

The Underline

A young girl with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a white tank top and light green leggings, is standing on a concrete surface. She is holding a large green block and appears to be in the process of building or playing with several other large, colorful blocks (yellow, green, red, blue, and white) that are stacked in various configurations. In the background, there is a concrete bridge structure with a sign that reads "mile 0.15". Further back, there are multi-story buildings and a clear blue sky with some clouds. The overall scene suggests a public space or park designed for children's play.

Strategic Plan

2022-2026

Acknowledgements

This Five Year Strategic Plan was made possible by our generous donors, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, The Allegany Franciscan Ministries, Rails to Trails and John Richard.

Special thanks go to our Strategic Plan Task Force who helped shepherd the process and guided this five year road map for Friends of The Underline and The Underline Conservancy's future activities, policies, processes and programs.

Members of The Strategic Plan Task Force

Jennifer Moon, co-chair
John Richard, co-chair
Stu Blumberg, The Underline Management Organization
Alice Bravo
Kieran Bowers, Friends of The Underline

Meg Daly, Friends of The Underline, The Underline Management Organization
Sandra Haughn
Roger Terrone, Friends of The Underline, The Underline Management Organization
Lilly Weinberg, Friends of The Underline

Friends of The Underline Board of Directors

Jessi Berrin, Baptist Health South Florida
Kieran Bowers, Swire Properties
Meg Daly, Friends of The Underline
Iris Escarra, Greenberg Traurig
Rudy Fernandez, University of Miami
Daniel Gibson, Allegany Franciscan Ministries
Lucas Hernandez, Microsoft
Arden Karson, Karson & Co
Ryan Marks, Kaufman Rossin
David Martin, Terra Group
Josh Merkin, rbb Communications
Camilo Miguel, MAST Capital

Grace Perdomo, Transit Alliance
Salma Rahmathulla, Pelicans Group
Brent Reynolds, Nolan Reynolds International
Donna Shalala, University of Miami
Roger Terrone, Retired from BDO
Rudy Touzet, Banyan Street Capital
Debi Wechsler, The Braman Family Foundation
Lilly Weinberg, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
Steve Wernick, Wernick & Company, PLLC
Judy Zeder, Coldwell Banker

The Underline Conservancy Board of Directors

Daniel Balmori, Hogan Lovells
David Cardenas, Miami Dade County Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces
Carlos Cruz-Casas, Miami-Dade County Department of Transportation Public Works
Meg Daly, Friends of The Underline

Eli Stiers, STIERS LAW, P.A.
Nicole Tallman, Miami Dade County
Roger Terrone, Retired from BDO
Kevin Walford, Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization
Steve Wernick, Wernick & Company, PLLC

This Five Year Strategic Plan was adopted by the Friends of The Underline on January 19, 2022 and by The Underline Conservancy on January 20, 2022.



Introduction and Background

Riding a wave of tremendous successes to date, Friends of The Underline (FUL) and The Underline Conservancy (TUC), the two organizations responsible for The Underline, embarked on a comprehensive strategic planning process led by two local consultants and a task force comprised of community leaders and FUL and TUC board members.

Beginning in August 2021, the first phase of the planning process entailed conducting a series of surveys and interviews with community stakeholders. This infused the process with valuable input and perspective. The second phase included six intensive planning sessions involving members of both boards and organizational staff, focusing on the key pillars of the plan. The resulting five-year strategic plan lays the necessary foundation for the long-term success and management of The Underline.

BACKGROUND

In 2013, Miami resident Meg Daly, broke both of her arms. Since she could not drive herself to physical therapy, she took the Metrorail near her home, and walked the rest of the way to her destination underneath the train guideway. Even in July, she did not feel hot in the shade of the tracks. She noticed how wide the corridor was and how much space there was, and the fact that she was the only person using the space. And so, the concept of The Underline was born, and the Friends of The Underline was formed, with Meg spearheading a tremendous effort.

The Underline, to be built in three phases, is becoming a 10-mile urban trail, a linear neighborhood park and public art destination that will span from the Miami River, north of Brickell Metrorail station, to Dadeland South. It will feature dedicated bike and pedestrian paths, community gathering spaces, amenities, art, programming, lighting, native vegetation as well as safety features and improvements at road crossings.

