

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Virginia Key Beach Park is not just another city park. Its future management and development have been the subject of an intense public involvement process that has involved every level of government from local to Federal and innumerable dedicated citizen activists, many of whom have devoted years to the protection and wise use of this unique parcel of public land. The park is one of a handful of places in Miami that people are willing to call sacred. The Virginia Key Beach Park Trust is thus charged with a unique mission: the stewardship of a park with extraordinary significance to our city and our nation as one of few sites dedicated to the commemoration of one of the nation's greatest and most humane accomplishments: the Civil Rights movement.

The master plan outlines the actions required to preserve and reuse Virginia Key Beach Park as a recreational setting and a natural resource with an educational and commemorative purpose. The park is recognized as a significant place within the context of the Civil Rights movement and the master plan provides a framework for establishing the park as a setting where the public can gain an appreciation of the goals and achievements of the Civil Rights movement. The park is also recognized as a significant vestige of the natural setting of the city of Miami and the master plan provides a framework for integrating into this setting a park program that reflects goals established by the public planning process. The park's natural resources will sustain a rare vestige of the region's unique animal and plant communities and contribute to the city's long term sustainability. The park will serve as a setting for education about both history and the natural environment. The park will play a role in meeting the recreational needs of the city as a whole and as a setting for cultural events. The Trust will face management issues related to each of these functions—commemoration of historic events, stewardship of natural and cultural resources, education, and recreation—and will share management duties with other public entities. Efficient and effective management of the park must be predicated on a clear understanding of how these duties are shared. As the word "trust" implies, the public will look to the Virginia Key Beach Park Trust to oversee and coordinate these activities:

Historic Preservation

Commemoration and Education

Recreation

Natural Resources

Operation & Support

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The goal of preservation of the historic site features – including both buildings and landscape setting – is to permit the public to place the events for which the site is recognized as significant into historical context. The character of the park during its period of significance was a joyful place of refuge and ease. Restoration of that setting will illustrate the achievement of one of the fundamental goals of the struggle for Civil Rights: the enjoyment of the inalienable right to the pursuit of happiness. The historic site features will provide an evocative setting for active recreational use and for the presentation of interpretive information that can illuminate the establishment of the park as a significant event in the Civil Rights movement. Proposed historic preservation measures are as follows:

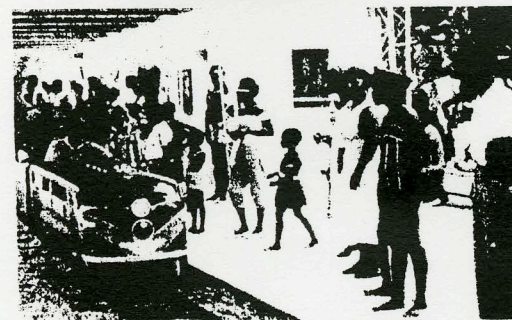
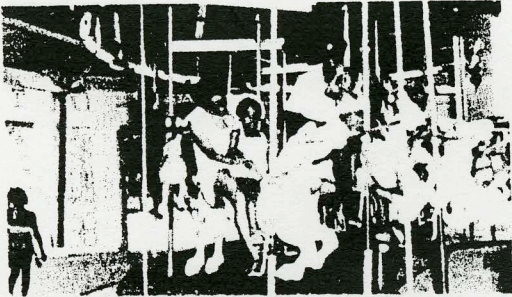
- Preserve and restore the landscape setting of the park and integrate new facilities and uses sensitively to protect the integrity of the setting
- Preserve and restore the existing historic structures and adaptively reuse each for its original function and to present interpretive information
- Recreate or reinterpret lost historic features within contemporary building code restrictions and use each for recreation and interpretation
- Incorporate interpretive text, period photographs and period artifacts into the park setting to provide visitors with information about the park's historic features, their use and popularity, their significance to the black community and the context of the park within American society during the period of significance

Recommendations for the preservation of the site reflect the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Preservation of Historic Structures and Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes* and are intended to safeguard the integrity of the Character Defining Features of the Landscape. Recommendations for preservation of the Character Defining Features of the Landscape are as follows:

SPATIAL ORGANIZATION AND LAND PATTERNS

Orientation of all park facilities to the Atlantic Ocean shoreline is a character defining site feature with both significance and integrity that should be preserved. In addition, the division of the park into distinct "outdoor rooms" by vegetation masses has significance and integrity and can also be preserved and restored. The "outdoor room" that was formed by the coconut grove along the park's shore was a significant element of its spatial organization, providing shaded seating and circulation areas along the shoreline with uninterrupted views of the water. This spatial configuration was critical to the recreational function of the park. The integrity of the grove has diminished with time. Shoreline seating areas created by clumps of Sea grape trees remain from the park's period of significance but have reduced integrity due to intrusion by exotic species. Erosion has caused the loss of shoreline vegetation in the eastern part of the site. The following treatment is recommended to preserve and restore the historic character of the site's spatial organization:

- Preserve orientation of all site facilities to the Atlantic Ocean by reestablishing the shoreline as a major circulation element
- Remove exotic species and reestablish shoreline vegetation in massing reflecting historic patterns
- Restore the coconut grove along the entire shoreline with a combination of native palm species and Coconut palms. Integrate the palm grove with native plant communities. (See Natural Resource Protection) Site picnic tables and grills similar to the standard park furnishings used during the park's period of significance throughout the grove to reestablish it as an "outdoor room"



The park's historic structures offer an opportunity to present the public with an accumulation of evocative glimpses of black life during the period of significance that can put the goals and accomplishments of the American Civil Rights movement into historical perspective. Period photographs can be displayed in the restored structures together with text panels and artifacts.

IEWS/BACKDROPS

Views of the Atlantic Ocean horizon, the absence of views of significant development and views of the natural character of the shoreline are among the site's most significant character defining features and should be preserved and restored. Uninterrupted views of the beach from the interior of the and the vegetated backdrops that define the park's northern boundary are significant character defining features that should be preserved and restored. Views of the beach park site within its undeveloped context from other vantage points are also important character defining site features that should be protected. The following treatment is recommended to preserve and restore the historic character of the site's views and backdrops:

- Stabilize vegetated backdrops by removal of invasive exotic species and replanting with appropriate native species
- Screen adjacent development with vegetation massing consistent with historic patterns
- Work with adjacent property owners to reduce and limit the visual impact of adjacent development
- Investigate the feasibility of scenic or conservation easements for critical visual backdrops

LANDMARKS/STRUCTURES

Significant landmarks with integrity include all of the structures identified as contributing resources in the National Register of Historic Places nomination. In addition, significant landmarks have been lost. The following treatment is recommended to preserve and restore the historic character of the site's existing landmarks and to recreate its lost features. (See Preservation Plan for details):

Carousel

- Restore the carousel building
- Replace the lost carousel horses
- Reuse the carousel as an entertainment feature as demand dictates (See Recreation)
- Use the carousel building to house significant interpretive exhibits that take advantage of the building's available wall space and secure interior
- Present longer, more complex interpretive text panels that can be perused at leisure in a shady indoor setting
- Display high quality photographs from the park's period of significance that can be protected from the elements and enjoyed either in the context of the interpretive text or within the context of an entertainment feature
- Include images of the carousel itself as well as images of the landscape setting visible from the vantage point of the carousel building such as the historic coconut grove and the Atlantic Ocean.

Concession Building:

- Restore the concession building to house the operations of a concessionaire responsible for providing refreshments (See Operation and Support for detailed recommendations related to the operation of the concession.)
- Include menu items from the park's period of significance (corn dogs, pop corn)
- Provide rental of beach chairs and umbrellas of the type available during the park's period of significance

Bathhouse:

- Restore the bathhouse to provide changing facilities and restrooms
- Meticulously maintain facilities to protect the structure itself and to support park operations (See Operation and Support for detailed recommendations)
- Use the bathhouse building to house significant interpretive exhibits that take advantage of the building's available wall space and secure interior



The corn dogs served at the snack bar are still remembered with relish fifty years later. Can the taste be recreated? A Juke Box like the one used at the dance floor can play period music once again, such as the songs of 1953 chart-toppers Nat King Cole and Ella Fitzgerald. The Minitrain ride can be a place to learn about the plant lore brought to America by the African Americans and Caribbean Islanders who settled in Miami Dade County.

- Integrate interpretive features in the interior that illustrate the importance of the bathhouse as a means of facilitating access to the beach for the park's visitor's during the period of significance when many people walked or took the bus to the park and relied on the changing facilities to make their visit feasible and dignified. Display the bathing suits and personal beach gear and grooming products that were used during the period of significance. Display period photographs of "bathing beauties" that were taken at the beach during its period of significance and which were a period mainstay of mainstream Miami from which black citizens were largely excluded until the opening of the beach.

Picnic Shelters:

- Restore the picnic shelters for their original purpose
- Restore the historic lawn and shade tree plantings around the picnic shelters (See Vegetation)
- Replace and restore picnic tables and grills inside and around the structures (See Site Furnishings)

Restroom Building

- Restore the restroom building to serve its original function
- Meticulously maintain facilities to protect the structure itself and to support park operations (See Operation and Support for detailed recommendations)

Superintendent's House

- Recreate the superintendent's house at its original location. Work with Miami Dade County Park and Recreation Department to incorporate the site into the park boundary
- Use the recreated structure to display significant interpretive exhibits related to Virginia Key's only official residential structure, the history of settlement and development of the barrier islands, water linkages to the park

Dance Pavilion

- Replace the palm trees, benches and Juke Box that were historically associated with the existing concrete dance floor
- Reuse the feature as an active entertainment feature
- Supply the Juke Box with music from the park's period of significance (1945-1953) as well as from the park's period of informal use by black Miamians (1920s-1930s) and from the period of the park's greatest popularity (1950s-1960s)

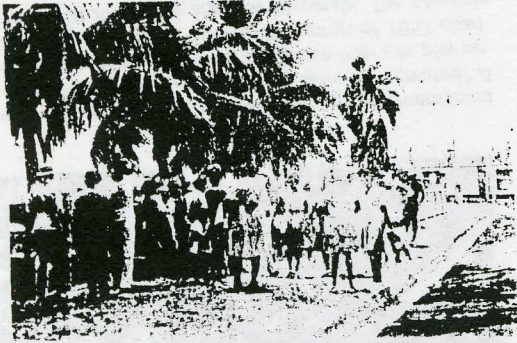
Mini train

- Restore the mini-train tunnel
- Recreate the mini train station in its original location on the existing slab and according to the original plans with appropriate modifications for coastal construction
- Recreate the mini train track
- Provide controlled train-track crossing points and planted barrier plantings with concealed fencing around the entire train track
- Replace the train with a train identical to or similar in appearance to the original train. Investigate energy-saving alternative power sources for the locomotive
- Enhance the plantings along the historic mini train route to provide educational and interpretive interest consistent with the original design intent of the feature as an entertaining experience of the natural landscape of the park (See Recreation for detailed recommendations)

- Incorporate interpretive, educational and play features within the enhanced landscape setting

Bus Stop

- Restore service to the bus stop (See Site Suitabilities)
- Site the State Historic Marker at this arrival point



VIRGINIA BEACH

(NEGRO) 162 ACRES
ATTENDANCE LAST YEAR 295,314
FACILITIES

Apartments
Bath House
Boat Livery
Cabanas
Dancing
Fishing

Fireplaces (5)
Miniature Railroad
Picnic Tables (88)
Refreshment Pavilion
Swimming
Umbrellas & Chairs

