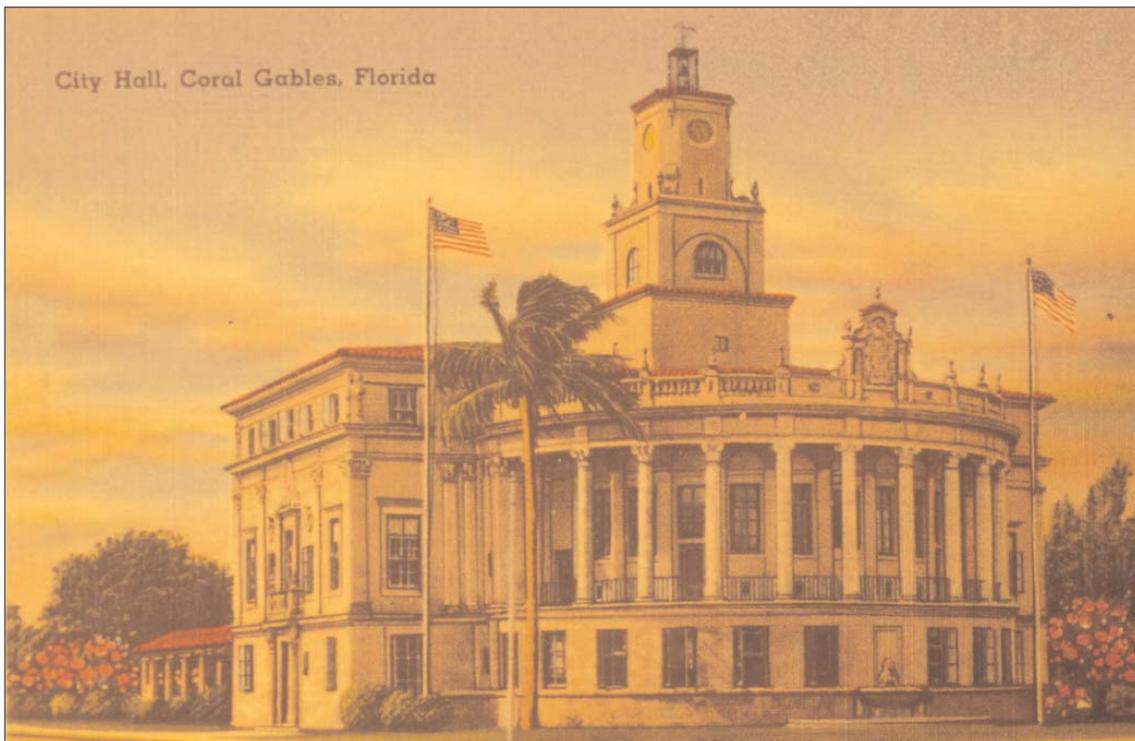


THE CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE REPORT



The City of Coral Gables and
The University of Miami School of Architecture
2002

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE

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CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The 1990s witnessed a widespread rediscovery of American main streets and downtowns, a revival so powerful that it led to the construction of entirely new town centers for the first time in over half a century. Americans have once again been drawn to the pleasures and advantages of living, working, and visiting downtowns for many reasons: lively shopping streets, vibrant business districts, interesting cultural areas, attractive lofts, apartments and townhomes, and the open-air civic atmosphere of village greens, town squares, and urban plazas.

Existing downtowns, such as Coral Gables, have experienced mixed success in harnessing this trend to realize their revitalization goals. Compared to the new suburban town centers being built, older downtowns face complex challenges related to aging infrastructure, more fragmented land ownership, and issues of parking, traffic congestion, and a lack of downtown housing options. But older downtowns have their advantages as well, including prime locations, historic buildings, civic and cultural institutions, and the patina that only the passing of time and events can bestow.

Downtown Coral Gables and the neighborhoods along North Ponce de Leon Boulevard enjoy many of these advantages and have managed to avoid the significant disinvestment, vacancies and blight that other urban cores have suffered in the recent past. The City already possesses a relatively dense, maturing downtown with rising property values and an absence of blighted and vacant properties.

Despite its prowess, however, citizens and the City's leadership have clearly identified some specific problems and a general dissatisfaction with the overall quality and direction of development in the downtown. There is the impression that Coral Gables consists of two cities; the one where they live - characterized by pleasant walkable, tree lined streets, a wide variety of distinctive, Mediterranean-influenced houses, and civic art in the form of fountains, pocket parks and gateways - and the commercial center - perceived by many as a barren environment dominated by traffic, parking lots, and indistinct buildings that could be found in any city. There are moments of past and present glory in the downtown - in the historic buildings, civic spaces, Restaurant Row and Miracle Mile - but as a whole the downtown is perceived as a place that is disconnected from the original vision and spirit of Coral Gables. Similarly, the North Ponce area seems to be evolving away from initial intentions as new buildings contrast with old and project an uncertain future.

There is also a general sense that Downtown and North Ponce have reached a historic turning point, and that they can no longer continue down a path of development where the shape of our streets and buildings is driven by accumulated layers of codes and standards that - while solving technical issues - fail to produce the types of beautiful, hospitable places that citizens so desire. Coral Gables core is not so much in need of "revitalization" as it is in need of a clear vision that reflects the high hopes its citizens have for it.

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This report is a starting point for renewing the vision. The recommendations presented in the pages that follow are not a rigid blueprint for the future of the city, but provide vivid examples to help guide developers, planners and city officials in the development and evaluation of projects as well as revising recommendations.

There are essentially two types of material presented in this report. The first can be referred to as general strategies. These include alternatives for the improvement of streetscapes, transportation strategies for slowing down traffic in the downtown, suggestions for the management of parking spaces with alternative approaches to accommodating parking in buildings, encouraging high quality retail frontages in the downtown core, and other suggestions for redevelopment in a form that improves urban vitality rather than undermining it.

The second type of material presented involves alternative development scenarios for specific public spaces, streets and buildings. These are illustrations of how new construction and redevelopment can occur in a manner that enhances the downtown living and working environment. A number of these could be developed directly from the sketches provided. It is also hoped that the concept and spirit of the illustrations and recommendations will have a more generalized influence and communicate the types of projects that the City should encourage in its efforts to improve the downtown.

Overall, the success of future efforts will depend on the City's ability to assemble a vibrant mix of uses within a built environment that provides a high-quality pedestrian experience for the people who live, work, shop, dine, and visit the downtown for entertainment and cultural activities. While the particular details of any one initiative will vary, there are elements of an overriding vision that have already emerged:

Streets where traffic is calmed, lined with shops, restaurants and residences, and where people stroll in comfort beneath canopies of street trees, arcades, colonnades and awnings.

Pathways that make walking from one block to the next a short, safe, and attractive choice.

Refined public spaces that are no longer islands in a sea of traffic, but comfortable gathering places for workers on their lunch hour, retirees, families with children, and evening visitors.

A concentration of civic institutions that are established as key sites within the downtown, and that provide the City with a wealth of fine and performing arts and cultural activities.

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Buildings that sensitively shape the public realm of the City's streets and gathering places, that provide balconies, terraces and windows that open up and take advantage of the temperate South Florida climate, and where people dining, working and living above the ground floors of buildings stay connected to the streetlife below, and contribute to the lively, open-air Mediterranean urbanism that citizens so desire.

Some will ask, how can we afford the types of changes envisioned in this report? We might better ask, how was it possible for George Merrick and the original residents of Coral Gables to create the City we know today? Surely their task was much more daunting, beginning from scratch out of the original landscape and groves of South Florida in the 1920s. Today as inheritors of their legacy, we have the benefit of standing on their shoulders as we work to bring their original vision forward with us into the twenty-first century. To do so does not require one grand sweeping effort completed in a single stroke. The enhancement of our city will come about through an incremental approach in which individual steps taken by City government and private property owners will accumulate overtime to create the place we dream of: street by street, building by building, each move following a unified vision.

Others may ask, how can we know what is truly consistent with Merrick's original vision or, for that matter, how can new buildings and places embody the Mediterranean precedent that citizens embrace? The models that were so obvious for Merrick in the 1920s may have become muddled for us today, clouded by many decades of trends and innovations. However, the models and precedents are, in fact, more accessible to us today than they were to Merrick in his day, including the cities and towns of Spain and Italy that provided the original inspiration for the architects and planners of Coral Gables. Other examples are much closer to home, spread throughout our neighboring South Florida communities.

Cities such as Boca Raton and West Palm Beach have redeveloped large areas of their downtowns in recent years that represent contemporary interpretations of Mediterranean architecture and urbanism. Mizner Park, City Place and Clematis Street show that the dream of a walkable, open-air, Mediterranean urban character that many people feel is lacking in downtown Coral Gables is possible.

As the City considers how to act on the recommendations that follow, it is important to emphasize that all citizens have a stake in the future of the downtown, and that this is an initiative that all citizens should monitor and support. While each of the City's neighborhoods and districts are important, the downtown belongs to all citizens; it represents the identity of the entire city, and the reputation of Coral Gables as a whole rises and falls with that of its downtown.

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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George Merrick and the Spirit of Coral Gables

The transcript of a talk by the historian Arva Moore Parks
given at the Coral Gables Youth Center for the opening of the Coral Gables Charrette,
January 10, 2002

It is a real pleasure to be here tonight with so many friends. There is nothing better than talking about Coral Gables when you know just about everybody in the audience.

I want to say a few words first and then I have some slides.

"The future of Coral Gables is at a crossroad. The decision is whether to follow the road that leads to a highly urbanized community with multiple dwellings and a big-city atmosphere or to continue on the road, which will keep the quiet residential atmosphere in which all of us are proud. Coral Gables has been faced with this dilemma, but has never come to grips with it. The future cannot be put off. It must be plotted now. Too much of Coral Gables planning has been after the fact, instead of before it. The fairest way to determine the future of Coral Gables is to go to the people who live here." Coral Gables Times editorial, December 15, 1960.

This 1960 editorial was prompted by the city's first two high rise buildings, other than the Biltmore-the apartment building in Sunrise Harbor and the David Williams Hotel. In response, a group of citizens organized the "Committee for the Preservation of the Present Zoning Ordinance." This early effort goes to show that one of the wonderful things about Coral Gables is that people have not just cared about quality of life recently, they have always cared about it. They have always tried to have input into the city's decisions. That time, however, the Commission did not listen. On February 7, 1961, by a three to two vote, the commissioners refused to change the charter to outlaw high-rise buildings, but they said they were going to institute many safeguards to control future development.

Well, with that as a background, I am thrilled to see this many people here tonight and I am thrilled you have come for a community charrette. I am so pleased that George Merrick is back where he belongs-in a position of high esteem. There was a time in Coral Gables' history, particularly from about the 1950s to the 1970s, when he was lost. I remember looking at Coral Gables' 50th Anniversary reports and documents and realizing that he was hardly even mentioned. Amazing, when we think of how it is today. Now we hear that "he would roll over in his grave or he would be happy . . . or he would like this or he wouldn't like that." What I try to do is not to say what I believe he would think today, but share what he did think, what he wrote, what he planned, what he accomplished and what he failed to accomplish but wished to. I have a big file entitled "In His Own Words" and I have collected a massive amount of information in his own words because, fortunately, he made a lot of speeches and was quoted in a lot of newspaper articles. In the old days, it was not unusual to print his whole speech in the paper. So by focusing on his own words, I can really understand him.

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I am trying to understand what some might think a little corny, but I do not think it is. I am trying to understand his soul-what he thought, why he thought like he thought, what made him tick. To start with, he was a very bright and very creative individual. He was the son of very bright, very creative parents. His family adored him. His grandparents adored him and so did his friends. All this adoration, which was rightly deserved, made him a very confident human being.

He was an extremely well educated person, but not in the usual way. In fact, as I work on George Merrick's biography, I keep saying "I am being educated by George Merrick," because he uses so many literary illusions in his writing that I have to read the book, look up phrases and find out what he really means because my education is not quite as good as his was.

His parents taught him but mostly, he taught himself. How? He read, read, read, and read. In fact, he described the early influence reading had on his future development. When he came to Miami in 1899 as a 13-year-old boy, he spent the first night in Coconut Grove with Reverend Bolton of the Congregational Church, who had assisted his father. Reverend Bolton's wife, Eva, was an educated woman. She gave young George a volume by John Ruskin to read. So at age 13, in his first night in Miami, he is reading Ruskin. For the rest of his life, he often quoted him.

George never went to school after 1899 until he went off to Rollins College when he was 21 years old. As you can see, he had a very unusual kind of education. Several times a week, he went into Miami to peddle vegetables in his mule cart-four hours in and four hours back. He said the mule knew the way, so he read the whole time. So if we all read eight hours every couple of days, we would be as educated as George.

He wanted to be a writer. He was a romantic. All those things you hear about him are true. He was very visual. He saw things behind his eyes before they ever got onto paper. He was not an artist in the traditional sense, like many other members of his family, but he was an artistic genius just the same.

He also was greatly influenced by the people around him. From age 13, he worked in the fields. He was a field hand. He grubbed the palmettos, which, if you've ever tried to do, you know how hard it is. His best friends were the black Bahamian laborers who worked on the plantation side-by-side with him and the family. He told many stories about them and what they meant to him. They are the ones who taught him to love the tropics, to love South Florida, to respect the pineland, to respect the beautiful cloud mountains. His Bahamian friends greatly influenced him all his life. Because of this early Bahamian influence, he understood the land and he loved all things tropical.

Recently, I penned a letter to the editor in response to somebody that wrote that he was only in it for the money like all the other developers. He really, truly, was not in it for the money, even though he made a lot of it. Today, he would have been like a Bill Gates. He had the chance to sell Coral Gables for \$80 million 1920s dollars. Just think of that! But he would not have considered it in a million years. Denman Fink, his uncle, said that he never knew how much money he had and he never cared. All he wanted to do was build a perfect city.

He was also a super salesman. He was handsome-very handsome-charismatic-very charismatic. He had deep blue eyes, dark hair-almost raven colored and a smile no one ever forgot. Doc Dammers once said that Merrick was so persuasive that he [Dammers] could say something in the morning that might be a lie and before the day was over George Merrick would make it happen. George's grandfather, H.G.G. Fink, had a tremendous influence on the young man. Fink was a charismatic Methodist circuit-riding preacher who became very wealthy selling Fink's Magic Oil. George adored him and he adored George. I believe that a great deal of George's confidence and oratory skills and ability to sell anything came from Grandpa Fink.

Well, with that as a background, we will begin the slide presentation.

I would like to start with this slide because it is romantic, just like George. You can see the vision, the "Castles in Spain" you have heard about. You can understand his point of view in one of the written documents he gave his salesmen:

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"Remember that what you are selling here is not just land. It is not just a piece of ground on which to put a house. What you are really selling is romance, the stars, the moon, the tropics, the wind off the blue water and the perfume of flowers that never grew in northern climes." That may sound a little corny to you today, but he meant it. He meant every single word of it.

You are all familiar with this image, but I think it again highlights Merrick's vision of what Coral Gables should be. His vision of the garden. His vision of the Spanish patio. His vision of what he thought was the best way to live in South Florida.

This is the front patio of George and Eunice Merrick's house on South Greenway Drive. You can see that he also practiced what he preached.

This is the Merrick family in the early 20th century. Solomon Merrick on the left, the preacher/father, who became the minister at Plymouth Church in 1901. That is George as a teenager, right next to him. This is probably a picture you have not seen before. His mother, Althea Fink Merrick, who was an artist, is sitting down. In front of him are his cousins Bob Fink, who was also an artist, and Enna Fink, who many of you may have known in Coral Gables. Another cousin, H. George Fink, is on the outside and in the back are his sisters Ethel and Medie.

This is a very early picture of their homestead. The house, a little wooden cabin, is the home they moved into from Duxbury, Massachusetts, where Solomon Merrick, was the preacher of the Congregational Church. In Duxbury, the family lived in a big fancy house right on Main Street. They moved to the wilderness of South Florida-out to the end of nowhere-five miles from everything-and lived in this "dog-trot" semi-shack. It must have been an incredible adjustment.

There were no schools this far out from the three-year-old City of Miami. Even though George did not go to school, the first thing his mother did was start this educational institution for her younger children. She named it the Guavonia School after the tangle of guava trees that grew nearby. (Just think, we could be living in Guavonia today.) The school was on the corner of Granada and Coral Way in a wooden cabin that was there when the family arrived. It was the first public school in Coral Gables.

George loved to read Washington Irving's Alhambra. This is the real Alhambra-taken from a book available to him in the late 19th Century. You may see some buildings you recognize. These are the type of pictures he looked at and this is what he read when he dreamed of "Castles in Spain." He wrote constantly about the Giralda in Seville, that you might recognize in its many later applications in Miami.

Even though George's father and mother were extremely well educated-Solomon with a Master's in Divinity from Yale and Althea with a Bachelor of Arts from Lebanon Valley College-they survived in Miami as farmers. Their first crop included guavas and vegetables grown on what is now the Granada Golf Course. Today's golf course was low land and it was therefore easy to plant the crops-no palmettos to grub. At the same time, George and his father plant-

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ed miles of grapefruit trees. His father used to say that things would get better "when the groves begin to bear." And bear they did. By 1910, the Merrick's Coral Gables Plantation sent the first carload of grapefruit out of South Florida.

Looking just west of today's Granada Boulevard, you can see that the whole area was full of grapefruit trees. As their economic position improved, the Merrick family built this beautiful rock house that is such a treasure in the midst of the city. They named it Coral Gables. You can see that the land around it was still rough and Coral Way was little more than a wagon trail.

About the same time the house was completed, 21-year-old George went off to Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida. At Rollins, he was the only freshman to ever win the oratory prize, after having not been in school since he was 13. In 1909, after two years at Rollins, he went to New York law school. When he was in law school, he lived with his uncle Denman Fink in Haworth, New Jersey. Denman Fink was only six years older than George and, by this time, was becoming a very famous, nationally known illustrator. As you can see, he was also very handsome, like George.

George's father died in 1911 and George left law school. He was glad to leave law school because he did not want to be a lawyer. While he was in law school, he won first prize in the New York Herald Tribune's short-story contest. He wanted to be a writer, but as a dutiful son, he came home to help take care of the family and manage the groves.

In 1916, he married beautiful Eunice Peacock, granddaughter of Charles and Isabella Peacock of Coconut Grove's Peacock Inn fame. From that time on, they began planning Coral Gables. He said later, however, that when he was living with Denman Fink, they began talking about the possibilities of doing some kind of a planned city. He and Denman had even toured some of the planned cities in the northeast.

This is the big four, as far as I am concerned. The four people who had the vision and created the plan for Coral Gables. Not to take anything away from Phineas Paist, but he did not join the team until more than a year after the first sale and the original plan was completed. The real hero of the plan is the man on the left-Frank Button-who some of you may not have heard of. Button was a registered landscape architect, the first in Miami. Next to him is Eunice Merrick, George's wife, who was very involved in all of the early plans. George, and of course, his uncle and chief artistic advisor, Denman Fink. George said he relied heavily on Denman Fink because he was an artist. George could see it and articulate it and Denman could draw it for him.

This, perhaps, is a new face for you. I'm elevating him to a new level because I have been doing more research on this early era. This is first cousin H. George Fink. He is the son of Romeo Fink, who was Althea Merrick's brother and Denman Fink's nephew. He too, was involved from the very beginning. Probably everybody sitting here knows and loves H. George Fink's office building just south of Coral Way on Ponce de Leon Boulevard. Like George Merrick, the King and Queen of Spain also honored H. George Fink. He was Coral Gables' most prolific architect and designed most of the early buildings on Coral Way. In fact, he designed over 400 houses between 1921-1924.

In November 1921, George sold the first lots right at the corner of Granada and Coral Way. "Follow the Golden Galleon," signs proclaimed. Coral Gables was going to be a Spanish-themed city built of "coral rock." George soon began to realize, however, that this one-type building material was too limiting. You can see his romantic side with the headline: "Where Your Castles in Spain are Made Real." At the bottom, however, you will notice his businessman/salesman side when he added: "Where Coral Gables Lies, Your Money Multiplies."

Merrick published the first plat of Coral Gables in November 1921. On the left you can see the first business district. Today it is Country Club Prado. At this time, he did not own the present site of the downtown area. If you look carefully, you can see the notation: "library." Amazingly, he was thinking about cultural institutions from the very beginning. He was not a static person at all, so he constantly rearranged Frank Button's plans to conform to his next purchase or inspiration.

This image was taken on the first day of sales in Coral Gables. I love it because there is a man standing in the crowd in pantaloons-keeping the Spanish city theme.

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One of the first buildings constructed of note was the Coral Gables Country Club. It became the first sales office. Notice the tower. George Merrick loved towers. Again, he was also practical. Salesmen would take prospective buyers up in the tower where they could look out and choose their lot. It was a high spot and, of course, it overlooked the Granada Golf Course-Merrick's former vegetable patch that still goes under water from time to time as it did then.

By 1923, Merrick had purchased the land east of Le Jeune Road and switched his plans for the business district to that area. This is actually the first commercial building. Some of you may remember it. Unfortunately, it is one that we no longer have with us. It was on the corner of Alhambra and Le Jeune, designed by Walter DeGarmo. Merrick announced that it would be a "modern shopping center." It had multiple stores surrounded by this wonderful arcade. For a while, the Esso Building, which is probably changed its name, sat behind it.

This view is of the same corner just a little bit later. You see the landscaping growing in. Isn't it a beautiful scene?

The two buildings on the corner of Salzedo and Alhambra are still there and the former Stowe-on the Wold remains as well. These were some of the first buildings on Alhambra and the last to still stand.

By 1923, Merrick built one of our greatest treasures and one of everybody's favorite buildings, Coral Gables Elementary School. Kiehnel and Elliott, the architects, came from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Merrick not only employed the best local architects, but he looked nationally for great architects as well.

That same year Merrick built Venetian Pool, another of our favorite landmarks. When he constructed all of those rock houses, the workers dug the rock from here and created a rock pit right in the middle of his planned community. Denman Fink turned the eyesore into what Merrick advertised as "the world's most beautiful swimming hole."

George Merrick also built an impressive group of small hotels. All but two are gone. This one, unfortunately, is one of the missing. The Coral Gables Inn was later the Coral Gables Music Club. It is now, and has been ever since it was torn down, a parking lot. If you have been to Spain's Alhambra, you will recognize this building. There are not too many "knockoffs" in Coral Gables but this one is very much like in the Generalife in the Alhambra.

The Antilla is another one of the beautiful small hotels. It was torn down for the Chateaubleu on Ponce. The Antilla had wonderful patios and arcades and places for people to eat outside. We should never have allowed the Antilla to be torn down. I hope we know better today.

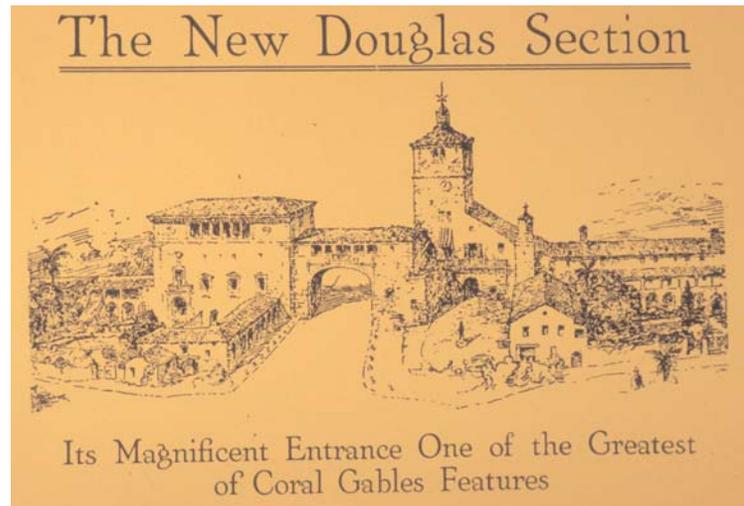
Of course, we still have the Cla-Reina, now called the La Palma, that fortunately, has been beautifully restored.

The Casa Loma Hotel once stood in today's Biltmore Hotel parking lot. Unfortunately, the City of Coral Gables tore that one down after they acquired the Biltmore and before everybody in Coral Gables got smart enough to say, "Don't do it." It is one of those very unfortunate things that makes us realize how much we have changed our attitude about historic preservation.

As you can see, the Bank of Coral Gables and Post Office was a beautiful building. It stood on the site where the new Allen Morris building is going up. Morris' building is the closest thing to the original Mediterranean style built since the 1920s. The bank and post office later became the Presbyterian Church. Recently, when I wandered inside before it was torn down, I could still see some of the filled-in arches from the original building. There is a wonderful description of the special Coral Gables ambiance found there. "Only in Coral Gables can you get your mail and sit in a garden to read it." We should remember that as we re-consider downtown.

Downtown Main Street, Coral Gables-as you can see, there is real symmetry, scale and consistency of design. As far as I am concerned, this is George Merrick's downtown and his vision for the Coral Gables business district.

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This view is looking north, just south of Alhambra.

Now you are looking south, from a little bit north of Alhambra.

If you stood in front of the Elementary School thirty-five years ago, you would have seen this vista including the now-demolished Gables Theater on the right. You can see quite a concentration of buildings in the same style. Many of us can remember how the street looked because most of the buildings survived into the 1970s.

This is another view, again looking north from about where the Colonnade is today.

George, however, was not content to just do a downtown. He had visions for these other wonderful spaces-sort of satellite shopping areas.

This is the Craft Village that was planned around the Ponce Circle. Only a few buildings were ever built. The old Charade Restaurant was the Granada Shop-where the Wilkins family created faux Spanish furniture. The Fine Arts Building is still there. An architectural firm now occupies it. It was where Denman Fink and Phineas Paist oversaw and approved the design, color and scale of all the buildings constructed in Coral Gables. The Boake Building was torn down, but the Bank of Coral Gables replicated it. Like many of George Merrick's great plans, he never had a chance to finish the Craft Section. It was to be a marvelous place where craftsmen worked and lived. Shoppers could watch craftsmen making rugs, pottery and furniture. At the end of the day, the craftsmen would go up stair to their dwellings.

It is very important for you to remember, although it's hard to imagine today when you cannot buy anything cheap in Coral Gables, that George Merrick planned Coral Gables for all kinds of people with all kinds of incomes. He did not want just rich people. In fact, he envisioned Coral Gables as a spot of beauty for the middle class. He never would have allowed gated communities except for some of his villages that traditionally had walls. Even on streets like Granada and Alhambra that have big estate-style houses, the side streets have more modest dwellings. He believed in a kind of democratic planning. I know many people still believe this is the right kind of planning for today.

The Exhibition Building was one of the buildings that was not built in the Craft Section. It was going to house a permanent trade fair to sell merchandise from all over the world.

This is the never-completed Coral Gables Market. Its foundation was there for years. Today it is the Court building; formerly, the Food Fair.

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This is a beautiful example of the detail of the early Coral Gables architecture. It's a Walter DeGarmo drawing with all the little swirls and all the lettering for the Administration Building that stood on the southwest corner of Coral Way and Ponce de Leon Boulevard. It was the second place George Merrick sold Coral Gables-the first the little building on Le Jeune shown previously. As the community grew bigger and better, he needed a larger and more grandiose headquarters.

This building was later Sam's Corner filling station. Many in the audience probably remember it. Unfortunately, it was torn down. If you look upstairs on the left-that little balcony area-was part of George Merrick's private office. This is one of the best pictures I can show to explain George Merrick's vision for Coral Gables. From his balcony patio, you can see down today's Miracle Mile toward Douglas Road. Imagine what a nice place it was to work. If he had someone to impress he just walked him or her out there to catch the southeast breeze, which, before air conditioning, all old-time Miamians know you must "catch" to survive.

