

Scenic Watch

Citizens for a Scenic Florida



Covering News November to December 2014



Photo: Al Diaz, Miami Herald

Can't See the Billboard for the Trees? Relocate Them, Florida Agency Says

New royal palms planted near the entrance of the Port Tunnel were taken down and relocated because they blocked the view of an LED billboard on the Miami Children's Museum on Watson Island.

Events Around Our State



Fun Festivals and Events

Central Florida

Dec 6

Christmas in the Square.
Sanford.

Dec 6-7

Sanford Historic Trust
Tour of Homes. Sanford.

Dec 7

61st annual Ye Olde
Hometown Christmas
Parade. Winter Park.

Dec 7

Orlando Pottery Festival.
Orlando.

Dec 7

23rd Annual Lighted
Boat Tour. Mount Dora.

Dec 8

Santa PAWS. Mount
Dora.

Dec 14

Christmas in the Park
with Snow. Mount Dora.

Dec 7

New Smyrna Beach
Christmas parade. New
Smyrna Beach.

Dec 7

Port Orange Christmas
Parade & Tree Lighting.
Port Orange.

Dec 7-8

Winter Waterland. Weeki
Wachee State Park.

Dec 7-8

Candlelight Tours of Fort
Foster, Tampa.

Dec 6

Light Up Flagler.

Dec 8

Home for the Holidays
Nighttime Parade.

Tree relocation around PortMiami Tunnel

A billboard company is moving 62 newly planted trees along the PortMiami Tunnel which could block the view of an LED sign on the Miami Children's Museum.



Photo: Miami Herald

"The trees, about \$200,000 worth of them, were planted weeks ago along the towering mouth of the PortMiami Tunnel, lining the gray concrete with dashes of tropical green. Royal palms, gumbo limbos, even a royal poinciana.

Their placement on the MacArthur Causeway followed a careful landscaping plan, drawn by the tunnel's renowned architects as a natural element to soften the imposing slabs of the \$1 billion public-private project.

Then, last week, workers began taking some of the trees down. A pile of royal palms lay on their side last Friday, uprooted. On Tuesday morning, crews strapped sabal palms one at a time onto flatbed trucks and hauled them away.

Sixty-two trees had been sentenced to relocation — all to protect the sight lines of an LED billboard that, under Miami-Dade County law, is technically illegal.

The owner of the electronic sign, Worldwide Amherst Media, protested that the trees blocked drivers' view of the billboard, located on the eastern facade of the Miami Children's Museum on Watson Island. The Florida Department of Transportation, which oversees state highways, agreed — upsetting tunnel operators, landscape architects and anti-billboard activists, who were caught by surprise.

'Every time I think they've gone as far as they can go, they manage to go a step further,' lamented Nathan Kurland, a board member of the anti-billboard Scenic Miami group.

A Florida law safeguards 'previously permitted' signs by establishing 'view zones' along highways. On roads with speed limits greater than 35 miles per hour, like the MacArthur, billboards must be visible from 500 feet away.

When the billboard company applied to modify the tunnel landscaping plan, FDOT quickly signed off. The sign company says it's paying about \$50,000 to move the offending trees elsewhere. It will also be responsible for their

Dec 8, Dec 14-23, 26-30

Wild Wonderland at Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo, Tampa.

Dec 5

2013 Holiday Tour of Homes, Ormond Beach.

Nov. 11 - Dec 31

Space Coast Lightfest. Melbourne.

Dec 14-15

Holiday Lights. Weeki Wachee Springs State Park.

Dec 14-23

Sarasota Snow Fest. Sarasota.

Dec 15

Winter Carnival. Harmony.

Dec 15

Snow Fest. Maitland.

Dec 15

Christmas in the Park with Snow. Mount Dora.

Dec 15-16

A Classic Christmas, Winter Park.

Dec 16

Winter Arts Festival. Tampa.

Dec 19-24, 26

Christmas Celebration of Lights, Homosassa.

Dec 21

Jazz Friday at Fossaner Museum of Art. Melbourne.

Dec 22

Holiday Songs in the Park. Longwood.

Dec 28

Climb to the Moon. Ponce Inlet.

Dec 29

Hidden Garden Melodies with Eirinn Abu, Lake Wales.

[Read more >](#)

South Florida

Through Dec 31

Key West 'Bight' Before Christmans, Islamorada.

Dec 1-Dec 31

Holiday Nights at Edison and Ford Winter Estates, Fort Myers.

upkeep.

'It should be fixed to everybody's satisfaction,' said Barry Rush, one of the company's principals.

He blamed the back-and-forth on 'confusion' over how much consideration the law requires be given to signs. The trees made the LED billboard 'unreadable from the road,' he said — a contention supporters of the original landscaping plan dispute.

Critics also counter that state protections should apply only to signs properly permitted at the local level. Miami-Dade rules restrict electronic signs, requiring among other things that they advertise only businesses, products and services available on site. The museum sign mentions museum events — but also advertises for entities and products unavailable inside the building, such as the Miami Marlins and Cover Girl makeup.

