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# Executive Summary

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# Executive Summary

## Study Area

The project study area for the Southwest Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan is bounded by SW 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue at the north, which generally follows the defined edge of the existing overlay district that spans from SW 1<sup>st</sup> Street across Atlantic to NW 1<sup>st</sup> Street. The study area's western limit is Interstate 95 and the eastern limit is Swinton Boulevard. The southern limit begins at the intersection of I-95 and W 10<sup>th</sup> Street, turns south at SW 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, turns east at the southern boundary of Ridgewood Heights subdivision to SW 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, then continues east along Southridge Road to its intersection at Linton Boulevard.

The formal boundaries of the study area do not include the Atlantic Avenue commercial district, but the impact that neighborhood serving businesses have on overall livability conditions required the inclusion of those areas in the proposed neighborhood improvement strategies.

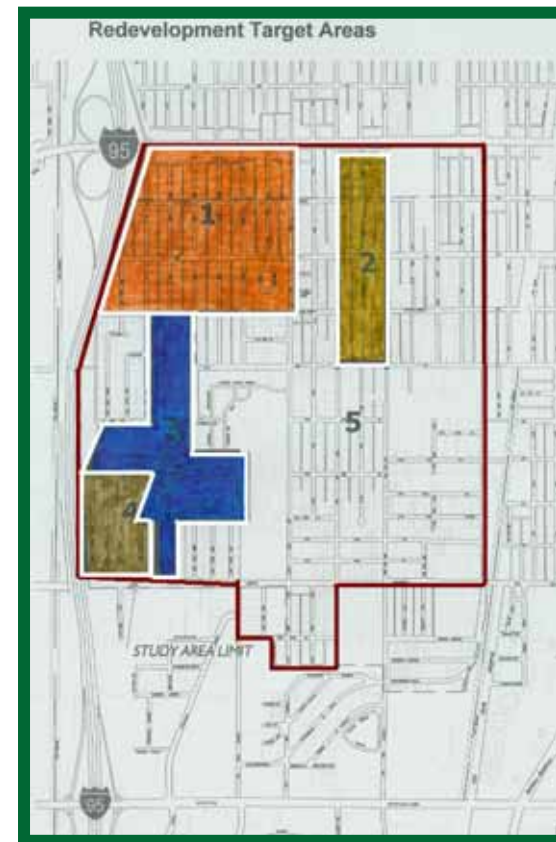


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## Sub Areas

For planning purposes the study area is divided into five sub-areas. The sub-area boundaries were determined based upon geography, historic factors, land uses, and existing conditions. Livability, urban design, and redevelopment options and recommendations were explored to address the unique opportunities and challenges presented in each of the sub-areas.

- 1. Northwest Quadrant**  
This sub-area encompasses the northwestern section of the study area, extending from I-95 to 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and from Atlantic Avenue to S.W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.
- 2. Frog Alley**  
This sub-area includes a large portion of the historic Bahamian settlement dating back to the 1800's that got it's name as a result of marshy conditions and the resultant large frog population. The planning boundaries extend from 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and from Atlantic Avenue to S.W. 4<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 3. Village Center**  
This sub-area links the public service and education facilities within a "service corridor" that extends from S.W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to S.W. 10<sup>th</sup> Street. Agencies currently based within the corridor include MADD DADS, the Full Service Center, the Village Academy, the Boys and Girls Club, Head Start, the Delray Beach Housing Authorities, and other service providers that have satellite operations in the area.
- 4. Industrial Corridor**  
This sub-area is zoned for light industrial uses and extends from I-95 to 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and from S.W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street to S.W. 10<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 5. Infill Area**  
This sub-area includes all of the land area not included in the above sub-area. This sub-area represents the majority of the study area's land mass. No major redevelopment projects are proposed in this sub-area. Infill development, housing rehabilitation, and code enforcement are the recommended tools to enhance protect the stability of the neighborhoods in this area.



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## Overview

The Southwest Area Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan was developed to provide a blueprint for the revitalization and stabilization of Southwest Delray Neighborhoods. A total of sixteen neighborhoods are encompassed within the study area

The plan represents the results of a collaborative endeavor between the consulting team (JEG Associates, Platts/Simon Community Planning, RMPK Group, Strategic Planning Group, and TRA Associates) and a committed group of Southwest (*and Northwest*) Delray Beach community stakeholders.

Southwest area residents, business and civic leaders, and other community stakeholders worked with this experienced team of planners, economic development experts and urban design specialist to craft solutions to community problems and develop strategies to enhance, stabilize, and protect Southwest Delray Beach neighborhoods and surrounding commercial districts.

The consultant team reviewed previous plans and studies to obtain a better understanding of historic community perceptions and current public policy direction and mandates. Previous studies, findings, and plans were analyzed to determine existing conditions and stakeholder priorities.

