City of Fort Lauderdale

Meeting Minutes - APPROVED

Friday, October 31, 2014

12:00 PM

Riverwalk City of Fort Lauderdale Commission Workshop

Broward Center for the Performing Arts
201 SW 5 Avenue – JM Family Studio Room

CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP

FORT LAUDERDALE CITY COMMISSION

JOHN P. "JACK" SEILER Mayor - Commissioner
ROMNEY ROGERS Vice Mayor - Commissioner - District IV
BRUCE G. ROBERTS Commissioner - District I
DEAN J. TRANTALIS Commissioner - District II
BOBBY B. DuBOSE Commissioner - District III

LEE R. FELDMAN, City Manager
JOHN HERBST, City Auditor
JONDA K. JOSEPH, City Clerk
CYNTHIA A. EVERETT, City Attorney

Mayor Seiler called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m.

ATTENDANCE ROLL CALL

Present: 5 - Mayor John P. "Jack" Seiler, Vice-Mayor Romney Rogers (arrived momentarily), Commissioner Bruce G. Roberts, Commissioner and Dean J. Trantalis and Commissioner Bobby B. DuBose (arrived momentarily)

Also Present: City Manager Lee R. Feldman, City Auditor John Herbst, City Clerk Jonda K. Joseph and City Attorney Cynthia A. Everett

BUSINESS ITEMS

BUS-1 14-1400 HISTORY, BACKGROUND AND CURRENT CONDITIONS

BUS-2 14-1396 URBAN LAND INSTITUTE REPORT: COMMON THEMESE

Urban Design and Development Manager Ella Parker reviewed slides titled “Brief History, Background & Current Conditions” and highlighted information in the Urban Land Institute Report. A copy of the slides and report, dated June 24 and 25, 2014 are attached to these minutes.

BUS-6 14-1395 CURRENT INVESTMENT

The City Manager noted that the City makes a significant public investment in the Riverwalk. He reviewed several ways in which the City contributes financially and through services. The City contributes to the Riverwalk Trust for holiday lighting and this year staffing assistance is also proposed. This year the City will contribute to the Downtown Fort Lauderdale Transportation Management Association for the water trolley.

In response to Commissioner Trantalis’ question about the Riverfront area, Parker said the riverfront is an important component of the Riverwalk. Climate resiliency should be incorporated. The master plan vision outlines an arts and entertainment district supporting hotels and a mix of uses, but it would need to be balanced with the fact that it is in close proximity to the historic district. It will also be a major connection to the Wave streetcar. Mayor Seiler suggested that everyone agrees that the Riverfront is a sore spot. In its current condition, it is dragging Riverwalk down. Commissioner Trantalis discussed the original intent of the Riverfront and its history. Other places in the country that Riverfront was intended to replicate were successful in large part because they had a residential critical mass that Fort Lauderdale did not have when the Riverfront was built. There is now a residential downtown and a lot of opportunity with disposable income of its residents. Unfortunately the owners of the complex have not yet identified a direction. He hoped they would revitalize the Riverfront according to the originally-contemplated guidelines as a retail center or urban core. He understood their interest in tearing it down and rebuilding but did not want to see that happen. There is a physical feature to it worth saving. He asked about the vision contemplated by people in District IV. Vice-Mayor Rogers felt that the existing development may need to be scrapped to some extent. It does not make sense to have a riverfront complex where the water is not visible from the street. From a historic preservation standpoint, he noted that very little was preserved. Residents are interested in what will happen with the Riverfront and want to enjoy entertainment, dining and a gathering place. The mix must be correct.

