

MIAMI BEACH

COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee Members

FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager

DATE: May 14, 2025

TITLE: DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON THE DYING TREE POPULATION IN NORTH BEACH OCEANSIDE PARK

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration will continue to monitor the health of the trees along the Beachwalk in North Beach Oceanside Park, provide updates to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee, and adjust future plantings with learnings. The Administration recently evaluated the trees and plans on conducting the next evaluation in the summer of 2025. Staff will also provide an update in the summer regarding planting the five additional trees species which was directed at the January 29, 2025 Committee meeting.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

On November 20, 2024, the Mayor and City Commission referred a discussion item (C4 Y) to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee (Attachment A) for discussion on dying trees in North Beach Oceanside Park. The item is sponsored by Commissioner Rosen Gonzalez and Commissioner Bhatt.

On January 29, 2025, the item was heard at the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee where the Environment and Sustainability Department provided a comprehensive update on the status of the trees. City staff was directed to return in 90 days for an update on the status, and to pilot test five (5) other potentially adaptable tree species for the Beachwalk Reforestation Project and return in six months for an update. The item is sponsored by Commissioner Rosen Gonzalez and Commissioner Bhatt.

ANALYSIS

The North Beach Oceanside Park renovation, including Beachwalk trees, was reviewed by City staff and found all trees healthy at the end of the one-year warranty and project close-out. Since the project close-out, many newer Beachwalk trees have not experienced sustained growth as a reaction to the consistent salt spray combined with the dunes' hot, dry environment. The trees experiencing symptoms of decline are often located in areas of direct salt spray and or wind from the ocean and are not protected by larger established seagrapes or the higher elevation of the dunes. Without natural protection, gumbo limbos, pigeon plums, and other trees exhibit stress symptoms. The species that appear completely unaffected by close, direct salt spray are seagrapes and silver buttonwood. It is important to note that generally, trees seasonally experience defoliation during dryer and colder winter months and should experience regrowth in the spring and summer.

Urban Forestry has been closely monitoring the trees in North Beach Oceanside Park with the Public Works and Parks and Recreation Departments.

The City has removed several dead trees and palms in the intervening years, including 38 trees recently in October 2024. As planned, the North Beach Beachwalk trees were evaluated for a second time in late November 2024. An additional 38 trees along the dunes side (east side) of the Beachwalk were identified as newly dead or having no chance of sustained survival. This evaluation also reviewed all trees on the North Beach Oceanside Park side (west side) of the Beachwalk and identified 13 additional dead trees and palms for removal. All 89 marked trees have been removed by City contractors.

Urban Forestry conducted another tree survey on April 23, 2025. Eighteen (18) trees had made significant recovery since the November 2024 survey and are no longer on the defoliated list. Unfortunately, fourteen (14) trees that had been defoliated in previous inspections did not survive as well as three (3) vandalized trees were discovered that were previously in good health. An additional palm was found dead but was not part of the project. All require removal and a request for proposal for will be forthcoming.

According to the Urban Forestry Permit, 376 trees were either planted or relocated along the Beachwalk. The North Beach Oceanside Park capital project schedule of values notes that the cost of the trees at that time was approximately \$196,000. Overall, the project's updated tree survival rate (excluding acts of vandalism) along the Beachwalk is 286/376 with 76% survival rate to-date for the trees closest to the Beachwalk. This figure may not include additional trees planted and relocated as part of the overall Oceanside Park renovation. This survival rate was updated from the 300/376 80% survival rate since the January 2025 Committee meeting following the additionally identified 14 dead trees.

The next North Beach tree evaluation will be at the end of the 2025 dry season (June) focusing on reviewing 148 trees (down from 180 to account for the 18 recovered trees and 14 additional dead trees) that are currently defoliated (at least 70% leaf loss) but with no other major stress symptoms or comorbidities. Many are expected to generate new leaf growth by the Spring and Summer months. Those trees that remain defoliated in the rainy season will be evaluated for their long-term sustainability.

Staff observations particularly of the North Beach Oceanside Park trees include recommended planting strategies such as: 1) Using seagrapes and silver buttonwoods as primary reforestation trees. These two tree species appear unaffected by the harsh coastal environmental conditions. Additionally, these two trees could be used as barrier trees to block certain environmental conditions for other desirable tree species. 2) Grouping trees into small compact units to encourage trees to protect each other during the developmental years. 3) Install smaller trees initially as young trees generally adapt better to any new environment. 4) Longer watering and establishment periods for newly planted trees.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

Does this Ordinance require a Business Impact Estimate? (FOR ORDINANCES ONLY)

The Business Impact Estimate (BIE) was published on .
See BIE at: <https://www.miamibeachfl.gov/city-hall/city-clerk/meeting-notice/>

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

CONCLUSION

The Urban Forestry Division in the Environment and Sustainability Department is committed to providing an additional scheduled North Beach Oceanside Park tree evaluation at the end of the 2025 dry season and planting five additional trees for an update to return to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee meeting in the summer of 2025.

Applicable Area

North Beach

Is this a “Residents Right to Know” item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-17?

No

Is this item related to a G.O. Bond Project?

Yes

Was this Agenda Item initially requested by a lobbyist which, as defined in Code Sec. 2-481, includes a principal engaged in lobbying? No

If so, specify the name of lobbyist(s) and principal(s):

Department

Environment and Sustainability

Sponsor(s)

Commissioner Kristen Rosen Gonzalez
Commissioner Tanya K. Bhatt

Co-sponsor(s)

Condensed Title

Discuss Take Action on Dying Tree Population in NoBe Ocean Side Park (Gonz/Bhatt) EN