

Biscayne Green Will Turn Downtown Parking Lots Into Parks

BY RYAN YOUSEFI



Photo courtesy of Schwartz Media

Downtown Miami will become a bit greener to kick off

2017. Biscayne Green, a pop-up park and promenade project, will transform Biscayne Boulevard into a community gathering space this week.

Parking lots across from the InterContinental, Bayfront Park, and Bayside will host the project, where the public will be able to enjoy free events and entertainment in a newly green space January 6 through 26.

Biscayne Green is meant to give the 90,000 residents of downtown and the more than 235,000 who commute there a vibrant place to enjoy nature and the related perks that make Miami one of the most beautiful places in the world.

“Spanning 20 days and featuring more than 20 events, Biscayne Green will have something for everyone,” says Miami Commissioner and Miami Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Chairman Ken Russell. “While it’s designed to entertain, it will also help reveal what can be achieved when we put people first and prioritize quality of life at the street level.”

The temporary project is part of the DDA's long-term plan to revamp Biscayne Boulevard between SE First and NE Sixth Streets. The idea is to change the area into a more useful space. The DDA hopes to transform existing median parking into a grand pedestrian promenade or “People Place” akin to the Embarcadero in San Francisco or Las Ramblas in Barcelona.

In addition to adding a green space to downtown, Biscayne Green is meant to show that when people put their minds to it, they really don't need as much space for traditional roads. The DDA philosophy is that the future is

in public transit, and the only way to accommodate increased growth is to adapt to the overwhelming increase in population South Florida continues to see annually.

“Downtown Miami has experienced a nearly 150 percent increase in population over the past 15 years, with the majority of these new residents falling between the ages of 20 and 44,” says DDA Executive Director Alyce Robertson. “This young demographic overwhelmingly favors public transit over traffic, connectivity and public space over sprawl, and community experiences over material accumulation.”



Photo courtesy of Schwartz-Media

For now, the proposal will include repurposing four vehicle lanes – up to two lanes in each direction – providing an area large enough for pedestrians, bicycle paths, and multipurpose space for happenings such as live music, art shows, and food truck events. In all, 101 parking spaces and two traffic lanes will be transformed into Biscayne Green.

The festivities get underway Friday, January 6, with the Biscayne Green Grand Opening Get-Down offering handcrafted cocktails, food, live music, and art.

Some of the highlights during Biscayne Green's 20-day stay include a movie session, Biscayne Screen, January 8, when movies will be shown and free popcorn, empanadas, and blankets will be given out; an Out of Office - Coffee and Wi-Fi session January 11 from 9 to 11 a.m., with snacks and coffee; and Baila on Biscayne from January 12 through 19 from 7 to 10 p.m., with alfresco music and dancing. At Taste of Downtown January 14 from 6 to 10 p.m., attendees can enjoy specialties from some of the area's hottest culinary masters. And Brunch on the Green, January 15 and 22 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., lets patrons sip mimosas and nibble on brunch offerings from local foodie hot spots.

According to event organizers, Biscayne Green may be temporary, but the goal is to build long-term infrastructure that provides a walkable environment. Foot traffic, they say, will stimulate the downtown economy and elevate Miami to world-class status.