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TO NEW LOCATION
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SOUTHBORO CENTER

R/UDAT

**REGIONAL URBAN DESIGN
ASSISTANCE TEAM**

CITY CENTRE

**WEST PALM BEACH
MAY 1977**

american institute of architects

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THE R/UDAT PROGRAM

The Urban Planning and Design Committee of the American Institute of Architects has been sending Urban Design Assistance Teams to various American cities since 1967.

The West Palm Beach R/UDAT is one of the latest such teams to be invited into a specific area to deal with environmental and urban problems which range in scale from recreational areas to model cities programs.

The teams respond to the problems as described by the local AIA Chapters and their sponsors from the community leadership.

Each Regional Urban Design Assistance Team is specially selected to include professionals experienced in the particular problems of the area under study. Members are not compensated for their services and agree not to accept commissions for work resulting from their recommendations.

The Team acquaints itself with the community and its people, presents its analysis from a fresh perspective, offers its recommendations and any ideas it may have for new approaches for planning and design.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the R/UDAT Program are:

- o to improve the physical environment throughout the nation;
- o to illustrate the importance of design in urban planning

- o to dramatize problems of urban design and stimulate public action;
- o to give national support to local AIA Chapters in their efforts to improve their own communities.
- o The aim is not to offer a complete final plan, but a new look by experienced outsiders:
- o to give new impetus and perhaps new directions for community action;
- o to make clear and comprehensive recommendations which are professionally responsible as well as politically and economically feasible and understandable by the public.

THE VISIT

The Palm Beach Chapter's request was processed by the AIA. The program chairman, Jules Gregory, made a reconnaissance visit on 31 March, 1977.

The team was sent extensive background material on the West Palm Beach Downtown area for study in advance of the visit. This included material from the Downtown Development Authority Master Plan Committee and the 1974 Genesis Midtown Effort.

After walking, riding, helicopter and boat tours of the City, followed by meetings with the Mayor, Planning & Zoning Commission, Downtown Development Authority Board and the AIA Chapter, a hearing was held in the City Commission Chamber. Citizens outlined the problems of downtown West Palm Beach. This was followed by a hearing involving the public. With this information, the team engaged in intensive work sessions which culminated in a public presentation on 23 May, 1977.

This report is presented at that time.

SPONSORSHIP

The request to the AIA has been accompanied by resolutions from responsible community organizations and governmental entities:



HISTORY

HISTORY

The land upon which West Palm Beach is built was claimed for homestead by Irving R. Henry in the year 1880. 1894 saw the simultaneous completion of the Florida East Coast Railway & the incorporation of West Palm Beach, vital elements in Henry Morrison Flagler's development coup in establishing Palm Beach as an exclusive haven for some of the worlds then wealthiest people.

The function of West Palm Beach as servant quarters for its Gold Coast twin across Lake Worth, is underscored by a population growth of only 8000 people in its first 26 years. In the decade from 1920 to 1930, the town population reached 27000 people as commercial activity, spurred by State infrastructure investments, paralleled the heady Florida building boom and land speculation.

1926, though, did not auger well for West Palm Beach. The speculation in land faltered and the economy in the area began to grow hesitant. The hurricane of 1928 dealt a severe body blow to the city, extracting some 13 million dollars in damage. The following year the Great Depression put West Palm Beach on the canvas for a long count, one that began to end with the influx of people and dollars that accompanied WWII and the growth of Morrison Field, now the site of Palm Beach International Airport.

From 1930 to 1960 the population doubled and the city grew 8 miles long north & south of the original town site; the result of thousands of tourists hunting the sun and sand who decided permanently against the rigors of the north.

Growth continued during the sixties; occurring in the western part of the city on the land purchased in 1955 by West Palm Beach for 14 million dollars. Development on this land west of the Seaboard Coastline Railroad, included a major civic auditorium, baseball stadium as well as the largest shopping mall in Palm Beach County. The immediate effect of this westward expansion was to diminish the vital signs of the existing downtown when several major retailers moved from that downtown to the new mall. Downtown it appeared suffered from a number of urban maladies, poor circulation, frustrating parking, limited open space, (a beautifully located park was filled with a library of curious distinction) and the reputation of being unsafe. The trauma of the mall & a governmental environment that is not particularly wholesome for developers still hampers efforts to get the Downtown into intensive care or subject even to the administration of first aid.



DOWNTOWN - PROBLEMS AND PROPOSALS

DOWNTOWN: PROBLEMS AND PROPOSALS

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Downtown West Palm Beach is no longer the regional activity center it once was. Decisions taken 15 years ago to effect the necessary westward expansion have led to a decline of the tax base in the downtown, as major retailers moved to the Palm Beach Mall, and to a decline in the physical amenity environment.

The loss of whatever physical and financial distinction the downtown once enjoyed, while lamentable, should not be reinforced by a loss of will or the ability to act on the part of the City. There is potential for a revitalized downtown only to the degree that the community realizes its potential to act positively and responsibly. Examples of a belief in the potential of positive action can be seen along Clematis Street where those dynamic and creative merchandisers who maintain their property are obvious, visible exceptions within the area.

The undistinguished appearance resulting from poor maintenance, vacant windows and the pervading sense of urban grief is made more bewildering, and at once poignant, considering the location and climate of West Palm Beach. The City is blessed with one of the more beautiful settings in the country. A subtropical climate which seems short of paradisiacal, coupled with its position as the northern anchor of the Gold Coast, a major growth corridor, makes it hard to understand why the community has failed to act positively and dynamically in the downtown to provide a climate for private sector reinvestment by demonstrating confidence through further public investment.

In the past, the City has tried to stimulate development by creating a development free fire zone. This policy has



Desmond '77

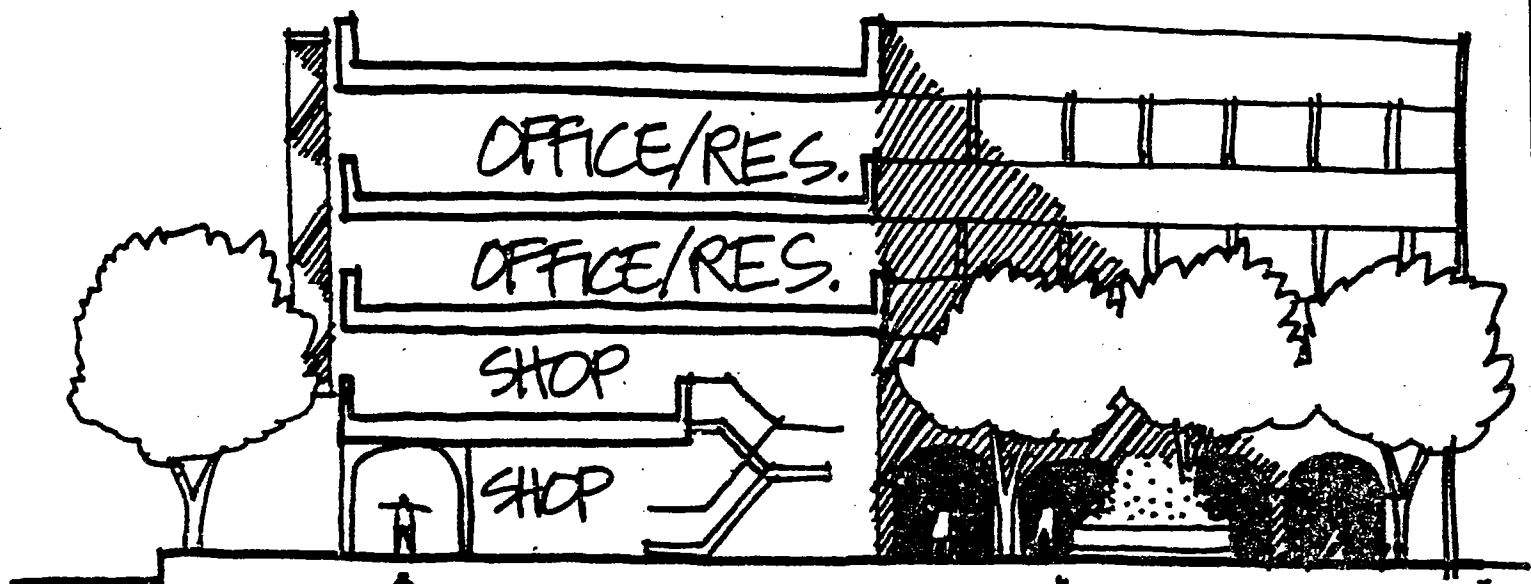
failed. We recommend that the City clearly articulate its design and environmental objectives and structure a set of development rules which give developers the necessary guidance to design packages which allow the realization of both public and private benefits.

The focus area of the downtown is bounded by First Street on the North, Lake Worth on the East, Evernia on the South and the FEC right-of-way on the West. This low rise core area should be bounded on the North by a high rise institutional and mixed use area, on the West by a high rise residential area, and on the South by a mixed office and residential high rise area. This boundary area should have a maximum height of 15 stories and use site review and density ceilings to preserve views and control bulk development.

A concern expressed to the team was that the focus area be a vital place, but at the same time, that it not be developed to the point where the pedestrian scale of the area be lost. The higher density high rise residential, office, governmental institutional areas can provide the people to make the lower scale focus area a vital place.

THE PROPOSED PLAN

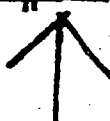
The concepts for the area envisions rather low municipal capital investment, reinforced by appropriate private sector investment, encouraged by municipal policy and responsive to a City plan and stated City goals. It is clear that the downtown, as a retail center, cannot effectively compete in the same merchandising area with the Palm Beach Mall, nor should it. There is a potential here for those types of retail outlets and shopping experiences not normally available at a shopping mall. Specialty shops, restaurants, and professional offices, which cater to a much wider range of consumers than



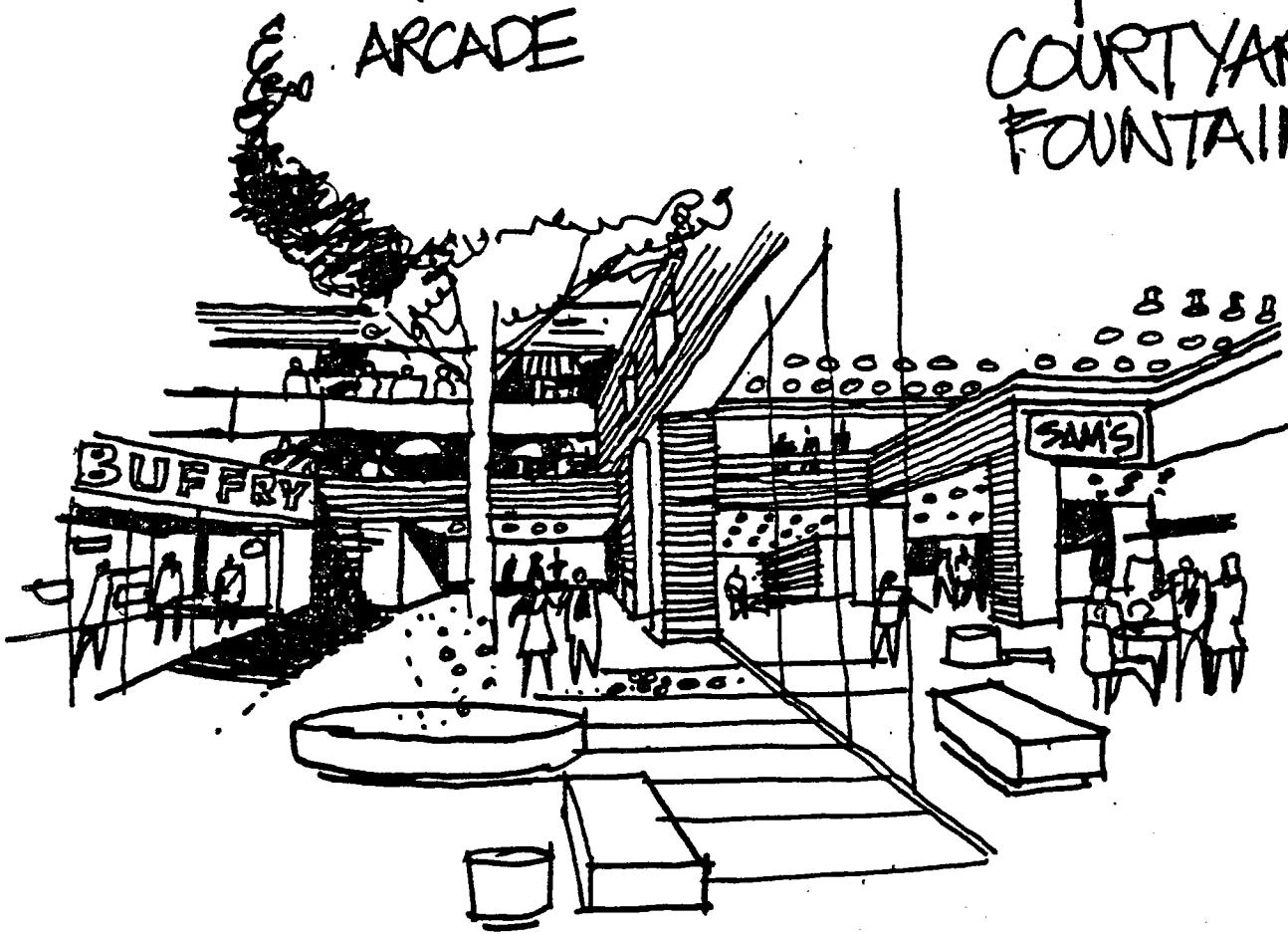
ARCADE



COURTYARD & FOUNTAIN



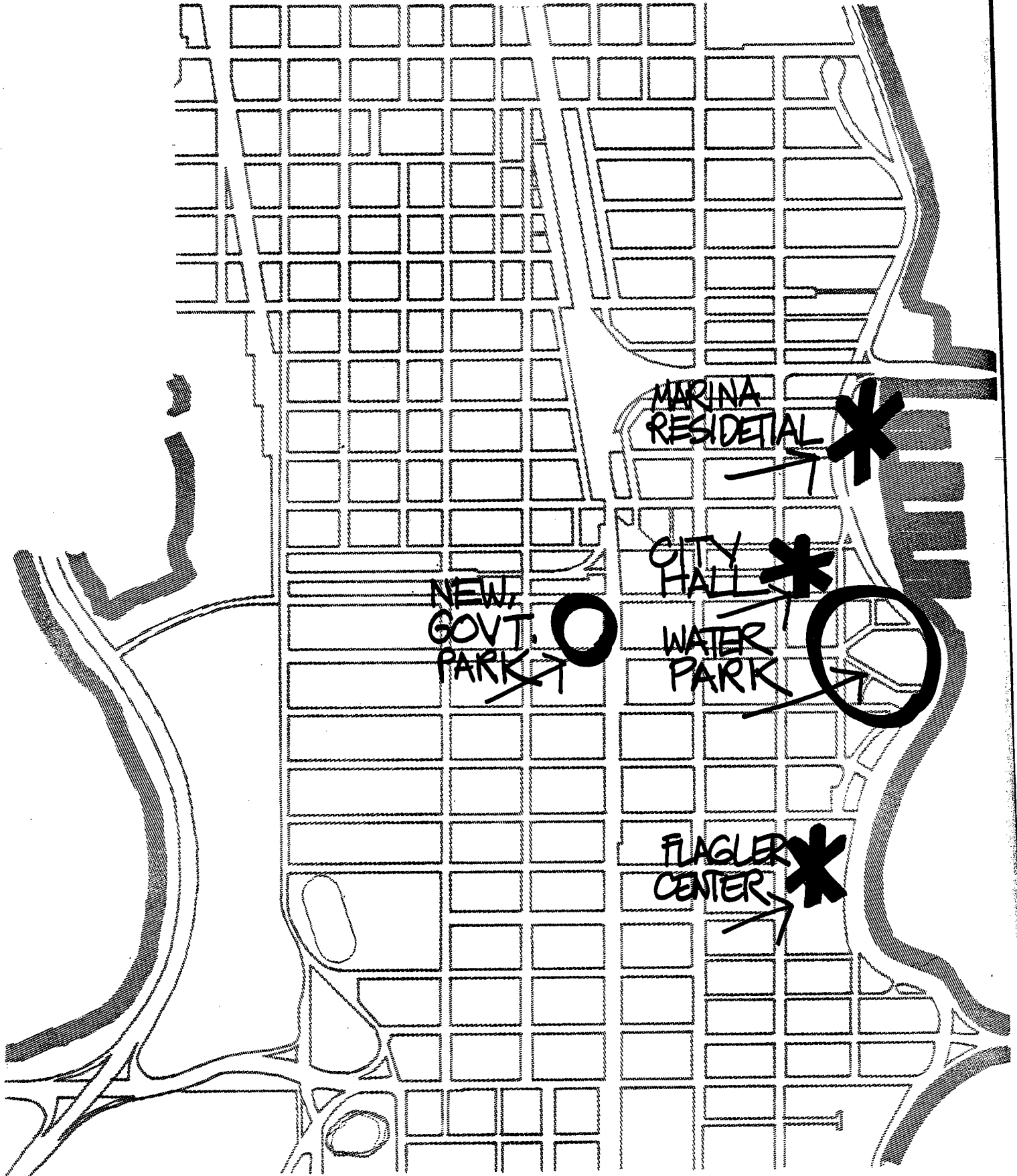
ALLEY



does Worth Avenue in Palm Beach, could capture a large share of the obvious northern Gold Coast market for these functions. The full spectrum, in other words, of varied and complimentary uses that a vibrant, dynamic, pedestrian scaled environment contains. We all respond positively to such places as Fashion Alley in Newport Beach, Ocean Avenue in Carmel, both in California, or Mystic Village in Connecticut. These are specialty shopping areas, on the Ocean, well within the influence and catchments of major shopping malls. What makes such developments work are municipal commitments, imagination, enlightened, experienced management, and a market. All these elements could be available in West Palm Beach.

