

# Brickell Homeowners Association

# NEWS

VOL. XVI NO. 1 • NEWSLETTER OF THE BRICKELL HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION, INC. • SPRING 2006

BRICKELL HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION is comprised of condominium association members and associate members representing some 16,000 residents along the Brickell corridor and on Brickell Key from the Miami River to the Rickenbacker Causeway. The purpose of BHA is to communicate common interests more effectively and mobilize support on important issues relating to the quality of life in our neighborhood.

[www.brickellhomeowners.com](http://www.brickellhomeowners.com)

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## Brickell Avenue FDOT Study Part IV

As the calendar passed the one-year mark in February for the Florida Department of Transportation's comprehensive study of Brickell Avenue from 26th Road to the Brickell Bridge, residents and business leaders realized that a lot of the ideas that many were banking on for congestion relief were going by the wayside. FDOT seemed to have determined that the ideas are unworkable, or that they would not bring improvements to our "F" grade situation, or that enacting the solutions would not lie within the FDOT's purview.

Consequently, when FDOT announced its public meeting to reveal its recommendations in late March, BHA residents and business groups including Brickell Area Association and Downtown Development Authority appealed to city and county elected officials to try to intercede to be sure that all options were fully explored. Both County Commissioner Carlos Gimenez and City Commissioner Johnny Winton are involved in trying to encourage improved *traffic management practices* rather than simply adding concrete in place of trees and narrowing sidewalks. FDOT said it continues to solicit and listen to all input, and nothing is yet final.

First, the positive changes that FDOT is endorsing that have developed since we reported on the study in the previous *BHA News*:

**"...a lot of the ideas that many were banking on for congestion relief were going by the wayside."**

### Pedestrian Improvements

We last reported that no new pedestrian crosswalks or amenities to achieve the oft-talked about but elusive "pedestrian friendly" environment were recommended. Since that



time, FDOT officials have said they decided that the area would benefit from pedestrian countdown signals like those used in major U.S. cities to help pedestrians cross at the intersections.

Continued on page 5

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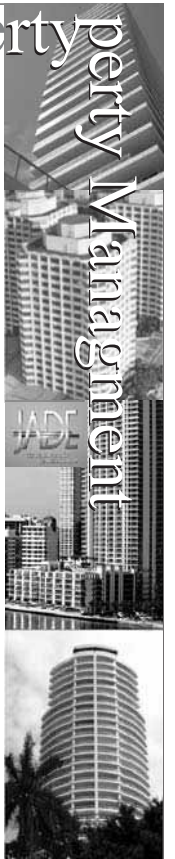
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## The Fire Rescue Fee Fiasco – Lessons to be Learned

The Fire Rescue Fee Fiasco reminds me of the movie title “Sex, Lies & Videotape” without the sex and without the videotape.

Although Judge Lopez has made his ruling on this case and said the unsavory settlement cannot stand and a class action may move forward, it's important that you, BHA members, know the BHA involvement.

A bit of history... In 1998 a consulting firm set up by an upstate law firm came up with a scheme that would enable Florida municipalities to circumvent their ad valorem tax caps by generating fees through special assessments. This is like offering a scheme to rob banks and then not be liable for prosecution. Everybody knows that bank robbery is a felony. Stealing from taxpayers is even more heinous.

*BHA News* is published by the Brickell Homeowners Association to keep neighbors, public officials and others in the community informed of the activities and concerns of its residents.

Advertising is accepted on a space-available basis, and BHA reserves the right to accept or reject all advertising. For advertising information or other details, see the BHA Web site or send email to Communications Director, Natalie Brown via email to: [nbrown@brickellhomeowners.com](mailto:nbrown@brickellhomeowners.com) Editorial material and suggestions are also welcome for consideration.

The City of Miami – then under severe financial pressure – succumbed to the temptation and voted to enact the Fire Rescue Fee, though strongly opposed by BHA and other community organizations. We were early supporters of TTUFF (Tenants & Taxpayers United For Fairness) an umbrella organization formed to have the fee rescinded, get the funds returned to the taxpayers and to fund an initiative requiring any and all fee legislation be authorized by referendum. BHA contributed to the legal fees by a check for \$2,500 to the law firm retained to represent TTUFF.

Initially, we were successful. The City Commission voted 4-1 to repeal the Fee, but the Governor's Oversight Board (then in control) ordered the City to re-instate the Fee.

Speeding forward from 1998 to 2004, the believed-to-be class action proceeded through the Florida courts and the Fee was finally declared unconstitutional. At this point, the City of Miami was defenseless against an action to refund the Fire Rescue Fees paid.

The law firm originally retained by TTUFF had been merged into the Miami firm, Adorno & Yoss. For reasons unknown, the class action status had not been certified by the Court, so that five members of TTUFF were the only plaintiffs. There is conflicting testimony as to how the settlement came about, but it is generally agreed that the City of Miami's legal department, acting

under the impression that they were responsible for protecting the City's financial interests, not the City taxpayers' interests, came up with a settlement scheme. This plan would cost the City only \$7 million and by delaying settlement, permit the statute of limitations to run out, precluding additional claims.

