

An aerial photograph of the Crandon Park coastline in Florida, showing a mix of greenery, sandy beaches, and buildings. The image is used as a background for the title text.

CRANDON PARK

Executive Summary

A CALL FOR CHANGE - RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS REPORT

2020



The Crandon Park: A Call for Change report is comprised of an *Executive Summary* and the following *Research Volumes*:

- Vol. 1 Introduction
- Vol. 2 Crandon Park Today | Part 1 - Site Analysis
Crandon Park Today | Part 2 - Specific Area Analysis
- Vol. 3 Relevant History
- Vol. 4 Master Plan Evolution
- Vol. 5 Park Governance & Funding
- Vol. 6 Recent Best Practices
- Vol. 7 Park Precedents
- Vol. 8 Historic Documentation

DRAFT - ISSUED ON JULY 15, 2020

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Printed in the United States

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Crandon Park: A Call for Change
Research & Analysis Report

Executive Summary

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Prepared for
Citizens for Park Improvement (CPI)

Elaborated by
West 8 urban design and landscape architecture

CRANDON PARK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS REPORT

Prepared for

Citizens for Park Improvement



Bird's eye view of Crandon Beach looking towards the City of Miami



Acknowledgments

Crandon Park: A Call for Change - Research & Analysis Report was realized as a result of the collaborative effort between members of the *Citizen for Park Improvement*, West 8 - urban design landscape architecture firm, and Charles Birnbaum, Founder & Director of *The Cultural Landscape Foundation*. The completion of this document would not have been possible without the participation of the following individuals:

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Executive Summary

Crandon Park: Research and Analysis Report

Crandon Park, originally designed by the famed William Lyman Phillips, was once a symbol of "Island Paradise" beloved by locals and tourists alike. Today it stands largely underutilized. The path of the Park's rise and decline is laid out in this Report. The most important conclusions in this Report, however, are not how deplorable its current condition is, but how great is its potential.

Crandon Park stands at a pivotal point in its history – it is a Park abandoned and divided. In large part, this is due to Crandon Boulevard, a four-lane highway that bisects the Park, which was built as the result of private interest and profit to grow Key Biscayne's real estate. As density of the key grew, the burden of the boulevard on the Park increased.

Crandon Boulevard, however, was not the only problem in the Park's development narrative. After a creative beginning in 1942, development of the Park over the following decades was disjointed and ad hoc. Ideas for park features came and went, yet abandoned facilities still stood. Old service roads and paths that led to nowhere remain today. Maintenance fell behind. Exotic fauna and flora flourished. With the exception of the golf course, which was one of the best public courses in the United States, Crandon Park enjoyed little community support or philanthropy. Newer parks



Typical beach scene on Crandon Park showing the Park's iconic coconut palm trees. Vintage postcard, ca. 1940s.

were developed with site plans and facilities more attractive to the changing attitudes of the public. Following a dispute between the County and Matheson Family, which deeded the original park land, litigation resulted in a settlement that in turn led to an unusual Master Plan written and adopted under even more unusual circumstances. While the Master Plan stopped the ad hoc development process in its tracks, it also froze the Park as it was in 1995 by imposing strict rules and regulations that governed every aspect of the Park's facilities and operations. Essentially, it prohibited change, community involvement or philanthropic support. Under the thumb of the Master Plan, Crandon Park is in decline.

There is reason to hope. The Master Plan gave the National Parks Conservation Association the power to approve or reject changes to the Park's governing document, placing respected public park advocates in the role of park stewards. Crandon Park needs that stewardship.

Crandon Park has spent 25 years under the guidance of outmoded planning and management principles, and is filled with poorly situated facilities that have exhausted their use. Now, for the first time, creation of a revised Master Plan for Crandon Park is within reach. Together, with the NPCA's support and community input, the County can restore this sleeping beauty into

one of the most important regional parks in the United States by establishing a unified identity, coherent circulation, sustainable infrastructure, and equitable access to nature.

We hope that this Report will shed light on the great potential of Crandon Park.

Overview

Executive Summary

Background

Since its opening in 1947, Crandon Park is fondly regarded as one of Miami-Dade County's oldest Heritage parks—an "Island Paradise" well known for its astounding coconut palm beaches, marina and natural preserves. Situated on the northern part of Key Biscayne, which is about five miles from the City of Miami, Crandon Park currently holds about 975 acres. It offers a range of destinations for park visitors to enjoy: beach, cabanas, picnic grounds, marina, nature center, natural preserves, tennis and golf course. However, despite the attraction of its natural beauty and setting, today the Park has largely become abandoned and underutilized.

