

As part of Shulman + Associates design, an infill building (in red) is lifted from the ground on piloti, not unlike the ground floor of Birch Tower.

Reimagining The City | North Beach Village

Text John T. O Connor

North Beach, as it is now called, was once part of the vast holdings of Hugh Taylor Birch, who also owned the land on which the Bonnet House Museum sits, as well as the 180 acres of Birch State Park to the north. Birch gave away the 45 acres the Bonnet House sits on as a wedding present to his daughter and sold the section South of the Bonnet House off prior to 1950. Birch Estates, as it was called, became a burgeoning little beachfront destination with a grid of streets named Terramar, Vistamar, Windamar and Viramar. Between 1950 and 1960 or so, an explosion of building occurred, giving birth to inns like the Sea Chateau and Sun Terrace. These little hotels, motels and apartments had an exotic charm for visiting northerners who might choose to stay at the Bali, Carib or Capri, while their friends were just around the corner at the Flamingo, Rip Tide or Sand Castle.

Built for an era when almost everyone drove to Florida in a car and expected to park at their door, these hotels and inns fell out of favor as the glamorous new hotels rose on the beach. Many suffered from decades of 'deferred maintenance' and the city added insult to injury installing poorly planned medians and ever more parking.

While it is clear to most who visit this neighborhood that something is not working, it is also clear that these streets have many things no other neighborhood in the city has. For one thing, it is completely walkable. From one end to the other, it is relatively quiet and, away from the beach, there is no speeding A1A to deal with. It also holds a great concentration of the city's signature Mid-Century Modern structures, like Birch Tower, Manhattan Tower, the Escape Hotel and scores of other unnamed gems. It is steps to the beach and – if it had a water taxi stop – could be minutes from Las Olas, sans car.

In spite of the success of the larger, three and four star hotels on the beach, until recently, this neighborhood had languished. Now, there is a growing interest in making North Beach a true 'destination' both for travelers and for residents. Talk has resurfaced recently of the Bonnet House opening an entrance at the top of Breakers Avenue, a thoroughfare that stretches six blocks to end at the new W Fort Lauderdale. With the opening of the Royal Palms in a completely revamped space, interest has resurfaced in this intimately scaled resort district. Work is already underway on a revamped hotel to be named Aqua and another called Beach House. Plans are on the boards for more.

With all this activity and with people finally paying attention to what could be a phenomenal destination, the editors at Tropic Magazine thought it might be a good idea to ask five architectural firms to take a closer look at the very spine of this neighborhood, Breakers Avenue and, by way of a charrette-style competition, come up with what they think makes sense for the location. Since that time, the offices of Vitalini Corazzini Architects, Shulman + Associates, PowersSchram Architects, Glavovic Studio and Falkanger Snyder Martineau & Yates have been busy doing just that: rethinking aspects of this little district and how best to reactivate its streets. These teams have studied elements of the neighborhood from its architecture and scale to its traffic flow and parking needs. They've looked at the role pedestrians, both residents and visiting guests, play in creating a truly vibrant village. These groups, one from Miami one from Coral Gables and three from Fort Lauderdale, have spent time thinking about landscape, paving and the connection of this walkable neighborhood to its biggest attractions: the Atlantic Ocean and Intracoastal Waterway.

There were no holds barred in this competition. No restrictions on what they were allowed to do. All of the entrants are winners as the ultimate goal here was simply to provide the fuel for change – to produce the seed of an idea.

The recession is over, tourism is up, and it's clear this neighborhood is on the move again. In the end, its final appearance and vitality is up to developers and the City's Planning & Zoning Board, but we figured a little outside brainstorming couldn't hurt. On the following sixteen idea-packed pages, Tropic Magazine presents the thought-provoking work of our five, hard-working teams.



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Jiro YatesFalkanger Snyder Martineau & Yates
Fort Lauderdale

The Disconnect: There are several disconnected conditions that are inherent to the areas along the Breakers Avenue spine and its immediate neighborhood. One is the existing high-rise structures along A1A that impede visual access to the beach from the western properties. Future approved and proposed projects will continue this trend due to existing zoning conditions and land values that compel dense developments. Another detached component is the absence of a public space for the local residents as well as the lack of guest-oriented activities and commercial venues for visitors. Though the beach has been the impetus for the barrier island's development, a successful destination needs this strong commercial presence to attract and retain its tourist base. In addition, the adjacent Bonnet House and Gardens has an entrance that has been disengaged from straightforward access since the 1940s.

