



MIAMI BEACH

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

NO. LTC # *432-2014*

LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor Philip Levine and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jimmy Morales, City Manager

DATE: December 24, 2014

SUBJECT: Tree City USA – 9 Year Anniversary

We are proud to inform you that the City of Miami Beach has once again received the Tree City USA certification. This marks the ninth year that the City of Miami Beach has been awarded this designation. The Tree City USA program is sponsored by the National Arbor Day Foundation in cooperation with the National Association of State Foresters and the USDA Forest Service. The Tree City USA designation recognizes communities that have proven their commitment to a healthy urban forest and an effective urban forestry program. It honors the efforts of the elected officials, city staff and citizens who work to maintain and enhance the urban forest.

To qualify for Tree City USA status a city must meet four standards:

- 1) A Tree Board or Department responsible for the care and management of the city's trees. In Miami Beach, this responsibility resides in the Department of Public Works, Greenspace Management Division, Urban Forestry Program. The program is headed by Mark Williams, an International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist Municipal Specialist, member of the American Society of Consulting Arborists and Landscape Inspectors Association of Florida Certified Landscape Inspector. One additional Certified Arborist in the Greenspace Management Division assists with monitoring and managing the City's trees, among other duties.
- 2) A Tree Care Ordinance. The first major ordinance rewrite since initial ordinance adoption in 2001 was successfully completed and approved on November 19, 2014.
- 3) A Community Forestry Program with an Annual Budget of at Least \$2 per Capita. Miami Beach easily exceeded this standard with tree plantings under the Reforestation Program, which the City Commission authorized in 2007, tree plantings as part of CIP projects, and funds expended for tree maintenance, including salaries and equipment for a tree maintenance crew.
- 4) An Arbor Day Observance and Proclamation. Each year the mayor proclaims a date in April as Arbor Day in Miami Beach. The Arbor Day celebrations, which always include tree planting, have usually been linked to larger events in order to bring our tree-friendly message to bigger crowds. In recent years the Arbor Day celebration has been associated with the Captain Planet Carnival at Flamingo Park, an ECOMB event at Marjory Stoneman Douglas Park, where volunteers planted 23 trees provided by the City, the 2013 Earth Day event at Lummus Park featuring the Native Flags Eco-Art Project, designed by Xavier Cortada and most recently as part of the 2014 Spring Eggstravaganza event at North Shore Youth Center and Park on April 19, 2014.

Trees are a vital part of the city infrastructure, providing numerous environmental, economic and social benefits. Among the identified benefits are cleaner air, reduced energy usage, less storm water runoff, amelioration of high urban temperatures, higher property values, improved aesthetics, a greater sense of health and well-being, reduced anxiety levels, and lower crime rates. Being designated as a Tree City USA projects a positive image of Miami Beach, and tells visitors, convention organizers and prospective businesses that ours is a community that cares about a healthy environment and their quality of life. The designation supports those of our residents, who have worked so hard to ensure a vital urban forest, and encourages residents to plant trees and properly care for those they have. The Tree City USA designation also assists the city in obtaining grant money that is allocated for trees or urban forestry programs. Despite declining funds for urban forestry grants, the Urban Forestry Program has been awarded four Urban & Community Forestry grants since 2006. The grants assisted with tree planting, the purchase of a water tanker truck to promote better water use efficiency and survival of newly planted trees, the trimming of mature Mahogany trees on Alton Road and most recently funded Phase 3 of the City's GIS tree inventory project.

We are pleased to report to you that the City's Urban Forestry Program has planted over 152 trees and palms this past fiscal year and a total of 4,473 trees and palms since the inception of the program in F.Y. 2006-07, utilizing designated funds earmarked towards the Urban Reforestation Program.

This past year has had many challenges for our tree canopy, with an increased focus on proper maintenance practices and risk assessment. The tree inventory GIS project initially started in 2013 was continued with the ultimate goal of uniquely identifying and categorizing every tree and palm on City owned or controlled property and ROW's. With this information we will gain a more complete understanding of the current state of our Urban Forest. Additional remedial structural pruning was completed for 161 Calophyllum trees along Meridian Avenue as a continuation of the work originally performed in 2011 in relation to cold damage.

Please advise if there are additional questions.

JM/MT//JF/MW