Mixing high-end restaurants with movie theaters did not work. It should be the hub of what attracts people downtown. Time and attention should be given to it. Commissioner Roberts felt that one of the biggest issues is lack of visibility and accessibility. He felt it should be a mix of uses. The City should make infrastructure improvements in advance. He agreed that the restaurant and theater/night club uses did not work. He went on to note the number of calls that the Police Department responded to. Commissioner DuBose felt it is poorly configured and should be demolished. The development should open to the waterway and speak to this being the Venice of America. Until it is properly configured, he questioned whether anything there would succeed. He did not necessarily think it had to do with the movie theater use. Las Olas attracts people without marketing and that should be expanded to this area. If something is popular, people will go to it even if it is difficult to get to. It should be viewed from the waterway and used to identify what Fort Lauderdale is. Mayor Seiler agreed that it does not function well under the current design. It does not open to the river or create a sense of place. However, in the interim until a decision is made, he would like to see it activated. With the downtown as it is today, he felt the result at the Riverfront would be much better with a well-designed complex.

Mayor Seiler opened the floor for public comment.

Sam Poole felt there should be a residential component. He went on to comment about residential activity along the river and the importance of pedestrian safety.

Tom Vogel, downtown property owner, said the Riverfront complex was successful when first developed. Challenges came with the movie theater, which was too big. When developers wanted to build a large condominium, they said they would drive everyone out of the complex. The market then declined and the complex has been emptied. Riverwalk used to be a city street and could be easily be opened to the water. He supported redeveloping and increasing density. It should not be allowed to stay empty. Even though the complex is blighted and vacant, there is still activity occurring around it. He urged the Commission to decide what to do and take action.

Courtney Crush commented that it could be vacant for another three years. She raised the idea of something in the interim by combining it with Bryan Homes and activating the area with docks and so forth.

In response to Mayor Seiler, Deputy Director of Economic and Sustainable Development Jenni Morejon said there is about 35 feet, give or take, that the City could activate. Mayor Seiler noted the City could activate the area with kiosks and such. Morejon indicated that complements what was recommended in the Riverwalk District Plan, that being interim activation. There are a lot of ideas in the plan. Mayor Seiler wanted to make this a high priority.

Denny O'Shea of Stiles Corporation said the property is actually divided into four segments by easements, which presents development challenges.

Vice-Mayor Rogers pointed out the dark void that is presented at night. It must feel safe and be well-lighted in order to feel safe. Commissioner Roberts questioned whether the City could do anything to alleviate the challenges presented by O'Shea. Dev Motwani, owner of the theater site, elaborated on what was done when the property was purchased to address problems that existed there. They expect to submit a plan for redevelopment within three to five months. There will be a residential component. They will work with staff on design issues. There has been discussion about a hotel. He elaborated on the need to activate the Riverwalk with lively retail that addresses the river appropriately, increasing the view from the street and open the pedestrian corridor. He agreed to work with the Riverwalk Trust and the City as the project goes forward. The biggest challenge is retail. There is concern about the location and whether it will be successful. They are trying to solve the problem of a massive boat docked in the area that is obstructing the view. There has been discussion and he would support the idea of making

Brickell Avenue two-way to open access to Las Olas. Mayor Seiler said the Liberty Bell could be moved at any time. It is more attractive than the complex. Motwani explained that it is difficult to market the site and assure people that the boat will be moved. Mayor Seiler indicated that if something exciting is going to occur on the site, the City will make sure the Liberty Bell is moved. Motwani argued that it does not translate well for someone who is not local.

Steve Buckingham, president of Tarpon River Civic Association, said he was pleased to hear of the prospect of a hotel for the complex. He believed the San Antonio Riverwalk is so successful because of the hotels. The river in San Antonio is very small and not visible from the street but there is great signage. Mayor Seiler agreed about the signage, residential and hotel. It will bring a 24-hour presence. He felt there should be uniform signage for the Riverwalk. Commissioner Roberts felt there should be uniform signage citywide.

Ron Centamore, representing the Downtown Civic Association, said several years ago the Association wrote a grant in conjunction with the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) for signage. Mayor Seiler wanted to start with Riverwalk. Centamore went on to say that the area should cater to older residents who reside in the area condominiums. There are safety concerns. He suggested closing bars at 2 a.m. instead of 4 a.m.

