

Miami

3 Proposals For Downtown

MAURICE A. FERRÉ

100 BISCAYNE BOULEVARD

MIAMI, FLORIDA 33132

September, 1970

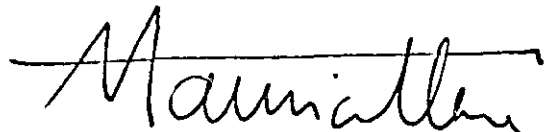
The proposals in this brochure were developed by an outstanding architectural and planning team. The recommendations are not new, many were set forth in the Magic City report. But they are very timely.

The downtown core of Miami is getting weaker. Out of a total Dade County assessment of over 8 billion dollars, Miami only represents 2 billion dollars. The downtown core is assessed at only 400 million, less than 5% of the total value of property in our community. A metropolitan area our size should have a downtown core valued well in excess of 1 billion dollars. Something is wrong, something must be done. But what?

Some had their hopes pinned on the Bond Issue. Out of 129 million dollars, 82 million dollars passed but 47 million dollars failed. Almost everything that failed was downtown oriented. We must now take another approach. The emphasis should be toward practical objectives that can be accomplished with limited expenditures in few years. The immediate impact of these improvements might start the pump again inducing the private sector to invest and, thus, spreading the tax base and eventually hoping the public mood will change wanting a strong, healthy downtown.

The proposals target 3 selected areas for improvement. They grew out of a study for a downtown office tower. Out of a commission to one of the nation's most distinguished architectural firms, I. M. Pei & Partners, a practical study of the downtown area emerged. Collaborating with Pei were City Planning Consultant, Vincent Ponte, and Traffic Consultant, Travers Associates. The planners discovered opportunities for public improvements that will generate additional business interests in the re-development of the City Center.

As a member of the Bay and Park Committee with the dual interest of beautifying and developing downtown Miami, I feel that the conclusions and recommendations contained in this report reflect practical, positive steps which may be taken immediately to move Miami ahead rationally and purposefully creating within our lifetime the kind of a City Center we can all take pride in.



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INTRODUCTION

The design of any structure begins with a study of the site and the area surrounding it. This applies especially to a building of such size and at such a key location as a 40-storey office tower on the corner of Biscayne Boulevard and Flagler Street. Our studies in regard to this building have therefore been more thorough and far-reaching than usual and have embraced the whole downtown area. They have resulted in some basic ideas about how to improve the downtown area without massive disruption of existing investments and at reasonable cost to the public and private sectors.

For convenience, our proposals have been summarized on the following two pages, together with the existing conditions that the proposals are designed to remedy or to capitalize upon. The rest of the report explains and illustrates the proposals in detail.

I.M. PEI & PARTNERS, ARCHITECTS

VINCENT PONTE, PLANNING CONSULTANT

TRAVERS ASSOCIATES, TRAFFIC CONSULTANT

I. DOWNTOWN MIAMI:

Liabilities

1. Absence of unity between the waterfront and the core of the business center.
2. Growing inability of the existing grid system to handle traffic in downtown streets.
3. Increasing congestion caused by conflict between pedestrians and wheeled traffic at all intersections.
4. Blighted appearance of much of the downtown area caused by proliferation of open parking lots, occupying 20% of the 200 acres between the Miami River, Biscayne Boulevard and the encircling tracks of the FEC Railroad.

Assets

1. Because of this very abundance of open parking lots and other vacant land scattered throughout the Central Business District, opportunities for effective yet highly economical improvements in the existing street network.
2. The Commitment of private and public interests to the rejuvenation of the Central Business District, as evidenced by such projects as the 34-storey First Federal Savings & Loan Association office tower, the 35-storey United National Bank Building, the downtown junior college, the Government Center, an Auditorium/Convention Center on a new non-park site and a proposed Holiday Inn near the old Port of Miami.

II. THREE PROPOSALS FOR DOWNTOWN MIAMI

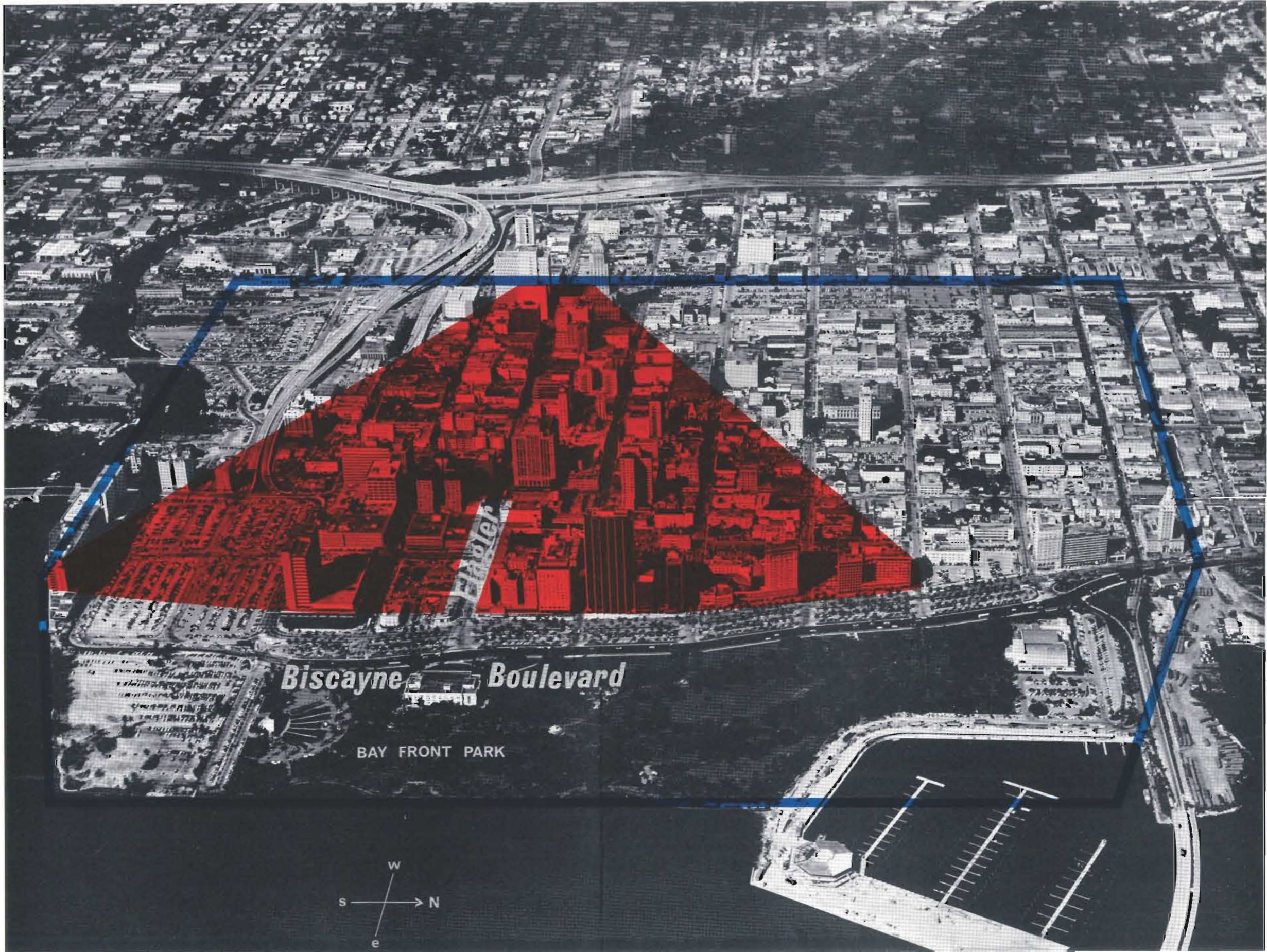
1. Elimination of parking zones in the Park and along center islands of the Boulevard. Landscaping of these areas to draw them into a tighter visual and functional relationship with the business center.
2. Eliminate jogs and bottlenecks. Close several street sections and open some new ones. Improve connections between the downtown expressway distributor and the local street system.
3. Construction of "sky bridges" at a second-storey level to enable pedestrians to move uninterruptedly from one end of the business district to the other, over streets and through buildings. This pedestrian network to evolve gradually as an integral part of future downtown development through the coordinated initiatives of private property owners and public agencies.

III. COSTS

Without a detailed financial analysis, the precise cost of these improvements can only be guessed at. But on the basis of past experience, we estimate the cost of implementing all three proposals at approximately \$1 million per year for ten years.

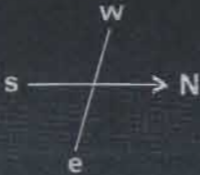
Miami has a total tax roll of nearly two billion, \$397,000,000 of which is in the downtown area. Thus the estimated cost of these improvements represents only a small fraction of the tax revenue annually derived from the Central Business District. Assuming that the proposals would encourage downtown property owners to renovate or replace outdated structures, the ratio of costs to benefits is highly favorable.

EXISTING CONDITIONS



Biscayne Boulevard

BAY FRONT PARK



CBD
280 ACRES

CORE
100 ACRES

DOWNTOWN MIAMI

At first glance, the aerial view of Miami's Central Business District (outlined in blue opposite) reveals a land use pattern typical of North American cities-- a heavily built-up central core (red area) surrounded by a wide framework of warehouses, parking lots, vacant land and railyards. What distinguishes Miami's CBD from all others, however, is the broad sweep of Biscayne Boulevard, the green expanse of Bayfront Park, the Miami River and the Harbor. These are downtown's impressive features - physical assets that lend charm and special distinction to the Miami business center.

