



ULI Technical Assistance Panel Report

DEERFIELD BEACH

Central City Area

City of Deerfield Beach, Florida | December 7-8, 2020

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ULI was established 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, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and the Asia Pacific region, with members in 80 countries.

For more than 25 years, the ULI Southeast Florida / Caribbean District Council has served the Southeast Florida and Caribbean region. Our over 1,100 members live and work in Florida's seven southernmost coastal counties reaching from Indian River through Monroe, and throughout the Caribbean Islands.

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Since 1947, ULI has assisted communities by bringing together panels of seasoned real estate, planning, financing, marketing and development experts to provide unbiased pragmatic advice on complex land use and development issues. In 2004, the ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council began providing these services locally through Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) to address specific development/real estate issues in areas such as housing, parking, redevelopment, future land use, Transit Oriented Development (TOD), and similar topics.

Drawing from its local membership base, ULI Southeast Florida / Caribbean conducts TAPs offering objective and responsible advice to local decision-makers on a wide variety of land use and real estate issues ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions. The TAP program is intentionally flexible to provide a customized approach to specific land use and real estate issues. In fulfillment of ULI's mission, this TAP report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

Learn more at <https://seflorida.uli.org/>.

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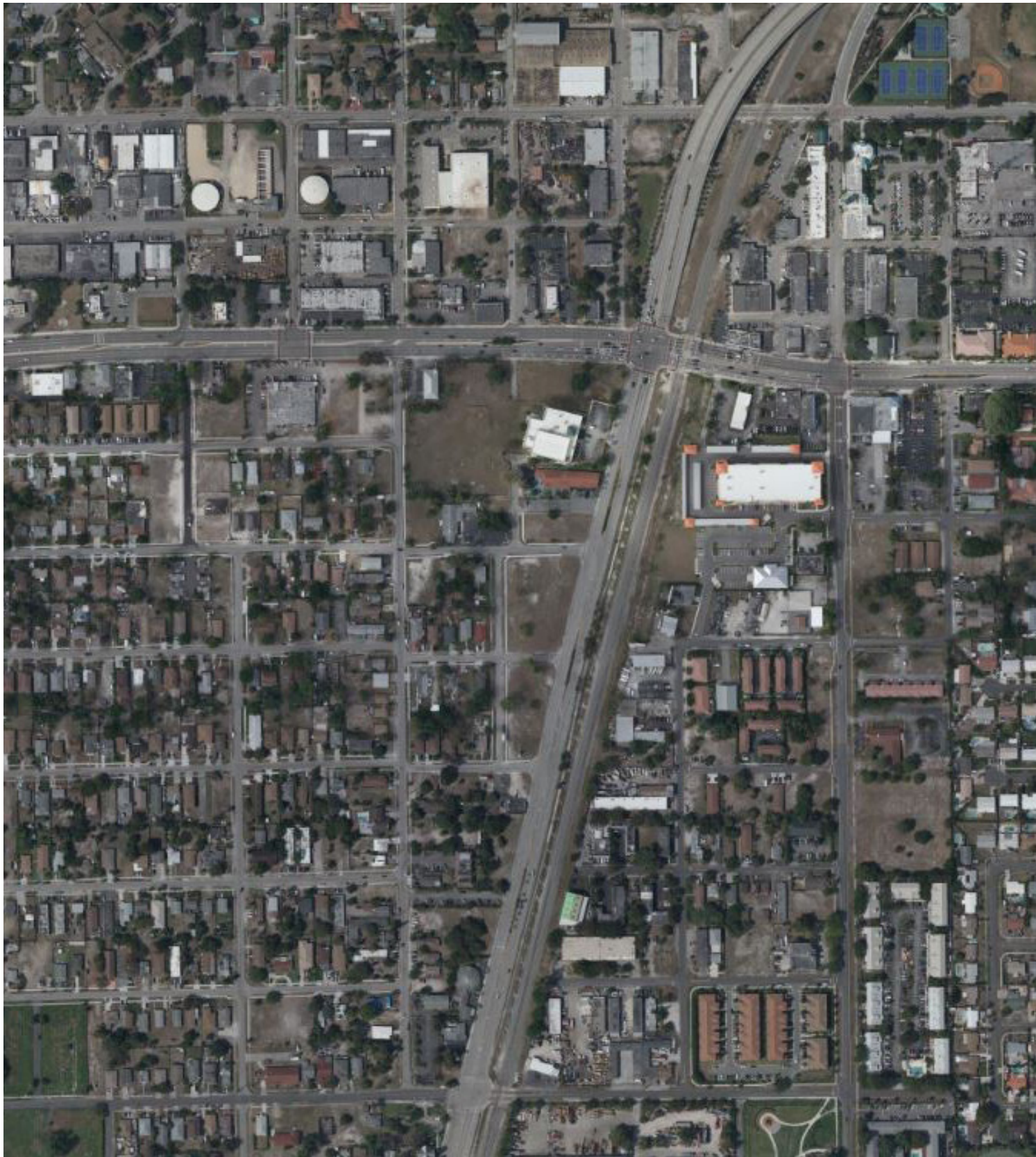
On behalf of ULI Southeast Florida / Caribbean, the panel would like to thank the City of Deerfield Beach for this effort.

Special appreciation goes to the City of Deerfield Beach staff in particular for their work in preparation, support, and coordination leading up to and during the virtual panel.

The panel would also like to thank the community leaders, planning staff, and representatives from across the City of Deerfield Beach who shared their perspectives, experiences, and insights with the panel.

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The Dixie Highway and Hillsboro Boulevard intersection and Pioneer Grove are shown in this portion of the Study Area.

Contents

Executive Summary	8
Location and Context	10
Obstacles to Redevelopment	17
Recommendations	19
Conclusion	31
Appendix	32
Glossary of Terms	32
Broward County Land Use Designations	33
Fort Lauderdale’s Central City CRA Case Study	34
Density Primer	36
Panel Bios	38

Executive Summary

Ideally situated between Broward and Palm Beach County with easy access from South Florida's major highways and thoroughfares, the City of Deerfield Beach boasts an expansive coastline and promising opportunities for commercial, industrial, and residential development. With a diverse population, deeply rooted community, and local business revenue reaching nearly \$20 billion annually, the City's recent efforts to support redevelopment along the beach and eastern areas have been largely successful. This success has compelled the City government and community leaders to again consider plans for redeveloping the City's older central city area and to better utilize its commercial and residential corridors. In 2015 the Dixie Highway Neighborhood Group (DHNG) was formed by a group of property owners in the area to organize for redevelopment. In early 2020, the Deerfield Beach City Commission began discussing specific approaches to redevelopment for the Dixie Highway Corridor and Alwood Homes neighborhood.

The Dixie Highway Corridor is one of the main north/south highways running through the City. Though the Dixie Highway Corridor is heavily trafficked, it is characterized by underperforming retail and commercial properties, adjacent to aging low density residential uses. The City appropriately decided that the area needed a fresh development approach and engaged the Urban Land Institute Southeast Florida and Caribbean District Council to conduct a Technical Assistance Panel (ULI TAP) to:

- Identify factors that are discouraging revitalization/ redevelopment of the Study Area
- Recommend measures to overcome obstacles to revitalization and redevelopment
- Identify a viable mix of uses that would encourage

new capital investment and public / private partnerships

- Recommend techniques to address concerns about neighborhood compatibility of new development along the corridor with the surrounding established neighborhoods
- Recommend how and where community spaces can be improved or created to enhance the Study Area and encourage revitalization and redevelopment

The "Study Area" as defined by the City included the Dixie Highway corridor from the city line south to Sample Road and the Alwood Homes Neighborhood.

Over the course of two days, the ULI TAP sought feedback from the community's local leaders and residents, toured the Study Area, and formulated recommendations to address identified obstacles to redevelopment. The ULI TAP identified a wide range of obstacles to redevelopment, including:

- Regulatory obstacles
- Site constraints and configuration
- Lack of consensus on the vision for the corridor and its relationship to surrounding neighborhoods
- Ownership patterns and legacy landbanking
- Existing infrastructure
- Community relations
- Lack of funding and incentives to revitalization / redevelopment

These identified obstacles are discussed in greater detail throughout this report.

Upon concluding their research, the Panel stressed that the Corridor's 3.5-mile Study Area is comprised of

three distinct “character areas” which require different redevelopment strategies to address the unique character and potential of each area.

- Corridor, the linear, multi-use Dixie Highway thoroughfare with its frontage parcels that are largely small-business and automobile-oriented uses
- Neighborhoods, the residential areas located along and behind the Dixie corridor frontages. These areas are predominantly home to small-scale single family and multifamily housing typologies
- Nodes, areas located on higher-traffic intersections with larger parcels that have the potential for higher density and intensity development

Within the context of these “character areas” the ULI TAP formulated recommendations to address identified obstacles to revitalization and redevelopment within the Study Area.

