

# CHAPTER 2

## CONTEXT

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ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT IN THE RIVERWALK DISTRICT REPORT

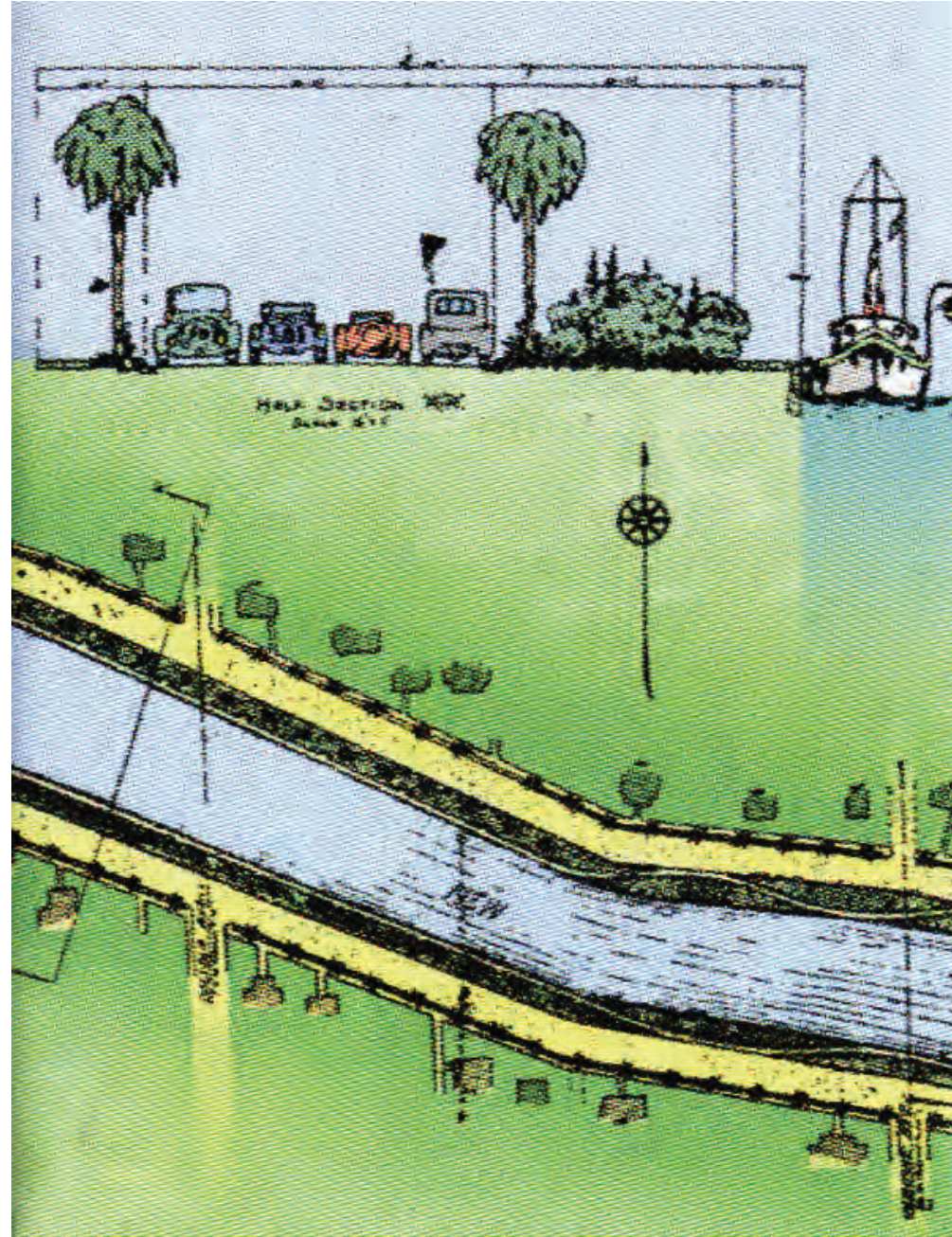


## RIVER HISTORY

### FORT LAUDERDALE'S NEW RIVER

Fort Lauderdale has a rich and layered history, and this report does not attempt to summarize the details. However, it is important to recognize the central role that the New River has played in the life of the city. From the geographical advantages it offered the earliest Native American inhabitants and the settlers who followed, to the visionary transformation of the river's edges to a grand public space begun in the 20th century, the New River has become a critical part of Fort Lauderdale's image, for both its maritime industry, and, more recently, tourism.