Purpose

In 2019, Citizens for Park Improvement approached the landscape architecture firm West 8 to conduct an objective preliminary research and analysis of the Park with the advisory assistance of Charles Birnbaum, founder and CEO of the Cultural Landscape Foundation. The study team sought to answer the following questions:

- What is the current physical and operational condition of Crandon Park?
- How can the Park's site, facilities and governance be improved?

Process

The study team conducted research between 2019 and 2020, during which West 8 visited the Park and surrounding areas multiple times to document the site using photography, on-site observation, and diagrammatic maps. In addition, the team studied historical imagery, maps and surveys, previous analytical and environmental reports and master plans. Summation of this research is concluded in this *Executive Summary* and *A Call for Change: Research & Analysis Report* (8 volumes).

Key Findings

After a preliminary site analysis and analysis of its history and current Master Plan document, which was last materially updated in 1995, the study team concludes that the Park is in need of a revision or amendment to its Master Plan. This recommendation is partially the result of the following key challenges that the Park faces today:

1. Crandon Park lacks a clear and unified identity.
2. The Park lacks resiliency to rising sea levels and storm events.
3. The Park suffers from poor accessibility and poor circulation.
4. The Park suffers from poor maintenance.
5. The Park is underutilized—and burdened by weaknesses relating to operations, management and revenue.
6. Fundamental modernization is stymied by an excessively rigid planning framework.

Key Recommendations

Based on the study team's expertise, case studies of other park precedents and comparison to current standards of design excellence and best practices, we humbly put forth the following recommendations:

1. Build an inclusive constituency and foster local stewardship through the creation of an Aspirational Master Plan.
2. Create a flexible planning framework that allows the park to adapt to changing times.
3. Design a visually and spatially unified Park with equitable access.
4. Design for sea level rise and enhance resiliency.
5. Bring exceptional elements of Phillips's Vision Plan into the 21st Century.
6. Position the Park's management and revenue models for maximum philanthropic engagement.



Rickenbacker Causeway

CITY OF MIAMI

VIRGINIA KEY

PROJECT SITE

Bear Cut Bridge

Biscayne Bay

Fossilized Reef

CRANDON PARK

Atlantic Ocean

KEY BISCAYNE

VILLAGE OF KEY BISCAYNE

BILL BAGGS FLORIDA STATE PARK

Introduction to Crandon Park

What and where is Crandon Park?

Crandon Park is one of Miami-Dade County's seven Heritage Parks. The Park encompasses 975 acres at the northern third of Key Biscayne, a barrier island situated between Biscayne Bay and the Atlantic Ocean and five miles southeast of the City of Miami. Visitors access the Park via Rickenbacker Causeway, and then along Crandon Boulevard, which runs through its center.

The Park's public marina, golf course, beach, cabanas and adjacent picnic areas serve as its primary recreational attractions, while the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Biscayne Nature Center provides educational programs for children and visitors. The Park's extensive nature preserves, home to a spectrum of ecologies from **upland hammock to mangroves**, qualify the Park as a valued environmental asset and a precious habitat for native flora and fauna.

The land itself was obtained by Miami-Dade County in 1940, with the sole purpose of serving "public park" uses, as stipulated in the deed with the Matheson family that had conveyed the property to public hands.

In 1993, the County and members of the Matheson family entered into a *Settlement Agreement* that further defined park uses and restrictions—as later recorded in the last and most recent *Crandon Park Master Plan*, which was published with several major revisions between 1993 and 1995. It was publicly presented to Miami-Dade County in 2000.

The Park still operates under the guidelines set by the current Master Plan, co-authored by Artemas P. Richardson of The Olmsted Office, Charles W. Pezoldt of Miami-Dade County and Bruce C. Matheson of the Matheson family.

Crandon Park's extensive nature preserves, which exhibit a spectrum of ecologies from upland hammock to mangroves, qualify the Park as a valued environmental asset and a precious habitat for native flora and fauna.

Crandon Park is one of Miami-Dade County's seven Heritage Parks. It is situated on the barrier island of Key Biscayne and encompasses 975 acres.



West Point Preserve



Golf Course



Crandon Gardens



Calusa Park



Marina



Tennis Center



Crandon Boulevard



Crandon Beach



Pavillions



Picnic Grounds



Bear Cut Preserve



Nature Center



Cabanas



Central Allee

History and Acquisition of Crandon Park

How did Crandon Park develop?

A Historical Overview of Key Biscayne

Crandon Park's story is tied to the long and rich history of Key Biscayne. In its early days, the island consisted solely of sandy beaches cloaked with thickets of saw palmettos and mangroves. A tribe of indigenous people known as the Tequesta Indians had made Key Biscayne its home for hundreds of years. In 1513, Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León first set foot on the North American continent at Key Biscayne. The Cape Florida Lighthouse, at the island's southern tip, was witness to the Second Seminole War in the early 19th century – and would later serve as a secret rendezvous point for runaway slaves awaiting safe passage to the British Bahamas. In the 1960s and early 70s, Key Biscayne attracted national prominence as the site of President Richard M. Nixon's "Winter White House."



