

As rainy season advances, flooding work on Brickell delayed

By ZACHARY S. FAGENSON

Work to help reduce flooding on Brickell Avenue won't start until later this month, Downtown Development Authority officials say.

The \$1 million project's start date was pushed from June to late August due to construction complications.

"I think they found some Florida Power & Light Company lines" under the construction area, said Alyce Robertson, the authority's executive director.

The project, which also includes streetscaping and irrigation work, is part of the authority's multiyear plan to prevent flooding on Brickell Avenue and to make the surrounding area more pedestrian friendly.

And as it prepares its budget for fiscal 2009-2010, those living and working in Brickell have high hopes that the authority will dedicate a substantial slice to myriad improvements in the skyscraper-lined corridor.

"They need to be a little more even-handed with Brickell and do the en-

hancements they promised," said Miami Commissioner Marc Sarnoff, who represents the area.

Ms. Robertson said that along with its existing projects, the authority plans to work with the Beacon Council and the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau to help attract businesses to fill the wealth of office space set to come on line.

Those plans, however, may just rub salt in fresh wounds.

The authority has been widely criticized for collecting the lion's share of its revenues from Brickell businesses and returning little.

Ms. Robertson maintained that its responsibility is to "address all of the needs throughout [the authority's] area" which stretches from Northeast 24th Street to the Brickell business district's southern boundary at Southeast 15th Road and extends west to Southwest First Avenue.

But In 2007, Brickell businesses paid \$2.96 million in taxes to the authority, more than half of the \$5.4 million col-

lected, according to tax collection documents.

In 2006, the authority collected \$3.9 million, of which Brickell businesses paid \$2.02 million.

Even though the authority will present its budget to the Miami City Commission Sept. 24, Ms. Robertson said Tuesday she didn't have its 2008 revenues in hand.

Meanwhile, the city has upped its pledged of \$2 million to improve drainage around Mary Brickell Village to \$3 million.

But the day when first-floor businesses there will be able to stay open through a rainstorm hasn't made it onto anyone's calendar.

"The City has... agreed to prepare plans that address the drainage and deteriorated roads throughout the village area," Ms. Robertson wrote to Brickell Area Association President Randy Olen in a recent letter. "We are working with the City on getting a formal schedule as to when the plans and construction of this work will commence."

The city's project, along with the authority's \$1 million for improvements will hopefully push back the tide until the Florida Department of Transportation begins work on a \$7.6 million pump station on Southeast 13th Street and Brickell Avenue in 2011.

Mr. Olen, principal in Coral Gables-based HollyRealEstate's commercial division, said the authority's moves over the past year have been encouraging but that more needs to be done.

"I think the two major confirmations we need," he said, "are, number 1, the water issue on 12th Street and Brickell Avenue, which relates to the pumping station, and we've been promised that that is going to be solved, and number 2 is the approval from the Florida Department of Transportation to repave Brickell Avenue."

Brickellites, he added "need an even distribution [of money] and our proportionate share of improvements... They need to feel like they're being taken care of."