

# Technical Assistance Panel: City of Fort Lauderdale's Sistrunk Corridor



December 9 and 10, 2014  
Fort Lauderdale, Florida



**Urban Land  
Institute**

Southeast Florida/Caribbean

This report on the Sistrunk Boulevard December 9 and 10, 2014, ULI Southeast Florida/ Caribbean District Council Technical Assistance Panel is dedicated to Greg Brewton, Director of the Department of Sustainable Development, who retired at the end of 2014 after a 36-year career with the City of Fort Lauderdale. Greg's dedication to the city and neighborhood he grew up in is exhibited in his stellar career and many enduring contributions to the community. His assistance with the TAP was both substantial and essential to its success.

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# Urban Land Institute Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council Technical Assistance Panels

## What Are Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs)?

Since 1947, the Urban Land Institute's (ULI) Advisory Services Program has been assisting communities by bringing together week-long panels of seasoned real estate, planning, landscape architecture, financing, marketing, and development experts to provide unbiased pragmatic advice on complex land use and development issues. Several years ago, the ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council began providing panel services of one or two days to address specific local government issues in areas such as housing, parking, redevelopment, and future land use development. The District Council has more than 750 members spread along the east coast of Florida from Indian River County through the Florida Keys and from the Caribbean.

## How Do TAPs Work?

A sponsor requests the services of a TAP with regard to a specific issue that can be addressed by a panel of experts in one or two days. The District Council assists the sponsor in refining the scope of the assignment and convenes a panel to address those specific issues. The sponsor works within ULI guidelines to provide background information to ULI panelists prior to the panel's convening. When convened, members of the TAP view the subject site, hear from public and private stakeholders, and then deliberate on the assigned issues. At the conclusion of its work, the panel presents an oral report to stakeholders; that is followed by a written report within approximately six weeks. To ensure objectivity, panel members cannot be involved in matters pending before the sponsor, be working for the sponsor, or solicit work from the sponsor during the panel's assignment period. Panel members volunteer their services to the project.

## Who Is ULI?

ULI was founded in 1936 as a non-profit institute to facilitate the open exchange of ideas and information among local, national, and international real estate industry leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places. Today it has more than 34,000 members worldwide. The ULI does not lobby or act as an advocate for any single industry. It is committed to providing leadership in the responsible use of land and creating and sustaining thriving communities.

# Sponsors and Panel Members

## Sponsor

City of Fort Lauderdale Northwest-Progresso-Flagler Heights Community Redevelopment Agency

## City of Fort Lauderdale Commission

John P. "Jack" Seiler  
Mayor

Romney Rogers  
Vice Mayor and Commissioner, District 4

Bruce G. Roberts  
Commissioner, District 1

Dean J. Trantalis  
Commissioner, District 2

Robert L. McKinzie  
Commissioner, District 3

## City of Fort Lauderdale CRA Staff (as of December 2014)

Greg Brewton, Director (retired the end of 2014)  
Department of Sustainable Development

Jenni Morejon, Director  
Department of Sustainable Development

Al Battle, Jr., Deputy Director (Director of the City of Fort Lauderdale CRA at the time of the TAP)  
Department of Sustainable Development

Linda Mia Franco, Principal Planner  
Historic Preservation and Board Liaison Urban Design & Planning Division  
Department of Sustainable Development

Bob Cass Wojcik, AICP  
Economic Reinvestment Coordinator  
Department of Sustainable Development

## Panel Members

### *Chair*

Ken Stapleton, President  
Ken Stapleton & Associates

### *Panelists*

Charita Allen, Director, Client Services  
Ryan LLC

Barron Channer, CEO  
BACH Real Estate

Davon Barbour, Director, Department of Community & Economic Development  
City of Hollywood

Joe Furst, Managing Director, Wynwood  
Goldman Properties

Steven Hurwitz, Principal  
Continental Real Estate Companies

Corinna Moebius, Consultant

Mark Troen, Senior Vice President  
Brookwood Group

# ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council

## TAP Vice Chairs

Dr. Charles Bohl, Associate Professor and Director  
Graduate Program in Real Estate Development and Urbanism, University of Miami, School of Architecture

Charles W. DeSanti, Principal  
DeSanti & Associates

## District Council Staff

Julie Medley  
Executive Director

Carla Coleman  
Florida Director

Jean Scott  
TAP Report Preparation

## ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council

3170 North Federal Highway, Suite 106  
Lighthouse Point, FL 33064  
Phone: 954-783-9504

# Panel Process and Agenda

## Introduction

In the fall of 2014, the City of Fort Lauderdale CRA asked the ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council to convene the Sistrunk Boulevard corridor TAP to recommend a set of strategies that would encourage development, including economic development, along the Sistrunk corridor area and adjacent areas in Fort Lauderdale. As background for the TAP's recommendations, the following describes the process used by the TAP to get to know the Sistrunk Boulevard corridor area and develop its recommendations. Following this section is one about the Sistrunk Boulevard corridor area – the current planning and investment context, what residents hope for the area and their concerns, and the issues that the CRA asked the TAP to respond to in this report. A summary of the TAP's recommendations follows that.

## Panel Process

The Sistrunk Boulevard TAP process centered on the following five steps:

- Representatives from the ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council met with City of Fort Lauderdale staff to discuss issues related to developing strategies to encourage development, including economic development, along the Sistrunk corridor and nearby adjacent areas.
- ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council staff researched the city's goals for the TAP and, based on that research, selected the TAP members who had the expertise most tailored to addressing the issues raised by city staff.
- The TAP members received a complete set of pre-meeting briefing materials about Sistrunk Boulevard and the surrounding area. TAP members also participated in a tour of the area and were briefed on its challenges and opportunities by city staff.
- The TAP session extended over one and one-half days. Its work sessions and public comment meetings were held at the Mizell Center located on Sistrunk Boulevard.
- The TAP presented a number of initial recommendations at a public discussion at the end of its visit.
- The TAP, under the leadership of the ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council, prepared a report on its recommendations and conclusions.



*Figures 1 and 2: The TAP worked together to develop a set of strategic priorities to encourage development and new economic investment along Sistrunk Boulevard and in the surrounding area.*

## Panel Agenda

The agenda (included as Appendix A) for the one and one-half day TAP was organized as follows.

On December 9, the panel began its orientation with a lunch meeting briefing about and bus tour of Sistrunk Boulevard and the surrounding area. City staff used the tour to acquaint the panel with points of interest and the strategic issues to be addressed by the TAP. Following the tour, the TAP held an organizational work session. During that time, the TAP learned more about the study area from city staff. After that, the panel held an organizational discussion and met with stakeholders from the area to hear their views. That evening, panel members participated in a working dinner meeting followed by a tour of the Sistrunk Boulevard area at night.

On December 10, the panel spent the morning and afternoon working on the issues that city staff had asked it to address. During the day the TAP narrowed and organized its ideas into a meaningful set of priorities. In the late afternoon, the panel members presented their initial observations and recommendations to and heard comments from an audience of interested citizens, businesses, and community groups .



Figures 3 and 4: The TAP participated in an in-depth tour of Sistrunk Boulevard and surrounding area (Figure 3) to thoroughly understand the area today and its potential for the future. The TAP also listened carefully to comments from those who work in, have a business in, and care about the area (Figure 4).



# Background: The Sistrunk Boulevard Corridor

## The TAP Study Area

The sections of the Sistrunk Boulevard corridor (including its surrounding area) examined by the TAP are located in the northwest portion of the City of Fort Lauderdale. The three segments (Figure 5) of the corridor that the TAP focused on were as follows:

- Segment 1: Sistrunk Boulevard west of I-95 to the western city limits.
- Segment 2: Sistrunk Boulevard east of I-95 to NW 9th Avenue.
- Segment 3: Sistrunk Boulevard between NW 9th Avenue to the Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway and the subject of the TAP's greatest emphasis.

The focus on specific portions of the corridor was to enable the panel to identify strategies and incentives that would create catalytic projects to encourage redevelopment at suggested locations along the corridor.



Figure 5: map showing the three segments of the TAP study area. Below and on the next page, photos illustrating conditions in each of the three segments of the Sistrunk Boulevard corridor TAP study area.



Figure 6: The African-American Research and Cultural Center located in Segment 1 of the corridor.

## Its History<sup>1</sup>

The Sistrunk Boulevard corridor has been where the city's African-American residents lived as far back as 1911 when Fort Lauderdale was incorporated. Symbolizing the area's role as home to the city's African-American community, the corridor is named for James Franklin "Doc" Sistrunk, who, with Dr. Von D. Mizell (also an African-American doctor), established Fort Lauderdale's first medical facility for blacks -- Provident Hospital -- in 1938. Segregation was reinforced by the city's street grid patterns established in 1927. The intersection of Broward Boulevard and Andrews Avenue served as the dividing line between the white and black neighborhoods.

Segregation of the area was exacerbated in the 1930s when the city started to enforce an 8:00 PM curfew that limited the movement of African-American families and led to many white businesses closing or leaving the area. That departure led to the decline of the area. Another negative impact was the lack of a high school in the county that accepted African-Americans. Despite those conditions, the area was home to a lively commercial district composed of African-American businesses and centered around what is now the West Side Commercial District and Sistrunk Boulevard. Many of the businesses met daily needs such as barber shops, shoemakers, and grocery stores. The area also contained a variety of restaurants and clubs where name entertainers such as Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie and Duke Ellington performed.

It was not until the 1960s that legal segregation came to an end; however, the segregated pattern continued because banks did not make loans in the area, public investments were slow in coming, and most of the city's public housing developments were concentrated in the area. Other detrimental actions included the purchase and demolition of properties (including the once vibrant West Side Commercial District) through eminent domain using federal funds and the displacement of many businesses and residents, thereby leading to further decline and disinvestment. The widening of Sistrunk Boulevard from the pedestrian-friendly two lanes to a four lane thoroughfare designed to move cars in and out of town as quickly as possible capped the negative influences. That action eliminated on-street parking and led to additional business closing and disinvestment in the area, further diminishing the availability of local jobs and housing choices and leading to fewer service and retail opportunities to meet daily needs. That, in turn, led to higher vacancy rates and deteriorating buildings.

