



## Technical Assistance Panel

# The City of West Palm Beach, Florida, South Dixie Highway Corridor



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# URBAN LAND INSTITUTE SOUTHEAST FLORIDA / CARIBBEAN DISTRICT COUNCIL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANELS (TAP)

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## ***What Are Technical Assistance Panels?***

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 over 800 members spread along the east coast of Florida from Indian River County through the Florida Keys and in the Caribbean.

## ***How Do TAPs Work?***

Sponsors request 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 four weeks.

## ***What Do TAPs Cost?***

A fee is charged for the advisory service, but the panel members are not compensated for their time. The fee depends on the length of the actual TAP convening but is typically between \$15,000 and \$20,000, including panel expenses. Each TAP is different, and fees are negotiated individually with the client sponsoring one. Panel members donate their time and are only reimbursed for their out-of-pocket expenses such as overnight lodging and transportation to attend the TAP. 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 six months following the panel's assignment period.

## ***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 30,000 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.

# SPONSOR AND PANEL MEMBERS

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## **Sponsor**

City of West Palm Beach, Florida

## **Board of Commissioners**

Jeri Muoio, Mayor

Sylvia Moffett, District 1 Commissioner

Isaac Robinson, Jr., District 2 Commissioner, Commission President

Kimberly Mitchell, District 3 Commissioner

Keith A. James, District 4 Commissioner

William Moss, District 5 Commissioner

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# PANEL PROCESS AND AGENDA

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## Panel Process

The City of West Palm Beach TAP for the South Dixie Highway Corridor centered on the following six steps:

- Representatives from the ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council met with city officials and staff and board members to discuss issues related to the South Dixie Highway Corridor.
- The ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council staff researched the city's goals for the TAP. To ensure that all issues were identified, a representative of the ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council participated in a December 6, 2011, corridor workshop sponsored by the city. The workshop was designed to provide background information on the TAP, receive community input on major issues facing the corridor, ask questions, and review next steps.
- The District Council selected the TAP members who had the expertise most tailored to addressing the issues identified through its research and the input from the December public workshop.
- The TAP received a complete set of pre-meeting briefing materials about the South Dixie Highway Corridor. That included a summary of the comments offered at the December 6, 2011, workshop.
- The TAP met on January 26 and 27, 2012, at Palm Beach Atlantic University, located on the northern end of the corridor. (A description of the activities for the two days is outlined below under the heading, Panel Agenda.)
- The TAP, under the leadership of the ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean District Council, prepared a report on its recommendations and conclusions. The report was presented to the City of West Palm Beach City Commission and is available to the public.



*“The city’s goal for the South Dixie Highway Corridor TAP was to hear from a multi-disciplinary panel of seasoned experts what strategies can be used to assist with the revitalization and improvement of the entire corridor – ideas for what the corridor could be like and a set of near- and longer-term steps and financing mechanisms to start making that future possible.” (Jeri Muoio, Mayor, City of West Palm Beach)*

*Left: Anchoring the northern edge of the South Dixie Highway Corridor, Palm Beach Atlantic University was the location of the TAP’s meetings where the public could comment on major issues and ask questions.*



Depicted above, the South Dixie Highway Corridor extends from Okeechobee Boulevard to the north to the south where West Palm Beach adjoins the City of Lake Worth.

*“We need a plan that will be implemented and will make the South Dixie Highway Corridor the vital place it once was. One of the biggest challenges the plan should address is that due to the proximity of I-95, the corridor is no longer functions as a highway. It is a neighborhood road.” (William Moss, former District 5 Commissioner, City of West Palm Beach)*

City of West Palm Beach, Florida, The South Dixie Highway Corridor  
January 26 and 27, 2012, Technical Assistance Panel

## Panel Agenda

The agenda (Appendix A) for the TAP was organized as follows.

On January 26, the TAP began its orientation with a lunch meeting with representatives of the city, including Mayor Jeri Muoio and former District 5 Commissioner William Moss. The lunch meeting was followed by a comprehensive tour of the South Dixie Highway Corridor. After the tour, the panel provided an opportunity for public comments from community representatives, neighbors, and other interested parties. The panel continued its work into the evening.

On September 27, the TAP spent the morning and early afternoon working on the issues that the city asked it to address. In the afternoon, the panel members presented their preliminary observations and recommendations to an audience of interested citizens and community and business groups.

## BACKGROUND: THE STUDY AREA AND TAP FOCUS

The City of West Palm Beach convened the TAP to provide seasoned expert advice on how to improve and revitalize the South Dixie Highway Corridor (illustrated to the left). The panel was asked to focus on both near- and longer-term steps. Those steps were to include ideas for what the corridor could be like in the future as well as the implementation strategies necessary to make that future a reality (rather than just another plan sitting on a shelf).

### The TAP Study Area: The South Dixie Highway Corridor

#### The Physical Environment

The approximately 4.2-mile long South Dixie Highway Corridor is bounded by Okeechobee Boulevard to the north, and the city line at the C-51 West Palm Beach Canal to the south. To the east and west are well-established residential neighborhoods, providing a potential built-in market for the businesses along the corridor. Important to the corridor's character and function are the road itself, the buildings alongside, and the parking.

## ***The Road***

The current character of the corridor reflects its role. From the time it was constructed in the 1920s, when the use of the car started to become more common, the corridor was part of a national system of roads designed to facilitate interstate travel. Subsequent to the completion of the parallel north-south I-95 in 1987, the corridor's function as an interstate connector has evolved to that of a regional connection to downtown West Palm Beach with a growing demand to serve neighborhood needs.

Currently, shoppers view the corridor as too hazardous to cross or stroll along in order to reach more than their intended destination. That is due to the corridor's width, high vehicle speeds, and lack of pedestrian amenities (for example, well-marked crosswalks, conveniently placed street furniture and points of interest, and shade – especially important in subtropical South Florida).

## ***The Buildings Along the Road***

A drive south down the corridor from Okeechobee begins with three significant community anchors: on the east side, Palm Beach Atlantic University and the Norton Museum of Art, and on the west side, the historic Woodlawn Cemetery. A continued drive reveals an eclectic mix of architectural styles that reflect the corridor's evolution from the 1920s to today. The buildings and their associated signage contribute to the corridor's unique sense of place and have become a means of local wayfinding. The buildings include Antique Row, Howley's, Carvel Cones (5901 South Dixie), Havana, Hall Hardware signage, Tropical Cleaners, Dixie Bar and Grill, City Girl Consignment (2417 South Dixie), and the Carefree Theater. A number of sites along the corridor are listed in the local register of historic places: the Woodlawn Cemetery gate (1500 South Dixie Highway), the Palm Beach Cadillac Company (2119 South Dixie), and the commercial buildings in the Mango Promenade Historic District.

Most of the commercial buildings along the corridor are lower scale (one- and two-stories) and in the form of suburban strip centers with deep set-backs for parking. An example (illustrated on the next page) is the Palm Coast Plaza, located just north of the West Palm Beach-Lake Worth city line. Opening in 1959, it was the county's first shopping center. There are also a number of free-standing buildings including several that were recently renovated. That



*South Dixie Highway today does not create a positive pedestrian environment. The width of the corridor and high vehicular speeds make it difficult to walk across or along the corridor as part of a shopping excursion. Although sidewalks are in place, they are not shielded from the traffic and few pedestrian amenities are in place.*



*Antique Row (top image) and Howley's (bottom image) are examples of the many buildings that make Dixie Highway unique and evoke its history.*

is evidence of new investment interest in the corridor and an opportunity to start regaining the vitality that was lost when the city's population, followed by new retail and office developments, started moving west to suburban locations in the 1960s.

### *The Flanking Neighborhoods*

The significant number of historic neighborhoods (shown on the map on the next page) that flank the corridor is also an important part of the planning context. They include Mango Promenade, El Cid, Prospect Park/Southland Park, and Central Park, which are listed on both the Local Register of Historic Places and the National Register of Historic Places. Those districts were initially developed during West Palm Beach's pioneer period, with houses built in the frame vernacular style surrounded by agricultural land (often pineapple plantations like Mango Promenade).

