



# MIAMI BEACH

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

NO. LTC # 148-2009

## LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor Matti Herrera Bower and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jorge M. Gonzalez, City Manager

DATE: June 5, 2009

SUBJECT: Residents Request For Shade System At Fisher Park

Your offices and the Parks and Recreation Administration have received a few requests from residents requesting a shade system, like the ones that have been installed at various tot-lots and playgrounds in other city parks, to be installed at Fisher Park. This request was also made at the Mayor on the Move held on May 19, 2009. Kevin Smith, Director of Parks and Recreation, spoke personally with two residents at the meeting to respond to their request.

As you know, the City has engaged in a process to identify how sites are recommended for shade systems. The basic criteria for placement of shade structures includes that the playground site does not have the benefit of natural shade from trees. Those tot lots that have had shade structures already installed were recommended based on this criteria, and those tot lots that were fortunate enough to have natural shade, such as Fisher and Flamingo, were not initially recommended. Funding to accommodate those identified parks was approved through the budget process. This process was explained to the residents that have inquired about a shade structure at Fisher Park. Although they understood the process, they requested the City pursue the concept further.

Staff visited the location on May 21<sup>st</sup> to identify the shade needs at the park. The following observations were made, and possible solutions developed in response to these inquiries:

- The site has a mature oak tree (roughly estimated to be between 50 - 60 years old) growing adjacent to the playground (tot lot). This large oak tree provides shade over approximately half of the tot lot, and provides more shade in the late afternoon as the sun is west of the tree.
- The placement of a typical shade structure (square) over the entire tot lot would require the removal of a major structural branch (30' long +/-) from the oak tree. Based on a site visit, Dr. Chris Latt, the City's Urban Forester, is very concerned that removing the structural branch from the Oak would leave a large wound on the tree that could create decay at the cut, which can weaken the tree and cause its decline.
- The installation of a traditional shade structure would also require substantial trimming of another tree, and another tree may need to be removed, depending on the final design concept.
- The tot lot is north of a swing set. The swing set does not have any large/significant, surrounding natural shade

Please see the attached aerial photo of the site.

Staff obtained quotes for a traditional shade structure over the tot lot. Staff also obtained quotes for a shade structure over the swing set. Following the May 21<sup>st</sup> site visit, staff asked the shade contractor to revisit the site and recommend options that would not involve trimming the large live oak tree and provide shade to the portion of the tot lot that remains unshaded for a portion of the afternoon (such as cantilever shades or sails).

Staff has conveyed to the interested residents that the city is currently evaluating the site for solutions that take into consideration the issue with the trees and is obtaining quotes from our shade contractor. More importantly, staff has advised the interested residents that there is no funding available at this time. We have also advised them we will keep them apprised of the progress and involve them in the process when we have more definitive information to relate.

A capital budget request for a shade structure for Fisher Park will be developed for the Commission's consideration during the budget review process.

JMG/HMF/KS

c: Hilda M. Fernandez, Assistant City Manager  
Kevin Smith, Parks & Recreation Director  
Julio Magrisso, Assistant Parks & Recreation Director

**FISHER PARK**  
**Alton and 50<sup>th</sup> Street**

