

Scenic Watch



News -
Winter 2024

Making Room for Billboards: "A giant tree in Miami waterfront park was chopped down by the city — without city approval"



Photo: Jose A. Iglesias, elnuevoherald.com

"A 35-foot tall ficus tree thought to be among the oldest in Maurice A. Ferré Park was chopped down by the city of Miami without any advance notice or a removal permit. What will take the beloved tree's place? The city claims an oak tree will go there. But downtown residents who use the park daily dread the planting of an invasive species — a 300-square-foot electronic billboard blinging ads...



Photo: TJ Sabo, Courtesy of TJ Sabo

Billboards are coming to the park Billboards will indeed be the newest objects in the park, Carollo acknowledged last Friday — one on the north end and one on the south end, both facing Biscayne Boulevard, on the east side of the sidewalk. While it's unclear if one of the LED signs will be placed on the exact spot where the tree stood, it will be close by, and unobstructed by the tree's 40-foot-wide canopy as some 100,000 motorists pass by each day...

Although a proposal to put 45 digital billboards in Miami's core was recently defeated by commissioners because of a public backlash, the placement of LED billboards in Ferré Park, Bayfront Park, Virginia Key Beach Park and at Miami Off-Street Parking facilities was approved Feb. 9 by a 3-1 vote, with Manolo Reyes opposed — warning, 'we don't want to look like Vegas.'

The two in Ferré Park — on monument bases and up to 400 square feet in size — will generate \$800,000 in annual revenue from outdoor advertising companies..."

-- Linda Robertson, Miami Herald

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"Florida House unanimously approves bill to designate A1A as 'Jimmy Buffett Memorial Highway'"



Photo: Orlando Weekly, Jimmy Buffett Facebook

"The Florida House on Thursday unanimously approved a proposal to designate Florida A1A, from the Florida Keys to Nassau County, as 'Jimmy Buffett Memorial Highway'...

'Over the course of the last 50-plus years, he went from busking on the streets in Key West for nickels and dimes to being the architect of diverse, big, big enterprises all over the globe,' bill co-sponsor Chuck Clemons, R-Newberry, said. 'And his success is the American dream. His success is a testament to what can be built with just six strings, an idea and talent that lends itself to a catchy song.'

The Senate Fiscal Policy Committee ... approved the Senate version of the bill (SB 84)."

-- Orlando Weekly, News Service of Florida

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Stopping Rapid Tree Loss with Water Resources Improvements: "Tampa to plant 30,000 trees by 2023 to restore city's canopy"



Photo: Fox 13 Tampa



Photo: Fox 13 Tampa

"The city of Tampa will be adding hundreds of trees in two communities as part of the mayor's mission to plant 30,000 new trees by 2030.

'We were known, previously, as having one of the best tree canopies in the world,' Mayor Jane Castor said. 'Every five years, USF does a tree study in the city. This last tree study showed that we had lost approximately 8% of our canopy. And so, we are doing all that we can to replace that and replace it with trees that make a difference.'

Construction crews are already in the process of improving miles and miles of water transmission lines and wastewater pipelines in several communities as part of the Neighborhoods Design Build Project. Crews installing wastewater pipes are also planting trees.

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On Friday, city leaders announced they are expanding this project to include a pilot program that will plant 200 trees across Macfarlane Park and Virginia Park.

'We are marrying up, with our sustainability and resiliency department, our planting of trees,' Castor said.

One of the reasons behind Tampa's declining tree canopy is due to residential development, including the building of new homes and the expansion of existing ones. The goal is to plant 30,000 trees by 2030..."

-- Ariel Plasencia, Fox 13 News

[Video and text of entire article](#)

[Read about MIT study](#)

"Cells of people living in greener areas age more slowly, research finds"



Photo: James Houser New Orleans/Alamy

"Many studies have shown that people living in greener neighborhoods have several health benefits, including lower levels of stress and cardiovascular disease. But new research indicates that exposure to parks, trees and other green spaces can slow the rates at which our cells age.

The study, published in *Science of the Total Environment*, found that people who lived in neighborhoods with more green space had longer telomeres, which are associated with longer lives and slower ageing.

Telomeres are structures that sit on the ends of each cell's 46 chromosomes, like the plastic caps on shoelaces, and keep DNA from unraveling. The longer a cell's telomeres, the more times it can replicate. When telomeres become so short that cells can't divide, the cells die.

'Research is now showing that where we live, what we are exposed to, how much we exercise, what we eat, each of these can impact the speed of telomeres degrading and again our ageing process,' said Aaron Hipp, a professor of parks, recreation and tourism management at North Carolina State and a co-author of the study. 'A longer telomere is usually a younger telomere, or a more protective, helpful telomere. It is protecting that cell from the ageing process...'

Hipp and his colleagues looked at the medical records (that included measures of telomere lengths from biological samples) and survey responses from more than 7,800 people who participated in a national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey conducted between 1999 and 2002. The researchers connected that information with census data to estimate the amount of green space in each person's neighborhood. They found that a 5% increase in a neighborhood's green space was associated with a 1% reduction in the ageing of cells. 'The more green the area, the slower the cell ageing,' said Hipp..."

-- Katharine Gammon, The Guardian

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Giant Billboard In Miami



Photo: Matias J. Ocnor, Miami Herald - A view of a 10-story LED billboard being constructed next to the Pérez Art Museum Miami on Friday, Jan. 26, 2024, in

downtown Miami, Fla.

"...Outrage over a supersized digital billboard rising on Miami's waterfront may spark a rewrite of the city's sign rules, leaving commissioners to decide which of the lucrative new advertising platforms will survive.

On Thursday [In February], city commissioners narrowly agreed to advance legislation repealing a 2023 rule change allowing a billboard company to build an 1,800-square-foot digital sign for the Perez Art Museum of Miami.

The 100-foot-tall billboard under construction off Interstate 395 has outraged some residents, while PAMM calls it a stylish addition to the area that will generate millions of dollars a year for the tax-funded museum.

'It completely changes the skyline,' Nicole Desiderio, a downtown condo resident, told commissioners ahead of the vote. 'We are not Las Vegas. We are not Times Square.'

Meanwhile, new digital billboards are in the city permitting pipeline for public spots outside the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts and Miami's Bayfront Park. Those were areas singled out in last year's redo of the sign rules sponsored by then-Commissioner Alex Diaz de la Portilla before his arrest on unrelated bribery charges and his subsequent reelection loss.

His legislation allowed digital billboards in those areas to be more than double the local size limit of 750 square feet, and now commissioners are arguing over whether to let PAMM and others finish building what's currently allowed under city code.

Along with allowing supersized billboards in a few places downtown, the 2023 law extended permission for smaller billboards at other locations, including city property within the Omni and Overtown redevelopment districts and the city's Virginia Key Beach Park..."

-- Douglas Hanks, Miami Herald

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