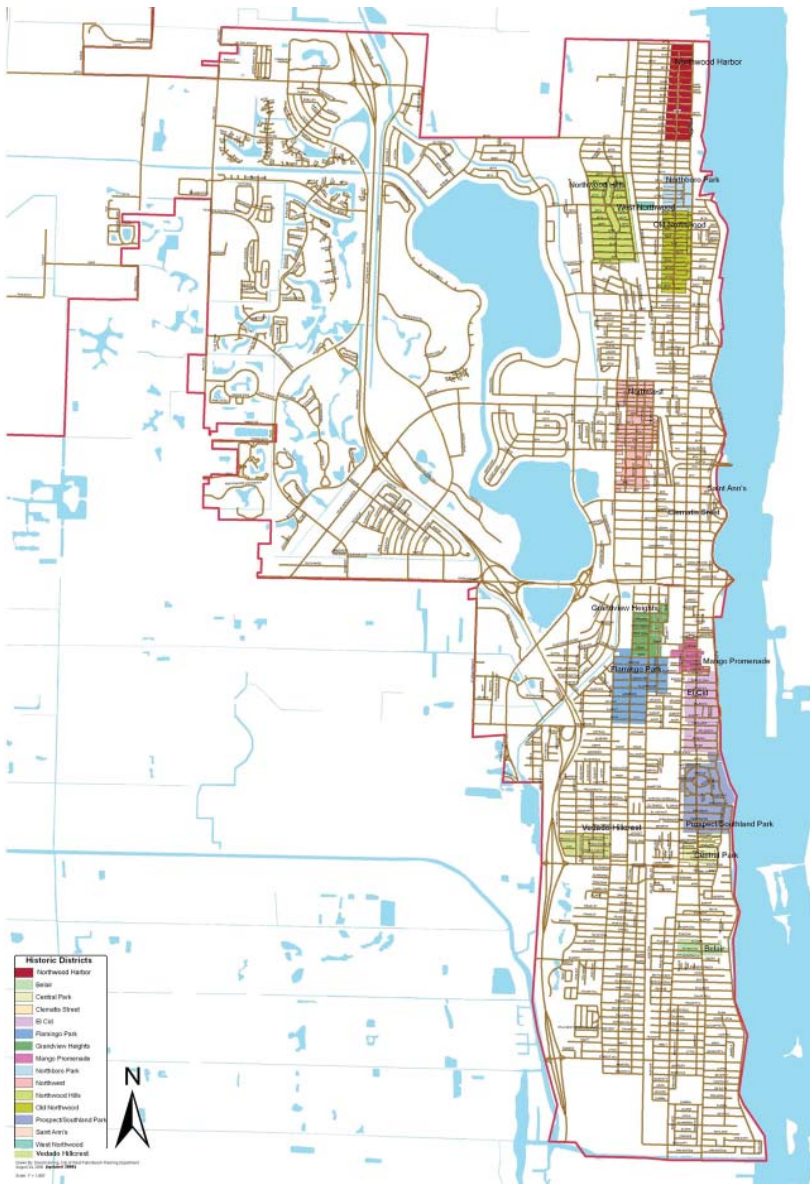
The majority of houses were built during the 1920s' Florida land boom; many were in the Spanish Mediterranean architectural style popular during that time. Houses continued to be added in the 1930s and 1940s in diverse architectural styles including Masonry Vernacular, Bungalow, Mission, Colonial Revival, Dutch Revival, and Monterey. Another significant wave of development occurred after World War II with the return of members of the military. Today the neighborhoods are close knit and have been revitalized through the efforts of residents who value the diverse architectural history.



*Founded in 1941, the Norton Museum of Art (image above) is a major corridor asset.*



*Palm Coast Plaza (image above) typifies the corridor's car-oriented development patterns.*



*Parking in the corridor is typically located in front of the building, either between the sidewalk and the building (top right) or on the street where buildings are pulled up closer to the sidewalk (above)*

*Above: City of West Palm Beach Historic Districts*

## Parking

Although several buildings along the corridor have internal parking, it is generally not close to the areas where thriving commercial uses are concentrated and it is the exception. Most parking is consistent with typical strip commercial, car-oriented development patterns. Illustrated above in some sections off-street parking is located in front of the building, separating it from the sidewalk and contributing to an unfriendly pedestrian environment; in other sections, the buildings are pulled up closer to the sidewalk and rely more on on-street parking. Bunching of driveways and frequent curb cuts (illustrated on page 16 , under TAP Recommendations) also disrupt pedestrians, limit the number of on-street parking spaces, and create potential conflicts with traffic.

## The Planning Context

The corridor is composed of two predominant zoning designations (see Appendix C): General Commercial (GC), concentrated in the northern part of the corridor, and Neighborhood Commercial (NC), concentrated in the southern part. Building height and uses are the primary differences between the two zoning designations. In areas zoned General Commercial, buildings can be higher if they are not adjacent to a residential area and if additional setbacks are provided. (A building next to a residential area is limited to a height of 30 feet.)

Residential uses on the corridor are zoned Multifamily Medium Density (MF20) or Residential Planned Development (RPD). The residential neighborhoods adjacent to the corridor are primarily zoned for single-family residential uses, with some multi-family residential. The corridor also has community service uses (CS or CSPD) such as those noted earlier: the Norton Art Museum (CS), the Woodlawn Cemetery (CS), and Palm Beach Atlantic University (CSPD) at the northern end of the corridor. St. Julianna Catholic Church and School (CS), and South Olive Elementary (CS) in the south end of the corridor are additional community service uses. Recreational Open Space (ROS) uses include Phipps and South Olive parks located just south of Southern Boulevard.

## Local Concerns

Over the last 15 years, the city has sponsored a number of workshops designed to give the public an opportunity to express their concerns and describe what they want the corridor to look like in the future (their vision of success). The most recent was the December 6, 2011, workshop that kicked-off the TAP.

The comments from that workshop and subsequent ones from the January TAP convening are summarized below. They relate to the need for streetscape improvements to improve the appearance and walkability of the corridor, address the interface or intrusion of commercial with residential neighborhoods, and the perceived lack of parking. Two additional topics include the importance of branding and marketing the corridor and implementation resources (those that will be required to make corridor plans a reality).



*The clear message from the public workshops about South Dixie Highway: Convert it from a car-oriented corridor (above) to a beautiful, highly walkable one with a mix of businesses that serve nearby residential areas.*

## ***Streetscape Improvements***

- Public comments focused on the desire to make the corridor more attractive and pedestrian-oriented – what one participant called “West Palm Beach’s grand esplanade, that beautiful urban street.” The focus was on making the corridor easier, safer, and aesthetically more desirable for pedestrians to cross or walk along. Examples of suggested design features included:
- landscaping improvements – a lot more trees and other vegetation on both sides of the street
- signage – to brand the corridor and the districts within it; also discussions of eliminating billboards
- lighting – on-street and building exteriors (front and back)
- sidewalks – wider with plenty of shade (trees, awnings, and building overhangs), street furniture, and building designs that create a positive pedestrian environment
- clearly defined crosswalks and techniques to overcome the width of the road – bulb-outs to narrow the crossing distance at intersections and medians that give people a safe place to wait
- slowing down traffic – more frequent stoplights and traffic circles and providing a buffer between traffic and the sidewalk were mentioned
- connections to the downtown – trolleys or electric vehicles to carry people up and down the corridor and to and from downtown were also suggested

## ***Interface of commercial uses with residential neighborhoods***

Concerns related to the height and mass of adjacent commercial structures. The areas where there is no buffer between residential uses and back property lines of commercial ones are of particular importance to residents (depicted to the right). Also important is maintaining the character of the area’s historic neighborhoods and creating greater synergies between the residential neighborhoods and businesses along the corridor.

## ***Perceived lack of parking***

The need for more parking (on- and off-street) was a frequent topic. Suggestions included using strategically placed vacant parcels for shared parking and making it easy for visitors to get from where they park to their destination businesses. Residents worry about commercial parking that spills over into adjacent residential lots.



*A problem for some residential areas is the lack of screening that visually separates residential uses from commercial ones.*

## ***Importance of marketing and branding the corridor***

Suggestions focused on using branding to define the corridor's different districts – antique, design, entertainment, and college, for example. That approach should recognize the distinct personalities, textures, and requirements of the different sections of the corridor, several participants observed. A “buy local” program could promote corridor identity and important to the corridor's success, help retain local businesses and attract new ones.

## ***Implementation resources***

A budget (i.e., funding) needs to be tied to a plan for the corridor. Incentives are also needed to encourage businesses to come to and invest in the corridor. That should include incentives that encourage the redevelopment and re-use of vacant and near-vacant buildings and lead to the development of vacant lots that create corridor dead zones. Such development should be consistent with the rest of the corridor.

The public comments offered at the December 6 workshop built on and reinforced a series of South Dixie Highway Visioning Groups Meetings held from the fall of 2009 to the fall of 2010. Those workshops led to a vision statement:

*“South Dixie Highway should support a vibrant business community that serves both the adjacent neighborhoods and regional customers and provides a mix of retail, dining, art, antique and office uses, with adequate parking for visitors, safe pedestrian crossings, and linkages to the surrounding neighborhoods. South Dixie Highway should be tree-lined and contain landscaped properties with attractive buildings that are consistent in scale and mass.”*

Many of the same desires were expressed in the South Dixie Highway Corridor Study, prepared by Glatting Jackson Kercher Anglin Lopez Rinehart in 2000 for the Southside Business Association. The recommendations focused on improving the pedestrian environment, creating better connections to adjacent residential areas, and consolidating driveways to reduce pedestrian and vehicular conflicts. Other strategies focused on establishing a corridor identity and marketing program and developing a business attraction program.