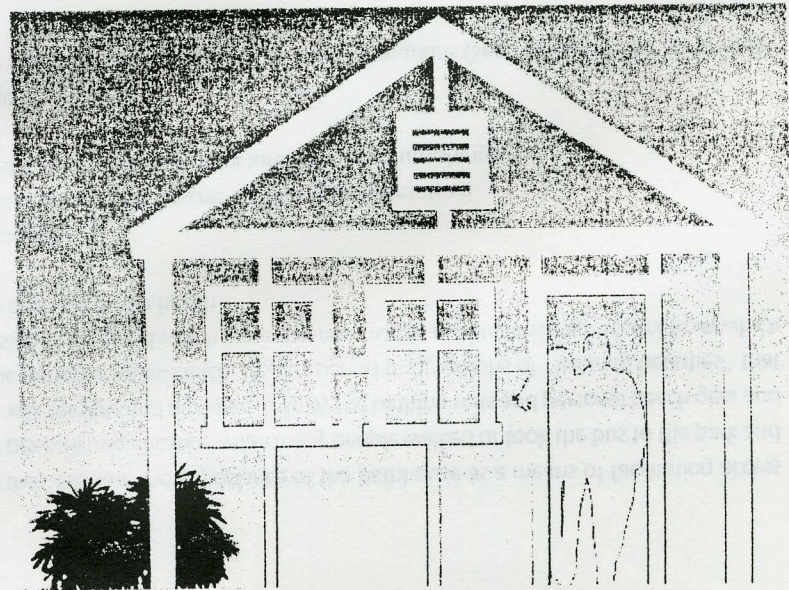
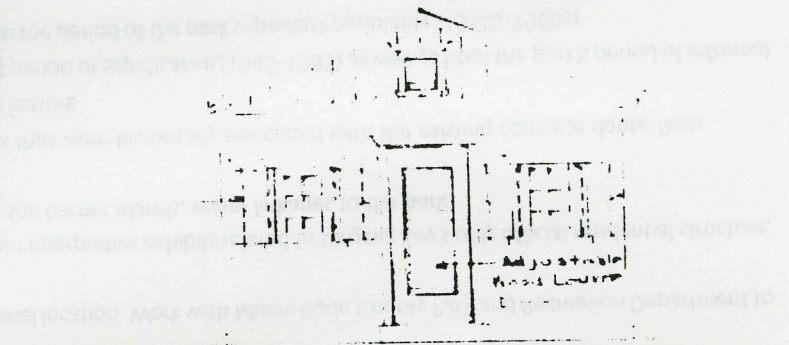
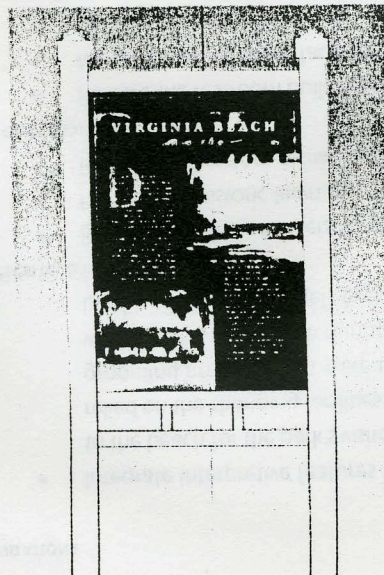
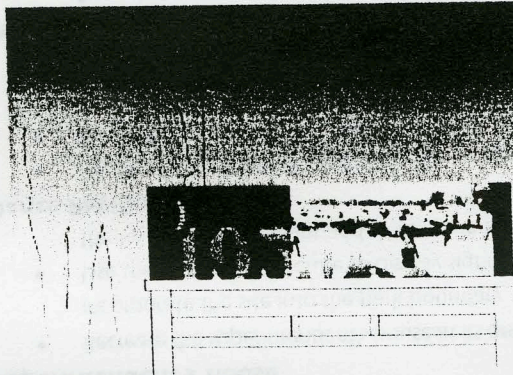
FREE PARKING



Lost historic structures and site furnishings can be recreated as interpretive features that tell the story of the park. Interpretive signage can be located throughout the site.

Park Office

- Recreate or reinterpret the park office at its original location
- Adapt or reinterpret historic plans or site an appropriate surplus military building of the type originally used at the park and replaced after the hurricane of 1950, with appropriate modifications to address hurricane hazards.
- Use the recreated structure to display interpretive exhibits related to the park's operation during its period of significance
- Present information on visitor demographics and attendance figures highlighting the diversity of black immigrants and the role of the park in bringing large numbers of people from isolated neighborhoods together. Present information on the facilities and services provided, the wide service area of the park, operating costs and management in comparison to other beach parks. Focus interpretation on the context of the park's establishment and preservation: the segregation laws that prohibited access to county beaches for black residents, the "Wade-in" at Haulover Beach, negotiations between the Negro Service Council and county officials, the planning and design of the park including the reason for the selection of the Bear Cut beach, its use during the 1920s and 1930s and as a segregated training area for black servicemen during World War II.





CIRCULATION

The entrance road, parking lot, sand esplanade and water linkages have considerable significance but limited integrity and should be restored in a manner that is consistent with protection of the natural environment and adaptive reuse of the site as an active beach park and educational setting.

Sand esplanade:

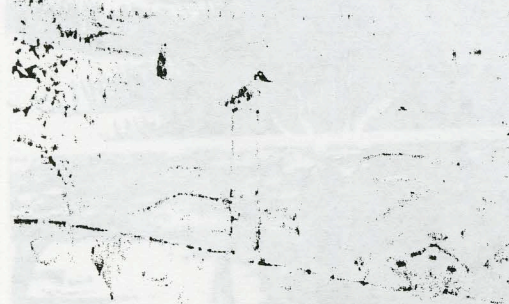
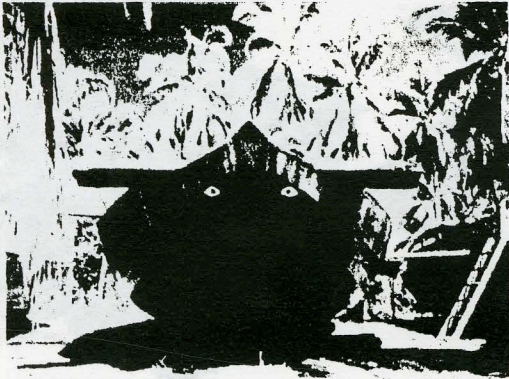
The sand esplanade was the primary pedestrian circulation element during the parks period of significance and should be restored as the primary circulation element of the restored park. Since the park's period of significance, the flat sand esplanade along the shoreline has evolved as a dune in some areas. Restoration to its historic condition would have negative impact on the site's natural resources and would require permitting and mitigation. Because of the importance and sensitivity of the natural shoreline resources, historic restoration of the sand esplanade should be integrated with natural resource protection.

- Reestablish a shoreline promenade evocative of the historic sand esplanade
- Extend the promenade along the entire shoreline of the park and provide access to palm-shaded picnic groves and dune crossings as well as other site facilities
- Use a friable geotextile base to comply with coastal construction requirements and to permit service vehicle and emergency access and a stabilized sand wearing surface to provide a handicap accessible, maintainable path that looks like the historic sand esplanade. (See Recreation for further recommendations)
- Maximum slope 1:20 for handicap accessibility
- Minimum width 8' for service vehicle access
- Locate benches along the shoreline promenade at shady vantage points with views of the ocean
- Locate interpretive features along the shoreline promenade that provide information on the plants and animals native to the shore, the Atlantic Ocean, tides, sunrise and sunset and facets of the site's history having to do with its accessible shoreline such as its possible link with the Underground Railroad, pirates, refugee landings and the Virginia Key Beach Park Civil Rights Task Force.



Stabilized sand and wide dune crossings should evoke the historic sense of being near the water on natural soil without straining the natural resources of the park





Water Linkages:

Access by boat to Virginia Key Beach was a significant character defining feature of the historic landscape. Restoration of water access can be an important method of restoring the park's historic character and interpreting its historic significance. No structures associated with this access have integrity. Compliance with conservation goals for both the sea grasses and the West Indian Manatee which feeds in the near off-shore waters of the park preclude construction of a pier or introduction of motorboat traffic into this zone. Recommendations for the treatment of the site's historic water linkages are as follows:

- A motor boat exclusion zone established for the shoreline should be marked to ensure enforcement.
- Water links to the shore should be limited to kayak and canoe access
- Provide interpretation of the history and significance of the water linkages along the Shoreline Promenade

Entrance Road

Florida Accessibility Code requires 2% of total parking spaces to be located at the shortest safely accessible route from the facilities they serve. The location of the entrance road between the parking lot and the public facilities it serves does not permit a code compliant safely accessible route.

- Adapt the southern spur of the entrance road as a pedestrian-only path to accommodate handicap access and to link the shoreline promenade to the access road from Rickenbacker Causeway
- Widen the northern spur of the entrance road to accommodate two-way traffic and bus access
- Use curbless asphalt roadway consistent with the historic character of the entrance road
- Extend the roadway to the historic parking area adjacent to the cabanas and picnic area

Parking Lot

The parking lot is a listed contributing resource in the National Register. As such, the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards* require that no action be taken that will have an adverse impact on the parking lot or the integrity of its setting. The parking lot has limited integrity and restoration of its historic condition will have detrimental impact on other park resources. The parking lot has deteriorated during the fifty years since the park's period of significance. In addition, the historic parking lot no longer represents a high quality facility and thus its historic significance has diminished integrity. By contemporary environmental, aesthetic and functional standards, the parking lot is of poor design quality and thus conveys an impression directly opposite the one conveyed during the park's period of significance when it represented a significant investment of public resources for the creation of top-quality facilities for African Americans. Drainage problems create flooding of the northeastern portion of the parking lot, which limits access and threatens further deterioration. Lack of shade and the unbroken expanse of asphalt make the lot uncomfortably hot and contribute to heat island effects and poor air quality. A lack of pervious areas to reduce storm water run-off contributes to flooding, impairs replenishment of the water table and increases non-point source water pollution. During the park's period of significance, the parking lot accommodated 660 cars which reflected exaggerated demand for the park's segregated recreational facilities among African Americans. Current demand levels at the park will be significantly lower, except during cultural events, but effective interpretation of this feature requires preservation of a sizable lot. The parking lot requires replacement with appropriate materials and methods. Because the significance and integrity of the park's natural areas limit appropriate building sites for historically compatible, functional interpretive facilities, and because the parking lot has a detrimental impact on other park resources, it is recommended that the parking lot be replaced or adaptively reused to accommodate protection of the site's natural features and to permit an interpretive center and park management office that will facilitate meaningful interpretation of the park's significance. Specific recommendations for the replacement or adaptive reuse of the parking lot are as follows:

- Stabilize and upgrade the parking lot to meet environmentally sensitive design standards and reduce the impact of the parking lot on the natural resources that are the basis of the park's historic significance.



The historic coconut grove can be integrated with native vegetation to provide habitat and recreation areas.



- Regrade to establish positive drainage
- Replace crumbling asphalt driving lanes
- Replace 50% of asphalt-paved parking spaces with pervious areas to decrease storm water run-off and flooding and to reduce non-point source pollution. Pervious areas can be a combination of stabilized lawn over-flow parking spaces and planting areas
- Maintain the orientation of the parking lanes and the overall size and shape of the lot
- Restore shade trees in planting islands around the parking lot's perimeter
- Preserve and restore the hand-cast curbing used around existing tree planting islands
- Plant shade trees to provide complete canopy coverage of the parking lot
- Use the native canopy tree species used in the parking lot's existing tree islands (*Ficus aurea*)
- Use hand-cast curbing for new planting islands
- Provide handicap accessible parking spaces in the main parking area
- Restore the parking lot adjacent to the cabanas for handicap accessible parking
- Coordinate storm water management requirements with South Florida Water Management District
- Convey the historic significance of the lot with in-depth interpretive signage, historic photographs and text explaining the parking lot's symbolism during the period of significance and can also include classic cars as permanent exhibits or classic car shows as temporary exhibitions as part of the park's event programming.

TOPOGRAPHY AND DRAINAGE

Character defining elements of the topography and drainage of the site with significance include the extent of fill, the water bodies in the wetland forest, the artificial lake and the shoreline. These should be preserved and restored. The integrity of these features is compromised by the large spoils piles located on the western and eastern ends of the shoreline and the eroded segment of the shoreline between the two existing groin systems. Since the park's period of significance, settling of the filled areas of the park has caused serious drainage problems throughout the park. Flooding and ponding are evident throughout and deterioration of pavement and "lumpy" lawn surfaces are the result. The meadow in the eastern end of the park currently does not have positive drainage and has many divets and hillocks that make walking uncomfortable and contribute to drainage problems. The irregular grading and drainage of the site has implications for the water quality and storm water management. Recommendations for the treatment of the site's topographic and drainage features are as follows:

- Stabilize the shoreline and wetland water regime (Army Corps of Engineer projects are planned to accomplish this stabilization.)
- Remove/spread the spoils piles
- Regrade throughout the site to establish positive drainage
- Adapt the parking lot, as discussed under Circulation above, to reduce water and air quality impacts
- Renovate the meadow to serve as an event lawn, picnic meadow and overflow parking area for events.

