

Broward's State Road 7/US 441 Collaborative

At first glance, Broward County's State Road 7 (U.S. 441) corridor may look like any other road, but it will soon be a model for economic development and mobility. Along the corridor, a partnership of 14 local governments is working with the South Florida and Treasure Coast Regional Planning Councils and citizens to transform the corridor into a place distinguished by unique communities and neighborhoods, a rich blend of international businesses and residents, a high level of mobility and livability, and a healthy business climate.

The 26-mile long State Road 7 corridor links 14 jurisdictions and includes an estimated population of 283,000. Throughout the 1970s State Road 7 was the focus of major commercial investment including shopping centers, malls, and employment and entertainment centers. In the 1980s, like many other first-tier suburbs in the country, commercial investments declined along the corridor as growth pushed further west.

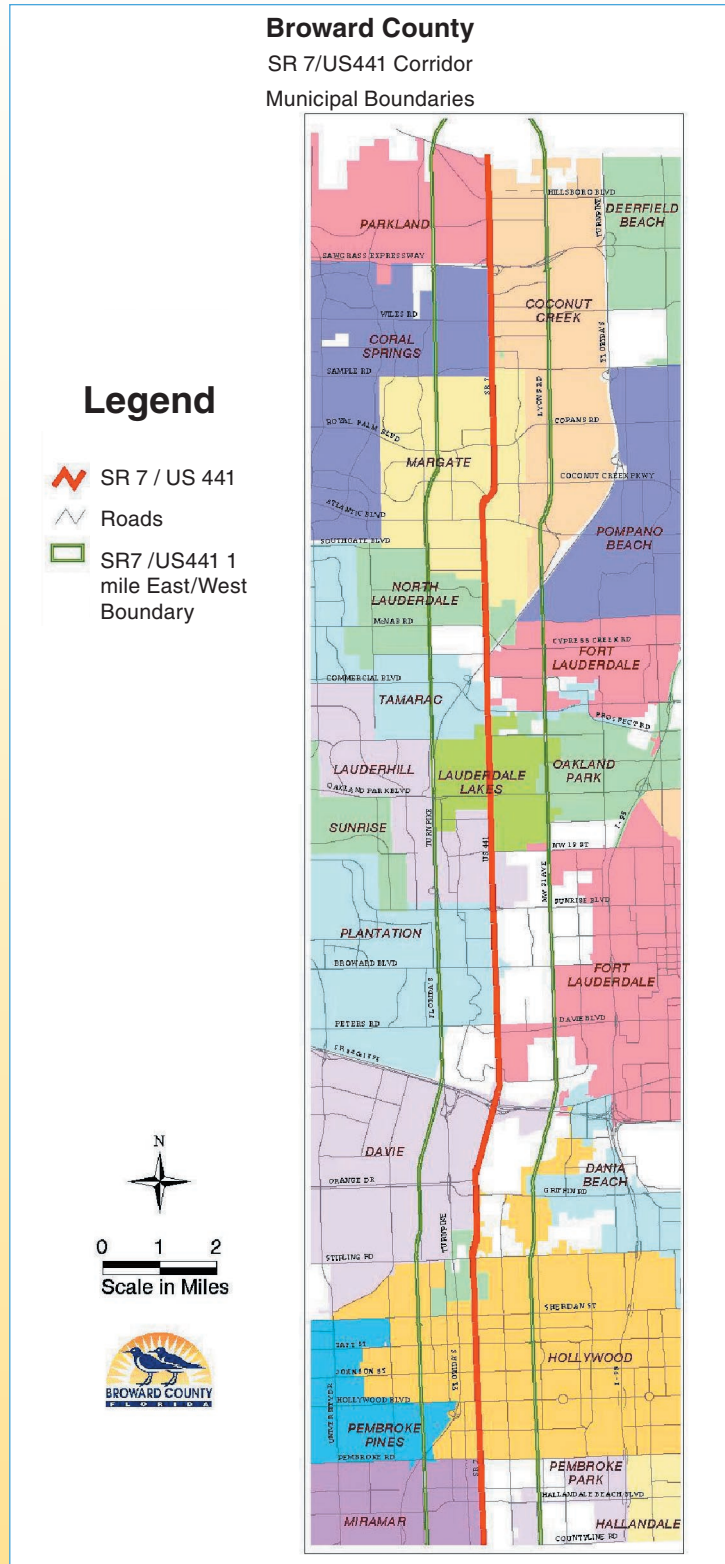
By the 1990s, the corridor exhibited traits of a bypassed area with deteriorating and vacant strip shopping centers and big boxes, failing infrastructure and buildings and declining property values and investments. These characteristics were exacerbated by piecemeal solutions instead of a unified redevelopment strategy.