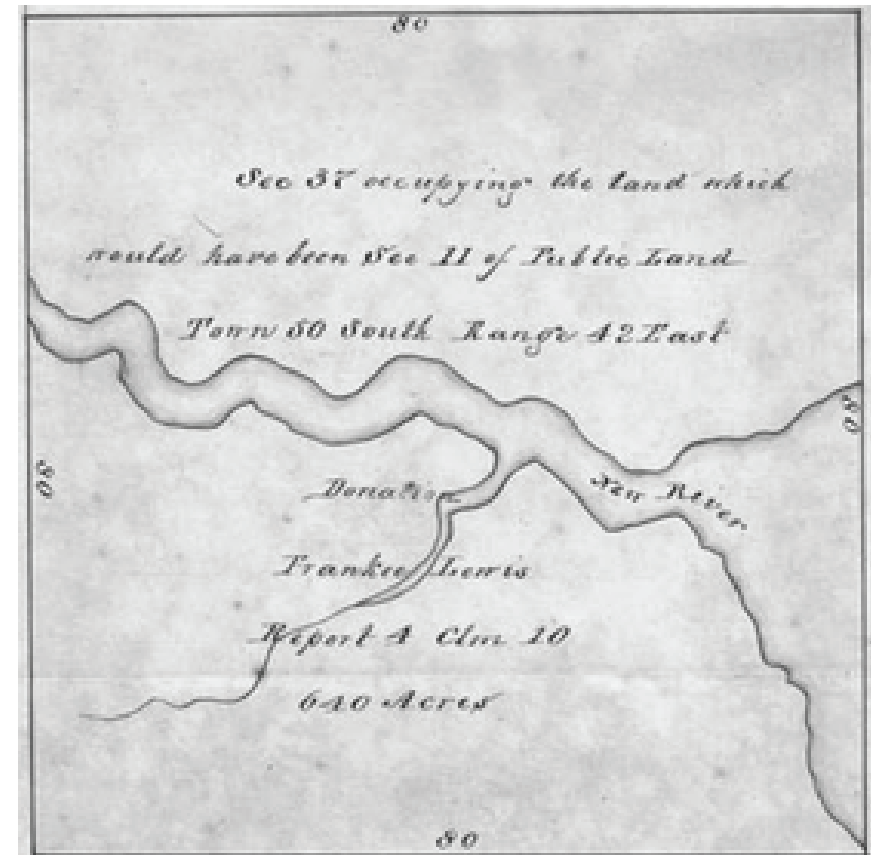
While many of the pieces are already in place, the New River and the spaces along it have yet to reach their full potential as the city's 'Central Park'. With the effort of a large number of enthusiastic partners and stakeholders throughout Fort Lauderdale, the City - through this current initiative- hopes to kick off a new era for the New River, an era in which the Riverwalk District comes to life as a coherent, well-managed destination, a great place for visitors, workers, and local residents that exceeds the sum of its individual parts.



