



Storefront Beautification

Lehigh Acres, Florida

Prepared for:

Lee County Community Redevelopment Agency
and its Lehigh Acres Local Redevelopment Planning Committee
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List of Consultants

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and its Lehigh Acres Local Redevelopment Planning Committee**

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Introduction

The purpose of this study is to encourage healthy commercial redevelopment in Lehigh Acres. The focus is on the original downtown along Homestead Road and the adjacent area along Lee Boulevard and Leeland Heights Boulevard.

This report is not a mandatory building or zoning code. It is a tool to assist commercial property owners of Lehigh Acres in developing, redeveloping, and rehabilitating in a manner consistent with, and reinforcing, traditional local styles of architecture. The sketches show a variety of approaches to improving actual commercial buildings in Lehigh Acres, using design themes equally appropriate to new buildings.

Previous Work

The Lehigh Acres CRA program is guided by its Local Redevelopment Planning Committee. A subcommittee produced a preliminary community beautification plan that articulated design themes to unify the disparate resources of Lehigh Acres, using entry features, a common landscape palette, and aesthetically pleasing signage. This report expands on that effort to include architectural themes for storefronts.



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Existing Architectural Styles

Upon the genesis of this study, several members of the community redevelopment planning committee helped select buildings that were typical of existing development in the Lehigh Acres commercial core. By focusing this report on potential improvements to those typical buildings, other property owners can visualize the effects of these architectural themes on their buildings as well.

Approach

The design team photographed the subject properties and many other commercial buildings throughout Lehigh Acres to identify a representative range of architectural styles and building conditions.

Photos of the subject properties are included in this report to illustrate existing conditions and contrast them with sketches of the potential improvements. Three case studies of building facades are presented, each with two different ideas as to how an owner might improve them. A fourth case study examines how a compound of separate buildings could be unified, including design options for landscaping, signage, fencing, walls, parking, and pedestrian circulation.

A variety of appropriate architectural elements are also presented to suggest desirable methods of establishing a cohesive palette of materials, elements, and design.



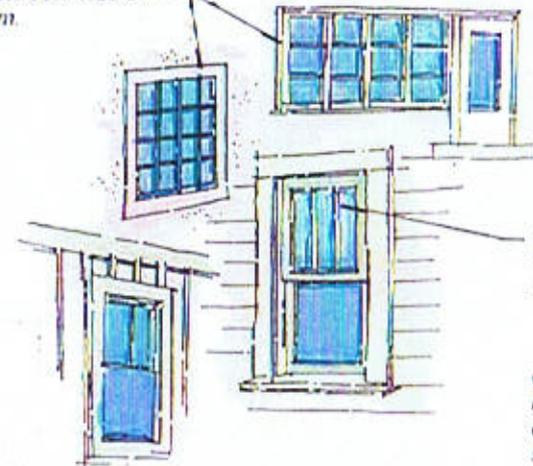
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Building Style & Detailing

It is important to recognize the elements that create the vernacular style of Lehigh Acres. Building mass, scale, facade balance, fenestration (window placement), roof treatments, columns, rails, doors, overhangs, awnings and color all contribute to the creation of a style. This report promotes the preservation of existing structures and encourages new structures that evoke these same elements.

Visual building mass, being for the most part structural, is the most expensive of architectural elements to change. Accordingly it is the one that can be most easily manipulated for *new* buildings with some desirable architectural elements at the time of construction.

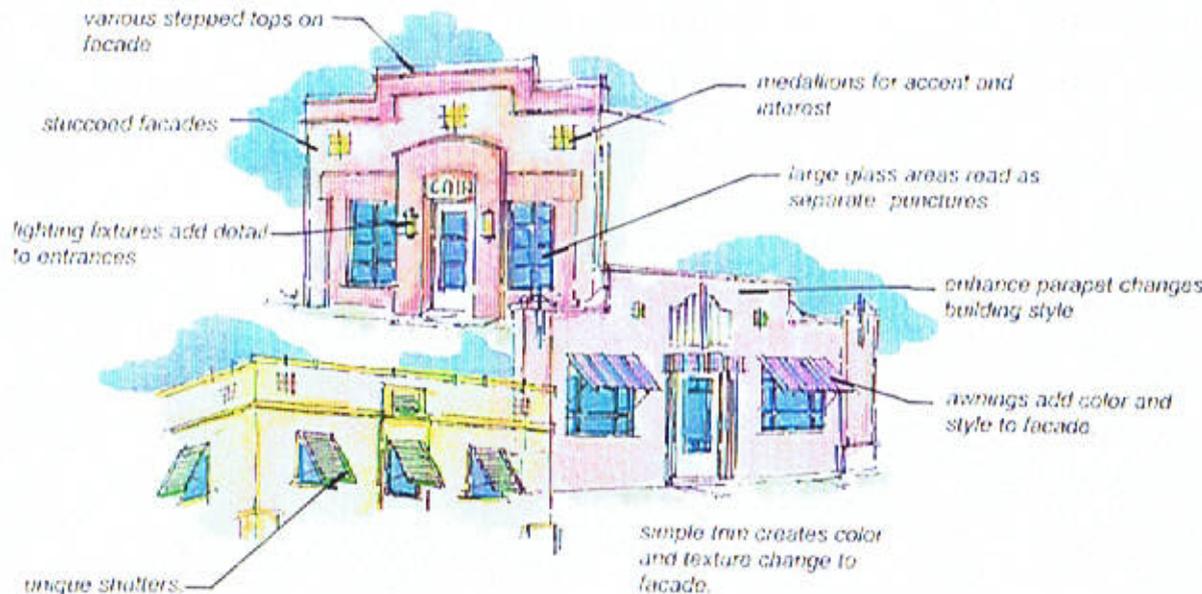
choose between wide or narrow trim.



divide glass with a variety of muntin bar arrangements

windowpanes should not be heavily tinted to encourage window-shopping.

Windows



various stepped tops on facade

stuccoed facades

lighting fixtures add detail to entrances

medallions for accent and interest

large glass areas read as separate punctures

enhance parapet changes building style

awnings add color and style to facade

simple trim creates color and texture change to facade.

unique shutters.

