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# DISCOURAGING STRIP COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

## Context

The Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission is preparing updates to the comprehensive plans for Tampa, Temple Terrace, Plant City, and unincorporated Hillsborough County.

In March 2014, the Planning Commission engaged Dover, Kohl & Partners and Spikowski Planning Associates to identify approaches that could improve the way these plans attempt to avoid strip commercial development. A second task is to improve policies encouraging mixed-use development, which is being addressed in tandem.

## Strip Commercial Development

Strip commercial development in its post-World War II form is the most common pattern for new stores, restaurants, and service businesses. Despite this prevalence, the planning profession is generally contemptuous of strip commercial development for its visual impacts, its impact on adjoining neighborhoods, and its congestion-inducing effects.

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**Stretching for miles in what seems to be an undifferentiated landscape of signs, driveways, parking lots and cheap buildings, the American commercial strip is one of the most exasperating and yet ubiquitous urban forms ever created. Occurring in nearly every settlement of any size in the country, the strip is everywhere the same and everywhere an eyesore.**

*--- Brenda Case Scheer*

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Comprehensive plans in Florida take a uniformly negative stand against strip commercial development. In part this reflects the planning profession's stance, but it is also a direct outcome of Florida's program that governs local comprehensive plans. For instance, state law says that a primary indicator of urban sprawl is a plan that "promotes, allows, or designates urban development in radial, strip, isolated, or ribbon patterns . . ." (F.S. 163.3177(6)(a)9.a.iii).

**Palm Beach County** Policy 2.2.2-a: "In order to **discourage strip commercial development**, to limit commercial development to nodes, to foster interconnectivity, and to promote the development of innovated mixed use projects inside the Urban Service Area, all new commercial future land use designations shall meet one of the following location requirements . . ."

**St. Johns County** Objective A.1.2 -- Control of Urban Sprawl: "The County shall control urban sprawl, characterized by leapfrog development, **strip development**, and low density residential over a large area."

**Sarasota County**: "A third tenet of the Future Land Use Plan is the aggregation of commercial uses in centers, and **avoidance of any additional strip commercial development** along roadways."

## This Document

This document summarizes the results of the first task in the strip commercial assignment.

The consulting team identified a wide variety of methods used in comprehensive plans from other communities to discourage or repair strip commercial development. Case studies are presented in the following pages for the following jurisdictions:

- Sarasota County (redevelopment corridors)
- Palm Beach County (variety of approaches)
- Lee County (site location standards)
- Orange County (commercial location standards)
- Arlington County VA (retrofit)
- Miami-Dade County (retrofit)

After the six case studies, this document summarizes best practices suggested by the Urban Land Institute and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

This document closes with a list of potential policy approaches that may be applicable for local governments in Hillsborough County.

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## CASE STUDIES

### SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA

Sarasota County's comprehensive plan received a major refinement in 2002 when a new section was added, widely known as Sarasota 2050.



Much of Sarasota 2050 dealt with an optional process that allowed major landowners east of Interstate 75 to consolidate their development rights and build compact villages or hamlets. That portion of Sarasota 2050 has remained controversial and is undergoing major revisions at the present time to loosen the requirements that the development community believes have inhibited the successful creation of villages.

A lesser-known portion of Sarasota 2050 dealt with the potential for urban infill in the unincorporated county. The map on the next page designated land (in red) as "Economic Development RMAs" (Resource Management Areas). Some of the larger tracts are vacant and awaiting first-generation development. Most of the linear areas on this map face major arterials and are identified as "redevelopment corridors," even if they had not been fully developed at that time.

The RMA designations did not change the underlying Future Land Use Map; the designations identified areas where landowners could choose to use new policies and approaches in place of the pre-existing rules.

To incentivize activity in the Economic Development RMAs, the comprehensive plan committed to a series of immediate steps:

- A new zoning district that would facilitate economic development and re-development.
- A special planning process that would combine a community plan with simultaneous rezoning for affected properties.
- After completion of the planning process, the affected areas would become priority spending areas for county infrastructure.

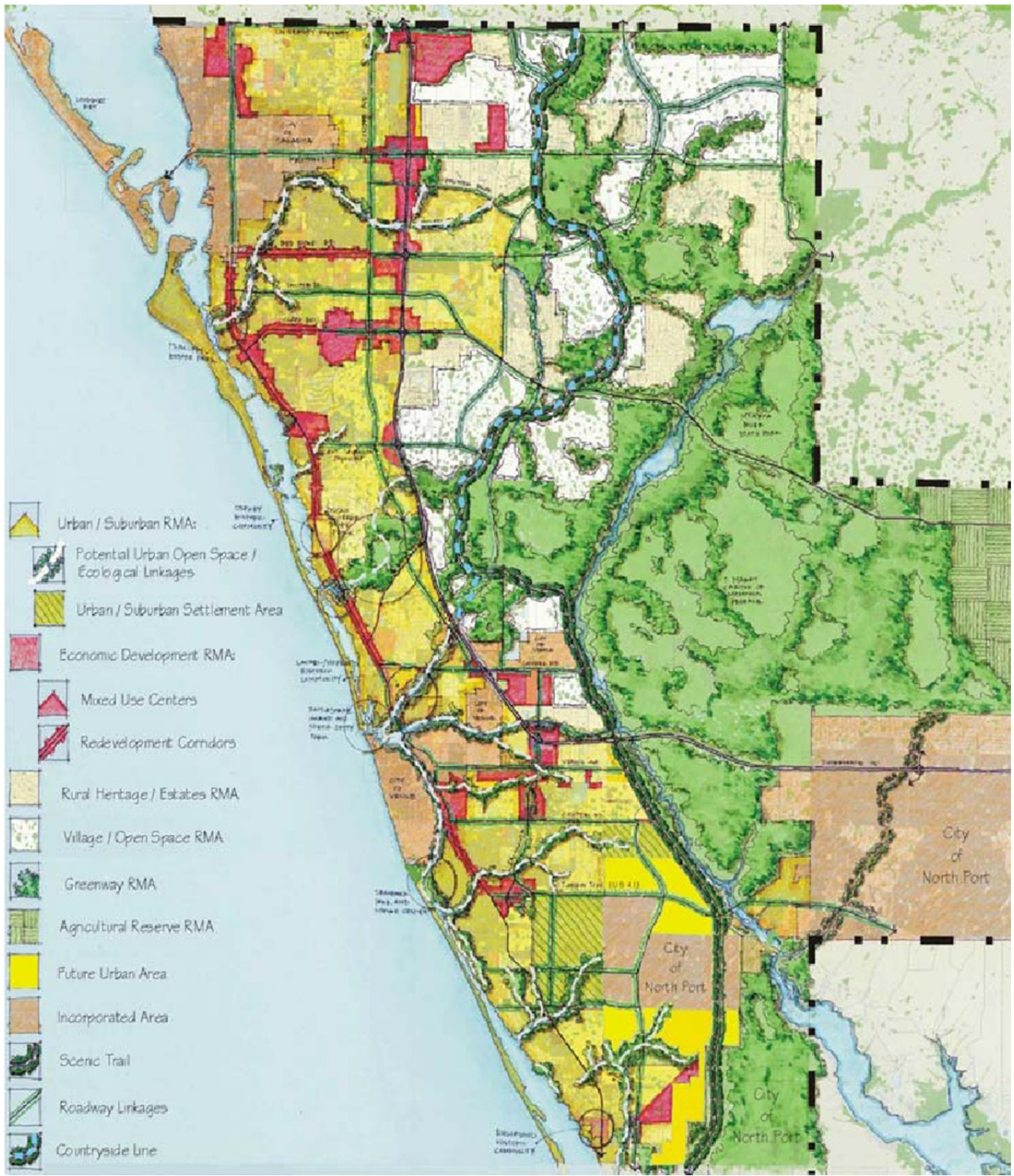
- Rezoning and development applications would receive expedited review.
- Design standards were included to ensure the creation of walkable city blocks that can accommodate varying uses over time.

Since 2002, Sarasota County has adopted two new form-based zoning districts that are available to landowners in Economic Development RMAs. Both require landowners to prepare detailed site plans that will become binding upon rezoning.

The newer zoning district is called Planned Mixed-Use Infill (PMI) and was adopted in 2007. It has several attributes to avoid strip commercial development or convert existing strips into walkable environments:

- Site planning must include a collaborative charrette where citizens and adjoining property owners can identify their concerns, understand site constraints, and explore alternatives.
- A highly interconnected network of streets is mandatory, with maximum block perimeters of 1,600 feet (2,000 feet under certain conditions).
- Transect zones are a major organizing principle. An "Edge" transect zone, which has a scale similar to suburban neighborhoods, can be used along the perimeter in place of buffer strips.
- A pre-approved palette of lot types is provided for each transect zone. Each lot is allowed a series of compatible uses so that uses can change over time without rezoning.
- The primary entrance of every building must directly face a street or civic space. Parking lots cannot be placed between a building and the street.
- Shared on-street parking is provided to reduce the size of individual parking lots, which if provided must be placed in side or rear yards or embedded in buildings.