The focus area should be a predominantly pedestrian dominated precinct, with a shaded and landscaped system of interconnected pedestrian pathways and courtyards. New development could be climate responsive, utilizing passive methods mitigating the effects of the hot sun and sudden rains, canopies, arcades, courtyards with fountains in them and buildings oriented to catch the prevailing easterly breezes. This multi-use zone, as we now see it, should contain height and bulk limitations which are compatible with pedestrian activities and with the existing scale in the area, allowing though, increased densities. A height limitation of 40 feet is seen as being appropriate. If the area were built entirely at four-story buildings with a sixty percent land coverage and a total build-out on the nine blocks, the potential square footage which would be obtainable is 3,740,000 square feet. The area currently contains 1,800,000 square feet on fifty percent land coverage.

There are a number of projects that could be undertaken over time, according to community development priorities. Some are responsive to stated desires, others are based on the team observations.



KEY ACTIVITIES IN THE NEW DOWNTOWN

LIBRARY/PARK SITE

The library is extremely ill sited. Its position effectively blocks the view from Clematis to the City's major visual and environmental resource, Lake Worth. Before construction of the library, the view down Clematis was terminated by the park, Lake Worth and Palm Beach island beyond, a marvelous progression of scale related views. The park and the view are now all but gone, leaving this part of town with no park or open space to speak of. For the success of downtown, it is felt that it is extremely important that a major park tie the Lake to the downtown. Many, many cities have had the courage to correct past errors rather than live with them. The waterfront along the three block wide focus area should be freed of buildings. The Women's Club, however, does not block the view, and is indeed a properly scaled, well-designed building, and could remain.

CITY HALL

It is a positive gesture on the part of the City to keep their new City Hall on the downtown site. The team agrees that this decision should be reinforced. We commend, however, to the City's consideration that a lower building, one, two or three stories in height, with courtyards, arcades and welcoming spaces be built, rather than the present design, which has been called by some local residents a fortress of government and appears not to be very responsive to the climate of the area, or the mood of the citizens.

MARINA DEVELOPMENT

The proposal for a residential use on the marina site is viewed positively by the team. We feel that a tall, slender tower would be most appropriate, since it would mark, in a sense, the return of West Palm

Beach to the water, and would not obstruct views, as would a low rise building, which would perforce string along the marina at five or six stories in height. There should be close design review, however, of the project by the planning director and his immediate staff.

THE PLAYHOUSE

This plan does not hinge at all upon the realization of the playhouse. In the opinion of the team, it would appear on the face of it that the decision to use public land for primarily private gain should be made with the context of a set of goals and priorities for the City. The pushing of even more activities out to the west seems inconsistent with the desire for the restoration of the downtown to its historical importance, though in a new form.

It seems highly unlikely also that a 3,000 seat theater would be economically accessible for local cultural needs, such as theater groups, small plays, or repertory drama. Sometime in the future, if need is demonstrated, the City might consider building a small playhouse/art/music center in the downtown, to more neatly fit the needs of a city of 65,000 people.



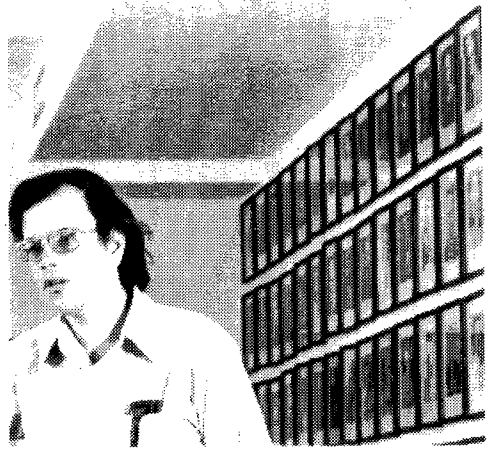
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

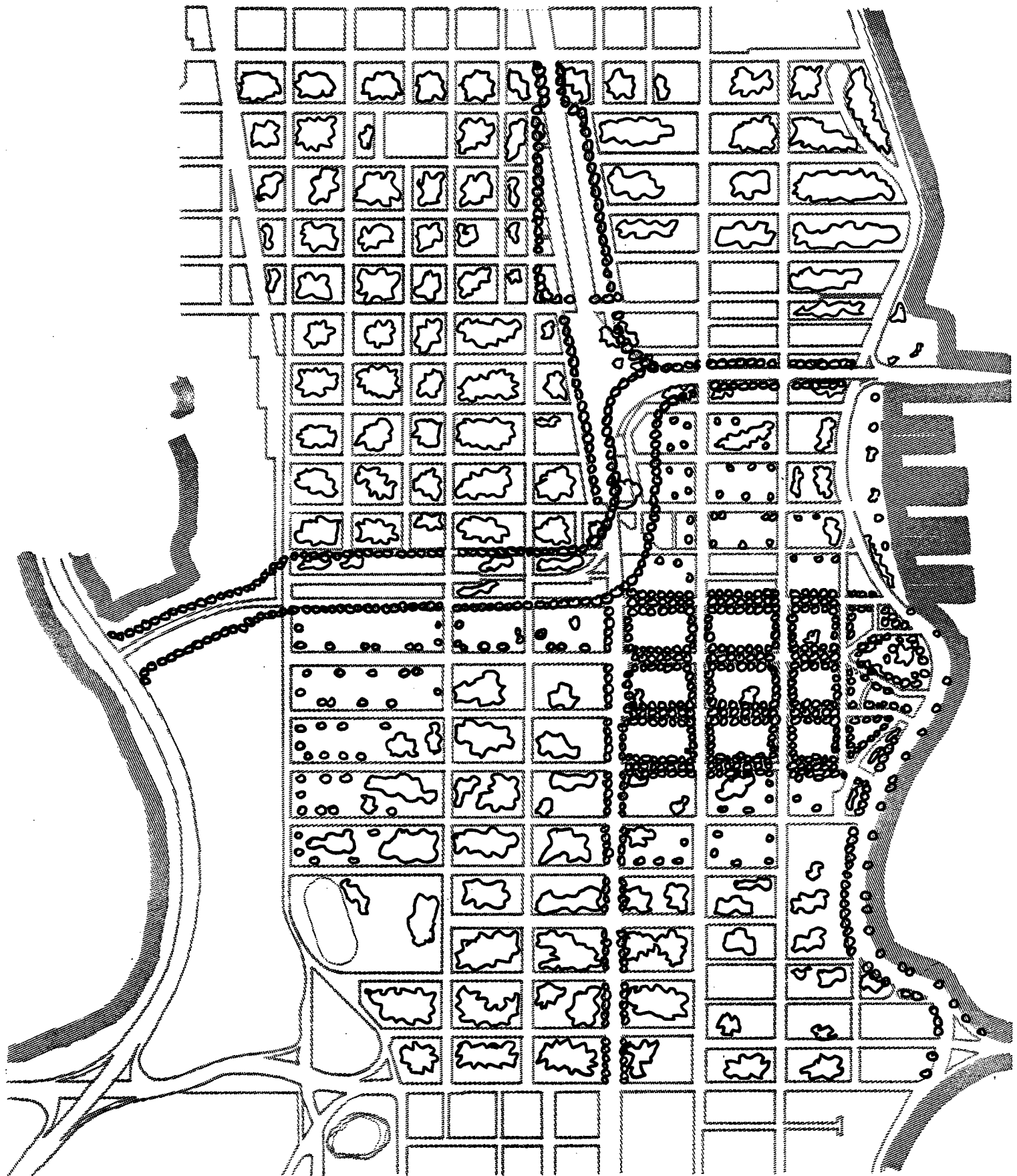
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Environmentally the City of West Palm Beach has three advantages: The climate, its relation to Palm Beach and plant growth. The climate provides the greatest unexploited opportunity - the chance to create a superb downtown living place. There should be a freedom of movement, open spaces that allow breezes to blow through, and protection from the glare and heat of intense sun during the day. Proper design would extend the spatial quality of the buildings to a larger scale outdoor space that contains and gives some sense of protection to the pedestrian. This lively environment is filled with spaces that revel in views of the water, such as cafes and passive recreation. They provide a chance to sit, watch people and view the lake. This kind of advantage has not been well exploited in most cities in this country. Cities of the Riviera show how to take advantage of this kind of wonderful scenery and climate. The geographical advantage orients to the ocean and allows West Palm Beach to provide Palm Beach with some permanent living amenities that are lacking in the resort town.

The third of the great regional opportunities that the City of West Palm Beach enjoys is the use of plants to create, define and enrich the outdoor spaces. Properly used they can provide a coherence that is lacking in most other urban areas of the country. Plants are wonderful materials to link the disparate elements and materials that make modern cities so chaotic. In this climate there is not only a wide selection of different plant types, but there are trees and plants that grow very quickly so that one can achieve in a few years what would require a lifetime in less beneficent climates.





CITY TREES

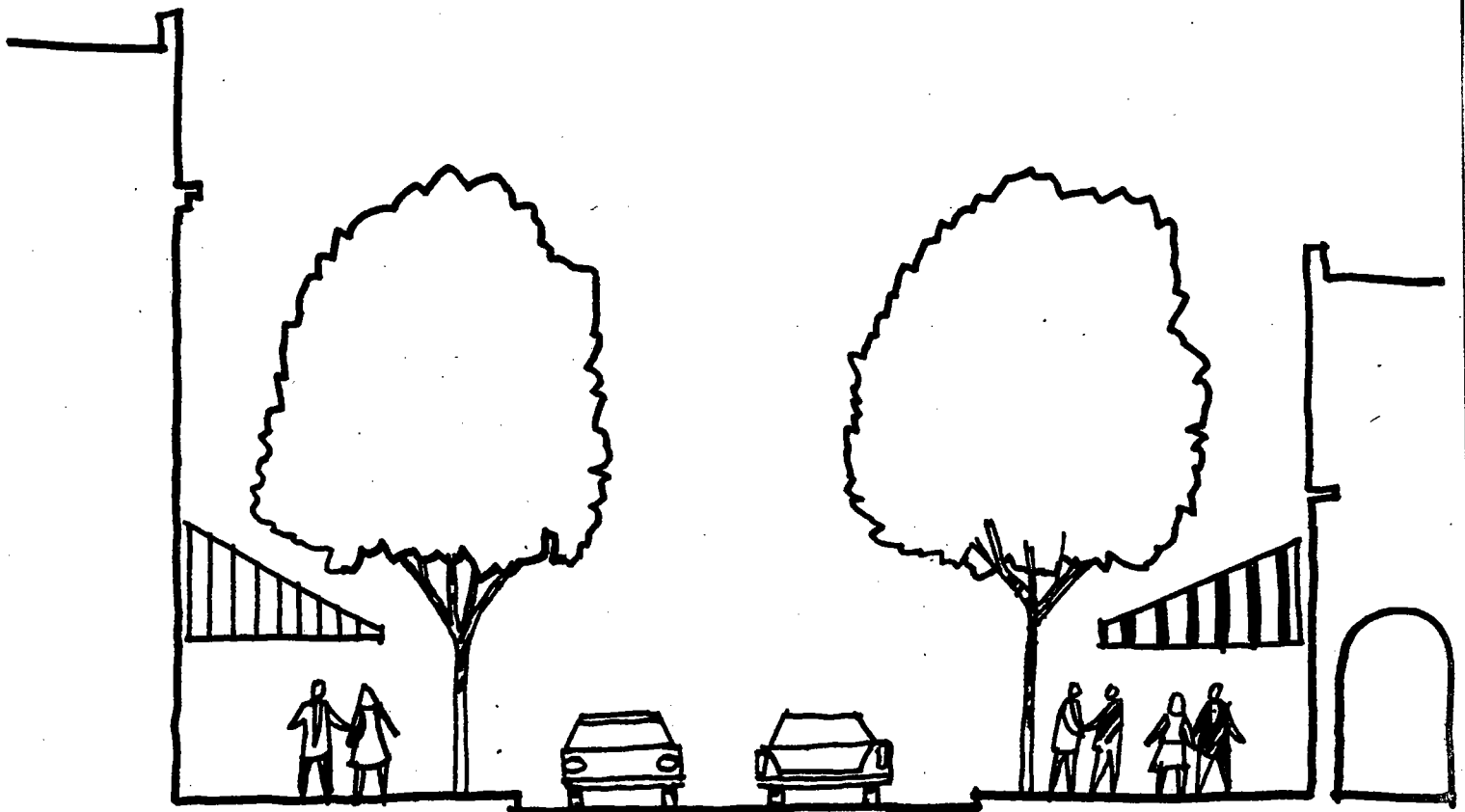
-  EXISTING
-  PROPOSED

GENERAL PLAN

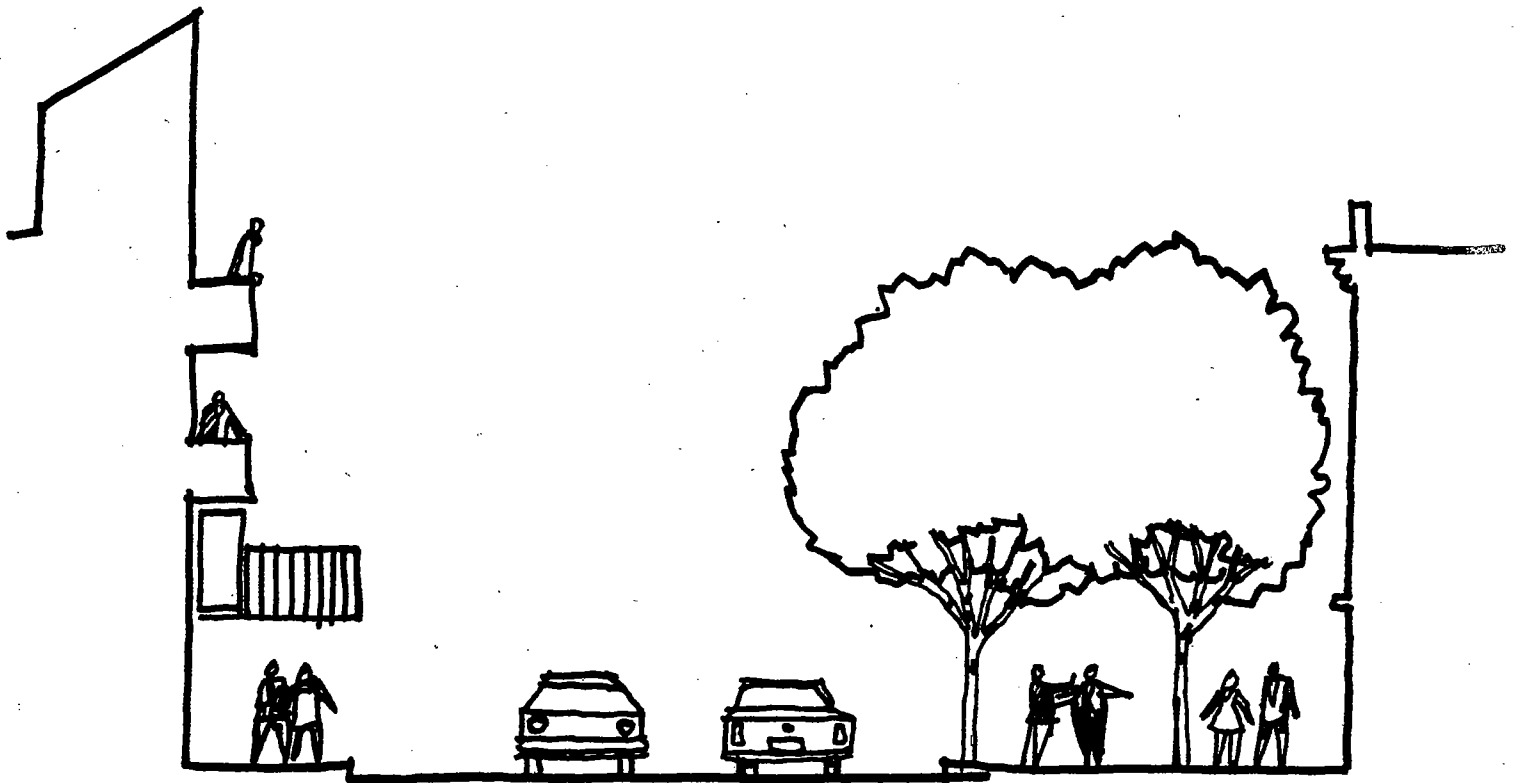
There should be a general development plan that delineates the important visual elements to be used throughout the city. Planting can provide both unity and a sense of identity. Unity would be achieved by a consistent use of trees along roads and access-ways to create a kind of rhythm and texture of foliage. Strong masses of special types of trees and plantings can create a sense of identity to special areas and precincts in the city.