VEGETATION

The natural setting of Virginia Key is its most significant character defining feature. Protection and stabilization of the park's natural setting, especially its native vegetation, is therefore a critical aspect of its preservation and restoration as an historic site. The coconut palm grove that existed along the entire sand esplanade was a significant character defining feature of the vegetation, spatial organization and circulation of the site during its period of significance. The grove provided shady walking and seating areas along the shore that





Furnishings from the period of significance were typical park furnishings that are still in common use and will provide versatile, easy to maintain seating and cooking facilities for picnic areas

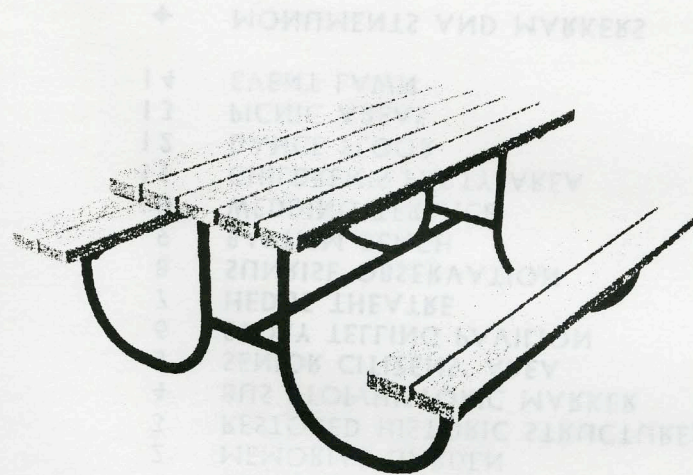
significantly extended the usable area of the beach and contributed significantly to the perception of the beach as a high quality recreational setting. The circle of palms surrounding the dance pavilion was also a significant feature and a visual icon of the park. Other significant elements of the historic landscape plantings were lawn areas and shade trees located throughout the park but especially in picnic areas offering shaded vantage points with views of the Atlantic Ocean. Since its period of significance, the park landscape has undergone many changes: invasion by exotic species, natural succession of native species, natural mortality of shade trees and other ornamental plantings and, most significantly, the loss of the historic coconut grove. The natural vegetation of the site will be stabilized by removal of exotic species and replanting with native species by the US Army Corps of Engineers Ecosystem Restoration Project. The ecosystem restoration project will restore the natural areas of the site to ecological integrity but will not address the restoration of historic landscape plantings, including parking lot shade trees, ornamental plantings, picnic lawn areas and the extensive shade tree plantings that were historically an important element of the park's appeal. Parking lot shade trees are addressed above under Circulation. Restoration of the other elements of the historic landscape should be carried out within parameters established by the ecosystem restoration, including the exclusive use of native plants, with the exception noted below. The following recommendations are made regarding historic planting restoration:

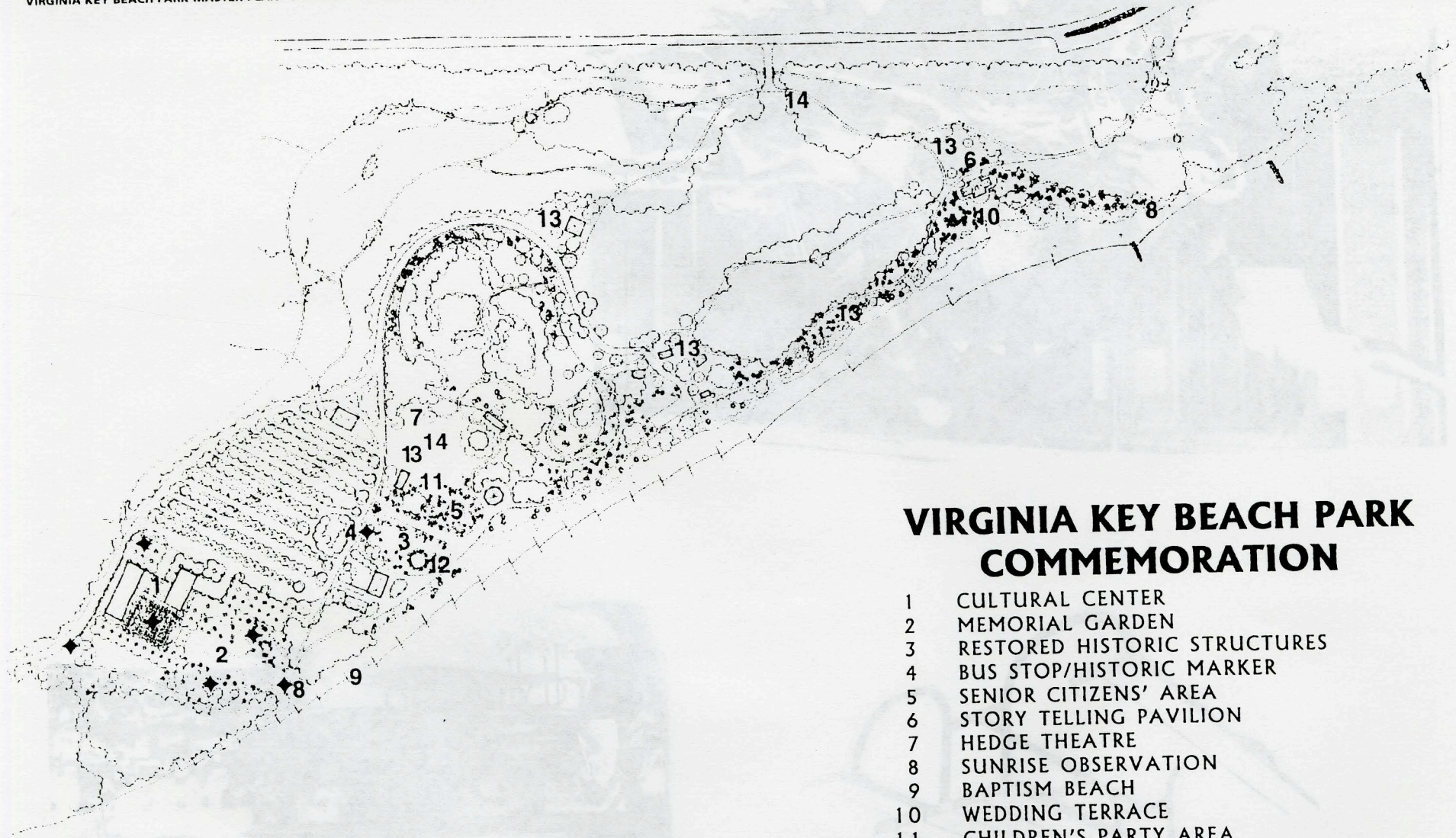
- Restore the historic coconut grove using primarily certified-seed *Cocos nucifera*, var. Maypan
- Following ecosystem restoration, engage a certified arborist to evaluate the quality and potential longevity of remaining native shade trees and make recommendations for proper pruning and reshaping of the trees to enhance their value as picnic sites and to extend their life expectancy
- Augment existing shade trees with new shade tree plantings in lawn areas and develop a "Tree Succession Plan" that plans for the replacement of mature shade trees as they age
- Replace lawn grasses with Paspalum, a species identified in the US Army Corps of Engineers/DERM ecosystem restoration project as native. (See Natural Resource Protection recommendation regarding use of native plants adapted to the climate and site conditions that do not require irrigation.) Paspalum is the low-water use lawn grass of choice in environmentally sensitive developments, including golf courses, and provides an attractive, easy to maintain lawn surface
- Restore plantings around historic buildings based on period plans, where these are available, with historically appropriate modifications to the plant selections to ensure that only native species are used
- Enhance plantings around the Minitrain tracks to serve as an interpretive and ornamental feature, with an emphasis on native plants. Include plants of African and Caribbean origin that are compatible with ecosystem protection (i.e. non-invasive species) to permit interpretation of African and Caribbean plant lore as part of the Minitrain experience.

SITE FURNISHINGS

There are no existing furnishings of significance or integrity on the site. New furnishings in the vicinity of the historic structures should be consistent with the design of features documented from the park's period of significance. (See Recreation for more specific recommendations)

- Use the standard park furnishings and wayfinding signage documented from the park's period of significance which are still widely available and routinely used in contemporary park settings (See Recreation for more specific recommendations)
- Recreate the lifeguard stands based on historic documentation
- Replace the metal cabanas with temporary structures consistent with the character of the historic features and compliant with building code requirements. (See Preservation Plan for technical recommendations)

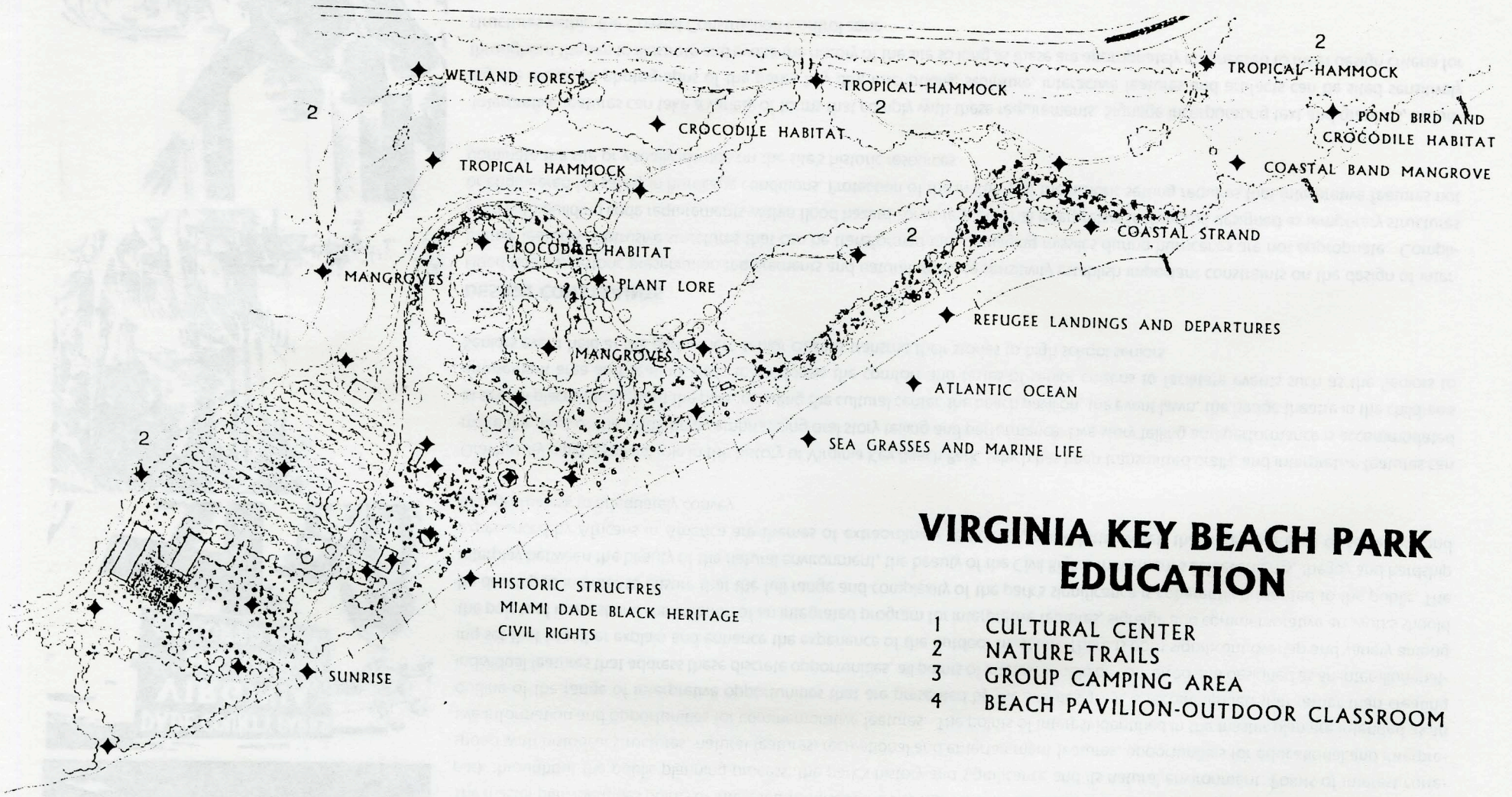




VIRGINIA KEY BEACH PARK COMMEMORATION

- 1 CULTURAL CENTER
 - 2 MEMORIAL GARDEN
 - 3 RESTORED HISTORIC STRUCTURES
 - 4 BUS STOP/HISTORIC MARKER
 - 5 SENIOR CITIZENS' AREA
 - 6 STORY TELLING PAVILION
 - 7 HEDGE THEATRE
 - 8 SUNRISE OBSERVATION
 - 9 BAPTISM BEACH
 - 10 WEDDING TERRACE
 - 11 CHILDREN'S PARTY AREA
 - 12 DANCE FLOOR
 - 13 PICNIC AREAS
 - 14 EVENT LAWN
- ◆ MONUMENTS AND MARKERS

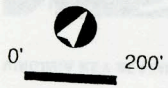




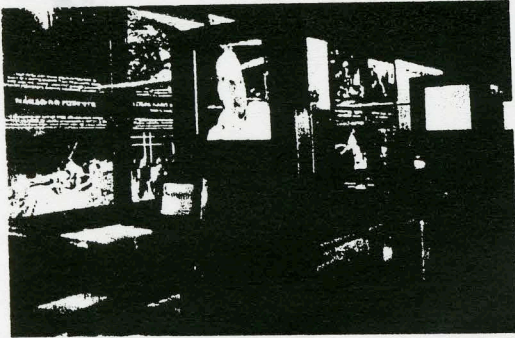
VIRGINIA KEY BEACH PARK EDUCATION

- 1 CULTURAL CENTER
- 2 NATURE TRAILS
- 3 GROUP CAMPING AREA
- 4 BEACH PAVILION-OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

◆ POINTS OF INTEREST



COMMEMORATION AND EDUCATION



The Virginia Key Beach Park has a unique and fascinating story to tell its visitors. Communicating this story effectively will require the development of a professionally prepared interpretive program. The public planning process has identified a range of themes of interest and relevance to the community. A cultural center to explore these themes in depth will be the center piece of the interpretive facilities on site. The site itself has a story to convey as well and the development of an interpretive program to guide the design and placement of interpretive features in the landscape is also required. Together, these features and the site itself will comprise the museum.

