

Pioneer Town Plaza: New name, newer look

By STEVE SCHROER
Staff Writer

It will be a Krome Avenue oasis. An urban respite in the middle of downtown.

A community gathering place on a raised, grassy plain — room enough for 1,000 reclining, blanket-cushioned concert-goers, ears tuned to a brand new gazebo with space for a 40-piece band.

It will be called Pioneer Town Plaza — Homestead's new town square.

After a year-and-a-half of slow-motion talks, plaza plans are on the fast track. Three weeks ago, local architect Robert Barnes was chosen to design one of the city's signature open spaces, and last Wednesday, he presented four plaza drafts to the Main Street Design Committee.

"This is about the future of our town, and what this plaza is going to do for us," said Barnes, who argued the square's impact would transcend its social center role, and prove a catalyst for economic development downtown.

Landscape architect Dick Rogers said the basic design premise was simple: "Attract lots of people."

Toward that goal, Rogers said a little dirt can go a long way. "Right now the square is in a little bit of a hole. We'd like to lift the land a little, to give it more prominence."

Of the four plans, two were chosen. The final choice will be dependent on the fate of the now-

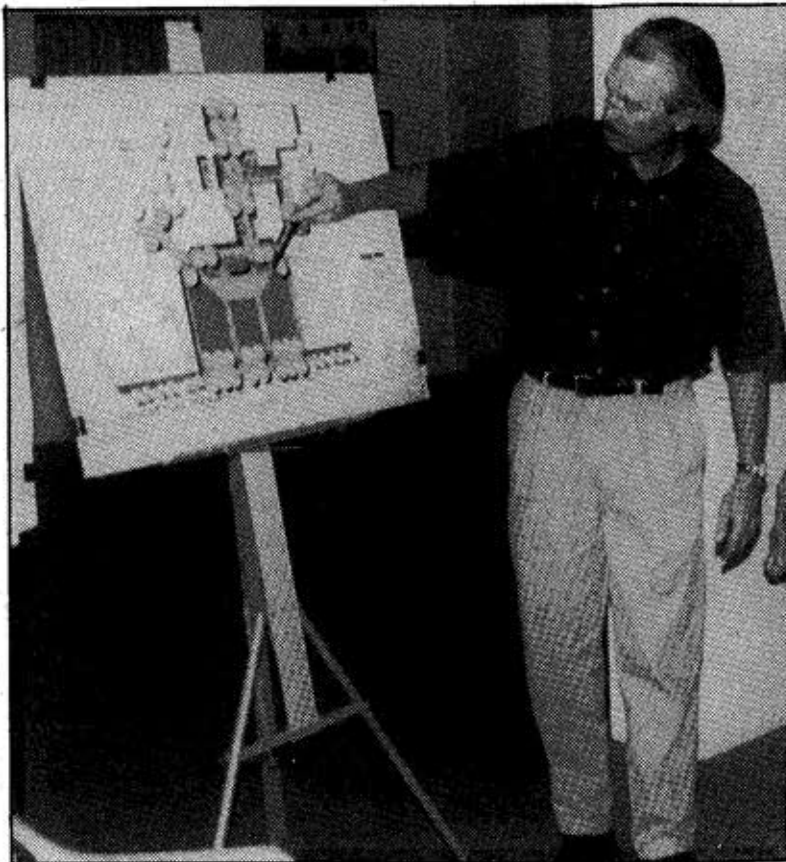


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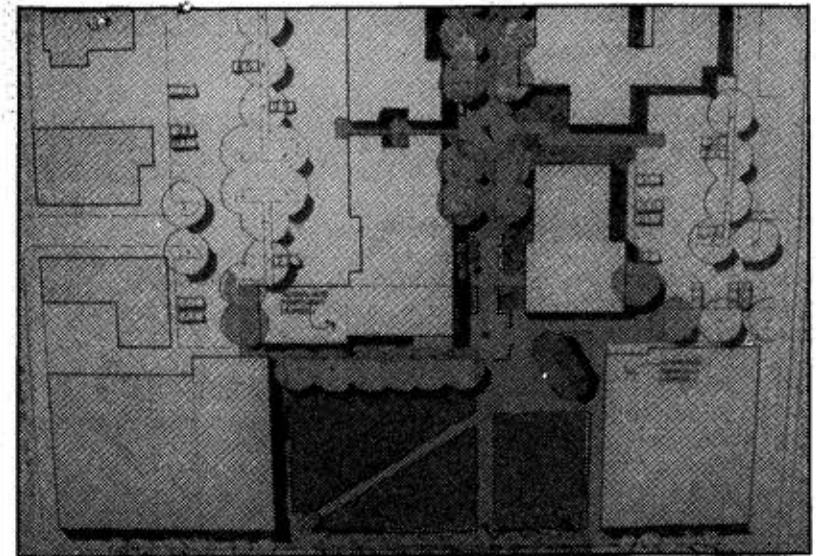
PLAZA PREVIEW — Homestead architect Robert Barnes schools the Main Street Design Committee on one of four design plans for Pioneer Town Plaza. Homestead's new town square will be complete by September.

vacant Ghuman building which faces Northwest First Street and abuts the square from the west. Two other buildings border the square: the Seminole Theater to the south, and the vacant 112 Krome Avenue building to the