By 1925, Coral Gables was booming, booming, booming. Salesmen brought in prospective buyers from all over America. This picture shows a Jacksonville group in front of the Administration Building. Merrick had offices all over America. Coral Gables was quite a national phenomenon.

Still dreaming and still loving his Spanish theme, in March 1925, which is a really big time for Coral Gables, they broke ground for the Biltmore Hotel. He brought in John McEntee Bowman, who was the finest hotelier of his day. Bowman brought in Schultz and Weaver, internationally known hotel designers. The Biltmore chain was in the class of today's Four Seasons or something of that caliber. It would be "the" hotel.

About a week later, the beautiful Coral Gables Congregational Church opened. Kiehnel and Elliott were the architects. It is one of the most beautiful buildings remaining almost unchanged from the 1920s. I always take people there to look around at the ceilings and the walls and the floors when they are trying to understand the early vision of Coral Gables. Merrick gave the land and provided most of the construction money to honor his late father, a Congregational Church minister.

In April, the City of Coral Gables incorporated. It is interesting to note, though, in the beginning George Merrick never planned to create a new city. He planned to have Coral Gables become part of Miami. There is a lot of writing on that in the early 1920s, but Coral Gables grew so rapidly, I guess he realized, fortunately, it needed to be its own city.

In 1925, he also announced the Riviera Section and the University of Miami. He gave \$5 million and promised four more, plus all the land to build the University. Believe it or not, Merrick talked about Coral Gables becoming Miami's university community in December 1921, one month after he sold the first lot. The new university was going to be gorgeous. This is the plan that Phineas Paist and Denman Fink created.

This is a Bob Fink drawing of some of the planned buildings. He was Denman Fink's son. When you get all these family members collaborating, they created something very special.

This is the concourse and new FEC Railroad station that was planned on Ponce, right in front of the University. From this point forward, most of the plans you will see were proposed but not completed.

This is the second building designed by H. George Fink planned but not built at Ponce de Leon High School (now Middle School). If you look on the right, you can see the building that was completed in 1926 and still stands. Unfortunately, if you study the present building, it does not look much like the original. The recent addition-and they should be shot for doing such a fort-like building-is obviously nothing like the proposed Fink addition. Too bad.

This photograph may surprise you. It was called the Towers. The Towers were to be an enormous high-rise complex.

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It was to be a Kellogg-type sanitarium, a health spa that was very big in the 1920s. It was located at Riviera Drive and Blue Road on the canal. To say that George Merrick would never build anything tall or large scale is wrong. He planned this complex-the largest planned single project in George Merrick's Coral Gables.

Even more surprising, is the Mahi Golf Resort. It was going to be on Hardee Road and the canal on South Alhambra Circle. There was to be a golf course with canals and homes for Shriners. The clubhouse, seen here, is a magnificent Moorish-style building.

This incredible light post is an important relic of the Riviera Section that I have been lobbying for somebody to do something about for 25 years. Denman Fink designed them. They are still standing but most are in serious disrepair. Somebody needs to do something about them. Put that on your list.

Merrick, as you know, had his main downtown and his Crafts Section. Now at the northern end of his planned community, he built the Puerta del Sol, that we call the Douglas Entrance. It had shops and apartments and offices. Everybody needs to read the original plan for the Douglas Section because I know this is part of the charette discussion. The original Douglas Section was to be an apartment district, that in many ways it still is. It was also to have a collection of cultural and civic institutions. Merrick proposed a museum of natural history, a library, a stadium and of course, the coliseum.

The Puerta del Sol was barely started. It was to be a mini-walled city more than twice the size of what was completed. Many of us remember when you could drive through it. I loved to drive through the Douglas Entrance when I was a little girl.

This is another un-built project that may surprise you. I counted it and it had 20 stories. When I tell you where it was to be you will groan. It was right where the new Segovia Tower is located. It had another feature that shows some of George Merrick's forward thinking. It was to be a condo. Before condos were invented, he was going to sell apartments. It never materialized. Some of us may be glad.

The Biscayne Bay Section was Merrick's final articulated and most unrealized plan. A great portion of land is now Cocoplum that was not developed until the 1970s, '80s and '90s. These drawings show the proposed waterway loops and the beautiful Bahia Mar-a grand boulevard that was to go all the way down the bayfront to Cutler. George planned lagoons on all these waterfront lots but he always kept a very wide swath for the public. He did not believe in roping off the public from the waterfront.

While the Biscayne Bay section was in the planning stages, the Biltmore was on its way up. It opened in January 1926. One month later, Tahiti Beach opened in the Biscayne Bay section. It was really about the only realized project in that section, except for a couple of houses.

The Gables Theater was one of the last big projects. It opened in late 1926 and was torn down in the 1970s.

University of Miami was going up in the summer of 1926, but by the middle of the summer, the economy started to fall apart even before the hurricane hit. University officials decided to move temporarily into the half-finished Anastasia Hotel that was also experiencing financial difficulty. This is a Richard Merrick drawing of the H. George Fink designed hotel. Richard was George Merrick's youngest brother. Of course, this is where the University started and remained until after World War II. It stood right where the Coral Gables Youth Center stands today.

The Colonnade was under construction in the summer of 1926. It was to be another administration building-the grandest of all. Merrick planned to move his offices across the street. It was never really finished because the Coral Gables Corporation ran out of money. In September 1926, the hurricane came and almost all construction stopped.

This is one of two last big gasps of the boom. It is the Coliseum that we should never have lost but we did.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE



And the final, final building that George Merrick had anything to do with is our beautiful City Hall. Phineas Paist and Walter De Garmo designed it.

What I have shown you tonight is George Merrick's Coral Gables. As you know, he ended up being forced off the Commission in 1928 because a dissident group of citizens blamed him and the Coral Gables Corporation for their crash related problems. They forced a referendum and the citizens threw everybody off the commission except George. He had the highest number of votes. He could have been mayor, but he refused. Then the new commission figured out a way to get rid of him anyway. They said he missed too many meetings. It was Depression times and people who were losing money looked for a scapegoat. There he was—the face and soul of Coral Gables. Despite the humiliation and defeat, he never became bitter—only sad.

George and his wife went down to the Keys and built a rustic, high-end fishing camp. The 1935 hurricane blew it away. He then came back to Coral Gables, opened a real estate office in his old Administration Building and was limping along with the rest of the depression weary folk. In 1940, because he wanted to pay off his debts and needed a regular income to do so, he took the postmaster exam and made the highest score. He became Postmaster of Miami. He ended up in that wonderful Federal Building across from the Wolfson Campus of Miami-Dade Community College. Ironically, while he was postmaster he participated in the dedication of the magnificent Denman Fink mural in the Central Courtroom. Fink's portrait of George as a young boy working on the Coral Gables Plantation can be seen today in this masterpiece.

This is a 1940s view of Coral Gables. As you can see, nothing changed much from the time George Merrick left in 1928. When George was forced out, he had a ten-year plan in place. He wanted to acquire 15,000 more acres to bring Coral Gables' total to 25,000 acres. He expected to spend \$100 million more to finish his dream city. This one will surprise you—he projected that Coral Gables would have 250,000 residents.

George Merrick died in March 1942 when he was only 56 years old. In 1940, when Coral Gables was 15, and George was still alive, a newspaper story opined that it was not just beauty that made Coral Gables unique but it was the single concept and the unity of design, plus the tremendous vision of George Merrick. It noted that it was inspiring that City officials and individuals had stuck to his ideas even after he was gone. Of course, he was still around to speak up.

This is a 1944 postcard. At the end of World War II, when people were beginning to build again, Coral Gables

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

became especially popular because there was an enormous amount of vacant land all over the city.

At that time, a group of architects began a movement to get rid of the Mediterranean-style architecture. It was considered old fashioned. It was a sign of depression-of failure. They tore down the administration building, the one with the patio-George's patio.

In January 1950, this newspaper comment sums up what was happening to the original spirit of Coral Gables.

"Landmark To Go! Gables completes its break with the past. A none-too-pleasant reminder of the City's humble beginnings. Few tears will be shed when demolition of the landmark is begun."

That was the era in which Coral Gables began to boom again, but in a very different way than George had envisioned. Eunice Merrick, George's widow, commented that she had seen his city become a reality, but "many of the castles have gone a little too modern to have pleased him."

This is the beginning of Miracle Mile, which is a post-World War II development. It has its own place in history and its own viability today but it is certainly not part of the original vision of George Merrick. His Main Street centered on Ponce and Alhambra. He would have developed Coral Way too if he had had time. The Colonnade and the Administration Building were only just the beginning of his plans for Coral Way.

In 1965, a group of people fought to keep the Douglas Entrance from being torn down to become a Food Fair supermarket. It seems pretty hard to believe today. I think this whole room would make a roadblock in front of a bulldozer if somebody started to go after the Douglas Entrance. In 1965, a handful of women worked to save the Douglas Entrance. They formed a group called the Villagers-our earliest preservation group that still strives to save our historic built environment.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the citizens of Coral Gables came together to save the Biltmore. The first vote I ever cast in Coral Gables was for this bond issue. I had just moved in, qualified to vote and voted for the Biltmore bond. Little did I know how involved I would be in later years. In 1973, Coral Gables had the first preservation ordinance of any Dade County municipality, although the current preservation ordinance, in my opinion, is very, very weak and still needs a more teeth.

In 1976, we were able to save Coral Gables House. It came this close to being lost. We didn't even have three votes to accept Mr. Philbrick's gift. It is always amazing when you think of that. We didn't have three votes to save the Biltmore either until Dorothy Thomson changed her vote. We forget this today, but we need to remember. You need to remember. We have come a long way.

After the 1960 zoning change, we had a 13-story height limit. As a result, Coral Gables sprouted a lot of flat-roofed, thirteen story less-than wonderful buildings in the downtown area. The first one was the Texaco Building. Then came the buildings on Alhambra. The Davidson Building next to Publix was "the straw that broke the camel's back." It spurred the Coral Gables Commission to create the Mediterranean Revival Committee in 1983. We worked together for three years to come up with a way to try to save the soul of Coral Gables' downtown. It was reviewed again in 1990 and, of course, it is being reviewed again right now.

The last thing the city has accomplished to try to save the soul of Coral Gables was the transfer of development rights. This ordinance helps protect the last remaining historic buildings like the Bank of Coral Gables, and the old Dream Theater seen here. I know Dean Colson is here tonight. His building, the classic three-story building saved the beautiful Weiland Clinic that is now Books & Books. It is the best example we have so far of how this ordinance can work for everyone's benefit. I hope as a long-time viewer of the scene, that we will figure out a way to encourage more of these mid-range buildings, like three stories, four stories, five stories, that we seemed to have forgotten how to build.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE



I would like to end with this image of Coral Gables Elementary School. It is one of the best surviving examples of George Merrick's vision for Coral Gables. The trees, the grass, the arches, the shadows, and the light capture his spirit. In 1927, when life was difficult and he was forced to stand for a citizen's referendum, he wrote this. It sums up the importance of what you all are going to be doing at the charrette.

"It is my earnest desire that the people of Coral Gables shall be given an opportunity to express their wishes in all matters affecting the City and that the wishes of the citizens so expressed shall be carried out."

And finally, George again, "Effective planning is compounded of vision and the proper application of that vision."

And with that, begin the great work of your visioning. I told you I wasn't going to say what George Merrick would like, but I'll break that promise this one time. He would love what you are doing these next few days.

Thank you for being here.

THE PUBLIC PROCESS

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: PUBLIC PROCESS



The Public Process

The City of Coral Gables Charrette 2002 took place January 10-14 at the Coral Gables Youth Center. More than 1,500 people joined 50-plus designers in the five days of meetings, design sessions and presentations. This essay describes the process of preparation and the charrette, which produced the report that follows.

A charrette is an intense participatory planning and urban design process in which community members and leaders work with architects, landscape architects and planners to envision the physical future of their city. The process is designed to draw out vivid public opinion and feedback. Seeking a broad range of public input is crucial, not only to shape but also to validate the recommendations resulting from the process.

The charrette, initiated by the City of Coral Gables and organized with the assistance of the University of Miami, was guided by a mission statement:

"To define a community vision that enhances the vitality of downtown and enhances the livability of adjoining neighborhoods."

The area of focus was limited to two areas related by adjacency and shared pressures for growth: the Central Business District and the North Ponce de Leon Neighborhood. The Central Business District is bounded by Navarre Avenue, Douglas Road, LeJeune Road and Almeria Avenue. The North Ponce neighborhood is bounded by SW 8th Street, Douglas Road, LeJeune Road, the City's western boundary and Navarre Avenue.

City officials and University administrators and faculty prepared for the January event for six months. More than three dozen prior studies and plans for the City were reviewed and summarized.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: PUBLIC PROCESS



Several methods to engage broad public participation were developed, including pre-charrette presentations reviewing the areas of focus and a series of quality of life categories:

1. Land Use
2. Zoning
3. Urban Character
4. Traffic & Transportation
5. Parking
6. Architecture
7. Streetscape
8. Infrastructure
9. Cultural
10. Miscellaneous.

A trio of pre-charrette meetings organized to solicit input from the City's 30-plus volunteer boards were held on November 6 and 17 and December 4, 2001, and drew large numbers of residents as well. These sessions created a public dialogue and set the stage for the event.

The pre-charrette process also included questionnaires handed out at the three sessions and made available on-line. Hundreds of interested parties shared their insights on the key issues. They also answered questions about what they like and dislike about Downtown and North Ponce, what they would do to improve those two areas, and what they envision for their future.

Surveys continued to flow during and after the charrette, giving the public a continuing way of participating in the process. Survey comments have been summarized and are included as an appendix to this report.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: PUBLIC PROCESS



The charrette was publicized in print, on the City's website, in the City's newsletter and promoted through colorful postcards, posters and buttons. Every effort was made to ensure public awareness and an inclusive process.

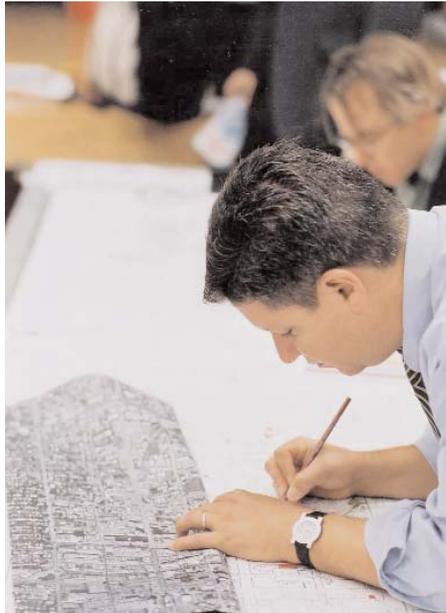
The public input from the surveys and the pre-charrette sessions culminated in the January charrette sessions.

Opening night of the charrette was introduced by Mayor Donald Slesnick and University of Miami President Donna Shalala. Featured speaker, historian Arva Moore Parks, shared her insights on the original intentions of town founder George Merrick and landscape architect Frank Button. An open microphone session followed in which residents shared their ideas.

Earlier in the day, the charrette design team met with city department directors and representatives of other local government agencies to review information about existing conditions. In the afternoon, the team and city administrators boarded trolleys and toured the Downtown and the North Ponce neighborhood, reviewing a variety of issues.

Day Two started early with a session seeking information from merchants, business owners and restaurateurs, followed by a session for input from government agencies. The early afternoon featured a meeting to gather the views of developers and property owners, followed by a session for residents, who talked about building heights, parking and traffic issues, Miracle Mile retail and a host of other concerns.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: PUBLIC PROCESS



Day Three was marked by a pair of Saturday morning events. A children's charrette, organized by Lisa Bohl and Eddy Lamas, engaged families with children of all ages in proposals for a more beautiful downtown. Adults heard topical sessions including an economic overview, a merchandizing presentation, a Mediterranean Ordinance update, a Merrick Park update, a traffic and parking session and a trolley route explanation.

In conjunction with the presentations and meetings Friday and Saturday, and all day Sunday and Monday, designers responded to the voiced concerns with proposals of solutions and enhancements.

Day Four consisted of a public review session. The late Sunday afternoon drawing pin-up event gave residents, many of whom had attended sessions during the previous three days, their first glimpse of the ideas emerging for improved streetscapes, pedestrian pathways, infill buildings, boulevarded streets and other urban enhancements.

Day Five was spent organizing all the work and finalizing the Master Plan. A final presentation in the evening showed slides of the drawings produced during the charrette, illustrating the recommended actions. The presentation was enthusiastically received by a packed house.

Mayor Don Slesnick noted that the charrette process came about by a unanimous vote of the commission, that there was a tremendous bonding between city staff and residents during the event and that each commission member would take a piece of the charrette to help carry out.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: PUBLIC PROCESS



Vice Mayor Maria Andersen, who helped initiate the charrette and worked behind the scenes to ensure its success, vowed to keep the process moving forward with action, implementation and commitment.

The ensuing part of this report consists of a final edit of the Master Plan, its illustrations and recommendations. The large number of recommendations represent the organizers' original intention to be responsive and comprehensive. As such, it is hoped that this document will be a wellspring of ideas and advice that will serve City leaders and administrators well as they continue their work in behalf of the public good.

"The inclusiveness of the process inspired a range of solutions, all of which shared the fundamental goal of honoring the city's history through new ways to make the original vision of the Merricks, the Finks, and Frank Button evident -- the character of the architecture, the presence of the native and exotic landscape, and the sense of community."

Professor Joanna Lombard,
University of Miami School of
Architecture and Charrette team
member

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: PUBLIC PROCESS

2002 Coral Gables Charrette Team

City of Coral Gables
Mayor Don Slesnick
Vice Mayor Maria Anderson
Commissioner William H. Kerdyk, Jr.
Commissioner Wayne Withers
Commissioner Rafael Cabrera, Jr.
Interim City Manager David L. Brown

City of Coral Gables Staff
Building & Zoning Department, Cable TV (Channel 18), City Attorney, City Manager's Office, Development Department, Finance Department, Fire Department, Historic Preservation, Parking Department, Parks & Recreation Department, Planning Department, Police Department, Public Service Department, Public Works Department

Charrette Working Group
Dona Lubin (Director, Historic Preservation), Margaret R. Pass (Zoning Director), Dennis Smith (Assistant Zoning Director), Eric Riel (Planning Director), Walter Carlson (Planning Department), Alberto Delgado (Director of Public Works), Cathy Swanson (Development Director), Betty Fleming (Real Estate Special Projects), Janet Gavarette (Campus Planner); Charles Bohl (Architecture), Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk (Architecture)

University of Miami Staff and Design Team
Donna Shalala - President
Luis Glaser - Executive VP and Provost
Sergio Rodriguez - VP for Real Estate
Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk - Dean, School of Architecture
Charles Bohl - Director, Knight Program in Community Building

Faculty
Roberto Behar, Carlos Casucelli, Rocco Ceo, Jaime Correa, Adib Cure, Steve Fett, Anne Finch, Jose Gelabert Navia, Jose Gelabert Navia, Gary Greenan, Jorge Hernandez, Richard John, Jean-Francois Lejeune, Joanna Lombard, Frank Martinez, Armando Montero, Carie Penabad, Tom Spain

Students
Erika Albright, Chris Block, Hector Burga, Michelle Camargo, Ignacio Correa, Gonzalo Echeverria, Jess Lynn, Ivette Mongalo, Magdalena Mroz, Christopher Podstawski, Erin Pryor, Pedro Quintanilla, Ben Salling, Debora Storch, Felipe Van Cotthem, Cybell Veziroglu, Frances Walter.

Staff
Linda Rodriguez (Facilities, Planning and Construction), Ana Irizarry (Architecture), Andrea Gollin (Architecture), D'Ann Tollett (Development), Lamar Noriega (Development)

Architects, Planners and Design Team Volunteers
Mallory Ertel, Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co.; Don Evans, Fairchild Tropical Garden; Anne Finch; Callum Gibb; Susan Hall, Bell & Hall Landscape Architects; Tabatha Janna - Victoria DeLaguardia Architects; Benoit Jonckheere - Fairchild Tropical Garden; Marina Khoury, Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co.; Eddie Lamas, Bermello Ajamil & Partners; Lorraine LeFranc, Bermello Ajamil & Partners, Fernando Ramirez; Hector Valverde, Bermello Ajamil & Partners; Freddie Viuas; Tom Graboski - Tom Graboski & Associates, Molly Adams - Miami-Dade Co. Public Schools

Special Guests
Arva Moore Parks - University of Miami Trustee and Coral Gables historian
Tim Plummer - David Plummer & Associates
Antonio Villamil - Washington Economics Group

Consultants
Steve Wright (Freelance Writer), Rick Hall (Hall Planning & Engineering, Inc.), Seth Harry (Seth Harry & Associates), Debra Hempel (Charrette Coordinator)

Community Volunteers
Lisa Bohl (Children's Charrette Organizer), Nancy Morgan (Coral Gables Secretarial Services), Ted Evangelakis (Trapezoid, Inc. - Web Page Design)

Over 1,000 concerned residents, children, business owners and developers.

OVERVIEW

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: OVERVIEW



In the early days of Coral Gables, George Merrick described the streets of downtown as follows: "thoroughfares were created and planted with palms and poincianas and rubber trees and flowering trees down the centers of the streets." Palms and poincianas recently were planted at the Alhambra Entrance in keeping with its historic design. Merrick, working with landscape architect Frank Button, also specified that vine-covered colonnades and colorful awnings, which would beautify and shade the streets, were to be included in the district's embellishments.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: OVERVIEW



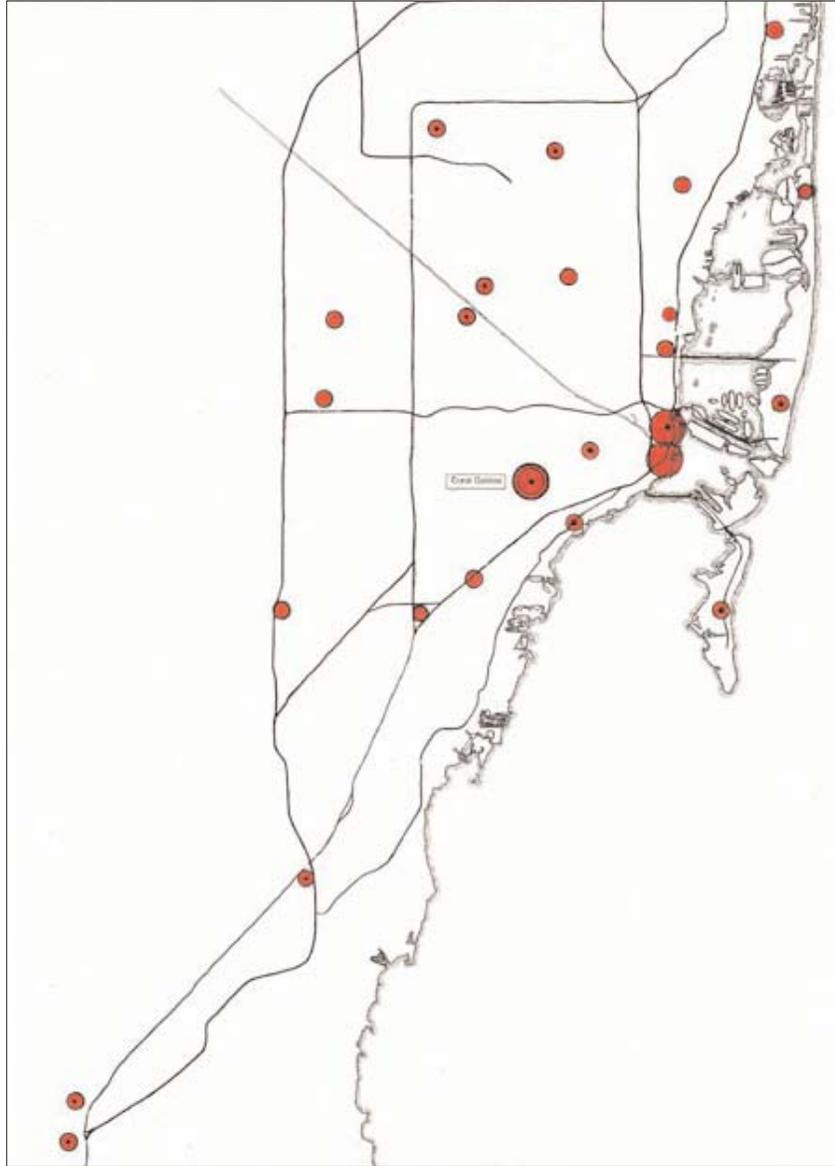
Merrick's and Button's dream of a lush, beautiful garden city survives largely intact in the City's residential neighborhoods. However, the Downtown has strayed from its inaugural concept and is perceived to have a number of shortfalls. Residents, business owners and developers each have their own concerns, sometimes contradictory. The task of the charrette was to examine these concerns and to propose a plan to benefit both public and private interests. The charrette goal was twofold: renew the vision for the City's heart, and clarify the regulatory framework in order to achieve this vision.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: OVERVIEW



Downtown Coral Gables has become much grander and much more significant to the region than could possibly have been imagined at its inception. It is an important center of government and commerce. The central business district supports 40,000 jobs with a variety of offices and retail establishments, and a full range of cultural activities including galleries and performing arts. From any perspective, Downtown is a focus and destination for the whole region.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: OVERVIEW



This map shows Coral Gables in the context of urban Miami-Dade County. In a region of multiple growing urban centers, Coral Gables is the only city center other than Miami that encompasses the full range of governmental, cultural and other activities. The City's significance to the region is indisputable.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: OVERVIEW



To a large degree, this transformation into an urban center has benefited the City's residents. The City's downtown provides its residents with workplaces close to home, good food and cultural activities that were not available 10 or 15 years ago. There is even a growing downtown residential population. However, there are some losses too: an incomplete retail picture, difficulty in parking, increasing traffic and new buildings that are often not as beautiful as the old.

A broad base of charrette attendees observed that the downtown is missing convenient and entertaining walkability. A grid of streets and blocks interconnect the Downtown, but many sidewalks are hot, unshaded and unprotected from the rain. Block dimensions are too long to make walking across town convenient. Building frontages are discontinuous and of varying quality; and the relationship of parking to destination is often unclear.

MASTER PLAN

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: MASTER PLAN



Master Plan

The Coral Gables charrette produced a Master Plan for the City's downtown and the North Ponce Neighborhood. The Master Plan portrays both areas as built out.

The summary recommendation of the plan is to focus building efforts on Downtown and postpone the redevelopment of North Ponce. Consolidate, enhance and complete the building of Downtown in order to achieve the quality-of-life characteristics of a walkable and transit-friendly twenty-four hour urban center. Postpone the expansion of high density development in the North Ponce neighborhood in order to assure the preservation of its historic residential character and scale, and the City's supply of affordable housing. The recommended actions which follow are embedded in this plan and the plan's guide for implementation.

(Key: Red - Civic; Hatched - Historic; Orange - Existing; Yellow - Proposed).

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: MASTER PLAN



Master Plan Diagram

This diagram of the Master Plan distinguishes among existing (black), historical (gray) and proposed (red) buildings. It clearly shows the plan's chief recommendation that Downtown growth be completed while North Ponce is to retain its historic character.