The real life and vitality of the 280-acre CBD is tightly concentrated in the 100-acre triangular core. Here are clustered the major office towers, hotels, shops, restaurants and centers of entertainment. As the Miami core prospers, new buildings will continue to push their way into this same area. For the core of every American city seldom spreads beyond 100 to 150 acres, a dimension which represents the distances that businessmen, shoppers and conventioners are willing to walk on their daily rounds. Our task, then, as planners and architects is five-fold:

To encourage this natural trend toward concentration without adding to congestion;

To create a more lively, interesting and comfortable environment for people to move in;

To improve the street pattern of the core and ease the flow of traffic;

To upgrade the presently blighted frame of land around the core; and finally -

To dramatize the natural features that now distinguish the core.

And the means by which we propose to do all this is along the lines already set forth in the Magic City Report -- the multi-level city center.

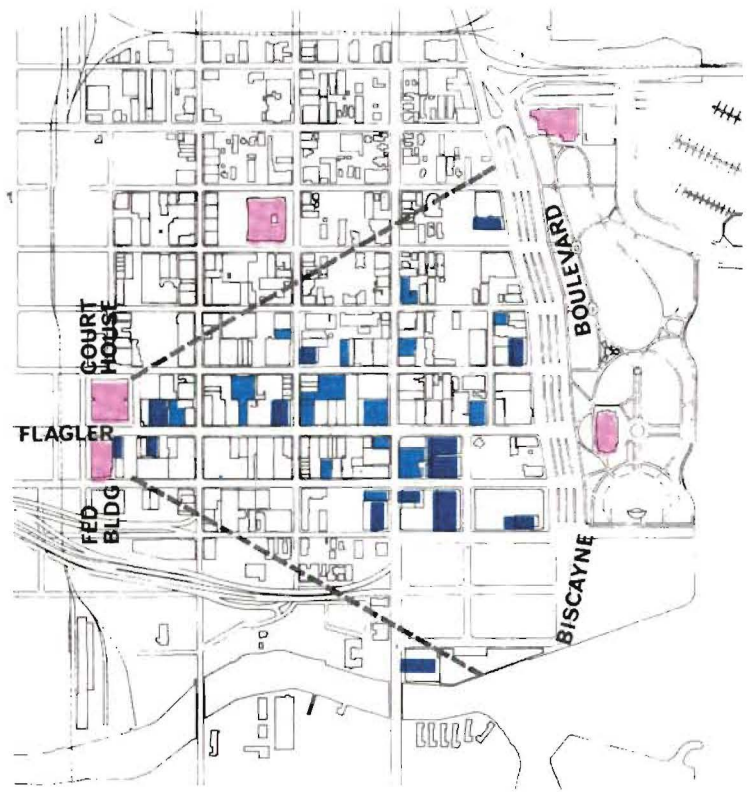
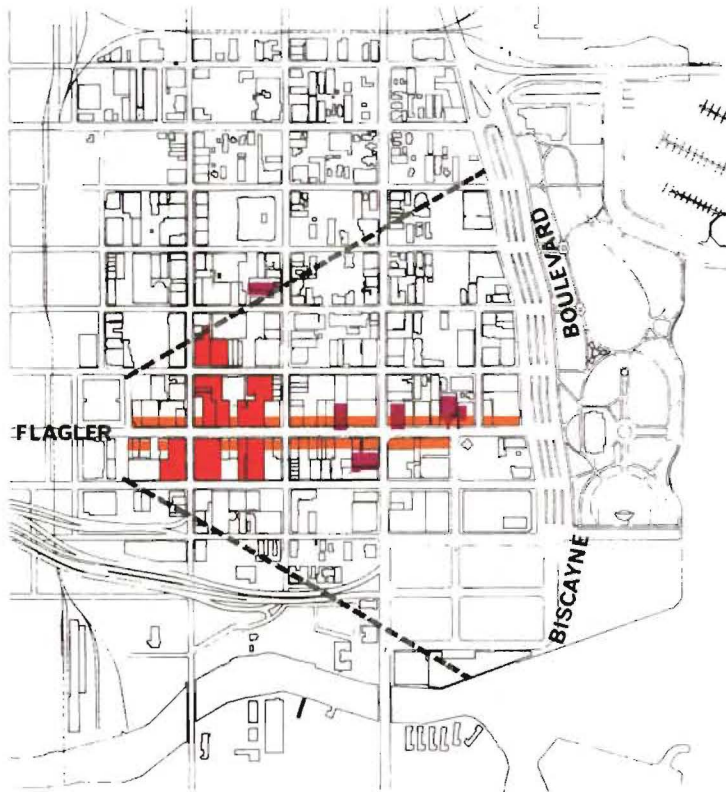
Fortunately, Miami already has a lot going for it, especially if the creative energy generated by a series of important new developments, public and private, can be effectively channeled to attain these worthwhile goals. Each project is big enough to contribute substantially towards bringing about the kind of business core needed to upgrade the Miami CBD to meet the demands of the future. Most of what we outline here can be achieved well within the next ten years by harnessing the vital forces now at work in the community.

MAJOR LAND USES

DEPARTMENT STORES
OTHER RETAIL
MOVIE THEATRES



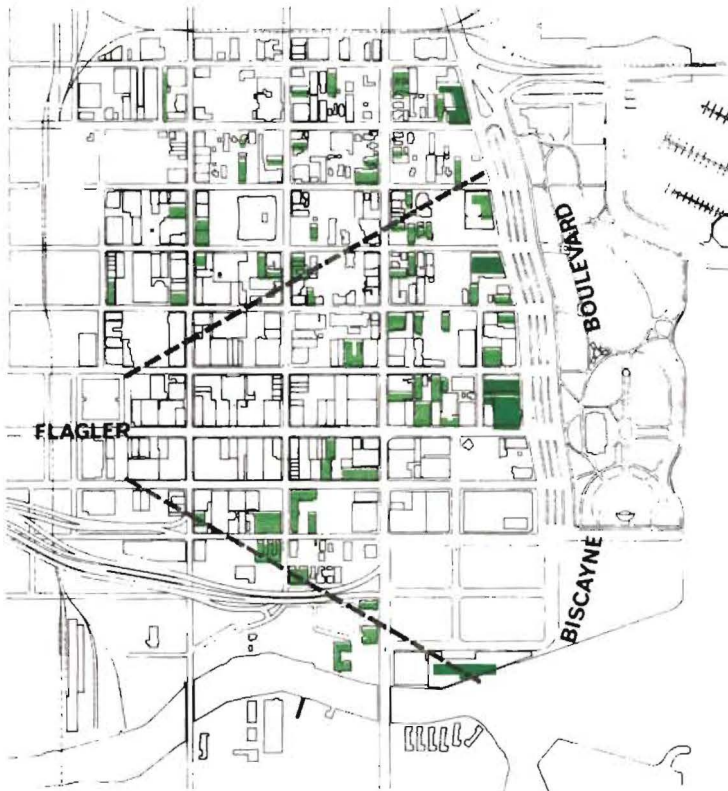
PREWAR OFFICE BLDGS
POSTWAR OFFICE BLDGS
GOVERNMENT BLDGS



A SHORT-HAND IMAGE OF THE MIAMI BUSINESS CENTER APPEARS ON THE FOUR MAPS ABOVE. THESE MAJOR USES CLEARLY INDICATE WHAT IT IS, HOW IT WORKS, AND WHERE IT CAN BE UPGRADED. EXISTING LAND USES GROUP THEMSELVES IN A CLASSIC FASHION. SHOPPING ACTIVITY FOLLOWS THE SPINE OF FLAGLER STREET, EXTENDING 1,700 FEET FROM THE CLUSTER OF DEPARTMENT STORES ON THE WESTERN END TO BISCAYNE BOULEVARD ON THE EAST.

JUST AS TYPICAL IS THE DISPOSITION OF OFFICE BUILDINGS — LARGE AND SMALL. THEY HAVE NATURALLY CLUSTERED ON BOTH SIDES OF FLAGLER. BUT SINCE 1950, NEW OFFICE CONSTRUCTION (SHOWN IN DARK BLUE) HAS PUSHED AWAY FROM FLAGLER TOWARD BISCAYNE BOULEVARD. IN EFFECT, THE NEW OFFICES ALONG BISCAYNE FORM THE LAND BASE OF THE CORE'S TRIANGLE, THE APEX OF WHICH IS FIXED AT THE DADE COUNTY COURT HOUSE.