Chris Wren, representing Downtown Development Authority, said they are working with City staff to partner on uniform signage and hope to launch it this year. There were some issues with the State. Transportation and Mobility Director Diana Alarcon said it is in the works. Staff has to get approval from Florida Department of Transportation for phase one signage on the barrier island. Riverwalk would be one of the first areas in the next step. She estimated six months.

Genia Ellis, executive director of Riverwalk Trust, said there is a large number of young people who spend time downtown and their habits are significantly different than older people. The riverfront should be a composite of things. It is not necessarily about those who live downtown. There must be a reason for people to come to the downtown.

Motwani noted that he is more than happy to work with the City and Riverwalk Trust on interim uses.

Mike Weymouth, representing Las Olas Company, commented about the extent of private boats docked along the Riverwalk. The walkway is only about 8 feet wide. It is no more than a sidewalk. There should be a connection to the water and there is a problem doing so.

There was no one else wishing to speak.

BUS-3 14-1397 URBAN LAND INSTITUTE RECOMMENDATIONS

a. Adopt an overall, unified approach to resilient placemaking

Mayor Seiler noted that the first recommendation was adopted.

Morejon highlighted information from the Urban Land Institute's report related to this matter.

In response to Commissioner Trantalis, Morejon advised that an example of resilient placemaking could be native landscaping species. The place should be beautiful but also respond to local conditions. Placemaking can mean the environment, the economy or the society. When discussing resilient or sustainable development, it is simply structures that can be used by future generations. Activities and programming will hopefully generate some revenue to support ongoing maintenance and operations.

Resilient placemaking, according to the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Technical Assistance Panel (TAP), means that as climate change occurs, potential sea level rise and weather events occur, the infrastructure can respond. Commissioner Trantalis noted that recently issues have arisen related to development along the waterways. There was concern about creating a canyon effect with tall development built close to the waterway. He is now hearing this may be an option for the Riverwalk and the riverfront. He wished to know more about the vision for resilient placemaking and preserving the riverfront area for future generations by trying to avoid the canyon effect while developing it to make it self-sustaining. Morejon explained that staff is following the City's vision as new development comes into that district allowing density to be focused on the north and south sides of the river but to build at the ground floor level to accommodate sea level rise, infrastructure needs or stormwater management. The Downtown Regional Activity Center District is the urban core. It allows the greatest density. Canyons, light and air, opportunities for vistas and viewpoints have all been addressed in detail through design standards in the Downtown Master Plan in terms of setbacks and stepbacks. Commissioner Trantalis felt a canyon effect has been created along the river. He hoped that experience could be modified. It is not just about addressing the ground level with high seawalls, broad pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians and first-floor retail with no regard to what happens on higher levels. The City Manager felt staff is saying that while it is important to make sure that the ground levels work well and it is also important that buildings be oriented to preserve vistas, views, light and interaction. Sometimes that can be achieved by making buildings slimmer which means that the building may be taller in order to get the right degree of density. In order to have a vibrant downtown, people need to live downtown. It will not be possible to have vibrant retail without the right types of density. It becomes a matter of trade-offs. Staff has tried to step development back from the riverbank. Each project's individual design style is examined so as not to add anything harmful to the river. Urban Design and Development Manager Ella Parker said the New River Master Plan was adopted in 2008. In comparing buildings constructed today, there is a significant setback from the waterway. Commissioner Roberts appreciated the taller, slimmer buildings that allow for more setback. Vice Mayor Rogers pointed out that the irony of San Antonio Riverwalk is that people do not focus on the river, but rather the unique hotels, boats and other people. There is a canyon effect in San Antonio. The City needs to ensure that what is built is interesting.

b. Codify design guidelines

Morejon advised that the design guidelines have not been codified. This would encompass all development. Fortunately all of the construction since 2008 has met the intent of those guidelines. The Transit Oriented Development (TOD) guidelines also need to be codified.