Through a partnership with Miami-Dade County, the cities of Miami, Coral Gables, and South Miami, FDOT, and a vibrant and engaged board of directors, public and private donors and hundreds of volunteers, The Underline is an example for repurposing unused land into a public park and community space and is poised to become one of Miami's signature assets.

In 2020, The Underline Management Organization (dba The Underline Conservancy) was created to manage, maintain, operate, and program The Underline. This public/private organization is governed by a board of representatives from FUL and Miami-Dade County.

Mission of Friends of The Underline

To deliver and activate a 120-acre, world-class linear park spanning 10-miles below Miami's Metrorail that will transform regional mobility and celebrate diversity, culture, and lifelong learning. Through innovative urban trails and creative programming, we are connecting people to their environment and each other to create a safe, healthy, equitable, and sustainable community



Mission of The Underline Conservancy

To deliver a world-class, 10-mile linear park and urban trail and provide engaging community-based health, wellness, public art, culture, and educational programming for all.

Organizational Core Values

- Diversity and inclusivity
- Innovation
- Health and wellness
- Sustainability
- Safety and mobility
- Connectivity
- Fun

Significant Milestones

- Capital funds (\$140 million) secured as of December 2021.
- Phase I construction completed. Brickell Backyard, the park's half-mile "proof of concept" from the Miami River to Coral Way, opened in February 2021.
- In the first 10 months since it opened, the Brickell Backyard welcomed more than two million visitors.
- Phase II (2.14 miles) construction began in October 2022 and is expected to open in Fall of 2023.
- Phase III construction is slated to begin in 2022 (seven miles through Miami, Coral Gables, and South Miami).



Strategic Focus: 2022- 2026

To secure and sustain the ambitious vision, The Underline will focus on four major goals during the next five years.

- Oversee The Underline's Phase II (opening Fall 2023) and Phase III (opening early 2026) construction.
- Ensure a safe, clean, and welcoming park with a robust portfolio of engaging and accessible programming as each phase opens.
- Secure the necessary level of support and resources to ensure long-term success by enticing all of Miami-Dade to "fall in love" with The Underline so that it becomes one of our community's most visible and beloved assets.
- Build the organizational, staffing, and resource capacities to sustain The Underline to world-class standards.

Construction of The Underline is well underway and being overseen by Miami-Dade County. FUL and TUC need to transition focus to supporting and operating each phase of the park as it opens and evolving from start-up organizational mode to building the organizational structures and capacities necessary to successfully address the challenges of funding, operating, and programming the entire park by early 2026.

To that end, there are four, equally important, strategic priority areas that require investment of time and resources:

- **Revenue generation.** By 2026 the organizations need to generate approximately \$11 million annually from dedicated funding sources (70% public and 30% private).
- **Community engagement.** Develop and maintain an extensive, complex network of partnerships and relationships to ensure the necessary support, as well as elevating and empowering Miami-Dade's diverse communities.
- **Park management and programming.** By the end of 2025, TUC will implement a framework that facilitates world-class operations and community-driven programming for 10-mile park.
- **Organization and leadership.** FUL and TUC will transition from start-up operational mode to full-scale operations with stellar leadership, staffing, and systems.

In conjunction with these strategic priorities, both FUL and TUC will undertake four major initiatives that will impact all aspects of operations and programming.

- Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity (DEI)
- Performance Measurement
- Special District
- Technology

The remainder of this document details the five-year priorities for each priority area, specific objectives for 2022 (updated annually), and key strategies and tactics to be deployed.



Priority 1: Revenue Generation

The long-term sustainability of The Underline relies on the ability to raise the necessary financial resources to support park maintenance, programming, and general operations of FUL and TUC.

Building on its success of securing capital dollars for construction, FUL must secure a dedicated revenue source for operations, establish a world-class culture of philanthropy, a robust donor relations and stewardship plan, and a comprehensive and sustainable development program driven by industry best practices.