'They're claiming the rights under that law without having gone through the approval process to be a legal billboard,' said Peter Ehrlich, a Scenic Miami co-founder. The sign does have a permit number, known as a tag, from FDOT.

While the museum signs appear to violate Miami-Dade's rules — so does the digital mesh outside the county-owned AmericanAirlines Arena, for example — neither county commissioners nor Mayor Carlos Gimenez have pushed to enforce the law.

The city of Miami has justified signs within its boundaries, including on Watson Island, by saying it 'opted out' of county regulations. But County Attorney Robert Cuevas has opined that the opt-out applied only to certain billboard-spacing provisions along highways.

Two years ago, Miami permitted signs at the museum, the Gusman Center for the Performing Arts and the James L. Knight Center. Between annual permitting fees and required revenue sharing — the museum, for one, must fork over 20 percent of what it makes from its billboards to the city — Miami expected to make about \$430,000 a year.

City commissioners approved two signs at the Children's Museum, one on the eastern facade, one on the western. The museum has more recently hung a third LED billboard on its northern facade, supposedly for 'self-identification' — as opposed to advertising — purposes. The museum also houses a charter school.

The cash from the first two signs allowed in 2012 was welcome not only for the city but also for the museum, which in 2009 needed \$400,000 from Miami to stay afloat.

'We need those funds desperately to redo the exhibits,' developer Jeff Berkowitz, chairman of the Children's Museum board, said of the billboard money in 2012.

Berkowitz did not return a Miami Herald reporter's call last week asking about the tree relocation. He sent the request to the museum's public-relations consultant, Woody Graber, who said Miami Children's had no part in the discussions over the landscaping — even though the museum stood to lose money if a blocked sign resulted in less interest from advertisers.

'The museum is not involved in this,' Graber said...

Dec 3-9

Sculpt Miami, Miami.

Dec 5-31

Annual Christmas Light Canal Tours, Punta Gorda.

Dec 7

Boynton and Delray Beach Holiday Boat Parade, Boynton Beach.

Dec 7, 14

Historic Lighted Inn Tours, Key West.

Dec 7

Florida Keys Holiday Festival. Islamorda.

Dec 7-8

Luminary Festival, Sanibel and Captiva.

Dec 8

Holiday Boat Parade, Key Largo.

Dec 14

Barnacle Under Moonlight, Coconut Grove.

Dec 14-16

Florida's Creative Coast Weekend, Pine Island.

Dec 15

Key West Lighted Boat Parade, Key West.

Dec 15

Winterfest Boat Parade. Fort Lauderdale.

Dec 15

Lower Keys Lighted Boat Parade. Big Pine & The Lower Keys.

Dec 16

23rd Annual Peace River Lighted Boat Parade, Punta Gorda.

Dec 18-23

Holiday Evening Tours of Whitehall, Palm Beach.

Dec 21-22

Holiday Pops Concerts. Fort Myers.

[Read more >](#)

North Florida

Through Dec 30

Festival of Lights. White Springs.

Dec 7

Camellia Christmas

Among the trees being displaced are 24 sabal palms and 12 royal palms, some of which can grow up to 24 feet, and a royal poinciana, which can grow up to 20 feet. Smaller trees, such as two gumbo limbos (up to 12 feet) and five thatch palms (up to eight feet) are also being moved.

There will be an increase in total greenery, the billboard company says, because it will plant 225 small grasses and shrubs in the spaces where the trees used to be — including 75 dwarf yaupon hollies with the memorable botanical name *Ilex vomitoria*.

'The trees are going to be relocated all within 100 feet of where they came from,' Rush said.

Tunnel architects had met at one point with the billboard company and revised the landscaping plan to maintain the sight lines to the LED sign.

But that apparently wasn't enough. The billboard company wanted to meet again later but architects had already turned over the plans to FDOT. So the company turned to the agency instead, which agreed to the tree relocation.

Last year, a committee of the county's Metropolitan Planning Organization approved the landscaping plans with some reservations — including a request that the architects add more trees."

-- Patricia Mazzei, Miami Herald

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"Complete Freeways? Florida Tries Bike Lanes on Highway Bridges"



Photo: Miami-Dade MPO

"The Julia Tuttle Causeway in Miami. The white stripe between the traffic lane and the bicycle lane will vibrate if a car crosses it, but that's all the protection there is. A hand railing was added to the wall after this photo was taken..."

-- Tanya Snyder, Streetsblog USA

2012, Tallahassee.
Dec 7-9, 14-16
Three Rivers State Park
Christmas Light Show.
Sneads.

Dec 8
Annual Holiday Parade
and Lawn Mower
Contest, Havana.

Dec 8
Artrageous Artwalk,
Fernandina Beach.

Dec 8
Holiday in the Gardens.
Washington Oaks
Gardens State Park.

Dec 14-16
Santa of the Rainbow.
Dunnellon.

Dec 15
Candlelight Tour of
Wesley House at Eden
Gardens State Park,
Point Washington.

