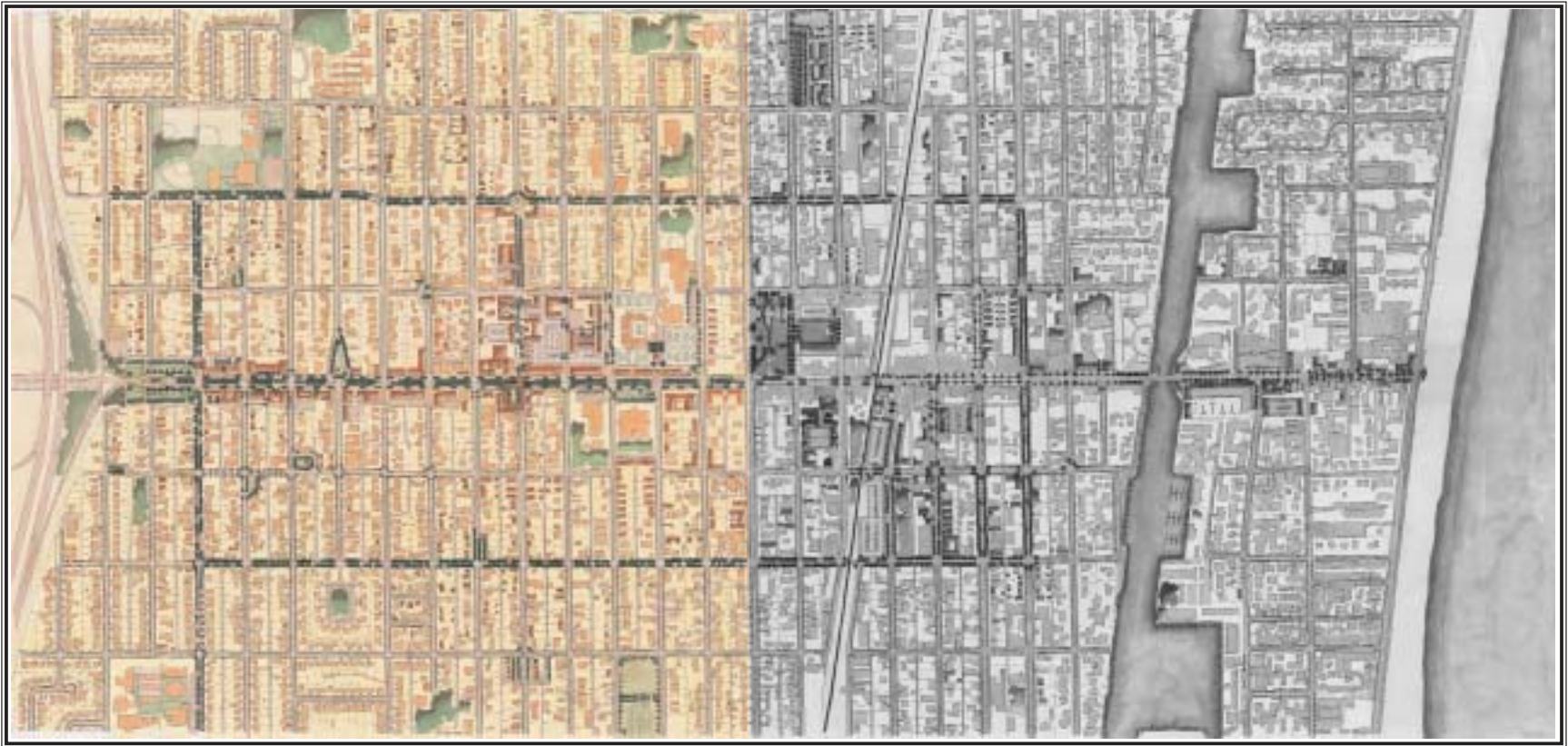


THE WEST ATLANTIC NEIGHBORHOOD



T R E A S U R E C O A S T R E G I O N A L P L A N N I N G C O U N C I L
I N D I A N R I V E R - S T . L U C I E - M A R T I N - P A L M B E A C H

General Structure

Located on the Western end the downtown area, it is twelve city blocks in length and, it includes the fire station, police station, county courthouse, a tennis stadium and the future site for the city's public library, some commercial uses, very few offices, and no residential component (along the Avenue). Within the fabric are several churches, additional commercial uses, many historic structures, single and multi-family parcels, public amenities, schools and many vacant lots.

