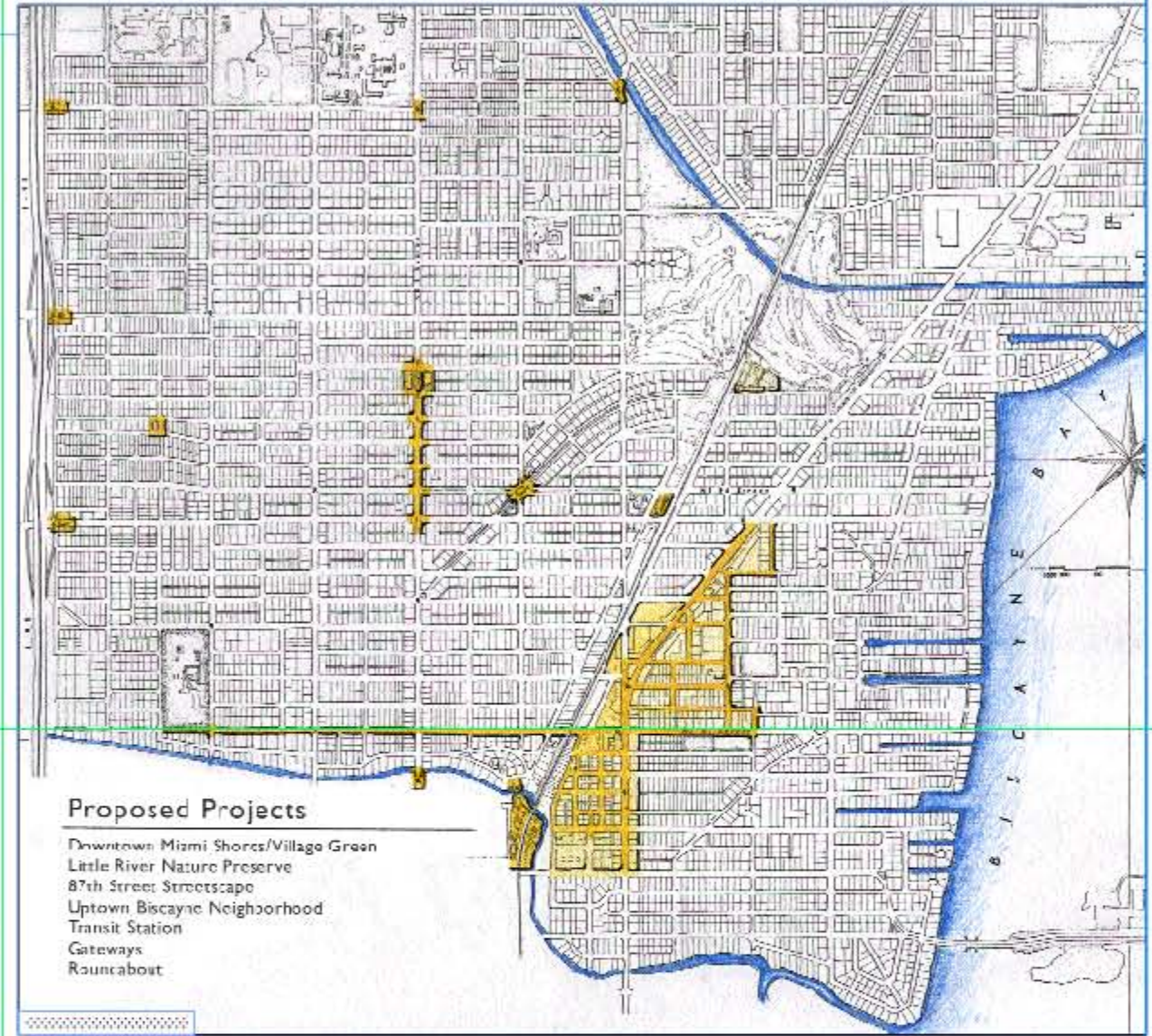
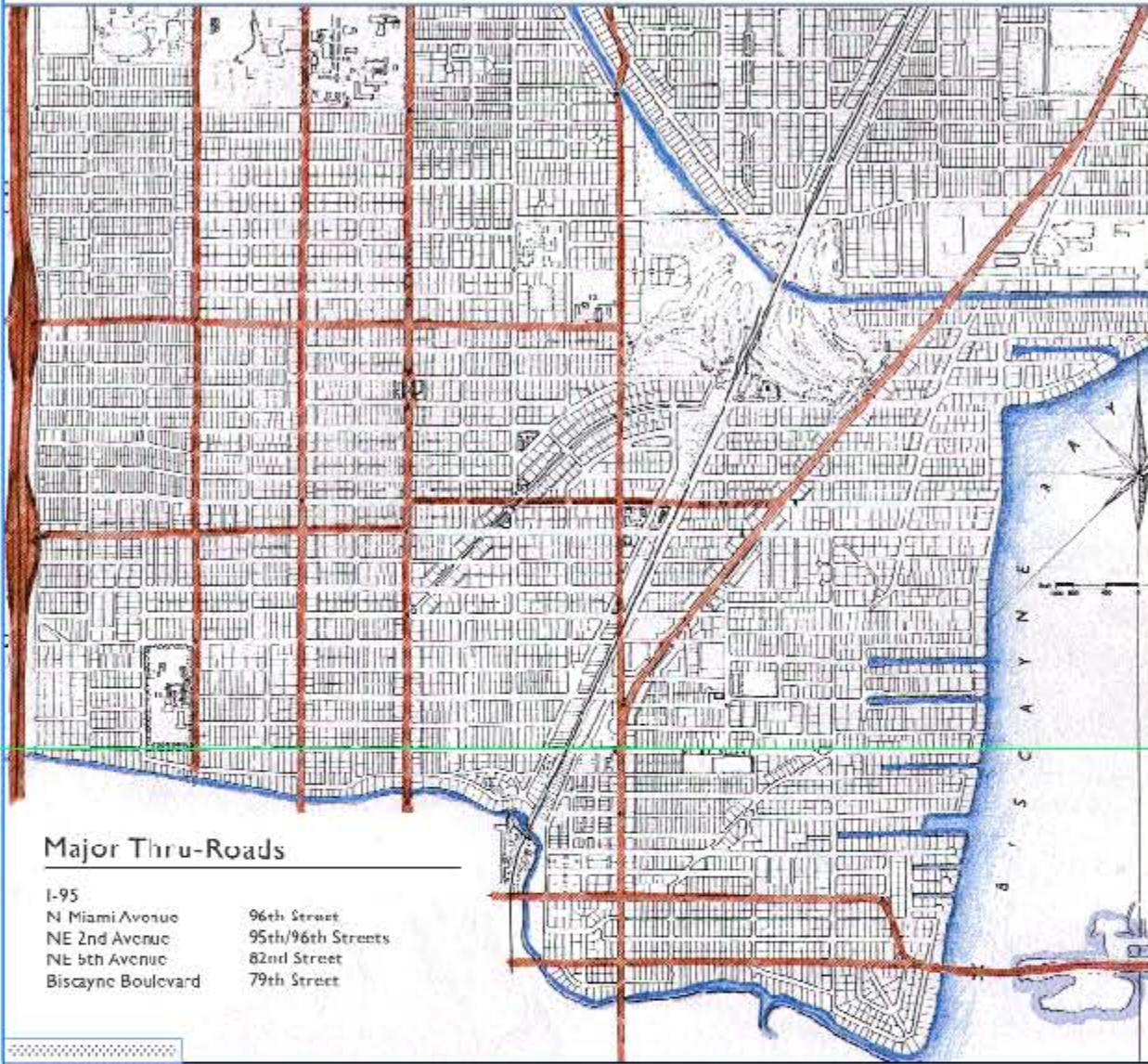