1850 Plan of Key Biscayne showing ecology at the time largely comprised of sand bars, salt marshes and mangrove flats.

William J. Matheson's Key Biscayne

Key Biscayne's eventual evolution into a high-end residential community started in the early 20th century when William J. Matheson, a wealthy industrialist, acquired approximately two thirds of the key. Under his patronage, Matheson planted the island with rows of coconut palms (*coco nucifera*), some of which still populate the Park today. Foreseeing development opportunities, Matheson envisioned a causeway that would link Florida's mainland to the island, which at the time was accessible only by boat.

The causeway was delayed by a devastating hurricane in 1926, the Great Depression, and Matheson's own death in 1930. However, in 1940, a trade-off was devised between the County and Matheson's heirs that would eventually enable realization of the envisioned causeway. In return for building this road, Matheson's heirs deeded Tracts 1, 2 and 3 to Dade County as parkland. Three remaining parcels (Tracts 4, 5, and 6) would be reserved for future residential and commercial use, eventually becoming the Village of Key Biscayne.



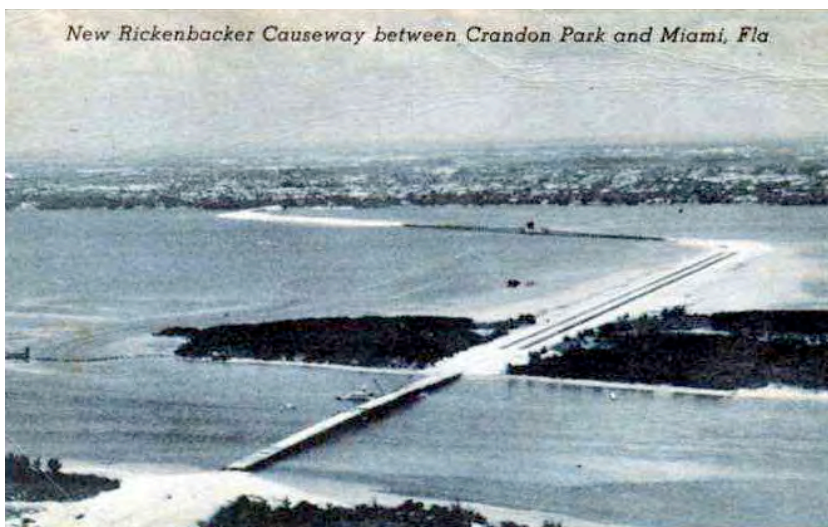
Coconut palm trees (*coco nucifera*) originally planted by W.J. Matheson inspired Crandon Park's landscape identity.

The 1940 Matheson deed carried particular conditions that limited the County's use of the land to "public park purposes"¹ and called for construction of a "roadway extending the causeway entrance to Key Biscayne on the north by a direct route through aforesaid Park Area to the south boundary thereof."² If the County failed to complete the causeway, the land would revert back to the Mathesons. The County consequently agreed to extend the causeway through the lands of the future Crandon Park.

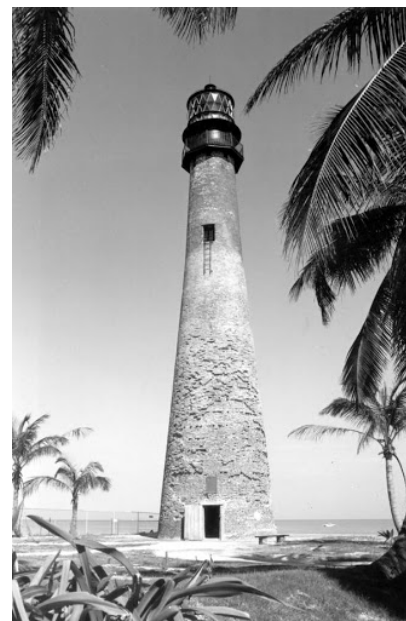
Rickenbacker Causeway Spurs Development of Key Biscayne

Completed in 1947, the four-lane Rickenbacker Causeway provided vehicular access from the mainland to Key Biscayne through the middle of Crandon Park—straight through to the southernmost tip of Bill Baggs Florida State Park. The stretch of road now running through both Crandon Park and Key Biscayne is called Crandon Boulevard.

