

H I S T O R I C



Established
1945

VIRGINIA KEY BEACH PARK

MIAMI, FLORIDA

Paradise Renewed

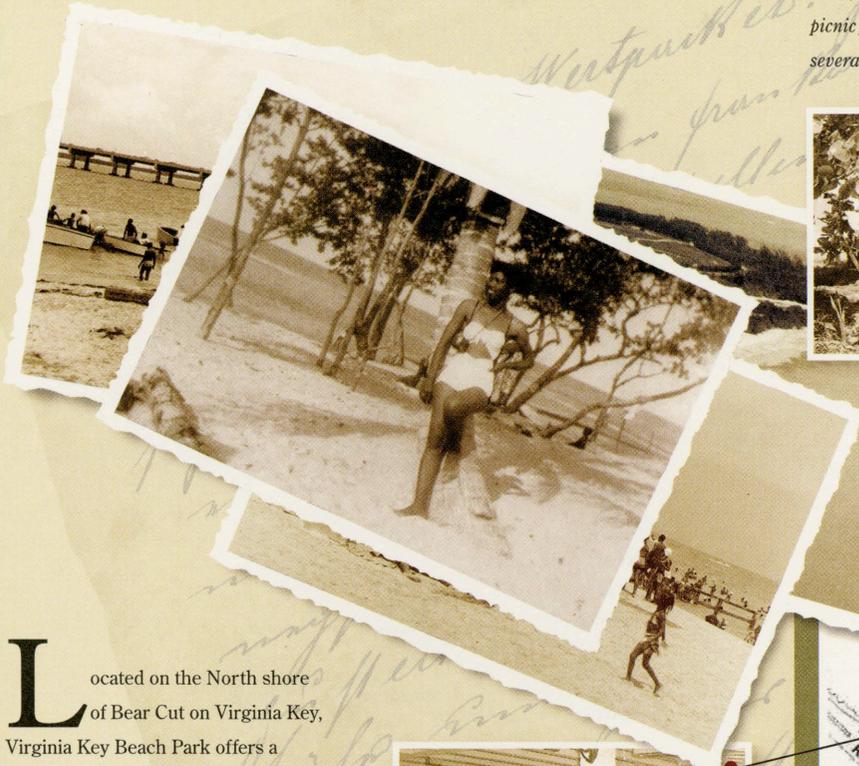
Grand Re-Opening

Dedication Ceremony-Ribbon Cutting-Press Conference

Friday, February 22, 2008
10:00 A.M.

THIS WAS THEN...