This might be considered astute “lawyering” in a corporate environment, but it is a mistake in judgment for a municipality.

For the \$7 million settlement plan to work required what appears to be collusion between the City and the law firm supposedly representing Fire Rescue Fee payers by keeping the settlement agreement under wraps, a violation of the Sunshine Law.

I am personally most offended by the small group of dedicated civic activists who were founders of TTUFF and who in the end succumbed to greed.

We submit the following lessons:

- 1) If it starts with a taint, it's hard to get rid of the smell.
- 2) Operating a city as if it were a business works just so far.
- 3) Enough money can corrupt some of the best of us.
- 4) Collusion between both sides in a legal matter, especially when quarter-backed by an attorney who had been retained to represent the citizens, the taxpayers, the wronged public gives off a strong aroma, actually a stench, if you will.

It is too soon to tell if any of these lessons have been learned. •

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How the countdown signals work is simple: when the light changes indicating it's clear to walk, the digital display counts down how many seconds remain before the light changes to "don't walk." Many residents are familiar with these systems as the technology has been adopted at busy intersections in many major cities, such as Washington, DC; San Francisco; San Jose; even Lake Buena Vista, Florida. The reports have been almost all positive where the countdown is tried. (Many residents say the traffic signals on Brickell change too fast for a normal walking person to make it across all the lanes of Brickell; the countdown display will show just how sprightly one must move.)

Another positive change that FDOT is moving forward is the addition of two traffic signals on

Brickell Avenue, and pedestrian crosswalks, at SE 14th Street and SE 10th Street. There's been a lot of discussion about how difficult it is to find a spot to safely cross Brickell, leaving many pedestrians darting across the street at non-designated crossings. FDOT does not favor pedestrian crosswalks mid-block where there is no traffic signal for fear that drivers would not notice and/or obey the cross-hatchings and not yield to those in the crosswalk. Along with improving the pedestrian situation, the signals are expected to help slow down traffic. Installation is to occur prior to the pavement rehabilitation, which is two years away.

### Traffic Flow Improvements

The Brickell Avenue and S.E. 8th Street intersection is an area of intense congestion. Converting the one-way portion of SE 8th Street

between South Miami Avenue and Brickell so that vehicles entering the Brickell intersection westbound on SE 8th Street can travel west rather than just north or south, initiating a "don't block the box" program, and adding signage to encourage usage of alternative routes such as South Miami Avenue instead of Brickell Avenue were all ideas residents were hoping to see adopted. City, county, and FDOT officials are still discussing all of these, as Commissioner Gimenez and Commissioner Winton won't let the notions be so quickly discarded.

For the two-way conversion of SE 8th Street, there's now talk of switching one of the existing eastbound left turn lanes of SE 8th Street between Brickell Avenue and Miami Avenue to a west-bound

Continued on page 6

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## From the FDOT Fact Sheet Brickell Avenue Bascule Bridge Widening Project

In February contractors for the FDOT began bridge-widening work on Brickell Avenue Bascule Bridge over the Miami River in downtown Miami. This project will add one northbound lane over the bridge, including the road up to the intersection of SE 4th Avenue. Work is expected to last approximately 300 days at an estimated cost for the project at \$1.2 million. The project includes roadwork and bridgework as follows:



### Roadwork

- Minor widening along the outside northbound lane between the north side of the bridge and SE 4th Avenue
- Installation of a proprietary retaining wall between the road and the sidewalk
- Installing concrete barrier wall on the southeast corner of SE 4th Street and Brickell Avenue
- Installing a new curb ramp on southeast corner of SE 4th Street and Brickell Avenue
- Drainage improvement
- Milling and resurfacing at the intersection
- Traffic signal modifications at the intersections of SE 4th Street and Brickell Avenue

### Bridgework

- Removing and replacing sidewalks, wing walls
- Removing and resetting decorative hand railings
- Installing new safety gates on the northbound lanes
- Installing modified support beams
- Installing new concrete walls and columns

### Construction Schedule

The department has included an incentive if the contractor completes the project ahead of the 300-day schedule, which could be impacted by bad weather or other unforeseen circumstances. Work is scheduled to be performed during daytime hours (8:00 AM – 5:00 PM).

### Maintenance of Traffic

Throughout the construction, the Department will strive to minimize impacts to area commuters, businesses and residents. Lane closures necessary to complete this work will be performed during non-peak hours on non-event days/weekends. Non-peak hours are 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., weekdays and weekends.

### Residential & Business Access

Access to local businesses and residences will be maintained at all times.

lane. Commissioner Gimenez is urging FDOT to conduct a pilot test of it since the concept would not require major construction, taking of sidewalk space or trying to acquire land for more lanes. Business leaders and residents are behind this effort. FDOT officials have said that their models, however, do not show the change would bring significant improvement to traffic flow. The city is conducting cost estimates of the project for which they would be a partner. Residents would like to see this construction and that planned for Brickell Avenue to happen simultaneously.

