
Introduction

THE STUDY AREA

The City of Delray Beach “**North Federal Highway Corridor**,” (shown graphically on Figure 1, page 2), is defined as the area of the City bordered by the F.E.C. Railroad on the west; the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) boundary on the east; NE 4th Street on the south and the city limits to the north.

HISTORY OF THE NORTH FEDERAL HIGHWAY CORRIDOR

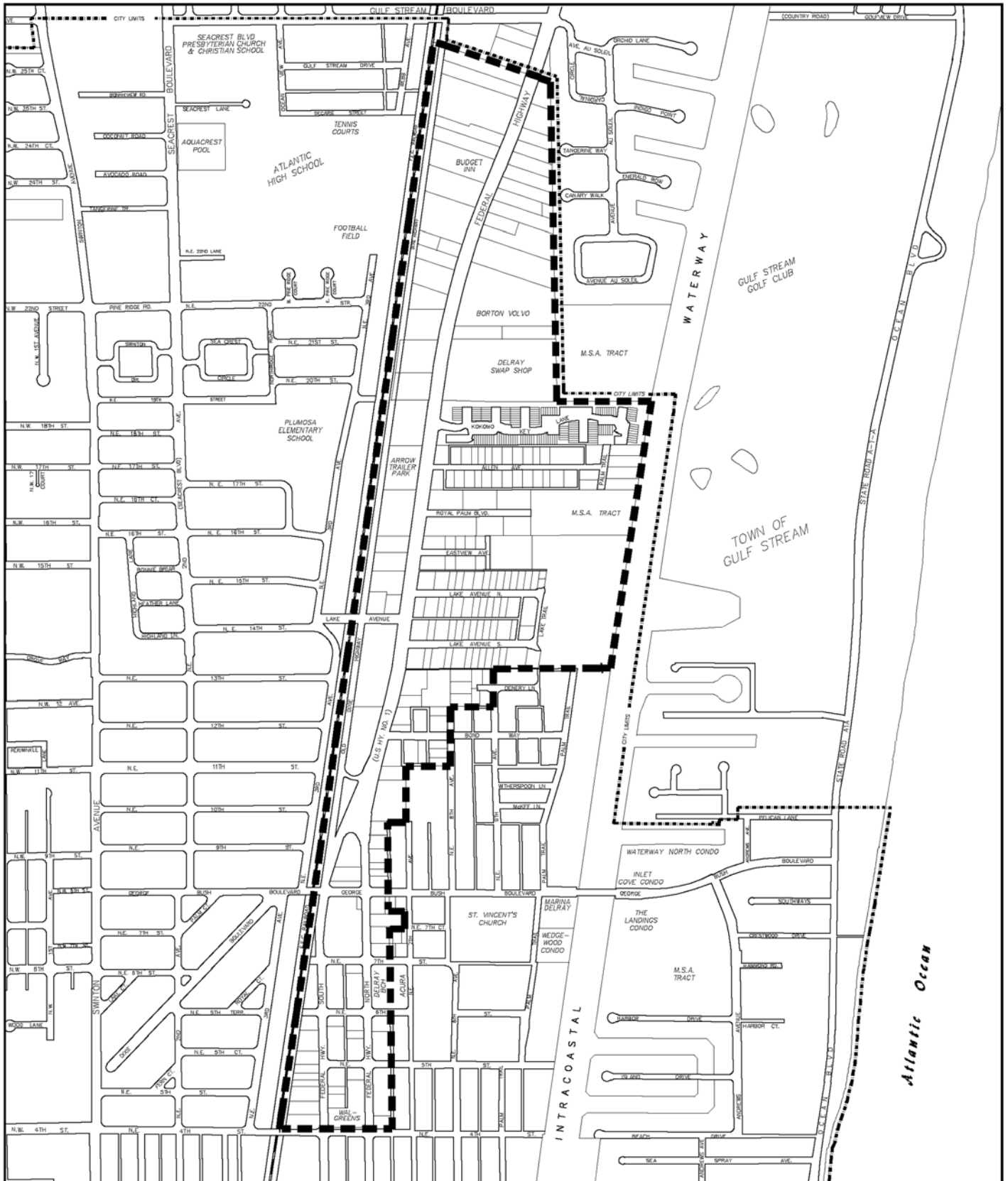
The North Federal Highway area was historically platted in three distinct phases. The section between NE 4th Street and George Bush Boulevard was subdivided by several plats recorded in 1913. The area just north of George Bush Boulevard (Sofia Frey subdivision) and the Lake Avenues (La Hacienda) were platted in 1926. The Bond Way area (Kenmont) and areas north of La Hacienda were platted between 1946 and 1950.