c. Link Community Investment Plan (CIP) and other financing to achieve outcomes

Morejon believed this is already occurring. Staff has looked at all of the CIP investments for the Riverwalk District.

d. Consider Adaptation Action Areas (AAA) designation

Assistant City Manager Susanne Torriente note that based on recent action of the Commission this language is now in the City's Comprehensive Plan. It is voluntary. It gives the Commission the ability to so designate areas because they are vulnerable to flooding, sea level rise and these kinds of conditions. The purpose has to do with focusing infrastructure investment. The next step is to decide which areas should be designated and then link that to the CIP. It is an incremental approach. Vice-Mayor Rogers wanted the AAA designation better defined. In response to Commissioner Roberts, Torriente confirmed that this policy and procedure will allow the City to leverage grants and federal

funding more readily. The City Manager indicated that the hope is when new growth management legislation is enacted, favorable incentives will occur for AAA designated areas.

e. Host a Great Riverfronts Symposium

Morejon advocated for such a symposium and recalled a symposium she attended years ago in Miami. Mayor Seiler felt it is a great idea.

f. Create a formal partnership to manage and curate governance

Morejon explained this is about defining the roles and responsibilities of all the groups and partners that contribute to the success of Riverwalk. When the Riverwalk District Plan was developed, there was a group of partners that met monthly. The Plan recommended such a structure. Attention should be given to the financial oversight, and delegating authority where appropriate. In response to Vice-Mayor Rogers, Morejon advised that there are examples of taxing or assessment authority separate from the entity. Vice-Mayor Rogers agreed with this recommendation. Commissioner Roberts suggested the group contain a residential component. Mayor Seiler wanted the Downtown Civic Association to have a role. Commissioner Trantalis questioned how this would differ from the Riverwalk Trust. Vice-Mayor Rogers felt the Trust would have to be modified in such case.

BUS-4 14-1398 DISCUSSION

Mayor Seiler opened the floor for public comment.

Denny O'Shea discussed the original group mentioned by Morejon. The group essentially already exists. There needs to be one individual charged with the responsibility.

Commissioner Trantalis returned to elaborate and agree with comments made by Vogel. People with disposable income to spend are important to the success. Hotels as well as people who reside downtown are critical. Drawing disposable income to the area should be a consideration when looking at new development. He felt recent development on the San Antonio Riverwalk has not been good. Fort Lauderdale should take this into account.

Some discussion ensued about the demographics of occupants in the newly opened New River Yacht Club wherein Genia Ellis indicated that pedestrian traffic has doubled since their opening.

Ellis brought attention to the Shippey House. Mayor Seiler was concerned about the lack of progress that has been made on the Shippey House; that it is an eyesore in the Riverwalk area and the City is losing hundreds of thousands of dollars in parking revenue. Commissioner Roberts felt it needs to be removed. Vice Mayor Rogers felt the problem is that no one is in charge. Commissioner Trantalis felt it needs to be moved and repurposed. There is a developer in the South Middle River neighborhood that would probably work with the City. The City Manager noted that it was very difficult to move this house. There is an estimated cost in excess of $200,000 of improvements to repurpose it. It was noted that the house is owned by the Friends of Shippey, a non-profit entity with a membership of two. As it is in District II, Commissioner Trantalis agreed to take the lead on this matter. Vice-Mayor Rogers concurred with Commissioner Trantalis' position that efforts should be made to save it. Commissioner Trantalis agreed to report back at a conference meeting so that a timeline could be set.