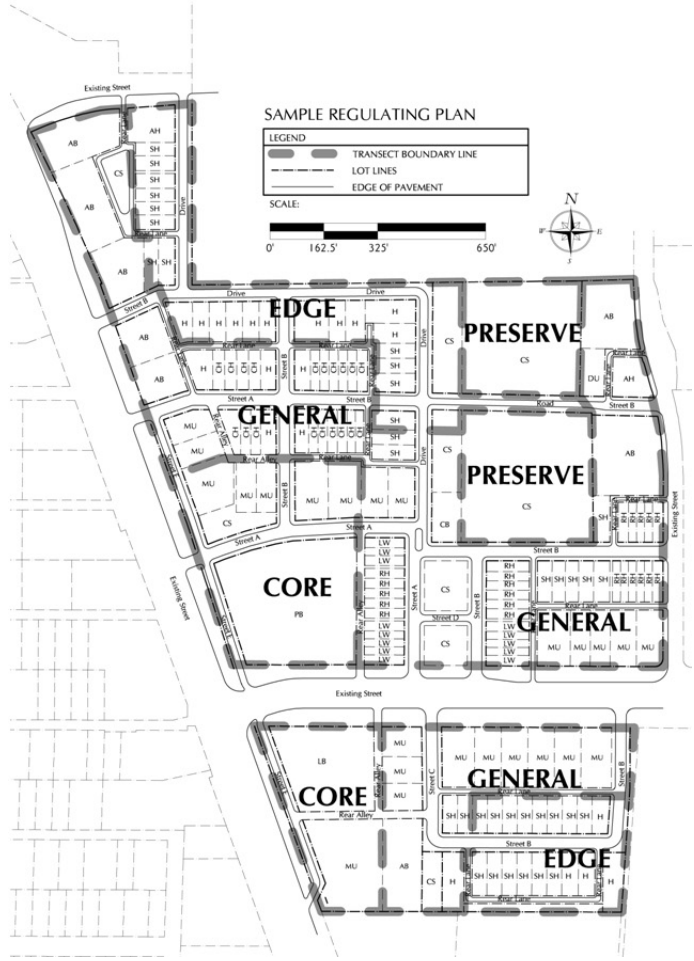
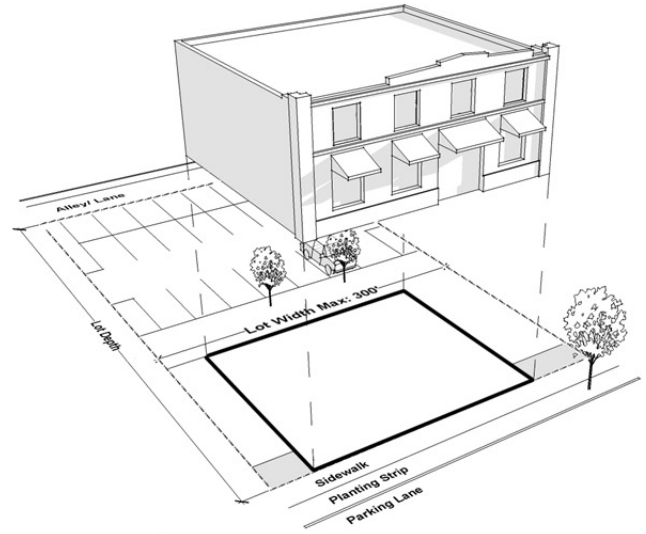
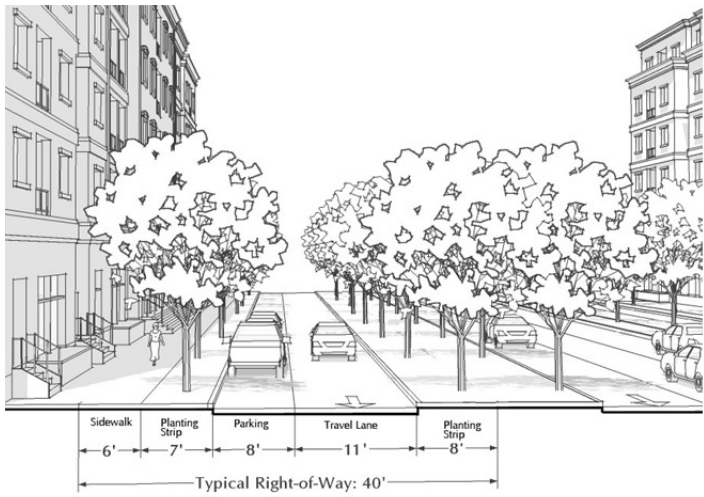




The upper figures on this page, included in the PMI zoning district, are examples of pre-approved street and lot types for the PMI zoning district.

The lower left figure on this page shows the kind of illustrative plan that must be prepared for each PMI zoning application. The lower right figure is a

schematic regulating plan that would be adopted by the county commission if the PMI zoning is approved, showing transect zones, street types, and lot types, but not showing specific building footprints or other non-binding details from the illustrative plan.





In 2009, county officials studied how this code could be used to help retrofit commercial strips.

The county choose Bee Ridge Road at S. Beneva Road. Potential reconfigurations included:

- New north-south local streets to break up over-sized tracts
- New access drives along Bee Ridge Road (see cross-section on previous page)
- Landscaped medians along S. Beneva Road

Aerial views (existing and reconfigured) are shown below, along with an image sequence that shows how this transformation could take place over time.



Images courtesy Moule & Polyzoides & Urban Advantage



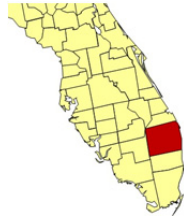
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## PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA

The Palm Beach County comprehensive plan contains a clear definition of strip commercial development:

*“A form of development that is designed primarily for vehicular access and is hazardous or inconvenient for pedestrians to use. Strip commercial development may include any of the following:*

- 1. intense, largely non-residential development, which is shallow in depth, and lies along a length of roadway*
- 2. poorly coordinated site plan, with buildings organized in a linear pattern or in isolated “islands”*
- 3. separate driveways or curb cuts from adjacent properties*
- 4. separate parking lots from adjacent properties*
- 5. inadequate accessibility and circulation for pedestrians and bicycles”*



After early attempts to forbid any new strip commercial development, Palm Beach County has experimented with a wide variety of techniques to control the location of new commercial uses.

In 1991 the county adopted strict commercial location criteria. These were applied to comprehensive plan amendments, which were required before new commercial development could be approved in residential categories on the future land use map. The criteria were based largely on the proximity to intersections of major arterials, a major arterial and a collector, or two collectors.

In 1995, much of this system was replaced by a formal site-specific consistency/compatibility analysis. After 1997, the formal analysis was no longer required, but compatibility policies were still applied in order to discourage strip commercial. Examples include compatibility between land uses including adjoining neighborhoods, impacts on road capacity, and environmental constraints. In 2005, the county discontinued all requirements for Commercial Needs Assessment/Location Studies.

Specific policies in the current plan still establish some location criteria for commercial development based on intensity and location (see chart on the next page); detailed lists of exceptions also apply.

The intensity and compatibility policies have been adjusted in accordance with a ‘tiered’ growth plan that the county added to its comprehensive plan in 1999. The following context zones or tiers are currently mapped (see map immediately following chart). These tiers were based on the area’s existing and proposed character:

- Urban/Suburban
- Exurban
- Rural
- Agricultural Reserve
- Glades

The tiers have played a role in Palm Beach County’s efforts to avoid strip commercial development, but at this time the distinctions have been blurred.

In the Exurban and Rural tiers, the county only allows new commercial development on land with frontage on two arterials or on an arterial and a collector.

