

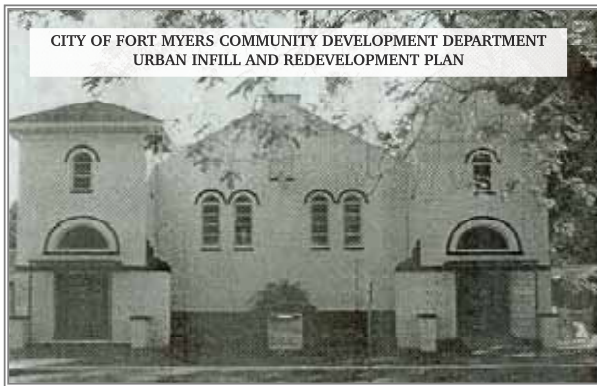


previous studies – appendix



URBAN INFILL & REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

Prepared by City of Fort Myers Planning Division 2002



In 1999 the Florida legislature authorized cities to designate “urban infill and redevelopment areas” to stimulate investment in distressed urban centers. This plan was prepared using a state planning grant under the program.

This plan designated a Fort Myers urban infill and redevelopment area bounded by Evans Avenue on the west, Michigan Avenue on the north and east, and Edison Avenue on the south. It included land both inside and outside the city of Fort Myers (although all of the area outside was annexed into the city in 2003).

This plan echoes most of the themes of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard Redevelopment Plan from two years earlier (as described on the next page) and contains four major enhancements.

The first is a new emphasis on brownfield redevelopment. The prior plan focused on brownfields as contaminated sites that required environmental cleanup before reuse was possible. Newer terminology refers to brownfields as abandoned, idled, or underused industrial or commercial facilities

where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived contamination. The urban infill area has one of the highest concentrations of such sites in the entire city.

Another enhancement followed the realization that, while Dunbar has a rich history and unique character, it has no single center or place that epitomizes the community. An opportunity presented itself when Lee County offered to turn Clemente Park and nearby Dunbar Park over to the city. If these two facilities were linked and Clemente Park were expanded to front on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, a highly visible centerpiece could be created that would serve as an anchor for community gatherings, cultural events, and public recreation.

A third new emphasis is on the preservation of ten historic structures, including three churches. All ten were documented in a brochure created for a self guided tour. (This brochure is reproduced in Appendix E of this report).

Finally, an appendix to the infill plan presented recommendations of the Dunbar Revitalization Committee. Most notable was the idea to create a cultural/commercial district along Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. This district would build on the preservation of McCollum Hall and the historic community center concept for Clemente Park, expanding that theme to the entire boulevard from Evans Avenue to Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard.

The end result would be a working, growing, attractive business center and tourist attraction. Local entrepreneurs would be encouraged to develop establishments that celebrate the culture of the neighborhoods, combining entertainment with a

unique shopping experience. This district would focus on the strengths of the historic culture, reinforce values of community, rekindle economic vitality, and solidify the image of the business corridor as a unique commercial center, while also serving as the social heart of the community.

The entire urban infill and redevelopment plan was approved by the City Council in October 2002 and endorsed by the Board of County Commissioners that same month.

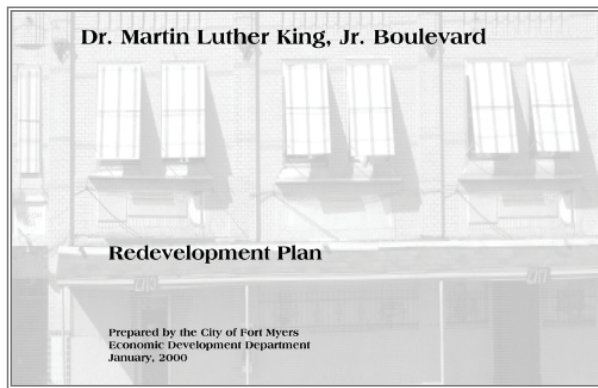
NOTE: The state has not yet implemented its ambitious plans for urban infill and redevelopment areas. In the program’s initial year, sixteen planning grants and six implementation grants were given. Since that time, the state has not authorized any further funding for this program.

