



# Consumer Services Department Business Plan

**Fiscal Years: 2008 and 2009**  
(10/1/07 through 9/30/09)

Plan Date: November 30, 2007 (segment 1)

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Peel", written over a horizontal line.

Cathy Grimes Peel, Department Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susanne M. Torriente", written over a horizontal line.

Susanne M. Torriente, Assistant County Manager

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |               |
|---|---------------|
| <b>DEPARTMENT PURPOSE/MISSION</b>       | <b>Page 2</b> |
| <b>STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT</b>              | <b>Page 3</b> |
| <b>PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND TARGETS</b> | <b>Page 5</b> |
| <b>CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS</b>         | <b>Page 6</b> |
| <b>3 to 5 YEAR OUTLOOK</b>              | <b>Page 7</b> |
| <b>Attachment 1</b>                     |               |
| <b>DEPARTMENTAL PROFILE</b>             |               |
| Table of Organization                   |               |
| Financial Summary                       |               |
| Capital Budget Summary                  |               |
| Business Environment                    |               |
| <b>Attachment 2</b>                     |               |
| <b>BUSINESS PLAN REPORT</b>             |               |

## DEPARTMENT PURPOSE/MISSION

The Consumer Services Department (CSD) is the County's consumer protection arm. CSD licenses and regulates specific industries, enforces consumer protection and trade practice standards of general applicability, conducts consumer, youth, family, and business education, and mediates consumer disputes against private businesses.

### Vision Statement

A community of educated consumers and sustainable businesses prospering in a fair and equitable marketplace.

### Mission Statement

Enhancing the quality of life for residents, visitors and businesses through education, licensing and regulation, and the investigation and mediation of consumer complaints.

Additional departmental information can be found in the Departmental Profile (Attachment 1).

## STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

I. The Department's efforts align with the following Miami-Dade County Strategic Plan Goals:

- *ES1 Enable County departments and their service partners to deliver quality customer service*
- *ED2 Lead the coordination of economic development activities throughout Miami-Dade County*
- *ED3 Expand entrepreneurial development opportunities within Miami-Dade County*
- *ED4 Create a more business-friendly environment in Miami-Dade County*
- *HH3 Improve the future of Miami-Dade County's children and youth*
- *HH4 Promote independent living through early intervention and support services*
- *NU2 Empower the community by increasing communications and coordination with local, state, and federal entities*
- *NU3 Promote responsible stewardship of natural resources and unique community environments*
- *NU4 Use consistent, fair and effective means to achieve code compliance*
- *NU5 Enact programs to beautify and improve urban and residential areas*

## Departmental Business Plan and Outlook

Department Name:

Fiscal Years: 2007/2008 – 2008/2009

### II. Department-related Strategic Plan Outcomes, Departmental Objectives, and Programs & Initiatives:

- *Secure Customer Satisfaction and Trust*
  - *Achieve an average rating of 4 out of 5 points in customer satisfaction surveys*
  - *Reduce waiting time at the for-hire Inspection station*
  - *Expedite the inspections of businesses and the issuance of license renewal applications*
- *Resolve disputes between consumers and businesses*
  - *Average number of days to close consumer complaints (30 days)*
  - *Answer consumer complaint and inquiry calls within 30 seconds*
  - *Implement price gouging complaint protocol during a state of emergency with the 311 call center*
- *Empower consumers and businesses to make informed decisions*
  - *Conduct educational and outreach programs for residents and businesses to include various consumer protection laws, industry expositions, small claims clinics, food safety and nutrition, and 4-H youth programs*
  - *Conduct educational programs for agricultural, commercial, and public sector employees about appropriate plant selection and maintenance, resource management, and using pesticides safely*
  - *Conduct commercial landscape maintenance programs*
  - *Publish quarterly "Consumer Wise" newsletters covering a wide range of consumer related subjects for Miami-Dade County's residents and visitors*
- *Promote healthy community*
  - *Support the introduction of Hybrid vehicles as taxicabs and limousines*
  - *Continue to encourage wheelchair accessible taxicab services*
  - *Increase landscape water use efficiency*
- *Increase the ability and quality of information delivery*
  - *Increase on-line access to applications and information*
  - *Ensure the availability of local educational and community cable television programming*
- *Encourage a level playing field and consistency among regulated businesses*
  - *Re-inspect 95% of all unlicensed motor vehicle repair, locksmith, moving, and towing businesses within 6 days of warning*
  - *Conduct periodic undercover enforcement operations with law enforcement*
  - *Utilize enforcement resources to concentrated areas in search of violations*
  - *Enhance the investigatory focus of CSD's consumer protection activities*
- *Promote well-trained, customer-friendly County government workforce*
  - *Implement mandatory annual industry training for Enforcement Officers*
  - *Encourage participation in professional development training*

