



# MIAMIBEACH

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Celebrate an Island with Monumental History**

*-- Rededication Ceremony of Flagler Memorial at Monument Island --*

**Miami Beach, FL --** Unless you travel by boat around Miami Beach or live on the Bay, chances are you don't know that just between the MacArthur and Venetian causeways is a small public, man-made island with a big history.

In 1921, Miami Beach's founding father, Carl Fisher, created an island as a base for a monument to honor of Henry M. Flagler, a fellow pioneer and someone Fisher much admired. After 88 years of major hurricanes, strong currents, vandalism and graffiti, harsh conditions finally took a toll on the monument. It was in need of care.

After receiving bond funding from Miami-Dade County, the City's Capital Improvement Projects Office (CIP) hired a professional restoration company and began a \$975,000 detailed restoration project of Flagler Memorial on Monument Island, which has now been completed.

"This is a project unlike any other the City has undertaken," said CIP Project Coordinator Hiram Siaba. Some of the major damages that were repaired included severely deteriorated and missing statue body parts, damage caused by lighting strikes and vandalism, graffiti, natural stains, and old paint, among other repairs.

Once in front of the monument, your eyes are automatically drawn up to the tip of the 96-foot obelisk whose base is surrounded by four 18-foot allegorical sculptures: two men and two women on tall stone pedestals. The four statues are symbols of education, industry, prosperity, and pioneer. Each allegorical figure was hand carved from cast-stone, and as part of the restorations, lighting and a sound fence will be restored to prevent future vandalism.

The island is a popular place for boaters and the City hopes that people will be sensitive to its care. To make sure that the island continues to honor its past into its future, the Environmental Coalition of Miami Beach (ECOMB) adopted Monument Island in 2007 to keep the island clean. ECOMB has been involved with the cleanup and restoration efforts of the island since the mid '90s,

Cleanups are now held on a monthly basis and volunteers are always welcome. Volunteers register at the Maurice Gibb Park on Purdy Avenue, where they are taken to the island by boat or kayak. "Volunteers focus primarily on removing items that are not part of nature, such as trash left behind by picnickers or boaters who throw their trash into the water," said ECOMB Executive Director Luiz Rodrigues.

"We are very excited that our long-time efforts to restore this important historic structure have finally come to fruition," said Miami Beach Mayor Matti Herrera Bower. "Some call it our own Statue of Liberty."

*To learn more about the restoration of the Flagler Memorial Monument, contact CIP at 305.673.7071.*

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