The above diagram shows how street closures create traffic bottlenecks, contributing to congestion on certain streets. Experience has shown that properties immediately “outside” the barricades will remain depressed relative to those “inside”. Improving those neighborhoods becomes more difficult and encourages their decline. The existing sphere of safety which was once enjoyed is also reduced. It will continue to do so as more barricades are erected inside the original ones, creating a smaller and smaller perimeter of “safe” space.

Traffic calming installed at appropriate locations reduces cut-through traffic by slowing down impatient drivers while still allowing access for residents. Traffic bottlenecks are reduced and housing values are not negatively impacted by exclusionary barricades. The Village’s sphere of influence and perimeter of safe space is at least maintained and there remains a chance for increasing the area of safe space.





Great towns, cities, and villages are the work of many people. Each generation leaves a mark. Young families want to settle down and start businesses. Older people want to retire close to their friends and relatives, and close to the places they helped build. Their efforts, and the efforts of those who came before them, are recorded in the buildings, streets, parks and plazas preserved by history.

Not all the villages of the world are great villages. Thinking about the consequences of every decision requires vision and patience. Short-term gain must be tempered by long-term aspirations. Irresponsible projects must be avoided. Control of a village's destiny must always remain in the hands of the citizens.

The Villages of Miami Shores and El Portal are good places today, and may be premier places some day. Whether they become one depends exclusively on the will of its citizens. A good plan is essential, but it is not enough. It is only a first step. Creating a community worthy of your children, and of those who will come after them, is a challenging endeavor. It will not be easy, but it will be worth every effort.

Now that the planning is done, it is time for action.

Once the Redevelopment Master Plan is approved, it must be implemented.