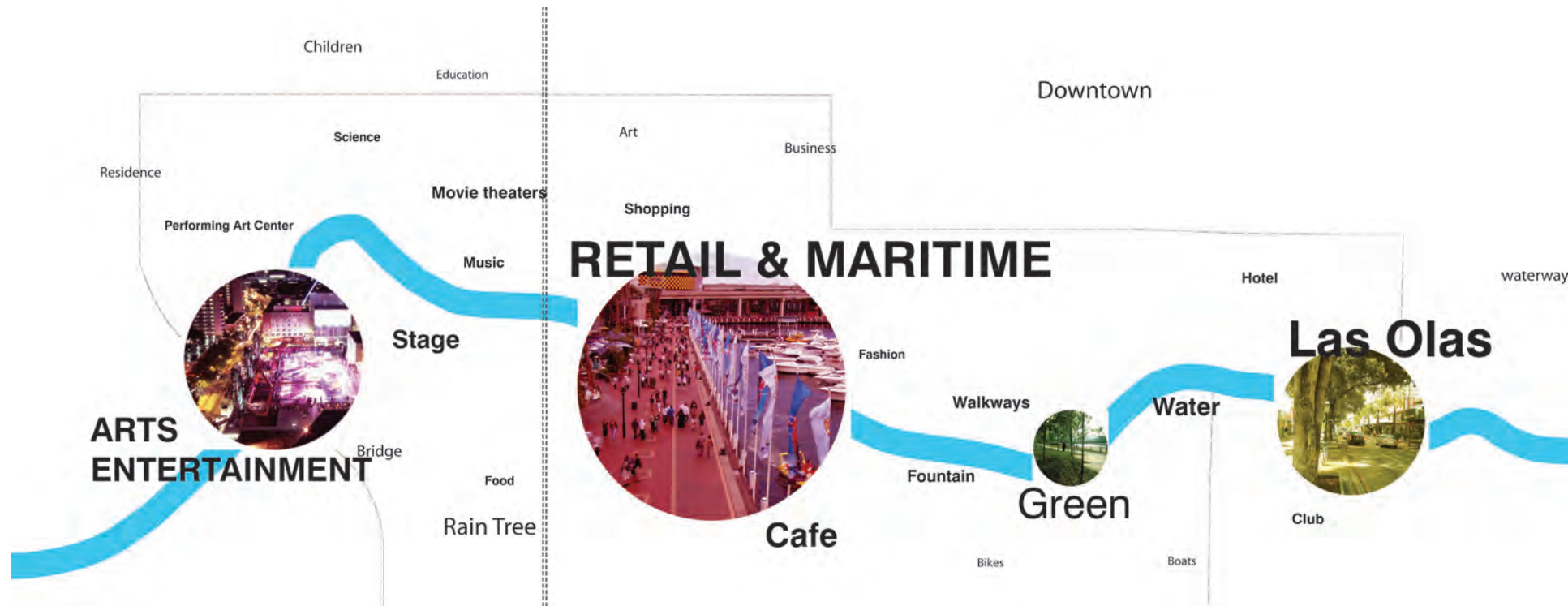
Continuous changes to its entry point to the Atlantic Ocean caused early explorers to note the mouth of a “new river” on maps with each new charting.

Settlement started along its banks and at a certain point, the river stubbornly held onto its form in the face of surrounding urbanization.

The areas along the edge of the water became public domain, allowing for this invaluable public space.



# NEW RIVER MASTER PLAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES



## NEW RIVER MASTER PLAN (2008)

The New River Master Plan, adopted in 2008, built upon the previous 2003 Consolidated Downtown Master Plan. The New River Master Plan provided a compelling vision for the area that included: a mixed-use Downtown integrating maritime, mixed-income housing, commercial, and cultural uses; a linked network of pedestrian friendly public spaces and parks; and connections to surrounding neighborhoods. Above all, there was a return to the idea of the river as the center of Fort Lauderdale.

Along with a framework describing thematic 'character areas' for the Riverwalk District, many of the specific design recommendations focused on the relationships between buildings and public space, with the intention of guiding the next wave of private development downtown. These guidelines have set the stage for the current effort to activate the public spaces of the Riverwalk more through programming, activities, and management, with less emphasis on purely physical design.

1. Envision the river as a center
2. Encourage daily life and activity
3. Allow for a variety of experiences
4. Strengthen links to surrounding neighborhoods and destinations
5. Improve the visual experience with exceptional architecture, landscape, streetscape design

**BUILDING ON THE MOMENTUM**

The activation strategies developed in this report, while offering ideas that reflect best practices around the country, are also attempts to build upon the extraordinary efforts of multiple organizations currently working on a variety of initiatives throughout the Riverwalk District.

The programs and events shown at right are just a few of the many established, new, or planned events that have begun to activate the Riverwalk. Some events, such as Sunday Jazz Brunch, have become very successful, attracting large crowds, while other events struggle for increased visibility. Clearly, the citizens of Fort Lauderdale and its active civic organizations have embraced the Riverwalk as an exceptional public space with great potential. However, a multi-pronged, often uncoordinated approach to the overall management of the Riverwalk itself, and of the broader Riverwalk District, results in a place that is not living up to its full potential as a spectacular destination for both regional visitors and local residents.

In order to take a comprehensive view of the Riverwalk District - its activities, public spaces, and physical infrastructure - we must first understand the existing demographics and existing market (both local and visitor-based) for the types of activities that are currently accommodated in the District and those that could be accommodated in the future.