Foundational Recommendations:

- Embrace Dixie corridor’s status as a working commercial corridor, and the different conditions along it - a one-size-fits-all approach to redevelopment will not work
- Streamline the regulatory process and calibrate zoning to add flexibility to both design standards and uses
- Work to get funding and support for revitalization efforts through a funding and management tool and by leveraging grants
- Repair relationships and establish a better line of communication with the community, to include establishing a community advisory board and hiring a community development liaison
- Focus on the future!

In-Depth Recommendations:

- Create a new zoning district regulations for the Study Area that utilizes a form-based code and recognizes the different character areas and nodes
- Embrace the different conditions throughout the study area and pursuing different types of development in each unique character area:
 - lower density, smaller flex industrial, owner occupied businesses, and smaller retail for the corridor
 - larger, more traffic-intense commercial or mixed-use projects for the nodes
 - infill, low-density single family, townhome, and surface-parked multifamily development for the residential neighborhoods
- Encourage a broader range of commercial uses, such as: owner-occupied businesses, small-bay warehouses, retail and entertainment opportunities, food options, additional grocery and convenience store uses, and medical centers
- Protect residential neighborhoods adjacent to the corridor through improved traffic flows, scaled building heights, and standardized buffers between commercial properties
- Incentivize development and land assembly through expedited permitting and reviews, and incorporate incentives for developments that support the public realm
- Improve community relations by rebuilding trust, supporting, enngaging, and educating property owners; increasing collaboration; and celebrating the heritage and legacy of the community in and around the Study Area
- Focus infrastructure investment to support better development, mobility, and activity along Dixie Highway



Above: The Dixie Highway and NE 51st Street intersection as seen from above.

Location and Context

Strategically located between Broward and Palm Beach counties, the City of Deerfield Beach is a thriving coastal community contained within an area of 16 square miles with a population of roughly 86,000 people. Approximately 4,400 businesses are located in the City and it employs about 62,000 workers. This commercial and industrial activity is facilitated by the excellent locational advantage the City enjoys with direct access to Interstate 95, the Florida Turnpike, and the Sawgrass Expressway.

The City is largely built out, with only 3% of its land vacant. With population and business interests increasing, the City is looking to guide growth into redevelopment opportunities in its historic downtown and along the Dixie Highway corridor.

History

Deerfield Beach dates back to the 1870s, when early settlers, who were mostly farmers, began to settle along the Hillsboro River. In the 1890s, Henry Flagler's Florida East Coast Railroad was constructed, connecting all the way to Miami, and later to the Florida Keys, and business began to grow, with commercial activity clustering around the intersection of Hillsboro Boulevard and Dixie Highway. Deerfield Beach's economy remained primarily agricultural until the postwar years of the 1950s brought an influx of tourism to the region, which increased development and economic activity along the coastline and shifted focus away from Deerfield Beach's historic town center. The economy continued to diversify throughout the second half of the century, and now relies primarily on tourism, manufacturing, distribution, and office industries.

TAP Context

While other areas of the City have flourished in the later part of the 20th century and into the early part of the 21st century, the neighborhoods in and around the Dixie Highway Corridor have not shared in much of this economic success. In recent years, the City has

endeavored to address the lack of redevelopment in this area but has so far been unsuccessful in stimulating the desired amount of development interest.

To aid in its efforts, the City decided to engage the Urban Land Institute Southeast Florida / Caribbean District Council to conduct a Technical Assistance Panel (ULI TAP) to:

- Identify factors that are discouraging revitalization/redevelopment of the Study Area
- Recommend measures to overcome obstacles to revitalization/redevelopment
- Identify a viable mix of uses that would encourage new capital investment and public/ private partnerships
- Recommend techniques to address concerns about neighborhood compatibility of new development along the corridor with the surrounding established neighborhoods
- Recommend how and where community spaces can be improved or created to enhance the Study Area and encourage revitalization/redevelopment.

Study Area

The panel was convened to look at Deerfield Beach's Central City Area, specifically the Dixie Highway Corridor from the City's northern line to Sample Road, and the Alwood Homes Neighborhood.

A major north/south transit connector, the Dixie Highway Corridor is a high-traffic, working commercial corridor dominated by light industrial uses, churches, and vacant lots interspersed with residential uses. The Corridor currently suffers from numerous empty storefronts and vacant lots, low traffic in its retail and commercial offerings and poor pedestrian connectivity. At many locations, this commercial corridor is directly adjacent to existing low density residential neighborhoods. However, the area has a high value frontage and strong potential for multimodal mobility.

The Corridor is currently comprised of multiple zoning categories. The west side of Dixie Highway, beginning at Eller Street to just south of Hillsboro Boulevard is zoned B-1 and B-2; south of this point to SW 15th Street is zoned Dixie Business Residential (DBR). From SW 15th Street to Sample Road, the City has retained an antiquated County B-3 zoning designation.



Top: The ULI TAP Study Area, outlined in teal. Bottom: An aerial view shows light industrial uses along the Dixie Highway corridor, corridor-adjacent neighborhood, and adjacent Florida East Coast Railway lines.

Study Area Observations

During the course of the TAP, the panel toured the Study Area and held a public forum to allow community members and other stakeholders an opportunity to address the items being evaluated by the panel. The City staff provided the panel with background material on the Study Area, including other studies and analyses which had been performed by others over the years.

In their review, the panel observed that the 3.5-mile-long Study Area includes several distinct “character areas” that differ substantially and require a tailored approach where each has its own set of policies and priorities for redevelopment.

These areas are classified as:

- Corridor, a linear, multi-use mobility thoroughfare with a range of uses along automobile-oriented frontages
- Neighborhoods, residential areas that would require a community-driven approach to redevelopment that considers each neighborhood’s specific character and protects its residents from gentrification or displacement
- Nodes, areas with a potential for development of higher density and intensity of uses, employment centers, business opportunities and multifamily residential on higher traffic intersections with larger parcels.

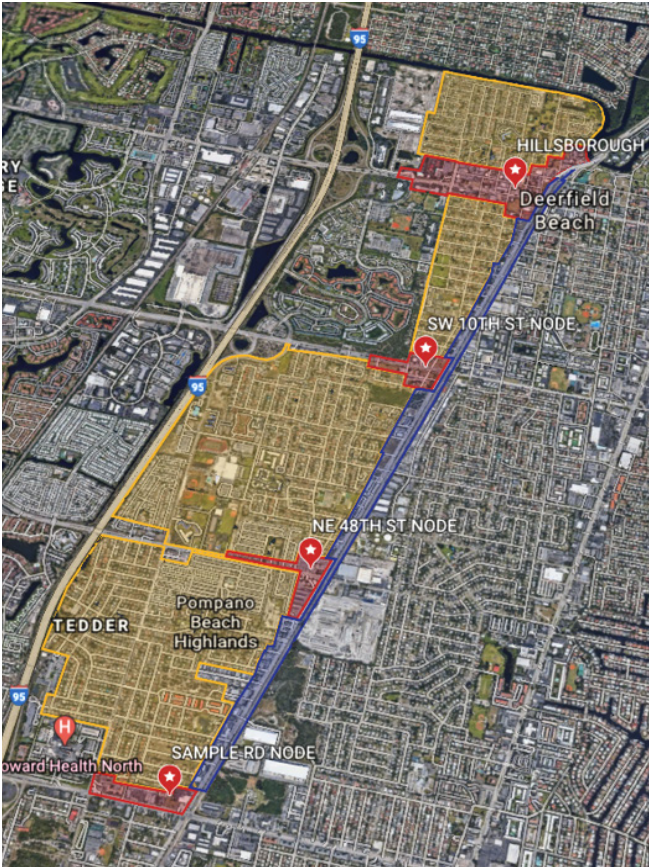
Corridor

The Corridor includes both Dixie Highway and the strip parcels along its western frontage and is characterized by shallow parcels, automobile-oriented design, vacant lots, and poor pedestrian and multimodal infrastructure. The Corridor is bordered on its eastern side by a pedestrian pathway and the Florida East Coast Rail lines, which run adjacent to the highway throughout the Study Area and create a one-sided condition along the corridor that cuts off access and visuals to the properties located on the eastern side of the rail line.

Corridor-Adjacent Neighborhoods

There are four residential neighborhoods adjacent to the corridor, and each must recognize and address its adjacency to the corridor and other areas. These predominantly low-density neighborhoods are largely typified by single-family homes, and small and vacant lots. The neighborhoods include:

- College Park/Alwood Homes
- Carver Heights
- Park Ridge
- Hillsboro Beach Highlands/Tallman Pines



Above: The unique character areas in and around the Study Area are shown: “Corridor” in blue, “Nodes” in red, and “Neighborhoods” in yellow.

