Draft Meeting Summary

Representatives of FDOT District 4 engaged in a series of listening sessions with local governments and transit agencies in late September as part of the I-95 Corridor Mobility Plan.

FDOT met with representatives of the City of Miramar on September 30. The group discussed the various strategies the City’s departments are undertaking in pursuit of its land use and transportation goals and the indicators they are currently using (or hope to use in the future) to track success.

# Key Themes and Takeaways

* The City of Miramar envisions itself as a community with transit-oriented development and mixed use communities where people want to live, work, shop, and play. The City envisions itself as a community for future growth with prime access to the region’s major metropolitan areas like downtown Miami and Fort Lauderdale.
* Miramar’s transportation strategies are focused on Complete Streets and streetscape improvements to encourage multimodal transportation. The City also continues to fund a community bus shuttle as an extension for Broward County Transit, and notes the success of the I-95 express service. The City and BCT are negotiating for space for the I-95 express service at/near Miramar’s Town Center.
* The City’s land use strategies include TOD and TOC future land use designations to promote denser mixed use developments with transit- and pedestrian-friendly design features.
* The City primarily measures success through the growth of population and the growth in construction.
* Miramar coordinates with other local governments in Broward County and with the Broward MPO and FDOT District 4. The City would like to enhance communication with local governments in Miami-Dade County and FDOT District 6.

# Action Items

* FDOT District 4 will reach out to District 6 to ensure better communication between Broward County communities and Miami-Dade County and FDOT District 6.

# Participants

* Michael Alpert, City of Miramar, Community Development
* Jessica Dimmick, Renaissance Planning Group, I-95 Corridor Mobility Plan Project Team
* Lorri Hall, City of Miramar, Community Development
* Larry Hymowitz, FDOT District 4, Mobility Coordinator
* Tekisha Jordan, City of Miramar, Community Development
* Karen Kiselewski, Renaissance Planning Group, Project Manager
* Katrina Lunan-Gordon, City of Miramar, Community Development
* Bissy Vempala, City of Miramar, Engineering Department

# Discussion

After an initial overview of the I-95 Corridor Mobility Plan project and status update, FDOT representatives and project team members engaged the representatives from the City of Miramar in a dialogue on the City’s vision, strategies, and indicators.

## Current Initiatives & Strategies

### TOD along SR 7

Miramar, like other local governments along SR 7, envisions transit-oriented development patterns along this corridor, and has designated an area of land use that borders SR 7 as a transit oriented corridor (TOC) on its future land use map. This TOC designation encourages mixed use development, denser development through building height and setback requirements, structured parking, public transit, and other features to enhance the pedestrian environment like wide sidewalks and street trees.

### Mixed Use and Streetscape Improvements along Miramar Parkway

The City envisions Miramar Parkway east of the Turnpike as a vibrant mixed use community. Miramar recently received a grant for $1.5 million to develop an amphitheater in this area. The City will incorporate elements of Complete Streets along this portion of Miramar Parkway. The City is partnering with FDOT on a streetscape improvement project. FDOT has constructed landscaping, signage, and lighting, along Miramar Parkway from SR 7 to 64th Avenue. The City will continue this project to Palm Avenue and implement new striping, a new median, new sidewalks, and will add bike lanes.

The City is considering mixed use along University Drive, and is examining other areas where mixed use “might work.”

### TOC Development Regulations

The City adopted development regulations for its TOC future land use designation. Four years ago, Miramar designated the area along SR 7 from Pembroke Road to County Line Road as TOC on its future land use map. City staff reflected on the controversial nature of the discussions with the residents during the TOC future land use designation. Residents initially opposed the future land use designations, but with education and additional outreach from the City, residents accepted the TOC future land use.

Last year, the City further implemented the TOC concept by designating this area as TOC in its zoning code, using a form based code. The change in the zoning was much less controversial than the future land use. City staff explained the owners of car dealerships were opposed, but they addressed their concerns by allowing them to continue operating their businesses, with a clause for lapses in use. The zoning designations included development regulations that preserve the existing residential neighborhoods through two zoning categories (single-family and multi-family), and promote mixed use along the commercial corridors.