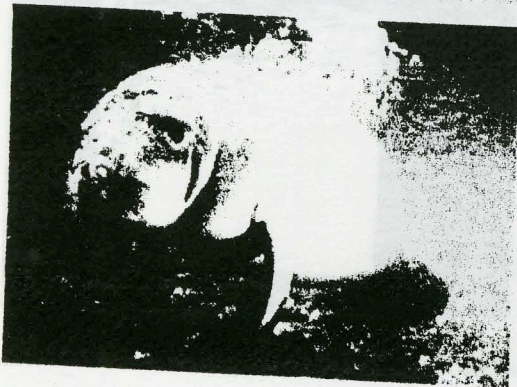
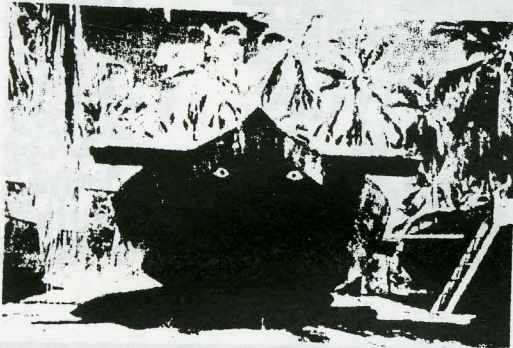
The master plan identifies points of interest throughout the site that fall into the broad themes that have guided the development of the park throughout the public planning process: the park's history and significance and its natural environment. Points of interest correspond with historical structures, natural features, recreational and entertainment features, opportunities for educational and interpretive information and opportunities for commemorative features. The points of interest identified in the master plan are intended as an outline of the range of interpretive opportunities that are presented by the site design. It is recommended that rather than creating individual features that address these discrete opportunities, all points of interest should be conceived and designed as an inter-illuminating set that together explain and enhance the experience of the outdoor museum. There is both significant overlap and variety among the points of interest and the creation of an integrated program for interpretive features, signage and commemorative art works should be developed in order to ensure that the full range and complexity of the park's significance is coherently presented to the public. The interplay between the beauty of the natural environment, the beauty of the Civil Rights movement's achievements, the joy and hardship experienced by Africans in America are themes of extraordinary resonance, some bittersweet, that require a level of sensitivity and thoughtfulness to adequately convey.

Oral history plays a special role in the history of Virginia Key Beach Park, which has been transmitted orally, and interpretive features can make the most of this tradition by emphasizing oral story telling and performance. Live story telling and performance is accommodated in several places throughout the park including the cultural center, the beach pavilion, the event lawn, the hedge theatre in the children's amusement area and seating areas that address the comfort and tastes of senior citizens to facilitate events such as the Seniors to Seniors event held at the park where senior citizens transmit their stories to high school seniors.

DESIGN CONSTRAINTS

Flood hazard, historic preservation requirements and natural resource sensitivity establish important constraints on the design of interpretive features. Obtrusive structures that can be transformed into damaging missiles during hurricanes are not appropriate. Compliance with building code requirements within flood hazard zones requires that interpretive features be designed as temporary structures or engineered for safety in hurricane conditions. Protection of the integrity of the historic setting requires that interpretive features not dominate the site or visually intrude on the site's historic resources.

Interpretive features can take a variety of forms that comply with these requirements. Signage incorporating text and graphics, including the evocative photographs of the park's hey day, inscriptions, sculpture, interactive features and artifacts can be sited sensitively throughout the site to illustrate and evoke the history of the site so long as these are appropriately engineered to meet design criteria for structures within the Coastal Construction Control zone.



WORDS AND IMAGES: SOUND AND LIGHT

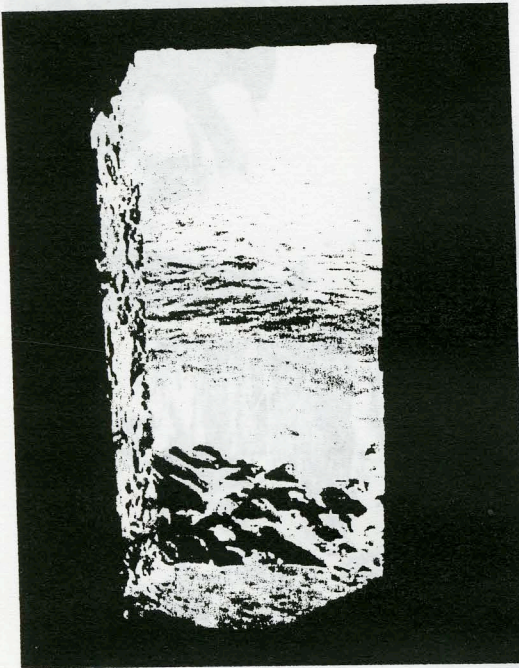
The importance of oral history, the richness of the photographic record of the park and its historic context and the special design constraints on the park each point to the use of the ephemeral elements of sound and light as appropriate media in which to convey the park's story. Innovations in new media art open the door for interpretive features that can have a profound and moving impact on park visitors without imposing extraordinary engineering requirements on the cultural center building that would be required to safeguard archival material that would be prone to damage in a hurricane. Presentation of voice recording, video and even holographic imagery at the cultural center can provide complex, in-depth story-telling that combines the voice and face of the story teller with the versatility and fascination made possible by media technology. The apparatus required to present video, voice recording or holographic imagery has the capacity to present a wide variety of images and sounds from a single presentation apparatus that can be appropriately engineered for site conditions or replaced in case of damage without loss of unique and irreplaceable artifacts. Photographic images convey volumes about the history of the park just as video images convey aspects of the historical context of the Civil Rights movement. Photographs of the park are extremely evocative of the park's joyful heyday while photographs and video images from the period of the park's establishment reveal both an inspiring oratorical tradition and a harsh reality that are critical to understanding the park's historical context and significance. These images and words conveyed in the form of ephemeral light and sound (video, hologram, photograph, voice recording) can minimize the use of irreplaceable artifacts vulnerable to hurricane damage and at the same time make a powerful statement about the nature of things which are part of our collective memory but which are not written in stone. These in turn can make a poignant contrast with the things that we do chose to etch in stone.

ARTIFACTS AND PLACES: STONE AND EARTH

As ephemeral elements, words and images convey memory. As permanent elements, artifacts and places convey enduring values. The master plan outlines actions required to establish the enduring legacy of the park's significance through preservation and access to the park as a sustainable place. The conception of the park as a living memorial, articulated throughout the public planning process, is best exemplified in the protection, enhancement, enjoyment and wise stewardship of the park site. These are enduring values expressed in policy and practice. In addition, the enduring values embodied by these activities can be commemorated in features that are permanent markers. Stone and other permanent materials should be incorporated in the memorial features sited in the park to the extent permitted by coastal construction requirements.

The cultural center should be designed around a garden that establishes an appropriate setting to commemorate the direct action protest that lead to the establishment of the beach park, which was one of the first direct action protests in the Civil Rights movement, mounted a full ten years before the Bus Boycott that is acknowledged as the initial impetus for the movement. The Wade-in at Haulover Beach staged by Negro Service Council members Judge Lawson Thomas, Dr. Ira Davis and Father John Culmer and the anonymous service men who joined them should be commemorated in this formal setting. The garden proposed is aligned axially toward the east and includes a garden court associated with the cultural center building and a memorial grove that links the building to the shoreline.

The garden court proposed includes a grove of Date Palms set in a terrace inscribed with appropriate texts and featuring a fountain that alludes to the Wade-in and to the role of faith in the Civil Rights movement. The form of the garden refers to Exodus 15:22-27 Marah and Elim, in which the Israelites are led by Moses to an oasis in the desert where the water is bitter and they cannot drink it. Moses throws a piece of wood into the spring and the water becomes sweet. *Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water.* The fountain proposed is an interactive water feature that permits visitors to wade into it to commemorate the wade-in. At the same time the fountain is intended to lighten the atmosphere of the cultural center where



the frank and thorough presentation of the historical context of the movement will have a bittersweet effect. The garden court will serve the traditional function of a garden, which is to provide a transition between the interior of a building and its landscape setting. The fountain, with children actively enjoying it, will serve as a reminder that the purpose and result of the movement is a joyful one and will provide an emotional "decompression chamber" that permits visitors to prepare to experience the more joyful and lighthearted elements of the outdoor museum. At the same time, the formality of the setting will prepare visitors approaching from the outdoor museum for the more serious exhibits in the cultural center.

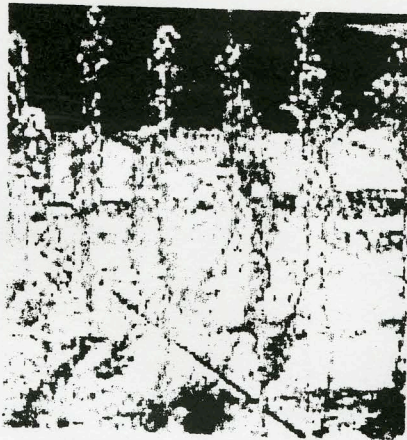
The memorial grove's main element is a Solar Gateway focused on the Atlantic Ocean horizon and aligned with the rising sun. The solar gateway should be a commissioned artwork from an artist and an engineer with experience in the installation of artworks with significant engineering requirements. This feature and the walkway leading to it from the garden court should be engraved with inscriptions that convey the purpose and meaning of the beach park as a living place and a symbol. The plantings and dune crossing associated with this feature should reinforce the alignment and include coconut trees. The walkway is symbolically aligned with the World Heritage Site at Goree Island, where the millions of Africans sent to America in slavery are memorialized at The Door of No Return, which is focused on the Atlantic Ocean horizon with America beyond. Markers and monuments bearing inscriptions that commemorate the achievements of Africans on the other side of that horizon should be located throughout a coconut grove on either side of the east-facing memorial walkway. The message chosen by the Trust Chairwoman M. Athalie Range to convey the intent of the memorial garden are the final testament of Florida Educator Mary McLeod Bethune: I leave you love.



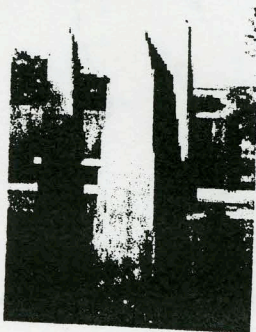
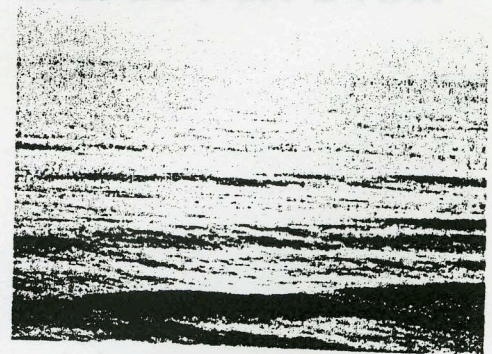
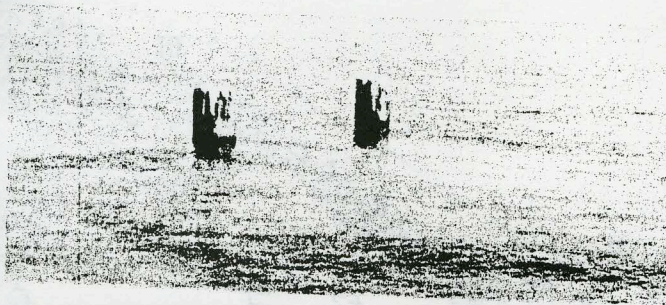
The Atlantic Ocean horizon from The Door of No Return at Goree Island, Dakar, Senegal, through which millions of Africans were sent to America. The struggles and achievements of Africans on the other side of that horizon be commemorated at Virginia Key Beach Park in a commemorative landscape that focuses on the Atlantic Ocean horizon visible through a gateway that frames the sunrise.

