

NORTH PONCE NEIGHBORHOOD

Strategies for **R**edevlopment

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Contents

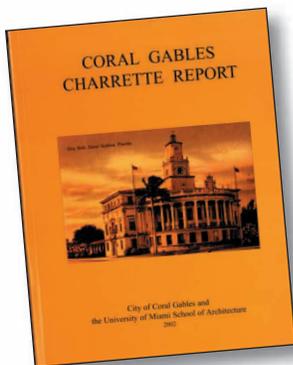
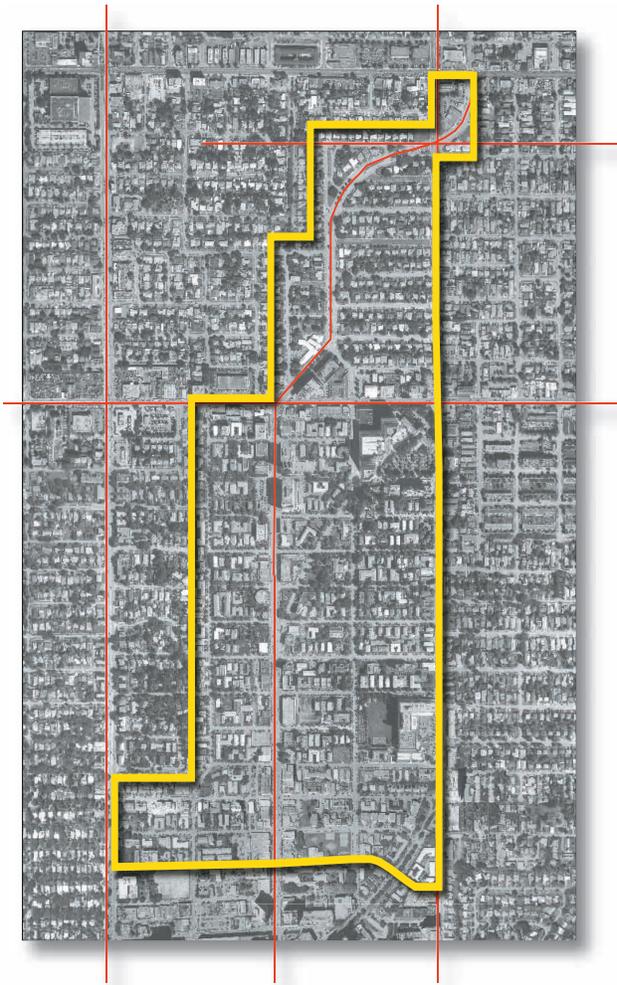
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Introduction

