

Downtown Miami agency offering grants to help Flagler businesses weather construction

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Commissioner Manolo Reyes said it will be important to make sure pedestrians have access to Flagler Street businesses during the next two years of construction. BY [DAVID SANTIAGO](#) ✉

Miami's Downtown Development Authority is offering grants of up to \$5,000 for business owners on Flagler Street, which will be torn up in sections over the next two years for a reconstruction and beautification project.

The [\\$27 million makeover of downtown Miami's main street](#) began in May with the goal of replacing ailing utility lines, improving drainage and creating a curbsless street designed to host more street festivals. Shop owners weary from the lost business during the COVID-19 pandemic said while the project is necessary for Flagler Street's future, they were also worried about the impact street closures would have throughout the construction period.

The anxiety is at least partly due to previous projects that disrupted business and failed to revitalize the area. Business owners agree a 2004 redo of the street wasn't effective, and a 2017 streetscape ran into delays that angered owners and prompted the city to [fire the contractor](#).

The tax-funded DDA will now spend \$500,000 for relief programs meant to help proprietors survive while the street is torn up and construction fences obscure storefronts and turn sidewalks into tunnels. Eligible businesses impacted by the construction can receive up to \$5,000. Thirty small businesses have already applied, according to the DDA. The grant dollars can be spent on rent or mortgage payments, utility bills, personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, business equipment and advertising.

Eligibility requirements and link to application paperwork for the [Flagler Grant Recovery Program](#) can be found at <https://www.miamidda.com/communityresources/>.

The construction zone currently covers Flagler Street from Biscayne Boulevard to Northeast Second Avenue, Northeast Third Avenue from Northeast First Street to Flagler and Southeast Third Avenue from Southeast First Street to Flagler.

The DDA, together with Miami-Dade College, is also offering owners training on how to promote their businesses on social media, launch websites and use other digital marketing strategies.

Miami Commissioner and DDA Chairman Manolo Reyes said the Flagler project is on schedule and the city is trying to soften the impact the long construction period will have on the street's businesses.

“From launching a grant program that offers direct financial relief, to working with Florida Power & Light to expedite their portion of the project, our goal is to deliver a beautiful street as quickly and safely as possible,” he said.