### Land Assembly

Miramar wants to encourage land assembly, but it currently sees this objective as a hurdle. The City is not offering financial incentives; rather they are offering density and intensity bonuses. Miramar enforces the zoning code administratively, which City staff see as another incentive because developers do not need to obtain approval from the Commission.

City staff also mentioned the possibility of purchasing land for shared parking garages, and they hope that they can entice a Publix. City staff recognized that capacity for parking is an issue. The required amount of parking in the zoning code is reduced for all mixed use developments, and shared parking is allowed.

### Special Zoning Districts

The City has designated the warehouse area along SR 7 south of Pembroke Road as a special zoning district. The vision for this area is a special arts district like the Wynwood Arts District in Miami. City staff explained the idea and vision for this arts district came from the property owner more than a decade ago, which was not possible under the City’s existing code. The City liked the idea and changed the land use and zoning accordingly.

The City conducted a visioning process with charrettes to build off of this property owner’s idea. At that time there was little interest in the area from developers.

### Town Center as a Transit Hub

City staff described the Town Center as a transit hub for Broward County Transit that is outside of the TOC designation. Transit service and shuttle enhancements were coordinated as part of the planning for the TOC. The Town Center will continue to be a hub for BCT buses, however there is limited space and the I-95 express bus. Although the I-95 express service is wildly successful in Miramar, the express service currently has 600 parking spaces. As the Town Center has developed, the City needs this space for other uses. Miramar is hoping to purchase land to build garages in the future, and City staff noted there is a lot of support for this purchase of land and for shared parking. The City is currently in negotiations to give BCT land across from the Town Center for the express service.

City staff attributed the demand for the I-95 express service to the large influx of residents to southwest Broward County after Hurricane Andrew. The I-95 Express route serves these residents and connects them south to Miami and north to Fort Lauderdale.

## Challenges

### Constrained Budgets

Miramar wants to encourage brownfield development as well as many other initiatives, but has little money to do so. The City is seeking grant opportunities. The City has issued $50 million in bonds for capital projects to be used primarily for drainage projects. City staff notes this bond could also be used to fund streetscaping projects like landscaping and beautification improvements.

### Political Will

City staff noted the influence that local politics has on what they do. City staff explained, “There’s always been a desire to make eastern Miramar better,” which has influenced political campaigns and politicians’ agendas.

The City of Miramar keeps documentation of the projects they desire to implement. As funding opportunities arise, City staff have documents ready to package to take full advantage.

### Transit Time Constraints

City staff noted that the service hours on BCT buses make it difficult for people to live without a car. Staff acknowledged that BCT is adding connections, and recommended increasing the convenience of BCT by increasing frequency, adding more east-west routes, and increasing service hours.

## Overall Vision

The City’s Comprehensive Plan is the City’s vision for the future and is also used as the City’s strategic plan. This vision includes the TOC, Town Center, and Historic Miramar. Miramar is a certified city, meaning that it has long had the privileges and responsibilities of limited review agency oversight for comprehensive plan amendments.

Miramar has experienced a stable political will over the past 12 to 15 years. Strong planners, commissioners, and the mayor have maintained the City’s vision. The City regards the development of its Town Center as a big achievement that highlights this stability.

The City bought 57 acres during a low point in the market, and sold off all but 14 acres for the Town Center to a partner developer that essentially paid off the price of the initial purchase. The partner developed the land as residential. The City also partnered with Broward County to build a public library. The City sees this as an example of the efficiency of public-private partnerships. Miramar is hoping to see a similar circumstance for the TOC.

The City Commission performs and annual visions exercise, but this is budget-oriented.

City staff noted the overarching desire to improve residents’ quality of life with things like walkability, however these investments often raise property values to a point where native residents are “pushed out.” Miramar wants to improve quality of life and keep its residents.

