

Scenic Watch



Photo: Bob Self, Florida Times Union

Council members, community beautification groups call on state to commit more landscaping to I-295 widening in Mandarin

A heavy toll: Residents demand fix for clearcutting

"Walking through the compacted dirt across from her home, Mandarin resident Christine Conner reminisces about what used to be.

'You know what's sad? Is that my kids used to -- it was like our forest. That's where they played, you know?'

Conner bought her house 17 years ago, in large part because of the old-growth live oak right outside her door - the very kind removed in a vast interstate clear-cutting, as the Department of Transportation makes way for toll roads.

The removal of perhaps thousands of trees along I-295 to make room for the new limited-access toll road has caught plenty of drivers' attention in recent weeks. But Mandarin residents living the reality of a denuded landscape are demanding a fix. Together with scenic advocates and some elected officials, residents on Friday called for remediation.

'I want to call it more than just 'mitigation,'" said City Councilman Bill Bishop, currently a mayoral candidate. 'This needs to be repaired. What happened here in this case is an example of what we never want to see happen in Jacksonville again.'

January
2015



Fun Festivals
and Events



Central Florida

Jan 31, 2014 - Feb 1, 2015
9th Annual Art in the Park and
Music Festival, Lady Lake
Feb 5

...'Nobody expected this devastation,' says Mandarin Community Club President Susie Scott.

'Shell shocked,' is how Mandarin Community Club president Susie Scott describes her community. Standing next to a pile of tree debris - all that's left of the onetime forest off of Scott Mill Road -- she adds, 'It's something I've never seen: Miles of roadway scraped back right to peoples fences.'

She and others are demanding DOT replant the landscape with native tree species -- not just palm trees, as they often do -- and install an ivy-covered sound wall. A larger, possibly more complicated demand is to keep revenues generated by the toll road in the local community.

DOT spokesman Ron Tittle says the agency will try to accommodate the community, and make what changes time and the budget allow. However, he noted that because the project is underway, and a contractor on the job, changes at this stage aren't easy. He expressed hope that the agency can do a better job of getting citizens involved at the front end in the future -- before a project is finalized.

'Traditionally people don't go to [project planning meetings]. We invite them to go and talk with our planners, designers. But typically people don't pay attention to things until construction begins.'

Something similar happened to Tittle himself. He also lives in Mandarin, and admits the tree removal has affected him. 'It does get your attention when you ride through there. You say, wow! Didn't realize, you know? And nobody really realizes until the work is done.'"

-- Anne Schindler, First Coast News

[Read entire article](#)

[Read Bob Self. Florida Times article](#)

Learn more about this and what the residents are doing to help get the damage repaired by [visiting Scenic Jacksonville website](#).



Photo: Dan Scanlan, Jacksonville.com

Jazz Friday at Foosaner Museum of Art, Melbourne
Feb 6-7
Celtic Family Jamboree, Brooksville
Feb 7
Plant City Bike Fest, Plant City
Feb 7
First Saturday Jam, Barberville
Feb 7
DeLand Craft Beer Festival, DeLand
Feb 7-8
The Mount Dora Arts Festival, Mount Dora
Feb 7-8
Annual Art and Craft Festival, Holmes Beach
Feb 7-8
The Great American Songbook with Jeff Shadley, Melbourne
Feb 13
Friday Family Fest, Melbourne
Feb 13-15
Wine Fest XXV, Clermont
Feb 13-14
Olustee Festival & Re-enactment, Olustee/Lake City
Feb 14
Indie-Folkfest, Orlando
Feb 14
Beer, Bourbon & BBQ Festival, Tampa
Feb 14-15
23rd Annual Downtown Dunedin Craft Festival, Tampa Bay
Feb 14-15
27th Annual Downtown Sarasota Festival of the Arts, Sarasota
Feb 14-15
Fort Foster Rendezvous, Hillsborough River State Park, Thonotosassa
Feb 16-22
68th Annual Pasco County Fair, Dade City
Feb 20-22
The 134th Silver Spurs Rodeo of Champions, Kissimmee
Feb 21
Cruisin' Downtown DeLand Classic Car Show, DeLand
Feb 21
Ozello Chili Cook-Off & Craft Show, Crystal River
Feb 26 - March 1
Music on the Bay, Tampa

