17th Avenue – Allapattah:
An Equitable Development Action Plan for Thriving Commercial Districts

Equitable Development Action Plan
Miami, Florida

Developed in partnership with
“Gentrification is not the inevitable result of economic development. Quite the opposite, it is the result of fundamentally unjust economic development policies, widespread public disinvestment in historically marginalized communities, and lack of protection for existing residents.”

05 | Vision for the Neighborhood

From San Francisco, CA to New York City, NY and from Seattle, WA to Miami FL, gentrification is erasing the essence of communities.

As noted in the “Development without Displacement” report produced by Causa Justa: Just Cause, a California based non-profit, “Gentrification is not the inevitable result of economic development. Quite the opposite, it is the result of fundamentally unjust economic development policies, widespread public disinvestment in historically marginalized communities, and lack of protection for existing residents.” The disproportionate influx of capital is displacing long-term residents and small business owners with rent increases and lack of viable opportunities to own their long-term residences or storefronts. This gradual displacement is eradicating Miami’s diverse and cultural neighborhoods. One of the main concerns is that community engagement and participation is inadequate in the redevelopment of vulnerable areas, which in turn will have a ripple effect beyond socio-economics, demographics, and opportunities available to long-term residents and small businesses. By promoting equitable development best practices, the scales can balance so that everyone has a chance to thrive in the neighborhood where they have lived for decades and invested many years of capital and sweat equity.

Equitable development refers to a plan that takes all community stakeholders into consideration. It is an outcome-oriented community development process where everyone in the target neighborhood benefits from the goods, amenities, and concessions provided by an initiative — whether it is a lucrative investment, a social impact program, an ordinance, or a government administrative procedure. In order for vulnerable communities to thrive, equitable development needs to be at the heart of the community development process. Based on the feedback from the 17th Avenue EDAP Steering Committee, the community’s shared vision is to have a safe, inclusive,
engaged, and intergenerational, mixed-income neighborhood with spaces, opportunities, and resources where residents of all economic classes and backgrounds can live, learn, work, play and thrive.

A process aligned with this shared vision took place in 2014 when the University of Miami conducted community conversations, charrettes and architectural design workshops in the Little Santo Domingo section of Allapattah in order to creatively revamp the aesthetics of the area to align it with the Little Santo Domingo concept. The City of Miami had developed design guidelines for Little Santo Domingo in 2013 and included plans to develop this area as a cultural destination in the City of Miami Consolidated Plan created in 2015. In 2016, Florida State University’s Community Real Estate Development program proposed an incubator focused on destination economic development in Little Santo Domingo aimed at leveraging the growth of historic and new businesses, enhancing the quality of life of residents and preserving the Dominican culture of the area. Developing a robust Dominican business district will further enhance the economic development, community engagement, commercial trade and touristic option for the City of Miami.

The community’s shared vision is to have a safe, inclusive, engaged, and intergenerational mixed-income neighborhood with spaces, opportunities, and resources where residents of all economic classes and backgrounds can live, learn, work, play and thrive.
The best solution for vulnerable communities is to first stop the bleeding by implementing anti-displacement strategies.

We should not boost the area until the main problem has been addressed or else boosting the area will harm the residents by the further increase of rents and property values. After anti-displacement strategies are in effect (resident protections, community benefit agreements, inclusive community engagement processes, equitable development ordinances, community land trust acquisitions, protection of legacy businesses, retail co-op, etc.), business owners will have greater confidence to expand their ventures, and then it would be sensible to boost the area by adding amenities and new businesses. Through technical assistance, key policy and wealth building strategies (defined as the acquisition of assets, savings, investments and capacity to manage opportunities and resources), businesses can become resilient, remain sustainable and intentionally build a strong legacy in the community for generations to come.
**Goal #1**

Establish the infrastructure and processes for implementing inclusive equitable community development

**Strategy 1:** Create a place-based community development non-profit organization — The Allapattah Collaborative — that focuses on equitable development, wealth building, and policy advocacy to implement key initiatives. (6-12 months)

- **Action:** Set up and register 501c3 non-profit organization.

- **Action:** Execute organizational strategic plan and resource development plan to support work and long-term organizational sustainability.

**Strategy 2:** Educate community about equitable development and wealth building practices. (6-24 months)

- **Action:** Create communications platform focused on promoting equitable development and wealth building practices for communities of color.

- **Action:** Schedule series of small events and community activities that highlight equitable development and wealth building practice for homeowners and small businesses.

