

FEDERAL COURTHOUSE SQUARE

Text John T. O'Connor **Photo** G.E. Kidder Smith

In our April issue, *Tropic* announced an invitational design charrette, the goal of which is to reimagine the William Morgan-designed Federal Courthouse, now deemed obsolete for its original purpose. The group of architects we've chosen to participate in this exercise understand that Morgan's Courthouse Square worked well pre-9/11, its trayed formation and open terraces suggesting an open, transparent democracy in built form. After the events of 9/11 however, the United States clamped down and security became the rallying cry of the decade. So Courthouse Square, as we call it, was quickly locked down, its doors alarmed, its courtyards closed to the public. It no longer made sense as a Federal Court

in an era of mistrust and suspicion.

With this *Tropic*-sponsored charrette our design teams are asked to look past the current use of the courthouse, and suggest ways this impressive structure could be revitalized for a better use.

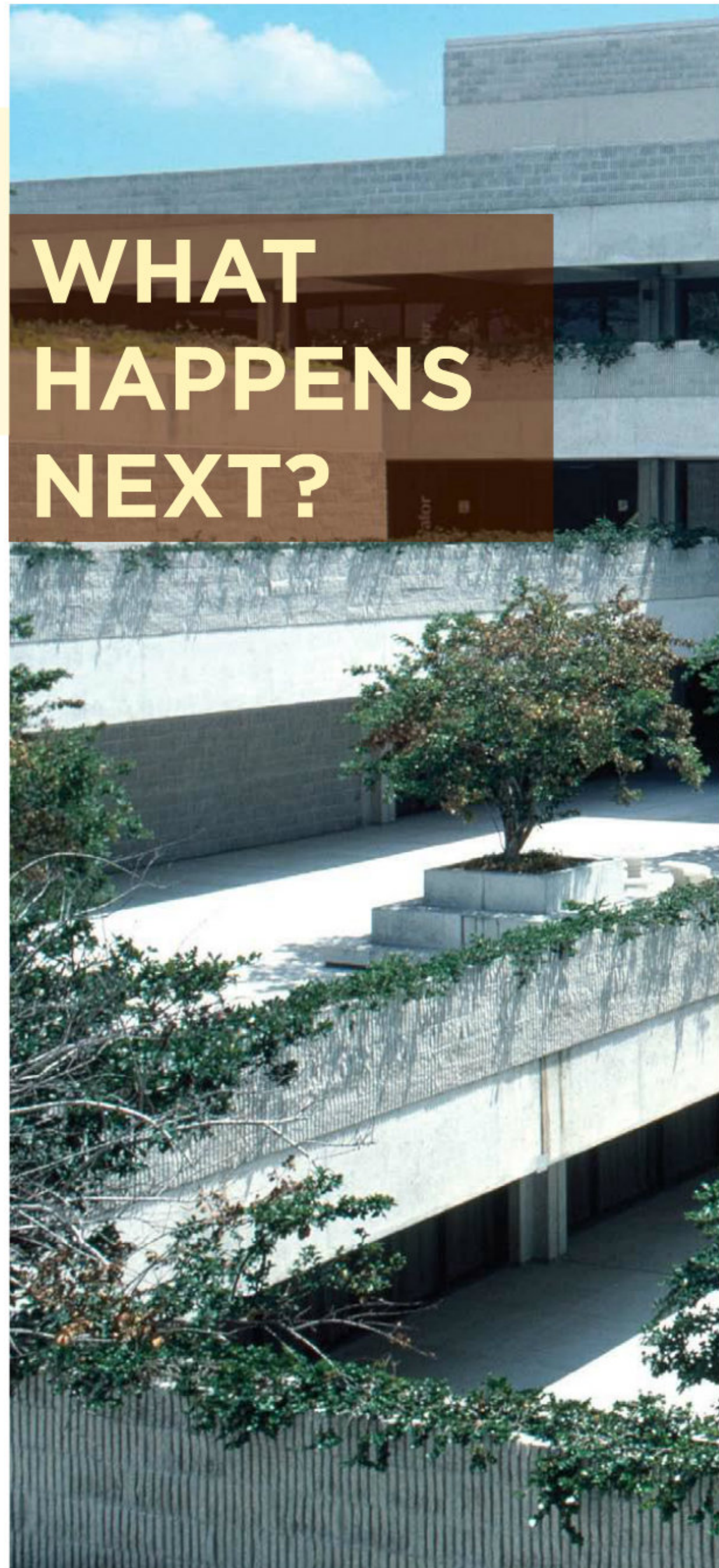
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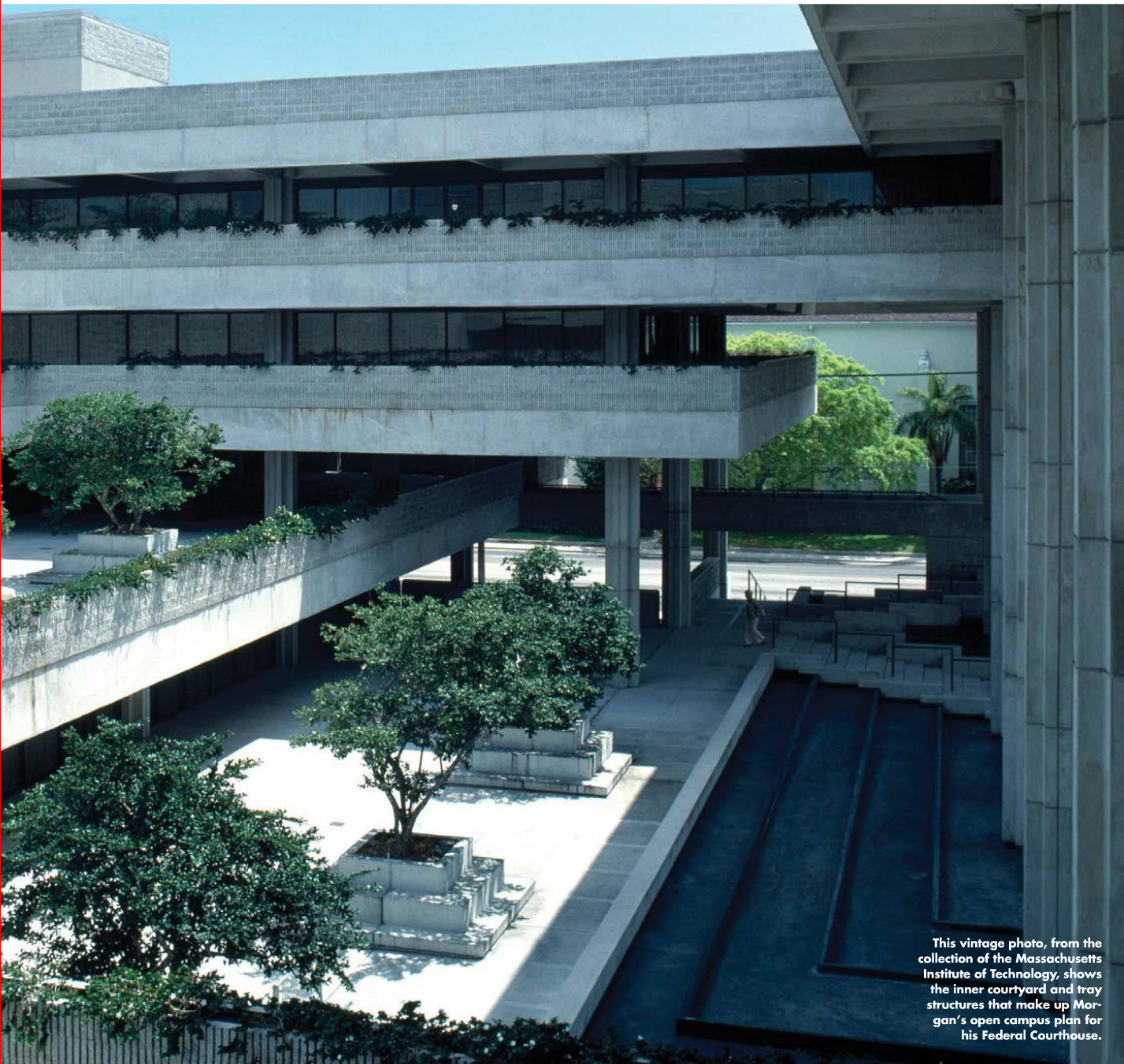
designers are asked to look past its current use, and suggest ways this impressive, Brutalist-era structure could be revitalized for a better use. A charrette is, for those not familiar with the term, an interactive brainstorming session of limited time and sustained concentration, the goal of which is to arrive at the best solution to a problem. The problem here: What to do with a Federal building suffering from deferred maintenance which no longer makes sense for its intended use. Tear it down? Restore it as is? Use a potentially available and contiguous piece of land to expand on the structure making it more financially lucrative? All of these are possible and we leave that to the talent we've brought on to decide.

That talent is substantial. It includes the Touzet Studio, based in Miami; STRANG Architecture, with offices in Miami and Fort Lauderdale; Fort Lauderdale's Glavovic Studio; Cadence, a landscape architecture firm; working in conjunction with Hollywood-based ODP Architects; Adache Group Architects in Fort Lauderdale; and finally, the design firm EDSA, based in Fort Lauderdale.

We're excited they're all on board for this important project, and look forward to publishing the results in our summer, double issue, out in mid-June.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?





This vintage photo, from the collection of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, shows the inner courtyard and tray structures that make up Morgan's open campus plan for his Federal Courthouse.