### *An amalgam of public comments about the corridor:*

*South Dixie Highway is now a neighborhood road and should be treated as such. Currently the corridor is a barrier to pedestrians. The big issue is making the corridor walkable. Agencies need to work together to do that.*

*We want a corridor that is a shopping destination – an area that people go to, not drive by. That means a place that feels safe and is easy to park in and spend a day strolling along and across the corridor.*

*The corridor is a unique area. It is composed of an interesting mix of architectural styles and uses that distinguish it from homogeneous areas to the west.*

*A plan for the corridor needs to inspire action and not just focus on the little things. It also should give businesses the flexibility to respond to changes in the market.*

*A plan for the corridor needs to be coupled with a way to fund it. That should include big impact actions early on to show progress.*

*It is time to stop talking and act. For that, we need strong leadership.*

## **THE TAP'S COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The TAP organized its comments and recommendations around a set of issues that the city, corridor businesses, and residents of nearby neighborhoods identified as important to the revitalization of the South Dixie Highway Corridor. Described in the prior section and outlined in the questions for the panel (Appendix B), those issues were outlined in the question for the panel (Appendix B) and are listed on the next page.

- Parking and Traffic Flow – management of parking and the flow of traffic in a way that will reduce speeds and promote accessibility of the corridor to both vehicles and pedestrians.
- Streetscape Improvements – design concepts and elements for a corridor streetscape program.
- Marketing and Branding – ideas for a marketing plan that will brand and promote the corridor and could be implemented by business owners; also address issues related to security and how to attract residents from nearby neighborhoods.
- Zoning – approaches that can be used to help mitigate conflicts between commercial activities and adjacent residential neighborhoods and address large vacant sites.
- Financing and Implementation – financing methods and other incentives that can be used to implement plans for the corridor (parking, streetscape, and marketing programs, for example).

The TAP's recommendations and comments are outlined in the following pages and a graphic analysis of the corridor is depicted in the drawing at the top of the next page. "The TAP's role," TAP chair Doug Smith noted, "is to bring a fresh set of eyes and ears to the corridor, and build on, what has been an ongoing planning process to revitalize the corridor and re-capture its prior vitality. We recognize that a lot of study has been completed in the past, but relatively few improvements have been made over time. Therefore, our goal is to focus on practical ideas and strategies for implementation (where the rubber meets the road)."

The TAP stressed that a plan for the corridor should concentrate on creating and maintaining a highly desirable public realm that preserves and builds on the assets of the corridor and the neighborhoods around it. Doing that will differentiate the corridor from the competition. It will also transform the corridor from a drive-through or one-stop place to one where people want to stop, walk around, stay awhile, and come back again to visit or invest.

*"The South Dixie Corridor has the potential to be a local and regional destination. That goal will require investments to make the corridor more walkable and to enhance and promote its unique mix of businesses and its neighborhood feel. It will also require strong leadership and participation of both the residents and the business community." (The ULI Technical Assistance Panel)*



*The TAP spent its time studying the corridor and learning about the related hopes and concerns of citizens (top image above). The TAP presented its findings at a well-attended closing session that gave those attending an opportunity to ask questions and offer comments (bottom image above).*



Achieving that outcome means modifying the design of the street so that it is not a barrier to pedestrians while, at the same time, protecting vehicle mobility function. A Complete Streets approach is recommended whereby all users – pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities – are accounted for in the roadway design. It also means preparing an overall corridor plan before moving ahead with a specific project that implements one of the TAP's recommendations.

- Provide an adequate supply of parking in the right places.

The TAP's parking recommendations centered on the public's interest in increasing the supply of parking both on-street and off. The recommendations, the TAP stressed, are based on the panel's experience and not on a parking demand study.

## On-Street Parking

The TAP noted that some non-conforming uses along the corridor are generating parking shortages that require an over-reliance on the use of on street parking. The on-street parking supply in many locations cannot be significantly increased because adequate sight distance (illustrated on the next page ) must be provided for drivers entering or crossing Dixie Highway from the numerous existing driveways and side streets in the corridor. If adequate sight distance is provided at a given driveway or side street, a driver waiting to enter or cross Dixie Highway at that location will be able to see far enough to the left and right that he or she will be able to see oncoming cars in time to safely make the decision to

*"If you plan for cars and traffic, you get cars and traffic. If you plan for people and places, you get people and places." Fred Kent, Project for Public Places*

*Left: The TAP recommended approaching the corridor as a series of distinct but complementary districts and zones. Each would build on current assets and could have distinguishing gateway and streetscape features that support an overall corridor brand and identity.*

enter or cross Dixie Highway. If the driver cannot see to the left or right because cars parked on the street block his or her view, sight distance is limited and the driver will not be able to safely enter or cross Dixie Highway.

Therefore, maintaining sight distance is a key safety issue, the TAP observed. Closing or combining driveways would eliminate some sight distance requirements and therefore become a near-term means of providing additional on-street parking spaces. That approach can be used where more on-street parking is needed, viable, and agreeable to property owners.

The notion of driveway closures could also be implemented as redevelopment occurs or as part of any future roadway reconstruction or rehabilitation projects. Closing driveways to create more on-street parking has both advantages and disadvantages:

- **Advantages:** Relatively low cost, no additional right-of-way needed, and adds to parking supply, resulting in less overflow parking in residential areas and more parking closer to businesses. Having fewer driveways may reduce the risk of vehicular accidents (because there are fewer points where vehicles cross paths) and minimize conflicts with pedestrians on sidewalks (because there are fewer points where vehicles intersect sidewalks). A pedestrian benefit of curb side parking is that parked cars serve to act as a shield between someone on the sidewalk and vehicles traveling down the street. The increased separation of pedestrians from vehicular traffic (travel lanes) is considered an approach to improving the pedestrian comfort level and is a component of performance measures that assess the quality of the pedestrian experience.
- **Disadvantages:** Potentially limits on-site circulation, and increased out-of-direction travel (where indirect or circuitous travel is required to reach a destination – e.g., in order to turn left into a destination, the need to travel three blocks past it to find a spot where left turns are allowed would require six blocks of out-of-direction travel (both ways).

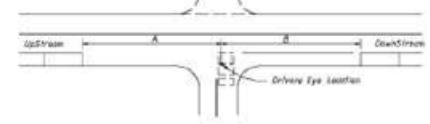
Use of minimum-width driveways for specific sites is an additional option to increase on-street parking. The decision to allow a minimum-width driveway should consider the number of vehicles anticipated to use the driveway. This opportunity would need to be studied carefully on a site to site basis.

## 8.6

### SIGHT DISTANCE AND ON-STREET PARKING

Location of a driveway close to on-street parking can seriously impact visibility. This situation is most common on roadways in dense developed areas. *Standard Index 173.46 (Sheet 10)* contains the guidance on the placement of driveways in relation to on-street parking.

Exhibit 8.4  
Upstream and Downstream  
Sight Distance



| Speed MPH | Upstream (A) | Downstream (B) |        |
|-----------|--------------|----------------|--------|
|           |              | 2 Lane         | 4 Lane |
| 0-30      | 85 ft        | 60 ft          | 45 ft  |
| 35        | 100 ft       | 70 ft          | 50 ft  |

*Providing more on-street parking requires addressing safety issues related to sight distance.*

*Frequent curb cuts and driveways (top image below) disrupt pedestrians, reduce the number of on-street parking spaces allowed, and create potential conflicts with oncoming traffic. Closing driveways, as depicted below, is one way to address that problem (bottom image).*



## Off-Street Parking

Where adding on-street parking is not feasible but there is a need for more parking spaces, the most likely near-term strategy is to look for off-street sites to lease or purchase for public parking, the TAP advised. (For South Dixie Highway, providing more off-street parking (particularly where the uses create a high demand for it) means fewer parking impacts in residential areas. A significant obstacle to that approach is the minimum lot size required, as well as the cost of land purchase. Any potential site for public off-street parking would require more detailed study to determine the number of parking spaces needed and to address specific issues and design standards.

Off-street public parking lots would ideally be located in relation to the businesses to be served. Their placement and design should add to, not detract from, a positive pedestrian environment, meaning such lots should be located such that they do not disrupt the urban fabric. That is, off-street parking lots should not be placed between the Dixie Highway right of way and the buildings that face the street. They should be located to the side or rear of buildings. If located to the side of buildings, the lot should be screened so that it is not the dominant feature of its block. If located to the rear of buildings, the lot should be well-maintained, open, and well lit so that drivers who park there feel safe doing so. Public off-street parking lots should be well signed so that drivers can readily find them. They also should not feel isolated.

### A Snapshot: Parking Supply Strategies

*Near-Term:* Close driveways to provide more on-street parking and, where that is not viable, provide lots for off-street parking. Another near-term strategy is to use alleys for additional parking.

*Near- or Mid-Term:* Revise the city's redevelopment and permitting processes to require adequate parking where on-street parking is not viable; where off-street lots have excess capacity, on-street parking can be recaptured for streetscape.