In 1995, the West Atlantic Avenue Redevelopment Plan was adopted. The plan applies to the section of the West Atlantic corridor bounded by I-95 on the West, Swinton Avenue on the east, and by SW 1st Street and NW 1st Street on the south and north, respectively. It also included the commercially zoned block north of NW 1st Street along NW 5th Avenue. The plan was adopted pursuant to a public input process known as Visions West Atlantic, which culminated in a charrette attended by various stakeholders, civic leaders, City staff, and design professionals.

The plan calls for gradual redevelopment, with an emphasis on the preservation and enhancement of existing neighborhoods, while promoting a pedestrian friendly corridor that has a mix of residential, commercial, and civic functions. Development of the commercial area would take place with a minimum of displacement of residents. The plan provides block-by-block illustrations of the type of redevelopment that may be possible in the area.

The recommendations made within this master plan for the downtown are consistent with the concepts and recommendations of the West Atlantic Redevelopment Plan, and should be considered as a reinforcement of that plan. Some additional detail and direction is provided herein, particularly with regard to streetscape improvements and the location of public plazas and neighborhood parks. Both plans should be consulted when evaluating any proposal for development or redevelopment in this district.



Above: Aerial photograph of the West Atlantic neighborhood depicting existing conditions.

Below: Segment of the Master Plan showing proposed interventions to the West Atlantic neighborhood.



The Citizen's Proposal

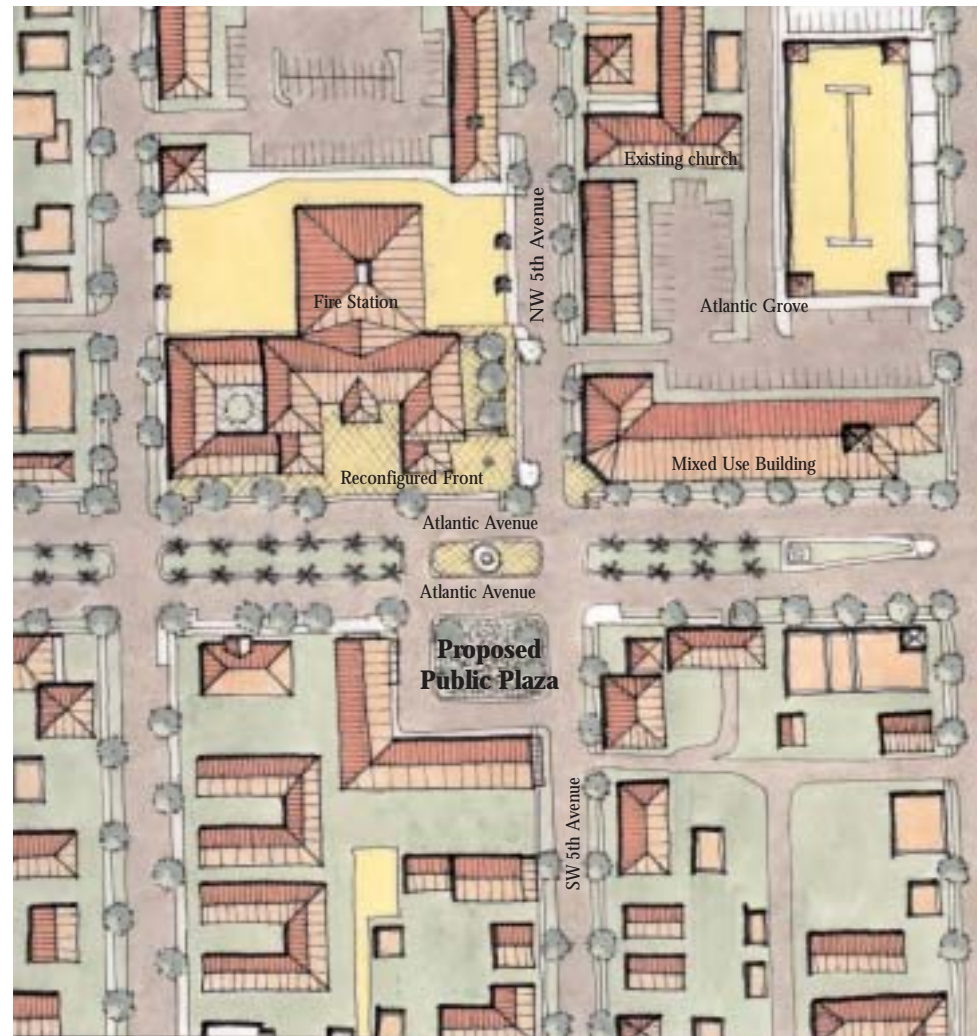
During the charrette, the citizens expressed the need for a new neighborhood center that would not only serve the West Atlantic Neighborhood, but the City as a whole. A center where retail, office and residential uses are combined in the right proportion. Where businesses are such that they can be locally owned and affordable to the entire community. Services from dry cleaners, shoe repair, hair salons, delis, museums, hotels, and ethnic restaurants to a small grocery store were envisioned. These uses would be combined into three to four-story buildings with office or retail on the ground floor and apartments above.