## Departmental Business Plan and Outlook

Department Name:

Fiscal Years: 2007/2008 – 2008/2009

- *Publish quarterly internal employee newsletter, conduct new employee orientation sessions, and celebrate employee achievements at group recognition ceremonies*

### Department Programs and Initiatives

- Conduct special for-hire enforcement services in cooperation with the visitor industry to ensure the success of important special events, such as Art Basel
- Launch a department-wide database system that will enable system communications between licensing, enforcement, complaints, collections and legal modules that feature on-line, intradepartmental, and GIS interfaces
- Create ordinances to enact components of the taxi study and recommendations for submittal to the Board, including standards for taxi meter technology, radio dispatch communications, continuation of a taxicab medallion lottery, and revisions to the Airport Region Taxicab Service (ARTS) program and inheritance provisions
- Propose and submit revisions to ordinances governing passenger motor carriers, chauffeurs, motor vehicle repair, and consumer protection provisions
- Develop a consumer awareness program directed to students and/or seniors for the dual purpose of creating better informed consumers and generating more eyes and ears in the community to identify violations of consumer laws
- Coordinate special for-hire activities preparing for Super Bowl 2010 through communications with various agencies and the Super Bowl host committee
- The Consumer Services Department succession plan prepares departmental leaders with the necessary tools to succeed. Key individuals at the administrative and divisional level have been identified and provided with managerial opportunities geared toward developing leadership skills

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND TARGETS

For ease of reference, specific information regarding departmental objectives and performance measures including the targets for FY 2007-08 and FY 2008-09 can be found in Attachment 2 – Business Plan Report.

## CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

### Department-wide Critical Success Factors

- Availability of sufficient staff resources and staffing levels, successful revision to various position descriptions, and successful recruitment efforts
- Continued funding to support service level agreements with the Enterprise Technology Services Department for technology needs
- Absence of adverse legislation that results in the preemption or reduction of any of CSD's regulatory programs or general consumer protection laws
- Absence of additional regulatory programs which are not self-supporting
- Maintained dialogue with industry groups in reviewing policies, ordinances, fee schedules and initiatives
- Implementation of the enterprise database system and continued funding to support service level agreements with the Enterprise Technology Services Department for technology needs and improving CSD's web site

### Critical Success Factors for Specific Objectives

- Regulatory fee schedules that fully support regulatory activities
- Continued commitment to the enforcement of consumer protection laws and the mediation of consumer complaints which resulted in the department exceeding consumer reimbursements goals
- General fund support of general consumer protection activities, consumer mediation, extension services, and administration
- Financial support from the Department of Environmental Resources Management (DERM), the Solid Waste Department and the Water and Sewer Department (WASD) for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program (FYN) and environmental education
- Continued financial support from the Seaport Department to enable starter service and for-hire enforcement activities at the Seaport
- On-going financial support from Miami-Dade Transit Agency for training of Non-emergency and Special Transportation Service providers
- On-going support from the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences in support of Extension programs

## Departmental Business Plan and Outlook

Department Name:

Fiscal Years: 2007/2008 – 2008/2009

- Continued commitment from Miami Dade College to the Cable Television Access Project (Cable TAP)

### 3 to 5 YEAR OUTLOOK

Many of the general consumer protection ordinances that are contained in the County Code and enforced by the CSD have been in place for 30 years. While these Codes are, by and large, as pertinent today as they were when they were adopted, it is appropriate to assess programs and laws from time to time to ensure they remain up to date. The CSD will undertake this review process over the next several years.

CSD has been engaged in a review of business regulations relating to for-hire transportation with the intent of recommending changes to reflect the current business environment. A continuing goal is to expand the administrative authority to issue licenses that currently require Commission approval. This process will occur over a multiple year period.