Early development in the area consisted of a mix of single family homes and commercial uses which were highly dependent on the tourist trade. These uses, including trailer parks, auto repair, filling stations, and small motels continued to thrive during this period, since Federal Highway was the principal route for travelers to reach South Florida.

Completion of the Florida Turnpike and I-95 reduced the importance of Federal Highway as a route for tourists bound for South Florida. The opening of Walt Disney World in 1971 also contributed to the decline of the corridor, as many tourists began stopping in the Orlando area rather than continuing to South Florida. These changes in the Florida tourist industry combined to marginalize the Federal Highway corridor as a tourist destination. Inevitably, the loss of a customer base led many businesses to become obsolete and disappear.

Economic activity and property values continued to decline throughout most of the 1980s. At the same time, many commercial structures and residences in the area were falling into disrepair due to age and neglect. As businesses left the area, they were often replaced by marginal uses located in poorly maintained buildings with inadequate parking and landscaping. While the physical appearance of these uses contributed to the negative image of the area, several locations created more serious problems for the stability of the neighborhood. Declining motels, trailer parks, and an adult book store became attractors for criminal activities, such as drug sales and prostitution. The presence of these activities inhibited investment in the area and deepened the decline.

The City has taken steps in recent years to help stabilize the area. It purchased the Adult Book Store property and resold it to a farm equipment dealer. The Delray Beach Police Department began working with neighborhood groups to help reduce problems with drugs and prostitution in the area. Following the enclave annexations, City water and sewer services were extended to most properties. In 1995, the last County “pockets” along the North Federal Highway corridor were annexed into the City.




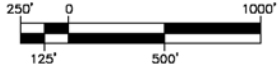

N
 PLANNING DEPARTMENT
 CITY OF DELRAY BEACH, FL
 -- DIGITAL BASE MAP SYSTEM --

FIGURE 1
**NORTH FEDERAL HIGHWAY
 STUDY AREA**

GRAPHIC SCALE

 250' 0 1000'
 125' 500'
 CITY LIMITS
 REDEVELOPMENT AREA - - - -

Private investment has also increased in the past few years. New development and redevelopment in the area include: Kokomo Key, a 133 unit townhouse development, establishment of the Del-Sol Patio Furniture outlet, Ellie's Diner and Borton Volvo, conversion of the old Miller Dodge site into a Kawasaki motorcycle and jet ski dealership, and a major redevelopment of the Delray Swap Shop property. Additionally, many businesses in the area have installed landscape improvements in response to the City's 1993 landscape compliance ordinance. The new landscaping has helped to improve the appearance of the area.

Notwithstanding recent improvements, the area still has a long way to go before the blight is eliminated. The City is preparing this redevelopment plan to build upon those recent advances and help speed up the revitalization of the corridor.

PURPOSE OF THE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

In preparing its vision for the future in the 1989 Comprehensive Plan, the City of Delray Beach realized that the City was rapidly approaching build-out. It was also evident that future increases in ad-valorem tax revenues would become more and more dependent upon the value of existing properties and less dependent on new development. This fact and a growing realization of the importance of neighborhood stability, led the City to refocus its attention toward redevelopment and revitalization of the older sections of Delray Beach. Recognizing that several of these older areas were becoming increasingly blighted and that property values were declining, the City adopted a proactive approach to stop the decline. The following Goal statement from the Comprehensive Plan represents the starting block upon which its implementation strategy has been built:

BLIGHTED AREAS OF THE CITY SHALL BE REDEVELOPED AND RENEWED AND SHALL BE THE MAJOR CONTRIBUTING AREAS TO THE RENAISSANCE OF DELRAY BEACH.

A major part of the implementation strategy is for the City to prepare and adopt "Redevelopment Plans" for declining areas of the City. These areas are depicted on the Future Land Use Map as Redevelopment Areas #1 through #6. This designation effectively acts as a holding zone on each area, where Future Land Uses designations will not be assigned until a Redevelopment Plan has been completed and adopted.

Although the North Federal Highway Corridor is not identified as one of the six redevelopment areas, the City's Comprehensive Plan and the CRA's Community Redevelopment Plan both identify the area as blighted and call for the preparation of a program to hasten the revitalization of the area. The following language, excerpted from Future Land Use Element Policy C-1.4 in the City's Comprehensive Plan, gives a description of the program:

Properties in the corridor that front on Federal Highway primarily contain small-scale, strip commercial development. Many parcels in the area contain vacant or dilapidated structures, substandard parking, and substandard landscaping. The area also contains residential areas identified as "Stabilization" and "Revitalization" on the Residential Neighborhood Categorization Map contained in the Housing Element. Many of the remaining parcels in the area are currently vacant.

