

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Chair

SUBJECT: FEASIBILITY OF PARTNERING WITH THE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE (SOA) AT FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY (FIU) TO COLLABORATE AND MOVE FORWARD MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (M-DCPS) EFFORTS TO EXPAND THE TREE CANOPY COVERAGE EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVE WITHIN SCHOOLS AND OTHER DISTRICT BUILDING FACILITIES

COMMITTEE: FACILITIES & CONSTRUCTION

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN: SAFE, HEALTHY, & SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Trees and urban forest systems are critical for cooling neighborhoods, cleaning stormwater, air pollution reduction, preventing flooding, energy savings, and reducing carbon footprint, as well as other benefits like increased real estate values and improved livability. Miami-Dade County (MDC) has doubled the number of trees it plants annually and has built partnerships with the Miami-Dade County School Board and faith-based organizations to prioritize tree planting in areas with current low canopy. While these and other actions will help lead an increase in environmental benefits and the green spaces in our community, there is still much work to be done.

On July 19, 2024, Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava released Miami-Dade County's Draft Urban Forestry Plan, a blueprint to reach the County's impressive goal of 30% urban tree canopy cover. The plan was drafted at the direction of Mayor Levine Cava and the request of the Board of County Commissioners, to inform residents, businesses and stakeholders of the state of our urban forests and the challenges they face. The draft plan sets forth guiding goals to achieve 30% urban tree canopy through an ecologically sound, community drive and planning reliable methodology. These draft goals are:

1. Invest in the lowest canopy areas
2. Increase the quality of tree canopy
3. Proactively protect, maintain and plant trees
4. Engage community stakeholders, and
5. Expand reforestation services and capacity.

FIU's School of Architecture (SOA) is committed to collaborate and support M-DCPS's efforts to expand the tree canopy coverage educational initiative exclusively in M-DCPS schools and facilities in a more timely and strategic manner. This proposed strategy of expanding the core of professionals working on this initiative is consistent with the MDC's plan to continue working with the school district to move forward the internal program's implementation.

M-DCPS would benefit from FIU's technical assistance which would be largely provided by SOA students and professional architects/professors in cooperation and collaboration with M-DCPS staff. This close collaboration will ensure compliance with M-DCPS goals and objectives and provide additional professional support to expedite the internal program's implementation of this initiative.

The item has been reviewed and approved by the General Counsel's Office as to form and legal sufficiency.

ACTION PROPOSED BY CHAIR

MS. MARIA TERESA ROJAS: That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, direct the Superintendent of Schools to explore the feasibility of partnering with the School of Architecture (SOA) at Florida International University (FIU), at no cost to the district, to collaborate and move forward Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) efforts to expand the tree canopy coverage educational initiative within schools and other District building facilities, and provide a report to the School Board at the Facilities and Construction Committee meeting scheduled for November 13, 2024.