Facades

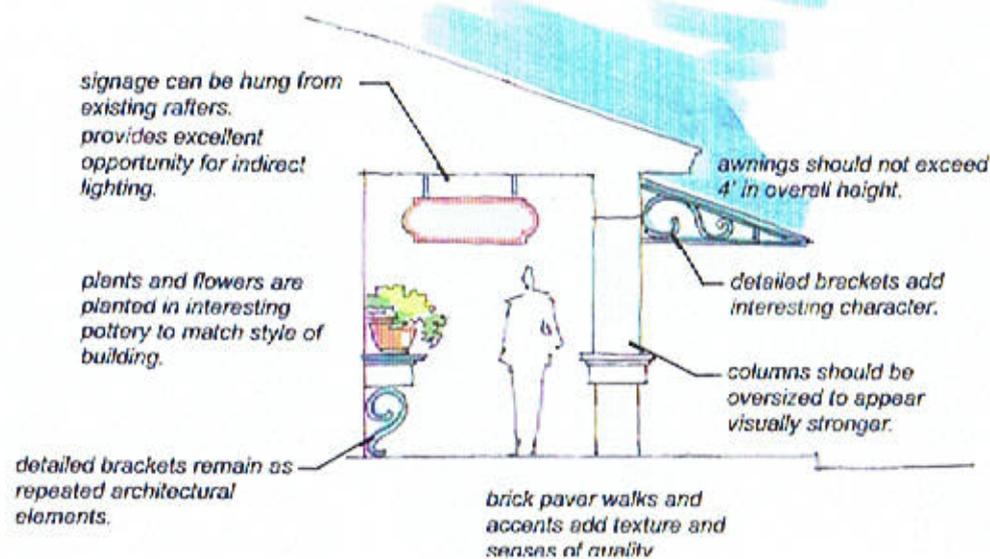
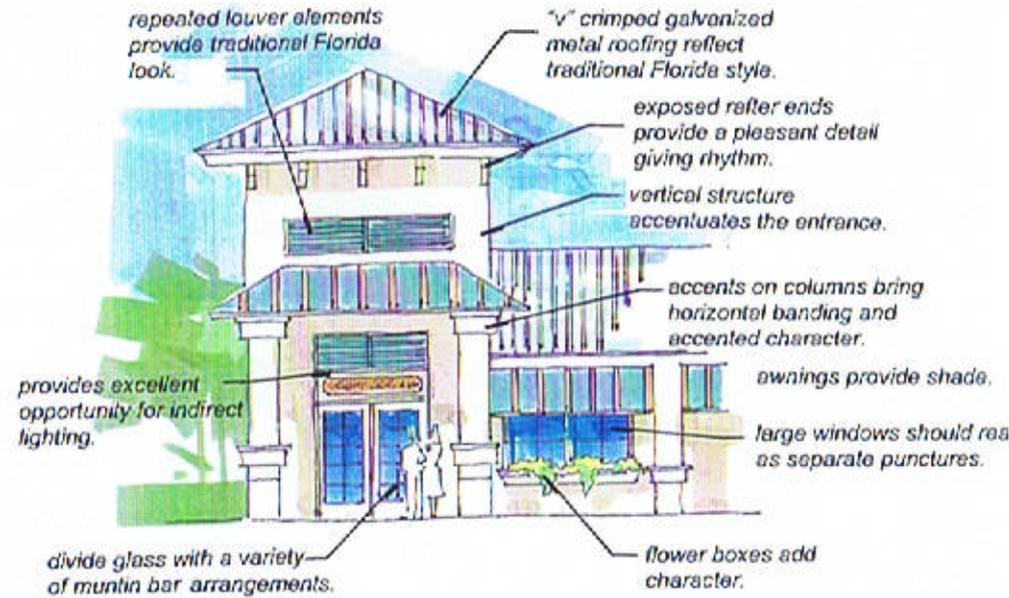


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Building Facades

The facades of commercial buildings are among the most noticeable architectural elements, often dominating a person's memory of a town's appearance. Facade details such as trim, doors, windows, as well as three-dimensional components (lighting fixtures, facade planters, and overhangs) present the architectural personality more strongly than most other elements.

The storefront facade is the architectural element most economically modified and has the highest visual impact. The elements and detailing attached to the facade are very important in the reinforcement of a style. Special paint trim motifs, door trim molding, and window mullions are all low cost, high impact modifications. The use of awnings, lighting sconces and planters add depth, richness, and interest to a building easily and economically.



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Roof Treatments

There are several roof styles in Lehigh Acres, but common elements and materials suggest a style. The predominant material downtown is natural finish metal roofing with noticeable seams.

Standard roof planes can be made more visually engaging with the use of cupolas, dormers, and gables. Ornamental vents also contribute to the vernacular style, expanding the architectural palette at a relatively low cost.

"v" crimped galvanized metal roofing reminds us of days gone by.

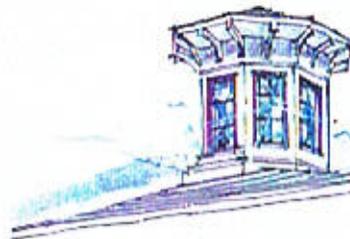
exposed rafter ends provide a pleasant detail and give rhythm.



dormers serve to "break-up" a large uninteresting roof and provide valuable interior light.

Dormers

the tall octagon was popular to provide a long view in all directions.



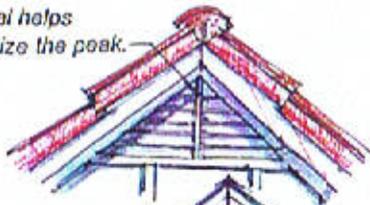
Cupolas

square shapes serve as basis for detail and interest as well.

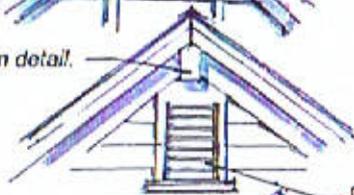


intersection with roof is important.

a vertical helps emphasize the peak.

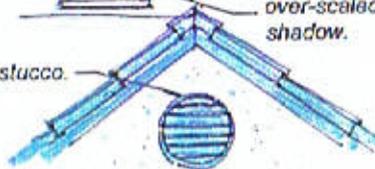


false beam detail.



over-scaled louvers for shadow.

no trim with stucco.



Gable End Roof Vents

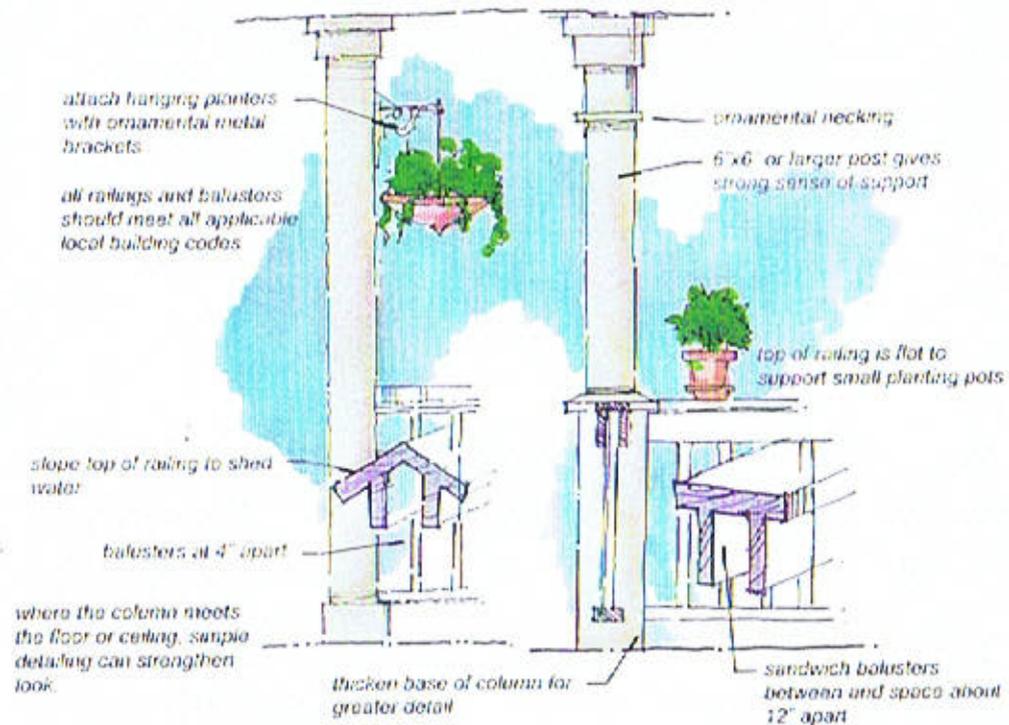


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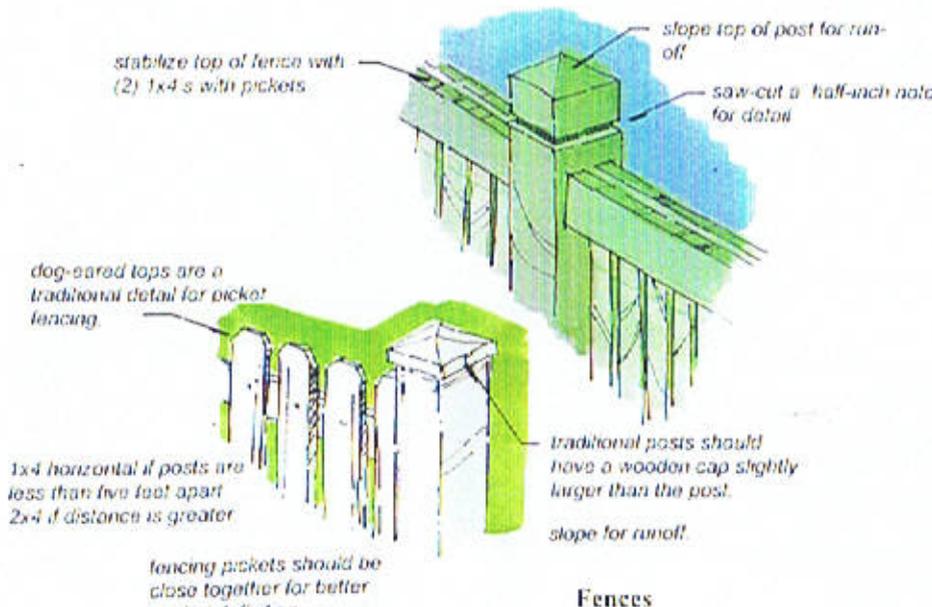
Fences & Porches