Ellis also brought attention to the Bryan Homes. She felt it is suffering demolition by neglect. The City Manager advised that he will be meeting with CBRE today on this property. He suggests it be marketed as it is through CBRE but also indicate in the promotional materials that there are other

redevelopment possibilities in the area. Mayor Seiler clarified for Commissioner Trantalis that there has been agreement as to repurposing. Commissioner DuBose felt this is the same plan that existed when the City received two bids about a year ago. The City Manager pointed out that it will now have national marketing whereas a year ago there was only an advertisement in the legal section of the *Sun-Sentinel*. Vice-Mayor Rogers wanted to move forward quickly because of the condition of the structure now. The City Manager indicated it would be on the market in the next 30 to 45 days.

A representative of CBRE pointed out that there will be a massive amount of capital needed to put the building back into service. Without revitalization of the general vicinity (Bryan Homes toward Esplanade Park), it will not be possible to secure a long-term tenant. CBRE does not believe that simply securing a tenant to take over the building will be a long-term solution. Mayor Seiler felt both approaches should be examined. It needs to get advertised. Commissioner Roberts felt the Commission should be informed of the cost to stabilize it. The CBRE representative believed when it was evaluated a few years ago, the cost was $1.6 million. He confirmed that the Shippey House is a concern with respect to this marketing effort.

Commissioner DuBose felt the Bryan Homes, Shippey House and Las Olas Riverfront are linked together. The CBRE representative indicated that CBRE believes it may be possible to address the Bryan Homes into a separate mixed-use development containing a hotel, retail and residential. Commissioner DuBose pointed out that is exactly what is being proposed at Las Olas Riverfront.

BUS-5 14-1399 NEXT STEPS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Mayor Seiler summarized consensus reached today on high priorities as follows. Temporary activation of Las Olas Riverfront; Riverwalk signage; great riverfronts symposium in the spring; codifying design guidelines; adaptation action areas designation; create a formal partnership to manage and curate governance; Shippey House report from Commissioner Trantalis in about 30 days; and Bryan Homes marketing in 30 to 45 days. He felt adopting an overall unified approach to resilient placemaking and linking the Community Investment Plan and other financing to achieve outcomes are more long-term.

Mayor Seiler raised the idea of art in public places and providing for people to share their art. He suggested the City get the Museum of Art as well as the Museum of Discovery and Science involved. Commissioner Trantalis felt the City should pursue permanent installations as part of development agreements. Commissioner Roberts asked that when the formal partnership group is formed, it should look at providing for entertainment. The City Manager indicated an ordinance would be needed to permit it. It is estimated to be presented in December. The basic concept is to permit buskers on the Riverwalk and west side of A1A. There would be a permitting process. There will be a distance requirement. Staff believes this is key to activating the Riverwalk.

There being no other matters to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 1:56 p.m.

Brief History, Background & Current Conditions…

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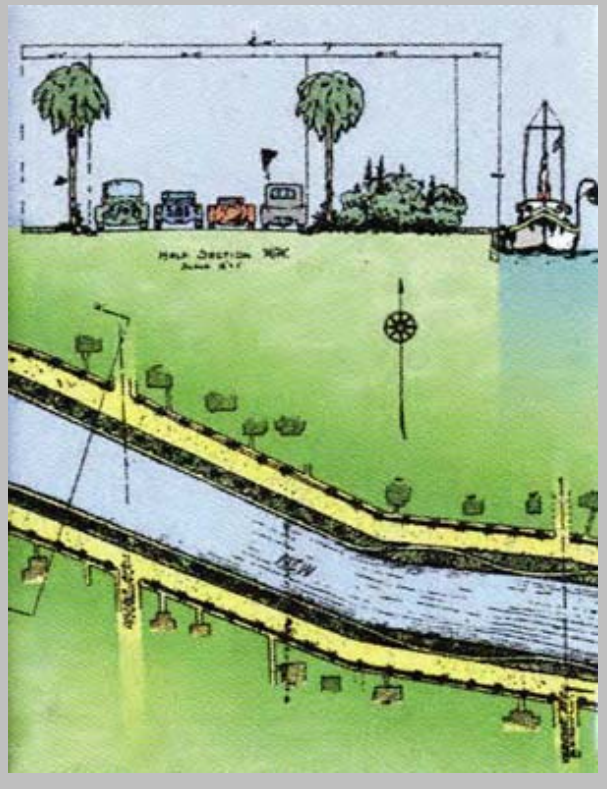
City of Fort Lauderdale

