

RE-ENVISIONING THE TOWN CENTER NORTH OVERLAY

CITY OF SUNNY ISLES BEACH



A REPORT PREPARED BY:



Calvin, Giordano & Associates, Inc.
EXCEPTIONAL SOLUTIONS™

DRAFT: 06/02/2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**Our sincere gratitude to the residents, business owners,
property owners and visitors of Sunny Isles Beach who
participated in this process, for their time and their love of
community.**

This report was prepared by Calvin, Giordano & Associates, Inc. for the
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GLOSSARY

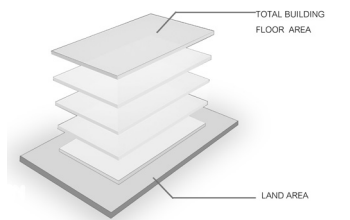
Comprehensive Plan: A community's comprehensive plan is a long-range policy document which provides a blueprint for existing and future development. The plan's goals, objectives and policies reflect the community's shared vision for its future and how it will meet the needs of existing and future residents, visitors and businesses. Florida statutes require all local governments in the state to maintain a comprehensive plan.

Consistency: Compatibility and agreement with the comprehensive plan of the local government. Florida statutes require consistency between the comprehensive plan and the land development regulations.

Density: This term describes the number of residential units allowed relative to the land area of a lot (usually calculated on a gross or net acre basis).

Floor Area Ratio

(FAR): This term describes a calculation of the floor area of all structures on a lot divided by the lot area. FAR describes the "intensity" of development and is expressed as a numerical value.



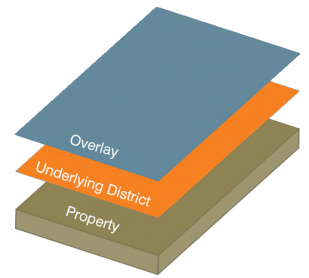
Floor Area Ratio

Intensity: This term describes the number of uses allowed on a lot in terms of concentration of activity. Intensity is usually measured through the calculation of floor area ratio (FAR) but the term is often used interchangeably with density.

Land Development Regulations (LDRs): The LDRs are City's adopted regulations which specify the nature of each of zoning district and how development takes place within it. This is achieved by regulating things such as lot size, building placement, bulk or density, building height, lot coverage, and other development features.

Mixed-Use: A development that includes primary non-residential and primary residential uses on the same development site, building or structure (e.g., residential, office, retail, public, and entertainment).

Overlay: An overlay is a special designation that lies on top of a "base" or underlying land use designation in the Future Land Use Map. The overlay modifies the underlying district's requirements for that area only.

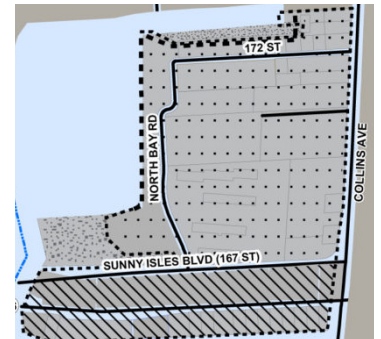


Overlay

Pop-up Outreach: A form of informal outreach that involves appearing at busy community locations such as a park, outside a store, or during a scheduled community event, to ask for input from a random sample of stakeholders who may not traditionally participate in the planning process.

Town Center North Area:

An informal reference to the part of the City encompassed by the Town Center North Overlay, as designated in the City's Comprehensive Plan.



Town Center Overlays

Town Center North Overlay:

An overlay of regulation that applies on top of the base land use districts, only in the area known as the Town Center North area. (Distinct from the Town Center South Overlay.)



Zoning: Zoning categorizes the City's land into zones or "districts" shown on a map, and specifies the types of land uses that are allowed within each zoning district and the regulations that apply to those uses.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACS: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (produced by the US Census Bureau).

CGA: Calvin, Giordano & Associates, Inc.

DU/AC: Dwelling units per acre

DEO: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity

FAR: Floor Area Ratio

FDOT or FDOT-D6: Florida Department of Transportation-District Six

PPH: Persons per household

PEP: Public Engagement Plan

SFRPC: South Florida Regional Planning Council

SFWMD: South Florida Water Management District

TCNO: Town Center North Overlay

TCO: Town Center Overlay

TCSO: Town Center South Overlay

TCZD: Town Center Zoning District

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Executive Summary

I. Project Overview

Early in 2019, an inconsistency was discovered between the City's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code.

Although the discrepancy only affected the Town Center Overlay (TCO) –an area which encompasses land located west of Collins Avenue from the north side of 172nd Street to the south side of Sunny Isles Boulevard— the discovery led to an animated community debate about density, building height and development character, not only as it pertained to the Town Center, but to the future and the identity of the entire community.