HISTORICAL VIRGINIA KEY BEACH PARK 1953

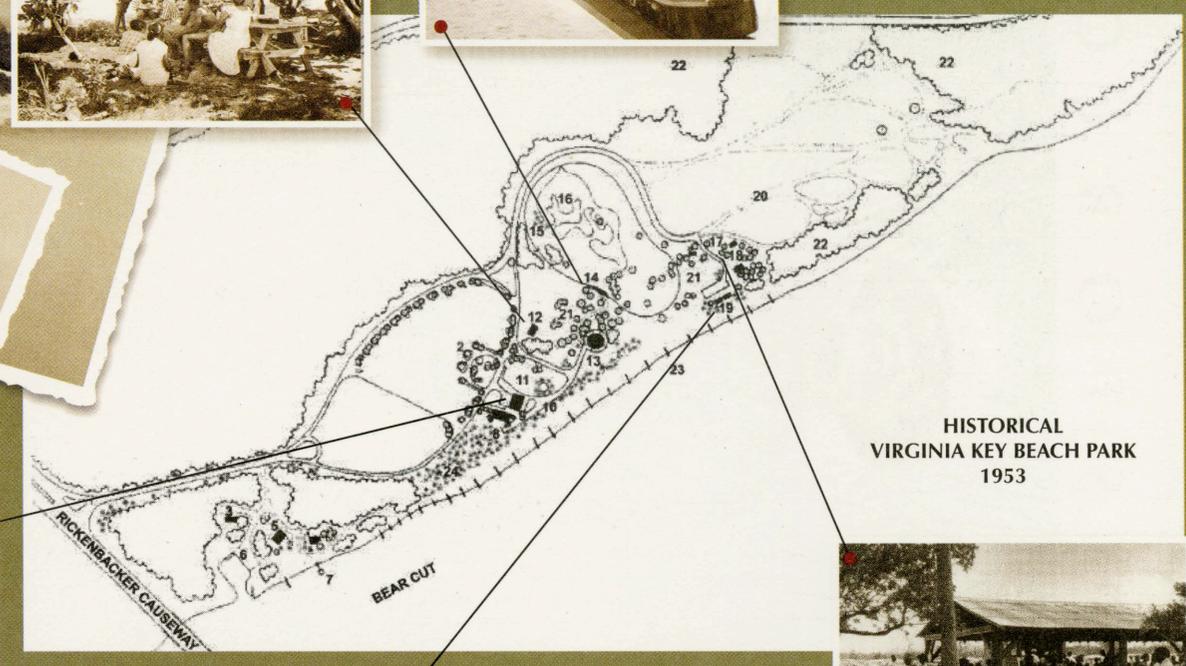


Located on the North shore of Bear Cut on Virginia Key, Virginia Key Beach Park offers a majestic view of the Atlantic Ocean and the placid waters of the blue Biscayne Bay ... Here at Virginia Beach the pleasure-seeker will find varied opportunities to enjoy the invigorating surf, sun bathing, cabana life, overnight apartments, family or organized picnics, wholesome food at reasonable prices, ample free parking, courteous beach guards and attendants, free dressing rooms and showers and scenic railroad... It is the plan of the Board of County Commissioners to expand the facilities at Virginia Beach as soon as it is practical, with the ultimate goal of creating a complete park for Negroes.

The difficulty of finding a picnic location for large organized groups has long been recognized, but happily, at Virginia Beach, the picnic facilities are sufficient to accommodate several hundred persons at a time.



For a thrilling ride, get aboard the narrow gauge railroad that will carry you happily on a trip along the beach and into the thickly wooded areas. Primarily designed to attract the youngsters, the miniature train often carries a capacity load of oldsters - reliving one of childhood's pleasant memories.



HISTORICAL VIRGINIA KEY BEACH PARK 1953



Refreshments, cold drinks and beach accessories are available at the large refectory at reasonable prices. At Virginia Beach, as at all other Dade County Parks, all sales are handled by the park department and not by concessionaires.

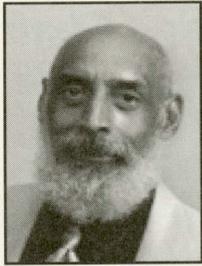


Twelve modern cabanas, equipped with shower stalls, beach chairs and awning porches, are grouped on the East end of the park. These cabanas are for daytime use only, and may be leased, for any number of days.



Shelters for large organized picnics may be reserved through the park office or by telephoning. Besides the individual barbecue grills, a large 20 x 6 foot barbecue pit is available for large groups.

Messages of Greeting;



Gene Tinnie, Chair

I am blessed with the distinct honor, on behalf of my fellow Trustees, the Virginia Key Beach Park Trust staff, and the community at large, of welcoming you to a history-making day in Paradise, the Grand Reopening of Historic Virginia Key Beach Park after some twenty-five years of being closed, and to these beautiful, restored 82+ acres of citizen-owned land that will remain henceforth open for public use and enjoyment. This Reopening of this treasured location, which has been aptly described as "a sacred site," and "a place of freedom," truly represents, in its past, present and future, triumphs of the human spirit in the face of adversity and daunting challenges. None of this could not have been possible without broad support from many segments of the community, in outstanding cooperation with elected officials and staff at the Federal, State, County, and especially City levels.

In this regard, we must pause to remember two individuals who were absolutely vital to the success of this project, and whose spirits are forever embodied in this sacred place, even though they are no longer physically present amongst us. The late City of Miami Commissioner Arthur E. Teele, Jr., will always be remembered for his vision and leadership in bringing the efforts of a disparate coalition of concerned citizens to fruition by drafting the necessary Resolutions and Ordinances that he and his fellow commissioners passed into law and ultimately established the Trust which was necessary to carry the actual work of restoration and reopening forward. Nor can enough be said about our late beloved community matriarch, former City Commissioner and Founding Chairperson of the Trust Mrs. M. Athalie Range, who in her final years embraced the community's vision for this site and led the effort as only she could. The widespread respect in which she was held by people of all tiers of society, and the wisdom and tenacity that were the hallmarks of her life were vital in garnering the funding and support without which none of what we are celebrating today could ever have been possible.