South West

Jan 31 - Feb 1
Bonita Springs National Art Festival, Bonita Springs
Feb 7-8
ArtFest Fort Myers, Fort Myers
Feb 11-14
Sweetheart Express on Seminole Gulf Railway, Fort Myers
Feb 13-15
Florida's Creative Coast Weekend, Pine Island
Feb 14-15
Rotary Club Arts and Crafts Fair,

Historic schoolhouse moved through Mandarin to new city park home

"A journey that began Tuesday morning with a blessing ended with a longtime prayer answered for those seeking to save a 126-year-old piece of Jacksonville history.

What may be the oldest-surviving school for freed slaves in Florida's post-Civil War era completed a 3.2-mile trip from one end of Mandarin to the other in Walter Jones Historic Park.

The Mandarin Museum and Historical Society needed about seven years to raise funds to move the 600-square-foot building to the city park where its volunteers already manage a restored 19th-century farmhouse and barn and the Mandarin Museum. As LaRue House Movers put the schoolhouse in position at 11:30 a.m., society board president Sandy Arpen was just relieved it was safely moved.

'We are just so happy,' Arpen said. 'It has been an amazing community coalition that made this happen.'

The Sisters of St. Joseph built the schoolhouse in 1889 at what is now St. Joseph's Catholic Church at Loretto and Old St. Augustine roads. Used until 1943, it was given to school handyman Nathaniel Long, who moved it to his home on Old St. Augustine Road. His family sold it in 1997 to antique collector Dee Brown after he died. She moved it six miles to property on Blanche Road and restored it...

Police escorted the house with traffic backing up as it sprawled over two lanes on busy San Jose Boulevard. A low limb on Loretto Road stopped it briefly, then the schoolhouse was rolled into the park at 11964 Mandarin Road, passing close to a museum porch packed with onlookers...'

The historic society (mandarinmuseum.net) still needs about \$4,000 for restoration that includes a new foundation, repaired roof, a new sidewalk and handicapped ramp."

-- Dan Scanlan, The Florida Times Union

[Read entire article here](#)

Complete Streets South Florida roadways not just dangerous for cars



"With snow and ice piling up in much of the country, Florida may be a vacation dream for many travelers. But its congested roads, bad infrastructure, irresponsible drivers and lax enforcement make it a nightmare for those who routinely travel on foot and by bicycle. Simply taking a stroll or jumping on your bike for exercise or pleasure has become a real-life game of Frogger...

According to The National Complete Streets Coalition's yearly Pedestrian Danger Index, in 2014, Orlando, Tampa, Jacksonville and Miami ranked as the top four most unsafe cities in the country for those on foot.

According to the Florida Highway Patrol, these types of incidents are becoming far too routine, with an average of 1,300 hit and runs in the state each year...

For cyclists, it's even more treacherous. The Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles reports an average of more than 100 riders are killed each year and nearly 5,000 are injured in Florida accidents. About three in every 10 crashes occur in Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties. The National Highway Traffic Safety

Sanibel Island
Feb 15
Edison Festival of Light Junior Events, Fort Myers
Feb 20-22
Edison Festival of Lights Crafts on the River, Fort Myers
Feb 21
10th Annual Punta Gorda Wine & Jazz Festival, Punta Gorda
Feb 21
Edison Festival of Light Grand Parade, Fort Myers
Feb 26-March 8
Southwest Florida and Lee County Fair, North Fort Myers
Feb 28
Ft. Myers Greek Fest , Ft. Myers
Feb 28
Burrowing Owl Festival, Cape Coral