The debate exposed community differences and mistrust of the local government, but it also revealed a regrettable incidence of miscommunications, misunderstandings, and even misinformation surrounding the issues at stake.

In the process, it also became clear that many voices were not being heard in the discussion, producing an incomplete and imbalanced picture and potentially hindering the decision-making process.

The City Commission decided to enact a 1-year moratorium and zoning in progress resolution effective in the entire TCO area. This gave the Commission a margin of time to contemplate the best course of action. The resolution passed in September of 2019.

Subsequently - having ascertained that the discrepancy impacted the southern portion of the Town Center most immediately - the Commission pursued a solution for that area by approving an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan, dividing the TCO into new Town Center South and North Overlay areas and adding density and intensity measures to the Town Center South Overlay (TCSO).

The City Commission also realized that establishing the Town Center North Overlay (TCNO) offered a rare opportunity to create a new vision for that new area, based on community input. To this end,

the Commission directed the project team of Calvin, Giordano & Associates, Inc. (CGA) to facilitate a public engagement process and to offer recommendations for the TCNO.

This [draft] report summarizes the process and the resulting recommendations.

2. Process Highlights

The process was designed to achieve three goals:

- Maximize inclusiveness and transparency.
- Gain insight into a range of opinions.
- Offer balanced, neutral and legally defensible recommendations.

The project team clearly understood that achieving consensus on the issues concerning the Town Center North (or, indeed, on any Citywide issue) was not among the purposes of the public engagement process, because there is no single “public” in Sunny Isles Beach. Instead, the aim was to listen to and gather input from the community's wide spectrum of stakeholder interests, to find balance among their disparate perspectives, and to help the City Commission reflect their decisions back so that participants can see how their concerns were considered.

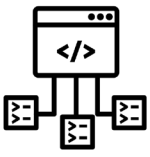
The process conducted by CGA consisted of 5 main interrelated tasks.



1. Mobilization: This task included the project kickoff meeting, preparation of the Public Engagement Plan (PEP) and launch of the engagement strategy, and stakeholder meetings with residents, landowners, developers, activists, and elected officials.



2. Snapshot of the Present: This task involved gathering and analyzing information about the present conditions in the Town Center, including pertaining to population, development, housing stock, policies and regulations, mobility, services and environment.



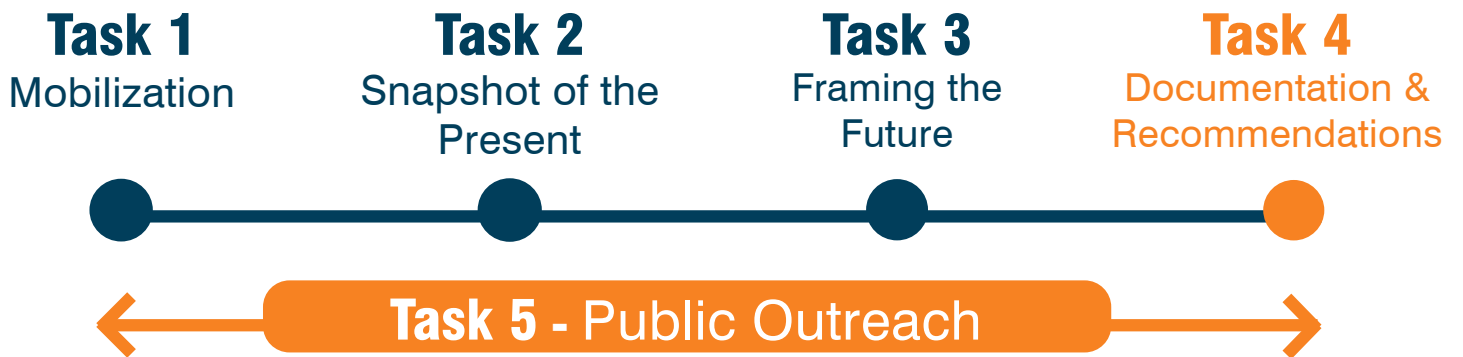
3. Framing the Future: This task was primarily about collecting public input so the project team could outline viable options to recommend to the City Commission. The information collected in the Snapshot task was organized in a series of interactive boards which were used to engage the public during the public outreach activities.



4. Documentation and Recommendations: In this task, the project team synthesized and documented the compilation of community input and identified areas of common ground to develop preliminary recommendations.



5. Public Outreach: In this task, the team implemented the PEP. Flexibility was built into the plan, allowing for adjustments due to unanticipated circumstances (such as the COVID-19 pandemic). The public outreach process included two (2) pop-out outreach activities, one (1) large “open-house” style workshop, an online survey that remained open to the public for several weeks, and a digital workshop.



Outline of the Re-envisioning process tasks.