The taxicab study was accepted by the Board in 2007 and contained a variety of recommendations. These recommendations include a proposal to modernize the industry by imposing standards for electronic GPS dispatch, two-way radio requirements, credit card processing, and other advances. Additional needs exist for driver security systems, such as in-vehicle security cameras and panic buttons. Various industry stakeholders support and oppose these recommendations. A key issue deals with the cost of implementation and who will be responsible with expenses expected to cost between \$2000 and \$3000 per taxicab. These issues will exist into the foreseeable future including identifying financing options for improvements. There is also a desire to "green" the taxicab fleet to improve gas mileage and reduce carbon emissions.

Maintenance of support for general consumer protection provisions is needed to respond to the needs of consumers and adequately address Board initiatives intended to protect consumers in the marketplace and ensure that all businesses adhere to the same standards. With the housing market and the economy experiencing downturns, it is expected that more consumers will become victims of fraud and will need assistance.

*Attachment 1*  
**DEPARTMENTAL PROFILE**

**Department Description**

The Consumer Services Department (CSD) is the County's consumer protection arm. CSD licenses and regulates specific industries, enforces consumer protection and trade practice standards of general applicability, conducts consumer, youth, family, and business education, and mediates consumer disputes against private businesses. In addition to the Director's Office, the CSD accomplishes these responsibilities through the Consumer Protection Division, Passenger Transportation Regulatory Division, and the Cooperative Extension Service Division.

**Passenger Transportation Regulatory Division**

The Passenger Transportation Regulatory Division licenses and regulates taxicabs, limousines, passenger motor carriers (including jitneys and tour vans), special transportation service vehicles, non-emergency transportation services, for-hire chauffeurs, and ambulance services. For-hire vehicles, as well as private school buses, are inspected for safety and appearance at our vehicle inspection station. The Division maintains an extensive chauffeur training schedule for new and renewing for-hire chauffeurs.

**Consumer Protection Division**

The Consumer Protection Division licenses and regulates motor vehicle repair shops and mechanics, locksmith businesses and locksmiths, local moving companies, towing businesses, vehicle immobilization (booting) companies and employees, title loan lenders, water remetering companies, and registers telecommunications providers. General consumer protection laws enforced include standards governing weights, measures, packaging and labeling; prohibitions against unfair and deceptive trade practices, price gouging in an emergency, self service tobacco sales, discrimination in tipping and gender pricing; and consumer protection laws relating to rental car agencies, dry cleaners, cash register price screen visibility, the availability of baby diaper changing stations at certain facilities, non-consent towing rates, alcohol warning signs, shopping cart warning notices, and check cashing establishments, among others. The Division houses the Consumer Complaint Mediation Center, and administers an agreement with Miami-Dade College for continuing use of the Educational Cable Channel.

**Cooperative Extension Division**

The Cooperative Extension Service Division is a partnership between the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), the US Department of Agriculture, and the County. Extension Agents provide science-based educational programs in commercial agriculture and horticulture, home gardening and landscape maintenance, marine sciences, food safety and nutrition, family and consumer sciences, and operate the 4-H youth development program.

**Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**

**Department Name:**

**Fiscal Years: 2007/2008 – 2008/2009**

**Office of the Director**

The Office of the Director provides policy direction, oversight, and centralized services such as personnel and information technology support. The office also houses shared positions that provide services throughout the department including collections, public information and legal support. The Consumer Advocate, a Code mandated position, provides consumer advocacy, education and outreach, and intervenes in legal and administrative proceedings on behalf of consumers in the public interest. An example of the educational programs conducted are small claims court clinics offered monthly throughout the County to teach consumers how to utilize the small claims court system.

**TABLE OF ORGANIZATION**

|  |
|--|
| <b><u>OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR</u></b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides overall leadership, direction, administration, and coordination of departmental operations including personnel, finance, information technology systems, purchasing, public information, and policy formulation</li><li>• Performs advocacy functions via pursuit of fraud cases, consumer education, litigation, intercession in public interest matters, and regulation development</li></ul> |

|  |
|--|
| <b><u>CONSUMER PROTECTION</u></b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Licenses and regulates locksmith, towing, motor vehicle, moving, vehicle immobilization, motor vehicle title loan, and water re-metering industries</li><li>• Assures compliance with code requirements pertaining to general business practices, including kosher foods, gasoline price signs, misleading advertising, misrepresentation, pricing, non-consent towing rates, visitor information maps, car rental laws, check cashing signs, nondiscrimination in tipping, self service tobacco sales, diaper changing stations, price gouging, alcohol sign postings, shopping cart signage, and other consumer laws</li><li>• Records and mediates consumer complaints using State of Florida Supreme Court Certified mediators; obtains consumer reimbursements</li><li>• Registers telecommunications providers</li></ul> |

