
ADAPTATION ACTION AREAS

Feasibility assessment

In January 2015, the Board of County Commissioners passed a resolution which directed the Mayor or his designee to study the feasibility of designating Adaptation Action Areas (AAA) as recommended in the Comprehensive Development Master Plan. The Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources studied the feasibility of designating AAAs and recommended initiating a pilot project. This determination was based on the careful review of the AAA pilot project implemented in the City of Fort Lauderdale, in partnership with the South Florida Regional Planning Council, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, and Broward County. This project produced a comprehensive planning guidebook for local governments that outlined how other jurisdictions could establish AAAs. This report was carefully reviewed. Staff also consulted with the technical and project leads for the Fort Lauderdale pilot to understand which program components were successful and which may need to be revised for Miami-Dade. Fort Lauderdale staff felt the AAA pilot project had been a successful tool to facilitate planning and infrastructure investments. Fort Lauderdale staff reported very positive responses from their initial community engagement and they intend to continue and expand the AAAs in the future.

Adaptation Action Areas are feasible because they are largely consistent with other designations and planning approaches that have been, and are currently being, used successfully. This includes the Coastal High Hazard Areas and small area studies used by the Planning Division, the priority stormwater basins, and the Resilient Redesign studies conducted by the Compact. These approaches have successfully helped direct planning resources, prioritize investments, and capital improvement projects, and draw out innovative and forward-looking solutions for the areas studied. Most importantly, it is the flexibility and inherent ability to tailor and adjust these areas to fit the needs of communities which makes this approach an appropriate and feasible way to accelerate implementation.

Adaptation Action Areas: a flexible tool

AAAs is an inherently flexible planning tool. As part of the feasibility assessment, staff considered several alternative approaches to adopting AAAs. This report outlined four approaches, which are not necessarily entirely distinct. Elements from each approach can be selectively adopted and can be further refined or adjusted depending on priorities and resources available.

1. Project-based
2. Enhanced adaptation planning for previously identified areas
3. Systems-based adaptation planning
4. Area planning for newly-identified vulnerable areas

SEA LEVEL RISE REPORTS

Final recommendations

As highlighted in the report, there are multiple approaches to designing the Adaptation Action Areas which can build upon existing processes, internal expertise, and the best available science. All four of the approaches could feasibly be adapted and implemented with existing staff and resources. However, the fourth approach, [area planning for newly-identified vulnerable areas](#), was determined to be the most desirable approach to begin implementation. This approach would allow for a more accurate assessment of vulnerability, a more comprehensive assessment of potential adaptation measures, and could help develop internal technical capacity and working relationships across departments, as well as in the community. As this approach will likely need to be adjusted and refined with time, staff recommended beginning the AAAs with a pilot project in 2016.

Adapting to sea level rise will require extensive collaboration, coordination, and collective learning. Small changes in sea levels will have cascading impacts throughout the system because of the interconnected nature of our regional water management systems. Addressing these changes often requires more than simple upgrades of the water and sewer infrastructure and therefore it is desirable to work across departments and directly with residents to find multi-purpose and cost-effective solutions. In many instances, it will be possible to find solutions that also enhance the quality of life in these neighborhoods. For example, increasing the buffer areas along our canals, rivers, and the ocean can reduce the vulnerability to flooding while also creating an opportunity for new linear parks and green spaces. By working with an interdisciplinary team to develop a suite of solutions for each area, it will be possible to continue to build the County's capacity to respond creatively to the challenges of changing sea levels.

Progress since the feasibility report

On January 20, 2016, the Board of County Commissioners passed Resolution R-66-16, sponsored by Commissioner Rebecca Sosa, which directed the Mayor or his designee to proceed with a pilot Adaptation Action Area.

Independently, the Urban Land Institute, a non-profit and research institute, selected Miami-Dade County as one of the communities chosen for assistance through their Advisory Services Program. Through this program the Urban Land Institute brought a Resiliency Advisory Services Panel, composed of renowned land use and urban planning experts, to the County to provide recommendations on how to improve the resilience of the Arch Creek drainage basin, one of the County's most vulnerable areas. The panelists toured the site (Figure 2), interviewed stakeholders, and presented their interim recommendations on May 27, 2016. A final report will be published early this fall with their final recommendations.

Figure 2: Engineers explain the drainage issues in the Arch Creek area



The opportunity to work alongside these experts and the Urban Land Institute was a great opportunity for the County. Staff will now be carrying these ideas forward as the Adaptation Action Area pilot is further implemented. The Arch Creek area will also be the focus on this year's Resilient Redesign effort through the Compact.