3. Snapshot of the Present: Key TCNO Facts

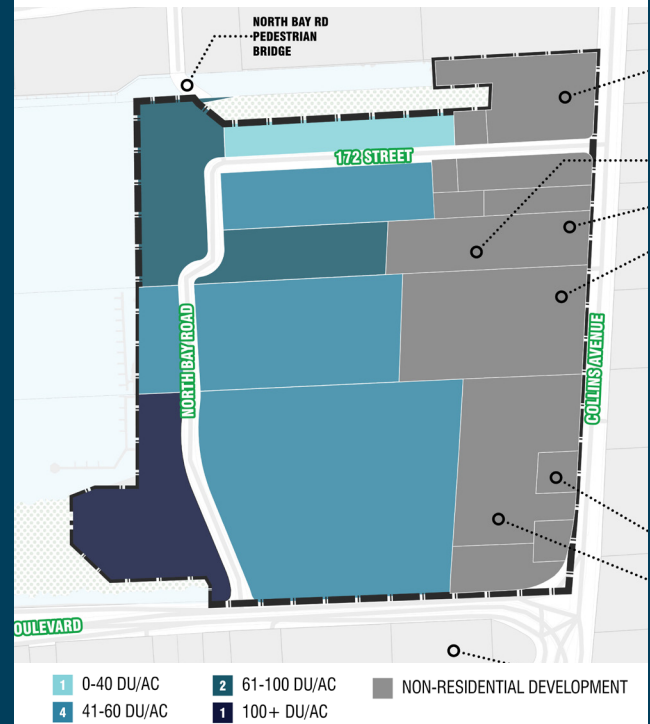
A “snapshot” analysis of the Town Center North area was developed to characterize the conditions, challenges and opportunities present in the area today. The outcomes of the analysis, summarized in the following pages, were used in the public engagement process to help process participants inform their opinions with simply presented key hard data.

The snapshot, however, is not exhaustive. It offers just a sketch in time to establish a reference point for framing options, tracking future change and evaluating and calibrating policy decisions.

DEMOGRAPHICS & SOCIOECONOMICS

Population 	TCNO 3,999 (majority White Latinos)	City 22,295 (majority White)	Comparison 18% of City population
	72% foreign-born	61% foreign-born	
Median Age in Years 	37.6	48.6	11 years younger than City average
Household Size 	2.26	2.1	0.16 larger than City average
Median Income 	\$41,889	\$52,355	80% of City's median
Housing Units 	2,835	22,195	10% of City's housing stock

RESIDENTIAL DENSITY BY PARCEL



BUILDING AGE



37
average building age in years



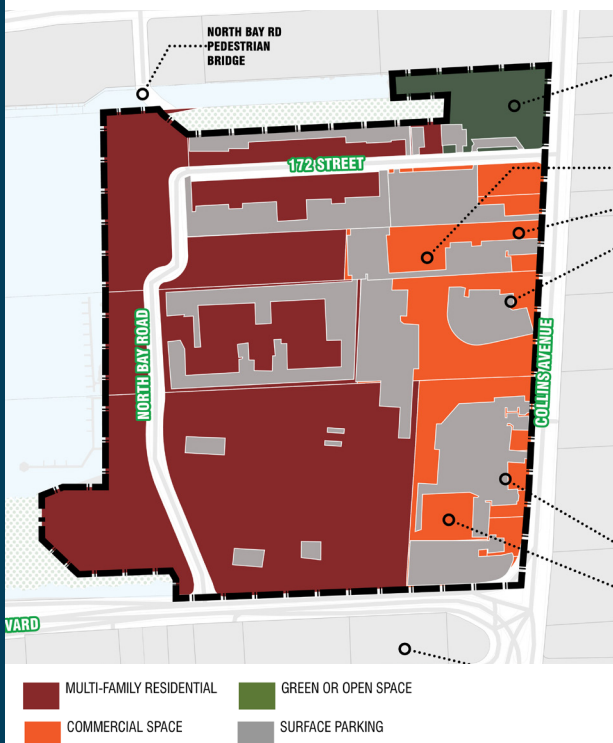
21%
% of buildings older than 50 years

RESIDENTIAL DENSITY

67
current average density (dwellings/acre)

25-184
range of density in existing residential development (dwellings/acre)