Due to those conditions, the North Federal Highway Corridor is hereby identified as a blighted area. The CRA will be the lead agency for the preparation of an Improvement Program for the North Federal Highway Corridor. The City, through its Planning and Zoning Department will provide support and assistance to the CRA in the preparation of the North Federal Highway Corridor Improvement Program.

The program will, at a minimum address the following issues:

- *Improvement of the appearance of the area;*
- *Identification of appropriate uses for parcels adjacent to Dixie Highway and the FEC railroad tracks;*
- *Identification of and strategies for the elimination of inappropriate and marginal uses;*
- *Provision for increases in permitted residential densities adjacent to the Intracoastal Waterway;*
- *Directing smaller business operations to more concentrated areas;*
- *Providing economic stimulation and investment in the area;*
- *Creation of jobs;*
- *Stabilization and preservation of residential neighborhoods through new development, redevelopment and the elimination of blight.*

This document is the Redevelopment Plan for "**The North Federal Highway Corridor.**" The Plan will attempt to reflect the essence of the community's redevelopment needs for the future. These needs will then be addressed by determining what regulations are appropriate and how they fit into the overall design concept. The elimination of blight through redevelopment will be made possible by promoting a healthy mix of commercial and residential development, coexistence of automobile, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic and the orderly development of vacant parcels.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

City staff began developing the concepts that led to this plan in 1995, following annexation of the last county enclaves in the North Federal Highway corridor. Now that the City finally had jurisdiction over all property along the corridor, it became possible to implement a coordinated redevelopment program for the area. Since redevelopment of the corridor is just beginning to take place, the City still has considerable opportunity to influence and guide the effort.

City and CRA staff first presented their ideas for redevelopment of the corridor at a public meeting held on March 25, 1996. The meeting was well attended by residents of the neighborhoods within and around the study area. The residents expressed concerns regarding the future of their neighborhoods, given the City's ambitious redevelopment program. On April 10, 1996, the City and CRA held a second public meeting to gather information for the preparation of the plan. That meeting, which was also heavily attended, indicated significantly different priorities for area residents, residents of surrounding areas, and owners of commercial properties and businesses in the area. In order that each of the three groups would have an adequate forum for their concerns, the City and CRA held special meetings with each of the groups. The comments received at all of those meetings helped to shape the contents of the first draft of the Redevelopment Plan.

One of the major elements of the Plan was to add a High Density Residential category to the zoning code and apply it to the 17-acre Yake property, adjacent to the Intracoastal Waterway. Concerns over increased traffic and compatibility with adjacent single-family development caused residents in the area to oppose the Plan. The City Commission denied the Plan on November 5, 1996. Staff was directed to work with the residents and businesses in the area to build a consensus on the scope of the plan and then revise it accordingly.

The City and CRA entered into partnership with the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (TCRPC) to prepare a new redevelopment plan. TCRPC in turn hired the private consulting firm of Dover, Kohl & Partners to conduct an intensive planning workshop called a "charrette", and prepare final recommendations for the redevelopment of the area. In November, 1997, a group of residents and property owners gathered together with public officials, City staff, CRA staff, and professional planners from Dover, Kohl and Partners and the Treasure Coast Planning Council to voice their opinions and propose specific courses of action for the area's future growth and development.

The purpose of the workshop was to gather citizen input and then meld all of the proposed ideas into one development plan. This was accomplished in a two step process. First, the participants were divided into five groups. Working with a professional planner, each group expressed their ideas with drawings on a map of the area. Next came the presentation by each group of their proposed plan. As each plan was presented, it became apparent that many of the ideas, while slightly different, had

common themes. The groups' suggestions included extensive landscape improvements; placing buildings closer to the street; and better utilization of Dixie Highway. Other ideas included traffic calming in neighborhoods south of the Swap Shop; revitalizing the Swap Shop and the Delray Shopping Center; developing waterfront parks; and promoting mixed use development. The participants also agreed that North Federal Highway should not compete with Atlantic Avenue, but compliment it by becoming a "workplace" with office buildings as opposed to boutiques and specialty shops.

Immediately following the charrette, the joint team of planners from the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council and the private consulting firm of Dover, Kohl & Partners began to develop their professional interpretation of the plan based on the extensive public input.

The charrette participants gathered again in February, 1998 for a formal presentation of an overall illustrative plan and redevelopment concepts by the consultants. A final report including all the consultant's recommendations was presented to the City in August, 1998. Many of the elements included in the report have been incorporated into this "Redevelopment Plan".

A draft of this Redevelopment Plan was presented to the Community Redevelopment Agency and the Planning and Zoning Board in February, 1999. The Plan was adopted by the City Commission on March 16, 1999.