As reflected in contemporary postcards, the new causeway—financed through toll revenues—was hailed as a major engineering achievement. Thanks to the project's successful completion, the County had obtained 975 acres of parkland. And, newly endowed with easy vehicular access to and from the mainland, Key Biscayne's real estate market boomed. Today, the prosperous Village of Key Biscayne has a population of approximately 12,000 people.



Postcard (dated ca. 1950s) of the newly constructed Rickenbacker Causeway linked Key Biscayne to the mainland, spurring development on the once isolated island.



Cape Florida Lighthouse in Bill Baggs Florida State Park is the oldest structure in Miami-Dade, first erected in 1825.

1. "In case said [bridge] work shall not be completed as aforesaid, or in case at any time it shall be definitely abandoned before completion or the use of said proposed park area for park purposes shall be abandoned, said land shall be reconveyed and released to [Anna Matheson Wood, Malcolm Matheson, and Hugh Matheson], [their] heirs, grantees or assigns, upon his or their request, in good, clean and sightly order and condition." (Matheson Deed dated April 25, 1940)

2. Dade County agreed "to construct through [the Park] a roadway extending from the causeway entrance to Key Biscayne on the north by a direct route through aforesaid Proposed Park Area to the south boundary thereof, and thence in a southerly direction through the remaining lands on Key Biscayne to a point on the private canal which runs in an easterly and westerly direction from Biscayne Bay to the Atlantic Ocean." (Matheson Deed dated April 25, 1940)



Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden in Coral Gables was also designed by the pioneer of tropical landscape architecture, William L. Phillips.

William L. Phillips Creates a Vision for Crandon Park that is only Partly Realized

The County employed the famous landscape architect William L. Phillips to design Crandon Park as an “Island Paradise.” Renowned today as the pioneer of tropical landscape architecture, Phillips played a major role in shaping Florida’s park landscapes. In fact, he designed two other County parks — Greynolds and Matheson Hammock Parks — as well as the stunning Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, among other nationally recognized Florida landscapes.

Vision Plan for Pleasure Ground and Parkway: In 1942, Phillips presented the County with a design for a recreational park that included a beach with cabanas, a park loop stretching along Biscayne Bay, a series of curated view corridors, a central allée, a marina, a canoe club, camping grounds, as well as various play fields for horseback riding, tennis and golf. Influenced by fashionable, automobile-focused layouts like Robert Moses’s Jones Beach in New York, Phillips’s *Vision Plan* included Crandon Boulevard as the Park’s central spine, with five sprawling parking lots that could accommodate high waves of expected beach-goers—5,000 spaces for automobiles.



Crandon Park officially opened to the public in 1947 and was originally designed to accommodate thousands of cars for beach visitors.

The Park’s As-built Condition: When the Park opened in 1947, only some elements of Phillips’s *Vision Plan* (1942) had been realized. The first completed areas included the Park’s beautiful beaches spotted with coconut palms, cabanas, shady picnic grounds with barbecues, stopping places for fishing and launching boats, and an amusement park with a carousel and a miniature train that carried children and their parents through the natural hammock. Crandon Boulevard, which connected to Rickenbacker Causeway, functioned as the main means of access, funneling droves of vehicles to its beachside parking lots.

Crandon Zoo: Although not included in his 1942 proposal, Phillips later designed the grounds of the Crandon Zoo—now Crandon Gardens — with lion tamer Julia Allen Field serving as its inaugural director. Both Crandon Zoo and the Beach became major attractions for Key Biscayne and County residents alike. At its peak of popularity in the mid-1970s, Crandon Park was attracting nearly two million visitors annually.