Given the extension of this area, the center was proposed mid-way between I-95 and Swinton Avenue. This mid-point location for a center was identified at the intersection of Atlantic Avenue and SW 5th Avenue.

NW/SW 5th Avenue has traditionally been the historic Main Street for the West Atlantic neighborhood. Today, at the southwest corner of this intersection, there is a vacant piece of property that could be converted into a plaza. The reconfiguration of this parcel occupying a central and prominent location within the heart of the neighborhood becomes the ideal setup for a public plaza.

Project Description:

- The vacant lot on the Southwest corner of Atlantic Avenue and NW 5th Avenue is 112' wide (fronting Atlantic Avenue) and 90' deep. This parcel is converted into a 92' x 70' plaza, surrounded by a 20' wide lane.
- The 50' x 90' lot next to this vacant parcel has a 30'x40', one story commercial building. In a first phase, this building is replaced with a two to three-story mixed-use building that faces and delineates the Western edge of the plaza.
- A fast food restaurant occupies the Southeast corner of this prominent intersection. The Master Plan keeps the use and location of this business but proposes infill on the vacant edges of this parcel. This infill of commercial buildings defines the Southern edge of the plaza.
- North of the plaza lies an important civic building, the fire station. This building is "hidden" behind thick landscaping. This amount of landscaping would be normal or acceptable in a suburban setting. The Master Plan proposes to eliminate this unnecessary landscaping, and open up the front of the building. This space now becomes public open space. An ideal location for a monument, a flagpole, or some element of cultural importance.



- The Northeastern corner is today a vacant parcel where the Atlantic Grove project will soon be built. It is crucial for this project to address both Atlantic Avenue and NW 5th Avenue. This project presents an incredible opportunity that will define the transition of retail and office from Atlantic Avenue into Historic 5th Avenue. It is therefore of utter importance that retail extends along the entire perimeter of this property. Parking lots, especially along NW 5th Avenue, should be shielded by two to three-story mixed-use buildings or live-work units. Due to the presence of the fire station and the church, if retail is interrupted on this first portion of NW 5th Avenue, it will be very hard for the commercial inertia of Atlantic Avenue to penetrate into the neighborhood.
- A 105' long, hard-scaped median is proposed at this location, to allow for westbound traffic to turn into the plaza and to improve pedestrian safety between the new center and Main Street.

The street is primarily a place of transit, whether pedestrian or vehicular, capturing public life momentarily. The public plaza on the other hand, is a destination. A purpose-built stage for ritual and interaction. It is the perfect setting to host structured or communal activities- festivals, celebrations, markets and specialized functions. By surrounding this plaza with mixed-use buildings with retail on the ground floor and offices and apartments above, the plaza is spatially defined and surrounded by uses that will keep it alive 24 hours a day. With this balanced mix of retail, office, residential and civic uses, the plaza becomes a central stage. It is the place where we would honor a ruler by setting up a monument to his name. It becomes an icon that will define the image of the neighborhood.



Looking West from Atlantic Grove at the Neighborhood Center and the proposed reconfigured space that fronts the Fire Station.



Aerial view of the public plaza, a center for the neighborhood.

The Importance of Atlantic Avenue

The memorable character of any region or community is established in its streets and public spaces. On a street like Atlantic Avenue, used by a lot of visitors and regional neighbors, there is no avoiding the fact that this corridor will form the lasting impression that many people have of the city. Whether for passengers in mass transit vehicles or private cars, pedestrians or cyclists, Atlantic Avenue should be comfortable, safe, pleasing, and even enlightening in terms of the experience it offers of the city.