LAND USE



LAND USE ALLOCATION

65%
multi-family residential land

30%
commercial land

20%
surface parking

5%
green or open space

BUILDING HEIGHT

6
average building height in stories

57%
% of buildings 5 stories or less

91%
% of buildings less than 10 stories

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

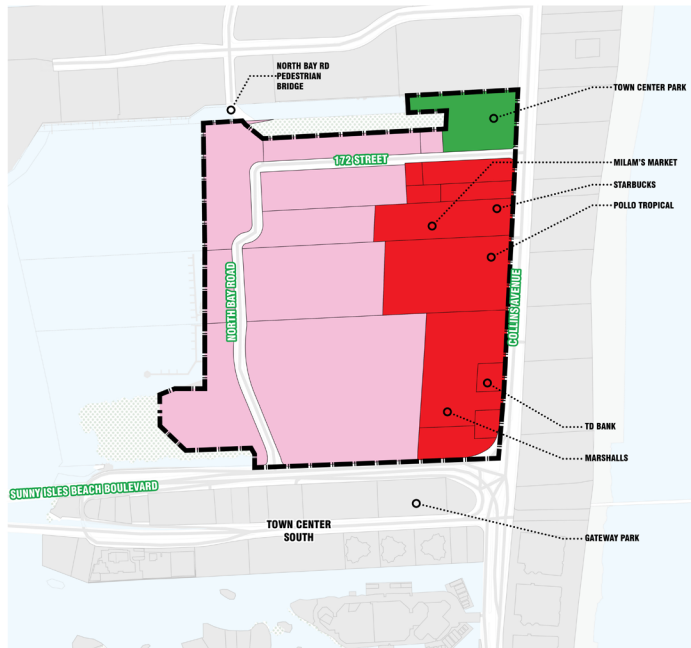
Property	Land-Use	Acre	%	Number of Units	Density (DU/AC)	FAR	Building Height (Stories)	Year Built / Age
Town Center Park	Recreation Open Space	3.47	4.81%	-		-	-	2007/13
Fire House	Community Facilities	0.36	0.50%	-		-	2	40787
Salem House	Mid-to-High Density Residential	4.04	5.61%	102	25	0.43	3	1969/51
Porto Belagio West	Mid-to-High Density Residential	3.64	5.05%	250	69	4.65	9	2003/17
Porto Belagio East	Mid-to-High Density Residential	3.64	5.05%	250	69	2.17	6	2003/17
Avila South (200 & 210 NBR)	Mid-to-High Density Residential	4.04	5.61%	196	49	1.17	5	1974/46
Golden Bay	Mid-to-High Density Residential	1.56	2.17%	84	54	5.14	12	1999/21
Intercoastal	Mid-to-High Density Residential	4.31	5.99%	795	184	7.16	24	2001-2002/19
Beach Place	Mid-to-High Density Residential	7.10	9.86%	308	43	1.10	6	1972-1977/48
Plaza of America	Mid-to-High Density Residential	18.37	25.52%	850	46	1.31	10	1979/41
Epicure	Mixed-use Business	3.13	4.35%	-		0.21	1	1953/67
Rk Center (17100)	Mixed-use Business	3.59	4.98%	-		0.60	2	1990/30
Rk Center (17070)	Mixed-use Business	6.43	8.93%	-		0.41	2	1956/64
Rk Center (16800)	Mixed-use Business	5.79	8.04%	-		0.39	1	1996/24
Rk Center (16830)	Mixed-use Business	0.52	0.72%	-		0.20	1	41456
Shell Gas Station	Mixed-use Business	0.45	0.63%	-		0.09	1	1961/59
Newport Parking Lot	Mixed-use Business	1.58	2.19%	-		-	-	1969/51
		71.99	100%	2,835		-		

Note: Submerged land is not included in the property acreage calculations

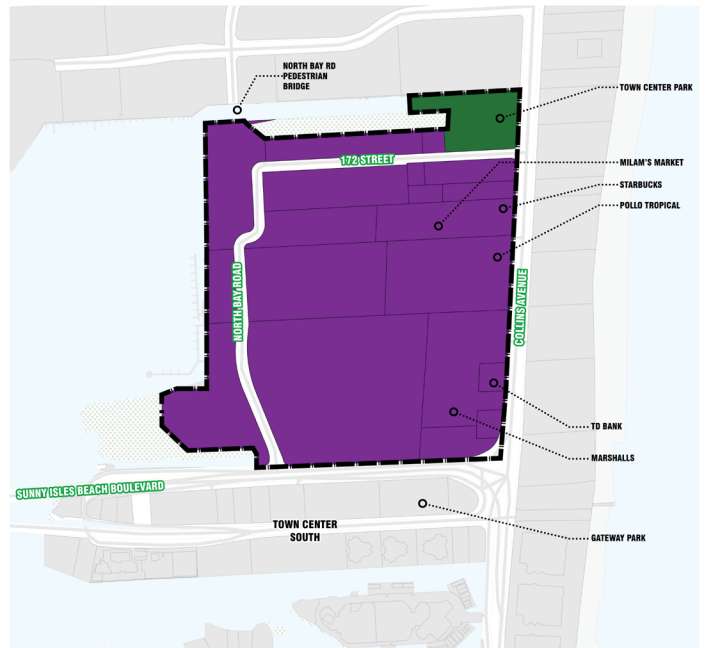
POLICY & REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Two official City documents guide development in the TCNO. The first one is the Comprehensive Plan, which provides the overarching vision and policy principles for the future of the Town Center. The second document contains the City's Land Development Regulations (or also referred to as Zoning Code), which implement the policies of the Comprehensive Plan through the assignment of zoning.