PUBLIC SPACE

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: PUBLIC SPACE

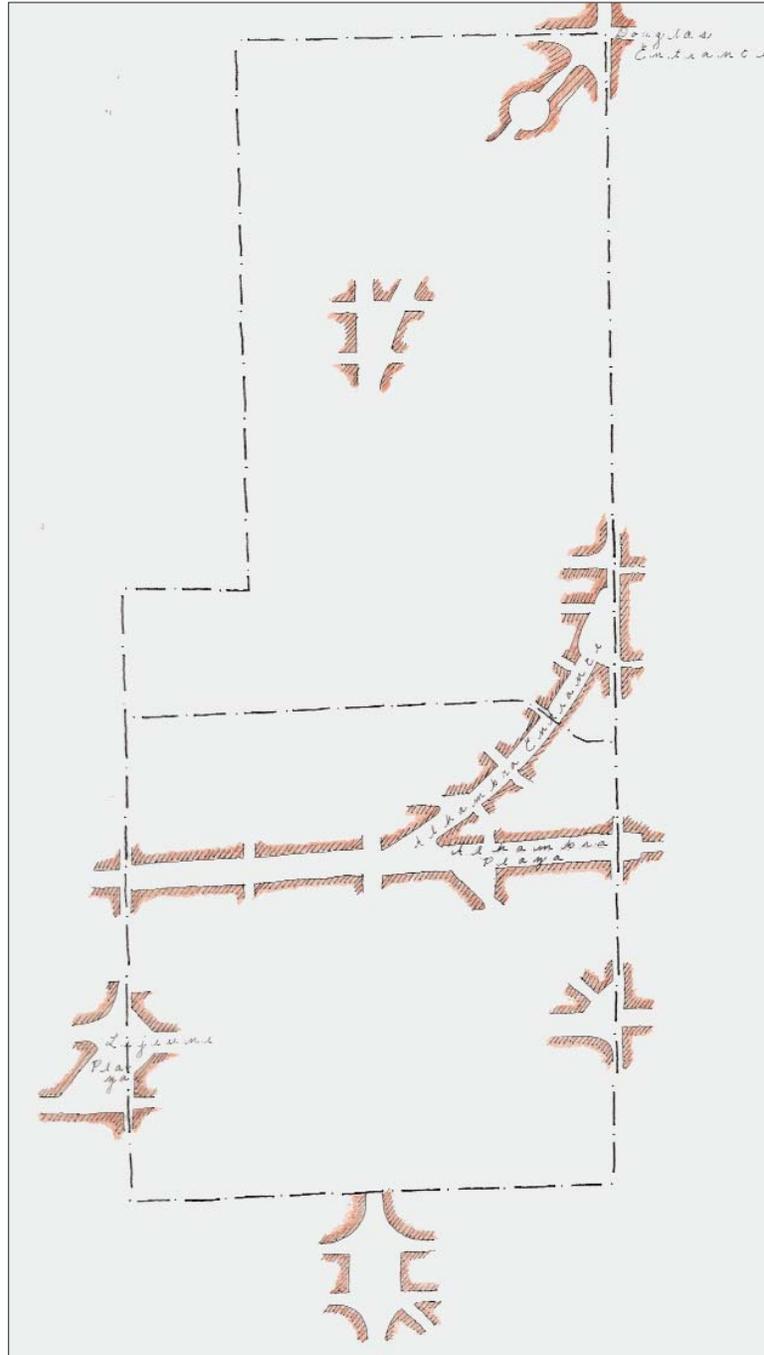
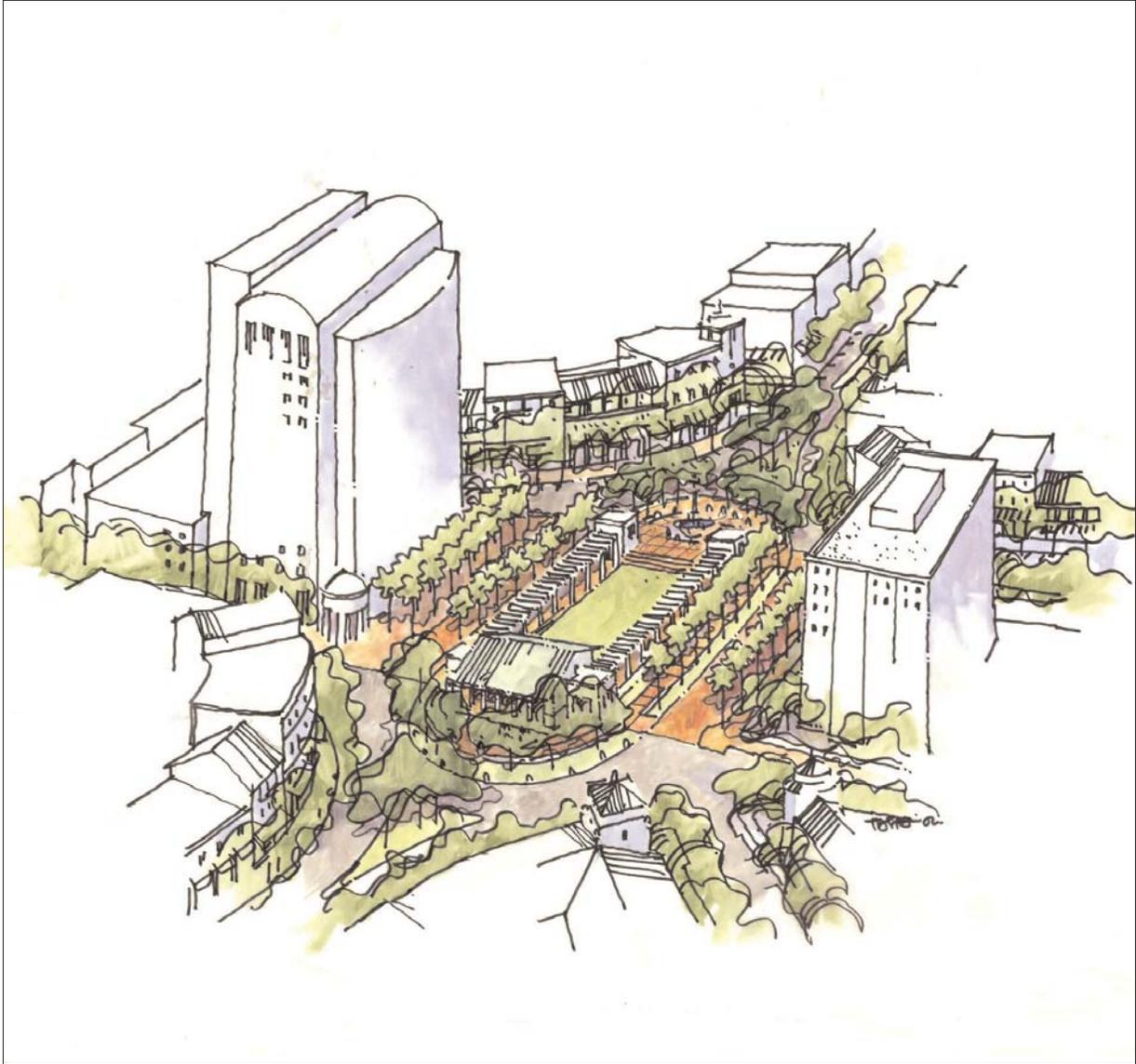


Diagram of Existing Public Spaces

In addition to an interconnected network of streets and blocks, Coral Gables' Downtown has a series of larger open spaces that are an important aspect of the public realm in the city. Some of these lend themselves to a reconfiguration that would make them more amenable and useful as destinations for public activities.



Ponce Circle Park

Ponce Circle was originally intended to be the center of the Arts and Crafts District. With numerous galleries to its north and south, the park has the potential of recovering that dream. A formal and urban landscape, including an open air pavillion and pergolas for shade along its sides, can support fairs and various gatherings related to arts and culture.

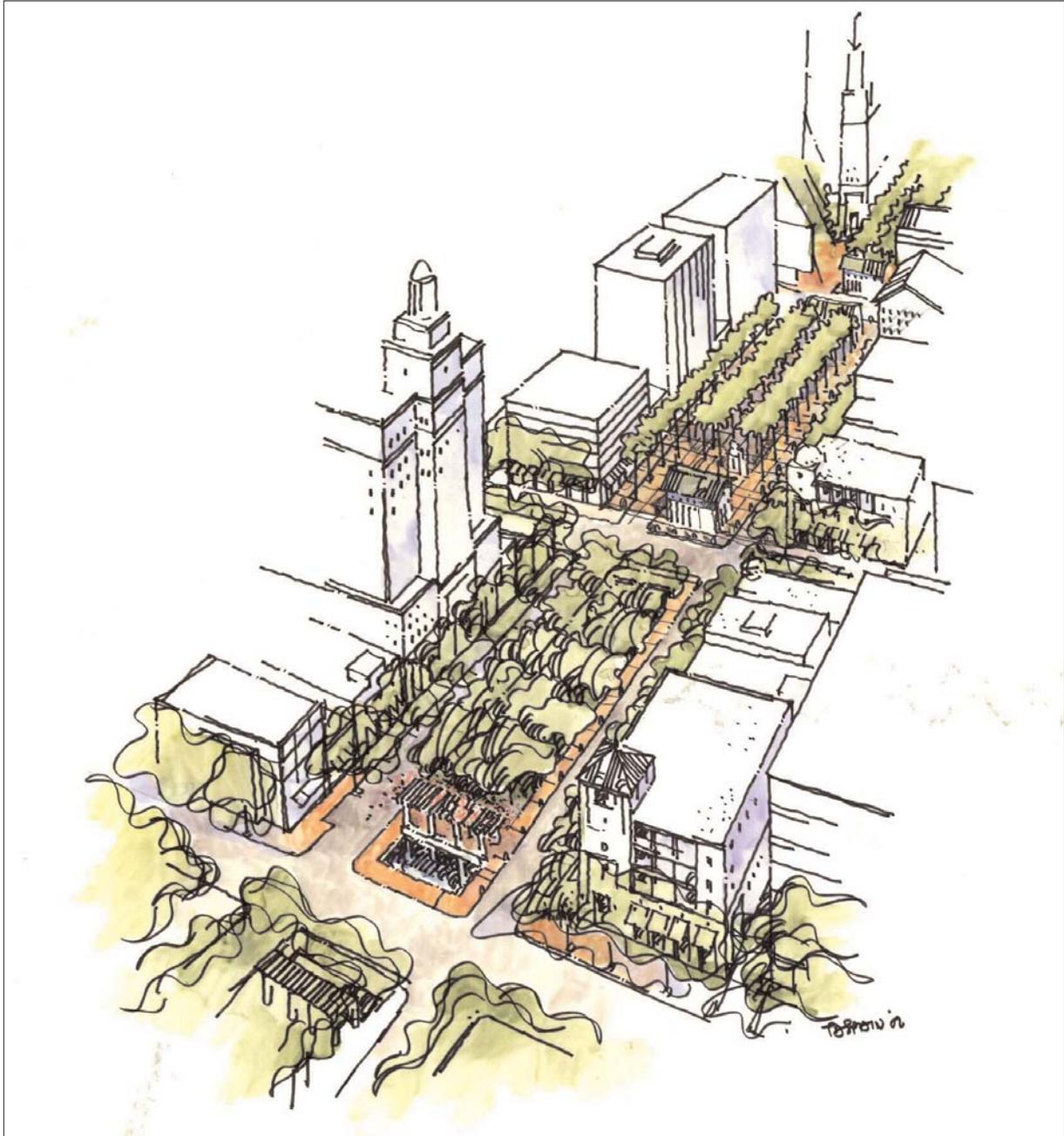
CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: PUBLIC SPACE



City Hall Green

City Hall deserves a grand civic setting. This drawing shows a large green urban room surrounded by streets and buildings on all four sides. A market structure stands at the south-west corner. New buildings are shown in place of currently unbuilt perimeter lots.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: PUBLIC SPACE



Alhambra Rambla

Alhambra Circle is the beginning of the one boulevard that runs continuously throughout the entire city. Its four blocks in the downtown provide the opportunity for a unified but varied series of public garden spaces, named during the charrette, the Alhambra Rambla, deriving its name from Las Ramblas in Barcelona. A similarly beautiful and memorable boulevard is El Prado in Havana. Alhambra Rambla has the potential to be one of the primary public spaces in the city, a memorable public boulevard, a great civic act at the heart of the city.

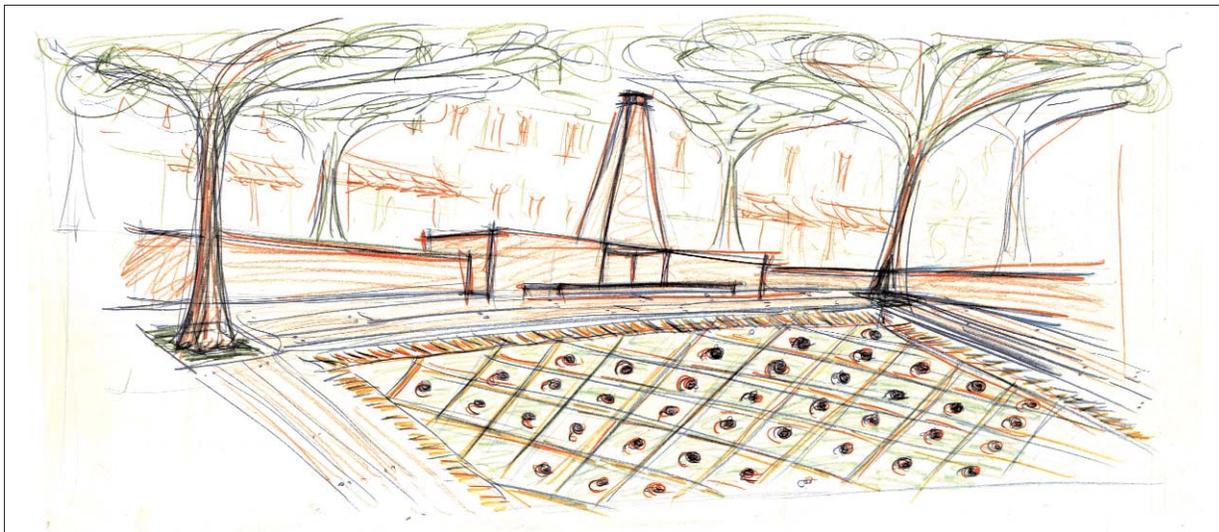
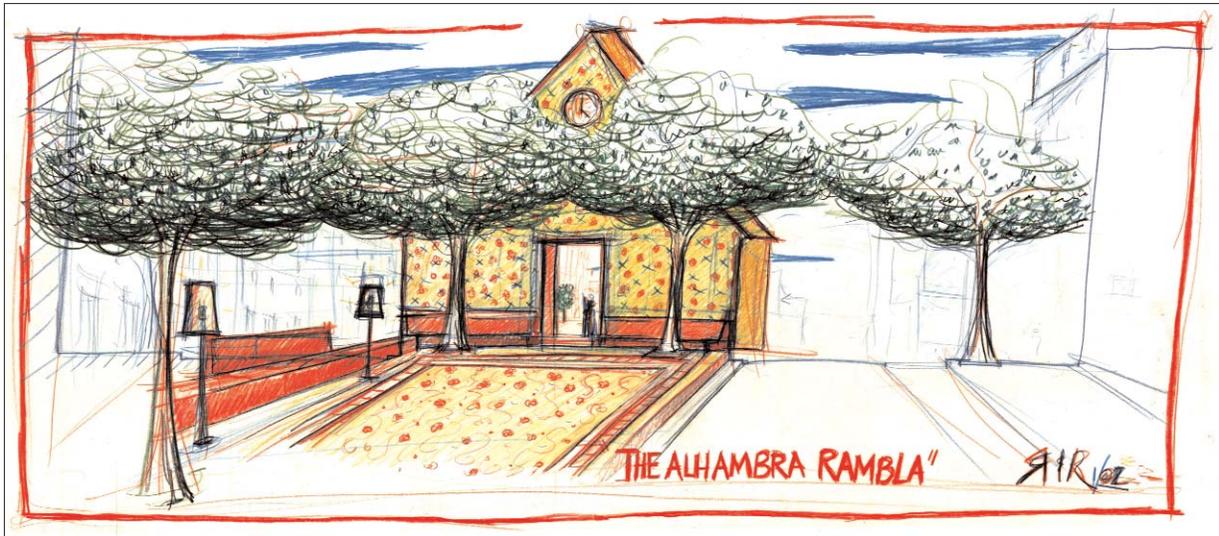
CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: PUBLIC SPACE



Alhambra Rambla Looking West

The dimensions of the boulevard are designed for people to walk and to congregate. A wide, central tree-lined and canopied promenade becomes a focus for walking. The promenade, measuring 48 feet in width, is lined with large royal poinciana trees planted 30 feet on center. A new landscape plan and a wide median on this block makes that connection explicit. The 300 block of the Rambla is the most verdant and lush, bringing into Downtown the profuse and shady landscape experience of the residential boulevard across Le Jeune Road.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: PUBLIC SPACE



Alhambra Rambla Perspectives

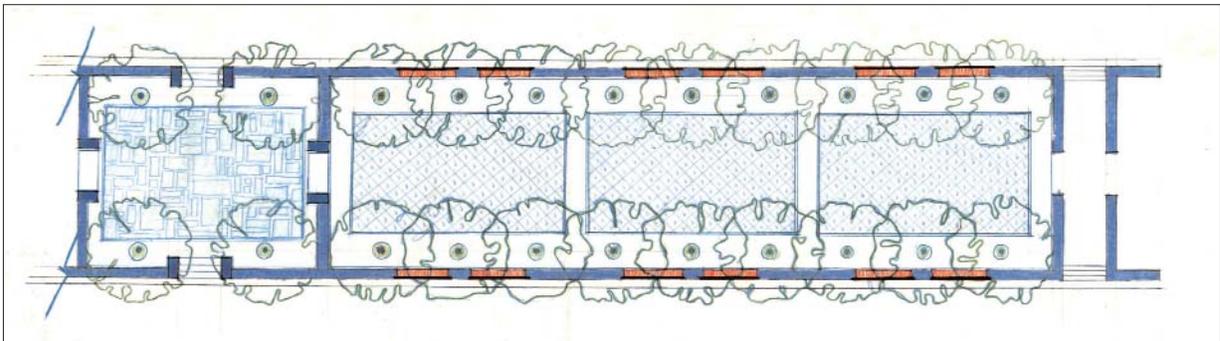
At the intersection of Le Jeune and Alhambra the beginning of the Rambla is marked by a gabled gate of coral rock. The gate leads into a public space designed to encourage people to gather.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: PUBLIC SPACE



Alhambra Rambla Section

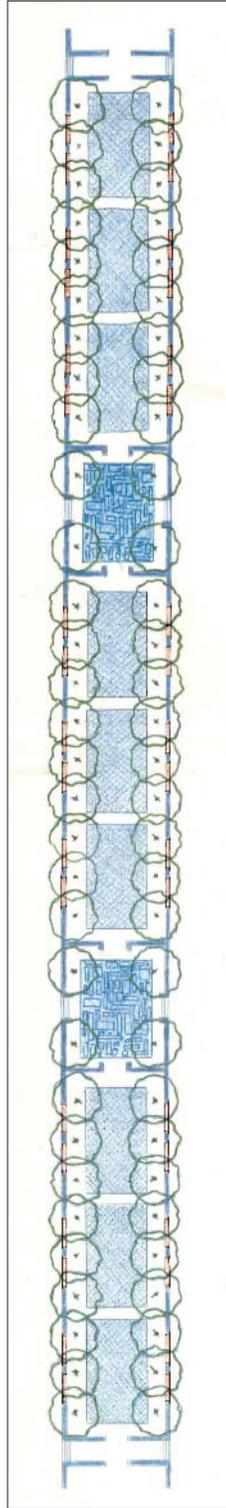
To emphasize the function of this space as an outdoor “living room” the benches, paving and street lighting are designed as pieces of overscaled domestic furniture.



Alhambra Rambla Plan Detail

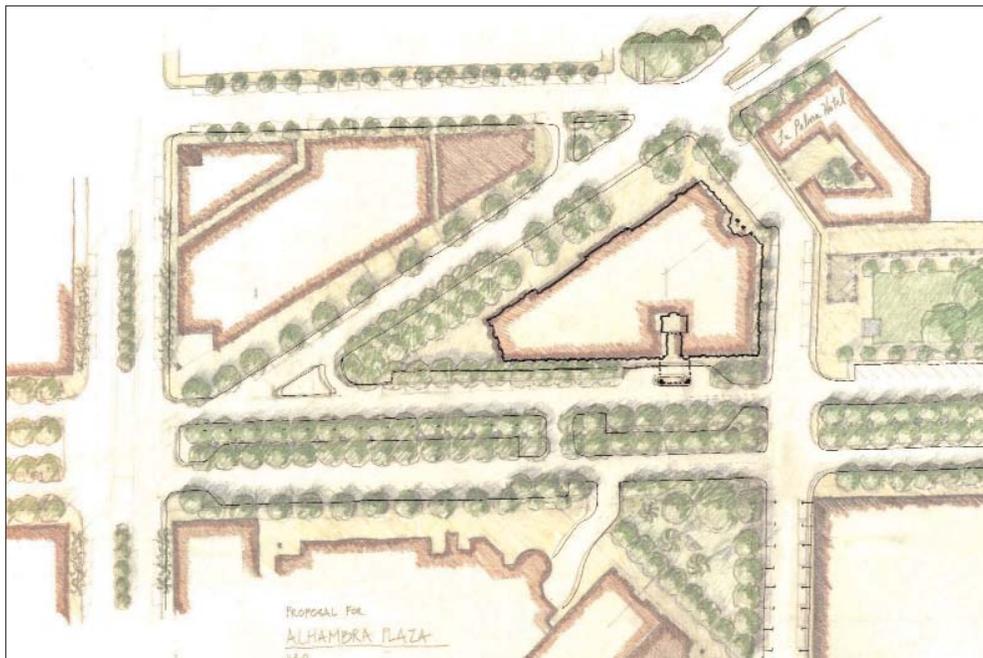
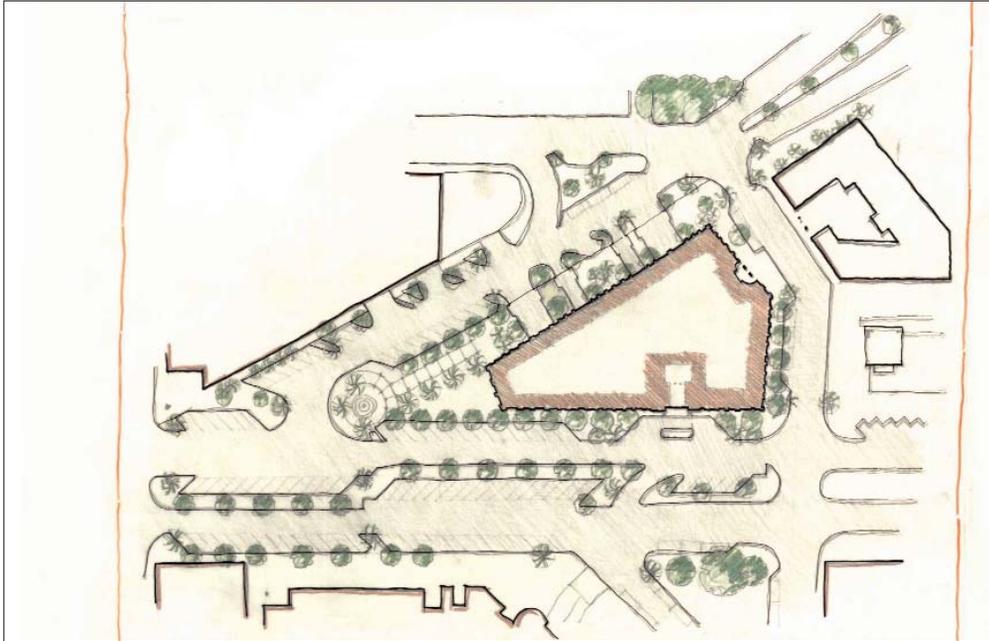
The 200 block is paved uniformly from north to south, from building face to building face with alleys of trees to provide a formal gathering space for the city. For special events it could be closed to traffic.

CORAL GABLES CHARETTE: PUBLIC SPACE



Alhambra Rambla Plan

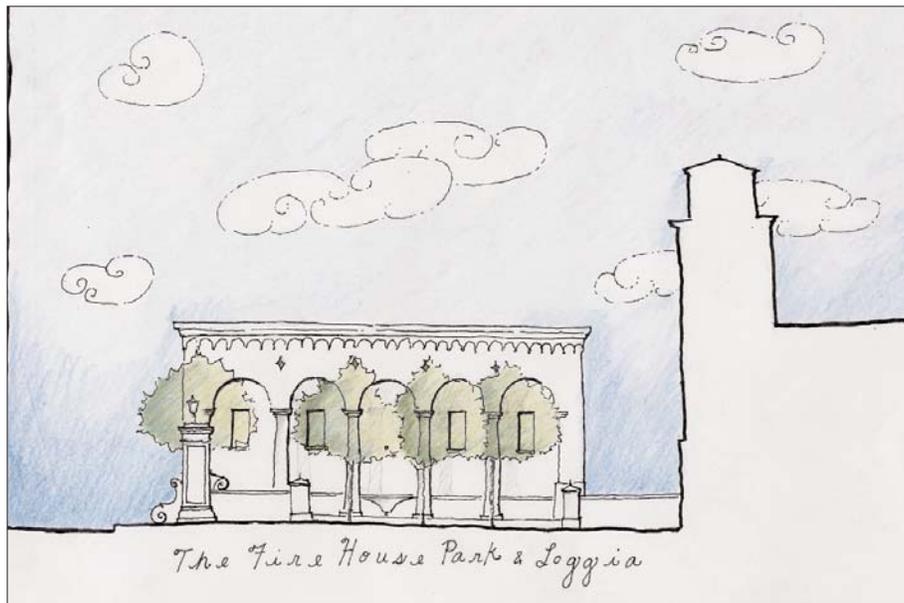
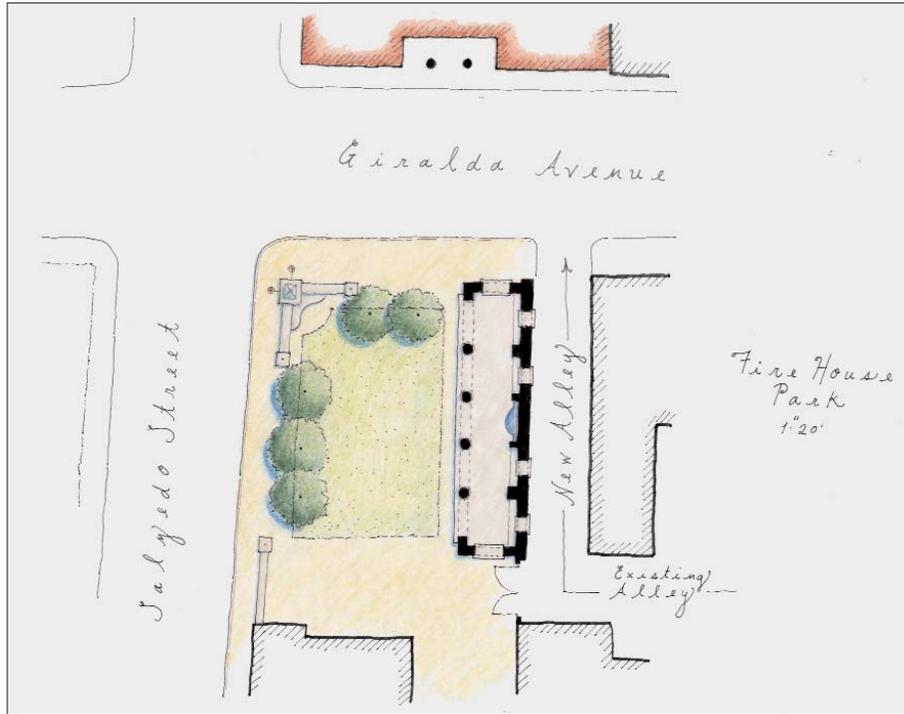
CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: PUBLIC SPACE



Suggested Revision to the Plan of the 100 block of Alhambra

The 100 block of Alhambra, entering reconstruction at the time of the charrette, is seen in the design (above) and in a suggested reconfiguration (below). The latter proposes densifying the median's alley of trees and maintaining them in a straight line, continuous sidewalk paving across driveways and enlarging Pitman Park by closing one block of Merrick Way.