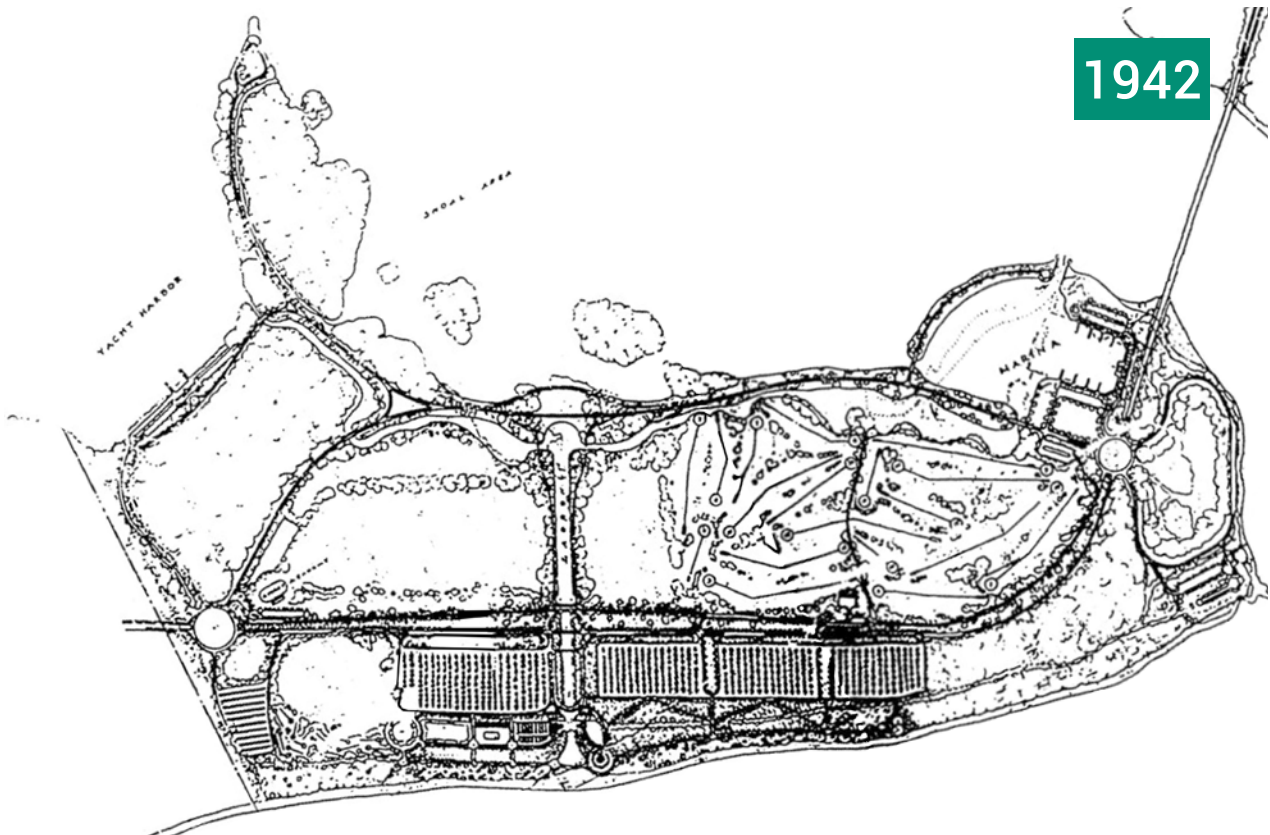
Some Incomplete Components: Several noteworthy elements of Phillips's design, however, would either be completed in piecemeal fashion, or not at all. The Golf Course and the Marina, for instance, were not completed until the late 1960s. The lagoon, intended to offer unobstructed views of Biscayne Bay to the west, was only partly constructed and today remains obscured by vegetation. Other critical design elements, such as the inclusion of roundabouts at entries to the Golf Course and Marina along Crandon Boulevard, were never constructed.

Additionally, a looping trail along Biscayne Bay was also never realized, nor were a vast majority of nature trails and boardwalks that were to connect people to the Park's unique coastal ecologies. Areas to the southwest and northwest, which Phillips had originally designated for recreation, were eventually given over to preservation to protect the native wetland species and mangrove hammocks. These areas are today known as the West Point, Ibis and Bear Cut Preserves.



The Marina shown under construction in the 1950s. It was created by dredging the existing wetlands and creating upland for Crandon Boulevard.

▶ For more info, see
Volume 3 | Relevant History



1942

Vision Plan (1942) by William L. Phillips proposed a pleasure ground park and parkway. His master plan established the "bones" of the Park's future framework; however, it was only partially realized.

Master Plan Evolution and Understanding

How did the Park's Master Plan evolve and how does it affect the Park today?

Evolution of the Master Plan document and its restrictive covenants

The authors of Crandon Park's guiding documents—from Phillips's 1942 *Vision Plan* to the present-day *Crandon Park Master Plan*—indisputably deserve praise for their efforts and their vision, and for the outstanding park they initiated. However, even the best-planned park must adapt to changing social, cultural and environmental forces. Stymieing the Park's ability to cope with change, the current *Master Plan* is so restrictive that it essentially locks in time, what existed in 1995 and not only limits change, but promotes resistance to change. Shackled to outdated policies, Crandon Park has become “frozen” in time. It thus cannot be characterized as a contemporary park. Instead, unfortunately, it has become an outmoded park.



Crandon Park the Next Fifty Years (1989) was a preliminary study conducted by an interdisciplinary team of faculty, who were the first to recommend the creation of a comprehensive master plan for Crandon Park.

Crandon Park The Next Fifty Years (1989): The need for a master plan was first identified in an interdisciplinary study called *Crandon Park: The Next Fifty Years*. Activity and interest generated by the Tennis Tournament had led the County to commission a comprehensive study of the Park by an interdisciplinary faculty team from the Florida Sea Grant Study Program, the Department of Park Administration and Landscape Architecture of Texas Tech University.

