

chapter **1**
THE VISION

NEW RIVER MASTER PLAN REPORT

A NEW VISION FOR THE NEW RIVER

AN OVERVIEW

The Vision for the Riverwalk District builds directly upon years of past work, including the built results of both public and private initiatives, and the planning work of the City of Fort Lauderdale.

The Riverwalk, in its current state, is a substantial amenity for the City. For recreation, it provides much-needed space for strolling, jogging, and as a venue for contact with the City's maritime-related activities. It also provides abundant opportunity for contemplating the history of Fort Lauderdale by returning the New River to a place of prominence appropriate to its role as the City's point of origin.

However, the Riverwalk District could be much more. It's public spaces seem to work best as occasional destinations for visitors, or as venue for special festivals or performances; as an integral part of the daily life of nearby

residents and workers, the Riverwalk falls short. Some areas are active; others are not, and feel less safe as a



result. Successful areas are often poorly connected to others. And large stretches of the River have no public access. Active, interesting stretches of retail, such as

An aerial view of proposed 'Downtown' Tarpon River waterfront neighborhood, showing new mixed-use development with decreasing height and massing transitions along the existing single-family Tarpon River community

A NEW VISION FOR THE NEW RIVER

Las Olas Boulevard and the restaurants of 2nd Street, are only a block away from a waterfront promenade, which often remains empty and intimidating at night. If there was some way to bring these two conditions together, it would be a recipe for success.

The Vision for the Riverwalk District seeks to overcome these challenges by creating a framework, supported by design guidelines, that will strengthen the parts of the Riverwalk that are working, fill in the gaps and missing links that leave the Riverwalk disconnected along the

river and from surrounding neighborhoods, and enliven the entire stretch of Riverwalk with a variety of interesting experiences, some familiar and some new.

The Riverwalk should consist of multiple, distinct experiences and characters. The Riverwalk's area of influence should reach back several blocks into the surrounding neighborhoods, drawing people and activity towards the river's edge. The Riverwalk District should be and feel safe throughout the day and night. And the quality of

architecture, landscape architecture, and public space design should be of the highest quality. This central river-park and its surroundings should be the showpiece of Downtown, leaving a lasting imprint on the memory of everyone who experiences it.



An aerial view of the proposed Cultural Arts Gateway area, showing re-designed Esplanade Park in the foreground, re-developed 'arts-district' blocks to the north, and streetscape improvements leading from Broward Boulevard to the Riverwalk District

BUILDING ON THE DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

The Downtown Master Plan (2003) makes multiple references and gives substantial guidance for further refinement. **THE MASTER PLAN VISION AND PLANNING PRINCIPLES** described below set the stage for the current New River Master Plan:

VISION: The Vision is of a Downtown Riverwalk that is an active and dynamic destination, easy to find and with many reasons to stay, and which truly connects the north and south sides of town...

The Vision is for a green Downtown, lushly landscaped, and promoting the health of the natural environment, especially the New River...

PLANNING PRINCIPLES:

PRINCIPLE 3 STRENGTHEN AREAS OF VARIED NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER AND DISTINCT IDENTITY

Downtown Fort Lauderdale is a large enough area that distinct identities have begun to emerge among its various neighborhoods. Building on the unique characteristics of each area, these distinct identities should be strengthened and encouraged, avoiding approaches that are either too homogeneous or too sporadic to create a sense of place. A variety of building scales, mixtures of uses, and architectural expressions will break down the large area of the Downtown RAC into smaller memorable neighborhoods that establish a clear ‘mental map’ of the city for residents and visitors.

PRINCIPLE 8 MAKE THE LAS OLAS - RIVERWALK CORRIDOR A TOP PRIORITY

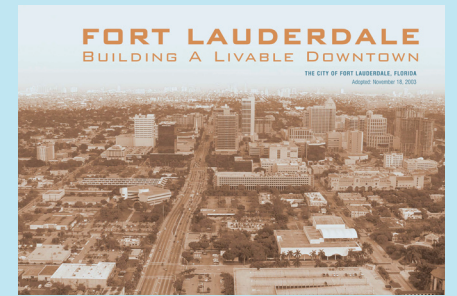
Las Olas Boulevard and the Riverwalk are among the most memorable and successful places in Downtown. However, each is incomplete, and, though nearby, are not well-connected to each other. The next phase of growth can complete the vision of a unified Las Olas – Riverwalk Corridor as Fort Lauderdale’s central public space. Strongly linking these two areas is the key to leveraging public investment and visitor spending for a greater economic benefit to the City and an increase in property values. It should be a unique, urban centerpiece for the new Fort Lauderdale, celebrating the rich juxtaposition of the linear, urban street and the winding, natural river.