**OVERHEARD AROUND THE RIVERWALK**



# GOALS AND ACTIONS OF THE MARKET STUDY

### Goals

Strengthen/expand the Arts and Entertainment District identity through existing public spaces and under-utilized facilities, and short-term, achievable actions and programming.

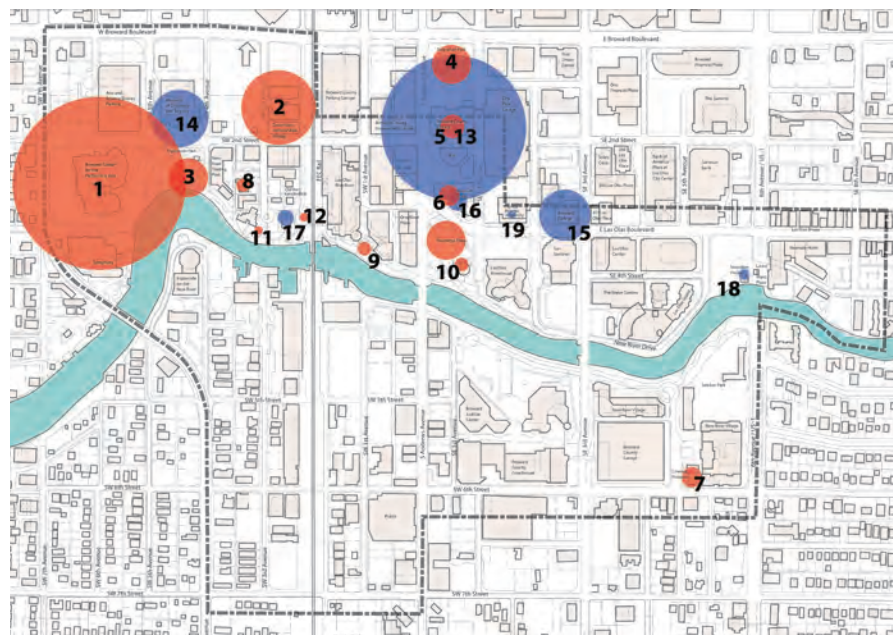
### Actions

1. Analyze audience and participant demand
2. Interview key stakeholders
3. Survey of 100+ cultural entities & artists
4. Provide facility inventory and gap analysis
5. Review precedents

### MARKET STUDY

As part of Activation Strategy effort, a Market Study was undertaken to better understand and prove the current availability of arts and entertainment-related programming, venues, and providers.

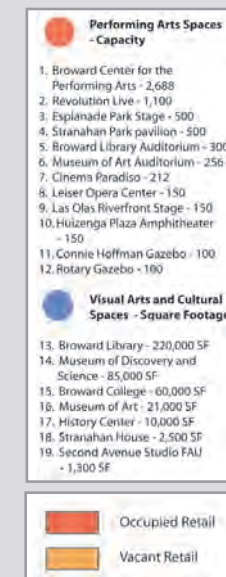
For the complete results of the Market Study, see the Appendix.