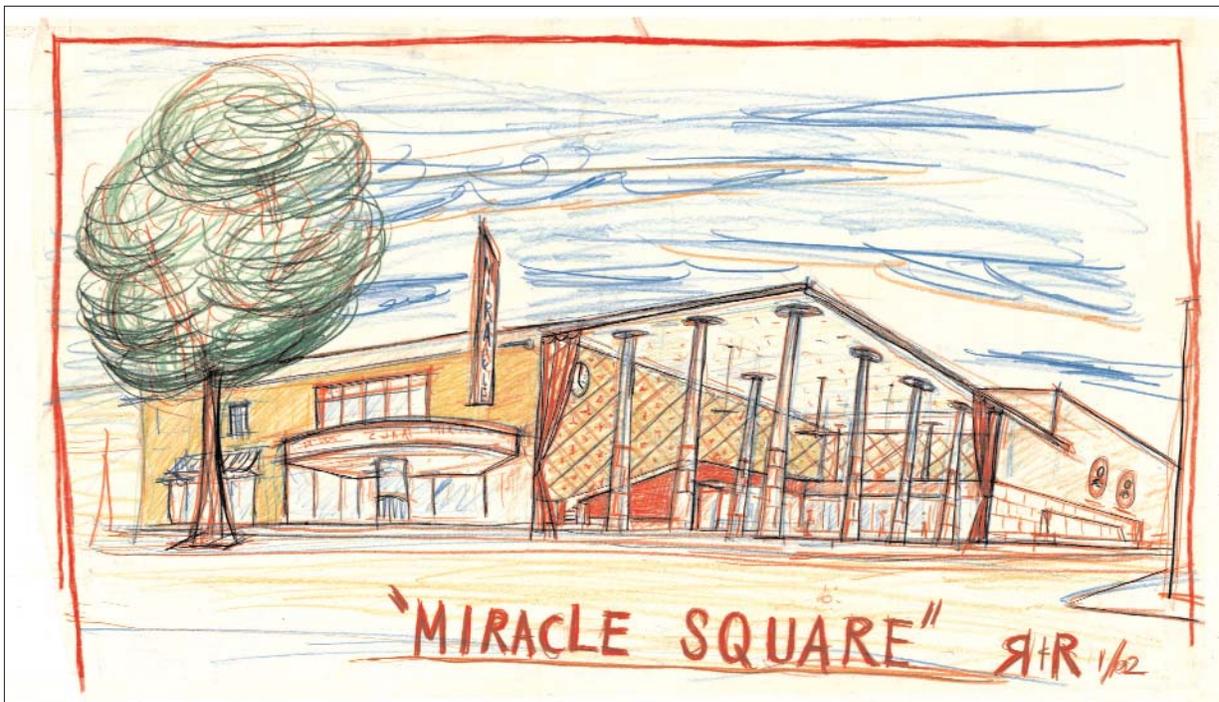
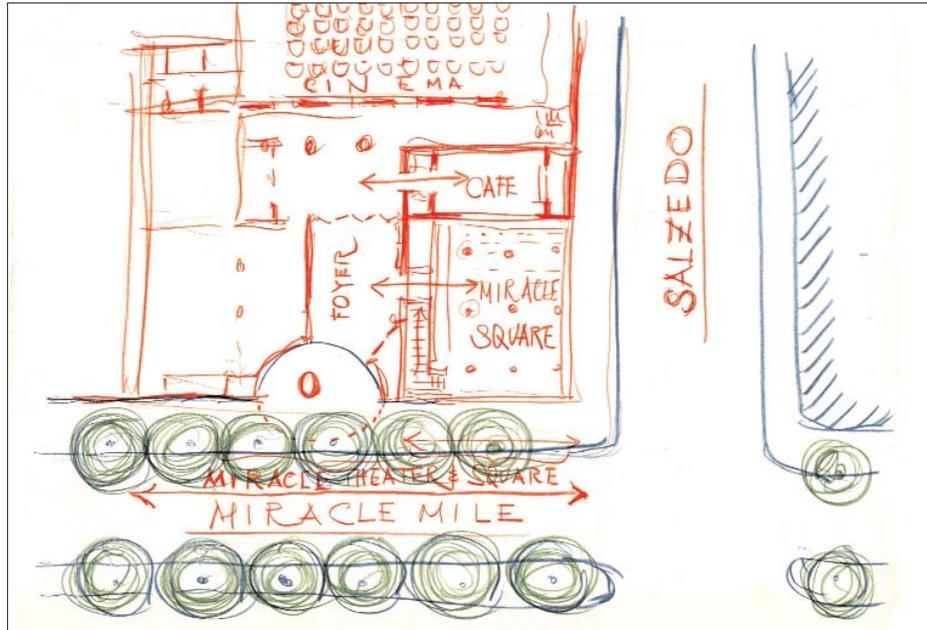
CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: PUBLIC SPACE



Firehouse Park

This park is proposed for the parking lot to the north of the historic fire station. It opens up the proposed ground floor historical museum and includes a loggia which is shown in elevation as it might look from Salzedo Street.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: PUBLIC SPACE



Miracle Square

This new public space is proposed on Miracle Mile adjacent to the Miracle Theater. A “Grand Loggia” opens to the foyer of the theater and includes a small cafe. Alternatively the space could be created by a bosque of trees.

STREETSCAPE

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: STREETSCAPE

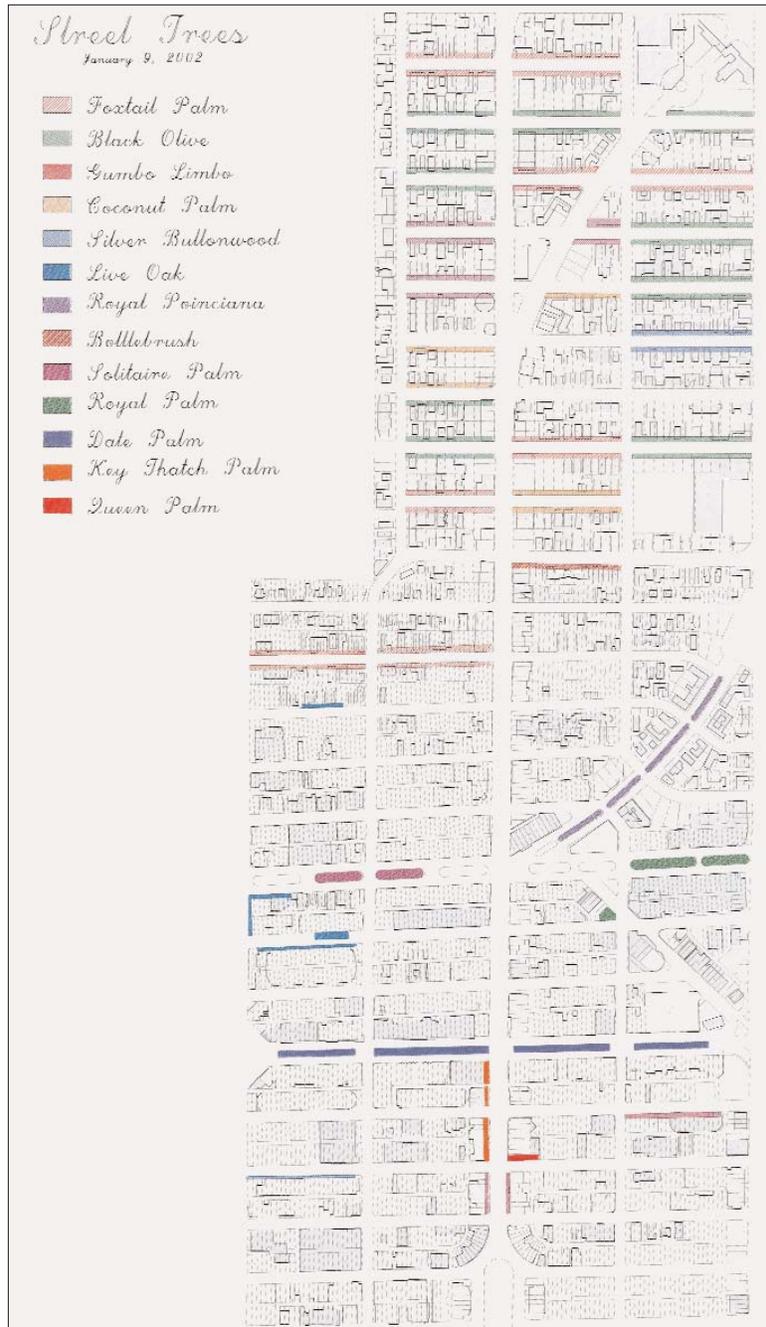


Diagram: Existing Street Trees

This diagram shows both location and type of existing trees in the City's rights-of-way. The Downtown generally lacks street trees. North Ponce has an ad-hoc variety of street trees. The Charrette suggests the greening of Downtown and orchestrating the public landscape to reinforce the identity of different areas in North Ponce. A street specific landscape Master Plan is recommended for all of Downtown and North Ponce taking into account existing landscape conditions as well as other types of street improvements such as signage and street furniture.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: STREETSCAPE

Proposed Plant Palette for Coral Gables

CANOPY TREES

Scientific Name	Common Name	Comments	Native	Height
LARGE GREEN SHADE				
<i>Bucida buceras</i>	Black Olive	Not in parking areas or over sidewalks- median only		45' +
<i>Bulnesia arborea</i>	Vera Wood	Evergreen		50' +
<i>Bursera simaruba</i>	Gumbo Limbo	Semi-deciduous; Native; Best in clusters; Best started from seed	N	40' +
<i>Calophyllum brasiliense</i>	Beauty Leaf; Santamaria	Evergreen		60'
<i>Conocarpus erectus</i>	Green Buttonwood	Shade; Sturdy; Native	N	25' +
<i>Ficus citrifolia</i>	Short Leaf Fig	Evergreen	N	45'
<i>Ficus rubiginosa</i>	Rusty Fig	Evergreen		40'
<i>Lysiloma latisiliqua</i>	Wild Tamarind	Semi-deciduous; Sturdy native		35' +
<i>Podocarpus macrophyllus</i>	Yew Podocarpus	No more than 20' apart		25' +
<i>Pinus elliotii</i> var. <i>densa</i>	South Florida Slash Pine	Evergreen; Native	N	40' +
<i>Quercus virginiana</i>	Live Oak	Shade; Sturdy;	N	45' +
<i>Simarouba glauca</i>	Paradise Tree	Showy new growth; Sturdy native	N	40'
<i>Swietenia mahogany</i>	Mahogany	Shade; Sturdy	N	45' +
LARGE FLOWERING SHADE				
<i>Bombax ceiba</i>	Red Silk Cotton Tree	Showy flowers; Deciduous		60'
<i>Cananga odorata</i>	Ylang Ylang	Very fragrant flowers		35' +
<i>Caesalpinia granadillo</i>	Bridalveil	Evergreen; Showy yellow flower		35' +
<i>Cassia fistula</i>	Golden Shower	Deciduous; Showy flowers; No more than 20' apart		35' +
<i>Cassia javanica</i>	Apple Blossom Shower	Showy flowers; Deciduous		30' +
<i>Ceiba pentandra</i>	Silk Cotton Tree	Deciduous; Showy flowers; Spiny		50'
<i>Chorisia speciosa</i>	Floss-Silk Tree	Deciduous; Showy flowers; Spiny		40'
<i>Delonix regia</i>	Royal Poinciana	Semi-deciduous; Brittle; Showy flowers		40'
<i>Erythrina crista-gallii</i>	Cockspur Coral Tree	Deciduous; Spiny; Showy Flower		30'
<i>Harpulia arborea</i>	Tulipwood	Showy fruit; Slow growing		40'
<i>Jacaranda mimosifolia</i>	Jacaranda	Showy flowers; Brittle; Deciduous		40'
<i>Lagerstroemia speciosa</i>	Queen's Crape Myrtle	Showy flowers; Deciduous		30'
<i>Manilkara zapota</i>	Sapodilla	Evergreen		45'
<i>Mimusops elengi</i>	Spanish Cherry	Evergreen; Fragrant flower		30'
<i>Peltoporum pterocarpum</i>	Copperpod	Showy flowers		45'
<i>Piscidia piscipula</i>	Jamaican Dogwood	Showy flowers; Deciduous; Sturdy	N	35'
<i>Pseudobombax ellipticum</i>	Shavingbrush Tree	Deciduous; Showy flowers		25'
<i>Spathodea campanulata</i>	African Tulip Tree	Evergreen; Showy flowers		40' +
<i>Triplaris americana</i>	Long John			

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: STREETSCAPE

Proposed Plant Palette for Coral Gables (cont'd)

CANOPY TREES (cont'd)

MEDIUM GREEN SHADE

Chrysophyllum oliviforme	Satin Leaf	Slow growing; 20' spacing;	N	35' +
Coccoloba diversifolia	Pigeon Plum		N	25'
Conocarpus erectus	Green Buttonwood	Sturdy native	N	30'
Conocarpus erectus var. sericea	Silver Buttonwood	Sturdy native	N	30'
Ilex cassine	Dahoon holly	20' spacing;; Not for rocky conditions	N	60'
Myrcianthes fragrans	Simpson Stopper		N	20'
Nectandra coriacea	Lancewood	Sturdy native		20'
Pimenta dioca	Allspice	Slow growing		25'

MEDIUM FLOWERING SHADE

Bougainvillea arborea				
Caesalpinia mexicana	Mexicana			20'
Citrus spp.	Citrus Calamondia			15'
Clerodendra quadriculocularis				15'
Lonchocarpus violaceous	Lancepod	Shade; Sturdy native	N	35' +
Tabebuia heterophylla	Pink Tab	Showy flowers; No more than 20' apart		30' +

PALMS

Scientific Name	Common Name	Native	Height
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PALMATE

Copernicia baileyana	Bailey Palm		35' +
Sabal palmetto	Cabbage Palm	N	50' +
Thrinax radiata	Thatch Palm	N	20' +

PINNATE

Cocos nucifera	Coconut Palm		25' +
Dictyosperma album	Hurricane Palm		25' +
Howea belmoreana	Belmore Palm		30' +
Phoenix canariensis	Canary Island Date Palm		40' +
Phoenix dactylifera	True Date Palm		30' +
Roystonea elata	Florida Royal Palm	N	50' +
Veitchia montgomery eryana	Montgomery Palm		30' +
Veitchia spp.	Christmas Palm		30' +
Wodyetia bifurcata	Foxtail Palm		25' +

SHRUBS

Scientific Name	Common Name	Comments	Native
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GREEN

Ficus benjamina	Ficus	Hedge; Must be maintained at 8' max. height	
Ficus 'Green Island'	Green Island Fig	Hedge	
Jasminum volubile	Wax Jasmine	Hedge	
Murraya paniculata	Orange Jasmine	Hedge	
Myrcianthes fragrans var. simpsonii	Simpson Stopper	Hedge;	N
Pittosporum tobira cv. 'Wheeler'	Dwarf Pittosporum,		

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: STREETSCAPE

Proposed Plant Palette for Coral Gables (cont'd)

SHRUBS (cont'd)

Psychotria ligustrifolia	Bahama Wild Coffee	N
Viburnum odoratissimum	Sweet Viburnum	

FLOWERING

Acalypha wilkesiana	Copperleaf	Red	
Carissa grandiflora	Natal Plum		
Chrysobalanus icaco	Cocoplum	Hedge	N
Codiaeum variegatum	Croton	Hedge	
Hamelia patens	Firebush	Native	N
Russelia equisetiformis	Firecracker Plant		
Tetrazygia bicolor	Tetrazygia; West Indian Lilac		N
Trithasia trifolia	Limebery	Hedge	

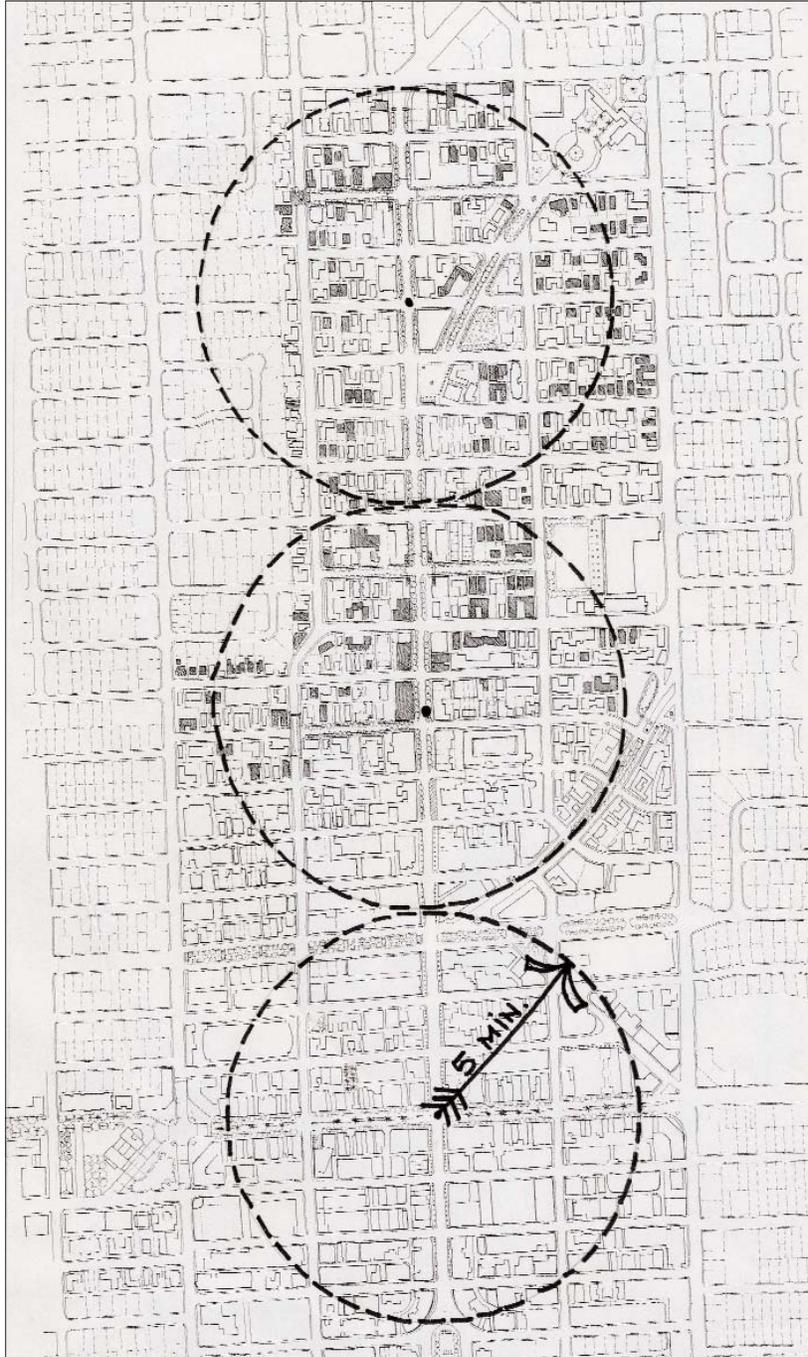
GROUND COVERS

Scientific Name	Common Name
Lantana depressa	Yellow Pineland Lantana
Nephrolepis spp.	Boston Fern
Ophiopogon japonica	Mondo Grass
Trachelospermum asiaticum	Confederate Small Leaf Jasmine

VINES

Scientific Name	Common Name	Comments
Allamanda cathartica	Yellow Allamandra	Showy flower; Evergreen; Surface and under walls; Toxic
Beaumontia grandiflora	Herald's Trumpet	
Clerodendrum splendens	Glory Bower	Surface and under walls; Red flower
Ficus pumila	Creeping Fig	Aerial roots; Evergreen; Surface
Petrea volubilis	Queen's Wreath	Twining; Evergreen; Showy flower; Surface and under walls
Quisqualis indica	Ragoon Creeper	
Senecio confusus	Mexican Flame Vine	Showy flower
Stephonotis floribunda	Bridal Bouquette; Madagascar Jasmine	Showy fragrant flower; Surface and under walls
Stigamphyllom littorale	Brazilian Golden Vine	Showy flower
Strongylodon spp.	Jade Vine Green	Walk under
Trachelospermum asiaticum	Confederate Jasmine	Surface

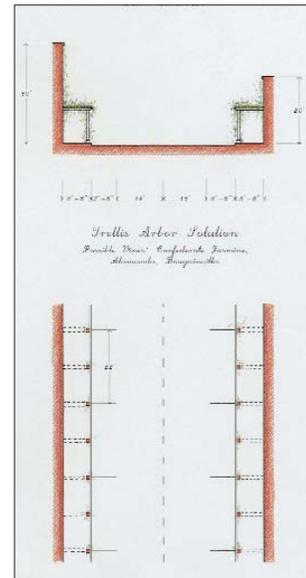
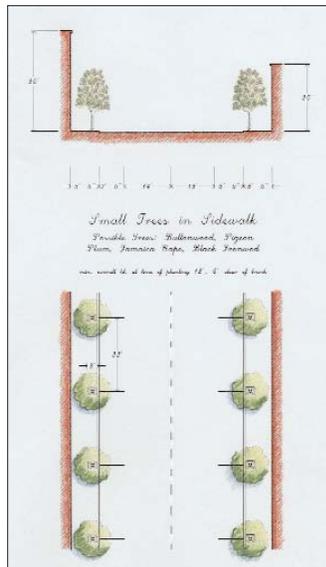
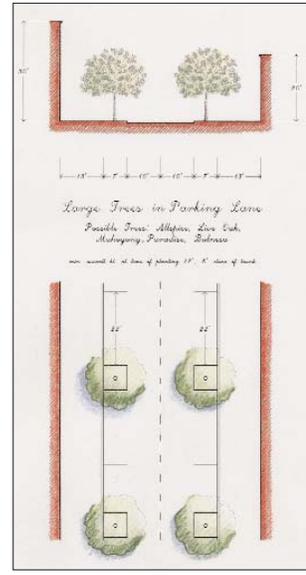
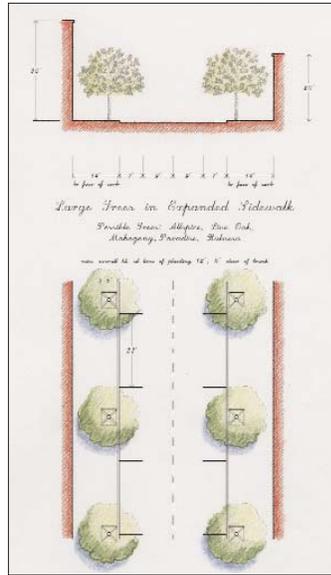
CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: STREETSCAPE



Five Minute Walk

An essential characteristic of urban centers is the inter-connected grid of streets. This overlay of a five minute walk shows that Downtown and North Ponce have the required street structure to be pedestrian-friendly, allowing future building to focus on the quality of the ambience.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: STREETSCAPE



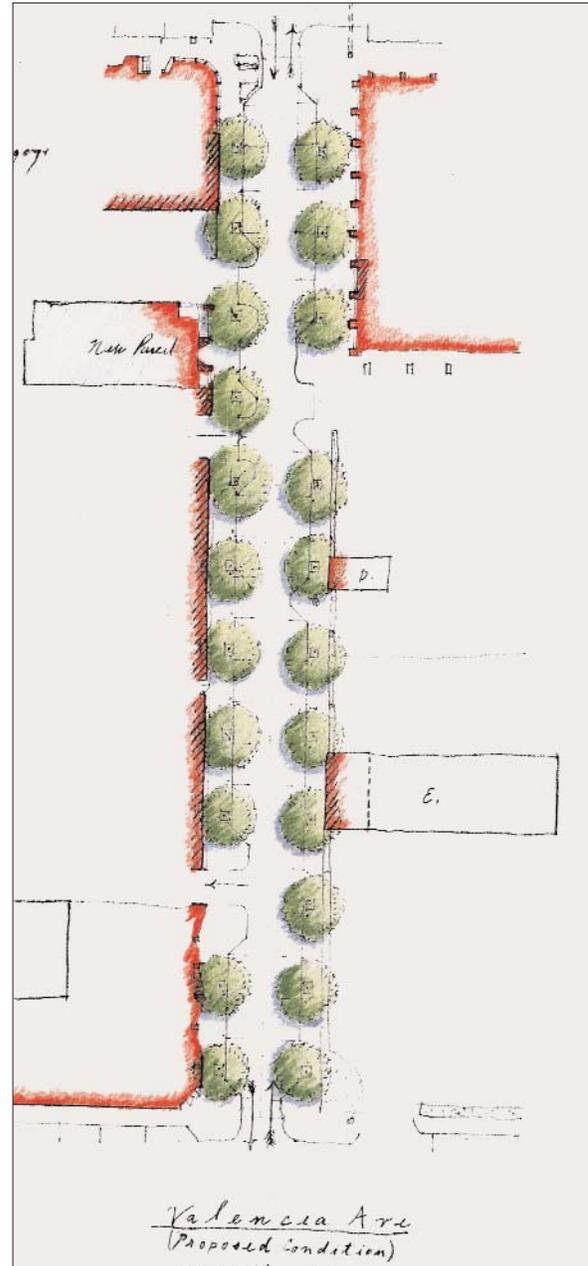
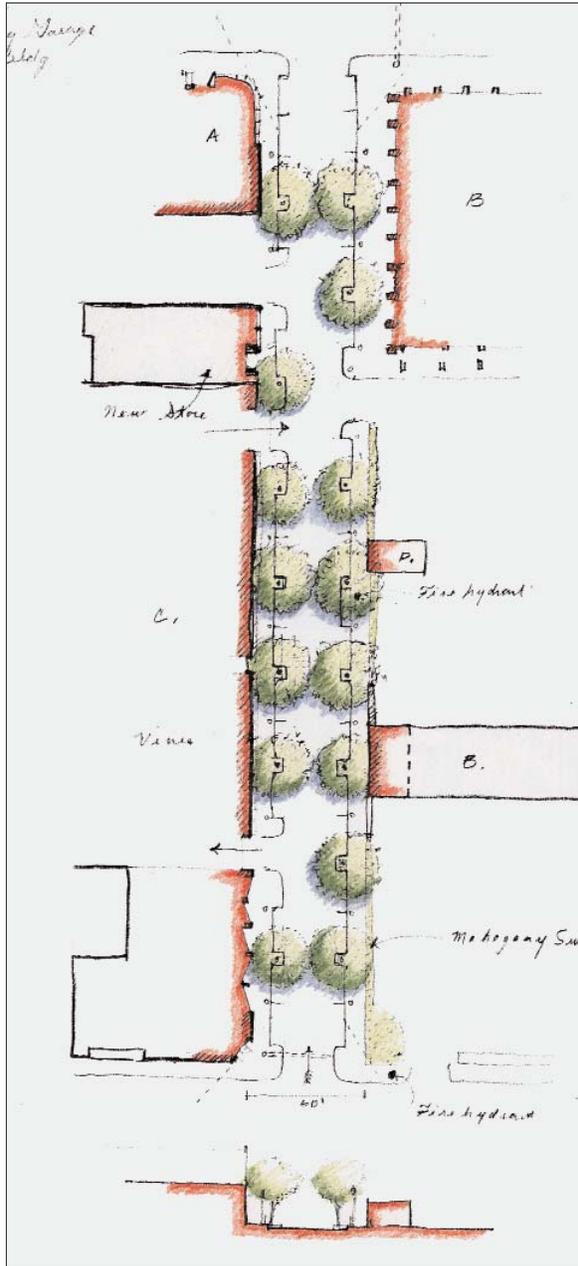
Four Typical Street Conditions

Improvements to the Downtown and North Ponce streetscape have four prototypical possibilities related to the varieties of right-of-way and existing conditions.

