

VIII.
***Social and Economic Disparity in the
Development of Regional Impact Process***

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Description of Social and Economic Disparity

Although the economy of South Florida is relatively healthy, pockets of extreme poverty remain throughout the region. Many individuals are not prospering from the benefits of economic growth. The region's prospects of becoming truly world-class will diminish if we do not link the healthy portions of our economy with areas in severe economic decline. The economic health of our individual communities is a basic indicator of our health as a region. Economic development must encompass a wide range of issues. No longer is activity directed solely at attracting new businesses and jobs. The quality and diversity of new businesses and jobs is equally important. New jobs are not the only issue; these jobs should pay a living wage. Social and economic disparity among the region's residents is a concern of the Council and recent welfare-to-work initiatives are moving this issue to the forefront.

One of the Council's main objectives is to promote a unified regional community that capitalizes on our cultural diversity and strives to provide opportunities for all residents to prosper. The *Strategic Regional Policy Plan for South Florida (SRPP)* recognizes that small and minority businesses are an important resource for the economic growth and stability. An example of this is illustrated in Goal 4.1 of the *SRPP*:

"Achieve a competitive and diversified regional economy, including a lower unemployment rate and higher per capita income than the state and national average for Dade, Broward and Monroe Counties through the achievement of cutting edge human resources, economic development infrastructure, and other resources to ensure a sustainable regional community."

Social disparity and economic development strategies can no longer be crafted independent of one another. The business climate of today demands that these issues be addressed as one. A variety of strategies are required to maximize each opportunity. Positive change can only be effected through the combined efforts of the entire regional community, including the public, non-profit, and private sectors.

While all sectors of the business community need to be involved, the public sector can play a unique and central role in responding to the challenge of reducing social and economic disparity. The public sector can play a leading role by bringing affected interest groups together to reach a community consensus. Moreover, the public sector can set a policy framework that builds on this consensus. There are differences between the public and private sector's ability to act on this issue. The private sector is more likely to participate when community goals are understood and are compatible with corporate goals.

Community consultation and political leadership are essential to crafting and implementing meaningful strategies. There are legitimate questions concerning the desirability or legality of taking a regulatory approach to reducing social and economic disparity among communities. Recent court decisions at the state and federal level suggest that the traditional approaches are ripe for reconsideration. As in many policy areas being flexible, adaptable and creative is essential. These characteristics are found in mixed land use patterns served by a variety of transport modes, entrepreneurial climates favoring small and medium-sized firms and strong linkages between educational/research institutions, local employees and community organizations.

An important role for the South Florida Regional Planning Council is to foster and support the development of a community consensus on the importance of this issue to the future of the South Florida. Currently adopted policies strive to involve small and minority businesses in the development and expansion of permanent job opportunities, with a concentration on the economically disadvantaged. As required by Florida Statute, the Council assists local governments with activities designed to promote economic development. Another ongoing initiative is the Council's effort to increase labor force

participation on the part of the economically disadvantaged by maximizing workforce development and training opportunities. Some specific actions include:

- supporting ongoing and emerging labor force empowerment initiatives;
- advocating for and advancing the linkage between labor force and jobs through regional transportation initiatives;
- supporting the provision of adequate affordable housing located near the workplace;
- seeking creative ways to provide affordable daycare;
- supporting the creation of job opportunities that help to raise the standard of living for residents; and
- distributing the *South Florida Small and Minority Business Resource Directory*.

The Council strongly encourages developers and other entrepreneurs to use the *South Florida Small and Minority Business Resource Directory* as a tool for providing training and business opportunities to all communities in South Florida. The attached directory should be used as a starting point, keeping in mind that the most up to date information can be obtained from the appropriate state and local offices.

Council staff is continuing to identify methods of building community consensus and creative strategies to deal with the issue of social and economic disparity. Active participation by land developers, the public, financing institutions and all sectors of the business community is critical to creating a unified regional economy. Our goal is to create a diversified regional economy, reduce unemployment and raise per capita income. Only through the collective efforts of the whole regional community can we translate South Florida's potential and dreams into reality.