For purposes of this study, the panel was asked to specifically examine the Alwood Homes neighborhood as part of its approach in formulating recommendations. The Alwood Homes residential neighborhood, bordering the Hillsboro Canal at the City's northern edge, is a high poverty area, with over 30 percent of families reporting that they live below the poverty line.

With many vacant and oddly shaped lots, and poor-quality affordable housing stock, the area has largely failed to attract redevelopment interest. However, that trend may be changing as recently a new six-story market-rate residential project and parking structure was approved on a parcel adjacent to the Hillsboro Canal. This project is expected to begin development shortly.

Nodes

With larger parcels, higher traffic, and better vehicular access, the corridor's nodes, located at major intersections, lend themselves to larger-scale or mixed-use development projects. These nodes include:

- Dixie Highway & Hillsborough Boulevard
- Dixie Highway & SW 10th Street
- Dixie Highway & NE 48th Street
- Dixie Highway & Sample Road

Of the four nodes within the Study Area, panelists observed that the Hillsboro Node has the highest potential for transformative development within the corridor, as one of the city's primary intersections, with high traffic counts and visibility. The node, which is currently seeing a revitalization of its retail offerings, presents the greatest opportunity for large retail and corporate uses, likely to be corporate headquarters or medical space.



Top: Nodes along the Dixie Highway corridor are positioned for larger-scale, more intensive development. Bottom: City-owned parks and the Alwood Homes neighborhood present ripe opportunities for development.

Key Strengths and Underutilized Study Area Assets

The panel identified several key strengths and underutilized or underappreciated assets in the Study Area:

- Vacant properties, which provide redevelopment potential
- Adjacency to commercial nodes (context sensitive adjacencies)
- Adjacency to a high-visibility corridor (Dixie)
- Civic assets: City-owned lands on the waterfront
- Proximity to North Broward Hospital, which provides jobs and healthcare
- Local public schools, which support a family-oriented market

Economic and Market Considerations

There are several key economic challenges facing the Study Area that hinder redevelopment. Compared to the City of Deerfield Beach and Broward County, the area's income levels are moderately low, which adversely affects property values, leasing rates, and homeownership rates. In addition, the majority of workers in and around the Study Area live outside of its bounds, while a majority of residents within the Study Area work outside of it. Between higher unemployment levels, lackluster property and leasing rates leaving little incentive for new construction, and low home ownership, economic development has so far failed to keep pace with the rest of the City.

The panel observed that there is both an opportunity to capture pent-up resident base (those workers who currently travel into the area for work) and utilize development as an impetus for job creation by encouraging more local businesses and larger employers into the Study Area.



Above: Broward Health North is a 409-bed hospital located on Sample Road in Deerfield Beach that employs many Broward residents.



Obstacles to Redevelopment

In their review of the study area, the Panel identified numerous obstacles to development. These barriers to revitalization and redevelopment in the Study Area fall into eight overarching categories:

- Regulatory obstacles
- Site constraints
- Lack of vision & consensus
- Need for infrastructure improvements
- Ownership patterns & legacy land banking
- Poor community relations
- Lack of development incentive
- Lack of funding



Above: A strip-style development on Dixie Highway supports a variety of local small business.

Obstacles to Redevelopment

Regulatory Obstacles

The Study Area is comprised of a variety of zoning districts that over-restrict development, do not allow for an appropriate mix of uses, and fail to take into account the identified “character areas.”

Site Constraints

Site constraints such as limited access along Dixie Highway, narrow commercial lots adjacent to existing residential uses, small residential lots, and a series of FDOT drainage retention areas at key intersections provide limitations to development throughout the Study Area.

Lack of Vision and Consensus

The community’s lack of consensus regarding its vision for the future of the corridor and its relationship to surrounding neighborhoods has contributed to the area’s stagnation.

Ownership Patterns and Legacy Land Banking

The quantity of unique parcel owners and legacy land banking throughout the study area has traditionally hampered development, keeping many parcels undeveloped or underutilized.

Need for Infrastructure Improvements

Current infrastructure along the corridor suffers from a lack of pedestrian connectivity, and the need for truck access, multi-modal improvements, and visual and character improvements.

Strained Community Relations

The status of community-City relations after years of poor communication and failed development efforts has led to an overall environment of mistrust, which hampers efforts to revitalize.

Lack of Incentives to Revitalize / Redevelop

Though the Study Area has grown increasingly attractive to development interests in the past few years, it is currently suffering from a lack of impetus - incentives to kickstart its revitalization.

Lack of Funding

In addition to lack of incentives for development, the Study Area also lacks funds to support community-led efforts to engage in redevelopment and revitalization processes.



Recommendations

The following recommendations were formulated to directly address each of the obstacles outlined above. They are all equally important and interrelated and together provide a strategy to achieve the redevelopment and revitalization goals of the City.

Recommendations to Address Obstacles Related to Regulatory Framework

The current zoning and land development regulations for the Study Area present a major obstacle to redevelopment and revitalization. The existing zoning regulations appear too restrictive in their requirements, placing severe limitations on permitted uses, which stifles development and redevelopment efforts and keeps out businesses that should be encouraged along the corridor. In addition, residents and landowners report that the confusing and burdensome entitlement process further discourages redevelopment.

Create a new Study Area zoning district

Deerfield Beach should create a new zoning district for the entire Study Area which recognizes the individual “character areas” identified previously in this report and creates a form-based code that sets design standards and regulations for the Corridor, Neighborhoods, and Nodes.

In the Corridor area, particular attention should be given to reducing restrictions and allowing and supporting a wider variety of non-residential uses and providing design guidelines and standards which recognize the physical constraints of many development parcels along the corridor.

In reducing restrictions on the Corridor, the City should also take care to institute gentrification and displacement mitigation efforts so that the current residents do not feel threatened by development progress along the corridor. The incorporation of neighborhood area design guidelines and standards and appropriate and uniform buffer requirements,

together with regulations encouraging more density and intensity at nodes, will provide such protections and help instill community confidence in the rezoning effort.

The zoning overlay for the corridor should be consistent throughout the different designations in order to create a cohesive frontage. This overlay should consider a reduction of the front setback to require future buildings to be closer to the right-of-way, providing additional space for parking in the back.

In addition, efforts should be made to build in incentives and support for development. The entitlement process should be shifted to an administrative approvals process in order to add predictability and expedited permitting opportunities. The form-based code should incorporate regulatory incentives, such as reduced parking requirements, reduced setbacks, increased density, increased height, tied to development proposals that encourage parcel assembly, shared parking, and increased buffering from residential uses and the like.

Re-designate the Corridor area and Nodes from “Commercial” to Broward County’s Newly-enacted “Commerce” designation

The City’s “Commercial” land use plan designation currently governing the Dixie Highway Corridor is

inconsistent with the panel’s recommended mix of uses for the corridor. In addition, portions of the corridor and many of the nodes may be appropriate for mixed use development, which is possible but cumbersome and difficult to develop under the current commercial land use category.

Following the lead of Broward County, which recently added residential use to the County “Commerce” category to its land use plan, the City should adopt the County’s “Commerce” category and re-designate the corridor and the nodes from its current “Commercial” category to this Broward County “Commerce” category. In this way, the new form-based code for the corridor and nodes will not be burdened by the restrictions on mixed use development under the current “Commercial” land use category.

Evaluate whether the Broward County Medium Density Residential Designation for the Neighborhood is appropriate

In addition, and as part of the neighborhood studies necessary to formulating the form-based code for the neighborhood area, consideration should be given to whether the residential land use categories currently in place in these neighborhoods support the revitalization and redevelopment envisioned by this strategy.



Above: A neighborhood adjacent to the Dixie Highway Corridor is seen in this aerial image looking west.

Recommendations to Address Site Constraints Along the Corridor

Many of the parcels located along the Corridor are small and shallow with limited vehicular access. These parcels are often further constrained on the west by existing low-density residential uses and on the east by FDOT’s storm-water retention areas.

The limited size and depth of these properties makes it extremely difficult to provide standard buffering to protect residential uses behind while leaving enough land area to be suitable for the development of the Corridor’s current and recommended uses. These obstacles, however, can be addressed in tandem with the zoning and land use regulatory changes by:

- Encouraging assemblage of smaller parcels
- Reducing minimum parking standards
- Encouraging more efficient development fronting Dixie Highway
- Targeting lower-density development along the Dixie Highway Corridor, specifically: smaller flex industrial, owner-occupied businesses, small retail, and corporate headquarter uses
- Pursuing larger more traffic-intense commercial or mixed-use projects that require full access, larger parcels, and visibility for the nodes:
- Creating a standardized, substantial buffer treatment to protect residential neighborhoods, and allowing reduced buffers and shallower transitions on smaller, limited parcels

Encourage Property Assemblages

Particularly among the smaller parcels fronting Dixie Highway, assemblage should be encouraged to maximize development potential and reduce curb cuts to access parking. In some cases where the blocks are shallow and there is a residential street behind, it is recommended that rear abutting lots be rezoned to provide additional depth to commercial uses.