Porches and fences can provide a pleasant traditional appearance to residential and commercial buildings. New commercial structures within Lehigh Acres often present a folksy image, a desirable attribute of this pleasant community. All structures should attempt to convey this image through traditional detailing of porch railings, pickets, and fences.

Porches and other entrance features should, as much as possible, utilize the same architectural detailing as the main structure to avoid the appearance of being a design afterthought. Consistent detailing of fence and porch rails can smooth the transition between exterior and interior environments. Simple details such as chamfering, routing and picket style provide accents with a common visual theme to unify a structure's appearance.



Columns and Railings



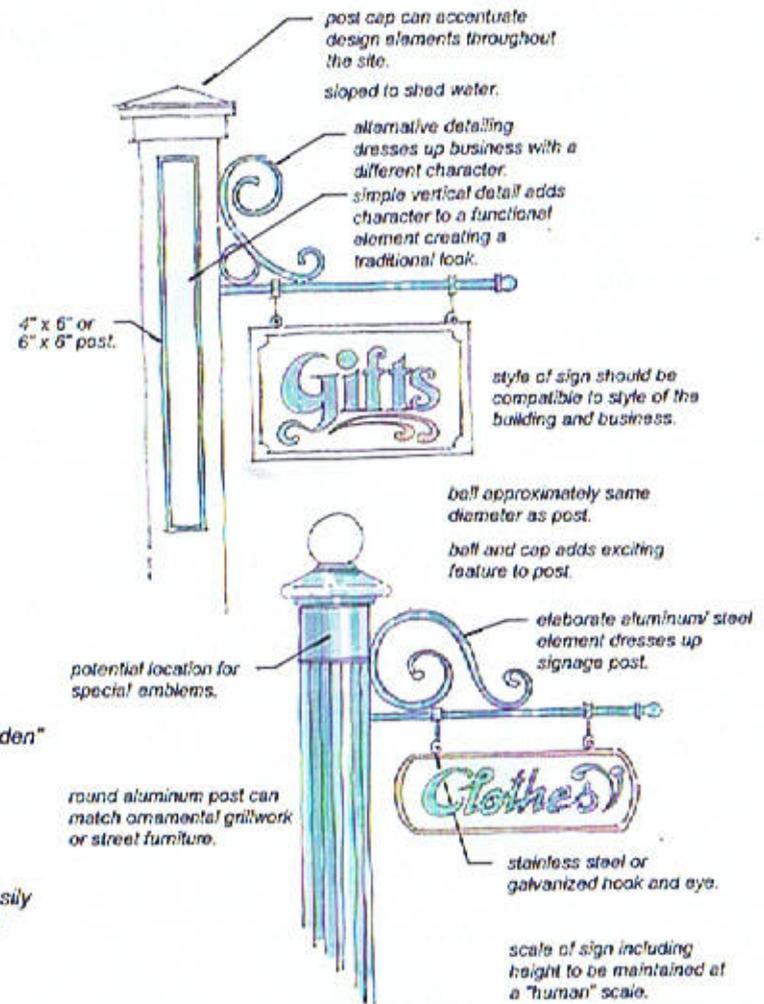
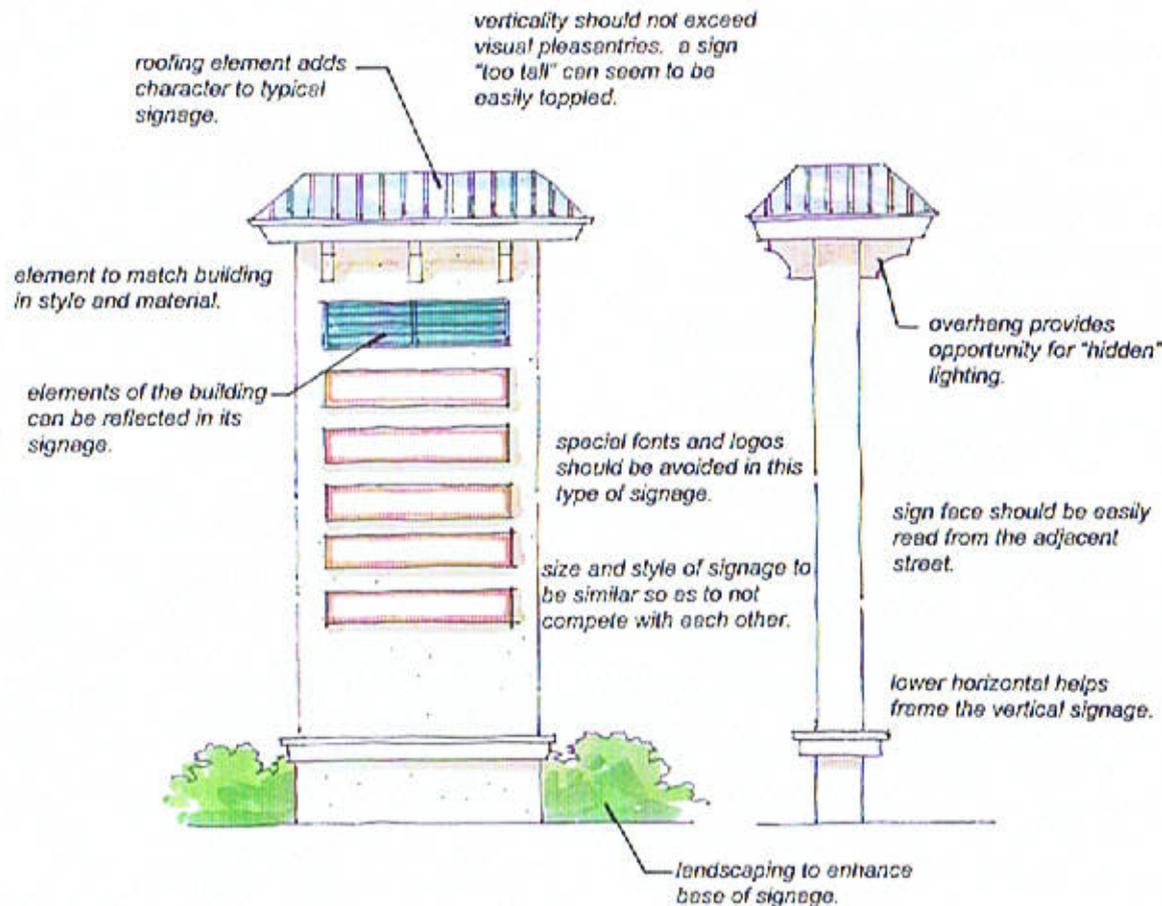
Fences



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Architectural Signage

Building signs can be visually offensive if they are oversized or not an integral building design element. These sketches suggest solutions that integrate the sign harmoniously with the building. Signage, by either type style, method of mounting, or shape, can even reflect the nature of the business being identified.