Two changes in this area will help a little. The addition of a lane going north between SE 4th Street to the north side of the Brickell Bridge will provide one more artery out of the area. (See Brickell Bridge Construction details left.)



Additional northbound lane over the Brickell Bridge under construction.

The other change FDOT said they will make is extending the left turn lane storage space on SE 8th Street going to Brickell Avenue, which their models show will help alleviate back ups to the Brickell Key Bridge and on Brickell Bay Drive.



This left turn lane on SE 8th Street heading west will be lengthened to enable more storage.

Of course the other area aspect that drivers encounter whenever they idle in traffic and have time to observe all around them (frequently) is that the signal timing could be improved to help traffic flow.

Traffic signalization for all of Miami-Dade is managed by the county. Everyone has been anxiously awaiting the new, state-of-the-art “intelligent” system promised with the passage of the People’s Transportation Plan. The new system is supposed to enable signal timing to be adjusted for time of day and traffic flow variations within the quarter-hour. Brickell Avenue is supposedly high on the list to be among the first areas in the county to get the new system in place. For safety, certain critical intersection signals are to have their own independent power sources so that during outages they will still be functioning.

### Roadway Flooding

FDOT has been encouraged to figure out what’s causing flooding during heavy rains at certain spots along Brickell, particularly around 12th Street and 26th Road. Headway has been made in this area, at least at 26th Road, where a week of nighttime work to repair the drainage pipe that was damaged by an underground conduit was promised by FDOT. Everyone seems to be in agreement that it wouldn’t make sense to do the pavement rehabilitation project on the Brickell roadway surface without resolving the drainage issues first.

### Tunnel Talk Cheap; Reality Tough

Residents may have seen the *Herald’s* recent report that a price tag has been at last affixed to the tunnel project which has been a big, exciting idea bounced about for several years. The tunnel would go

under the Miami River linking cars to the north and south with no waiting for river traffic. Reynolds, Smith & Hills, the engineering firm charged with coming up with a plan and a price have put that amount somewhere just under a billion dollars due to right-of-way and construction costs. And, they concluded that it would have “minimal traffic benefits.” Many affected residents do not accept these findings. Further study is indicated. •

Let us hear from you...



President: Tory Jacobs  
tsjacobs@bellsouth.net

Communications Director:  
Natalie Brown  
nbrown@brickellhomeowners.com



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# Brickell Homeowners Names “Above & Beyond” and Advocate Award Winners

The Brickell Homeowners Association announced the recipient of a new award established to recognize an individual who has done an exemplary job in serving the needs of the BHA neighborhood. Stephanie Grindell, director of Public Works for the City of Miami, received the honor at the BHA Annual Board Meeting in February, in recognition for her personal



Stephanie Grindell receives the BHA Above and Beyond Award.

involvement in rectifying clean-up delays after Hurricane Wilma.

“Stephanie personally responded to our complaints and investigated the situation herself so she could see first hand what wasn’t being done

and needed attention on Brickell Avenue and surrounding streets,” said BHA President Tory Jacobs. “She was extremely responsive, and got the logjam removed.”

The landscaping of Brickell Avenue, which is U.S. Highway 1, is usually managed by the City of Miami under agreement with FDOT, but for hurricane clean up, the initial jurisdiction shifts back to FDOT so that FEMA funds can be tapped for reimbursement.

Somewhere in the hand-off process, crews to actually perform the work didn’t materialize for weeks until Stephanie stepped in and made sure the dead-limb hangers and tree stumps got removed.

“We’re calling it the ‘Above & Beyond for Brickell’ award,” Mr. Jacobs said, “since so often we don’t see this level of speed in problem solving — it is usually a matter of weeks or months versus just days before we see action.”

Ms. Grindell has been with the City of Miami since 2003. A Miami native with a degree in civil engineering from the University of Miami, she is a licensed professional engineer and a certified general contractor in Florida and Georgia. She was with private firms before coming to the City and also spent 10 years working for FDOT.



Mac Seligman receives the BHA 2006 Advocate Award from BHA President Tory Jacobs.

## Long-time Advocate Wins Annual Award

BHA named Mac Seligman Advocate of the Year for 2006 at its Annual Meeting. Mr. Seligman was an early board member and has served as an officer, security chair and graffiti clean up chair for 10 years.

Always out and about on his daily five-mile walks, he’s also regarded as the eyes and ears of Brickell.

“Mac Seligman has been devoted to safeguarding the quality of life and improving the Brickell residential neighborhood,” BHA President Tory Jacobs said. “He has given unselfishly of his time, thoughtful attention and expertise and is an outstanding example of volunteerism and service.”

A resident of Brickell Townhouse, Mr. Seligman is a retired public relations company owner who had a thriving business specializing in the travel and tourism industry for several decades. •

## BHA Officers

At the BHA Annual Meeting in February, the following slate of officers was elected.

