



CORE NEWS

Vol. II No. 1

URBAN CORE Community Coalition

Summer/Fall 2021

7:47

Brickell Homeowners Association's Post

Angry Comment Share

101 people reached Boost Unavailable

You and 5 others

Most Relevant

Chino Martinez
This is what I see everyday when I go walking. Too much for me to pick it up and there is no trash can around. It grows every day. Reported to City of Miami, Miami-Dade, Commissioner Office, NET office, etc and none has helped out!!

11h

Tweet

Mayor Francis Suarez @FrancisSuarez

For us, it's about 3 things: Keeping Taxes Low, Investing in Public Service, & Quality of Life

Key City of Miami positions remain open while public works and related "quality of life" disruptions persist. Elected officials are more active on the campaign trail than in responding to cries for help. Where is our government?

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UCCC CEO's COLUMN – SAMUEL JOSEPH

Join the “Change Miami Campaign” Movement Today

Since our founding in 2020, UCCC has received an incredible amount of communication from our urban core residents and stakeholders about the abject failure of City of Miami government. Whether it be simple “quality of life” issues like broken sidewalks and crosswalks, lack of code enforcement, routine “back door” deals, or the lack of qualified staff in open administrative positions to address these issues, it’s obvious that the City of Miami government is not working!

The situation has gotten so bad that citizens are advised by City staffers and their elected officials that they must organize to force action on addressing the community’s issues, often times having to come up with the solutions and plans for remedy on their own. This perversion of the democratic self governance model and the total lack of respect by our public servants for the “Magic City’s” electorate and addressing our needs cannot be allowed to continue.

Miami is in desperate need of change and reinvigoration. Too often in elections past urban core residents and stakeholders have had to settle for choosing among the same characters and familiar names on the ballot due to a lack of qualified and/or interested candidates.

With the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, we’ve learned that disinterested, unsympathetic and non-transparent government and/or public servants are a danger to the community’s health and well-being. Thanks to term limits and politicians with bigger aspirations, Miami’s voters have the rare opportunity to remake City of Miami government. These factors have all combined to make the upcoming elections in 2021 and 2022 perhaps the most consequential elections in the “Magic City’s” lifetime. **“Change” must come to Miami because our lives literally depend on it!**

As former Speaker of the House Tip O’Neil used to say, “all politics are local.” In an effort to help you the voter make informed decisions about the upcoming elections, UCCC invited all the qualified candidates to

submit a brief article addressing one question: *“How will you, as our newly elected public servant, help make real the promise of an urban core where we can all live, work, play and learn safely together?”*

In a democratic society, citizenship requires active not passive participation. It’s up to the “people” to “be the change they wish to see” as taught by Gandhi. Ask yourself “What can I do to get the change I want?” Below you will find some suggested advocacy efforts and activities you can do today to begin making real the change in your community you want to see.

- **VOTE (and recruit 10 friends to vote)**
- Attend Government and School Board Meetings
- Help with Letter/Email Writing Campaigns
- Host Community Meeting(s)
- Donate your time, talent, and/or treasure to UCCC
- Spread the word among your “circles of influence” about your advocacy efforts and recruit others to the team



As the election season approaches, UCCC invites you to work with us to affect the change that’s necessary for a better Miami. If you haven’t already, we invite you to join the UCCC Advocacy Team today. We need your help to assure that all our urban core neighbors have the information they need to make the right choices in our upcoming elections. Let’s end the insanity of status quo and work together to elect public ser-

vants who will really address our issues and do “our” work.

As the old saying goes, “we get the government we work for and deserve”. Working together as a team, we will ensure that families living in Miami’s urban core live out the promise of a community where we can all Live, Work, Play and Learn safely together.

To learn more about the “Change Miami Campaign”, UCCC and/or joining the advocacy team visit <https://www.uc3miami.org>. ■

UCCC PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – ERNESTO G. CUESTA

Our Role in Creating the Change

As social anchors in our community, we have a moral responsibility and duty, to influence our neighbors, to help, and to find solutions to existing challenges.

Education

Aside from not having enough public schools (MDCPS) to serve our growing population, we are also experiencing the immediate need for vocational/technical programs to help our high school students to transition into a higher educational institution or vocational school to get certified in the careers of their choice. Not enough of our youngsters are interested in serving in the service industries and/or becoming electricians, plumbers, property managers, transit

operators, which are essential professions driving our economy.

Violence & Crime

Very unfortunately, our inner-city children are too frequently the victims of domestic violence, drugs, and gang-related activities. Current trends can be redirected at home. Family is the foundation and center of our society and we must take a stand and raise our voices in our neighborhoods, churches, and associations. Simply hiring more police or imagining that law enforcement will eliminate violence/crime is misleading; their duty is to fight it, families are to prevent it.

