

Memorandum



Date: April 8, 2022

To: Honorable Chairman Jose “Pepe” Diaz
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

Agenda Item No. 2(B)(2)
June 1, 2022

From: Daniella Levine Cava
Mayor

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniella Levine Cava".

Subject: Report on County Policy on the Feasibility and Advisability of Expanding Little Free Libraries within Miami-Dade County – Directive 212132

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Executive Summary

This report has been prepared by Miami-Dade Public Library System (MDPLS) in consultation with the Regulatory and Economic Resources Department (RER), Department of Transportation and Public Works (DTPW), and the Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces (PROS) Department in response to Resolution No. R-963-21, sponsored by Commissioner Raquel A. Regalado, and adopted by the Board of County Commissioners (Board) at its October 5, 2021 meeting. This resolution directed the County Mayor or County Mayor’s designee to prepare a report that explores the feasibility and advisability of expanding Little Free Libraries throughout Miami-Dade County. Specifically, the report includes impediments and regulations that exist regarding individual property owners installing Little Free Libraries on their own property, and whether there are any impediments to installing Little Free Libraries on County property, such as County parks.

Based on the findings of the report, an amendment to the Code is required to add a Little Free Library as an allowable use while establishing setback requirements on private, residential property. Permits are required for Little Free Libraries located within the interior of private properties such as a mall, shopping center, within a multi-family community, or in a clubhouse within a residential community. For installation of Little Free Libraries on County property, departmental permits are required for their installation in County parks and DTPW is open to a one-year pilot program at transit facilities.

Background

The Little Free Library is a non-profit organization based in Hudson, Wisconsin that promotes literacy and community through neighborhood book exchanges in the form of a public book cabinet where individuals can take a book or leave a book. The public book cabinets, often referred to as Little Free Libraries, can be purchased directly from Little Free Library or built using plans available on their website, www.littlefreelibrary.org. A few cities in Miami-Dade County have Little Free Library programs. For example, the Village of El Portal installed and manages the Little Free Library located at their Village Hall, the City of Coral Gables and the Town of Miami Lakes provides for sponsorships of Little Free Libraries at City and Town parks, and the City of Miami conducted a pilot project in 2019 to permit Little Free Libraries at municipal parks within City of Miami District 4.

Private Property Considerations

Little Free Libraries can be installed on certain private property within Miami-Dade County. There are not specific Code requirements that explicitly permit the installation of Little Free Libraries.

The State of Florida limits what can be placed in public rights-of-way, and a Little Free Library is currently not listed as a permitted structure in public rights-of-way. Additionally, per RER, Little Free Libraries are not currently allowed at residential, single-family properties within unincorporated Miami-Dade County as the use and setback for the structure is not listed as a permitted use. However, an amendment to the Code could add a Little Free Library as an allowable use while establishing setback requirements. Little Free Libraries can be located and oriented within the interior of a property such as a mall, shopping center, within a multi-family community, or in a clubhouse within a residential community. Additionally, should an entity wish to install a Little Free Library on the exterior of its non-residential property, a Zoning Improvement Permit (ZIP) would be required, and, in some instances, a building permit may be necessary depending on the scope of the project and its precise location.

Potential County Host Sites

As it relates to some Miami-Dade County government properties, Little Free Libraries can be installed at County Parks. Individuals and organizations interested in sponsoring a Little Free Library can contact David Livingstone at the PROS Director’s Office at 305-755-7824 to apply for a one-year revokable permit. Though there are no Little Free Libraries at any DTPW locations, DTPW is open to a pilot program. Per DTPW, permission would be required from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for Incidental Use at Metrorail stations and other federally funded facilities. Those interested in sponsoring a Little Free Library at a Transit property, can contact Javier Bustamante, Chief of Right of Way, Utilities & Joint Development, at 786-469-5244 for a permit and to initiate the necessary FTA review and approval process. Sponsors will need to pass a background check, obtain insurance coverage, indemnify Miami-Dade County, comply with the American Disability Act, and complete the department’s annual revokable permit application. Once the permit is approved, the applicant would need to provide the physical watertight book cabinet with materials that are blast and penetration resistant, provide ongoing cleaning and disinfecting, maintenance for graffiti, trash and debris that may collect in a Little Free Library, and the ongoing responsibility to ensure the books and magazines materials in the Little Free Library are appropriate.

MDPLS Support for Little Free Libraries

MDPLS is familiar with the Little Free Library initiative and is approached occasionally by community groups or individuals interested in placing a Little Free Library on library property. With 49 existing Miami-Dade Public Library locations and mobile services, as well as the other municipally operated library locations in Hialeah, Homestead, North Miami, North Miami Beach, and Miami Shores, access to public library services and hours/days of operation throughout Miami-Dade County is vast as are the service options to obtain reading materials directly from a library and obtain library materials and content remotely, including home delivery services and digital library book platforms. MDPLS also offers lending libraries to community organizations such as childcare and senior centers. MDPLS has not seen the need to install Little Free Libraries on existing properties where “Big Free Libraries” are located. However, efforts to install Little Free Libraries by individuals or community groups is a commendable approach to promoting literacy and community-building, especially when maintained and monitored appropriately by the owner/installer.

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If a starter Little Free Library book collection is needed, individuals can contact MDPLS. Once a Little Free Library has been approved by PROS, DPTW, or RER, responsible parties can contact the CustomerCare@mdpls.org to request a starter collection of books that have been donated to MDPLS.

Should you require additional information, please contact Ray Baker, Director of the Miami-Dade Public Library System, at Ray.Baker2@miamidade.gov or (305) 375-5026.

Per Ordinance No. 14-65, this report shall be placed on the next available Board meeting agenda.

- c: Geri Bonzon-Keenan, County Attorney
- Gerald Sanchez, First Assistant County Attorney
- Jess McCarty, Executive Assistant County Attorney
- Office of the Mayor Senior Staff
- Yinka Majekodunmi, Commission Auditor
- Jennifer Moon, Chief, Office of Policy and Budgetary Affairs
- Basia Pruna, Director, Clerk of the Board
- Eugene Love, Agenda Coordinator