

Coral Gables news

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Streetscape project begins in Downtown Coral Gables

BY HELEN LEMUS

What many in the City Beautiful have been anticipating finally has arrived. Construction has begun on Coral Gables famed Miracle Mile in an ambitious project that will change drastically the Mile and parts of Giralda Avenue for generations to come.

Streetscape has arrived, and as Mayor Jim Cason said at the Apr. 28 groundbreaking ceremony, the city is set to "write a new chapter in its history."

The \$21.6 million enhancement to the Mile has the goal of creating a completely unique and artistic pedestrian-friendly Downtown Coral Gables in order to provide dramatic experiences for visitors shopping, dining and celebrating.

Construction began in mid-April with a projected 18-month timeline. It will span the area between Douglas Road (SW 37th Avenue) and LeJeune (SW 42nd Avenue) on Miracle Mile and between Galiano and Ponce de Leon on Giralda.

Crews began by pruning trees and removing roots and sick trees. Next, there will be the paving which will be done in phases so that the Mile will not be affected all at once. Businesses are set to remain open and attractive signage will be on hand to direct visitors to their destinations.

Maria Olivares of Maru's Corner, a boutique located on the Mile, remains upbeat about the



Residents, city representatives and members of the Streetscape team dig in for the groundbreaking ceremony.

construction.

"It's ultimately for the best," Olivares said. "Although it will be hard for a while, in the end it will benefit us all."

Area merchants were invited to an information meeting held at the Actors' Playhouse and hosted by Barbara Stein on Apr. 25.

"It is critically important to work with our

great partnership with this team to create a downtown that will be a premier shopping and dining destination," Marina Foglia, executive director of the Business Improvement District (BID), told attendees at the meeting.

According to Ramon Castillo Sr. from Ric-Man International, the company responsible for the construction, the architect has created an artistic masterpiece that likely will result in an award. It will be a scene that will be unique in the whole nation.

The sidewalks will be made from natural stone cut from sources in Spain and South America. On the stretch of Giralda, the effect will be enchanting. It is designed to mimic the effect of rain descending upon a pool of water. Above, there will hang rods of light that seem to streak towards the earth while the stone on the ground is arranged in circular patterns to create the effect of ripples in water.

As Castillo also explained, the company has everything planned to minimize any impact on the businesses in the area. Valet parking will be provided for the low cost of \$5 per day. A water truck will be on hand to minimize the dust. Window washers also will travel around the mile to clean up the dust.

"For decades our community has been preparing for this day," Mayor Cason said.

Now, the day has arrived.



Rendering of new Giralda Avenue streetscape