MAJOR HOTELS
OTHER HOTELS & MOTELS



STREETS
OPEN PARKING LOT
PARKING GARAGES



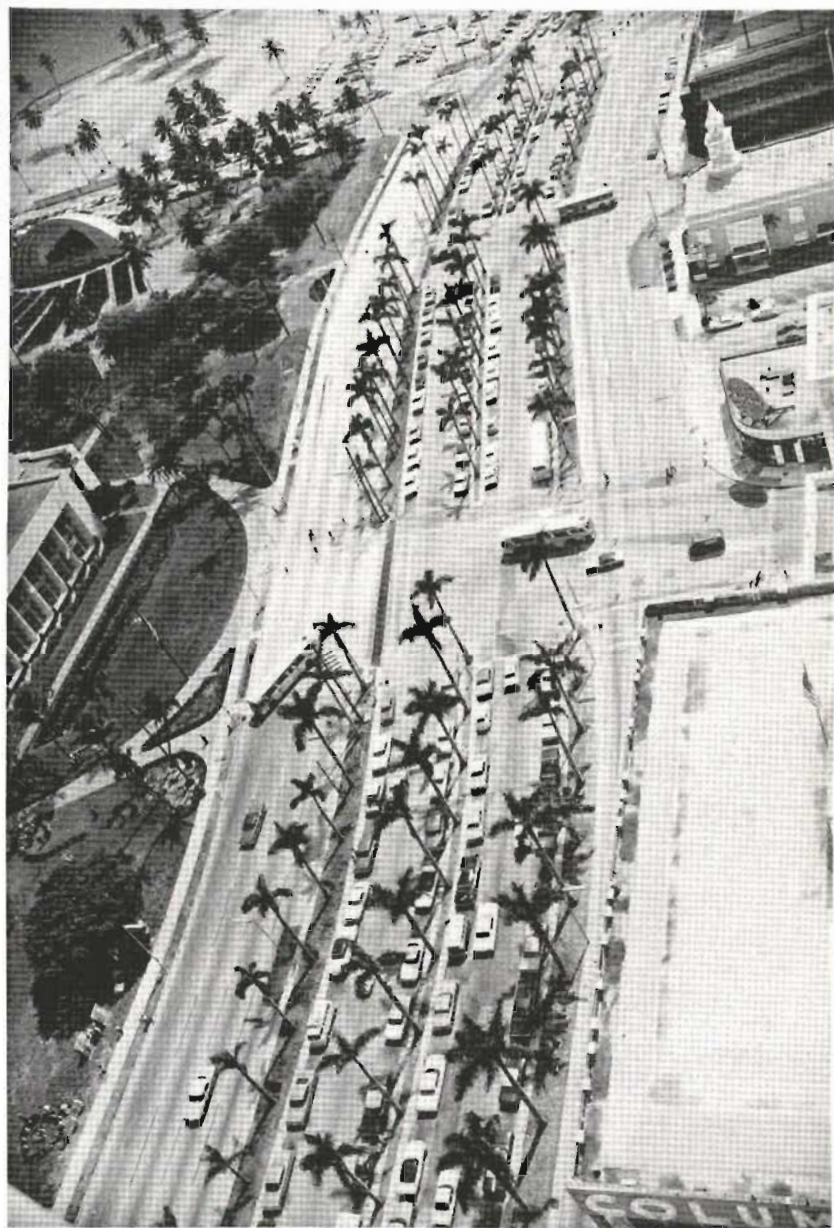
AS BEFITS A CITY WHOSE MAJOR INDUSTRY IS TOURISM AND CONVENTIONS, THE MIAMI CENTER IS STUDDED WITH HOTELS OF ALL SIZES AND CATEGORIES. TOGETHER THEY CONTAIN A TOTAL OF SIX THOUSAND ROOMS AND BECAUSE BISCAYNE BOULEVARD IS MIAMI'S "FRONT DOOR", FOUR OF THE FIVE BIGGEST HOTELS LINE UP ALONG IT OVERLOOKING THE PLEASANT GREENERY OF BAY FRONT PARK AND THE LONG VIEWS ACROSS BISCAYNE BAY TO THE ATLANTIC.

DEPARTMENT STORES, SHOPS, OFFICES, HOTELS — THESE CONSTITUTE THE HEALTHY TISSUE OF ANY ACTIVE CBD. BUT THE IMAGE ABOVE REVEALS AN ALL TOO FAMILIAR URBAN PLAGUE: PARKING LOTS POCKMARK THE CITY CENTER AND EACH YEAR THEIR NUMBER GROWS. EVEN THE MOST HARDENED URBANITE MAY BE SHOCKED TO LEARN THAT FORTY PERCENT OF THE LAND AREA IN DOWNTOWN MIAMI IS SLABBED OVER WITH ASPHALT IN BOTH STREETS AND PARKING LOTS.

THREE PROPOSALS



1929



1969

PROPOSAL 1 BISCAYNE BOULEVARD & BAYFRONT PARK

Although the Boulevard sweeping alongside Bayfront Park has formed the most memorable impression in the minds of visitors since its dedication in 1928, that impression for fully 40 years has always been encumbered by bumper-to-bumper parking. Today, even though there are 275 metered parking spaces strung out for nearly half-a-mile between SE 2nd Street and NE 5th Street, they are not nearly enough to satisfy the area's needs as any motorist familiar with the area knows. Yet, they are sufficient to blight what should be an important feature in Miami's showcase.

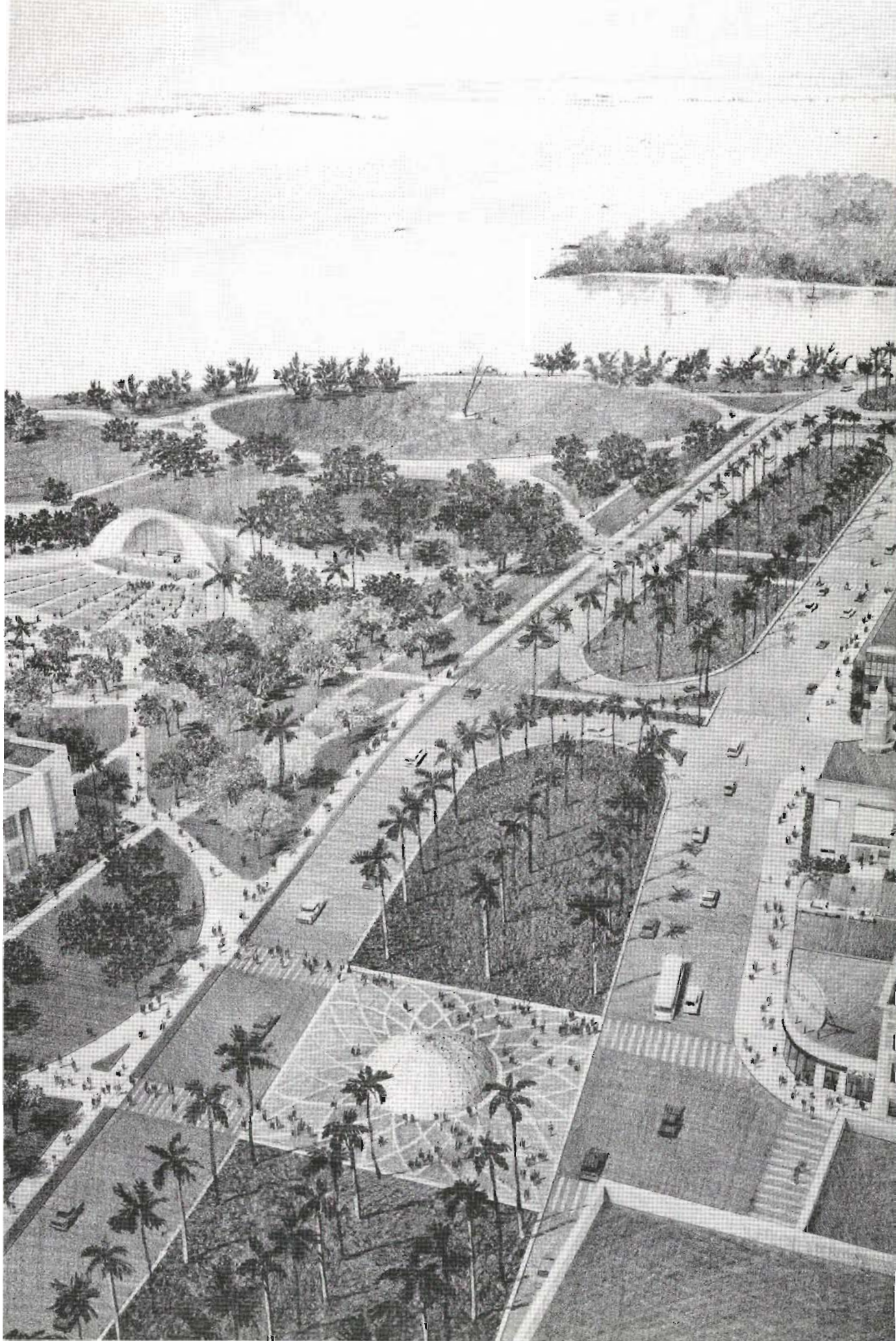
Our first proposal, therefore, is to allow Biscayne Boulevard to attain its potential as one of the world's most picturesque thoroughfares. The solution is exceedingly simple. These 275 parking meters should be relocated elsewhere. The two center thoroughfares should be filled in solidly with grass, trees and occasional fountains to form a single landscaped island 100 feet wide. Traffic would be confined to the six lanes of the outboard thoroughfares -- an ample space for any foreseeable volume of traffic.

Trees and grass are inexpensive amenities. The cost of upgrading Biscayne Boulevard would be only a few hundred thousand dollars -- a small price for a city whose major industry is tourism and whose future plainly lies in its position as a gateway to and from Latin America and Europe.

On the next two pages the recommended treatment is compared with the scene as it appears today.