THE FOCUS AREA

In the nine-block region of the Focus Area the pedestrian will be treated with unusual deference. Vehicular access will be handled so that the person arriving in the downtown by automobile is easily oriented to a convenient location for parking. Walking time from the parking location to destination should not exceed five minutes. Parking will be concentrated at key locations in structures. To make this function well as a pedestrian area, and maximize the advantages of climate, there is need to plant trees for shade. Openess to allow breezes and to allow the pedestrian to orient himself to the larger environment is achieved by keeping plantings above eye level or very low. There must be places where people can sit in the shade and enjoy the views. The chief disadvantage of modern cities is overcome here by eliminating encroachment of automobiles. Traffic flow is accommodated in well-defined, limited areas. Parked cars along the edges of traffic streets are eliminated. Pedestrian crossing signals, will allow people in these spaces easy access to shops and places on both sides of the street. Since there will be adequate parking provided at critical locations, there will be no need to utilize the valuable pedestrian space on both sides of the downtown streets for parking. This will allow broader sidewalks and tree-shaded areas that will create a much more desirable kind of movement space that occurs in the typical regional shopping center.



TYPICAL EAST/WEST SECTION

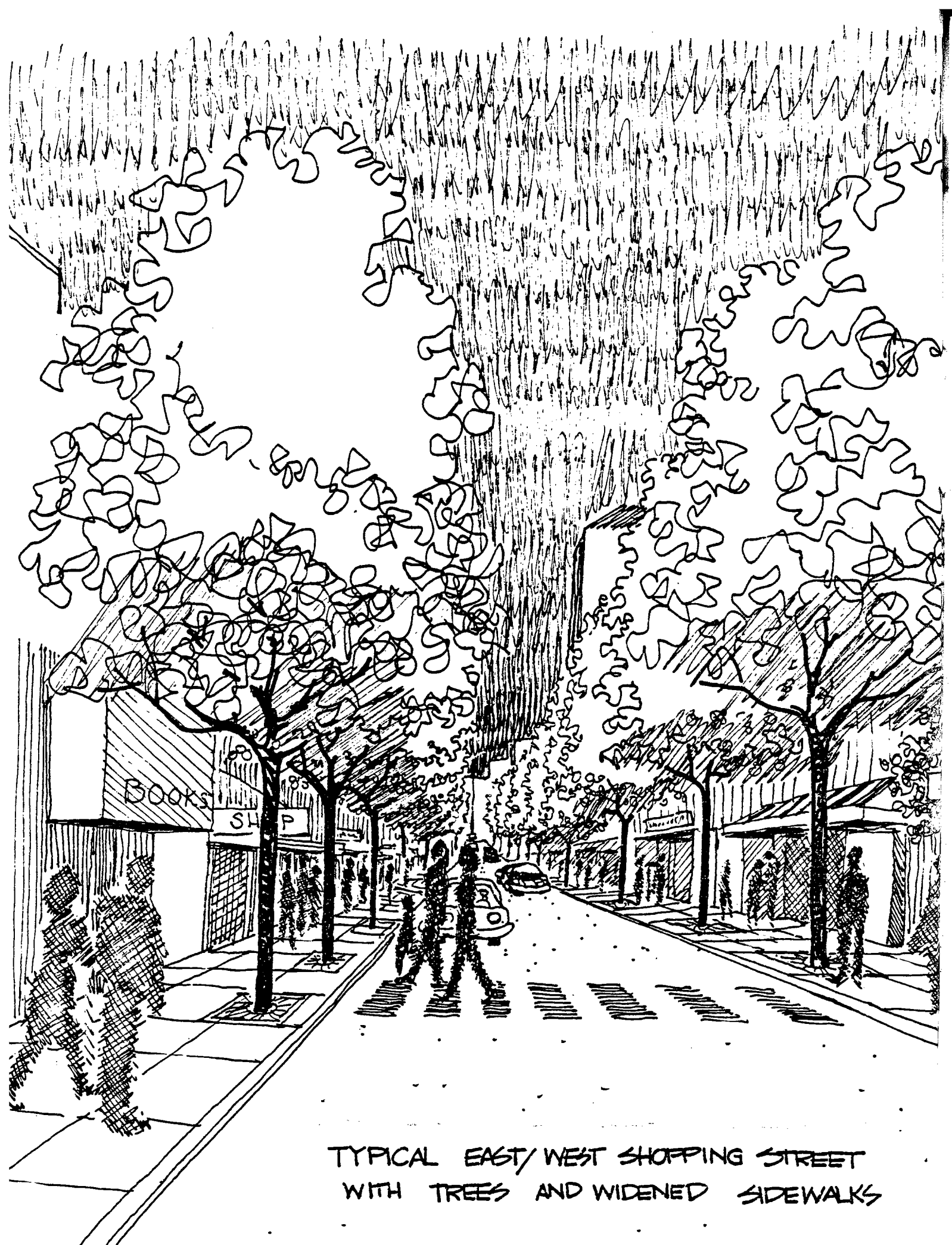


TYPICAL NORTH/SOUTH SECTION

Thus, differentiation between the vehicle circulation and the pedestrian circulation is visually achieved by plants.

Just as plants are used functionally to define and orient people to the street system, the waterfront would use plants functionally to reinforce the visual qualities and increase the usefulness of this vital part of the city. The city waterfront, at present, is a dramatic gift that is under-utilized. Ways should be sought in the future to eliminate or reduce the impact of automobiles. More important is the need for a row of tall high-branched trees, that provide shade along the outer edge of the walkway that follows the shore-line. With the proper selection and spacing of trees, this would not restrict views under the high branches, but would enframe the views, and provide shade for sitting along the promenade. Palm trees which line the boulevard now, are useful in defining the automobile circulation, and in some cases can be further reinforced to provide greater continuity and coherence. In general, because of the crisp, broad, sweeping character of the lake edge and desirability of maintaining maximum views across the lake, low planting should be avoided except for grass, and perhaps low ground covers. Where anything but grass is used, it would need to be done at a very broad, appropriate scale related to the vastness of the views and the speed of the automobile.

Another important component of this downtown pedestrian area is parks. There should be a major Focus Area park somewhere near the terminus of Clematis Street, near the waterfront. This park should be a kind of central focus for the downtown area. The untimely location of a library right at this focal point, provides an obstacle to optimum development of such a space. If the library should burn down or disappear in the future, the space could be exploited to its maximum advantage as a focal point and overlook for the central urban area. Whether or not the library remains here, this should be developed as an important park space, and should have facility for crowds and people that just wander into the space from their other downtown activities.



TYPICAL EAST/WEST SHOPPING STREET
WITH TREES AND WIDENED SIDEWALKS

By accepting the grid street, providing the needed shade, and permitting breezes, openness and unrestricted views, the quality of these spaces can be achieved without any sacrifice of access by automobile or other transit vehicles. In the initial stages, this Focus Area will be served primarily by automobiles. As development increases in the future it will become feasible to introduce some smaller scale, electrically driven vehicles that move people from one section to another, adding to the amenity. This Focus Area, should rely on the functional use of plants to build spaces and not be simply a traditional vehicle dominated space that is decorated with planting. Plants can be used at the proper scale to provide a wonderful unity, and to make transitions between vehicle and pedestrian.

Amenities, such as benches and drinking fountains, well designed signs and other furnishings will further enrich what is a basically pleasant kind of space.

PLANTING AND PARKS

There are four general ways in which plants can be used functionally to create these spaces. The first and most important, is to use large scale shade trees with the proper texture and spreading branch form to create canopies over walking areas. It is important that this be done with species of trees that will allow high crown development with adequate space underneath for views and circulation. The texture and spacing of these trees should be so organized that they do not make the spaces too heavily shaded but still provide a continuous shadow pattern to protect people from the midday sun.

Lower plants as hedges are used for screens. These are used with restraint only where it is important to block or control a view. It is not advocated to screen a view of some undesirable situation that should be corrected rather than screened, for example, the Palm Beach garbage trucks that are parked along the major access into West Palm Beach.



LAKE WORTH PROMENADE

Unless the City of West Palm Beach benefits financially from providing this service space for their neighbors, then the situation should be eliminated. If there are benefits for providing this space then this would be a legitimate case for using plants to screen an activity that is visually undesirable. Ground cover plants can be used in the downtown areas where they would not interfere with circulation. Another useful category of planting, especially in this climate, are plants that cover walls. They could be espaliered shrubs or trees, or vines. In many instances downtown, the south and west facing walls can be covered with intricate planting patterns to mitigate the effect of afternoon sunlight.

The tree plan for the Focus Area should express functional differences in the street system. The north-south streets provide primary access to this core area, and are often of inadequate width. It may be necessary to widen the right-of-way. Where this occurs, widening is on the east side of the street, so that a double row of trees creates a shaded arcade where afternoon sun is most oppressive to pedestrians. The east-west streets, which are the primary shopping streets in this area, would generally have two single rows of trees spaced an equal distance from the stores on both sides, and planted in spaces that are now usurped by parked automobiles.

The arrangement of this double row of trees would express more of the pedestrian scale and character that is desired on east-west streets. In addition, the major arterials, or approach roads that connect this section with the rest of the city, should be planted on both sides with trees. In areas where pedestrian circulation is important, broad-spreading, high branched shade trees should be used. In areas where there are vehicles but little pedestrian activity, the use of palm trees, which are taller, more linear space-defining type of trees, may be most appropriate. Followed consistently, this would signal the locations of the pedestrian paths and areas that are more favorable to pedestrian use.

Besides the major Focus Area park, there should be a series of small parks integrated into the system of pedestrian ways and shops in this central business area. Within each shopping block there should be at least one small park that has high branch shade trees and other plantings that do not restrict the special quality of these spaces. The existing park in the eastern most block of Clematis Street, is somewhat overgrown with low plants and could be improved by removing lower branches and deleting the lower plantings which restrict space. Such parks are ideal places for the shopper to sit and could be enhanced by an outdoor cafe.

Another category of park-like space for the downtown area, consists of planting in conjunction with the railroad right-of-way. In effect, this would be a broad-linear band of trees following both sides of the Florida Eastcoast Railroad as it goes through the downtown area. These trees might also serve as a protective canopy for a bike way, jogging trail and walking path. The advantage to this kind of circulation system would be a further link with other areas of the city, and an opportunity to extend the pedestrian character of the Downtown into the other parts of the city.



TRANSPORTATION

TRANSPORTATION

There is a great deal of understandable concern that transportation problems will hinder the development of downtown West Palm Beach. Perhaps the most frequently mentioned difficulty is automobile access to the downtown from the rapidly growing residential areas west of Clear Lake. The principal highways running west from the downtown are slow-moving, older arterials with frequent lights and cross streets. East-west traffic is further delayed by two active north-south railroad rights-of-way that pass through the western side of the business district and cross all east-west streets in the downtown at grade. Lack of high performance highways running west from the downtown, coupled with the opening of a mall on Interstate 95, west of Clear Lake, are widely perceived as important causes of the recent decline of economic activity downtown.

The downtown is also thought to have serious problems with internal traffic circulation and parking. One of the railroad rights-of-way, operated by the Florida East Coast Railroad (FEC), causes difficulties with internal automobile movement as well as with east-west traffic. Perhaps more important, substantial volumes of through traffic congest the downtown because U. S. Route 7 passes through the center on two north-south one-way arterial streets (Dixie Highway and Olive Avenue). Finally, many downtown employees and shoppers must pay for parking, while shoppers and employees can park for free at most other retail and office locations in the metropolitan area.

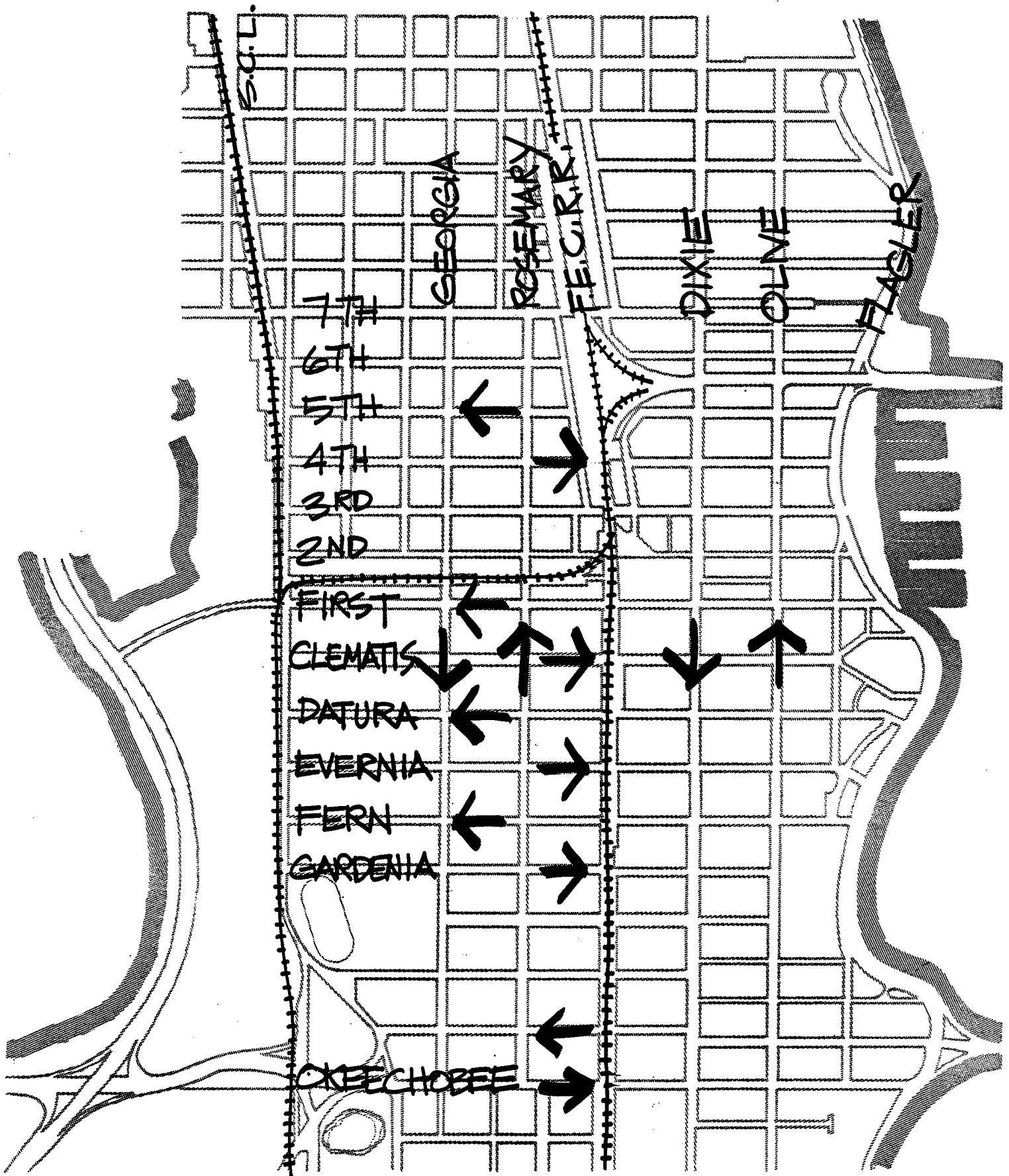
Several of the downtown development proposals currently being considered by West Palm Beach focus on dramatic and costly transportation projects, designed to reduce the problems of access, circulation, or parking. The R/UDAT team believes that

such costly transportation projects are probably unadvisable: only modest changes in the highway, parking, and public transportation facilities appear to be desirable or necessary to support increased economic activity in the downtown. Highway access to the growing western areas of the City and internal traffic circulation probably can be improved somewhat, at modest cost. Substantial gains in western access and circulation are not possible, at least at reasonable expense, but fortunately neither appear critical to some renewed growth. Provision of free downtown parking for shoppers, and if desired, employees, may be feasible at a cost to downtown retailers and employers only slightly higher than that paid by their competitors in malls.

AUTOMOBILE ACCESS TO THE DOWNTOWN

The downtown area is handicapped somewhat in attracting shoppers and other travelers from the fast growing areas to the west of Clear Lake and the extreme southeast and northeast of the City because travel times from those neighborhoods to the downtown are longer than travel times from those neighborhoods to suburban malls and employment centers. The longer times to the downtown are caused partly by the longer distances involved, and partly by slow traffic speeds on the urban arterials that connect the downtown with the west and Interstate 95.