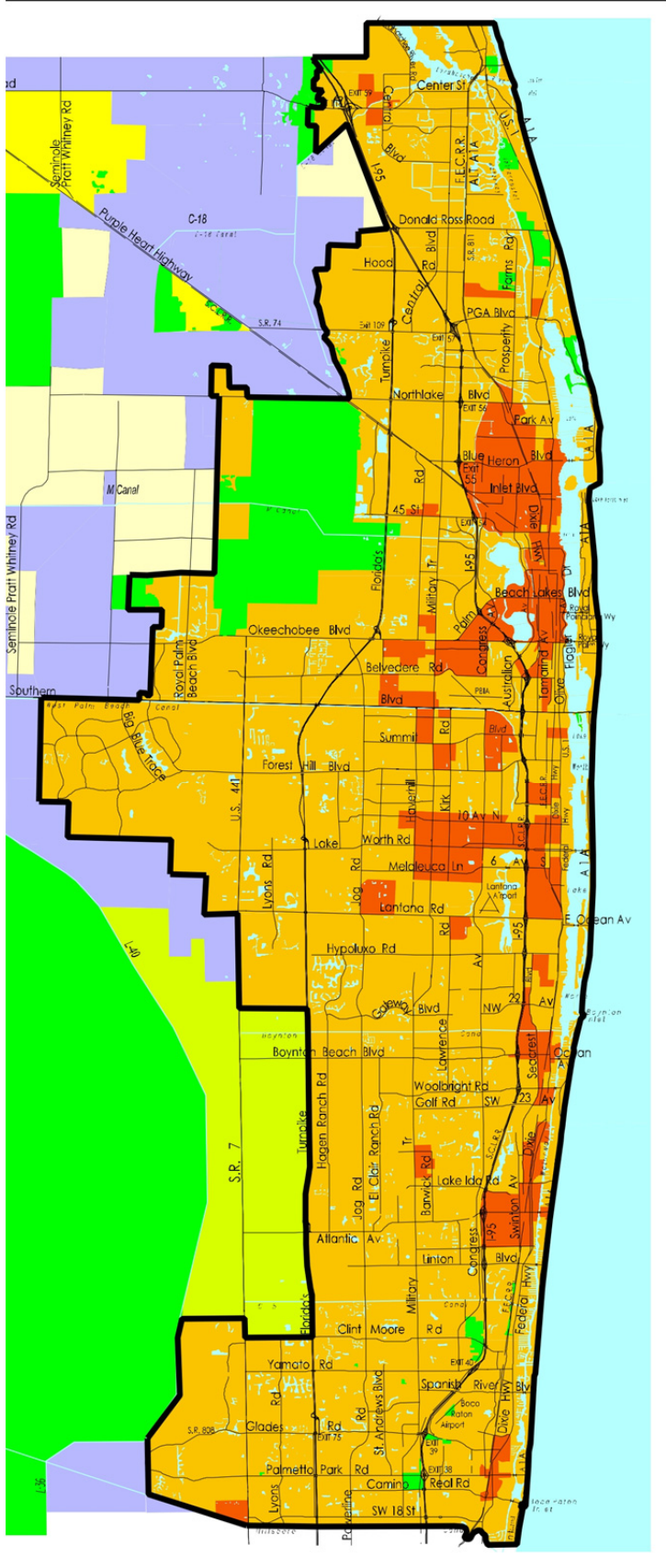
In the Urban/Suburban tiers, the rules are similar but less demanding. For instance, the frontage requirement doesn’t apply if a proposed commercial parcel shares a property line with another commercial parcel.

The Urban/Suburban tier also includes a revitalization and redevelopment infill overlay and an Urban Redevelopment Area (URA), which is similar to the revitalization and redevelopment overlay but doesn’t include any peripheral tracts. Within the URA are designated Priority Redevelopment Areas (PRAs), where two new urban mixed-use Future Land Use Designations have been established: Urban Center and Urban Infill. As currently configured, these overlays don’t provide any special policies or regulations to discourage strip commercial development.



**Table III.D.1  
Additional Criteria for Determining the Depth, Width, and Use  
for Commercial and Industrial Designations**

<b>IF:</b>	<b>THEN:</b>
<b>A.</b> 1.A lot extends beyond the commercial or industrial land use designation line on the FLUA; and 2.the land area beyond the line on the FLUA totals less than one acre.	The County may rezone the area beyond the line to commercial with cross-hatching or industrial, provided: 1. the entire lot is developed as a unified site plan; and 2. the amended lot area on the FLUA is only be used for water retention, landscaping, and/or at-grade parking.
<b>B.</b> 1.A lot extends beyond the commercial or industrial land use designation line on the FLUA; and 2.the width of the lot does not exceed 300 feet; and 3.the lots adjacent to both sides of the subject lot have previously been granted a commercial or industrial designation beyond the line on the FLUA.	The County may rezone the lot area beyond the line to commercial or industrial to the same depth as exists on the adjacent lot with the lesser depth designated commercial or industrial, provided: 1.the remaining portion of the lot would not be substandard for residential or another use permitted under its future land use designation. 2.both lots are not cross-hatched. If both lots are designated as commercial with cross-hatching, then the portion of the subject lot behind the line shall be amended to commercial with cross-hatching.
<b>C.</b> 1.A lot has a commercial or industrial land use designation on the FLUA; and 2.does not front on a collector or arterial roadway.	The lot may be rezoned to commercial or industrial provided: 1.it is combined through a unity of title with a lot which fronts on a collector or arterial roadway; and 2.the lots are developed through a unified site plan.
<b>D.</b> A lot does not have a commercial or industrial land use designation, but: 1.has frontage on a collector or arterial roadway; 2.has a maximum width of one hundred and fifty (150) feet; and 3.is situated between and adjacent to lots with commercial and/or industrial land use designations.	The County may rezone the subject lot to commercial or industrial.  This shall apply even if one or both of the adjacent commercial and/or industrial designated lots are located within a municipality.
<b>E.</b> A lot with a commercial land use designation on the FLUA has a portion which is indicated by cross-hatched lines.	The portion of the lot that is cross-hatched: 1.must only be used for water retention, landscaping, and/or at-grade parking; or 2.may be developed as residential based on the underlying residential land use designation.
<b>F.</b> A portion of a lot: 1.was granted commercial or industrial zoning prior to August 4, 1980; and 2.has a commercial or industrial land use designation on more than fifty percent of the lot area.	The County may rezone the entire lot to commercial or industrial. Lots that meet this criteria may not be restricted by the requirements of A through E above; however, the County may impose cross-hatching on the parcel to address compatibility concerns.
<b>G.</b> 1. A lot was granted a commercial designation on the FLUA at the time of the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan; and 2. its sole frontage is on a local street.	The lot shall be limited to single or double occupancy professional offices; or may be rezoned to commercial or provided: 1.it is combined through a unity of title with a lot which fronts on a collector or arterial roadway; and 2.the lots are developed through a unified site plan.
<b>Note:</b> 'Lot' is defined in the Introduction and Administration Element.	
The intent of the above language which references rezoning to "commercial or industrial" is meant to grant commercial land use designations and zoning to those parcels located between or adjacent to commercial parcels and grant industrial land use designations and zoning to those parcels located between and adjacent to industrial parcels. Properties utilizing the provisions of A, B, C, or D, above, may be the subject of a County initiated land use amendment after the rezoning.	



MAP LU 1.1

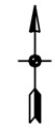
**MANAGED GROWTH TIER SYSTEM**

- Urban/Suburban Tier
- Revitalization and Redevelopment Overlay
- Exurban Tier
- Rural Tier
- Ag Reserve Tier
- Glades Tier
- United Technologies Area Overlay/North PBC General Aviation Airport
- Conservation
- Urban Service Area Boundary

SOURCES:  
 PBC PLANNING ZONING & BUILDING DEPARTMENT  
 PLANNING DIVISION  
 PBC DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
 RESOURCES MANAGEMENT  
 SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT  
 INTERGOVERNMENTAL PLAN AMENDMENT  
 REVIEW COMMITTEE



**PALM BEACH COUNTY  
 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
 MAP SERIES**



Scale: N.T.S.

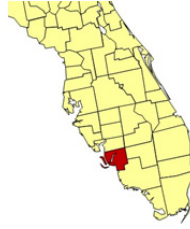
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## LEE COUNTY, FLORIDA

In 1984, Lee County adopted an entirely new comprehensive plan that contained specific site location standards and policy statements regarding commercial development.



New standards, variations on which are still in use today, were established for the following types of commercial centers:

- Minor commercial (<30,000 SF of floor area), to be located within 300 feet of intersections of local and collector, local and arterial, or collector and collector; or ‘at the intersection’ of collector and collector or arterial and arterial streets.
- Neighborhood commercial (30,000 to 100,000 SF), to be located ‘at the intersection’ of collector and arterial or arterial and arterial streets.
- Community commercial (100,000 to 600,000 SF), to be located ‘at the intersection’ of arterial streets.
- Regional commercial (>400,000 SF), to be located on an arterial between ½ and 2 miles from a freeway.

These categories were based on then-current shopping center types and sizes, which are only one type of commercial development. An early amendment added the following clarification:

- “The location standards . . . shall apply to the following commercial development: shopping centers; free-standing retail or service establishments; restaurants; convenience food stores; post offices; gas stations; car washes; car sales; and other similar retail and service development. These location standards shall not apply to the following: banks and saving and loan establishments (with drive-in facilities); hotel or motels; marinas; general, medical or professional offices; industrial, warehouse or wholesale development; and other similar development.”

