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Miami-Dade County
Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR)
Task Force

Proposed Recommendations to Miami-Dade County Comprehensive Development Master Plan

by

The Nature Conservancy

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FUTURE GROWTH MANAGEMENT

LAND USE ELEMENT

Maintain the Urban Development Boundary

Miami-Dade County's long-term viability depends on a firm and defensible Urban Development Boundary (UDB) and to account for a 2050 planning horizon, the Comprehensive Development Master Plan (CDMP) shall be updated to uphold Miami-Dade County's urban development boundary. Keeping the existing UDB intact protects agricultural lands, wetlands, working lands, and wildlife habitat, while emphasizing infrastructure investments and delivery of services remain efficient within the UDB. Miami-Dade County shall adopt distinct land use policies and effective land use techniques and designations that direct future growth and development/redevelopment within the Urban Development Boundary through its CDMP amendment process. Miami-Dade County shall require governing land use plan amendments, text amendments, and/or zoning actions prevent the expansion of the current UDB through its CDMP amendment process and shall make any expansion an extraordinary exception rather than a routine growth strategy.

For any residential development consideration outside the existing UDB or in any currently identified Urban Expansion Areas (UEA), Miami-Dade County shall adopt the Design Guidelines for Corridor Compatible Communities (CCC) through its CDMP amendment process. The CCC Design Guidelines are an evidence-based system of guidelines and qualities that are widely practical, promote low-impact development and the retention and enhancement of wildlife corridor functions, and preserve vital ecological connections while sustaining a high quality of life for residents. The CCC Design Guidelines can serve as a balanced approach to developing in-sync with healthy, functioning natural ecosystems that provide valuable ecological services for Miami-Dade's residents and protect the County's diverse, natural ecosystems for people and nature to thrive. Miami-Dade County shall require any new development outside the existing UDB integrates the CCC Design Guidelines. As part of the development review process, the County shall provide incentives to encourage adoption of the CCC Design Guidelines for any development in existing UEA to promote connectivity of wildlife habitats and corridors. Miami-Dade County shall clearly define the boundaries of the Redland area and codify land use policies that prevent incremental encroachment to this functioning natural ecosystem through its amended CDMP.

Direct Growth Inward Through Infill and Redevelopment

To accommodate growth through 2050, the amended CDMP shall encourage infill development and redevelopment, adaptive reuse and higher densities along existing serviced areas within the existing UDB. Increased density enables the cost-effective delivery of transit, water, sewer, and emergency services while minimizing development pressures on agricultural and environmentally sensitive lands. Land Use policies, zoning and subdivision codes shall be updated to remove regulatory and procedural barriers that inhibit compact development and mixed-use development projects. Miami-Dade County shall require increased densities and adaptive reuse along transit-oriented areas within the current UDB through its amended CDMP process, encouraging infill

development and redevelopment that promote safe walkability, maintain and restore tree canopy, integrate green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) practices, and improve connectivity to parks and greenspaces.

Expand Transfer of Development Rights and Purchase of Development Rights

Miami-Dade County shall prioritize preserving areas "that shall not be considered" for development and remove barriers to fully adopting Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) to protect high-priority ecologically sensitive lands through its CDMP amendment process. Miami-Dade County shall maintain strong support for and fully implement the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program to supplement the TDR and avoid the conversion of agricultural and natural lands to development. The CDMP shall clearly identify TDR receiving areas within the current UDB, and TDR sending areas that prioritize agricultural lands, wetlands, and wildlife corridors outside the current UDB to protect and conserve environmental resources. This proven market-based approach balances future growth with permanent land conservation.

Protect Agricultural Lands Inside and Outside the UDB

Agricultural lands provide food security, economic value, climate resilience, and flood attenuation in Miami-Dade. The CDMP should be updated to explicitly protect agricultural lands both outside and within the UDB. Agricultural uses within and outside the UDB should be safeguarded from premature conversion through expanding buffering requirements, integrating design compatibility standards outlined in the CCC Design Guidelines, and providing incentives that discourage speculative land banking. Clear geographic boundaries must be established to protect the Redlands and prevent incremental encroachment. Agricultural areas that provide ecological benefits and economic value to people and nature should be identified and designated for conservation in perpetuity. Miami-Dade County should adopt distinct goals, objectives and land use policies that minimize negative impacts on and avoid incompatibility with agricultural lands.