As might be expected, the list of persons who deserve to be thanked publicly for their own critical roles in making this effort a success would be long enough to fill volumes, such was the nature of this extraordinary coming together of diverse people around a common cause. These include past and present City and County Commissioners and a host of friends and allies. A few names, at the risk of being unfair to the many not mentioned, must be given due recognition. Among these are Dr. Gregory Bush, former County Commissioner Dr. Barbara M. Carey Shuler, Mrs. Mabel Miller, Mr. Robert Weinreb and Ms. Nancy Lee, and, most recently National Football League legend Larry Little. Organizations like the Urban Environment League, Sierra Club, Tropical Audubon Society, Dade Heritage Trust, The Black Archives and the Historical Museum of Southern Florida, among numerous others, were also, and will always be, a crucial part of this success. And, of course, this is most especially true of the community itself – the "regular folks" whose knowledge, fond memories, and dedication to community betterment were the ultimate keys to reclaiming this special place and its stories for posterity.

Although today's Grand Re-opening represents a culmination of more than eight years of diligent work by all concerned, it also represents only the beginning of what will be. The vision for the future, born out of a successful planning charrette and several public meetings, includes a park-wide museum experience with a new museum structure on the site, which will bring to life both the natural and human history of this unique barrier island, in an environment of family fun and recreation. Appropriate special events and cultural experiences will not only attract global audiences but also provide valuable support and funds for the museum and park maintenance. A classic merry-go-round, comparable to the original, will be installed as a companion amusement ride to the Mini-Train, just as in the Park's historic heyday. In addition to these historic renovations and replications, a new Nature Center will be built, greatly enhanced by the improvements of the adjacent wetland area being restored by Miami-Dade County Department of Environmental Resources Management (DERM), which will include a wildlife observation boardwalk. All of these developments will be carried out with a strong commitment to clean-and-green environmental sensitivity.

In short, Historic Virginia Key Beach Park (HVKBKBP) will be a unique experience in all the world, serving not only Miami's residents and visitors, but also serving as a model for the rest of the nation and the world. May this very special place be enjoyed for many generations to come.



David L. Shorter, Executive Director

Historic Virginia Key Beach Park is a treasured living legacy of land, history and beauty which integrates the rich past and a vision of bright tomorrows. As we re-dedicate this remarkable site at the close of Black History Month, it is appropriate to mention the long standing story of Historic Virginia Key Beach as a place of freedom--

Freedom sought, as illustrated by the Seminoles defending their land, *freedom found* as when the early African American community served as the founding builders of the City of Miami, *freedom denied* as in the way these African Americans established their own informal recreational area before it was officially sanctioned and *freedom triumphant*, the end result of dedicated people acquiring an exclusive public park for people of color during the segregation era which became known as Historic Virginia Key Beach Park.

After a 26 year closure and a multi-million dollar renovation of the grounds, we are pleased to close the first phase of our park restoration program by opening the gates of this magnificent green space to all people, everywhere. So, it is my profound wish is to see this great recreational facility be enjoyed, be nurtured and be preserved as an everlasting symbol of social justice and equality.

In Dedication of....



**M. Athalie Range, Founding Chair
(1915-2006)**

Humanitarian

Preservationist

Environmentalist

Civil Activist

Community Matriarch

Her Legacy:

Historic Virginia Beach Park owes its legacy to the late M. Athalie Range. When people a generation younger were retiring into senior citizen status, Mrs. Range took up the cause of saving Historic Virginia Key Beach Park from private development for an exclusive few.

Through her experience as a successful business leader in the African-American community and as a former City of Miami Commissioner, M. Athalie Range understood the profound and sacred historical significance of this unique recreational facility as an emblem of the universal human struggle for justice and equality.

Through Mrs. Range's energetic advocacy as part of the Virginia Key Beach Park Civil Rights Task Force and as the founding Chairperson of the Virginia Beach Part Trust, Historic Virginia Key Beach Park has evolved in many ways. It is an 'urban jewel' within an ever-changing city starved for green, open spaces. A wonderfully scenic beachfront with full public accessibility that is sensitive to the ecologically fragile barrier island it shares and, most of all, a treasured site that is deserving of its landmark status for preserving the history of the past.



Her Future Vision:

M. Athalie Range was among the first to express the dream of building an unique museum/cultural center at Historic Virginia Key Beach Park that would impart Miami's untold story, particularly, the many contributions of the local Afro-American population, as a legacy for future generations.

She advocated vigorously to secure support for the museum project from Miami-Dade County, the City of Miami, other agencies and the community-at-large but, most of all, Mrs. Range played a critical role in expressing her vision and enthusiasm to the competing architects who would ultimately devise the most visually and environmentally exciting concept.



