



Strategic Plan Update 2025 - 2027

Presented by The Underline

The Underline Strategic Plan Update: 2025-2027

Executive Summary

In 2021, The Underline conducted a comprehensive planning process to produce its first strategic plan designed to guide the organization from 2022 through 2026. Much has been accomplished and learned in the intervening years. Significant progress has been made on park construction, fundraising, and building organizational capacity. In addition, the two interrelated organizations—Friends of The Underline (FUL) and The Underline Conservancy (TUC)—together responsible for The Underline’s operations and sustainability have evolved. As of early 2025, each organization has a fully functioning board of directors and executive staff and is focused on its primary purpose of fundraising (FUL) or operations (TUC).

Given the magnitude of park and organizational growth since 2022, The Underline’s leadership determined it would be beneficial to update the strategic plan to reflect progress to date and to extend the plan’s outlook through 2027—one year beyond the opening of the entire 10-mile park. This update, intended as a supplement to the current strategic plan, is an interim step before the creation of a new plan in 2027.

With guidance from the FUL and TUC boards, staff developed the priorities, goals, and strategies presented in this update. To provide input, board members completed an online survey and also reviewed drafts of the document. Additionally, on an ongoing basis, Underline staff have been collecting data directly from visitors and other stakeholders regarding park operations and programming as well as utilizing a performance measurement system to guide operations. The information gathered from these processes also informed the development of this update.

While this document represents the organization’s direction and strategies, it is understood that as circumstances change or additional information becomes available, the plan may be modified. Monitoring this update’s implementation is critical to success. FUL and TUC will continue the progress monitoring process implemented since 2022 which utilizes KPIs and quarterly progress reports. This strategic plan update will also be consulted during the annual budget process, with any necessary modifications incorporated. It is during the annual budget process that the boards and staff leadership should develop strategies and action plans for the upcoming fiscal year.

Mission of Friends of The Underline

To deliver and activate a 120-acre, first-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 first-class, 10-mile linear park and urban trail and provide engaging community-based health, wellness, public art, culture, and educational programming for all.

Organizational Values

- Diversity and Inclusivity
- Innovation
- Health and Wellness
- Sustainability
- Safety and Mobility
- Connectivity
- Fun

Strategic Priorities: 2025-2027

Through 2027, the board and staff at both FUL and TUC will focus on scaling up operations and “getting it right” with the following strategic priorities:

1. Collaborate with Miami-Dade County to complete the entire park so that we may receive and open the park by the end of 2026.
2. Sustain The Underline as a first-class park and premier destination for local residents and tourists by building the necessary organizational capacity through community, public, and private financial support.
3. Drive repeat visitation by maintaining high levels of visitor safety and satisfaction along with engaging programming.

This document is divided into six sections which correspond to the functional departments of FUL and TUC. Each section contains the goals towards which the board and staff will strive as well as the strategies and key actions they will employ.

1. Revenue Generation
2. Park Operations
3. Programming
4. Marketing and Outreach
5. Organizational Leadership and Infrastructure
6. Community Connections

Revenue Generation

The Underline, under the leadership of Friends of The Underline (FUL), has significantly increased its capacity to raise the revenue necessary for park operations. Progress to date includes cultivating and securing \$1.7 million in private donations and \$1.8 million in public funding for FY 2025, hosting the inaugural Sneaker Ball netting nearly \$500,000, and hiring a CEO. In late 2024, The Underline engaged OJB, a leading public realm firm, to develop a revenue generation plan that lays the foundation for generating the revenue needed to support park operations and maintenance.

Goals

Establish sustainable, diversified public and private sources of revenue that by 2026 generate approximately \$11 million¹ annually.