*The Mizell Center (top image) is located in Segment 2 of the corridor. The images below it are located in Segment 3, the TAP's primary area of focus. In order, they are the industrial area fronting Sistrunk Boulevard, and, in the image below that, the Shoppes on Arts Avenue, and the FAT Village Center for the Arts.*



Figure 7: The Mizell Center, Segment 2.



Figure 8: Industrial area, Segment 3.



Figure 9: Shoppes on Arts Avenue, Segment 3.



Figure 10: FAT Village Center for the Arts, Segment 3.

<sup>1</sup> The City of Fort Lauderdale, Urban Land Institute (ULI) Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Background Report, Fort Lauderdale Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Sistrunk Corridor TAP, December 9 and December 10, 2014, served as the primary source of information.

## Recent Planning and Investment Context

Since those early days, the City of Fort Lauderdale has devoted significant investments and leadership to revitalizing the Sistrunk Boulevard corridor area. A number of those investments (both public and private) and related plans are highlighted below. Collectively they create a strong foundation that sets the stage for encouraging new economic investment and development in the northwest area of the city, thereby creating a foundation to begin reversing earlier negative trends. Those investments and plans are outlined below under the following two topics:

- Northwest-Progresso-Flagler Heights Community Redevelopment Plan
- Draft (pending City Commission approval) FY 2014-FY 2029 City of Fort Lauderdale Economic Development Strategic Action Plan

### Northwest-Progresso-Flagler Heights Community Redevelopment Plan

Pivotal to the revitalization of the city's northwest area were the creation of the Fort Lauderdale Community Redevelopment Agency in 1989, preparation and city approval of a Neighborhood Conditions Survey and Finding of Necessity report and the creation of the City of Fort Lauderdale Northwest-Progresso-Flagler Heights Community Redevelopment Area (NPF CRA)



*“Collectively those plans demonstrate the city’s focus on ensuring that the Sistrunk Boulevard corridor within the Fort Lauderdale city limits returns to being a thriving area that offers a highly desirable quality of life and a wide variety of jobs, housing, and economic and development opportunities.”*

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Figures 11 and 12: The vision (bottom) for the NPF CRA's Sistrunk Boulevard infrastructure project resulted in a more walkable environment and a more attractive streetscape for residents and possible new businesses. Today, the road (top-left) features improved sidewalks, landscaping, and decorative lighting.

Plan in 1995. The 1,300-acre planning area is located north and west of the city's downtown and is bounded by Sunrise Boulevard to the north, Broward Boulevard to the south, the city limits at NW 24th Street to the west, and North Federal Highway to the east, except for the area east of North Andrews Avenue and south of NE 4th Avenue. A significant portion of the area (approximately 1,100 acres) largely consists of the city's original African-American community and includes the portion of the Sistrunk Boulevard corridor located within the City of Fort Lauderdale. Under the current city land use plan, the area west of the Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway is called the Northwest Regional Activity Center (NWRAC) – the focus of the TAP.

The first CRA Community Redevelopment Plan for the NPF area had its beginnings in 1987 with the Marjorie Davis Charette that was spearheaded by the president of the largest homeowners association in the area and a community activist. The charrette resulted in an adopted Safe Neighborhood Plan that included the NWRAC area and the creation of the Northwest Neighborhood Improvement District in 1989.



*Figures 13 and 14: The Housing Authority of Fort Lauderdale focuses on developing housing that enhances a sense of pride in place and promotes healthy living. It also focuses on building community wealth through its apprenticeship and other programs.*

In 2001 the amended NPF CRA Community Redevelopment Plan was approved by the CRA. The plan outlined a series of public and private improvements within the district that include:

- The NE/NEW 6th Street (Sistrunk Boulevard) Streetscape/Enhancement Project. The plan focuses on restoring Sistrunk Boulevard from Federal Highway to NW 24th Avenue to its former prominence by creating a livable, workable, pedestrian-friendly street that will spark future economic development and help revitalize the overall neighborhood (Figures 11 and 12). Plan elements feature a three-lane design (one lane westbound and two lanes eastbound), trees, landscaping, wide sidewalks, and decorative lighting.
- Approximately \$10 million in neighborhood improvements to upgrade water mains and sanitary sewer and storm drains, and another \$5 million for major improvements to facilitate the development of Sistrunk Boulevard as a mixed-use corridor. One focus is on developing guidelines that will help shape future development of the Northwest Regional Activity Center and the Northwest- Progresso-Flagler Heights Community Redevelopment Area.
- A neighborhood housing improvement program designed to preserve and expand affordable housing choices in the area. The Housing Authority of Fort Lauderdale has been a leader in producing affordable housing designed to fit the physical context of the area, be energy efficient, and create a healthy, walkable environment (Figures 13 and 14). Its work centers on the theme of creating pride in the area's cultural heritage. In the last seven years, the housing authority has invested approximately \$270 million in the area, resulting in approximately 1,000 new units. Renters have the opportunity to work toward homeownership. The housing authority is also working with residents to design safe and attractive walking trails and help build wealth in the neighborhood. An example is the state certified Step-Up Apprenticeship Program to provide youth with the opportunity to create a portfolio of education, training, and employment skills. In a new initiative, apprentices receive training in green building and have the opportunity to become LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) certified by the U.S. Green Building Council. The Housing Authority's work in Northwest Gardens earned a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Award for Equitable Development in 2012.

In 2007 the CRA commissioned a market demand analysis of the NPF CRA area. The plan documented a number of conditions that created significant impediments to achieving a more sustainable future for the study area. Those impediments included the community not being healthy, safe, or walkable; failing to offer equitable and affordable housing choices; failing to provide sufficient businesses to meet basic resident needs; and not being conducive to business growth and development.

Other important plans and programs are the:

- February 2008 Northwest-Progresso-Flagler Heights Implementation Plan: Fort Lauderdale, Florida, prepared by Urban Design Associates. The plan is more comprehensive than the previous Community Redevelopment Plan. It contains a detailed database about the area as well as urban design and development principles, strategies that include small business development initiatives, and a market analysis that highlights the area's strengths and weaknesses and the retail uses in the most demand and uses in oversupply.
- October 2013 Northwest-Progresso-Flagler Heights Community Redevelopment Agency 5-Year Program, developed as part of the NPF CRA's commitment to eliminate slum and blight in the area. The 5-Year Program focuses on establishing a clear vision and framework that can be used to set the CRA's short- and long-term plan priorities for the next five years and to measure outcomes.
- November 2014 NWRAC-Master Plan, City of Fort Lauderdale North West Regional Activity Center Mixed-Use Zoning District. Among other things, the zoning changes are designed to promote a mix of uses, create a more predictable approval process for all parties, reduce parking requirements along the corridor, and eliminate certain negative uses. It also calls for active ground floor uses and building scales that complement the character of the surrounding area.

*"An essential first step in the TAP process is to learn what those who live, work, or have a business in an area want for their neighborhood or community and what their concerns are. That is why the TAP begins its process with a detailed tour of the area and plenty of time for listening."*

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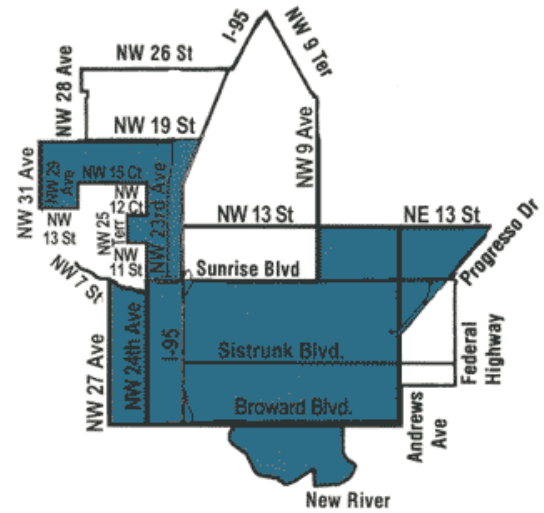
*Figures 15 and 16: A façade improvement program (top-right) is an example of the NPF CRA's development incentive programs designed to create a positive business investment environment. A low-interest loan program (bottom) is another incentive example.*

# FY 2014-FY 2029 City of Fort Lauderdale Economic Development Strategic Action Plan

Updated in October 2014, the city's draft in progress strategic action plan for economic development establishes the city's vision for economic development. The plan was called for in the economic development cylinder of excellence of the city's Press Play Fort Lauderdale: Our City, Our Strategic Plan: 2018, and is aligned with the "We Are Prosperous" statement in the plan, Fast Forward Fort Lauderdale: Our City, Our Vision 2035.

The plan:

- Includes an analysis of Sistrunk Boulevard's strengths and assets and its opportunities. They include the strong tradition and symbolic value as an African-American neighborhood, the major public investment in the streetscape and improving the appearance, the ability to use vacant and underutilized land for interim uses such as pop-up retail, public art, and public gardens. Higher vehicle counts are also listed.
- Contains a demographic and economic profile of Sistrunk Boulevard that documents many of the issues that the TAP was asked to address: flat population growth, relative lower median income housing values, a high rate of households below the poverty line, and residents with relatively low educational achievement.
- Outlines a set of retail development strategies that reinforce the idea of creating multiple small retail nodes along the corridor rather than focusing on a central commercial center. Another component includes strategies for underwriting job training costs for area workers, abating property taxes for a period of time, and considering low-cost ground floor lease and site improvements.



*The city's Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) allows qualified businesses to receive federal contracting assistance, negotiate for sole source contracts, and participate in restricted competition limited to HUBZone businesses (map above). The NPF CRA is also a state-approved Enterprise Zone that qualifies businesses to apply for specified business incentives.*

## Learning from Study Area Residents and Businesses: Their Hopes and Concerns

Robert McKinzie, Fort Lauderdale City Commissioner for District 3, opened the TAP public input session with the comment that the TAP's purpose was to learn from area residents: how they view the area and what they want for it. TAP chair Ken Stapleton emphasized that the TAP had convened the session to listen to those who live and have businesses in the area.