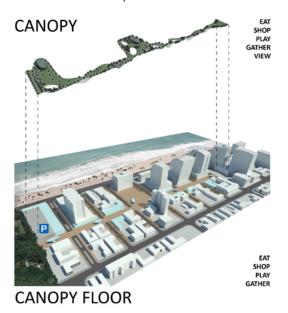
With the existing and future proposed hotels, almost 2,000 guests rooms will be available in the hotels along A1A alone in addition to the over 100 structures within the NBRA neighborhood. Though this will be one of the densest local areas for tourist lodging, there is a lack of shops and restaurants to provide an active, walkable destination environment.

The initiative of this project is to introduce an urban canopy that will provide connections both literal and conceptual to stitch together the fabric of these disparate parts to provide conditions that encourage development along Breakers such as retail, restaurants, galleries and other tourist and local amenities.

The Connection: Canopy The raised canopy is the primary construct which operates in multiple capacities. It provides cover and demarcates the space of the newly created Breaker's Promenade below and establishes a sense of place. Its form is derived from both current and future site conditions. It undulates to hotel decks to provide potential connection routes, and sways away from residential structures and other properties. The movement away from properties such as the future Ocean Waves Resort is to maintain its entrance configuration adjacent to Breakers Avenue and to maintain light and air filtration.

The canopy itself is occupiable and offers space for retail and restaurants. The structure is organic in form and in those locations where it bridges the east-west cross streets, it provides a raised space offering views to the ocean and intracoastal. The existing Mid Century Modern structures along Breakers and in the village, were designed primarily as small hotels and as such do not necessarily lend themselves well for renovations into commercial activity due to size and configuration. To infuse a certain density of commercial uses to make the area viable as a destination, there needs to be selective demolition and additions, and the canopy itself will bolster this program by providing additional space above, below and within.

The canopy is a linear park with 2 large open spaces and vertical access is provided by elevators, stairs and escalators. The canopy provides areas to walk, exercise, gather, shop and eat away from vehicular traffic while providing views to the ocean. Access-controlled connections to the pool/sun decks of each hotel can also be made which offers an interesting, dynamic relationship between the hotels quests and the canopy.





Visual Connection (from and to) Not only will the canopy provide a visual connection to the beach and the village for those within or on the canopy, but it will also provide a striking form visible from the beach and from vehicular traffic along A1A. This will draw beachgoers in and invite those driving by to explore the areas behind the beachfront hotels.

Canopy Floor A major component of the canopy is the public parking structure adjacent to the south edge of the Bonnet House. A multilevel parking structure will serve the beach, the northern SLA district, the new south entrance to the Bonnet House as well as the new commercial program that will develop along the new Breakers Promenade and the immediate neighborhood. The facility will incorporate commercial uses and a trolley stop that will transport users to other destinations up and down the beach as well as a Broward B-Stop bicycle rental station. The parking structure will be encompassed by the canopy and will support the viewsheds of the Bonnet House property and help buffer the current and future high-rise developments along the beach.

Towards the heart of the park, directly behind the Atlantic Hotel, the canopy expands to create a central location in the neighborhood for several different activities. This area would not be conducive to the development of a future high-rise because the Atlantic Hotel would block its views to the beach. This locale provides opportunities for several different programs. Many of the hotel guests arrive directly to the hotels when entering the city, so a welcome center in this site would provide information for their stay. A pharmacy and market would be a welcome addition for tourists and residents alike and a police and lifeguard substation with a small medical clinic and a hurricane command center

could also be provided. At grade level under the largest section of the canopy would be a public plaza and above on the canopy will be another park space with landscape for public access. Connecting these 2 spaces will be a glass volume containing the previously mentioned program.

The canopy provides a location for art shows, car shows such as the Concours d'Elegance in Winter Park, Florida , an open Farmer's Market as well as outdoor film festivals.



Vacate. Dedicate. Vacation. Vacating Breakers Avenue will allow private development to claim this street for pedestrian activities and to

encourage commercial growth under the canopy and along the edges of the newly created canopy floor.

People tend to gather under covered areas in urban settings and the habitat under the canopy will encourage pedestrians to traverse the promenade in shade. The heat island affect will be reduced and the removal of vehicular traffic along Breakers Avenue will provide a better pedestrian experience.



Sustain business, sustain location, sustainable strategies The use of solar and wind energy will help provide power for the turtle-friendly lighting systems and the canopy will capture rainwater to aid in the irrigation of the newly formed parks and linear greenway systems.

