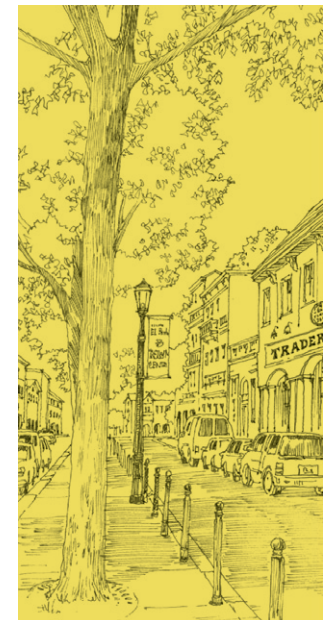




EL PORTAL

Charrette Report



DRAFT 11.27.13

Village of El Portal

Daisy M. Black, Mayor

Linda Marcus, Vice-Mayor

Adam Old, Council Member

Claudia V. Cubillos, Council Member

Omarr C. Nickerson, Council Member

Statement of Legislative Intent

This statement is applicable to these recommendations in its entirety and is declared to be incorporated by reference into each part thereof.

1. Nothing in the recommendations of the El Portal Charrette Report ('the Report') shall be construed or applied to constitute a temporary or permanent taking of private property or the abrogation of vested rights as determined to exist by the Code of The Village of El Portal.

2. The recommendations of the Report shall not be construed to preempt considerations of fundamental fairness that may arise from their strict application. Accordingly, these recommendations shall not be deemed to require any particular action where they are incomplete or internally inconsistent, or that would constitute a taking of property without due process or fair compensation, or would deny equal protection of the laws.

3. The recommendations of the Report are intended to set general guidelines concerning its purposes and contents. They are not a substitute for land development regulations.

4. The recommendations of the Report contain long-range policies for the redevelopment of The Village of El Portal. Nothing in these recommendations shall require the immediate changing of existing uses or structures. It is the intent of these recommendations that they be applied as redevelopment occurs naturally or is precipitated by the destruction of the property to the extent that redevelopment in its original form is not economically feasible. The recommendations of the Report are not intended to preempt the processes whereby applications may be filed for relief from land development regulations.



This Report prepared by:

Miami-Dade County

Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources

Development Services Division

Urban Design Center

November 2013

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The El Portal Community Design Charrette Study identifies challenges and proposes specific recommendations for the Village of El Portal, while developing a shared long-range vision for future development within the study area.

Residents and stakeholders of the Village of El Portal, together with its Mayor, councilmembers and staff helped guide the planning process over the course of several months, which led to the El Portal Community Design Charrette. The consensus vision developed as a result of the study creates the framework to promote new development, revitalize the Village and strengthen the overall area with the recommendations outlined in this report.



OVERVIEW

What is a Charrette?

Charrette Workshop

The term “charrette” is derived from the French term for “little cart.” This refers to a final intense work effort by 18th Century architecture students to meet a project deadline and place projects into a cart on its way for final review. The modern charrette is intended to foster a similar creative burst of brainstorming ideas in a limited period of time.

A charrette workshop involves the public in the planning and design process and is a valuable tool for setting the foundation for the development of a detailed Area Plan. It is a practical planning technique that blends public participation, planning and implementation, where residents and stakeholders are invited to join urban designers in visualizing the future of their community.

Purpose

In the spring of 2012, elected officials from the Village of El Portal sought out a study to determine the highest and best use for the last two remaining commercially viable areas within the Village boundaries. In preceding years surrounding municipalities had taken significant steps in improving the quality of development in their own areas, with the City of Miami approving Miami21 and the completion of the new commercial development north on NE 2nd Avenue in Miami Shores.

Upon completion of a highest and best use study, the Village would be equipped with a municipal wide consensus for its future. This future vision of citizens, stakeholders and government officials would assist in securing new development or other funding opportunities to improve the Village of El Portal going forward.

Public Outreach

Leading up to the charrette date, an extensive public outreach effort was made so that Village area residents and stakeholders were aware of the event and maximum

participation could be achieved. The Village of El Portal displayed pertinent information on signage around the Village Hall, in addition to a link to the advertisement information on the Village’s website. A door to door campaign circulating flyers was also undertaken by volunteers within the community.

Additionally, a series of public information sessions were hosted at the Village of El Portal hall. These sessions, open to the public, were conducted to educate residents, stakeholders and other interested parties on the charrette process and to build momentum moving into the charrette week.



You are invited to participate! Make it happen!

2013 EL PORTAL COMMUNITY DESIGN CHARRETTE

The Charrette will be a week-long intensive design session, open to all residents, property owners and business owners, including those without formal training or previous experience with urban planning. Participants will be able to share their vision for the community and to see it put into a new Comprehensive Master Plan for the future of El Portal.

May 4th Kickoff Workshop 10am – 5pm
May 5 – 9 Onsite Design Work all day
May 10 Presentation of Work 10 am – 12 pm

El Portal Village Hall • 500 NE 87th St. • El Portal, FL 33138

For more info please contact El Portal Village Manager Jason Walker at jwalker@villageofelportal.org or 305.795.7480

You're invited to participate!

2013 EL PORTAL COMMUNITY DESIGN CHARRETTE

PARTICIPATE IN THE CHARRETTE!

The Charrette process provides the most meaningful and authentic way for people to get involved in planning for growth and change in their community. Without a clear, community-supported vision for the future, the conventional approach to the public approval of projects usually results in costly delays, decision-making paralysis, and/or design and construction cost overruns. The Charrette process allows for a more comprehensive and collaborative approach to the planning process.

The Charrette process will provide a framework for creating shared vision for our Village. The process will result in more comprehensive plan that will guide design and development in the community for years to come.

Contribute your talents, hopes, and ideas to the plan for the future of El Portal!

WHAT IS THE CHARRETTE?

The Charrette will be a week-long workshop conducted by the El Portal Village Council. The Charrette will be held at Village Hall. It will consist of a series of meetings, including a kickoff meeting, a series of design sessions, and a final presentation. The Charrette will be a collaborative process where residents, property owners, and business owners will work together to create a shared vision for the future of El Portal. The Charrette will be a public process that will allow for a more comprehensive and collaborative approach to the planning process.

Please attend the next Public Information Session!

March 15th 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Contact El Portal Village Manager Jason Walker at jwalker@villageofelportal.org or 305.795.7480 for more information or to join the meeting list.

THE STUDY AREA

Historical Information

Derived from the Spanish word for 'wooden gate' that once stood at the entry to the Village, El Portal is a picturesque, historic Village in Miami-Dade County. Primarily a residential community of single-family cottages and bungalows, the Village of El Portal was founded in 1937.

Just minutes from downtown Miami, the shaded streets, lined with sprawling live oaks, some over 75 years old, make the Village of El Portal a haven for local wildlife. Wild peacocks and iguanas are just a small sample of exotic species of wildlife that call El Portal home. In addition, one of South Florida's most unique historic sites is situated within the Village. A large Indian mound, in the Sherwood Forest neighborhood, is the first archeological site to receive historic designation in Miami-Dade County.

Moving into the 21st Century, the Village of El Portal continues to value its inherent natural qualities and takes pride in being diverse and peaceful community, while preparing to face new and remain connected to its rich history.

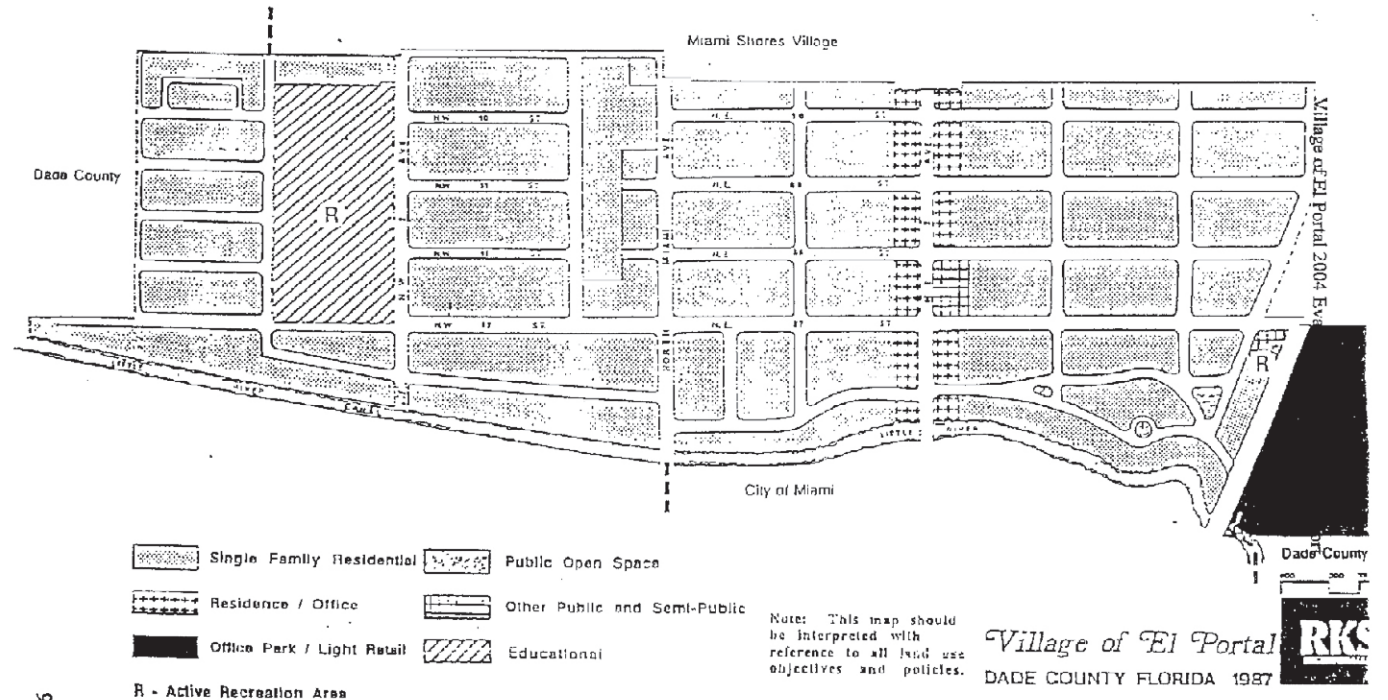
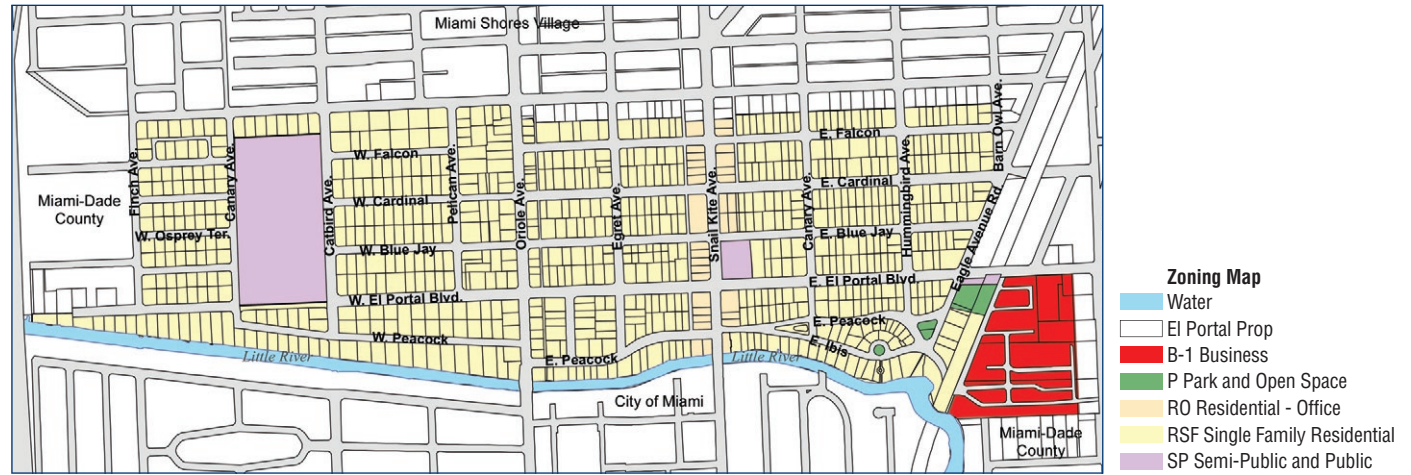


Zoning and Future Land-Use

An important question for residents and Village officials to ask is “Do the existing land regulations adequately portray the vision the community has for the Village of El Portal?”

The zoning map for the Village of El Portal currently shows that the majority of the land within the jurisdiction is zoned as RSF Single Family Residential. This zoning category would be consistent with the single family homes that make up most of the community. Two lots, the Horace Mann Elementary School property and the church property on NE 2nd Avenue are both zoned for SP Semi-Public and Public. The remaining lots directly abutting NE 2nd Avenue, on either side are zoned for RO Residential-Office. Lastly, the lots which make up the Little Farm Trailer Park site are zoned as B-1 Business.

The future land-use map illustrates the majority of the properties within the Village boundaries as Single Family Residential. The Horace Mann Elementary School property is designated Educational. The existing church property, along with the Village Hall property is designated as Other Public and Semi-Public and the remainder of the properties adjacent to NE 2nd Avenue are listed as Residence/Office. The properties that comprise the Little Farm Trailer Park site is designated Office Park/Light Retail.