1. Develop and implement a strategy to secure at least \$5.5 - \$6.5M annually privately.
 - a. \$1.2M net from Individual Donors and Community Campaigns
 - b. \$3.1M net from Corporations and Foundations and Fundraising events
 - c. \$1.2M net from Earned Revenue (e.g., retail, rentals)
 - e. \$1M from other revenue (e.g., grants)
2. Develop and implement a long-term strategy to secure \$5.5M in public funds through such sources as Transportation Infrastructure Improvement District (TIID), the Tourist Development Tax, stormwater funds, and municipal contributions.

Park Operations

Since the opening of Phase 1 in early 2021, staff have worked diligently to develop the know-how to effectively and efficiently maintain this unique park. As The Underline quadruples its footprint from 2.6 miles to 10 miles in the next two years, staff and partners must scale up efforts accordingly. To this end, TUC staff will focus on institutionalizing best practices in park operations, installing critical operational infrastructure, seeking efficiencies, and balancing external and internal resources.

Goals

1. Maintain the park to first-class standards—clean, welcoming, and safe—as a seamless and integrated corridor coupled with walkways, gardens, and amenities that instill community pride.
2. Scale-up and optimize The Underline’s current physical and operational infrastructure to support efficient operations.

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

3. Establish 10 miles of stunning, sustainable native landscaping that connects visitors to nature, inspires the use of more native landscaping, restores vulnerable ecosystems, and provides critical habitat for local species.
4. Become a model garden and urban forest for best practices and pioneering techniques.

Programming and Events

The Underline aspires to become Miami-Dade’s premier “Third Place”— where people can gather outside of home and work to socialize and build community. Beginning with Brickell Backyard programming in 2021, TUC staff and partners have experimented with a broad array of programming to meet the needs and interests of Miami-Dade’s diverse community. Challenges have been addressed, lessons have been learned, and consequently programs have been recalibrated. Through 2027, the focus will be on determining the optimal mix of programming and arts and culture activations for each segment of the park that results in high levels of visitor satisfaction, repeat visitation, and park revenue.

Goals

1. Determine the optimal mix of programs for each segment of the park (e.g., active vs. passive, free vs. ticketed, public vs. rentals) and develop an annual schedule reflective of this mix.
2. Increase the number of programs that generate park revenue as well as the number of programs delivered by community partners.
3. Implement a diverse portfolio of well-attended programs that reflect The Underline's values and the interests of Miami-Dade’s residents.
4. Complete implementation of The Underline Art Master Plan and ensure that the stories of Miami-Dade and each neighborhood are elevated through arts and programming.
5. Develop a robust core of first-time and recurring volunteers to support programming, operations, stewardship, and park administration.

Marketing and Outreach

The Marketing and Outreach Department will play a pivotal role in establishing The Underline as a premier tourist destination, a cultural and social hub that connects the community, and a key player in Miami-Dade’s transformation. Most parks and public spaces follow cookie-cutter marketing strategies—we will push beyond industry norms and become known for creativity, forward-thinking activations, and premium brand experiences. To date, The Underline has gone from an unknown entity to an award-winning example of branding and design. However, as a relatively new destination, there is still much work to be done to grow awareness about The Underline.

Goals

1. Position The Underline as a premier destination for both tourists and Miami-Dade residents.
2. Strengthen The Underline’s brand and messaging.
3. Foster community engagement and strengthen civic connections.
4. Provide the promotional infrastructure needed to increase revenue opportunities.
5. Establish The Underline as a global case study in urban development and societal connections.

Organizational Leadership and Infrastructure

Since 2022, The Underline has made significant progress in the evolution of its organizational infrastructure into two fully separate—but interrelated—organizations. Moving forward, the focus will be on enhancing and formalizing existing administrative processes, staffing up for full operations, establishing needed physical infrastructure, and further delineating the roles and responsibilities of each of these two organizations affiliated with The Underline.