FUTURE LAND USE (2016-2030)



ZONING MAP



■ MIXED USE - BUSINESS
■ MEDIUM TO HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
■ RECREATION - OPEN SPACE
■ CONSERVATION
■ WATER
■ CONSERVATION

■ CONSERVATION
■ RECREATION - OPEN SPACE
■ TCD - TOWN CENTER DISTRICT

*** TO BE APPROVED BY STATE; PENDING FINAL DEO APPROVAL

TABLE 2: SYNOPSIS OF CURRENT REGULATIONS VS. SITE CONDITIONS

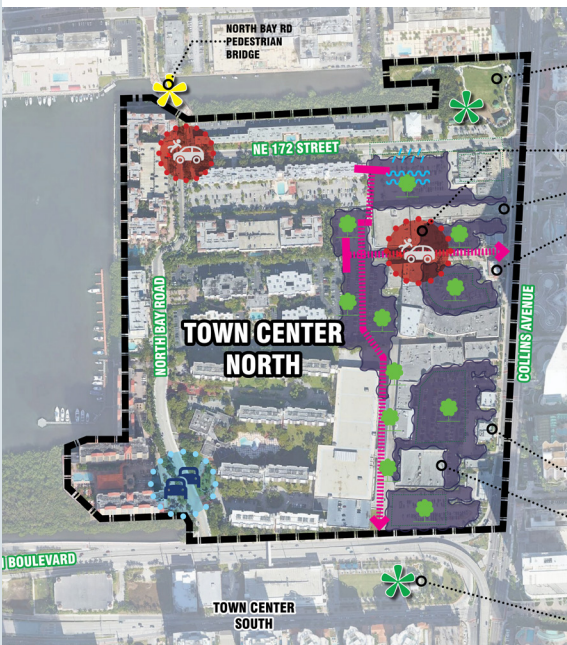
DOCUMENT	COMPREHENSIVE PLAN			ZONING CODE	EXISTING CONDITIONS
	MEDIUM-HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL	MIXED-USE BUSINESS	TCNO	TCZD *	
MEASURE					
DENSITY	Base: 25-50 DU/AC Waterfront sites* bonus: Up to 60 DU/AC (*all the waterfront property is currently developed) Affordable housing bonus: Up to 65 DU/AC	Base: 25 DU/AC Up to 85 DU/AC achievable through bonuses	No density measure in place	60 DU/AC The current exception for properties along the Sunny Isles Beach Blvd. south edge applies to the new TCSO; but the TCZD needs to be clarified	Average: 67 DU/AC districtwide On a site-by-site basis, residential density varies greatly, ranging from 25 DU/AC (Salem House) to 184 DU/AC (Intracoastal Yacht Club)
INTENSITY	Base: 2.0 FAR Waterfront sites* bonus: Up to 2.5 FAR (*all the waterfront property is currently developed)	2.0 FAR	No intensity measure in place. Mixed-use developments greater than 3 acres in size must balance their allocation of FAR	Base: 2.5 FAR Bonuses: up to 4.5 FAR through a variety of bonuses, all with conditions	Average: 2.0 FAR On a site-by-site basis, FARs vary greatly: Commercial: 0.09-0.6 Residential: 0.43-7.16 (Intracoastal Yacht Club)
HEIGHT	No height measures are included in the Comprehensive Plan	No height measures are included in the Comprehensive Plan	No height measures are included in the Comprehensive Plan	The maximum height is based on street type, which varies by location. The maximum "attainable" height is 290 ft (approx. 24 stories) only applicable to the south edge of Sunny Isles Beach Blvd.	Average: 6 stories district wide On a site-by-site basis, heights vary greatly: Commercial: 1-2 stories Residential: 2-20* stories (excluding parking)

Note: The Intracoastal Yacht Club is was approved under Miami-Dade County rules prior to the incorporation of the City.

* A Transfer of Development Rights may allow for an increase of up to 30% in density/intensity (Section 265-23 of the Zoning Code).

The overlay designation currently does not include density or intensity parameters. Coming up with these standards is one of the goals of the Re-envisioning process.

Neither the Zoning Code nor the Zoning Map have been amended to for consistency with the 2019 Comp Plan land use amendments created the TCSO and TCNO.



Key	Assets	Challenges	Opportunity
		Flooding "hot spot"	Improve stormwater management
	Parks		Leverage for expanded recreation & event programming
	Bridge		Leverage for improved walkability, connectivity, safety and identity
		Point of pedestrian/vehicular conflict	Improve safety
		Points of vehicular conflict	Improve access management and safety
		Gaps in internal circulation	Improve connectivity, walkability and safety
	Surface parking areas		Potential for future redevelopment
		Areas lacking tree canopy	Improve tree coverage and lower heat island effect

The TCNO is unique for Sunny Isles Beach due to its demographics, scale and setting, which has remained static compared to other parts of the City. The area is an important local destination, appreciated for its compactness and walkability. Challenges include inadequate connectivity, outdated design, pedestrian safety issues and flood hot spots.

