

# After hurricane andrew: homestead revitalization planning and the south transit C...

[Environment](#), [Disaster](#)



“ Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody” Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities

Twenty-five years ago, the city of homestead was in the center of a category five hurricane which unleashed its wrath on south Florida August 24, 1992. Hurricane Andrew’s 175-mile wind gust leveled the City of Homestead which devastated countless areas of the infrastructure system and left thousands homeless. Approximately 1 million people that fled to the North from South Florida and the morning after the storm residents awoke with no power, no traffic lights, no gas, and the worse harm was to the landmarks. People didn’t have refrigeration, water or air conditioning for weeks. This Hurricane was reported has the most devastating storm in Florida and the costliest in U. S. history till Katrina in 2005.

The center was remarkably damaged that reconstruction was nearly out of the subject. The numbers were appalling with a record break of \$26. 5 billion in damage. At that time Homestead had 26, 000 in population, and it was recorded 7, 500 people were left homeless, and 85 percent of housing was either damaged or destroyed. The main shopping center located in U. S. 1 at Campbell Drive sustained a lot of destruction it had to be removed completely. There was nothing left except for the City Hall, the Power Plant, and the Hospital everything else was terminated. With homes, stores, infrastructure, and the economy in ruins; homestead was overlooking years of rigorous rebuilding. The local government, city officials and homestead residents, were resolved to rebuild the city once again. Rebuild they did, and

Homestead most drastic change came after hurricane Andrew sent numerous white middle-class residents packing and mostly for good up North. Now the City of Homestead sits on a turning point as Miami Dade's focus of population approaches the South and, developers renew their quest of the last remaining buildable green areas in the Miami Dade County to turn into residences and shopping strips. Miami Dade Commissioner Dennis Moss who was first elected in 1993 after hurricane Andrew has devoted much of his term in office promoting the region's redevelopment. According to the U. S. Census Bureau in 1990 the southern Miami-Dade population was 300, 000 and has expanded to approximately 528, 000. The area has totaled 75, 000 housing units since 1990, producing a total 190, 000 until today and figures continue to rise.

The working middle-class families that relocate to South Dade recognize that is one of the areas in Miami-dade county where families can acquire a single-family home or townhouse at an affordable price, though it is continuously changing. Redevelopment has yet to touch much of the South areas because the region remains too limited to bring private investors. The City of Homestead developed new affordable housing on its most rural areas especially on the west side to replace what was overthrown. Although the local city revenue and fiscal budget plunged, officials had a strategy of rezoning and annexing land on the east side of U. S. 1, for local residential improvement; which produced a growth so dramatic, that City of Homestead became among the fastest growing municipalities in the nation. The strategy was an accomplishment in many ways displayed in the population growth of

68, 700 as of today, which is a 148 percent increase, and its median household income increased to \$40, 959 according to FIU figures. Sadly, the national recession hit the city, and homestead had one of the highest foreclosure percentages. The total property assessments in the municipality dived to 54 percent from 2010 through 2013. Today homestead officials have begun a hopeful revitalization approach bringing extensive planning combining movie theaters, bowling alley, dining, and many retails through for the downtown area. A parking garage is in the process for development and a transit hub linked to the neighboring County Busway which is another post-Andrew improvement. The Miami Dade Board of Commissioners collectively supported the allocation of \$1. 5 million to the City of Homestead for Downtown Homestead Revitalization Project, and this would finance adequate infrastructure projects intended to assist in building the infrastructure needed for an active downtown district with exceptional civic and cultural amenities, businesses, and improved transportation expansion procedures. The support of the County will support the City of Homestead achieve projects that will provide its resident's transit passage, budgetary opportunities, and quality of life. The Downtown Revitalization Plan comprises of three phases. The first phase includes the newly developed City Hall, Police Station, Seminole Theatre, and National Park Trolley. The second phase involves of a Transportation & Retail development area that consists of a movie theater, restaurant, and retails; the Iconic Attraction will be built to combine with an everglades-themed 4-D ride with an observation tower that flaunts a landscape of the Everglades and the Florida Keys. The Cybrary that is not like a conventional library but a state-of-the-art technology with