The Plan includes many types of projects. Some can be done right away, such as planting trees and formalizing local streets in the neighborhoods; constructing the gateway features and roundabouts; and making 87th Street more pedestrian friendly. Others, such as reconstructing NE 2nd Avenue and Biscayne Boulevard and establishing the Little River Environmental Learning Center and Nature Preserve are longer-term projects. However, there is one basic recommendation: the ideas proposed in this plan complement each other and should be applied together. A Village needs all its parts. No element of the Plan is autonomous or self-sufficient.

The Plan is a representation of the ultimate build-out of the Villages of Miami Shores and El Portal. It is, in strict terms, the citizens' vision of the future. However, the Plan is not a strategy for implementation of redevelopment and revitalization projects. Therefore, there is no timeline for completion nor a program for the phasing and funding of the projects. The specifics of implementation must be addressed in future documents prepared by the Villages. Village staffs and the citizens should start work on this as soon as possible.

Recommended implementation steps:

Approve the Plan.

The Plan will guide policy decisions. It will also have regulatory power. The Village Commissions, Village staffs, chambers of commerce, and the citizens must make an unquestionable commitment to respect the spirit of the Plan and all the details that are essential for its success.

Replace the existing Zoning Code with a new Urban Code.

An Urban Code guarantees the integrity of the Plan. It is the only document that can answer the most difficult question about the future of a Village: *What will my neighborhoods look like?*

Many villages have adopted standardized codes supplied by some national planning agency. This is foolish. Each village must spend the time and effort to develop its own code and must have the commitment to follow it consistently.

When the Village passes an Urban Code, it will have one of the most sophisticated zoning ordinances in the Country.

Hire an Urban Designer.

Plans are very fragile. They require constant oversight. Any plan, regardless of its merits, can fall apart if it is not implemented correctly. Success or failure depend on the details. Only a full-time professional, competent and motivated, can make sure that the Village has a fair chance to implement the vision of its citizens.

- The Village's Urban Designer will have five major responsibilities:
- Review proposed projects for compliance with the Plan.
- Prepare illustrative products to encourage redevelopment of specific areas.
- Provide design and other technical assistance to citizens' groups and organizations interested in working on projects.
- Assist in developing marketing products advertising the Plan.
- Assist in putting together funding requests and drives that will carry out the Plan.

The Village's Urban Designer, therefore, will be much more than an administrator of the Plan. An important aspect of the job will be creation of a new urban code, the ongoing interpretation of the code, and its fine-tuning as time goes by. This job will require proactive planning. This can only be done with projects. Words cannot develop the Plan any further.

This new position should be distinct, separate and independent from any existing job in

the Village. The Village must hire a person who is trained in architecture and urban design and who is willing to help people solve their problems. This person should answer directly to the Village Council and, with the support of the Council, should be responsible for the redevelopment and revitalization of the Community.

Many cities have redevelopment plans but no staff with the specialized skills needed to implement them. When the Village hires an Urban Designer, it will have a clear advantage over many towns, cities and villages in Florida.

Organize the citizens.

Citizen organizations can improve the public spaces of the villages. In some instances, the Village and a Citizen organization may collaborate. The landscaping of various streets, for example, could be accomplished if the Village buys the trees and a local club donates the work needed to plant them. Similarly, bus stops, roundabouts or commemorative gazebos and pergolas could be built with private funds on land owned by the Village. ~~The Villages could also continue to work with investors and begin providing the infrastructure and purchasing the property necessary to attract investors to complete the Biscayne Boulevard project, construct the neighborhood’s environmental learning center, and reconstruct the village main street.~~

At the neighborhood level, the Village may want to encourage some type of Neighborhood or Home Owner’s Associations, similar to those found in suburban developments. Suburbia looks manicured because Neighborhood Organizations assure the maintenance of the commons and the public areas. Since the Village may not have the capability to maintain every local street, the citizens must take over this responsibility. Many times, the difference between a great neighborhood and a slum is the first broken window and the first overgrown yard. If minor maintenance problems are not fixed immediately, they can overwhelm an area.

The people who can fix these problems best are the residents. But they need to have an established and recognized organization to take action.

Adopt codes that regulate the upkeep and maintenance of properties.

This measure would support village revitalization efforts. If the codes are strictly enforced, the work of the neighborhood organizations, and individual citizens, will be sustainable.

Implement the redevelopment and revitalization projects, under the supervision of the Village’s Urban Designer.

The renovation of the public spaces will have an immediate impact on the life of the community. Therefore, the Village should concentrate its efforts in coordination and sponsoring those projects that enhance the public activities of its citizens.

Market the Area.

~~Cities and their immediate neighborhoods have a hard time competing with large private developers because they do not use the same marketing techniques. A big developer will orchestrate an ambitious advertisement campaign to convince the public that the product is of the highest quality. A village must do the same.~~

Some possible campaigns may be:

Do you miss the old neighborhood?