Strategic Regional Policy Plan for South Florida - Goals and Policies Related to Social and Economic Disparity

Strategic Regional Goal

- 4.1 Achieve a competitive and diversified regional economy, including lower unemployment rate and higher per capita income than the state and national average for Dade, Broward and Monroe Counties through the achievement of cutting edge human resources, economic development infrastructure and other resources to ensure a sustainable regional community.

Regional Policies

- 4.1.3 Strengthen the role of education and training in economic development by:
 - a) educating small and minority business employers and employees about international trade and business, and ensure these target groups are familiar with resources available to assist them;
 - b) coordinating with post-secondary and secondary educational system, developing and implementing programs such as global awareness, computer training and awareness that will position South Florida as a world leader in the education and training of workers, students and teachers in international business with the Americas;
 - c) increasing the amount of entrepreneurial programs in education at the elementary and secondary levels;
 - d) encouraging industry involvement in planning and designing training programs and curricula;

- e) encouraging the development of training opportunities by both the public and private sectors that meet the needs of the market place;
- f) encouraging the implementation of training and employment programs for minority youths designed to enhance long-term employability potential;
- g) encouraging the discussions between the region's educational and business communities regarding their roles in the development of human resources;
- h) training for sectors with the greatest potential for job development and enhancement;
- i) addressing the issues and concerns surrounding the "school to work transition" within the region; and
- j) encouraging the development of a direct relationship between job training and job placement to improve job trainer awareness of labor market needs.

4.1.20 Strengthen the role of small and minority business in economic development by:

- a) advocating for a commitment from large corporations to do business with small and minority businesses;
- b) developing and implementing mechanisms to ensure that equity issues are being addressed for small and minority businesses where there is distribution of funds by private and public sector entities;
- c) advocating to ensure that small and minority businesses are given a fair and equal opportunity in obtaining state, local and federal grants and contracts;
- d) advocating that government, education, economic development agencies and business assistance agencies work together in assisting small and minority businesses;
- e) advocating that state government and other initiatives create funds to serve as the capital requirement of the minority business communities;
- f) advocating the removal of impediments for small and minority businesses to compete in international trade markets;
- g) ensuring that small and minority businesses will have an opportunity to access direct or indirect business from proposed large, medium and small scale projects and developments impacting the region;
- h) implementing fiscal mechanisms to create direct accessibility to venture capital for small and minority businesses;
- i) creating and developing a state and /or regional finance corporation empowered to enter interlocal agreements with cities and counties to increase available credit for new and expanding businesses; and
- j) advocating reinvestment in the local economy where there are slum and blighted conditions, low income neighborhoods, commercial deteriorated areas, etc.

Examples of DRI Development Order Conditions to Address Social and Economic Disparity

PUBLIC PROJECTS

The Applicant shall, to the best of its ability, fully utilize economic development enhancement resource agencies and programs to involve small and minority businesses in the development and expansion of permanent job opportunities. Examples of such resource agencies and programs include, but are not limited to, those listed on the attached Exhibit. The Applicant is specifically encouraged to concentrate on efforts to assist the economically disadvantaged by adopting a plan of action. The economic disparity action plan may be accomplished by utilizing programs designated for enterprise zones as well as other economic and employment opportunity programs. The Applicant should provide goals and policies defining steps and procedures that affirmatively address social and economic disparity. The Applicant is further encouraged to work with community development corporations and other community-based agencies to promote its plan and achieve its obligations.

PRIVATE PROJECTS

To the best of its ability, fully utilize economic development enhancement resource agencies and programs designed to involve small and minority businesses in the development and expansion of permanent job opportunities within the project. Examples of such agencies and programs include, but are not limited to, those listed on the attached Exhibit. The applicant will attempt to access the range of job skills available in the region and promote greater labor force enhancement. At a minimum, the applicant is encouraged to provide potential commercial tenants with information about employment and training agencies that maintain a database of trained/skilled workers to consider in meeting the project's employment needs.