



PAVING THE WAY

Trucks may soon roll in and out of Miami's Bicentennial Park carrying arsenic-tainted soil, which wouldn't be suitable for land that may soon house the city's two state-of-the-art museums. P4

Park cleanup making way for \$500 million museums

BY OSCAR PEDRO MUSIBAY

Sixty to 75 trucks a day may soon roll in and out of Bicentennial Park, their bellies full with arsenic-tainted soil that wouldn't be suitable for land that would house Miami's two state-of-the-art museums.

The hauling would be part of a \$2.3 million contract to remove as much as 20,000 tons of soil, but that's only if the dirt tests positive, said Kip Trexel, project executive with Suffolk Construction, which is overseeing the cleanup of the onetime fueling center and landfill.

Tons of dirt that tested positive for both arsenic and petroleum have already been removed. Bulldozers are currently working on the northern portion of the site, which is being renamed Museum Park as part of its transformation into the home for both the Miami Art Museum (MAM) and the Miami Science Museum. Its recent history has included stints as a Grand Prix racetrack, a stop on the Lollapalooza Tour and a seasonal home for Cirque du Soleil.

But, if the city is lucky, the majority of the dirt won't test positive, which would drive down costs to the city's community redevelopment agency, which has dedicated \$2 million to the project. The luck could also go the other way for the cash-strapped city, with the majority of the soil being contaminated and the cleanup costs exceeding the \$2.3 million contract price.

So far, early indicators are that the project may cost less than initially expected, Trexel said. "My gut feeling is that the price is going to go down."

Tampa-based WRScompass is the subcontractor on the job, with former city of Miami chief engineer David Mendez as the company's on-site representative. He said the job is supposed to be completed by no later than Oct. 31, in preparation for infrastructure work.

MAM Director Thom Collins said the cleanup is the first step in a construction process that will solidify the city's cultural and artistic foundation, which is highlighted by international events like Art Basel.

"MAM's formal groundbreaking will take place shortly thereafter, with delivery of the building set for 2013," he said. "Our chief priority is completing this project on time and on budget."

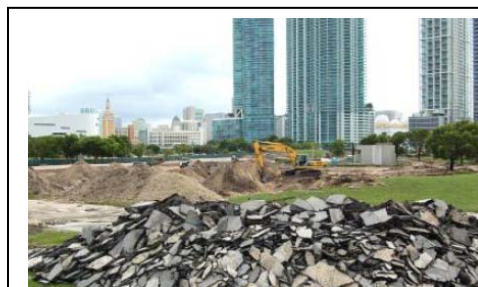
Neisen Kasdin, vice chairman of the Miami Downtown Development Authority, an advocacy organization for business owners, has said that the park's redevelopment is another important underpinning to the city's urban evolution, spurred by the development of thousands of condominiums in the downtown core.

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MAM, the first to start construction of its facility, has raised more than \$45.5 million in private donations toward the \$200 million project. That fundraising threshold makes it eligible for funding through Miami-Dade County's Building Better Communities general obligation bond.

Miami Science Museum has raised more than \$20 million in pledged donations from its board toward the \$300 million project, which could start construction next summer.

The museums will share a 440-space underground parking garage, with each of the projects going their own way once the parking and piling work is done.



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