Welcome back, Village of El Portal.

Are you tired of traffic and cookie cutter developments?

Come to the Village of El Portal for a slice of the real Florida.

Do you spend most of your day on the highway?

Move to the middle of things—NE 2nd Avenue, Main Street-Miami Shores

Tired of driving and shopping in strip malls?

Try a stroll down main street, NE 2nd Avenue, the Village of Miami Shores

Encourage people to live and work in the Village.

People like the convenience of living and working in the same city. No one enjoys long commutes. Some people endure them every day because they are unable to find housing that is affordable and attractive close to their jobs. The varied housing stock of Miami Shores and El Portal can accommodate most house and apartment preferences.

Complete neighborhoods are not made up of commuters. For a neighborhood to prosper, people must have a personal stake in its development. If a substantial number of people see themselves as part-time or transient residents, if a person moves into the neighborhood only because it has low real estate prices, things will not improve.

The Villages should:

Consider incentives to existing businesses who hire people who live in the Community.

~~Encourage, with incentives, public employees to live within the Community.~~

Promote home ownership and maintenance of properties by code enforcement and other means.

Eliminate any real or perception of serious crime within the Villages.

The Villages should:

Expand the existing program of neighborhood based police officers.

Provide incentives for officers to live within the neighborhood they patrol.

Encourage the organization of Neighborhood Home Owners Associations that can work with neighborhood based police.

Remove the barricades and replace them with more effective and attractive traffic calming devices.

Expand your good influence.

The Villages of El Portal and Miami Shores have a very strong sense of “community.” In most Florida counties this has become the exception rather than the rule. Barricades and gates will not maintain what you have in terms of a strong community. In the end, they will weaken and divide the community; shrink the existing sphere of safety surrounding your community; reduce your ability to reach consensus on how to solve community-wide problems; and minimize your level of influence for improving and strengthening neighboring communities.

If the villages are concerned about negative effects from outside your jurisdictions, retreating behind walls is not the long-term answer. The villages must use all political and nonpolitical means available to get neighboring jurisdictions to take actions to improve themselves. It is a reasonable demand of any town, city or village to expect neighboring jurisdictions to behave in a manner that does not negatively impact you. On the other hand, if you do not use your good influence to set an example and ensure responsible actions, do not expect your neighbors to solve their problems which affect you.

THE EXPERIENCE The Miami Shores/El Portal Masterplan Design Charrette grew out of their joint proposal to the South Florida Regional Planning Council (SFRPC) under the Florida Department of Community Affairs' (DCA) "Eastward-Ho!" Partnership Initiative. *Eastward-Ho!* was created to support the redevelopment and careful urban design of Florida's historic coastal communities. The Eastward-Ho! corridor – roughly east of I-95 from Ft. Pierce to Homestead – lies within the jurisdictions of the South Florida and Treasure Coast Regional Planning Councils. The Miami Shores/El Portal project was selected as the first of four charrettes to be held in South Florida, co-sponsored by the DCA, Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (TCRPC) and the SFRPC. The TCRPC works primarily in the counties of Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie and Indian River.



The entire Treasure Coast design studio staff and a number of other urban design and architecture professionals worked vigorously on the charrette and masterplan for a full week. Beginning with a public "Kick-off" session on Friday night, November 7, 1998, the citizens familiarized themselves with the charrette process and the design team and expressed issues of concern in their community. Over 100 residents turned out the next morning for the citizen design workshop. With the assistance of the design team, citizens discussed real

design issues and actually drew their ideas onto maps of the towns. At the end of the day, all the maps were presented by a citizen representative from each group. It was with these presentations that consensus was realized. Ideas common to each of the citizen designs were quickly identified. It is this consensus that the designers used to create the Masterplan. The team set up its shop at the El Portal Village Hall where the doors were open for visitors most of the day and into the night

throughout the entire week. It is estimated that each designer put in from 90 to 100 hours of work that week. An interim presentation of work-in-progress was made at the Miami Shores Country Club the following Friday, November 14. Further development and refinement of the work was done in the following months and was presented to the public again on January 21, 1999. A final presentation of the charrette masterplan was conducted Tuesday, May 18, 1999.

TCRPC Design Studio:

Michael Busha - Executive Director; David Goodman - Project Manager; Marcela Cambor; Geoffrey Ferrell; Shirley Monroe

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Citizens:

Lou Soli; Hugh Gladwin; Bruce Hamerstrom; John Tomczak; Joe Kohl; Sergio Vazquez; Spiro Canton; Citizens of the Village of Miami Shores; Citizens of the Village of El Portal; Greater Miami Shores Chamber of Commerce; Miami-Dade County Fire Rescue.