To begin the discussion, the TAP posed several questions to meeting participants. The participants' responses are highlighted below.

### Hopes for the Area

The hopes expressed for the future of the Sistrunk Boulevard corridor coalesced around a shared set of features – a Sistrunk Boulevard corridor that is:

- An economic hub for the city with strong connections to other hubs such as FAT Village. The focal point for black-owned businesses and entrepreneurs who want to locate in the area and employ people from the community.
- A destination point for unique businesses and retail drawn by a meaningful set of incentives and spaces that support and attract entrepreneurs.

- Welcoming to new residents, businesses, and visitors.
- Characterized by a unique energy with a mix of old and new businesses that retain the legacy of a place with a rich culture.
- Known for its proximity to the downtown, cultural arts facilities, and transportation, as well as the location of local services such as dry cleaners, barber shops, restaurants, service stations, and a bakery and community farmers' market or supermarket.

## Concerns About the Area

- More homeownership opportunities and physical improvements that stabilize the area are important. More homeownership opportunities (can be townhouses) will also help attract new businesses. Weston, for example, started with the housing and the retail followed. When discussing residential opportunities, a concern was expressed about tall towers that create walls and are not affordable to those who live in the area.
- There is a need for more areas with industrial zoning to allow more jobs in manufacturing fields.
- The difficulty in access to capital and the inability to get business loans should be addressed if the area is once again to be a center for commerce.
- The lingering perception that the area is not safe needs to be overcome, and more people need to be aware of the area and what it offers. A part of that should be telling the story of the area, including the number of very successful people who came from it. Also important is telling the story of the new Sistrunk and its rich culture and history. After 30 years of being overlooked and detrimental actions such as the I-95 flyover and lack of an I-95 access ramp, telling the area's story today and its vision for the future is all the more important.
- Steps should be taken so that the area does not gentrify as new economic investments occur.
- The high number of absentee property and business owners needs to be addressed. That should include the investors who are buying up properties (especially residential). Attracting and helping more small entrepreneurial mom and pop businesses that can fit into smaller properties will start alleviating that problem. The push for more small businesses should focus on local ones, not chains.

### A Sampling of Comments about the Sistrunk Boulevard Corridor

Sistrunk should be a profitable, safe, and culturally rich area in which to be black, and it should stay black.

We want the rich diversity of businesses and services and the homeownership that the neighborhood had in the '50s and '60s. We know that works.

We want the Sistrunk Boulevard corridor to have the same respect as other areas of the city.

We want a balance in the richness of the culture of the area while at the same time attracting new businesses that can help revitalize the neighborhood. The area should be a place that is friendly to opening a business.

Promoting more homeownership is central to building the stability needed to attract businesses that provide needed services locally.

Maintaining the area's history is important to the black community as is telling the story of the area. We have a lot of very successful people from the area – a story that needs to be told.

We need leadership with a shared vision of the area's people and place assets and creating a location where current residents and businesses can stay and those who left can come back to.

The focus should be on what Sistrunk is going to be. We need to find ways to work together to figure out what we want (our top priorities) and make more connections to those who can help as we help ourselves. To do that, we need to become bridge builders and learn how to give and take.

The Sistrunk Boulevard corridor should be an area that people want to come to and sit down and have a cup of coffee and stay a while – a good place to live, play, and visit.

We need to stay unified on the inside and act as one in advocating and acting for the community and ensuring that our voice is heard. We need to talk and sing together at the same time.

We need to be like one family. We need to bond and stay together and let our voice be heard and control our future.

The TAP helped us see new ideas and the importance of the neighborhood coming together.

## Issues for the TAP

The TAP was asked to identify strategies that would encourage new economic investment in and development along the Sistrunk Corridor and nearby adjacent areas. As outlined in more detail in Appendix B, Panel Questions, issues that the TAP was asked to address included how to:

- Best encourage appropriate economic development and increased private sector investment along the corridor, including where those efforts should be concentrated, the size of such areas, and the land use, incentives, and policy changes that will be needed to attract private investment. Such strategies were to focus on how to tie Sistrunk Boulevard more closely to the downtown core and FAT Village, best serve existing residents and those with strong neighborhood ties, and fund needed infrastructure improvements and the panels' recommendations.
- Address existing industrial uses contiguous to the study area and implement strategies for incorporating those uses into the overall plan for the area.
- Identify other approaches that would help support investment and development along the corridor as well as recommended next steps.



# Panel Response to the City of Fort Lauderdale's Questions About Creating a Socially and Economically Vibrant Sistrunk Boulevard Corridor

## Setting the Context: TAP Observations about Its Assignment and the Study Area

### Assignment

After introducing the TAP and highlighting the qualifications of each member, TAP chair Ken Stapleton began the presentation of the TAP's recommendations by reviewing the assignment to identify strategies that would be effective in encouraging new economic investment in and development along the Sistrunk Boulevard corridor and in adjacent areas.

Strategies that the TAP was asked to address included:

- Phasing (where and when) of efforts and activities.
- Structuring incentives to encourage the desired redevelopment, community benefits, and economic growth.
- Marketing and branding strategies.
- Organizational structure to accomplish the desired changes.
- Lack of access to capital.
- Immediate next steps.

*"The Sistrunk Boulevard area is of critical importance to the City of Fort Lauderdale's future well as its past. This TAP and other city and CRA investments underscore the city's commitment to revitalizing the area and making it a vibrant economic and cultural center once more."*

Robert McKinzie  
District 3, City of Fort  
Lauderdale City Commission

### TAP Observations about the Study Area

The TAP began its comments with the note that its members had invested their time in getting to know as much as they could about the Sistrunk Boulevard area: its history, its current status, and its residents and businesses and their hopes and concerns. The area, the TAP observed, has numerous positive features that create opportunities to build on and several challenges that need to be addressed.

Among its strengths that create opportunities to build on, the area is :

- Home to legacy sites such as the Mizell Center and the nearby African-American Research and Cultural Center that serve as community focal points and connote and honor the African-American roots of the area and enhance the area's potential for heritage tourism.
- Ideally located for future growth because of excellent access to the downtown and to both public and private transit options, including the Sun Trolley's NW Community link to connect to Tri-Rail. Also nearby is the site of a new All Aboard Florida station that will connect to the Sun Trolley, Broward County Transit system, future Wave Streetcar, and a planned Tri-Rail station.

*"The Sistrunk Boulevard corridor has an extraordinary story to tell. Its roots as the center of the city's African-American community go back to the city's incorporation in 1911. The fact that the name of Sistrunk Boulevard and the Mizell Center come from two pioneering African-American leaders in the medical field is a part of that story."*

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- A place of strong community pride and unique African-American heritage.
- Benefitting from the recent and substantial infrastructure investments by the CRA.
- The location of an abundance of available and developable sites along the corridor, many of which are controlled by the local housing and development authorities.

People moving back to the community and the new entrepreneurial small businesses are good indicators of the area's strengths and that it is in transition, TAP members observed.

As for the challenges, the area:

- Is adversely viewed in the market because of poor perceptions about safety, something that must be directly addressed or little else will work.
- Is not the vibrant place it was in the past.
- Lacks a clear champion in the marketplace and a uniformly defined and shared community vision.
- Does not offer many neighborhood services such as places to eat and shop for daily needs.
- Lacks clear and current market research about demand for various uses and tenants.
- Has a low degree of home ownership and high commercial vacancy rates.
- Has shallow lot depths on many key properties along Sistrunk Boulevard that limit new construction and redevelopment, due in part to the lack of buffers between uses.
- Is not well branded or promoting its story.

*“Real estate development and funding can succeed in the Sistrunk corridor – but only when markets (including market perception) and financial capital are willing and available. The key to unlocking that success is an in-depth marketability and feasibility assessment combined with a targeted district strategy that embraces partnerships, sources funding, and drives business opportunities.”*

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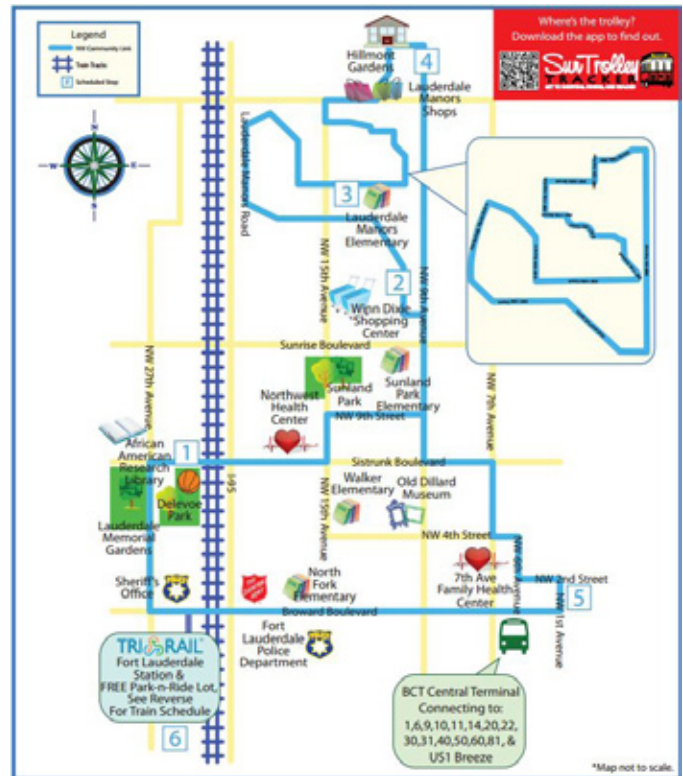


Figure 18

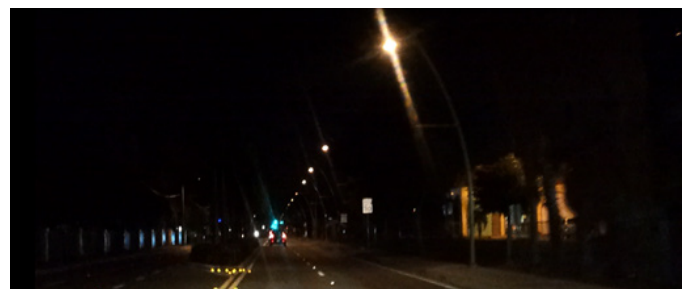


Figure 19

The Sun Trolley NW Community Link that connects to Tri-Rail (Figure 18). Sistrunk at night (Figure 19).