## Indicators of Success

### Population Growth

City staff considers growth in population to be an indicator of the City’s success. Miramar’s population exceeded projections for the 2000 and 2010 Census. City staff attributes this growth to the quality of life in Miramar, which is a result of the City’s development standards. Available land, transportation access (to two interstate highways), and the marketing of the City are other factors that have contributed to Miramar’s success. Miramar is conveniently located halfway between Miami and Fort Lauderdale, and Miramar has good transportation access to the ports and airports in both cities.

### Construction Revenue and Permits

The revenue from construction and development permits has recently skyrocketed, and these are other indicators of success. The City has a base of warehouse distribution space, which was been to focus of economic development, and the City sees this as a benefit that can incentivize redevelopment (as opposed to trying to incentivize redevelopment on formerly commercial properties). Fortune 500 companies have bought large areas of land.

### Other Indicators

The City uses GIS to monitor development, such as its corporate parks.

The City’s Comprehensive Plan includes a requirement to measure VMT as a way to analyze whether Miramar is meeting its goals and objectives, but City staff explained they are unsure of how to measure VMT, and “it’s an area that’s never really been pushed.” The City prepares an annual monitoring report for the Comprehensive Plan, and measuring VMT is a future goal. Data availability is a major barrier to using performance measures.

When asked what kind of indicators would be helpful if you had the data, City staff said they would want to track quality of life, beautification, and walkability and show the improvements that they are making in these areas to the public.

City staff would also like to better understand where people live and work. They perceive that many of Miramar’s western residents work in Miami, but they would like to know how many people actually live and work in Miramar.

## Strategies for Coordination

Miramar’s Comprehensive Plan mandates coordination with the Broward MPO. Representatives of Miramar are voting members on the MPO’s Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC). City staff attend “a lot of intergovernmental meetings” including those for initiatives like Complete Streets and the SR 7 Collaborative. City staff mentioned involvement with the League of Cities. The City coordinates informally with the City of West Park, and has coordinated with the City of Pembroke Pines on the I-75 overpass.

Coordination with local governments in Miami-Dade County is challenging. City staff say they do not receive any notifications from Miami-Dade County or from FDOT District 6. Miramar would like to coordinate with Miami-Dade County, especially to address the crime on County Line Road.

The City is applying for a redevelopment grant from Broward County, and hoping to combine this money with TIGER grant funds to make Complete Street improvements along Pembroke Road from SR 7 to 64th Avenue. This project is a high priority for Miramar, and City staff explained it will happen next year, if not sooner.

# Strategies and Indicators

The following table lists the strategies and indicators that the City of Miramar mentioned throughout the listening session.

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| Strategies |
| System-Wide   * Partner with FDOT on roadway (and streetscape) improvement projects to leverage resources * Seek grant funding for catalyst development (e.g. amphitheater) * Encourage and work with community members and property owners to create a future vision (e.g. special arts district) * Strong, clear vision for the community * Stable commission and planning staff to carry out vision * Be prepared for funding opportunities that may arise by planning for and document projects for implementation even before funding is identified   Facilities   * Invest in streetscape improvement projects to improve the environment for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders   Places   * Use TOC, TOD, and RAC future land use designations to communicate future vision * Incorporate TOC into zoning code with development regulations for:   + Mix of uses   + Building height   + Building setbacks   + Structured parking   + Public transit service and amenities   + Wide sidewalks   + Street trees * Offer density and intensity bonuses to encourage land assembly * Use administrative code enforcement as an incentive in special districts * Reduce parking requirements for mixed use developments and encourage shared parking agreements * Wherever possible, take advantage of low market conditions and purchase land for city uses (public/private partnerships) |

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| Indicators |
| Quantitative[[1]](#footnote-1)   * Population growth * Revenue from construction and development permits * Revenue from property taxes * Annual increases in commercial, industrial, and office development square footage   Qualitative or Anecdotal   * Quality of life |

1. Miramar’s Finance Department tracks financial indicators in its Annual Financial report, available on the City’s website at <http://www.ci.miramar.fl.us/finance/financialreport.html>. The quantitative indicators listed in this table include those relevant to transportation and land use. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)