It is important, however, to keep the problem of access from the west in perspective. Although travel times from the west to the downtown are longer than from the west to other shopping and office areas, they are not excessively so. Auto travel time between the Okeechobee interchange of Interstate 95 and the downtown is only five to ten minutes, even in the winter season. Such added inconvenience, although small, probably precludes the downtown from



CURRENT DOWNTOWN CIRCULATION

→ = ONE WAY STREET

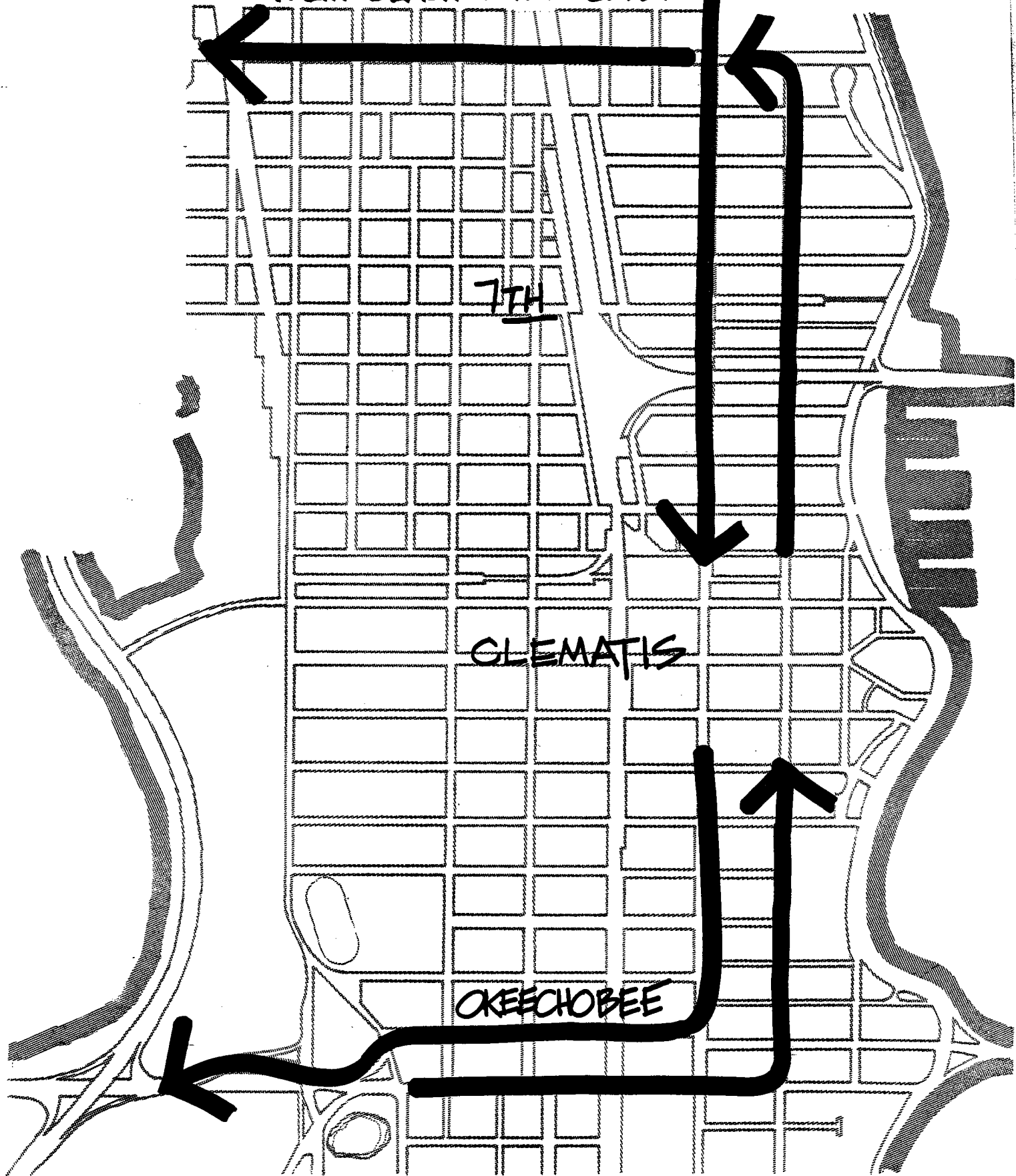
attracting western area shoppers for groceries, inexpensive clothing, and other frequently-purchased goods and services. However, the downtown is probably accessible enough to draw western area residents to specialty shops, entertainment, restaurants and other similar activities, especially if the downtown develops the distinctive character and amenities envisioned by this plan.

More significantly, the downtown area is extremely accessible to Palm Beach. As the section on economic prospects explains, commercial rents in Palm Beach are extremely high because only a little land in that city is zoned for commercial use. Many stores and offices serving Palm Beach residents would probably find the extremely accessible, but less expensive, downtown West Palm Beach area an attractive location.

Finally, the downtown area also has excellent access to the residential areas of West Palm Beach immediately to the south and north. These areas, with significant residential populations already, probably will grow, especially if high-rise buildings are permitted around the central downtown blocks as proposed in this plan.

Although the downtown may well experience renewed growth without better highway access, some improvement, especially to the west, would almost certainly be beneficial. Unfortunately, substantial reductions in automobile travel times from the west to the downtown areas appear difficult to achieve, at least at a reasonable cost. Firm determination of the possibilities would require a detailed traffic engineering study, of course, but substantial increases in speeds on Okeechobee and Palm Beach Lakes Boulevards would probably require either widening the rights-of-way or reducing interruptions to smooth traffic flow by closing cross streets and limiting access to abutting property. Prop-

PALM BEACH LAKES BLVD.

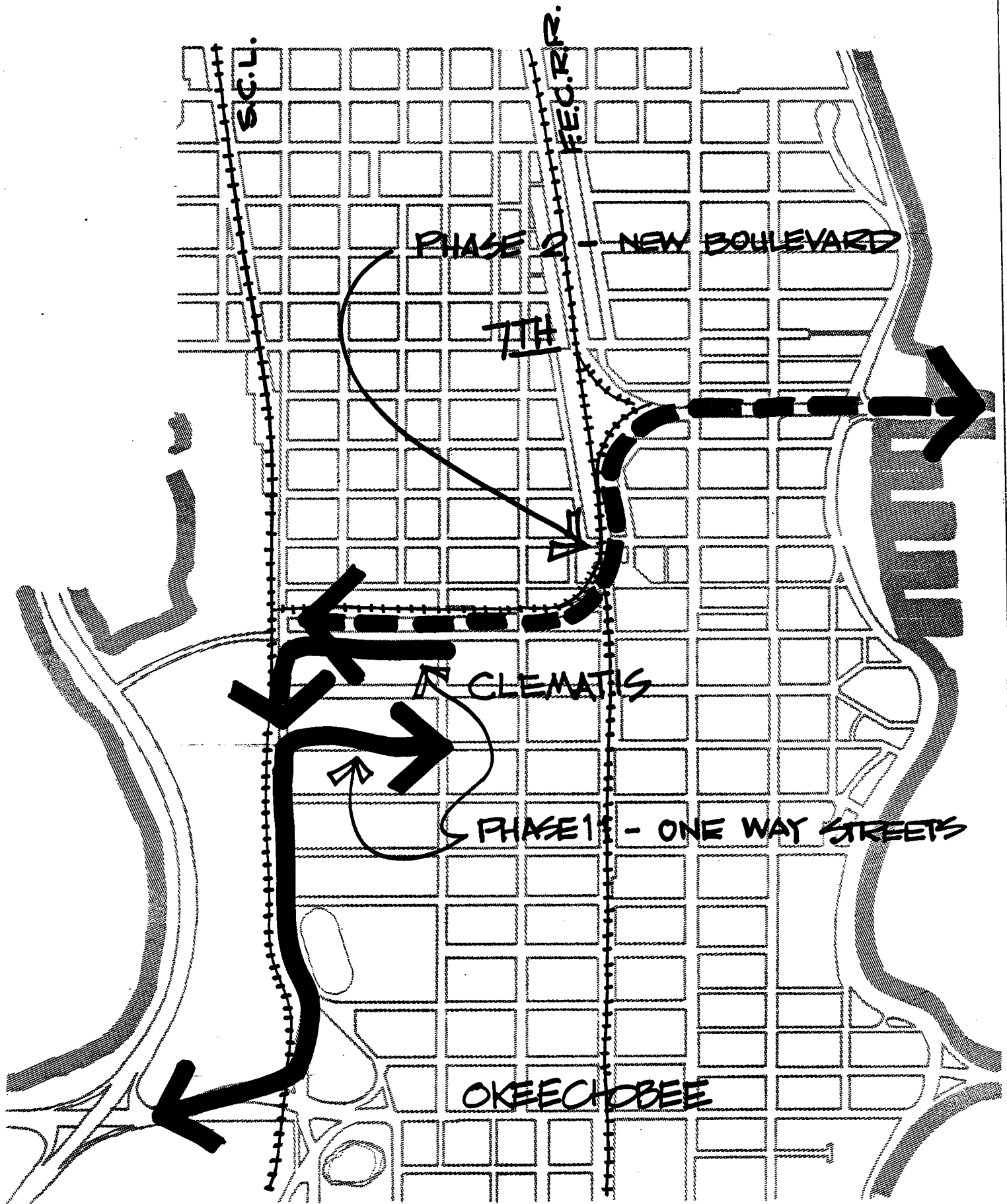


PRIMARY WESTERN APPROACHES TO DOWNTOWN

erty acquisition for widening would be extremely expensive and the City would probably have to bear the entire cost, at least for Okeechobee and Palm Beach Lakes Boulevards, since the streets are not part of the federally designated primary and secondary road system. Closing cross streets and limiting property access would likely cause severe traffic problems, especially close to the downtown.

The difficulties in improving traffic speeds on the western approaches to the downtown are apparent in the proposal that the City has recently been considering to upgrade Okeechobee east of Tamarind Avenue. The proposal involves condemning the property between Okeechobee Boulevard and Jessamine and Lakeview Avenues to create a wide boulevard from Tamarind Avenue east to U. S. Route 1 (Olive Avenue). The cost of property acquisition alone is estimated to be at least \$3 million, with a similar amount required for demolition, construction, and landscaping. The resulting reduction in travel times would probably be at most one or two minutes, since the widening would affect less than 3/4 of a mile and downtown-bound traffic would still be forced to travel on congested U. S. Route 1. At least from the standpoint of improved traffic flow, the widening of the eastern end of Okeechobee Boulevard is probably not worthwhile. Moreover, since Okeechobee Boulevard is almost half a mile from the center of the downtown, the substantial green space envisioned in the Okeechobee widening project would probably provide a competing rather than a complimentary focus for renewed growth in the downtown.

Although substantial speed increases are likely to be prohibitively expensive, modest improvements may be possible at relatively low cost. Speeds on Palm Beach Lakes and Okeechobee Boulevards could conceivably be increased slightly by relatively inexpensive traffic engineering tech-



PHASED ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS

niques, such as more sophisticated signal timing or pavement markings.

The widening of Tamarind Avenue, which is scheduled to begin in six months, may provide an important and immediate opportunity to upgrade the western approaches somewhat at low cost. The City is widening Tamarind Avenue from a two-lane to a four-lane arterial between Okeechobee Boulevard and First Street. To take advantage of this project, First and Datura Streets (which are now both three lanes one-way west from Flagler Drive to Georgia Avenue) should be made one-way west and east, respectively, between Tamarind and Olive Avenues. Speeds on the two streets might also be improved by signal progression. Traffic bound to the downtown from the west could then travel the entire distance on relatively free-moving arterials by taking Okeechobee east to Tamarind, Tamarind north to Datura Street, and Datura direct to the downtown. By providing this new route to the downtown, occasional congestion on the two current routes (Okeechobee and Palm Beach Lakes Boulevards to U. S. Route 1) would probably also be reduced somewhat.

A second and more ambitious phase of access improvement, which could be implemented at a later date as funds become available, would involve using two short railroad rights-of-way that run east-west parallel to First Street and connect the Seaboard Coast Lines (SCL) with Florida East Coast (FEC) tracks and the FEC tracks with the foot of Flagler Bridge. The right-of-way between SCL and FEC is now apparently used for only interchange traffic; such traffic could probably be accommodated at another point on the two railroad systems. The right-of-way from the FEC lines to Flagler Bridge is currently abandoned.

If the City could purchase the two short east-west railroad rights-of-way, the land between First Street and the railroad, and a parcel just east of the FEC tracks between

Fourth and Second Streets, it may be possible to build an attractive four or six-lane arterial between Tamarind Avenue and Flagler Bridge to provide an attractive entrance corridor to downtown and provide better downtown access for shoppers from Palm Beach.

The right-of-way between Tamarind Avenue and downtown would be wide enough to be extensively landscaped, with trees on each side and, possibly, in the median. Prominent signs to downtown West Palm Beach could be placed on the turns from Okeechobee Boulevard to Tamarind Avenue and from Tamarind Avenue to the new arterial.

The cost of this new arterial would probably be less than that of the recently proposed Okeechobee Boulevard widening project. Much of the savings would come from reduced right-of-way acquisition and demolition costs, since the right-of-way between the railroad and First Street is less than half a block wide and currently is almost entirely unimproved land or parking lots.

The City should begin more detailed engineering studies to determine the cost and feasibility of the new arterial. If the results of these studies are favorable, the City should acquire the right-of-way immediately, before the new adjacent federal center stimulates property improvements. Construction could be delayed for several years, until the City could raise the necessary funds. In the interim, the land could be used as revenue-producing parking lots, or could be landscaped. The City should explore the possibility of reclassifying the route as a primary or secondary highway, so that federal aid could be used for construction.

THE RAILROAD LINES

The two railroad lines passing through the

western side of the downtown slow east-west automobile traffic somewhat, and probably more important, constitute noisy eyesores. The FEC track is the railroad's main line and carries approximately ten to sixteen through and local freight trains per day. However, the FEC has been responsive to City requests not to schedule trains during the morning and evening rush hours. The SCL track to the west carries a little local freight traffic, but is mainly used by several daily Amtrak passenger trains, which stop at an attractive, older station located at the foot of Datura Street.

Unfortunately, the possibilities for alleviating the traffic and aesthetic problems caused by these railroads appear to be limited:

1. Removing both railroads to a new right-of-way to the west of the City would be prohibitively expensive, especially since no federal or state funding is likely for the project;
2. Putting the railroads in an open cut below street level would also be extremely costly, largely because the cut would have to be extremely long to accommodate the modest grades which railroads require;
3. The long-standing proposal to consolidate the two railroad lines onto one right-of-way in the downtown area would provide only limited improvement and at excessive cost in condemning, clearing, and grading connections between the two existing rights-of-way.

Some small, but worthwhile, improvement in the aesthetic problems of the FEC railroad line might be gained by planting trees and landscaping the right-of-way on either side of the tracks in the downtown area.

The FEC has reportedly taken the position that their right-of-way is too narrow to allow trees and landscaping. The railroad's argument appears to be weak, however, since the right-of-way is 100 feet wide and carries only one track in the downtown.

The City should also look into the possibility of elevating the new arterial between Tamarind Avenue and the Flagler Bridge to pass over the FEC main line. The usual aesthetic problems of an elevated structure might not occur in this instance since the railroad right-of-way is at the foot of a hill that runs between Georgia and Florida Avenues. However, it may be expensive and difficult to engineer exits from the elevated portion of the arterial to downtown West Palm Beach. More important, the improvement in traffic flow would probably be minor, as long as the FEC is cooperative in not scheduling trains during peak traffic hours.

DOWNTOWN TRAFFIC AND PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

The circulation of automobile traffic and pedestrians within the downtown area is currently constrained by the large volume of traffic passing through the downtown on U. S. Route 1. (U. S. Route 1 passes through the downtown southbound on Dixie Highway and northbound on Olive Avenue.) In addition, there are no special amenities to facilitate pedestrian circulation in the downtown, except on the first two blocks of Clematis Street, where sidewalks have been widened slightly to provide trees and plantings.

Unfortunately, it appears impossible to relocate U. S. Route 1 outside of the downtown at an affordable cost. The relocation proposal most frequently made involves shifting Route 1 to the FEC right-of-way in the downtown area. The railroad right-of-way is not wide enough to accommodate both Route 1 (which would be six lanes

wide) and the railroad tracks and sidings at grade. Consequently, either the FEC operations would have to be moved to the SCL right-of-way, or the highway would have to be elevated. Both possibilities create obvious and prohibitive financial and aesthetic difficulties.

Fortunately, the downtown circulation problems created by Route 1, although still serious, appear to have lessened recently. In particular, traffic volumes on Route 1 have dropped since the opening of Interstate 95 from the Okeechobee Boulevard interchange south to Miami. Interstate 95 is carrying much of the long distance traffic that once used Route 1. In addition, the Interstate is probably carrying some of Route 1's former local traffic too, because the expressway now has six interchanges in West Palm Beach.

It is very likely that extensive pedestrian facilities could be provided on Clematis Street and parallel streets without seriously affecting automobile traffic as long as two conditions are met. First, Olive Avenue and Dixie Highway would probably have to remain much as they are today, in order to accommodate the substantial volumes of through traffic still remaining on Route 1. Traffic lights on the two streets could likely be retimed to favor pedestrian crossings in the downtown area without strongly hindering the automobile through traffic significantly. The sidewalk widths and the number of traffic lanes would have to remain the same, however. Second, some provision would probably have to be made to move traffic between downtown and Tamarind Avenue and Australian Avenue, in order to facilitate automobile access from the western and the extreme southern and northern parts of the City. This east-west movement could be accommodated on a pair of three-lane, one-way streets between Olive and Tamarind Avenues (e.g. First and Datura Streets) or, in the second phase of access improvement, a new arterial between Tama-



rind Avenue and Flagler Bridge.

Provisions for pedestrians on Clematis and parallel streets probably could include a complete ban on auto traffic inside a few east-west blocks and/or widening of sidewalks (to allow landscaping) inside a larger number of blocks. The most attractive possibility is to widen the sidewalks on Clematis Street from twelve to twenty feet (to leave two ample lanes for traffic) or to seventeen feet (to leave two narrow lanes for traffic and one lane for parking). If the new boulevard is built from Tamarind Avenue to Flagler Bridge, sidewalks could also be widened on First and Datura Streets. Two-way movement on downtown streets should be preserved, if possible, so that a simple and easily understood grid street system can be maintained. Alternative downtown sidewalk configurations are illustrated in the section of the report which deals with environmental quality.