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

Goals with Associated Strategies and Key Actions

Boards and Committees

1. **Succession Plan:** Develop and implement a succession plan for the board chair of FUL and TUC to transition out of these roles by the end of 2027.
2. **Board Development:** Ensure both the TUC board and the FUL board have the composition, member engagement, and support necessary to successfully execute their roles in sustaining The Underline.
 - a. Review, and revise as needed, the boards’ committee structure.
 - b. Review, and revise as needed, board and committee member nominating, onboarding and exiting processes (e.g., board roles and responsibilities, board manuals).

Staff

1. **Staffing Levels:** Increase organizational staffing for full-scale operations while maintaining a lean and agile organization.
 - a. Develop, and implement, a plan to ensure sufficient staffing for full scale operations—focusing on park operations and fundraising.
 - b. Ensure that the Compliance (i.e., risk management, safety, insurance) and HR (i.e., selection, onboarding, retention, training, exit) functions are addressed through in-house staffing or outsourcing.
 - c. Implement onboarding and annual training plan for staff.
2. **Organizational Culture:** Create and sustain an organizational culture that aligns with The Underline's values and fosters employee productivity and retention. Utilize the existing internal Culture Committee to develop and lead efforts to continuously improve organizational cohesion and communication.
3. **Staff Recruitment and Retention:** Attract and retain highly qualified employees.
 - a. Formalize and enhance existing staff onboarding and training to reflect the needs of a growing organization and for each staffing type (i.e., operations, volunteers, administrative, full-time, part-time, interns, supervisors).
 - b. Building upon the 2024 Salary Study, ensure employee compensation addresses both tangible and intangible remuneration and is competitive with area nonprofits including updating the pay framework in 2027.
 - c. Update and revise the Employee Handbook, incorporating variations in staffing types, including hourly and exempt employees.
 - d. Review and update the Performance Evaluation System.

Organizational Development

1. **FUL and TUC Relationship:** As we manage two symbiotic organizations with the same board chair, ensure a coordinated execution of roles and responsibilities across FUL and TUC that maximizes resources and personnel. By the end of FY 2025, assign supporting roles (e.g., marketing, human resources, etc.) to the organization (FUL or TUC) where the function makes the most sense. Review allocation of roles periodically and recalibrate as necessary.
2. **Reporting:** Consolidate planning and reporting across both organizations.
3. **Systems Infrastructure:** Scale-up systems infrastructure to ensure sustainable, efficient full-scale operations.
 - a. Finalize the Operations Manual (including processes for reviewing and updating).
 - b. Leverage existing technologies focusing on creating automations and increasing staff training and adoption.
4. **Physical Infrastructure:** Develop a long-term plan for physical infrastructure for administrative and front-line park staff along the 10 miles, including headquarter and satellite facilities.
5. **Financial Management:** Enhance existing financial management practices to reflect a growing organization.

- a. Review and update the financial management strategy including cash on hand, reserves, and investments.
 - b. Review and revise, as needed, internal controls, policies and procedures.
 - c. Increase department head coordination and accountability in efficiently and transparently managing and communicating about budgets.
6. **Performance Measurement:** Refine the existing performance measurement system (KPI dashboard and other sources) focusing on the development of fewer primary KPIs that can be used to monitor the long-term success of The Underline. This will include developing KPIs for each department as well as benchmarking to successful peer organizations.

Community Connections

From the release of The Underline's current strategic plan, the boards' and staff's commitment to hiring, investing, and programming in ways that reflect Miami-Dade's cultural mosaic has been consistent. The Community Connections Committee crafted an Equity Statement and helped staff set internal goals for measuring progress. For this update, the committee reevaluated its goals and strategies to guide The Underline's robust engagement with the community.

Goals

1. Ensure FUL and TUC boards and staff reflect Miami-Dade's enriching diversity.
2. Maintain practices, processes, and policies to ensure The Underline represents the greater Miami-Dade community and becomes the region's most welcoming park.
3. Continue to support the unhoused population through establishing partnerships that provide employment opportunities and wrap-around services.
4. Help vulnerable populations gain representation through the creation of specially curated activities, stories, and events.