Virginia Key Beach Park Trust

Mission Statement

The mission of the Virginia Key Beach Park Trust is to create and carry forward a community-based vision for the development and use of Historic Virginia Key Beach Park by: a) promoting and maintaining absolute public ownership and access; b) fostering its perpetuation as a passive open green-space which includes nature trails, recreational facilities and appropriate museum structures, all compatible with the natural environment of Virginia Key; c) honoring the rich social and civil-rights history of the site and of South Florida; and d) preserving the site as a valuable historical, environmental, educational and recreational resource to be enjoyed by posterity.

Timeline of Events

1945

Virginia Key Beach Park is officially dedicated as Miami's 'colored-only' beach.



1979

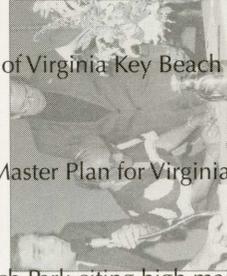
The County cedes ownership of the property to the City of Miami.

1982

The City of Miami closes Virginia Key Beach Park citing high maintenance costs.

1987

The City of Miami develops an extensive Master Plan for Virginia Key Beach Park.



1998

The City of Miami considers development of Virginia Key Beach Park for exclusive use.

1999

Commissioners establish the Virginia Key Beach Park Civil Rights Task Force.

2000

A public planning session is held to determine future uses for the historic property.

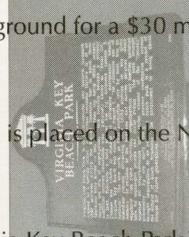


2000

Commissioners create the Virginia Key Beach Park Trust to manage the land.

2002

Historic Virginia Key Beach Park is placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

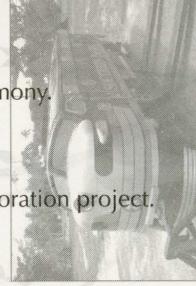


2003

Virginia Key Beach Park breaks ground for a \$30 million Master Plan/Restoration project.

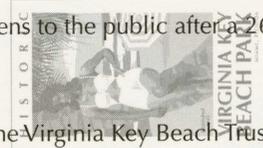
2006

The symbolic arrival of the mini-train is hailed at a special unveiling ceremony.



2006

M. Athalie Range, Founding Chair of the Virginia Key Beach Trust dies at age 91.



2008

Historic Virginia Key Beach Park re-opens to the public after a 26-year closure.

Dedication Cer

Music

Soothing Music by Florida Memorial Choral Ensemble

Presenter

David L. Shorter, Executive Director

Incantation

Mrs. Catherine "Hummingbird" Ramirez

Presentation of Colors

*Boy Scouts of America Troupe 204
Sponsored by American Legion Post 165
Pledge of Allegiance
Lift Every Voice & Sing*

Invocation

Bishop Victor T. Curry

Introductions/Recognitions

*Introduction of Mistress of Ceremony: Trina Robinson
Mrs. M. Athalie Range Highlight----Moment of Silence
Mr. Gene Tinnie (Chair)----Introduces Trustees/Tasks
Presentation of Proclamation by Office of Mayor Manuel A. Diaz
County Commissioner District 7, Carlos A. Gimenez
City Commissioner District 2, Marc Sarnoff*

Key Note Address

Reverend Dr. Joseph Lowery

Procession/Ribbon Cutting

Bahamian Junkanoo

Ending/Mingle/Tour

emony Agenda



Reverend Dr. Joseph Lowery, Key Note Speaker: Reverend Dr. Joseph Lowery is a minister and leader in the American civil rights movement. He was a Co-Founder, President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, former President of the Black Leadership Forum and worked with Campaign for America's Future, Citizen's for a Moratorium on Federal Executions and the NAACP. As pastor of Warren Street United Methodist Church in Mobile, Alabama, he helped lead the Montgomery boycott after the arrest of Rosa Parks in 1955. His property was seized in 1959 along

with that of other civil rights leaders (including Ralph Abernathy) by the state of Alabama as part of a libel suit but, the US Supreme Court ordered the suit reversed. At the request, of Martin Luther King, Lowery led the Selma-to-Montgomery civil rights march in 1965. He served as pastor of Cascade United Methodist Church in Atlanta until his retirement in 1992