Fort Lauderdale arose on the banks of the New River some 100 years ago as a trading post



Riverwalk is the culmination of a planning legacy dating back to the 1920s

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Today, the Riverwalk linear park comprises the premier public open space of Fort Lauderdale, providing a signature setting for cultural amenities

As one of the city's main gathering places, Riverwalk hosts a variety of special events throughout the year

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Fort Lauderdale's key historic resources can be found along Riverwalk…

While the downtown has grown, these resources remain at the center of activity today

Riverwalk ties together three Downtown parks on the banks of the River: Esplanade Park, Huizenga Plaza and Smoker Park

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The Riverwalk District is served by Water Taxi service, three B-Cycle bike share stations and Wave Streetcar service begins in 2017

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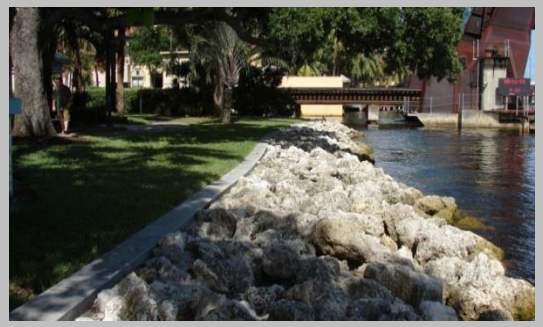
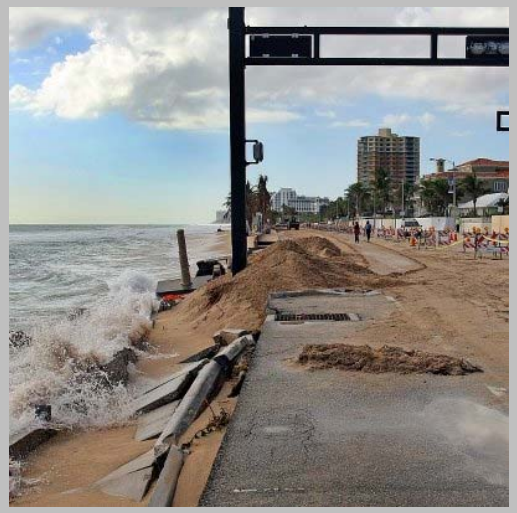
While Downtown Fort Lauderdale contains a significant amount of office space, the bulk of the private development fronting on Riverwalk is residential high-rise construction

As identified in the Riverwalk Public Realm Plan, many opportunities exist to create an even more successful Riverwalk environment

Southeast Florida is recognized as an area particularly vulnerable to climate change, especially sea level rise

Fort Lauderdale has experienced increased coastal flooding during high tide events, and increased inland flooding with storm events coinciding with high tides