Possible Funding Sources
The Beach CRA, the Beach Business Improvement District (BID) and the Beach Parking Fund along with private investment from those along Breakers Avenue.
The ultimate goal is to have this commercial organism grow and expand towards the west side of Breakers and to provide a vibrant and sustainable destination for tourists and residents alike.



The spine of Breakers Avenue (multi-colored) shows a newly pedestrianized way including cafés and green spaces. This sustainable community plan would include solar and wind generation, rooftop gardens and rainwater collection and storage.

Impluvium Village

Margi Nothard Glavovic Studio Inc. Fort Lauderdale

Margi Nothard and the team at Glavovic Studio took a look at an aerial view of this neighborhood and deciphered not one axis but two axes that they felt wanted to emerge from the early 20th century grid of streets. Breakers Avenue became, in their plans, the north-south primary and Terramar, which stretches from Ocean to Intracoastal, provided the east-west. Beyond this, they added two more pathways, one connecting courtyards and atria replete with commercial enterprises like small retail shops and cafés and the last as a secondary north-south pathway of a pedestrian nature connecting hotels and so on.

Energy Collection But for the Glavovic team, the entire project became one that would revolve around both building an energy network out of renewable sources and creating a sustainable community. Nothard firmly believes that the time has come for us to use what might normally be considered "wasted space" – rooftops, the tops of newly created covered walkways and shade structures – to collect solar energy and rainwater. The solar technology exists today and is being used all around the city to power tiny installations like the Broward B-Cycle stations or certain elements of city signage. Nothard believes North Beach Village offers an ideal opportunity to create a village that ratchets this up a few notches.

A newly-pedestrianized Breakers Avenue could provide spots for multiple, small-scale wind turbines, taking advantage of nearly constant ocean breezes. This vision for Breakers would connect to a newly-opened south entrance at the Bonnet House & Gardens, and through the street's connection to history, environment and with an infusion of culture on a local level, create a desirable place to be in, not simply a place to pass through on one's way to somewhere else.

As the title of their submission indicates, the importance of water in the Glavovic plan is paramount. Taking a clue from ancient Greece, where the impluvium was a common feature where roof lines forced rainwater to be collected and stored in a huge pool and cistern, water and its collection and celebration would be a part of this plan at every turn. As Fort Lauderdale is known as "The Venice of America" and this particular neighborhood ends at water both east and west, Nothard thought this constant link with water in many forms, waterfalls, languid pools and so on, creates beauty, creates sound and connects to the Ocean views.

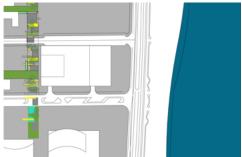
Waterways Glavovic Studio proposes to promote the installation and use of waterways and multiple cisterns to collect, distribute and store rainwater and storm runoff for highly localized use. Collection cisterns could redistribute water for irrigation use, keeping the Avenue green, or filters could be integrated enabling the collected water to be used in a gray water system. Another proposal calls for the use of alternate energy sources, using small-scale hydroelectric stations that can be integrated into the atria and impluvium network. Water from the waterways can be pumped (using solar power) to elevated spill platforms, which will then fall and generate power for a cluster of buildings.

Micro-farming Add to this micro-plots of open land on terraces or existing rooftops, which can serve as gardens and orchards. The harvests from these local micro-farms – formerly acres of heat-generating rubber membrane or tar paper – should be sold to local restaurants creating a micro-economy that will not rely on carbon-based transportation and, at the same time, create tourist interest and the prospect of actual carbon footprint measurability. That alone creates an opportunity for continued marketing of Fort Lauderdale Beach as a unique vacation destination.

Lastly, this team felt there were great opportunities for urban infill and came up with the designs for a potential hotel tower to take the place of an existing parking lot. This design would include a dramatic, landscaped atrium with vertical garden as well as Intracoastal and Ocean viewing platforms, water elements and an east-west link to all-important Breakers Avenue.



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Breakers Avenue becomes the primary pedestrian spine for all of North Beach Village. from Bonnet House on the north to the W Hotel on the south.



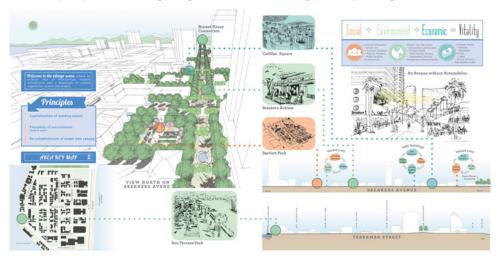
At the corner of Breakers Avenue and Belmar Street, an existing building is reoriented towards a repurposed tennis court - now a restaurant or café with shade structures and a reintroduction of water. A secondary spine, formerly a disused alleyway, becomes a pedestrian path connecting Breakers to Birch Street.