1970



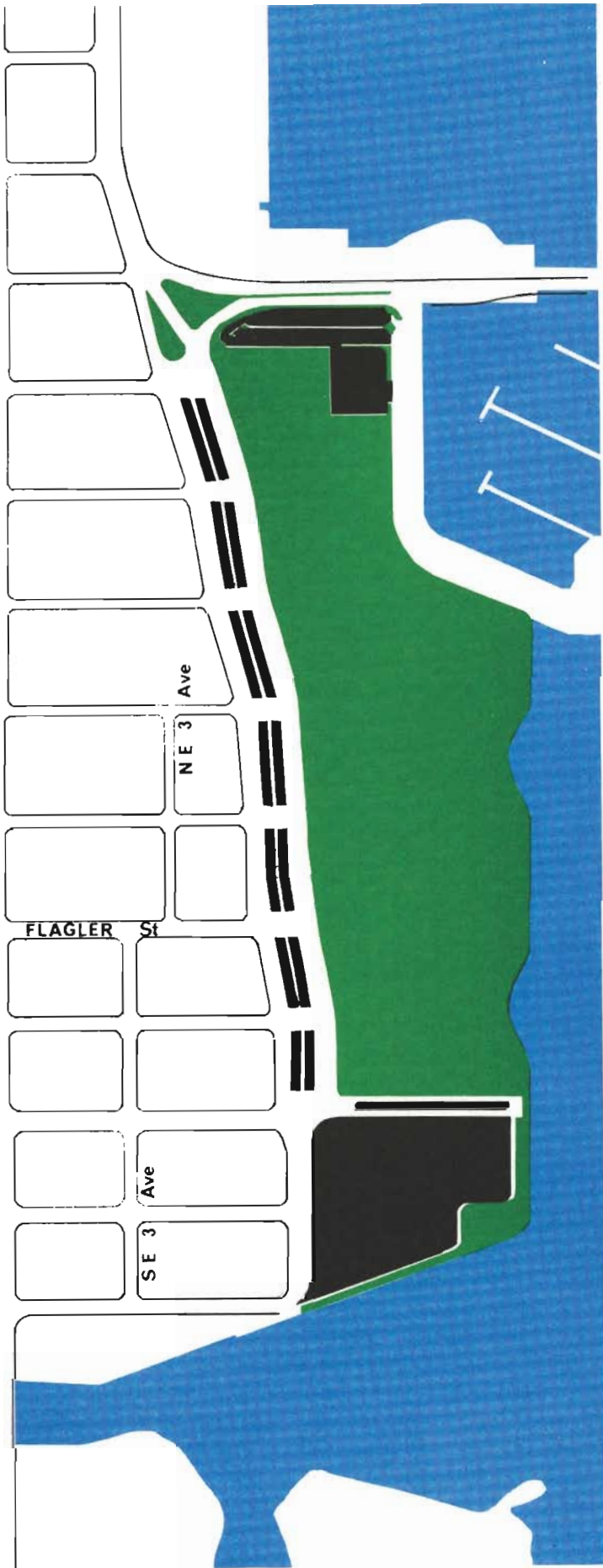
1972

1970

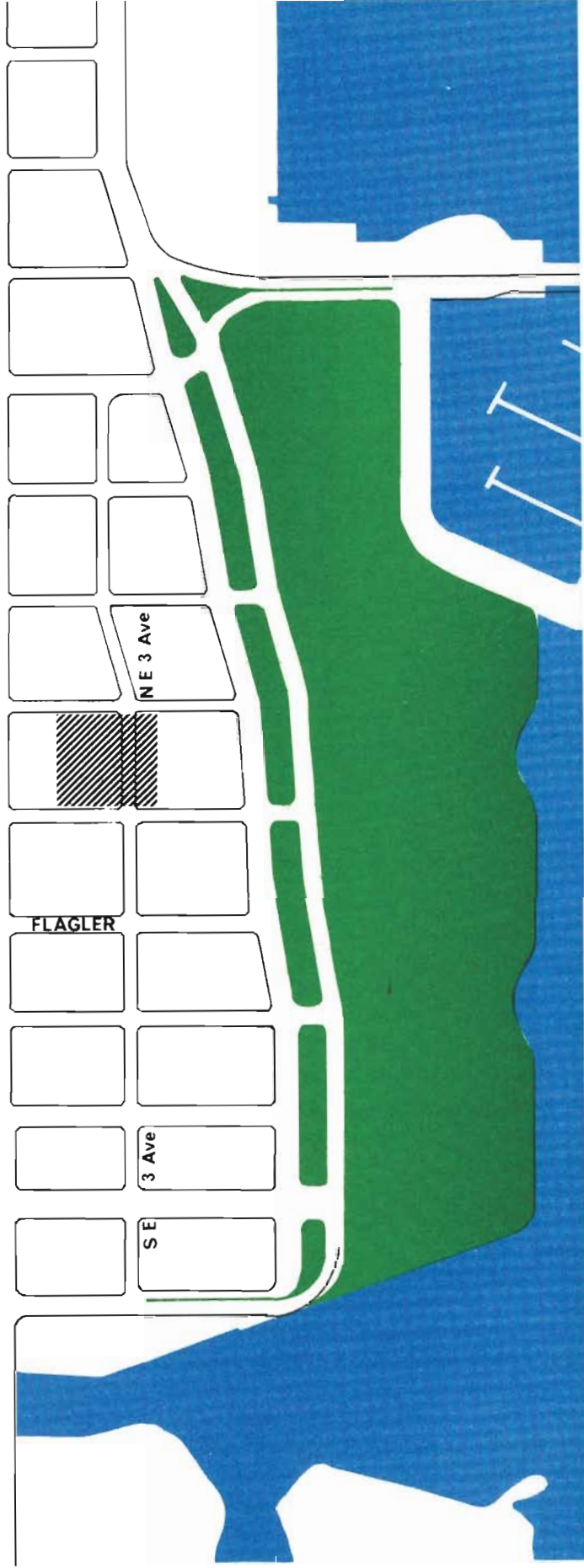
Every weekday sees six of Biscayne Boulevard's fourteen lanes turned over to cars parked at meters and to others slowly cruising in search of a space. Only 275 metered spaces are available (shown in the dark grey strips, opposite). Yet even this small number is sufficient to hamper traffic and erode the avenue's appearance. Bayfront Park also does not live up to its potential. It is truncated by a huge patch of pavement to the south and a small parking lot on the north. This rigid frame of asphalt, with all its parked cars, can be easily removed to restore a formal beauty to the boulevard and to extend Bayfront Park's fresh greenery to the edge of the city.

1972/75

To bring Biscayne Boulevard and Bayfront Park together into a formal framework of greenery is an easy task that can be fulfilled by 1972. Open parking would be replaced by grass and the parking spaces lost transferred to a multi-level garage close to the business center and straddling the realigned NE 3rd Avenue (grey patch on map). Central islands on the boulevard, which would run for two blocks in length, would be created by closing four intersections. The resulting garden strips would be generously planted with more trees, grass and embellished with fountains. This clean-up at Miami's front door would do more than lend the city a new formal beauty. Cities as diverse as Paris and Washington, D.C., have learned that parklike boulevards can define their image. The improvement of Biscayne Boulevard and Bayfront Park would do the same for Miami (see page 47).



1970



1972/75

PROPOSAL 2 TRAFFIC CIRCULATION

Driving in Miami's Central Business District is an unpleasant, frustrating experience. At times, it seems the primary purpose of streets -- namely, the circulation of vehicular traffic -- is merely incidental to such activities as parking, loading and lining up before traffic signals.

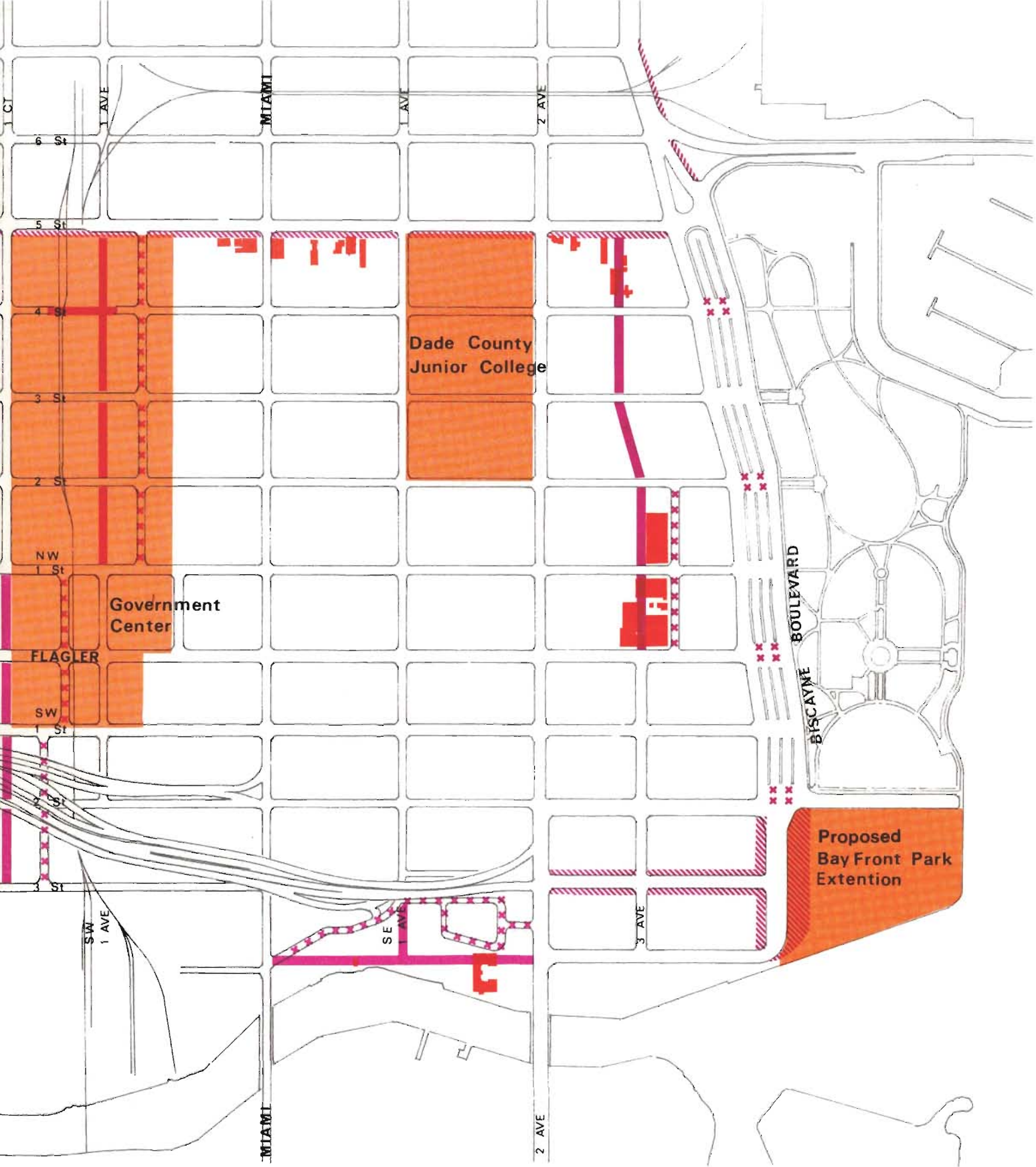
--from the Magic City Plan for Action (1960)