## TAP Recommendations: Creating a Firm Foundation for Sustained Success

The TAP organized its recommendations around the following 11 topics :

- Communicating the shared vision
- More clearly understanding market demand for housing, retail, and other potential uses
- Carefully phasing incentivized projects
- Structuring incentives to better attract investment and improve community benefits
- Preparing improved development agreements
- Enhancing the organizational structure of the CRA
- Strengthening the image as a safe, unique, and vibrant place
- Creating industrial district strategies
- Increasing access to capital
- Focusing housing efforts on mixed-income residential projects in order to make more retail and commercial development sustainable
- Identifying immediate next steps



*Figure 20: Adopted by the City of Orlando in January 2015, the Parramore Comprehensive Neighborhood Plan (the result of a collaborative visioning process) is designed to be implemented over the next 20 years and is organized into short-, mid-, and long-term goals. The Urban Land Institute's Principles for Healthy Community Design served as the foundation for the plan and its goal to preserve, revitalize, and transform the community. Each of the 10 plan big ideas identified in the visioning process has related measures and indicators that can be used to evaluate progress in resolving the challenges of the community. The plan, which was unanimously adopted by the Orlando City Commission in early 2015, is prominently featured on the city's website <[www.cityoforlando.net/economic/parramore-comprehensive](http://www.cityoforlando.net/economic/parramore-comprehensive)>. It grew out of the city's 2005 Pathways for Parramore initiative to revitalize the 1.4-square mile Parramore community that was viewed as one of the city's toughest neighborhoods. Adjacent to downtown Orlando, the Parramore community is the historic home of Orlando's African-American community. Today the area is the focus of new investments that are creating a diverse and vibrant location.*

## > Communicating the shared vision

A broad range of stakeholders located in the Sistrunk Boulevard corridor should be brought together to have a professionally-facilitated discussion focused on better ways to communicate the shared vision for the corridor. Examples of stakeholders to include are residential and commercial property owners, long-time and newer start-up business owners, local academic and non-profit leadership (the Mizell Center and African-Research and Cultural Center, for example). Relevant transportation organizations such as All Aboard Florida should also be included as should potential outside partners who could have an interest in developing and/or tenating or investing capital in and activating the area.

The discussion sessions should be professionally-facilitated. Focus groups could also be used to test the effectiveness of the communications strategies. One of the focus group exercises could be to use visual preferencing to identify the desired character of the area. "Having a bold, shared and clearly communicated vision by a broad-based and committed group of vision champions is essential to sustained economic success," the TAP stressed.

Those elements are essential to attract investors, and are also necessary before there can be an effective branding and marketing program. Identifying clear roles and responsibilities and deadlines for deliverables should be part of the collective communications strategies if progress is to be made and celebrated.



Figure 21: In Virginia, the Town of Herndon developed a brand identity that celebrates and promotes the town as a Next Generation Small Town and as an exceptional place to live, work, and visit. Creating a town brand came from the town's Economic Development Task Force that engaged a marketing consultant to work with a Brand Advisory Committee composed of marketing executives, town residents, and elected officials who were charged with developing a brand, logo, and strategy. The town uses the brand internally (on its website, town vehicles, and signs, for example). It also has a town marketing plan and reaches out to businesses and other types of organizations to integrate the town brand into their own marketing and communication programs. Depicted above, businesses are encouraged to co-brand their communications by using the master logo as well as an application that fits, such as ON the Move, ON Board, Dream ON. The brand website <[www.herndon-va.gov/Content/Business/NewBrand/default.aspx?cnlid=5080](http://www.herndon-va.gov/Content/Business/NewBrand/default.aspx?cnlid=5080)> provides links to the brand style and logo usage form.

## > More clearly understanding market demand for housing, retail, and other potential uses

Also important is having current market demand information. That should include updating market studies related to various types of housing, retail, office, and industrial space. It also requires clearly communicating what aspects of the shared vision are currently achievable within the context of market demands as well as which goals will need to be addressed in later phases. Furthermore, the TAP noted, traditional suburban market studies will not be useful in the initial phases, particularly for housing and retail in a mixed-use pattern that has been successful in many other markets. Nationally recognized urban market analysts who have the expertise to understand the potential of the Sistrunk corridor area should be recruited for the work, the TAP emphasized. Recruiting unique businesses that reinforce and contribute to the local character and to a heritage neighborhood destination should be part of mixed-use developments that contain both business and residential components. The recommended quality market analyses will help guide that approach.



Figure 22: The Northwood/Pleasant City community is one of two West Palm Beach CRA districts. Two target areas within the district are Northwood Village, a nine-block commercial area in the north end of the city, and Pleasant City, one of the city's historic black residential communities.

Northwood Village is the focus of a successful branding and marketing program sponsored by the CRA. One of the first steps was to conduct market survey and prepare a marketing plan that emphasizes business development and growth. The plan is updated annually. The CRA hosts multiple events, advertises specials, and maintains the Northwood Village website with an on-line directory to village stores and services. The installation of entry and parking directory signage and light pole banners along with a discovery map and other materials market the Village as a destination. A Neighborhood Ambassador Program that is re-launching in early 2015 encourages local neighborhood residents to get to know and promote the “Real Faces and Real Places” of Northwood Village. Pleasant City is also the focus of many initiatives to revitalize the area. Recent CRA investments include infrastructure and streetscape improvements, creating a range of housing choices, and improving the facades of owner-occupied homes to increase community pride and engagement. An example is the Plant & Pave Program.

The CRA also offers a variety of incentives <<http://wpb.org/cra/incentives>> to promote investments in the Northwood/Pleasant City CRA district, including a Real Estate Development Accelerator (REDA), Capital Improvement Grant Program, Façade Grant Program, and more. CRA staff work closely with business owners, property owners, and engaged area residents to promote business retention and attraction.

## > Carefully phasing incentivized projects

The TAP recommended phasing projects to maximize their impact. Projects should be prioritized as follows:

- Stabilize and strengthen past projects to build investor confidence.
- Focus on the NW 7th Avenue intersection and south along NW 7th Avenue (outlined in the map under Next Steps on page 33) to add more housing and mixed uses.
- Explore new ideas and uses for the industrial district.
- Focus on local service retail below housing for the western portion of the corridor.

## > Structuring incentives to better attract investment and improve community benefits

Once the vision communication and market-responsive strategies are in place, a package of meaningful incentives should be assembled to give businesses more reasons to locate in the corridor during the initial phases of revitalization. “Incentives will be needed,” the TAP noted, “to help jump start development and attract new businesses that will create some early successes.”

When putting together an incentive package, the first focus should be on existing buildings and the people who have already invested in and own businesses and properties in the community. Early incentives should also be designed for small, more organic mom and pop retailers that grow from the area. The next focus would be on expanding the economic sectors that export goods and services out of the community, thereby bringing outside dollars back to the area. Any incentive package, the TAP stressed, should come with appropriate deliverables and conditions, including market rate rent caps to ensure that spaces are rented to uses that the community needs at reasonable rates.

Another important part of the incentive package process is to expand the base of partners working together to attract new businesses and development investments. The Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance, Broward County Office of Economic and Small Business Development, the Fort Lauderdale Downtown Development Authority, and others can help attract private investments as well as civic investments/incentives to the area.

Sistrunk leaders also need to look beyond cash incentives. Relaxing parking requirements for now, especially in the corridor’s commercial districts, is another incentive to pursue. Accelerated approvals for building and event permits, conditional uses, project designs, and infrastructure should also be considered. In addition, a one-stop shop for business licenses or reduced licensing rates for incubator-located businesses would also spur small business starts. Even co-marketing approaches can make a big difference. Another incentive is the preparation of collateral materials that provide relevant information in one place for someone interested in locating a business and investing in the area. Examples include key statistics about the area such as information from land surveys, size and zoning of buildings and sites, and the full package of incentives. “Interested parties shouldn’t have to do much work to be sold on the area and to see what’s available to them.” the TAP commented. “Do your homework and put the information in one on-line easy to access and navigate location.”



*Figure 23: The HIVE 2.0 <[www.thedhive.com](http://www.thedhive.com)> is a business incubator located east of the Anacostia River in Washington, DC, that provides co-working space and support for small business, nonprofits, and creative professionals from all industries. Co-working options include furnished private offices, dedicated desks, and common area access. Membership includes 24/7 access, internet, meeting space, mail services and office equipment. Through support from Capital One Bank, the HIVE 2.0 hosts regular workshops and networking events that are free and open to the public. Members also have access to free small business support and technical assistance. Its location in a U.S. Small Business Administration Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) helps small businesses gain preferential access to federal procurement opportunities. HIVE 2.0 is part of a larger collection of ARCH Development Corporation (ADT) <[www.archdevelopment.org](http://www.archdevelopment.org)> projects in historic Anacostia, today a predominately African-American neighborhood. An additional ARCH business development project is Eat Shop Live Anacostia, a partnership with Washington DC’s Department of Housing and Community Development. ADT also sponsors events that highlight historic Anacostia. An example is the 2012 and 2013 LUMEN8ANACOSTIA that united artists, creative organizations, local merchants, and community members in an all-night festival of light and art. ADT is a neighborhood-based organization that focuses on the economic regeneration of Anacostia using arts, cultural, and the creative economy.*

## > Preparing improved development agreements

Improved development agreements are needed to achieve the desired sustainable development patterns and vision for the area and to better align development with economic and community benefit goals. The agreements should have clear language that describes developer performance – what he or she is to do by specific dates and the disincentives for failure to perform. They should also include local hiring goals that require more than just “best efforts” during both the construction and business operation phases. Communicating those expectations early in the process – and consistently across projects and over time – will create the predictability investors want and opportunities for the shared prosperity the community desires.