*Ongoing:* City upgrades sites through the redevelopment and permitting process.

*Lower Right:* Another strategy would involve canvassing the corridor to identify where rear alleys can be improved and used for employee and other parking.

*Upper Right:* The City of Orlando requires parking behind buildings in the pre-World War II parts of the city. Outside, design features are used to improve the view of parking from the sidewalk, utilizing knee walls and landscaping to soften the view.



Where off-street parking is not viable, a near- or mid-term strategy is to revise the city's parking requirements to require that all redeveloped or improved properties provide adequate on-site (business) parking. That approach will require an assessment of the allowable uses in the zoning code in relation to the amount of parking they generate. It will also require a change to the City's current practice of exempting properties that change use but not intensity from constructing any additional parking that the new use may otherwise require. That would result in the provision of adequate parking by the uses that generate the demand for it; however, a disadvantage is the imposition of a site constraint with potential business development limitations. In other words, the need to provide the full amount of required parking on a given parcel may make it more difficult to lease, sell, or redevelop that parcel, especially on smaller parcels.

In an area where off-street (on-site) parking has excess capacity, on-street parking could be converted to other uses (bulb-outs with landscaping, or wider sidewalks, for example). As discussed later in this section, the advantages of such improvements include shorter street crossing distances, improved aesthetics, and lower traffic speeds. The city can gradually upgrade sites through the development and permitting process. Each site would require more detailed study to address specific issues and design standards.

Shared off-street (on-site) parking is another approach to consider where parking spaces are limited. Shared parking makes parking spaces within a common parking supply area available for more than one use. This approach takes advantage of uses that have their peak parking demand at different times of the day. For example, a medical or office use would require parking during the day, while a restaurant or entertainment use would have a higher demand in the evening. This approach is an inexpensive way to maximize the use of each parking space, thereby significantly reducing the number of parking spaces required in mixed-use environments.



*Destin, Florida, provides for shared parking between property owners in its Land Development Code. Options include reductions for mixed or joint use, off-site shared parking, and in-lieu fees for public parking and extra bicycle parking spaces. In the case of shared parking (example to the left), a developer must submit sufficient data that the hours of maximum demand for parking do not overlap. A legal agreement that is submitted to the city for approval guarantees the joint use of the on-site parking spaces. The agreement, which runs with the covenants of the land, must be signed by all property owners involved and include a provision for maintenance. The use of shared parking is part of an overall strategy to address the challenge of older buildings in a popular commercial area where the properties generally do not have adequate parking.*

- Lower the speed of traffic and make it easier for pedestrians to cross the street.

## Traffic Speed

Lowering the speed of traffic is important to creating a flow of traffic that will allow pedestrians to feel more comfortable walking along or crossing the road, while also encouraging drivers to become aware of and patronize the businesses along the corridor. The TAP outlined two approaches to reducing traffic speed: design and capacity. It also recommended strategies that would help pedestrians cross the street more easily.



*Painted lanes (top image above) are being tested as a way to reduce conflicts between bicycles and motor vehicles by making the bicycle lane more visible to motorists. Raised medians (lower image above) also improve safety by giving pedestrians a place to wait when crossing the street. Bulb-outs (below, from [contextsensitivesolutions.org](http://contextsensitivesolutions.org)) can be used to reduce the street width that pedestrians need to cross and increase pedestrian safety by making pedestrians more visible as they cross the street and slowing down cars as they turn a corner.*



## Design Approaches

Design options include the following:

- Corridor-wide – colored pavement in parking lanes may help the corridor feel more enclosed, which can psychologically induce drivers to slow down. FDOT approval of colored asphalt would have to be based on a specific and detailed proposal to the department. Because colored pavement is addressed in the 2009 Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, it is by definition a traffic control device. That means that the need must be demonstrated before it is used. Currently, colored asphalt is only allowed for bicycle lane treatment where it is warranted to address a safety concern and must be approved by the FDOT District Design Engineer. In some circumstances, FDOT may choose to request approval from the Federal Highway Administration and the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials for another intended use on an experimental basis. That would require monitoring and reporting by the Department.
- In sub-areas – landscaping and street trees in combination with buildings that greet the street because they are pulled closed to the sidewalk can help create the feeling of a more enclosed space. That prompts drivers to slow down.
- Site specific – bulb-outs at key intersections and raised medians can slow traffic by narrowing the roadway and effectively reduce the width of the street for pedestrian crossings. Raised medians also provide a mid-point refuge for pedestrians when crossing the road.
- Terminal vistas – designing the corridor so that a driver's line of sight down the highway is broken up by design features (such as median landscaping), thus signaling to drivers that their speed in the corridor will be limited.
- A key advantage of the design options listed above is that none represent an impact to the right-of-way.
- A potential disadvantage of a raised median can be the relocation of some on-street parking.

## Capacity

Lane width reduction was the TAP's recommended strategy to lower speeds along the corridor. Studies of highway capacity show that narrower lanes induce slower speeds.

The approach offers multiple advantages for pedestrians and businesses – for example:

- For pedestrians, safety benefits result from slower traffic and less pavement to cross.
- For businesses, more pedestrians walking across and down the street can result in increased patronage, new business investment, and a higher tax base. More pedestrian use also results in additional eyes on the street, which can have a positive effect on crime prevention. An additional business benefit is that when vehicles move at lower speeds, the occupants are more apt to see and register shopping and business opportunities along the corridor.

It also has no right-of-way impacts and with the narrowed lanes, the extra right-of-way can be utilized for other purposes. For South Dixie Highway, that could mean increasing the attractiveness of the corridor in a manner that improves the quality of the pedestrian experience and the outward appearance of the neighborhoods bordering the corridor. For example, in sub-



*After a year-long test study (top image above), the City of Delray Beach decided to proceed with plans to enhance a portion of U.S. 1 extending through the downtown (lower image above) and make it safer for pedestrians. The plan (image below, left) calls for narrowing the width of the road, widening the sidewalks, using bulb-outs at intersections, and adding landscaping in the right-of-way. Well marked and conveniently placed crosswalks will make it easier and safer for pedestrians to cross the corridor and visit multiple businesses.*





areas of the corridor, the unused right-of-way could be used for wider sidewalks, public art, gateway treatments, transit infrastructure, and lighting upgrades. It can also provide space for a raised median.

An important factor to consider in the decision to reduce lane widths is the amount of truck use in the corridor. Data collected by the TAP indicates a higher than average percentage of trucks when compared to the traffic volume of the corridor. That has the effect of reducing the margin of error for trucks in navigating through traffic, in maneuvering around parked/parking vehicles, and in making turns at side streets and driveways.

The alternative approach to reducing the lane width is to remove lanes (not recommended by the TAP for the corridor). That is the “road diet” approach. Road diets are used to narrow higher speed (auto-centric) streets that were expanded in response to growing traffic. Although that approach has the advantage of reducing the width of the street that pedestrians need to cross, it could lead to increased congestion and the unwelcome diversion of traffic to parallel roads such as Olive Street.

### *Improved Pedestrian Crossings*

Safe, well-marked, and convenient pedestrian crossings are the single biggest need of the corridor and an essential part of the package when creating a great walkable street. Walkability has proven to be critical to the success of commercial districts and the TAP found this to be a significant deficiency along the corridor. Crosswalk locations and the specific type of treatment used should be site-specific. Some options include the use of striping patterns, special lighting, a traffic signal or beacon, bulb-outs, and textured pavement (which could include an audible and/or vibratory element). Improved pedestrian crossings will help expose businesses to more customers and contribute to the corridor’s identity as a desirable place to visit. “Visitors have a reason to cross the road, but need a safe way to do that,” the TAP observed.

- Select streetscape improvements that contribute to creating a walkable environment and enhance the corridor’s identity.

A streetscape improvement plan for the corridor should include a long-term, coordinated program of public and private investments that will create the desired pedestrian



*In another Delray Beach example, landscaping in place of on-street parking (top image above) provides a barrier between pedestrians and oncoming traffic, and buildings frame the street (bottom image above) which contributes to a positive walking experience and cues traffic to slow down. A downtown shuttle (image below) allows for a “park once” strategy for corridor visitors.*



*Downtown Roundabout Shuttle*

environment and distinctive corridor personality and character. Recommended improvements will vary based on existing conditions and specific needs within the various districts of the corridor. Variations in streetscape improvement can be used to distinguish the distinct personality and texture of the districts that comprise the corridor (discussed later under Marketing and Branding).