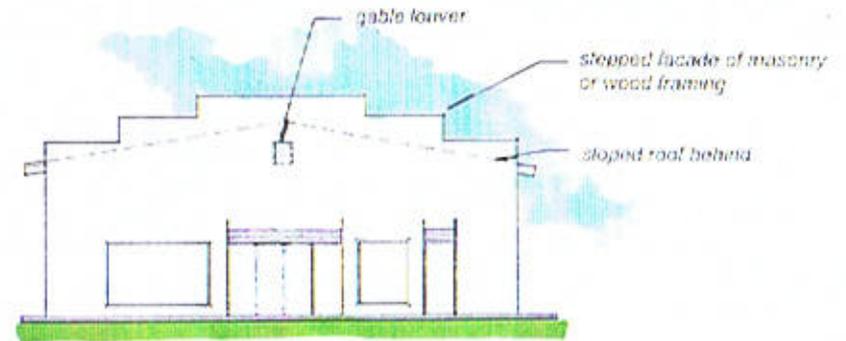


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Building Mass & Color

One of the dominant building types in Lehigh Acres is a rectangular block structure with a gable roof. The following sketches suggest how this basic building can be modified with embellishments and various color schemes. Facade modifications, especially when combined with compatible signage and graphics, are extremely cost effective while providing architectural diversity.

One especially effective design technique is the use of awnings. Colorful fabric material softens and breaks up the large surface area of the blank facade and provides protection from the rain and sun. The traditional image of awnings has been tarnished by the recent spate of garish backlit awnings that are more sign than awning. Similarly, decorative detailing such as coins, applied moldings and reveals become simple, low cost and visually pleasing design solutions.



Typical Existing Building



Old Florida Style

signage to match style of architecture texture and color

ornamental finials add accent and interest

Traditional Style

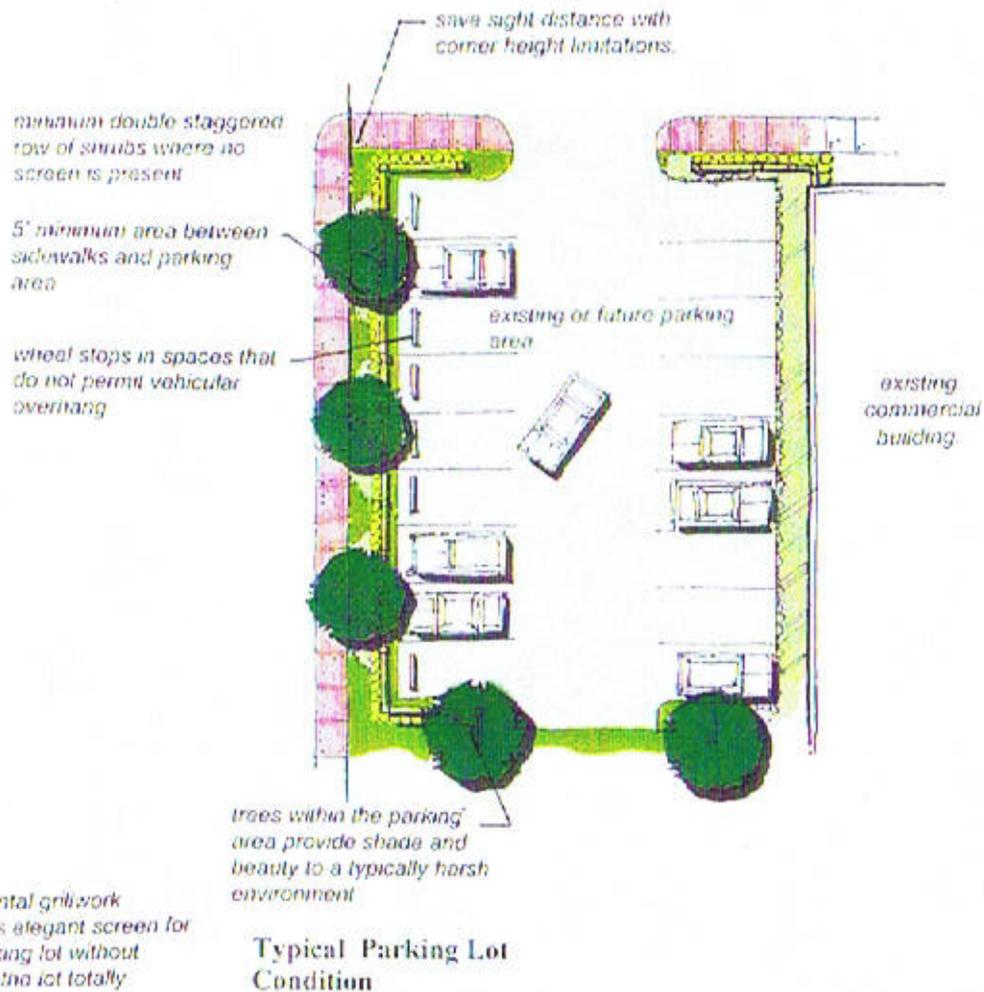
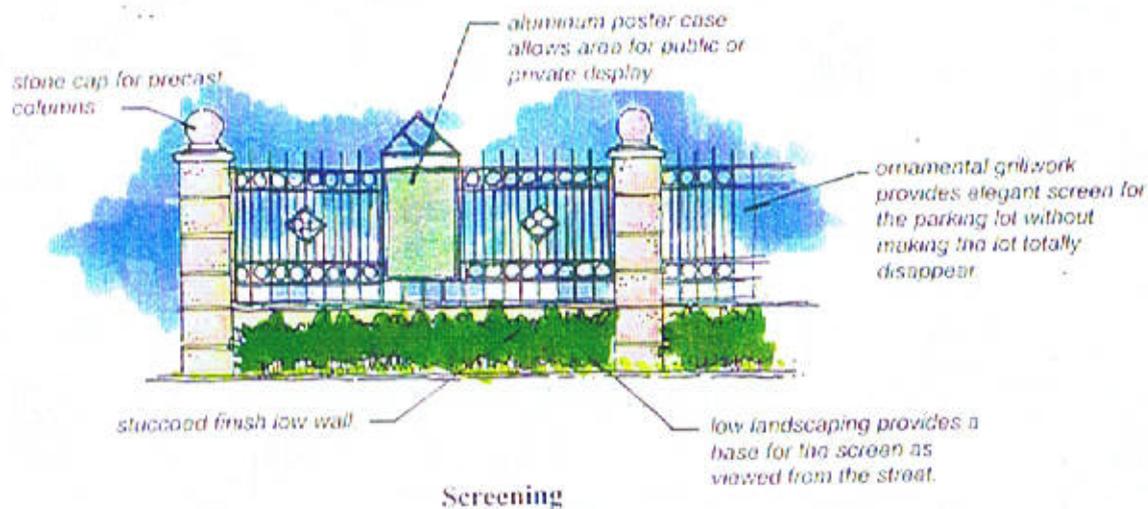
many color combinations can work and change the image or character of the building



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Parking Lots

Existing and proposed parking lots should be screened from the main boulevards with either a landscape buffer or ornamental fencing as per the following sketch. This buffer should be 36" - 42" high to screen automobiles, but not the building facades and signage. This approach minimizes the visual impacts of parking lots that often overwhelm our commercial areas.



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Architectural Solutions

Case Study One

One of the most typical structures in the Lehigh Acres is this one-story masonry home. Two design studies following suggest visually pleasing approaches when an existing residential structure is to be transformed into a commercial building.

Both the 'Old Florida' and 'Traditional' approaches can be integral components of an identifiable town style that grow from existing architectural styles in Lehigh Acres and other parts of South Florida. The existing visual qualities have been improved by simply adding architectural treatments such as facade medallions, awnings, door trims, window muttons, signage, lighting, planters, hanging plants, planter boxes and special pavement areas.