Figure 24: The Amway Center < [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amway\\_Center](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amway_Center) > in downtown Orlando is home to the Orlando Magic and serves as a venue for sporting and entertainment events. The center was strategically designed to complement the heritage of historic Church Street where it is located and the Parramore community (described earlier in this report). To ensure that the center and other community venues had a direct economic benefit on the local community, in 2005 the city decided to not only focus on building community venues but also to use them to transform neighborhoods. That decision led to the BLUEPRINT for Using Community Venues to a Create Sustainable Economic Impact, a comprehensive approach to leveraging community venue projects to create local jobs and training opportunities and local business growth. The Blueprint Employment Office provides a central location for residents who wish to work on community venue projects.

Each venue partner agrees to publicly commit to forming a partnership with the community and ensure that maximum opportunities are given to local, small, and disadvantaged businesses in the areas of job creation and training, business development, and procurement of goods, services, and construction. Venue partners also agree to monthly monitoring for compliance. An Oversight Committee that reports directly to Orlando’s mayor monitors compliance with Blueprint goals and applicable laws. Construction of the 875,000-square foot Amway Center (pictured above) was one of those community venues selected to increase opportunities for local residents and businesses during contraction and operation. More than 1,400 central Florida residents, including 430 from the FIX Parramore community, found employment during the center’s construction, and minority- and woman-owned business performed \$94 million worth of work. Other participating community venues are the MLS Soccer Stadium, Orlando Citrus Bowl, and Dr. Phillips Center for Performing Arts. More information on the community venues and the Blueprint program can be found at <[www.cityoforlando.net/venues](http://www.cityoforlando.net/venues)>.

## > Enhancing the organizational structure of the CRA

To attract investment successfully and more quickly, a strong organization must proactively promote the shared vision, advocate for the civic leadership support and resources needed to accomplish the vision, develop and maintain strong partnerships, and provide the technical expertise and capacity to get deals done. While some aspects of those qualities are already in place, the TAP recommended the following organizational upgrades:

- Extend the CRA beyond 2025 when it now due to expire. That will enable the dedicated funding needed for essential capital improvements, amenities, and programming. Special attention and dedicated funding needs to continue in a focused way if the Sistrunk corridor is to meet its potential.
- Expand the partnerships and civic leadership, including involving economic development organizations that could help the area.
- Create a retail recruitment program that includes efforts to develop a small mom and pop business program that provides services and products that visitors can experience and, in the process, learn what the Sistrunk Boulevard corridor is all about.
- Create the marketing capacity to develop and implement a strong place-branding strategy and marketing plan. While consultants may play a role, there should be at least one dedicated CRA staff member who will sell the area as a good place to live, work, play, invest, and locate a business. “Although the CRA staff has an important role to play,” the TAP commented, “they also have responsibilities for other CRA areas, which means that an ongoing stakeholder group for the Sistrunk Boulevard area should identify a funding mechanism to support marketing and business recruiting efforts.”



*Figure 25: The Sweet Auburn Historic District in downtown Atlanta is where many African Americans established businesses, congregations, and social organizations settled because of segregation. Like many other inner-city neighborhoods, the area thrived until disinvestment occurred. Subsequently, the area was characterized by crime and abandonment, earning its 1992 National Trust for Historic Preservation designation as one of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. That led to formation of the Historic District Development Corporation to help turn the area around, starting with houses surrounding the birth home of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and working outward.\**

*Today “Things to do in Atlanta” <[www.atlanta.net/partner/sweet-auburn/00086054](http://www.atlanta.net/partner/sweet-auburn/00086054)> promotes exploring “Atlanta’s history-rich culture in the Sweet Auburn District, just minutes from Downtown.” Places listed to visit include the International Walk of Fame (an interactive memorial made of shoe prints from influential Civil Rights activists), the APEX Museum that presents the country’s history through the eyes of African-Americans, and a taste of the South at the Sweet Auburn Curb Market. The area also offers walking tours. Annual events include an annual African-American heritage festival -- Sprinfest -- and the National Black Arts Festival. During Black History Month the area’s history is celebrated with performances, guest speakers, and food. Friends of Sweet Auburn <[www.sweetauburn.com/#!](http://www.sweetauburn.com/#!)> works to restore Auburn Avenue to its place of prominence. (\*The information in this paragraph is from <[www.nps.gov/nr/travel/atlanta/aub.htm](http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/atlanta/aub.htm)>.)*



## > Strengthening the image as a safe, unique, and vibrant place

### Branding and Marketing

For the economic and redevelopment strategies to work and the hopes for the area to be realized, active brand management of the area and underscoring how that brand connects to its story are essential. Repositioning of the Sistrunk corridor place brand should flow out of and support the shared vision for the area and should use multiple tools to get the word out. Such tools could include websites, promotional brochures, community events, social media, and wayfinding signs that tell about the places and the people. Festivals and plaques as well as public art could also be a part of telling the story.

One TAP caution was that an effective marketing program should include different messages and mediums (print, social, trade publications, etc.) for different end users (residents, businesses, or industry, for example). Research will be needed as to the messages that resonate and mediums most frequented by each target group. The TAP also cautioned that to promote economic development goals, the marketing strategy should center on recruiting businesses to the area and keeping projects moving forward. CRA staff could also help developers and property owners in the area get out the word about their products. The marketing approach should shift away from marketing the organization and focus on the place.

An additional approach is to establish creative partnerships with tourism organizations such as the Fort Lauderdale Convention and Visitors Bureau and African-American tourism groups and networks, such as Black Meetings & Tourism and the National Cultural Heritage Society. An immediate opportunity is the National Urban League Conference being held in Fort Lauderdale in the summer of 2015 and hosted by the Urban League of Broward County.

*"It's about so much more than the 8 million dollar economic impact that the National Urban League Conference brings to Broward County. It's about strengthening the community by becoming the destination of choice for the country's largest and most influential black professional organizations."*

- Nicki E. Grossman, President of the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau, commenting on the National Urban League Conference in Fort Lauderdale <<http://nul.iamempowered.com/content/urban-league-broward-county-host-2015-national-urban-league-conference>>.



*Figure 26: The mission of the non-profit Cultural Tourism DC is to deliver memorable experiences and learning opportunities in the areas of heritage, international exchange, and humanities. The African American Heritage Trail is one of its projects. The trail identifies more than 200 sites that are important in local and national history and culture. Of those sites, 100 are marked with plaques. Funding partners include several departments of the District of Columbia and the National Park Service. An August 2008 article, "Cultural Heritage Tourism in Washington, DC: A Community-Based Model for Neighborhood Economic Development" in Global Urban Development Magazine (Volume 4, Issue 1)\* calls out the successful work of Cultural Tourism DC to map and link cultural assets to their economic benefits to neighborhoods and the city.*

*The article also recognizes Cultural Tourism DC's collaborative community and partnership involvement that starts with a community-based approach, using the following six steps:*

- *Build a coalition around a clearly stated mission.*
- *Educate potential partners outside the cultural community.*
- *Map historical and cultural assets and conducted research.*
- *Build political support and create key partnerships.*
- *Develop a strategic plan.*
- *Develop sustainable financial support.*

*The article also cites Cultural Tourism DC's emphasis on product development to create new experiences in addition to marketing strategies.*

*([www.globalurban.org/GUDMag08Vol4Iss1/Smith.htm](http://www.globalurban.org/GUDMag08Vol4Iss1/Smith.htm))*

Creating amenities along the corridor to attract the cruise ship tourist population to the area is another opportunity and something that is already happening in other parts of the city. Discounts can be given to those with cruise ship tickets. Cultural heritage tourism, the TAP noted, is a growing sector of the tourism economy. A national market study<sup>1</sup> released in October 2009 reports that “78% of all U.S. leisure travelers participate in cultural and/or heritage activities while traveling, translating to 118.3 million adults each year. With cultural and heritage travelers spending an average of \$994 per trip, they contribute more than \$192 billion annually to the U.S. economy.”

The National Trust for Historic Preservation cites the following benefits as a result of creating cultural and heritage sites. They:

- Create jobs and businesses.
- Increase tax revenues.
- Diversify local economy.
- Create opportunities for partnerships.
- Attract visitors with interest in history and preservation.
- Increase historic attraction revenues.
- Preserve local traditions and culture.
- Generate local investment in historic resources.
- Build community pride.
- Increase awareness and perception/image of the site or area’s significance.

Travelers like to experience places and events that tell the story of a place or people. A starting point for telling the story of the Sistrunk Boulevard corridor could be the African-American Research Library and Cultural Center, described by the Greater Fort Lauderdale Visitors and Convention Bureau as a “60,000 sq. ft. jewel, only the third of its kind in the U.S.” It contains “a main library and a unique children’s library with more Black history books and books written by Blacks than any other facility in the country” <www.sunny.org>.