This experience is particularly important to tourism. All tourism destinations of world-class status have great streets. Certain physical qualities are required for a great street. And it is the combination of all these elements, not just one or two, that contributes to create unforgettable mental images. What lasting impression is left after a drive down Atlantic Avenue today? Are the physical changes along the corridor affecting peoples' perception of the City?

Sidewalks where people can walk easily and safely seem like an obvious and easy goal to achieve. But that alone doesn't create a sense of place. Only healthy streets contribute to that sense of place. The roadway on Atlantic Avenue should be narrowed to allow for a wider median and a sense of enclosure. This will cause auto traffic to move at slower, safer speeds and will invite pedestrians to spend more time on it.

The Changes to the Avenue:

Within the West Atlantic neighborhood, the existing on-street parking on Atlantic Avenue is too wide and is occasionally mistaken for a right-turn lane. In order to correct this situation, a beautification project for the Avenue is currently underway which includes the incorporation of bump-outs to shield parked cars at the corners of each intersection along the Avenue. The narrowing of the travel lanes and widening of the medians should be incorporated in the project. This Master Plan also proposes the construction of additional bump-outs every three to five parked cars. These bump-outs also serve as planting areas.

Bump-outs should be as large as a parking stall (8' x 22'). This provides enough space for two trees planted in each one. These extensions of the sidewalk cut pedestrian crossing time, improve the safety of turns and contribute to a sense of enclosure at times when there are no parked cars.

The physical changes to the Avenue proposed here affect the buildings as well. On this portion of the Avenue, buildings exist as a combination of one to two-story structures, fronting a very narrow sidewalk and a wide, high speed road. Few buildings have awnings and there is an excessive amount of vacant land. Many buildings are in need of updating and renovation. This combination creates ambivalent zones along the street which are not pedestrian friendly or supportive of retailing activity.



Above: Existing conditions and proposed changes to Atlantic Avenue between NW 12th Avenue and Swinton Avenue. The Darker, hatched roofs on the image below represent new proposed buildings.



These ambivalent zones are made even more evident by the presence of the parking lots in front of buildings or the tennis center. In addition to damaging the pedestrian quality of the street, this sends the message that stores and entertainment are oriented less toward local neighbors than towards strangers driving by. Pedestrian activity in such an environment is a fantasy. It feels unsafe and is boring, as the only distraction is provided by the grilles of the cars in the parking lots.

This first section of Atlantic Avenue leads visitors right up to the City's heart. It should become a ceremonial thoroughfare that will centralize and fully control the urban experience of visitors from the moment they enter the City.



Different views showing deteriorating buildings and sidewalks that are interrupted or change width abruptly. All these factors negatively affect retailing activity and are not conducive for a pedestrian environment.

Positive elements:

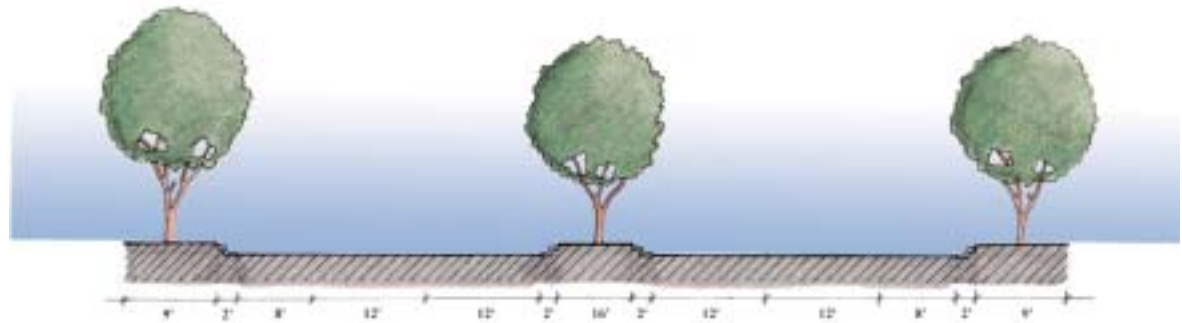
- One to two-story buildings properly sited.
- Good street lighting
- On-Street parallel parking
- Shade
- Narrow but beautifully paved sidewalks
- Median