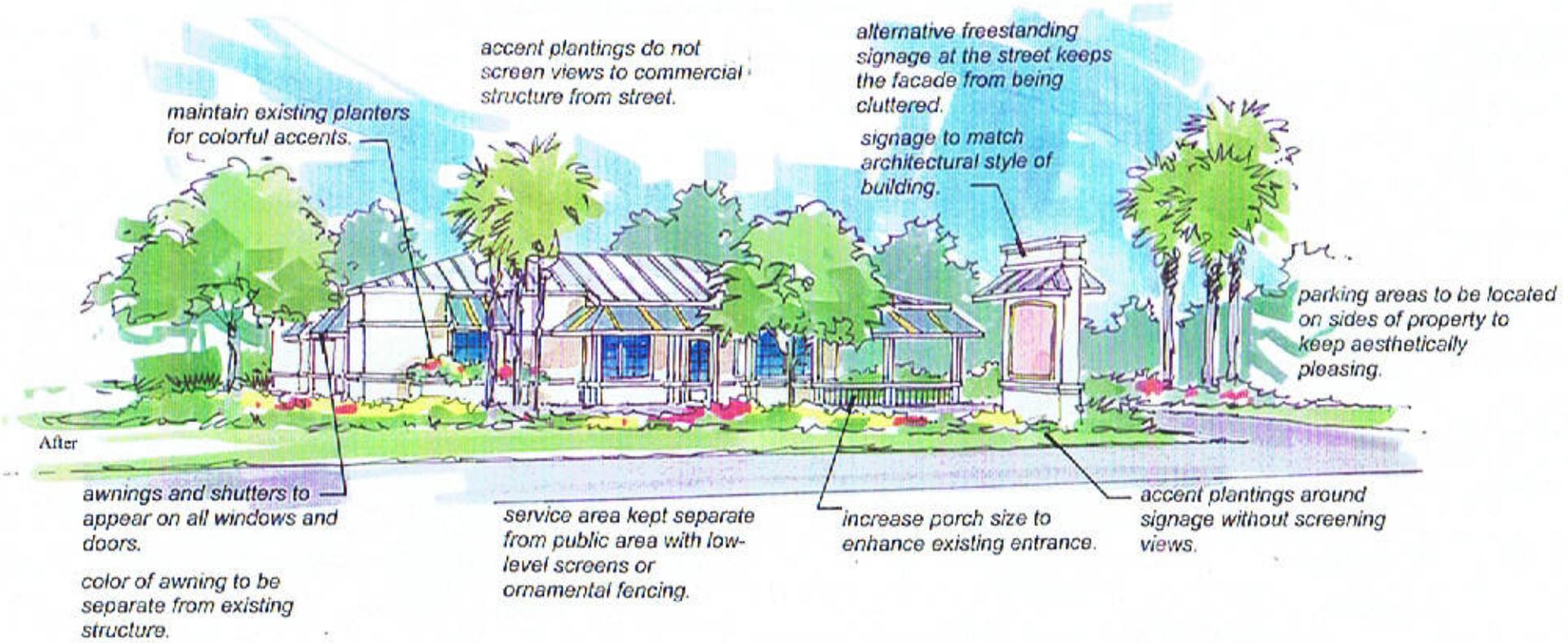
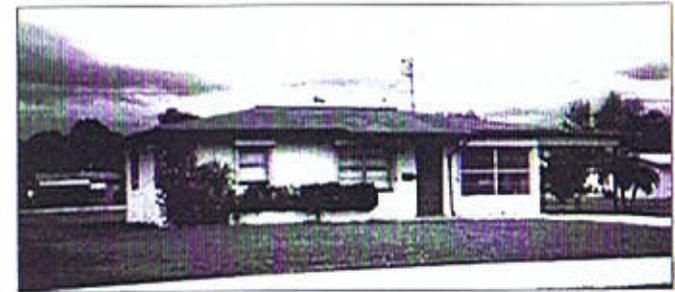


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Architectural Solutions

Case Study One

A Old Florida Style Residential to Commercial Leeland Heights Boulevard



Lehigh Acres

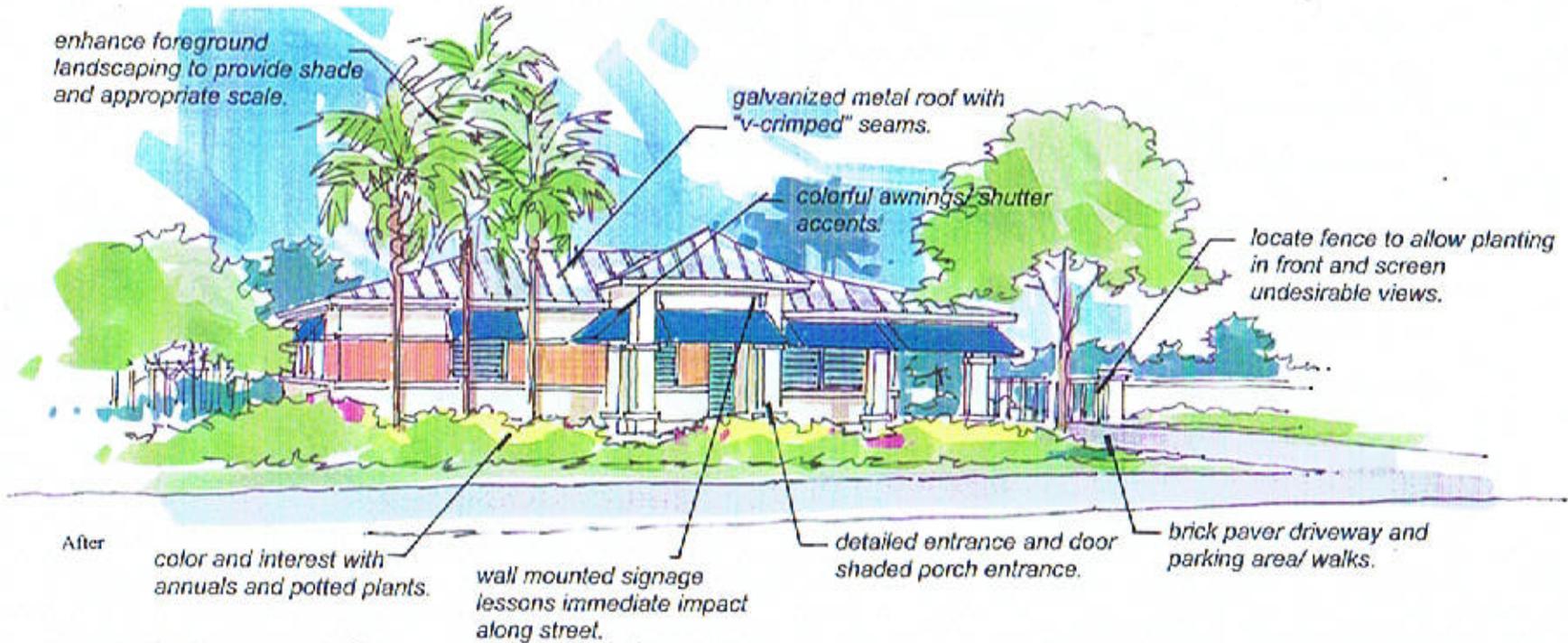
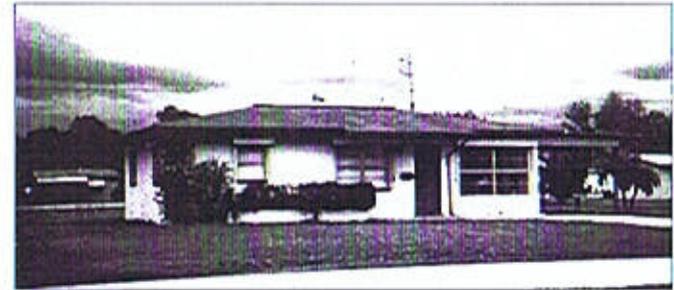
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Architectural Solutions