Five Year Strategic Priorities

- Establish sustainable sources of revenue that by 2026, generate approximately \$11 million¹ annually from dedicated funding sources (70% public and 30% private). This includes \$1 million for program support once the entire park is open.
- Create a comprehensive donor relations and stewardship program that focuses on donor acknowledgement and recognition, and that leads to high donor satisfaction, engagement, and retention.
- Design and launch a comprehensive annual giving program that generates interest from many individuals (at least 1,000 annually within five years) from throughout the county.
- Launch an individual middle donor (\$1,200 to \$10,000 annually) program (at least 100 annual members within five years) that creates a pipeline for major gift prospects.
- Build a robust program for individual major gifts, corporate partnerships, and foundation grants, with a strong prospect tracking system to drive activity.
- Recruit and support a team of experienced development professionals that will partner with the FUL leadership and board of directors in realizing considerable revenue growth.
- Secure dedicated funding source(s) for park operations.
- Secure funding for programming-related park amenities (e.g., art installations, rain/sun shelters, additional lighting, bathrooms, and food and beverage infrastructure).
- As more of the park opens and is activated, explore opportunities for earned revenue through merchandise sales, space rentals, and partnerships (e.g., food vendors), especially by leveraging relationships with businesses along The Underline.

¹ This is the amount that budget projections estimate for annual park and organizational operations.



Priority 2: Community Engagement

Community engagement involves outreach, communications, marketing, and advocacy. Events, activities, and structured programs are also a form of community engagement.²

Both FUL and TUC will share responsibility for community engagement, as it is an organization-wide effort and the linchpin for establishing and sustaining The Underline’s position as a beloved community asset.

By its nature, The Underline has a vast array of stakeholders and potential partners – all of Miami-Dade’s diverse residents; the neighborhoods adjacent to park; businesses of all sizes; governments and other public agencies; educational institutions (pre-K through university); businesses and developers, and civic, cultural, and other nonprofit organizations. The size and diversity of these stakeholder groups will require ongoing, intensive staff and board attention.

Five Year Strategic Priorities

- Ensure that Miami-Dade residents “fall in love” with The Underline and demonstrate a sense of ownership and pride through their visitation and support.
- Position The Underline as Miami-Dade’s “civic commons” where people from different backgrounds come together.
- Increase levels of civic engagement by fostering activities such as volunteering, stewardship, and advocacy.
- Empower community leaders to “own” The Underline as a place to host their own programs and initiatives.
- Increase awareness of “why we are here,” supporting a mission to create a more connected, engaged, mobile and safe community.
- Increase awareness and support for each phase of construction.
- Increase awareness, support, and connection (related to utilization) to each section of The Underline as it opens, informing people about space features, uses, and programming.
- Improve the feedback loop so that FUL and TUC learn more about user interests and incorporate their priorities into actions, programming, and policies.

² Given the enormity of planned programming, it is addressed as a separate section later in this plan.



Priority 3: Parks Operation and Programming

The Underline’s promise to the community is to provide a world-class park that is clean, safe, in “good as new” condition, and perceived to be welcoming and accessible to all.

Our ability to live up to that promise lies in our power to create an excellent working environment for our operations staff (including our contract partners) and give them the necessary resources to effectively do their jobs.

Five-Year Strategic Priorities

- Always keep the park clean, welcoming, and safe.
- Maintain the walkways, gardens, and amenities in “like new” condition.
- Create the back-of-house infrastructure to make this possible and support front-line park staff.
- Continue to work with county and local officials to strengthen the partnerships for park maintenance.
- Secure long-term office space for staff.

PROGRAMMING

Programming a 120-acre, 10-mile linear park with the frequency, diversity, and quality that the community desires is a daunting undertaking. Leveraging numerous local organizations with programming expertise, TUC will serve as a curator with the bulk of programming delivered through partnerships. This will support our community engagement goals and reflect the organization’s commitment to be the community’s “learning lab.”

Guided by a Programming Master Plan, TUC will curate programming by:

- Developing programming vision, direction, parameters, and themes, such as DEI, health and wellness, art and culture, and civic engagement.
- Setting programming standards and measurable performance metrics to ensure diverse, consistently delivered, inclusive, and high-quality programming.
- Creating an interactive calendar of ongoing, regularly scheduled, publicized programming.
- Engaging, coordinating, and monitoring the community-based partners that will deliver the bulk of the programming.

Programming encompasses a diverse array of activities including planned events and programs, art and other installations, and food and other retail opportunities. Broadly, programming will:

- Be diverse, accessible, and dynamic, appealing to many kinds of audiences.