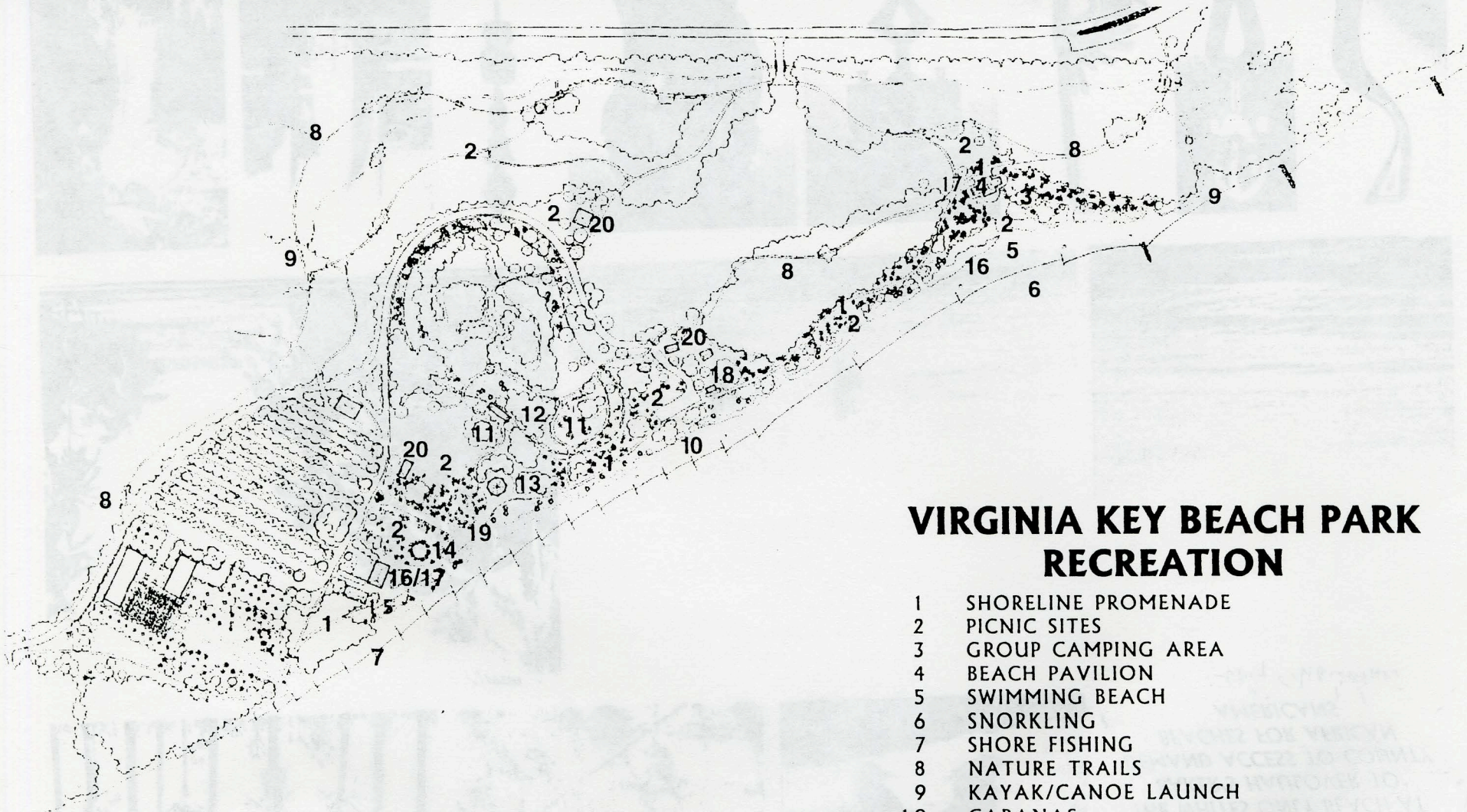
Key texts from the Civil Rights movement should find a place within the memorial garden as well. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" seems especially appropriate to illuminate why the simple pleasures offered by Virginia Key Beach Park were so well appreciated in their day and represent a significant achievement in the Civil Rights movement "...We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jetlike speed toward gaining political independence, but we stiff creep at horse-and-buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging dart of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son who is asking: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross-county drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness" then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience..." *Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water.*





MAY 1945
 JUDGE LAWSON THOMAS, DR.
 IRA DAVIS AND FATHER JOHN
 CULMER STAGE A "WADE-IN" AT
 THE WHITES ONLY BEACH AT
 BAKER'S HAULOVER TO
 DEMAND ACCESS TO COUNTY
 BEACHES FOR AFRICAN
 AMERICANS
 LONG SHOOTING
 EMMA HAYES
 SUE FITZGIBBON
 MAYOR II
 BRADY

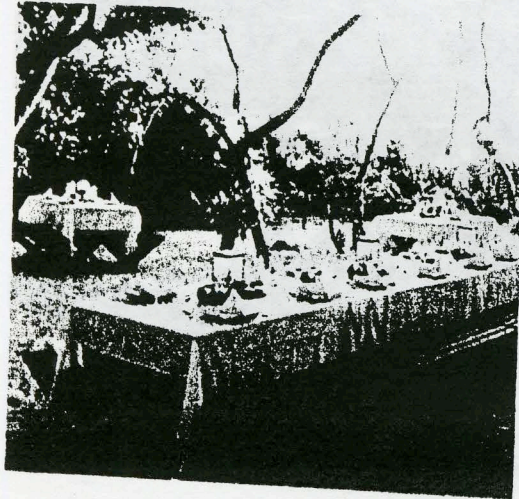
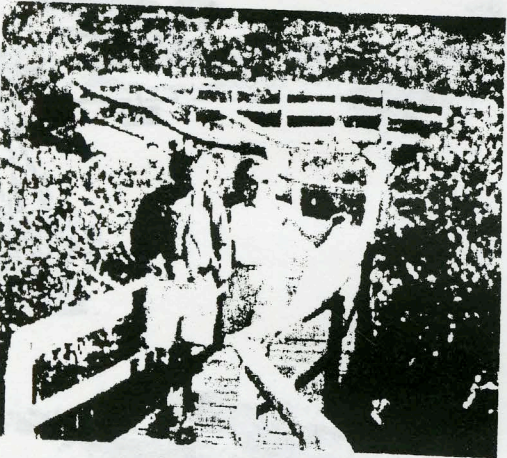
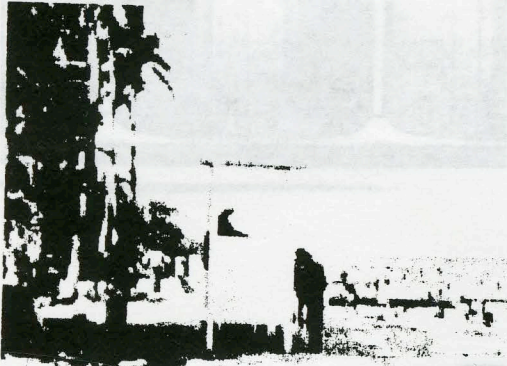




VIRGINIA KEY BEACH PARK RECREATION

- 1 SHORELINE PROMENADE
- 2 PICNIC SITES
- 3 GROUP CAMPING AREA
- 4 BEACH PAVILION
- 5 SWIMMING BEACH
- 6 SNORKLING
- 7 SHORE FISHING
- 8 NATURE TRAILS
- 9 KAYAK/CANOE LAUNCH
- 10 CABANAS
- 11 PLAY GROUND
- 12 MINITRAIN
- 13 CAROUSEL
- 14 DANCE PAVILION
- 15 BATHHOUSE
- 16 BEACH EQUIPMENT RENTAL
- 17 REFRESHMENTS
- 18 RESTROOM
- 19 SHADED SENIOR SEATING
- 20 PICNIC SHELTER





RECREATION

TRAIL SYSTEM

The shoreline promenade is the primary recreational feature of the park as in the park's period of historic significance. The restored park will feature an environmentally sensitive adaptation of the historic sand esplanade planted with native coastal vegetation and a restored palm grove of both native palms and coconut trees. A paved recreational path for pedestrians and bicyclists will extend along the entire shoreline of the park and link all of the park's features. The trail will connect to Rickenbacker Causeway via the entrance road and to the beach park to the north via nature trails and the STP Road. Nature trails will be incorporated in the US Army Corps of Engineers restoration project. The trail system identified in the master plan is coordinated with the location of historic pathways, roads and cleared areas assumed to have predominantly exotic vegetation cover. Following exotics removal appropriate routes through the restored ecosystems will be determined with precision. The location of the trails will be determined in the field by the landscape architect in charge of the restoration project in coordination with DERM. Points of interest and trailhead locations will also be refined following the restoration. Recommendations for trails development and improvement are as follows:

- See Natural Resource Protection for recommendations related to trails layout
- Coordinate points of interest and interpretive signage and features as part of an integrated, holistic interpretive program for the entire outdoor museum
- Work with the Biscayne Nature Center, MAST Academy, Rosenstiel School, NOAA, and Marine Fisheries as well as city schools and the city Park and Recreation Department to develop nature interpretation that reflects the on-going programs of these institutions
- Follow historic preservation recommendations for trail paving, benches, signage, fencing, boardwalks, shelters and outdoor classroom features
- Extend hours of operation by reservation to take advantage of the shoreline promenade's unique vantage point for observing sunrise over the Atlantic Ocean from a setting without any trace of urban development intruding on the view. Sunrise baptism ceremonies, sunrise yoga and meditation groups should be accommodated as well as special celebrations focused on the Solar Gateway that is the focal point of the Memorial Garden.
- Coordinate with Miami Dade County Park and Recreation Department to introduce a canoe or kayak launch with access to the water bodies in the adjacent park land if these are restored for recreational access.

SWIMMING AND SHORELINE ACTIVITIES

Following completion of the shoreline restoration, the requirements for establishing safe swimming conditions along as much of the shoreline as possible should be explored. Preliminary studies related to the US Army Corps of Engineers Shoreline Stabilization study indicate that the shore drops off less abruptly in areas identified in the master plan as the Swimming Beach. Access to the shore for turtles and other sea life dependent of the near shore sea grass beds precludes the use of nets or cribs to physically prevent swimmers from straying into dangerous currents. Lifeguards stationed appropriately for effective monitoring should be deployed along the entire shoreline together with posted "No Swimming" signs. Only the area identified as safe for swimming should be groomed, since seaweed deposits serve as a passive deterrent to swimmers. The non-swimming areas of the beach can be used for shore fishing and baptism ceremonies, in which immersion is restricted to safe distances from the shore. As with other maintenance and operational issues, duplication of personnel and equipment needed to guard and groom the beach would not be a wise use of scarce city resources. The city of Miami Park and Recreation Department has an existing management and equipment capacity established for the city beach to the north. The Trust should work with the city of Miami Park and Recreation Department to extend these services to the Trust beach, with the Trust contributing funding to support additional personnel required.



PICNIC SITES, SEATING, CABANAS

Picnicking and eating are close seconds (behind swimming) as popular beach activities and shaded picnic sites are an important feature of the historic landscape setting. Picnic tables, benches and grills compatible with the historic furnishings should be deployed throughout the park in the restored coconut grove and beneath the restored and new shade trees. The historically compatible picnic tables and benches are available with environmentally-friendly, easy-maintenance recycled plastic table tops and seats which could be used in place of wood and could incorporate a signature color combination. The same color theme can be applied to beach chairs and umbrellas as well as to cabana awnings and temporary tent-style beach cabanas and shade awnings. (See Food and Equipment Vending)

Benches and tables should be located to permit easy access by senior citizens in the vicinity of the historic structures, including the cabanas. Shade, cushions, appropriate height, easy access and arrangements that encourage gathering should be considerations in the design of senior seating. Senior seating should not be the standard park equipment of the historic type since this is not easy for seniors to use but it should be compatible with the historic setting. The best shade trees should be reserved for senior seating and temporary shade canopies or awnings should be supplied where shade trees are lacking. Wheel-chair accessible seating areas should also be provided with shade and where feasible, shade trees should be made accessible to wheel chairs. Supply and maintenance of these special features should be included in the concessionaire's contract to simplify management.

PICNIC SHELTERS

Three historic picnic shelters will be restored. In addition, two new picnic shelters are proposed:

- A small shelter near the two small existing shelters. This shelter should be compatible with the historic structures since it will be sited in close proximity. (See Appendix 1: Preservation Plan for design guidelines)
- A large corporate rental shelter with grill on the western end of the event lawn. This shelter is not near historic features and therefore does not need to comply with the historic preservation standards that apply to the small shelter but should not be visually intrusive. The design should be distinctive, however, and reflect the theme of the Beach Pavilion.

