



Urban Form and Density Report Project Overview

City of Wilton Manors, FL

The Urban Form and Density Report utilized urban design and planning techniques to present what future density and intensity could look like and provided recommendations on how to implement strategies to make this vision a reality. The report included an analysis of existing plans, community engagement with the business community and the public, a series of graphics and visualizations showing what the future redevelopment would look like, and included a list of implementable strategies to obtain the vision while protecting the City's small-town character and residential areas. The report stressed that the focus on future development should focus on the urban form and how that form relates to the urban fabric of the City and not the density of each development. Also imperative to this report was to show how the existing residential districts would be protected from future development.

BACKGROUND

The City of Wilton Manors embarked on the Urban Form and Density Report in order to determine how to best redevelop the City's mixed-use districts while maintaining the City's small-town feel and preservation of existing single-family districts. Initial research was done on existing studies completed or currently underway, and an analysis of existing demographics and economics of the City were identified to develop a road map of recommendations to be implemented. The City's market realities show that the community has almost 3x the amount of retail square footage per capita than the national average, primarily bar and restaurants along Wilton Drive. And although square footage within the City is high, there are large areas of the City that are currently under-served by retail uses. As the amount of retail square footage is not sustainable long-term, the need to redevelop these areas into active, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use districts becomes imperative. Establishment of special, unique places as an incentive to the urban form is important to make future development become part of the urban fabric. Upon all initial findings, it is known the Wilton Manors has three key points that stand-out:

1. High amount of underdeveloped commercial areas with a high percentage of vacancies
2. Wilton Manors' urban-village character and small-town sensibility must be preserved when redeveloping
3. The current ratio of retail square feet per population is 3 times higher than the US Average



EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Various stakeholders and respective processes were integrated throughout the life of this report including weekly collaboration with City staff, presentation updates to elected officials, private meetings with thought leaders of the City, and integrated processes, such as workshop presentations, with residents and the business community. Public engagement meetings were held for both the business community as well as residents, and based on the information compiled from this meeting, the design team presented their recommendations to the City Commission. Each recommendation was later detailed within the report using a sub-tasking strategy that serves as a guideline to what may be needed in order to implement the recommendation.

1. Expand Mixed-use for NE 26th Street – This area should be analyzed for a mixed-use district to create a gateway that incentivizes development oriented towards public space enhancements.
2. Reconcile the Future Land Use and Zoning Maps - Rezone single-use zoning districts into to a mixed-use zoning district.

3. Increase Density in Appropriate Locations - Creation of an incentive program for the TOC Districts for additional height and addition of appropriate density in mixed-use districts.
4. Buffer Single-family Homes from Abutting Development – Create specific regulations that provide an increased and a more defined buffer, with proper screening (walls, trees, landscaping).
5. Create Great Places for People - Design Guidelines should be created to establish a framework for urban design based on Wilton Manors’ urban design fabric. This process would establish the urban form for the mixed-use districts promoting the relationships of buildings to the street and creating standards for semi-public open space dedications.
6. Implement Updated Parking Requirements - Due to the increase in transportation network companies (Uber/Lyft) as well as the future of autonomous vehicles, parking should be reviewed and amend the City’s Unified Land Development Code if needed.
7. Increase Sustainability and Resilience - Additional focus in these areas would assist in the City’s continued implementation of sustainability and resiliency strategies, including an Urban Forestry Master Plan, enhanced LEED or similar regulations, and a Green/Gray Infrastructure Master Plan.
8. Connect People to Places - A Streetscape Master Plan will create a set of regulations and criteria for development and supply a guide for developers to establish pedestrian areas, proper shade, and locations for public interaction. An overall tree and landscape palette will enhance the pedestrian and bicycle experience.



INNOVATIVENESS

A few strategies through the development of this report allowed the design team to push beyond the typical measures of data collection and representation. These integral pieces include methodology of public outreach, representation of development scenarios, and collaborative processes of a multi-disciplinary approach. Both the residents and business owner public engagement meetings gauged individual opinions through interactive boards that allowed direct feedback in relation to the City’s past development. In addition, a live online platform, PollEverywhere, facilitated a contemporary approach where residents were able to see real-time data in order to guide a conversation about the desire of the community. Creation of a tiered incentive program with base heights and additional heights for the TOC Districts is an innovative strategy to leverage increased development with requirements for developers to add amenities and architectural features that will provide enhanced landscaping, open space dedications, and street activation. The program would allow a height of four stories in most of the TOC districts with an additional floor added provided with certain amenities. Within parcels that are walkable from the proposed transit station at Five Points, base height of six stories is recommended with an additional two stories with amenities to incentivize increased height in the transit core. Ultimately, the development scenario would allow for the potential of development to be ‘unlocked’ in tiers according to the enhancements to the public realm designations being implemented. Lastly, through the ability to work cross-discipline, conceptual renderings advanced the approach of the report and gave visual satisfaction to further explain the sheer benefits of the development scenarios.

CONCLUSION

Through input received from the community and the City’s thought leaders, the initial steps have begun in order to shape Wilton Manors into an economic driver led by pedestrian-dominated development. On 11/24/2019, the report was adopted by the City Commission and was well received by the Commission and the public. As a result of the Report and public involvement, many residents and business owners, whom originally were not in favor of increased density, attended the Commission meeting and spoke in favor of the project. One business owner even created “Form not Density” T-shirts that audience members wore in support of the report.

This project would not have been possible without the help of our outstanding team - James Hickey, Director of Planning, Gianni Feoli, Director of Landscape Urbanism and Design, and Dominic Mack, Landscape Designer.

Contact us today to learn how we can help develop strategies to make your vision for your community a reality.
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