THE CHARRETTE

Kickoff Presentation

On the morning of Saturday, May 4th, 2013 Village officials, residents, stakeholders and other interested parties gathered at the Village of El Portal Village Hall to shape the ultimate vision for their Village. Approximately 50 people took their place within the Village Hall as Councilman Adam Old opened the meeting and introduced the staff from Miami-Dade County's Urban Design Center who would be assisting in the shaping of the Vision Plan.

The Village of El Portal kickoff presentation was intended to briefly educate the participants on the upcoming charrette process. Existing Village conditions were presented and the necessary questions asked to provoke the participants of the charrette to think about specific issues that should be addressed in the ultimate Vision.

The El Portal Community Design Charrette is a historic opportunity to shape the future of the community by focusing on design and enhancements within the Village. The purpose of the charrette is to not only develop meaningful urban places, but to also position the Village in a way to best respond to a changing real estate market and leave a positive legacy into the future.

In addition, the presentation covered previously completed studies within the study area and identified new areas of interest for the participants to consider. Alternative local examples of highest and best use, transforming neighborhood streets into multi-modal, pedestrian friendly thoroughfares and establishing character and civic pride within the community are all examples of things that the study anticipates addressing in its final product.



How the vision plan was created...

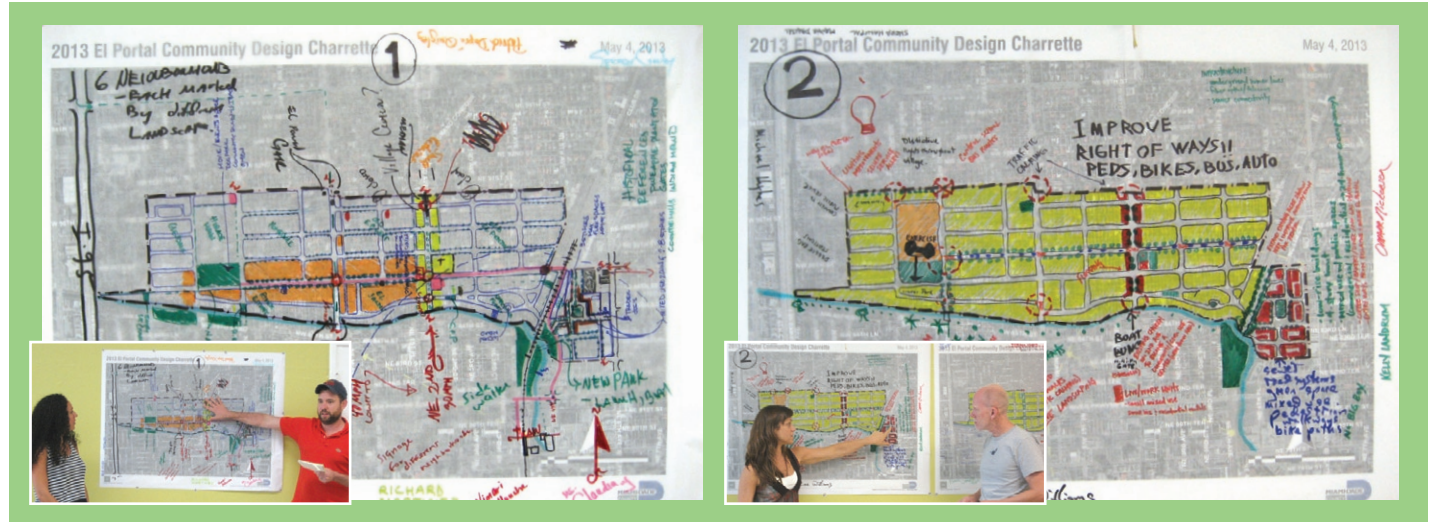
After the kickoff presentation, charrette participants broke into various groups, each provided with an aerial photograph of the Village overlaid with trace paper. With the assistance from one or two members of the design team, each group discussed community issues and drew ideas onto the trace paper, which by the end of the afternoon would become the "Citizen's Plans." After several hours of drawing and discussion, the plans were displayed on the walls of the Village Hall and each group was instructed to elect a representative to present the features of their plan. In these presentations, there was an evident consensus amongst the suggestions and improvements within the Village of El Portal.

The concepts and issues brought forward from each of the presentations are outlined within the citizen's plans, shown on the following pages. It should be noted that these plans form the backbone for the Vision Plan presented as a result of the charrette process. Without the consensus amongst charrette participants and the citizen's plans the urban design recommendations within this report could not have been possible.

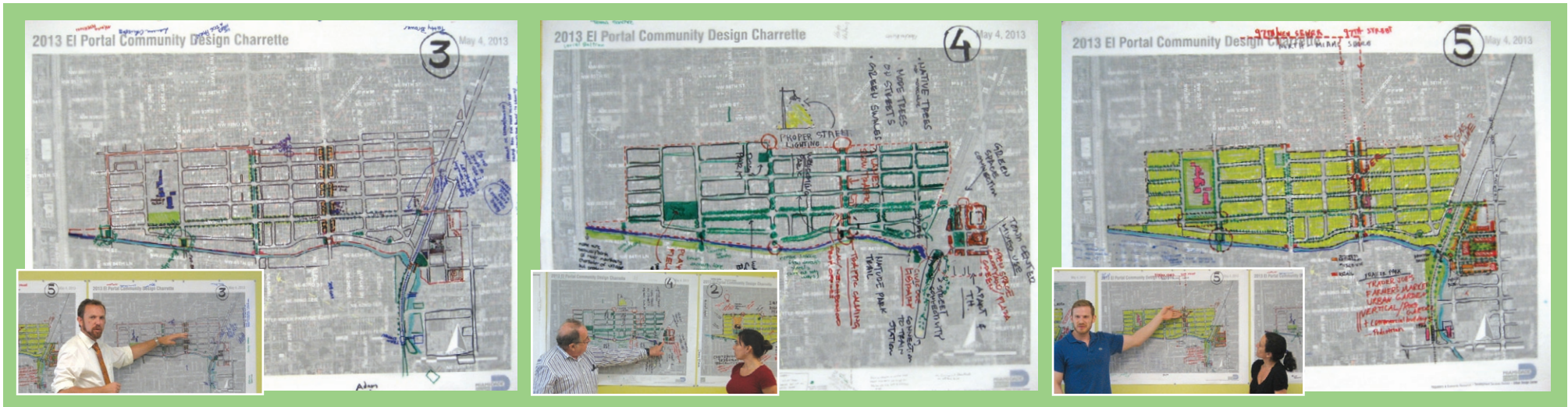


Citizen's Plans

The following plans were created at each of the table sessions. The Citizen's Plans display a strong consensus amongst the issues and improvements to be addressed as a result of this planning study. Participants and stakeholders addressed the following at each table:



Citizens Requests	Table #				
	1	2	3	4	5
Improve and propose better connectivity throughout the village.	•	•	•	•	•
-Maintain current character of the village with sidewalks and bike-paths shared along the neighborhood streets.	•	•	•	•	•
-Enhanced walkability, pedestrian activity, biking, kayaking all link different areas together.	•	•	•	•	•
Control the routes of school buses, reducing their interaction with pedestrian/bicycle routes.		•			
Redevelop the Little Farms Trailer Park site as a mid-rise, medium to high density mixed-use district with 'narrow' blocks to include commercial, office and residential uses.	•	•	•	•	•
-Buildings should transition from eight stories along Biscayne Boulevard and taper down to two or three stories near the railroad tracks.	•		•	•	•
-Mixed-uses should include apartments, townhouses, lofts, businesses, outdoor cafes, farmer's market and a grocery presence like 'Trader Joe's'.	•	•	•	•	•
-Include new green spaces and plazas within 'town center' area.	•	•	•	•	•
-Creative parking solutions, such as lined parking garages and on street parking, free up space for more pedestrian friendly streets, habitable mixed-use spaces and new open space.		•	•		•
Encourage ways to connect to and from the proposed FEC transit station.	•		•	•	•
-Greenways, pedestrian/bikeways, motor vehicle					
Use the river as an amenity (kayak and canoe launches)		•		•	•
Identify an area on the river for civic presence				•	•
-City Hall uses and water front dining/congregation					
Pedestrian Bridge to connect the green areas in the south, north into the village			•	•	•
Extend the right-of-way improvements along the North Miami Avenue section south on NE 2nd Avenue.	•	•	•	•	•
-Redesign NE 2nd Avenue as a narrower (two lanes) neighborhood level main street with wider sidewalks, shade trees, buildings (closer to the street), rear loaded parking, which allows for incremental building of smaller, flexible businesses					



Citizens Requests (cont.)	Table #				
	1	2	3	4	5
A park with small commercial uses (kayak rental/launch) on the vacant parcel at the bridge (NE 2nd Avenue)		•	•	•	
Increase landscaping on all thoroughfares and open spaces, using native plants, trees and other vegetation.	•	•	•	•	•
An open space for a dog park or a community garden (eat what you grow), botanical garden/educational area located on the vacant North Miami Avenue parcel.		•		•	•
Horace Mann nature trail area and adjoining space to become a shared facility with the school.	•	•	•	•	•
-Include a gathering space, area for movie nights (blank wall), a Vita Course, a soccer field and walking/running tracks.					
Kayak-launch next to the pedestrian bridge at River Estate Park that also links to the other two proposed access sites along the river.	•		•		•
Seawall beautification improvements on both sides of the river		•		•	•
-Maintain safety and natural character					
Human scaled lighting that is not intrusive to the character of the area.	•	•	•	•	•
Traffic calming elements along major thoroughfares and textured crosswalks at major intersections	•	•		•	•
Identify and create entrance features at major entry points to the Village signifying arrival points to an important community.	•	•	•	•	•
Instead of closing off streets, introduce spot medians with limited turning in and out into certain neighborhoods.	•	•	•	•	•
Reestablish original names for the village neighborhoods and display via signage (Glendale Manor, Miller's Homedale, River Estates, Old El Portal West, El Jardin, Old El Portal East and Sherwood Forest)	•				•
Create harmony between the commercial and environmental potential of the village by incorporating natural plans/foliage to maintain the habitat/bird sanctuary.	•	•		•	
Protect manatee areas from busy, water fronting, intensive uses.				•	
Improve existing infrastructure (water and sewer) to attract opportunities for redevelopment.		•			•

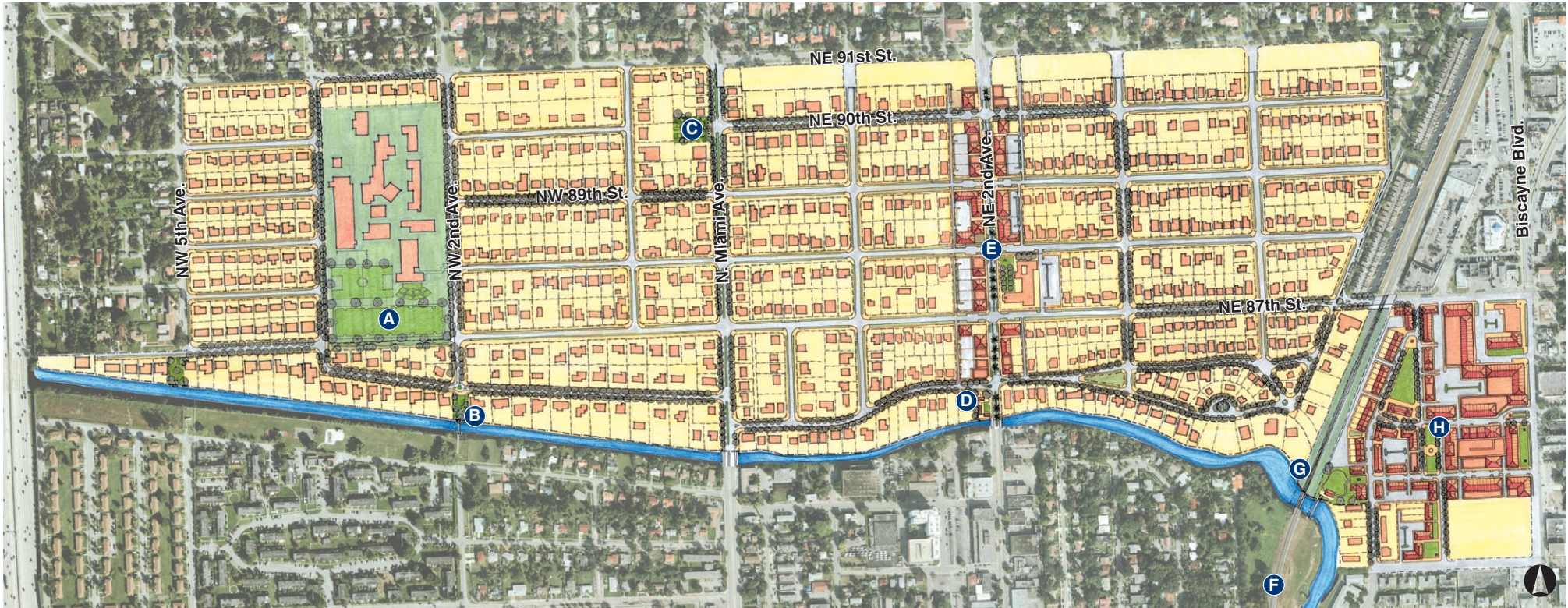
Charrette Studio

In the week following the charrette workshop, the design team remained within the study area, working in the community room at the Village Hall. All of the necessary materials, computers and equipment were set up, creating a full studio space where the designers could work to detail the ideas presented at the charrette workshop into more formal graphics and presentation materials.