4. Highlights of the Public Input

- Most participants in the public engagement process do not want to see skyscrapers in the TCNO. It is worth observing that nothing in the current TCNO, underlying districts or TCZD zoning allows a “skyscraper” in the Town Center North area today.
- Most participants would prefer to see the TCNO maintain a more moderate skyline than the area surrounding it. It is worth observing that the buildings heights in the TCZD, regulated by a complex Street Frontage Plan, do not exceed approximately 24 stories. The tallest building that exists in the district today is 20 stories, not including structured parking.
- Most participants condemn the “canyon effect” and the impression of an uninterrupted concrete and glass wall along the east side of Collins Avenue.
- The Town Center North is seen as a respite, a “lung” where the shorter buildings and lower concentration of structures allow sunlight to pass through and give a sense of openness.
- Participants like the current mix of building heights (no uniformity), and they favor the current districtwide average height of 6 stories.
- In a redevelopment situation, participants would favor a gradation of building heights depending on the site’s location within the TCNO.



Word cloud composed of combined public input about aspirations for the TCNO. The size of the terms indicates the frequency with which the terms appear.

5. Vision for a Town Center

These are the common-ground themes identified through the public engagement process, expressing aspirations for the TCNO.

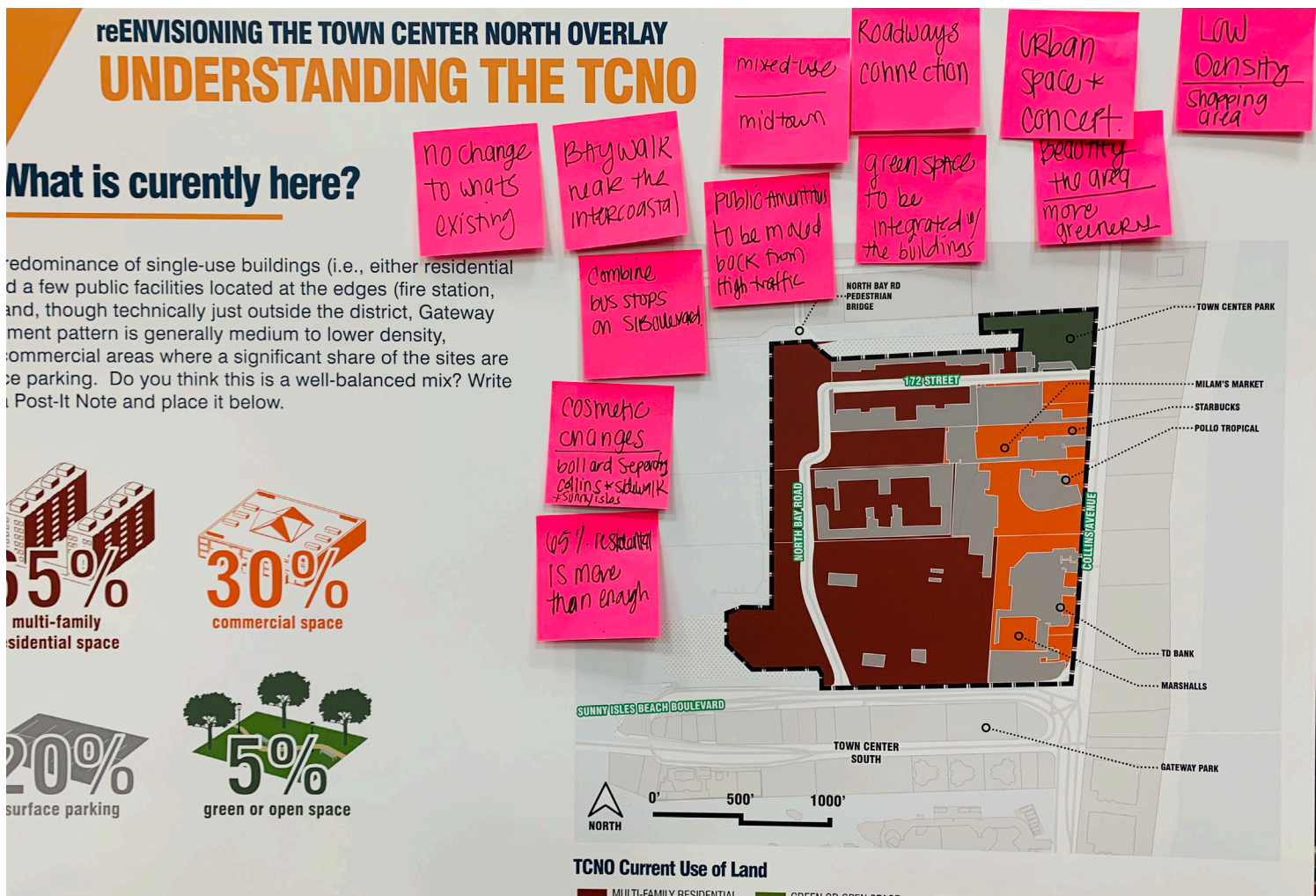
- **Distinct:** Today, the TCNO differs in scale, character and density from the surrounding area; it looks and feels different. Residents keenly wish this district to remain unique, especially compared to development on the east side of Collins Avenue.
- **Oasis:** The great importance placed by people on a smaller-scaled, lower-profiled North Town Center suggests the need for a sense of retreat from the intense urban setting that surrounds it.

