

MIAMI BEACH

City of Miami Beach, 1700 Convention Center Drive, Miami Beach, Florida 33139, www.miamibeachfl.gov

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

LTC # **222-2016**

LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor Philip Levine and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jimmy L. Morales, City Manager 

DATE: May 20, 2016

SUBJECT: Miami Beach Convention Center Renovation and Expansion Project
Tree Removal

The purpose of this LTC is to advise the City Commission of changes which had to be made to the overall tree plan for the Miami Beach Convention Center Renovation and Expansion Project, (the Project) as a result of some recent construction conflicts.

Background:

As previously advised on LTC #024-2016 dated January 21, 2016, 12 acres of new parks and streetscapes are being created within the Project site of +/- 25 acres. This includes the new P-lot Park, the 21st Street park and canal edge surrounding the Carl Fisher Clubhouse, two additional landscape medians (one on Convention Center Drive and another on 19th Street) and a 10 foot wide by 1,000 foot long landscape area along Washington Avenue at a location formerly used as a vehicle drop off.

As part of this design, the City has a robust reforestation plan which currently includes the following tree disposition summary. Staff's team, including the design firms of Fentress Architects, West 8 Landscape Architects, and Clark Construction have coordinated the plan under the supervision of the City's Urban Forester, Mark Williams. All work is being performed under the project's tree removal permit which was approved and issued on December 30, 2015. The chart below summarizes the current plan:

Existing Trees	
335	Total Existing Trees
(99)	Trees Being Removed*
236	Trees Being Relocated or Remaining in Place
Future Trees	
228	Shade Trees (All trees are either Native or Adapted Species)
139	Palm Trees
367	Total Added Trees
603	PROJECT GRAND TOTAL

* The amounts shown are approximate as the trees are inspected on site by the City's urban forester prior to final removal.

All of the trees proposed to be removed are those that are either in poor condition, have too small a root ball to be viable for relocation, or have significant physical damage and are considered unsuitable for relocation. Other trees in this category are those considered to be prohibited, nuisance or exempt tree species per City and Miami Dade County code.

Unforeseen Conflicts:

During the first phase of construction, several viable mahogany trees (a total of seven) located along a narrow portion of the site along the Collins Canal edge, originally not slated for removal, have now been found to be in conflict with existing as well as future utilities. The root balls of the existing trees are intertwined with storm drainage that must be removed in order to accommodate the new water, storm, and sanitary sewer utilities required to service the building. The roots will be heavily damaged once those utilities are removed. (Refer to Figure 1) In addition, cranes required for structural steel and curtain wall installation have space constraints on the north west corner and also pose a conflict with the existing trees. (Refer to Figure 2) Finally the construction of the seawall brings some site logistic challenges since the sheet piling along the canal also requires the use of large cranes that will be in conflict with the trees.

Since May 10 when the City was formally advised of the conflict, staff, the City's landscape designers and consultants, the construction management team, along with the City's Urban Forester have exhausted every possible option to save the seven mahogany trees.

Unfortunately, due to the size and scale of the equipment necessary to complete the shell of the building, the seawall, and the need to remove existing utilities which are located underneath the mahogany trees, there is no other viable alternative than to cut and remove these trees and replace them with the same species after construction of the area is complete. Once the new trees are planted, the tree count will actually grow by an additional three trees.

Next Step:

On May 20, 2016, the City Urban Forester, at the request of Clark Construction, approved a permit modification to the original tree permit to include replacement of the seven mahogany trees with 10 new Florida Grade #1 Mahogany trees with a height of 18 – 20 feet with the remaining required mitigation offset by canopy trees to be installed as part of the new P-Lot Park. The demolition of the seven mahogany trees is scheduled for the week of May 23rd.

If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Maria Hernandez at Ext. 2584 or me.

cc: Maria Hernandez, Project Director, Convention Center District
Mark Williams, Urban Forester
Susanne Torriente, Assistant City Manager, Chief Resiliency Officer
Steven DiBartolo, Vice President, Hill International

Attachments: Figures 1 & 2

JLM/MH

FIGURE 2