It is important to work in this manner because continued public involvement is imperative to the success of the planning study. Residents who could not participate in the Saturday workshop had the opportunity to stop by the studio space at their convenience throughout the week so their voices could be heard. Many concerned community members spent individual time with the design team, providing valuable comments, suggestions and further clarification on the main issues touched upon in this report.



Vision Plan



Points of Interest

- | | |
|--|---|
| A Horace Mann Shared Area | F Connection to Proposed Train Station (79th Street) |
| B Pedestrian Bridge and Park | G Civic Presence on the Canal |
| C N. Miami Avenue Community Garden | H Little Farms Trailer Park Site |
| D N.E. 2nd Avenue Bridge |  Existing |
| E N.E. 2nd Avenue Corridor Improvements |  Recommended |

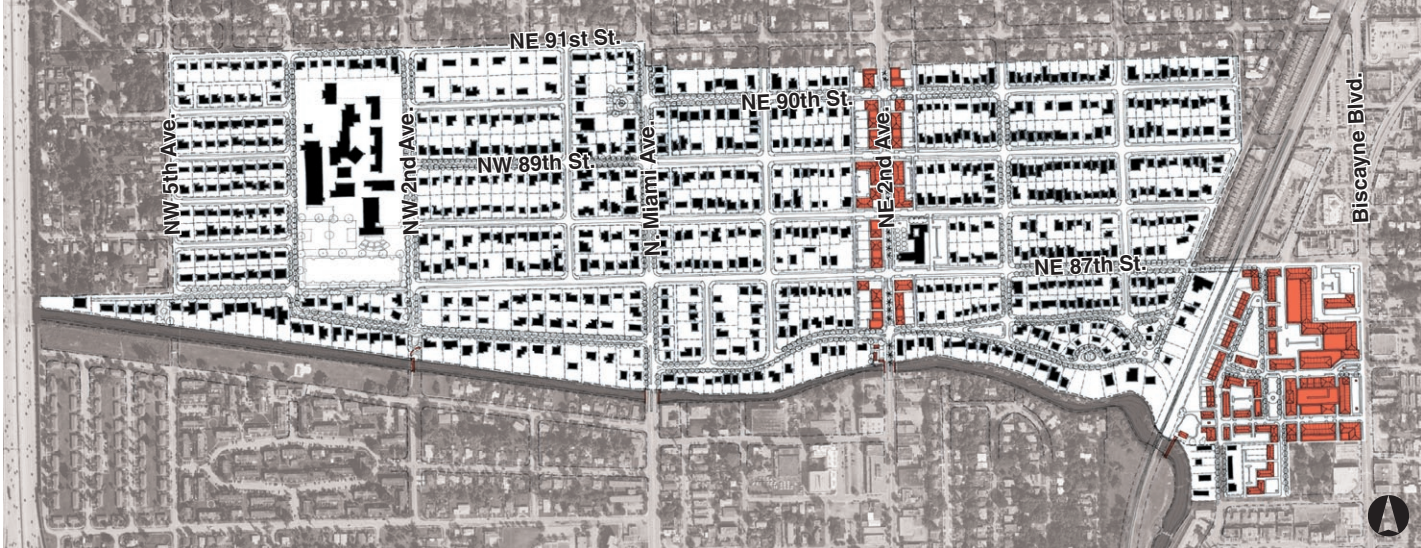
Village Area Improvements

Figure Ground Diagram

The Figure Ground diagram is a great tool to help understand the development pattern of the Village of El Portal. Using only two colors, black and red, the diagram illustrates the existing conditions of development within the Village and compares them to any proposed interventions proposed by the participants in the charrette and reflected in their Vision Plan.

Currently, the existing figure ground shows the majority of development as single family homes with some commercial buildings located along NE 2nd Avenue. The scattered pattern of the trailer park stands out on the west side of the Village, as it breaks the continuity of the development pattern within the Village.

In the proposed figure ground diagram, there is a contrasting relationship between the existing black and the proposed red buildings. As one can see, the trailer park can be laid out into a small, compact, mixed-use town center with open spaces. Also, the buildings along NE 2nd Avenue could be brought to the property line creating a more cohesive, main street development pattern. Various other interventions around the Village are also clearly visible in this diagram, such as, entrance features, bridges and canoe launches and a proposed civic feature on North Miami Avenue.



Street Connectivity and Block Structure Diagrams

The street connectivity and block structure diagram illustrates a comparison between the existing thoroughfare network and that which is proposed in the Vision Plan.

The main differences between the two are that in the Vision Plan, both motor vehicles and pedestrians would have greater options as to how to traverse the Village in all areas. The Little Farms Trailer Park is broken down into a system of new streets and blocks, manageable for the pedestrian and better suited to alleviate traffic from motor vehicles, by offering more options rather than the bottle necking that occurs with only one means of ingress and egress.

Also, a system of alleys and service ways has been incorporated within the proposed town center and directly behind the commercial lots along NE 2nd Avenue. By situating the service and parking in the rear, off of these alleys, buildings can now be moved towards the street, thus improving the public realm.



Green Network Diagram

A priority identified by the residents of the table sessions was the establishment of a variety of open spaces and connectivity within the Village. Their design should include elements that provide comfort and protection to everyone within the public realm.

Open space options for the community should occur in the form of parks, greens, squares and plazas. In addition to parks and greens, other forms of open space should be enhanced to increase tree canopies and add beauty to the neighborhood. For example, roadway medians and planting strips are excellent locations for trees, which contribute to neighborhood character and pedestrian comfort. The creation of pedestrian friendly, tree-lined streets and a variety of open spaces that are connected to the businesses, offices, residences, schools and civic facilities encourages adults, of all ages, and children to walk or bike to their destinations, promoting a safe, active and healthy lifestyle alternative to vehicular travel.

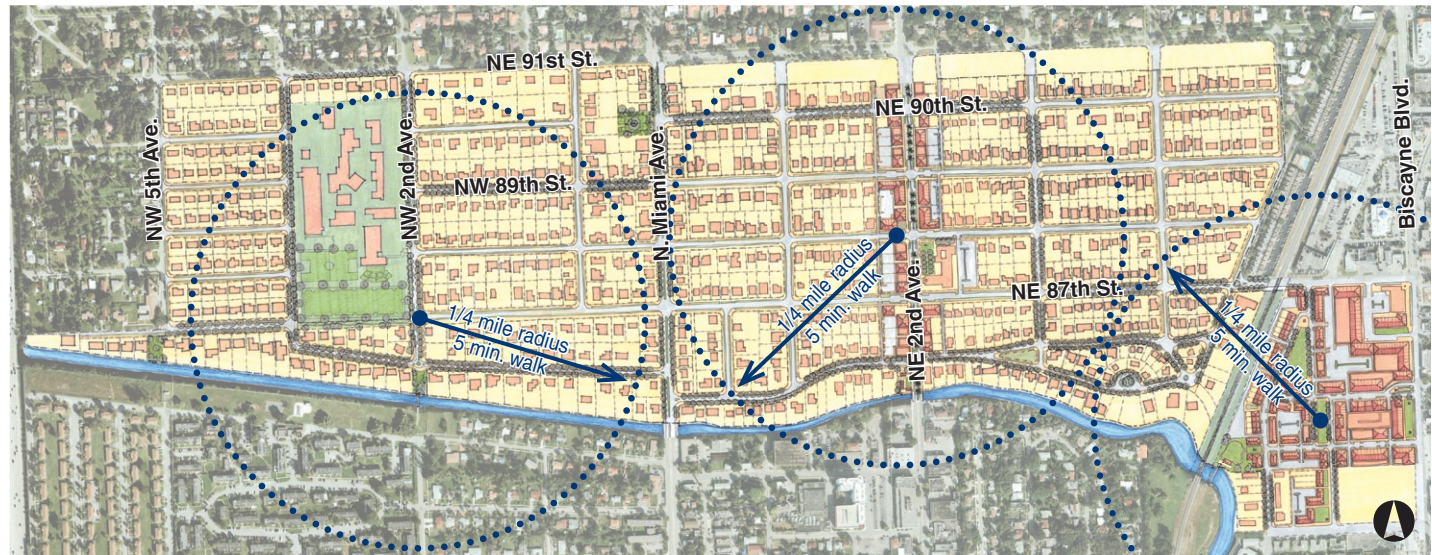


Pedestrian Shed Diagram

As a unit of measurement of distance within a community, time traveled via automobile has become one of the most widely used units. Residents will say that the store is 10 minutes away or a family friend lives about 15 minutes from here, however, rarely is the case that people measure time from a pedestrian's point of view.

With recent efforts to move away from auto-oriented, suburban sprawl development and a focus on place making and pedestrian oriented design, it is important to also look at the Village from this point of view.

The Pedestrian Shed Diagram shows the distance from a specific point with each concentric circle indicating an additional minute it would take to travel by foot. The idea being that everything that an individual needs for their day to day life should be located within a ¼ mile pedestrian shed, or 5 minute walk. When located near a transit station the ¼ mile shed would expand to a ½ mile radius, as individuals are more apt to walk with transit options nearby.



URBAN DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

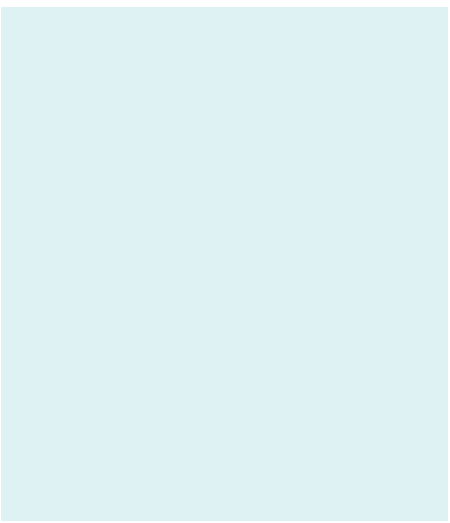
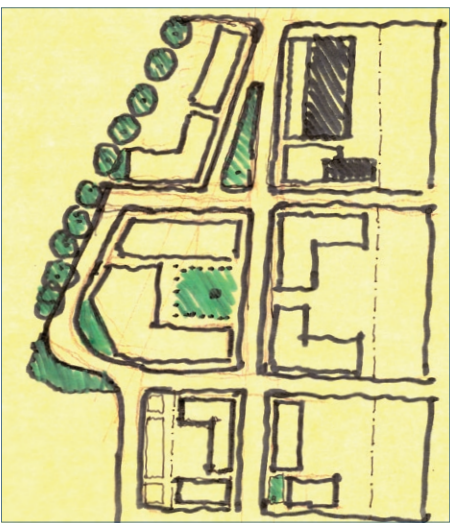
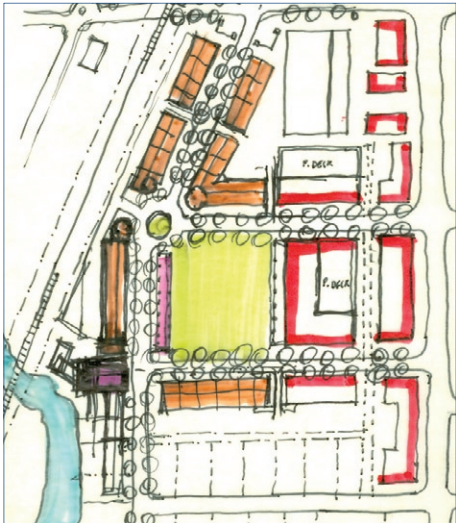
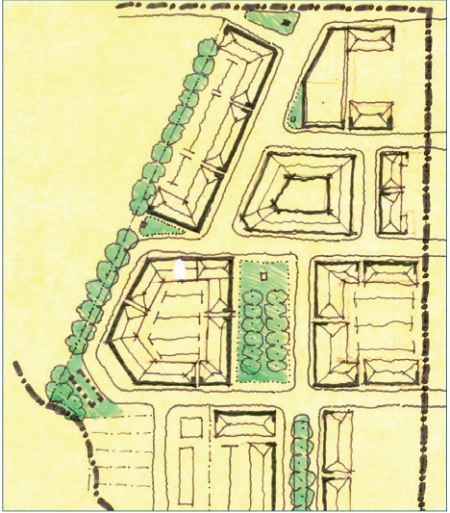
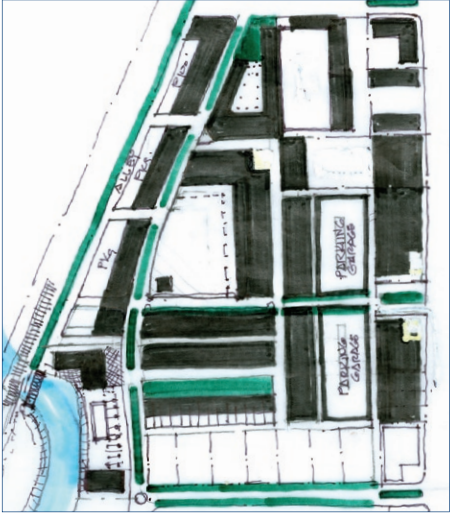
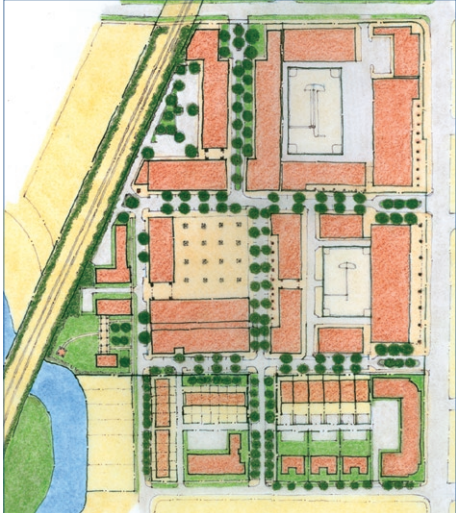
Little Farms Trailer Park Site

Located on the southwest corner of the intersection at Biscayne Boulevard and NE 87th Avenue, the Little Farms Trailer Park is the catalyst for the Village of El Portal Charrette. While the out parcels along Biscayne and NE 87th Avenue are commercial properties, the majority of the site is an interrupted, irregular grid of streets, lot after lot filled with trailer park homes.