In short, it appears possible to significantly improve pedestrian amenities downtown with little degradation of downtown auto circulation. The City should, of course, undertake a careful study of the traffic movements in the downtown before deciding on the precise character of the pedestrian improvements to be made.

DOWNTOWN PARKING

Provision of free downtown parking, especially for shoppers, is thought by many to be important if the downtown area is to compete with other retail centers in the metropolitan area.

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is currently operating an experimental program of free parking for shoppers in the downtown area by reimbursing private and municipal lot owners for the fees they would have charged to persons parking two hours or less. The payments to lot owners are financed partly by the DDA and partly

by voluntary contributions from downtown merchants. Although this program has reportedly been successful in attracting new shoppers to the downtown, the financing mechanism probably should be altered. The DDA cannot afford to provide funding for a major free downtown parking project, unless the statutory limit on the millage rate it can assess downtown property owners is increased. Voluntary contributions from merchants are also an undesirable source of funding, since merchants have little inclination to support this current system because they receive the benefits even if they do not contribute.

A variety of simple mechanisms could be used to better finance a free downtown parking program. One possibility is to have the Downtown Development Authority provide the free parking, financed out of a new special property tax assessed in the downtown area.

Another alternative, used successfully in many other cities, is a merchant parking validation program; under such a system participating merchants pay parking lot owners for the parking charges incurred by their customers.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

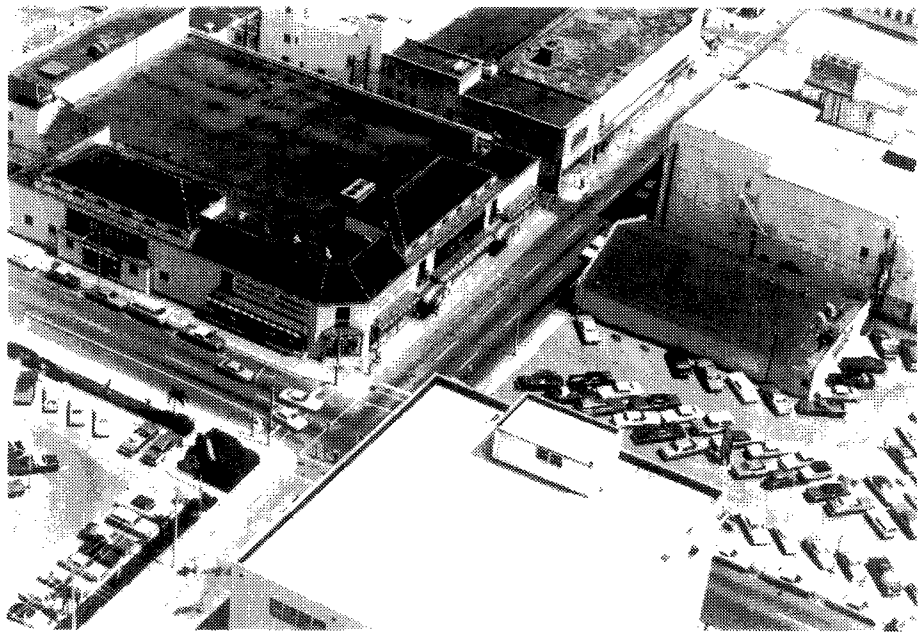
The Palm Beach metropolitan area has such a ubiquitous highway systems, relatively low levels of traffic congestion, and high levels of income and automobile ownership that ridership on public transportation will probably remain at relatively low levels for the next 10 or 20 years, even if the county government substantially improves the bus transit service it now offers.

Nevertheless, it probably is desirable to make two provisions for public transportation in this downtown plan.

First, the traffic plan for the downtown should include special curb cuts at the bus stops used by the bus routes that the county operates through the downtown area. Second, the city or DDA should experiment with free bus service on Clematis Street from the retail section near Lake Worth to the government buildings at the western end of the downtown, to try to induce government employees to shop downtown. Only one bus should be necessary, at least initially, and if successful the service should probably be financed out of a special assessment on downtown property owners, who would presumably be the ultimate beneficiaries of the service.

SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- o Datura and First Streets should be made a one-way in alternate directions between Tamarind Avenue and Olive Avenue, as soon as the City finishes widening Tamarind Avenue.
- o The City should investigate the possibility of creating a wide, well-landscaped boulevard from the intersection of Tamarind Avenue and First Street to the foot of Flagler Bridge to improve traffic access to the downtown from Palm Beach and from the West.
- o If the results of the boulevard study are encouraging, the City should purchase the required right-of-way as soon as possible, before improvements to the property are stimulated by the new federal building. The property could be used to provide parking or as a park until funds for construction of the boulevard are available.
- o The City should investigate the possibility of placing trees and landscaping on either side of the FEC Railroad tracks in the downtown.
- o The City should do detailed study of traffic patterns in the downtown area to evaluate the feasibility of widening sidewalks for landscaping, especially on Clematis Street.



- o Free parking should be provided for shoppers in the downtown area, financed by a special assessment on downtown property, a merchant parking validation program, or some similar scheme.
- o The City or DDA should experiment with free bus service along Clematis Street in the downtown. If successful, this service should be financed by a special assessment on downtown property.



ECONOMIC EVALUATION

ECONOMIC EVALUATION

Historically the economic stagnation of the downtown study area has been the product of several interrelated factors. These factors include:

- Changes in access and transportation routes coupled with increased reliance on the automobile as a primary means of transport.
- Competition resulting from development of the western area of the city and other municipalities within the region.
- Differentials in land costs in the downtown area vis-a-vis outlying areas.
- Governmental actions and inaction which have favored development beyond the downtown core.
- Changes in the socio-economic composition of the population.

There is no single factor which can be readily isolated as the fundamental cause of the economic decline: it is clear from a review of the many data sources and testimonials by local residents, that each of the above factors has contributed to the many problems which plague downtown West Palm Beach today.

This segment of the report:

1. Illustrates the economic implications and potentials associated with a redevelopment of the downtown study area.
2. Describes the necessary tools for implementing an economically viable program of downtown redevelopment.
3. Provides recommendations as to the initial steps to be undertaken in creating a conducive atmosphere for the gradual rebirth of downtown West Palm Beach.



ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS AND POTENTIALS

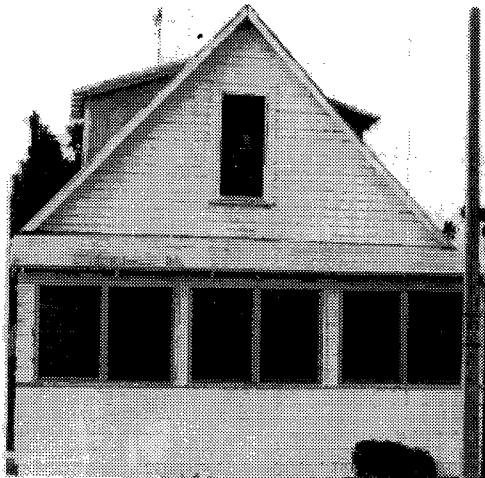
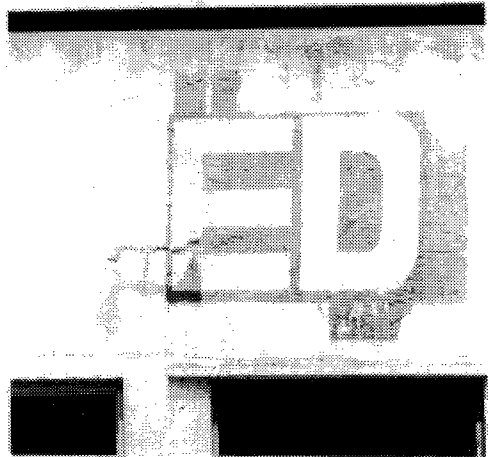
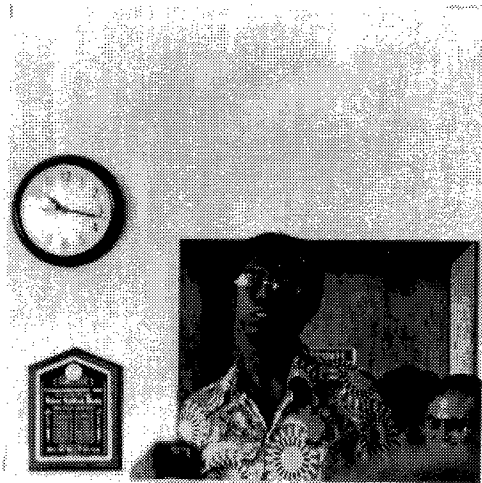
The entire City of West Palm Beach has an important stake in remedying the blighted conditions and diminished quality of life experienced by its downtown area. Renewed growth in the core of West Palm Beach could restore the downtown as a dynamic center of cultural, social, and economic activities. Equally important, growth in the downtown will prevent the core area from becoming an economic burden on the remainder of the City. When the downtown was a thriving retail center, its tax base undoubtedly supported public services in the outer portions of the City. As the decline of the Downtown continues, the outer portions of the City must support an increased share of the costs for social and governmental services in the blighted core.

Our survey of the West Palm Beach metropolitan area suggests that the downtown core, despite its current apparent problems, has certain merits which would support rapid development if a coordinated program of rehabilitation is undertaken by the City government.

Foremost among these merits is the central location that the downtown enjoys: proximate to the international airport, to major transportation routes, to the principal employment and residential areas of the City, and to the affluent community of Palm Beach.

In addition, the downtown has substantial environmental amenities. The western and, especially the eastern boundaries of the downtown border on attractive bodies of water, thereby providing an important resource in terms of views and recreation. There are also many sound and architecturally interesting buildings and mature trees in the downtown area which provide a charm and a sense of history that is rarely duplicated in newly developing areas of a city.

Finally, the attractiveness of alternative locations in the metropolitan area has been diminishing in recent years. Low land prices in outlying areas, particularly to the west, once favored development outside of the urban core. Increasing land cost, congestion, and other development pressures in the outlying areas currently favor certain types of development in downtown. The downtown area,



bypassed by developers in recent years, is now ripe for their renewed attentions.

In short, the current economic conditions are conducive to redevelopment of the downtown core of West Palm Beach. The citizens of West Palm Beach can either create the atmosphere for rebirth of the core as focal point for local activities, or contribute to it's further decline. However, failure to invest in needed capital improvements such as access and parking, will contribute to further stagnation of the downtown core and increase the tax burden of those citizens who reside in other areas of West Palm Beach.

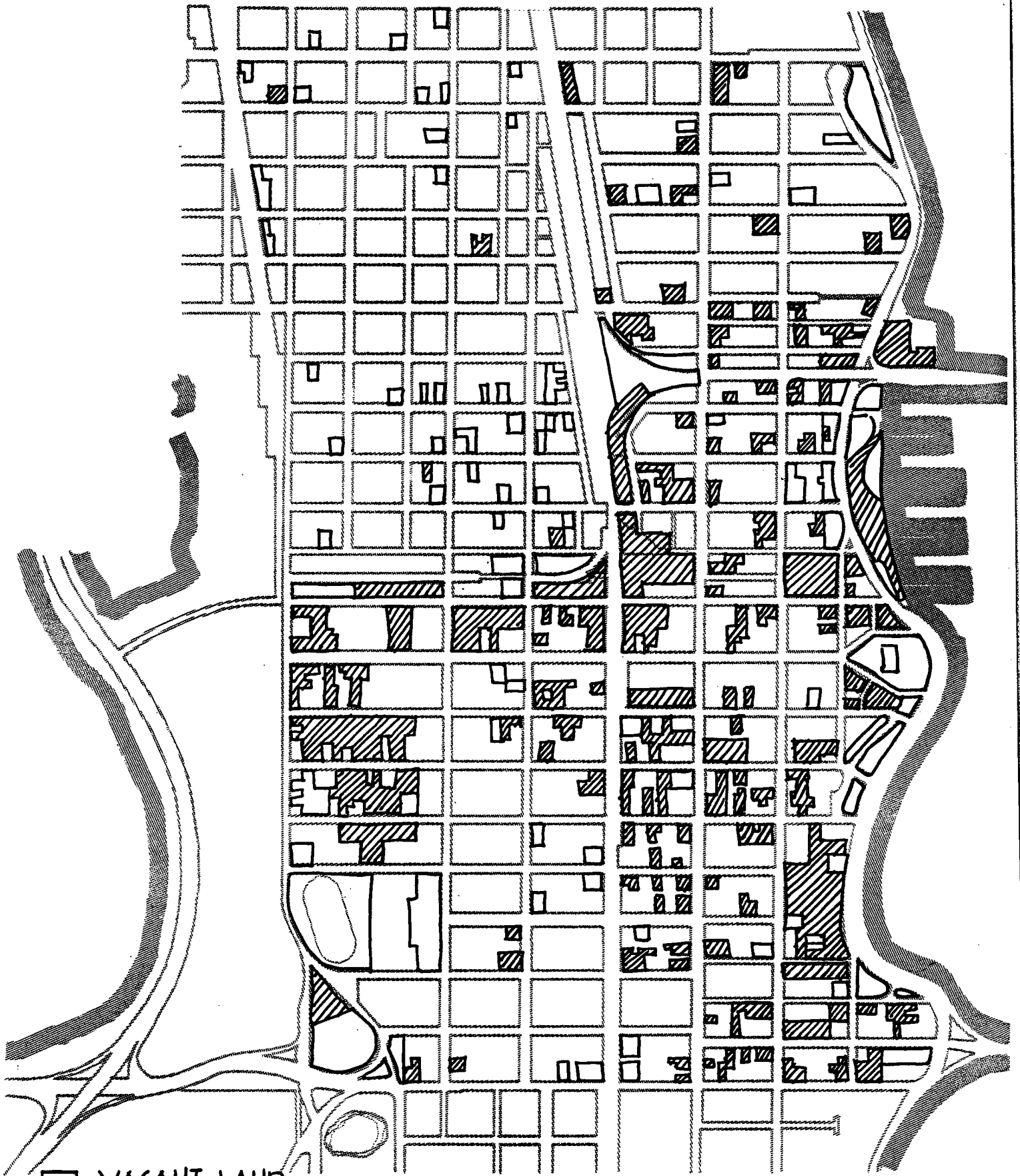
As an alternative to the dismal consequences of permitting continued erosion of the central business district's economic structure and tax base, we recommend that the City of West Palm Beach participate in a structured program of improvements in the downtown area. The City's program should be viewed as a sound investment in restoring the economic health of the historical and functionally optimal location for the central business district of West Palm Beach.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

It is imperative to underscore the need for active participation by the City government in the process of redevelopment. The City can effectively manage the economic and physical rebirth of the downtown area through positive actions to improve access and parking, and removal of superfluous impediments to needed private investments and development. Additionally, the City leadership must introduce measures to reinforce community attitudes about the economic necessity for redevelopment as a means of redistributing the tax burden and augmenting revenues to meet expanding service demands.

At a minimum, the City of West Palm Beach will need the following basic tools to direct and carry out the implementation of an economically viable redevelopment program for the downtown study area:

1. A total plan for implementation that contains a clear definition of redevelopment goals and



□ VACANT LAND
▨ PARKING

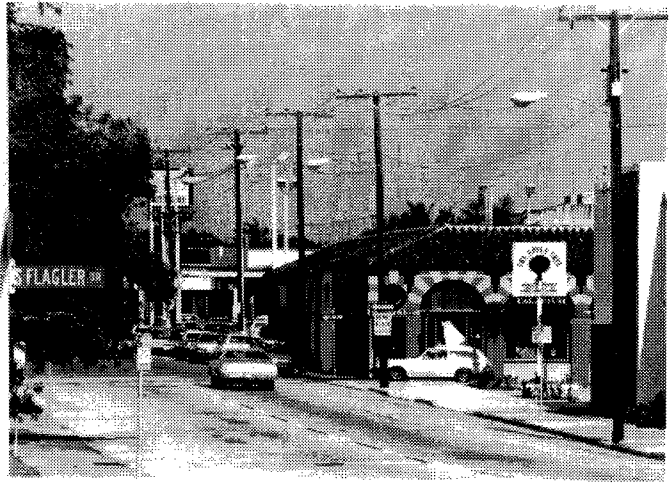
EXISTING PARKING & VACANT LAND

objectives. The proposal prepared by the R/UDAT team is an example of such a plan. However, the plan that is ultimately adopted by the City must enjoy the backing of the City leaders and a majority of the voters within the community.

2. A detailed plan for phased capital improvements or other incentives to be employed as a means of fostering development in the downtown area (refer to the transportation section for a discussion of capital improvements to improve access, travel times, and parking).
3. The legal means to discharge the implementation plan adopted by West Palm Beach (A detailed discussion of the essential legal tools to permit a sound revitalization of the central business district is furnished in another section of this report).
4. An organization vested with the power to coordinate the implementation of the plan for redevelopment, to acquire and assemble land as needed, and to serve as an interface between the public and private sector. Ideally this organization should be an integral component of the City government structure, provided with partial or complete municipal funding for operations. Whatever organizational arrangement proves best for directing the redevelopment process, such an agency should also have the primary responsibility for evaluating the feasibility and suitability of proposed developments in the target area. Furthermore, this agency should be charged with the responsibility of promoting downtown development, soliciting funds, and educating the public about proposed development/redevelopment activities in the core area.

RECOMMENDED NEAR-TERM ACTIONS

The plan we have proposed for redevelopment of the City's blighted downtown core area, was intentionally designed to meet the ultimate test of economic feasibility. While we recognize the importance of attractive physical design and accompanying graphics to illustrate how inviting a redeveloped downtown might be, the proposed plan must also be capable of implementation.