|  |
|--|
| <b><u>PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION REGULATION</u></b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regulates the for-hire industry and private/public ambulance providers; assures compliance with code requirements relating to ambulance service, non-emergency medical transportation, taxicabs, limousines, passenger motor carriers including jitneys, and Special Transportation Services (STS) carriers; and performs vehicle inspections including private school buses</li><li>• Investigates consumer complaints; performs field inspections; issues citations; seizes and impounds illegal vehicles; prepares cases for suspension/revocation actions; processes applications; and issues licenses, certifications, registrations and permits</li><li>• Regulates for-hire chauffeurs and conducts mandatory chauffeur training programs</li></ul> |

|   |
|---|
| <b><u>COOPERATIVE EXTENSION</u></b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides education in commercial agriculture, home gardening, marine science, food and nutrition, consumer and family science, resource management, family health, entrepreneurship, and 4-H youth opportunities</li><li>• Performs weather monitoring service for commercial agriculture during cold weather events and provides post-disaster agricultural damage assessments</li></ul> |

**Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**

**Department Name:**

**Fiscal Years: 2007/2008 – 2008/2009**

**FINANCIAL SUMMARY**

| (Dollars in Thousands)                | Actual<br>FY 05-06 | Budget<br>FY 06-07 | Adopted<br>FY 07-08 |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Revenue Summary</b>                |                    |                    |                     |
| General Fund Countywide               | 2,156              | 2,507              | 2,045               |
| Carryover                             | 1,505              | 1,735              | 2,343               |
| Code Fines / Lien Collections         | 951                | 756                | 826                 |
| Fees and Charges                      | 6,265              | 6,365              | 6,432               |
| Interest Earnings                     | 26                 | 0                  | 0                   |
| Local Business Tax Receipt            | 471                | 471                | 471                 |
| Other Revenues                        | 384                | 0                  | 0                   |
| Transfer From Other Funds             | 0                  | 195                | 0                   |
| Transfer From Other Funds             | 164                | 160                | 187                 |
| <b>Total Revenues</b>                 | <b>11,922</b>      | <b>12,189</b>      | <b>12,304</b>       |
| <b>Operating Expenditures Summary</b> |                    |                    |                     |
| Salary                                | 5,938              | 6,614              | 7,295               |
| Fringe Benefits                       | 1,717              | 2,014              | 2,236               |
| Other Operating                       | 1,778              | 3,509              | 2,714               |
| Capital                               | 52                 | 52                 | 59                  |
| <b>Total Operating Expenditures</b>   | <b>9,485</b>       | <b>12,189</b>      | <b>12,304</b>       |

| (Dollars in Thousands)<br>Expenditure By Program | Total Funding      |                     | Total Positions    |                     |
|--|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
|  | Budget<br>FY 06-07 | Adopted<br>FY 07-08 | Budget<br>FY 06-07 | Adopted<br>FY 07-08 |
| <b>Strategic Area: Transportation</b>            |                    |                     |                    |                     |
| Administration                                   | 796                | 735                 | 7                  | 7                   |
| Passenger Transportation                         | 5,319              | 5,649               | 52                 | 52                  |
| Regulatory Division                              |                    |                     |                    |                     |
| <b>Strategic Area: Economic Development</b>      |                    |                     |                    |                     |
| Administration                                   | 774                | 903                 | 7                  | 7                   |
| Consumer Protection - Cable                      | 689                | 140                 | 0                  | 0                   |
| TV Access Programming                            |                    |                     |                    |                     |
| Consumer Protection Division - General           | 1,245              | 1,294               | 16                 | 17                  |
| Consumer Protection Division - Regulatory        | 2,213              | 2,361               | 21                 | 22                  |
| Cooperative Extension Division                   | 1,153              | 1,222               | 23                 | 24                  |
| <b>Total Operating Expenditures</b>              | <b>12,189</b>      | <b>12,304</b>       | <b>126</b>         | <b>129</b>          |

**Capital Budget Summary**

**N/A**

**Current Business Environment**

The Consumer Services Department (CSD) provides countywide services without regard to municipality to a wide range of clientele. Incorporations and annexations do not affect the services of the department. CSD's customers are consumers and businesses generally, as well as businesses and individuals that specifically fall under CSD regulatory programs. CSD works closely with the business community in each of the areas it regulates, related industries including the local hospitality and tourism sectors, retail establishments generally, individuals and entities involved in commercial agriculture, horticulture and aquaculture, municipalities, and other County departments.

