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Sarasota County marks Arbor Day by restoring historic tree walk

Sarasota County celebrates Arbor Day this year by marking the restoration of Phillippi Estate Park's Historical Tree Walk at the Edson Keith Mansion. Sarasota County Commissioner Joseph Barbetta will help dedicate the restored walk during a ceremony at the mansion, 5500 S. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, beginning at 9:30 a.m. Friday, April 24. The event includes a special tree planting and graphic displays for treescape projects that have been developed by the county as part of the infrastructure surtax program's economic stimulus initiative. The public is invited.

Phillippi Estate Park once included a canopied native tree walk that ran unbroken from U.S. 41 to the mansion. According to Demetra J. McBride, who manages the county's Urban Forestry program, storms, dredging, ownership changes and development all impacted the walk over time, with a virtual loss of the tree walk itself.

"In recent years, Sarasota County restored a number of pines throughout the property and replanted a short corridor of the tree walk from the sidewalk abutting U.S. 41," said McBride. "For Arbor Day, we are restoring the remainder of the tree walk to the mansion, using a native and naturalized tree palette that includes live oak, southern red cedar, slash pine and a buffer of green buttonwood along the banks of Phillippi Creek."

McBride said it was important to share graphics along with before-and-after photographs of current and developing projects. "Arbor Day occurs once a year to celebrate a national sensibility, knowledge and environmental culture that is practiced every day in Sarasota County," said McBride. "We plant first for function, and second for aesthetics. The function may be to stabilize property values in an underserved community, or to promote air and water quality, or serve as a green corridor for the health and vitality of wildlife."

Projects that will be introduced at the Arbor Day ceremony on April 24 include:

- A green infrastructure project in Venice that combines street trees and bioswales
- Recently-completed “place-making” projects on Oak and Palm Terrace in Sarasota (these projects create a center of green space in a neighborhood, enhancing the neighborhood’s value, desirability and public health)
- An initiative for greening mass transit and shading sidewalks
- Future canopy roads and green gateways in Kensington Park in Sarasota
- Multiple treescape projects along U.S. 41
- Reforestation of several major roads in the southern part of Sarasota County

For more information about the event or Sarasota County’s Urban Forestry program, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000.

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