

DISCUSSION ITEMS 9

MIAMI BEACH

COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Land Use and Sustainability Committee Members

FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager

DATE: January 16, 2025

TITLE: MONTHLY UPDATE ON THE G.O. BOND BEACHWALK REFORESTATION PROJECT

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration is committed to providing monthly updates on the G.O. Bond Reforestation Project activities to ensure that the reforestation efforts align with sustainability goals and community expectations.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

On October 30, 2024, at the request of Commissioner Alex Fernandez, the City Commission referred a discussion item (C4 D) to the Land Use and Sustainability Committee (Attachment A) for monthly updates regarding the G.O. Bond Beachwalk Reforestation Project.

At the November 25, 2024 Land Use and Sustainability Committee meeting, the Environment and Sustainability Department provided the Committee a comprehensive monthly update.

At the December 19, 2024 G.O. Bond Oversight Committee, the Committee made a motion in support of the Beachwalk Tree Planting Project moving forward and on schedule (Attachment B Letter to Commission #560-2024).

ANALYSIS

The G.O. Bond Beachwalk Reforestation Project is being carefully planned to enhance one of the City's most recognized assets by creating shade and comfort through tree installations to address extreme heat conditions for this pedestrian and cyclist mobility corridor that is part of the Atlantic Greenway Network. The Administration is committed to a carefully planned tree planting project that offers pockets of shade to Beachwalk users while being sensitive to viewsheds and ocean-front conditions.

The City already has established canopy coverage in some Beachwalk sections. This project intends to extend filtered canopy coverage to other selected Beachwalk areas. Additionally, the project will contribute to the City's goal of increasing the tree canopy from 17% to 22%.

The project is funded by both a \$1 million United States Forest Service (USFS) Urban and Community Forest Grant and the 2018 G.O. Bond to plant approximately 600 trees along the entire seven (7) mile stretch of Beachwalk. The USFS grant application was approved by Commission in June of 2023 and the grant was awarded to the City in September of 2023. Subsequently, the City Commission approved the purchasing of trees for the reforestation project in July of 2024.

The Beachwalk Reforestation Project community outreach included a Letter to Commission, 16,000 postcards, project website, notices, and a detailed proposed planting map. Presentations were also provided to neighborhood associations. The Environment and Sustainability Department's Urban Forester will spend the next several months addressing feedback and meeting individually with property owners. Several properties have already been contacted. Additionally, City staff contracted with a Public Information Officer to lead the meetings and feedback, along with preparing any site-specific renderings.

City staff is reviewing the planting plan and will consider community feedback regarding species selection, requested distribution, and the planting design. Strategic tree placement to avoid substantial conflicts with private properties and their immediate viewsheds is a priority in any potential design. The City will not plant trees adjacent to properties with building associations that advise staff that they do not want trees.

The Environment and Sustainability Department has the following updates since the last committee meeting:

Public outreach continues with beachfront residents. The Public Information Officer (PIO) firm will lead the coordination between City staff and beachfront properties. The PIO was provided all comments from last year's extended public comment period. To date, City staff meetings with property owners and association members have been very positive once initial design plans were presented to them; meetings have thus far been held with representatives from 425 Ocean Drive, Carriage House North at 5005 Collins Avenue, and the Corinthian at 5825 Collins Avenue.

Additionally, some residents have reached out about the health of North Beach dunes' tree plantings both along the Beachwalk and in the park. The Urban Forester has been monitoring this closely with Public Works and Parks and Recreation Department staff. The North Beach Oceanside Park renovation, including Beachwalk trees, was reviewed by City staff and found all trees healthy at the end of the 1-year warranty and project close-out. 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 dunes' 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.

According to the Urban Forestry Permit, 376 trees were either planted or relocated along the Beachwalk. Overall, the project survival rate along the Beachwalk is 76/376 with 80% 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.

The next scheduled North Beach tree evaluation will be at the end of the 2025 dry season (May-June) focusing on reviewing over 180 trees that are currently defoliated (at least 70% leaf loss) but with 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 by May or June will be evaluated for their long-term sustainability. The trees exhibiting stress symptoms are primarily gumbo limbo and pigeon plum species. Seagrapes and silver buttonwoods appear to be faring well.

Staff observations particularly of the North Beach dunes' trees have fostered 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.

The anticipated new project start date of tree planting along the Beachwalk is the Spring of 2025 in conjunction with the start of the summer rainy season. The first phase of the project will consist of plantings in areas adjacent to City-owned properties.

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

For the initial project, the proposal was \$426,582.27 funded by FR-00113 grant and \$593,472.93 balance funded by G.O. Bond Funding however the project will need to be procured again based on community feedback gathered over the next few months. \$1,000,000 United States Forest Service (USFS) Urban and Community Forest Grant is available for the Beachwalk plantings in allowable areas and \$2,300,000 G.O. Bond Funds is available for all remaining tree planting efforts.

CONCLUSION

The Environment and Sustainability Department is committed to continue providing monthly updates through the completion of the G.O. Bond Reforestation Project.

Applicable Area

Citywide

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

Yes

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 Alex Fernandez

Co-sponsor(s)

Condensed Title

MONTHLY UPDATE ON THE G.O. BOND BEACHWALK REFORESTATION PROJECT
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