



Item: SP: A1

## STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Tuesday, February 19, 2013

**SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO RENAME HERITAGE PARK TO THE JOHN M. FREEMAN HERITAGE PARK.**

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### PROPOSED COMMITTEE ACTION

Review and recommend approval of a request to rename "Heritage Park" to the "John M. Freeman Heritage Park" to the Board of Trustees.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 1971, an area of the Boca Raton Campus of FAU near the Humanities Building was officially named "Heritage Park," and a historical marker was placed in the park, identifying some of those who contributed to its creation. The plaque does not mention Dr. John (Jack) M. Freeman, a faculty member of the Mathematics Department and the College of Science from 1964 to 1998, and emeritus professor from 1998 until his death on February 19, 2012. Dr. Freeman was the leader of the I-95 Tree Rescue Project team that preserved a large variety of beautiful, native Florida trees, later replanted in and around the Florida Atlantic University campus, including Heritage Park. These plantings continue to enhance the FAU campus even now, forty years later.

Beginning in the early 1970's, Dr. Freeman dedicated himself to the preservation and maintenance of native plants and trees, as well as a "natural" philosophy for the landscape architecture here at FAU. He referred to himself as an "old Floridian," and in 1971, he assembled a comprehensive team of faculty, staff, students, FAU alumni, students from Carver Junior High School in Delray Beach, the greater Boca Raton Community and officials around the State of Florida to lead a project to save natural trees of Florida due for destruction as the Boca Raton portion of I-95 was developed. One prominent member of his team was Sandra Bernstein, an FAU alumna from the Department of Mathematics and a long-time Boca Raton High School Mathematics teacher. Dr. Freeman further enlisted the support of the Arvida Corporation and Hardrives of Delray, Inc., who volunteered labor, machinery and expertise to the project. Circle K, the student affiliate of Kiwanis International, the FAU Student Government, and then FAU President Kenneth Williams provided financial support for Mr. Freeman's I-95 Tree Rescue Project. The State of Florida supplied bulldozers and foresters to assist in the supervision of the transplanting and pruning of these native Florida trees. Materials and moral support were also provided by then Governor

Reuben Askew and his cabinet. Hundreds of trees were taken from the pathway of I-95 in Boca Raton, and later from the site of La Fontana Condominiums on Highway A-1-A in Boca Raton. Thanks to Dr. Freeman, pine trees, scrub oaks, live oaks, saw palmettos, sable palms, gumbo limbos, maples, cypress and magnolia trees were planted across the FAU Boca Raton campus. Dr. Freeman ensured that a large number of the trees were arranged, especially in Heritage Park, in a way that simulates the natural growth of native trees in the forests of Florida.

Dr. Freeman's tireless efforts and heartfelt dedication in leading the I-95 Tree Rescue Project have led to countless hours, days and years of enjoyment for all who visit the FAU campus, starting in 1971 and continuing until his death in February, 2012. The Department of Mathematical Sciences and the Charles E. Schmidt College of Science request that Heritage Park be renamed the "John M. Freeman Heritage Park" to keep his memory alive as one of FAU's pioneer faculty members and preservationists and honor his efforts to provide a "natural and native" forest park for all of FAU's faculty, staff, students, visitors and community to enjoy. This honor would also be shared by the many faculty, staff, students, organizations and members of the community who contributed to the preservation of some of Florida's greatest natural and native trees that stand, thrive, and beautify our campus today and for many years to come.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN/DATE**

Upon approval by the Board of Trustees.

#### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

N/A.

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**Supporting Documentation:** N/A

**Presented by:** Mr. Dennis Crudele, Senior VP for Financial Affairs

**Phone:** 561-297-3267