- **Destination:** The TCNO is an important, multifunctional activity center for locals and visitors. People would like to see more and higher quality shopping and dining options, as well as new entertainment and civic uses added.
- **Livable:** This quality is better described through other terms and attributes:
 - Human scaled: an area of predominantly low and midrise buildings (as it is today) and designed to engage and nurture the pedestrian at the street level.
 - Multimodal: a walkable, bikeable, “transiteable” area.
 - Accessible: an area easily and safely connected to other parts of the City.
 - Open: an area with more green spaces and an improved tree canopy
 - Updated: modernized architecture, improved public realm and upgraded selection of businesses.

6. Summary of Policy and Regulatory Choices

The TCNO Re-envisioning process inspired outcomes that have been useful in identifying and framing alternative paths. Weighing the public input and the elements of the vision, the project team has compiled four (4) broad policy and regulatory concepts and provided a neutral basis for evaluating advantages and disadvantages of each, considering certain factors. The choices, summarized on the following page, are color-coded for clarity and ease of differentiation.

These choices are not the entire universe of potential solutions. They are a small array distilled from the common-ground ideas that emerged from the community engagement process.



The four choices are based on public input collected through the process

TOWN CENTER NORTH POLICY & REGULATORY OPTIONS

This scorecard is designed to facilitate a side-by-side review and evaluation of several potential courses of action available to the City of Sunny Isles Beach, with the factors involved in each potential decision concisely and objectively presented. These options are broad concepts, not designed to encapsulate every detail of the processes needed to achieve an option. To allow for an “apples to apples” comparison, four criteria of significance to the residents, the business owners, landowners, developers, staff and the City were scored on a simple scale of 1 to 5.

SCORE CARD

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

1 2 3 4 5
LEAST FAVORABLE MOST FAVORABLE
Refers to input provided via the community engagement process. It also refers to consensus identified regarding specific ideas.

RISK

1 2 3 4 5
VERY HIGH VERY LOW
Refers to potential development rights, legal and fiscal ramifications to the City, based on an estimate of the development impact of changes, as well as on feedback from the City Attorney.

COMPLEXITY

1 2 3 4 5
VERY HIGH VERY LOW
Reflects the relative level of exertion required in terms of City coordination and effort due to thresholds to meet, technical analyses to prepare, and/or documentation to assemble due to the number of “moving parts”.

PROCESS EXPEDIENCY

1 2 3 4 5
VERY SLOW VERY QUICK
Indicates the estimated length and pace of the process based on the number of local administrative or legislative requirements and the applicable level of State review.

Option

LET IT BE

This option entails keeping the Town Center North Overlay (TCNO) in the Comprehensive Plan.

Implications:

- While keeping the current boundary and character of the TCNO, intensity and density measures must be added via a text amendment to achieve compliance with the Florida Statutes (these metrics are not in the Comprehensive Plan today). Community response and risk may vary depending on which metrics are chosen.
- Zoning Code text changes to the TCD may be needed to achieve consistency with the 2019 Comprehensive Plan change (i.e., the split of the TCO).
- While no FLUM map amendment is necessary in this option, the Zoning Map must be amended to match the Zoning Code changes.



CUMULATIVE SCORE: 13

Option

A NEW VISION

In this option, a new “Town Center North” land use designation (a base district) would be established to replace the TCNO. New guidelines would be created as part of the new district (reusing elements that work from the existing overlay).

Implications:

- Requires Comprehensive Plan text amendments to create a new land use designation, with its own density and intensity measures, and to eliminate the existing TCNO.
- A FLUM amendment is required to re-designate properties within the current overlay to the new base district. *
- The Zoning Code will have to be amended to match changes in the Comprehensive Plan. Zoning Map changes are also necessary.



CUMULATIVE SCORE: 9

* A variation in this option could be to consider whether the Town Center, as a general concept, should be applied (i.e., relocated) to an entirely different area of the City. This may require regrouping and assessing the implications of this. A separate study may be needed.