An overall streetscape program should address the roadway itself, as outlined in the sections above:

- Reducing traffic speeds through traffic calming design and/or capacity (narrowing street lanes) solutions.
- Increasing, where feasible, the number of on-street parking spaces and using them to buffer pedestrians from vehicular traffic.
- Installing conveniently placed and well-marked crosswalks and raised medians to help pedestrians cross the road.
- The streetscape program should also address what happens in and along the sidewalks. Elements should include:
  - Plenty of vegetation, including shade trees, on both sides of the corridor, as well as plantings to buffer parking and service areas from the street and mitigate large blank building faces. A street tree program is a public investment that accomplishes multiple goals when creating a positive pedestrian environment. That is well demonstrated in the Antique Row area of the corridor.
  - Wide and attractive sidewalks that are buffered from oncoming traffic by using on-street parking and/or street trees and other landscaping.
  - Bulb-out planting islands can be created to soften the feel of the street, calm traffic, and provide separation between pedestrians and vehicles. The use of bulb-outs in the southern part of the corridor is a good example. The clustering of Sabal Palms is very effective in softening the street scene, calming traffic, creating shade, and separating pedestrians on the sidewalk and traffic on the street. Additional bulb out opportunities exist in currently striped zones that might be converted. Sight distance requirements will have a bearing on the feasibility of that.



*Three images above: Special features and places*

*Right: Street trees and buildings with transparent front windows and doors pulled close to the street. Awnings provide shade.*



- Good lighting, which is an important security element both on the street and at the sidewalk storefront level. Lighting and landscaping elements must be carefully designed so as not to disrupt street views to storefronts. Lighting improvements in the south of the corridor are a welcome change to the streetscape. The same should be considered for the northern segments.
- Conveniently-placed street furniture that includes seating, trash receptacles (already in place in some areas of the corridor), and other amenities such as well-designed water features.
- Public art that provides visual interest and contributes to a strong sense of place. Public art on the corridor could be a potential partnership with two corridor anchors: the Norton Museum of Art and Palm Beach Atlantic University). Public art could also be used to demarcate “gateways” at each end of the corridor and possibly between districts.
- Underground utilities to reduce the feel of visual clutter, open views of buildings, and allow more space for street tree growth. The installation of underground power lines in the southern portion of the corridor creates a significant physical difference and would provide more flexibility to add street trees.
- Building design and placement to reinforce the desired pedestrian-orientation of the corridor. Important aspects include building frontage pulled up to the sidewalk and commercial uses and facades with transparent doors and windows at ground level (activates and provides “more eyes” on the street, which contributes to safety). Design techniques can be used to break up the mass and scale of buildings and building fronts can also feature awnings and other devices that provide shade and protection from inclement weather.
- Well-located places to park bicycles
- Good connections (pedestrian and vehicle) to the neighborhoods flanking the corridor.
- Parks and other gathering spaces are important to the vitality of the corridor. These spaces can host regular events (festivals, etc.).
- Good wayfinding signage is needed throughout to draw visitors and help them find their way around the corridor (discussed in the next section, Marketing and Branding).



*Upper: Underground Utilities. Lower: Use of landscaping to hide a blank wall and add interest.*

As depicted in the images on the prior page and to the right, the TAP also highlighted the streetscape assets and pedestrian improvements already in place in the corridor.

- **Develop a compelling corridor vision, brand, and coordinated marketing plan.**

The marketing and branding message from the TAP: Keep it simple and actionable. An immediate step is to establish a marketing task force composed of business representatives from each corridor zone (described later in this section). The intent is that the task force will initiate the marketing and branding process and activities with volunteer time and effort. Each representative must commit to a certain amount of volunteer time. Electing a chief marketing officer is also important.

Task force actions should include:

### **Creating (and Agreeing on) a Clear Vision**

Refine (both shorten and differentiate) the vision statement developed during a series of South Dixie Highway visioning meetings held between fall 2009 and fall 2010. A good vision statement should paint a vivid, compelling picture of where you want to go (the desired outcome). It should also inspire action and provide a framework for corridor actions. Each action should be aligned with and help advance (not detract from) the vision. A memorable catch phrase at the beginning contributes to a vision that guides and leads to positive change. Length is also important, with no more than three sentences at most.

### **Establishing a Strong Brand**

The TAP recommended deputizing a sub-group to develop an overall brand for the full corridor and, within that, sub-brands for each distinct district within it. The brand expresses the positive experience that the corridor will deliver, while the sub-brand exemplifies the unique and differentiating characteristics or experience of a particular district. The sub-brands can attract different market segments to the corridor – for example, someone shopping in the antique row district might stay and visit other districts.

The branding task force should take its time to develop a thoughtful master brand based on an assessment of corridor assets. When developing a brand, the TAP emphasized, it is important to remember that:

- An overall, master corridor brand should be used to develop a sense of cohesion and unity and provide a framework for the different districts.

*“A burning purpose attracts others who are drawn along with it and help fulfill it.” Margaret Bourke-White, Photojournalist*



The City of Dania Beach's master brand banners (above) display sub-brands for different districts. Corridor and district brands can also be communicated through wayfarer signage (examples below) that visitors use to identify and find their way around an area.





- A brand is not a logo; instead, it communicates the nature of the unique experience of the district. Logo design, the TAP stressed, should be based on a business decision (not an art contest). That decision should assess how well the brand advances the corridor's objectives.
- A brand alone is not a silver bullet but is a long-term proposition that is never really completed. That includes regular brand assessments – periodically evaluating key brand attributes using agreed upon benchmarks that measure success (increased visitor numbers and sales, for example).

## Developing an Actionable Plan

The plan should contain the strategies and the tactics for implementing each. Three essential plan elements are to create a sense of place, give people a reason to be in the corridor, and get the word out about the corridor.

### *Create a Sense of Place*

The corridor contains a number of distinct districts, each with its own identity. Some of those districts exist now, while others will need to be developed as part of creating a strong sense of place. Five distinct districts noted by the TAP are:

- Arts and Culture District (builds on corridor assets such as the Norton Art Museum, former Carefree Theatre, and the Woodlawn Cemetery (which has a rich history to communicate).
- Antique and Design District (capitalizes on the current success of antique row that draws visitors from throughout the region).
- Professional Services District (promotes the presence of many professional, as well as personal, services offices already located in the corridor).
- Community District (emphasizes the existing parks, schools, and churches).
- Restaurant Row (recognizes the growing number of restaurants in that section of the corridor).



*Gateway features can be used to announce arrival in the corridor and the individual districts and should visually be consistent with and support corridor branding materials.*

The southern end of the corridor (south of Forest Boulevard) could potentially be treated as an additional district where everyday conveniences are concentrated. A high quality development in that location would capitalize on the large parcels in the area and could serve as a retail anchor that sparks other investments.

Each district should have its own specific banner program that is part of an overall graphic uniformity and communicates where someone is in the corridor. The banners should be highly visual to yield maximum impacts. Corridor businesses should use the same visuals and identities in their materials. The master corridor and district sub-brands should additionally be communicated through distinct landscaping and streetscape treatments. To assist in forming those districts, the city could consider incentivizing appropriate uses through fast tracking permits if the business correlates with the overall use of the district (for example, a restaurant locating in the Restaurant Row District or a designer showroom locating in the Antique and Design District).

Coupled with signature street designs, gateways and wayfinding signage are other ways to distinguish the corridor and the districts within it. Gateway features announce arrival in the corridor and its districts. Wayfinding signs also can connote a sense of arrival as well as attract and direct travelers to specific locations (parking, for example) and help them easily navigate unfamiliar surroundings.

### ***Give People a Reason to Visit the Corridor***

A well-planned events program can attract new people to the corridor and prompt them to stay longer. One approach is to explore synergies created by partnerships with existing events and businesses in the area (for example, an arts after dark program or an evening on antique row). Other events could include a bike day (in Miami, for example, a stretch of road is closed and bicycle clubs are invited) and activities such as ethnic festivals and concerts put on by local schools that activate the parks and other gathering places along the corridor.



*In Clearwater, Florida, Cleveland Street (the heart of the Cleveland Street Retail and Entertainment District) is the focus of a multi-prong approach to making the corridor a more desirable and easier place to visit and learn about. Banners are used to announce the district (above, left) and an easy-to-navigate website < [www.clevelandstreetdistrict.com](http://www.clevelandstreetdistrict.com) > features information about the corridor. That includes a link to a district business guide, opportunities for housing, district specials and events, and a video of what people are saying about the district. Also underway is a major streetscape improvement initiative that features on-street parking and landscaping to shield the pedestrian from traffic and pedestrian-scale street lighting. As depicted in the lower image above, a colonnade provides shade and the building is pulled up close to and fronts the street with windows and doors, further contributing to the pedestrian environment.*

## Get the Word Out

Essential tools to getting the word out are:

- A dedicated website that conveys information about the corridor and the districts within it.
- Direct marketing using traditional and social (groupon, four square, and Facebook, for example) outreach.
- A loyalty, passport, and/or “buy local” program. Passport programs are typically implemented to entice customers to visit multiple places. Customers receive a stamp for each place visited and receive a reward when visiting all or a defined number of businesses participating in the program.
- Cross-marketing (cross-pollination between different sectors; for example, doctors, restaurants, arts, and home furnishings and design).