PRESIDENT <b>T. Sinclair (Tory) Jacobs</b>	TREASURER <b>Ernesto Cuesta</b>
1ST VICE PRESIDENT <b>Claudia Bruce</b>	SECRETARY <b>Joe E. Diaz</b>
2ND VICE PRESIDENT <b>Jose Dieguez</b>	BOARD CHAIRPERSON <b>Herbert Bailey</b>

## Important Community Contact Numbers

### **Coral Way NET**

Administrator Liza Walton  
(305) 329-4750  
lwalton@ci.miami.fl.us

### **Downtown NET**

Administrator Eddie Padilla  
(305) 579-6007  
hpadilla@ci.miami.fl.us

### **City of Miami Police**

Officer Jeffrey Giordano  
(305) 710-5222  
Commander David Rivero  
david.rivero@miami-police.org

### **Miami-Dade County Commissioner**

District 7: Carlos A. Gimenez  
(305) 375-5680  
District7@miamidade.gov

### **Miami-Dade County Commissioner**

District 5: Bruno Barreiro  
(305) 643-8525  
District5@miamidade.gov

### **City of Miami Commissioner**

District 2: Johnny Winton  
(305) 250-5333  
jwinton@ci.miami.fl.us

### **Miami-Dade Public Schools**

Board Rep District 3: Dr. Martin Karp  
(305) 995-1334  
martinkarp@dadeschools.net

### **Florida Senate**

District 39: Senator Larcenia J. Bullard  
Tallahassee (850) 487-5127  
Miami District Office (305) 668-7344  
bullard.larcenia.web@flsenate.gov

### **Florida Senate**

District 35: Senator Gwen Margolis  
Tallahassee (850) 487-5121  
Miami District Office (305) 993-3632  
margolis.gwen.web@flsenate.gov

### **Florida House of Representatives**

District 107: Rep. Gustavo Barreiro  
Tallahassee (850) 488-9930  
Miami (305) 643-7324

### **U.S. House of Representatives**

District 18: Congresswoman  
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen  
D.C. (202) 225-3931  
Miami (305) 275-1800

### **U.S. Senate**

Senator Bill Nelson  
D.C. (202) 224-5274  
Coral Gables Office (305) 536-5999

### **Senator Mel Martinez**

(202) 224-3041  
Orlando (407) 254-2573  
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# Brickell Key Bridge Safety

After the collective persistence of residents, Brickell Key leaders, BHA and others, the County agreed to add traffic calming measures at the east end of the Brickell Key Bridge. The measures have been advocated to protect pedestrians from the vehicles that tend to come over the bridge at lightning speeds. Drivers find that the bridge ends suddenly and they are upon a walking, residential area where a deadly pedestrian-vehicular encounter has been feared. •



## Free E-Mail Traffic Alerts Help Commuters Avoid Congestion

SmarTraveler® SunGuide 511 offers free e-mail traffic alerts at [www.511southflorida.com](http://www.511southflorida.com) which provides commuters updates on traffic events or congestion on customizable routes. When traffic conditions will impact your particular commute route, you'll receive an email alert to either your e-mail-enabled cell phone, PDA or e-mail account describing the traffic event and its location, enabling you to make alternative plans. Registering for this free service is easy. When you go to the website, click on the Personal Alerts tab. The SunGuide partners include representatives from FDOT, the Turnpike and Miami-Dade Expressway Authority.

## Who to Call/Where to Go

### Construction Noise and Code Violations

Residents are asked to use the following contact information for noise and other suspected violations relating to construction.

- Mondays through Friday, Between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. — Call Code Enforcement at (305) 329-4770.
- Holidays & Mondays through Friday Before 8 a.m./ After 6 p.m. — Call Police (305) 579-6111 to request a marked unit to come to the scene.
- Saturdays before 9 a.m. and after 5 p.m. and Sundays All Day — Call Police (305) 579-6111

If you feel you are not getting adequate response, please call Neighborhood Resource Officer Jeffrey Giordano at (305) 710-5222.

### Reporting Damaged Light Poles, Burned Bulbs

For poles located in the City of Miami, residents should call David Hernandez of the Public Works Department at (305) 416-1220.

### Discarding Home Chemicals

The Home Chemical Collection Center is located at 8831 NW 58th Street and is open every Saturday from 8:30 am to 12:00 noon and from 12:30 to 5:00 p.m. and on Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon and from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. The collection center accepts oil-based paints, pesticides, solvents, pool chemicals, other household chemicals and used electronics (computers, televisions, VCRs etc.). The Center will not accept commercial waste of any kind. Non-hazardous items such as latex (water-based) paint cans can be disposed of with the regular garbage as long as the paint is completely dried out. Explosives, ammunition, radioactive, infectious and/or bio-hazardous wastes are also not accepted. For more information, call the info line at 311.

# Residents' Request Rejected

Eastbound residents driving on 26th Road and turning north onto Brickell Avenue before the Rickenbacker Causeway have complained about frequent near-misses at that intersection due to cars in the two left lanes trying to make the turn.

The roadway configuration at this multi-lane intersection makes it seem like both lanes permit turns, however only the far left is indeed the turning lane. Confused drivers, however, frequently make the turn from the second left lane, cutting off the legitimate turners. An appeal to FDOT to reconfigure the area to restrict that second lane from making the turn was rejected, as indicated in the letter to the right.