Examples of good site developments and uses along the Dixie Highway corridor that should be encouraged for future projects include:

- Small freestanding flex business facilities located at 5145-5147 North Dixie Highway, seen from different angles in top two images
- Deerfield Beach Housing Authority, above

Protect Residential Neighborhoods

It is imperative that the residential neighborhoods along the corridor be better protected from the commercial uses along Dixie Highway and the traffic and parking issues associated with these uses. Development should scale down towards residential uses, respecting the scale of the neighborhood.

While non-motorized (especially pedestrian) access is encouraged between neighborhoods and the Dixie Highway-fronting parcels, vehicular access from the rear should be minimized or prohibited to prevent traffic intrusion into the neighborhood and keep vehicular speeds and flows at an appropriate level for neighborhoods.

A residential parking program should be established and enforced to discourage commercial patrons from parking in the neighborhoods. In addition, parking sharing programs between compatible uses such as religious and office uses should be encouraged as part of a parking in lieu program. This will reduce the parking need in these shallow parcels, and could potentially provide a revenue stream for the community's religious centers and reduce overflow parking in residential neighborhoods. Centralized garages could also be considered as private-public developments to lighten the burden for surface lots within the already shallow and scarce commercial land along the corridor.

Incentives for integrating neighborhood employment and local businesses along the corridor should be pursued to benefit both the commercial development as well as the community. This can be encouraged through zoning incentives such as additional intensity entitlements, reduction in impact and permit fees, and further parking reductions (which would be possible given the potential for active mobility within walking distance, with a work-live condition between the neighborhoods and commercial properties). Certificates of use should be conditional on meeting the necessary criteria.

Capitalize on Existing Residential Sites to Build Functional Housing

The City should take advantage of existing vacant and underused land parcels to continue enhancing residential neighborhoods adjacent to the corridor. Infill development that targets low density single family and townhome lots while allowing accessory dwelling units, low-scale apartment buildings, and stand-alone multifamily buildings with centralized parking solutions guarantees that residential neighborhoods remain affordable and responsive to the community's needs while encouraging accessible home ownership. This type of residential development allows the community to lift its income, employment, and ownership levels and begin building stronger generational wealth.

Recommended uses in the Study Area vary by character type:

- The Corridor should include smaller flex industrial, owner-occupied businesses, and small-scale retail such as grocery and convenience stores
- The Nodes should target larger, more traffic-intense commercial projects, such as corporate headquarters, medical offices, and mixed-use developments
- The Neighborhoods should pursue low-density infill development: single-family and townhome projects, and standalone, surface-parked multifamily where appropriate

Recommendations to Improve Existing Infrastructure to Make the Corridor More User-Friendly

Existing infrastructure along the Dixie Highway Corridor presents a major challenge to revitalization. The corridor is characterized by poor accommodations for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders, limited parking availability that results in spillover into residential neighborhoods, and a spate of Florida Department of Transportation retention ponds lining Dixie Highway which limit the development potential of key redevelopment parcels. The City must focus on improving and enhancing existing infrastructure in order to encourage revitalization along the corridor.

Several solutions are recommended to improve upon the current infrastructure limitations, including roadway improvements, parking and circulation studies to determine the community's actual needs, and public space activation to better connect the community to the area's natural and built environment.

Activate Public Space and Enhance Multimodal Transit Connections

Enhancing infrastructure and the built environment has proven to have enormous economic and quality of life benefits for communities all over the world. Activating the public space would create a sense of place, increase property values, and improve the overall health and equity stake of residents within the Study Area. Some solutions include improving street frontages and enhancing transportation options. This includes widening sidewalks and adding landscaped buffers between roadways and sidewalks, and adding bike lanes to better accommodate pedestrians and cyclists.

Upgrading multimodal connections in and around the corridor by enhancing transit stops with canopy shading and other amenities, adding pedestrian crosswalks near transit stops, creating buffered bike lanes, and adding pedestrian scale lighting and shade trees and structures along the east and west sides

of the Dixie Highway corridor will go a long way in helping cyclists and pedestrians feel comfortable in the corridor. Similarly, building a shared use path on the east side of Dixie Highway would create a safe, convenient, and dynamic usage of the main thoroughfare.

Enhancing the experience of multiple modes of transit can support increased density and accomplish the City's broader development goals. To carry out these transportation management strategies, the City must put into place key measures that promote transit ridership and usage of pedestrian and bike enhancements. These include creating individualized marketing campaigns that use incentives to increase transit ridership and drive visitors to surrounding infrastructure investments; and installing bike share stations near transit stops along with short- and long-term secure bike parking near transit stops.

Finally, the Florida Department of Transportation currently owns a set of drainage lots that are hampering redevelopment opportunities and the City's ability to make infrastructure improvements. The City should work with FDOT to convey these parcels and consolidate the drainage basins in order to reduce the number and extent of retention areas and free up land for development and public use.



ALTA PLANNING + DESIGN

Above: An example of enhanced medians and pedestrian crosswalks and signaling from the 78th Street Vision Zero Corridor.



The City should re-engage with FDOT to consolidate and convey the retention basins located along Dixie Highway in order to free up land for development and public use.



THE CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

Top: An FDOT retention basin located on Dixie Highway in Deerfield Beach. Bottom: The Flagler Greenway, a shaded bicycle trail which opened in 2012, runs along the Florida East Coast Railway corridor on Flagler Drive.

Address Actual and Perceived Parking and Circulation Issues Through Traffic and Circulation Studies

Residents and other stakeholders report that the corridor is plagued with inadequate circulation and a need for parking. Concerns were also expressed about commercial traffic cutting through residential neighborhoods. To evaluate these perceived issues and formulate strategies to address them, the City should undertake a neighborhood survey to get an accurate gauge of the public's perception and current traffic issues.

If significant community concerns exist, the City should pursue a high-level traffic circulation study to assess existing traffic circulation issues, and analyze truck access and neighborhood cut-through traffic. The study should take a high-level look at current conditions, relying on developers to conduct more in-depth traffic analyses in the future to demonstrate the impacts of specific proposed projects. Once a survey has been conducted, a number of potential solutions can be evaluated to streamline and improve traffic circulation in the study area such as traffic circles and speed bumps. These have worked well in similar, nearby areas.

In addition to a circulation study, a neighborhood mobility study could address the ongoing issue of disruptive commercial cut-throughs in residential areas. The study would identify the key entry and exit points for the neighborhood while offering solutions to cut back on traffic, such as planning for commercial uses by utilizing signalized intersections for truck access, implementing truck aprons at other locations, and limiting vehicular access from the Corridor into the neighborhoods.

Finally, as discussed in the Regulatory Recommendations above, shared parking arrangements and reduced parking requirements can be implemented through new zoning district regulations, but first the City and the community need to fully understand the area's parking needs and available assets.

Recommendations to Address Ownership Patterns and Encourage Land Owners to Participate in the Development Process

Historically, development and redevelopment in the Study Area has been hindered by a reticence on the part of local landowners to redevelop their "legacy properties." This unwillingness has evolved in part from a lack of trust in the City and a perceived lack of its commitment to revitalizing the community.

These perceptions have left many owners that have owned their properties for generations more willing to leave their lands undeveloped rather than risk jeopardizing their family's inheritance through engaging in a redevelopment effort that they don't have confidence in. These residents own a significant portion of the vacant land in the Study Area, so achieving meaningful revitalization and redevelopment is reliant upon them bringing their lands back into active use.

Through the efforts of this TAP, the City is engaged in the area's revitalization with an understanding that the City and stakeholders need to solidify this trust and further explore joint development efforts.



Above: An undeveloped property on the Dixie Highway corridor is listed for sale

What Do We Mean by Legacy Owners and Legacy Properties?

Legacy properties are real estate assets that have been held, managed, or passed down within a family over time, often across multiple generations. These properties can have high emotional and historical value for their owners, as they may inherently grow to become symbolic representations of the family's history, growth, and dreams, carrying historical and cultural significance through multiple generations.

For the owners or active managers of these properties, who we refer to in this report as legacy owners, making decisions and managing these properties may carry a heavy emotional context that includes not only the property's historical importance to the family, but also its potential legacy for the future and consecutive generations.

Help the Community Establish its Identity and Reach Consensus on a Shared Vision for the Study Area's Future

Local property owners also have concerns that redevelopment will displace local residents and create gentrification. Developing and reaching consensus on a shared vision that takes all of the community's concerns into account is crucial to building trust among community members, owners, and stakeholders regarding the area's redevelopment process, which is necessary to getting landowners committed to joining the development efforts. An agreed-upon vision will inform a plan and direct efforts to achieve that desired vision and create community excitement and impetus to kickstart redevelopment.