*“The allowed land uses in the corridor are not the problem. The concerns relate to the way a use is occurring and site design – the appearance of the use.”*  
*The ULI Technical Assistance Panel*



*Mixed-use development contributes to the pedestrian environment. The building's placement and relationship to the street help create a feeling of enclosure (like an outdoor room) and its transparent windows and doors create visual interest.*

## Putting in Place the Metrics and Funding

### Metrics

A set of metrics should be developed to evaluate performance and effectiveness. Metrics are a valuable tool for measuring the success of a campaign or event. For example, an outdoor event could be measured by attendance numbers; a social media campaign could be gauged the number of “likes” on Facebook as indicated by a before and after count. Revenue in dollar amounts or percentage can be a good measure for a loyalty or passport program.

### Funding

Funding can come from different sources, including sweat equity, membership fees, a special taxing district, and sponsorships. For example, businesses might be interested in a particular theme or target demographic, such as a wine event sponsored by a wine and spirit company, a music festival by a car dealership, or bike day by a fitness company.

Grants are another source of funding – for example the National Endowment for the Arts’ “Our Town Program” that focuses on creative placemaking projects that contribute to the livability of communities and places that have the arts at their core. Grants and other funding could be used, for example, for incentives that encourage businesses to expand or locate in the corridor, matching grants for building and site improvements, parking initiatives, shuttles for events, gateway features, and wayfinding signage. Funding, the TAP concluded, should be used to enable three essentials of revitalizing the corridor: continuity, achievability, and long-term thinking.

- Address code enforcement and physical upgrades for currently allowed uses and enhancement of properties that are less visually appealing and/or not contributing to meet corridor goals.

## Current Uses

The TAP found there is no need to make major changes to existing zoning or land use regulations that apply to the corridor at this time. The existing use list is not unreasonable and it can be said that problems generally arise from how the use occurs. For example, if the owner of a used car lot allows cars to over-park the lot and provides minimal landscaping, the use is viewed as a problem and creates fears about allowing future uses of the same kind. Concerns increase in the case of a continuing use that does not meet the current standards that new uses are required to meet.

One caution noted by the TAP when considering limiting certain uses or zoning them out: Limiting a current use causes existing sites with that use to increase in value, assuring their continuation. The impact of undesirable uses on the community can be mitigated by making them conditional, which means that the city can ensure that specific conditions are met on the property in order for the use to be allowed.

Mixed-use development is an allowed use that should be encouraged. It is recommended that those developments should be small scale (two to three stories). Having more residential units on the corridor would mean a number of benefits, including more customers for corridor businesses and more “eyes on the street” that contribute to a greater feeling of safety. An additional benefit is that buildings have more mass and that enhances the relationships of building size to the width of the corridor. Magnolia Court is a good example of the desired small-scale mixed development.



*The City of Orlando's Small Business Facade Program provides matching loan funds to commercial property owners and new and existing businesses, particularly those in more blighted areas. The program is part of the city's Strengthen Orlando Plan launched in 2009 to generate jobs and help residents and small businesses weather the recession. The plan also includes a one year waiver of change-in-use transportation impact fees (encourages the use of vacant properties), a business assistance program that helps offset development fees, and a Buy Local Orlando program. The city also supports the innovative Orlando Main Street Program <[www.cityoforlando.net/economic/mainstreet](http://www.cityoforlando.net/economic/mainstreet)> created to strengthen older neighborhood commercial business districts by enhancing their distinctive architecture, pedestrian-friendly environment, personal service, local ownership, and sense of community. The districts (Orlando now has seven) may incorporate as a special taxing district, such as a BID or Neighborhood Improvement District (NID). Corporate sponsors pair with districts, contributing towards operational expenses. An example is the Downtown South Main Street District <<http://downtownsouthorlando.org>>. Main Street staff provide in-house design assistance to kick-off facade improvements and at times target individual properties that are highly visible.*

## Enhancement of Existing Uses

Revitalization of the corridor should focus on the aspects of existing uses that are not visually pleasing. Those uses can be updated through a regulatory approach such as requiring current code upgrades/compliance for all properties by a defined date in the future or requiring updating of properties within the area by implementation of an overlay district.

Another approach is to encourage voluntary upgrades through programs that provide funding and/or incentives for property improvements such as landscaping and/or façade improvements that enhance building design and visibility. Incentives can take several forms; one example would be to couple the provision of design assistance with matching grants to help with the cost. That is particularly important for properties that, because of their current configuration, may have a more difficult time meeting higher standards. Providing design assistance could lead to more visual continuity along the corridor. Where upgrades are required, the assistance should be available for a period shorter than the deadline to comply in order to encourage more timely adherence to the new standard.

## Property Maintenance and Appearance

A property maintenance ordinance can mandate basic maintenance such as painting, resealing and restriping of parking lots, repair of architectural features and fences, and controlling clutter on individual properties. Another appearance/security/business clientele strategy is to dress up the side streets that connect the residential neighborhoods to the corridor. Improved sidewalks and better lighting are two related initiatives.

## Security and Code Enforcement

With the exception of a few minor issues, the TAP observed, there are relatively few security and code enforcement problems along the corridor. Examples of those minor issues include parked cars blocking sidewalks, outdoor displays and storage, some illegal signage, and utility pole posters. Reporting code violations to the proper authorities will help reduce problems.



*Before improvements: The Orange Blossom Trail Development Board created two Municipal Services Taxing Units to finance the construction and maintenance of beautification projects for the Orange Blossom Trail in Orlando.*



*The Orange Blossom Trail after improvements.*

- Put in place the public and private financing and the governance structure that will lead to successful implementation.

The TAP's principal advice about financing and implementation: Public-private partnerships are the only way to get it done. Government alone cannot solve the problems. The private sector needs to invest its own money and needs to be involved in implementation.

Financing and governance are two key cornerstones of successful implementation.

## Financing

Options for financing can include partnerships with utilities, city funding, and special taxing districts. Florida has two types of districts: an independent special district, which is created by legislative authorization and is independent of a general purpose government, and dependent special districts, which are created by a county or municipality. Dependent districts can be temporary or long term. They allow services, generally those are beyond the core services provided by the local government, to be targeted to a specific group of consumers who pay for and benefit from the services received.

Municipal Special Benefit Units and Municipal Special Taxing Units (MSTU) are two common dependent special districts. The TAP recommends the MSTU option. Projected revenue and property owner costs (based on the current assessed valuation of the corridor) are presented in the "Potential MSTU Revenue and Cost to Property Owner" on the next page. When setting up the MSTU, the TAP recommends omitting any owner-occupied residential properties in the area, if possible, but including rental residential properties, especially large multi-family units since they are essentially income-producing commercial enterprises. Selection of the millage rate would depend on the amount pledged by the city and any other partners, such as utilities or possibly grants received.

Another option is a special assessment for local improvements, what some cities call a Business Improvement District (BID). A BID allows business owners to approve an assessment to pay for increased services and to promote their district. Examples of such activities include initiatives to attract, retain, and expand businesses in the district; providing services that supplement those provided by a municipality (cleaning streets and sidewalks and providing security, for example); and make capital improvements such as the construction of pedestrian and streetscape enhancements. BIDs also carry out marketing programs and sponsor events. As discussed earlier, funding is needed for incentives that encourage property improvements in addition to attracting new businesses to the corridor.

The Coconut Grove Business Improvement District <<http://web.grovebid.com>>, established in 1999, serves as an example. The money collected from the BID goes directly into improving Coconut Grove and provides a level of service that is beyond what the city can provide. The Naples, Florida, Fifth Avenue South Business Improvement District <<http://fifthavenuebid.com>> is another example. In response to changing market conditions, the BID recently developed a new logo and tag line to promote the corridor and the business in it. Its new marketing campaign will include a business directory and map that will be posted on the street and included in pamphlets.

## Potential MSTU Revenue & Cost to Property Owners

Total Assessed Value: \$224,634,002

| Millage Rate | Revenue   |
|--------------|-----------|
| .5           | \$112,317 |
| 1            | \$224,634 |
| 1.5          | \$336,951 |
| 2            | \$449,268 |

| Millage Rate | Estimated Annual Tax |
|--------------|----------------------|
| .5           | 383.50               |
| 1            | 767.00               |
| 1.5          | 1,150.51             |
| 2            | 1,534.01             |

*Average Parcel Value: \$767,006 (average value may be distorted by large sites)*

### Governance

The TAP noted that governance may be the single most important aspect of creating a successful corridor. Without a strong governance structure in place, the current lack of cohesion and change within the corridor will likely continue. When creating a governance structure, it is important to recognize that revitalizing and continually enhancing the corridor will require long-term attention. Governance options include continuing revitalization as a city project or creating one of the multiple types of special districts allowed under Florida law that will provide for the desired revitalization activities.

Providing for an independent board to govern the special district (if allowed for the chosen type of district) would be desirable. An independent board will help ensure continued community and city support as well as opening doors to new partnerships and opportunities while keeping a singular vision on the mission at hand. An independent board can also serve to provide ongoing coordinated marketing and branding of the corridor.