PRINCIPLE 9 RETURN THE RIVER TO ITS CENTRAL ROLE AND BETTER CONNECT THE TWO SIDES

Transform the New River from a barrier into a seam, by improving connections between the north and south sides, and improving public access and activity along its edges. Accessible and friendly pedestrian crossings, completion of the Riverwalk ‘loop’, and transit connections across the River are a few of the strategies that can contribute to this goal.

PRINCIPLE 10 GREEN THE DOWNTOWN WITH A CONNECTED SYSTEM OF PARKS, TRAILS AND STREETS

Downtown should take advantage of Fort Lauderdale’s remarkable South Florida climate and the ability to quickly grow lush landscapes. A general ‘greening’ of the Downtown could simultaneously transform the city’s image and increase pedestrian comfort levels. The ‘greening’ should include the improvement of existing parks, the creation of new parks to sustain the anticipated population growth, the creation of trails and greenways that connect with regional park and trail systems, and the comprehensive planting of street-trees throughout Downtown.



Fort Lauderdale Downtown Master Plan, adopted on November 18, 2003

BUILDING ON THE DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

The Master Plan Framework chapter includes the following Goals and Actions that make specific reference to the New River area:

LAS OLAS & RIVERWALK CORRIDOR:

GOAL 1

STRENGTHEN THE LAS OLAS CORRIDOR.

Make the Las Olas Corridor a continuous, walkable, urban promenade by filling in critical gaps between existing pockets of active street life.

ACTION

Along Las Olas between SE 5th Avenue and the area above the Federal Highway tunnel: provide continuous ground floor retail or other active uses (including possible park or recreation uses along the south side). Explore the possibility of a narrow building site on the north side of Las Olas at the tunnel, blocking the views and noise of Federal Highway below.

ACTION

Along Las Olas between Andrews Avenue and SE 3rd Avenue: Provide continuous ground floor retail or other active uses in the few remaining locations (and future redevelopment), specifically at the empty FAU/BCC corner site at 1st Avenue. Explore possible solutions for activating the Art Museum 'plaza', such as new transparent entry or possible gift shop/café opening onto plaza.

ACTION

Along SW 2nd Street between SW 3rd and SW 4th Avenues: Provide continuous ground floor retail or other active uses in remaining development sites to encourage the expansion of the current restaurant and entertainment area to the east.

ACTION

Along SW 2nd Street between SW 7th Avenue and SW 5th Avenue: Activate intersection of SW 7th Avenue and SW 2nd Street with ground floor retail or other active use. Explore the possibility of retrofitting the ground floor of the parking garage with active uses.

GOAL 2

COMPLETE THE RIVERWALK CORRIDOR.

Fill in the missing 'pieces' along the North and South sides of the New River, providing continuous public access on both sides stretching from the Federal Highway tunnel westward to the 4th/ 7th Avenue bridge.

ACTION

Require all future riverfront development stretching from the 7th/4th Avenue bridge to Federal Highway to provide public riverfront access in accordance with an updated Riverwalk Master Plan. The City should actively pursue riverfront access between SW 1st and SW 4th Avenue, the key remaining 'missing link' in the Riverwalk park.

ACTION

Require remaining riverfront development to provide ground floor restaurant, retail, cultural, or other active uses to activate the Riverwalk edges. A variety of experiences along the Riverwalk, occurring at various times of the day, is crucial to its success.

ACTION

Update the existing Riverwalk Master Plan and create Riverwalk-specific Design Guidelines.

BUILDING ON THE DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

GOAL 3 CONNECT THE NORTH AND SOUTH SIDES OF THE RIVERWALK.

Through the placement of pedestrian crossing(s), create a continuous, walkable park loop around the New River, returning the New River to its central role in Downtown.

ACTION
Create a 'signature' pedestrian crossing bridge or ferry at the Federal Highway tunnel location. Take advantage of public land adjacent to the Stranahan House property and Smoker Park for bridge landings. Distinctive views of the structure from the surrounding area, including from Federal Highway traveling north and south, should be considered in the design.

ACTION
Improve the pedestrian crossing at the 7th/4th Avenue bridge. Create an accessible, exciting design along the eastern edge of the bridge, highly visible from the water's edge as the western terminus of the Riverwalk loop.

ACTION
Provide ferry or water crossing adjacent to the exiting FEC rail line bridge. This will allow for continuity along the proposed Flagler Greenway system, and will provide improved access between the two sides of the river.

GOAL 4 BETTER CONNECT THE RIVERWALK AND THE LAS OLAS CORRIDOR.