A decade has passed since these words were written, and the situation has only grown worse. Miami like all cities, is burdened with a street layout which was not designed for today's traffic demands.

But today Miami has an opportunity to unclog its downtown streets. The abundance of open parking lots and the inevitable replacement of many buildings whose days of commercial life are limited, make an effective reorganization of the street grid a highly feasible goal to be achieved in the next five years.

The key to success is for the City to act in conjunction with private property owners. By doing so, both gain; at minimum expense Miami gets relief from its traffic irritations, and the property owners, in return for giving up small amounts of land, find themselves with valuable new street frontage. This proposal suggests how and where the street grid may be regularized and difficult intersections eliminated. Exactly what is involved is shown on the following pages. Specifically it is possible for Miami to:

1. Improve the connection between the Expressway and Biscayne Boulevard.
2. Bring the disjointed segments-jogs and bottle-necks-of the CBD street grid into a smoother, more functional relationship. This means simplifying the patchwork of streets by closing four streets, replacing them with four new ones, and by widening three others.



STREET CLOSINGS



NEW STREETS



STREET WIDENINGS



BUILDINGS TO BE ACQUIRED
FOR STREET IMPROVEMENTS



STREET IMPROVEMENTS

As stated earlier, wherever possible the improvements outlined in the proposals set forth in this report should be coordinated with large-scale developments as they occur. At this very moment this fortuitous combination exists in the Miami CBD -- so that within the next two or three years, thirty percent of all the proposed street improvements can be accomplished, since they occur within the land area of the three public projects shown in orange on the map opposite. The remaining two thirds of the street improvement should be accomplished well within the next five years through the cooperation of the city and private land-owners. In the total scheme, this will include the purchase and demolition of only 20 buildings. Of these, all but four are small and decrepit. The biggest advantage at hand is that eighty percent of the land needed for street improvements is right now either completely vacant or in use as parking lots.

We see this process of improvement taking the following course. Within the proposed Government Center land area, N.W. First Avenue can be closed and a parallel street substituted to the west. Secondly, the city should acquire the parking lot to the south of Bayfront Park to guarantee the future expansion of the Park itself. Simultaneously, Biscayne Boulevard could be widened on the east side shown to the Miami River. Other widenings in this same area, along the west side of Biscayne and both sides of S.E. Third Street should be made now while the four blocks between DuPont Plaza and the First National Bank are still encumbered by buildings.

The only place where land acquisition is likely to be expensive is for the extension of Third Avenue, north of Flagler. It is here that the most expensive of the 20 buildings are located. But since this area is also the locus of the most constant traffic congestion, it is also probably the most important change to make.


The changes will not entirely free up the circulation of cars. But the proposed widenings, realignments and closings will unquestionably bring a tremendous improvement in circulation. As the maps on the next two pages show, the city grid will be made much more logical, simple and straightforward. Additional relief to traffic circulation can be achieved by the separation of pedestrians and vehicles discussed later in Proposal 3.



Existing Street Network

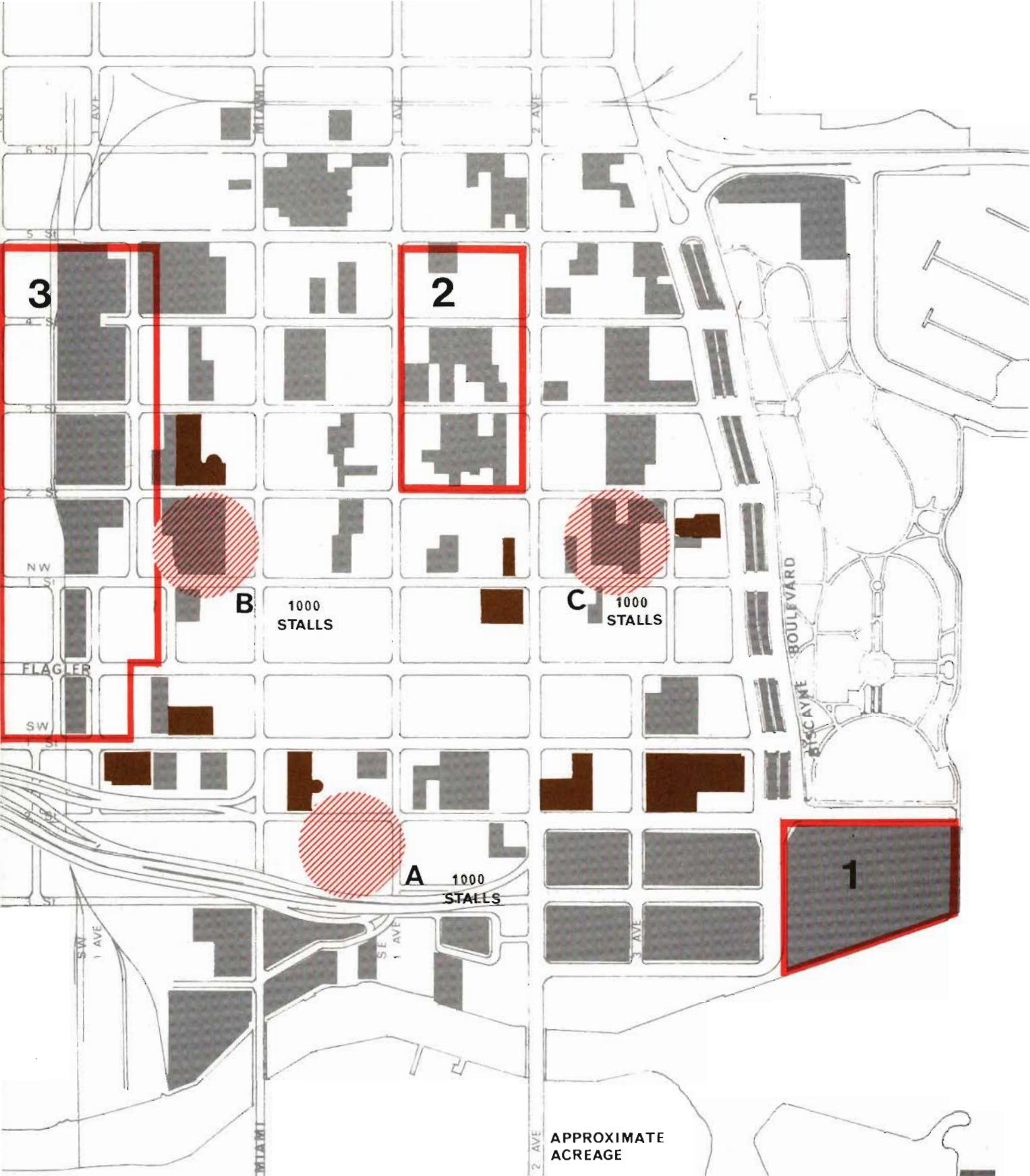
-  ONE WAY
-  TWO WAY
-  IRREGULAR INTERSECTIONS



