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Planning Begins For 'Complete Streets' Makeover

By David Phillips

Miami DDA is hosting a public workshop to initiate a Complete Streets makeover in Downtown Miami, and the project could serve as a countywide model for improving street safety and usability.

MIAMI – One of downtown Miami's busiest busy streets may soon become a lot more user-friendly. The Miami Downtown Development Authority, in partnership with the City of Miami and Miami Dade County will host a Complete Streets Workshop today through April 6th to discuss repurposing one of its most trafficked corridors – SE/SW 1st Street, between Biscayne Boulevard and SW 2nd Avenue.



The national Complete Streets initiative involves transforming urban thoroughfares into a vibrant and safe public space for pedestrians, cyclists and others to arrive at local destinations like retail shops and restaurants. Such increased connectivity has served as a catalyst for economic development in other cities across the US.

The public is invited to participate during the workshop to help craft a strategy to convert SE/SW 1st Street into a multimodal street capable of accommodating multiple modes of transportation.

The workshop is being funded by the Miami DDA with the assistance of a \$10,000 grant from The Health Foundation of South Florida. Implementation of the Complete Streets concept that results out of this process will be conducted and funded by Miami-Dade County.

The effort, in part, is due to downtown Miami's residential population boom, which has more than doubled since the year 2000. In addition to the more than 200,000 daytime workers who fill city streets, making it a priority to improve safety and re-balance roadways to better serve transit, pedestrians and cyclists.

The goal, according to Alyce Robertson, executive eirector of the Miami DDA, is to provide all residents, visitors and workers with safe, functional access along streets Downtown, and increased access to Bayfront Park and the waterfront.

"By bringing together local and state officials and the public to discuss this important endeavor, we are confident that a plan will take shape," Robertson said. "A Complete Streets approach would ensure that as Downtown Miami grows, the city streetscapes meet the needs of walkers, bikers, bus riders, as well as cars."



Residents, business owners and agency partners are being encouraged to participate and provide input in relation to the changes and improvements they feel would best suit the corridor and the business community.

"Miami is consistently one of the top cities in the country for pedestrian and bicycle crashes – a statistic that can be avoided through solutions that give everyone safe and reliable access to our city streets," said City of Miami District 2 commissioner Ken Russell, who also serves as chairman of the Miami DDA. "This workshop will put the right pieces in place to achieve this for the thousands of residents and visitors who come into our district each day."

Since its inception in 2004, more than 700 jurisdictions in 30 total states have put Complete Streets initiatives into action. The improvements made in other cities include dedicated bike lanes, transit-only lanes and enhanced crosswalks, as well as other aesthetic changes that increase curb appeal and make public thoroughfares more accessible to pedestrians.

Creating a consensus plan for SE/SW 1st Street could potentially lead to similar improvements being applied to other streets throughout downtown.

"Downtown Miami remains one of this region's preeminent economic engines, as well as an international destination," said Alice Bravo, Miami-Dade County department of transportation and public works director. "We are committed to working with the DDA and the City of Miami to enhance our streets, improve transportation options and showcase the power of cooperation."

Upon conclusion of the workshop, the coordinating agencies are expected to finalize recommendations and present to elected officials for approval of an implementation plan and installation of pilot project. In most jurisdictions where Complete Streets policies have been enacted, plans go through a vetting process before they proceed to implementation.

The workshop began today at the Miami Center for Architecture & Design (MCAD), 100 NE 1 Ave. Today's events were to include an informal open house from 3 to 4 p.m. with an opening presentation and public seminar from 6:30 to 8 p.m. On Thursday will be open house hours from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. with a closing presentation and wrap-up discussion from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

The Miami DDA is an independent agency of the City of Miami funded by a special tax levy on properties in its district boundaries. It is governed by a 15-member Board comprised of three public appointees and 12 downtown property owners, residents and/or workers who are tasked with overseeing the direction of the agency and setting policy.

Health Foundation of South Florida, a nonprofit grant making organization, is dedicated to improving health in Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties. By funding providers and supporting programs to promote health and prevent disease, the Foundation makes a measurable and sustainable impact in the health of individuals and families. Since 1993, the Foundation has awarded more than \$108 million in grants and program support.