Voter Registration, Mentoring, and Motivating Potential Future Public Servants

One of our main objectives is to identify potential public servants, motivate them to run for public office, as well as to serve administratively. Young people need to be recruited, they are our present and our future. It's time to overcome unfulfilled promises and recycled faces in the political arena and instead bring new energy and blood. This is critical and imminent. ■



**URBAN
CORE COMMUNITY
COALITION**

Dedicated to Fortifying Miami's Economic Engine

CORE NEWS, published by the Urban Core Community Coalition (UCCC), is dedicated to providing news and information about quality of life and related issues of importance to those who live, work, play and learn in Miami's urban core.

URBAN CORE residents and other stakeholders will find the editorial content of CORE NEWS highly focused on issues and concerns of interest to the homeowners and business interests in this unique, luxury high-rise, high density area. CORE NEWS is striving to be highly regarded as an important source of information for those in the urban core.

CITY OF MIAMI GOVERNMENT IS DYSFUNCTIONAL, DANGEROUS, AND IN DESPERATE NEED OF CHANGE!

TOGETHER WE CAN
MAKE A DIFFERENCE!



Join the historic change process taking place in our “Magic City”. As the Supreme Court ruling in the landmark Citizen’s United case taught us, money is speech. Help UCCC speak loud and clear on your behalf by donating your time, talent, and treasure to this important cause today.

Submit donations safely and securely on our website or at Venmo today. Donation checks should be made payable to Brickell Homeowners Association, Inc., with the notation “UCCC-CMC Donation” in the notes section. Send donation checks by mail to PO Box 45-2403, Miami, Florida, 33245. Visit www.uc3miami.org to stay up to date on UCCC and/or the “Change Miami Campaign” related news.

**URBAN
CORE COMMUNITY
COALITION**

Dedicated to Fortifying Miami’s Economic Engine

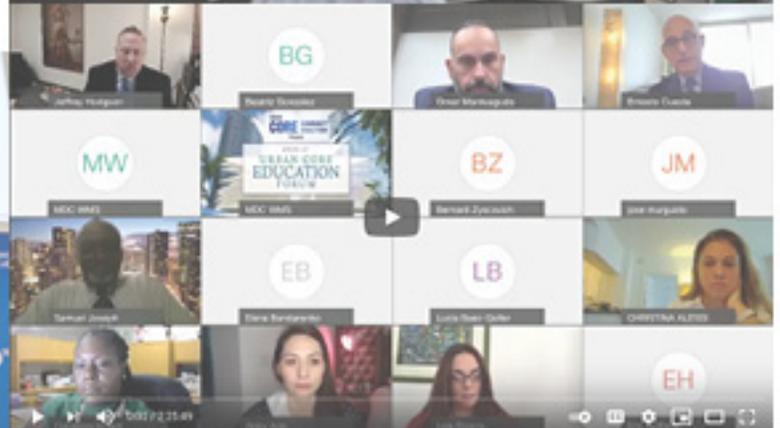
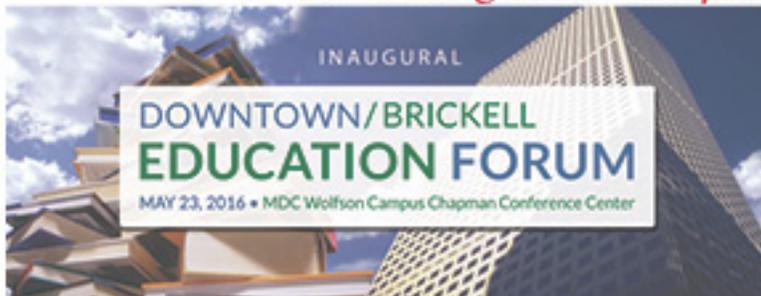
URBAN
CORE COMMUNITY
COALITION
Presents

2021-2022
**URBAN CORE
EDUCATION
FORUM**

Save the Date
Saturday, November 20, 2021

Hybrid Community Event:
Live in-person event at MDC Wolfson Campus
Virtual Programming & Forum Simulcast

Convening Community to Solve Problems Since 2016





UCCC thanks all those who were in attendance at the 2020-21 Urban Core Education Forum.

Community events like the 2020-21 Urban Core Education Forum are only possible through the generous support of many stakeholders. UCCC extends its gratitude to our friends at Brickell Homeowners Association (BHA) and all the other Urban Core stakeholders who helped make this year’s Education Forum a reality.