- Feature components that attract people adjacent to The Underline as well as those from throughout Miami-Dade County.
- Foster the development of interactions and connections between people from different backgrounds.
- Reflect a balance of programmed activity, spontaneous experiences, and quiet use.
- Be largely free of charge to participants.
- Be self-sustaining from earned income and philanthropic support.
- Provide opportunities for underserved populations to improve their economic standing.
- Attract people to the park year-round.
- Operate with sustainable and green considerations.
- Reflect the interests and needs of local neighborhoods.

Five Year Strategic Priorities

- Within three months of opening of Phase II and III, launch a full portfolio of community-driven programming.
- Ensure that programming participants reflect the diversity of the community.
- Earn high levels of participant satisfaction.
- Demonstrate achievement of targeted performance metrics for Brickell Backyard programming (metrics for Phases II and III will be measured in later years).
- Create a 10-mile outdoor public art gallery



Priority 4: Organizational Leadership and Infrastructure

As the entire 10-miles of The Underline opens, the two organizations responsible for its creation and sustenance must evolve from their current start-up, build-design mode into governance and operational structures that can successfully manage and support a large, complex park.

The Underline: Areas of Responsibility	
Friends of The Underline	The Underline Conservancy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Development▪ Community Engagement (with focus on development and advocacy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Operations▪ Programming▪ Community Engagement (with focus on park utilization)

For both FUL and TUC, this will require changes to the board of directors (e.g., focus, structure, and composition), administrative systems and processes, and significant investment in staffing and organizational culture.

FUL will transition to focus solely on revenue generation and advocacy while TUC will manage all park operations and programming.

Five Year Strategic Priorities

- Re-align both FUL's and TUC's board structure and composition to provide the leadership necessary to sustain a fully operational Underline, transitioning FUL's purpose to revenue generation and advocacy.
- Implement a leadership succession plan.
- Continue to strengthen TUC's ability to manage all park operations and programming as Phases II and III open.
- Increase staffing levels at both FUL and TUC to meet the expanding operational scope, including hiring a CEO for both organizations.
- Attract and retain high quality employees to meet new priorities.

CROSS-CUTTING INITIATIVES

Several critical initiatives span all areas of operations and as such are addressed in this cross-cutting section of the plan. They include:

- Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity (DEI)
- Performance Measurement
- Special District
- Technology

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Staff are currently participating in an intensive DEI initiative, led by The Highline Network and The Urban Institute, to identify and advance equity goals and implement equitable planning, programming, and metrics. As part of this process, staff, in collaboration with Harvard's Graduate School of Design, conducted baseline assessments to guide organization's DEI planning, goal setting, and metrics identification.

The following four goal areas will guide long-term DEI efforts:

- o Thriving civic and cultural life
- o Increased local community use of the public space
- o Increased engagement among diverse communities
- o Promotion/retention of neighborhood history and culture
- o Improved neighborhood accessibility and connectivity
- Neighborhood affordability and equitable economic development
 - o Elevating small businesses, especially those led by people of color
 - o Reduced resident displacement
 - o Stabilization of land value
 - o Employment of residents and businesses within the public space
 - o Workforce and training opportunities via partnerships for neighboring communities
- Health, wellness, and resilience
 - o Improved health of local residents
 - o Greater resilience of frontline communities around the public space
 - o Environmental justice
- Equitable organizational growth
 - o Diversity and inclusion in staffing and hiring practices
 - o Professional growth and training opportunities for staff
 - o Inclusive governance model



Five Year Strategic Priorities

- Diversify both FUL's and TUC's board and staff so that they match or exceed the County's diverse demographics.
- Ensure that all practices, processes, and policies represent Miami's diversity and result in The Underline becoming the most inclusive park in Miami.
- Enhance access for groups that represent people of color by engaging nonprofits and neighborhood groups that specifically serve minorities.
- Create a program, complete with funded resources, that proactively supports the unhoused population and connects individuals with needed services.
- Help underserved communities gain representation through the creation of diverse activities, stories, and events.
- Develop intentional messaging that speaks directly to different cultures and populations to let them know that they are not only welcome, but encouraged to be a part of activities, stories, and events.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Ensuring that the organization achieves its goals and operates effectively requires a robust system for collecting and analyzing data as well as staff and board dedication to utilizing data on a regular basis to inform decision-making and operations. Staff have already been collecting and utilizing data, but a comprehensive performance measurement plan is not yet in place.