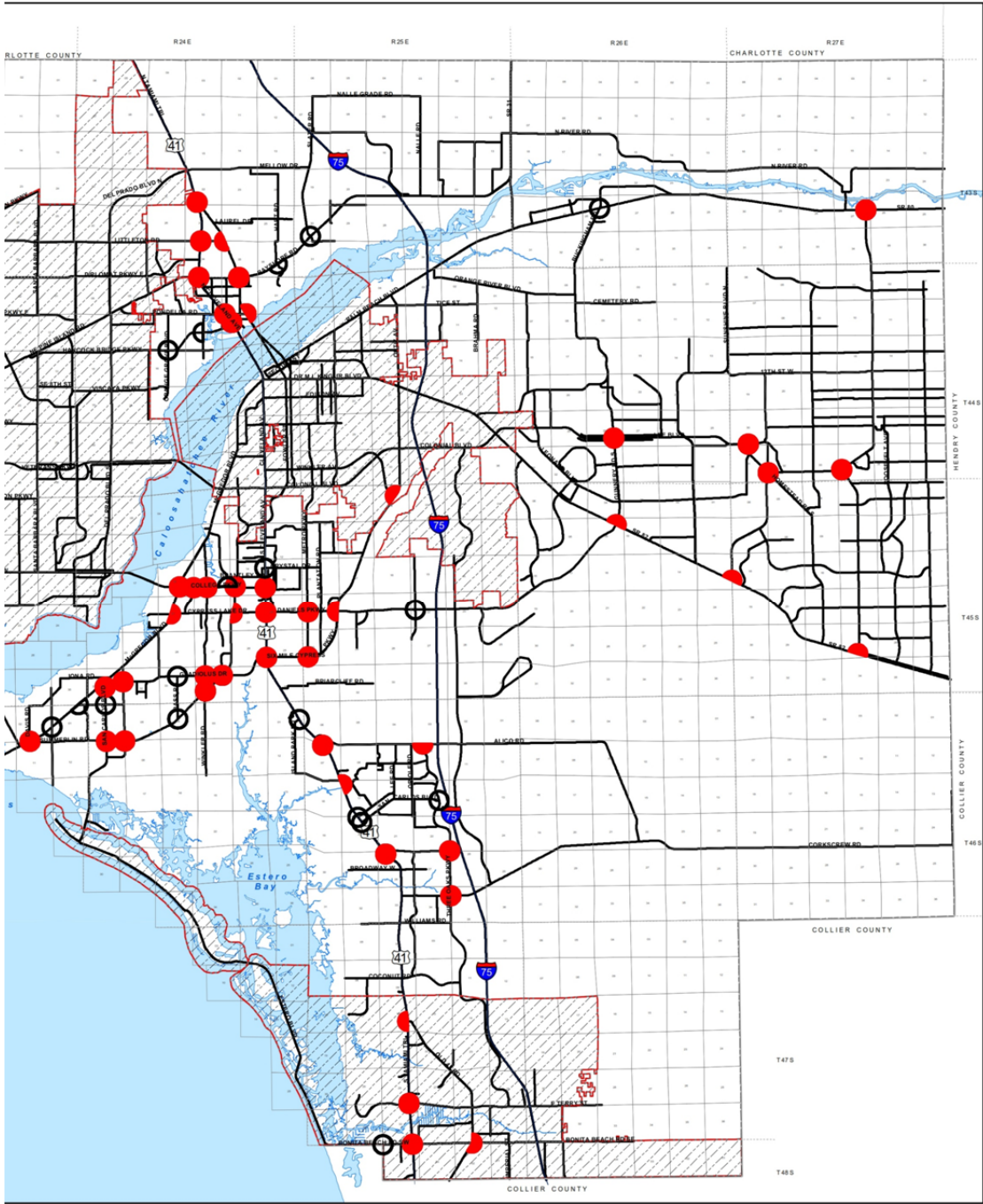
Even with this clarification, this categorization proved overly rigid when applied during the rezoning process, resulting in a variety of exceptions being added over time.

Related policies (since superseded) included:

- *“Commercial development ‘at the intersection’ shall extend no more than one-quarter mile from the centerline of the intersection and include proper spacing of access points, with the following exception. Commercial development ‘at the intersection’ may extend beyond one-quarter mile from the intersection, provided that” (a) direct access is provided to the development within one-quarter mile of the intersection; and (b) a parallel access road or frontage road provides access to the intersecting street.”*
- *“Application for neighborhood and community commercial zoning and development shall provide a professional market analysis indicating among other things a demonstrated need for commercial development at the proposed location, the types of marketable commercial activities, and the projected trade area needs of the proposed development.”*




In 1996, the comprehensive plan was amended to replace the abstract ‘local and arterial’ or ‘collector and collector’ standards with a map that identified which specific intersections met the neighborhood commercial and community commercial standards, instead of relying on the previous ‘local and collector’ and similar designations.

This map, shown on the next page, eliminated the uncertainty caused by occasional reclassifications of collector and arterial streets by transportation planning agencies. This map also provided a more nuanced analysis of suitable commercial locations, including instances where commercial development would be desirable on some but not all quadrants of an intersection.



# COMMERCIAL SITE LOCATION STANDARDS

## LEGEND

-  Intersection meets Neighborhood Commercial Center Standards (Policy 6.1.2.2)
-  Intersection meets Neighborhood and Community Commercial Center Standards (Policy 6.1.2.2 and 6.1.2.3)
-  City Limits

- Notes:
- 1) Circles designating intersections are not shown at any set scale.
  - 2) This map implements policies 6.1.2.2 and 6.1.2.3. It is not an assurance that commercial zoning will be approved for any particular parcel within the designated intersections. Nor does it supersede the various exceptions to the standards within the plan.
  - 3) All development within the designated intersections must be consistent with the Lee Plan, including the direct access requirements in policies 6.1.2.2 and 6.1.2.3.
  - 4) Commercial development within interchange area is regulated by policy 6.1.2.9.



Map Generated: January 2008  
 City Limits current to date of map generation  
 October 28, 1994

**Lee Plan Map 19**



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In the intervening years, the Lee County comprehensive plan has been amended to provide additional exceptions, especially where community plans have identified potential commercial locations. Much of the original language supporting the site location standards has been replaced by more generic policy statements which are used during the rezoning process to evaluate development proposals. These policies remain:

- *“Commercial development must be consistent with the location criteria in this policy except where specifically excepted by this policy or by Policy 6.1.7, or in Lehigh Acres by Policy 32.2.4 or located in the Mixed Use Overlay utilizing Chapter 32 – Compact Communities of the Land Development Code.”*
- *“The approval of existence of commercial development on one corner of an intersection shall not dictate the development of all corners for commercial development, nor does the existence of commercial development on an arterial dictate that all frontage must be similarly used.”*
- *“Prohibit commercial developments from locating in such a way as to open new areas to premature, scattered, or strip development; but permit commercial development to infill on small parcels in areas where existing commercial development would make a residential use clearly unreasonable.*

It has been thirty years since Lee County’s site location standards appeared in the comprehensive plan. County planning officials are now proposing to delete the site location map and replace most of the standards with these two policies:

**POLICY 3.4.6:** *Commercial development approved or existing on one corner of an intersection does not mean all corners are appropriate for commercial or mixed use development. Further, the existence of commercial development on an arterial or collector road does not dictate that all frontages must be used in a similar manner.*

**POLICY 3.4.7:** *Permit limited commercial uses, agriculturally related services, and other needs of the rural area in non-urban areas as follows:*

- a. **Location:** *The retail use, including buildings and outdoor sales area, must be located as follows except where this plan provides specific exceptions:*
  1. *At the intersection of an arterial and collector or two arterials with direct access to both intersecting roads. Direct access may be achieved with an internal access road to either intersecting road. On islands with intersecting network of collectors and arterials, commercial development may be located at or near the intersection of local and collector, or local and arterial, or collector and collector roads; and*
  2. *Consistent with the Communities Element;*
- b. **Site Area:** *Two acres or less; and*
- c. **Range of Gross Floor Area:** *Less than 30,000 S.F.*

## ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Arlington County's Columbia Pike corridor is an example of retrofit and revitalization of an aging strip commercial corridor.

Columbia Pike is the historic "main street" of south Arlington County. The first development along the corridor was built to house government workers, in proximity to DC (and later to the Pentagon); commercial areas emerged to serve this residential population. In the 1990s, the primary urban form observed in the 3.5-mile-long corridor was strip commercial development with surface parking, surrounded by aging garden apartments. Existing zoning and development regulations had deterred development. While explosive growth had occurred in much of the D.C. region, the Pike was stuck in time with a large amount of underutilized land.

A *Special Revitalization District* for Columbia Pike was designated on the General Land Use Plan by the County Board in 1986. The goal was to build a safer, cleaner, and more competitive corridor. The goals and vision for this district were defined in *Columbia Pike 2000: A Revitalization Plan*, and later updated in 2002's *Columbia Pike Initiative: A Revitalization Plan*. The plan focused on economic development and commercial revitalization, land use and zoning, urban design, transportation, open space and recreational needs, envisioning a traditional "Main Street" environment. The elements described include:

- Mixed-use development districts (retail, office, residential, cultural)
- Street frontage at a pedestrian scale with articulated ground-floor retail
- Buildings placed at back of sidewalk, oriented to Columbia Pike, and built close together forming a continuous "street wall" characteristic of an urban environment
- Parking located underground or to the rear of buildings
- Appropriate transitions to residential neighborhoods
- Enhanced public and pedestrian transportation, enhanced streetscape

Based on recommendations from this plan, the "Columbia Pike Special Revitalization District" in the GLUP was expanded in 2002. In February 2003, the "Columbia Pike Special Revitalization

District Form Based Code" was adopted by the County Board, codifying Plan elements. The form-based code regulates land development, setting clear controls on building form (height, siting, and building elements), with broader parameters on building use, to shape public space.