The study pinpointed many of issues that persist today, including the need for:

- **Better park interconnectivity for pedestrians and cyclists**
- **A reduced number of access points to streamline vehicular traffic**
- **Dune and shoreline enhancement**
- **Educational initiatives for preservation areas**
- **A master plan**

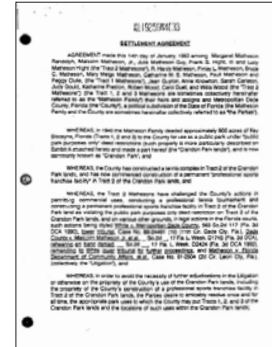
All but the latter were not implemented.

Settlement Agreement Restrictions (1993): In the aftermath of a series of lawsuits debating the definition of “public use” as stipulated in the Matheson deed, Miami-Dade County and the Matheson family agreed to a number of covenants which restricted flexibility in the location, footprint, size, and functions of Park facilities.

These limits mainly affected the Tennis Center, and also spelled out restraints on signage, advertisements and permissible recreational activities. Some of these restrictions helped ensure protection of the Park’s natural areas. But these provisions would come to be bound within the future Master Plan document—and were imposed, in essence, without input from other Park constituents.



Crandon Park Tennis Center (formerly known as the Lipton Tennis Center).

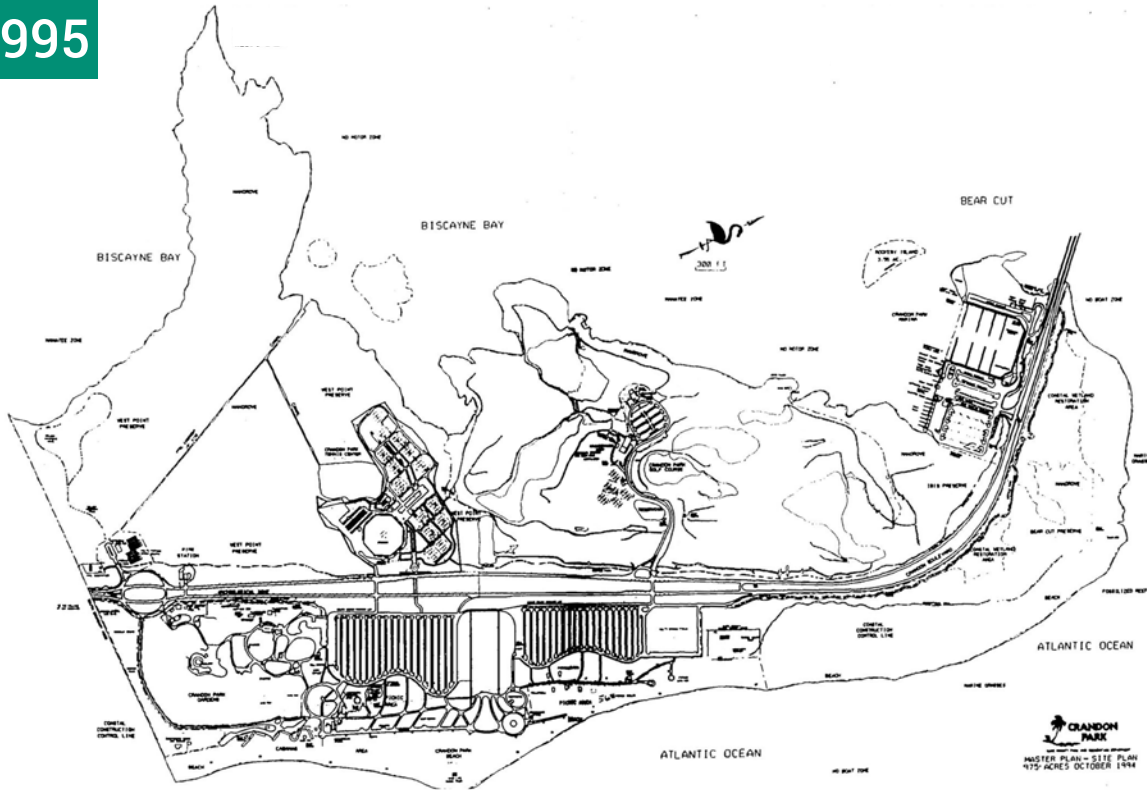


The Settlement Agreement (January 14, 1993) between Miami-Dade County and the Matheson family imposed a number of restrictions that were incorporated into the current Master Plan.