The Orange Blossom Trail Development Board (OBTDB), Inc., in Orlando is a good example of a special taxing district and governance structure. The organization was created (through an interlocal agreement) in 1984 by Orange County and the City of Orlando. Its charge was to plan and implement projects intended to revitalize the Orange Blossom Trail. To give the organization a strong start, the city and county jointly provided \$200,000 for the first two years. Today the board operates as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and is considered a quasi-governmental entity accountable to the Board of Orange County Commissioners and the Orlando City Council.



*The Orange Blossom Trail Development Board emphasizes partnering as a useful tool in bringing together all the relevant parties and building friendships and lasting working relationships. OBTDB leaders note that partnering has been effective in providing an open forum to discuss potential problems and find workable solutions and opening doors by actually getting to know people. Instead of working separately for their individual goals, organizations now work together as a team to complete the common goal of revitalizing the corridor.*

The OBTDB's roles include administering two Municipal Services Taxing Units (MSTU) that were created to finance the construction and maintenance of beautification projects. The additional tax is paid by the commercial and industrial property owners that front the Orange Blossom Trail, as well as other non-residential properties in the area. Affected property owners are taxed at a different rate, depending on whether or not they have frontage properties.

Another important role is serving as a conduit between local government and property owners, developers, and technical groups involved in the physical and social improvements to the Orange Blossom Trail. The OBTDB is also in charge of corridor maintenance (through an agreement with Orange County and FDOT). The OBTDB's website <[www.obtdb.com](http://www.obtdb.com)> provides useful information about the corridor, including why businesses should locate there.

## CONCLUSIONS

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South Dixie Highway, the TAP concluded, is well positioned to become a shopping and entertainment destination that is distinct from others in the region. Achieving that goal will require taking the necessary steps to make the corridor a complete street that meets the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

Those steps – outlined below – need to be practical and fundable and have the support of local businesses and the surrounding neighborhoods. They also need to be taken within the context of an overall plan for the corridor. A first step is to address the TAP's recommendations for financing and governance:

- Put in place the public and private financing and the governance structure that will lead to successful implementation.

Financing and governance are the two cornerstones of successful implementation. Both require public-private partnerships; one sector alone cannot solve the problems. Through the governance structure, leadership must evolve to drive continuous and consistent attention to improvements throughout the corridor. The private sector must be willing to invest its own capital and sweat equity and must become involved in implementation. Municipal Special Benefit Units and Municipal Special Taxing Units (a special taxing district) are one way to create revenues dedicated to revitalizing and marketing the corridor. The board for the district could serve as the governance structure that will help ensure continued community and city support and open doors to new partnerships. It can also maintain a singular focus on the corridor vision.

- Provide an adequate supply of parking in the right places.

Both on- and off-street parking strategies can be used in the near term to provide more parking where it is needed and appropriate. That would have two positive results: a corridor that is easier to visit and a decrease in parking overflow into nearby neighborhoods. One on-street strategy is to encourage the consolidation of driveways and reduce the number of curb cuts, thereby addressing the current problems with sight distance that limit the number of allowed on-street parking spaces. Where more on-street parking is not feasible, the most practical approach is to create conveniently placed off-street parking lots that are located and designed to contribute to, not detract from, the urban fabric. Requiring that all redeveloped or improved properties provide adequate on-site (business) parking is another option where more off-street parking is not possible

- Lower the speed of traffic and make it easier for pedestrians to cross the street.

Both design and capacity strategies were recommended to reduce traffic speed. Lower speeds through traffic calming will make pedestrians feel safer and encourage drivers to stop and visit businesses along the road. Design strategies include those described in the streetscape recommendations below. Other ones could include colored pavement in parking lanes and terminal vistas that break up the driver's line of sight. The recommended capacity strategy is to reduce lane widths (not the number of lanes). The extra right-of-way created can be utilized for wider sidewalks, public art, gateway treatments, or transit infrastructure. Improving pedestrian road crossings is the corridor's most pressing need. Businesses will attract more customers when people feel safer crossing the street.

- Select streetscape improvements that contribute to creating a walkable environment and enhance the corridor's identity.

A crucial first step involves preparing a long-term, coordinated streetscape improvement plan that emphasizes the distinct sub-districts of the corridor. The plan should be based on an assessment of existing conditions and provide a framework for public and private investments. Recommended strategies include many of those discussed above plus others – plenty of vegetation including ample shade, wider sidewalks buffered from traffic, safe street crossings, buildings pulled close to the sidewalk, underground utilities for the whole corridor, public art, conveniently placed and designed street lighting and furniture and civic spaces, and themed wayfinding signage (also important to marketing and branding). At key locations, bulb-outs and raised medians should be used to calm traffic, reduce street crossing widths, and provide a safe refuge for pedestrians.

- Develop a compelling corridor vision, brand, and coordinated marketing plan.

A marketing task force should be established immediately. Two of its top priorities would be to create (and agree on) a clear and compelling vision for the corridor and a strong corridor brand as well as sub-brands for the distinct districts (listed in the TAP branding recommendations) that comprise the corridor. Next would come the preparation of a simple, action-based marketing plan and the public-private partnerships required to implement that plan. The plan should be organized around creating a sense of place, giving people a reason to be in the corridor, and getting the word out about it. Developing a set of metrics to evaluate performance and securing funding are also important.

- Address code enforcement and physical upgrades for currently allowed uses and enhancement of properties that are less visually appealing and/or not contributing to meet corridor goals.

No obvious changes in zoning are presently required. Current concerns stem from how certain allowed uses are occurring in the corridor today. A regulatory approach and/or incentives could be used to enhance existing uses and facilitate desired upgrades throughout the corridor. One initiative may be to provide design assistance along with matching grants to help with the costs of upgrades. Addressing property maintenance and dressing up the side streets and sidewalks to encourage nearby residents to visit the corridor are also important.

In closing, the TAP stressed that a lot of good planning has been done for the South Dixie Highway corridor. It is now time to move forward with the actions that will make it a great walkable street and position it for a period of renewed vigor and investment.

## APPENDIX A: AGENDA

### ULI Southeast Florida/Caribbean Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) Workshop West Palm Beach South Dixie Hwy. Corridor

January 26 & 27, 2012

#### Thursday, Jan. 26th

- 12:00 – 1:30 pm** Panelists arrive and meet over lunch (WPB staff to also attend)  
**Café Saponi Italian Restaurant**  
205 Southern Boulevard, West Palm Beach (561.805.7313)  
*(Located two blocks east of Dixie Hwy. on north side)*
- 1:30 – 3:00 pm** Tour of study area by van, led by WPB staff
- 3:30 – 5:00 pm** Panel meeting with community representatives, neighbors and other interested parties.  
**Palm Beach Atlantic Univ. Lassiter Student Activities Center**  
Weyenberg Center Room, 2nd Floor – corner of Olive & Okeechobee  
***This meeting is open to the public.***
- 5:00 – 6:00 pm** Hotel check-in and break  
**Hotel Biba**  
320 Belvedere Road, West Palm Beach (561.832.0094)  
*(Located at southeast corner of Belvedere & Dixie Hwy.)*
- 6:00 – 9:00 pm** Dinner and Initial Panel Discussion (Staff invited to dinner)  
Don Ramon Restaurant  
7101 South Dixie Highway, West Palm Beach (561.547.8704)  
*(Located south of Hotel Biba on Dixie Hwy. Dinner in private room.)*

#### Friday, Jan. 27th

- 7:30 – 8:30 am** Breakfast at **Hotel Biba**
- 8:30 – 10:00 am** Panel work session (closed to public)  
**PBA Lassiter Student Activities Center, Weyenberg Center Room**
- 10:00 – 10:30 am** Break
- 10:30 – 12:30 pm** Panel work session (closed to public)
- 12:30 -1:30 pm** Working lunch (catered)
- 1:30 -3:00 pm** Panel work session (closed to public)
- 3:00 -3:30 pm** Break
- 3:30 – 4:30 pm** Panel review of Draft Report (closed to public)
- 4:30 – 5:30 pm** Presentation of Draft Report; Questions & Answers  
**PBA Univ. Lassiter Student Activities Center**  
Weyenberg Center Room, 2nd Floor ***(open to public)***

## **APPENDIX B: QUESTIONS FROM THE CITY OF West Palm Beach**

### **South Dixie Highway Corridor**

**January 26 and 27, 2012**

#### **Questions to be Addressed by ULI Panel**

##### Traffic and Parking

1. How can existing parking lots be shared among businesses throughout the corridor to address the perceived shortfall in on-street parking and reducing the need for patrons to park in the adjoining residential neighborhoods?
2. What specific areas would be benefitted most by additional parking?
3. Where could on-street parking be added without impeding through traffic?
4. Should traffic flow on South Dixie be slowed to encourage drivers to become aware of the businesses along the corridor and to patronize them? If so, explain in what areas and by what means, as examples?