BHA will work with Miami Police on enforcement, although experience, and the police themselves, will attest that enforcement brings about behavior change for only a short while. •



Many drivers use the second through lane on 26th Road to turn north on Brickell Avenue.

District Traffic Operations Office  
1000 NW 111 Avenue, Room 6206A  
Miami, Florida 33172  
(305) 470-5335

February 20, 2006

Subject: Section 87030, SR 5/ Brickell Avenue at SE 26 Road. Request to restrict eastbound vehicles that are illegally making left turns from the through lane cutting off turning vehicles

Dear Mr. Jacobs:

I have been asked to evaluate and respond to your E-mail dated February 9, 2006 to Mr. Johnny Martinez, District Secretary, regarding the subject. The Department cannot separate the eastbound through traffic from the eastbound left turn through physical means given the conditions.

If some of the eastbound through traffic are cutting off those turning vehicles already in the left turn lane from turning left to Brickell north, then it becomes an enforcement problem. By copy of this letter to the local Police Department, we are requesting them to conduct random enforcement.

And while we cannot physically separate the lanes as requested we have, as you may know, tried to improve the intersection operation. In July 2005, Reynolds Smith & Hills, Inc. completed a Level of Service Analysis at the subject intersection to evaluate the existing traffic conditions and to examine the feasibility of changing one of the eastbound through lane to a shared through and left turn lane among any other improvements needed. The study indicated that the eastbound left turn vehicles experienced some delay for a short period of time between 6:00 PM and 6:30 PM. and have normal operation the rest of the day.

The Department requested Mr. Bob Williams with Miami-Dade County Public Works Department Signs & Signals Division to add more green time to the eastbound left turn movement during the evening peak hour and he did. Additionally, the County monitored the intersection during evening peak hour to see if any further modifications were warranted. The Department and County were strongly against the idea of changing the lane assignment due to the negative impact on the through traffic along the eastbound approach and along Brickell Avenue.

Furthermore, the Department is in the process of improving the intersection through a project including the installation of a signal head mounted on a pedestal in the island located at the southeast corner facing northbound traffic to heighten driver's awareness of the approaching signal and narrow the northbound two right turn lanes to one right turn lane with the proper signage to reduce the exposure of pedestrians to potential vehicular conflicts. These improvements will be implemented once plans are completed and work-load permits.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to have investigated this matter for you. Should you require additional assistance or information, please call us at the above number.

Sincerely,

Khalil Maarouf  
Traffic Operations



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# Hurricane Preparation for Brickell

By Commissioner Carlos A. Gimenez, District 7, Miami-Dade County

With hurricane season 2006 just weeks away, Miami-Dade County continues to try to recover from the historic 2005 season. While experts may not agree on why hurricane activity is increasing, they do agree that we are in a cycle of increased activity and that this cycle will continue for upwards of 20 to 30 years.



The County has tried to take lessons learned from this past season to better prepare for next season. One of the most

important messages we need to get across to our citizens is *“be prepared for three days.”* That means that every resident should make sure to have three days worth of food, water, and fuel. Self-sufficiency is necessary for 72 hours, so that government can assess damage and need, and begin distribution of assistance.

As we saw numerous times last year, the government’s resources after storms are limited. In the case of a catastrophic event, such as Katrina in the Gulf Coast, the more people are able to be self-sufficient, the more that limited government resources can be focused on those who have been truly devastated by the loss of property, injuries, etc., or on those most vulnerable, such as the elderly and disabled.

In order for people to be self-sufficient, they must have electric-

ity. To this end, my colleagues and I on the Board of County Commissioners passed an ordinance requiring all gas stations to install generators so they will be fully functional in the aftermath of storms. These must be in place by August 1st. As we have seen, when gasoline is not readily available because there is no power to pump it, panic buying ensues creating long lines.

For the longer term, we need to consider how we can strengthen our infrastructure. For example, Hurricane Wilma, when it struck Miami-Dade County, caused electrical outages for more than 98 percent of our residents. Consider that the experts are saying that Hurricane

Wilma was only a Category Two storm when it swept across our community.

I have been vocal in my belief that Florida Power and Light must consider alternatives to the current power line structure that provides service to almost half of all county residents – including the conversion to underground lines. I believe that this is not just an issue of convenience, but of public

**“One of the most important messages we need to get across to our citizens is *‘be prepared for three days.’*”**

safety. In addition to minimizing the risk of accidental electrocution, underground lines can often allow power to be restored more quickly in widespread outages. This again ties into my belief that our residents need to be as self-sufficient as possible so that our limited resources can be focused on those with the greatest needs. •



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# An Update from Dr. Martin Karp, Miami-Dade School Board District 3

*Dr. Martin Karp was elected to Miami-Dade County Public School's Board in November 2004 for District 3, which encompasses the BHA community. He is "our" School Board Rep, and is quite interested in being in touch with BHA on any needs or concerns we have relating to education. Dr. Karp provided BHA Directors with a state-of-the-schools update and details of his many initiatives in his short tenure on the board. He has worked in particular in the areas of after-school programs, lifelong learning, child abuse and internet safety, and study-abroad programs. He is also keenly interested in finding ways to encourage more graduating students to pursue careers in education.*

*Dr. Karp also talked specifically about MDCPS and the Brickell area, and how the district is preparing to meet the changing educational needs in our diverse, growing city.*

## Growth and its impact on the Brickell corridor

A discussion of public schools in Miami-Dade County would be incomplete without a conversation about growth and student stations.