Over the years, interest has grown from developers to purchase the land and redevelop. For this reason, along with the City of Miami rezoning efforts, called Miami 21 and its close proximity to the Village, officials have looked to the residents to partner together and outline their vision for the property. Village officials hope that the results of the charrette yield not only a new vision that residents of El Portal and participants agree upon, but also, one that creates additional tax base for the Village and a positive stream of revenue for years to come, all while transforming the image of the Village of El Portal.

At the charrette workshop on Saturday, residents and other participants discussed very specific ideas about what they would like to see happen on the site of the Little Farms Trailer Park, within their overall vision for the Village of El Portal. A rather apparent consensus was reached regarding the types of uses, scale of the buildings and character of the development that they would like to see be implemented on the site. This consensus makes it easier for designers to work on the details and unites a stronger case for development when that time comes.

Generally, each of the tables felt that the site should be developed into a mixed-use town center, within close proximity to the remainder of the residents within the Village. They wanted a network of connected streets, easily traversed via motor vehicle, but felt it was mandatory to be able to connect with other modes of transportation or on foot. The majority of development should mimic the development pattern outlined in the existing zoning code, where the highest intensity and density should be



at the corner and along Biscayne Boulevard and should transition back to meet the scale of the surrounding residential neighborhoods. Participants also hoped to see new open spaces in the place of vast parking lots, therefore creative parking solutions would need to be implemented.

Armed with this new information, the design team returned to the studio with the goal of creating a master plan for the trailer park, which satisfied the citizen's consensus in a well thought out, detailed manner. For the first day of the studio, each designer worked independently on a scheme for the trailer park. By mid-morning the following day, each of the schemes was presented during a pinup, with the best of each plan to be consolidated into the Vision Plan.

The plan for the Little Farm Trailer Park was detailed in a phased manner so as respect the existing streets within the area, and also, remain consistent with the existing uses that are presently functioning, outside of the trailer park. Traveling north on Biscayne Boulevard, one's attention would be grabbed by a large linear open space. Framing this plaza would be buildings roughly 8 stories in height along the corridor, a height consistent with the proposed development allowed on Biscayne Boulevard. A spot median, for traffic calming draws people into the town center and can also function as an entrance feature to the new development. The existing network of interrupted streets should be transformed into a network of connected streets and blocks. The majority of the blocks should be made up of ground floor retail with small cafés and restaurants that spill out into wider sidewalks at the street level. On the floors above, office space and residential will activate the proposed town center at all hours, rather than this just being a destination during part of the day.

A stark contrast from conventional suburban development,



where vast parking lots stand before a strip mall at the rear of a site, mixed-use development should provide alternative parking solutions that diminish vehicles impact on the place. Parking should be located within courts, at the rear of buildings or mid-block, where they are out of site and cannot negatively affect pedestrians within the town center. Where feasible, and proposed in the eastern most block along Biscayne Boulevard, a parking structure can provide multiple levels of parking, while still being lined with mixed-use buildings, providing in-tact urbanism for those within the proposed town center. When combined with on street parking, on certain thoroughfares, most of the parking requirements for this site can be met, depending on how many stories of parking are located within the garage. By proposing parking solutions in this manner, developers can take advantage of shared parking incentives, thus freeing up more space within the site for new development.

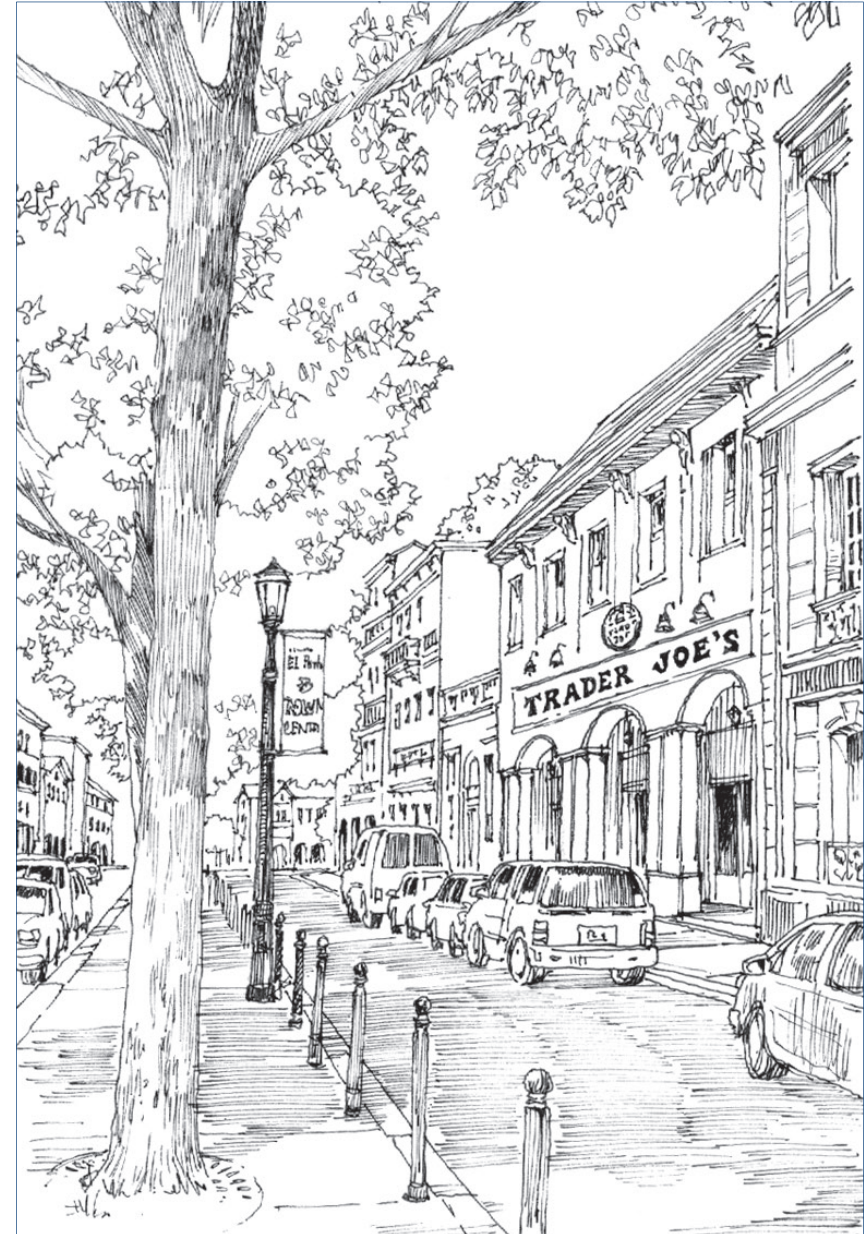
Once within the proposed town center, both vehicles and pedestrians co-exist on tree lined streets with active, lively uses. Moving west from the entrance off of Biscayne Boulevard, one would arrive at a rectangular shaped, formal green. This green, landscaped with local trees, hardscape and other amenities, such as water features, outdoor seating and individual shopping kiosks can serve as another of the main gathering spaces within the town center and form an additional link into the green network. As intensity and uses begin to transition to the north and west, the character of the town center follows suit. Participants of the charrette workshop hoped to see building heights begin to reduce and meet the smaller scale of the residential houses of the Village of El Portal, so as to serve as a buffer from the higher intensity areas within the town center. Flexible uses such as those proposed on the NE 2nd Avenue, paired with alternative forms of residential housing, which provides the opportunity to vary housing typologies offered in the Village of El Portal, transition to a less intrusive 2 to 3 story at the western edge of the Little Farms Trailer Park property. This housing type, the townhouse, is



rear loaded by an alley and is the ideal typology, when housing abuts into something like the FEC Tracks, as these do.

When entering off of NE 87th Avenue, one will be drawn into the property by a passing view of a civic building overlooking a large, open green, meant to serve as a flexible open space for the community within the Village of El Portal. Participants of the charrette envision a large, civic building, such as the government building or a library overlooking a landscaped green. This triangular shaped green can evolve to be used as a farmer's market, passive recreation areas or for other community events, like art festivals and fitness jamborees. When not in use for special events, residents and guests alike can occupy this green from one of the many cafes or business uses on the east side in the flex space buildings.

The purpose of illustrating the design for the Little Farms Trailer Park in a phased manner is to show that the vision does function as its own entity and does not suffer if the surrounding parcels, adjacent to the property do not develop, or develop at a different pace. The final phase of the plan illustrates what would happen if the owners of the parcel on the corner of NE 87th Street and Biscayne Boulevard and the owners of the parcels at the south edge of the trailer park on NE 83rd Street decided to plug into the plan for the town center. Liner buildings applied to the existing antique mart could transform the block into a more pedestrian friendly environment, consistent to that of the proposed town center. A linear green and small retail/office building to the south of the new mixed-use building on the corner would complete the blocks transformation. On the parcel to the south, a series of townhomes, 2 to 3 stories in height could front a linear green which would serve as an entrance feature and complete the access point at an appropriate scale from the south, along NE 83rd Street.





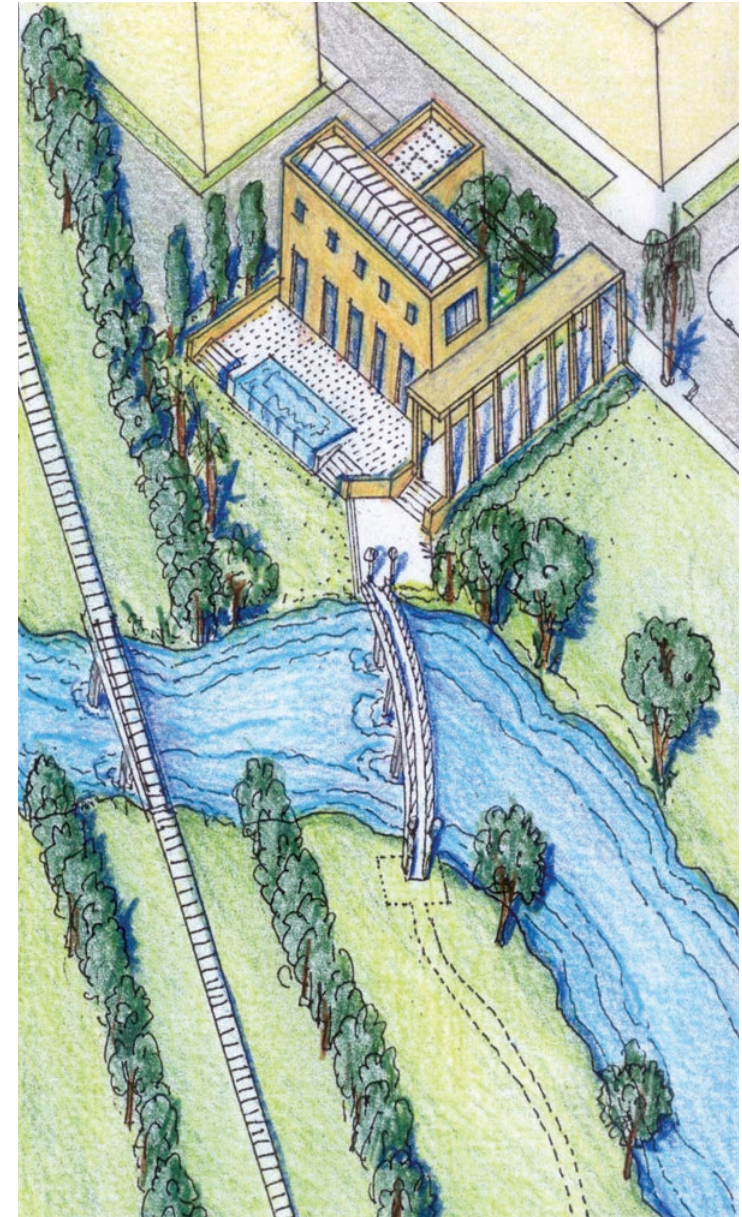
Civic Presence on the Canal

The canal, which establishes the southern border of the Village of El Portal, is the most prominent of the natural landscape features the Village has to offer. No different than many other places, the canal is merely a backdrop for the residential homes that make up the majority of the Village. Charrette participants identified various places along the canal for active uses, such as: landscape improvements, small scale commercial opportunities and leisure areas. Within these areas, guests could take advantage of a water view, watch manatees or take rest from daily routine.