Focus Development Along Established Transit Corridors

Through the CDMP amendment process, Miami-Dade County shall emphasize future development along existing transit corridors within the current UDB and strengthen land use policies that channel future growth along major roadways and established transit corridors, consistent with the Corridor Compatible Communities design principles. This low impact development approach supports multimodal transportation, reduces vehicle miles traveled, and minimizes outward growth into natural and agricultural areas. Miami-Dade County shall encourage incentives for new developments along existing transit-oriented areas inside the UDB adopt low-impact development (LID) best management practices through the CDMP amendment process. Providing incentives would encourage the adoption of LID practices and Miami-Dade County should limit publicly funded infrastructure investments outside the UDB and beyond established transit corridors unless necessary for public health, safety, or environmental protection. The CDMP shall emphasize that infrastructure investments may not be used to justify future land use changes that induce sprawl, habitat loss or land fragmentation. Publicly funded infrastructure should ensure compatibility with

land use designations and policies in the CDMP. Miami-Dade County should encourage zoning flexibility for development along existing transit corridors through the development process.

Strengthen Protections for Wetlands, Natural Lands, and Wildlife Corridors

Miami-Dade County shall strengthen land use policies that protect wetlands, environmentally sensitive lands, and designated wildlife corridors through its CDMP. Miami-Dade County shall explicitly prevent land use amendments including text amendments that fragment or degrade vital natural resources or negatively impact environmental quality through its CDMP process. Miami-Dade County shall prioritize wetlands identified in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan for acquisition to remedy degraded hydrological and biotic conditions. The CDMP shall expand protective buffers around sensitive installations, including Homestead Air Reserve Base, to reduce exposure of residents to pollution, protect wildlife habitat, and advance connectivity to the Florida wildlife corridor. The County's CDMP shall reinforce protections for "Wetlands of Regional Significance" and protections for natural and working lands through integrating the Corridor Compatible Communities (CCC) Design Guidelines within land use and development review processes including development designs to prevent sprawl and promote restoration of regionally significant ecosystems and connectivity between remaining natural systems.

Integrate Natural Climate Solutions for Climate Resilience

Miami-Dade County shall codify land use policies that require the integration of natural climate solutions—such as restored wetlands, living shorelines, urban greening, stormwater treatment areas, and floodable open spaces—to mitigate flooding, sea-level rise, and extreme heat. The CDMP shall require green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) best management practices and provide incentives within the development review process to encourage adoption of GSI practices that replace or supplement conventional stormwater solutions. These strategies restore ecological function, prevent nuisance flooding, improve neighborhood aesthetics, promote mental well-being, enhance community health and resilience to climate change while providing long-term cost savings compared to grey infrastructure alone.

Secure Dedicated Funding for Land Conservation and Water Quality

Miami-Dade County should establish a dedicated conservation funding source—such as a sales tax or real estate millage—to support natural infrastructure investments including land acquisition, habitat restoration, septic-to-sewer conversion, and green infrastructure. Dedicated, long-term funding stability is essential to achieving CDMP goals for land conservation and water quality by 2050.

Support Housing Supply Within the UDB

Miami-Dade County shall establish a clear, enforceable framework that aligns increased density and infill development with reasonable housing outcomes and along existing transit corridors through the CDMP amendment process. This requirement ensures development remains within the UDB and increased housing supply minimizes displacement. Miami-Dade County should leverage its position to increase financing mechanisms to secure permanent housing affordability along transit corridors

within the UDB. Miami-Dade County shall require the use of best available data, models and resources in the development approval process for the location and design of new residential development projects within the UDB is consistent with the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact's uniform sea level rise projections and the Miami-Dade vulnerability assessment. Regional Climate Action Plan 3.0 (RCAP 3.0).

AGRICULTURE

Protect Agricultural Lands Inside and Outside the UDB

Agricultural lands provide strategic and economic value, climate resilience, and flood attenuation in Miami-Dade. The County CDMP should be updated to explicitly protect agricultural lands both outside and within the UDB. Miami-Dade County's CDMP shall safeguard agricultural lands within and outside the UDB from premature conversion through expanding buffering requirements, integrating design compatibility standards outlined in the Corridor Compatible Communities (CCC) Design Guidelines, and providing incentives that discourage speculative land banking. Clear geographic boundaries must be established to protect the Redlands and prevent incremental encroachment in the CDMP. Agricultural areas that provide ecological benefits and economic value to people and nature should be identified and designated for conservation in perpetuity. Through the CDMP, Miami-Dade County shall require land use goals, objectives and policies minimize negative impacts on and avoid incompatibility with agricultural lands within and outside the UDB.