virtual reality, 3-D printing and much more. Lastly, is the Losner Park expansion that will be transformed into a destination place for all visitors and residents alike developed by Sasaki and associates who had designed the Master Plan of the Beijing Olympics. Future projects would be the in the third phase of the phase that would bring low-rise condo developments to provide a residential component to Downtown Homestead. It also expands the City's relationship with Miami Dade College (Homestead Campus) by conceiving a Student Center and Entrepreneurial Center transversely from City Hall allowing MDC students to get out toward Downtown Homestead to explore retail, recreation, and dining.

Achieving Homestead revitalization is quite the challenge in smaller towns like the City of Homestead, but officials are persuaded that a \$100 million downtown revitalization will change the average area into an active city. The centerpiece is a \$50 million Homestead Station which is the entertainment hub of the downtown area. The city officials influenced the ShowBiz Cinemas based in Dallas, Texas to inaugurate its first Florida location, serving a ten movie screens theater, a bowling ally with 14 lanes, video arcades room, café and full bar restaurant under same roof location. The 65, 000 square foot structure will premiere in June 2019. The City is waiting to combine a bus rapid transit system at Homestead Station by 2021 that would dramatically reduce the actual two-hour transit commute times for residents who work in Miami. City Manager George Gretsas noted that council and city officials have made revitalizing the downtown a priority because they believe it will translate to higher home values, more jobs and greater respect for a

town known only for farming and agriculture. The South Miami Dade public transit continues to have critical traffic concerns since taking 90 minutes to traverse the busway, which runs from Florida City/Homestead areas to Metrorail's Dadeland South station, making it a transit option ineffective to use for many citizens. The problem is complicated since a few big private companies won't invest in employment centers in the south area, forcing residents to commute far to get to their employer destinations. After Andrew, Miami Dade County planners convened workshops for the public and established new zoning rules to generate compact, mixed-use urban centers along South U. S. 1 that would be connected to transit busway and a guaranteed future expansion of Metrorail to Homestead and Florida City areas. The intention is to promote office development, residential and commercial close by and develop population groups dense enough to sustain transit assistance. Metrorail expansion never occurred, and developers turned to build farmland inside the UDB and developed at low densities that require auto use. A retired county planning official Mr. Subrata Basu who assisted in the development of the urban hub plan recognized the lost opportunity to direct the expansion in the South Miami-Dade in a reasonable direction. But the growing transportation distress and reiterated development burden are opening these debates once again. Elected officials and Mayors in all five South-Dade municipalities along Miami Dade County Mayor Carlos Gimenez are contemplating a system of express buses that work in many ways like trains. Officials and planners say transit-oriented construction joining with Metrorail stations along U. S. 1 represent the only practical alternative for South Dade. Everyone across the board is expecting

a vital growth with predictions as 40 percent population increase by 2040. Many are anticipating to see development along Florida City/Homestead busway routes much like Downtown Dadeland, though at a lower scale more compatible with the direct surroundings. Miami Dade County has placed a bid for high rise transit-oriented expansion that incorporates a housing element on Quail Roost Drive. County Commissioner Dennis Moss noted when having people in such density, it will support public transportation and will draw office growth such as now exemplified in the Downtown Dadeland area accompanying the transitway.

In conclusion, none to this would have been achievable without the leadership of federal, state and local government officials who made the significant commitment to rebuild not only South Dade areas, but the Homestead Downtown district. Furthermore, utilizing the expertise of urban planners that guarantee: Transportation, Water supply sewers and solid waste disposal, Air quality, Parks, outdoor recreation & open space, Economic development and Housing can come together in a cohesive, climate-informed, strategic, unified and sustained planning across all the multiple sectors. This plan is ongoing and with hopes of rehabilitation, employment opportunities and overall economic stimulus to South Florida and its citizens.