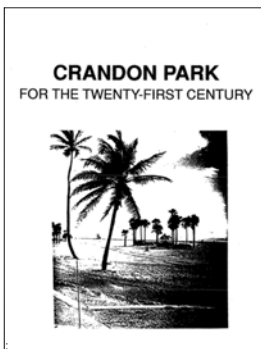
Crandon Park’s Master Plan document was created through an atypical process that was by and large conducted without significant public input. As a result, the Park has not been able to adequately serve the diverse needs of its constituents.

For more info, see Volume 4 | Master Plan Evolution

1995



Crandon Park Master Plan (1995) by Artemas P. Richardson of the Olmsted Office and Bruce C. Matheson of the Matheson Family.



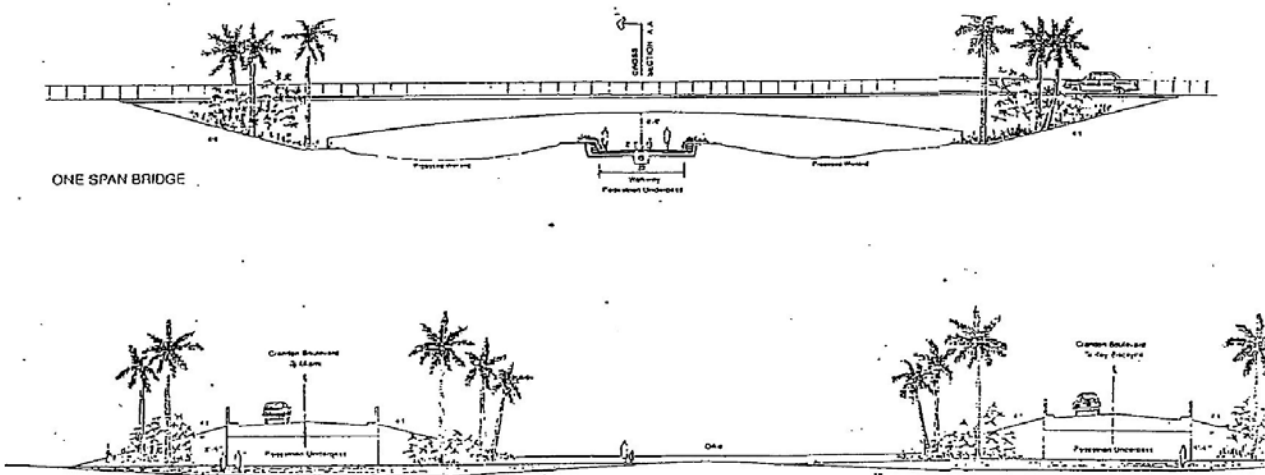
Crandon Park for the Twenty-first Century (1993) was the first master plan prepared by Artemas P. Richardson (The Olmsted Office)

Master Plan Document Challenges and Constraints (1993-2000):

The current *Crandon Park Master Plan* is the result of three major revisions. Artemas P. Richardson of the Olmsted Office completed the first publication in 1993. Bruce C. Matheson seemingly led the second and third re-publications. A close study of the evolution of the *Master Plan* documents reveals that many of Richardson's innovative recommendations in 1993 were written out in subsequent revisions.

At the same time, the list of restrictive covenants adopted from the *Settlement Agreement* was expanded. For instance, only names relating to the Park and its natural flora and fauna are permitted (eg. no names of individuals are allowed), with the exception of a small donors plaque in the Nature Center. This restrictive rule, arguably self-defeating at least in respect to revenue generation, significantly inhibited opportunities to attract and recognize philanthropic support for the Park. It is worth mentioning that when the current *Master Plan* was circulated to the Miami-Dade County Park's staff, several reacted negatively to it. Syliva Unzueta, Acting Deputy Director of the Park and Recreation Department wrote prophetically that that the plan goes "beyond the *Settlement Agreement*, fixing many details in stone, and not allowing for movement and constructive change."⁴