The plan and form-based code have unlocked development potential:

- The code, which is optional, provides for a quicker review than the standard County process; in addition, the code increased new development potential for many sites, regulating through building height and massing rather than density, and prescribing mixed-use buildings in previously commercial-only zones.
- Since 2003, 1,500 residential units and 300,000 SF of commercial space were added through redevelopment projects under the new code, including 200 committed affordable units and 64,000 square feet of community uses. Additional sites are currently in various stages of the approvals and construction process.



At left:  
existing  
conditions in  
2002



At left:  
2010, new  
building under  
the Plan/ Code



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## Arlington County GLUP

The General Land Use Plan (GLUP), one of several elements of the Comprehensive Plan, is the primary policy guide for future development in Arlington County. Where special conditions or circumstances exist, the County Board may initiate special planning processes for designated areas (“Special Planning Areas”), and amend the GLUP to include a specific district to guide future land use according to the Plan. Columbia Pike is one of these Special Planning Areas (the GLUP for the Columbia Pike Commercial Centers is included on page 14).

## Commercial Revitalization

The Arlington County Board has endorsed a land use policy that concentrates high-density development within Transit Corridors and preserves lower-density residential areas throughout the County. The revitalization of commercial corridors to best serve residents in surrounding neighborhoods is a priority. In support of this overall policy, the following is one of five adopted land use goals incorporated into the General Land Use Plan:

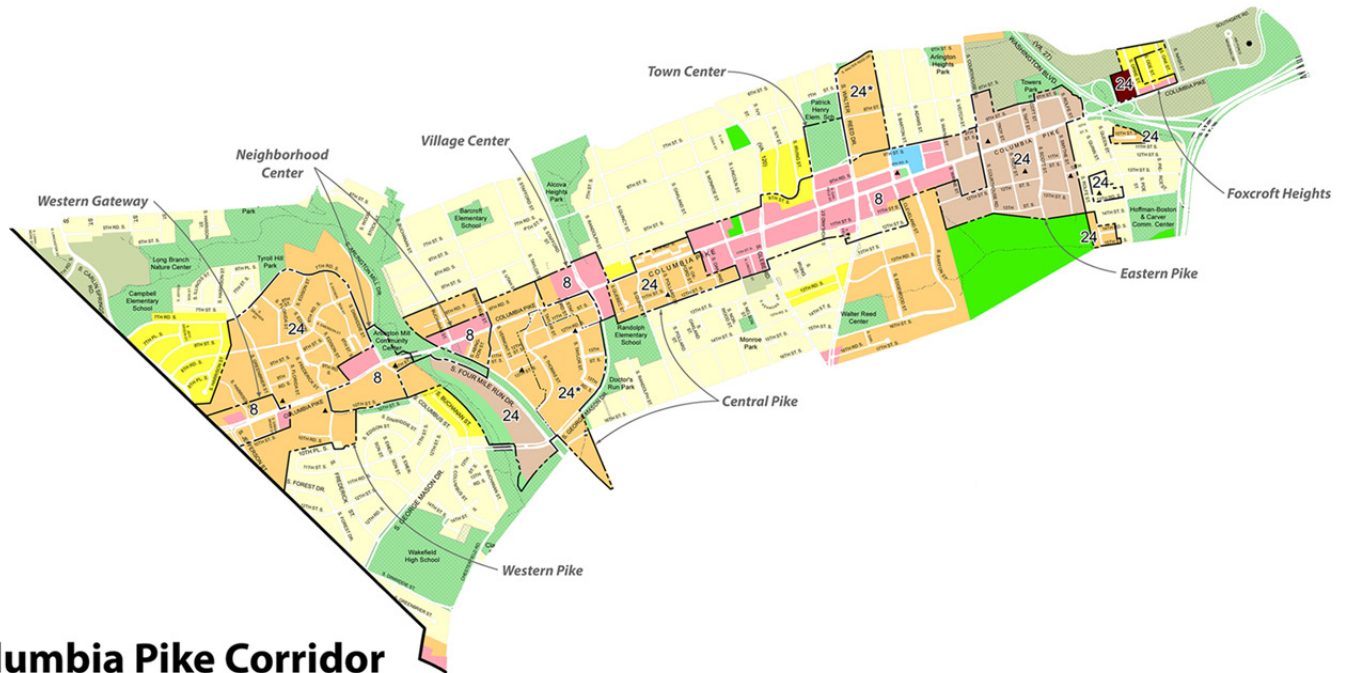
- 5. Preserve and enhance neighborhood retail areas.** The County encourages the preservation and revitalization of neighborhood retail areas that serve everyday shopping and service needs and are consistent with adopted County plans. The Commercial Revitalization Program concentrates public capital improvements and County services in these areas to stimulate private reinvestment.

The *Commercial Revitalization Program* is a “Special Planning Program” developed to implement the GLUP goals and fuel revitalization efforts through capital improvement projects. Civic associations, neighborhood groups, county commissions or committees, county agencies, business or commercial property owners or individual residents may submit proposals for locations to be considered for funding.

Improvements (such as streetscape enhancement, utility undergrounding, or new parks/public spaces) are aimed to complement and stimulate additional investment from the private sector. Improvements to Penrose Square on Columbia Pike were partially funded through this program.

## Major Planning Corridors





## Columbia Pike Corridor

### Columbia Pike Commercial Centers

**Adopted Plans:** Columbia Pike Initiative - A Revitalization Plan - Update 2005; Columbia Pike Form Based Code, 2003.

**Corridor Concept:** Mixed-use development districts, oriented to Columbia Pike (linked by residential transitional areas and open spaces) and primarily consisting of office, residential, retail, and cultural uses.

**Plan/Form Based Code Features:**

**Town Center (S. Oakland St. to S. Courthouse Rd.):**

- Maximum height of 6 stories
- Incorporate historic structures with heights up to 8 stories
- Creation of public square at Adams Square and Fillmore Garden Shopping Center sites

**Village Center (S. Taylor St. to S. Randolph St.):**

- Maximum height of 6 stories (except northwest corner which has 54 ft. height maximum)
- Day-lighting of Doctor's Run (south of development district)

**Neighborhood Center (S. Frederick St. to S. Wakefield St.):**

- Maximum height of 4 stories east of Four Mile Run, oriented to park and Columbia Pike
- Maximum height of 6 stories west of Four Mile Run

**Western Gateway (County Line to S. Greenbrier St.):**

- Maximum height of 6 stories except 10 stories on the south side of Columbia Pike at S. Greenbrier Street

**Special Planning District:** "Columbia Pike Special Revitalization District"

**Neighborhood Conservation Plan Areas:** Arlington View (Plan accepted 1964); Penrose (Plan accepted 2004); Arlington Heights (Plan accepted 2008); Douglas Park (Plan accepted 1998); Alcova Heights (Plan accepted 1999); Barcroft (Plan accepted 2008); Claremont (Plan accepted 1990); Columbia Forest (Plan accepted 2004); Columbia Heights West (Plan accepted 2000); Columbia Heights (Plan accepted 2000); Foxcroft Heights (Plan accepted 2009).

### Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Areas

**Adopted Plans:** Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Area Plan, 2012; Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Form Based Code, 2013.

**Corridor Concept:** Generally residential uses with special provisions for affordable housing within the Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Redevelopment District. For purposes of mapping, the special planning district has been divided into three (3) subareas: Western Pike, Central Pike and Eastern Pike which includes Foxcroft Heights.

**Special Planning District:** "Columbia Pike Special Neighborhoods Revitalization District"

**Neighborhood Conservation Plan Areas:** Arlington View (Plan accepted 1964); Penrose (Plan accepted 2004); Arlington Heights (Plan accepted 2008); Douglas Park (Plan accepted 1998); Alcova Heights (Plan accepted 1999); Barcroft (Plan accepted 2008); Claremont (Plan accepted 1990); Columbia Forest (Plan accepted 2004); Columbia Heights West (Plan accepted 2000); Columbia Heights (Plan accepted 2000); Foxcroft Heights (Plan accepted 2009).

To view full-size map, visit:

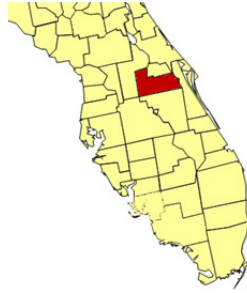
<http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2014/03/GLUP-Map-2013.pdf>



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## ORANGE COUNTY

Orange County's Comprehensive Plan *Destination 2030* provides an example of locational criteria for commercial development; there is also guidance for retrofit into mixed-use formats.



### Urban Framework

The Urban Framework portion of the plan provides location and development criteria to guide the location of commercial uses:

- The location of commercial development shall be concentrated at major intersections and within Activity Centers and Neighborhood Activity Nodes within the Urban Service Area.
- Guidance is provided to evaluate future land use amendment requests:
  - Criteria is provided for acceptable acreage and square footage of leasable area for different types of commercial (Neighborhood, Village, and Lifestyle Centers, and Wholesale/Retail)
  - The FAR for new commercial development is set at 3.0, unless otherwise restricted by County policy or code (this increased density/intensity is aimed to make more productive use of land)
  - The County may require a market study to validate land use requests
  - Policy states the County is seeking more integrated forms of commercial and non-residential development (see *Urban Strategies*)
- Commercial activity larger than a Neighborhood Center is limited to the Urban Service Area and Growth Centers.
- Village Center Commercial uses shall be located at or near major road intersections where one road is an arterial.
- The full retail/general commercialization of an intersection shall be avoided unless sufficient justification of need is provided. Office, hotel, and multi-family uses can be

used to avoid the full commercialization of an intersection.