However, the statutes authorizing urban infill and redevelopment areas are still in place. They provide an alternative way to implement TIF or tax-increment financing (in addition to the more common “community redevelopment area” designations as described later in this report).

To continue eligibility for the economic and incentives such as TIF, the city must demonstrate during the evaluation and assessment of its comprehensive plan that within designated area, the amount of annual residential, commercial, and institutional development has increased by at least 10 percent.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BOULEVARD REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

Prepared by City of Fort Myers Economic Development Department, 2000



While the Florida Department of Transportation (DOT) was designing the four-laning of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, city officials decided to establish formal redevelopment areas on both sides of the boulevard. This action would complement the city's commitment of \$3 million in infrastructure improvements along the boulevard for storm sewers, landscaping, irrigation, new utilities, and enhanced lighting.

This plan was one of the statutory prerequisites for new redevelopment areas. The first step was completion of studies in 1999 documenting blighted conditions.

Although the plan recognized the needs of the unincorporated enclaves, the new redevelopment areas could only include land that was within the city limits at the time. The planning area was initially broken into three sub-areas along both sides of the boulevard:

1. Evans Avenue to Ford Street
2. Ford Street to Michigan Avenue
3. Michigan Avenue to I-75

The Lincoln Park residential neighborhood was added as fourth sub-area.

This plan identified 19 properties with serious environmental concerns including abandoned service stations, salvage yards, and vacant commercial buildings. The plan also noted the large concentration of aging and obsolete buildings and the inadequate depth of most commercial lots on the south side of the boulevard.

Here are the major recommendations of this plan:

Land Use / Zoning Changes:

- Adopt an overlay zoning district along the boulevard to relax parking and setback requirements for lots that were reduced in size to accommodate the road widening.
- The primary pedestrian-oriented zone is west of Ford Street where parking should be behind buildings and streetscape improvements are needed along comfortable sidewalks.
- Phase out undesirable uses such as pawnshops, pool halls, tire repair shops, check-cashing establishments, and recycling facilities.
- Chain link and barbed wire fencing should be eliminated; where fencing is necessary, use aluminum or wrought iron fences.
- Eliminate commercial and multifamily uses from Lincoln Park.

Land Acquisition:

- Assist Pepsi Cola in acquiring property behind their plant as an incentive to stay at their present location; provide access from their plant to Palmetto Avenue (now Veronica S. Shoemaker Boulevard) to replace access the plant lost due to four-laning of the boulevard.
- Assist in the rehabilitation of McCollum Hall; if necessary, acquire that property and adjacent parcels and identify a master developer to adaptively reuse this facility.
- Acquire brownfield sites such as abandoned

service stations to clean them up and prepare them for productive uses.

- Acquire surplus sites from the Florida DOT after the four-laning is completed and use them for pocket parks and roadway landscaping.
- Expand uses at the Imaginarium site, including reuse of the "red brick" building and the cleanup of residues from the coal gasification plant so that site can be reused by private enterprise.

Housing:

- Housing should not be placed on properties fronting the boulevard; reserve these sites for commercial, industrial, and institutional uses.
- Retain newer homes in Lincoln Park but consolidate ownership of other lots and assist a master developer in creating a new middle-income community centered on Lincoln Boulevard.

Economic Development:

- Expand business incentives to create new jobs and encourage desirable commercial uses on vacant and underutilized properties.
- Develop a facade grant program to encourage upgrades of commercial properties.
- Develop a micro-lending program to assist small businesses.
- Restructure the Business Development Center (now the Southwest Florida Enterprise Center) into a non-profit organization.
- Assist the Lee County Employee and Economic Development Corporation (LEEDCO) with completion of the Dunbar Shopping Center.
- Designate major segments of the redevelopment area as a brownfield area, making it eligible for cleanup funds.

ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS AND BUSINESS PLAN FOR DUNBAR SHOPPING CENTER

Prepared for Dunbar Chamber of Commerce, 1992

Physical Improvements:

- Upgrade landscaping along the boulevard including attractive fencing around visible retention ponds.
- Enhance the visible identity of “Historic Dunbar” west of Ford Street.

Annexation:

- Annex the unincorporated enclaves into the city and use county funds to upgrade infrastructure in those areas.