Case Study One

B Traditional Style

Residential to Commercial
Leeland Heights Boulevard



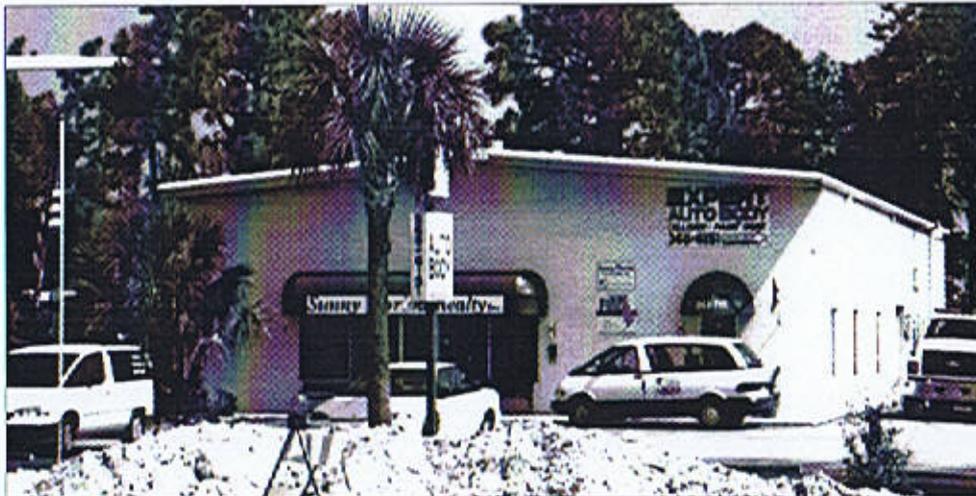
Lehigh Acres

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Architectural Solutions

Case Study Two

This study suggests potential treatments for existing commercial “stand alone” structures. The structure shown here does not have a symmetrical door, which affects the balance of this building. The less informal ‘Old Florida’ style is more adaptable to this imbalance. An alternative, the ‘Updated Traditional,’ is made visually appealing with a centered door to provide a more symmetrical formal look. Minor roofline modifications enhance the refinement of the buildings. Either treatment is comfortably adaptable to Lehigh Acres buildings.