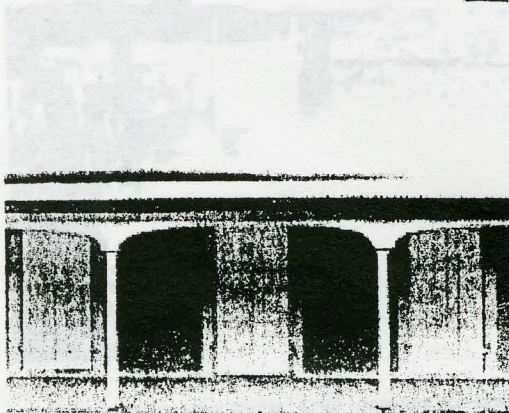
BEACH PAVILION

This shelter is also not constrained by the historic preservation requirements and should be a distinctive structure with the potential to become a visual icon for the park. As the "home base" for nature study programs and group camping, the pavilion should have an environmentally sensitive and regionally appropriate design theme. The beach pavilion will serve a multitude of functions and should accommodate the following program:

- Outdoor classroom or story-telling venue
- Trail head interpretive facility
- Nature-study program group camping "home base" with storage space
- Outdoor kitchen with a large outdoor fireplace or hearth suitable for both cooking and gathering around for stories or classes
- Sheltered eating area
- Refreshment vending area (refreshment cart or vending machines)
- Bath house (See restrooms for recommendations)

GROUP CAMPING

The master plan proposes a group camping area near the beach pavilion to facilitate nature study and recreation access and outreach programs. The group camping area should be, like the Sand Spar Beach Camping Area at Bahia Honda State Park, carefully integrated





with the adjacent natural vegetation with sites oriented both to the ocean and nestled beside the marine hammock vegetation. The group camping area should include:

- post and rope barriers to protect natural vegetation
- dune crossings at both ends and in the center of the area
- a central "allee" of palm trees with a lawn to serve as a circulation spine
- a staggered arrangement of individual 50' square picnic/camping sites with planting buffers separating neighboring sites

Each camping site should be equipped to serve either as a picnic site for day use or an overnight site for tent camping:

- a pair of palm trees spaced appropriately for hanging a hammock
- a picnic table and a grill
- a level, flat, rock free 16'x16' lawn or bare sand area to accommodate a four-man tent

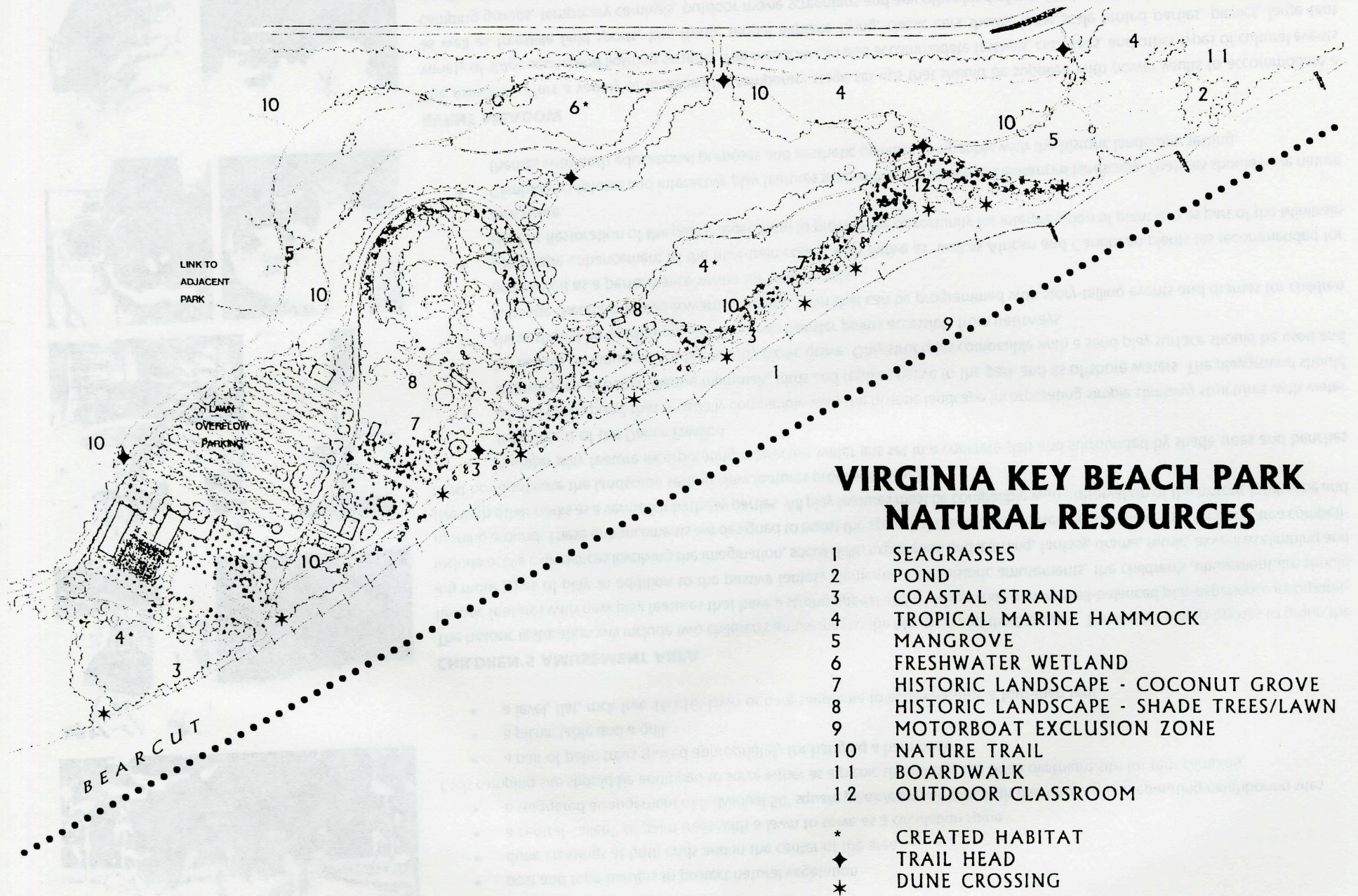
CHILDREN'S AMUSEMENT AREA

The historic restoration will include two children's amusements: the Minitrain and the Carousel. The master plan proposes to group the historic features with new play features that have a strong appeal and which provide a more well-balanced play experience incorporating more types of play. In addition to the passive fantasy elements of the historic amusements, the children's amusement area should include active experiences involving the imagination, social skills, exploration and learning, fantasy, drama, music, as well as climbing and running around. These enhancements are designed to boost the appeal of the historic amusements to make the children's area competitive with other parks as a venue for birthday parties. All play features must be compatible with preservation of the historic landscape and must not dominate the landscape setting. New features proposed include

- A water play feature incorporating interactive water jets set in a concrete slab and surrounded by shade trees and benches reminiscent of the Dance Pavilion
- A sand playground that is visually compatible with the historic landscape incorporating simple climbing structures with water themes such as boats, marine mammals, birds and reptiles native to the park and its offshore waters. The playground should be visually continuous with the nearby picnic grove. Only structures compatible with a sand play surface should be used and these should be sited to provide handicap transfer points accessible from pathways.
- A hedge theatre oriented toward the picnic lawn that can be programmed with story-telling events and dramas for children and rented as a performance venue for small events.
- Landscape enhancement of the mini-train course with native as well as African and Caribbean plants (as recommended for Historic Restoration of the park's vegetation) to provide the opportunity for interpretation of plant lore as part of the Minitrain adventure.
- Climbing sculptures and interactive play features sited within the Minitrain's enhanced landscape. Features should have nature themes with both educational purposes and aesthetic qualities compatible with the historic landscape setting.

EVENT MEADOW

The meadow offers a variety of locations for temporary stage set ups that should be supplied with power vaults to accommodate a variety of stage sound and lighting systems. The meadow can also accommodate festivals, craft fairs, and other types of cultural events as well as freestyle field sports, kite flying, model airplane flying, classic cars shows, large scale tented parties, picnics, large tent camping groups, temporary carnivals, outdoor movie screenings and any other kind of activity that requires no more than a lawn and simple, removable equipment. (See Historic Restoration: Vegetation and Site Constraints: Park Carrying Capacity for details regarding restoration, event capacity and traffic and parking issues.)



VIRGINIA KEY BEACH PARK NATURAL RESOURCES

- 1 SEAGRASSES
 - 2 POND
 - 3 COASTAL STRAND
 - 4 TROPICAL MARINE HAMMOCK
 - 5 MANGROVE
 - 6 FRESHWATER WETLAND
 - 7 HISTORIC LANDSCAPE - COCONUT GROVE
 - 8 HISTORIC LANDSCAPE - SHADE TREES/LAWN
 - 9 MOTORBOAT EXCLUSION ZONE
 - 10 NATURE TRAIL
 - 11 BOARDWALK
 - 12 OUTDOOR CLASSROOM
-
- * CREATED HABITAT
 - ◆ TRAIL HEAD
 - ★ DUNE CROSSING



NATURAL RESOURCES

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) has planned two projects designed to restore the ecological integrity of the site. These projects are funded and underway, with preliminary planning complete. Design and implementation of these projects will be coordinated with the master plan. Recommendations for integrating the project parameters established by the Corps with the master plan are discussed below.

PROJECT 111 SHORELINE STABILIZATION

The first project, scheduled to begin in October 2003, will restore the wooden groins stabilizing the beach and add three new wooden groins of similar design in the area of the severely eroded segment of the shore. This project will include the creation of a dune berm of approximately two feet which will parallel the shoreline in the area of the new wooden groins. The dune berm will include five breaks to permit dune crossings. Recommendations for integrating the shoreline stabilization project with the master plan are as follows:

- Locate dune crossings as shown in the master plan along the shoreline promenade to correspond with other planned site features
- Provide handicap accessible 1:20 maximum slope at-grade stabilized sand dune crossings similar to Sand Esplanade
- Make crossings as wide as feasible to maximize views to the water
- Make crossings perpendicular to the shoreline to maximize views to the water and to permit ceremonial processions for weddings and sunrise ceremonies

PROJECT 1135 ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

Following stabilization of the shoreline, the Corps will undertake an ecosystem restoration project involving removal of all exotic vegetation throughout the park followed by replanting with native species typical of the habitat types located in the park. Design of the ecosystem restoration project will include a detailed inventory of the plant communities on site. Ten percent of the project budget is earmarked for recreational features such as nature trails and interpretive signage. Recommendations for integrating the ecosystem restoration project with the master plan are as follows:

- Protect and restore historic vegetation backdrops
- Protect views of the Atlantic Ocean. Only low coastal species and Key Thatch Palm and Silver palms should be planted in the area between the historic bath house and carousel.
- Follow recommendations under Historic Preservation for the Sand Esplanade. To the extent possible, given the requirement that existing vegetation be retained, alignment of the promenade should be as shown in the master plan, using long, smooth curves to provide a varied experience that passes through dense and open vegetation and moves between coastal strand and marine hammock.
- Vegetation on the seaward side of the promenade should incorporate large and frequent passages of low coastal vegetation to maximize views to the water from points along the promenade. Passages of low vegetation should be coordinated with picnic sites and shoreline seating oriented to the water.
- The location of vegetation masses and trails should correspond with the master plan, which identifies the general location of restoration areas by habitat type and integrates these with recreational use areas and preservation of historic features, including views.
- Points of interest and trailhead locations have been identified in the master plan. Precise locations and the content of interpretive features at points of interests should be determined based on the detailed inventory of site vegetation. See Commemora

tion and Education for detailed recommendations

- Amenities such as benches, boardwalks or fencing should reflect the design guidelines established for these elements in Historic Preservation.
- The key feature of the memorial garden is a special shoreline feature that will frame the rising sun. The dune crossing and shoreline promenade at this location should be aligned with the proposed feature. No dense planting should be planned in the immediate vicinity of the walkway to permit a memorial grove of coconut trees to be integrated with retained existing vegetation in this area.
- Link to the coastal nature trail established by the City of Miami Parks and Recreation Department and provide opportunities to interpret the area between the two parks, which includes several notably large Mangrove specimens that are of special interest since they may represent some of the oldest mangrove trees in Miami Dade County. The trail alignment here should take advantage of the interpretive possibilities of this historically important mangrove community.
- The lake at the center of the park has been colonized by both exotic species and mangroves since the park's heyday, altering its character significantly. Formerly a visual focus for the historic Minitrain, the lake's dense surrounding vegetation and associated wildlife has become a feature of interest in itself. Clearing of exotics should expose the peninsulas extending into the lake and create opportunities for nature trails as well as create views into the lake from its edges. The restored historic Minitrain will encircle the lake. Because of safety concerns related to crossing of the Minitrain tracks, access to the lake shore will be restricted to crossings at designated points. Trails accessing the lake should correspond with these controlled crossings of the Minitrain track. A boardwalk across the lake should be located to permit nature study within the context of this controlled access system and to make the most of the lake's potential as a "destination" within the park, which is reduced by the dense surrounding vegetation.
- While planting of non-native Coconut palms is outside the parameters of the ecosystem restoration, native palms should be planted within the area designated in the master plan as the Shoreline Picnic Grove to enhance the ecosystem value of this area and to provide variety. Key Thatch Palm, *Coccothrinax morrisii*, Silver Palm, *Coccothrinax argentata* should be used more extensively in this area than the Cabbage Palm, *Sabal palmetto*.

NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Miami Dade County Department of Natural Resources Management has been instrumental in developing the restoration plan that will be implemented by the US Army Corps of Engineers. Once exotic vegetation has been removed and native plant communities reestablished, DERM will continue to be involved in resource protection but the on-going maintenance of the park's natural resources will be the responsibility of the Trust. The Trust's stewardship obligations will include:

- Protection of restored habitats from recreation-related impacts
- Control of Exotic Vegetation
- Adherence to best practices in resource-sensitive design and operations
- Conformance with State wildlife and water quality protection requirements (which will be determined during the permitting process that will be required for virtually all site development activities)
- Promoting awareness of the value and requirements of natural resources protection

The city of Miami Park and Recreation Department and Miami Dade County Park and Recreation Department control adjacent park properties. Each has either implemented or planned restoration of the natural resources on these adjacent properties. Because the natural resources of all three parks on Virginia Key are intimately related, the natural system encompassing all three would benefit from

a single management program that leverages the capabilities of all of the organizations and institutions with an interest and expertise in the island's natural resources. As with other maintenance issues, duplication of personnel and equipment required to monitor and maintain the park's sensitive habitat areas as a separate entity is not a wise use of scarce city resources or an effective strategy for long-term habitat protection. However, the capacity of existing management systems to absorb the additional responsibility of managing the re-opened Virginia Key Beach Park must also be considered. Management of its natural resources is a pressing challenge for the city of Miami. With only one naturalist and a small pool of laborers responsible for exotics control for all parks within its system, the city of Miami lacks the resources to effectively manage these resources and would be strained by the addition of another park. The City of Miami Park and Recreation Department has recently initiated a master plan process for the park system that will address maintenance, operation and staffing issues related to the city's parks, including its four natural resource-based parks (Sewell Park, Alice Wainwright Park, Simpson Park and Virginia Key Beach, the beach park area north of the Historic Virginia Key Beach Park.) The City of Miami Master Plan should address the issue of providing adequate staffing and funding for the management of Virginia Key Beach Park as an integral component of the Virginia Key ecosystem. The Trust should actively participate in the master planning process and take the lead in exploring partnership arrangements to ensure that an effective management program is developed that incorporates all three natural areas into a single unit. Partnership responsibilities can be shared by the variety of institutions and organizations with an interest and expertise in Virginia Key's ecosystem. The Trust can bring a number of unique resources to such a partnership:

- Raise funds from both governmental and private sources
- Formalize and administer partnerships with a wide variety of institutions both public and private
- Create education and resource-based recreation programs
- Organize volunteer programs.

EXOTIC VEGETATION

Reestablishment of exotic vegetation should be actively guarded against. To effect this the Trust should:

- Develop the expertise—whether through partnership with other institutions and organizations or by employing a park naturalist—to monitor the park's plant communities and detect invasive plants
- Routinely remove invasive pioneers before they have the chance to establish and spread to adjacent lands.
- Limit park plantings to native species or *proven* non-invasive species

WILDLIFE ISSUES

Virginia Key Beach Park includes important wildlife habitat. With restoration of the plant communities, wildlife presence can be expected to increase and to bring with it the need for policies and programs to safeguard the wildlife and its habitat. The State Department of Environmental Protections and the US Fish and Wildlife Department have jurisdiction over the wildlife and will define the requirements for these measures during the permitting process. The Trust can also implement educational programs to support these measures.

Crocodiles

The return of this species from the brink of extinction is indicated by the increased population within the county. American Crocodiles, unlike their Australian and African cousins are docile. Popular misconceptions about the danger posed by crocodiles has a detrimental effect on the species. Public education about the gentle nature of the crocodiles can play a role in the Trust's education programs.

Sea Turtles

A turtle nest monitoring program is required by the State. Monitoring will identify when turtle nests are present. In addition, protection

of the quality of the turtle nesting habitat should be a primary consideration in planning activities and events:

- Peak attendance should be avoided during nesting season to limit beach activity
- Night time events should not be held when turtle nests are present
- All events and activities that will take place on the beach should be compatible with protection of the quality of nesting habitat and reviewed with a sea turtle biologist
- Site lighting should be designed to protect the integrity of turtle nesting habitat. Turtle hatchlings orient themselves to moonlight on water to guide them from the nest to the water and artificial shoreline light causes the hatchlings to head in the wrong direction. The design of site lighting should be reviewed with a turtle biologist to ensure that it conforms to turtle protection requirements.

Manatees

The decision to forego the restoration of the historic water link to the park is based on the more compelling public interest of compliance with the goals of the Manatee Protection Plan. The plan discourages activities that increase boat traffic in sensitive manatee habitat. While the beach park is not within the designated Manatee Protection Zone, the park's shoreline seagrass is habitat for the Manatee, among other species. In addition, the points of origin for water taxis to the park would be within the Manatee Protection Zone and thus restoration of the historic water link would increase boat traffic in this zone. The Virginia Key off-shore waters have been designated a Motorboat Exclusion Zone but the zone has not been marked. The Trust should

- Work with state officials to ensure that the Motorboat Exclusion Zone is properly marked.
- Actively discourage motorboat access to the shoreline

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND OPERATIONS

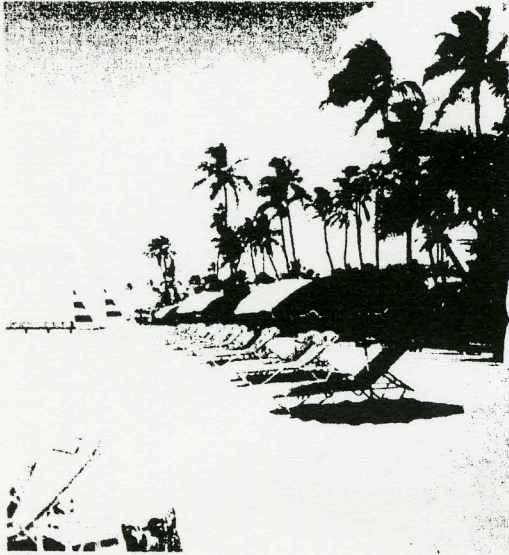
Virginia Key Beach Park's place in the urban context is unique. The park is an important historical remnant of the natural environment that once typified the now heavily developed Miami area. Best practices in environmentally sensitive design are therefore essential to assure that the development of the park does not adversely affect the natural resources that are fundamental to the park's significance and integrity as a both a National Register of Historic Places site and a jewel in the crown of Miami's public places. Responsible use of non-renewable resources – or sustainable design – is therefore an important tenet of the beach park's development program that reflects the Trust's mandate to provide wise stewardship of one of the city of Miami's most valued natural and cultural resources

The principles of sustainable design have been followed in the planning of the park's development program and should be followed in the design, development and operation of the park. Sustainable design requires that design, construction and operation of facilities reflect wise use of precious resources and consideration of the impacts on land, water, air, soil or living systems of the actions necessary to build and operate the park. It is recommended that the Trust adopt a standard ranking system to ensure adherence to best practices in sustainable design. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) ranking system developed by the United States Green Building Council is recommended as a method of guiding future design and operational decisions.

Common sense and community values have guided the planning process toward a development program that fulfills many of the criteria established by this ranking system including minimization of development overall, preservation and enhancement of existing Florida habitats, creation of additional habitat areas, removal of exotic species and ongoing management to preclude re-establishment, encouraging and accommodating alternative transportation modes, limited use of impervious paving and reduction of paved surfaces to reduce storm water run off, shading from trees to reduce heat island effects and protect air quality. Adoption of LEED standards will provide the

Trust with a method of communicating expectations and accomplishments regarding sustainable design to consultants, city officials, the public and grant making organizations. The LEED ranking system will also provide an accepted recognition that has already helped other institutions around the country to obtain grants from environmentally conscious foundations and governmental agencies.

- Consider the life-cycle cost of all improvements required to both protect the site's resources and to conserve the resources of the community at large.
- Incorporate water conservation and protection measures in improvements to the parking lot, event meadow and other areas of the site and development of new facilities. As discussed under Historic Preservation, drainage is a significant issue on the site. Improvements are necessary to correct flooding problems and improve functionality throughout the site. As with all improvements on the site, environmental permitting will be required. The site's extensive jurisdictional wetlands and its critical habitat areas make storm water management and water quality issues of special importance.
- Increase permeability by reducing impervious or paved areas for parking
- Limit paving and roof areas throughout the site to maximize permeability
- Incorporate filtration features in parking lots and new structures to cleanse run-off to reduce pollution
- Incorporate "green building" techniques in all new structures according to the US Green Building Council "LEED" Standards
- Use only low-water-use, native plant species to reduce or eliminate the need for irrigation
- Irrigation during the establishment period for new plantings should be provided by water trucks and planting timed, as feasible, to coincide with the summer rainy season to reduce the supplemental water requirement.
- Incorporate water recycling systems into the design of all new facilities to reduce the demand for municipal water. Potable water from the municipal system is required for drinking water, showers and water play features but storm water run-off collected in cisterns can be used for supplemental irrigation and to supply toilets. The Lighthouse Keeper's house at Bill Baggs State Park includes a vernacular cistern that supplied all water for South Florida's first built structure. Such cistern systems are increasingly common and can be incorporated into the design of the cultural center and the beach pavilion to supply non-potable water.
- The use of an on-site treatment system for effluent can be explored to reduce the demand for potable water at the beach pavilion by providing an alternative water source for toilets. The Audubon Society's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary employs such an innovative system that uses wetland plants as part of a filtering system that supplies near potable water that is purer than the municipal water supply. Such a system could be an integral part of the Beach Pavilion's educational function and integrated with the Ecosystem Restoration. Such a system would require below ground tanks for the initial and final treatment and a small artificial wetland planted with typical freshwater wetland species.
- Maintenance vehicles and mobile concession carts should be electric vehicles with a recharging station.
- Solar energy provided by photovoltaic cells should be used to power any or all of the park facilities requiring electrical power but at a minimum all site lighting, ticket vending machines, interpretive features and park maintenance vehicles and vending mobiles should be powered by solar charged batteries. Because the park will not be a large energy consumer, there is some flexibility in the use of alternative energy sources for larger energy-demand features as well. Solar panels have become substantially more efficient creating energy, more common and more economical as well. Further study will determine how much of the park's energy needs can be met by solar power.