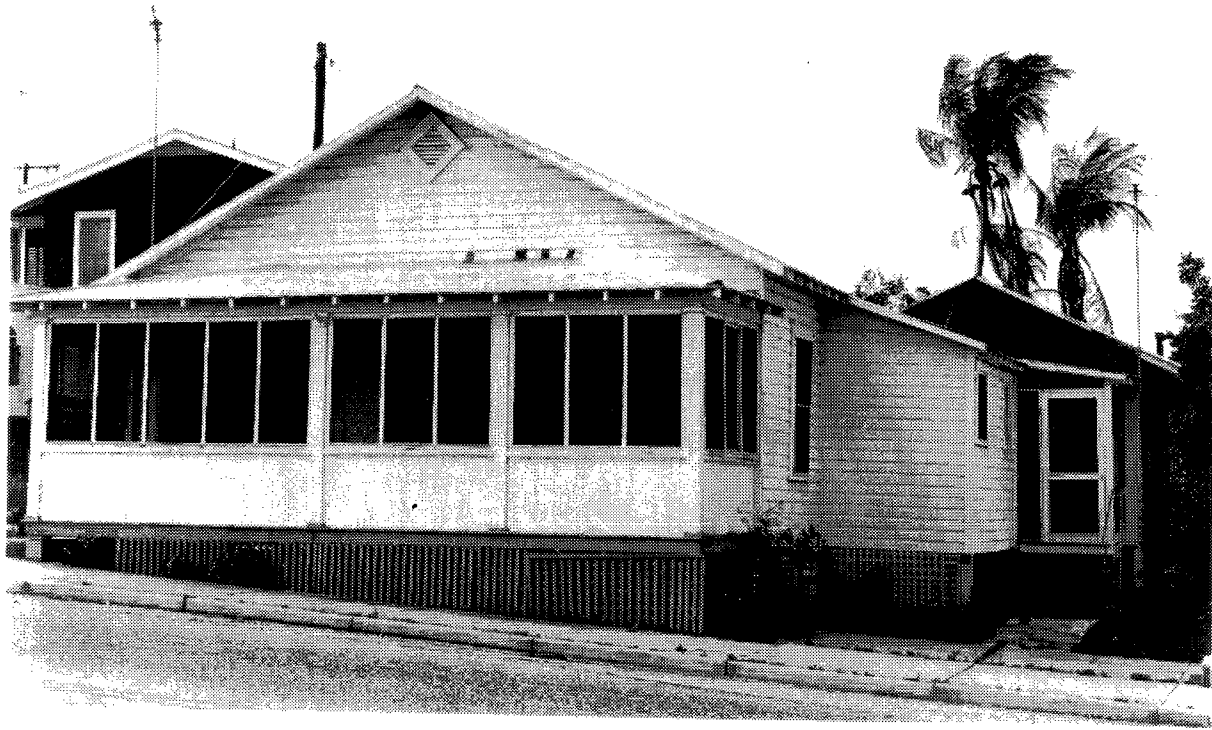
Because developers and investors are, for the most part, currently disinterested or opposed to committing time and money toward rejuvenation of downtown properties, several critical steps must be taken to create the proper economic climate for provision of the substantial amounts of private development capital and activity required in the downtown target area.

First, it is mandatory for the City of West Palm Beach to make a commitment to a particular plan for downtown redevelopment and provide the necessary tools for implementation of the designated plan.

Second, there is an immediate need to stimulate a local commitment to the redevelopment of the downtown area. We have suggested the development of a specialty retail area in the block along Clematis between the library and Olive Avenue. In spite of the current state of decline which characterizes the downtown area, a specialty center could feasibly be developed. Additionally, it could serve as a dramatic focus for renewed interest in the downtown area, thereby assisting the vital process of reshaping attitudes about the downtown core.

Third, the City should investigate the many avenues for acquiring federal funding assistance for the planned redevelopment activities. Presently, many federal agencies such as the U.S. Economic Development Administration, and The Department of Housing and Urban Development, have programs which are applicable to the solution of problems we have identified in the urban core of the City. If there is no experienced grantsman with excellent contacts in these and other federal agencies, the City should seek the assistance of a professional with a sound track record in this specialized area.

Finally, the Palm Beach County government should not be allowed to move its offices out of the downtown area to the site near the airport. Such a move would obviously hinder renewed economic growth of the downtown. Moreover, the move would not even be in the parochial interests of the county government.



NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

A concern expressed to the team and one with which we are in agreement is the obvious need for people to inhabit the traditional center of West Palm Beach not just during business hours but around the clock. The team identified a number of housing areas during the field survey which are subject to stabilization, conservation, rehabilitation as well as providing opportunities for new infill housing.

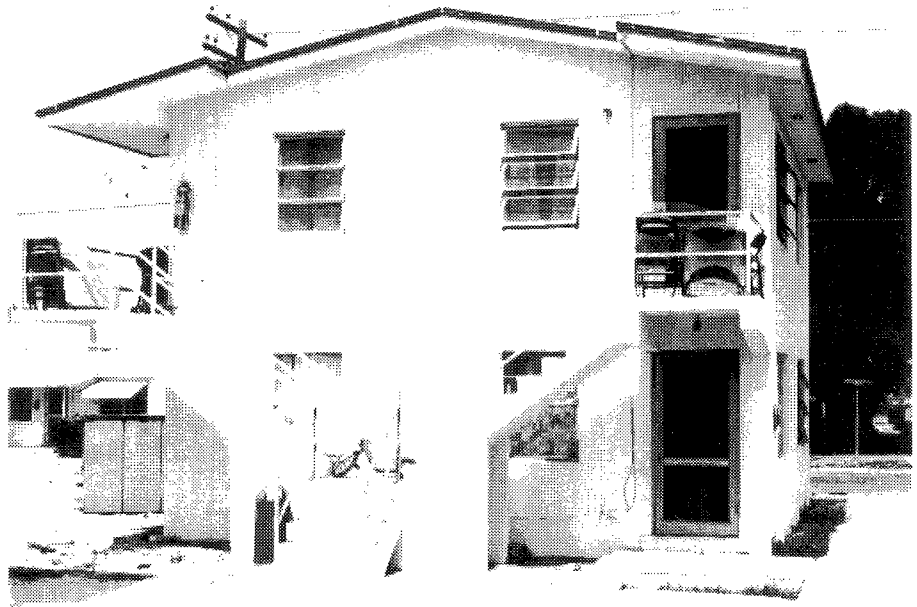
A reiteration of the reasons for strengthening and conserving the physical and residential heritage of West Palm Beach is not necessary, because there appears to be a well developed and readily apparent local interest in maintaining and reinforcing residential use downtown. In any event, if major local motivation is not strong, it cannot be created by outsiders. We can point out those resources and needs, action and commitment must be local. A basic assumption of the team is that there IS or should be a firm commitment by the citizens and officials of West Palm Beach to the ideas of taking appropriate action - backed by money and personal effort - to preserve, enhance, and creatively use the rich and varied remnants of West Palm Beach's past.

Three separate areas have been identified as having the potential impact on the downtown as well as being noteworthy and deserving of early and concurrent attention.

- o Northwest residential area
- o Southern residential area
- o Northeast mixed use residential area

The type of commitment to be made by the residents and officials of the community should be:

- o Establishment of community organization



- o Community improvements
- o Recognition of existing character
- o Home improvement loans and grants
- o New housing

ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

The City should endeavor to assess the desires of all citizens with regard to housing in their neighborhoods, and should actively insure that all points of view are heard from all sections of the community. The best mechanism for achieving this goal is the establishment of a community or neighborhood organization. The team has identified that this type of organization exists in the Northwest neighborhood (Community Action Council) but no such organization exists in the other two neighborhoods. Community organization serves a number of purposes.

1. They become a forum in which the residents can work out their priorities with regard to their neighborhood.
2. It is a mechanism of self help in terms of communicating information about home improvements.
3. The City has an established group to which they can present their policies, if public action is planned in a neighborhood.

These mechanisms insure that the City and community are in accord with each other, always the best policy for neighborhood revitalization.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

It has been found in numerous neighborhood development programs around the country that a partnership of private investment and public investment is the best mechanism to bring about the revitalization of neighborhoods.



Residents are always fearful of investing funds in their homes where public investments are in disrepair and the neighborhood lacks public amenities such as street trees and parks. Conversely, it is fiscally unwise for a city to invest public funds in a neighborhood where the residents have no concern for their property.

The City, at this time has Community Development funds for these types of improvements, and has been making them in the residential areas in the downtown. The City should continue this program and insure that there is sufficient private investments to compliment the public program to bring about neighborhood revitalization.

RECOGNITION OF EXISTING CHARACTER

Each neighborhood has its own particular character which is a product of:

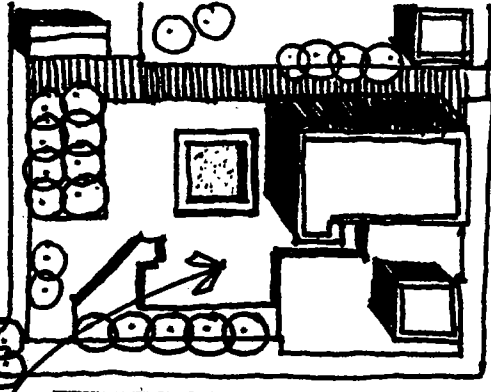
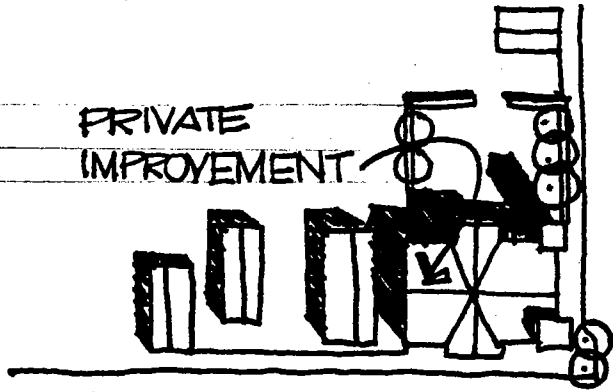
- o When it was developed (historical character)
- o Ethnic profile of community

When improvements are made in these various neighborhoods, these historical and social characteristics should have a major impact on the decisions made. The three residential neighborhoods all have good quality older buildings which should be rehabilitated so that the historical character of the neighborhood can be maintained. When new housing is developed, it should be compatible with those qualities within the financial limitation imposed by development.

HOME IMPROVEMENT LOANS AND GRANTS

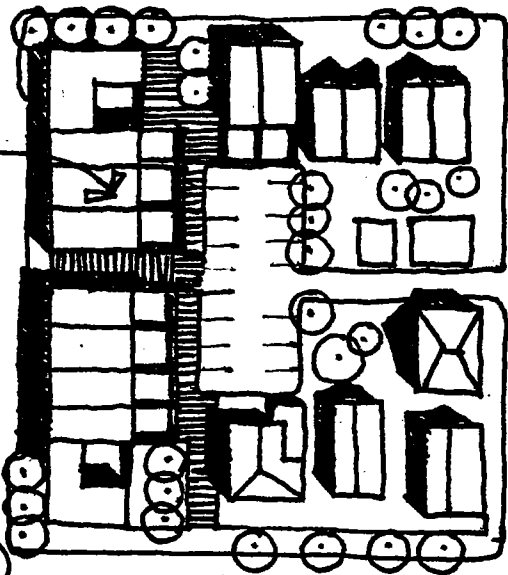
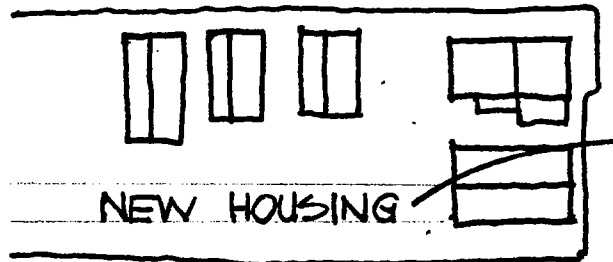
The ideal situation from the City's viewpoint in restoring these neighborhoods would be for owner-occupants and landlords to repair their own houses, and the City to fulfill its vested obligations through the improvement of roads, sidewalks, trees, parks and other street furniture. However, such home repair, at times, is clearly beyond the economic means of many homeowners and landlords.

PRIVATE IMPROVEMENT

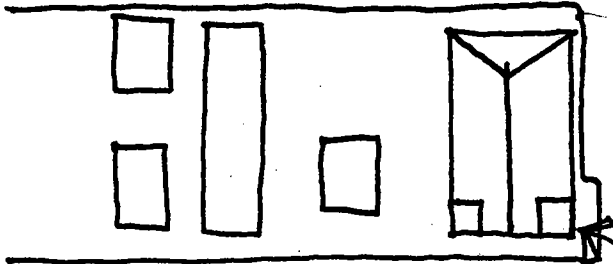


NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

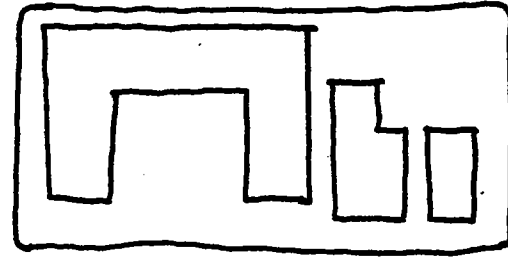
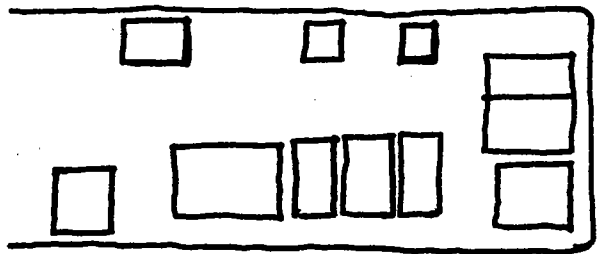
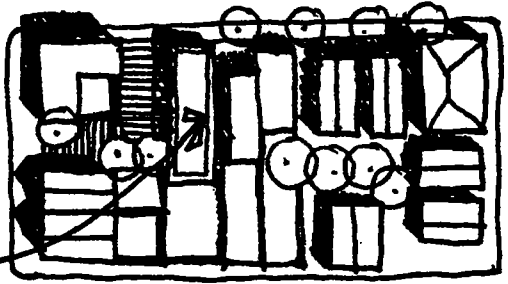
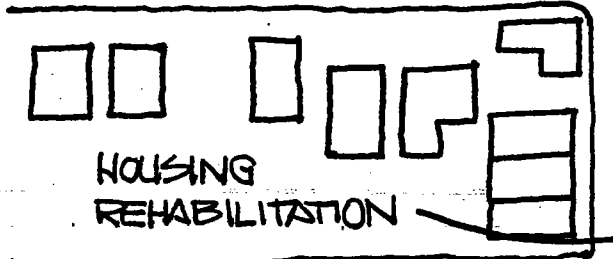
NEW HOUSING



STREET IMPROVEMENTS



HOUSING REHABILITATION



NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPEMENT.

The City has instituted a Revolving Loan Fund under their Community Development Program. This loan fund, at this time, is only being implemented in the northwest areas and should be extended into the southwest area. The loan fund provides funds to the homeowner in three ways:

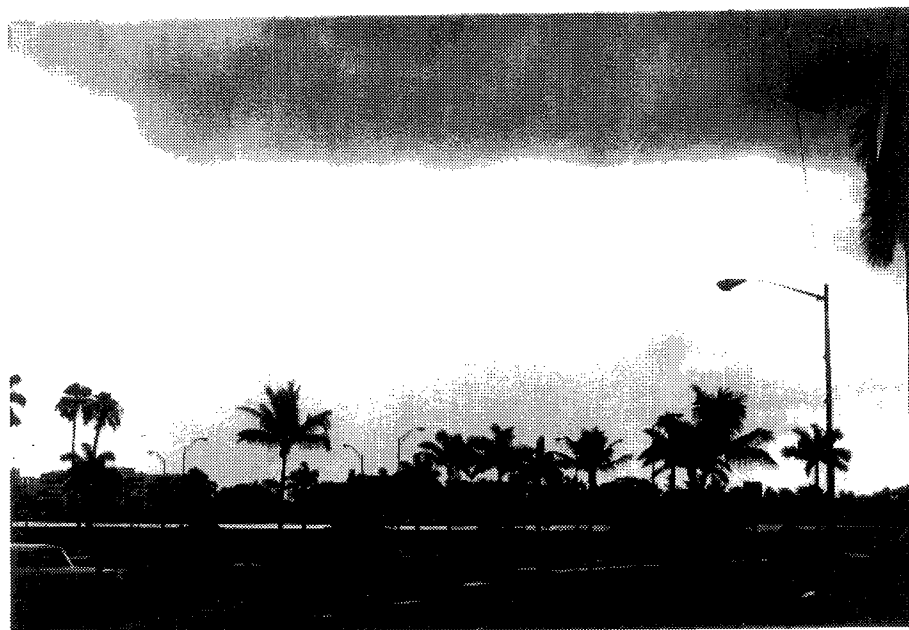
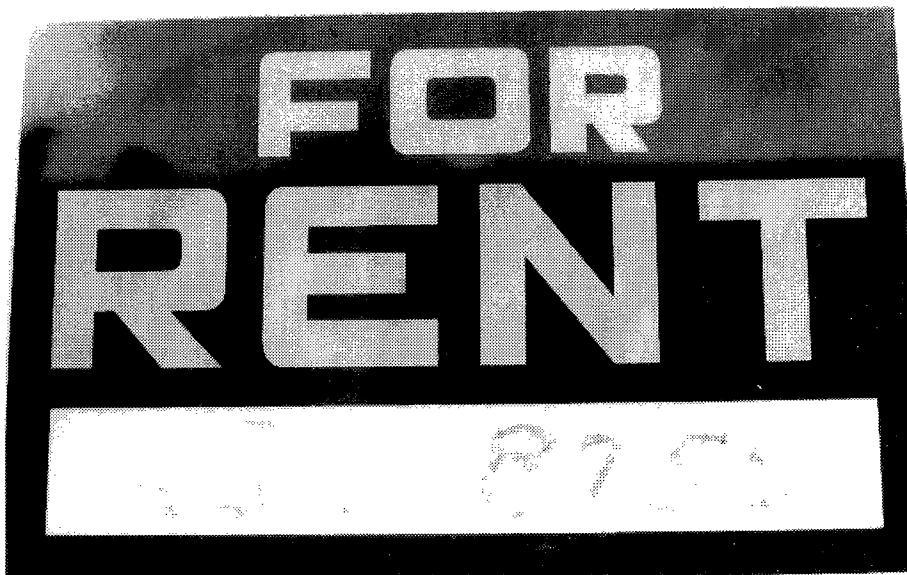
- o Grants from \$5,000 to \$7,000 to residences who cannot afford to obtain a loan. A lien is put on the home for the life of the mortgage to insure this loan.
- o Payment to the loan institution of the interest on a conventional loan so that the resident only pays the principal, which effectively reduces the cost of the loan. This loan is guaranteed by the City.
- o Straight guarantee of a conventional loan from a bank by the City.