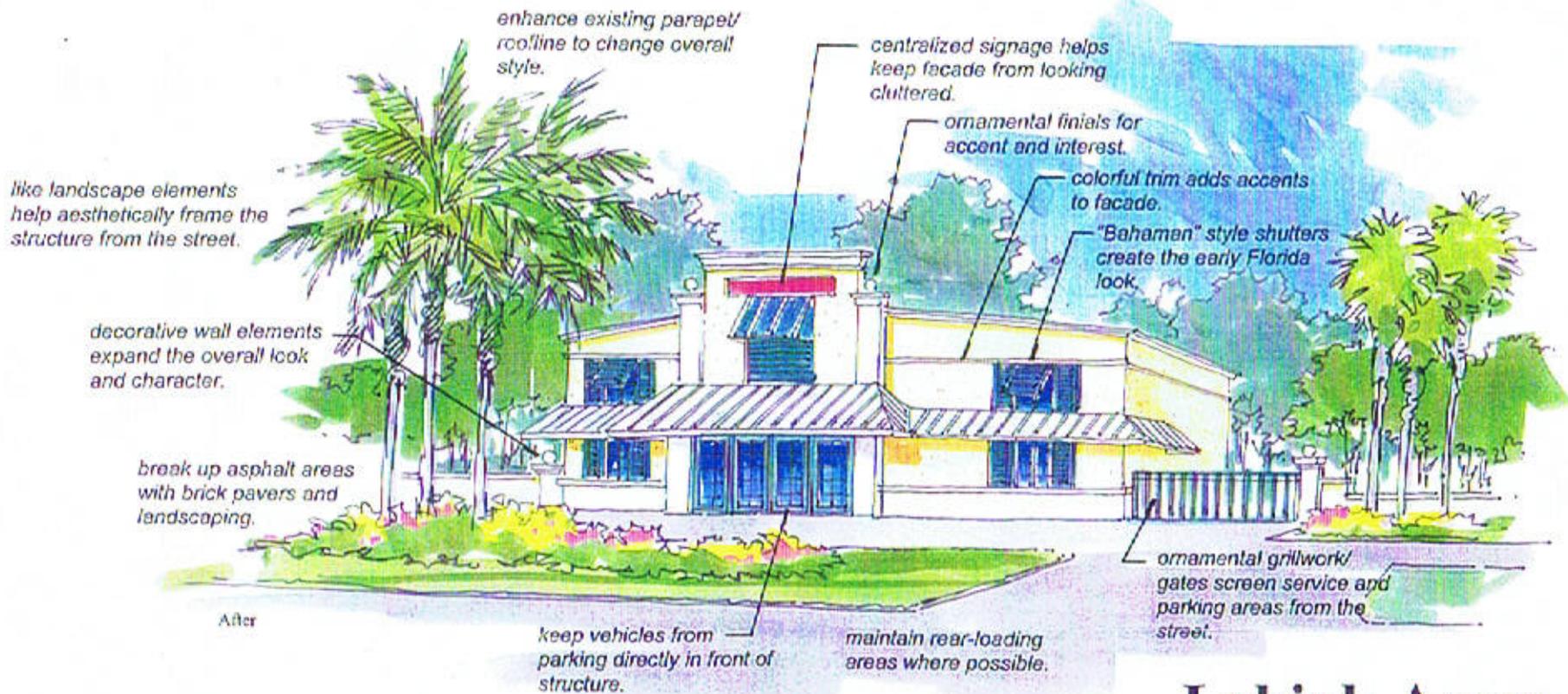


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Architectural Solutions

Case Study Two

A Old Florida Style Typical Commercial Re-Use Lee Boulevard



Lehigh Acres

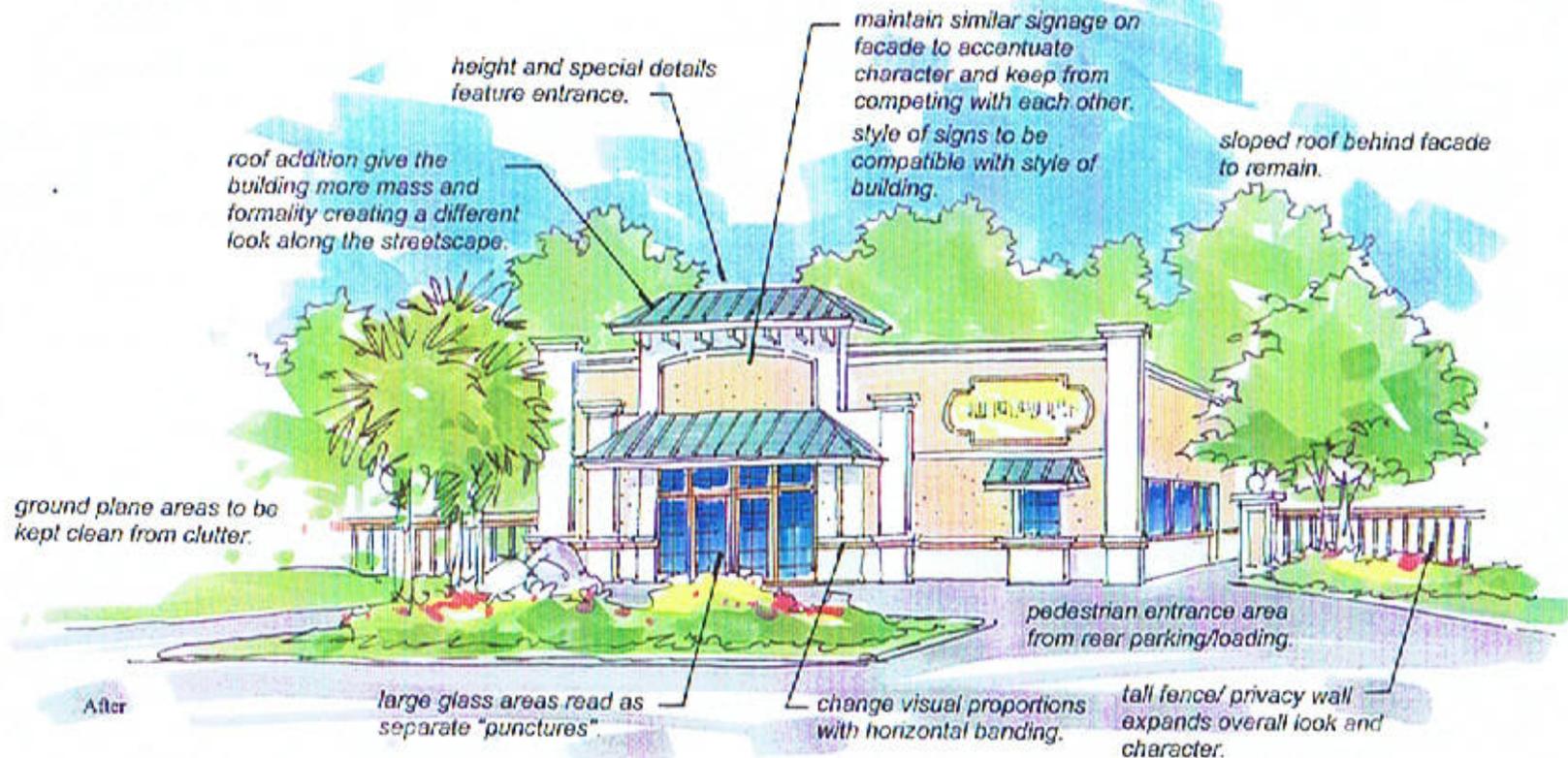
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Case Study Two

B Traditional Style

Typical Commercial Re-Use
Lee Boulevard



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Architectural Solutions

Case Study Three

Often, structures that are constructed in close proximity to one another, either by a single developer or as “stand-alones,” lack architectural cohesion. There are several practical approaches to improve the visual qualities in this situation. Common architectural elements such as signage, fences, landscaping, awnings, and trellises can tie multiple structures together visually.

Beyond establishing an ‘Old Florida’ look with the roof material, columns, and windows, an overall goal is reducing visual clutter. Although street merchandising is encouraged, cluttered signage is unattractive and actually makes it more difficult for motorists to read the signs.

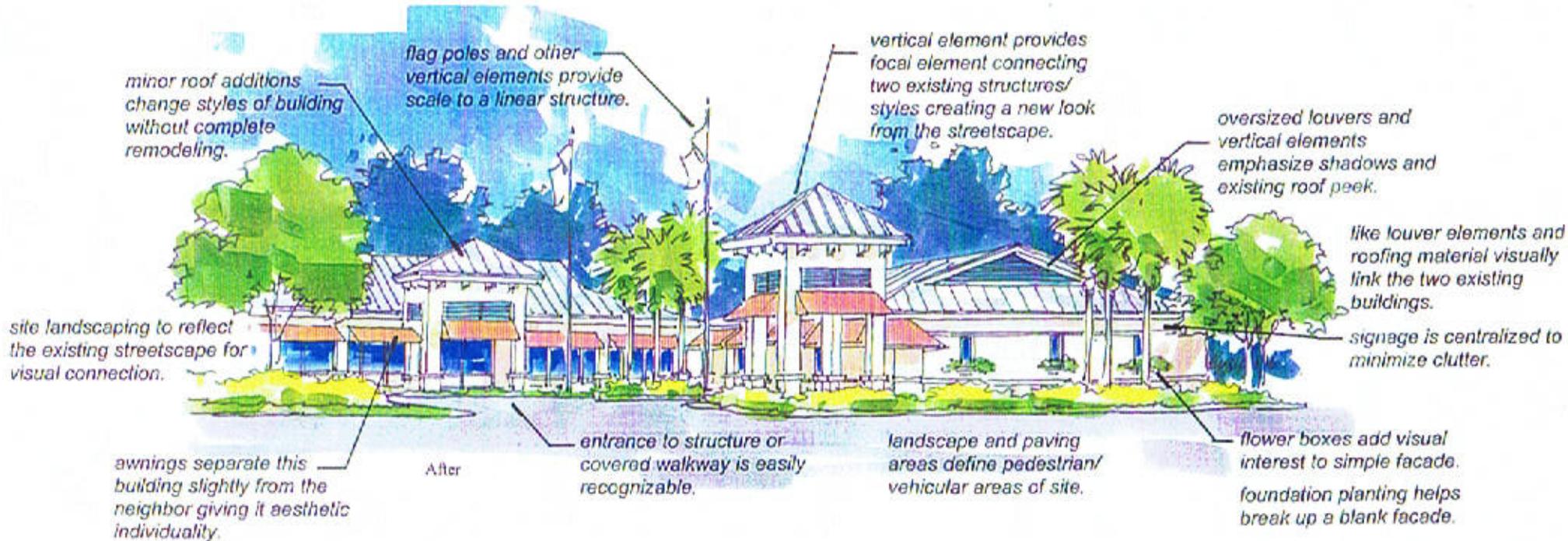


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Case Study Three

A Old Florida Style Multiple Building Connection Lee Boulevard



Lehigh Acres

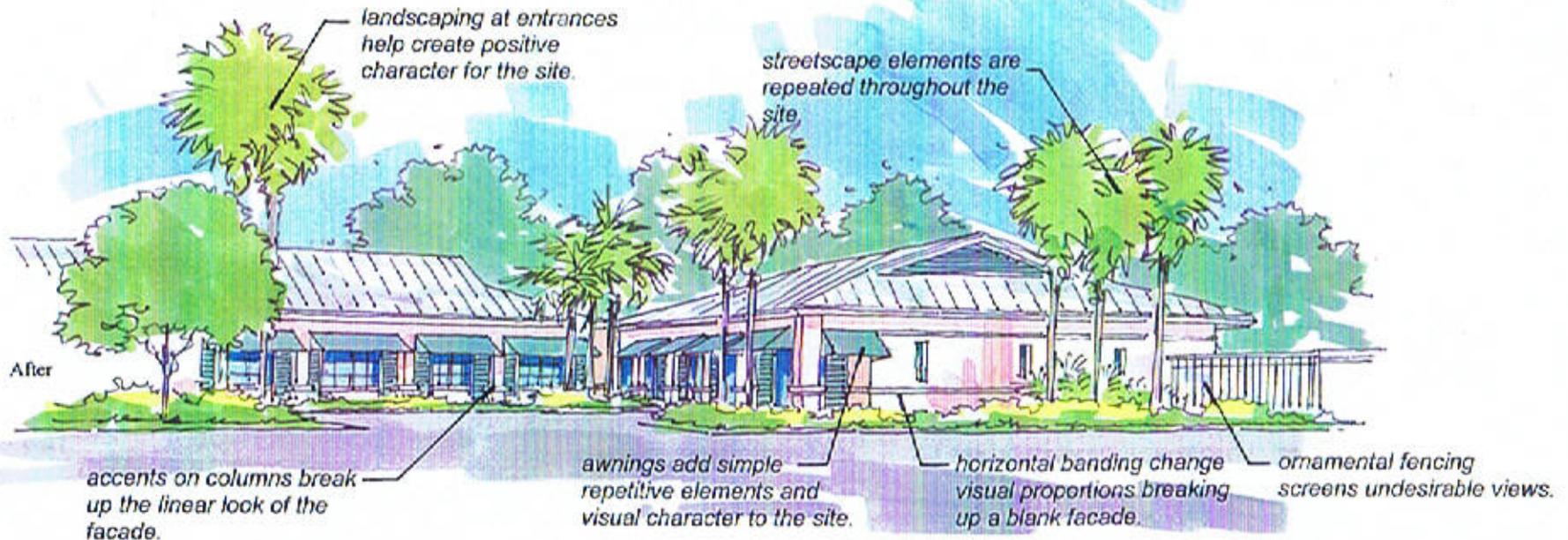
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Case Study Three

