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U.S. 441 CORRIDOR

## Redevelopment of area has begun

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Once, only a few scattered palms sagged as drivers rushed by the rundown, aging businesses along U.S. 441 in Plantation.

The roadway didn't much merit a second glance.

But that has begun to change.

The city was among the first to create a Community Redevelopment Agency, which allows a portion of taxes from businesses to be set aside for general improvements to the area. Since the CRA was started in 2000, the city has awarded more than \$3.5 million in economic incentives to business owners.

Now Plantation is considered a model on how to improve U.S. 441, also known as State Road 7.

It's a roadway that has been typically characterized by its high-flying flags flapping over car dealerships, pawnshops, bargain stores and scattered, drooping palm fronds.

David Dahlstrom, project manager for the South Florida Regional Planning Council's State Road 7 collaborative, said Plantation added canopies to bus shelters, improved business facades, and added more palms along its two-mile stretch of the highway.

"They enhanced landscaping in the median and designed brick bus shelters, which characterizes the city," Dahlstrom said. ``They were one of the first cities to have a Community Redevelopment Agency."

To boost improvements, the city uses the CRA to give business owners money to make renovations.

Ed Weinstein, owner of the Plantation Professional Center at 320 and 330 S. State Road 7, received \$93,000 from the city to build a brick archway and add more palms.

The money cannot be used for maintenance, city redevelopment specialist Miriam Deckert said.

Wayne Burns, city economic development coordinator, said the 12-acre, mixed-use Grove East project being developed at Broward Boulevard and U.S. 441 also got incentives.

It broke ground in March.

"The whole idea is to generate those types of improvements, and it's working," Burns said. ``It's a very productive system."