

3-year Flagler road revamp brings more grants to businesses

By GENEVIEVE BOWEN

As the final two phases of revitalizing downtown Miami's iconic Flagler Street are ushered in, the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has issued another round of grants totaling \$80,000 to businesses disrupted by the ongoing roadway reconstruction, which is anticipated to last through 2025.

The Flagler Street Beautification Project began in 2021 and is designed to transform Flagler Street from Biscayne Boulevard to Northwest First Avenue "into an iconic, festival-style boulevard," boosting its appeal, operations and the local economy. The initiative is sponsored by the City of Miami's Office of Capital Improvements in partnership with the Flagler District Business Improvement District (BID) and the Miami DDA.

Despite the efforts to breathe life back into the urban core and its economy, Miami Today reported

in June 2023 that two years of ongoing construction had forced more than 40 businesses on East Flagler to close as demolished roadways and barricades caused foot traffic to the stores to decrease as well as sales.

DDA Chairman and city Commissioner Manolo Reyes distributed financial aid to a total of 16 businesses along sections D and E of the construction zone on June 17. Each received a \$5,000 grant to be used for expenses including rent, utility bills, equipment, marketing and advertising. Among recipients are Pega Grill, Mario the Baker Downtown, Eddy & Sons and more.

"The extensive construction on Flagler Street has disrupted daily operations for businesses located in the construction zones. By distributing grants, the Miami DDA aims to help alleviate some of the financial burdens these businesses are facing," Mr. Reyes said.

In the three years since the project started, the Miami DDA



"The extensive construction on Flagler Street has disrupted daily operations for businesses located in the construction zones."

Manolo Reyes

has distributed \$622,000 to help 93 affected businesses. The grants are part of a broader initiative to

revitalize downtown while supporting the economic health of local enterprises.

"The construction team has been hard at work to revitalize Flagler Street, one of America's most iconic main streets. Our vision is that Flagler Street will once again be seen as Miami's dominant retail and business core, with modern enhancements that include widened sidewalks and an improved streetscape. However, restoring historic property is not without its challenges, which has led to delays," Mr. Reyes said, speaking to the project's timeline.

"To-date, construction is substantially complete in Sections A and B. These sections have been opened to pedestrian traffic and are pending final permits to re-open to vehicular traffic. Section C was opened to pedestrian traffic earlier this year and should be considered substantially completed by September 2024, once ongoing work on First Avenue and the west end is finalized," he

detailed.

Construction goes on in Section D, which has been partially opened to pedestrians. Section E has not been started yet. Overall completion is targeting 2025, but that will depend on the timeline for Section E.

In addition to curb-less streets, upgrading drainage systems and installing new utilities, the Flagler corridor will have expanded sidewalks, large shade trees, outdoor café dining, public art and seating.

"The final stages are expected to significantly boost the economic health and vitality of downtown Miami by enhancing pedestrian and vehicular accessibility, improving the aesthetic appeal of the area, and potentially increasing foot traffic and business activity," Mr. Reyes added. "The revitalization efforts are aimed at creating a more attractive and functional downtown area, which should benefit local businesses, residents and the community as a whole."