B Traditional Style

Multiple Building Connection Lee Boulevard



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Site Planning Solutions

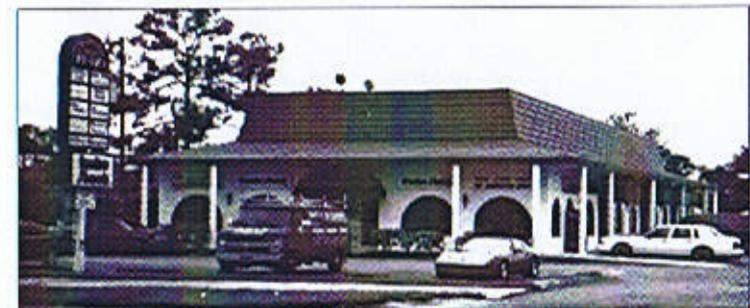
Case Study

This example uses a cluster of buildings that are close to one another but without any common architectural theme or unifying circulation plan. Each building functions independently, not taking advantage of common parking, or providing comfortable walkways that could encourage shoppers to visit the other stores. The layout of the buildings is also not conducive to expansion onto vacant land to the rear.

There are several options for increasing intensity, including more retail space (infill or to the rear), pocket parks, alleys, or walkway connectors in the vacant area between building to access additional parking behind the buildings.

Streetfront space could be developed to include pleasant offsets in the walkway to create interesting landscaped spaces. Trellises and awnings should be considered for shade and visual interest. Wasted space could be used to eliminate clutter by burying utility lines.

Potential infill buildings or expansion of existing structures can also occur to the southwest of these structures (although triggering the need for more parking). The siting of new structures depends on the proximity to existing structures and the proposed



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street/sidewalk location. Careful consideration needs to be taken in the placement of new structures to avoid detracting from the overall character and function of the existing complex.

However, infill buildings should be encouraged to maintain an individual character, more like a traditional downtown than shopping-center-like uniformity of design. Again trellises and planters help to soften the building mass and create visual interest in the streetscape.

All the existing structures shown are set back a considerable distance (70'+) from the right-of-way line. This space is essentially a front yard and is defined by the existing parking lots.

Several of these structures have front porches. The study on the following page indicates how this lot configuration should be preserved in certain areas to create residential scale 'porch zone' commercial areas. These areas provide an excellent opportunity for professional offices, services and restaurants.



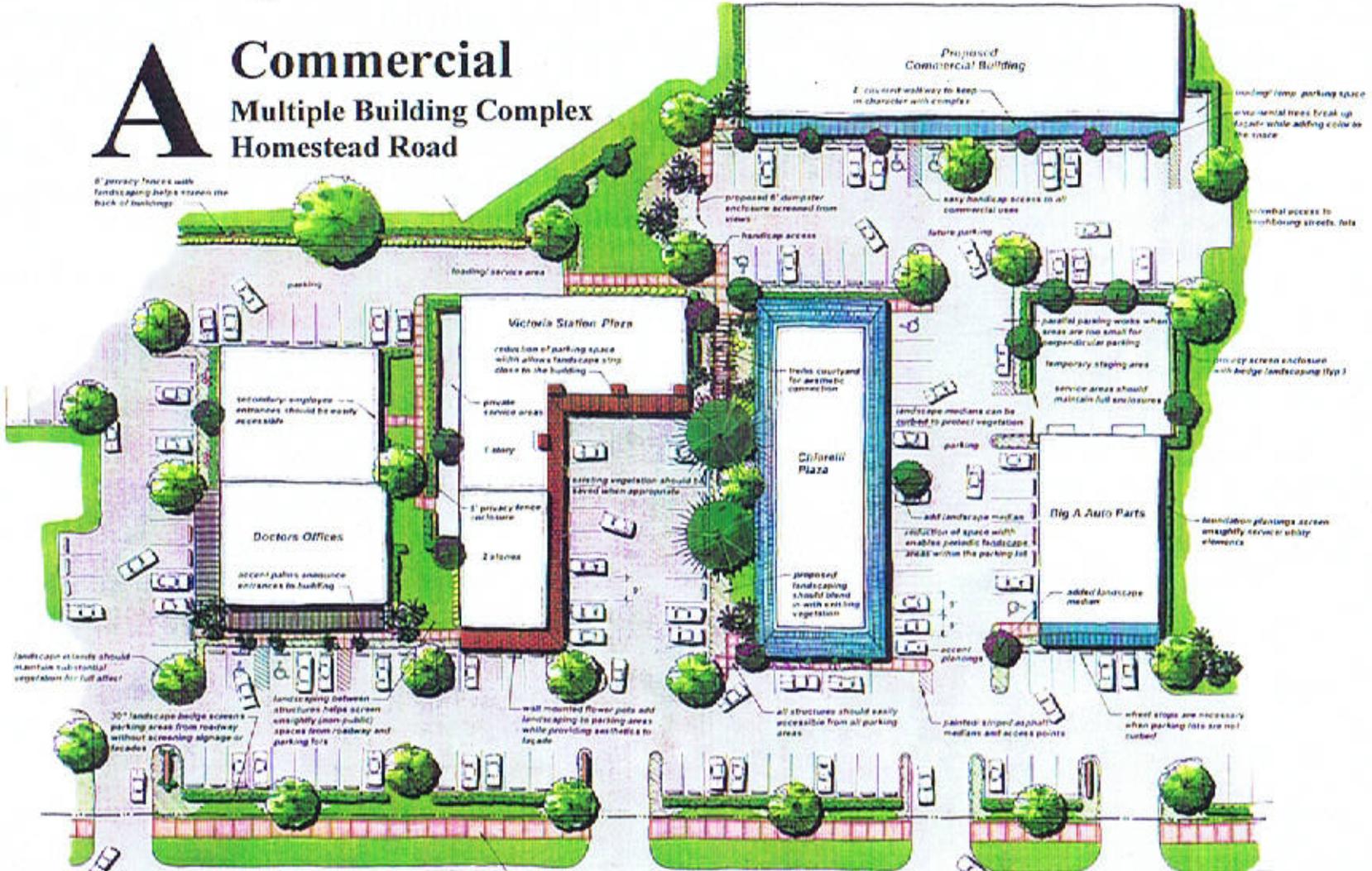
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Site Planning Solutions

Case Study

A Commercial Multiple Building Complex Homestead Road



8' privacy fence with landscape helps screen the back of buildings

landscape on lands should maintain full vertical vegetation for full effect

30" landscape hedge screens parking areas from roadway without screening signage or facades

landscape strip between structures helps screen unsightly (non-public) spaces from roadway and parking lots

wall mounted flower pots add landscaping to parking areas while providing aesthetics to facade

all structures should easily accessible from all parking areas

accent plantings

added landscape median

proposed 8' curbed sidewalk to be continuous along Homestead Avenue

the complex can be visually linked by the landscaping elements like shrubs, groundcover, site lights, etc.

existing ramp parking space

environmental trees break up facade while adding color to the scene

handicap access to neighboring streets, lots

handicap screen enclosure with hedge landscaping (typ.)

distribution plantings screen unsightly service or utility elements

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