Specifically related to strip commercial, the plan states:

*FLU1.4.10 Strip commercial land uses shall be defined as commercial uses adjacent to roadways that are located outside the reasonable zone of influence of the intersection to which they relate. They are characterized by individual curb and median cuts and lack visual landscaped buffers. Strip commercial land use patterns shall be avoided by requiring a transition of land uses, encouraging a mix of land uses, or requiring incorporation of a buffer into the development's design. Strip commercial land uses do not include outparcels in shopping centers, malls, or similar developments where access is provided internally from the shopping center/mall or similar development, or via a system of shared or common driveways. More compact, clustered pedestrian and transit-friendly development options shall be encouraged.*

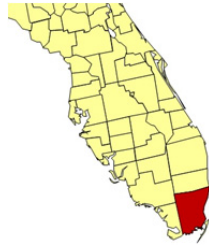
The locational criteria in the Urban Framework section help make future land use choices to scale the amount of commercial development and avoid continuous stretches of strip commercial. However, this section does not address urban design (pedestrian-friendliness, bikability, transit-worthiness, sustainability). The strip commercial policy focuses primarily on vehicular access (curb cuts) but not on other shortcomings of this approach (reliance on autos, visual blight, etc). These topics are addressed in the *Urban Strategies* and *Urban Form* policies.

### Mixed-Use Strategies & Activity Centers

Orange County's comprehensive plan contains policies to develop, adopt, and implement mixed-use strategies and incentives; these strategies can be used to retrofit existing strip commercial areas. In addition, the Plan promotes pedestrian-friendly, compact, transit-ready and transit-oriented development in Mixed-Use Development Activity Centers. Although not specifically targeted to retrofit of strip commercial corridors (Activity Centers may be implemented in sites throughout the County), the requirements of this set of policies, specifically design/ development standards and a charrette requirement, render this approach promising to achieve the desired physical results. (For additional information, refer to the Mixed-Use Development case study).

## MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Downtown Kendall, located at the intersection of the US-1 and Kendall Drive corridors in Miami-Dade County, demonstrates the transformation of strip commercial development form into a walkable urban center.

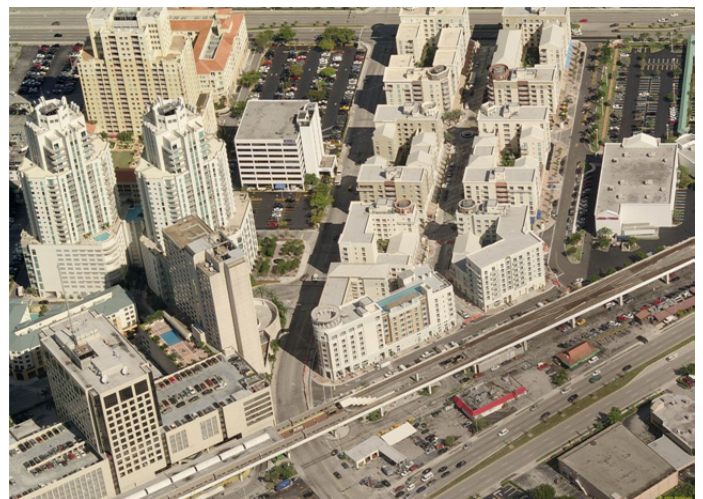
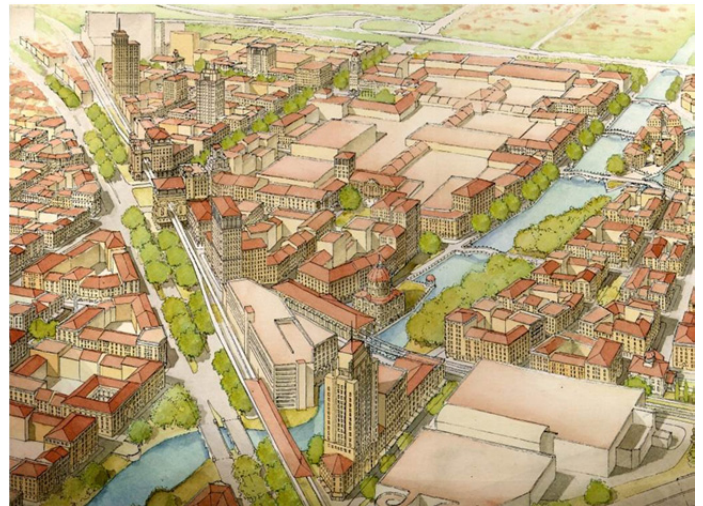


Thirty years ago Kendall Drive was a narrow country road and Dadeland Mall's first buildings were sprouting at the rural edge of a young metropolis. By the 1990s, this location was embedded in the suburban growth that followed, typified by strip commercial development with poor pedestrian accessibility. In addition to major regional roadways, there are two Metrorail stations in the area. The economic vitality of the area was stable, but the suburban setting left the area with a lack of sense of place.

In the early 1990s, the Miami-Dade County Comprehensive Plan designed the Downtown Kendall/ Dadeland area a Regional Activity Center. Requirements included a minimum and maximum density within proximity to transit stations, as well as minimum open space requirements.

A public charrette planning process created a vision for the site that met the Comprehensive Plan requirements. The Downtown Kendall Urban Center District was created as a result to implement the vision and guide new development. This form-based code contains three Regulating Plans: a *Sub-District Plan*, which designates core, center and edge areas to meet Plan density requirements; a *Street Frontage Plan*, which designates frontage types A through E to the network of streets (each designation has a corresponding set of development standards for buildings: build-to location, height, etc.); and a *Designated Open Space Plan*, which ensures the 15% open space Plan requirement is met through new squares and plazas rather than swales and useless open areas. The big ideas in the code include:

- Regulating by specific building placement and design parameters, not just abstract controls such as FAR



Downtown Kendall aerial view, from top to bottom:  
Existing conditions 1998; Plan Vision; Existing  
Conditions 2010



- Habitable Space requirement creates pedestrian friendly streets -- no blank walls
- Open space is coherently organized in squares and plazas, not just leftovers
- Building height regulated by stories, not feet; step-back at top of pedestal & pent-house level

Since code adoption, more than 350,000 sf of retail / commercial, 110,000 sf of office space, and more than 3200 new dwelling units in mixed-use settings have been approved. Over 200,000 square feet of commercial square footage, and 2,500 residential units have been built.

The urban form of new development, which includes new buildings that line streets in a walkable urban setting, have been praised, and the project has been featured in numerous publications, including a special issue of Business Week *21 Ideas for the 21st Century*, as a case study for retrofitting sprawl. However, much of this transformation has occurred on private property; early plans to transform Kendall Drive into a walkable boulevard remain unrealized due to resistance from implementing agencies, which compromises the functionality of buildings which directly front on auto-oriented thoroughfares. In addition, the FBC is silent on the placement of mechanical equipment, and does not include strong architectural controls – which has allowed some less desirable implementation choices.

Downtown Kendall (master plan and code completed in 1999) served as an important precedent; building upon its success, the County refined its approach for “Activity Centers”. The current Plan identifies “Urban Centers” of differing scales; from the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Development Master Plan (CDMP):

*Diversified urban centers are encouraged to become hubs for future urban development intensification in Miami-Dade County, around which a more compact and efficient urban structure will evolve. These Urban Centers are intended to be moderate- to high-intensity design-unified areas which will contain a concentration of different urban functions integrated both horizontally and vertically. Three scales of centers are planned: Regional, the largest, notably the downtown Miami central business district; Metropolitan Centers such as the evolving Dadeland area; and Community Centers which will serve localized areas. Such centers shall be characterized by physical cohesiveness, direct*

*accessibility by mass transit service, and high quality urban design.*

The current CDMP contains guidelines for new development in Urban Centers such as:

- Uses and Activities: a mix of uses to be provided, including requirements for residential uses;
- Streets and Public Spaces: streets to be designed for pedestrians as well as vehicles; streets create a network of blocks; minimum of 15% of site area for public open spaces;
- Parking: shared parking is encouraged; reductions from standard parking requirements authorized where there is a complimentary mix of uses and nearby transit stations;
- Buildings: buildings shall be built to the sidewalk edge to frame the street ; continuous blank walls at street level are prohibited; weather protection by awnings, canopies, arcades, and colonnades provided in areas of significant pedestrian activity;
- Density and Intensity: Range of average FAR and max densities established. In addition, minimum densities and intensities set within designated Community Urban Centers and near transit stations should not be lower than provided in Policy 7F:

***LU-7F.** Residential development around rail rapid transit stations should have a minimum density of 15 dwelling units per acre (15 du/ac) within 1/4 mile walking distance from the stations and 20 du/ac or higher within 700 feet of the station, and a minimum of 10 du/ac between 1/4 and 1/2 mile walking distance from the station. Business and office development intensities around rail stations should produce at least 75 employees per acre within 1/4 mile walking distance from the station, 100 employees per acre within 700 feet, and minimum of 50 employees per acre between 1/4 and 1/2 mile walking distance from the station. Where existing and planned urban services and facilities are adequate to accommodate this development as indicated by the minimum level-of-service standards and other policies adopted in this Plan, and where permitted by applicable federal and State laws and regulations, these densities and intensities shall be required in all subsequent development approvals.*

As pioneered in the Kendall example, Urban Centers with an adopted area plan have these CMDP guidelines codified in a form-based zoning overlay district to direct new development.