UCCC extends a special thanks to our event sponsor ZYSCOVICH for their generosity in support of the forum and our children’s education. We thank our invaluable Education Forum partner/host, Miami Dade College Wolfson Campus, and all the speakers, presenters, and other guests for their efforts to ensure a thoughtful, engaging, and informative experience was had by all.

Although the Forum did not produce immediate solutions to the issues we face, we feel it was very successful in sending the message that there is an urgent need for families living in Miami’s urban core to have access to high-quality public schools in their neighborhoods. This will require creative ideas and approaches to the issues our area is facing now and in the future. UCCC and our sister organization, BHA, in collaboration with other urban core stakeholders, continue to devote our time, resources, and advocacy efforts to helping resolve this very important community need.

Below you will find a link to the video recording of the 2020-21 Urban Core Education Forum for your enjoy-

ment and edification. We encourage you to share this information with your friends, family, neighbors, constituents, others in your “circles of influence,” and/or any others who might be interested in this issue.

In the coming weeks, UCCC will be working on the plans for our upcoming 2021-22 Urban Core Education Forum in November, which will be live and via webinar. We invite your thoughts, comments and/or ideas for making the event our best yet. We look forward to sharing this and other forum information with you soon.

In the meantime, the lasting lesson from the 2020-21 Urban Core Education Forum is the need for Miami’s Urban Core stakeholders to organize our education advocacy efforts to ensure our area’s issues are heard and addressed appropriately. I invite you to explore our website and follow our social media feeds to learn more about joining the movement for change in Miami.

We’ve come a long way since this effort began in 2015, but we’ve got much more work to do to assure the promise of an urban core where we can all Live, Work, Play and Learn safely together. Working together we will ensure all families living in Miami’s Urban Core have access to high-quality public schools in their neighborhoods. Now our work officially begins for the even bigger and better 2021-22 Urban Core Education Forum this fall. ■

[2020-21 Urban Core Education Forum Video Recording](#)

Thoughts from School Board Member Lucia Baez-Geller

As Brickell continues to grow, we must prioritize education as part of the development process. Miami's urban core has accounted for 40 percent of new office construction in Miami since 2010. During the same period, construction of new apartments increased by 66 percent in Miami's urban core. Unfortunately, during this renaissance of growth and development for our community, our classroom capacity has not kept to the same pace.

As the area grows denser, we want to keep sustainability, safety, and education opportunities at the forefront of our decision making when it comes to building renovation, construction, and transit. We have the opportunity to build capacity and re-imagine how we educate our students, and I believe that through building and improving our education infrastructure, the outcome can be innovative and groundbreaking.

We usually imagine a brick and mortar school as a building with one or two stories on a few acres of land.

A school in a high-rise, mixed-use building is not what we typically imagine, but it's what we can expect in the urban core where we want to limit sprawl and make the best use of available land.

In the urban core, businesses should fuel economic growth, residents should be able to access all of their needs, and families should feel comfortable sending their children to schools with the knowledge that they're high-performing. I look forward to working with my School Board colleagues and staff, City, and County officials to make this goal a reality for our community. ■



Mayor Suarez Addresses Urban Core Education Forum

Mayor Francis Suarez began his presentation at the Urban Core Education Forum by thanking organizers for persevering to address the critical need to improve and grow our educational system. Speaking "not only as mayor" but as a resident and father of two children, Suarez acknowledged the gaps and the need to "incentivize" developers to include schools in their models.

"We need to invest and focus on our educational system over anything else," he said. Suarez emphasized not only the immediate need for improved educational opportunities for our city's children, but that the need will grow exponentially, particularly in the urban core, as more tech companies consider relocating to Miami.



Suarez discussed partnering with our school board and superintendent to give children necessary resources such as learning financial discipline and establishing a kindergartner savings account program. He commended recent raises in salaries for teachers and voiced his support for funding STEM/Robotics curriculum. The mayor also addressed solutions to obtain critical funding while competing with other programs such as sports.

Self-described as "not a tax guy," Suarez said he is listening to our residents who have voted in favor of improving education and will vote accordingly this legislative session.

"Suarez" continued on next page

Commissioner Eileen Higgins: Transit Oriented Neighborhoods are the Key to Urban Core Promise

As a downtown resident and the County Commissioner who represents most of the Urban Core, I understand the need for great public education in Downtown and Brickell. Gone are the days of Downtown Miami being known as strictly an employment center that lights up from 9 to 5 and empties at the end of the work week. Our urban neighborhoods are transforming into just that, neighborhoods, where young professionals, families with children, and residents of all ages have built homes in the tall towers that make up Miami's skyline.