Create New Communication Strategies Between the City and the Community

Since a significant portion of the land along the Corridor is owned by legacy owners, the participation and cooperation of these owners is necessary if the City hopes to achieve meaningful revitalization of the Study Area. The City must focus on building a better relationship with these landowners and being deliberate about including them in development plans and decisions, since it is reliant upon them to either sell their properties or engage in the development process themselves.

Creating and executing a robust communications and engagement strategy that informs stakeholders of plans and opportunities to weigh in is key to engaging these owners and the greater community. In order to successfully execute an engagement strategy that caters to specific groups of residents, the City should partner with local community 'champions,' people embedded within each distinct group who can disseminate information, share community thoughts and ideas with the City, and help guide the City in their outreach strategies.



Meaningful and productive engagement, communication, and collaboration between resident stakeholders and city leaders is key to kickstarting successful redevelopment.

Educate Local Landowners on the Real Estate Industry and the Development Process

Additionally, the City should work to develop educational opportunities that empower landowners with insights into the development process so that they can become active participants. Some opportunities might include:

- hosting small business and real estate investment seminars and workshops
- creating landowner and developer matchmaking events that would require the City to vet developers and ensure their vision falls in line with the best interests of the community;
- running site-specific design competitions for targeted sites that would allow the community to look at various ideas and offer tangible feedback and guidance about what can be successful in a particular space. These competitions would be especially poignant for the creation of a community-focused development, such as a recreational amenity or community grocery store.

Offer Incentives to Develop or Assemble Property

Meaningful revitalization and redevelopment will require legacy land owners to bring their lands back into play. Without their participation - either by selling their land or developing it themselves, significant portions of the

Study Area will continue to stagnate. As discussed above, incorporating regulatory incentives in the applicable zoning and pursuing other development regulations which encourage land assemblage and development of larger parcels is key to providing a significant enough push to kickstart this process.

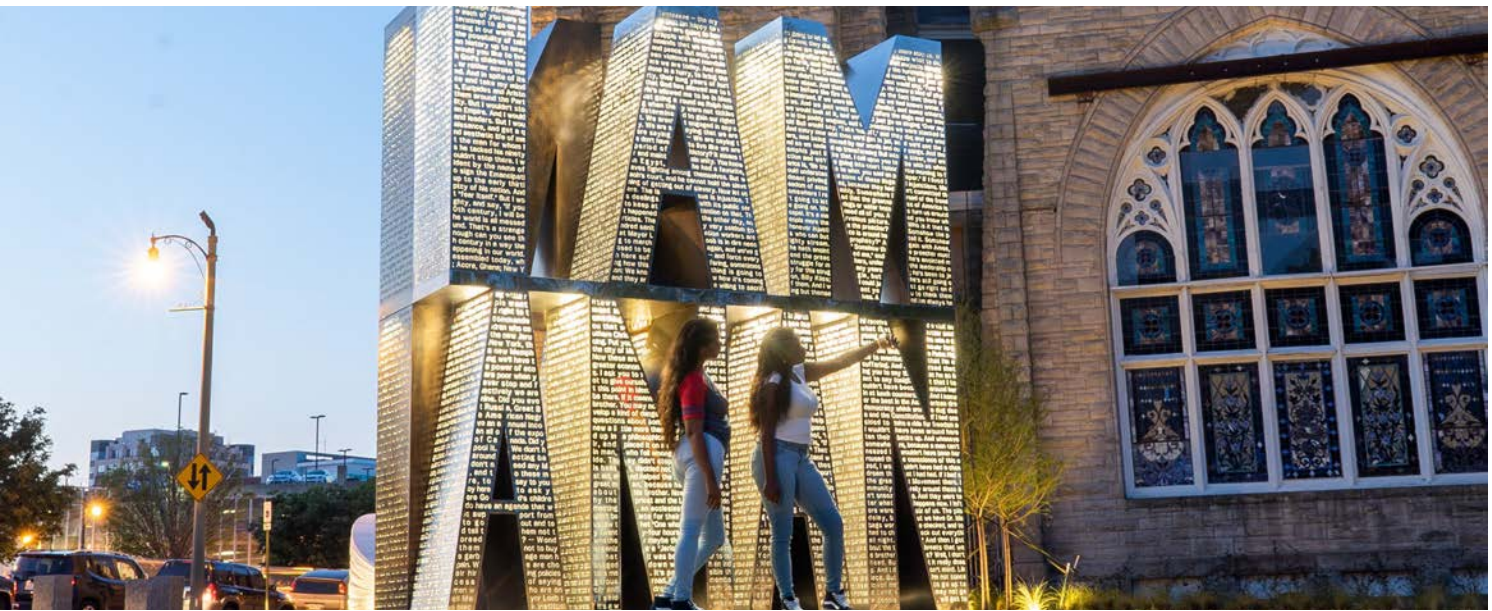
Financial incentives, such as reduced processing fees and expedited permitting will help motivate landowners and developers to undertake new development projects in the Study Area. Incentives can go a long way in ensuring their participation while additionally motivating developers to work closely with the community's stakeholders.

Recommendations to Strengthen Relations Between the City and the Community

Unfortunately, the City of Deerfield Beach has a fraught relationship with many of the residents and community stakeholders in the Study Area. The community reports that a series of missed opportunities to truly engage residents with information related to enhancing their community through development have occurred and repeated attempts to formulate a common vision for the Study Area have faltered. Healing the relationship between the community and its leaders requires honoring the community's needs, supporting and educating property owners as they work towards improving their

Property Assemblage

Many parcels located in the "Corridor" portions of the Study Area are too small and have too limited access to support successful redevelopment. It is highly recommended that a particular focus be made on assembling smaller properties in order to unlock development potential and provide more options for the Study Area's revitalization and redevelopment. By assembling, owners of small lots that in many cases may be deemed undevelopable can increase the likelihood of development interest from both retail and commercial users. As some stand-alone parcels along the Corridor are suitable for development, a more defined study could be undertaken to look at the needs for assemblage along each section of the Corridor.



THE CITY OF MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

The Memphis Heritage Trail took a multifaceted approach to economic development, honoring cultural heritage, building community, and engaging the community in development. The project also worked to reimagine, reuse, and repurpose once-forgotten public spaces.

properties and pursuing development, and finding an avenue through which city officials can engage residents in a more congenial manner.

These overarching goals can be accomplished by engaging the community in the planning and development process, creating vehicles for increased communications between the City and residents, and engaging the community at every level with economic development opportunities.

Add a Dedicated Staff Person at City Hall to Coordinate and Facilitate Development with Property and Business Owners

If the City is unable to create a CRA for the Study Area, it should add a dedicated staff member to the employee roster at City Hall to coordinate and facilitate development projects with property owners, businesses, and local residents. This staff member could also manage community outreach, developer/landowner forums, and educational programming.

Establish a Community Advisory Board to Work With the City on Development Approvals and Infrastructure Planning

In addition to hiring a key staff member as its community liaison, the City should establish a Community Advisory Board to give members of the community more agency in presiding over the community's development. The Community Advisory Board would offer residents the opportunity to speak directly with other members of their community and give them easier, more straightforward access to decision makers and the development process.

Recognize and Celebrate the Heritage of the Community in and around the Study Area

The Study Area has decades of history and local culture to share with the broader community, and by doing so can both create and celebrate its own identity and hopefully create a shared vision for the Study Area's future. The City could start this cultural awakening and prompt the formulation of a shared vision by prioritizing plans that celebrate

local heritage and encourage a broader swath of the community to have a stake in its future. For example, utilizing city-owned land in and around the Study Area to create an attraction that recognizes and celebrates its local history could be one approach to unite the community under a city-run project.

Similarly, the City should work toward creating events that bring the community together with heritage-style experiences that celebrate the neighborhood character. This puts an emphasis on the community's legacy, which will provide value and recognition for long-time landowners and encourage more residents to build a path toward a common vision for their collective future.

Recommendations to Resolve Funding Issues Through Incentives and Creative Funding Solutions

New Angles on a Community Redevelopment Agency

Although traditional Community Redevelopment Agencies (CRA) have been seen as the panacea for redevelopment of blighted areas such as the Study Area, establishment of a traditional CRA in Deerfield Beach at this time may not be possible. In the absence of a traditional CRA, the City should explore the creation of a City-only funded CRA or work with Broward County to create a CRA that does not rely upon revenue from all other taxing districts, but rather the County and the City identify other resources to fund the needs of the Study Area.

In addition, economic development can be spurred through the creation of specific resources designed to build economic opportunities within the Study Area that respond directly to the community's needs. Attracting non-traditional resources such as incubator spaces into the Corridor can transform the region into an educational, cultural and entertainment hub that bolsters entrepreneurship and innovation in the region.