The outlook for the corridor began to change in 1999 when local officials came together to create the "State Road 7 Collaborative," a public/private partnership that allowed the designated governments and local citizens to reexamine how to best plan for future growth. The result was a long-term redevelopment plan for enhancing and improving the State Road 7 corridor.

The Collaborative established two interlinking goals:

- Create and sustain a partnership organization recognized and supported by all 14 of the jurisdictions along the corridor;

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Community Revitalization

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- Improve the corridor and its communities by coordinating local resources and planning to promote economic vitality, aesthetic improvement, community redevelopment and safety.

As a departure from past practices, the Collaborative set about achieving these goals to ensure:

- All jurisdictions involved in the redevelopment and upgrade of the corridor have an equal voice in discussions;
- Decisions are made by collaboration and consensus and open to the public;
- Citizens are included in the development of a Corridor Master Plan and participate in the decision-making process.

The Collaborative is led by a Steering Committee comprised of one representative from each of the 14 municipalities within the corridor and the county. With the support of the South Florida Regional Planning Council's Institute for Community Collaboration, work is focused on a three-phase strategic planning process.

- Phase I created the Collaborative. The 14 corridor communities adopted an interlocal agreement establishing the Collaborative and describing its mission, membership and governance structure. Phase I was completed in 2001.
- Phase II began in 2003 and launched a series of town hall workshops where Collaborative members and citizens began a visioning and planning process to develop a master plan for the corridor;
- Phase III consists of implementation of the master plan after its completion.

In a few short years, the Collaborative has accomplished a remarkable record of additional achievements through the collective actions of its members. Between 2000 and 2002, the Collaborative received a total of \$50,000 from the Department of Community Affairs and Florida Department



of Transportation (FDOT) to advance its work. The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and Regional Plan Association of New York selected the Collaborative for a design workshop. The FDOT sponsored public workshops enabling citizens and community leaders to discuss options for aesthetic and economic corridor improvements.

In 2002, the Broward County Metropolitan Planning Organization approved \$1.5 million to study express bus service for the corridor, to be integrated with a \$350 million road-widening plan. The Collaborative was awarded \$500,000 from FDOT's District 4 Transportation Enhancement Grant Program to develop a unified landscaping plan to beautify the road. And Broward County adopted a new mixed land use category to assist State Road 7 redevelopment.

In 2003, the Collaborative was awarded \$2 million from the Federal Highway Administration to create a collective urban design vision and Master Plan to foster community identity, encourage citizen input, create a sense of place and promote pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods and town centers. In addition, the SFRPC has pledged nearly \$50,000 in additional funding and technical assistance toward development of the Master Plan. The Collaborative received an additional \$500,000 from the FDOT District 4 Transportation Enhancement Grant Program for roadway

landscaping. The Collaborative was also awarded a \$250,000 MacArthur Foundation Grant to create the State Road 7 Community Network to actively engage elected officials, citizens, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, civic leaders, and the private sector in the State Road 7 revitalization process.

Building on its accomplishments, the next major undertaking of the Collaborative is to complete the Master Plan for the Corridor. The Master Plan will provide a common planning framework for the governments that share jurisdiction of the corridor. Collaborative members have committed resources to the development of the Master Plan and are participating in community design charrettes facilitated by Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council.

It is expected the State Road 7 Community Network will be developed and implemented over the next few years. A redevelopment curriculum and a series of workshops and seminars will be designed to educate and assist with building local capacity to implement the Master Plan.

The ongoing Collaborative project establishes a valuable guide on how to involve multiple jurisdictions in strategic planning. For more information on the Collaborative, contact David Dahlstrom, SFRPC Senior Planner and Project Manager at (954) 985-4416, or e-mail davidd@sfrpc.com. ■