Negative elements

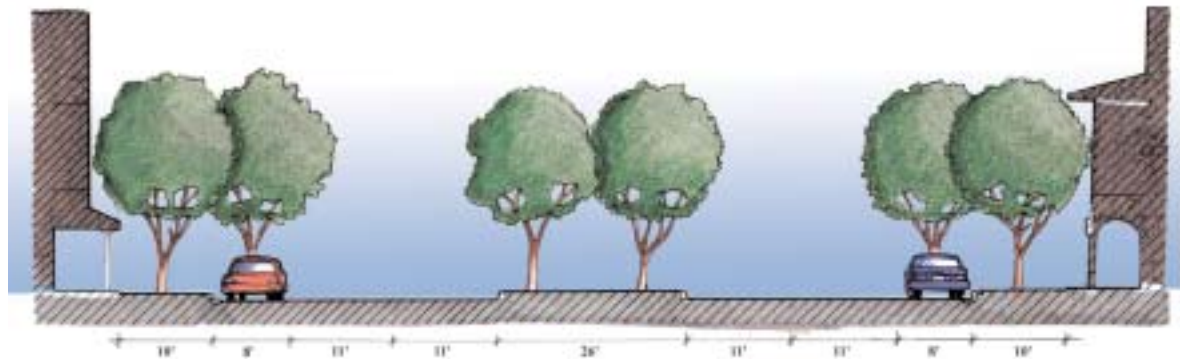
- Excessively wide travel lanes
- Excessively wide parking lanes
- Narrow median
- Speeding traffic
- Narrow sidewalks
- "Missing teeth" (too many vacant lots)
- Public buildings that neglect the street and the pedestrian
- Single use buildings
- Parking lots in front of buildings

The long-term future of Atlantic Avenue is a four-lane, tree-lined street with wide median, parallel parking and a mix of uses along its edges. The quality of future development on it will rely largely upon how well the street is rebuilt.

Atlantic Avenue: Existing Condition



Atlantic Avenue: Proposed Changes



Physical Changes To Atlantic Avenue Along The West Atlantic Neighborhood.

Regarding the Street

- Maintain four 11' travel lanes, and a 26' median throughout the entire neighborhood.
- Shield parking by adding bump-outs at corners and at mid-block. Parking lanes should be narrowed to 8'.
- Median should be widened to 26' throughout the entire neighborhood.

Regarding Street Lighting

- Eliminate cobra head high-type streetlights.
- Continue with the more elegant light standard and fixtures already in place in other neighborhoods.

Regarding Crosswalks

- Crosswalks should be incorporated at main intersections, and should be highlighted with bricks, pavers, concrete bands, stamped concrete, or simple color in the pavement.

Regarding Landscaping

- Customizing street-tree plantings on a block-by-block basis will be necessary.
- Plant a double allée of trees in the widened median.
- Utilize large, native shade trees (i.e. live oaks).
- Plant a continuous strip along the residential streets that feed into the Avenue.

Regarding Café Seating

- Outdoor seating should be encouraged and supported, just as it is in other Districts.

Regarding Residences above Shops

- Residential uses should be encouraged and supported. Special programs to encourage such uses need to be adopted.

Regarding News Stands

- Ideally there should be one or two news kiosks in the neighborhood staffed by a merchant.







View of the recently renovated Spady House and proposed infill along NW 5th Avenue



NW 1st Street and NW 5th Avenue: A view of the renovated grocery store along the Neighborhood's historic Main Street



While most new developments are trying to incorporate the concept of the corner store into the community, the West Atlantic neighborhood understands it as a tradition. There are several corner stores and neighborhood retail within this area.

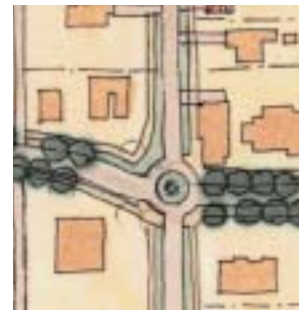
These stores are more than just places for retail. They are places where neighbors meet. They are social centers that contribute to build bonds in a community and, when properly sited and designed, contribute to property values. The corner store provides residents with their daily needs and does wonders to limit automobile trips.

These corner stores should be maintained and the synergy that they generate should be used as a catalyst to develop small neighborhood centers.

The image above shows an existing one-story business with other commercial uses surrounding it. The proposed expansion to these buildings where the uses are maintained and commercial uses like those provided by a neighborhood restaurant and a second story are added is shown on the right.



Mixed-uses and retail should be encouraged within the neighborhoods - A view of the potential expansion of these uses



Establish a series of quiet neighborhood greens or centers.