Above: Fort Lauderdale's redesigned Northeast 13th Street, which leveraged funds through the City's new CRA model.

Central City CRA

The City of Fort Lauderdale's Central City CRA is a new model of a CRA-like funding system that facilitates infrastructure improvements, rehabilitation of existing properties, and funding for new development.

The CRA is a 344-acre community redevelopment area established that is generally bounded by NE 13th Street and NE 16th Street on the North, Sunrise Boulevard on the south, Power line Road and I-95 on the west and the Florida East Coast railway on the east. It is the youngest of the City's three CRAs.

Created in 2012, the CRA and is funded through a Redevelopment Trust Fund for the area, with the CRA carving taxes out of the designated area only, with the City of Fort Lauderdale levying ad valorem taxes within the redevelopment area for a period of 30 years.

The CRA compliments these funds with other sources of funding, including a \$2 million grant from Broward County that has already been leveraged to rebuild the district's blighted Northeast 13th Street. The project, which reimagined the corridor as an arts district, enabled significant infrastructure improvements and has already bolstered local businesses and economic growth. See more in Appendix A on page 34.

An incubator space can act as a hub through which residents can develop knowledge around property development, build vital professional skills, and incubate new commercial endeavors, thus leading to long-term improvements in local productivity and helping to activate the Dixie Highway corridor.

Federal Programs That Can Provide Alternative Financing and Funding:

HUD's Choice Neighborhoods Program

Choice Neighborhoods is the signature place-based program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This competitive grant program is designed to help address struggling neighborhoods with distressed HUD-assisted housing through a comprehensive, holistic, and focused approach to neighborhood transformation. Choice Neighborhoods focuses on replacing distressed public and assisted housing through high-quality, well-managed mixed income housing; improving educational outcomes and intergenerational mobility for youth through specific services designed for this purpose; and creating the conditions necessary for public and private reinvestment in distressed neighborhoods by improving amenities to make the community more desirable. If awarded a Choice Neighborhood grant, the City would work with public and private partners to leverage the resources available to them to make the Corridor a more desirable location for development.

Within the Choice Neighborhoods program, the Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant would likely be the most appropriate initial source for the City. This grant assists communities in developing and building support for a successful neighborhood "Transformation Plan."

The City's stakeholders, including its public housing authority, school district, police, business owners, non-profit organizations, landowners and private developers come together to strategize on and implement this plan. The grant involves a two-year planning process, with a maximum grant award for planning of \$350,000.

Action Grant

The City may additionally apply for an accompanying Action Grant, which includes funding for developing a successful neighborhood Transformation Plan and additional funding for "Action Activities." The grant term for this is 3.5 years and the maximum grant award is \$1.3 million (\$350,000 for planning purposes and \$950,000 for action), with "action activities" including reclaiming vacant property; beautification, placemaking, and community arts projects; owner-occupied home or business façade improvement programs; neighborhood broadband/wi-fi infrastructure; and gap financing for economic development projects.

Economic Development Assistance Grant Programs

Economic Development Assistance Grants are designed to empower communities toward a better future. Within these programs, the Public Works program presents a viable option for the City. The program empowers distressed communities to expand and upgrade their physical infrastructure to attract new industry, encourage business expansion, diversify local economies, and generate or retain long-term private sector jobs and investments. The types of projects generally funded by Public Works grants include technology-based facilities that utilize distance learning networks, smart rooms, and smart buildings; multitenant manufacturing and other facilities; business and industrial parks with fiber optic cable; telecommunications and development facilities; water and sewer systems improvements; industrial parks; business incubator facilities; and skills-training facilities.

Economic Adjustment Assistance Program

The City may additionally wish to pursue grants available through the Economic Adjustment Assistance program, which assists local interests in designing and implementing strategies to adjust or bring about change to an economy. The program focuses on areas that have experienced or are under threat of serious structural damage to their underlying economic

base. Through this program, the EDA administers its Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Program, which supplies small businesses and entrepreneurs with the gap financing needed to start or expand businesses. This program can provide implementation grants to support infrastructure improvements (including site acquisition, site preparation, construction, rehabilitation and equipping of facilities) that would be beneficial for the City.

HUD’s Community Development Block Grants

HUD has additional programs that the City can leverage to raise blighted areas within the Corridor out of despair. The City should leverage Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for facade improvements and economic development stimulant activities through the Section 108 Loan program. Local communities within the Corridor can use Section 108 guaranteed loans to either finance specific projects or to launch loan funds to finance multiple projects over several years. Eligible activities that can be financed through this program include property acquisitions, rehabilitation of publicly owned property; construction, reconstruction, or installation of public

facilities (including street, sidewalk, and other site improvements); related relocation, clearance, and site improvements; loans to for-profit businesses for economic development purposes; payment of interest on the guaranteed loan and issuance costs of public offerings; debt service reserves; finance fees; and public works and site improvements.

Create a Community Development Corporation or Similar Entity

The City may also wish to explore creation of a Community Development Corporation (CDC) or partnering with a local CDC with aligned redevelopment interests. Community Development Corporations are not-for-profit organizations incorporated to provide programs, offer services and engage in other activities that promote and support community development. Through the CDC, the City can apply for grants and complete other fundraising activities that directly support redevelopment while creating programs that bolster local impact.

CITY OF MIAMI PARKS & RECREATION



Above: Groundbreaking at the City of Miami’s Gibson Park Phase II Redevelopment project. Grants and funding mechanisms can support redevelopment efforts like these in Deerfield Beach.



Conclusion

The Deerfield Beach Dixie Corridor and Central City Study Area have great potential for revitalization and redevelopment. Going forward, the City and residents of the Study Area need to embrace Dixie Highway as a working corridor rather than a retail or residential destination and understand that with its unique character areas, a one-size-fits-all approach to promoting the area's redevelopment will not work.

This report outlines a set of recommendations to help the City of Deerfield Beach be more strategic in its redevelopment approach to the Dixie Corridor and Central City Study Area. The key fundamentals needed to kickstart and ensure the success of this area's redevelopment are:

1. Helping the community establish its identity and an agreed-upon vision for the Study Area's future
2. Creating a new zoning district for the Study Area that increases flexibility of uses, introduces a form-based design program, and streamlines the development permitting process, which should be formulated with input from all stakeholders so that landowners, developers, and residents alike understand how the process works
3. Encouraging and supporting local landowners to make property improvements, assemble parcels, and engage in the development process through funding, education, and dedicated staff support
4. Working with Broward County to establish a funding and management tool to support revitalization throughout the community
5. Establishing a better line of communication with the community regarding development, to include establishing a community advisory board and hiring a staff person who is dedicated to supporting the Study Area's redevelopment and revitalization
6. Incentivizing, encouraging, and supporting the reactivation of vacant lands sooner rather than later through financial, regulatory, and community mechanisms
7. Utilizing established federal programs to provide financing and funding for infrastructure improvements and new development
8. Focusing on the future!

Glossary of Terms

Buffer Treatment

Any landscaping or structural elements designed to separate or provide transition between different types of land uses, such as between sidewalks and roadways.

Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)

A taxing district and development-focused agency established by a local government to promote redevelopment activities in a designated area.

Corridor

The linear Dixie Highway thoroughfare and its bordering properties, which form an area that is visually defined by its architecture, land use, and streetscape.

Corridor-Adjacent Neighborhoods

The residential areas located along or just behind the parcels fronting Dixie Highway.

Form-Based Code (FBC)

A zoning approach that fosters a high-quality public realm by controlling the physical form of buildings and their relationship to the streetscape and adjacent uses first, placing a lesser focus on land use types than traditional zoning.

Infill Development

The process of focusing development on vacant or under-used parcels within existing urban areas that are already largely developed.

Legacy Properties

Real estate assets that are passed down within a family that can carry high historical and emotional value.

Minimum Parking Standards

Minimum parking standards require new buildings to include a fixed number of parking spaces in their development based on the assumed amount of parking needs that the building will generate.

Nodes

The areas of increased activity and interaction where transportation routes congregate, generally at higher-traffic intersections.

Property Assemblage

When two or more parcels of land are combined to be sold as one joint parcel. Typically, these combined parcels attract more interest and higher prices than when the smaller parcels are sold separately.

Zoning

The laws or regulations that control the development of land and dictate the kinds of uses that can and cannot be used in certain areas.

Broward County Land Use Designations

Broward County “Commerce” Category

The Broward County Land Use Plan designates a “Commerce” category of land use for areas that are predominantly connected with the sale, rental and distribution of products, or performance of services.

In March 2020, Commissioners approved amendment PCT 20-4 to permit multi-family residential uses in designated “Commerce” or “Activity Center” parcels as part of an effort to increase affordable housing in Broward County.