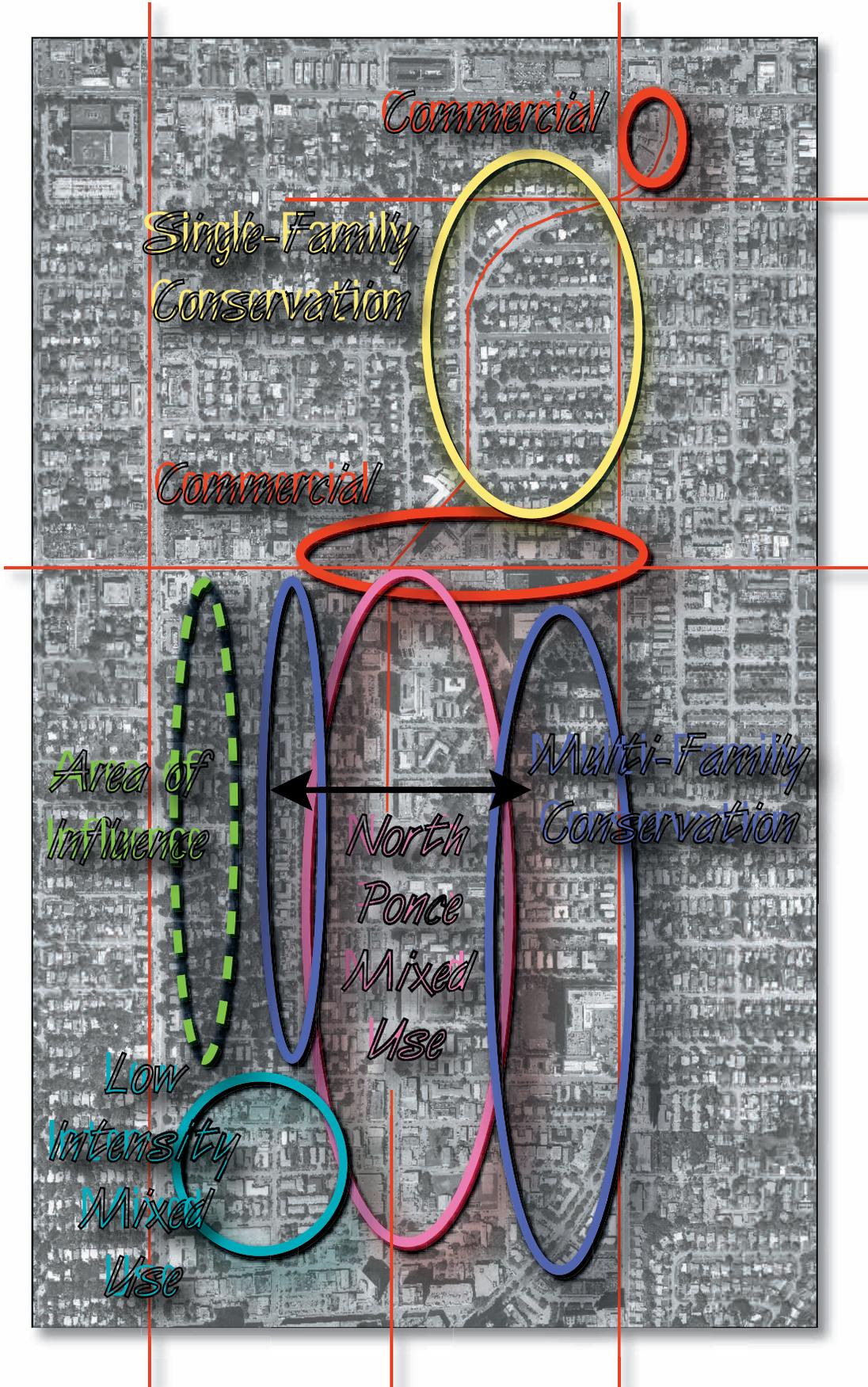
Siemon & Larsen was retained by the City of Coral Gables to complete a study and draft Zoning Code regulations that provide a revitalization strategy for the area commonly known as “North Ponce,” the portion of the City of Coral Gables, which generally lies north of Navarre, east of LeJeune, west of Douglas, and south of SW 8th Street. The objective of these Strategies and Zoning Code regulations is to establish a program of regulations and public investment initiatives which will preserve and enhance the desirable and positive community character elements of the area while at the same time improving the quality of life and economic trajectory of the area. The new Zoning Code regulations and districts (Appendix A) will be included in the City’s rewrite of the entire Zoning Code.

North Ponce is a neighborhood made up of a series of discrete sub-areas. The North Ponce neighborhood is located immediately to the north of the Coral Gables Central Business District (CBD) and has superior access to the regional transportation network by way of five major arterials that pass through or along the edge of the area.



North Ponce has long been recognized as a unique urban residential neighborhood with great potential for neighborhood serving commercial uses and a pedestrian friendly environment. In the recent past, many studies have been performed about the North Ponce area. However, none of the resulting plans have been implemented. Most recently in 2002, the City held a widely attended and successful Charrette, where many ideas and recommendations for the City, and specifically the North Ponce area, were developed. The preparation of these Strategies started with the Charrette and its predecessor plans and builds on their ideas and proposals. Wherever a Charrette recommendation is utilized or expanded upon, the following symbol will appear.





The North Ponce area is home to more than 3,200 persons living in a variety of housing types — from single family dwellings to high-rise condominium buildings. Ponce De Leon Boulevard is the armature or “spine” of the area. Due to the character of the street and volume of traffic, the Ponce de Leon corridor is a natural boundary which defines the residential areas on either side of the street.

In recent years, North Ponce has been the focus of significant redevelopment, primarily with residential, commercial, office and mixed-use buildings allowing new developments up to 8 and 16 floors in height. Much of the recent redevelopment is unfriendly to the pedestrian at the street level and there is concern that the pedestrian qualities of the area are in jeopardy.

The objective of these Strategies is to promote the North Ponce neighborhood as a “great” urban neighborhood with attractive streets as “addresses” and a pedestrian friendly environment. Existing development trends and permitted intensities of use portend change which is unlikely to be consistent with a great, pedestrian friendly, near-downtown urban neighborhood, without active municipal intervention.

