Currently, our transportation corridor provides access primarily for the automobile, treating other modes of transportation as secondary. Driving, as a result, has become a matter of necessity rather than choice in Broward County, and those who cannot drive due to age, ability, or income are at a distinct disadvantage. Further, improving the transit system and creating a pedestrian-friendly environment has another significant benefit: it will create a livable, desirable, and vibrant urban-village atmosphere.

To elevate the quality of life in the county, and enhance the economic opportunities available to all, a new dedication to improving the transit system is required, with a strong emphasis on pedestrian-oriented amenities such as covered passageways, continuous sidewalks, crosswalks, landscaping, and attention to design detail at the scale of the pedestrian.
New vision

To best accommodate redevelopment activities and achieve the five primary goals in the coming years, we must first embrace a new vision for Broward County that shifts the balance from an “auto-centric” society to one that is more diverse, efficient and community oriented. The new vision introduces places where cars aren’t always necessary, where high quality public spaces abound, where living, working, and recreation activities are within walking distance or accessible by modern transit, and where all cultures and communities have a voice and a stake in the decision making process.

As the County redevelops to accommodate the anticipated future population, we also have an opportunity to reconnect with our unique landscape, waterways, and natural environment that are often the main reason many residents have chosen to live here. Our tropical landscape and climate, the flat coastal topography of our land, and our intense dramatic sky all contribute significantly to our local “sense of place.”

Authentic places are also found where local culture thrives. With the rich diversity of distinct cultures, neighborhoods and areas in Broward we can easily encourage and nurture local design expression, innovation, and adaptation. When individual freedom of expression is balanced with urbanity, a resonating and authentic sense of place is thus achieved.

Effective community design must include an ongoing dialogue with the community itself, through its designers, artists, storytellers, and key thinkers. The Community Design Guidebook recognizes this need for diversity within the built environment of Broward County in both the urban and suburban contexts. Therefore, the Guidebook balances suggestions for advantageous design patterns with a description of a process, or framework, for achieving an authentic “sense of place” by combining ongoing community dialogue with consensus-based policy, best design practices and technical expertise.

Research into the history of Broward County’s built environment reveals that an emerging sense of place, as it can be associated with design activity itself, is determined by a combination of things we have created over time, and things which respond to the our natural setting. The Guidebook provides a community-wide process for incorporating both by describing the process used to gain community input for the guidebook itself.
County-wide themes and recommendations

Patterns of development in Broward County forming a County-wide “Quilt Net”

Currently, the patterns of development in Broward County resemble a rough patchwork quilt, organized along section lines in a grid of approximately 1 mile by 1 mile. The development and land use patterns themselves vary, ranging from the grid structures typical of many small American towns built prior to the early 20th century, to the sprawling and hierarchic network of roadways of the mid to late 20th century, to an emergent post-modern variety of infill redevelopment. The distinct characteristics of these development patterns have also changed and varied over the decades, as development decisions shifted away from the hands of local owners and financiers, to the more anonymous, corporate oriented investor that has dominated the global scene since the 1970s.

Consistent with piece-meal and changing growth patterns over the years, the major roadway corridors of Broward County now work together to form a functional separation of uses. The grid pattern of the main corridors places primary emphasis on automobile traffic. The critical corridors are, therefore, hierarchical and serve two automobile intensive functions: as both a “traffic arterial” and as “access provider” to separate land uses. The net result is that, to date, most of Broward County is neither completely suburb, nor city, but seeks to capture the essence of both. To use the patchwork analogy, each city is a “patch” - stitched together by the “threads” of the corridors.

To reinforce these threads, as the County and the municipalities adapt to the redevelopment challenges they face, the Guidebook will help facilitate a method for transitioning the major corridors to a more multi-modal reality, and provide a process whereby these prime public spaces can be integrated into the entire “fabric” of the county so they have the strongest, most desirable final impact.
Reinforcing the “Quilt Net” with threads of a New Vision

Increases in population and a shift to more mass-transit options present an excellent opportunity to not only reinforce the “Quilt net” in anticipation of redevelopment in dispersed areas by highly interwoven community centers, but to layer it with a rich array of new options. A variety of transit, pedestrian, vehicular and waterway networks can now become integral components that will weave the revitalized “Quilt net” together in the future.

Concept for the new County “Quilt Net”:

- A diverse patchwork of communities with public and private places “woven” together with multi-modal transportation “threads”.

- The major corridors, roughly one-mile apart in each direction, act as arterials that contain the movement between places.

- The arterial road network forms the underlying pattern of the quilt, or the “seams” between the patches.

- Within the patches (roughly square sections), development patterns vary, having been influenced over time by economic and market trends, and in response to evolving site development policies and regulations.

- Though many of these quilt “sections” in the western portions of the County are new and won’t be redeveloped for years, and the stable residential neighborhoods in the east will experience little change in their development pattern, retrofits to landscaping, transit accommodation, signage, and architectural detailing can help these areas enhance their aesthetics and sustainable value.
If the population increases without an increase in pedestrian and transit mobility options, traffic congestion will surely to have an increasingly negative effect on redevelopment opportunities and quality of life. Therefore, the quilt-net concept of this Community Design Guidebook superimposes pedestrians, transit, uses, and buildings on top of all existing infrastructures to create a network of centers and multi-modal corridors that will help create a more livable and vibrant public realm with greater economic exchange and social interaction. Taken together, the layering of pedestrian, transit, new and mixed uses, and new building forms over the existing infrastructure will increase both access and the choice of mobility, and thereby provide the platform for more diverse and sustainable redevelopment.

Principal components of the Quilt Net include:

- Armature of streets and corridors
- Green Tunnels and Palm Promenades
- Town Centers and community cores
- Community Patterns

The armature of streets and corridors can accommodate clean, modern, and attractive regional transit linked with local transit, park-n-ride facilities, and an interconnected pedestrian walkway system.

Green tunnels and palm promenades provide shade, natural wayfinding elements, and sense of place to the county’s roadways and corridors.