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NORTH MIAMI

Cleaning up the city may become a new priority

A 'clean team' to keep downtown North Miami tidy -- at a cost of \$431,000 a year -- will be discussed at a redevelopment meeting.

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Plans for a cleanup of North Miami's business district are moving ahead after business owners complained about dirty sidewalks and missing garbage cans.

The City Council, sitting as the redevelopment agency board, is scheduled to consider costs for the plan at a 5:30 p.m. meeting Tuesday in City Hall, 776 NE 125th St.

A "downtown clean team" of three people would clean up litter daily, pressure clean sidewalks once a month and maintain pavers, fountains and planters. Seasonal banners would go up and there would be new landscaping with foxtail palms, carpenteria, ficus and veitchia plants.

Four people, including a code enforcement officer and three workers, would be hired. The total cost is estimated at \$431,000 including salaries, trucks and other equipment.

Mayor Kevin Burns held a breakfast meeting Aug. 8 with business owners to discuss the plans.

"This was just to introduce the business community to what's going to be happening," said city spokeswoman Pam Solomon.

Volunteer students from Johnson and Wales University will also be enlisted for cleanup work, she said.

Business leaders have been clamoring for such a program, said Deborah Gray Mitchell, a photographer with studios on West Dixie Highway.

"We've been trying for years to get trash cans installed on West Dixie Highway," Mitchell said. "It just seemed like they were going to talk it to death. I could have pressure cleaned the sidewalk 10 times."

But Mitchell's frustrations were over more than just the time it was taking to get things done. She was also concerned about location.

"It just seems like all the efforts have been concentrated on 125th Street, but if you turn the corner there on Sixth Avenue by those bus stops, the sidewalks are piled high with bird poop."

Mitchell's business partner, Paul Morris, hosted the breakfast meeting to air the issue with city officials.

There are also plans for new bus benches, shelters and waste containers.

"I'm happy to see some direction, some strong push to do something," Morris said.