(These are all illustrated using the Aragon Street rights-of-way.)

- A. A wide street in which travel lanes can be narrowed: sidewalks are widened with trees added within the sidewalk.
- B. A wide street in which travel lane and sidewalk dimensions are maintained: small trees are added to the sidewalks.
- C. A narrow street in which travel lane and sidewalk dimensions are maintained and in which sidewalks are too narrow for trees; trees are added in the parking lane.
- D. A narrow street in which travel lane and sidewalk dimensions are maintained, and sidewalks and parking lanes cannot accommodate trees: arcades, pergolas, trellises and awnings over the sidewalks substitute for trees.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: STREETSCAPE

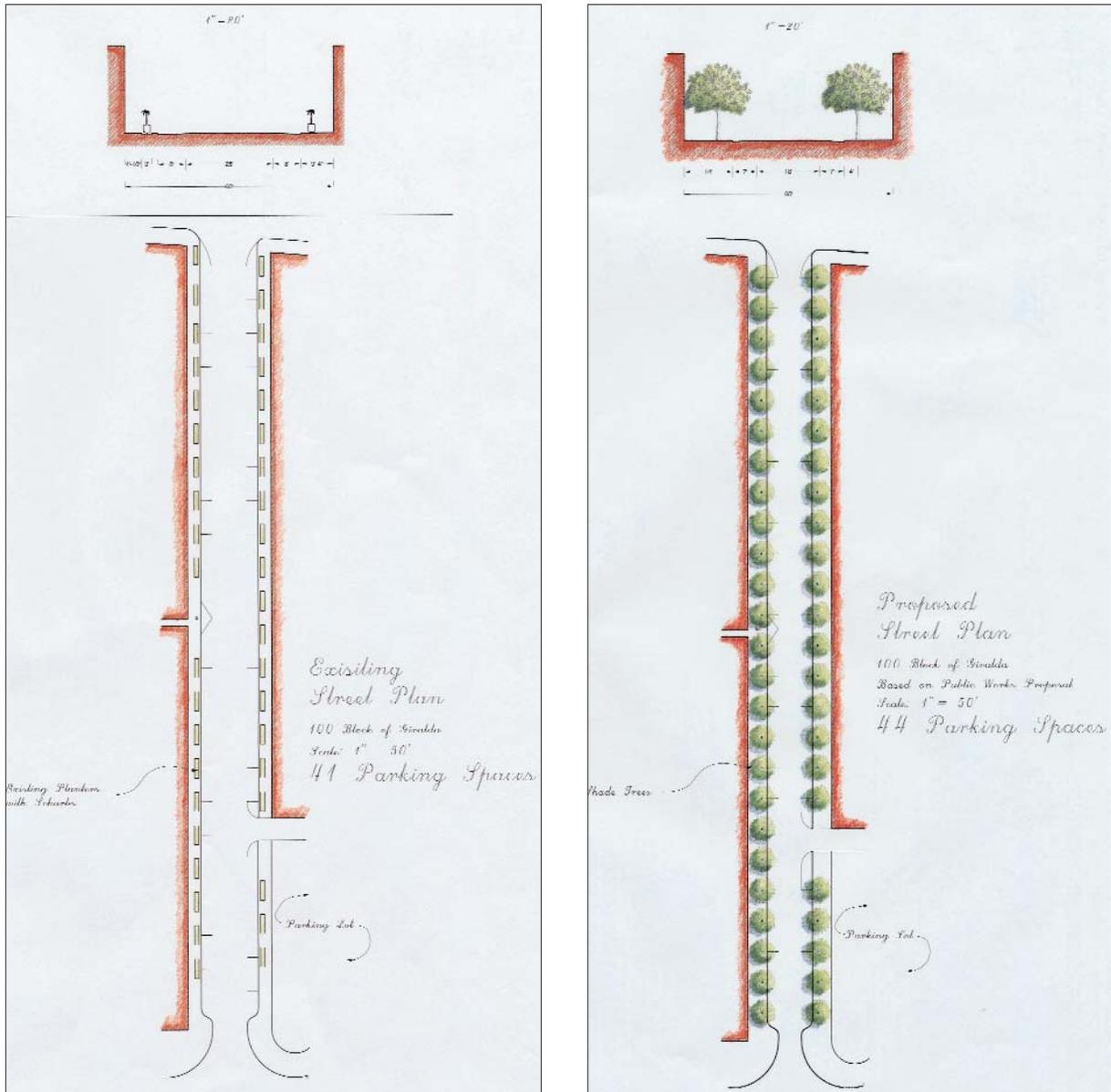


Valencia Avenue: Two Proposals

Two proposals for a new streetscape show mahogany trees in the parking lanes (*left*) and mahogany trees in the sidewalk (*right*).

In both cases parallel parking is retained without loss of spaces.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: STREETSCAPE



Giralda Avenue

Giralda Avenue is shown in its existing condition (*left*) and with a proposed streetscape of shade trees in the sidewalk.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: STREETSCAPE

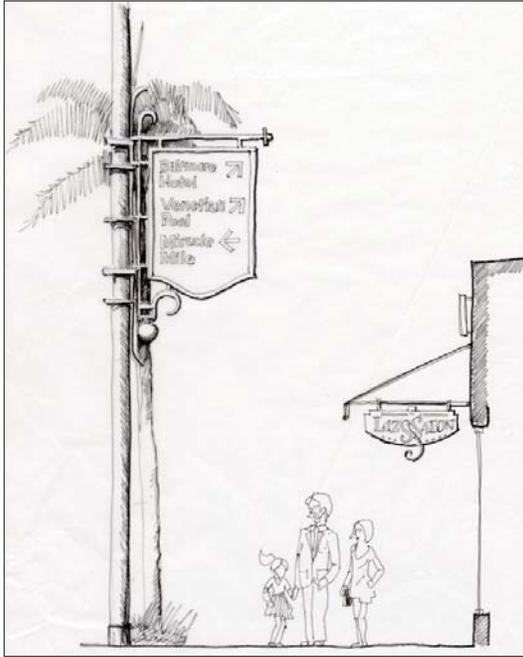


Figure 1



Figure 2

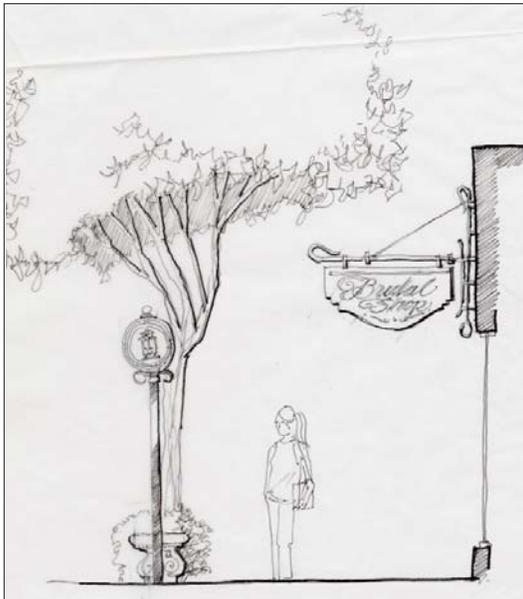


Figure 3

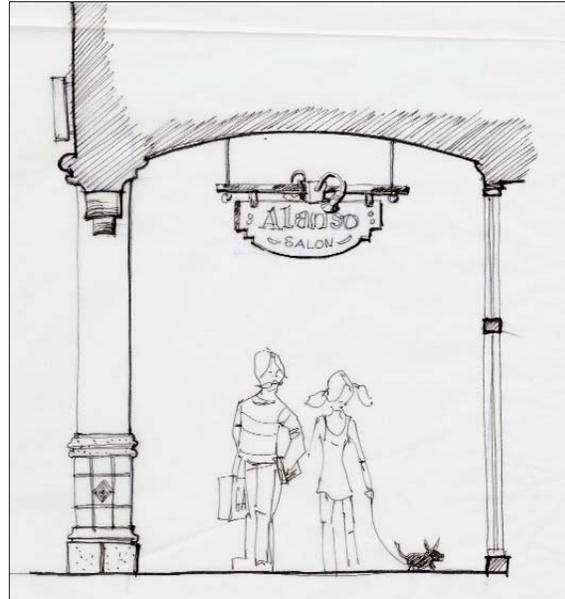


Figure 4

Signage

Signage is an important aspect of pedestrian convenience, especially in a Downtown retail center. A full hierarchy of signage is helpful for wayfinding and visual identity: from vehicular signs providing directions to specific locations (*figure 1*), to strategically placed directories that map retail locations (*figure 2*), to individual retail establishment signs that can coexist with trees and arcades (*figures 3 & 4*).

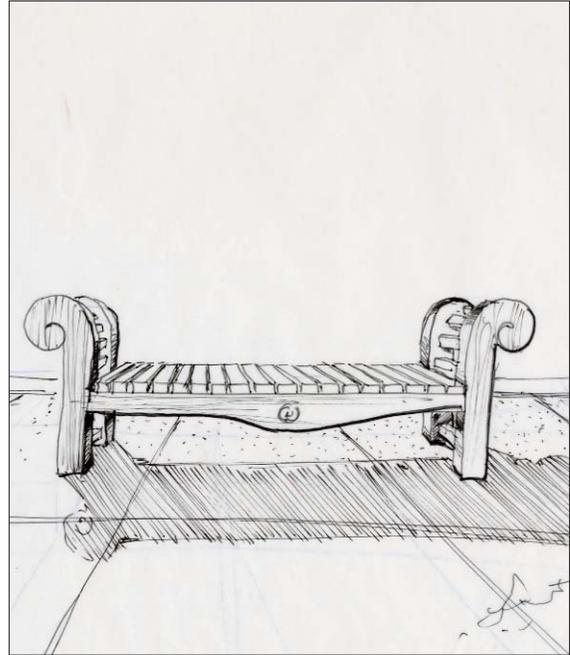
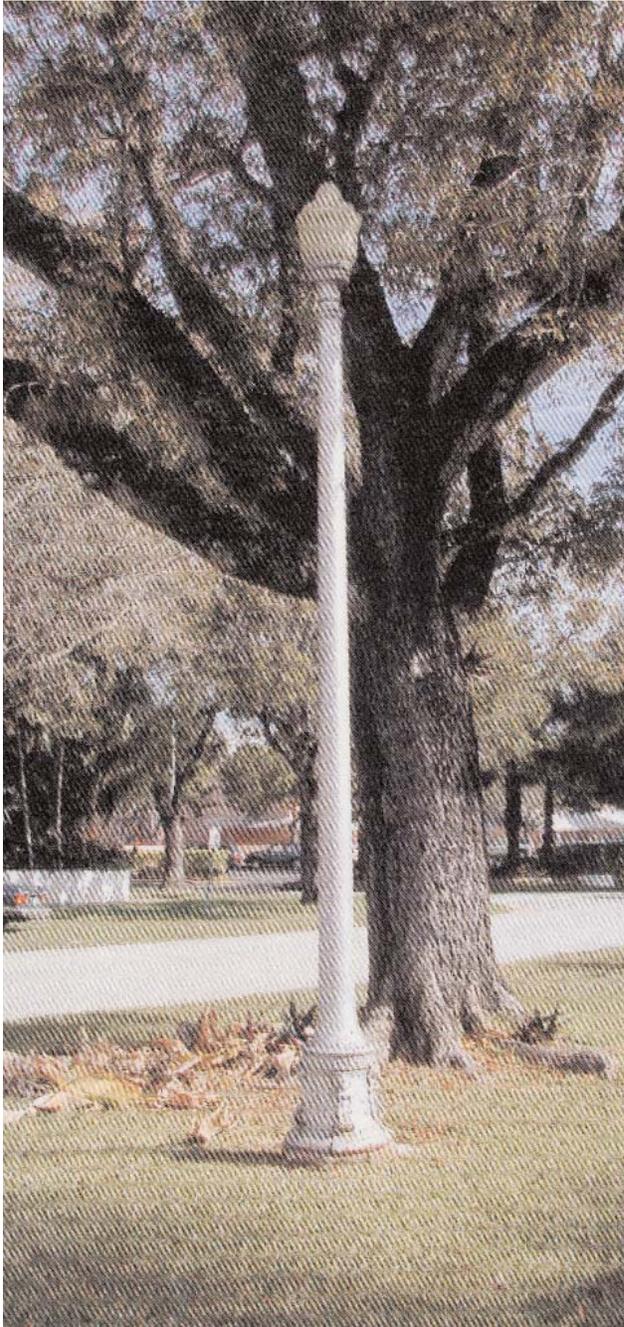
CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: STREETSCAPE



Historic Signage

The existing sign code should be modified to allow perpendicular and window signs such as shown in this historic photograph.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: STREETScape



Street Furnishings

Along with a comprehensive signage system, a uniform palette of street furniture can enhance streetscape and promote a sense of place. Like the signage, street furniture design should look to the history of Coral Gables, incorporating reproductions of historic streetlamps and benches as much as possible.

TRANSPORTATION

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: TRANSPORTATION

Rethinking Streets

by Rick Hall, P.E.

The transportation recommendations of the Coral Gables Charrette aim primarily at the reduction of automobile use by increasing transit use and pedestrian mobility.

The grid of local streets in Downtown and the North Ponce neighborhood is an ideal design foundation for a walkable city. Residents of these areas are within easy walking distance of the workplace, shops, restaurants and cultural activities. Workers and shoppers arriving in Downtown have multiple destinations and parking facilities from which to choose. And soon there will be a trolley to facilitate access across longer distances in the city's core, making it a truly park-once environment. However, the streets and sidewalks that serve the pedestrian have an unfriendly ambience due to the priority they give to vehicles.

Walkability is a critical feature in the continued vitality of Coral Gables, and not only because it addresses the growing problems of gridlock and parking in Downtown and North Ponce.

Walkability in Coral Gables is important for the following reasons:

1. Every vehicular or transit trip begins and ends with a walking trip. When travelers can comfortably walk to a transit stop, ride for more than a comfortable walking distance (over a mile) and walk comfortably at the other end, then transit can be successful. Transit success depends on comfortable walkability through well-designed urbanism. Unpleasant surroundings for walking will frustrate the most dedicated pedestrian. Similarly, multiple parking stops can be exchanged for park-once trips in a walkable urban area.
2. The compact scale of pedestrian movement, with its corollary reduced parking needs, contributes greatly to the efficiency and character of urban places. Destination walkers (as opposed to recreation walkers) encourage vital, successful, mixed use environments that enhance community charm in ways an auto dominant system can never hope for.
3. The opportunity for productive social exchange is greatly enhanced in pedestrian friendly areas. By walking daily, one gets to know a spectrum of neighbors and fellow citizens, and the bonds of community are strengthened.
4. The most enjoyable cities for both their residents and visitors are walkable. There is a growing urban population that desires a walkable town or city environment where accessibility of destinations and varied experiences on foot are possible. The dynamic businesses of our time have recognized this and seek to locate in cities such as San Francisco, New York, Boston, Pasadena and Santa Barbara.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: TRANSPORTATION

5. Walkability requires the pedestrian to feel safe. For the pedestrian to feel safe, low speed traffic on the street is required. Pedestrians stricken by vehicles traveling with speeds at or below 25 miles per hour have a far greater probability of surviving. Also, higher vehicle speeds generate more noise, thus reducing pedestrian comfort levels.

Although Coral Gables is known as one of America's garden cities, and although, as stated earlier, the grid of streets in Downtown is ideal for walkability, the Downtown is currently less than ideal for pedestrian strolls to work, shopping and cultural activities. A major problem is the excessive design speed of Downtown's thoroughfares. In Coral Gables, the width and geometry of the roadways cater to fast-moving traffic rather than providing a comfortable, pedestrian-friendly walking environment. The mandated minimum 30-mph speed limit set by County standards prevents fine-tuning of the street designs to provide comfort to pedestrians. Prioritizing vehicular mobility can preclude a high-quality urban experience.

Sidewalk pedestrians thrive when they are protected by parked cars and when auto speeds are limited to 20 to 25 mph. Therefore, the current design assumptions underlying the uniform speed limit should be adjusted to allow lower design and posted speeds. Because Miami-Dade County is the jurisdiction currently responsible for street design standards, the City must negotiate this change with the County.

A precedent exists with the North Carolina Department of Transportation, an agency that has adopted a flexible approach to transportation standards. It allows lower design speeds on streets within walkable, traditional neighborhood developments. Certification of lower design speeds requires evidence of walkable land use design and street structure. Miami-Dade County could insist on this same guarantee. Lower design and posted speeds can be allowed when both land use and street conditions are likely to yield heavy pedestrian use.

Specific street classification types can be defined for walkable communities, with the explicit purpose of streets serving pedestrian needs first and automotive needs second. Design speed influences urban design features that encourage pedestrians: smaller and shorter curb radii, narrower vehicular lanes and parallel-parked cars, all of which tend to slow driving speed. The lower the design speed of the street, the more pedestrian friendly it can be.

Recommendation

A clarification of specific street types is proposed for the walkable center of downtown Coral Gables. These definitions are fully compatible with the City's Comprehensive Plan and should be accommodated by Miami-Dade County to allow the use of lower design speeds to enhance pedestrian comfort and thus downtown vitality. The street categories are as follows:

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: TRANSPORTATION

Boulevard

A boulevard provides mobility for pedestrians and for higher speed and longer range motor vehicle trips. Design speeds are set at 30 mph with 25 mph at high pedestrian usage locations. Under this classification, Ponce De Leon Boulevard will remain at 30 mph except for 25 mph through the Downtown section.

Avenue

Avenues are wider, more civic-oriented thoroughfares, generally shorter than boulevards. Their purpose is to serve pedestrian movement, and in a secondary role, motor vehicles traveling medium distances. Miracle Mile, Alhambra Circle and Alhambra Plaza perform as avenues within Coral Gables. The desired quality of pedestrian service calls for 25 mph design speed. Traffic capacity will be maximized at this speed level through traffic signal design and adequate lane width.

Street

Streets form most of the thoroughfare structure in walkable communities. Appropriate design speeds and adequate sidewalks are essential elements for pedestrian comfort. Vehicle design speeds vary: 20 mph and 9-foot lane widths for the highest priority walkable streets, 25 mph and 10-foot widths for moderate walkability, and 30 mph, 11-foot widths for those with the least important pedestrian flows.

Streets in predominately residential areas require a 25 mph design speed to maintain pedestrian comfort. In Coral Gables' Downtown, 60-foot rights-of-way predominate and should be reconfigured for 10-foot lanes with parallel parking, generous planting strips and sidewalks.

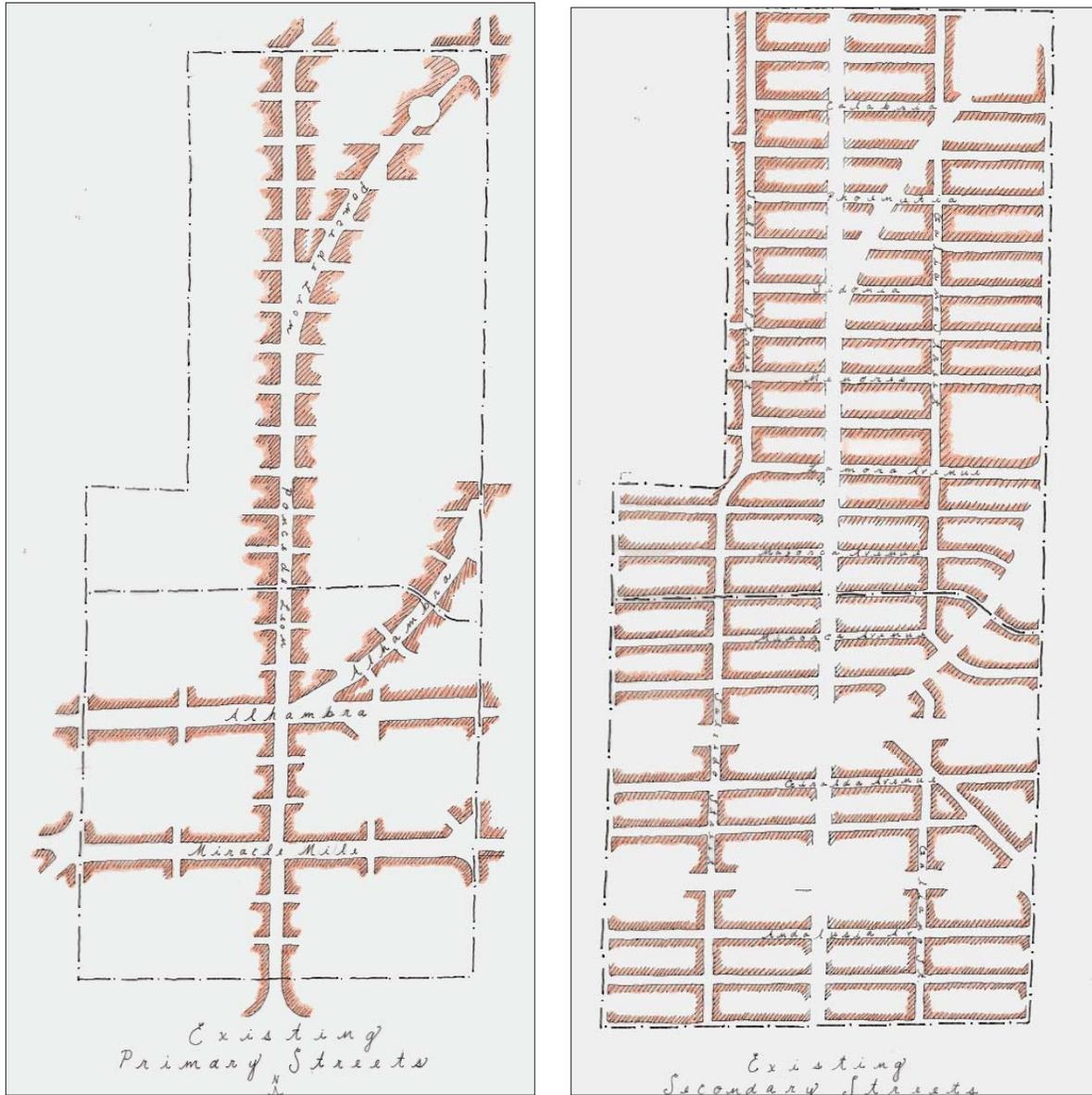
Alley

Alleys at the rear of buildings allow servicing that would otherwise obstruct sidewalks and displace pedestrians. Occasionally, pedestrians use alleys as shortcuts between streets. Standard 20-foot widths are sufficient for alleys. At street intersections, alleys should not interrupt sidewalk continuity or elevations.

Passage

The passage is a primarily pedestrian connection between thoroughfares, often at mid-block locations. Passages range in width and should have sufficient aesthetic quality and monitoring from storefronts to encourage their use by pedestrians.

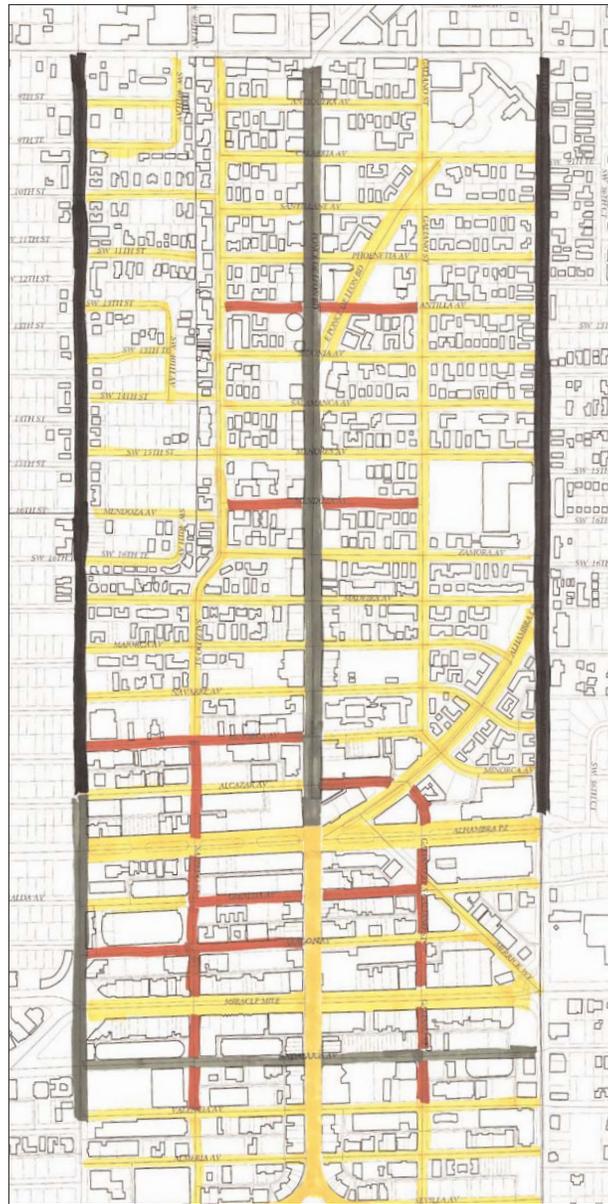
CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: TRANSPORTATION



Street Network

The city is fortunate to have an interconnected network of streets and blocks that provide many choices and facilitate movement for vehicles and pedestrians. Several large boulevards structure the network of local streets that serve individual buildings.