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## BEST PRACTICES

### *Ten Principles for Reinventing America's Suburban Strips*

In 2001, the Urban Land Institute published *Ten Principles for Reinventing America's Suburban Strips*. This prescient report proposed many ideas that have since moved into mainstream public-sector planning.

The ten principles are:

- Ignite Leadership and Nurture Partnership
- Anticipate Evolution
- Know the Market
- Prune Back Retail-Zoned Land
- Establish Pulse Nodes of Development
- Tame the Traffic
- Create the Place
- Diversify the Character
- Eradicate the Ugliness
- Put Your Money (and Regulations) Where Your Policy Is

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**The zoning technique used by most suburban communities is to designate everything along the arterial highway strip for commercial uses and wait for retailers and developers to gradually fill in all of the individual sites.**

**In this type of environment, new development sprawls outward even as sites closer to the city remain vacant and older retail centers deteriorate. Retail overzoning thus has had the effect of extending strips prematurely in discontinuous and inefficient ways as developers leapfrog over one another onto sites farther and farther away from the city.**

**By pruning back the amount of land zoned for retail, suburban communities can stimulate retail growth, encourage revitalization, and improve the quality of their shopping strips. It simply is not necessary for every major parcel along every arterial to be zoned for commercial or retail use.**

*--- Ten Principles*

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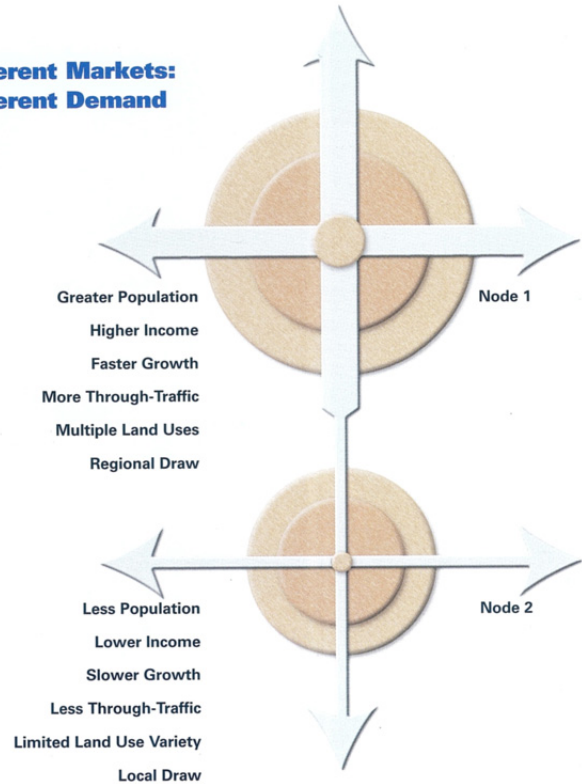
Here are some quotations from this report that are relevant in Hillsborough County:

- Recognize that a corridor will likely be composed of many distinct neighborhoods with different populations, incomes, growth rates, and levels of access. These differences should lead to wide variations in activity and character along different parts of the strip.
- Structure zoning in mature strips to encourage denser forms of development that can be reached by multiple access modes.
- Reserve some of the previously zoned retail land for housing, office space, civic uses, recreational facilities, and open space.
- The success of strip commercial development is predicated on free and plentiful parking. Unfortunately, parking lots commonly dominate the landscape of the strip. Conventional practice requires that every development along the strip provide for all of its parking needs on its own site between its structure and the roadway, even though this is inefficient and contributes substantially to the wasteland aesthetics of today's commercial strip.
- Pedestrian connections should be provided ... along corridors that are designated for future retail growth.
- Transit stations obviously are not the solution to most strips' problems, but some strips have matured and densified enough to become urban places with opportunities for transit. In fact, it is the increased density that makes transit feasible and reduces dependence on the automobile.
- Surround big boxes with "sleeves" of retail and service uses to minimize blank walls and dead spaces.
- As development pressures increase and land values rise along suburban strips, the character of the strips should densify and diversify, and mixed-use development should become an essential part of this change. This will add a new and exciting diversity to the strip, bring new services, create a more lively human dimension, and reinforce a sense of place.

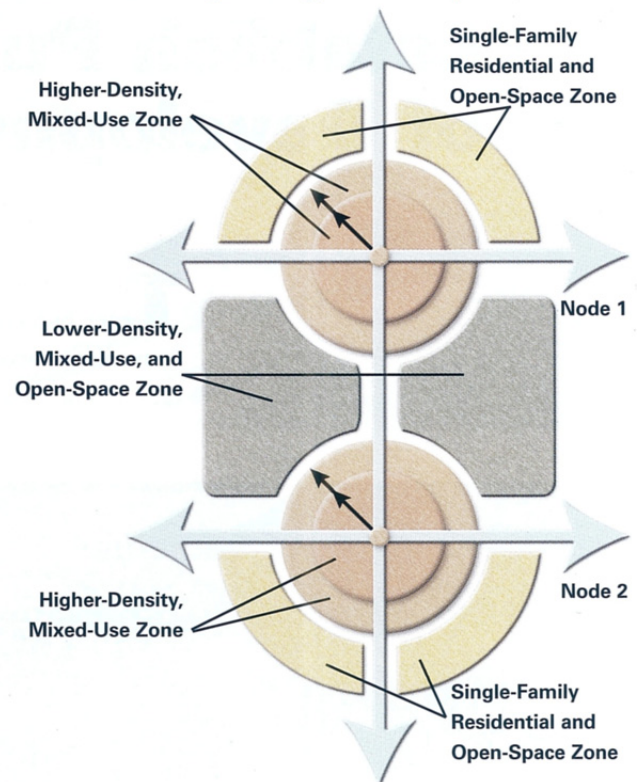


- Accommodate a range of nonretail uses, including housing, hotels, offices, civic uses, and cultural, entertainment, and recreational activities.
- Arrange the diverse land uses in ways that encourage walking and discourage driving for short trips and errands.
- Rezone designated areas in mature strips for urban mixed-use projects and higher-density housing.
- Landscape the main arterial with mature trees [and] plants in the median.
- Be creative with parking by placing it in courtyards, behind buildings, above stores, and in innovative arrangements as properties are redeveloped in new and denser configurations; this will reduce the visual blight of endless parking lots.
- Design and landscape parking areas so that cars are in a park rather than that trees are in a parking lot.
- Create a secondary street pattern where appropriate, and modify setback requirements to pull retail and restaurant facilities close to the arterial and secondary streets.
- The public sector must be prepared to make investments and take actions to support its own public policies for reinventing suburban strips.
- Design zoning regulations that facilitate private developers in implementing the public's strategy. Zoning must be clearly linked to the public's implementation plans, including effective by-right development standards as well as transfer of development rights in mature strips. Not every developer has the wherewithal to go through a rezoning or a replanning effort.

### Different Markets: Different Demand



### Create Variety Along the Strip



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## ***Restructuring the Commercial Strip***

In 2010, EPA's Smart Growth Program commissioned *Restructuring the Commercial Strip: A Practical Guide for Planning the Revitalization of Deteriorating Strip Corridors* to help communities revitalize these corridors, re-use land already served by infrastructure, and expand economic activity.

Prior to commissioning this report, EPA had assisted five communities with corridor development and redevelopment issues. Each effort was summarized in this guidebook, with a link to the formal report for each community.

This guidebook was then prepared to lay out specific steps communities can follow to revitalize their aging and often underused commercial corridors.