The newly-adopted amendment states that residential density bonuses may be allocated in these parcels to facilitate the development of affordable housing, defined as:

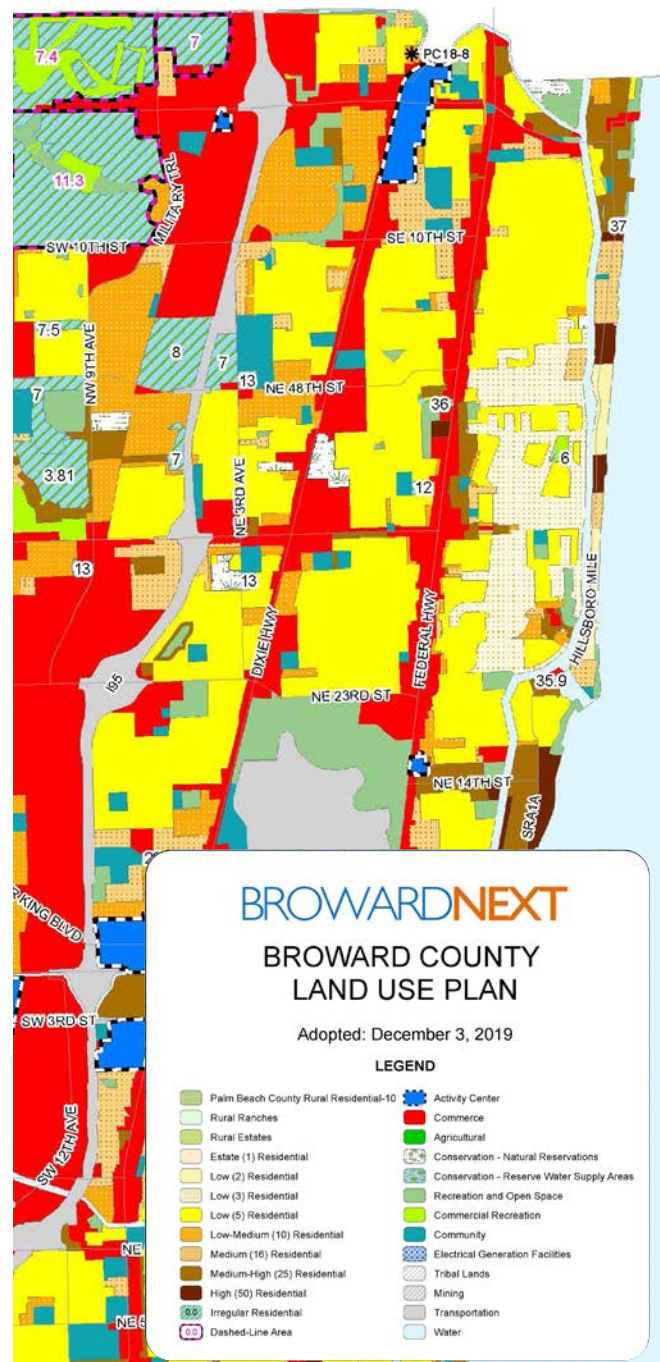
- Moderate income, those with a total household income equal to or less than 120% of the area median income (AMI)
- Low income, those with a total household income equal to or less than 80% AMI
- Very low income, those with a total household income equal to or less than 50% AMI

Projects in Commerce areas seeking to incorporate residential uses may receive:

- Six bonus units for every moderate income unit included in the project
- Nine bonus units for every low income unit
- Nineteen bonus units for every low-income unit

Broward County “Medium Residential” Category

The Broward County Land Use Plan designates a “Medium Residential” category of land use that permits up to sixteen dwelling units per acre.



Above: The Broward County Land Use Plan, zoomed in on the area showing Deerfield Beach. The areas shown in red currently fall under the county’s “Commerce” designation, and areas in orange under “Low-Medium” and “Medium Residential.”

Fort Lauderdale's Central City CRA Case Study

Central City Community Redevelopment Area
Fort Lauderdale's Central City CRA is a 344-acre community redevelopment area located on the north side of Sunrise Boulevard established in 2012 that is funded primarily on the increase in value generated by the improvements to the area.

Located just north of the Downtown Fort Lauderdale CRA, the Central City CRA is generally bounded by NE 13th Street and NE 16th Street on the North, Sunrise Boulevard on the south, Powerline Road and I-95 on the west and the Florida East Coast railway on the east.

The youngest of the City's three CRAs, it is notable for its unique funding system. Unlike most CRAs established in Broward County, which receive Tax Increment Funds (TIF) from both their respective cities and Broward County, the Central City CRA's established financing comes exclusively from the City of Fort Lauderdale's Tax Increment Funds. These funds are then leveraged to identify additional funding sources that can be utilized to implement the area's Community Redevelopment Plan.

The Central City CRA Area is financed through a Redevelopment Trust Fund established by the City Commission on April 3, 2012, which collects 95% of the incremental increase in ad valorem taxes levied each year within the redevelopment area by the City of Fort Lauderdale for a period of 30 years.

The Central City CRA works to significantly improve the quality of life in the area, increase property values, and redevelop and revitalize properties so that the community becomes a growing, dynamic, sustainable, desirable, and thriving area.

The City Commission acts as the Community Redevelopment Agency's Board of Directors. The CRA's current redevelopment goals are to remove slum and blight, provide increased redevelopment opportunities in the area, including improving housing stock, streets and infrastructure, improve safety, bring quality jobs and services to the area, and foster the development of new businesses and development, with a focus on the Sunrise Boulevard, NE 13th Street, NE 4th Avenue and the Florida East Coast Railway Corridors.



Above: An aerial map of Fort Lauderdale's Central City CRA shows its current zoning.



The CRA has already achieved several notable accomplishments, including:

- Leveraging Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to activate and revitalize the NE 13th Street corridor through structural improvements and renovations for new and existing businesses, including an art gallery
- Utilizing a \$1.5 million grant from Broward County under its Broward Redevelopment Program, as well as funds from the City and the CRA to implement a capital improvement project to transform NE 13th Street into a Complete Street
- Conducting a rezoning project
- Funding property improvements of four properties along NW 13 Street between NE 4 Avenue and North Flagler Drive for both interior and exterior renovations to allow flex warehouse and retail business tenants



Top: Rendering of Northeast 13th Street, which was redesigned through funding leveraged by the Central City CRA. Bottom: The interior of Lovelee Bakeshop, one of the new retail tenants attracted following a property improvement project.

Density Primer

What is Density?

Density – specifically the density of a built environment - is a term that covers a broad range of urban characteristics. Precisely, density means the mass or amount per unit area. However, when applied to the built environment, this concept can have numerous definitions and systems of measurement. When people discuss density, they may be referring to the size of buildings, the number of homes, or the amount of people living in an area. These differing definitions, contexts, and measurements can create confusion.

On top of this, the term density often carries with it many additional correlations - for some, the phrase “high density” may bring up images of mass transit, skyscrapers, and vibrant city life, while others may picture monotonous buildings, crowded streets, pollution, crime, or disrepair. By contrast, “low density” may connote farmlands, fields, country life – or suburban life to others.

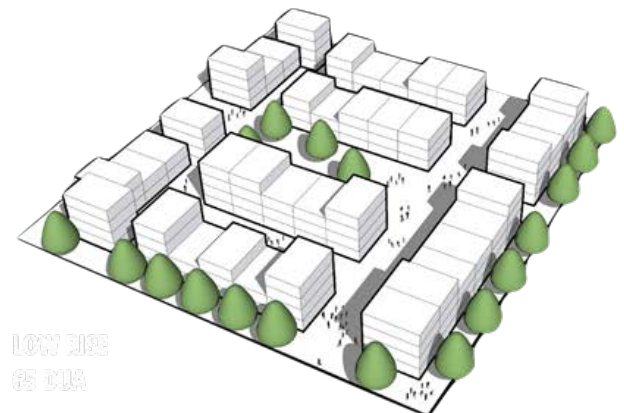
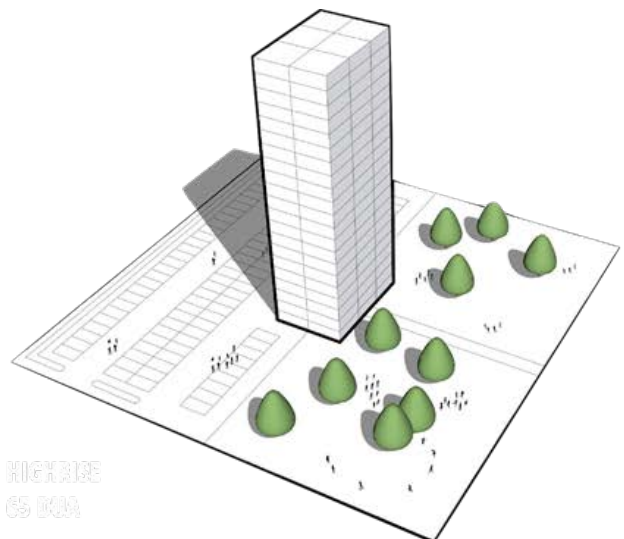
Building at higher levels of density saves governments, developers, and residents money and time as travel, construction, and services costs go down, ultimately boosting the economy through increased efficiencies.