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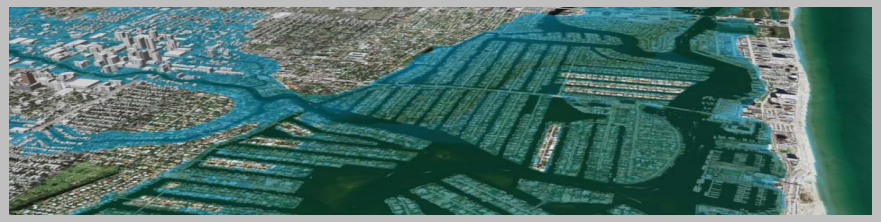
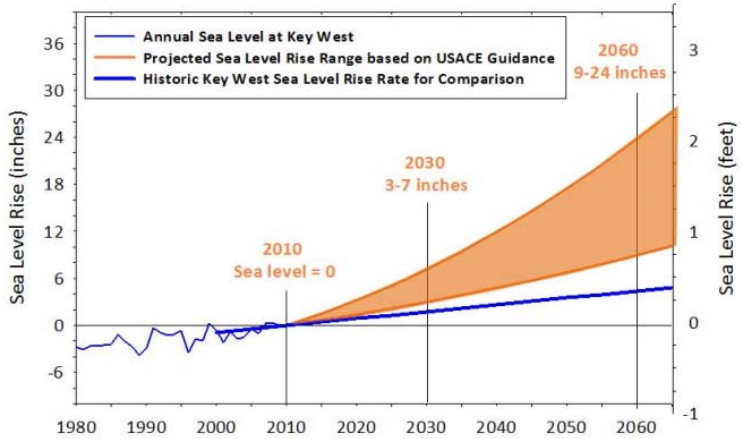
The Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact is currently projecting that sea level will rise an additional 3-7 inches above the 2010 level by the year 2030 , and as much as 9-24 inches by 2060





Unified Southeast Florida Sea Level Rise Projection for Regional Planning Purposes. This projection uses historic tidal information from Key West and was calculated by Kristopher Esterson from the United States Army Corps of Engineers using USACE Guidance (USACE 2009) intermediate and high curves to represent the lower and upper bound for projected sea level rise in Southeast Florida. Sea level measured in Key West over the past several decades is shown. The rate of sea level rise from Key West over the period of 1913 to 1999 is extrapolated to show how the historic rate compares to projected rates.

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Located directly on the tidal portion of the New River, Riverwalk's seawalls, brick walkway and some nearby streets are inundated by extreme high tides that occur seasonally

River traffic causes wakes, which furthers the reach of the water onto dry land

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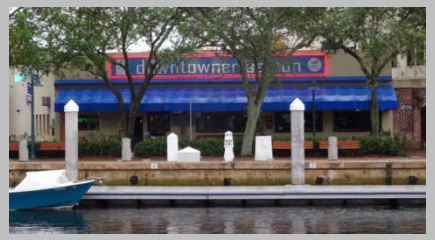

Climate resiliency along the Riverwalk may include a wide variety of policy, operational and structural solutions, affecting public and private property, as well as a broad audience of tourists, neighbors, and visitors

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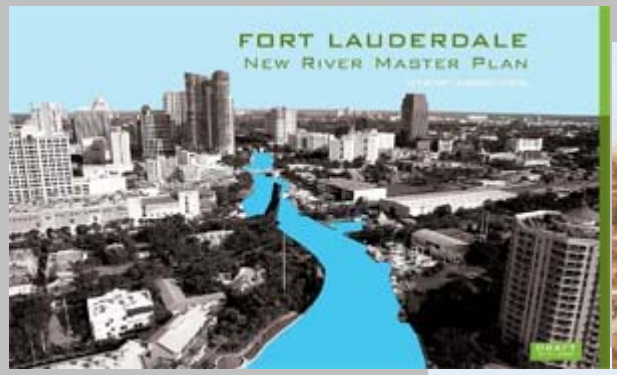
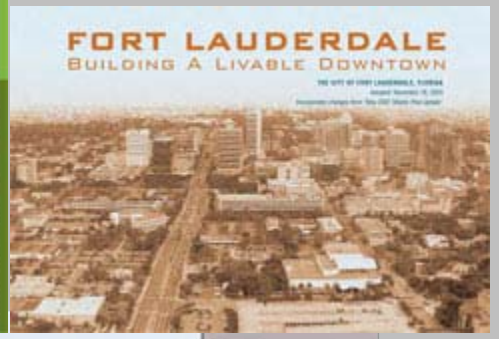
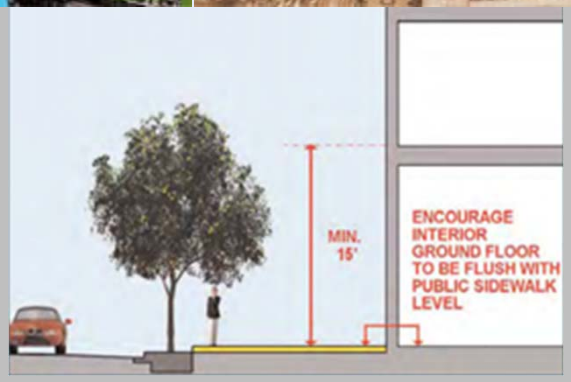
Climate resiliency of future development will require revisiting Downtown and New River Master Plan guidelines