CSD's organizational structure emphasizes direct services. On an annual basis, CSD issues approximately 23,000 licenses or permits, conducts 95,000 field inspections or consultations, delivers training to 83,000 educational program attendees, and assists 25,000 office visitors, in addition to 178,000 contacts via telephone. CSD has increased information available on its website ([www.miamidade.gov/csd](http://www.miamidade.gov/csd)) to afford customers the ability to obtain information on their own and during non-traditional business hours. Popular downloads on the website are regulated industry application forms and training schedules. This trend toward on-line services will continue.

A new enterprise operating system to be launched in January 2008 will enhance the ability of the department to process licenses, track complaints and field inspections, and manage data. Field access to data, remote entry of inspection results, work flow processing and electronic ticketing will be phased into the new system following initial launch of the licensing module.

## **Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**

**Department Name:**

**Fiscal Years: 2007/2008 – 2008/2009**

Over time, this system will change the way the department does business by improving service delivery and internal accountability.

CSD began an initiative in FY 2006 to focus on core consumer protection functions relating to consumer dispute resolution, the investigation of unfair and deceptive trade practices, and settlement agreements and legal action to address violations. This effort has resulted in a significant increase in the monetary value of recoveries for consumers while providing a level playing field between businesses and contributing to a better quality of life. In FY 2007, the value of goods and services recuperated for consumers was \$1.079 million as a direct result of mediation and enforcement, a 68% increase from the prior fiscal year. Outreach and education are important components of this effort. Educational programs covering identity theft, credit and finance, and the 2009 digital television conversion are among the educational efforts underway.

A significant factor in department operations is the increasing demand of business-specific regulatory programs. Resources dedicated to these programs continue to be great and challenge the department's ability to keep up with demands requiring extensive administrative involvement. This is especially true in the for-hire transportation area. CSD has two department appointed advisory groups dealing with the taxicab and limousine industries that meet on a quarterly basis. The guidelines for both groups were recently revised and new member selections are occurring. Opposing viewpoints exist between and within these industries on many policy issues.

Invasive pests, such as the fig whitefly and pink hibiscus mealy bug, and the impact of these pests on neighborhoods and commercial growers are serious concerns. The whitefly, for example, is defoliating ficus hedges and trees throughout the County. Research and educational programs of the Cooperative Extension are assisting homeowners and growers to minimize damage and utilize the correct treatment methods. Extension collaborates with the County's Agricultural Manager on these and other issues by providing science-based technical information and educational programming on matters impacting the agricultural community.

CSD monitors state and federal legislation that may impact consumer protection laws or preempt our ability to regulate local businesses and battles state preemption challenges each legislative session. Continued efforts to preempt consumer protection and regulatory programs are expected to continue. These preemptions are detrimental to consumers because State agencies do not have local resources to monitor businesses and intervene on behalf of consumers. The department works closely with the County's intergovernmental staff in identifying and addressing preemptive challenges.

CSD collaborates with its South Florida consumer agency counterparts and meets with them on a bi-monthly basis. This collaboration is being expanded to include agencies in other geographic areas of Florida. This network of agencies provides an opportunity to share ideas and common problems, respond to issues as a collective body, and explore standardization of various processes.

The CSD conducts customer feedback using a variety of measurement tools. The Feedback Plan consists of:

**Departmental Business Plan and Outlook**

**Department Name:**

**Fiscal Years: 2007/2008 – 2008/2009**

- Surveys – provided to businesses, consumers, and industry workgroups to solicit satisfaction with licensing, mediation, and other services. CSD seeks to obtain a rating of no less than four on a five point scale and consistently exceeds this target.
- Business Inspection Program – regulated businesses receive after the fact contacts to gauge the thoroughness of recent inspections and determine quality of inspection, employee conduct, and educational materials received.
- Educational/Seminar Feedback – surveys are provided to educational program attendees to assess satisfaction with program effectiveness and usefulness. Results are used to fine tune programs and curriculums.

In addition to the satisfaction surveys, CSD tracks the length of time for-hire vehicles wait in line for inspection at the for-hire vehicle inspection station. In 2003, the average wait time was approximately 90 minutes. Due to a series of improvements, the wait time has been reduced to approximately 20 minutes or less. This performance measurement continues to be closely monitored.