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## REDEVELOPMENT

# CHANGING LOOK

**WITH NO NEW ROOM TO BUILD IN HOLLYWOOD, CITY OFFICIALS ARE LOOKING TO CHANGE 'BLIGHTED' AREAS TO ONES MORE SUITABLE FOR HOMEOWNERS AND SHOPPING**

**BY ANA RHODES**  
Special to The Herald

With new projects underway at Young Circle Park and the surrounding downtown, Hollywood leaders are looking at the next phases of redevelopment:

U.S. 441, the industrial corridor along Dixie Highway, and U.S. 1 just north and south of Young Circle.

"There's no room in Hollywood. We're built out," said Neil Fritz, director of commercial corridor redevelopment for Hollywood. "It would grow if we didn't do anything, but the city wouldn't grow in a pattern that would improve the quality of life."

City planners want to tackle the areas' "blight."

"The Dixie Highway corridor has the blight of normal commercial areas," said Jim Edwards, executive director of the downtown Community Redevelopment Agency. "It has the uses such as automotive repair and sales and the kinds of uses that create an appearance of very unattractive to new development."

But Edwards said that situation is beginning to change.

Cornerstone Group Development of Coral Gables has begun construction of Hollywood Station on the southwest corner of Hollywood Boulevard and Dixie Highway.

The first phase of the project will consist of 500 to 600 condominium units in a mid-rise building, with 20,000 square feet of retail space on the ground floor. The second phase will include town houses.

"The most significant aspect of this is it is the first big project in that area, and it shows not everything is happening on Young Circle," Edwards said.

Some of the factors he attributes to the need for more development downtown: Baby boomers with grown children aren't so concerned with having a house with a yard, and proximity to schools is not an issue for them anymore.

The city is working to change its growth plan, to allow more development.

The city also is seeking to expand the boundaries of the downtown growth plan to include the area from Sheridan Street south to Pembroke Road, 17th Avenue on the east and 24th Avenue on the west, including portions of Hollywood Boulevard.

The current boundaries are Johnson Street south to Washington Street and 22nd Avenue on the west to 17th Avenue on the east.

Edwards said he expects the new plan to be approved by the end of 2005.

The city also wants to spur development in the area of U.S. 1 and Hollywood Boulevard, where old motels sit. The area could be attractive to developers in the next few years because of its proximity to the new ArtsPark at Young Circle, expected to be completed in 2007.

The city has hired Bernard Zyscovich to study U.S. 1 and recommend development options.

Hollywood's 4 1/2-mile stretch of U.S. 441 is another area targeted for redevelopment.

The Florida Department of Transportation is studying how to go about widening the road to at least three lanes each way to alleviate

traffic congestion.

The first phase of the \$30 million project -- which covers Pembroke Road to Hollywood Boulevard -- will likely start in 2008. The second phase, from Hollywood Boulevard to Stirling Road, is five to 10 years away.

"There are major opportunities there for residential and mixed-use projects," Fritz said. ``Right now, it's strip mall commercial anywhere in America, not an especially pretty place."

Fritz said the city is looking into whether a light-rail project would be feasible. FDOT is exploring the possibility of having one lane exclusively for buses.

"Bus use in the 441 corridor is the heaviest in the county," said James Ford, project manager for design of FDOT's State Road 7 Project. ``The number of passengers in that corridor dwarfs any other area."

Fritz said the city is working with FDOT to protect businesses during the widening. The last time it was widened, he said, it was done in a way that was not attractive to businesses.

"They took only what was the front of the property," Fritz said. ``It created a situation where the buildings were too close to the road, and it made the properties less attractive."

He said encouraging mixed use is the best way to get people into the area without also inviting the congestion headaches that follow new construction.

The area now has one retail area after another, with no residential hubs.

City Manager Cameron Benson said the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino will serve as an anchor at the northern end of U.S. 441 and the Millennium Super Mall, which is undergoing a major redevelopment, will anchor the southern end.

"With the widening, we want them to stop in and develop parcels that have a mixed-use opportunity so that it will invite people to stop and shop, which is better than just residential or just commercial," Benson said.

Fritz agrees.

``That's the great thing about mixed use because in a single-family neighborhood, you're always close to a great place."