Trina Robinson, News Anchor, Mistress of Ceremony: Emmy award winning journalist, Trina Robinson, has proven her talents to South Florida viewers as an experienced anchor, reporter and meteorologist. Robinson began working at NBC 6 in 1999 and has become one of WTVJ's most visible and versatile reporters. Her wide range of duties also includes being a weather anchor and co-host of *South Florida Today*. Robinson came to WTVJ from KYW in Philadelphia and has worked in Tampa, Orlando, Fort Myers, South Carolina and Virginia. Her commitment to news truly parallels her dedication to giving people information that can improve and even change their lives. Trina received

a BA degree from the College of Notre Dame in Baltimore, a graduate degree in Journalism and Public Affairs from the American university in Washington, D.C. and did her course work in Meteorology at Mississippi State University.

Lift Every Voice and Sing

Lift every voice and sing
till earth and heaven ring,
ring with the harmonies of liberty.

Let our rejoicing rise
high as the listening skies;
let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark
past has taught us;
sing a song full of the hope that the present
has brought us;
facing the rising sun
of our new day begun,
let us march on, till victory is won.

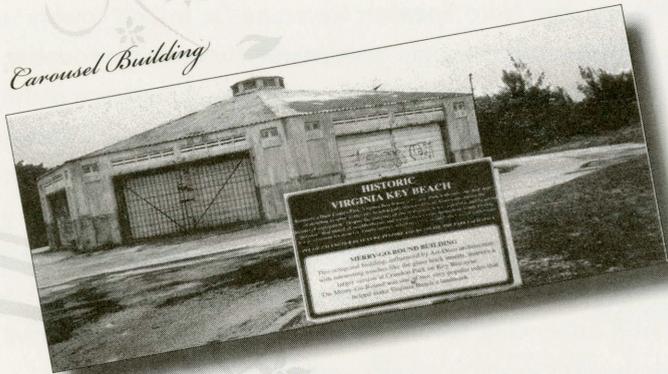
Stony the road we trod,
bitter the chastening rod,
felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
yet, with a steady beat,
have not our weary feet
come to the place for which our parents sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears

have been watered;
we have come, treading our path through
the blood of the slaughtered,
out from the gloomy past,
till now we stand at last
where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.
God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
thou who hast brought us thus far in the way;
thou who hast by thy might led us into the light;
keep us for ever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our
God, where we met thee;
lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the
world, we forget thee;
shadowed beneath thy hand
may we for ever stand,
true to our God, true to our native land.