The sixteen neighborhoods within the study area provide a wide range of opportunities and challenges. The plan includes strategies for addressing overall livability conditions within the study area. It also focuses attention on the development of specific actions necessary to enhance and protect the relatively stable neighborhoods and arrest blight wherever it exists throughout the study area.

The plan reviews existing conditions within each of the sub-areas and prescribes planning and design solutions that are intended to reflect the vision of community stakeholders grounded in technical and practical reality.

The plan links the neighborhood residential areas, commercial centers, civic functions and green spaces utilizing practical and creative design schemes intended to create a vibrant, pedestrian friendly network of connected neighborhoods.

A phased, implementation process is proposed to minimize the displacement of current residents and the destruction of the community's culture, while promoting reinvestment in the neighborhoods.

The study area was divided into five *sub-areas* based upon current and proposed land uses. The sub-areas serve to define potential boundaries for the phased implementation of the various plan components.

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### Plan Description

The plan is organized into five major components:

The **Strategic Planning Framework** provides background regarding the process, conditions and circumstances that culminated in the development of this plan. The stakeholder-driven planning process which was utilized to maximize community participation is outlined, and stakeholder input is documented in this section. An analysis of livability conditions within the study area is offered, based primarily upon the observations of community stakeholders.

The **Existing Conditions** component describes current physical, social, and economic conditions within the study area. The direct input of community stakeholders is augmented with secondary data (census), photo studies and thoughtful planning analysis to provide a thorough portrait of the Community relative to its demographic make up, housing, commercial districts, green spaces and infrastructure.

The **Strategic Action Plan** provides a conceptual master plan for the revitalization of the study area. It reflects the long range vision for the area envisioned by community stakeholders. The urban design concepts proposed in the plan were developed based upon a set of guiding design principles that were developed based upon identified community priorities. The conceptual plan includes specific recommendations for the enhancement or redevelopment of each of the sub-areas within the study area. This section is intended to provide strategic direction and conceptual design options for the redevelopment of the targeted areas.

The **Economic Development Plan** outlines specific strategies to improve overall economic conditions in Southwest Delray. The plan includes recommendations designed to create or enhance job creation and entrepreneurial activities, increase the availability of goods and services in the community, and increase property values, thereby increasing overall community wealth.

Finally, the **Implementation Strategies** section provides specific recommendations for implementing the plan in a manner that allows for the effective and expedient implementation of steps to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in the plan with minimal disruption and displacement and ongoing stakeholder engagement in the decision making process. The roles and responsibilities of community stakeholders are discussed, along with potential partnership opportunities and resources, and specific action steps and phasing options.

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## Key Findings

### FINDINGS:

- The Southwest Area consist of a diverse networks of neighborhoods representing a rich blend of cultures, income levels, and social issues. A well organized system of neighborhood associations and active community organizations provide a solid foundation for community building.
- Community stakeholders rated overall livability conditions in the community poorly, but expressed a great deal of pride in the area's history and current sense of community.
- The overall housing stock in the community is in fair condition as a result of an aggressive infill program implemented in the area in recent years. However a large number of substandard housing units still exists, mostly in the northern section of the study area, and will require substantial rehabilitation or replacement to arrest blighted conditions and stabilize transitional areas.
- The lack of quality, neighborhood serving businesses to provide for the daily needs of residents and community stakeholders has a major negative impact on overall livability conditions.
- The current effort to redevelop the West Atlantic Avenue business district provides a tremendous opportunity to improve economic conditions and overall livability conditions in the adjacent neighborhoods.
- A substantial number of vacant parcels exist in the study area, creating opportunities for housing infill development. Title entanglements and speculative pressure inflating land values present a challenge relative to lot acquisition.
- There are also a large number of vacant lots and substandard structures in the areas targeted for redevelopment, including several properties owned by the CRA. However, those areas also contain several businesses and churches that will have to be incorporated into the redevelopment scheme.
- The potential displacement of current residents is a major concern that will require the coordinated effort of public officials, developers, and community stakeholders. The continued engagement of community stakeholders in a coordinated effort to address this issue will be especially critical to the effective implementation of the revitalization strategies included in this plan.
- The area's commercial market potential is limited due to its small population base and reputation as a "high crime" area. Both of these issues will have to be addressed in order for substantial commercial investment in the area to occur
- The proximity of the area to the downtown business district, major transit corridors, and the beach are extremely positive factors, relative to the potential for reinvestment. Creating a proper transition between the intense commercial activity proposed for West Atlantic Avenue and the surrounding residential neighborhoods is extremely important.