Urban cores across the country have benefited from Transit Oriented Development (TOD). TODs create compact, walkable, mixed-use communities centered around train systems. We can implement TODs in Miami's Urban Core, yet take it a step further by framing them as transit-oriented neighborhoods. A transit-oriented neighborhood is a vibrant, livable, sustainable community where residents can live and work. Families in Brickell can live car free and continue to grow without the need to move away when their kids start school. We can build in everyday essentials directly downstairs of high-rise buildings, and center around open, green spaces that become a place for all to gather.

In order to make this happen, we need schools and



community centers. Through a partnership with the County, the School District, and the Related Urban Group, we're already building a first-of-its-kind development that includes a school and workforce housing. This development will expand the capacity of Southside Elementary School in Brickell by 3 grades, 6, 7 and 8, and 610 students,



while making it affordable for teachers and school staff to live in the area.

I want to replicate this type of project to create a true transit-oriented neighborhood in the area surrounding Government Center. This area has so much under-utilized space that can be developed to include assets that our urban core residents need. A school is on the top of the list, and this new project will help address the gap in walkable schools that our residents have been experiencing for far too long.

We can't expect residents to stay in our Urban Core if they don't have what they need as they move through different stages of life. I love living in Downtown – and I believe through more of these developments we can shape it into a neighborhood that's truly livable for all. ■

“Suarez” continued from previous page

With his tweets about Miami becoming the new Silicon Valley being seen by 28 million people, Suarez spoke to the momentum to prepare for tech jobs and growth in the urban core. The major question he gets from tech entrepreneurs is about the educational system in this, the “Magic City”. In order to create a Miami for everyone, we need to give our children and parents the resources they need. We need to give our children specific tools to thrive in this economy.

Miami has a story to tell and Suarez is passionate about

the importance of telling that story well. Stating that Miami graduates more Black and Hispanic engineers than any area in the country, he is fighting the misperception that Miami is not developing talent and is an “intellectual importer”. With 53,500 followers on Twitter, Suarez is energized to keep his phone nearby and keep telling Miami's story.

He welcomes questions and encourages investors and software companies to come and see what Miami has to offer. As the story continues to unfold, Suarez invites this community to keep the conversation moving forward via texts, calls and @FrancisSuarez. ■

A College Experience with a 'Magic City' Flair

The Wolfson Campus of Miami Dade College opened in 1970 holding classes in storefronts in downtown Miami. Since then, it has played an integral part in the development of the metropolitan skyline. As the only comprehensive urban campus in the City of Miami, it provides a fully accredited, high-quality education to over 27,000 students each year.

Easily accessible by public transportation, the Wolfson Campus extends students a unique opportunity to enjoy the many cultural centers and exciting attractions that make Miami the "Magic City."

Location Meets Innovation

The Wolfson Campus utilizes state-of-the-art technology and innovative approaches to teaching throughout its curriculum. It capitalizes on being at the center of Downtown Miami's financial, government, and cultural hubs by offering programs in banking, business, microcomputers, paralegal studies, architecture, economics, hospitality management, engineering, the arts and humanities, and the social sciences.



Unique Programs

The Campus is also home to The Center for Literature, Miami International Film Festival, the Earth Ethics Institute, The Honors College, New World School of the Arts, MDC Online, and the Freedom Tower. A rich array of student life activities and social and cultural events complement the educational experience at the Wolfson Campus. ■

MDC Honors College

Since 2002, The Honors College at Miami Dade College has provided an opportunity for students to receive an elevated education, earn an AA degree, and through the Honors Fellows Award, graduate debt free. Serving four campuses across Miami-Dade County, The Honors College has acted as a Pathway to Greatness with over 96% of graduates going on to earn a baccalaureate or higher degree. In the last five years, Honors College students have been offered over \$54 million in scholarships by transfer institutions.

Administrators attribute The Honor College's success in large part to a supportive community of Honors-certified faculty, experienced administrators, alumni, and peers, all invested in student achievement. The program is highly personalized, meeting students where they are and providing the programming and

resources that inspires them to become well-rounded citizens.

Members of the recently created The Honors College Alumni Advisory Committee are invested in giving back to the program which they credit as a springboard for their own personal success. Building on the supportive community model, the Committee is creating an Alumni Mentoring Network to assist current students with selecting and successfully transferring to their best match institutions. The Committee will also help raise funds to support Honors students facing food insecurity, transportation gaps, or other unexpected hardships that present barriers to program completion.

