

FIU NEWS RELEASE

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FIU Releases Overtown Study Results

MIAMI (February 19, 1998) --A recently released study by Florida International University's Institute of Government confirms that expressway construction and urban renewal in Overtown during the 1960s had a devastating impact on that community. The study proposes government actions that could help revitalize the community.

A team of public administration analysts, economists, historians and planners from FIU conducted the study with The Black Archives History and Research Center. The study included a review of documents on the issue, interviews with 56 former and current Overtown residents, and the impact of similar transportation projects in Tampa, Jacksonville, Nashville, New Orleans and Atlanta.

The study confirms that Interstates 95 and 395, State Road 836 and urban renewal projects constructed in the 1960s had a disastrous impact on the Overtown area and largely destroyed a once viable and stable African American community.

"The same trends were experienced in the other comparison cities after major transportation projects were launched," said Milan Dluhy, director of the FIU Institute of Government, which coordinated the study. "They took a big hit when the urban expressways went through, and never recovered."

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In 1950, Overtown had a thriving central commercial area with 318 businesses and 45 percent of the African American population in Miami-Dade County. From 1960 to 1970, the community lost 51.2 percent of its population and 33 percent of its businesses.

The transportation infrastructure recommendations include:

- The perimeter of Overtown needs to be highlighted using historical symbols or markers to enhance the gateway character and identity of the area.
- Signage from all exit ramps from I-95, SR 836 and I-395 should direct people to the Historic Folklife Village and the main commercial districts.
- Additional landscaping and beautification at the midtown interchange.
- Opening of dead-end streets to enhance circulation and stimulate commercial development.
- Study the feasibility of completing the MetroMover loop from the School Board either south to the Government Center, southwest to the Overtown Shopping Center or westward to Culmer Station.
- The area under I-395, currently an ugly and dangerous wasteland, should be landscaped, filled, or converted to commercial or recreational use.
- Consider additional exit and entrance ramps from I-95 and I-395.

Economic development-related recommendations include:

- Encourage the city of Miami and the Sports Authority to complete

an adaptive reuse study of the Miami Arena.

- Extend the Downtown Development Authority's boundaries to include all of Overtown.
- Reinforce the privatization efforts of the Miami-Dade Housing Authority in the Town Park Gardens Area, which will increase residents' stake in the area.
- Work with the city of Miami to help develop affordable housing and office complexes for the 240 acres east of I-95 and west of the Miami Arena.

The study was commissioned by the Metropolitan Planning Organization, a Miami-Dade County agency that coordinates local transportation planning. Over the next few months, the study and its results will be presented to the Metropolitan Planning Authority, city of Miami, Miami-Dade County Commission, Downtown Development Authority and the Florida Department of Transportation within the next few months.

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