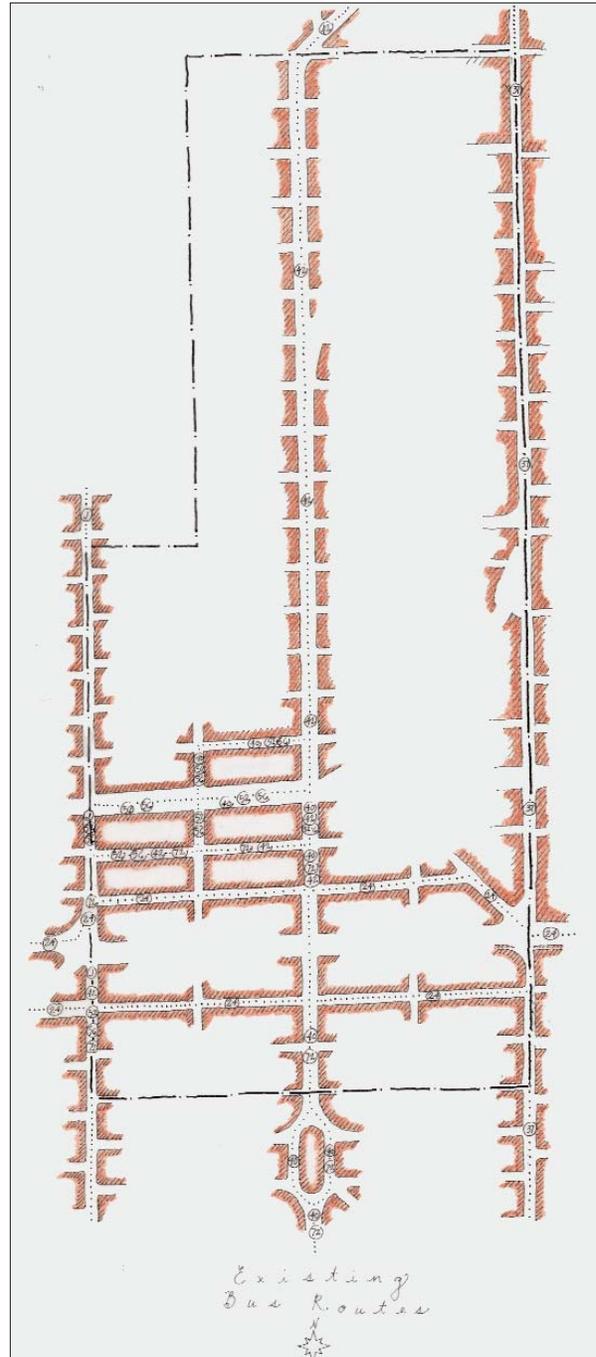
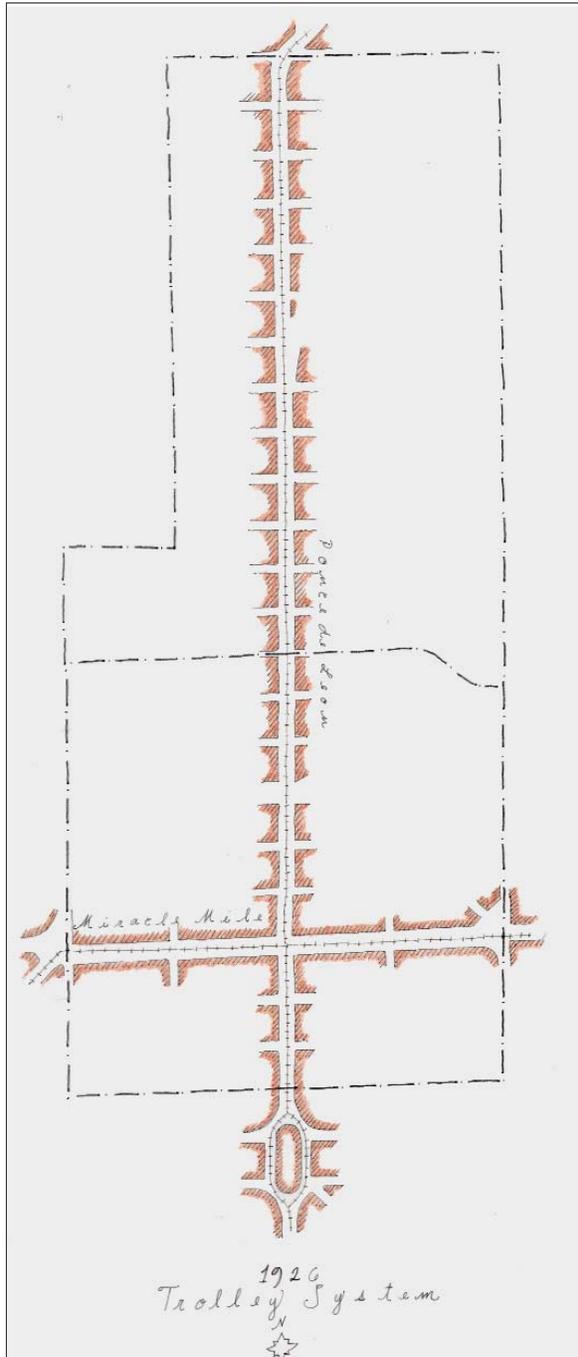
CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: TRANSPORTATION



Proposed Design Speeds

This drawing indicates proposed design speeds for various streets within the Master Plan; black- 40 mph, green-30 mph, yellow-25 mph and red-20 mph.

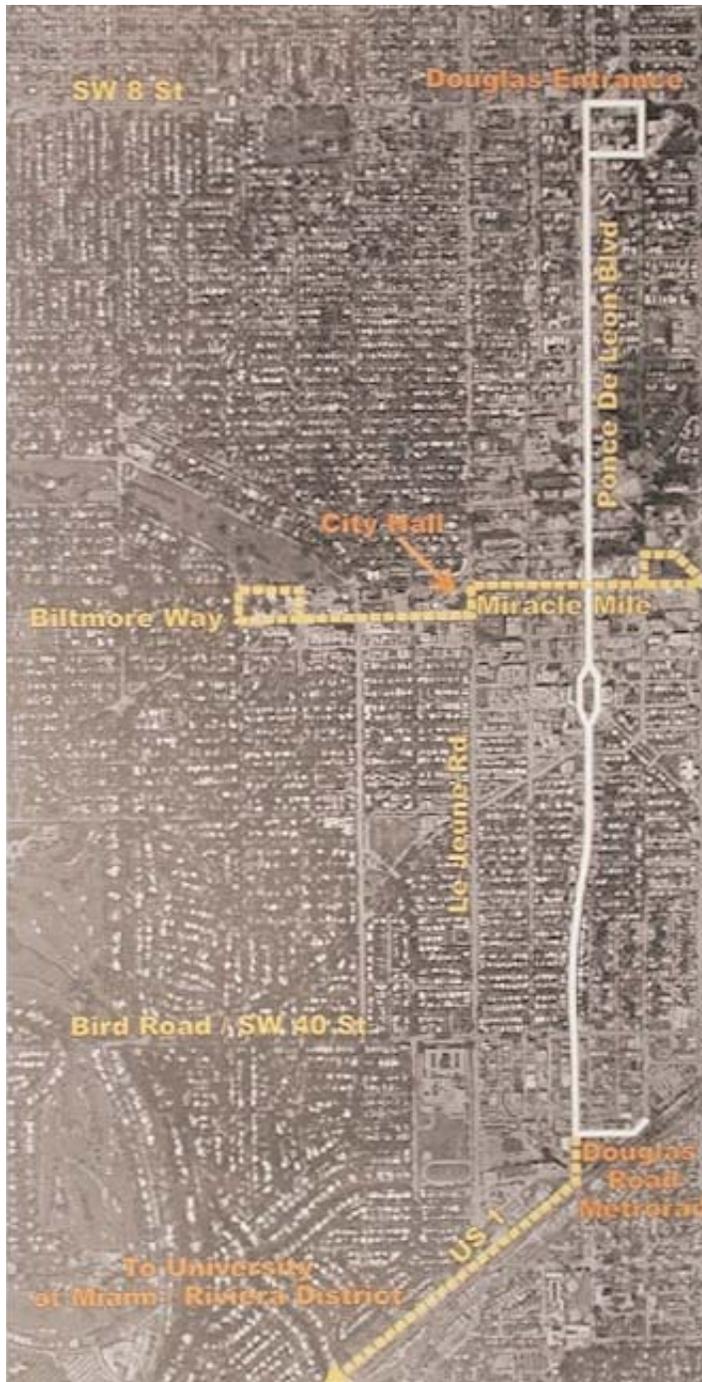
CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: TRANSPORTATION



Public Transit

Downtown and North Ponce are well positioned for county-wide access. A number of different bus routes (right) traverse the downtown connecting this part of Coral Gables with other destinations in the region. In 1926, a trolley system provided public mobility along Ponce de Leon Boulevard and Miracle Mile (left).

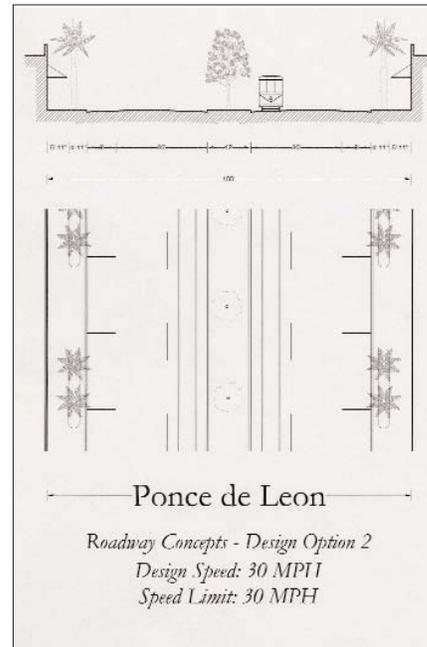
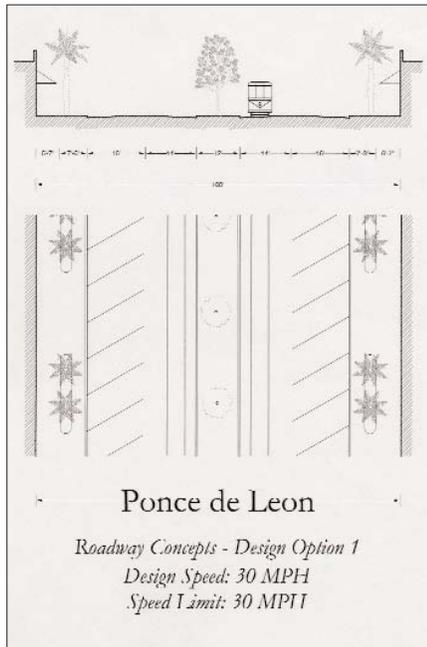
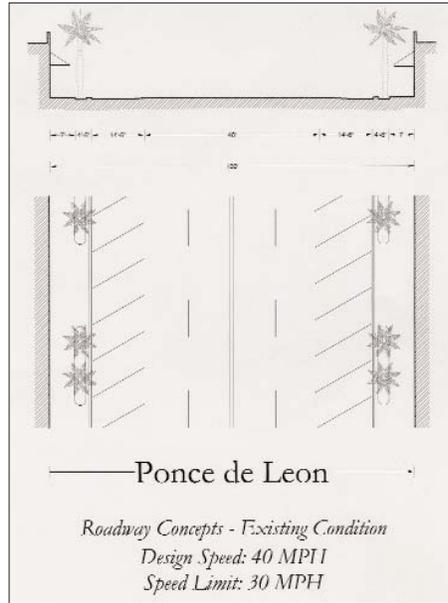
CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: TRANSPORTATION



Historic Trolley

A new trolley line is under implementation for Ponce de Leon Boulevard between Eighth Street and Merrick Park and the Douglas Road MetroRail Station. A second east-west line is planned for Coral Way, Miracle Mile and Biltmore Way. The Trolley must have visual appeal and agility. Remanufacturing one of the historic prototypes would further ensure the viability of the trolley system.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: TRANSPORTATION

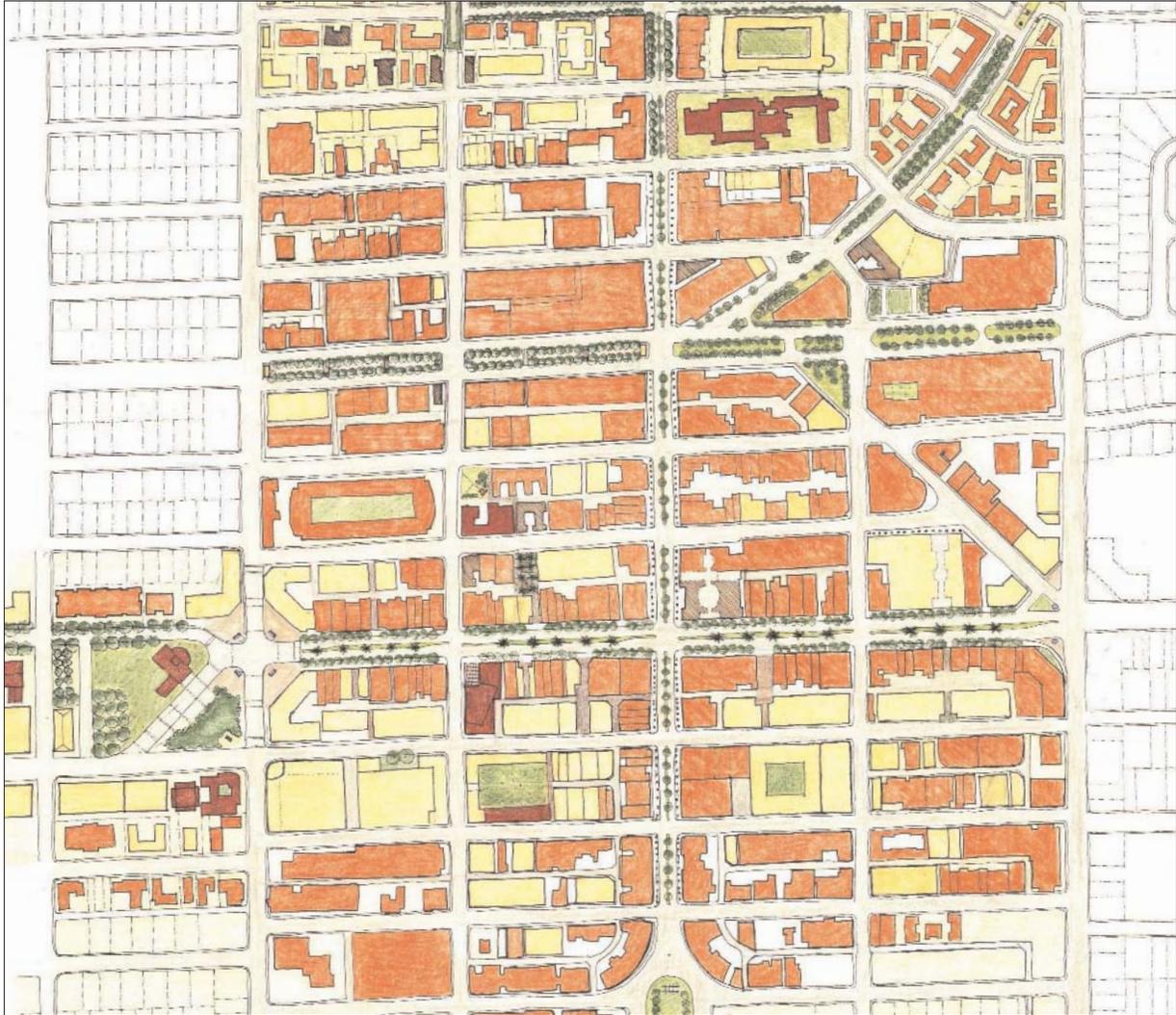


Ponce de Leon Existing Street Section and Two Proposals

These diagrams illustrate both the existing street section of Ponce de Leon Boulevard (above) with its current design speed of 40 mph and two design proposals (below) which incorporate the proposed street trolley, a landscaped median, with a new design speed of 30 mph.

DOWNTOWN

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: DOWNTOWN



Downtown Master Plan Detail

This detail of the Master plan shows the Downtown built out, with all empty lots replaced by buildings. Orange represents the existing buildings and yellow represents new buildings. This plan shows new through-block passages and the altering of existing platting at the west end of Miracle Mile to allow larger buildings to front Le Jeune Road.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: DOWNTOWN



Quality of Pedestrian Frontages

This frontage quality analysis shows little uninterrupted pedestrian quality. The thickest line represents storefronts with visible retail or restaurant activity; the medium line, building walls with windows and doors concealing office or other non-retail activities; the thin line, parking lots or garage fronts, blank walls or landscape buffers distancing the pedestrians from the building. Miracle Mile and a few short blocks of Ponce de Leon Boulevard provide a continuous, interesting and safe pedestrian experience. The remaining street fronts are discontinuous at best or totally lacking in any quality of pedestrian experience.

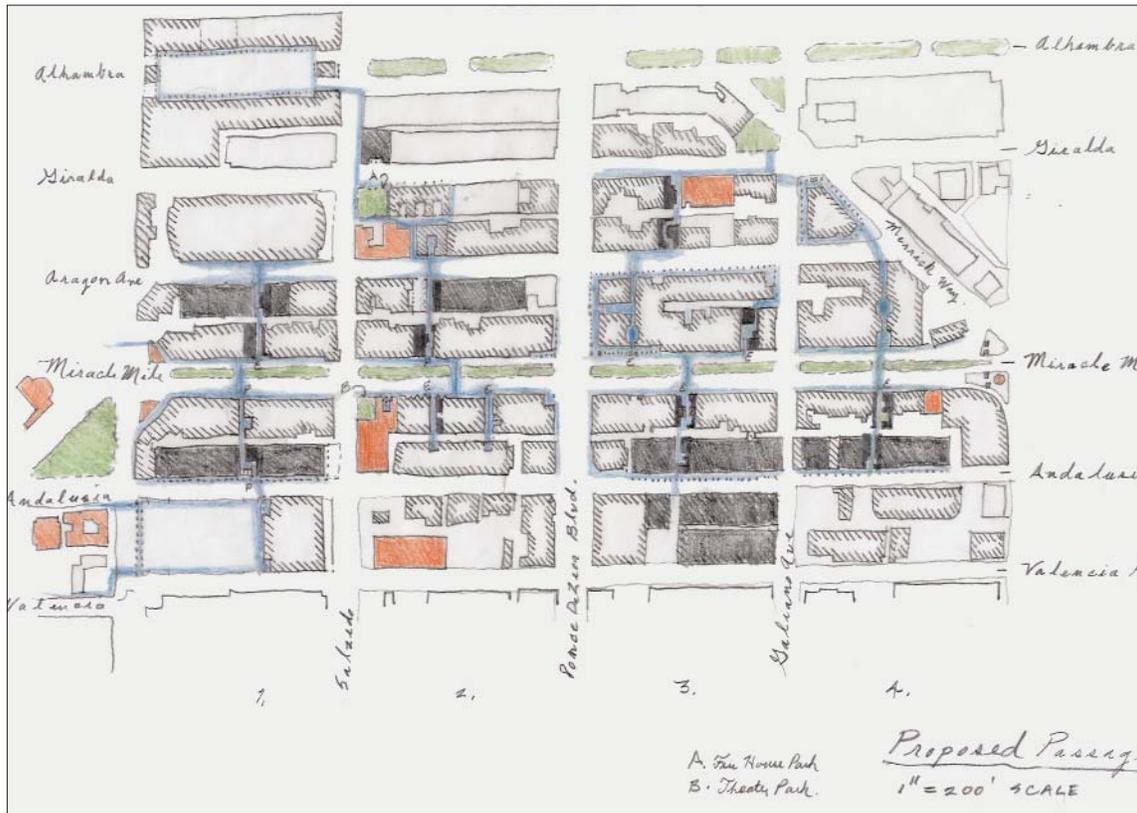
CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: DOWNTOWN



Pedestrian Passages: Existing Conditions

The dimension of downtown blocks, especially along Miracle Mile, has long been identified as being inconvenient for the pedestrian. The walk from a parking lot or a garage behind the store to its front on the Mile may be over 800' because of the length of the block. Several midblock passages exist but they leave much to be desired, as they are hard to find and lack a sense of security.

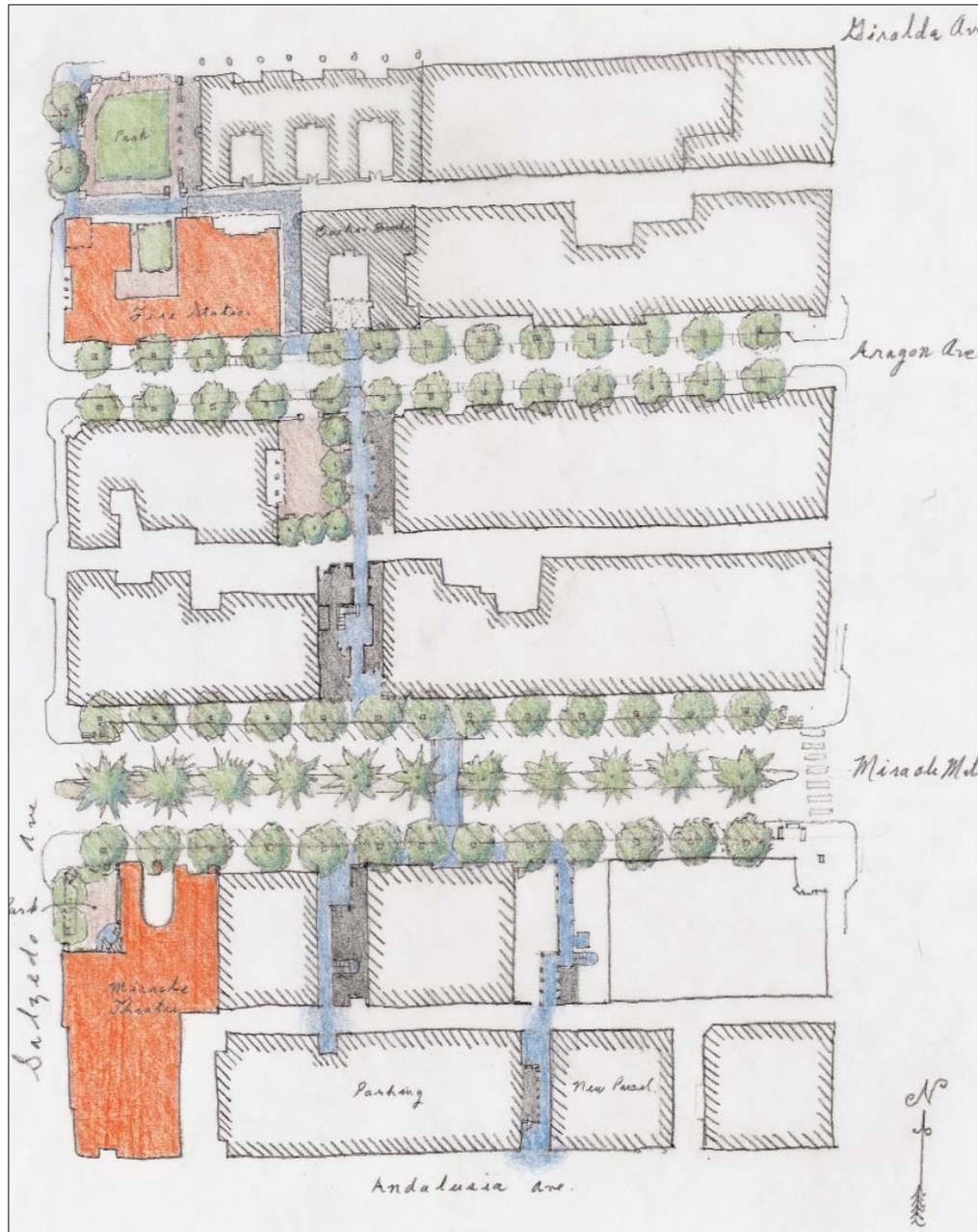
CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: DOWNTOWN



Pedestrian Passages Proposal

The Master Plan proposes a series of midblock passages strategically located as shown here. Some may require the removal of an existing building to be replaced by a new combination of walkway, storefronts and landscaped courts. In exchange for the public easement for the passage, this type of development can be made attractive for the property owner with a package of incentives such as public parking spaces for the offices or apartments on the upper floors. Alternatively, the City could buy one of these properties and redevelop it appropriately as a catalytic example for the private sector to emulate.

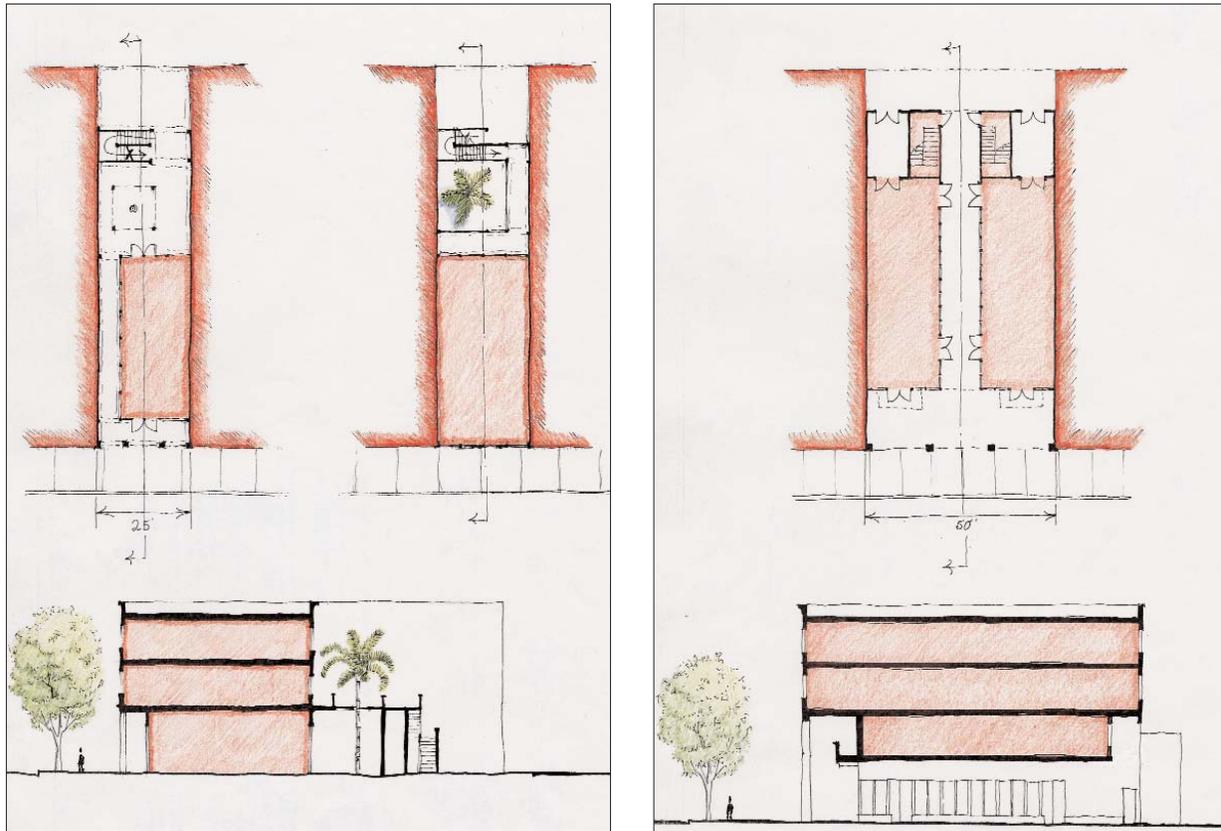
CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: DOWNTOWN



Detail of 300 Block Pedestrian Passages

A detailed study of one passage trajectory shows it as a continuous walkway from Andalusia Avenue in the south, through to Miracle Mile, and through to Aragon Avenue where the City's parking lot provides space for the passage at its western end. The passage arrives at the Books & Books courtyard and continues on to historic Firehouse Park. Wherever possible the passages should cross alleys perpendicularly, in order to avoid mixing pedestrians with service vehicles.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: DOWNTOWN



Pedestrian Passage Details

These two proposals show designs for pedestrian passages on a 25-foot lot and on a 50-foot lot. On the left, a storefront faces the passage and a garden court illuminates it and provides the entry to residential lofts above. On the right, two storefronts face the walkway which includes the entries to the upper stories. The setback of the store behind an arcade on the left, and on the right a double height arcade, announce the presence of the passage to the pedestrian approaching along the sidewalk.