ST IMPROVEMENT 

DIRECTIONAL CHANGES 

Proposed Street Network



- 1** PROPOSED BAY FRONT PARK EXPANSION
- 2** DADE COUNTY JUNIOR COLLEGE
- 3** PROPOSED GOVERNMENT CENTER SITE

- 8
- 11
- 26

PARKING LOTS

PARKING GARAGES

PROPOSED PARKING GARAGES **AB & C** CONSISTING 3000 STALLS

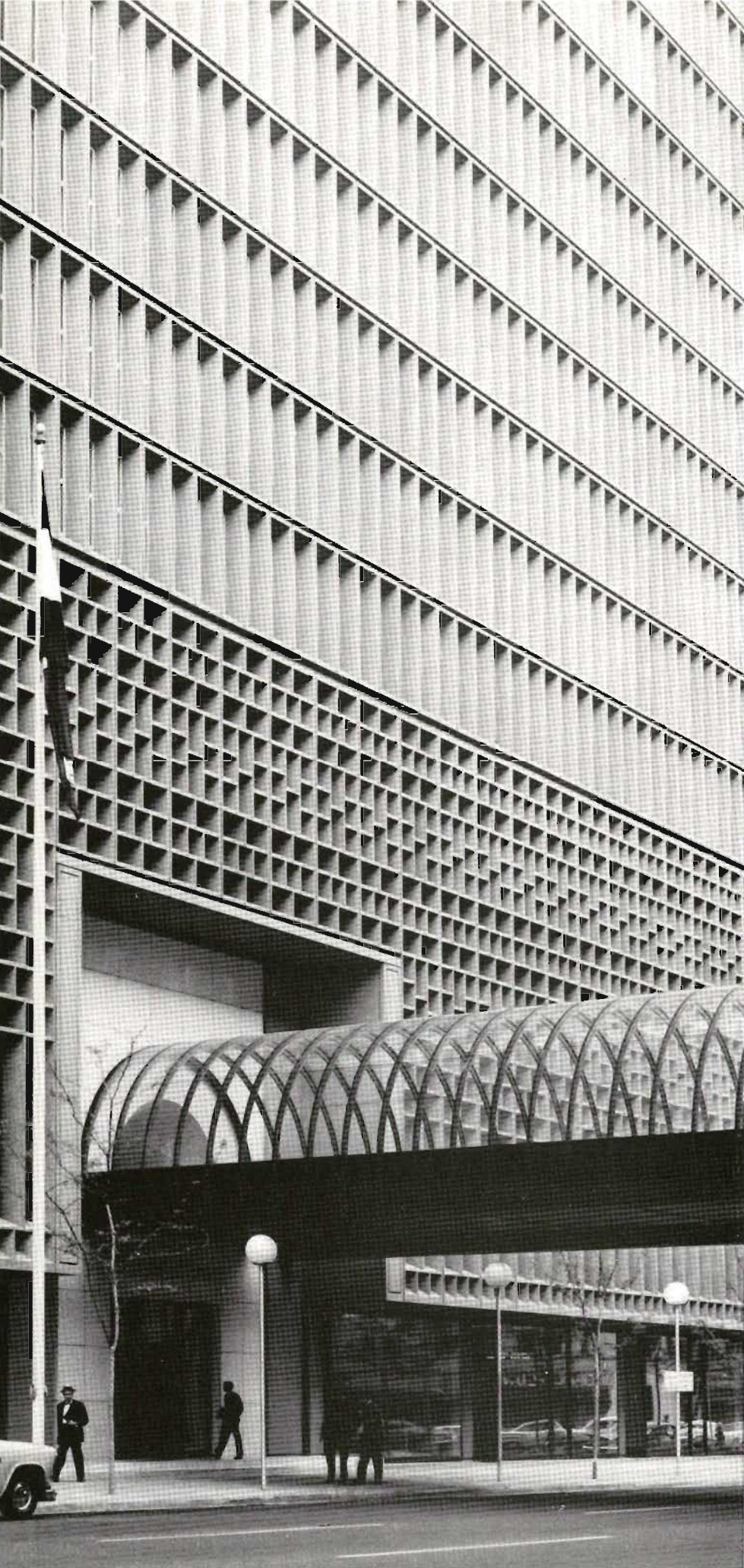
Development Potentials

PARKING

Since the war, the elimination of unsightly lots started with the construction of multi-level garages. This process will be speeded in the next few years with the construction of three multi-block public projects (see map left) on the periphery of the core. The street improvements will absorb their share too. Eventually, as a public policy, all parking should be concentrated in space-saving garages, strategically placed to serve the business center and properly related to the highway and street system (general locations for three public garages hatched in red).

FLAGLER STREET

Next to Biscayne Boulevard, this is downtown Miami's most prominent thoroughfare. As the commercial spine of the city, it rates special attention. Its character can be enhanced considerably by allowing only taxis and buses to run its length during the day, with special times set aside for trucks. This would not work any hardship on private autos, which would use the streets to either side of Flagler, but it would have the immediate effect of favoring people rather than vehicles on a vital shopping street which depends on people for its continued existence.



SKY-BRIDGE CONNECTING THE HILTON
HOTEL WITH MAY DEPARTMENT STORE

DENVER-COLORADO

PROPOSAL 3 PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

If cars now have a hard time getting around downtown Miami, pedestrians have even more difficulty. People on foot require one kind of city street and motorists require another. Proposal 3 is designed to resolve this conflict by means of a new level of circulation to be gradually created specifically and exclusively for people. Miami's water table, lying only six feet below the streets, precludes an underground pedestrian system -- (a solution which has improved pedestrian circulation in such cities as Montreal, New York, Dallas, Frankfurt and London). The logical alternative is to supplement the existing sidewalks by going one level above ground, spanning downtown streets with attractive "sky bridges".

The concept fits in well with Miami's tradition of shopping arcades. It is obviously a boon to pedestrians, for they have the convenience of air-conditioned second-level pathways lined with bright, new stores and boutiques. Developers also benefit, because they are able to derive a higher return on their investment from the new shopping space in their buildings. Finally, the elevated pedestrian ways provide the city with more tax revenue and also a dynamic new image.

To be successful, the pedestrian system has to be organized by the city. Developers must be encouraged to think of their neighbors as well as themselves when they build. New buildings, as they are projected, should provide for second-storey connections. For the process of getting an effective pedestrian system is necessarily piecemeal and grows gradually, by accretion. This is not impossible or impractical. Baltimore, St. Paul, Hartford, Cincinnati and Calgary are all planning above-grade pedestrian systems. An extensive system, such as that mapped out on the following pages would cost the city only about \$3,000,000 over the next ten years. Miami can well afford \$300,000 a year to add a separate pedestrian level to the core. The question is whether it can afford not to provide the kind of environment that makes the city center truly pleasant and profitable for its citizens.

The drawings on the following pages illustrate the phases in which a pedestrian system could come into existence, in step with projected developments in the Central Business District.



EXISTING PEDESTRIANWAYS AND LOBBIES ———
 EXISTING ARCADES AT GRADE

1970

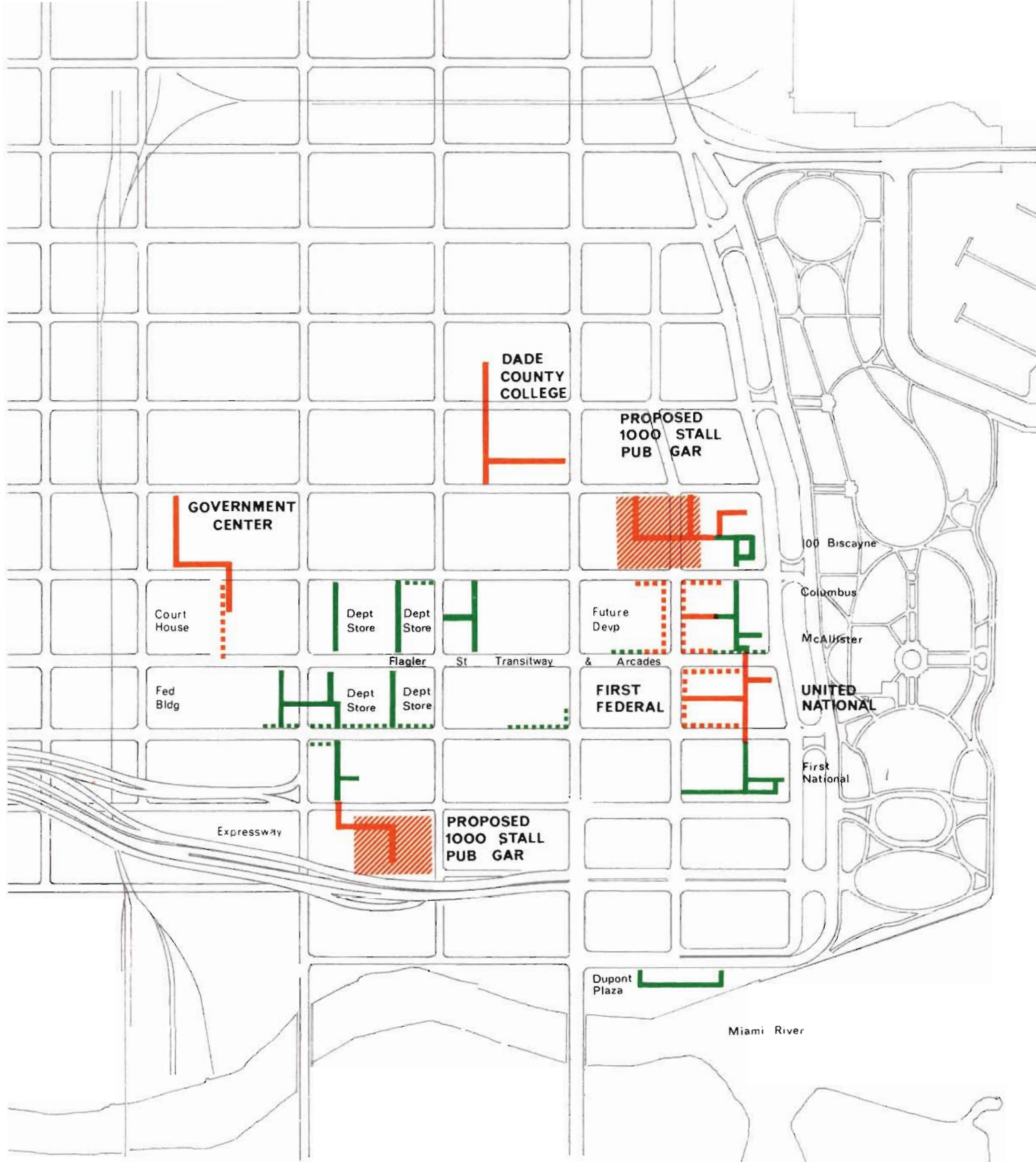
EXISTING WALKWAYS: 1970

Downtown Miami already possesses, in fact, the beginnings of a pedestrian system. It consists of arcades which pierce through blocks, through department stores and, more recently, lobby connections and shopping gallerias incorporated into full block developments like the one in First National Bank and the DuPont Plaza. These scattered fragments are shown in green, opposite. With proper planning and sustained initiative, they can be gradually extended and hooked together during the coming years into a single integrated pedestrian system that will span the whole of the Central Business District.