Terramar east along elevated walkway. A green walkway morphs into a vertical garden inside the skin of a proposed hotel



Breakers, the public plaza could encourage a range of vendors and uses, including films in the plaza at night.



The Village Scene

Rick Powers

Powers/Schram Architects / Cadence Landscape Architecture Fort Lauderdale

The Village scene, where an eclectic vibe of Mid-Century Modern architecture, coastal vegetation, and global visitors reclaim the streets in a hip new beach destination. Arriving dockside in your SeaRay with the Bimini top, you cast your lines to the dock master and stroll past cafés and bistros filled with seasonal visitors sipping their morning java along the new Sun Terrace Park. With the car forgotten, you meander through the eclectic neighborhood village of mid-century modern architecture and swaying palms in the local ocean breezes. Turn onto Breakers Avenue where you arrive at your modern two-story guest house for the week of fun. Beach bag packed with towels, cocktails and sunscreen, you stop by the local village market for cheeses, fruit and baguette for your day at the beach where friends wave you down from their favorite beach perch.

It's 4:00 O'clock and the sun begins to set so you hop onto your B-bicycle streamliner for a brief tour of the village and then ride back to your guest house for a quick shower to get ready for the evening. At sunset you stroll down the pedestrian mall of Breakers Avenue for a glass of wine with friends before dinner and outdoor theater at a neighborhood hot spot known for their stone crab claws. Closing the evening with live jazz at the Village Scene you catch a night cap and say good night to friends and prepare for tomorrow's famed open market bazaar of local artisans

Celebrate Evolution. Design for Flexibility Welcome to the re-imagined North Beach Village, a sustained coastal destination. Here environmental, economic, and social implications are equally considered to bring vitality back to the streets of Terramar, Vistamar, Windamar, and such. These streets try once again live up to their suggestive names and host an array of pedestrians. What, you may ask, makes this a sustained coastal destination? Equal attention to multi-modal access, versatile business opportunity, and investment in public open space.

North Beach Village sits in the physical center of Fort Lauderdale's beach evolution. At its north boundary, the Bonnet House - one of the only remaining parcels in Fort Lauderdale where our barrier island's original coastal dune vegetation can still be found. And its south boundary, W Hotel - a premier hotel luxury brand, created on the power of WOW. This condo-hotel represents the evolutionary peak of high-rise beach front development.

So what's next? A challenge to bridge the gap, of both time and physical development. North Beach Village offers the ability for mid-century buildings to be re-born. Empty parcels to be re-imagined and transformed, shared by a rotation of vendors, outdoor exhibits, performance artists, and visitors. Collective buildings can serve as vintage boutiques where both domestic and international purveyors can set up shop or revolving displays from key Fort Lauderdale cultural entities can share their art. North Beach Village will work to sustain itself, but support the City as a whole. North Beach Village will be a progressive development model - honoring connection and collaboration.

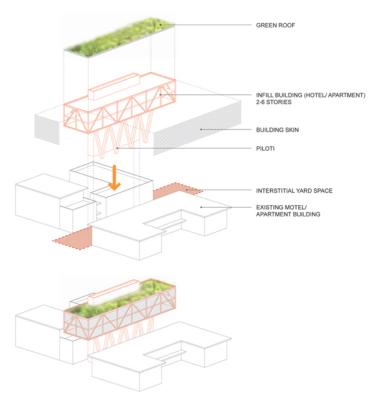
Vision This vision reunites old-Florida hospitality with a pedestrian-focused village, echoing days when canopy trees towered over this

Along the Avenue Breakers Avenue emerges as the physical and visual connection between the past and present of that which is 'Fort Lauderdale' – bridging the pap of time from our past as an untouched and endless coastal dune landscape to the bustling beachfront hotel boom experienced two times over.

Here on the Avenue, people have priority. Automobiles are in the periphery. A tree canopy returns along the Avenue that was long ago lost to development. Live oaks, gumbo limbo, mahogany, and buttonwood now spill over the walls of the Bonnet House and down Breakers Avenue. Mid-Century Modern architecture will be renewed for a different generation to appreciate and enliven. Street-side activity flourishes year round for both residents and global travelers alike.