Five Year Strategic Priorities

- Implement an ongoing park services performance measurement plan to ensure quality park operations and programming and demonstrate achievement of targeted metrics.
- Implement a robust organizational performance measurement structure that tracks KPIs to ensure effective and efficient administrative operations.
- Utilize performance data to tell The Underline's story, increasing the effectiveness of all communications activities.

SPECIAL DISTRICT

Creating a special district for The Underline would be a significant step towards ensuring long-term success and sustainability from dedicated public and private funding sources. The special district includes:

- Land use and urban design
- Access and connectivity
- Value capture mechanisms
- Implementation and outreach strategies



Creation of this special district would:

- Propose resilient, positive economic opportunity and equity under a shared vision of the entire corridor, building on the unique nature of the district.
- Present a holistic plan that provides municipalities and county development and connectivity guidelines for future interventions and development opportunities.
- Articulate a unified vision that addresses the unique qualities of each municipality and its neighborhoods, providing a cohesive conscious approach for future land use and development standards.
- Provide innovative urban planning techniques that incorporate design guidelines and identify value capture mechanisms.
- Establish anti-displacement strategies to protect existing residents and incentivize the construction of equitable housing options to preserve affordability and improve access to the corridor for all.
- Establish a dedicated funding source.

The proposed Underline Special District boundary would be a half-mile geofenced area from the perimeter of The Underline from the Miami River to Dadeland South Metrorail station.

Five Year Strategic Priorities

- Pass the necessary legislation to create a special district by 2023.
- Begin implementation of policy changes by 2024.
- Have the special district begin generating revenue by 2024.
- Ensure The Underline is part of a larger system of connectivity, access, and mobility.

TECHNOLOGY

In early 2021, staff engaged in a technology master planning process resulting in a vision for technology. The plan identifies that The Underline will be:

- A place accessible to all, where all visitors feel welcome, safe, equally engaged, and trust towards the entity that operates it.
- A local asset that promotes fitness, sustainability, education, innovation and connects neighborhoods.
- A globally recognized destination that exemplifies Miami's public art scene and technology sophistication.
- An example of efficient operations driven by an understanding of park visitors



Five Year Strategic Priorities

Within the next five years, the organization will launch technology that:

- Attracts and engages a diverse community.
- Understands the community.
- Creates a safe environment.
- Fosters learning through immersive park experiences.
- Supports economic development.
- Supports the arts master plan through digitally enhanced art and nature.
- Supports community development.
- Streamlines operations through an events and reservations platform.
- Supports health outcomes.



Implementation

The strategic plan is based upon the best information available to the board, staff, and consultants. While this plan represents the organization's direction, and the strategies and investments, it is understood that as circumstances change or additional information becomes available, the plan may be modified.

Monitoring the plan's implementation is critical to success. Using implementation templates and dashboards, the chairs of the boards and the CEO share responsibility for oversight. To facilitate implementation, each strategic priority area should be assigned to a working group and a staff liaison. Working groups should be responsible for ensuring implementation in collaboration with senior staff, and monitoring progress toward annual objectives through a performance scorecard. Progress should be discussed quarterly at board meetings at appropriate intervals throughout the year.

The strategic plan should be consulted during the annual budget process, with any necessary modifications incorporated. It is also during this process that the board and CEO should develop strategies, objectives, and action plans for the upcoming fiscal year. Prior to the beginning of the fiscal year, the updated plan should be presented and approved



Appendices

Prior to – and concurrent with – numerous documents and plans were created. They informed the planning process and will continue to be used to drive implementation (refer to our website for publicly available documents).

- Creating Value Through Open Spaces: The Economic Impacts of The Underline, 2015
- Development Assessment, 2021
- Development Plan, 2021
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Recommendations, 2021
- Donor Relations Plan, 2021
- Environmental Scan, 2021
- Feasibility Study, 2020
- Framework Plan and Demonstration Projects (James Corner Field Operations Master Plan), 2015
- Public Art and Cultural Master Plan, 2021
- Technology Master Plan, 2021
- Organizational Chart, 2022