Existing Performing and Visual Arts Venues and Capacity



Occupied and Vacant Retail Space

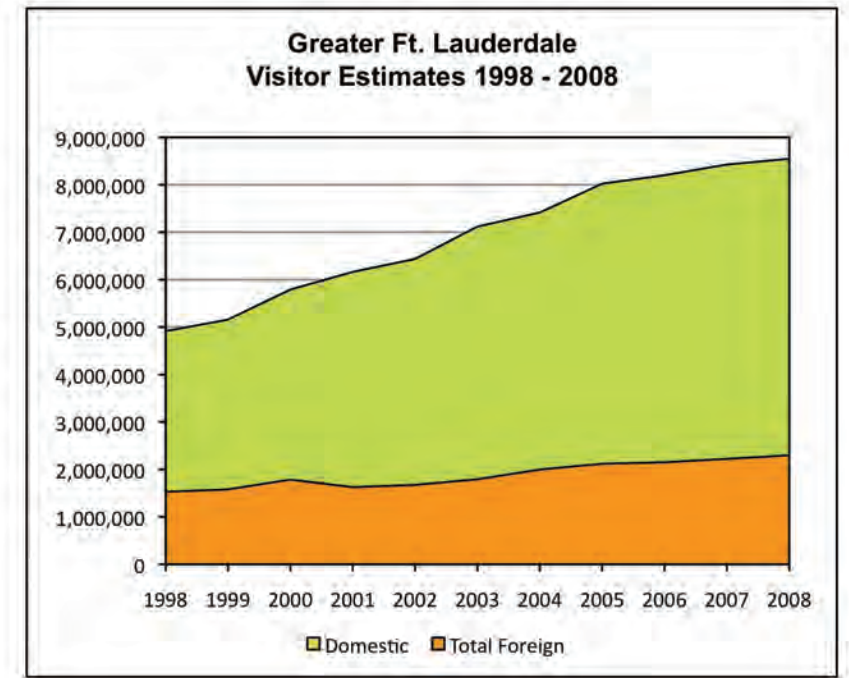
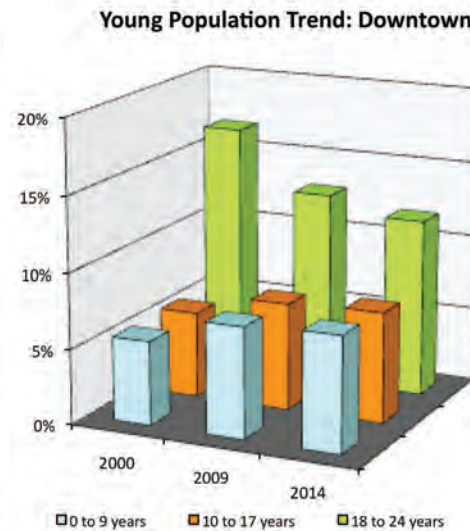
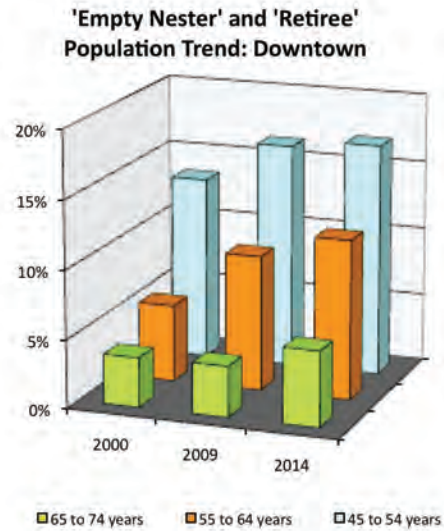


# MARKET ANALYSIS

Who will use the Riverwalk?

The 'face' of downtown is changing with more young adults (over the age of 24), more children and more empty nesters and retirees