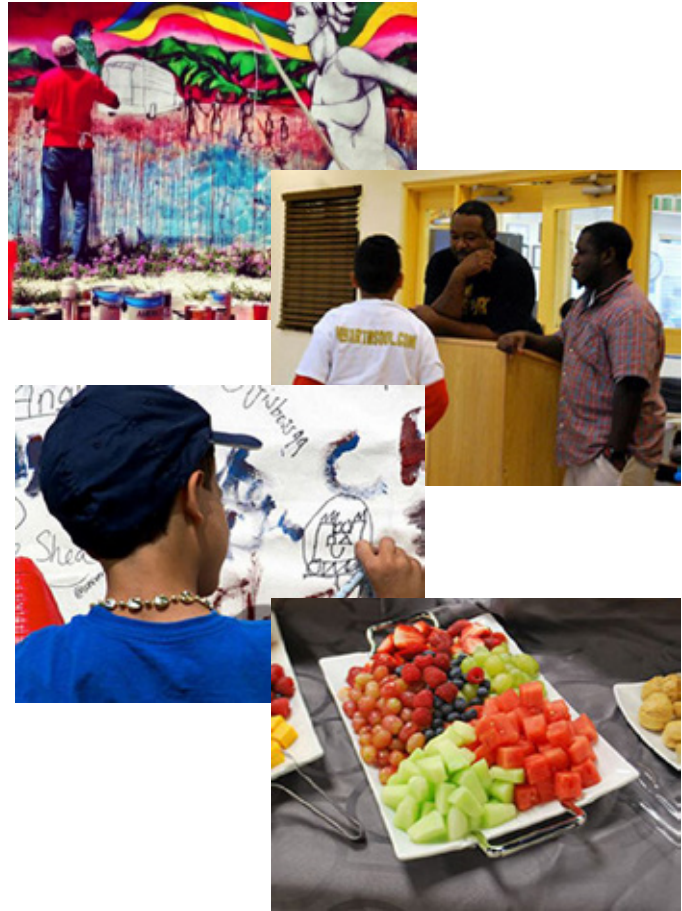


Figure 27: In Miami the mission of the non-profit Arts Hub <www.thearthub.org> is to implement an art program that actively engages inner city youth. It focuses on areas where no art programs exist. Programs include:

- Hands-on art workshops and classes for children and adults from beginners to advanced students.
- A mentoring program for young men that includes etiquette, entrepreneurship, and the arts.
- Community projects through creating a partnership with artists, property owners, local residents, and sponsors to bring out urban areas by way of a mural project that will beautify the area.
- An art of life camp that is designed to help understand key elements of life, better eating habits and introduce various art forms to young people.

The Arts Hub also sponsors events. In 2015 they will include a painting in the street art party, a gala for young men, an Arts Hub summer camp for youth, and an art in the parks program.

<sup>1</sup> The City of Fort Lauderdale, Urban Land Institute (ULI) Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Questions, Fort Lauderdale Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Sistrunk Corridor TAP, December 9 and December 10, 2014, served as the primary source of information.

Celebrating the area's arts and cultural heritage, the TAP observed, could be an important attribute of the Sistrunk Boulevard corridor's new brand, which would tie in with the focus of the successful FAT Village Technology & Arts District that is home to a variety of art-related venues and special events, including a monthly art walk. Food events should be a part of the heritage experience, with tastings offered as a part of walking tours and festivals, for example.

An additional project could be BRING OUT SISTRUNK, a volunteer-based collaborative mural project involving partnerships with artists, property owners, local residents, and sponsors. A proposal of Art and Soul, the mural would beautify Sistrunk Boulevard in 10 locations and would tell the story of the Sistrunk neighborhood, including the history of the city's jazz scene and famous artists who played there. By telling individual and collective stories, the mural would help create a sense of pride among residents and help local youth find their artistic voices and develop self confidence. Described in more detail in Appendix D, the project would involve the community from the earliest stages of planning.



*Figure 28: The Wynwood area of Miami is a neighborhood that, because of strategic investments in the arts and place making, reversed years of economic disinvestment that resulted from the suburban movement that began after the end of World War II. Today the area is home to an eclectic mix of arts and creative businesses that brought life back to the once vacant and neglected warehouses and old factories that characterized it. Street art in all forms is credited with catalyzing the area's comeback. Artists followed by adapting buildings and alleys into galleries, performance venues, showrooms, and restaurants. The Wynwood Arts District Association (WADA) works to strengthen the area as an arts district. Services include sponsoring events and hosting an on-line map showing the artistic businesses in the area. At the urging of WADA, in 2013 the City of Miami created the Wynwood Business Improvement District that uses funds from property assessments for initiatives that strengthen the area as a hub for artists and entrepreneurs. Examples include infrastructure improvements, more public art, supplemental security and sanitation services, master planning, and a marketing program.*

Underscoring the importance of cultural tourism, the Broward County Cultural Tourism Division worked with other partners to develop a ten-year community cultural plan, *CreativeBROWARD 2020 - A Plan for Cultural and Economic Development in Broward County*. A goal of the plan is to incorporate cultural diversity into every aspect of the overall plan and the component plans of creative economy, cultural tourism, and public art and design <[www.broward.org/Arts/Resources/Publications/CulturalPlan2020/Pages/About.aspx](http://www.broward.org/Arts/Resources/Publications/CulturalPlan2020/Pages/About.aspx)>. Grants are also available specifically for cultural tourism projects in Broward County (see <[www.broward.org/Arts/Funding/Programs/Pages/CTPGrant.aspx](http://www.broward.org/Arts/Funding/Programs/Pages/CTPGrant.aspx)>). A tourism initiative could also build upon previously completed oral histories based on the life stories of Sistrunk residents.

In summary, a comprehensive marketing and promotions strategy that supports the shared vision and targets investors and businesses will be crucial to achieving the economic development goals for the Sistrunk Boulevard corridor.



Figure 29: Midtown Summer Fest



Figure 30: Light Up Sistrunk



Figure 31: FAT Village Artwalk

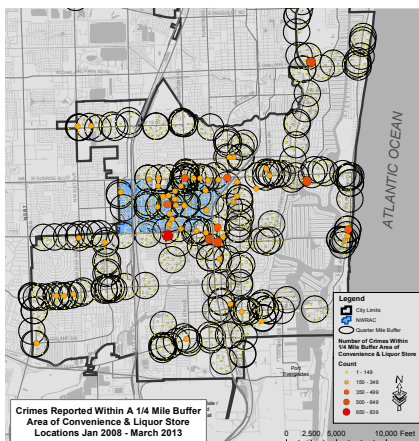
Figures 29-31: The Sistrunk Boulevard corridor and neighboring area are the focus of events (examples above) that celebrate the area's arts and cultural heritage. They also provide a tradition to build on when creating new experiences that tell the story of the area and its heritage.

## Safety: Real and Perceived

An essential aspect of the Sistrunk place brand to address is the perception that the area is unsafe. As shown in Figure 28 the Sistrunk Boulevard TAP focus area has experienced a significant drop in crime, with a 50 percent reduction over the last three years. The police have a substation in the area at 1300 Sistrunk Boulevard and have a four-member Neighborhood Action Team that focuses on reducing crime through community partnerships. Team members attend Homeowner Association meetings, respond to concerns raised by residents, participate in outreach and mentoring with youth, and perform community outreach events such as the police department's SALT (Seniors and Law Enforcement Working Together) group. The department's Community Resource Unit is also run through the Neighborhood Action Teams.

Despite those efforts and the reduction in actual crime, the TAP concluded that significant negative safety perceptions remain and must be addressed early in the process if investors, residents, and businesses are to be effectively recruited. They suggested using a comprehensive approach involving the built environment, adjustments to programs and patrols and innovative strategic communications. New metrics should be developed that focus on perceptions, and initial surveys and focus groups will be needed to understand the exact nature of the concerns by key target markets. One concern is how dark the corridor is at night. Improved lighting at night is critical, the TAP stressed.

To implement the recommended actions and other measures to improve the safety image of the area, the CRA and/or an ongoing stakeholder organization will also need to build a meaningful partnership with the Fort Lauderdale Police Department and consider the creation of a Business Improvement District to help fund a clean and safe initiative. For example, the district concept used in other communities such as the Wynwood BID (described earlier) dedicates funds toward safety enhancements over and above what is dedicated through the normal police budgeting department. Those additional dollars are usually specifically targeted and program-oriented in nature and renewable on an annual basis by agreement of both parties.



Figures 32 and 33: Above left, crime incident count, Sistrunk Sector, December 2013–November 2014, Fort Lauderdale Police Department. Above right, the Riviera Beach CRA Clean and Safe Program that in 2014 won a project award from the Florida Chapter of the American Planning Association. The goal of the program initiated in 2008 is to reduce crime by working with residents and businesses to improve real and perceived neighborhood concerns about safety. Three program initiatives are the:

- 2014 Clean and Safe Ambassador Program that is designed to supplement city services by advocating and serving as a resource for creating a clean and safe environment.
- Business Watch and Neighborhood Watch programs established to help protect property and provide communication tools.
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), defined by the International CPTED Association as a multi-disciplinary approach to deterring criminal behavior through environmental design.

Other services provided by the Clean and Safe management team include business surveys, crime prevention tips, business continuity planning, and emergency planning. Businesses can also fill out comment cards to ask for assistance in addressing a specific concern. More information can be viewed at <[www.rbcra.com/clean-safe-program](http://www.rbcra.com/clean-safe-program)>.

## > **Creating industrial development strategies**

The TAP recommended reimagining the night life in the industrial area as an entertainment district with multiple venues to complement the city's emerging FAT Village Technology and Arts District. Based on its nighttime tour of the area, the TAP suggested integrating the existing non-conforming uses now on Sistrunk Boulevard into internal locations within the industrial area and away from residences. The industrial buildings create a unique environment and offer redevelopment potential, the TAP observed. Along with the highly accessible location for such a variety of uses, the area presents a strong opportunity to attract additional businesses and users.

A series of strategies to encourage investment in the industrial area include:

- Considering regulatory changes to improve use options such as entertainment, retail, and gallery spaces.
- Conducting an audit of infrastructure and existing uses. The audit of existing uses should also include an analysis of tenancy rates and occupancy.
- Connecting job and training opportunities to the Sistrunk Boulevard neighborhood.
- Exploring parking requirement adjustments.
- Leveraging the state's Step-Up Apprenticeship Program.
- Exploring a sub-district plan for the area, including a distinct branding initiative.