Dec 15
Christmas in Old St.
Augustine. St. Augustine.

Dec 22
The Ichetucknee Time
Machine, Fort White.

Dec 29-30
Old Town Arts & Crafts
Show, St. Augustine.

[Read more >](#)



Note from the Editor

Suggestions for improvement are
always welcome.

"Fixing One of Florida's Deadly Roads With a Protected Bikeway"



Photo: A new vision for Florida's deadly Rickenbacker Causeway. Bernard Zyscovich. Architect's
Newspaper



Photo: Current conditions on the Rickenbacker Causeway, Architect's Newspaper

"Our friends at Transit Miami have been writing for years about the horrible conditions on the Rickenbacker Causeway, a key transportation link for the city. In 2010, they wrote that, without any intervention, the car-centric design would continue to cause loss of life and limb: 'As long as we have a roadway designed to induce speed, the speeding will continue and bicyclists and pedestrians will continue to get hurt.'

...[The Zyscovich] plan would convert the divided highway to two lanes for automobile traffic and a landscape-buffered lane for cyclists and pedestrians. Hardwood trees and bushes that would be planted along the cycle track would increase safety by separating the various modes of transportation...

Separating automobiles from other modes of vulnerable transportation has gained grassroots support in Florida. According to the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, Florida has a record of having the highest number of fatal bicycle crashes of any state. Further, Miami Dade County has one of the highest numbers of bicycle fatalities, which was highlighted by

national news when the 44-year-old cyclist Aaron Cohen was struck and killed by a motorist. "

-- Angie Schmitt, Streetsblog USA

[Read Architect Newspaper Blog Here>](#)
[Read First Streetsblog USA Article here>](#)
[Read Second Streetsblog USA Article here>](#)

"City, Advertising Firm OK Deal on Digital Billboards

Agreement Expands Billboard-Free Areas in Jacksonville"

"City Council approved settlement agreements Tuesday with two outdoor advertising companies that will allow digital billboards and expand billboard-free areas in Jacksonville. Scenic Jacksonville, which sued CBS Outdoor, Clear Channel and the city of Jacksonville to ban digital billboards, agreed to settle its lawsuit last month. City Council's unanimous approval made the agreement's official.

Under the agreement, the companies will be able to keep their existing digital billboards and build a limited number of new electronic signs. In exchange, areas where billboards are prohibited will expand.

The settlement will keep the billboard free status for Butler Boulevard, Wonderwood Connector, Nocatee Parkway, Town Center Parkway and other areas currently off limits to billboard. It will also speed the removal of 85 traditional billboards on 24 roads over the next 10 years, and 10 other roads will see a reduction in billboards.

The settlement is the latest chapter in a decades-long issue of how the city controls billboards, which dates back to a 1987 election when voters approved tougher regulations...

City attorneys concluded in 2010 that previous agreements that limited billboard placement didn't apply to digital billboards, a reversal from previous advice from city attorneys that allowed companies to go digital in Jacksonville.

Scenic Jacksonville representatives said the settlement preserves the changes approved in the 1987 election will remain in the city charter and will continue to control proliferation of billboards.

Officials of advertising companies say it establishes consistent regulations and recognizes the role billboards play in promoting business."

-- Christopher Hong, The Florida Times-Union

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French City Continuing to Win Awards and Recognition

"Grenoble Bans Street Ads, to Replace Billboards With

Trees"



Photo:City of Grenoble Press Release

"The French city of Grenoble will become the first in Europe to remove all commercial advertising from its streets, with the city's Green mayor promising to replace the signs and billboards with trees and community noticeboards.

'The municipality is taking the choice of freeing public space in Grenoble from advertising to develop areas for public expression,' the office of Grenoble mayor, Eric Piolle, is cited by The Local news website.

Between January and April next year, the city will get rid of all of its 326 advertising hoardings, including 64 large billboards.

'About 50 young trees will be planted before spring' where the ads used to be, the mayor's office said.

The Grenoble administration will also offer advertising space to local cultural and social groups for free.

Those signs will be smaller and aimed 'not only at drivers, but also pedestrians,' Lucille Lheureux, deputy in charge of public spaces for the city of Grenoble, said.

The city's contract with the world's top outdoor advertising company, JC Decaux, expires at the end of 2014 and won't be renewed.

'We have taken note of this decision,' Albert Asseraf, JC Decaux general manager in charge of strategy, told Le Figaro newspaper...

According to the mayor's office, the city used to earn in 600,000 euro in advertising revenue..

Green EELV party member, Eric Piolle, was elected Grenoble mayor in April 2014. Banning street advertising was one of his campaign platforms.

Last year Forbes magazine placed Grenoble, with a population of over 150,000, fifth in the rankings for the most innovative cities in the world. In 2014, the city at the foot of the French Alps was also voted the best place to be a student in France.

By giving up on street ads, Grenoble is following in the footsteps of French village, Forcalquier, which implemented a similar ban back in

2009.

-- RT.com

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