BISCAYNE BAY

Reduce Nutrient Loading and Stormwater Runoff

Miami-Dade County shall ensure the Land Use and the Conservation, Aquifer Recharge and Drainage Elements of the CDMP require explicit, enforceable land use and conservation policies that reduce nutrient loading and stormwater runoff into Biscayne Bay. In the CDMP, development approvals shall require best-in-class stormwater treatment and adopt green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) and low-impact development (LID) practices as cost-effective tools for managing stormwater, improving water quality and aquifer recharge, and cooling urban heat islands in both new development and redevelopment areas. The CDMP should require infrastructure planning and capital investments to incorporate climate resilience, including flooding, heat, and sea-level rise. Miami-Dade County CDMP shall encourage emerging adaptive control technologies and leverage predictive analytics to improve flood control, water quality, and hydrological conditions. The County CDMP should require cost-effective nature-based water treatment solutions such as Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs) wherever possible to improve the water quality in Biscayne Bay.

Accelerate Septic-to-Sewer Conversion

Septic systems are a major contributor to nutrient pollution in Biscayne Bay. Miami-Dade County CDMP should strengthen land use policies to accelerate septic-to-sewer conversion, particularly in

areas draining directly to the Bay and areas in the Biscayne Aquifer. Any redevelopment, up-zoning, and/or land use changes should be contingent upon sewer connection or firm conversion timelines to mitigate nutrient loading and protect the health and resilience of Biscayne Bay.

Biscayne Bay Watershed Plan

Miami-Dade County shall adopt the comprehensive Biscayne Bay Watershed Management Plan which focuses on a unified restoration and management approach to restore and protect Biscayne Bay and improve human and ecosystem health and resilience. Recommendations listed in the Watershed Plan are central to the recharge and protection of the Biscayne Aquifer. Miami-Dade County shall require CDMP objectives and policies codify this watershed-based approach as the framework for improving water quality in the Bay and sustaining water supply from the aquifer through 2050 and beyond. The County's CDMP should require new developments will not adversely impact the Bay within the review of development applications.

Secure Dedicated Funding for Land Conservation and Water Quality

The County should establish a dedicated conservation funding source—such as a sales tax or real estate millage—to support land acquisition, habitat restoration, septic-to-sewer conversion, and green infrastructure investments. Establishing stable and dedicated long-term funding for land conservation and water quality is essential to achieving CDMP goals by 2050.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Prioritize Infrastructure Investments Within the UDB

Miami-Dade County should adopt land use objectives and policies that prioritize publicly funded investments within the UDB to support infill, redevelopment, and transit-oriented growth. The County should ensure that any new roadways outside of the UDB prioritize effective wildlife crossings to enable safe wildlife movements and maintain the continuity of habitats along ecologically sensitive corridors. The County CDMP should codify land use policies and development standards to ensure wildlife crossings are provided at new public roads that cross river systems, wetlands, ecologically sensitive lands, and other potential wildlife corridors outside the UDB. Extending infrastructure beyond the UDB should remain highly constrained to prevent growth pressure on agricultural and natural lands, wetlands and river systems.

Support Multimodal Transportation Within the UDB

The County CDMP should codify a multimodal transportation system that integrates land use, transportation strategies in the provision of a sustainable transportation and mobility infrastructure for all users. The County should support the development of multimodal transportation corridors to increase the viability of walking, biking, and transit that protect wildlife crossings and habitats.

Capital Improvement Projects Within the UDB

Miami-Dade County should ensure that any substantial new infrastructure are not developed in areas that are contrary to land use goals, objectives, and policies protecting the UDB. The updated CDMP should require that the location and design of capital improvement projects are consistent with the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact's uniform sea level rise projections and the Miami-Dade vulnerability assessment. The CDMP should codify an updated development process that uses the best available data, models and resources, including adopting the Compact's Regionally Unified Sea Level Rise Projection, and trusted tools developed by academic institutions and government agencies to inform planning, prioritizing and dedicated annual funding. Regional Climate Action Plan 3.0 (RCAP 3.0)

Advance Green and Climate-Resilient Infrastructure

Miami-Dade County CDMP should require infrastructure planning and capital investments to incorporate climate resilience, including flooding, heat, and sea-level rise. Miami-Dade is considered "ground zero" for climate change risk such as sea level rise and severe flooding. The CDMP should codify green infrastructure best management practices and nature-based solutions should be prioritized as cost-effective tools for stormwater management, water quality improvement, and urban cooling. Miami-Dade County should leverage emerging adaptive control technologies and predictive analytics to improve flood control and water quality outcomes.