The City of Delray Beach is growing, and it is increasingly attracting families with children. Currently, there are no small neighborhood parks for them to play that they can walk to or where their parents will let them go on their own.

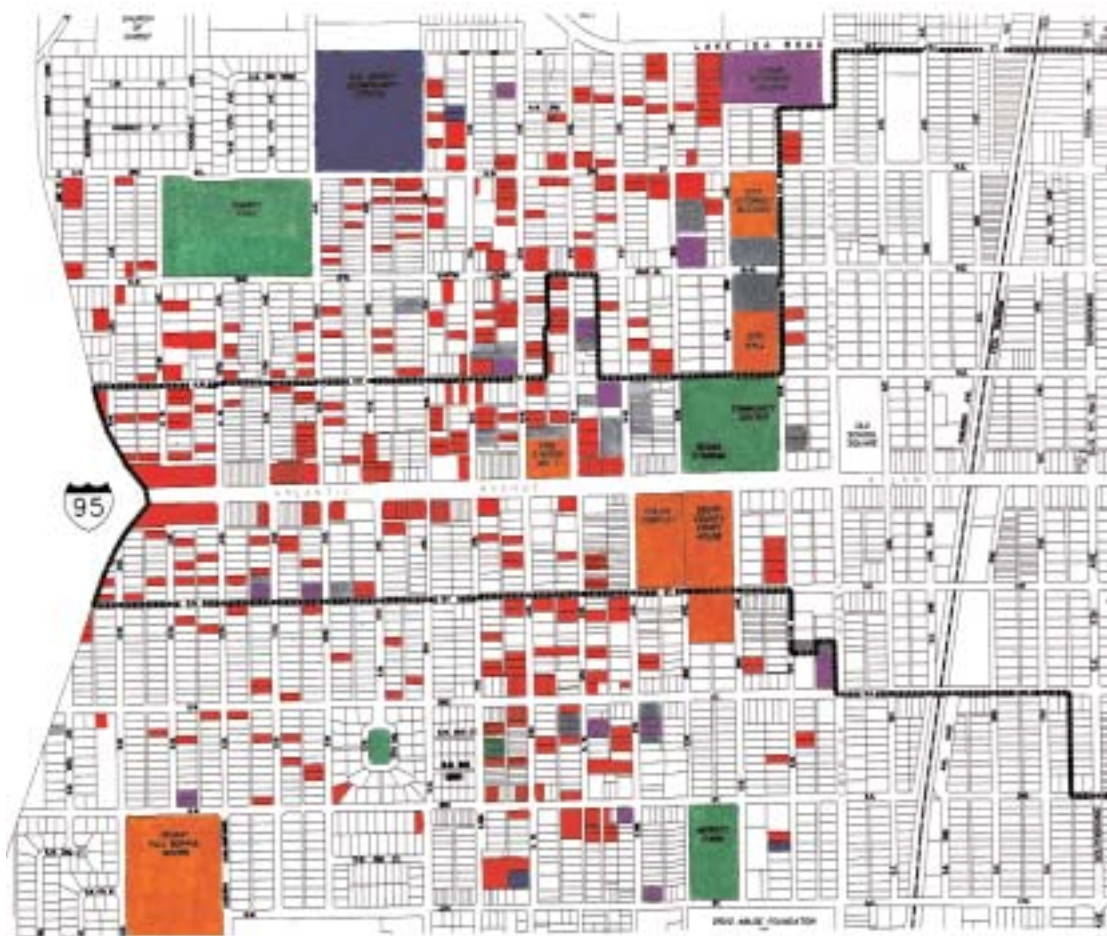
The Master Plan suggests establishing a network of interior neighborhood parks that people can walk and ride their bikes to safely. All these parks have been proposed in vacant lots or in areas where land is available due to jogs on roads or shifts on the grid.

These are the kinds of parks that nobody but the residents really know about, because they are tucked into the fabric.

The different uses and their relative locations proposed here are not relevant to the success of the parks themselves. What becomes crucial is to maintain accessibility and visual connection, therefore, every park should be fronted by at least three streets.

These small pocket parks serve two major purposes: they provide a sense of ownership and civic pride for the neighbors and in a grid like Delray's, they become an important point of orientation.

Public Open Spaces should be designed to be inhabited, not solely viewed, as well as to give life and urban character to the neighborhood.