Versatility = Viability North Beach Village assembles a variety of landscape elements into a constellation of inventive spaces nestled around existing and infill architecture. The design allows for a number of flexible-use spaces for both commercial purposes and public events. The tree-lined Breakers Avenue, closed to automobiles, can incorporate a variety of amenities such as market squares, event lawns, street cafes, or even an outdoor theater. This integrated approach creates a vibrant hub set in a landscape full of excitement and versatility.

URBAN INFILL



An exploded view shows how infill building could in many cases easily fit between existing structures.

The Urban Dune Allan Shulman FAIA, LEED AP Shulman + Associates Miami

The North Beach neighborhood of Fort Lauderdale can be seen as both a coastal dune and an urban district. The neighborhood's identity and interest derive from the positive interaction of these two characteristics, relatively rare in South Florida despite miles of high-density development along the coast. Although the shifting, wind-swept character of a dune and the built intensity of an urban district may seem contradictory, their reconciliation suggests fertile ground for a new vision of North Beach. The hybrid concept of the "Urban Dune" becomes the thematic focus of this study; each decision regarding future improvements to the neighborhood flows from and reinforces these baseline characteristics.

Ecological Regeneration North Beach, like most of South Florida's barrier islands, is a dune – a buffer zone between ocean and terrestrial highlands; before its 20th century development, the area provided a sheltered habitat for native flora and fauna. One goal of this project is to nurture the repair of the underlying dune – not through dune reconstruction eastward of A1A, but in-situ, interweaving with the subsequent urban development over the original area of the dune. The regeneration of the dune is not purely an ecological concern, but a dynamic urban process. The mission is to provide a "sound ecology" within the existing district, one that will also support healthy development.

The Urban Dune will repair the health and function of the district as a dune by reinforcing its underlying character as a continuous and shifting coastal habitat. It dissolves the impervious armature of paved surface, almost 100' wide, made up of street grid and parking areas. In its place, it proposes an adaptive infrastructure mixing pervious and landscape areas in the public realm. Plantings within the urban grid will include pioneer species like sea grasses, as well as shrubs and woody vegetation that represent mature dune ecosystems. Cocoplum, Seagrape, Buttonwood, Sand Live Oak and Saw Palmetto will provide both ornamental landscaping and canopy for the district. soften: Remove pavement in order to soften the infrastructure of the district. Replace asphalt and concrete streets and parking areas with dune restoration and pervious paving.

replenish: Replant the dune landscape using native plants, shrubs and trees, in the public right-of-way. Increase the amount of ground cover and canopied open space. Urban Regeneration One goal of the project is to transform the infrastructure of the area into a living organism. As an urban district, the vision for North Beach is an ecologically-balanced, pedestrian-oriented oceanfront community. The district needs to find a sustainable balance among water, sand, vegetation and constructed space. Critical to this balance is a reconsideration of the existing infrastructure, the introduction of a new main street "center" to the district, and nurturing a mixed-use character.

Within the grid of North Beach, Breakers will become a new type of main street. Built over the high point of the original dune, it will mix retail development with dune restoration.

pedestrianize: Remove the cars from the heart of North Beach (maintain car access along North Atlantic/AIA and Bayshore Drive) to create a pedestrian-oriented dune community. Develop parking garages along both sides to accommodate visitors with cars. Although most existing buildings were built for the automotive age, their transformation into a new type of ecological village will lend a meaningful new identity to the district.

recenter: Convert Breakers Avenue into a mixed-use commercial, pedestrian-oriented main street. Use botanical garden type landscaping in the center.

Architectural Regeneration Any new development within the North Beach district should take into account the distinctive character and quality of the existing built environment. It should also consider the benefits of densification and diversification. In this primarily low-scale neighborhood, a combination of adaptive uses, and the careful layering of new additions will create a sustainable urban district.

Layering begins with conservation of the existing buildings as a baseline characteristic of North Beach, and of the mid-century community. It is important to maintain character-defining features of the buildings. Transformation of the buildings may begin with street-front areas to mixed uses, especially along Breakers Avenue. Here, we propose the incorporation of retail frontages and transformation of street-front parking areas into virtual porches

Pilotis buildings, already present in the district (e.g. Birch Tower) provide an ideal transitional architecture for urban densification. The challenge with new construction is to consider the dynamic ground plane of the dune, while also respecting the existing fabric of low, two-story apartment buildings that give the district its identity. Sometimes referred to as still buildings, pilotis buildings attach to the landscape with a light footprint. They float above the existing fabric, while remaining atmospherically transparent at ground level. They offer superior views and air. They provide an intermediate scale that heals the rift between high-rise oceanfront hotels and the low-scale resort and residential development just behind.

layer: Preserve the character of the neighborhood by conserving existing buildings. Allow new additions and adaptive use, i.e. layered architectural development, to enhance the density and diversity of the district.

connect: Exploit the interstices. Allow the development of connective structures and vertical additions that use existing rear and side yards, and that maintain the existing network of primary gardens and courtyards

elevate: Create new pilotis buildings. Incentivize new infill development that detaches from the ground surface.