One of the most attractive properties along the river is where the river bends, just south and west of the Little Farms Trailer Park Site and proposed town center. This site, with a view of the canal in both directions and open field, could be integral in connecting the Village of El Portal Town Center and the proposed site for the South Florida East Coast train station at NW 79th Street.

With the attractive location, in close proximity to the proposed town center and natural features, participants of the charrette were in consensus, identifying this site as one for a civic building.

The most popular idea for this lot was for a community activities civic building to be located on the site. This building, owned by the Village of El Portal could contain all-purpose rooms for after school students and the elderly. Some Village offices could create a government presence nearer to Biscayne Boulevard, offering greater visibility for the Village. Perhaps the most prevalent idea for the property was to offer a community swimming pool with space for a restaurant café, where residents could relax and enjoy the view of the natural areas, and still have ease of access to the proposed town center.



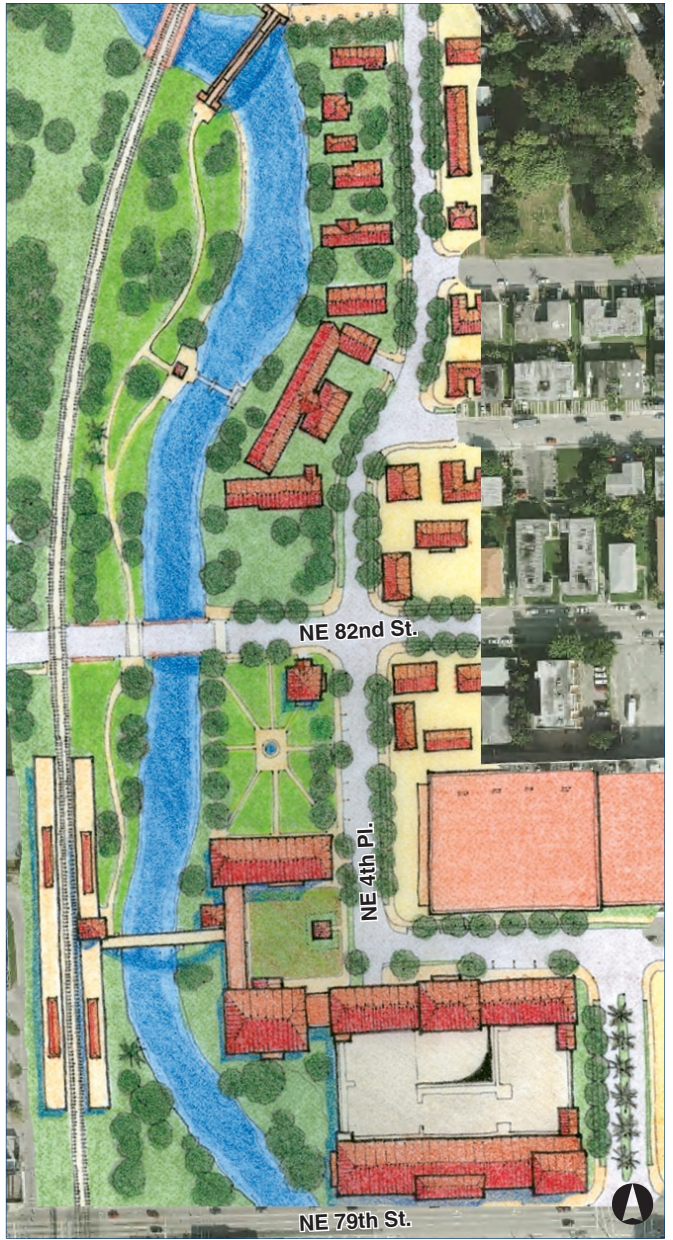
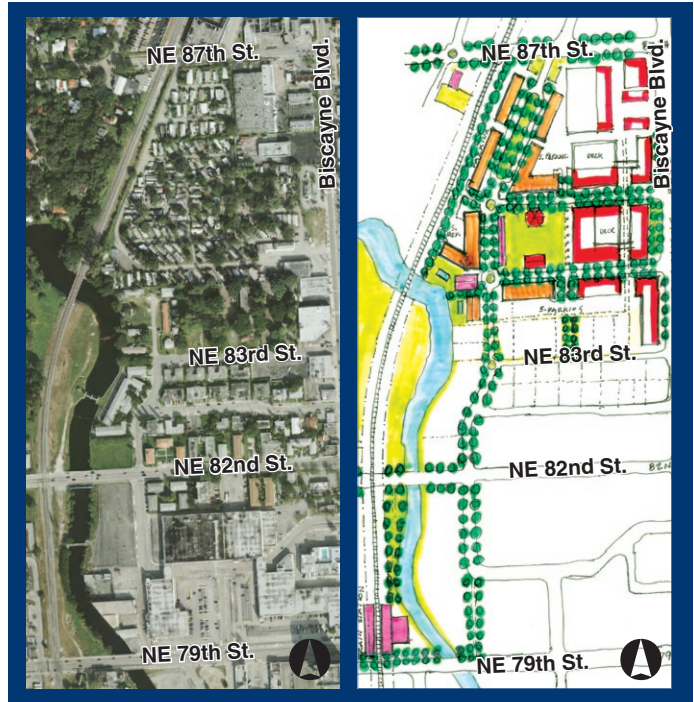
Connection to Proposed Train Station (N.E. 79th St.)

Roughly ¼ of a mile from the southern edge of the proposed town center, a study to determine potential concepts for the South Florida East Coast Corridor Transit Oriented Development Station, at NW 79th Street, has been prepared.

The plan, unique in that it calls for the density and intensity similar to that of the proposed Village of El Portal town center, but also contains natural landscape features, a greenway and canal, splitting mixed-uses and the actual rail station. A network of landscaped streets and blocks are proposed to assist pedestrians and motor vehicles in and around the site, where new mixed-use buildings could be built. A pedestrian bridge, spanning the canal, with grand public space adjacent to the station, provides an intriguing opportunity for connection to the former Little Farms Trailer Park Site.

Located within the accepted ½ mile radius from a major transit station, the Village of El Portal Town Center is connected to the 79th Street Station via several viable options for transit users and patrons of the town center. With this proximity, the two should be easily accessible by motor vehicle and by pedestrian, whether it be on foot, bicycle or by water.

A wide green way and canal that runs into the south side of the Village of El Portal is a prime place for pedestrians, bicyclists and canoes to travel between the Village of El Portal and the proposed station site. Connecting directly into a pedestrian bridge that is designed into the proposed civic building at the south side of the existing Little Farms Trailer Park, a series of meandering paths could filter people to the station in less than a 10 minute walk. Various public spaces along the canal could be designed to serve as places of recreation or rest for people along the way. Landscaping and other elements of pedestrian comfort could be implemented to offer more amenities to encourage use of the connection to the train station and in return alleviating some of the vehicular traffic in the area, as more and more people use alternative means to arrive at the new station.

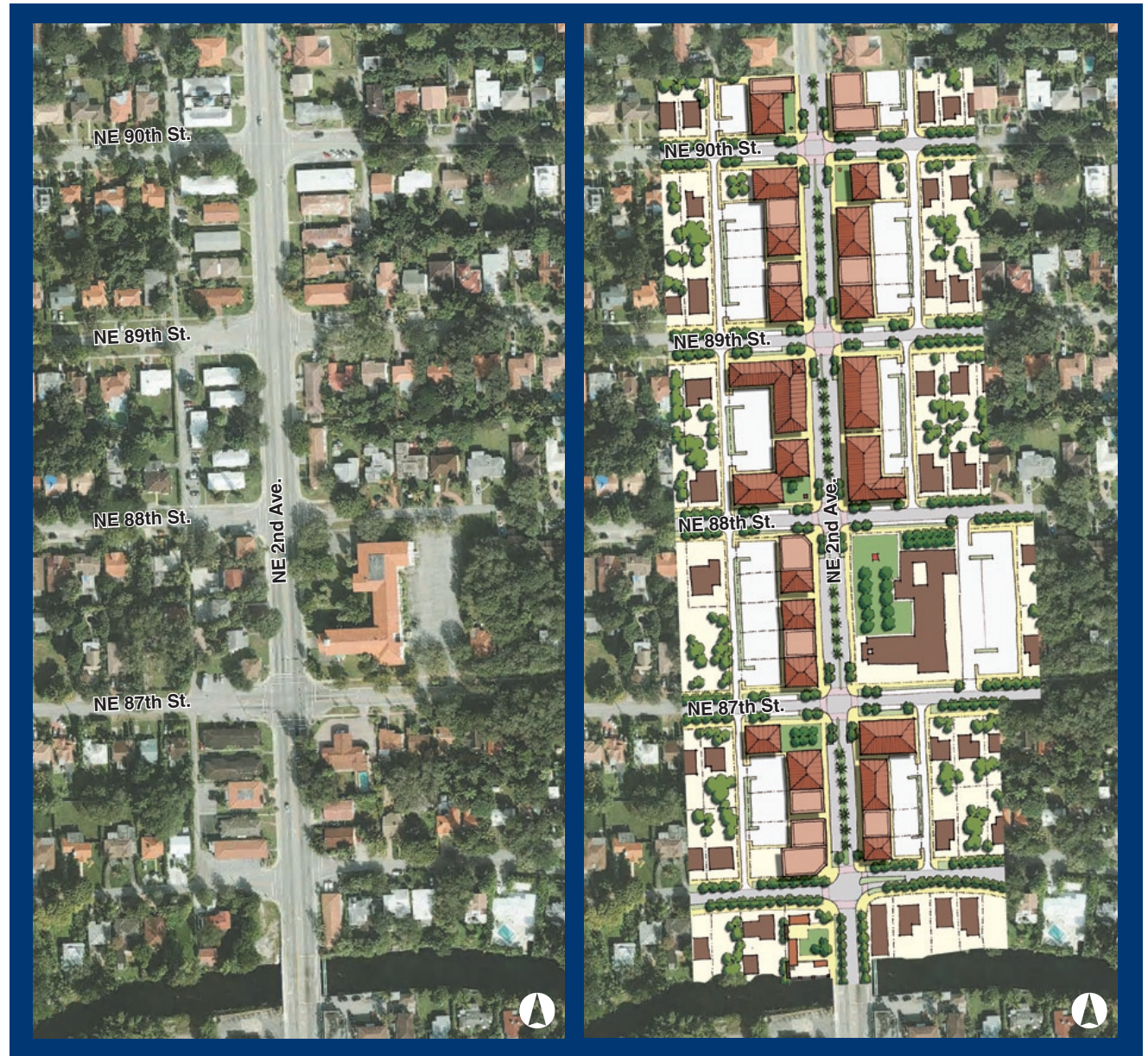


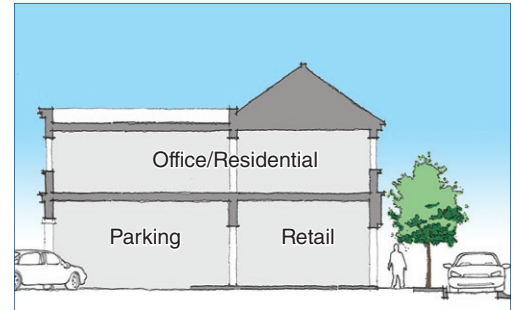
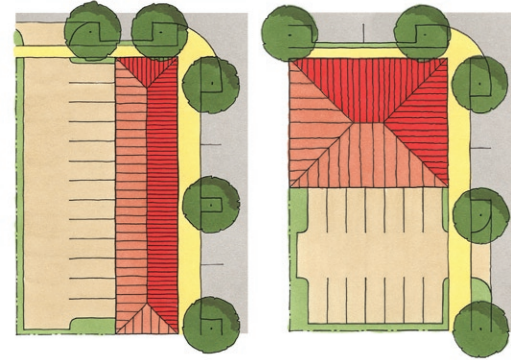
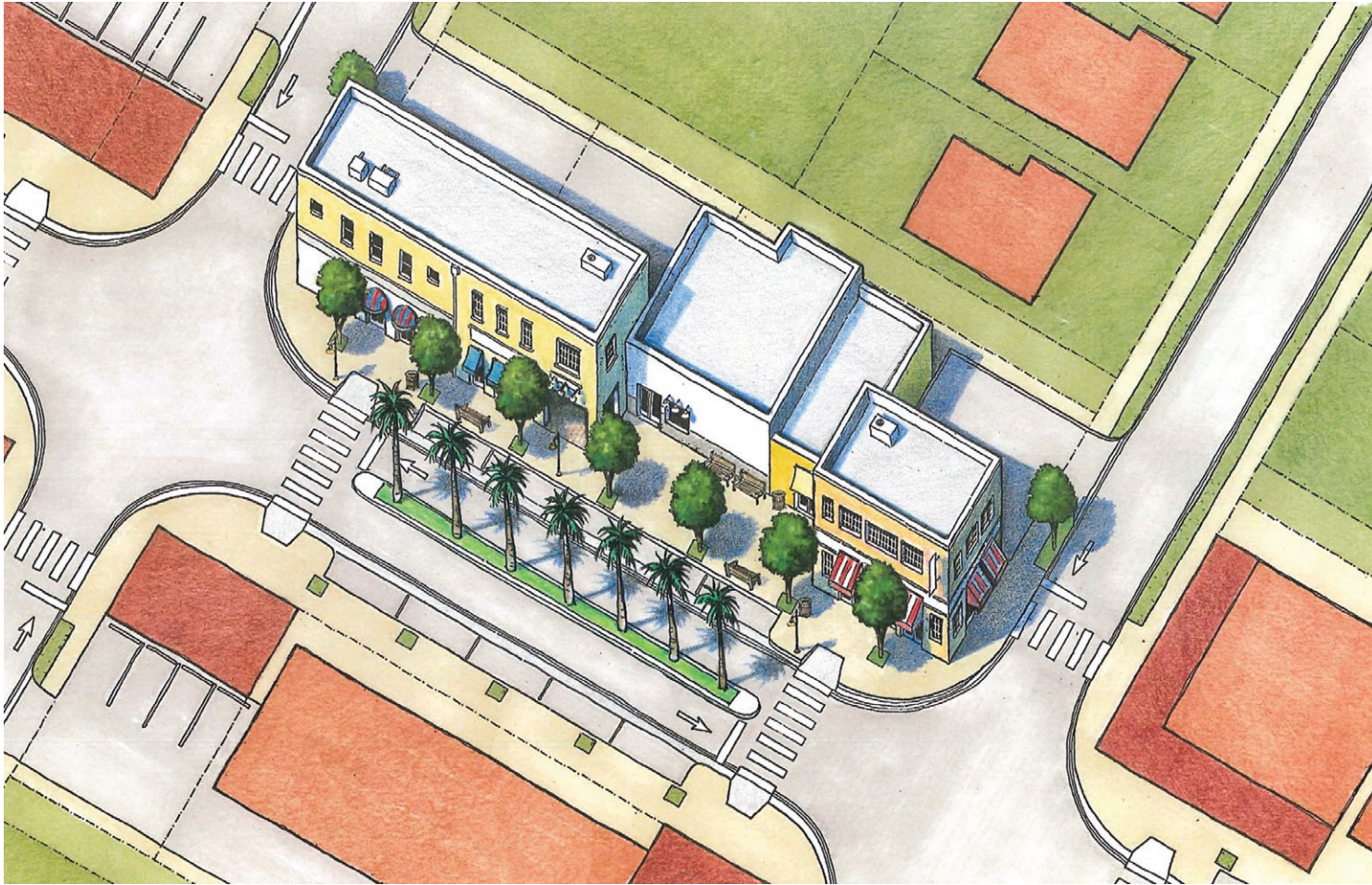
NE 2nd Avenue Corridor Improvement