This loan program, for homeowners only, provides an opportunity for rehabilitation. In both the southwestern and northwestern neighborhoods, there is a high percentage of renters with absentee landlords. Most communities that avail themselves of home improvement loan programs have been reluctant to give absentee landlords low interest loans and we would not recommend this policy for West Palm Beach. What is needed is a strict code enforcement policy in the three neighborhoods to insure that the investment by the City and the private resident is secured.

NEW HOUSING

The most important program for all three neighborhoods is new housing. This program is directly tied to the redevelopment of the entire downtown area and to the investment by the City in public amenities. The downtown will have the development that is shown in the rest of the plan before private investors will have a market to build new housing in the residential neighborhoods.

The City administrators should take the



necessary steps to allow federally subsidized housing for residents of these neighborhoods to be built by passing a rent supplement ordinance.

These three residential neighborhoods should be developed with single and townhouse type units both subsidized and market rate. As stated above, this program is tied to the rest of the redevelopment of downtown. At the same time, it would be foolish for the residents and the City administration to allow these neighborhoods to deteriorate any further. Community organization is the first effective step in the revitalization of any neighborhood and costs very little.



LEGAL IMPLEMENTATION

LEGAL IMPLEMENTATION

GENERAL IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

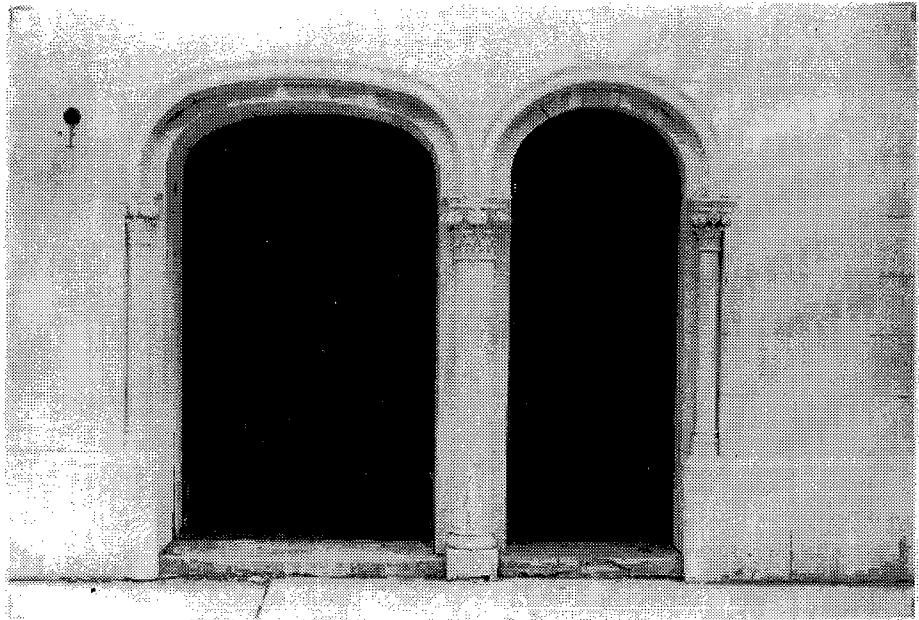
Programs to revitalize the downtown must be implemented through a combination of innovative and land use controls and redevelopment incentive and finance programs. Local and state laws alone, cannot assure the successful revitalization of the downtown but a coordinated land use control and urban redevelopment strategy can provide the legal structure through which capital investment into the downtown can be attracted. In recent years, communities across the country have developed a number of innovative land use control techniques to stimulate quality urban development, and the city seems to have ample authority to adopt and administer a set of land use controls to revitalize the downtown. Because the State has had seemingly limitless land development during most of its history, Florida has only recently begun to address the problems of urban redevelopment. As a result, Florida law contains constraints on urban redevelopment programs not found in other states, but proposed legislative and constitutional changes may alleviate many of these problems in the near future and the impact of existing law may have been overestimated.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CITY

To enact a land use control ordinance which both allows developers the flexibility to adapt to rapidly changing market conditions and assures that all downtown development will be consistent with high standards of project design and environmental criteria as well as the basic design objectives of this plan.

To make maximum use of the existing Florida laws which allow downtown commercial and residential redevelopment programs.

Adopting imaginative land use controls ordinances alone will not assure revitalization of the downtown unless the City changes its current attitude toward downtown development. At the present time, the City has no strong commitment to downtown redevelopment, although they are not opposed to helping the downtown.



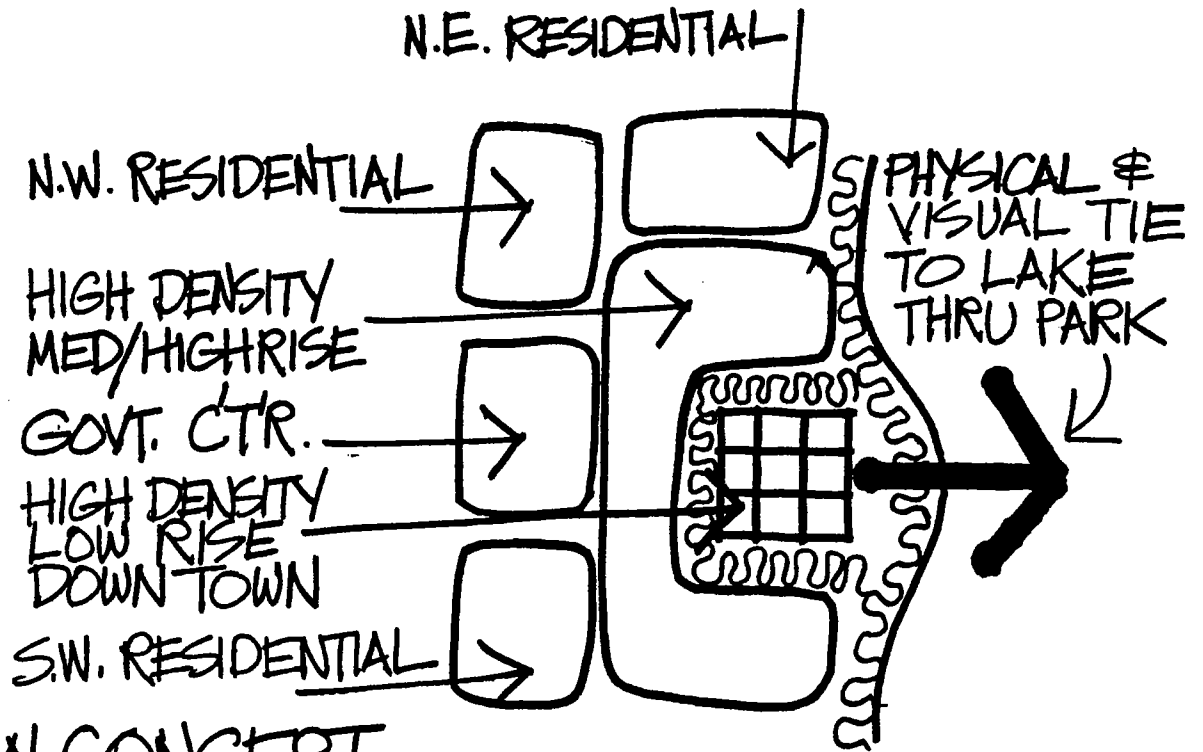
Planning and land use implementation are split within the city government, and the Downtown Development Authority is not integrated into the city government structure. As long as no clear downtown development objectives exist and the city lacks a department strongly committed to their implementation, there is too great a potential for delay in the project design approval process which will provide a disincentive to the commitment of capital to the downtown area.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CITY

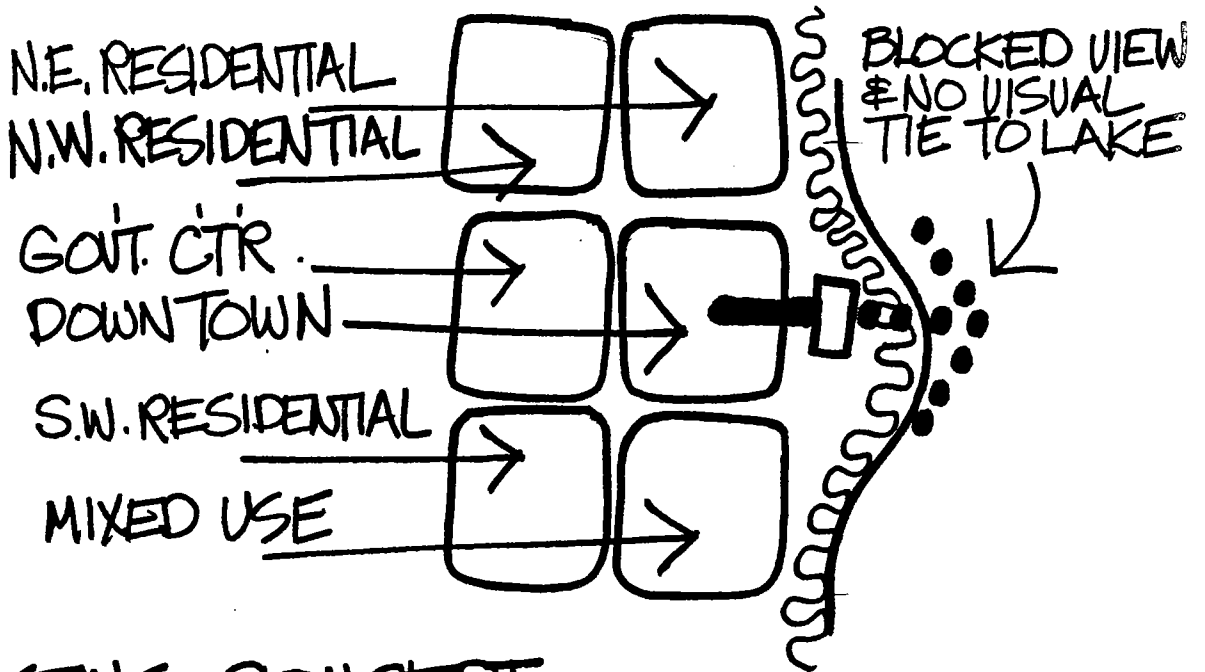
To develop an adequate and competent city planning staff with the power to administer land use regulations in order to assist as well as to regulate private developers working in the downtown and that existing redevelopment programs be absorbed by the city as permitted under Florida law.

SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The existing C-4 zoning district should be eliminated. This district was designed to provide an incentive for downtown development by eliminating all parking requirements. The C-4 classification has not stimulated any new construction within the existing district area and, in fact, provides a disincentive to imaginative development. The West Palm Beach zoning ordinance is a classic general cumulative ordinance. It is not adapted to the demands of the contemporary developer nor to the implementation of a downtown revitalization program to attract innovative designs. As one moves down the scale from residential to commercial and industrial uses, higher uses may locate in lower districts. In addition, the categories of allowed use in each district are general. This means that a developer in a C-4 district has no assurance that the land use around his development will be consistent with his development. For example, a developer who puts up a mixed residential-commercial structure has no assurance that a printing plant or small industrial plant would not locate nearby, thereby impairing the value of the project.



**NEW CONCEPT
FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT**



**EXISTING CONCEPT
DIFUSE DEVELOPMENT**

The existing downtown planned unit development ordinance needs to be substantially revised, and incorporated into a new zoning ordinance. The existing PUD ordinance is permissive rather than mandatory, it contains the potentially exclusionary and costly requirement of a market survey, and contains no design requirements to assure a high amenity level in the downtown as recommended by this plan.

The basic design objective of the R/UDAT Team is that the two strongest elements of the existing downtown, which form a "T", be preserved and strengthened. An area on either side of Clematis Street, to the Florida East Coast tracks and the area along Lake Worth would be maintained at its existing scale. Development in the focus area consistent with the existing scale of development would be encouraged. To the West, North and South of the focus area, higher density development would be allowed in such a manner to retain the prospect of Lake Worth as the focal point of West Palm Beach.

A zoning ordinance to implement this policy for the downtown should have the following elements.

- o All major development in the downtown should be reviewed pursuant to the ordinance. No major development should be allowed as a matter of right pursuant to general criteria.
- o The basic design and environmental control mechanisms should be site plan review, height limitations, and density ceilings.
- o Design and environmental standards such as landscape and signage enhancement ordinances should be formulated in light of the overall design objectives that the city adopts for downtown.
- o A firm but workable density policy should be adopted. The basic elements of a density policy would be:

Densities in the focus area set to preserve the existing scale,

Greater height limitations outside the focus area in designated high density districts with bonuses allowed for super-minimum design and environmental standards.

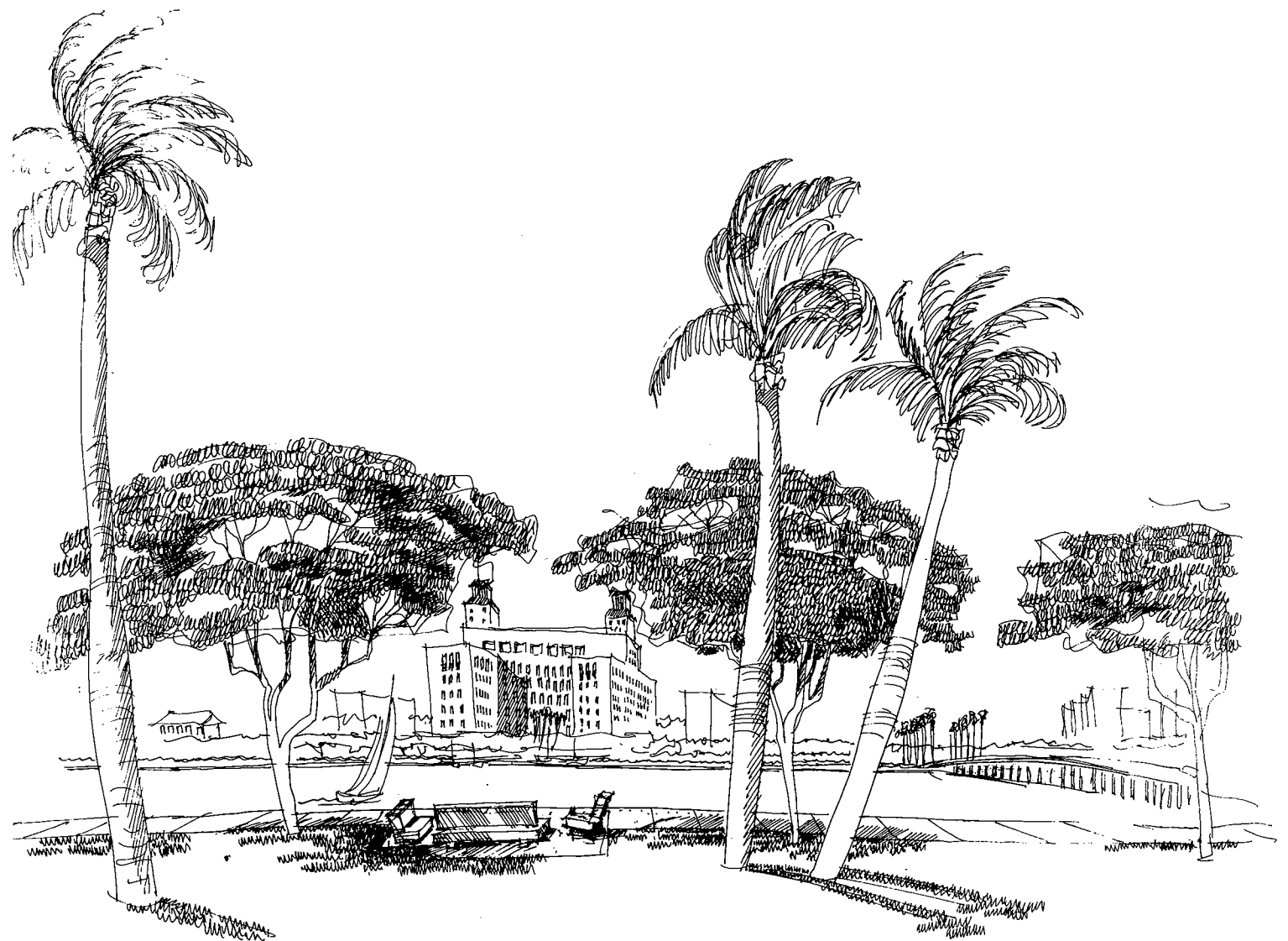
Overall density levels established for the high density districts in order to put developers on notice of the maximum projected densities for the downtown area so the rules of the game are made certain to developers and the city has the means to avoid lining Lake Worth with high-rise buildings.