*Figure 34: The City of Philadelphia's Community Life Improvement Programs (CLIP) consists of several programs and agencies that work together to improve the appearance of neighborhoods through eliminating blight. One of the CLIP initiatives is a vacant lot program < [www.phila.gov/qualityoflife/vacantlotprogram](http://www.phila.gov/qualityoflife/vacantlotprogram)> to address the blighting impact of the city's some 40,000 vacant buildings and lots that attract crime, create unsanitary conditions, reduce property values, and cost the city significant money for safety and upkeep. As an alternative, in 2014 the city created a land bank to turn over vacant lots and buildings to people and organizations that want to create affordable and accessible housing, businesses that create jobs for residents, and spaces for community food productions. The vacant lot program is supported by the Campaign to Take Back Vacant Land, a coalition of Philadelphia's community, faith, and labor groups that joined together to pass the land bank legislation. Other CLIP initiatives are a graffiti abatement team, community service program to carry out clean-up projects, community partnership program that lend pieces of equipment for community clean-up, and trash and debris removal program.*

## > Increasing access to capital

A primary TAP recommendation to promote increased access to sources of capital was for the CRA to be empowered to convene a capital market summit that would bring together potential investors in the area. Suggested invitees would include area lending officers, venture capital firms, foundations, and private investors. State regional, and local economic development organizations should also be included and involved in the planning.

The summit should be preceded by the previously mentioned CRA-commissioned analyses for residential, retail, and industrial. The analyses should highlight the trends and metrics that funders need to justify making an investment.

CRA-commissioned marketability and feasibility studies on phase one sites should also be undertaken. An additional step is to explore alternative capital sources. Examples could include the CRA itself, individual civic investors, churches, developers, the city and county, and crowdfunding. Another potential source would be angel funds that provide early stage venture capital to entrepreneurs.

The summit should be preceded by a CRA-commissioned analysis (a white paper) of the current market for three Sistrunk Boulevard market segments: residential, retail, and industrial. The analysis should highlight the trends and metrics that funders need to justify making an investment. CRA-commissioned marketability and feasibility studies on particular sites should also be part of the package.

An additional step is to explore alternative capital sources. Examples could include the CRA itself, individual civic investors, churches, developers, the city and county, and crowdfunding. Another potential source would be angel funds that provide early stage venture capital to entrepreneurs.

Two resource organizations are the Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance that sponsors an Entrepreneur Council and an Entrepreneurial Virtual Center, both of which focus on helping entrepreneurs grow, and Enterprise Florida that sponsors the Florida Opportunity Fund which provides venture capital for start-up and early-stage businesses. “It is important to recognize,” the TAP stressed, “that for the Sistrunk Boulevard corridor to succeed, any private investor or developer will need a government partnership. The market reality is that the Sistrunk area is not yet at the point of a Miami Beach or Wynwood, both successful models of an area that came back.”

## > Focusing housing efforts on mixed-income residential projects in order to make more retail and commercial development sustainable

Based on its general review of housing types and patterns on and around the Sistrunk Corridor, the TAP concluded that the current residential inventory alone will not likely support the robust retail and commercial corridor desired by those who live and have a business in the area. Unless a corridor is a well-established regional destination, the TAP emphasized, thriving retail and commercial corridors are typically supported by those who live and work in the adjacent areas. Relative to those observations, the TAP recommends that the CRA assess, as part of a retail analysis, whether the corridor’s current housing types (largely low-to moderate-income single family homes and subsidized multi-family units), mix, and intensity must change in order to make retail and commercial development more sustainable. The issue is more complex than homeownership (what many in the area want to see encouraged) versus rental housing, the TAP concluded. Instead the focus should be on how to achieve more mixed-income housing choices. Without an increase in buying power by area residents, new retail and commercial businesses will have a difficult time attracting customers. Mixed-income housing will also help the corridor become a retail destination.

*“Without a serious, well-coordinated vision of what kind of housing the city will allow and encourage in the Sistrunk Boulevard area, it is difficult to plan the corridor’s future potential with any certainty, as the existing housing stock alone will not support significant additional retail/commercial business activity.”*

The ULI Technical Assistance Panel

Factors that the TAP considered in making its recommendations regarding housing:

- Median incomes in the area are significantly lower than Broward County's. Identified recently in United Way of Broward's 2014 ALICE Report, a study of financial hardship in the county, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Living Wage Calculator, Broward County is one of the most housing cost-burdened locations in the country. According to recent estimates published by the mortgage industry, a South Florida family needs to earn over \$58,431 annually to afford principal, interest, taxes, and insurance on a median-priced home with a 20 percent down payment. Broward's current median income is almost \$12,000 below that figure, and median household incomes in/near the Sistrunk corridor are less than \$30,000. (More information on mixed-income housing and its benefits can be found at <<http://urbanland.uli.org/economy-markets-trends/making-mixed-income-housing-work>> and <<http://urbanland.uli.org/planning-design/ulx-10-next-wave-mixed-income-housing-projects>>.)
- Nationally, the country is still emerging from the most devastating recession in more than 80 years. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Florida endured one of the largest declines in homeownership in the country during the past decade. In South Florida, homeownership slipped from a high of 71 percent in 2005 to 59 percent at the end of 2014. Few, if any, forecasters anticipate homeownership rebounding beyond the low 60 percentage range in the foreseeable future. Tight lending requirements and the necessity of a 20 percent down payment also price many potential homeowners out of the market. Those factors, coupled with the fact that many millennials are showing a marked preference for rental options over ownership until later in life, make creating a full spectrum of housing choices a highly desirable goal. Focusing on both ownership and rental mixed-income options will allow the Sistrunk area to become a more attractive option for a higher percentage of new residents.



*Figure 35: In Arlington, Massachusetts, the recently completed Arlington 360 was built on the former site of a closed hospital. Of the 164 apartments, 26 are affordable, including 17 reserved for households earning at or below 80 percent of the area's median income (AMI) and nine for those earning below 120 percent of AMI. The development also contains 12 for-sale townhouses and amenities such as a community garden, walking trails, and parks. (Source: <http://urbanland.uli.org/planning-design/ulx-10-next-wave-mixed-income-housing-projects>.)*



## > Identifying immediate next steps

Building positive momentum is a crucial aspect of any successful economic development or redevelopment initiative. For the Sistrunk Boulevard corridor, the TAP members suggested a number of immediate next steps that can help create “early wins” in the building of that momentum.

### Design and Physical Improvements

The TAP’s advice for early next steps was to concentrate initial incentive efforts around NW 7th Avenue and then extend them to NW 15th Avenue. The focus should be on existing buildings and catalytic projects, with an emphasis on creating success stories for new projects. Ensuring that development and connections extend and are scalable in all four directions is a key part of the design strategy. Parcels north and south of Sistrunk Boulevard along NW 7th Avenue should continue the mixed used pattern as part of that early phase.

Specific strategies, which should be consistent with the 2008 Northwest-Progresso-Flagler Heights Implementation Plan, should address:

- Creating gateways at Sistrunk Boulevard and NW 7th Avenue and Sistrunk Boulevard and Andrews Avenue. NW 7th Avenue and Sistrunk Boulevard should be treated as “main and main.”
- Activating the Sistrunk Boulevard gateway to the west and facilitating development to the east.
- Making stronger connections to the industrial area to the north.
- Increasing connection to Avenue of the Arts to the south.

Strategies should also address connecting across Andrews Avenue where six lanes create a barrier, as does crossing the FEC Railway tracks. Work on the western segments of Sistrunk Boulevard should come after the eastern link. The goal, the TAP emphasized, should target infilling and redeveloping existing vacant buildings and properties; once those areas are vibrant, focus growth west of 15th Street.



Figure 36: The focus area for the TAP recommended priority next steps.

## **Additional Economic Development Program Enhancements**

In addition to implementing the design and physical improvements strategies outlined above, which are essential to the sustained economic success of the corridor, the CRA should:

- Recruit economic development partners and adjust the organizational structure to welcome them. Work together to begin recruiting additional civic investments.
- Conduct the needed market research, including hiring the best people available for urban markets.
- Immediately begin the process to communicate the shared vision and reposition the brand with enhancement of safety perceptions as a key initial priority. Hire strong consultants to create the strategy; then hire necessary staff.
- Begin organizing capital market summit and hold it within six months.
- Organize business and property owners in the Industrial District to explore enhancements.
- Create a small business council to assist existing small businesses and help recruit more.
- Expand opportunities for existing residents to participate in the revitalization.

“We understand the complex nature of revitalizing the Sistrunk Boulevard corridor and attracting new economic investments,” the TAP members concluded. The first steps outlined above should help create forward momentum; sustaining that momentum, however, will require careful attention to the broader concepts contained in the TAP report. In addition, all the partners should keep in mind the need to balance community interests with investor requirements and market demand for the area. By staying focused on the shared vision, working cooperatively, and taking advantage of marketplace trends, the partners can achieve most of their goals for Sistrunk in the next decade.

# Appendix A: TAP Agenda

## Fort Lauderdale CRA Sistrunk Corridor TAP

December 9 & 10, 2014

2nd Floor Conference Room, Mizell Center, 1409 NW 6th Street (W. Sistrunk Blvd.), Fort Lauderdale

### Tuesday, December 9th

- 12:00 – 1:30 pm Panel arrives, meets over catered lunch  
Mizell Center, 1409 NW 6th Street (W. Sistrunk Blvd.), 2nd Floor, Fort Lauderdale
- 1:30 – 2:45 pm Tour of Study Area Led by Staff  
Van to leave from Mizell Center
- 2:45– 3:30 pm Hotel check-in and break  
Riverside Hotel, 620 E. Las Olas, Fort Lauderdale
- 3:30 – 5:00 pm Panel Work Session  
Mizell Center, 2nd Floor Conference Room, 1409 NW 6th Street (W. Sistrunk Blvd.), Fort Lauderdale
- 5:30 – 7:00 pm Panel meeting and discussion with stakeholders  
Mizell Center, 2nd Floor Conference Room. This meeting is open to the public.
- 7:30 – 9:00 pm Dinner & Deliberations  
McGuire's Hill 16 Pub, 535 N. Andrews Ave., Fort Lauderdale (Private room)  
Short tour of corridor at night will follow dinner

### Wednesday, December 10th

- 7:30 – 8:30 am Breakfast at hotel for those staying onsite  
Riverside Hotel
- 8:30 – 10:00 am Panel work session  
Mizell Center, 2nd Floor Workroom
- 10:00 – 10:30 am Break
- 10:30 am – 12:30 pm Panel work session
- 12:30 - 1:30 pm Working lunch
- 1:30 - 3:00 pm Panel work session
- 3:00 - 3:30 pm Break
- 3:30 – 5:00 pm Panel review of draft report & power point prep (closed to public)
- 5:30 – 6:30 pm Presentation of draft report; Questions & Answers  
Mizell Center, 2nd Floor Conference Room. This meeting is open to the public

# Appendix B: Panel Questions

## Fort Lauderdale CRA Sistrunk Corridor TAP

September 30 & October 1, 2014

The focus of this TAP is the formation of strategies to encourage development, including economic development, along the Sistrunk Corridor area and nearby adjacent areas in Fort Lauderdale.