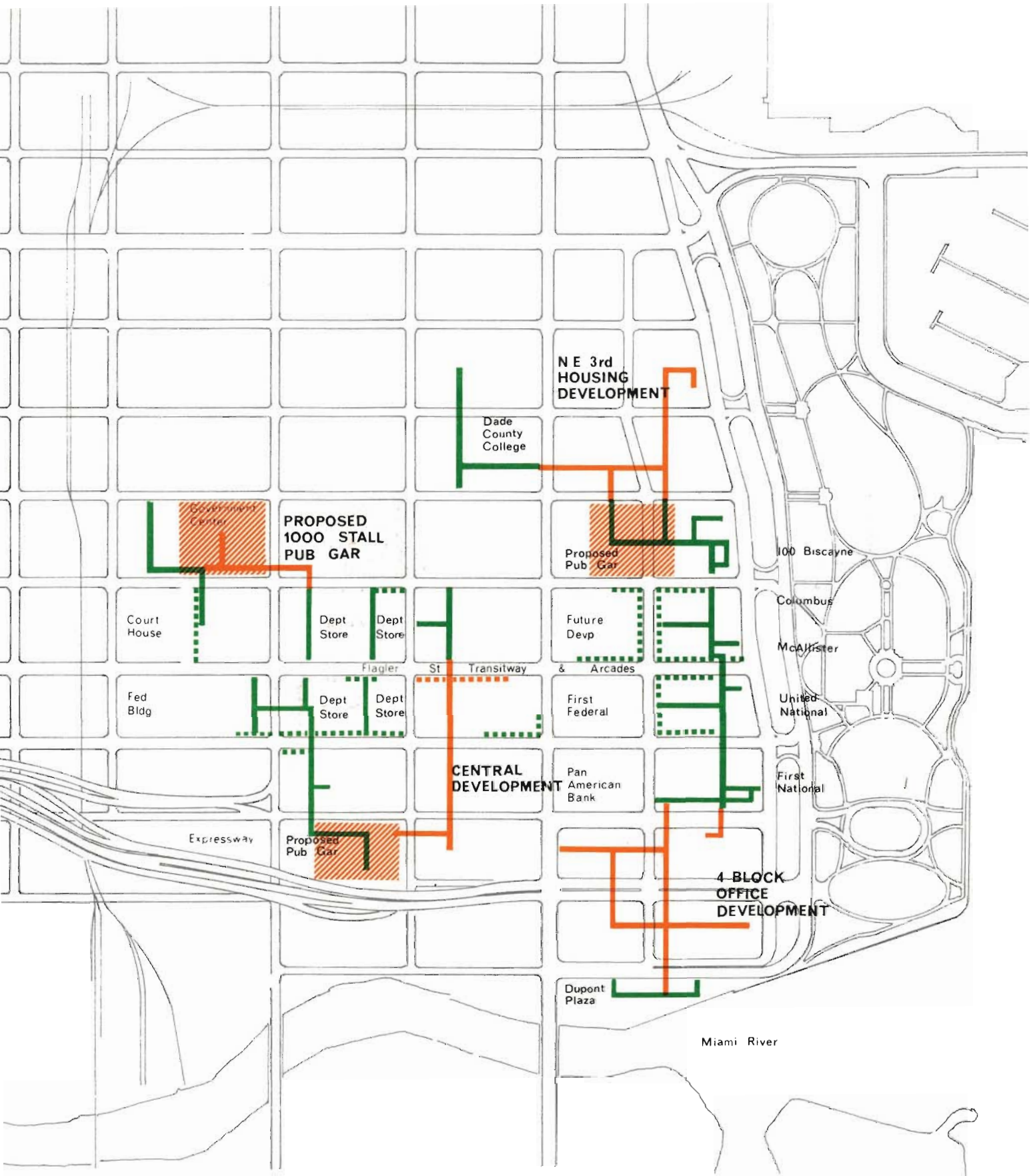
PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM: 1970/75

The movement toward a unified pedestrian system can take a giant step during the next five years because of three already scheduled multiple block developments. Plans for two of them in fact, -- Dade County Junior College and the Government Center -- already call for above-grade pedestrian levels. It only makes sense, therefore, to encourage the inclusion of similar facilities above grade and at street level in the third major area -- the 8-block district at the east end of Flagler Street -- where large-scale private developments along realigned streets offer splendid opportunities at nominal expense.

Two parking garages, recommended earlier in this report to be built by 1975, should also be connected into the growing pedestrian network. The resulting additions to the existing system are shown in orange, opposite page.



1970/75



EXISTING

- ABOVE GRADE PEDESTRIANWAYS
- ⋯ ARCADES AT GRADE

NEW

-
- ⋯

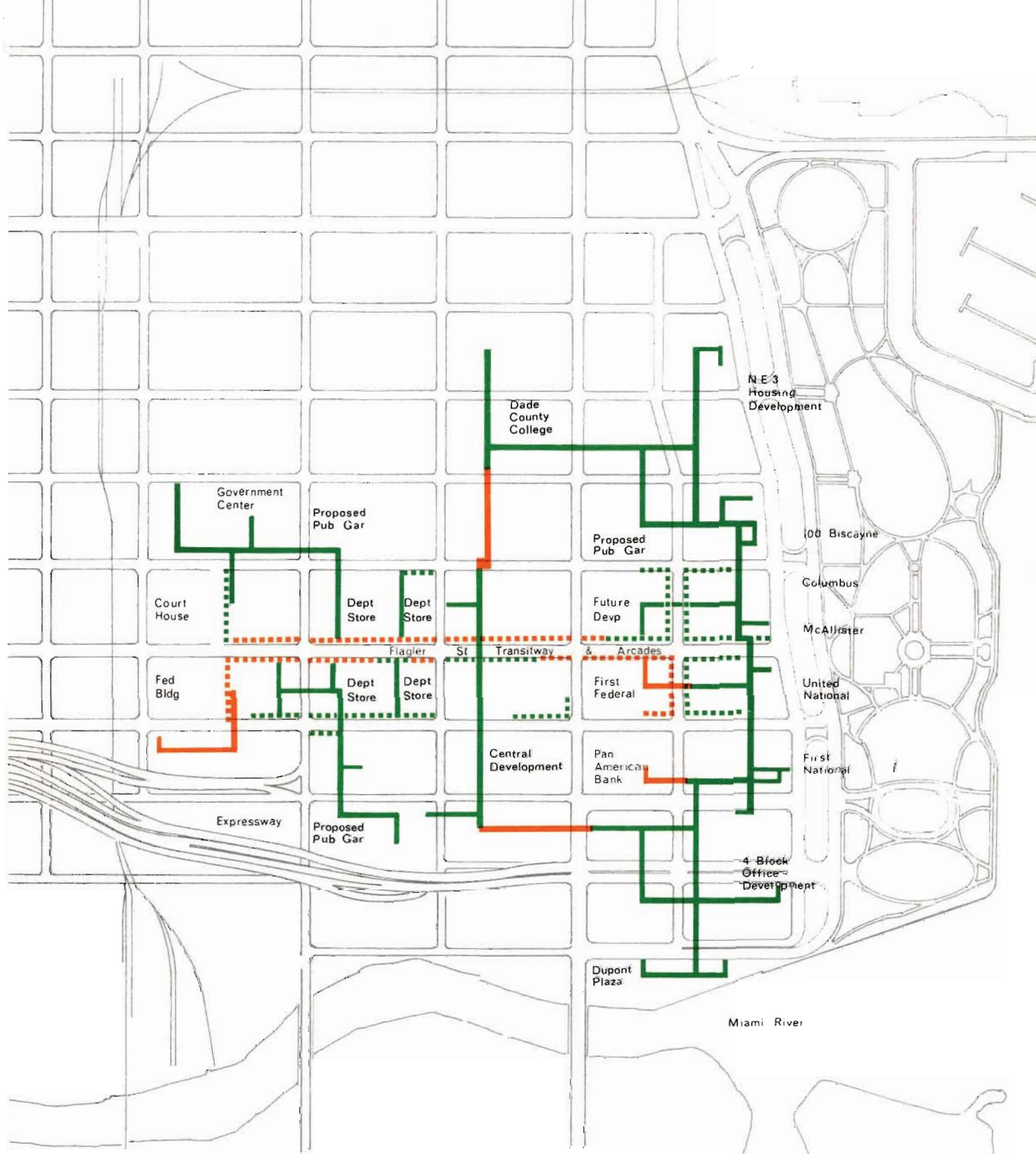
1975/85

PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM: 1975/85

In the decade between 1975 and 1985 the pedestrian system should logically extend into those areas of the Central Business District where important developments are most likely to occur. At the present time these areas appear to be the blocks lying east of the Dade County Junior College site, the four currently vacant blocks around DuPont Plaza and the center section of the Flagler Street district. The third garage will also be plugged in. The extensions of the pedestrian system, hypothetical, to be sure, at this remove -- are shown opposite in orange.

PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM: AFTER 1985

By 1985 the pedestrian system will have achieved its basic scope and character. It will be self-sustaining, and from then on it can be counted on to extend itself automatically into every major new building in the area. The system will have developed into an environment in which pedestrians can move to almost any point within the Central Business District without encountering the hazards and unpleasantness of traffic. And traffic, freed from conflict with pedestrians at intersections, can continue to move easily through districts that will be far more densely built-up than they are today. Not least among the benefits of the pedestrian system will be the gradual extension of street-level arcades along Flagler Street (dotted lines on map, opposite) which will bring architectural unity and local charm to that important thoroughfare.



EXISTING



ABOVE GRADE PEDESTRIANWAYS

ARCADES AT GRADE

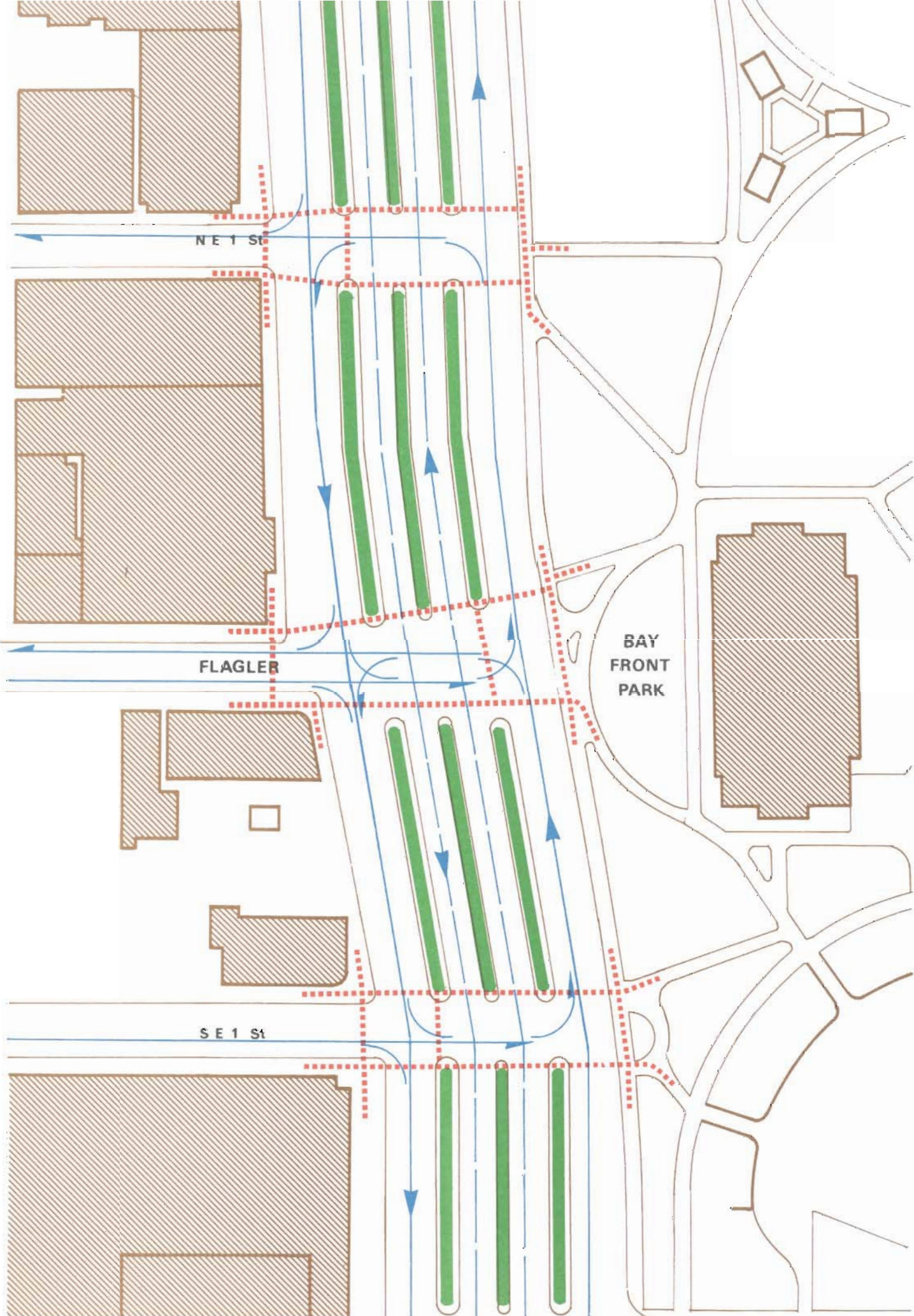
NEW



AFTER 1985

APPENDIX

**BISCAYNE BOULEVARD
& BAYFRONT PARK**

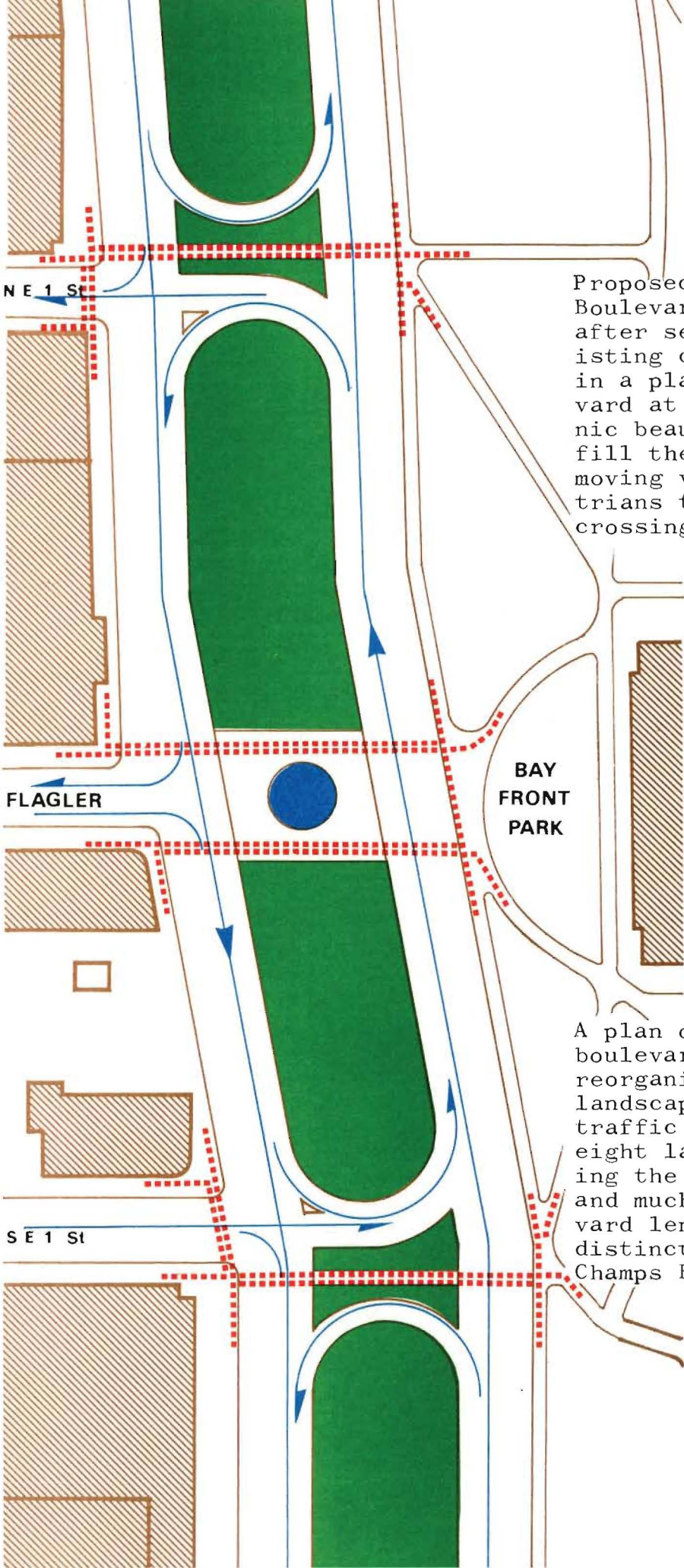


Circulation

VEHICULAR ————
PEDESTRIAN - - - - -

Proposed reorganization of Biscayne Boulevard is shown in before-and-after sequence on these pages. Existing conditions, shown opposite in a plan of a section of the boulevard at Flagler Street, confine scenic beauties to three narrow strips, fill the intervals with parked and moving vehicles, and oblige pedestrians to make lengthy and hazardous crossings in front of traffic.

A plan of the same stretch of the boulevard shown on this page after reorganization, shows a wide formally landscaped mall down the center, with traffic traveling on the remaining eight lanes. For pedestrians, crossing the boulevard has become safer, and much more pleasant. The new boulevard lends the same kind of formal distinction to downtown Miami as the Champs Elysée does to Paris.



A NEW FRONT DOOR FOR MIAMI

By unsnarling its street system, by making downtown attractive and convenient for pedestrians, and by upgrading Biscayne Boulevard and its bordering park, Miami can over the next few years make a spectacular improvement in its appearance and its image (see next page).



1970: Miami's "front door" as it looks today. The large zone within the dashed white line represents the area that should be future park extension.



1972/73: The same view of a three-dimensional model shows the dramatic enhancement of the park and Biscayne Boulevard as they could appear by 1973.

With the rapid growth and reorganization of the Central Business District, and the formal grandeur of Biscayne Boulevard and Bayfront Park, new and bigger structures are bound to rise in response to the challenge of the surroundings.