Some consideration was given to implementing a density policy in the designed high density areas through transferrable development rights. Transferrable development rights (TDR's) are rights to develop a certain number of units which are not tied to ownership of the underlying parcel of land. Under a TDR scheme each landowner is given a certain number of developable units and a developer who wants to build above the maximum number of units allocated to the parcel he owns must buy the units from other landowners who are, of course, then precluded from developing beyond the number of units they retain or acquire from another landowner. At the present time it is premature to recommend implementation of a TDR scheme in West Palm Beach, although this is an option the city may want to consider in the future should initial efforts to revitalize the downtown be successful and it becomes desirable to limit development for environmental reasons.

A revitalization of downtown based on mixing commercial and residential uses in well designed, high amenity projects will require substantial land assembly. Typical of most downtowns land ownership in downtown West Palm Beach is fragmented among many small parcels. Land assembly by voluntary agreement is reported to be difficult, and many downtown developers expressed the need for public condemnation. Despite past abuses with the use of condemnation in urban renewal programs, we believe that the city should use condemnation when necessary to facilitate land acquisition for revitalization projects which it wishes.

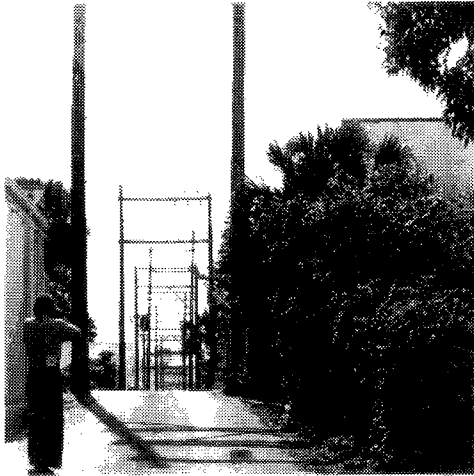
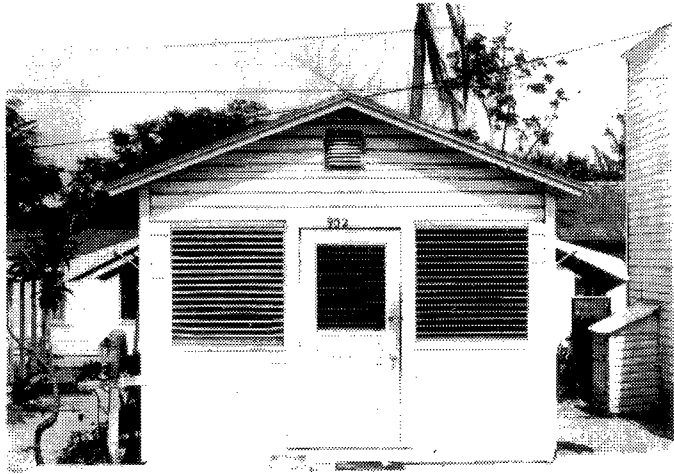
Unfortunately, the Florida law of urban redevelopment is not as favorable as it is in most other states. Until 1969 urban redevelopment powers were delegated to communities on a city by city basis through special legislation. Cities were given limited powers through this process, generally because they did not request more extensive powers. The West Palm Beach DDA currently lacks the power of eminent domain as well as adequate taxing authority. Pending State legislative amendments to the 1969 urban redevelopment Act, which include tax increment financing, should provide a more than

adequate statutory basis for the City to absorb the DDA and mount an aggressive redevelopment program. However, apart from legislative authority and innovation considerable doubt exists about the authority of communities to condemn blighted or sub-standard, non-slum property for sale or lease to private developers. Florida courts have always been concerned with abusive exercises of the power of eminent domain, and in 1952 the Florida supreme court held that the condemnation of blighted property for sale or lease to a developer was unconstitutional under state law. All states require that the power of eminent domain be exercised for a public use. Originally public use meant that the public could not be denied access to the property, but in recent years the term has come to be equated with the concept that so long as the condemnation is for a public purpose, even if the land ultimately ends up in private ownership, the exercise of the power of eminent domain is valid. The United States Supreme Court has gone so far as to hold that a city can decide to condemn standard property in a blighted area because it considers private redevelopment a more efficient use. The Florida courts have consistently rejected this expansive view of the use of eminent domain in urban redevelopment, but in recent years they have allowed condemnation for this very purpose to some extent. The courts remain suspicious of condemnations of blighted or sub-standard property for ultimate disposition to private developers. As a result it is widely assumed by lawyers and city officials that condemnation is not available for urban redevelopment. This conclusion is an oversimplified reading of Florida cases which are groping for a line between condemnations which distribute benefits widely not narrowly. It is, of course, difficult to predict how a court would react to an exercise of eminent domain in connection with the redevelopment of West Palm Beach. However, as the state legislature makes a firmer commitment to urban renewal, well-documented redevelopment projects which demonstrate that the condemnation is necessary to spur downtown revitalization may meet with friendlier judicial responses than they have in the past. At a minimum the DDA and the City ought to take a detailed look at the Florida law of urban redevelopment to determine precisely what options exist under present case and statutory law.



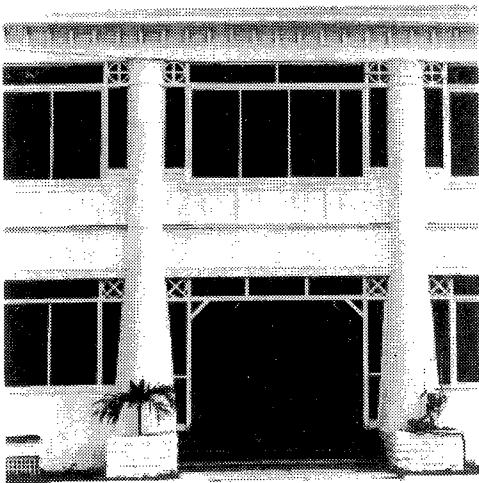
Under the City's existing zoning ordinance, the Flagler Drive and the Lake Worth prospect are not given special treatment. Except for public parks, which are designated, existing zones extend eastward to the shore of Lake Worth. Because Lake Worth and the view across to Palm Beach is the City's strongest visual asset, special zoning treatment should be given to the land approximate to Lake Worth. The purpose of a special district would be to:

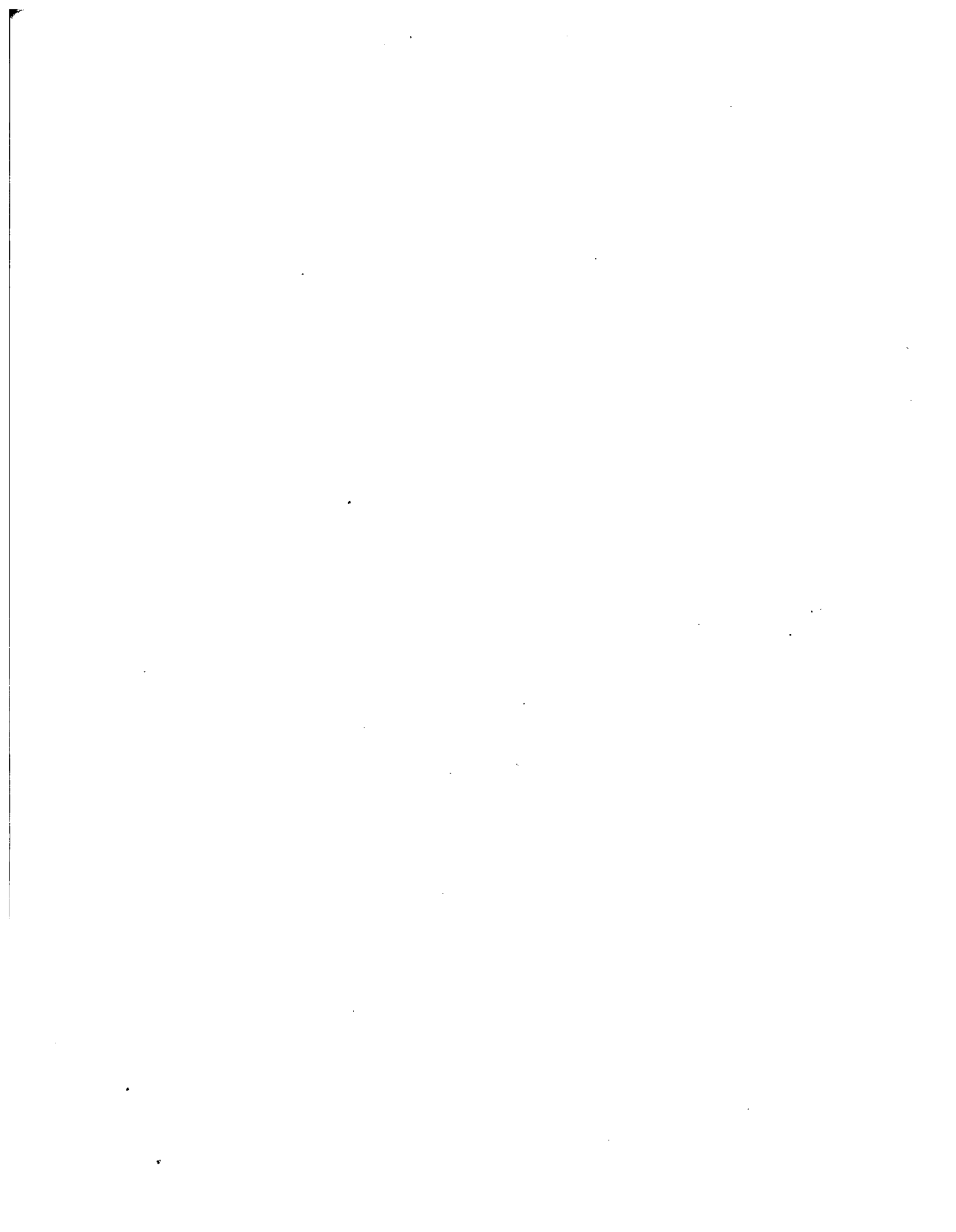
- o Identify those areas along the Lake Worth which are and should be permanently dedicated to open space uses.
- o Establish the set-backs for future development. This provision could either confirm or extend the 40 foot limits set forth in the existing ordinance.
- o Establish a criterion of "water-relatedness" as the basis for allowing new development in close proximity to the lake.
- o Establish height and site limitations which both provide the necessary incentives for the contemporary real estate market but maintain an appropriate scale with existing and proposed non-lakefront high-rise development.



R LEASE

CONSULT...





To

RUDAT

Notes on Downtown
W.P.B.

Avoid structure parking as well as meters. Exceptions might be tall apartment building private parking -

W. Palm Beach exists because of Palm Beach - and P. B. would not exist without W. P. B. There should be greatly expanded access to The ocean beaches (& parking)

Downtown W.P.B. needs more parks, arcades, and some streets converted to just pedestrian travel. The "boundaries" of D.T.W.P.B. could be expanded and as goals have 2 or 3 focal points rather than one. Each focal pt. might have its special attractions but overlapping would not be discouraged -

In W.P.B. Lake frontage should be free & accessible to The public. Marina's should have accommodations and

ROAD

2

out door cafes & restaurants
should be encouraged -

A line of apto. & condos.
(recently built) on the ocean
front, though no more than 5 floors
high, have effectively changed
the climate of part of P.B. for
those who live in the 2nd 3rd
& 4th rows. The prevailing
winds here are N.E, East, & S.East.
We hope this won't happen in
W.P.B. The ocean & the Lake
and the sun have made this
place a haven for many - but
time has showed that without
good planning it can be
spoiled - Re routing through
traffic is still
a problem.

Elrot Atkinson

419 10th ST.

WPB 33401

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CITY COMMISSION

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Vice Mayor Richard Linn
President Pro Tem Carol A. Roberts
Commissioner James M. Adams
Commissioner Helen Wilkes

CITY PLANNING BOARD

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George Greenburg, Vice Chairman
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Board of County Commissioners
Economic Council of Palm Beach County
Downtown Development Authority
Greater West Palm Beach Chamber of Commerce

Financial support for the expenses of the
R/UDAT has been enlisted by the Downtown
Development Authority from the City and
citizens.

R/UDAT CITIZENS ACTION COMMITTEE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thanks must be extended to the following groups and individuals for all their support throughout the process.

Anstis, Vass & Ornstein
ArtCraft Awning
Erid Atwater
City of West Palm Beach Planning Dept. Staff
Dorice Long, Christmas by Dorice
Downtown Development Authority
Flagler National Bank
Arthur Frogel (Holiday Inn)
Ginnocchio & Spina
John Glidden
Tom Graboski
Graphic Center, Inc.
Halsey & Griffith
Ellen Hyman
Helen Jones
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L. L. Humphries, Inc.
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Michalaros & Smith
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Palm Beach Chapter AIA
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Palm Harbor Marina
Peacock & Lewis
Marion Phelps
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Schwab & Twitty, Architects
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Team Plan, Inc.
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John Vogeler, (Christopher's)
West Palm Beach Library
Helen Wilkes (Helen Wilkes Hotel)
John Wilson-Jeronimo
Women in Construction (Greater WPB Chapter)
WPEC
WPTV
Xerox
Pat Zapatka

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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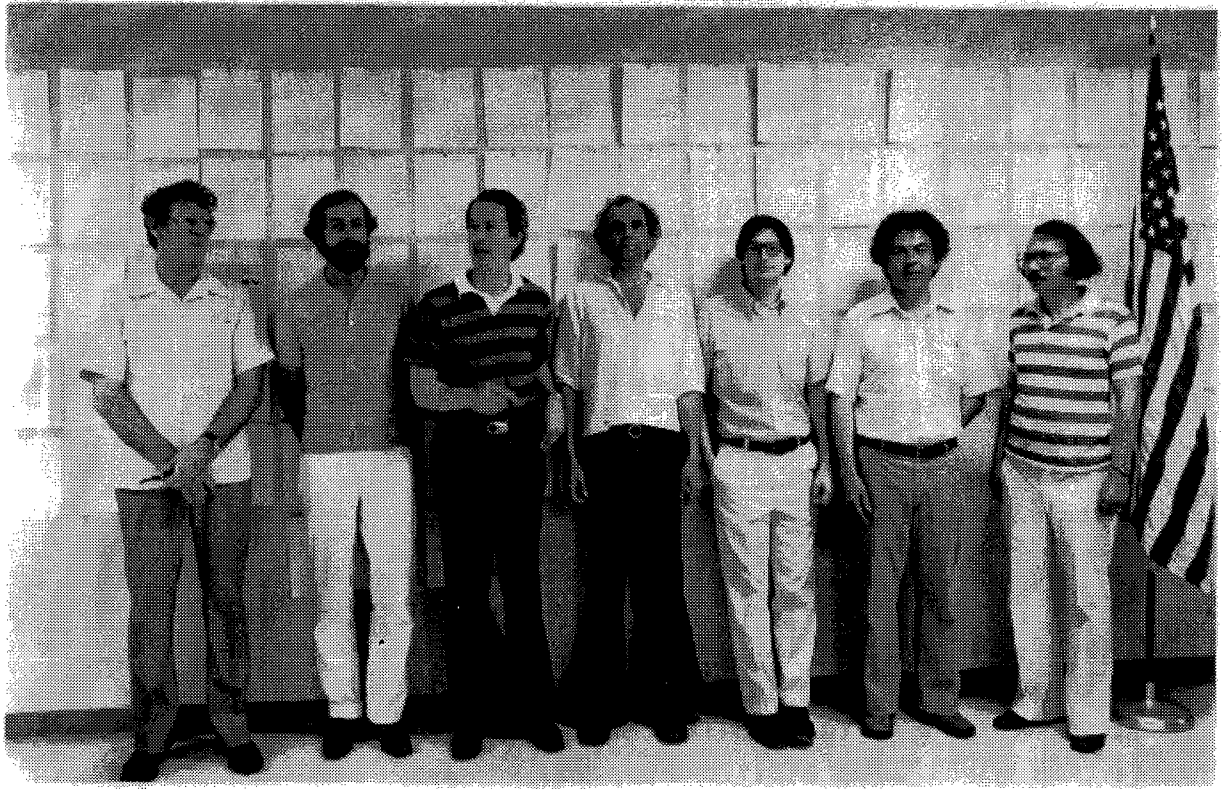
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community center and 220 units of
housing which are part of a unified
neighborhood redevelopment plan, and
the financing of \$2.0 million of home
improvements.

Offered as a point of interest:

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