Option

TOSS IT AWAY

This option would simply eliminate the TCNO in the Comprehensive Plan, leaving the existing underlying land use districts (Medium to High Density Residential and Mixed-Use Business) to guide future development and redevelopment.

Implications:

- Considers whether the City really needs a designated “town center.”
- Requires Comprehensive Plan text and FLUM amendments to eliminate the TCNO.
- Text amendments to the Zoning Code are needed to eliminate the TCD zoning designation. *
- Zoning map amendment is needed to rezone the land currently designated TCD to the more appropriate zoning designations (compatible with the underlying future land use districts).



CUMULATIVE SCORE: 9

* A variation in this option could be to convert the TCD base designation to a zoning overlay with any necessary variations, for example, adding in design guidelines from the Comprehensive Plan. This change still would require Zoning Code and Zoning Map amendments.

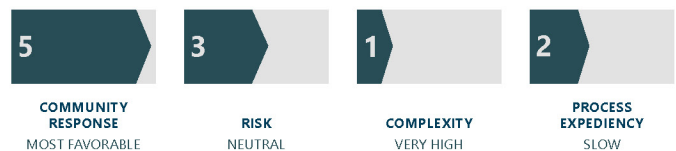
Option

A NARROWER FOCUS

In this option, the Town Center North would be subdivided to reflect the current character of the area. The TCNO is shrunk (or redrawn) to apply only to the present commercial area, i.e., properties fronting on Collins Avenue. The TCNO guidelines could be adjusted based on public feedback. The TCNO would be removed from the residential portion of the district, and development there would be controlled by the underlying Medium to High Density Residential designation.

Implications:

- Requires a FLUM amendment to remove the TCNO designation from the residential portion of the current district.
- Requires a Zoning Map amendment to redraw the boundary of the TCD to match the FLUM, and to rezone the residential portion of the current TCD to a different zoning designation.
- Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code text amendments may be necessary to clarify the changes in the nature and extent of the overlay and the TCD.



CUMULATIVE SCORE: 11

7. Key Conclusions and Recommendations

Despite significant challenges and limitations (not the least of which was conducting public engagement in the time of the coronavirus), this process met its goals to engage a wide variety of community perspectives, to get a balanced picture and to find areas of common ground. As the process nears completion, the Commission's role is to weigh the community's input, the areas of common ground, and the vision elements to determine which potential policy and regulatory path to take. The following is a selection of factors to consider (for the full list refer to Section VII of the report).

Density and Intensity Measures: The "Let it Be," "A New Vision" and "A Narrower Focus" options all require adopting density and intensity measures, because the Comprehensive Plan does not include such measures, which are statutorily required. The Commission should provide direction to staff regarding these metrics.

Development Capacity: Any changes that result in a reduction of development capacity must demonstrate that the changes are based on rational reasons to further a legitimate public interest, and that property owners are still provided with an economically reasonable use of land.

Defining Building Height:

- Except for the commercial area, the building heights that are currently prescribed in the TCZD are in line with the range that the public deemed acceptable. Many participants favor the current mix of building forms and masses but would prefer shorter buildings along Collins Avenue, with taller buildings in the residential area.
- The City should consider stipulating building height in terms of number of stories (rather than number of linear feet) and adding a definition of "story" that establishes the maximum ceiling height of a building story.
- The City should consider revisiting and/or streamlining the concept of the Street Frontage Plan, which controls building parameters including building height in the TCZD. Most of the original street types, which are tied to locations, may not be feasible.

Additional Considerations:

- ***Walkability:*** While most participants enjoy the high level of walkability of the area, they also recognize that further improvements are needed in the areas of pedestrian comfort and safety. This is something of a low-hanging fruit that the City can take short-term action to make tangible improvement on.
- ***Redevelopment prospects:*** The Town Center North area is mostly built-out and has been relatively stagnant in terms of redevelopment. The future opportunities may be limited for a time, especially considering the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the South Florida real estate market.
- ***Site and building design:*** Despite being well maintained, participants see the commercial buildings as outdated, the architecture as unmemorable, and the site design as inefficient. New guidelines and standards are needed. Focus on encouraging inspiring architecture, best practices in functional site design, and increasing and improving landscaping and green space.
- ***Parking:*** The commercial section of the Town Center North area is an area of high parking demand. A study may be needed to identify potential ways of increasing efficiency of existing parking capacity, discouraging automobile use, reducing congestion and conflicts, resolving spillover problems, improving internal circulation and managing access.
- ***Bus stops:*** Participants raised alarm at the potentially hazardous location of the bus stops on westbound Sunny Isles Boulevard. This issue requires coordination with FDOT and Miami-Dade County Transit.
- ***Transportation/congestion:*** Continue coordinating with regional and state transportation agencies and neighboring communities, as well as the implementation of the City's 2016 Transportation Master Plan.

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