By concentrating its attention on specific portions of the corridor, the panel will identify strategies and incentives to create catalytic projects, with the highest priority being how to focus and encourage the redevelopment on a suggested locus along the corridor. For purposes of this TAP, the Sistrunk Corridor is broken into three segments, with the panel's emphasis on the third segment:

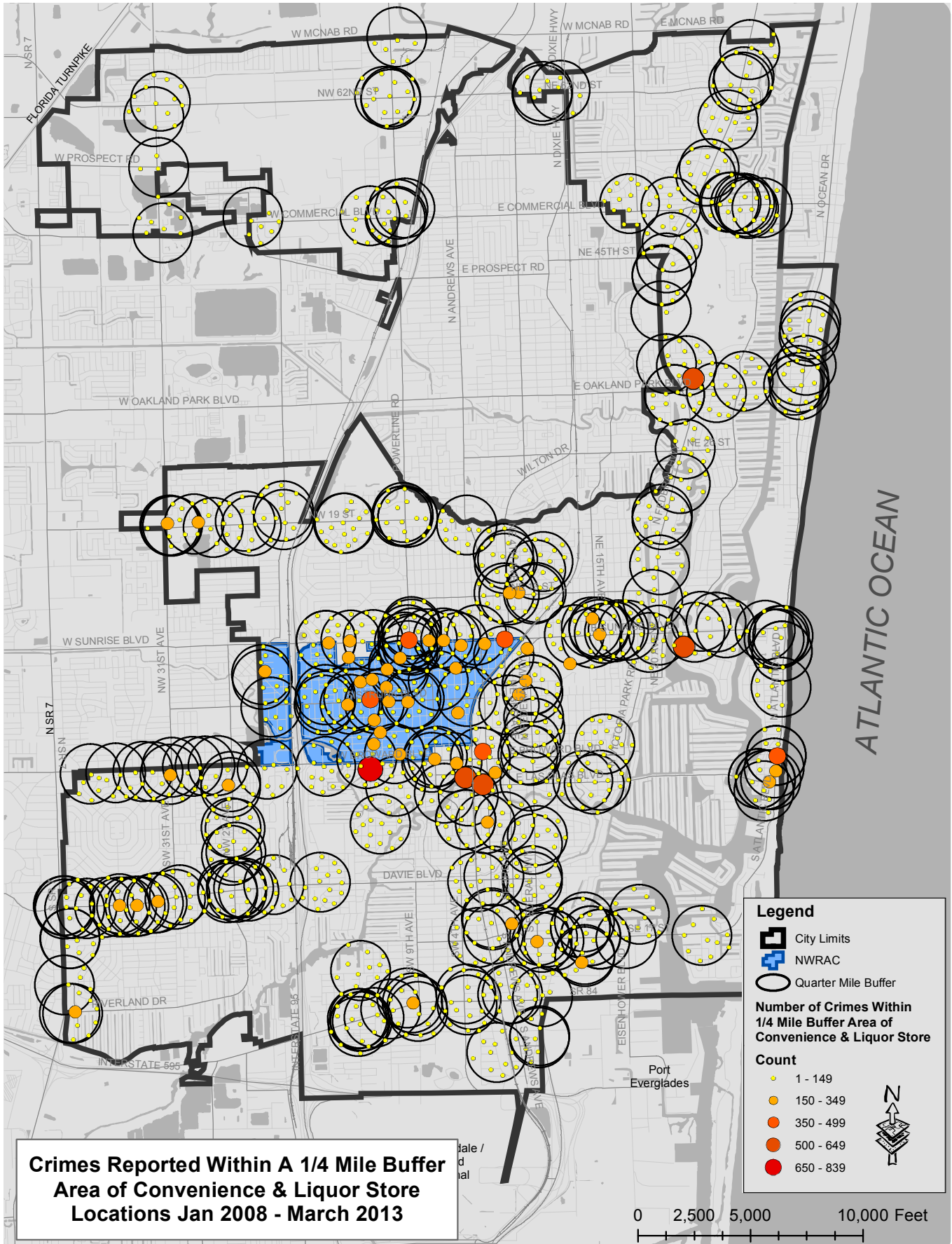
- Sistrunk Blvd. west of I-95 to the city limits
- Sistrunk Blvd. east of I-95 to NW 9th Avenue
- Sistrunk Blvd. between NW 9th Avenue to the FEC

The panel will be furnished with other studies and analyses of the study area for their review prior to on-site work. On-site, the panelists will address the following questions:

- In general, how best can Fort Lauderdale and its CRA encourage economic development along the study corridor?
- To encourage the most appropriate economic development and increased private sector investment on the Sistrunk corridor, the panel is asked to suggest specifically where these efforts should be most closely concentrated.
  - How large an area should this be?
  - Are any land uses changes/specific policy changes needed to make the area more attractive to private sector development?
  - What strategies should be used to tie Sistrunk more closely into the downtown core? To connect with FAT Village?
  - How can the corridor best serve its existing residents and those who feel strong ties to the neighborhood?
  - What conditions or incentives should be addressed/put in place to attract private sector investment?
  - Are additional infrastructure improvements needed? If so, how could these improvements best be funded?
  - Address the process and resources needed to accomplish panel's recommendations.
- Address existing industrial uses contiguous to the study area, and identify strategies for incorporating or refocusing those uses in the overall plan.
- Overall corridor focus:
  - What other tools, techniques or capacity are recommended to help support investment and development overall on the corridor?
  - What are the recommended next steps?

# Appendix C: Sistrunk Boulevard Corridor Crime Statistics

Source: City of Fort Lauderdale Police Department





# Appendix D: Other Non-Profit Community Proposals

- **Introduction:** In Conjunction with the City of Fort Lauderdale, Art n Soul has identified a need within the Sistrunk Corridor for elaborated creativity.
- **Needs Statement:** We work towards creating a partnership with artists, property owners, local residents and sponsors to BRING OUT SISTRUK by way of a mural project will beautify the area. We have identified 10 locations within the Sistrunk corridor to serve as host canvases for the murals.
- **Purpose:** The mural process will tell the historical story of Sistrunk neighborhood. The individual and collective stories will cohesively help to develop a vehicle geared towards empowering the community. The project will also engage local youth to help find their artistic voice, develop self-confidence and discover new ambitions while helping creating murals.
- Goals of art project:
  - Beautify buildings throughout the city which are primary in high visibility locations
  - Visually promote the arts throughout the community
  - Create a sense of pride among Sistrunk residents
  - Provide a positive impact on project participants
- **Methods:** The Mural Project requires the commitment of local Volunteers within the community from the earliest stages of planning through the hands-on work required to painting the walls of the mural. There will be committees formed to help with selecting artists, mural themes, and sponsors. The committees will seek volunteers who show promise of broad participation from the resident standpoint, along with a desire to create a project that is reflective of the community. This Mural Project will help build ties within the community and address some important challenges the community faces.
- **Proposed Concept I:** A visually dynamic mural that gives onlookers a glimpse into the history of the Fort Lauderdale jazz scene. The imagery will allow the community to take a step back in time to the hottest Fort Lauderdale jazz clubs in the 1930s such as Club Brownie and the Trianon Ballroom. The mural will also tell the story of world-famous artists who played in Fort Lauderdale such as Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald, who gave one of her first lead performances in Fort Lauderdale.
- **Proposal Concept II:** A visually appealing painted mural that portrays jazz subject matter with bold and dynamic abstract shapes and patterns. Forms depicting musicians playing music along with symbols for rhythm and sound will interact to evoke emotions of sound and movement. The mural will be painted utilizing a color palette complimentary to Ft Lauderdale architecture of the neighborhood.

- **Additional Considerations:** A mural project such as this would be heavily figurative and detailed thus, taking multiple weeks' time to complete. Additionally, the artist would need to collaborate with the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society and The old Dillard Museum to research the history relative to the project goals. We will invite local high school artist to be mentored by retired artist as part of this project as well. Along with have a Juried show case with a prize to Best mural, Most Improved Artist and Best Design. This will take place between the High School artists on 3 of the walls selected for murals.
- **Projected Timeline:** The mural project is set to target 10 walls with in the Sistrunk area that will be used as canvas. Five walls are facing the east and five are facing the west. The mural project is estimated to take approximately 6 months of time to complete, starting August 2015. The mural project is planned to end just before the month of December which just in time to host a "Bring out Sistruck" street exhibit in conjunction with the Light up Sistruck Festival.

**Art n Soul** will curate new edition of murals with eight to twelve of the top muralists from around the Fort Lauderdale area. This project will build ten new created murals and will look to add mural to the Fort Lauderdale area ever year after.

The Midtown area Mural Project will hopefully turn into a yearly event with the goal of creating over 50 murals by some of Fort Lauderdale talented artist in a 5 years' time span in various area around the city. The recurrence and solidification of the project throughout this time will establish the Midtown and Fort Lauderdale area as a landmark destination for internationally recognized murals and will create exposure for the city, establishing it as a premier art destination.

Outline items for project:

- Mural Walls Needed: Locate walls that could use a mural
- Corporate Sponsorship: Seek any one that LOVE the project and want to support.
- Volunteers Needed: Anyone who wants to help

Date and event:

- August 1, 2015 Will be a community cleanup day in Mid Town
- August 2, 2015 Painting of Murals Begin in conjunction with Summer Fest
- Reception without Cultural Partners and Community Leaders
- With Musical performances, with all the muralist in attendance
- December 6, 2015 Painting of Murals End in conjunction with Light up Sistrunk