Text: Red Mangrove, Black Mangrove, and White Mangrove trees, and the Buttonwood shrub grow in South Florida's coastal environments. Mangroves protect the coast from erosion, especially during hurricanes. Their massive root systems prevent erosion, slow terrestrial runoff, and stabilize low lying coastal lands. They also promote sediment retention by trapping mud in their roots. As the tide washes into the mangroves, water carries fish, crabs, shrimp, and other creatures into the tangle of exposed roots to feed and to hide from predators.

Photo: Black Mangrove & Pneumatophores besides it.
Photo: Buttonwood

Heading: # Mangrove Wetland

Photo: Red Mangrove

Photo: Wetland

Text under photo: Red Mangrove

This member of the Rhizophora family lives in the mostly water-covered coastal areas. The Red Mangrove can reach a height of 80'. It is easily recognized by its exposed arching roots, called prop roots. These prop roots take in air through pores in its bark.

Text: *Did You Know?*
Historic Virginia Key Beach Park has some of the oldest mangrove trees in the state of Florida!

Text under photo: Buttonwood
This shrubby mangrove relative is more adaptable than white and black mangroves. It can grow in sunny, shady hammocks and in brackish marshes. Buttonwood has small greenish flowers and tiny reddish and cone-shaped fruit.

Text under photo: **Black Mangrove**

The Black Mangrove receives its name from its dark brown to nearly black bark. One can identify this species by its straw like roots sticking up out of the soil called pneumatophores. The pneumatophores have numerous pores which transport oxygen to the roots below the ground. Look for these roots besides these large trees growing at Historic Virginia Key Beach Park.

Photo: White Mangrove

Text under photo: White Mangrove
The white mangrove can be distinguished from the black and red mangrove species by their round leaves which contain two glands that secrete sugar. These mangroves have either prop roots like the red mangrove, or pneumatophores like the black mangrove.

Did you know? **It is estimated that 75% of game fish and 90% of commercial species in South Florida depend on the mangrove system.**

Panel 1 graphics: Mangrove Wetland

Red Mangrove
Black Mangrove
Pneumatophores
Buttonwood
White Mangrove
Wetland

Heading: # Trees Please!

Text: ## Go Native!

Text: Native species are those that grew in South Florida before Europeans and Africans arrived (1513-1565). In South Florida, native plants and animals evolved over thousands, even millions of years and need each other to survive. Native plants provide food and shelter for wildlife. Wildlife spread the native plant seeds and pollinate the flowers.

Text: ## Go Away Exotics!

Text: An exotic species is a plant or animal living outside its native environment. These exotics can spread by natural means (wind, rain, animals) or by human introduction whether on purpose or by accident. The exotic species can take over, crowding out or killing native species. When competition for space is intense in an ecosystem, the native plants and animals may no longer be present and are considered extinct in that area.

Text below photos: Wild Lime   Sea Grape   Cocoplum   Coconut Palm

Gumbo Limbo   Black Bead

Silver Palm   Sable Palm

Text: Exotic species invaded this park, crowding out the natives. The common exotics in this park were Australian Pine, Madagascar Periwinkle, Brazilian Pepper, Creeping Daisy, Castor Bean, and Beach Berry. These plants competed with natives for growing space and natural resources. Over time, the exotic species replaced many of the natives throughout the park. The exotic plants can make the ecosystem less attractive or unattractive for wildlife. For instance, Australian Pines interfere with sea turtle nesting. Loss of native flowering plants means fewer butterflies and other pollinating insects. To encourage the restoration and return of South Florida's native plants and animals, exotics have been removed and replaced with native species. Virginia Key needs more native plants to nourish its healthy ecosystems and provide food and homes to a greater diversity of native animals.

Panel 2 Graphics: Trees Please

Coconut Palm
Gumbo Limbo
Blackbead
Wild Lime
Sable Palm
Cocoplum
Sea Grape 2
Silver Palm

Heading: # What's the History?

Text: Originally dedicated in 1945, on an unequal, separate basis, Virginia Key Beach Park represents the focal recreation space where the black community at-large was allowed to gather, commune and create the conditions for solidarity necessary for a civil rights movement to flourish. Miami's "colored only" beach, like no other recreational park of its kind during the twentieth century, established a significant turning point in terms of forging compassionate negotiation and creative communication between black and non-African American societies. Indeed, the historical message of Virginia Key Beach Park is contained in the power of responsible citizenry and leadership which led to the second reclamation of the property in 1999 by the Virginia Key Beach Park Trust. Today, under the jurisdiction of the trustees, dedicated staff and volunteer supporters, our green, open accommodations are made available to all members of the public as a necessary component in building true equality.

Text above photo: Concession Stand
Photo: Concession Stand

Old   new

Text: When Virginia Beach Park officially opened to the public in 1945, a prefabricated "snack bar" was among the site's first amenities. A 1947 hurricane destroyed it. In 1951, this permanent concession stand was constructed. For decades, park and beach visitors have enjoyed hamburgers, potato chips, and the traditional corndogs with a Nehi soda.

Text above photo: Bathhouse

Photo: Bathhouse old, Bathhouse new

Text: The bathhouse was among first permanent structures at Virginia Key Beach Park. Inside are showers, changing rooms, and restrooms. Today, the bathhouse has been renovated to modern standards while maintaining its historical appearance.