As a partner in the success of Miami-Dade County, The Honors College is committed to providing an affordable, high quality education close to home and serving as a Pathway to Greatness for our local community. ■

New World School of the Arts (NWSA)

Young artists in South Florida can find and shape their artistic voice at New World School of the Arts, in Downtown Miami. NWSA college and high school students are taught and mentored by artist faculty with established artistic reputations, professional expertise, and demonstrated commitment to the creative development of young talent. Students earn Bachelor of Fine Arts and Bachelor of Music degrees and High School Diplomas through its institutional partners, Miami Dade College, University of Florida and Miami-Dade County Public Schools. NWSA alumni are award-winning artists, playwrights, performers, influential visual artists and designers who grace stages, concert halls, museums, galleries, film, television, and radio, around the world.

Dance studies are grounded in traditional ballet and modern dance technique with supporting studies in choreography, movement analysis and dance production.

The Music program seeks to educate and train the

student as a complete musician through professional preparation in performance, theoretical and historical studies. Voice, instrumental studies and composition are possible majors.

In Theater, students train in acting and music theater through a discovery and exploration of self, and technical craft, intensive rehearsal process, and performance in dramatic.

Visual Artists develop a personal, artistic and aesthetic vision while mastering their technical skills in traditional and new media.

Acceptance to NWSA is based on artistic talent which allows students from all backgrounds, ethnicities and socioeconomic statuses the opportunity to receive a conservatory-level education here in our community.

To learn more about NWSA or explore your student's creative artistry visit the website at <https://nwsa.mdc.edu/> and/or call 305-237-3135. ■



KENDALL GAZETTE

MAY 18 - 31, 2021

Connecting Communities

School for Advanced Studies ranked fifth in the nation and first in Florida

BY ALLISON HORTON

Continuing its tradition of excellence, Miami Dade College’s (MDC) School for Advanced Studies (SAS) was just ranked the fifth best high school in the United States and the best high school in Florida, according to the 2021 rankings released by *U.S. News & World Report*.

SAS maintained its position at the top of the annual list. Last year, it was ranked best high school in Florida and the fourth best high school in the nation.

A combined effort between MDC and Miami-Dade County Public Schools

(MDCPS), SAS is a part of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools district. Students attending SAS complete their last two years of high school while they obtain an Associate in Arts degree from MDC.

Located at five MDC campuses (Homestead, Kendall, North, West, and Wolfson), SAS takes pride in its diverse student population, nurturing learning environment, and commitment in providing all students with a rich and rigorous liberal arts education with many of its students specializing in STEM.

For more information about the School for Advanced Studies, visit <https://sasdreamfactory.org/>.

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2021-2022 SPECIAL ELECTIONS SECTION

2021 City of Miami Municipal & 2022 County Election Coverage

Qualified candidates were invited to submit a brief article addressing the question: *“How will you as our newly elected official help make real the promise of an urban core where we can all live, work, play and learn safely together?”*

Rodney Quinn Smith, Candidate for Commissioner, District 3

Despite its doubters, Miami has continued to grow and transform itself into a truly global city, but one of the things I hear from voters is the lack of community. Too many people feel like we are not in this together. This sentiment comes from every part of my district and every demographic. As an elected official, any change starts with me, and I look forward to constantly being out in the city, knocking on doors and connecting with residents.

But we also have to prioritize quality of life issues that too often do not receive the value they deserve. This starts with expanding parks and making them clean, safe, and accessible in every neighborhood. We all have to make some adjustments to respond to noise complaints. In my experience, Miamians are reasonable people. They understand that Miami has nightlife and entertainment, but there needs to be a limit so that people can rest.

Our elected leaders have to work together, at all levels of government, and show residents that cooperation and good government are possible. I am heartened by the desire to live in community, to be respectful yet reasonable, and as an elected official, my job is to help harness these better angels, to be a part of stitching together the kind of city where we are all proud to live. ■



URBAN CORE CANDIDATE FORUMS

2021 City of Miami Municipal & 2022 County Election Editions

September 8th & October 6th, 6:30 p.m.

UCCC in partnership with our urban core friends and stakeholders, cordially invite your participation at this special community gathering (host site TBA). Join us for an important discussion with candidates seeking to serve our community by addressing the quality of life issues facing the residents, merchants, visitors and other stakeholders in Miami's urban core.

[Click here for more events information](#)

2021-22 Races to be Highlighted:

- City of Miami, Mayor
- City of Miami, Commission, District 3
- City of Miami, Commission, District 5
- Miami-Dade County Commissioner District 2
- Miami-Dade County Commissioner District 4
- Miami-Dade County Public Schools - Board Representative, District 2
- Miami-Dade County Public Schools - Board Representative, District 6

Max Martinez, Mayoral Candidate

The City of Miami needs an unconventional leader with different priorities. The people deserve someone who listens and is fully committed toward building a healthy, sustainable urban core for future generations to come. I am fighting for the full-time opportunity to make my hometown the best place it can be.