Map representing vacant property within the West Atlantic neighborhood

During the Charrette, the design team conducted a survey of vacant land within the West Atlantic neighborhood. These vacant parcels are represented in this map in red. Civic uses are also represented here.

This simple diagram makes evident the fact that there are over fifteen vacant parcels along any given street. As the Avenue's improvements take place, development pressure will increase not only along the Avenue but within the neighborhood and on these vacant parcels as well.

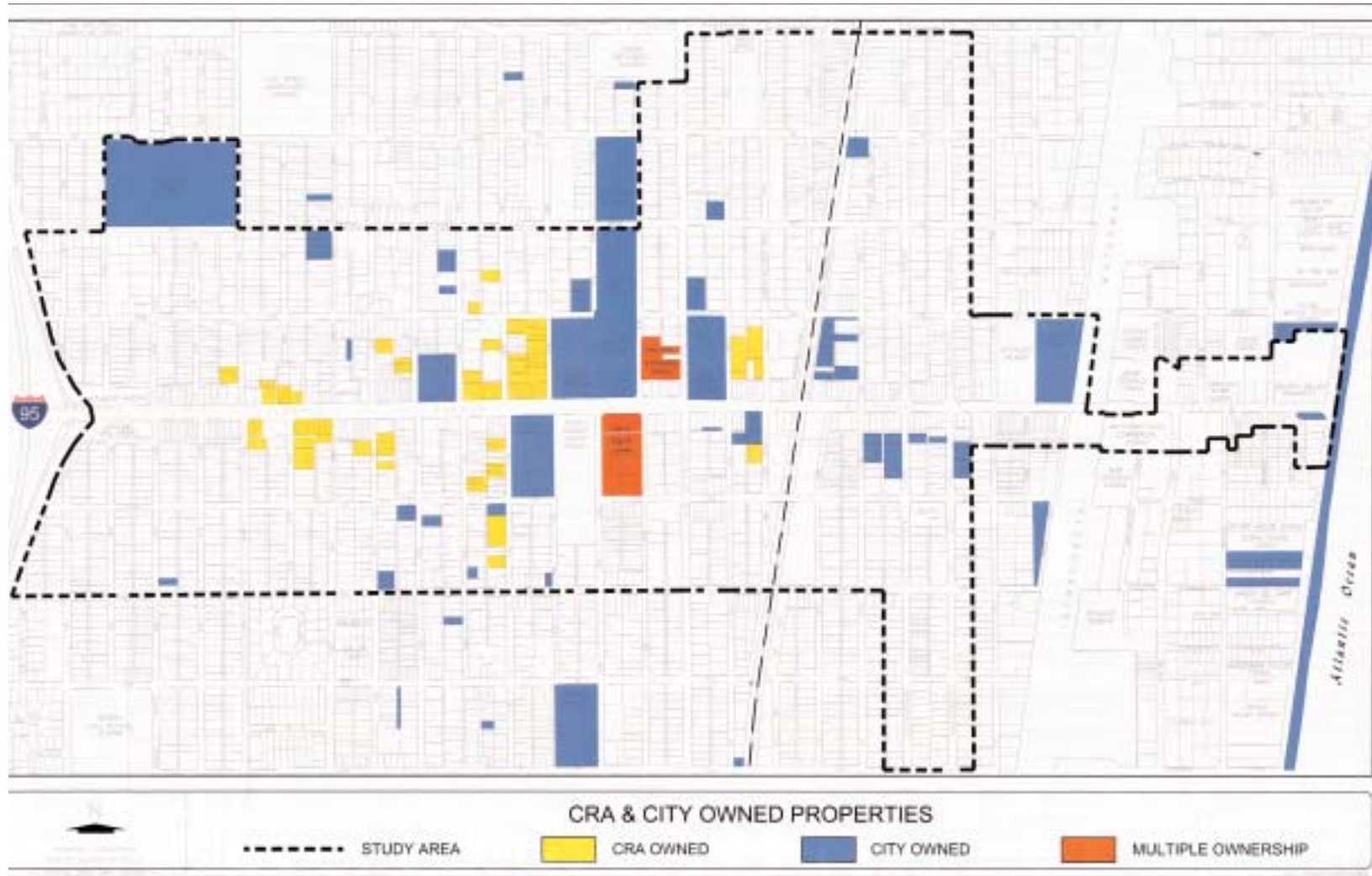
The CRA today has an ongoing infill program. This amount of vacant land represents an incredible opportunity to expand this program and to create public/private partnerships that will trigger residential development.