north.

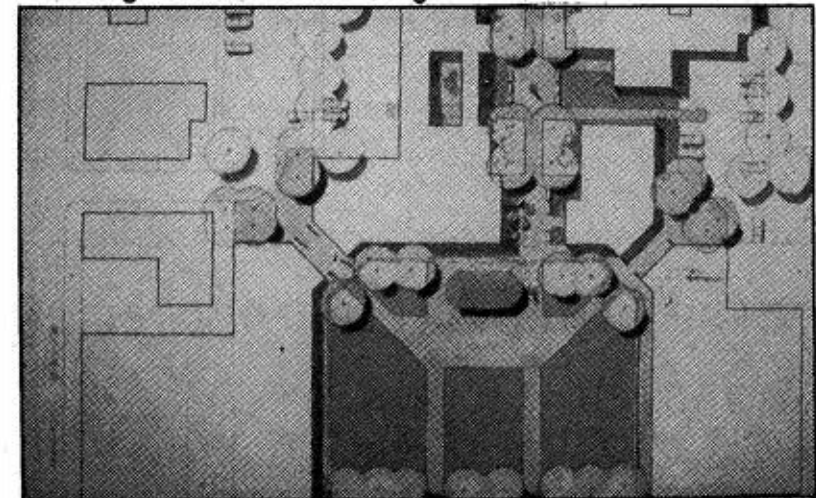
Those buildings will stay, but the Ghuman building may go, depending on aesthetics and funding

See PLAZA, 5A



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ABOVE — Plan A, with the gazebo angled into the northeast corner, keeps all current buildings in the design — Seminole Theater to the left, the 112 Krome Avenue building to the right and the Ghuman building center, just behind the row of trees in the artist's drawing. Below is Plan B. If the Ghuman building is torn down, the plaza will be larger, and the gazebo placed in the middle facing Krome Avenue. Either way, a pedestrian walkway is planned for Northwest First Street heading west into Pioneer Village.



Redesigning underway

PLAZA, from 1A

to purchase and demolish the building — estimated at \$150,000.

With the Ghuman building remaining, the design committee preferred a plaza layout placing the 1,000-square foot gazebo in the northwest corner of the square.

Without the Ghuman building, the square will be larger — perhaps 350 'blanket seats' bigger. With more space, the committee chose to place the gazebo along the back edge of the square facing Krome.

Rogers said this placement was judged best for parking access

and acoustics, and Barnes argued the design would also help connect the square to Mowry to the south via a pedestrian pathway heading out from the square's southwest corner.

One possible drawback: With westerly sightlines, setting suns may disrupt early evening concerts.

Costs are unknown, and the gazebo design won't be ready until the next design committee meeting. But the unveiling date is set: Sept. 20th — in time for the downtown antique car display and Second Annual Colors of the Earth Art Show.