We are facing time-sensitive issues that no other city has ever dealt with before and need to act with urgency. If elected, it would be my job to listen to the people, develop strategies, and execute ideas that end up becoming the best solutions for the future of the City of Miami.

As ground zero for its effects, it's our responsibility to come up with the climate crisis blueprint and we can start immediately by doing small things such as implementing recycling programs into HUD housing. I will strongly advocate to invest in sustainable infrastructure and for the creation of necessary programs to train residents for well-paid jobs that restore our climate and preserve our ecosystem.

Basic human rights, such as affordable housing, have turned into major issues because of City Hall's contin-

ous neglect of the city's low-income communities. Landlords have profited off of leaving communities empty and I will ad-

advocate for a vacant-property tax in order to stimulate the effort to pioneer 'middle-class' affordable housing. Together, we need to address the disparities between, and within, Miami's racial and ethnic groups in order to combat the wealth divide.

To change the political culture of the City of Miami, it needs to be shocked. Miami-made and Cornell-educated, I plan on doing just that. I'm the 30-year-old, fearless leader who believes everything is earned, not given. There is no heir in a democracy and 21,872 votes won't be enough in 2021. Check out the rest of my platform at Max4MIA.com. ■



Zico Fremont, Commissioner Candidate, District 5

I will, in my capacity, reach out to the board of Urban Core ("and Magic City") to introduce a plan that focuses on livable wages and help make sure we challenge wage discrimination. I would address it by creating a committee where local government officials and employers can discuss and promote ways to combat wage discrimination in our community.

I will work to reduce gun violence, advance decriminalization, racial justice, and police accountability by creating a board with local government officials, lawmakers, and law enforcement officials to address gun violence, decriminalization, racial justice, and police accountability. Also, I will support efforts to put clear standards into law so that public funds for economic development and public contracts are directed to responsible companies that are held accountable for local job creation. I will work to create equitable opportunities for all residents to progress, compete in the global economy and become economically self-sufficient by providing financial assistance to residents and businesses.



I will ensure that the funding from the American Rescue Plan goes out to the people that need it the most. I will analyze where the money is going and make sure it recovers our district. I will challenge state preemption legislation that limits a local government's power to do what they believe is in the best interest of their residents to better our urban core. I will take an active role in pushing back against legislative efforts to preempt local authority to better our urban core. ■

Michael Hepburn Candidate for Commissioner, District 5

Latest job: Founder & Executive Director of ReImagine Miami Foundation and Coordinator of the Institute for Civic Engagement & Democracy at Miami Dade College. Age: 38

Resume high points: Hepburn is a former Jr. Executive for the National Football League, who co-founded the Allapattah Neighborhood Association, served on the City of Miami Parks & Recreation Board, and graduated from City of Miami Police Citizens Academy. He has gained a national profile for being a co-founding candidate of the Justice Democrats movement and for appearing in movie theaters across the nation in Michael Moore's Fahrenheit 11/9 film and the Netflix Original Documentary | Knock Down The House.

Pet issues: Known for his focus on reducing the Civic Empowerment Gap, Hepburn has built his campaign around ideals like "Tuition-Free College" for City of Miami public high school graduates, Safe Sustainable Neighborhoods, Economic & Workforce Development; and Developing & Preserving Affordable Housing.

Positioning: Hepburn seeks to bring his "People FIRST" approach to the Miami City Commission and a unique perspective by becoming the only Millennial on the dais. Hepburn is the community-centric candidate whose advocacy in economic justice, high quality education and cultivating partnerships – will elevate the voices of the city's marginalized.

Miami Made: Hepburn was born and raised in Miami and has personally walked every block that he is campaigning to represent. He also delivered hand sanitizer packets and face mask to more than 5,000 households in the city during the pandemic. ■



La-Shanda West, Candidate for School Board, District 2

Living in Liberty City, Perrine, Naranja, Goulds, Cutler Bay, and North Miami, I understand the needs of our neighborhoods. From topics such as affordable housing and transportation to sea level rise, residents working with elected leaders can implement solutions for the common good of Miami-Dade.

As a teacher, teachers wife, and parent of two school-aged children, I envision a community where we can live, work, play, and learn safely together. I proudly represent the struggles of my ancestral past and the opportunities for a brighter future in which all people can live the American dream. Miami, home to many cultures, can seize this moment to build an urban center where there is equitable access to safe schools and mental health programs.