What is important to keep in mind is that with so much vacant land, whatever gets built will play a great role in defining the character of the neighborhood. Great architecture defines character. The problem is that so does bad architecture.

The City of Delray has a great housing stock. Infill programs should continue this tradition and provide some of the best examples of architecture in the City. The houses that get built do not need to be big, but they need to honor the style and design that our forefathers envisioned for Delray. This report contains a few examples of existing and proposed types that are

affordable and at the same time will contribute to enhance the character of the neighborhood. Other examples to be used by the CRA and private developers can be found in the "Building Plans and Urban Design Principles for Towns, Cities and Villages in South Florida" planbook.

- Civic Uses
- Parks And Recreation
- Schools
- Churches
- Parking
- Vacant Lots





Above: Three Examples of good architectural types to be used as models for infill

Below: Different single-family homes that would contribute to and define the character of the neighborhood

- Single Family
- 50'x100' lot
- 2 bedroom,
- 1 bath
- 1000 sf

- Single Family
- 50'x100' lot
- 3 bedroom,
- 1 bath
- 1,056 sf

- Single Family
- 50'x100' lot
- 3 bedroom,
- 1 bath
- 1000 sf



Existing Condition



Phase 1



Ultimate Build-Out

As physical improvements to Atlantic Avenue extend westbound, side streets will be positively impacted. Bump-outs should "wrap-around" corners and extend into perpendicular streets as a first phase towards neighborhood street reconstruction.

This simple move together with the incorporation of street lighting and landscaping will help define the character and encourage investment and development in the neighborhoods along the Avenue.



Filling in the Gaps Along the Avenue

The parking lot that fronts the Tennis Center is seldom used to its maximum capacity, except during special events and for a few days during the season. Although the Center is a positive addition to the City, its location, size, parking and street closures had a negative impact on Delray's fabric.

This general combination is not conducive to a pedestrian environment. For several blocks, pedestrians going to and from downtown need to walk by several vacant parcels, by the grilles of cars and vacant parking lots, all with limited protection from the sun and none from the rain. This unfriendly environment only contributes to blur the physical structure of the Avenue, and to make the barrier between two districts harder to overcome.

The Master Plan proposes the construction of three liner buildings on this parking lot fronting the Avenue, and the creation of a plaza in front of the existing building. These proposed two-story buildings with arcades over the sidewalk and balconies overlooking the tennis center will be a positive use of this valuable land and will make the pedestrian transition between the two districts more inviting, and uninterrupted.

The existing parking is relocated. Parking is proposed behind the liner buildings, as on-street parallel parking along the Avenue and NW 1st Avenue, and angled parking along NW 3rd Avenue. This proposal increases the existing number of parking spaces by twenty spaces.



Proposed infill along the front parking lot.



New Development In The West Atlantic Neighborhood

The images above show the proposed new library and necessary parking both for the library and the courthouse.

The proposed library location is between SW 1st and 2nd Avenues, along Atlantic Avenue. This parcel, together with the land behind it, is publicly owned. The County's original plans were to turn all this land into a parking lot to cater to the parking needs of its future courthouse expansion. But through a series of negotiations, the frontage along Atlantic Avenue will be used for this proposed civic building.

The relocation of the library will have many positive consequences:

- It will be located closer to the center of the Avenue, making access to it equally convenient to all area residents.
- It will trigger development within the West Atlantic Neighborhood.
- It will free up public-owned land in the Central Core District that should be used for a public parking structure.

The design team reviewed the proposed library plans as well as the County's proposed parking expansion. Following are the Master Plan's recommendations:

- Keep SW 2nd Avenue open: The County's proposal suggests the closure of this roadway.
- Maintain pedestrian access to the library over vehicular drop-offs: Pedestrians should be able to access the library from Atlantic Avenue as well as from the rear parking. Vehicular drop-offs that interrupt the sidewalks should be avoided. These can occur along the alley, between the building and the parking.

The proposed alternative to the library building shown here is a one story, 25,000 square foot building. It has a covered entry arcade from Atlantic Avenue and from the rear parking. All of the reading rooms are organized around an open, private courtyard. The architecture follows the Florida vernacular style of the tennis center, across the Avenue. All the same concepts should apply if the building becomes two or three stories high.