A major development idea highlighted by the participants of the charrette was the future of the NE 2nd Avenue Corridor. Residents felt that as it currently runs, the corridor, with a future land use of Residents/Office, could be planned to better incentivize development for the Village and generate increased income for parcel owners, while creating an additional destination within the community.

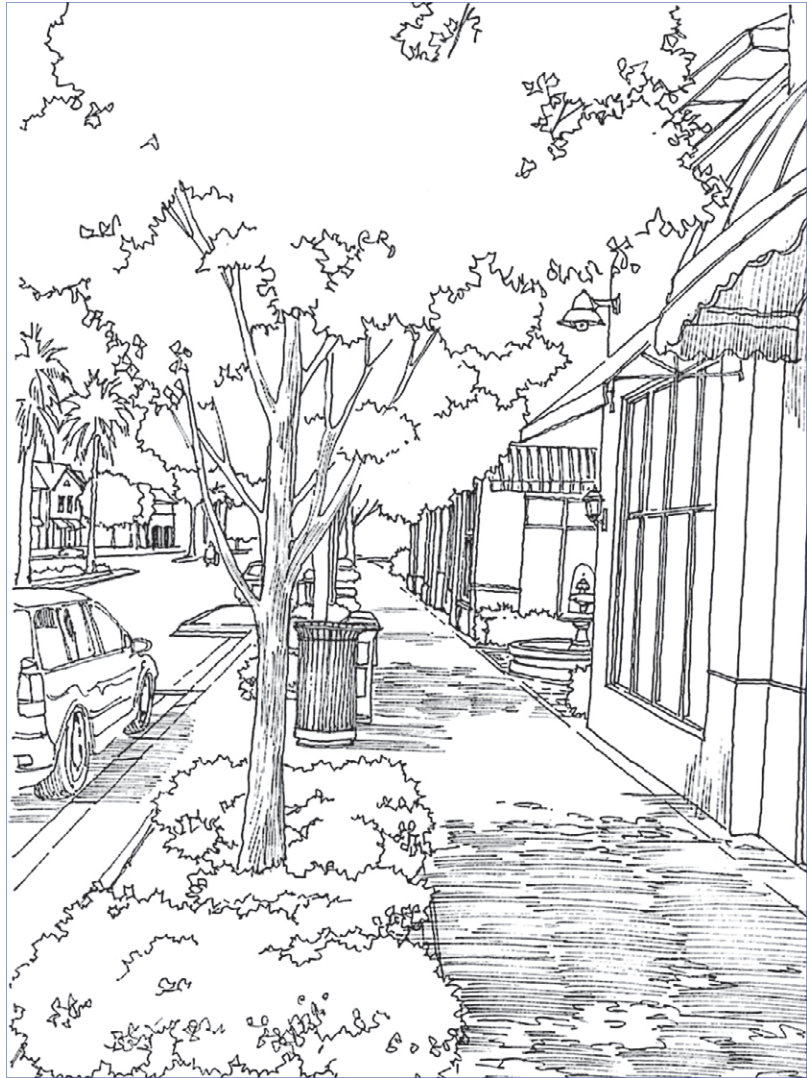
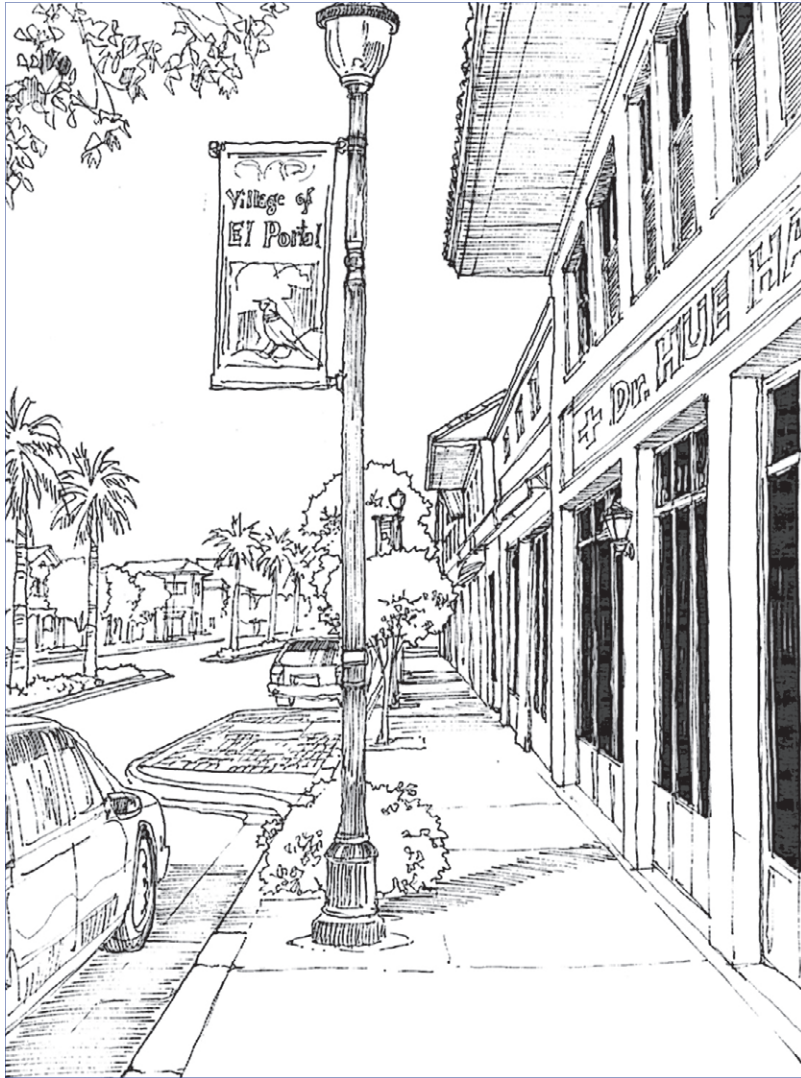
Presently, NE 2nd Avenue is a wide thoroughfare, zoned for commercial Residential-Offices, adjacent to the corridor, extending one lot deep. For the most part, the buildings overlooking the corridor operate as single family homes or are single family residences, repurposed as small business and office. Doctor's offices, lawyers and other small businesses are the most prevalent types of establishments on the corridor.

During the planning process, residents and participants envision NE 2nd Avenue transforming into a vibrant, pedestrian friendly, mixed-use corridor. To promote pedestrian activity, ground floors should be occupied by uses that provide interest for passing pedestrians; buildings should be brought closer to the front property line, while providing vehicular parking in the rear or at the side of the proposed buildings. These structures could be occupied by small scale 'mom and pop' businesses, where the business owners can operate during daytime hours and at night, close the doors and head up stairs to their homes. These second floor flats could also function as income properties for the owners. Many of the residents even detailed their vision to include art studios and small gallery spaces. It is these types of flexible uses that are very compatible with the types of two to three story live work units that could transform NE 2nd Avenue.











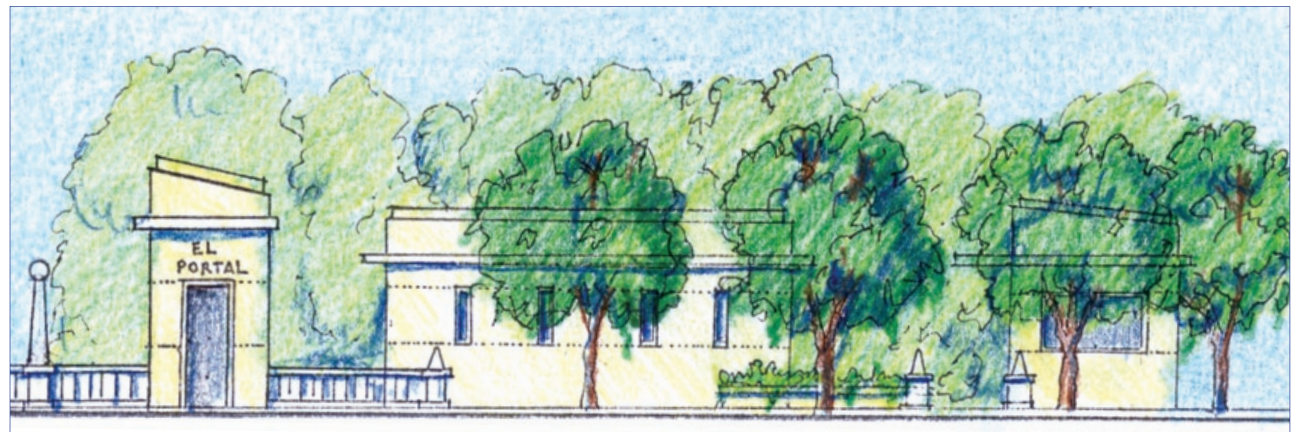
Open Spaces

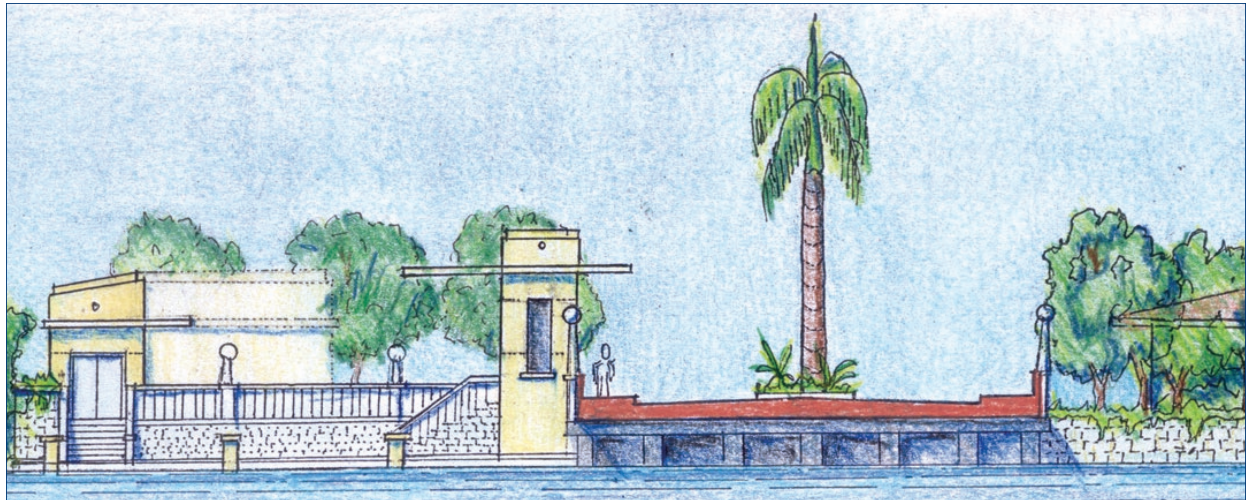
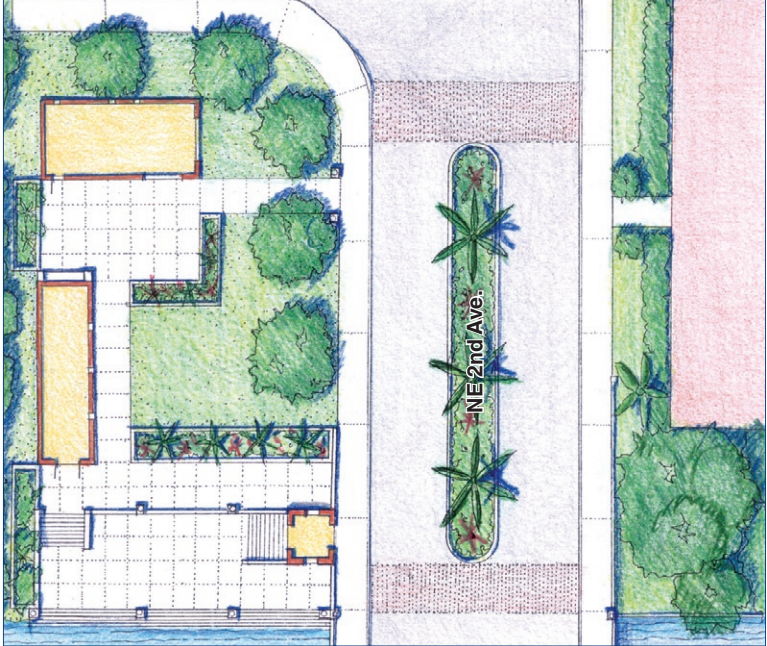
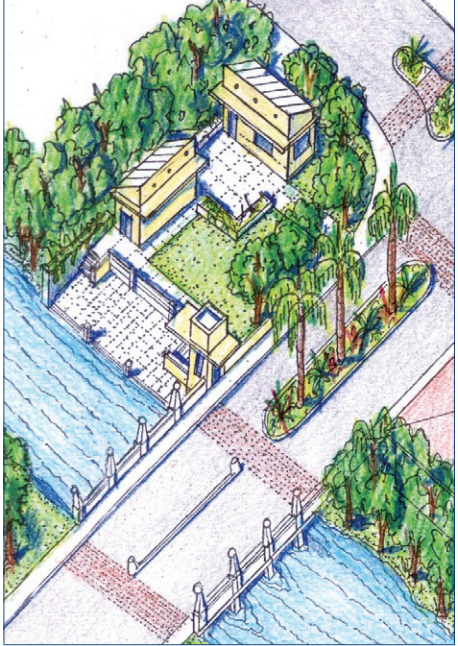
NE 2nd Avenue Bridge