Safe schools and mental health programs require common sense solutions in the K-12 school system to support children's academic, social, emotional needs, and other skills needed for college and workforce readi-

ness. To achieve this, we need to increase mental health counselors in schools, require mental health training for teachers, counselors, and school administrators, and include families and guardians in the conversations about mental health support within the community.

Despite the challenges ahead, I'm incredibly hopeful about today's solution for a better tomorrow where we unite as one to build safe schools and neighborhoods. ■



Urban Core Community Activism Saves Southside Park

...Again *By Abby Ape*

Southside Park Developers Reach Out to Brickell Community

The Brickell Homeowners Association began out of a desire to raise awareness on important issues including the future of Southside Park. In 1990, the future of the park was threatened by big development and concerned-residents-turned-community-activists saved it. The end result of this and other quality of life issues needing grassroots advocacy was the establishment of the Brickell Homeowners Association, Inc., founded by resident and unofficial “Mayor of Brickell” Tory Jacobs. Tory recruited local condominium associations, urging them to unite and form a strong and unified voice to advocate for a better quality of life in the Brickell community. “In unity there is strength” was his favorite expression.

Fast forward to February 2020 at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic when a surprising repeat of history was taking place right “under the nose” of urban core taxpayers! A surprise “back door” redevelopment plan for Southside Park was released and hastily passed by the Miami City Commission without any public comment. Residents reacted with concern and consternation about the lack of transparency during the negotiations between City of Miami staff and the project developer, JD Development Group.



and staff to propose offering an informational meeting to present the project to BHA, Brickell residents and the surrounding urban core community and to entertain the comments and recommendations of the group. This was the first of what would become more than a handful of informative and engaging consultations/

“Activism Saves Park” continued on page 18

As in the past, concerned Brickell residents and other urban core stakeholders organized, hosted a press conference expressing publicly their concerns with the proposed project and the process by which it was approved. Public relations efforts of the activists resulted in an interview with the Miami Herald where they brought attention to what appeared to be at the time a no-bid land giveaway. Click here for more information about the aforementioned efforts.

In winter of 2020, JD Development Group staff contacted BHA board



BRICKELL AREA RAISES FUROR TO KEEP PARK

Quietly, without public notice or much discussion, Miami city commissioners two weeks ago endorsed the idea of donating the Brickell area's only park to a group that wants to build a hospital.

Monday, an outraged committee of downtown businesspeople urged the commission not to give away the land.

Under a resolution introduced by Commissioner Joe Carollo and tentatively approved by the entire commission earlier this month, Southside Park, an L-shaped oasis in what is destined to become a neighborhood of high-rise condos and bustling sidewalks, would be given away to a charity that wants to replace the softball field with a cancer ward.

Commissioners approved the deal without consulting



the city's own parks department, said Charles Hudson, landscape architect for the department. He said this is the first time he has heard of the city giving away a public park.

La Liga Contra El Cancer proposes to eliminate the 2.2-acre park at 100 SW 11th St., said Lourdes Aguila, general coordinator of the prominent Latin charity.



But the commission is still at least one hearing away from handing over the land, said Assistant City Attorney Robert Sechen.

And the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce's New World Center Action Committee, a group of business and political figures devoted to downtown development, Monday voted unanimously to ask commissioners to save the park.

"The park is of critical importance," said Miami lawyer Dan Paul. "It is the only open recreation space in an area which has now been designated for high-density

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“Activism Saves Park” continued from page 16

discussions and meetings to address the concerns of community stakeholders including the many users of the park.

Despite the collaborative effort and cooperation from project developers urban core stakeholders still have some outstanding issues to address. Some of the remaining issues identified and still under consideration by BHA include the sizing and functionality of the park’s new water feature, dog runs, and the restoration and activation of the historic schoolhouse building on site. BHA President Ernesto Cuesta announced that despite outstanding issues, the Brickell Homeowners Association supports the Southside Park Development project and the promise of enhancement of the neighborhood’s quality of life after its completion.

BHA, Brickell, and surrounding urban core stakeholder input and involvement remain critical to the long term success of this project and ultimately our community. As we’ve learned in more than 30 years of community advocacy work is change and/or success can only be achieved by working together. It is incumbent on all of us to stay focused on this project to assure that all the public benefits promised are realized. BHA needs your help, you are our “eyes and ears on the street” stay alert and continue to contact us with your updates, issues, ideas and/or feedback as this project moves forward.