**Strategy 3:** Establish partnerships with key institutions to enhance wealth building and equitable community development. (12-24 months)

- **Action:** Engage and partner with hospitals, financial institutions and the real estate development community to support and enhance equitable community development and wealth building initiatives in the area, such as local small business contracting opportunities, favorable loan program to boost businesses, and community integration in new developments.
• **Action:** Work with industry experts, local government and partnering non-profits on equitable development plans and community benefits agreements policy that include benefits for small businesses and commercial corridors that are affected by displacement.

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**Goal #2**

**Prevent Displacement of Existing Small Businesses**

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**Strategy 1:** Provide key recommendations to City of Miami and Miami Dade County Consolidated Plans, focused on anti-displacement strategies for small businesses. (6-12 months)

- **Action:** Review Consolidated Plan’s Annual Action Plans to provide recommendations that align with anti-displacement strategies for small businesses as part of the City and County’s CDBG programs, ensuring funding for implementation is allocated.

- **Action:** Partner with the City of Miami and Miami Dade County Community Development departments to increase investment for small business service providers and increased capital for small businesses loan pool.

**Strategy 2:** Purchase commercial property through a community land trust to provide greater ownership opportunity for small business owners along the commercial corridor and gain permanency of long-standing stakeholders. (12-24 months)

- **Action:** Secure partnership with South Florida Community Land Trust to acquire properties.

- **Action:** Secure funding to acquire properties for commercial community land trust initiative.

- **Action:** Educate small businesses on CLT model and prepare them for acquisition.

**Strategy 3:** Advocate for policies that provide government subsidies or tax relief for long-term leases, legacy business and small business preservation. (6-24 months)

- **Action:** Educate City of Miami commissioners on best practices and quantify the value of this proposed initiative.

- **Action:** Educate small businesses on the benefits of legacy business and small business preservation.

- **Action:** Meet with City of Miami staff and other experts to identify tax code sections and funding sources for small business relief and landlord incentives.

**Strategy 4:** Build resilience and sustainability of small businesses with financial capability, technical support, training and coaching. (6-18 months)

- **Action:** Establish partnerships with nonprofits offering technical assistance and access to capital to small businesses such as Prospera, Partners for Self-Employment, ACCION, Self-Help and The Miami Bayside Foundation among others.

- **Action:** Hold events in the corridor to bring partners’ technical assistance directly to businesses.

- **Action:** Prepare 10 businesses to access capital for asset building and operational expansion.
**Strategy 5:** Conduct a feasibility study for the creation of a cultural business incubator to provide a location for displaced businesses within the commercial corridor. (18-36 months)

- **Action:** Secure funding and perform feasibility study.
- **Action:** Secure partnerships and funding sources to develop incubator.
- **Action:** Secure site control of development site to establish incubator.
- **Action:** Establish an “incubator without walls” as an interim step providing technical assistance and services to select businesses most in danger of displacement.

**Strategy 1:** Develop a comprehensive commercial district revitalization strategy for the 17th Avenue corridor. (12-24 months)

- **Action:** Establish a 17th Avenue Main Street program.
- **Action:** Work with local officials and School of Architecture Master's programs in local universities (University of Miami, Florida International University, etc.) to update the visioning process completed in 2014.
- **Action:** Work with the City of Miami staff to execute community comprehensive commercial district revitalization plan.

**Strategy 2:** Implement a community branding campaign for the 17th Avenue commercial corridor. (18-24 months)

- **Action:** Designate a Special District in the target commercial corridor to facilitate City of Miami logistics and permitting for events and outdoor community gatherings.
- **Action:** Create and implement a calendar of community events that bring the community together and boost business engagement.
- **Action:** Establish a community wide marquee event.

**Goal #3**

Boost Cultural Economic Development with Commercial District Revitalization Strategies

By boosting the richness of the Dominican culture in Allapattah, the area will revive with a myriad of cultural offerings — art, food, music, traditions, folklore — and increased foot traffic. This improvement will create new employment opportunities, improved infrastructure and broader the tax base.

**Strategy 3:** Complete a business market study to recruit new businesses and expand existing businesses. (36-60 months)

- **Action:** Secure key location for anchor tenants to increase foot traffic in the area.
- **Action:** Identify and curate key business to join the target commercial corridor.
Goal #1
Establish the infrastructure and processes for implementing inclusive equitable community development

Goal #2
Prevent Displacement of Existing Small Businesses

Goal #3
Boost Cultural Economic Development with Commercial District Revitalization Strategies