There is an opportunity for new open space development on the south edge of the Village boundary, in a vacant parcel, along NE 2nd Avenue. Charrette participants envisioned the redevelopment taking the form of an improvement to the existing bridge and programmatic improvements to the empty parcel, which would provide an amenity to the community and generate a source of income for the property owners.

Improvements to the NE 2nd Avenue Bridge would be integral into improving the general image of the Village of El Portal. The bridge could be designed to integrate many of the design ideas that are consistent with the themes that are carried on throughout the Village. In addition to aesthetic improvements, the new bridge could be incorporated into the traffic calming scheme and complement new techniques outlined at the charrette.

Programmatically combined with an improved bridge, the vacant parcel could contain an assortment of new open spaces and structures for the community. Residents wished to pay homage to the idea that this property once displayed the original 'gates' into the Village. A tower feature directly overlooking NE 2nd Avenue could mark the entrance to a corner plaza, with a mix of local trees, softscape and hardscape. Several other structures could compliment the tower feature and also provide additional program for the open space. Uses such as a sandwich café or snack shop could step down to the canal side, where a canoe rental and launch would provide a new feature, unique to the Village of El Portal.



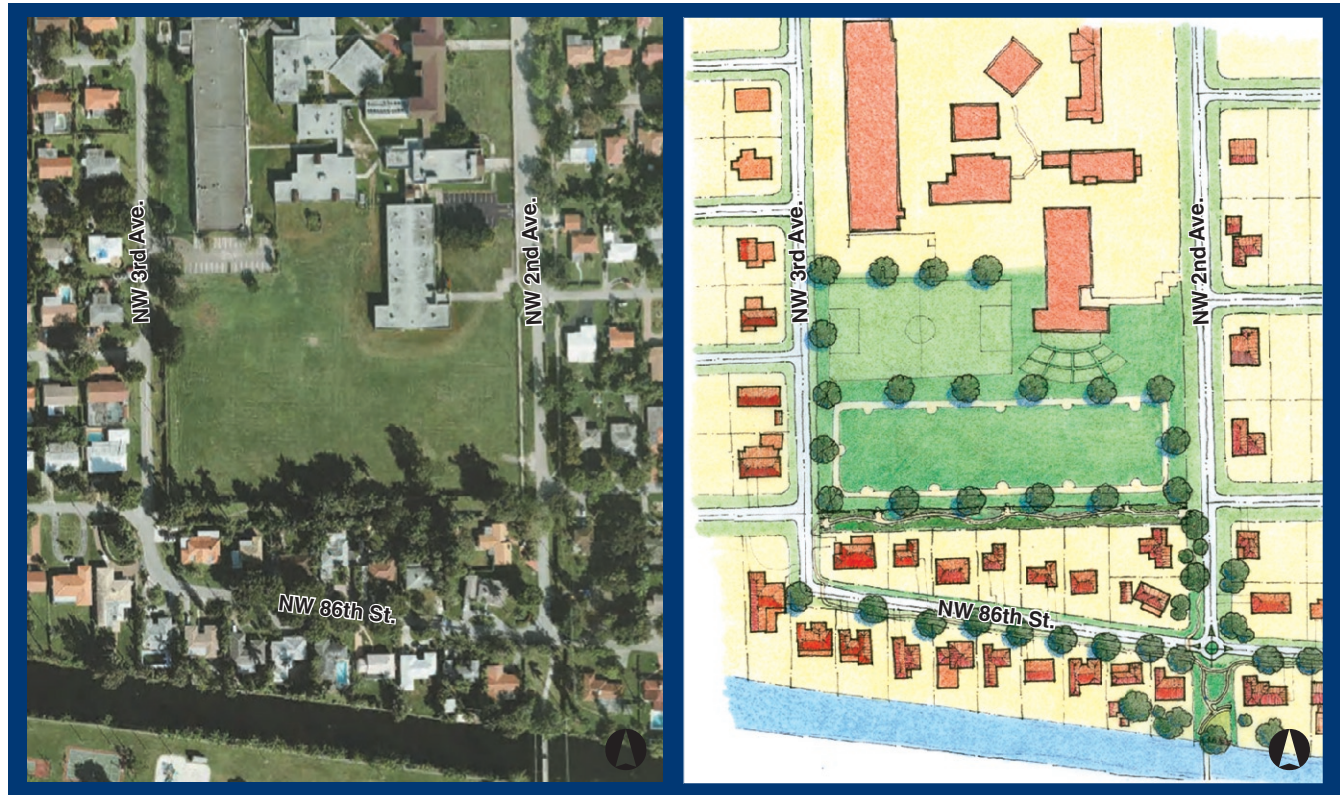


Horace Mann Shared Area

One interesting opportunity for consensus reached at the table sessions was the establishment of the Horace Mann Shared Open Space. Residents and participants feel that there is no relationship between the Village of El Portal and the Horace Mann Elementary School as it currently stands. Once the school day is complete, the Horace Mann property becomes vacant until the students return the following day.

The consensus for the property was to market the existing trail at the southern end of the property. Create gates at each end to satisfy any security requirements, but also provide opportunity to be compatible with the existing improvements and character within the Village. Further, residents wished to establish a vita-course adjacent to the existing path. With popular trends of actively used open spaces and boot camp like fitness classes, a vita-course provides a place for residents to continue their healthy lifestyles.

Lastly, in addition to a soccer pitch, participants hoped to establish a community green space where residents can come together for outdoor events and congregation. The big idea behind this would be to include a gently sloping green towards the southern façade of the school, where the Village could host regular movie nights and other events to bring this close-knit community together more often.



Pedestrian Bridge and Park

Terminating where NW 2nd Avenue meets the canal at the south edge of the Village, an open parcel, with a pedestrian bridge, provides yet another chance for the Village of El Portal to implement ideas outlined at the charrette.

Currently, the small park space contains some landscape in and around where the pedestrian bridge lands on the northern bank of the canal. With its close proximity to the Horace Mann Shared Open Space, charrette participants felt that it was necessary to connect via a landscaped pathway. New landscaping made up of local vegetation and trees could be planted in a manner that encourages the residents of the area to use the space for more than just spillover from the bridge. A butterfly garden, meditation garden or educational programs would further engage the residents and activate the space. Consistent with the resident's interest in activating the canal, a small walled in plaza, which steps down to the water, would make this park accessible to different types of water transportation, thus connecting the various other points of interest on the canal.



N. Miami Avenue Community Garden

Charrette participants felt that there was a lack of civic use for the community at the western side of the study area. The presence of an open lot along North Miami Avenue generated much discussion as a solution for this problem.

The general consensus for this lot was to transform it into a more community driven and used, interactive place. A civic building could house a commercial use, similar to the community room at the existing Village Hall. This room, when not occupied could be rented out for parties, thus another source of income for the Village of El Portal. More importantly the lot could also accommodate an additional open space for residents. A tree house park was one of the most coveted ideas for the open space. Around this house residents could plant a community garden, where educational programs based on gardening, landscaping and horticulture could be geared towards children and other residents interested in the history of the Village.

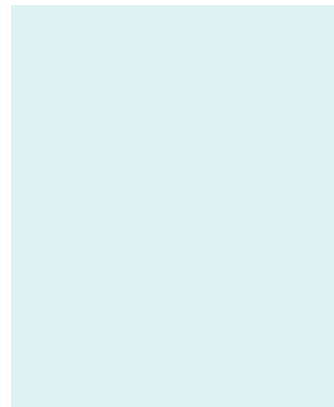


Thoroughfare Improvements and Traffic Calming Techniques

During the charrette, participants from the community expressed the need to reduce the speed of vehicles along the corridor, improve conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as discourage cut-through traffic in specific areas within the Village.

Traffic calming methods like segregating users, strict speed limits and street closures tend to be the default when one thinks of how to control traffic. In reality, the goal of traffic calming is to make the streets safe for all users, whether they are in cars, on bikes or afoot, while not preventing efficient traffic flow or causing traffic jams.

Though individual traffic calming interventions can be effective at certain points within the Village, it is beneficial to devise a comprehensive traffic calming scheme, where numerous elements are designed to work together, cohesively, and yields the desired solution that charrette participants want. It is then that traffic becomes more predictable and easier to manage.



Designed Right of Ways

The right of way is an important element of urban design within the study area. They define the blocks and open spaces within a community and should be designed to accommodate convenient, safe and attractive travel for all users. Improving the rights of way within the Village will enhance access and visibility to businesses, as well as increase the ease in which pedestrians navigate the Village of El Portal.

Wide sidewalks allow for pedestrians to move freely within the right of ways without vehicles traveling in close proximity, while further separation can be provided by parallel parking between the sidewalk and travel lanes. When parallel parking is not necessary, wider green strips can have the same effect. Planted landscaping improves the aesthetics of the streets, within the Village, in addition to architectural features such as awnings that protect pedestrians from the South Florida sun. These improvements, when combined with pedestrian scaled street lighting, street furniture and signage will contribute to a successful mixed-use town center for all of the Village to enjoy.



Roundabouts

One of the most effective ways to control traffic at intersections, without the installation of traffic lights is the roundabout. Heavily trafficked streets, with high volumes of high speed, cut-through traffic are great options for the implementation of a roundabout. Roundabouts provide a means to terminate a driver's view at a strategic intersection, forcing them to slow down as they travel through intersections, thus allowing for a higher level of pedestrian safety. By slowing the vehicles intermittently throughout the neighborhood, vehicles do not have the opportunity to build speed over long stretches thus making the neighborhood safer.

In addition to controlling the traffic within an area, roundabouts also add to the character of the place. Architectural features, such as public art or sculptures can be placed within the roundabout. Also, landscaping and native trees can be designed within the roundabout to support the community's wish to maintain the natural feel of the Village.