The area generally south of the Miami River and east of I-95, which comprises the Brickell corridor, is experiencing unparalleled growth as part of the City of Miami's physical and economic rebirth. With projects at the planning, permit application or construction stages, the City of Miami has estimated that an additional 18,000 units may come on line over the next five to seven years in this area alone, bringing renewed vitality to an already desirable high-rise,



**“Currently the District is working with builders to consider adding primary learning facilities in new developments. ...enable residents with young children to receive a high quality public school education within the same building as their residence.”**

high end residential market.

The Miami-Dade County Public Schools District has been working closely with City of Miami staff to ensure that as this new residential development takes place, adequate public school facilities are available to accommodate the projected increase in the number of students. Based on current projections, the estimated 18,000 new units could generate approximately

1,500 elementary students, 830 middle school students and 970 senior high school students for an approximate total of 3,300 students at all three levels.

Presently, the Brickell area is served by Southside Elementary, Shenandoah Middle and Booker T. Washington Senior High School. The District's Five-Year Capital Plan provides for construction of a new elementary and middle school to accommodate the anticipated growth, with no additional need projected at the senior high level for the coming five-year period given that the senior high school has low enrollment figures and is underutilized.

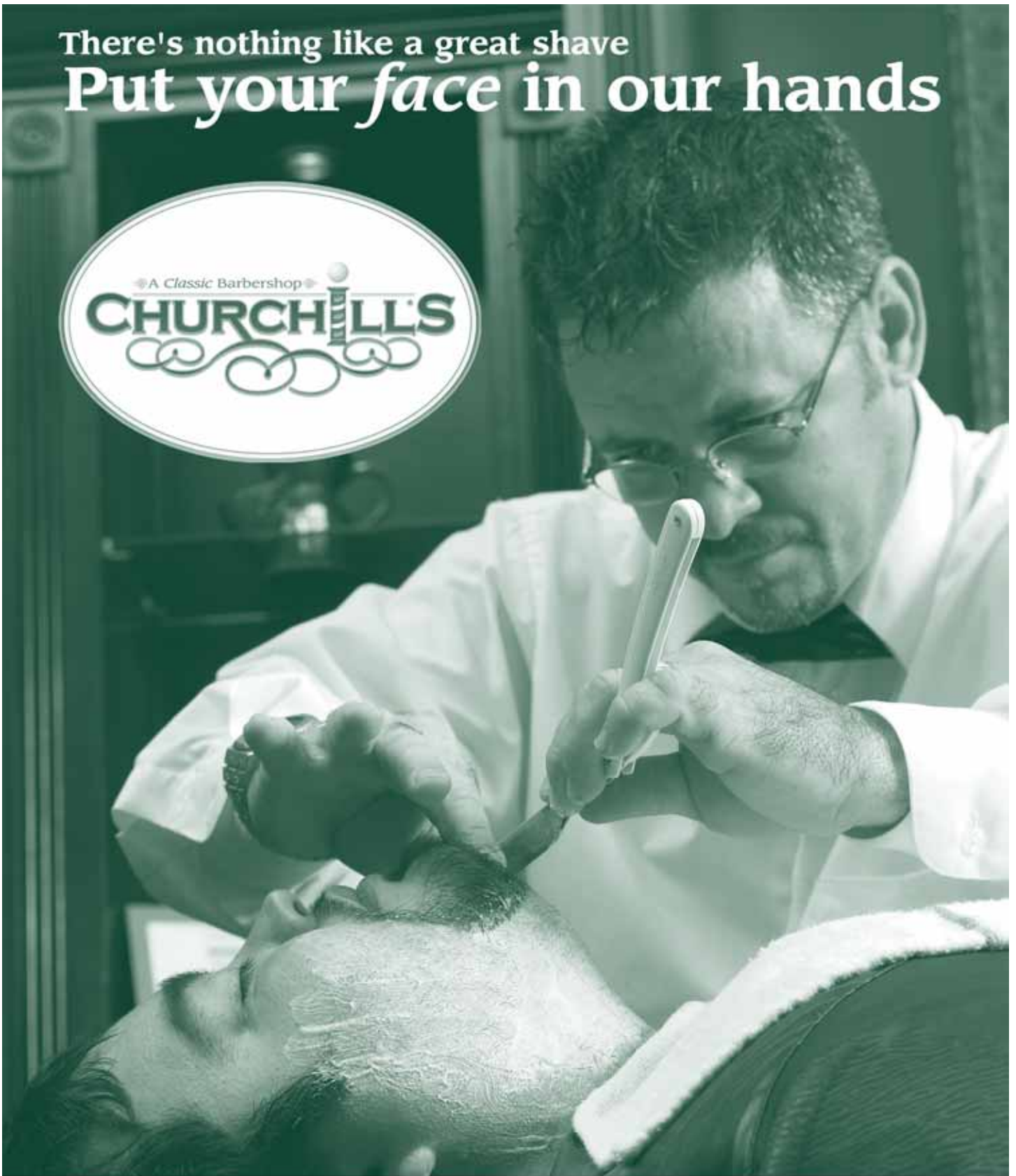
High-rise living is still a fairly new and non-traditional choice for families with children in Miami-Dade; therefore, the District will continue to closely monitor the proposed building activity in this area, as well as school enrollment patterns, to ensure that proposed new school projects continue to be a good match and are responsive to the demand.