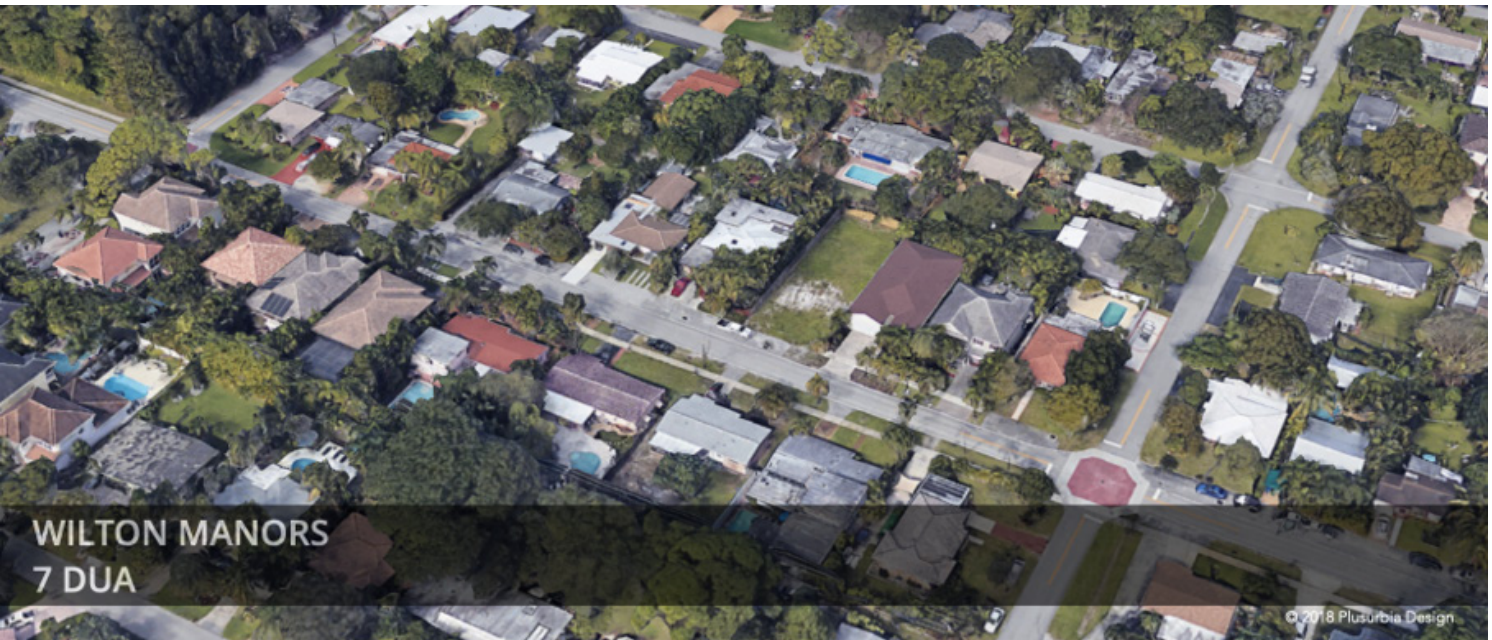
Density vs. Design

Despite the benefits that density can provide, resistance to density is widespread. Increased density is often viewed as a potential threat to quality of life as many people believe that it inherently leads to increased traffic, crime, and crowding. And, as we alluded to above, many people picture the wrong thing when they think of density - monstrous, dark, boring buildings, essentially equating *density* with *design*, when in reality perceptions of density vary widely depending on design, and density does not determine building configuration.

Building density does not equate with building design or building configuration.

The two parcels in the example below have the same density, but vastly different configurations, design, and overall feel.





WILTON MANORS
7 DUA

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Small-scale residential density can exist without drastically changing the look or feel of a neighborhood. Context-sensitive infill development can increase density through small-scale multifamily infill developments and by allowing multigenerational and family living through accessory dwelling units (ADUs).



PORTLAND, OR
14 DUA

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CARVER HEIGHTS, DB
5-7 (+) DUA

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About the Panel



Debbie Orshefsky
Partner, Holland & Knight

Debbie M. Orshefsky is an attorney in Holland & Knight's Fort Lauderdale office. She practices in the areas of land development and environmental law with specific experience in land use planning, infrastructure planning and financing, zoning, subdivision controls and community redevelopment, as well as state, regional and local roles in land use decision-making. Ms. Orshefsky represents private developers and landowners in all aspects of the development approval process and has extensive experience permitting complex multi-jurisdictional developments. In addition, she is a frequent speaker at state and national seminars on the land development process, as well as infrastructure planning and funding.



Alia Awwad
Senior Associate Engineer/Florida Lead, Alta Planning + Design

Alia Awwad is the Senior Associate Engineer and Florida Lead at Alta Planning + Design. Alia's interest in transportation stems from a passion in providing safe, convenient, and sustainable transportation options and creating livable places for everyone. Following a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering and a Masters in City Planning, Alia's background in transportation planning and engineering was shaped in both the public and private sectors. Through this experience, Alia has led roadway design, traffic operations and analysis, and context-sensitive transportation planning projects.



Alfred Battle Jr.
Deputy Director, Department of Sustainable Development, City of Fort Lauderdale

As the Deputy Director of the City of Fort Lauderdale's Department of Sustainable Development, a department that includes five collaborative and complementary divisions, Al Battle oversees fiscal administration, hiring and personnel procedures, contract and facilities management, and all other internal service operations for the entire department. Prior to taking on the role of Deputy Director, he served for 16 years as the Division Manager of the City's Economic and Community Reinvestment division, managing all aspects of economic development and community redevelopment agencies and housing and community development programs.



Alfonso Costa Jr.
Executive Vice President, Falcone Group

As the Executive Vice President, Alfonso Costa is responsible for leading Falcone Residential's workforce and affordable housing platform, as well as the firm's Opportunity Zones strategy. Costa most recently served as Deputy Chief of Staff at the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), where he counseled the Secretary and oversaw policy for the \$52 billion annually budgeted Cabinet-level agency, which maintains a wide range of Federal housing and community development programs, and more than 7,000 employees across 65 offices nationwide.



Eric Liff

Principal, Lambert Advisory

As Principal of Lambert Advisory, Eric Liff brings 25 years of experience providing economic and financial advisory services to both the private and public sectors. He has worked with numerous national and international corporations providing economic, strategic and investment guidance in real estate acquisition, development planning and asset repositioning. His advising work also includes development throughout the U.S. and the Caribbean. Over the course of his career, he has served as project manager to more than fifty municipal and governmental agencies on initiatives ranging from economic development to complex financial and partnership structuring.



Scott MacLaren

President, Stiles & District Council Chair, ULI Southeast Florida / Caribbean

Scott MacLaren is the current Chair of ULI Southeast Florida / Caribbean and the President of Stiles. As a member of the company's executive leadership team, he is focused on day-to-day operations and overall strategy. He plays an integral role in driving Stiles' future pipeline of activity, including development, acquisitions, and third-party services. Since joining Stiles in 1999, Mr. MacLaren has held roles of increasing responsibility in all aspects of sales, financing, acquisitions, and asset management, and has directed numerous ground-up development projects. He is experienced in the development and redevelopment of neighborhood shopping centers and mixed-use projects as well as the acquisition of value-add commercial properties and new land inventory.



Juan Mullerat

Founder, Plusurbia

Juan Mullerat is the founder of Plusurbia Design - a firm that specializes in land planning and city building. As a designer with over 25 years of experience, Mullerat has received numerous awards for his projects around the world, including the APA's 2017 National Economic Planning Award for the Wynwood Master Plan and the 2015 Kinpan Design Award for Songhua Lake Design, in 2013 he was honored as the Urban Designer of the Year by the AIA in Miami. Mullerat is dedicated to solving transportation, revitalization, and housing issues, and has designed buildings, neighborhoods, and cities in five continents. He lectures on healthy cities, urban revitalization, and placemaking at the University of Miami and several other forums.



Darwyn Kelly

Panel Intern & Student, Real Estate Development + Urbanism, University of Miami

Darwyn Kelly is a graduate student at the University of Miami studying Real Estate Development + Urbanism, where he also writes for the MRED+U newsletter. Prior to joining the university's MRED+U program, he attended the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Sports Management. A licensed Florida real estate agent, he also writes about real estate in his own newsletter aimed at bridging the gap between millennials and the real estate industry by providing expert advice and insights on key topics.



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