Spot Medians

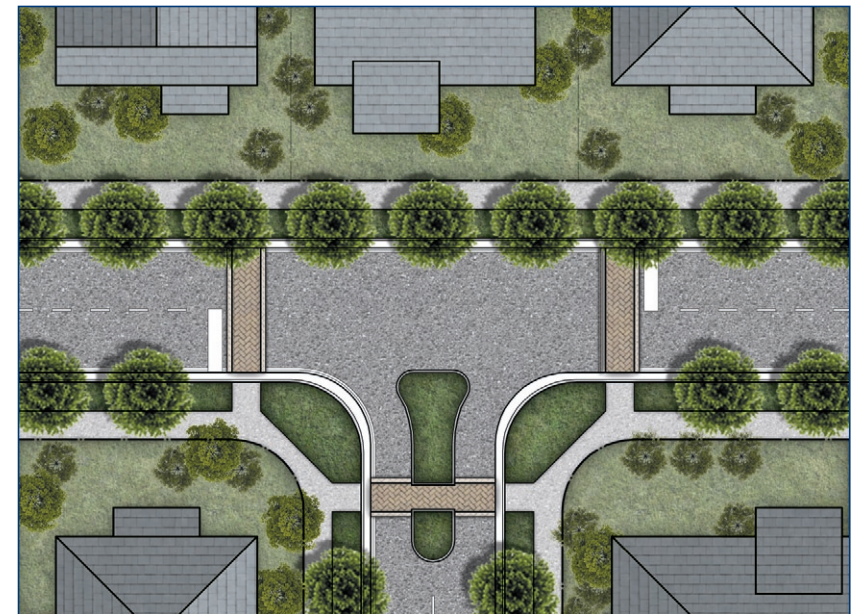
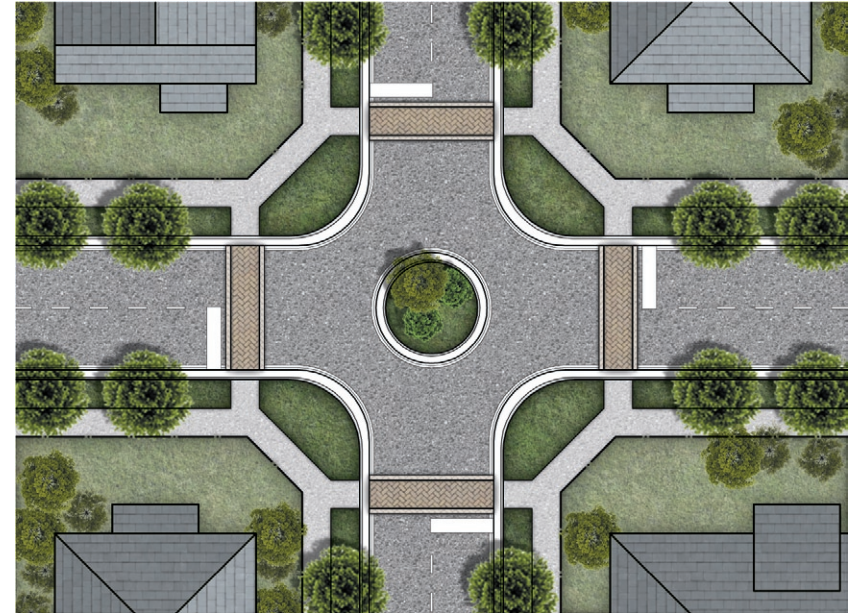
Spot medians are effective ways to control traffic and reduce vehicular speed along neighborhood streets.

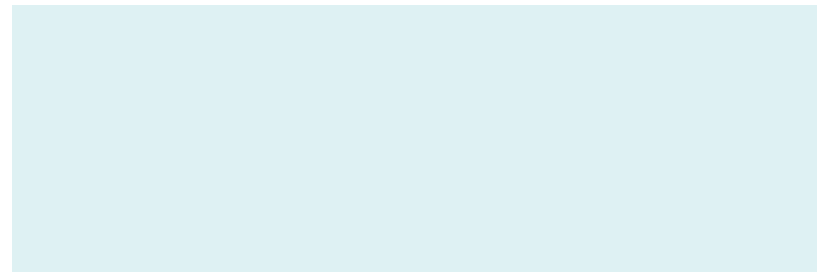
At intersections, streets that contain spot medians have controlled speed and access into the neighborhoods. In addition, when vehicles exit the neighborhoods, spot medians limit them to right turn only out, which discourages cars that use these streets as cut through streets.

Like traffic circles, spot medians located within specific right of ways or at certain intersections also provide opportunities to reinforce community identity. Architectural signage and landscaping can be used to embellish the traffic calming device and blend it within the character of the place.

Textured Crosswalks

Textured crosswalks serve as a complimentary element within the overall traffic calming scheme within the Village. Whether the crosswalk is designated with reflective paint or a more elaborate material designates that space, textured crosswalks demarcate the safest place for pedestrians to cross. Moreover, even when the cross walks are void of pedestrians, the presence of a change in pavement subconsciously alerts drivers to be more aware, thus controlling the vehicular traffic and creating a safer environment.

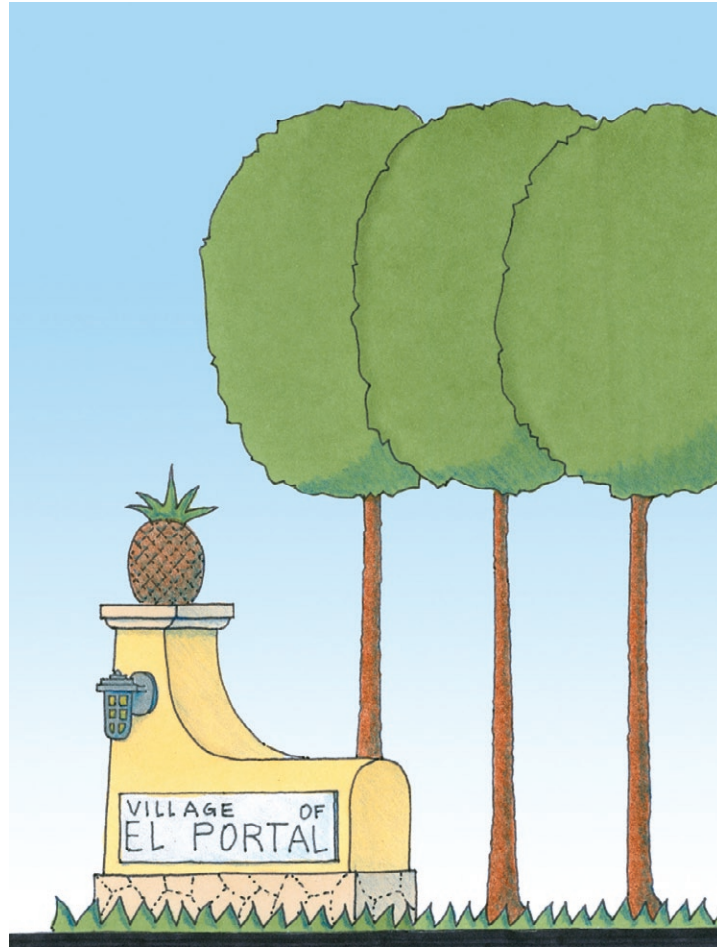


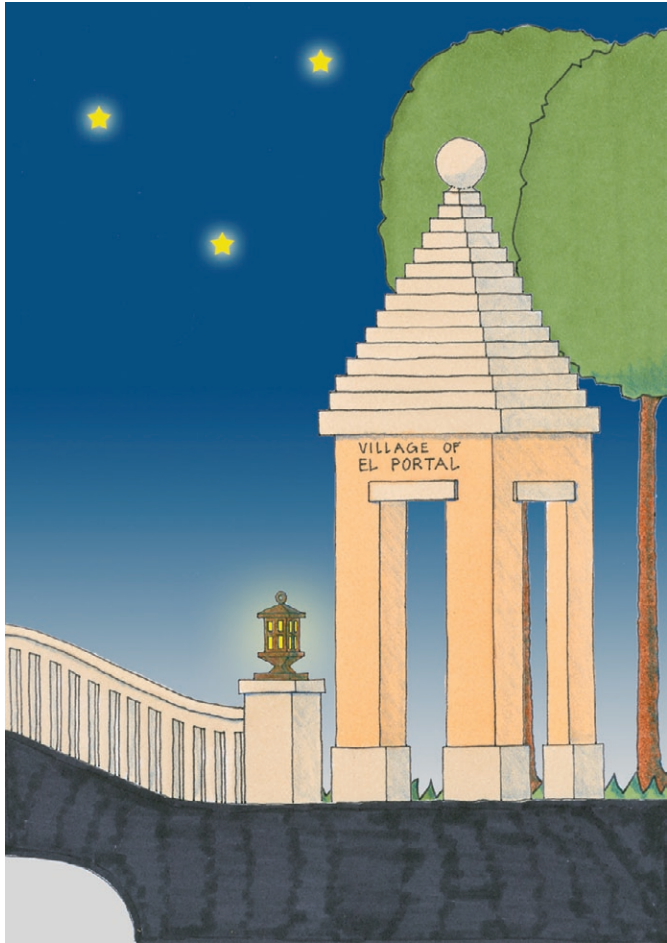


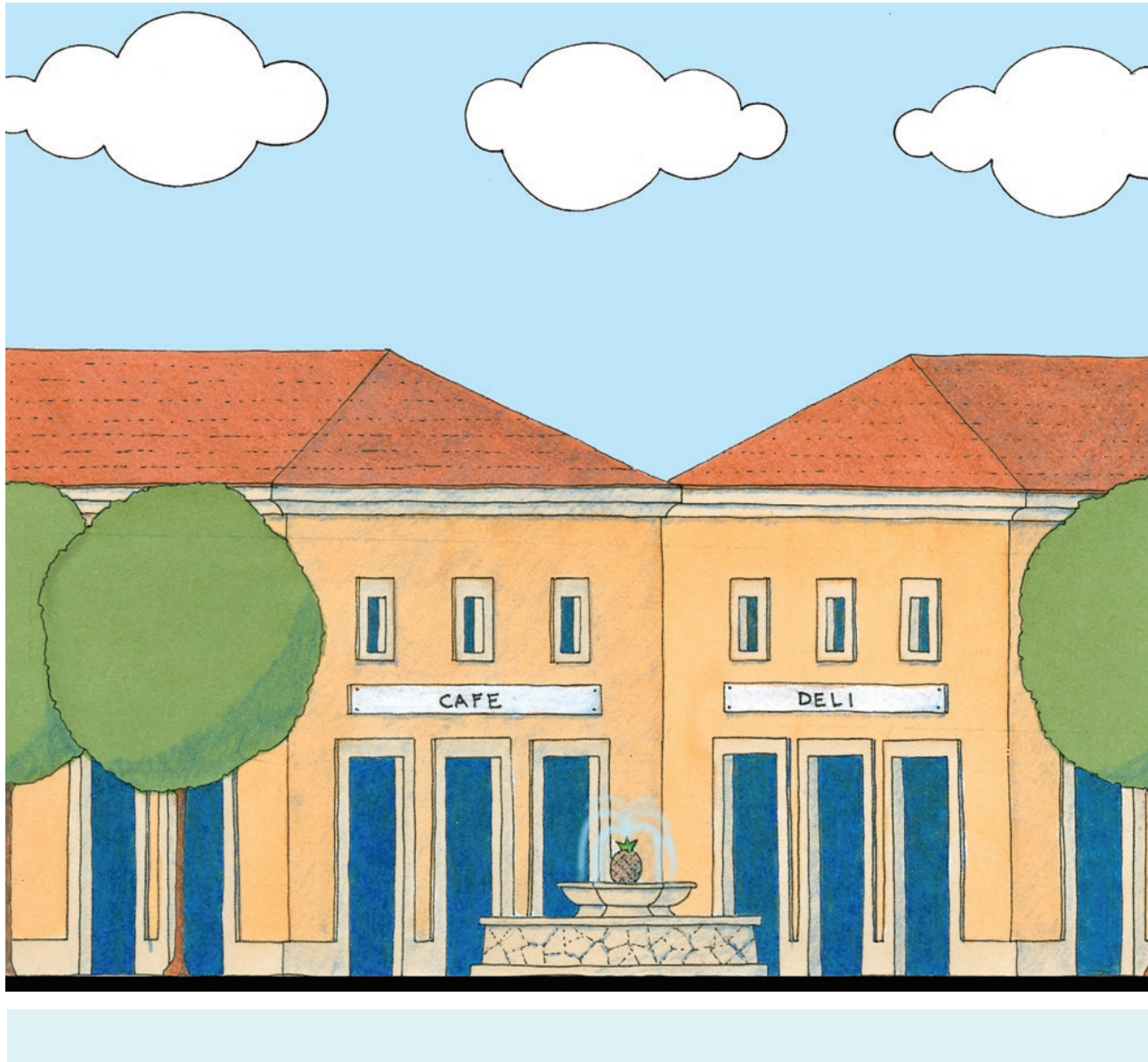
Community Identity and Neighborhood Branding

Entrance Features and Signage

Entrance features and signs make visitors aware of their arrival to a special community or place. They are important elements that help define the boundaries of the study area and would provide additional identity to the Village of El Portal. There were numerous requests for entrance features, signs or gateway markers made by residents during the charrette workshop.







IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the Vision Plan for the Village of El Portal requires citizen participation, as well as private sector and government agency involvement.

Over the past few years, municipalities across the Nation have adopted new legislation and created new zoning district standards that include criteria requiring developments with defined public open space allocations, specific land use designations, street and block design, building height restrictions and transitions. Zoning standards requiring regulating plans, strict building placement standards and architecture form, as well as scale guidelines are known as form-based codes.

A form-based type of code could potentially guide new development within the Village of El Portal. The new code would allow mixed-use development along NE 2nd Avenue, the Little Farms Trailer Park site, as well as throughout the Village. Regulating plans, building placement and height diagrams and criteria consistent with the Village of El Portal Charrette Report would guide development form, building height, building placement, transitions, parking, open space and landscaping. Form-based code amendments are the quickest method of attaining development change within the Village of El Portal consistent with the findings of this Report.

Intergovernmental coordination to determine infrastructure needs, restrictions and mitigation could be required for the implementation of the Vision Plan, as successful implementation of the recommendations in this Report are dependent on infrastructure to adequately provide services for residential, business and office uses.

The recommendations provided in this Report would contribute to the health, safety and welfare of the Village of El Portal. It is imperative the community remain involved to ensure identity, quality and success. Implementation of some of the recommendations may occur in a very short time while others, requiring a high level of intergovernmental coordination, are long term. Over the long term, the Village of El Portal Charrette

will be seen as successful only if there is a concerted effort and coordination on part of the community and government agencies to see the recommendations through to implementation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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