One aspect to consider is the requirement that ground floors be flush with sidewalks, in order to engage a more active and lively pedestrian environment



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The redevelopment of Las Olas Riverfront provides a unique opportunity to advance both Climate Resiliency and Downtown Revitalization

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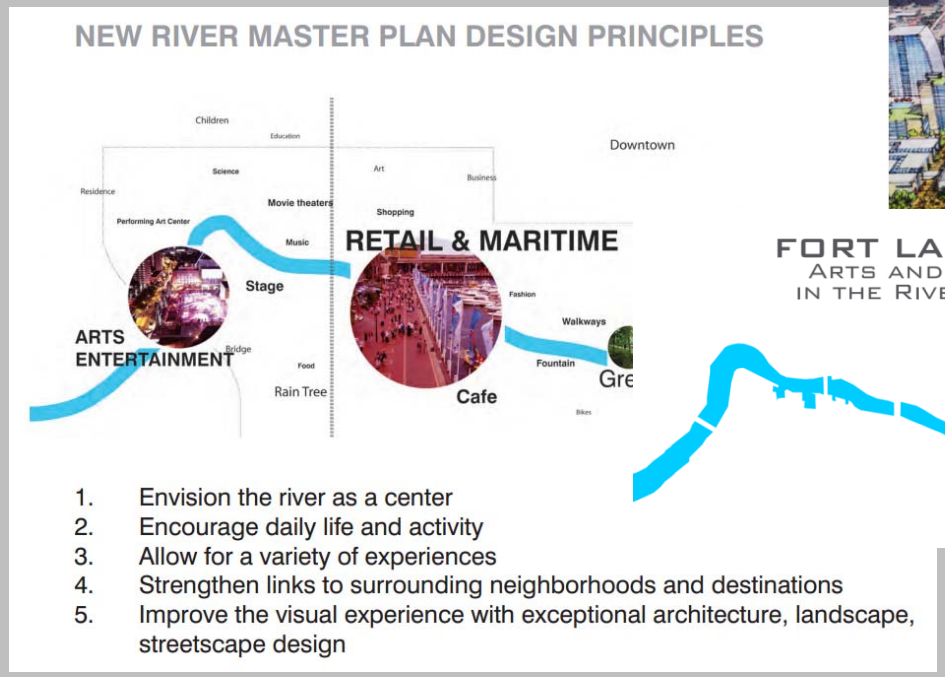
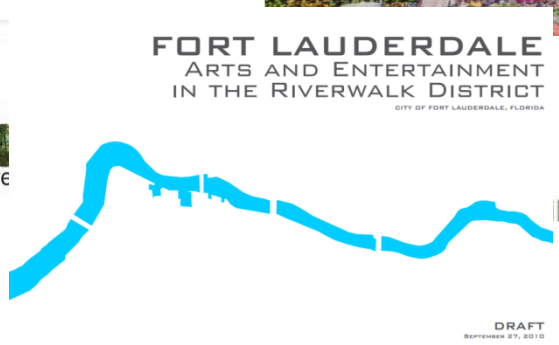
In 2010, the Riverwalk Public Realm Plan introduced a strategy and framework to ensure the Riverwalk District's success and sustainability…





It is important this framework now also include contemplating Climate Resiliency

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