Public Safety:

- Enforce anti-loitering laws and work toward eliminating crime and drug problems in the area.

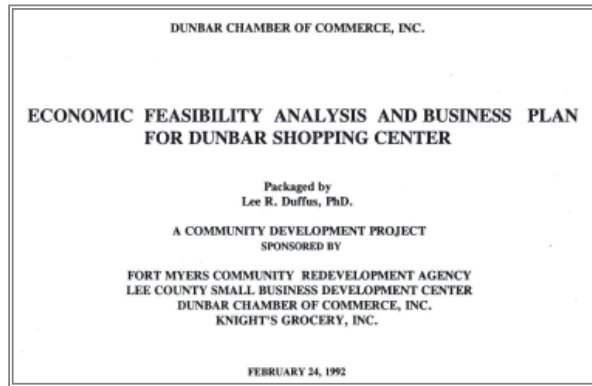
Miscellaneous:

- Place murals on exposed sides of buildings.
- Remove dilapidated and unsafe structures.
- Discourage industrial uses west of Palmetto Avenue and clean up those to the east.

Funding:

This plan recognized that tax-increment funds from these small areas would not begin to accrue for about five years and, even then, could not be relied on as a major source of funding. Other funding sources were suggested in the plan:

- City general funds and bond proceeds
- Florida DOT (for roadway landscape funds)
- Brownfield grants and loans
- Enterprise Zone incentives
- Historic preservation grants for McCollum Hall
- Lee County funding for areas to be annexed
- Private investment (the major source of funds for redevelopment along the boulevard)



- The Dunbar community strongly supported a neighborhood shopping center located in Dunbar.

The study concluded that based on the strong community and market demand identified, a well-managed and marketed shopping center, anchored by a supermarket and having a critical mass of other retail activities, would succeed.

The Economic Feasibility Analysis and Business Plan for the Dunbar Shopping Center was prepared in February 1992. It examined the economic basis for a new shopping center in Dunbar which was being considered at that time (it was constructed about eight years later).

The research-based study outlined the social and economic determinants, demand factors, and economic development benefits from locating a shopping center in Dunbar.

Major findings of the study were:

- A substantial amount of community purchasing dollars (the Dunbar community spent in excess of \$81 million per annum on retail purchases) and, consequently community jobs, were transferred outside Dunbar because of out-shopping by residents.
- The closest retail shopping area from which householders in Dunbar purchase the basic mix of retail items is located 2-5 miles from the intersection of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Veronica Shoemaker Boulevards, the approximate population center of the community.

DUNBAR COMMUNITY GROWTH PLAN

Prepared by Florida Institute of Urban Affairs, 1981

This plan addressed a portion of Dunbar that was outside the city limits until 2003 - the area between Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Canal Street, and between Ford Street and Flint Drive.

The plan's primary focus was on zoning designations that were continually allowing incompatible non-residential land uses. These included 71 special permits, special exceptions, and variances since zoning was instituted in 1962. The plan recommended that 20 of these be rescinded immediately and limitations be placed on 27 more. The plan also recommended removing heavy commercial zoning from the north side of Canal Street and from lots on the north side of Fairview Avenue in Harlem Lakes, and recommended the removal of industrial zoning from vacant land throughout the planning area. Dozens of other specific rezoning recommendations were also presented.

A future land use map was prepared to designate the eventual uses of every parcel of land. Note the following comments:

[M]any commercial, industrial and nonresidential uses [have been] established in residential areas which are not capable of handling the excessive traffic, noise, and other activities and nuisances which are inconsistent with the enjoyment and upkeep of the homes located in the Dunbar Community. The continued encroachment of these uses into the residential areas will ultimately displace the residents from an area which has been traditionally valued by a relatively immobile homeowner who will find it difficult to seek comparable homes in other areas of the community. The only way to prevent such displacement is to safeguard home ownership by prohibiting any further infiltration of incompatible land uses.

This study was accepted by the Board of County Commissioners, but very few of its recommendations were carried out.

NOTE: A comprehensive re-evaluation of zoning in the planning area did not take place until after the 2003 annexation of the unincorporated parts of Dunbar. In 2005, all prior Lee County zoning actions in the annexed areas were replaced with new Fort Myers designations.