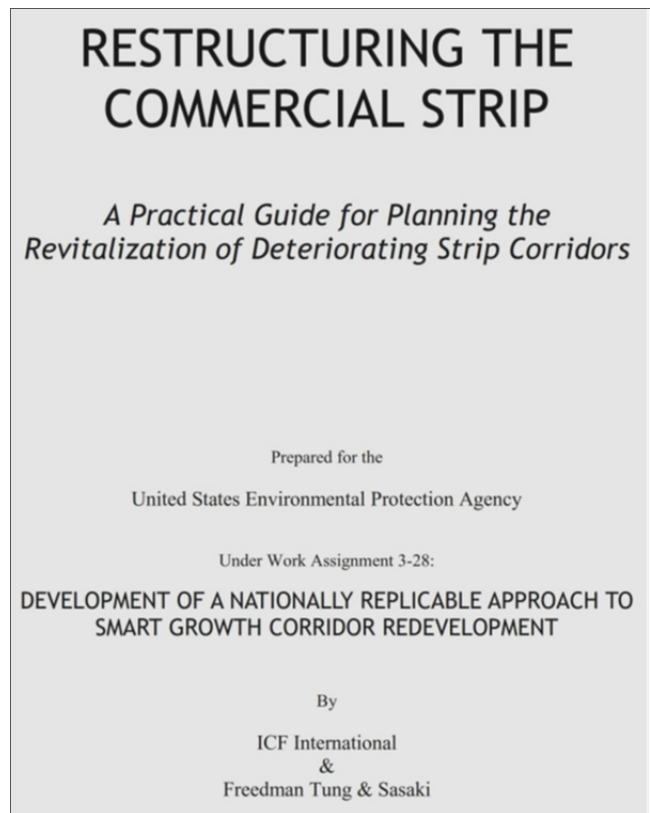
A brief history is provided about the advent, reign, and dissolution of America's commercial strips, which today often have prosperous businesses at major crossroads and disinvestment on sites in between. The "in-between" sites are often hampered by inflexible lots, a legacy of low-quality construction, and competition from an oversupply of vacant retail-zoned sites.

The guidebook recommends a deliberate process of restructuring aging commercial strips into a form which property owners, developers, and communities will once again invest.

Complementary strategies are required. The first is restructuring the physical form of retail activity from a linear to a nodal pattern, based on a hierarchy of crossroads locations and industry-standard shopping centers formats. Another is redesigning the public right-of-way to serve the new pattern.

The guidebook provides specific principles for reconfiguring typical auto-oriented superblock shopping centers into mixed-use developments that can be served by transit and are comfortable for pedestrians.

Segments between major crossroads often lose value over time. However, where these segments have stable clusters of specialized auto-accessed uses such as car dealers, motels, or quasi-industrial



uses, planning should bolster them and encourage continued investment.

When retail uses have been out-competed by better locations, new uses and development types may be the answer to restoring value. Residential and office uses are often the most viable and predominant alternate use for segments experiencing disinvestment. These uses are easily integrated with the neighborhoods they border and they don't need to compete with crossroads locations for shoppers and retail investors,

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**In the post-strip suburban city, it is easier for corridor frontages to attract value by integrating with the neighborhoods they border than by trying to compete with far-away crossroads properties for shoppers and retail investors.**

--- *Restructuring the Commercial Strip*

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In older communities, zoning often persists from the heyday of the strip when the highest and best use was assumed to be the same for the crossroads as for the segments in between. Typical commercial-only strip zoning leaves property owners in the segments with limited options, as rezoning is often a barrier to reinvestment.

Residential uses can simply be added to commercial zoning districts. A more effective technique would be to replace underperforming commercial zoning with residential zoning on segments that are well-suited for housing. Without the anticipation of a lucrative (but unlikely) purchase by a retail developer, residential investment will occur sooner.

The new zoning should permit a wide range of housing types including single-family homes, duplexes, attached or stacked townhomes, courtyard housing, and flats to accommodate a variety of incomes and family structures.

Compatibility of building types is the key to mixing uses in these segments. Building type compatibility can only be ensured by establishing and enforcing a development code that offers flexibility of use but is quite specific with regard to physical form (the opposite of most strip zoning codes).

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**Re-making the corridor to put housing on frontage parcels is an opportunity to finish the residential neighborhood—to transform it from a place that ends with dumpsters to one that is bounded by housing and punctuated by the neighborhood centers.... Residents in strip corridor-abutting neighborhoods would typically support a plan that would reduce or eliminate noise, odor, and privacy impacts of strip development by replacing it with properly designed housing**

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--- *Restructuring the Commercial Strip*

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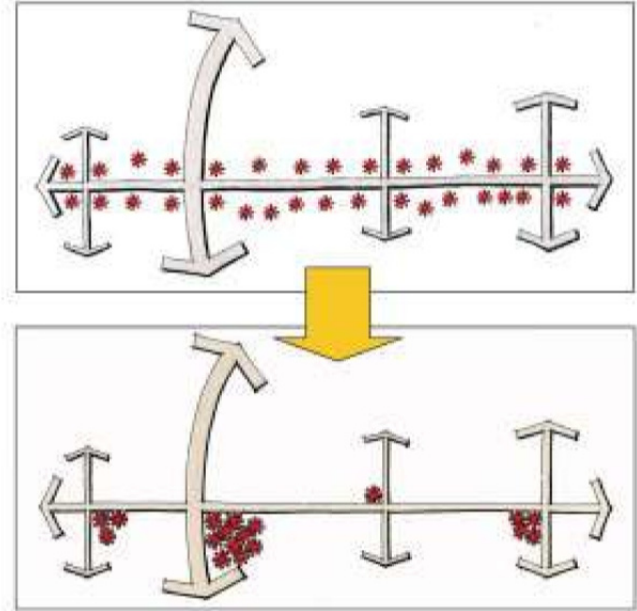


Figure 15. Diagram illustrating the essence of the shift from linear strip retail (top) to retail clustered at primary crossroads. Image: Freedman Tung & Sasaki

The development code must establish the characteristics and positioning of building types to ensure that all permitted uses are good neighbors to each other and particularly to a potential residential development. The same setbacks, building orientation, buffering devices, and architectural consistency required for corridor-fronting housing must be applied to office, lodging, live-work, and any permitted commercial uses within the segment.

Corridor zoning should be organized by center and segment, instead of by commercial or residential. These regulatory changes would promote lasting value of the entire corridor.

The guidebook also provides specific suggestions for restructuring the right-of-way to match the anticipated private redevelopment. The guidebook ends with practical observations about the role of local government in orchestrating the restructuring of strip commercial corridors.

This guidebook describes very specific planning and coding techniques designed to be used on specific strip corridors. The concepts behind the techniques are broadly applicable and could be introduced at the comprehensive planning stage.

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## POTENTIAL APPROACHES FOR HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

The following approaches, derived from analysis of case studies as well as input gathered through focus group meetings conducted in April 2014, are among those that should be considered for discouraging strip commercial development in Hillsborough County:

1. **Move the current commercial locational policies away from a quantitative approach** of precise square footages and distances from intersections, toward policies that define the desired outcomes and describe how they can be made easier to accomplish.
  - a. New policies could differentiate between rural, suburban, and urban locations.
  - b. New policies could differentiate between stable developed areas versus undeveloped or transitioning areas.
  - c. New policies could differentiate between areas with existing parallel streets; where parallel streets could be built; and where they cannot be built.
  - d. New policies would be clear about where and when they would be applied, and about what kind of implementing regulations might be required.
2. **Make a clear distinction between desirable commercial concentrations near major intersections**, and the link/segments/connections between those intersections. This distinction could be carried out in various ways:
  - a. New policies could be more positive than negative (instead of focusing on what landowners CANNOT do between the intersections, the policies would say what landowners can and should do between the intersections).
  - b. Comprehensive plan residential densities could be raised between the major intersections, perhaps limited to suitable building types and site designs.
  - c. New policies could authorize the LDC to include simple regulating plans that show a secondary street network that would support retail and mixed-use concentrations at intersections and other uses along arterials between intersections.
    - i. As an incentive, land subject to these regulating plans (at or between the intersections) could qualify for rezoning by the county or cities, instead of making landowners apply individually.
    - ii. New policies could explain what these regulating plans would depict and how and when they would be adopted and applied.
3. **Include general policies about desirable design features** for commercial and mixed-use areas, addressing for instance:
  - a. Importance of local street connectivity, instead of relying on single entrances
  - b. Benefits of shared facilities (such as driveways and parking spaces)
  - c. Importance of walkability (to support transit; healthy living; walking between stores; pedestrian safety)
  - d. Best methods of implementing the features (land development regulations; overlay districts, form-based codes)
4. **Expand the use of vision maps in each plan.**
  - a. The vision map could differentiate between stable developed areas versus undeveloped or transitioning areas.
  - b. Priority redevelopment corridors could be identified, with policies that describe what could/should happen there.
  - c. Temple Terrace and Plant City could map their downtowns and intersections where commercial and mixed-use concentrations are desired.
  - d. Arterials and other streets that qualify for commercial could be shown (replacing the current reliance on functional classification maps created for other purposes).
5. **Organize new policies using a common format and vocabulary**, distinguishing between policies and strategies.
  - a. Policies are statements of intent and general direction that a city or county sets to meet its goals and objectives; policies direct the manner in which actions and decisions should be made.



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- i. Some policies provide guidance for making decisions on rezoning applications.
  - ii. Other policies are statements of design intent.
  - b. Strategies are the specific actions, techniques, or programs that a city or county will implement to achieve objectives and policies and solve issues and problems.
    - i. Some strategies direct other county or city actions (LDC changes; special studies; overlay districts; etc.).
    - ii. Other strategies identify incentives that can be provided to encourage other parties to follow some desired path.
  - c. Most regulations belong in the LDC, not the comprehensive plan, but some such as residential density are required by the state to be in comprehensive plans.