The North Ponce neighborhood is comprised of several relatively distinct and identifiable “sub-areas” (the idea of identifying sub-areas was expressed in the 2002 Charrette Report). However, the current zoning code and comprehensive plan permit structures that are in contrast to the existing structures, allowing for an evolution away from the vision of the City’s founders. 

These Strategies address each sub-area independently, drawing on the need for preservation, conservation and new development, based on the existing conditions of the North Ponce neighborhood. These Strategies create districts with unique restrictions and standards to ensure the preservation of the neighborhood character while meeting the needs of residents who have invested in the area and workers who are employed in North Ponce and creating an attractive and viable pedestrian-oriented center. The following are the sub-areas: Commercial areas, Single Family Conservation District (SF-C), Multi-Family Conservation District (MF-C), Low Intensity Mixed Use District (LIMU) and the North Ponce Mixed Use District (NPMU).



Commercial areas

(1) in the vicinity of the intersections of Douglas Road and Ponce de Leon with Flagler Avenue; (2) generally located along SW 8th Street between SW 40th Avenue and Douglas Road.





Single Family Conservation District (SF-C)

a single family area generally located north of SW 8th Street between Campina Avenue and Douglas Road.





Multi-Family Conservation District (MF-C)

a multi-family area generally located south of SW 8th Street between Douglas Road and Galiano and between the western City limits and North Ponce de Leon Boulevard.





Low Intensity Mixed Use District (LIMU)

a low intensity mixed use district located generally in the SW corner of the North Ponce area, abutting the CBD.





North Ponce Mixed Use District (NPMU)

a mid to high intensity mixed use district located south of SW 8th Street, north of the CBD, west of Galiano Street and east of Salzedo Street.



The purpose of these Strategies is to create land development regulations to responsibly accommodate growth, maintain neighborhood integrity, provide for appropriate transitions between and within sub-areas, and encourage walkable mixed-use neighborhoods. These Strategies discuss each proposed district individually. Each district outlines existing conditions, issues in each sub-area, and recommendations. Recommendations are discussed in the body of the report and they are articulated in new zoning districts for each subarea.

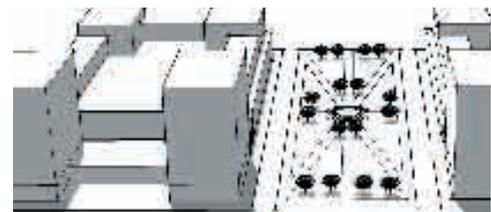
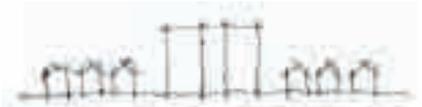
Summary of Findings And Recommendations

The most visible part of North Ponce is Ponce de Leon Boulevard, an unremarkable commercial street lined with modest and relatively ordinary buildings. The north and south ends of Ponce de Leon Boulevard are important gateways into North Ponce.

The purpose of the revitalization Strategies is to create a framework for a positive change in an area of the City which is undergoing accelerating redevelopment, and to support the continued reinvestment in the residential neighborhoods that are adjacent to Ponce de Leon Boulevard.

The essential components of the strategies are:

1. Change the regulatory framework for the corridor to create several districts tailored to the particular characteristics of distinct sub-areas. The intensity of permitted development lessens with distance from Ponce de Leon Boulevard.
2. Invest in the character of the public realm that tells the private sector that the City is serious about changing the market position of the corridor — beginning with off-street parking, parks and open space, signage, street lighting and streetscape improvements.
3. Create “addresses” for redevelopment by committing additional public dollars for public realm improvements that benefit qualifying redevelopment projects.
4. Create a catalytic project in the heart of Ponce de Leon Boulevard in a prominent location. The catalytic project should contain a critical mass of redevelopment that is attractive to a broad group of people who are looking for a quasi-urban lifestyle.



○ North Ponce Neighborhood ○

5. Reinforce the existing neighborhood by connecting sidewalks and continuing with grant and loan programs for renovation of existing buildings.
6. Providing ideas for sources of funding for the variety of regulatory changes and initiatives suggested.
7. Concentrating intensity along the North Ponce de Leon Boulevard Corridor through the use of incentives such as the transfer of development rights (TDR's) and allowing a greater height along the Corridor than anywhere else.