Finally, Miami-Dade County Public Schools is seeking innovative ways to add student stations in areas where land for schools is scarce. Currently the District is working with builders to consider adding primary learning facilities in new developments. This initiative deserves support. Ultimately, the results of these efforts will enable residents with young children to receive a high quality public school education within the same building as their residence. •

*For the full text of Dr. Karp's update, please see the News section at our website: [www.brickellhomeowners.com](http://www.brickellhomeowners.com)*

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# A Vision for the Brickell Community

By Robert Green, BHA Associate Member 1550 Brickell Avenue

Our company developed the 1550 Brickell rental community in the late 80's, and we continue to own it. Before addressing my vision for the future of South Brickell (south of 15th Road), let me first describe the significant changes that have occurred in the Brickell area during the past two decades.

**“...it is not too late for us to improve our neighborhood and, in the process, improve property values in South Brickell.”**

In the late 1980's, Brickell's primary commercial hub was at 8th Street, as three or four office towers had been recently completed. Brickell Key was just beginning to be developed, and there was virtually no residential development north of 15th Road. Also, most of the blocks just north of 15th Road were substantially undeveloped, as that area was considered to be inferior and at the wrong end of Brickell. The recently demolished Sheraton was the only quality hotel on this side of the River.

Although the changes in North Brickell (north of 15th) have been profound during this time, the changes in South Brickell have been

*The opinions contained herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect viewpoints held by BHA. Readers are invited to send in their comments related to the neighborhood or condominium living that may be of interest to Brickell residents.*

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very few. In my opinion, we are no longer THE Brickell residential location, as Brickell Key and other North Brickell waterfront sites are now the best residential locations in the city, and the redevelopment of the Sheraton site promises additional high-end development close to the River. Meanwhile, the buildings in South Brickell are typically showing their age and our sales prices are dwarfed by those in the newer developments.

Although it was inevitable that much of the newer development would move north, as that is where the vacant and under-developed land existed, it is not too late for us to improve our neighborhood and, in the process, improve property values in South Brickell. In order to do so, however, we must embrace

shops, banks, restaurants and health clubs. Yet, the planning process in our neighborhood (South Brickell) has lagged that of North Brickell because we don't relate in a meaningful way to that significant and growing hub. For example, there is a relative dearth of residential development in our neighborhood which abuts (or is in close proximity to) this 15th Road hub. From a planning standpoint, that is not ideal because walking should be encouraged at such activity centers. Like all great cities, Brickell is becoming a walking city and we in South Brickell need to share in that very positive experience.

Regardless of how and why we got here, the simple fact remains that North Brickell has many excit-



A look down the west side of Brickell Avenue.

the changes which have occurred around us and then develop a plan for improving our neighborhood. One such example is that the area around 15th Road has encountered significant development, thereby providing an appealing gateway to our community complete with

ing new buildings while we have many older, undistinguished buildings, especially on the West side of Brickell, and very few vacant sites for new development. But, all is not lost, as our community could, with appropriate zoning, become every bit as exciting as North Brickell

while retaining its exclusively residential character.

While my comments relate primarily to the west side of Brickell, they could also relate to some of the older buildings on the east side of Brickell. Please understand that I am not suggesting that all of the

**“We have all heard our community leaders talk about how much they care about preserving our communities and I cannot think of anything that would build on that notion like a community center.”**

existing low rise buildings on the west side of Brickell be replaced with high rise buildings, but I am suggesting that a more generous zoning code, which calls for mostly mid-rise buildings, would stimulate new projects, thereby providing a huge upgrade to our community and provide a more fitting complement to the high rises to the east.

While there seems to be some level of agreement among community leaders that the development on the west side of our community is hugely inferior to that on the east, and should be improved, the solution has been elusive. One explanation could be that our political leaders have been unwilling to bat-

tle area homeowners as it is assumed that they might vigorously oppose any zoning change to the west side of Brickell. Although that assessment may be accurate, it is hard to believe that proper development of our populous South Brickell community could be thwarted by so few when no legitimate argument can be made in opposition to such a modified zoning plan.