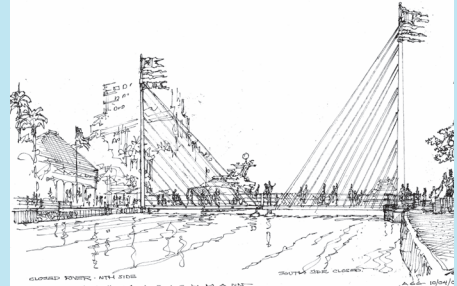
Combine these two parallel pedestrian spaces into an integrated urban experience and a defining element of Downtown. Increase the perception of close proximity of each space, and bring some of the vitality of 'old' Las Olas & Himmarshee Village to the Riverwalk.

ACTION
Encourage strong north-south pedestrian connections between the Las Olas and Riverwalk Corridors at every possible location, in particular at public rights-of-way.

ACTION
Introduce an integrated signage and wayfinding system to assist connections for residents and visitors.

ACTION
Introduce new ground floor retail, active uses, streetscape improvements, plazas and other 'green connections' to encourage street activity.

ACTION
New development shall not block any existing street, alley, or other right of-way to the Riverwalk. Provide mid-block connections where possible.



A sketch done by a local resident during a public meeting for the Fort Lauderdale Downtown Master Plan in 2003, showing a pedestrian bridge connecting both sides of the river

ENVIRONMENT:

GOAL 1

REDUCE POLLUTION OF THE NEW RIVER.

ACTION

Maximize the use of natural storm-water management solutions and minimize runoff at the source. This includes: reducing the amount of pavement in Downtown to reduce polluted stormwater runoff into the New River (See Design Guidelines for various techniques for reducing roadway widths and minimizing surface parking lots); 'greening' rooftops, and increased frequency of street sweeping.

ACTION

Encourage the introduction of more technically advanced solutions for dealing with storm-water at the outlets. Techniques include advanced filtration and baffle technologies for all discharge points along the river.

ACTION

Encourage the use of minimal-polluting water-based transit.

OPEN SPACE

GOAL 1

IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EXISTING PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACES.

ACTION

Improve Stranahan Park and Huizenga Park through a combination of landscaping and physical design, and programming.

ACTION

Work with the Riverwalk Trust to create an updated set of design guidelines for future development along the Riverwalk. Include recommendations for building setbacks, ground floor uses, and amount of space accessible to the public.

GOAL 2

ENCOURAGE THE CREATION OF NEW PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACES DOWNTOWN.

Plan for any location within the study area to be within a 5-minute walk of a quality public space.

ACTION

Encourage the creation of 6 new major parks and public spaces:

- 3) An expansion of the South Riverwalk between Andrews and 3rd Avenue.
- 5) Require any future redevelopment of the south riverfront properties between SW 4th Avenue and SW 1st Avenue to provide an expansion of the South Riverwalk.

GOAL 3

LINK PARKS AND OPEN SPACES INTO AN INTERCONNECTED RECREATIONAL AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORK OF TRAILS AND LINEAR PARKS.

ACTION

Encourage the creation of the Flagler Greenway, stretching generally alongside the FEC rail line on the north and south sides of the river.

ACTION

Encourage the creation of a significant public link between the eastern terminus of the North Riverwalk and Las Olas Boulevard.

LAND USE & BUILDING TYPES

GOAL 6

ENCOURAGE AND STRENGTHEN SPECIAL USE DISTRICTS.

Special-use districts can provide areas of particular interest and intensity of a distinguishing use, while still maintaining a healthy mixture of complementary uses.

ACTION

Encourage initiatives to strengthen the Arts and Entertainment District currently anchored by the Performing Arts Center and the Museum of Science. A number of under utilized sites currently exist in the area. Current plans for a Museum of Maritime History would complement the District.

ACTION

Encourage initiatives to strengthen the Courts District south of the New River. A potential new Federal Courthouse and Family Courthouse building can revitalize under utilized sites and benefit from the proximity of existing related uses.

BUILDING ON THE MASTER PLAN UPDATE

The **Master Plan Update of 2007** added several River-specific design guidelines to the more general Downtown-wide guidelines introduced in the original Master Plan:

SECTION 8: THEMATIC PLANNING DISTRICTS

Strengthen Definition/ Concepts for Special Districts:

Arts & Entertainment/ Cultural District

- Expand existing Arts & Entertainment District
- Require cultural component as part of large development projects
- Potential artist live/work units
- Potential new theaters, museums, galleries
- Strong public art focus in streetscape design

Judicial Campus

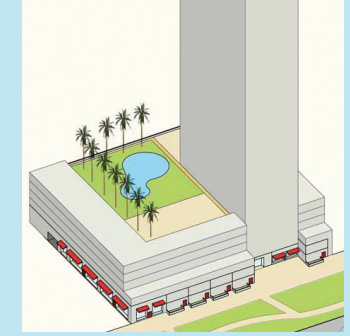
- Strengthen existing courts-district south of the River
- Revitalize under utilized sites
- Create new active relationship to Riverwalk area
- Minimize negative urban design impacts of perimeter security requirements