##### Streetscape

1. Provide sample design concepts and elements of a streetscape program for the corridor and suggest a financing plan.

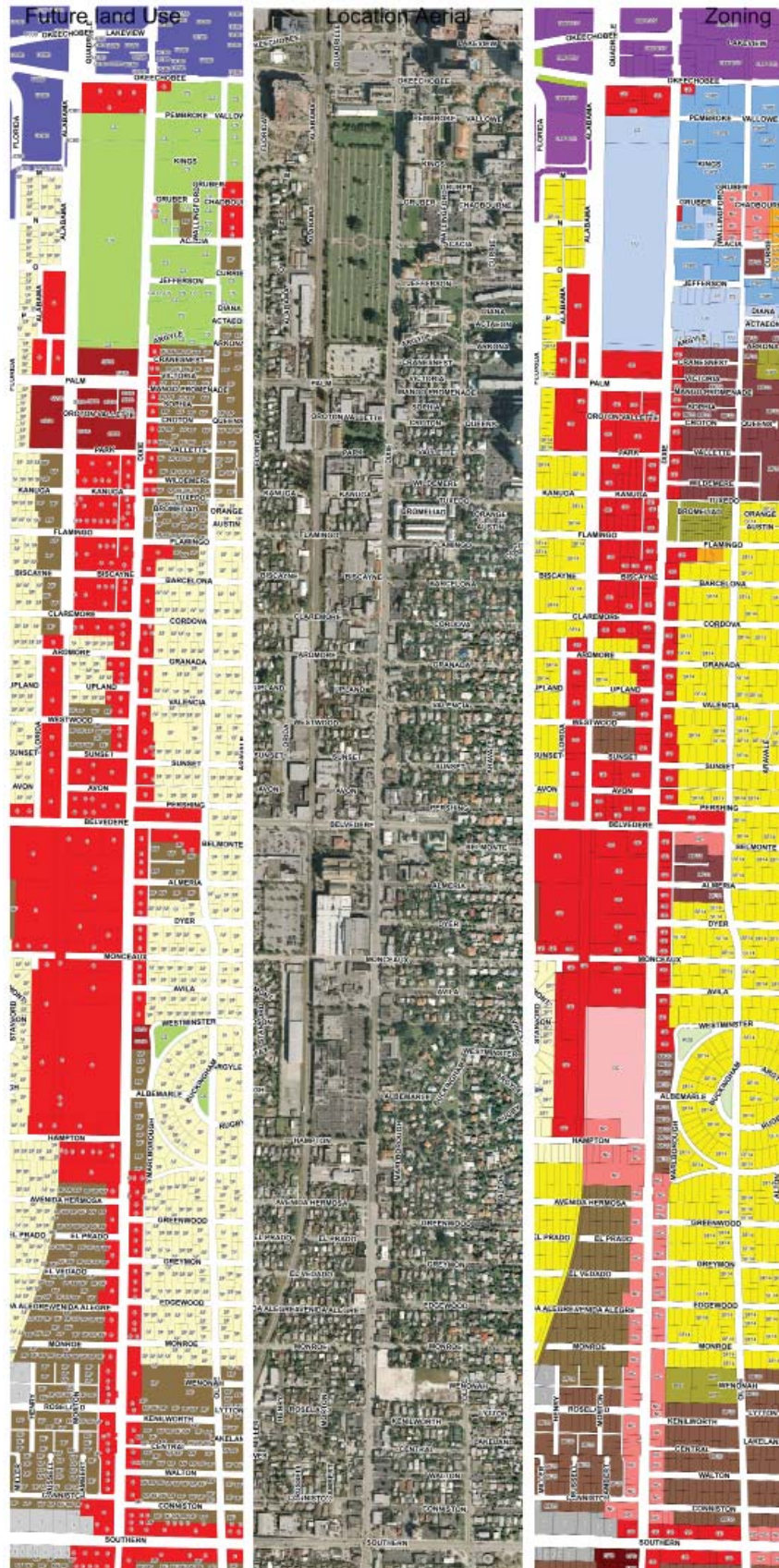
##### Marketing/Zoning

1. How could a marketing plan be used to enhance the corridor? What are the most important elements for such a plan? How could it be implemented and managed, and how could business owners participate?
2. What conflicts exist between the commercial activities along the corridor and the adjacent residential neighborhoods, and how can they be mitigated?
3. What actions could the businesses along the corridor take to increase patronage by adjacent residents?
4. Should certain uses within the corridor be restricted through regulatory tools such as an overlay district to address the larger vacant sites that exist throughout the corridor?
5. Is there a need for enhanced security along the corridor, and if so, where, when, and in what forms?

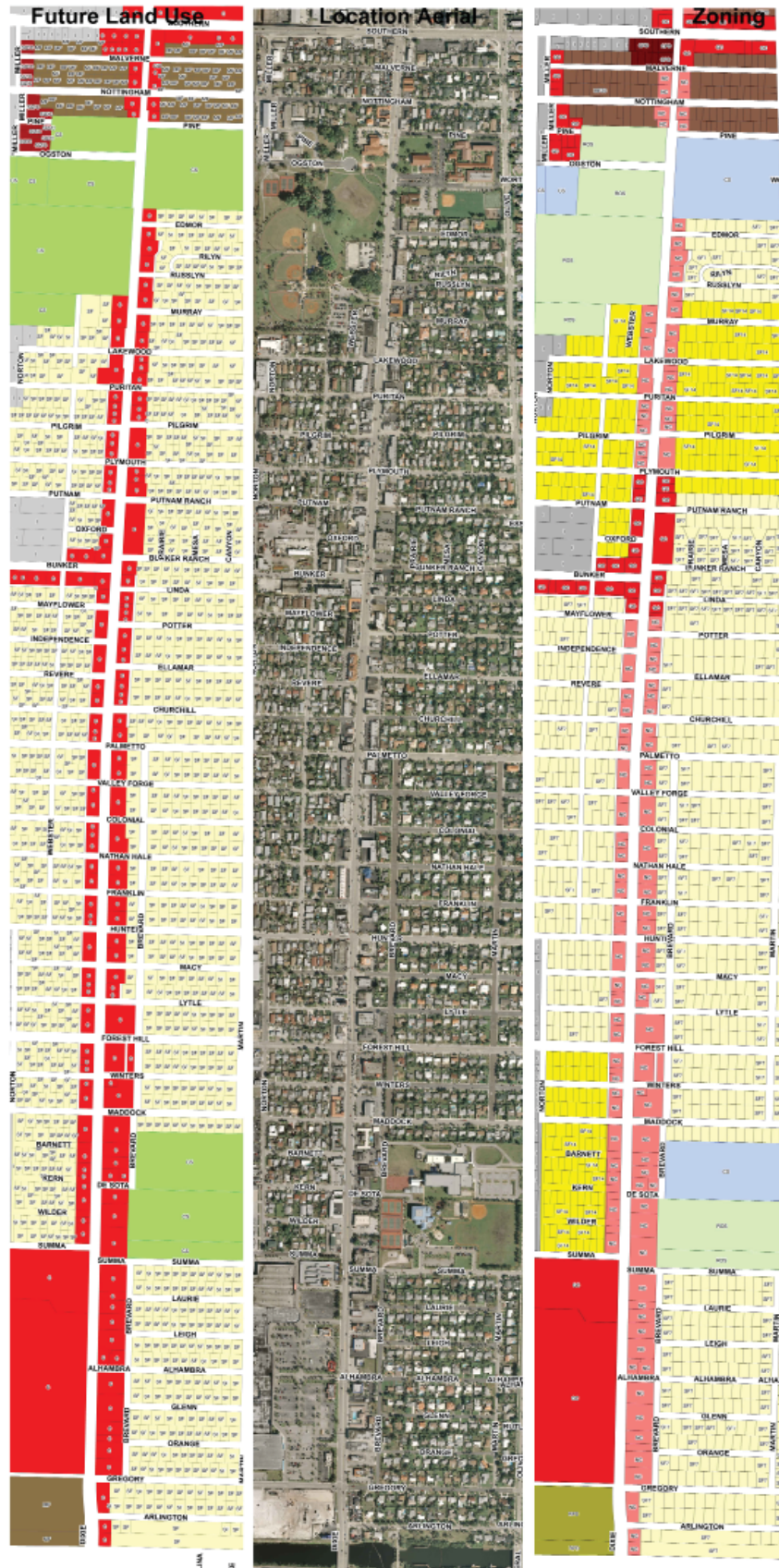
##### Financing

What financing vehicles or incentives should be employed with regard to any parking, streetscape, and marketing programs?

## APPENDIX C: Future Land Use, Aerial and Zoning Map



*Future Land Use, Aerial and Zoning between Okeechobee Blvd. and Southern Blvd.*



*Future Land Use, Aerial and Zoning between Southern Blvd. and the Southern Limits of the City.*