South East and Keys

Jan 26 - Feb 1
South Florida Fair, West Palm Beach
Feb 1
SunTrust Sunday Jazz Brunch, Fort Lauderdale
Feb 1-2
Florida Keys Art Guild Art Festival, Islamorada
Feb 1-2
17th Annual Downtown Delray Beach Craft Festival, Delray Beach
Feb 6-8
Everglades Seafood Festival, Everglades City
Feb 6-8
Civil War Heritage Days Festival, Key West
Feb 6-8
16th Annual Garlic Fest, Delray Beach
Feb 7-8
21st Annual Pigeon Key Art Festival, Marathon
Feb 12-16
Strictly Sail Miami Boat Show, Miami
Feb 19
Third Thursday Art Walk, Islamorada
Feb 21-22
50th Annual Old Island Days Art Festival, Key West
Feb 21-22
Annual Upper Keys Gigantic Nautical Flea Market, Islamorada
Feb 21-22
21st Annual Street Painting Festival, Lake Worth
Feb 26 - March 1
Miami International Art Fair, Miami Beach

North

Administration reports about 1 in 6 of the nation's fatal bicycle accidents occur in Florida each year, making it the most dangerous state in the nation for cyclists...

During its upcoming session, the Florida Legislature should take a closer look at pedestrian safety. At least one member has gotten the message. A bill proposed by state Rep. Kathleen Passidomo, R-Naples, would increase the penalties for drivers who harm pedestrians and make it illegal for drivers to cut off them off when making right turns..."

-- Phil Latzman, Sun Sentinel

[Read entire article](#)



Photo: Hector Gabino, El Nuevo Herald

Placemaking Knight Foundation's "Cities Challenge" announces 10 Miami finalists

"The foundation's national call for ideas to make communities more vibrant places to live in work attracted more than 7,000 submissions..."

Winners will be announced in the spring. The challenge is part of a three-year, \$15 million commitment that Knight Foundation announced in the fall of 2014..."

Finalists from Miami were:

Connective Tissue Plan and the Miami Department of Public Life:
Creating the nation's first Department of Public Life to promote a more inclusive, connected, walkable Miami.

Future Museum Park:
An Iterative Placemaking: Involving the public in the creation and design of Museum Park through interactive experiments to help developers understand the wants and needs of the community.

Guagua App:
Creating a single platform for private jitneys and minibuses to provide inexpensive, on-demand, door-to-door transportation that fills substantial gaps in the local transit system.

Made in Dade:
Matching entrepreneurs and inventors with local manufacturers who can produce their goods to create a positive environment for talented creators while stimulating the job market.

Multimodal, Linear Park:
Building a linear park along the Florida East Coast Railway from downtown to the Little River residential and business district.

PlaceMaking Agency/Lab:
Establishing a new creative agency focused on building a cultural identity in neighborhoods and helping developers and entrepreneurs build ideas based on those cultural foundations, to create stronger neighborhood ties.

Feb 14-15
St. Augustine Arts & Crafts Show, St. Augustine Beach
Feb 28
Great Atlantic Seafood Festival, Jacksonville Beach
Feb 13-15
Steinhatchee Fiddler Crab Festival, Steinhatchee
Feb 7
Double Bridge Race, Pensacola
Feb 13-14
Mardi Gras At The Beach, Panama City Beach

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SmartPARCS @ North:

Improving Internet access in underserved communities by creating a community park system around Miami Dade College that will provide free WiFi hotspots and encourage community engagement.

The Talent Development Network:

Helping talented Miamians stay in the city by connecting students with employers in seven target industries through a collaboration between all major academic institutions in the city.

Wild Planting for a Fruitful Future:

Strengthening Miami by providing residents with free fruit trees to plant in public spaces for all to share - turning the streets into a veritable edible park.

The Science Barge:

To promote sustainability by creating the Science Barge, a floating, urban sustainable farm and environmental education center powered by renewable energy

See the full list of finalists at knightcities.org.

[Read more of the article here](#)