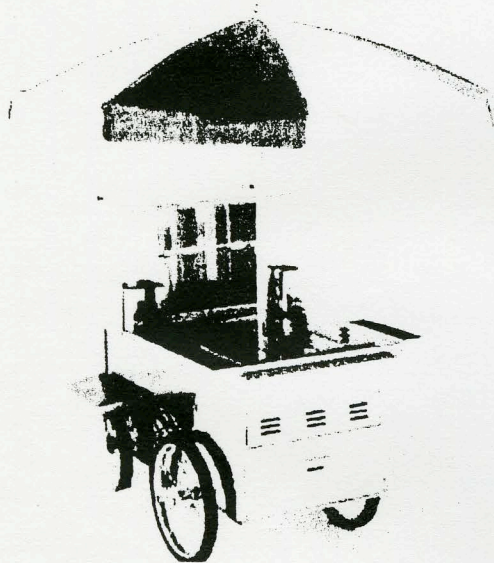


OPERATIONS & SUPPORT

PARK OFFICE

While Trust administration functions can be housed in office space incorporated in the cultural center, many functions related to the day-to-day operation of the park will require separate facilities that will be required long before the funding, design, permitting and construction of the center is complete. The master plan therefore proposes a 5,000-7000sf management office. The Park Office should accommodate the following functions:

- Office space for the park manager including meeting space
- Break area/locker room for park staff
- Storage space for limited maintenance equipment. As noted, the city of Miami Park to the north has a maintenance yard and equipment capacity that should not be duplicated on the historic site's limited and highly constrained site.
- A visitor orientation/information and assistance space with a public telephone, an information kiosk, a lost and found and a first-aid station
- A battery-charging station for solar powered maintenance vehicles
- Designated Employee Parking spaces for park manager and maintenance staff
- Parking space for a park maintenance truck
- Overflow storage space and vending area for rental equipment including bicycles or other equipment that cannot be accommodated in the Concession Stand's service yard or elsewhere on site.
- Interpretive/trailhead information for nature and recreation trails



FOOD AND EQUIPMENT VENDING

The historic concession stand will offer snacks, beach chairs and umbrellas that were historically available for sale or rent. The distance between the parking lot and the swimming beach and the distance between the swimming beach and the historic concession stand are inconveniences that can diminish repeat visitation. To counteract this and in order to make beach-going as convenient as possible for those without cars to transport all the beach necessities, the master plan proposes additional refreshment vending and equipment rental facilities. A wide variety of beach necessities should be made affordably available at the park including coolers, ice, a variety of picnic items or boxed lunches as well as recreational equipment. Snacks (including corn dogs), cold drinks and equipment rental should be made available at the swimming beach and along the shoreline promenade by means of mobile refreshment carts of the type used at Crandon Park, where a Cushman cart plies the beach vending cold drinks, or by means of a more historically-appropriate type of cart that can be transported to a remote location and returned to storage at the main concession stand. Beach chairs, towels, umbrellas, coolers, rafts, boogie boards and other non-motorized water sports equipment such as snorkels, canoes or kayaks can be rented directly from beach with the attendant sheltered in a structure similar to the historic lifeguard stand. Bicycles, tricycles, scooters or, if appropriate security techniques could be developed, Segues could be rented at the Park Office for use on the park's recreational loop trails. Since an historically and ecologically compatible shoreline promenade would not be wide enough to accommodate passing, Surreys of the type used at Crandon Park should be avoided since they are too big. The design of the recreational trails should take these wheeled uses into account to ensure appropriate wearing surfaces. Stabilized sand wears well under foot and bicycle traffic but a sand-surfaced concrete or asphalt path might be more durable under heavy recreational use of this type. Trail traffic congestion should also be controlled by limiting the numbers of vehicles in use at one time.

In addition to the standard beach items that visitors might expect, Virginia Key Beach Park will offer a signature snack – the corn dog – and should investigate other opportunities to offer simple yet distinctive treats that will drive business by attracting loyalists. Eating is the second most popular beach activity and providing a quality eating experience will attract and retain loyal users. Treats should be explored that are unusual – such as fully loaded boxed lunch or family picnic baskets for sale at the concession stand– and treats that naturally attract loyalists, such as Espresso or morning coffee for sunrise visitors or Key Biscayne commuters stopping by in the morning on their way to Miami.

All vendors should be managed by a single concessionaire to simplify management and to enhance the business opportunity provided to the concessionaire. Only a successful concessionaire will be capable of providing the quality of service and products required to attract and retain repeat visitors and ensure a stable attendance for the park.

RESTROOMS

Two historic restroom bathhouse facilities will be restored and a new facility is proposed at the beach pavilion. The beach pavilion restrooms are proposed to serve the swimming beach and the group camping area as well as trail users. The remote location of the facility introduces the potential for misuse and to guard against this, the facility should be designed to discourage malingering by desegregating the facility, omitting semi-private space, and providing unisex facilities that open directly onto the shoreline promenade. Full facility private “cabanas” can serve day users as changing areas and restrooms and overnight group-campers as complete shower and restroom facilities. Each beach pavilion cabana should include:

- toilet
- sink and vanity counter with mirror
- shower
- utility shelf/bench
- clothes hook/towel rack
- electric hand drier to remove the need for paper towels
- floor drain
- easy-maintenance surfaces and design features such as a stainless steel counters and wall partitions that do not touch the floor to facilitate floor cleaning
- break-away wooden partitions to conform to coastal construction requirements
- Caribbean design characteristics (See Beach Pavilion for detailed design recommendations)

Impeccable restroom maintenance is vital to Virginia Key Beach Park's long-term sustainability since it is required to encourage repeat visitation. Repeat visitation will allow the park to hold its own as a popular recreation option despite its relatively small swimming area and competition from nearby Crandon Park and Bill Baggs State Park. Both competitor beach parks offer a swimming experience that is world-class and are consistently ranked as the top beach parks in the nation. Swimming is overwhelmingly the most popular activity at any beach park and Virginia Key Beach Park is not well suited to competing with these parks for typical beach users. Virginia Key Beach Park has a comparatively small swimming beach that is remote from parking and while this will discourage many visitors, the park's distinctive ambiance and historic significance will offer an experience with the potential to attract a small, loyal user group. Priority should be given to serving this audience since consistent visitation is crucial to many aspects of the park's operations. The quality of the business opportunity possible for concession operations will be determined by the consistency of visitation. A successful business will ensure a successful concession operation with appealing offerings. This will in turn be an important means of providing for the second

most popular beach activity—eating—and for developing a loyal user group attracted and retained by a positive experience at the park. Measures should be taken to ensure that first time users return and that repeat visitors develop a high level of confidence in the consistency of the park's offerings. Dirty restrooms are frequently cited by visitors as the most influential deterrent of repeat visitation and therefore a commitment to superior levels of restroom maintenance should be a top priority. While this may seem an odd top priority, failure on this front has the potential to undermine all other aspects of the park's operations. Because concession operations are dependent upon a consistently high level of bathroom maintenance, this maintenance function should be included in the concessionaire's contract and diligently monitored by the Trust.

ACCESS AND ACCESS CONTROL

Access to beach recreation, education and cultural activities is not easy for many Miami residents: it is expensive and inconvenient. Access to a car is a prime deterrent and many residents lack the financial resources to overcome this hurdle. Many lack the \$4 entrance fee typical for parks. (See Site Suitabilities: Goal 4: Overcoming Barriers to Access for detailed recommendations for programming.) The master plan proposes several features to increase accessibility:

- Make the beach "transit friendly" by extending the bus line into the park
- Provide well-maintained changing facilities
- Actively work with outreach organizations that provide access to non-traditional park users, including organizations such as Optimists Club, Boys and Girls Clubs, church groups and nature-related educational organizations
- Eliminate the entrance fee and collect revenue at "value added" points throughout the park such as the parking lot, the cultural center, the historic amusements, the food and equipment concessions, and the rental facilities including the dance pavilion, the event lawns, the Hedge Theatre, the picnic pavilions, the Beach Pavilion, the Group Camping area, and for special events on off-hours such as sunrise events.
- Enhance the business opportunity for the concessionaire (and simplify and reduce the cost of management and overhead) by permitting the concessionaire to collect all fees associated with non-rental facilities and assume all management costs associated with these activities.
- Automated fee collection methods should be explored to further simplify management.
- Actively pursue grant funding from environmentally conscious organizations to subsidize outreach programs with emphasis on education and natural resource protection
- Collect revenue from "members" for special privileges such as access during off-hours ("The Sunrise Club") or long-term cabana rental.
- Pursue other revenue streams to subsidize park operations. The Beach at Crandon Park is in constant use as a film and photography venue, with fees contributing to the park's operating budget. The park's wide beach, scenic coconut tree plantings and Atlantic Ocean views are therefore a valuable commodity. Once restoration is complete, Virginia Key Beach Park should actively pursue this revenue stream by accommodating media companies and maintaining the scenic character of its setting, with due diligence to the impact of filming on sensitive areas. The entire beach park – and especially key landmarks, such as the restored Dance Pavilion, the Solar Gateway and the Beach Pavilion — can be made available as a scenic backdrop but access to sensitive natural areas should be limited to prevent damage.

UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Improvements required are identified below for the park's major infrastructure systems. Electrical and water and sewer service improvements are in progress and should incorporate the recommendations below.

Water and Sewer Service

Water and sewer service are required for the following:

- 25,000-30,000sf Cultural Center
- Water features (memorial fountain, water playground)
- 5,000-7,500sf Park office
- Beach Pavilion (6 unisex facilities including toilet, sink and shower, sink and hose bib, drinking fountain, outdoor beach shower)
- Large Picnic Shelter (sink and hose bib)

Electrical Service

The park is currently served by overhead electrical lines. It is recommended that these lines be buried to minimize potential storm damage and to reduce interference with trees. A cost analysis should be conducted to compare the life-cycle cost of converting electrical service connections at existing buildings to underground connections. The highest portion of the cost of utilities undergrounding is related to the modification of service risers at existing buildings. Maintaining the above ground service risers to existing buildings can reduce the cost of the underground conversion and minimize impact on the historic structures themselves. These cost savings should be compared to the long-term cost for storm damage repair to the historic structures. Underground service connections should be provided to new facilities. Electrical service is required for the following:

- 25,000-30,000sf Cultural Center
- 5,000-7,500sf Park office
- Beach Pavilion (lighting, restroom hand dryers)
- Large Picnic Shelter
- Water features pump systems (memorial fountain, water playground)
- Minitrain
- Parking lot lighting
- Pathway lighting system
- Temporary Stage sound and lighting systems
- Entrance Lighting
- Battery recharging station for electric park maintenance vehicles and mobile concession carts

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM SUMMARY

The development program depicted in the Master Site Plan is summarized below.

CULTURAL CENTER

28,000sf exhibit building with apparatus required to present video, voice recording or holographic imagery

COMMEMORATION LANDSCAPE

- Inscribed stone garden court terrace with Date Palms and interactive fountain
- Solar Gateway
- Memorial Walkway with inscriptions
- Memorial Coconut grove with markers and monuments
- Recreate or reinterpret the park office at its original location as an interpretive display
- Install interpretive displays at Bath House
- Replace the lost carousel horses
- Install interpretive text panels and historic photographs at carousel
- Install a Juke Box at the Dance Pavilion that plays music from 1920s-1960s
- Restore the Minitrain feature including train, tracks, tunnel and station
- Enhance the Minitrain course with interpretive, educational and play features at the station and in the landscape
- Replace metal cabanas and install interpretive signage
- Install interpretive signage, historic photographs and text in parking lot
- Install classic car display
- Install shoreline interpretive features
- Install natural history interpretive features
- Install the State Historic Marker

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE RESTORATION

Paving, Grading and Drainage

- Remove/spread the spoils piles
- Regrade throughout the site to establish positive drainage
- Widen the northern spur of the entrance road to accommodate two-way traffic and bus access
- Renovate the parking lot
- Restore the parking lot adjacent to the cabanas
- Stripe and sign handicap accessible parking spaces in the main parking area and cabana area
- Install 8' shoreline path with friable geotextile base, a stabilized sand wearing surface with maximum slope 1:20
- Adapt the southern spur of the entrance road as a pedestrian-only path

Planting

- Restore shade trees in planting islands around the parking lot's perimeter
- Plant shade trees to provide complete canopy coverage of the
- Restore the historic coconut grove using primarily certified-seed *Cocos nucifera*, var. *Maypan*

- Engage a certified arborist to evaluate and prune shade trees
- Plant new shade trees according to a "Tree Succession Plan"
- Replace lawn grasses with Paspalum
- Renovate the meadow with turf-block, grass-rings or similar geotextile system
- Restore plantings around historic buildings
- Enhance plantings around the Minitrain tracks
- Enhance the plantings along the historic mini train with barrier plantings with concealed fencing

RECREATION FEATURES

Trail system

- Shoreline promenade
- Paved recreation trails
- Nature trails
- Dune crossings
- Boardwalk at pond / mangrove area
- Canoe or kayak launch with access to the water bodies in the adjacent County park
- Informational and wayfinding signage

Beach Improvements

- Recreate the lifeguard stands
- Replace the metal cabanas
- Install "No Swimming" signs
- Install marker buoys for safe swimming area

Picnic and Camping Facilities

- Replace and restore picnic tables and grills inside and around the historic picnic structures
- Install Picnic tables, benches and grills for picnic/camping areas
- Small shelter near the two small existing shelters
- Large corporate rental shelter with grill
- Beach Pavilion
- Post and rope barriers to protect natural vegetation

Children's Amusement Area

- A water play feature with interactive water jets.
- Playground climbing structures
- Hedge theatre
- Climbing sculptures and interactive play features

Event Meadow

- Electrical service vaults at temporary stage locations

OPERATIONS AND SUPPORT FACILITIES

- 5,000-7000 Park Office SF on pilings
- Water and Sewer Service:
- Electrical Service:
- Overhead electrical line burial
- Conversion of service risers at existing structures
- Telephone and high-speed internet access
- Access drive from STP Road with removable bollards
- Security gate
- Bridge over wetland