Photo: Mini-Train and Tunnel

Text below photo: Mini-Train & Tunnel

Text: Beginning in the 1950's, a mini-train chugged along an approximately three-quarter mile track and through a 7-foot wooden tunnel surrounded by coral rock. Many older park visitors wistfully recalled the train ride through tropical vegetation and along azure shores shaded by sea grape and palm groves. The "Biscayne, Virginia and Rickenbacker Central" experience has been recreated with an engine and railcars of the same vintage and manufacture.

Text above photos: Dance Circle
Photo: Dance Circle old and new

Text above photos: Carousel

Photo: Carousel Building old and new

Text: A 1917 map located a "Negro Dance Pavilion" in this general area of Virginia Key. When Virginia Key Beach Park opened in 1945, a concrete floor was included on this site. Beach visitors danced the Lindy Hop, Foxtrot, Twist, Monkey, Mash Potato, Robot, and Hustle to the popular hits of the day. Local radio stations held live Saturday broadcasts and hosted dance contests here, too.

Text: In 1952, park planners decided to include a carousel ride for park visitors and their children. By 1956, an Allan Herschell "merry-go-round" delighted beach visitors inside this octagonal building. The beautifully hand-carved wooden horses glided up and down, round and round, as children of all ages awaited their turn to take a spin.
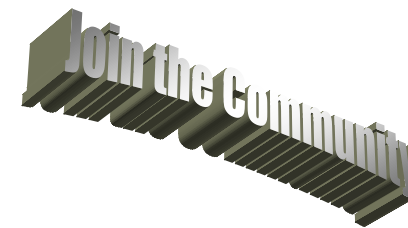
Panel 3 Graphics: What's the History?

Concession Stand Old
Concession Stand New
Bathhouse Old
Bathhouse New
Mini-Train & Tunnel
Dance Circle Old
Dance Circle New
Carousel Building

Heading: **Become a Part of History – VOLUNTEER!!**

Text: You should become a part of Virginia Key Beach Park history by becoming a volunteer!
There are many ways that you can help preserve this pristine 82.5 acre ecological park.

Become an Intern!

Meet People

Join the Community

Text: Beach Clean-up

Help conserve and preserve our precious beach!
Photo: Beach Clean-up

Photo: Volunteer Group

Text: Special Events

Meet musician and artists while lending a helping hand!

Text: Volunteers

Help create an ecological preserve.

Photo above text: Tour Guide

Photo below text: Volunteers

Text: Tour Guide

Provide tours through the Park. Become a docent or volunteer tour guide.

Panel 4 Graphics: Become a Part of History – Volunteer!!

Beach Clean-up
Volunteer Group
Volunteers
Tour Guide

Heading: # Coastal Dune & Marine Life

Text: Historic Virginia Key Beach Park has a unique beach ecosystem
Here's what you will find in the Atlantic Ocean when you visit:

Text: Crustaceans, mollusks, young fish, dolphins, manatee, sea turtles

Photo: Sea Grass   Photo: Sea Grass 2   Picture: Ocean 1 (cartoon-like, with fish, dolphins, turtles, etc)
Text below photos: Turtle Grass   Shoal Grass   Manatee Grass

Sea Turtles like to eat this! It grows on sand and rubble sea bottoms down to 20 ft below the surface.	This plant grows alone in areas where other sea grasses cannot. It likes very salty water prone to disturbances.	This plant grows in mixed beds with other sea grasses.

Text: *Did You Know?*
Wind and waves add sand to the beach and erode it away, again.

Picture: Ocean 2 (cartoon-like, with fish, dolphins, turtles, etc)

Text: The beach ecosystem along the shoreline is formed by wind and waves depositing sand into mounds called dunes. Dunes are natural barriers to beach erosion also caused by wind and waves during storms. Dunes protect the coastal environment and the communities of plants, animals, and humans living nearby.

Sea Oats and Inkberry help dunes form and maintain shape. The strands of Sea Oats and Inkberry bushes trap wind-blown sand, causing it to pile up along the dunes. Over time, the sand accumulates to stabilize and reshape the dunes' environment.

Text: Don't Mess with the Sea Oats and Beach Inkberry
These plants are protected because each is important to the seaside ecosystem. Their complex root system strengthens existing dunes, trapping wind-blown sand.
Photo: Beach Inkberry   Photo: Sea Oats

Panel 5 Graphics: Coastal Dune and Marine Life

Sea Grass
Sea Grass 2
Ocean 1
Ocean 2
Beach Inkberry
Sea Oats

Heading: Paradise Renewed

Text: Hold your event at Historic Virginia Key Beach Park

Text: Picnic s

Photo: Event 10

Text: Weddings

Photo: Event 4

Text: Family Reunions

Photo: Event 8

Text: Community Gatherings

Photo: Event 7

Text: Birthday Parties

Photo: Event 1

Text:Concerts

Photo: Event 6

Text: Festivals

Photo: Event 3

Panel 6 Graphics: Paradise Renewed

Event 1
Event 3
Event 4
Event 6
Event 7
Event 8
Event 10