

THE REAL DEAL

SOUTH FLORIDA REAL ESTATE NEWS

TRD MIAMI /

June 11, 2019

By [Francisco Alvarado](#)



Calle Ocho (Credit: iStock)

Taking cues from zoning changes that have ignited redevelopment of old industrial buildings in Wynwood, a master plan for revitalizing Little Havana calls for more small-scale buildings that fit the character of the historic neighborhood, the slashing of parking requirements for projects, and developer bonuses for affordable housing, streetscape improvements and historic rehabilitation jobs.

For more than two years, Miami-based urban planning firm PlusUrbia Design worked on the [master plan](#) on behalf of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which unveiled the report during a press conference on Tuesday that included city and Miami-Dade officials.

Robert Nieweg, National Trust senior field director, said the plan makes recommendations on how local government and private property owners can address sub-standard housing, poor transportation options and lack of green space in Little Havana.

“Little Havana is the heart and soul of Miami,” Nieweg said. “This is the first report of its kind, and we believe it can be a road map for making life better for people in Little Havana.”

According to PlusUrbia’s report, [Little Havana](#) is home to roughly 20 percent of Miami’s rental housing stock and is one of the city’s most affordable places to live. More than 87 percent of the rental properties go for less than \$1,000 a month. However, current zoning regulations make it economically unfeasible to develop small multifamily and mixed-use buildings, Plusurbia’s planners concluded.

Properties that are 15,000 square feet or less remain vacant as owners wait to sell to investors or developers seeking to assemble parcels for larger projects, the report states. The “wait and see” attitude by current landlords means they are not maintaining their properties, resulting in a large swath of Miamians living in buildings that are “in most cases, in deplorable disrepair,” according to the master plan.

PlusUrbia suggests the city adopt a neighborhood revitalization overlay district, or NRD, that would include development standards encouraging small-scale, new housing on vacant and underused parcels; reduce parking requirements and allow higher unit counts and floor-to-area ratio. City commissioners approved the first NRD for [Wynwood](#) to allow developers to build apartment, office and condo buildings, hotels and mixed-use projects on land zoned for industrial uses.

To encourage development on small lots in [Little Havana](#), PlusUrbia recommended the city provide parking reductions and exemptions for all properties less than 10,000 square feet and new buildings under three stories. If a lot is smaller than 7,500 square feet, the city should remove all parking minimums for new construction, the report states.

PlusUrbia also suggested the city implement bonus incentives in exchange for public benefits such as building permanent affordable housing units, historic rehabilitation projects and streetscape improvements, among other recommendations in the 162-page report.

PlusUrbia put the master plan together with input from various groups including Live Healthy Little Havana, Urban Health Partnerships and Dade Heritage Trust. The firm held several community workshops since 2017 that were attended by more than 2,700 Little Havana residents, landlords, investors and business owners.