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### Recommendations

- Continue to develop and nurture collaborative relationships among community stakeholders through vehicles such as the Community Management Team, Neighborhood Associations, and WARC.
- Continue to cultivate the Community Management Team as a vehicle for ongoing stakeholder engagement in the planning and implementation of community redevelopment projects and initiatives.
- Develop mechanisms to keep the community informed about implementation progress, changes, or setbacks.
- Develop partnerships between the City, the County, the CRA, the Delray Beach Housing Authority, and other appropriate community stakeholders to provide for maximum leveraging of public resources.
- Cultivate and coordinate resources for property acquisition and land banking to accommodate the infill development, and redevelopment strategies outlined in the plan.
- Develop an aggressive infill development program that gives residents in areas slated for redevelopment priority when selecting potential tenants and/or home owners for infill units.
- Work with the Community Management Team to create/enforce design standards for new development and infill/rehabilitation projects, consistent with the conceptual schemes included in this document.
- Develop and promote an incentive-based façade improvement program for existing commercial and residential structures.
- Develop a structured, collaborative process and proactive outreach, education, and case management strategies to address displacement, relocation, and individual capacity development issues.
- Continue to work with non-profit developers (CDC's) to maintain the affordability of infill housing units.
- Include clear language about urban design parameters and affordable unit set-asides in all RFP's and contracts.
- Focus on the development of neighborhood serving commercial enterprises and neighborhood compatible office and public use facilities.
- Develop façade improvement programs to encourage existing businesses to improve the appearance of commercial buildings to be consistent with the proposed new development.
- Set strict design standards (possibly utilizing overlay districts) to ensure that any new development in the targeted areas is consistent with plan design schemes.
- Phase the implementation of proposed redevelopment projects to provide for the gradual relocation of current residents and to minimize displacement.
- Redevelop the northwest quadrant of the study area (I-95 to 8th Avenue / Atlantic Avenue to 3rd Street) with a neighborhood serving commercial activity center along Atlantic Avenue, and a mixture multi-family housing (apartments/townhomes), single family homes, and amenitized green spaces.
- Redevelop the *Frog Alley* corridor (4th Avenue to 6th Avenue / Atlantic Avenue to 4th Street) as a mixed use and residential area, consistent with the historic Bahamian architectural and urban design themes.
- Continue to develop the *Village Center* service corridor (3rd Street to 10th Street) to create a seamless service network linking education, social, and recreation services and facilities to meet the needs of Southwest area neighborhoods.
- Incorporate the proposed parks and green spaces, and other infrastructure improvements into current and long-range City department plans and budgets.
- Develop a detailed financing plan and implementation schedule to follow up on the funding strategies included in this document.

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### Conclusions

Like many older, urban communities in Florida, and throughout the nation, the neighborhoods of Southwest Delray Beach are threatened by the looming specter of blight and decay in the very near future if appropriate steps are not taken today to stem the tide. This plan represents an ambitious undertaking designed to drastically improve livability conditions in Southwest Delray Beach. The success of this effort will be contingent upon the ability of community stakeholders to work collaboratively to garner the necessary resources and community-wide support to make their vision a reality for themselves, as well as for future generations. The plan captures the stakeholders' vision of a beautiful, well connected community with a wide range of housing options to meet the needs of current residents, while attracting new young professionals, families and seniors to settle in the area. The plan also attempts to address the need for new and improved neighborhood serving businesses, public spaces, and services to address the daily needs of community residents and individuals that work or play in the area.

We were greatly encouraged throughout the process by the strong faith of all of the community stakeholders in the areas' promise. Our sense of optimism was also boosted by the strong commitment to the community demonstrated by key stakeholders and City leaders. The implementation of the projects included in the plan will require substantial public and private investment. The replacement of sub-standard housing in the areas targeted for redevelopment while minimizing the displacement of existing residents is possible, but will require the concerted efforts of community stakeholders. The end result could very well be a "win-win" situation with current residents benefiting from the opportunity to improve their living situations; and the rest of the community enjoying the benefits associated with the redevelopment of blighted areas (i.e., increased property values, improved services, entrepreneurial opportunities, additional housing options, parks, etc.).

The intent of this study was to develop a collective community vision for the area. Hopefully, this plan accomplishes that goal, even as it reflects the diversity of interests and opinions among various stakeholder groups. The recommendations and design schemes offered represent a sincere effort to balance the interest of each of the specific stakeholder groups with the interest of the entire community. A careful analysis of economic, physical, and social factors that could potentially impact the success of efforts to revitalize the area helped to shape our thinking. The future of the Southwest Delray Beach neighborhoods will be determined in large measure by the actions taken today. However, it should be recognized that community building is a long-range, and constantly evolving process. The achievement of the vision presented in this plan will require patience, determination, and sacrifice by all of the community's stakeholders. This vision plan is intended to be conceptual in nature, it will hopefully serve as a guide for the renaissance of Southwest Delray Beach. However, the ideas and schemes presented are intended to allow for the necessary flexibility to adapt to implementation realities and changing conditions within the community landscape.