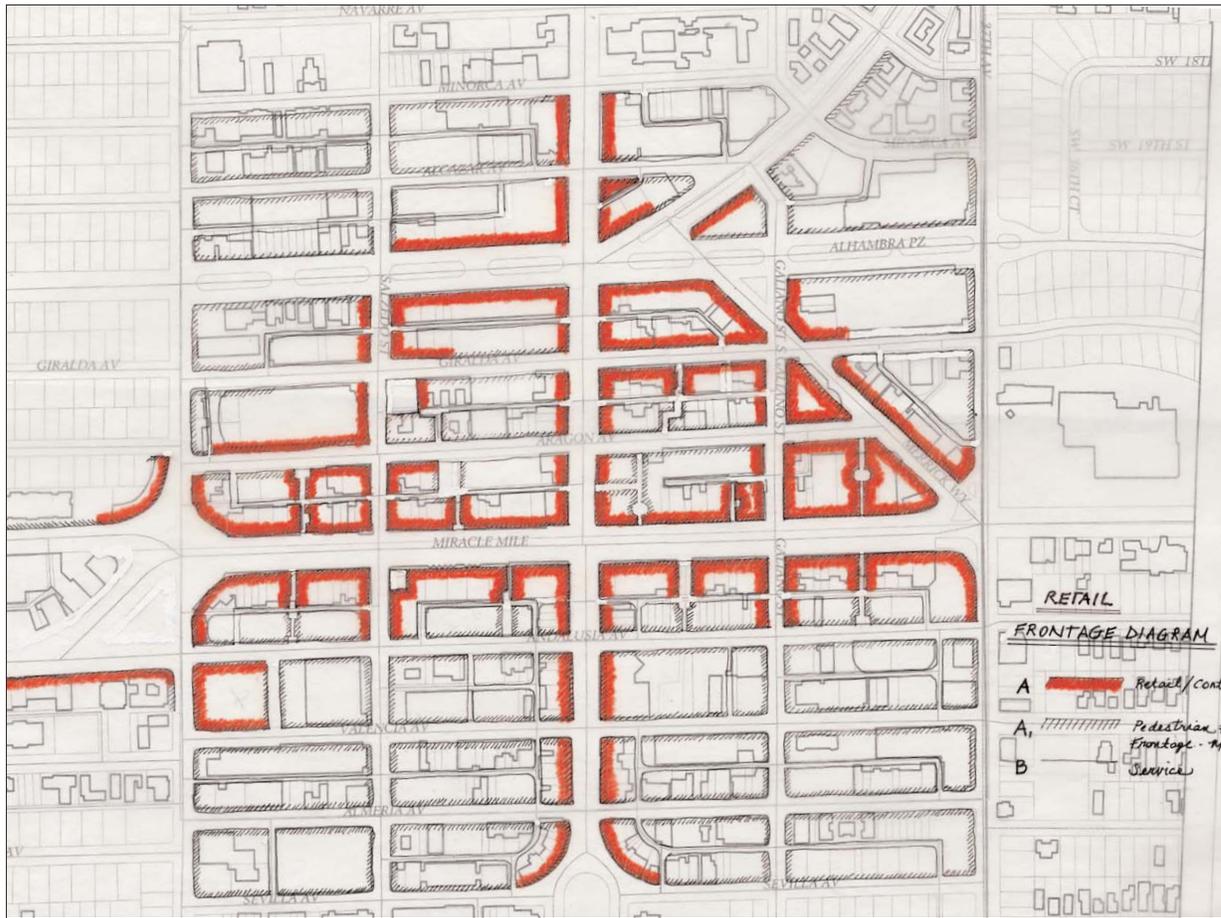
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Pedestrian Passage Entrance from Miracle Mile

This perspective shows the passage entrance on the north side of Miracle Mile, with the store-fronts turning in along the passage and the directory sign.

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Retail Frontage Diagram

The downtown is the primary retail destination of the city. As the preceding pedestrian quality analysis diagram shows, retail continuity is sporadic and interrupted. The charrette proposes a tighter retail focus than that currently encouraged by the zoning code. The red lines of this diagram propose the area of required retail continuity in Downtown: essentially a pedestrian circuit from Ponce Circle to Alhambra Circle along Miracle Mile, and including Salzedo and Galiano. The zoning code should be adjusted so as not to require first floor retail outside this area, instead allowing live-work residential and office space to front the street. Further suggestions for the retail health of the downtown area include the positioning of downtown retail in a manner complimentary to Merrick Park once that retail destination opens, and the coordination of merchandising and recruiting merchants to keep the proper retail mix by the Business Improvement District.

A number of other charrette including recommendations, streetscape improvements, signage and parking management changes, will benefit downtown retail.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: DOWNTOWN



Themed Retail: Restaurant Row

One retail enhancement strategy discussed during the charrette is the theming of retail in merchandising sub-zones, accumulating many like-product establishments in a specific location. Giralda Avenue can already be identified as Restaurant Row. This drawing shows the use of the street parking spaces for sidewalk expansion to encourage outdoor dining. This would need further study to determine whether the loss of adjacent parking would be harmful to the businesses.

Coral Gables Retail Report
by Seth Harry, Retail Consultant

Overall Strategies

Consolidate and strengthen existing retail environment to build critical mass. Initial efforts should concentrate on a downtown focused on Miracle Mile and bounded by Lejeune Road, Alhambra Circle, Douglas Road and Ponce Circle. Expand outward as demand dictates.

Identify specific merchandizing sub-zones that are physically distinctive, such as "restaurant row," for further development. Trends on Miracle Mile suggest an increasing market for cafés, boutiques, restaurants and some "Main Street" chains such as Pottery Barn, Restoration Hardware, The Gap. The bridal-oriented shops should form a tighter sub-zone, and arts and crafts-oriented establishments could be recruited for another sub-zone.

Support architectural and zoning regulations that reinforce the "sense-of-place" and historical ambiance of downtown Coral Gables. Encourage the creation of an open air, Mediterranean, retail and dining experience: sidewalk cafés with rooftop, balcony and terrace seating, loggias, arcades, colonnades, awnings, canopies and copious plantings.

Pedestrian Enhancements, Streetscape and Design

Develop a new sign code to encourage distinctive and effective signage appropriate to a contemporary main street context.

Pursue architectural and zoning regulations that support a walkable, mixed-use, pedestrian environment.

Incorporate urban design elements that encourage people to congregate and interact.

Implement streetscape improvements for the Giralda "restaurant row" and begin pilot program of weekend and evening closure of the street. Allow outdoor seating on the sidewalk and street while street is closed. Locate centralized valet station at the intersection of Giralda and Galiano.

Provide a clear and effective wayfinding program to and from all parking areas.

Make mid-block pedestrian passages that are attractive, well lit, clearly marked and safe to facilitate the use of parking garages. Implement enhanced lighting and landscaping for passages, and require storefront windows and entrances to open onto the actual passages. Create wider, plaza-like openings where passages meet streets and sidewalks.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: DOWNTOWN

Traffic and Parking

Implement traffic calming measures to slow traffic for the retail focus area, creating an effective pedestrian zone for the downtown.

Create attractive, high-profile trolley stops integrated with downtown streetscape improvements. As per the Circulator System Study, locate trolley stops close together in the downtown: between Valencia and Andalusia, between Miracle Mile and Aragon, between Giralda and Alhambra Circle, and between Minorca and Navarre (at the Elementary School).

Develop a unified, strategic parking program that provides rational, convenient and appropriately priced parking throughout the retail district. Identify opportunities for shared parking arrangements allowing private office parking garages to be available to retail, entertainment and dining customers in the evening.

Create centralized, clearly designated valet parking stations.

Explore opportunities to maximize private parking capacity for public use and avoid "predatory" enforcement policies.

Merchandizing, Management and Marketing

Develop an overall merchandising and positioning strategy to maximize penetration and capture within the primary trade area.

Build upon existing market strengths while targeting specific niches that will expand and extend downtown's regional presence.

Optimize the mix of shops to take maximum advantage of existing local market and new residents within the downtown core.

Update visual merchandising frequently and seasonally, and light storefronts as long as restaurants remain open, if not all night. Provide ambient sidewalk illumination from storefronts.

Explore joint marketing and promotional events with Merrick Park to create greater perception of Coral Gables as a single regional destination.

Coordinate trolley development with Merrick Park to ensure quality of vehicles and provision of an attractive, high profile streetcar stop at Merrick Park.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: DOWNTOWN

Merchandizing, Management and Marketing (continued)

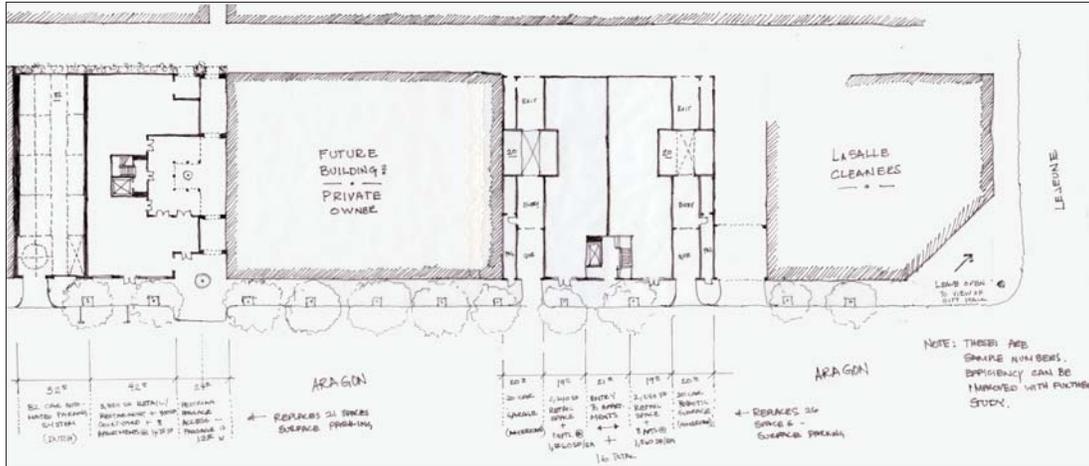
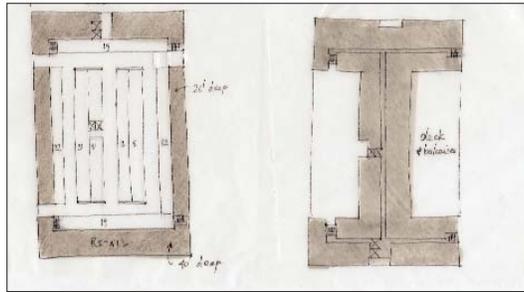
Consider hiring a part-time tenant coordinator to assist both new and existing merchants with merchandising and design issues.

Coordinate retail hours of operation, particularly in support of special events such as Gallery Night.

Develop an ongoing event program that reinforces the unique history and "brand" identity of Coral Gables and Miracle Mile.

Research programs in other cities, such as Boulder, that have been successful in preserving the mix of small, local businesses in the downtown, even as commercial lease rates rise during redevelopment.

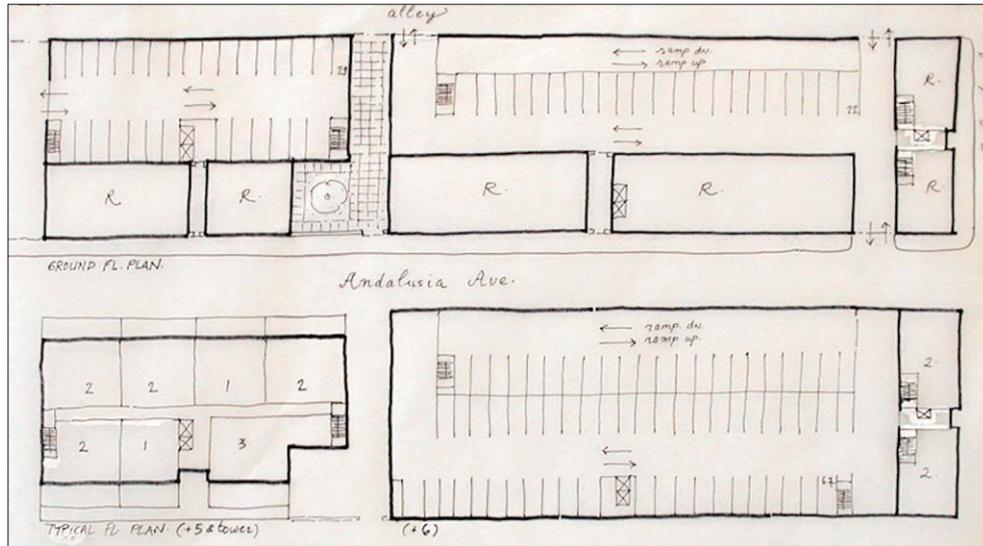
CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: DOWNTOWN



Parking Proposals

The top diagram depicts a through-block development of parking with a ground floor retail liner and residential building above. The middle drawing shows the south side of the 300 block of Aragon street developed with mixed uses, including a building for an automated parking system at the east end. Using 32 feet of frontage, 82 cars can be parked in the building. The use of such a system is already being pioneered in other parts of Florida and could be a worthwhile pilot project in which the City might engage. The elevation sketch shows the garage on the left, next to a small building which includes a pedestrian passage to the right.

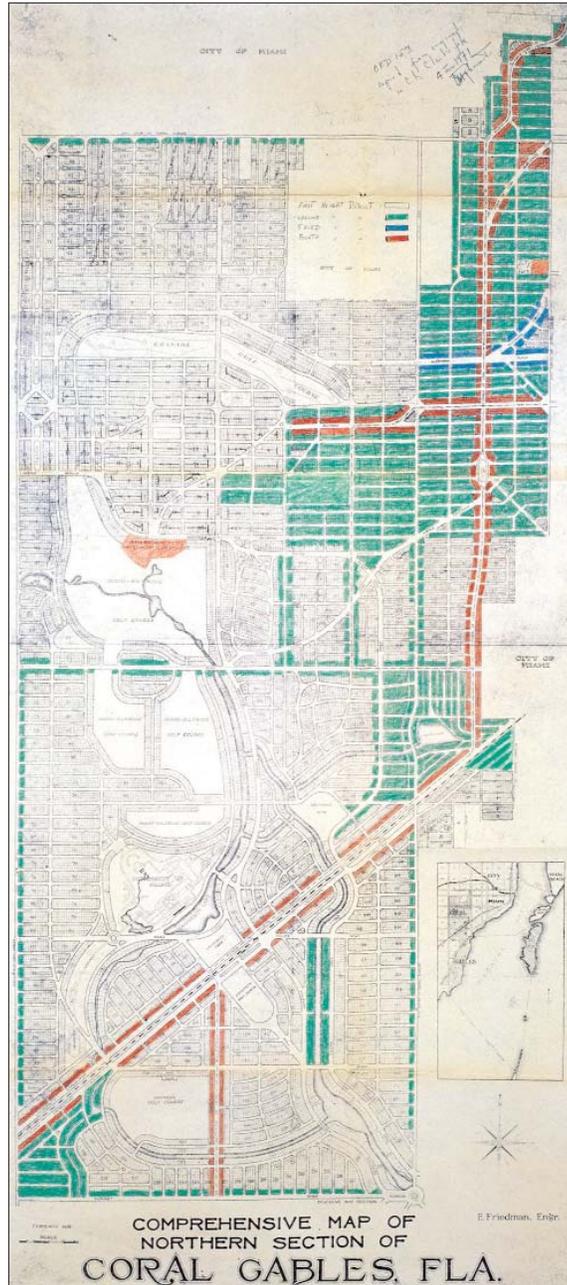
CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: DOWNTOWN



Parking Proposals

Further examination of the city properties available for redevelopment produced this drawing for the north side of Andalusia Avenue in the 300 block. It shows the separation of the parking building and the apartment building side by side instead of their conventional stacking in one long building. This plan shows the apartments with retail on the ground floor and a small amount of concealed parking, with the bulk of the required parking in the adjacent building, with retail on the ground floor and a proper façade concealing the parking above. This disengages the two different structural systems of parking and apartments and allows a crossblock passage to Miracle Mile. One of the charrette recommendations is to add to the zoning code a restriction that no building exceed 250 feet in length of street frontage.

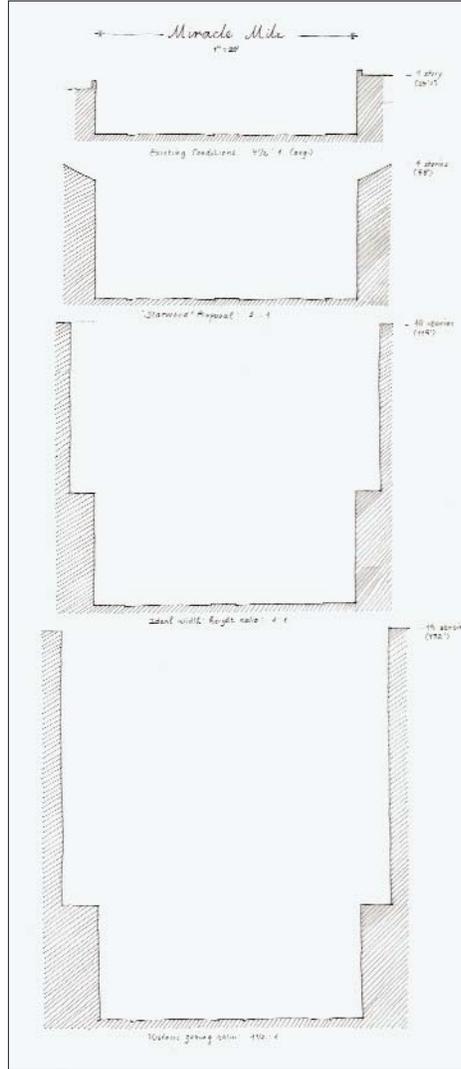
CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: DOWNTOWN



Historic Height Map

The historic height map shows building height regulated according to the width of the street. For a right-of-way 60 feet wide, buildings were to be no more than 60 feet tall, creating a one-to-one ratio of street space width to height. Alhambra Circle and Miracle Mile were allowed a one to one-and-a-half street section ratio.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: DOWNTOWN



Buildings Height along Miracle Mile

The public right-of-way of Miracle Mile is one hundred feet wide. This diagram shows four proposals for the street section of Miracle Mile. At the top is its existing condition of one and two storey buildings. The second section shows four stories facing the Mile as proposed in the Starwood proposal. The third section illustrates the one-to-one ratio, with buildings 100 feet tall, and at the bottom, the historical intention, with 150-foot-tall buildings.

The charrette proposes that buildings fronting Miracle Mile be maintained at a maximum of five to six stories. This responds to the overwhelming public desire for a lower scale along the Mile, and the precedent of lower buildings to the front and taller buildings to the rear as set by the historic Colonnade building and the approved Starwood project at the east end of the Mile. If this recommendation is pursued, Miracle Mile would eventually have a uniform urban space, with lower buildings to the front and taller to the back, in a manner which would give it a character unique among all South Florida urban centers.

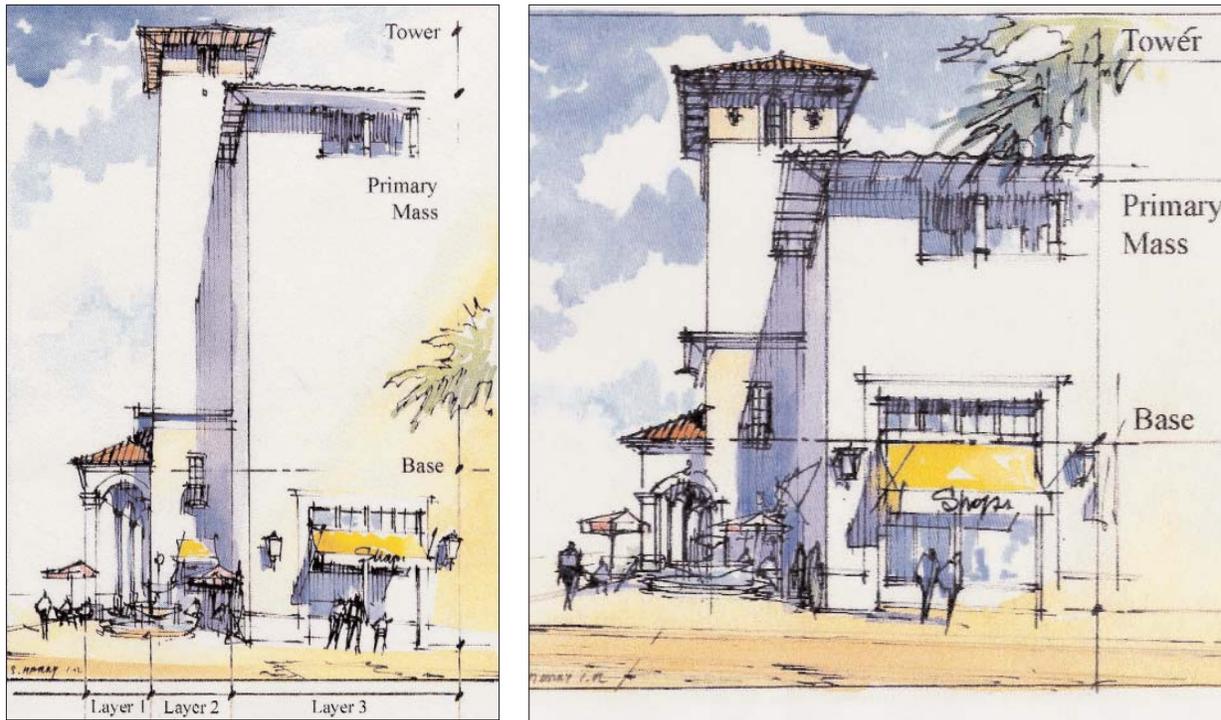
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Downtown Infill

This before and after illustration shows how one might infill downtown streets with a mix of residential and commercial buildings.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: DOWNTOWN



Mediterranean Ordinance

A much discussed topic during the charrette was the way buildings look. The overarching public concern is that Downtown does not have the strength of visual character that some of the City's residential neighborhoods have. While a number of urban design adjustments to the zoning code have been suggested to address this, including that building heights should be set without bonuses and that building lengths along the streets should be restricted, the architectural issues of height, massing, and imagery are important to address as well.

With the understanding that a committee was recently formed to review the current Mediterranean code, the charrette produced a schematic proposal for revising that code to control better the height and massing in the picturesque manner that is an integral part of Mediterranean style buildings. These two drawings show that such a code could be written with specific instructions for three building layers in two directions. Vertically: three layers in height provide, with specific proportions, a base, a main mass and a tower of limited floor plate. Horizontally: three layers in depth include embellishment at the pedestrian level, the main mass maintaining the street wall and a tower. The charrette's recommendations elaborate on this.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: DOWNTOWN



Recladding Existing Buildings

Responding to popular demand for an illustration showing the recladding of an existing building, the following drawing was made to compare with the photograph.

NORTH PONCE NEIGHBORHOOD

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: NORTH PONCE NEIGHBORHOOD



North Ponce Neighborhood Master Plan Detail

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: NORTH PONCE NEIGHBORHOOD



Retail Frontage Analysis

Retail frontage along Ponce de Leon Boulevard is sporadic and frequently interrupted. The half mile length of the boulevard in the North Ponce area mitigates against a strong retail character its full length. Nevertheless, the boulevard deserves store fronts and habitable space facing the sidewalks throughout. While the boulevard likely will continue to house locally oriented retail and office space, it would nonetheless improve its pedestrian quality.

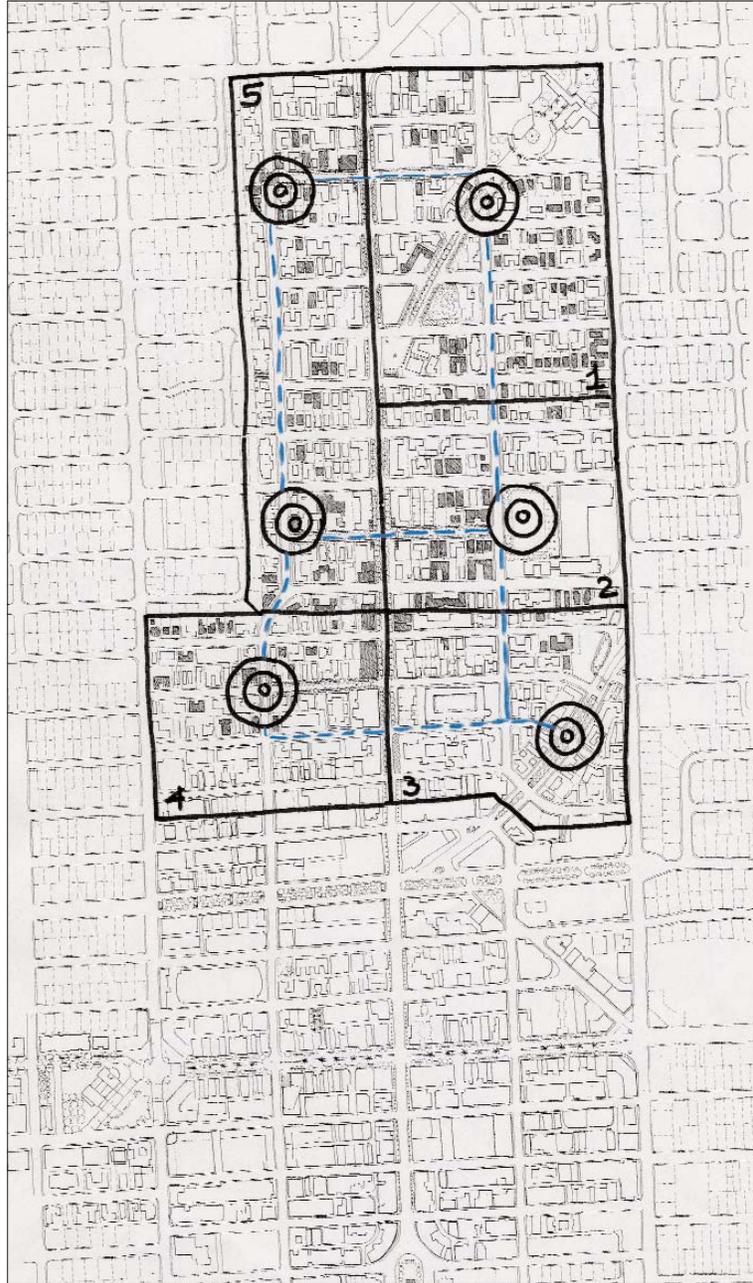
CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: NORTH PONCE NEIGHBORHOOD



Central Square for North Ponce

A neighborhood center for the entire North Ponce area can be created in the area where Ponce de Leon Boulevard and its eastern extension meet. This can be accomplished using existing private properties and by requiring the surrounding public properties to face the new square with arcades.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: NORTH PONCE NEIGHBORHOOD



North Ponce Wards

Prior studies have shown that there are five clearly identifiable communities or wards in the North Ponce area. Each of these wards represents a group of individuals who share a sense of belonging by associating themselves with particular urban spaces, buildings, economic conditions, etc. The charrette proposed that a distinctive character for each of these wards be developed through the selection of a particular street tree for each ward as well as the design of a special green space at an intersection central to the ward.



Topiary Square

This is a proposal for the central green space of the southwest ward. Located at the intersection of Salzedo and Majorca a two-story ficus hedge is situated within the public right of way. The public landscape is formalized to create a "green room" as a special identifying piece for the ward.

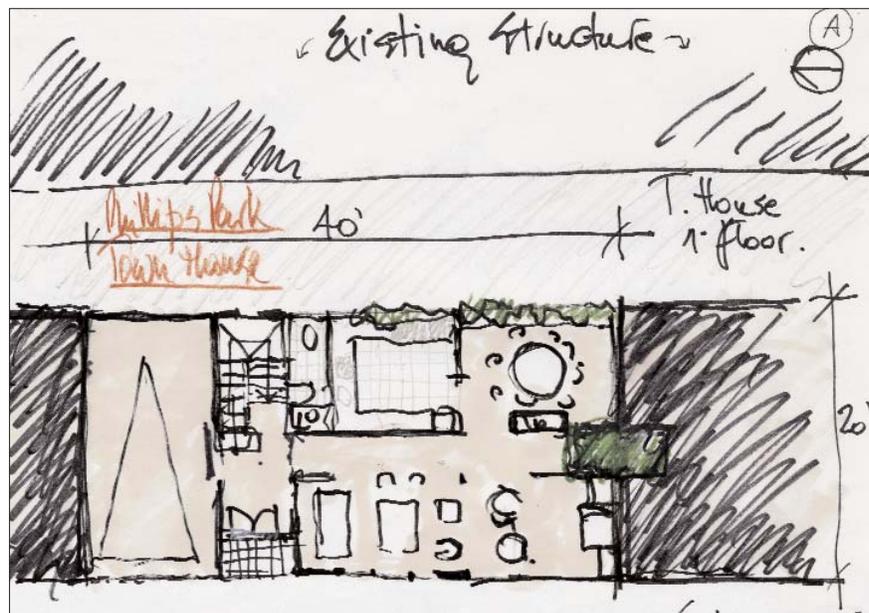
CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: NORTH PONCE NEIGHBORHOOD



Phillips Park

For the east central ward of the North Ponce Neighborhood, the charrette proposed an improvement for Phillips Park to screen the unsightly parking garage under construction on its eastern side.