Source: Claritas 2009



Source: Greater Fort Lauderdale 2009 Visitor Estimates

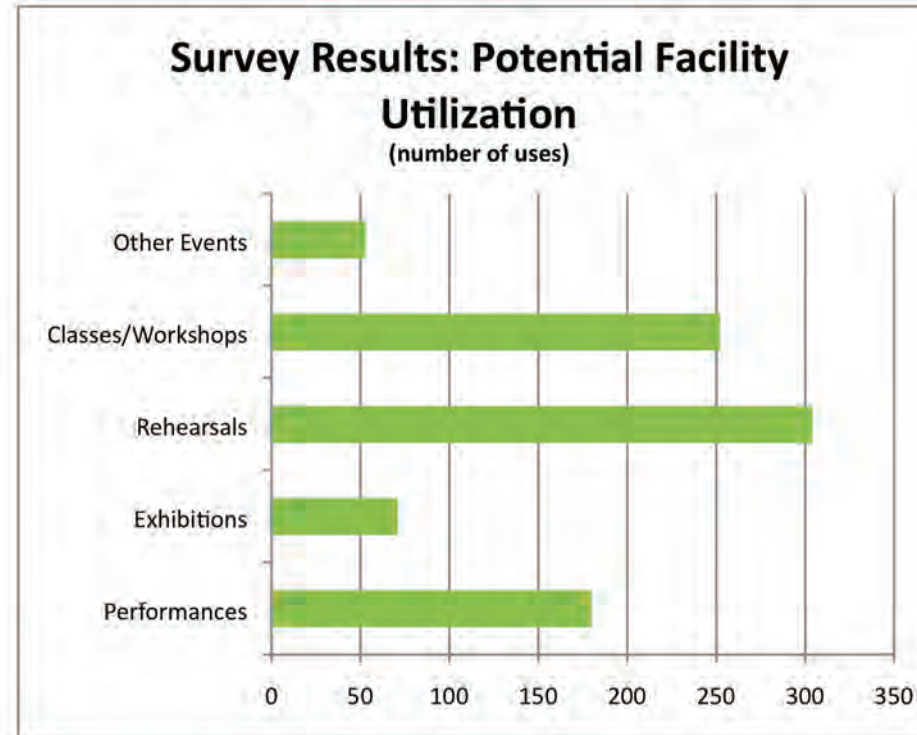
## Visitor Estimates

- Tourism drives local economy
- 10.8 million visitors in 2008
- 21% are international visitors
- Cruise ship embarkations and debarkations (now at 3.1 million) are rising
- Significant proportion of visitors are visiting friends and relatives

# MARKET SURVEY RESULTS

## Understanding the Survey

- Survey issued to 100+ cultural entities, artists and more than 100 visits, 45 completes
- Participants include artists, arts groups, service/granting orgs, creative businesses, interested individuals
- Questions focused on support for more programming, partnerships and facility needs
- 98% of respondents support further development of arts and entertainment activity at the Riverwalk
- 56% are interested in delivering programs, 40% might be interested
- 12 out of 45 groups could deliver programming in the short term
- Large majority currently maintain or are interested in developing partnerships



## Facility Demand

- Both indoor and outdoor performance facilities (28 groups/artists)
- Flexible teaching/rehearsal space (30 groups/artists)
- Exhibition space (17 groups/artists)

# MARKET STUDY CONCLUSIONS

## Conclusions from Market Study

The right players are at the table, but need to be **managed and connected**

The market can support additional arts and entertainment, with particular **potential to serve:**

- Diverse populations throughout the County
- Families
- Downtown residents
- Cultural tourists and visiting friends and relatives (VFRs)
- Cruise ship passengers

Existing facilities are **expensive and difficult** to access for small groups, start-up groups and independent artists

Downtown **outdoor facilities are limited** in their ability to support live performance

Notable demand for **small-scale** performance, exhibition and program space at the Riverwalk

**Permit policies** are limiting activity in downtown Fort Lauderdale and on the Riverwalk

## Key Potential Partners in Riverwalk Programming

### Art Institute

Student exhibits and presentations, student-run eateries

### FAU

Student exhibits

### MoA|Nova

New performing arts program, building presence in downtown Fort Lauderdale and working to bring students to Museum

### Cinema Paradiso

Outdoor film presenting

### Broward Center for Performing Arts

Connecting patrons to the Riverwalk; Live performance presenting and programming

### Local artists

Galleries, studios and retail

### Riverwalk Trust

Building on existing resources, events and programming

### DDA

Leverage and program Huizenga Plaza activities

### MODS

Develop programming on and relevant to the Riverwalk



# MARKET STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

Floating Stage, Lake Las Vegas Resort, NV



Addison Circle Park, Addison, TX



## Overall Recommendations from the Market Study:

### Programs

- Support low-cost/informal arts and entertainment
- Reflect Fort Lauderdale's diversity
- Use arts education as a unifying theme

### Short Term Facilities (Public and Private)

- Four to six "program spaces"
- Temporary artist studio spaces
- Outdoor Film Venue
- Exhibition Space
- Administrative and storage spaces

### Long Term Facilities (Public and Private)

- Flexible Plaza
- Outdoor Performance Venue
- Flexible Performance Venues
- Visual Arts Center

**The combination creates the destination.**

## AN EARLY SUCCESS: Riverwalk Trust's Blanket Event Permit

In its mission to continue to activate the area, the Riverwalk Trust proposed an annual "blanket permit" seeking permission from the City Commission to host a year's worth of events at designated locations along the Riverwalk. While event organizers will still be required to coordinate with the City on an event-by-event basis for items like public safety, parking, and street closures, this approval marks the first step in streamlining the event permitting process.

One of the first successful regularly occurring events to be realized as part of the blanket permit is the Riverwalk Trust's Urban Market. The market takes place in Himmarshee Park every Saturday from 8am to 1pm, offering more than 40 vendors of produce, jams, spices, sauces, pastry, breads, cheeses and lots of other great food items.