

MIAMI BEACH

COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Land Use and Sustainability Committee Members

FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager

DATE: November 25, 2024

TITLE: DISCUSSION REGARDING MONTHLY UPDATES 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.

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 thoughtful tree planting project that offers 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, email notices, and a detailed proposed planting map. Presentations were provided to G.O. Bond Committee and 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 is contracting with a Public Information Officer to lead the meetings and feedback and prepare graphics. 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.

Some residents have reached out with concerns about the health of North Beach Oceanside Park tree plantings along the Beachwalk. The North Beach Beachwalk Project 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 in the intervening years. Overall, the project still has a high success rate of approximately 86% survivorship of all trees installed along the Beachwalk near dune areas.

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 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 planning, 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. \$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 reforestation efforts.

CONCLUSION

The Administration is committed to providing monthly updates on the G.O. Bond Reforestation Project activities.

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

G.O. Bond Beachwalk Reforestation Update. EN (Fernandez)