

Memorandum



Date: September 20, 2016

To: Honorable Chairman Jean Monestime
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: Carlos A. Gimenez
Mayor 

Subject: Future Parks and Open Spaces System

At the first budget hearing, I remarked about the importance of funding for parks and open spaces: for maintenance, for programming, for new development. We find ourselves at a unique juncture to make decisions about our community's green spaces and parks and the legacy we want to leave for future generations. We are within \$1 million of fully expending the highly successful Safe Neighborhood Parks program, a \$230 million bond program that funded more than 250 parks and other projects throughout our community. Within three years we will pay off our Criminal Justice Bonds, freeing up capacity in our voted debt millage rate. Finally, we have a strategic plan already unanimously adopted in 2008 by our Board of County Commissioners and subsequently by all of our 34 municipalities and the School Board – the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan (the Master Plan) – that calls for great parks, public spaces, natural and cultural areas, streets, greenways, blueways, and trails to form the framework for a more sustainable community. This is the time for us – as a community – to decide our future parks system.

Implementation of the Master Plan must be considered as a vital element of a healthy and prosperous Miami-Dade County. Existing regional and municipal parks require continued support and the Master Plan addresses both the needs of these assets with a visionary approach to integrating improved and expanded parks, public spaces and the programs that make people happy and keep children active and safe, into the overall fabric of the community. We want to be a place where residents want to live, employers want to do business, and tourists want to visit.

At the same time we are developing a plan for implementation for the Master Plan, we must also develop a strategy to provide the resources needed to support not only capital development, but also operations and programming, as well as long-term maintenance needs. As noted above, at least on the part of the voted-debt millage, flexibility will be available in the near future. Decisions must be made weighing the priority of parks and green spaces against other financial policies and priorities.

We have momentum and we cannot let that slip away. I have tasked my Senior Management in the areas of parks and recreation and finance and budget to work with the Parks Foundation, the Miami Foundation and key stakeholders and continue this effort with vigor. Developing a reasonable schedule for implementation, resource options, and a system for oversight and monitoring that takes into account lessons learned from previous public programs will take some time and care. We will report to the Board of County Commissioners' committee of jurisdiction on a quarterly basis on the progress of our working group, beginning in December 2016, when we will identify our initial schedule of activities, goals and milestones.

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The great cities in our country have found that investing in great parks and public spaces pays handsome dividends – every great community has a great park system. I look forward to working with you in developing this important legacy for our community. Please feel free to provide your input to my staff or to me personally. Only with community-wide involvement can we hope to create a comprehensive plan of which we can all be proud.

c: Abigail Price-Williams, County Attorney
Office of the Mayor Senior Staff
Jennifer Moon, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Jack Kardys, Director, Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces
Christopher Agrippa, Clerk of the Board
Neil R. Singh, Interim Commission Auditor

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