Lyrics by James Weldon Johnson, 1899

Before

Carousel Building



Site of Negro Dance Pavilion



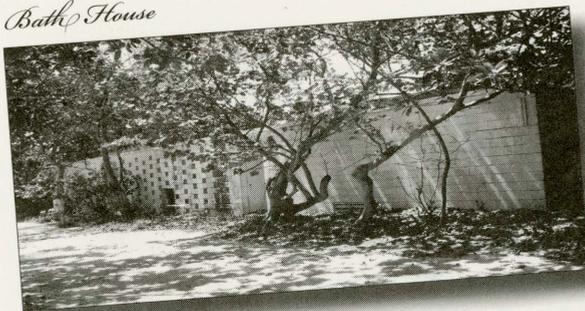
Concession Stand



Picnic Shelter



Bath House



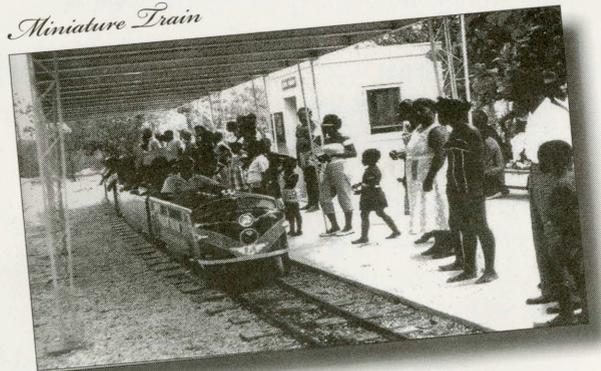
Parking Lot



Beach Pavilion



Miniature Train



After

Carousel Building



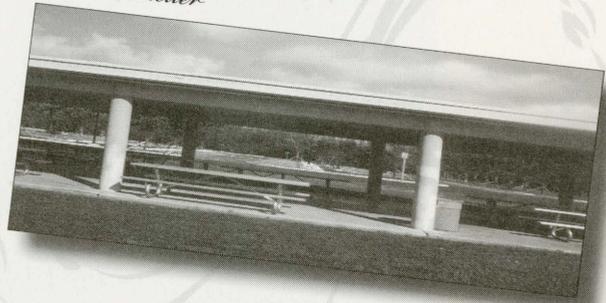
Site of Negro Dance Pavilion



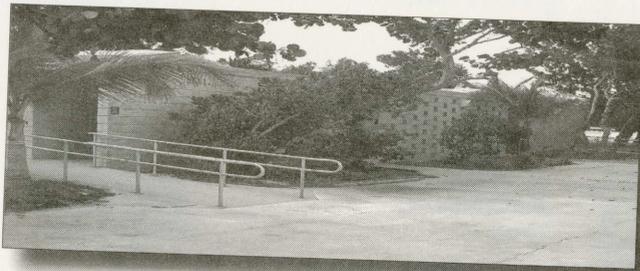
Concession Stand



Picnic Shelter



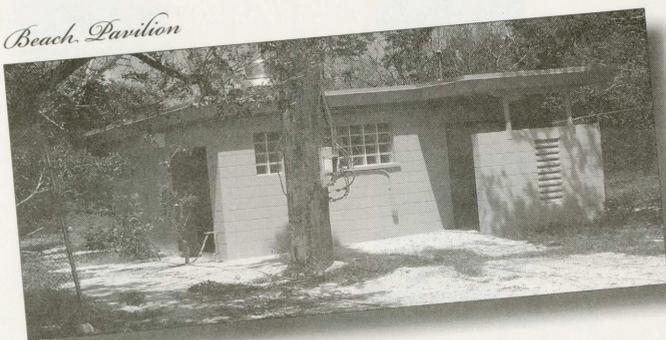
Bath House



Parking Lot



Beach Pavilion



Miniature Train



We Honor Our Distinguished Volunteer Members, Past And Present

The Virginia Key Park Civil Rights Task Force 1999

The Hon. Dr. Barbara M. Carey-Shuler
Miami-Dade County Commissioner

Dr. Dorothy Jenkins Fields
Black Archives History &
Research Foundation of South Florida, Inc.

Miguel Germain
Miami-Dade Public Schools

Clyde W. Judson, Jr.
Judson & Partners Architects

Maud Newbold
Retired Principal, Dade County Public Schools

Enid Curtis Pinkney
Dade Heritage Trust

M. Athalie Range, Chairperson
Former Miami City Commissioner

Garth C. Reeves
The Miami Times

The Hon. Beryl Roberts-Burke
Florida State Legislature

Bernice Sawyer
Miami Pioneer

Eugenia Thomas
Florida State Parent Teachers Association

Gene S. Tinnie, Vice-Chair
Miami-Dade Community College

Richard Townsend
Tropical Audubon Society

W. Mark Walters
Sierra Club/University of Miami

In addition to the officially appointed members, the Task Force has benefited greatly from the diligent volunteer assistance of numerous supporters, most notably the following:

**Gregory Bush, Ph.D. • Mike Deacon • Kelsey Dorsett
Patricia Ford • Nancy Lee
Claudia Peterson, Ph.D. • Robert Weinreb**

Virginia Key Beach Park Trust Board Members 2008



Gene Tinnie
Chair



Eugenia B. Thomas
Vice-Chair



W. Mark Walters
Secretary



Miguel A. Germain
Treasurer



Gustavo Godoy
Trustee



Erica McKinney, Esq.
Trustee



Maud Newbold
Trustee



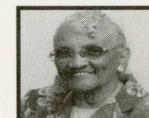
Enid C. Pinkney
Trustee



N. Patrick Range II, Esq.
Trustee



Bernice Sawyer
Life Trustee



M. Athalie Range
Founding Chair (deceased)



David L. Shorter
Executive Director

THIS IS NOW...

HISTORICAL VIRGINIA KEY BEACH PARK - CONCEPTUAL SITE PLAN



HISTORIC VIRGINIA KEY BEACH PARK

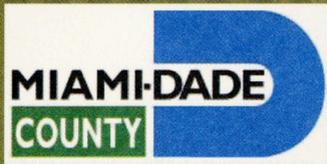
www.virginiakeybeachpark.net



◆ HISTORIC FEATURE



*Historic Virginia Key Beach Park gratefully acknowledges the contributions of its partners,
whose generous support has made the Paradise Renewed: Grand Re-Opening possible.*



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