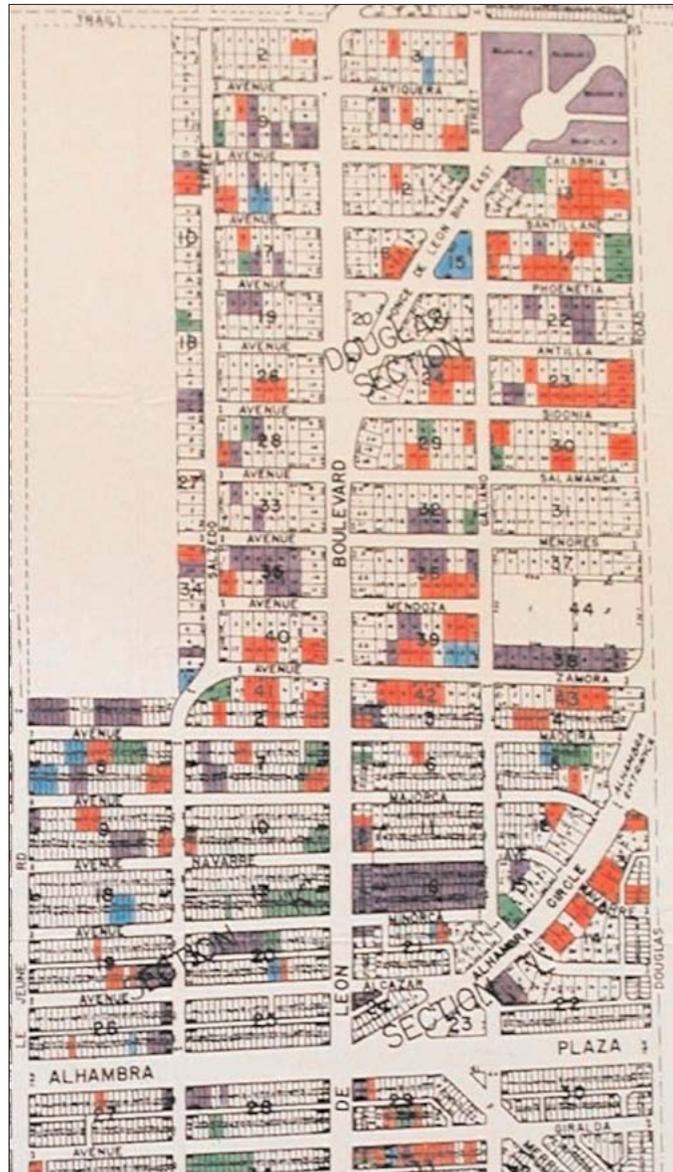
CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: NORTH PONCE NEIGHBORHOOD



Phillips Park Housing

A very narrow liner building containing housing could screen the garage and provide eyes on the park to ensure its safe use. The unit type proposed is 22 feet deep and 40 feet wide. The funds accrued from the sale of this piece of public property could be used for other neighborhood public space improvements such as the North Ponce central square or the green spaces for the ward centers.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: NORTH PONCE NEIGHBORHOOD



Historic Urban Fabric

The North Ponce area contains a number of historic apartment buildings that should be preserved. This map is the city's record of historic buildings, color coded by the period in which they were built: 1910s Yellow; 1920s Purple; 1930s Green; 1940s Pink; 1950s Blue

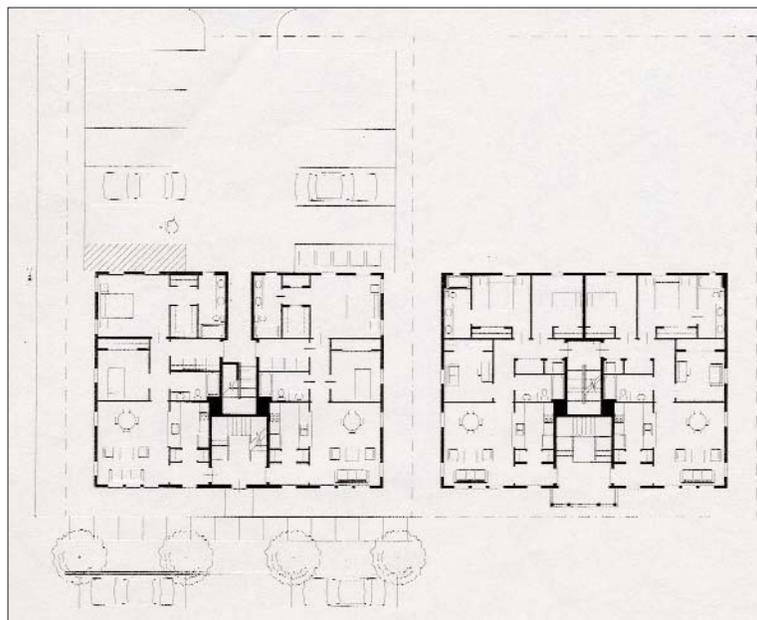
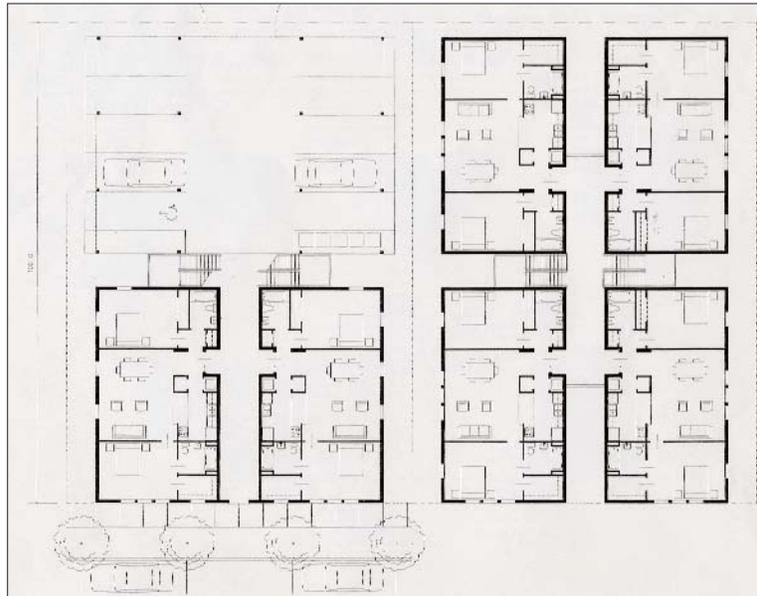
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Existing Building Types

The existing North Ponce building types are typically free-standing two and three-story buildings on double wide lots. They do not usually include parking on the lot.

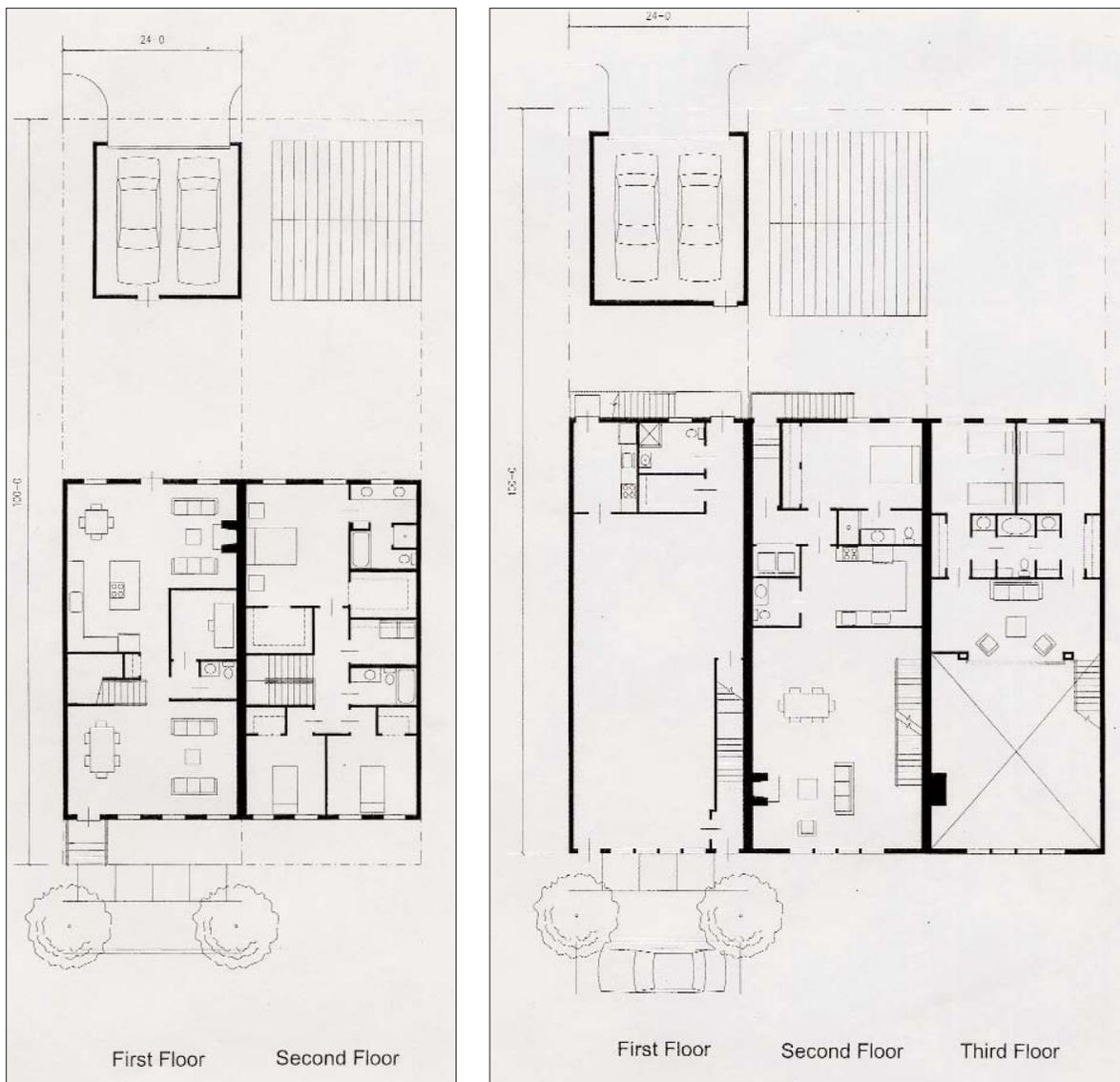
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New Building Types

These studies show new building types of a massing similar to the historic types. The Central Hall or Central Stair type of apartment building can contain up to eight units, providing ten parking spaces at the rear of the property. An adjustment to the zoning code requiring habitable space on the ground floor to face the street would allow this to be a viable alternative to the current trend of building apartments raised over parking lots.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: NORTH PONCE NEIGHBORHOOD



Townhouses and Live Work Units

The townhouse is a single family dwelling with common walls on the side lot lines, which allow for the development of a continuous façade along the street. The live work unit is defined as a flexible commercial building type with one dwelling above a commercial loft. Alleys typically serve both of these typologies, as the quantity of required parking must be accommodated at the rear to preserve pedestrian continuity along the street. The provision for these types of housing no longer exists; however we hope to revive the use of these typologies within the southern portion of the North Ponce area closest to Downtown.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: NORTH PONCE NEIGHBORHOOD



Before and after

This before and after illustration shows how one might infill streets with setbacks with new live-work units and townhouses.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: NORTH PONCE NEIGHBORHOOD



Before and After

This before and after illustration shows how one might infill streets without setbacks with new live-work units and townhouses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations were generated by the extensive input of citizens, committees, City staff, and stakeholders through the following: completion of a series of pre-Charrette public meetings held in the fall of 2001; review of more than 100 questionnaires that were filled out and submitted, and the public sessions held during the January 2002 Charrette. This input included the work of some fifty professional, faculty and student architects and designers that worked on one of the four teams organized for the Charrette, and who responded with specific recommendations for guiding the future development of the City's downtown buildings, streets, and public spaces.

This draft of the recommendations was prepared by the University of Miami's School of Architecture and is the result of two rounds of review and input by City of Coral Gables' staff representing Planning, Building and Zoning, Development, Historic Preservation and Public Works.

The recommended actions are categorized according to the three main tools of urban enhancement: Design, Policy and Management.

Design actions include the individual projects illustrated in the Master Plan, including the capital improvements, focusing on the public realm, parks, squares, boulevards, streets and pedestrian cross-block passages.

Policy actions provide the regulatory basis for the Master Plan's implementation, promoting the physical predictability of the private building, an important assurance of long term value for property owners and investors.

Management actions regard the ongoing function and maintenance of the physical fabric. Urban management can be facilitated by design and policy in so far as they structure the physical environment for ease of maintenance and long-term value.

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: RECOMMENDATIONS

Design recommendations refer to specific locations in the Master Plan and are illustrated in this final report.

1. Redesign Ponce Circle Park to conform with the historical intention of the original Arts and Crafts section as a more formal and urban landscape with an open air pavilion and pergolas for art fairs and other cultural gatherings. (Parks and Recreation, Public Works)
2. Provide City Hall with a civic setting in support of its historic designation: a grand civic green with a market structure; an urban room defined by buildings across the boundary streets on west, south and east. (Development, Planning, Historic Preservation, Public Works)
3. Create a grand public space for Alhambra Circle referenced as the “Alhambra Rambla”: diagonal parking and two travel lanes in each direction; a 48-foot wide median with shade trees, beautiful paving, large stone benches and pedestrian scaled lighting; at the west end shade and flowering trees with a gabled coral rock pavilion; the City salon at the center able to be closed off for civic events; a special design for the east of Ponce aligning median trees and enlarging Pitman Park. (Development, Public Works)
4. Develop a master streetscape plan for all Downtown and North Ponce streets to enhance the city as a Garden City, with an emphasis on pedestrian comfort as follows: maximize sidewalk width; add shade trees to increase tree canopy; minimize vehicular lane widths; maximize on-street parking; preserve commercial/retail visibility; access and accentuate mid-block crossings; design aesthetically pleasing lighting; select plant material types to relate to street scale; and promote increased urban open space in safe, accessible areas. Encourage the use of innovative design and planting techniques, including structural soil, to insure survivability of plant material. Develop four generic approaches (kit of parts) based on the variety of existing rights of way and conditions as follows:

Begin with Aragon, Andalusia and Valencia Avenues.

- a. Widen sidewalks; narrow travel lanes; trees on the sidewalk.
- b. Maintain sidewalk and travel lane dimensions; trees on the sidewalk.
- c. Maintain sidewalk and travel lane dimensions; trees in the parking lane.
- d. Maintain sidewalk and travel lane dimension; arcades, pergolas, trellis awnings over sidewalk. (Public Works, Planning, Public Service)

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Return two way traffic to Valencia Avenue. (Public Works)
6. Activate trolley planned for north-south route from SW 8th St to Merrick Park and Metro Rail; add east-west service on Miracle Mile and Biltmore Way up to Venetian Pool and Biltmore Hotel. (Public Works)
7. Make trolleys visually appealing using original Coral Gables trolley as a prototype. (Public Works, Historic Preservation, Planning)
8. Consider long term plan for fixed rail to substitute for rubber tire trolleys and study additional routes throughout City in addition to routes mentioned above. (Public Works, Planning)
9. Develop eastern edge of Phillips Park with liner residential buildings to conceal the parking garage now visible across the park and to add eyes on the park. Use development proceeds to purchase land for small parks in the North Ponce area. (Planning, Parks and Recreation)
10. Develop mid-block pedestrian passages for each block of Miracle Mile and encourage their continuation north-south throughout Downtown. Design pedestrian passages to be inviting to the pedestrian with store fronts, small offices, entries to apartments above, and landscaped courts. (Planning, City Manager)
11. Develop a public garden (Firehouse Park) with a loggia in the lot to the north of the old Firehouse in coordination with its new first floor museum. (Historic Preservation, Public Works)
12. Develop a public loggia (Miracle Square) adjacent to the Miracle Theatre at the corner of Miracle Mile and Salzedo with connections to the theater and a small café. Alternately, a vined trellis or a quincunx (canopy) of trees may serve. (City Manager, Planning, Public Works)
13. Replat west end of Miracle Mile to increase depth of lots facing LeJeune Road to give appropriate frontage to City Hall and to allow larger floor plates. (Planning)

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: RECOMMENDATIONS

14. Develop a comprehensive and uniform signage system which supports pedestrian orientation with changes to the zoning code as necessary:
Provide wayfinding signs on Miracle Mile at street intersections and cross block passages. (Public Works, Planning)
Create distinctive signs for trolley stops. (Public Works)
Allow perpendicular and window signs for storefronts. These function well with street trees and arcades and are part of the City's history. (Planning, Building and Zoning)
Create standards for placement of strategically placed signage for special events. (Planning)
15. Develop a palette of street furnishings, including benches, trash receptacles, information kiosks and streetlamps based on original Coral Gables models for use throughout Downtown. (Planning, Public Works, Public Service)
16. Reinforce five identifiable communities in North Ponce area, per prior study, with a streetscape that establishes identity and a special green space for each community. (Planning, Public Works)
17. Create a central square for all of North Ponce at intersection of Ponce de Leon Boulevard and East Ponce Boulevard with arcaded buildings or similar edge defining attributes surrounding the new square. (City Manager, Planning, multiple public and private entities)
18. Redesign Ponce de Leon Boulevard corridor to include the following: increased sidewalks widths; sidewalk landscaping; limitation of vehicular driveway curb cuts; and traffic calming, including a landscaped median. (Public Works, Public Service, Planning)
19. Provide landscaped traffic calming elements for Galiano and Salzedo Streets. (Public Works, Public Service, Planning)

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy recommendations include overall goals to govern public and private development, as well as specific regulatory changes.

1. Consolidate dense development and redevelopment of Downtown to enhance the public realm and its transit friendliness and walkability. (Planning)
2. Engage property owners, residents, and merchants to address issues of design, regulations and management in area south of the Downtown boundary and north of University Drive. (Planning, Historic Preservation)
3. Make multiple mobility options the goal of all City and specifically public works improvements including pedestrians, bicycles, transit and automobiles. (Public Works, Planning)
4. Work with County to adjust street speed limits as follows:
 - a. 40 mph for arterial streets outside of Downtown, such as SW 8th Street; Douglas Road north of Alhambra and south of Sevilla; LeJeune Road north of Alcazar and south of Sevilla;
 - b. 30 mph for Ponce de Leon Blvd. north of Alcazar and south of University Drive; Douglas Road south of Alhambra and north of Sevilla; LeJeune Road south of Alcazar and north of Sevilla;
 - c. 25 mph for the remaining streets except.
 - d. 20 mph for Antilla between Galiano and Salzedo, Minorca between Ponce and LeJeune, Alcazar, east of Ponce, Giralda between Salzedo and Galiano, Aragon between Ponce and LeJeune, Salzedo between Alcazar and Valencia. (Public Works)
5. Work with County to assume jurisdiction of all streets in Downtown and North Ponce. (Public Works)
6. Limit height of buildings facing Miracle Mile to three to six stories, allowing taller buildings on the rear lots facing Andalusia and Aragon Avenues via regulations allowing transfer of development rights. (Planning, Building and Zoning)
7. Revise zoning code to limit street front building length to a maximum of 250 feet. (Building and Zoning, Planning)

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: RECOMMENDATIONS

8. Revise the zoning code to allow and encourage live-work units with workplace space on the ground floor and living quarters above to increase resident activity and small business incubation within Downtown and North Ponce. (Building and Zoning, Planning)
9. Revise zoning code to allow narrow lot mixed-use infill townhouses in Downtown, including a zero front setback building type for blocks with alleys and a front setback building type to match existing in other areas. (Building and Zoning, Planning)
10. Revise zoning code to consolidate Downtown retail into the Retail Priority Area, including the length of Miracle Mile and generally the blocks between Salzedo and Galiano from Alhambra to Valencia. Limit the requirement of ground floor retail use to this area only. Require all Downtown buildings to face streets with commercial or residential habitable space (not parking) for first four floors, with doors and windows onto sidewalks. (Building and Zoning, Planning)
11. Revise zoning code to encourage creation of an open-air Mediterranean shopping and dining experience emphasizing sidewalk cafes, garden courts, and upper level terraces. (Building and Zoning, Planning)
12. Complete further research on the Mediterranean Ordinance to consider eliminating incentives and to require picturesque massing and proportions in keeping with traditional principles. Emphasize building design that promotes relationship of building to site, taking into consideration building bulk, mass, visual corridors, historic landmarks, scenic roadways, creation/preservation of entrances. Govern the horizontal and the vertical dimensions of building with these layers:

Vertically: Three layers in height provide a base, main mass, and a tower. The base shall have specified maximum lot coverage, the largest floor plate area, from ground floor up to 1/3 building height. The main mass shall have a smaller floor plate for a minimum of 1/3 building height. The tower shall have the smallest floor plate for a maximum of 1/3 building height.

Horizontally: Three layers in depth provide embellishment at the pedestrian levels, a dominant mass maintaining the street wall, and a tower for long distance identity. The first layer may encroach into the right-of-way with an arcade, cantilevered balconies, awnings, trellises. The second layer commences at a build-to-line. The third layer sets back a minimum distance. (Planning, Mediterranean Review Committee)

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: RECOMMENDATIONS

13. Create a compact and transparent zoning code from the ground up -- rather than continuing to overlay already numerous amendments to what has become a convoluted code. Establish an ordinance revision committee to guide new code development. (Planning, Building and Zoning)
14. Preserve historic apartment buildings in North Ponce and develop methodology for implementation thereof. (Historic Preservation)
15. Preserve North Ponce as the City's neighborhood for affordable rental housing. (Planning, Building and Zoning, Historic Preservation)
16. Revise zoning code to promote infill building in North Ponce that is compatible with historic types, with parking behind habitable space fronting sidewalks to ensure eyes on the street. (Planning, Building and Zoning)
17. Revise zoning code to bring FAR and height restrictions into conformance with land use and platting regulations. (Planning, Building and Zoning, City Attorney)
18. Revise zoning code to allow bed and breakfast uses with smaller unit size and parking on the street with permits. (Planning, Building and Zoning)
19. Encourage the establishment of ground level urban open spaces (e.g., plazas, greens, courtyards) to promote pedestrian gatherings and activities. (Planning)
20. Encourage the use of art in public and private spaces to further enhance the cultural and historic identity of the City Beautiful. This could include water, lighting, murals, new landmarks and interactive art. (Planning)
21. Require screening and buffering of obnoxious uses in alleys. (Planning, Public Works, Public Service)

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: RECOMMENDATIONS

Management recommendations are concerned with aspects of operation

1. Establish a retail merchandizing plan for the Retail Priority Area with specialty zones such as: restaurant row; arts and crafts area; design district; and, others oriented to niche and local markets in order to coordinate tenant recruitment and marketing. Build on the success of gallery night. (Development, Business Improvement District)
2. Work with merchants:
 - a. develop a plan for frequent and seasonal merchandise updating
 - b. develop a calendar for evening and special event hours
 - c. develop a storefront interior lighting standard to increase sidewalk ambient illumination. (Development, Business Improvement District)
3. Consider hiring a part-time tenant coordinator to assist both new and existing merchants with merchandising and design and marketing issues. Develop an ongoing events program that reinforces the unique history and "brand" identity of Coral Gables and Miracle Mile. Research programs in other cities (such as Boulder, Colorado) to help preserve the mix of small, local businesses in the downtown as new development continues upward pressure on commercial lease rates. (Business Improvement District)
4. Consider closing Giralda evenings and weekends for open air dining that spills out into the street. (City Manager, Public Works, Planning, Public Works, Parking, Development, Public Service)
5. Consider centralized valet stand at both ends of 100 block of Giralda to serve restaurants. (Public Works, Parking, Planning)
6. Position Downtown and North Ponce retail to be complementary to, rather than competing with, tenant mix of the Villages of Merrick Park. (Development, Business Improvement District)
7. Implement joint marketing, trolley funding and other activities with the Villages of Merrick Park. (Development, Parking, Public Works)

CORAL GABLES CHARRETTE: RECOMMENDATIONS

8. Clarify parking regulations as follows:
 - a. Require all public and private garages to put visitor parking on the lower levels closest to the street with permit and employee parking above. Encourage shared parking arrangements to make office parking available for evening retail and dining users. (Parking, Planning, Building and Zoning, Planning)
 - b. Within the Retail Priority Area, require all public parking to be short term visitor parking, prohibiting all permit parking. (Parking)
 - c. Develop a market pricing system for all public parking, with the highest price parking in the highest turnover area, close to retail areas, and lower priced parking away from the retail core. (Parking)
 - d. Develop the City's fledgling parking trust fund to support public provision of parking. Establish parking buy-out program to encourage infill building currently precluded by inability to fulfill private parking requirements. (City Manager, Parking, Planning, Building and Zoning)
 - e. Create remote parking respectful of surrounding residential uses at the north terminus of the trolley system. South terminus is already served at Metro Rail. (Parking, Public Works, Planning)
 - f. Explore automated parking systems, which consume 40 to 50 percent of space conventionally required. (Parking, Public Works)
 - g. Eliminate valet parking during the daytime or consider centralized valet service. (Parking)
 - h. Introduce residential parking permit system for North Ponce residential neighborhood. (Parking, Building and Zoning)
9. Plan for infrastructure enhancements, including burying of overhead utilities and adding infrastructure for new technology. (Development, Building and Zoning, Planning, Public Works)
10. Promote the City's standing as a center for arts, culture, dining and entertainment for the region. (Development)
11. Explore ways of using City land to support core infill goals including affordable housing facilities for seniors. (Development, Planning)

What's Next?

by Eric Riel

Now that the charrette has been completed and its recommendations presented, what happens next?

Implementation of the recommendations will begin immediately and will span several years to come. Some proposals can be undertaken and completed within a short time frame. Others will require a long-range effort, especially if they involve public review and the allocation of resources.

City staff will prepare an action plan for each charrette recommendation, including time frame for implementation, city department responsible, required changes to various city policies, and estimated implementation cost. The recommendations are comprehensive and will require the involvement of all departments. The work will be coordinated through the city manager's office. Preparation for the charrette involved the participation of all city boards and committees, and it is expected that the expertise of the boards and committees will continue to be utilized to refine the recommendations, as well.

Changes are expected to the city's Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Changes will also be made to the Zoning Code, which is the document that governs what can be built on a parcel of land or what type of uses are permitted and how that property is developed from an aesthetic standpoint. Larger items such as improvements to streetscapes, including improvements to Downtown or North Ponce de Leon sidewalk experience will require further analysis and refinement. Allocation of dollars is needed to complete these improvements. This will be accomplished with a number of financial mechanisms that could include federal, state and county grants, the City's own Capital Improvement Program, or the creation of assessment districts.

This is not the last of the charrette. The Master Plan and its recommendations are a top priority for the City Commission and the City administration. Private development projects that follow the recommendations will be recognized, and physical improvements resulting from the recommendations will be identified as its results. Several projects currently under construction and under review by the City are already responding to the charrette and incorporating its recommendations.

To keep informed of the continued implementation of the charrette, please visit the city web page at www.citybeautiful.net, or contact the Planning Department at (305) 460 5212.