There is one more idea which would greatly improve our South Brickell community and I feel certain that neighbors would be supportive. Specifically, Simpson Park could become a huge potential asset for our community if it were transformed into an active park instead of leaving it as a wooded, sleepy park which is poorly utilized. Although that change by itself would be a huge improvement for our community, I would suggest that we take it a step further by seeking to include a community center in that park, much like the facility that exists on Key Biscayne or, to a lesser extent, like they have



Simpson Park remains closed due to the 2005 hurricanes.

at the Coral Gables Youth Center. We have all heard our community leaders talk about how much they care about preserving our communities and I cannot think of anything that would build on that



The three types of homeowners in the neighborhood captured here looking east from South Miami Avenue: a single family home in the foreground, the five-story apartment building under development behind and Santa Maria in the background.

notion like a community center. If this idea were floated to the political leadership, we would undoubtedly hear legitimate concerns about the cost of such a facility but, in response, I would point out how common it is for cities, including ours, to exact financial commitments from developers for such community needs. There may also be money available from Park Impact Fees, which have been collected from developers for some time now.

Communities don't just become great, we have to make them great. Sometimes, inertia or political fears dictate how cities develop. But, collectively, we have so much at stake, and I think that the time may be right to ensure that growth in our city includes us. By embracing this vision, our community will be better and so will our neighborhood. Let's work together to make it happen! •

# Neighborhood Updates



## First Presbyterian Church Receives Preservation Award

In April the Dade Heritage Trust honored the BHA Associate Member, First Presbyterian Church of Miami, 609 Brickell Avenue, with the Hall of Fame Award at its Preservation Awards Ceremony. This award is presented to an historic building that has preserved its architectural integrity and original use. Past awardees include Vizcaya, the Biltmore, Gusman Cultural Center, Trinity Cathedral, Venetian Pool, Central Baptist Church, the Barnacle, and Cape Florida Lighthouse. Congratulations to First Presbyterian! •

## Brickell History Marked, Remembered

The Fort Brickell historical marker in front of the Santa Maria was restored after the hurricanes last fall, thanks to the help of Michael Harned, manager for Santa Maria.

Not everyone knows that during the Spanish-American War many Miamians feared an invasion by Spain.

The U.S. Government erected a fortification to defend the land, "Fort Brickell," marked at the 1600 block of Brickell Avenue. •



## BHA Thanks Haydee Regueyra

Haydee Regueyra, Coral Way NET Administrator for several years which encompasses BHA, has been reassigned to Coconut Grove, and will be missed by many. Haydee was always responsive to all our questions, and worked toward finding the answers and solutions. We thank her for her dedication and professionalism. We also look forward to working with Liza Walton, who is the new Administrator for Coral Way NET. •

## Bike Safety Comments

BHA has been working with city and county officials on bicycle safety in response to pedestrian complaints about cycles on Brickell sidewalks and near-misses between walkers/joggers and cyclists. Limiting bikes to the west side, improving bike path and "yield to pedestrian" signage have been discussed as possible ways to improve roadway and sidewalk safety for all users.

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your comments below, or to [www.brickellhomeowners.com](http://www.brickellhomeowners.com) for the Bike Safety online form.

### From the Inbox on Sidewalk Safety

*“The fact that there is no shoulder on Brickell for bicyclists to ride on is the major problem. I both run and bike on Brickell and stay on the sidewalk with my bike because the speed of the traffic and their lack of respect for bikes leaves me no option. No one in their right mind would allow their children to ride on that road. The sidewalk has plenty of room EXCEPT where they put the stupid bus benches smack in the middle instead of*

*setting them towards the back of the sidewalk (especially the one by 25th Road).*

*Both pedestrians and bicyclists need to exhibit more respect for one another (I always say “on your left or right”; but even with this I can get dirty looks and remarks. A campaign to promote understanding on both sides, by asking the bicyclists to announce their passing and making pedestrians aware of the safety factor of using the sidewalk over Brickell might help the situation.”*

*Thank you,  
Jerri Halgowich, Brickell Mar*

The latest news is that City and County consultants have found a way to create a bike path on South Miami Avenue and that there is joint City/County funding in place. Currently, the City has dismissed the notion of prohibiting bikes on Brickell Avenue sidewalks as the legal department determined they don't have justification for the ban. The City has said they will add signage asking the riders to yield to pedestrians, as the BHA resident below suggests.

BHA is collecting comments from pedestrians, cyclists and other neighbors about sidewalk safety and all uses can comfortably, safely co-exist. Please share

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## Brickell Avenue Bicycle Incident Form

Have you had any encounters with bicycles on the sidewalks of Brickell Avenue where your personal safety or comfort level were compromised? BHA is seeking to ensure the safety of all who use the sidewalks including pedestrians, joggers, walkers with baby strollers or dogs, wheelchair users, and cyclists. Please provide a brief statement of your experience(s) for our research into the matter.



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Description of what happened - where you were, time of day, etc.

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Comments on anything related to Brickell Avenue safety: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please fax the report back to BHA at (305) 446-5491 Or, mail to BHA at the address on the back cover. The Bicycle Incident Form may also be completed online: [www.brickellhomeowners.com/bikes.html](http://www.brickellhomeowners.com/bikes.html) **Thank You!**



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