Potential infill structures all use pilotis, allowing them to be elevated from a very small footprint. This would be ideal for future residential and hotel space.



> On the left in red, an infill building is lifted from the ground on piloti, not unlike the ground floor of Birch Tower, Breakers Avenue has reintroduced the natural dune by removing pavement and restoring native plants and trees, increasing the canopy and providing needed shade

The corner of Breakers and Belmar becomes known as Birch Plaza and is planted with native Seagrape. The walking paths are created with water permeable materials instead of asphalt. Evening lighting for the Plaza is provided from fixtures positioned to hang from the trees.



North Beach Transformation

Pablo Corazzini LEED AP / Luigi Vitalini LEED AP VC Architects Coral Gables

VC Architects partners Pablo Corazzini and Luigi Vitalini enter into any design project most concerned with scale, proportion and context. A project with the scale of Breakers Avenue offers multiple possibilities, but in the end, Vitalini and Corazzini chose to transform the entirety of Breakers Avenue into a linear park that would cater to local residents and tourists simultaneously through retail, cafés and a series of pavilions in the center of the Avenue from Vistamar on the north to Viramar on the south.

The team's goal here is five-fold. With these plans they propose to protect the architectural character of buildings in the district. This would mean adaptive re-use of existing structures at all cost to maintain a scale and coherence to North Beach Village. Further to this, the architects hope to underscore the homogeneity of the area's signature Mid-Century Modern architecture, creating a tangible identity.

Through the construction of a tree-shaded linear park the team intends to beautify an area currently bereft of significant canopy and landscaping, replaced over the years by concrete and asphalt. This newly landscaped and shaded promenade would activate the neighborhood with much needed components like small stores, restaurants and cafés running the length of this walkable stretch. Vitalini and Corazzini both agree this could be done without damaging historic residential buildings. The new pavilion-like structures would be narrow in form and face north-south, allowing ample promenades on either side. These structures would also improve the existing twentyfoot setback as a landscape buffer between new and historically significant structures.

Vitalini and Corazzini propose the design of these structures to take into consideration the context of what already exists in the surrounding neighborhood, using whimsical gull-wing rooflines on one and ribbon windows on another. These little buildings could house bike rental facilities, coffee shops and so forth. At the center of each intersection of the linear park would be a two-story obelisk, each different and each referencing the existing architectural style and reinforcing the identity of this unique neighborhood. Open, flexible spaces would be retained in the linear park for potential festivals, art fairs and food trucks.

A significant strategy with VC Architects would be to remove off-street parking and replace with parallel, on-street parking, allowing them to narrow paved areas and introduce far more landscaping to the neighborhood. Areas that were once relegated to parking on Breakers would be returned to pedestrian use and, with the introduction of the pavilions and new landscaping, the distance between buildings and multi-use pavilions would narrow to a more intimately-scaled 32 feet across instead of the current 94 feet.

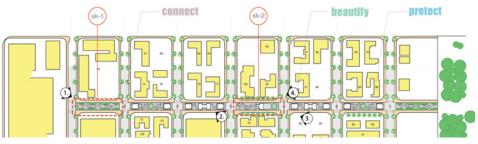
implementation

- Create starter project with Breakers Avenue by making it a pedestrian friendly linear park/street that will contain cafes, retail, and pavilions; providing services
 and products for tourists and locals simultaneously.
 The new structures will be narrow in form and face north/south in order to allow ample promenades at each side. This new layout will utilize and improve the

- existing twenty foot setback as a landscape buffer to the historical structures.

 3. Provide signs/monuments leading to Breakers Avenue at key intersections that reinforce the unity and character of the neighborhood.

 4. Maintain and improve streets that run east/west and connect Breakers Avenue to the bay and ocean by providing large, shaded sidewalks, on-street parking, removing off-street parking and narrowing paved areas. This strategy will continue on Birch and other streets.



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