The Brickell Homeowners Association (BHA) was formed so residents and other Brickell stakeholders are united as a collaborative force to communicate common interests more effectively and mobilize support on important issues. This article was written by BHA Communications Director Abby Ape. For more information, she can be reached at info@brickellhomeowners.org. ■

“Furor” continued from page 17

residential and commercial development. It’s the wrong thing to do to gobble up park land, no matter what for – a hospital, church or whatever.” Carollo could not be reached for comment Monday night. But La Liga’s Aguila said the charity wants the land for a 25-30 bed hospital for destitute cancer patients. La Liga has not yet applied for a certificate of need, which it must obtain to build a hospital.

“This donation by the city of Miami is a wonderful dream coming true,” she said. “It is a beautiful site, close to everything and the Metrorail station right there. It is perfect for us. Nobody will oppose a hospital that the community needs. That park is not used.”

But it is.

“I come two or three times a week after work with my son,” said Nancy Del Busto, as Rafael, 3 1/2, tumbled down the sliding pond in the park’s playground. She sat at a picnic table, reading a paperback of Jackie Oh! in the shade of one of the park’s big bushy trees. “For the area, it’s not a bad park. It’s something. It’s a shame to take it away. Where would the kids go?”

The park, immediately west of the Brickell train station, has eight 50-foot-tall shade trees, two basketball courts, a poorly maintained softball field and a small playground.

It is in a mostly low-income area of low apartment buildings, a changing area destined to become an extension of the Brickell banking and condo corridor. Southside is next to a city fire station, where the firemen sit on lawn chairs watching the kids, staring at the passing trains and beyond to the gleaming, rainbow-colored Brickell towers.

“What this park needs is lights,” said Idas Stewart, 20, who was playing hoops. “You can’t play basketball at night.”

“I like this park,” said Ruben Carrasco, 15, another basketball player. “I come here almost every day after school. It’s nice, everybody comes.”

This story is a reprint of an article which originally appeared in the Miami Herald:

MARC FISHER Herald Staff Writer

PUBLICATION: Miami Herald, The (FL) SECTION: LOCAL

DATE: April 23, 1985 EDITION: FINAL

Page: 1D ■

Dade Heritage Trust: Protecting and Preserving the “Magic City’s” Education History *By Christine Rupp*

The City of Miami’s Southside Park in Brickell is home to a very significant historic building – Miami’s very first high school. Constructed in 1905, the lovely wood frame bungalow in the park has a great story to tell. The building, which was originally located at South Miami Avenue and 1st Street, was relocated to SW 12 Street and 1st Avenue in 1911 to serve residents and students who lived south of the Miami River. From 1911 to 1914 it became Southside Elementary School, and eventually turned into a boarding house with several additions.

In 2001, after it was discovered during a proposed demolition, plans were made to relocate the building to Southside Park. The \$1 million relocation and restoration was funded by Dade Heritage Trust and partner organizations including The Villagers and the State of Florida Division of Historical Resources.

After a lovely grand re-opening in 2009 and proposed use as a community center, the building was activated; however, Southside Park was eventually closed to the public due to the discovery of contaminated soil. After a full remediation, the park re-opened in the summer of 2016, but the historic building has remained closed and used as a storage facility by the City.

JDS Development, the developers of the new 1 Southside Park project, which includes two 62-story towers on the west side of the park, were required to enter into a Public Benefits Agreement with the City of Miami. That agreement includes the construction of a new on-site fire station that will replace the current Fire Station Four on SW 2 Avenue. The developer will also redesign Southside Park, adding several amenities to

the popular neighborhood park, one of very few green spaces in Brickell.

While included in project renderings, the old school house has been left out of the Public Benefits Agreement. Dade Heritage Trust is stepping up to rectify this situation. DHT representatives have had conversations with the developer’s Managing Director for Strategy & Development and their legal team, imparting that the building must be protected during the construction of the mega project and should be restored and enhanced as a community center with appropriate programming

for the neighborhood upon completion.

With Southside Park’s proximity to the adjacent Underline, Brickell Metrorail Station and Southside Preparatory Academy, it is an incredible asset to the Brickell area. The restoration of the Old Miami High building and its potential to

serve the residents of the neighborhood will add incredible value to Southside Park. It could be a great space to interpret the history of the area and teach the importance of environmental preservation, resiliency, and progressive urban planning to students. We also believe the building would make a great headquarters for The Underline.

The time and money spent on relocating the school house and restoring it over a decade ago should not be wasted. For now, protection of the building is Dade Heritage Trust’s number one goal and we feel confident JDS Development, Miami-Dade County and the City of Miami will ensure the building is protected, restored and returned to the community. ■

Christine Rupp is Executive Director of Dade Heritage Trust.

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