River Plan

- Integrate special districts into a uniformed river-focused plan with riverfront guidelines (Section 9)

SECTION 9: RIVERFRONT GUIDELINES

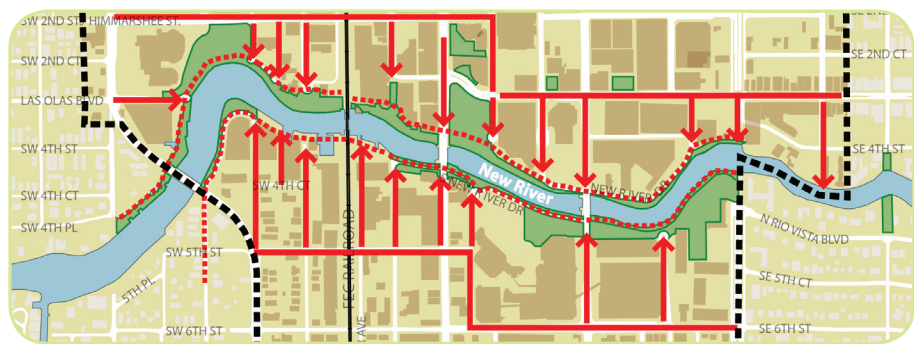
- R-1** Create and maintain waterfront street and pedestrian connections to the River, to enhance the visual presence of the river and increase physical public access
- R-2** Create and maintain continuous public access along both sides of the river
- R-3** Maintain and create strong pedestrian connections to the riverfront with wider sidewalks, double row of trees, increased building setbacks and active ground floor uses
- R-4** Create at least one key pedestrian gateway from each riverfront development to public Riverwalk
- R-5** Develop a comprehensive New River Master Plan:
 - Divide the Downtown Riverwalk into separate character areas, with unique setback, stepback, hardscape/ softscape ratios, and palette variations
 - Character areas range from more-urban/active to less-urban/passive
 - In order to further activate the Riverwalk, small scale open cafes and dining venues can be introduced along the river's edge adjacent to restaurants in a principal building. These open air structures should be periodic and limited so as to not inhibit views and access along the Riverwalk.
- R-6** Encourage riverfront towers to orient the narrowest dimension parallel to the river's edge. Provide a building stepback above the 3rd floor for buildings facing directly onto (or across the street from) the Riverwalk



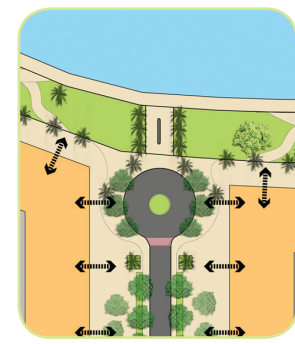
Riverfront Guidelines R-6



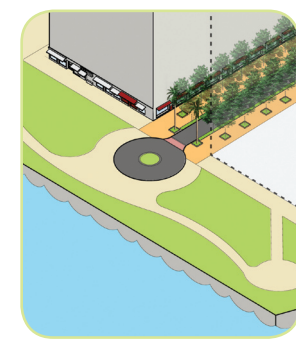
Buildings are slender, and their narrowest dimensions are oriented parallel to the water's edge to allow air, views and greater space between them along the Vancouver, Canada waterfront



Riverfront Guidelines R-1



Riverfront Guidelines R-3



Riverfront Guidelines

REFINED PRINCIPLES FOR NEW RIVER AREA

PRINCIPLE 1

Envision **the river as a center** (and not as a barrier) by connecting clusters of uses/destinations to and across the river



Inner Harbor, Baltimore, MD

PRINCIPLE 2

Encourage **daily life and activity** to complement special events, serving both locals and tourists



San Francisco, CA

PRINCIPLE 3

Allow for a **variety of experiences** along the Riverwalk, balancing river-based activity (boating, maritime uses, and transportation) with land-based activity (culture, housing, recreation, entertainment, and commerce)



Chicago, IL

REFINED PRINCIPLES FOR NEW RIVER AREA

PRINCIPLE 4

Strengthen links to surrounding neighborhoods and destinations

PRINCIPLE 5

Improve the visual experience with: **exceptional architecture, landscape and streetscape design**; water as a connecting design theme

The Planning Principles represent a set of shared ideals and goals that drive the New River Master Plan recommendations. They result from broad consensus reached between various groups, including the public, stakeholders, and City leaders and staff. These principles are used to provide criteria for measuring the success and appropriateness of architectural, urban design, and planning proposals. In general, each Design Guideline in Chapter 4 meets the intent of one or more of these principles; and, every principle is implemented by virtue of one or more of the Design Guidelines.



Las Olas Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, FL



Olympic Sculpture Park, Seattle, WA