4. Unzueta, Silvia, *Crandon Park Master Plan*, From Silvia Unzueta to G.A.Cutie, March 12, 1996. Memorandum.



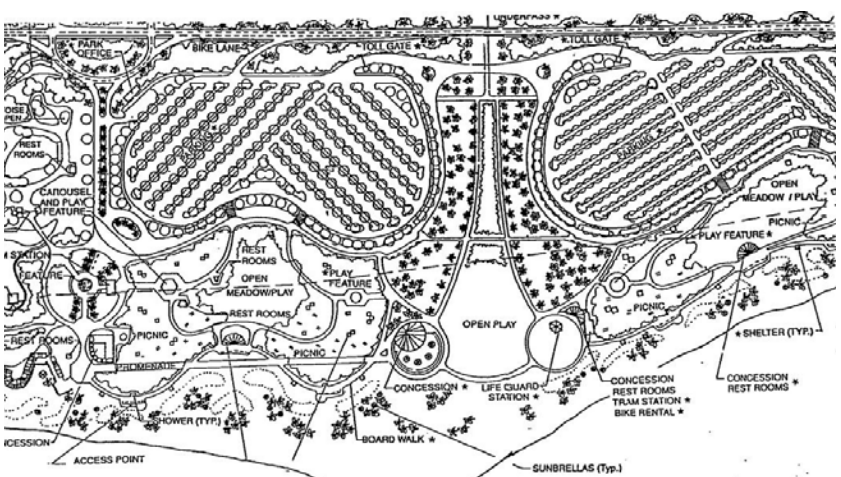
Proposed sections of Crandon Boulevard from the 1993 Crandon Park Master Plan by Richardson showing an open span bridge with a pedestrian/bicyclist underpass that would connect to the Central Allée and lagoon. The minimal ramping (3%) of the vehicular overpass and proposed plantings would make it seem like a natural development. This proposal was eventually written out in later revisions of the master plan.

Improvements That Were Never Implemented: As noted, many of the current *Master Plan* recommendations were never realized, such as the inclusion of nature trails through the preserves, enhancement of the beach dunes, opportunities for flexible recreational fields, diversified bike and pedestrian circulation, and improved access across Crandon Boulevard.

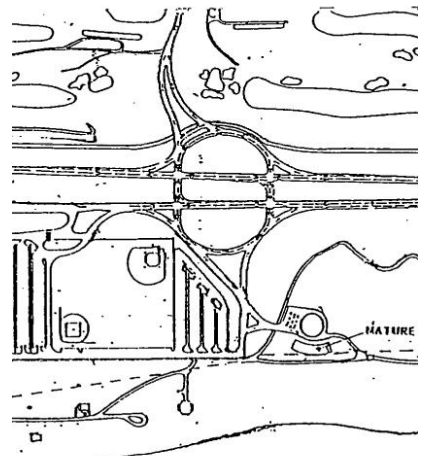
In addition, in Richardson's first draft of the *Master Plan* in 1993, he had recommended construction of a vehicular bridge along Crandon Boulevard that would allow pedestrians/cyclists to connect to the Central Allée underneath. This recommendation would later be excised. Such solutions would have helped minimize today's friction between cars and pedestrians/bicyclists.



Crandon Park Master Plan (1995-2000) is the most current master plan document of Crandon Park to date.



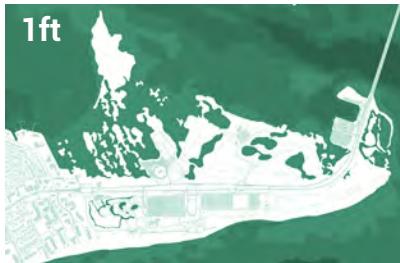
Richardson proposed a design for Parking Lots that would screen the Tennis Center and also accommodate the flexible play fields. The curvilinear forms were meant to mimic the beach shoreline. This proposal, however, was one of the many never realized.



Roundabout node at the entrance to the Golf Center and Nature Center would have helped slow down oncoming traffic, and consolidated entries into the Park's amenity areas.

Six Challenges Crandon Park Faces Today

What are Crandon Park's challenges and constraints?



Based upon today's standards, Crandon Park is, regrettably, no longer a contemporary park: it is out-of-date. Since adoption of the current *Master Plan*, Crandon Park has failed to evolve in a way that reflects widely accepted, contemporary best practices in park management. The Park falls substantially short in its relationship to the surrounding community, its culture, and its environment.



For the most part, for example, Phillips's designs have not been properly updated to address climate resiliency or contemporary standards of sustainability. The Park fails to adequately emphasize multimodal mobility as it relates to bikes, pedestrians and other low-impact forms of transit. It fails to use such resilient materials as permeable pavement, and it fails to meet contemporary visitors' preferences for flexible recreation zones. Furthermore, the park generally underperforms in respect to the preservation of natural resources and historical sites.



Based upon the study team's preliminary research into the Park's history and its existing conditions—and based also upon an analysis of the evolution of the Master Plan document—the study team has identified at least six challenges Crandon Park must overcome to rise to standards expected of a Twenty-first Century Park:

Sea-level rise predictions
(NOAA climate data)

▶ For more info, see
Volume 2 | Crandon Park Today

According to an analysis by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, by 2030 sea level rise will be one foot; and by 2060 it will be three feet; and by 2100 it will be 6.75 ft. Based on these numbers, if no measures are taken beyond those already in place, almost all of the West Point Preserve, the Marina, the northern portion of the Bear Cut Preserve, parts of the south Beach, the southwestern part of the Golf Course, Crandon Gardens and stretches of the Boulevard will be underwater within 50 years.

— Diane Toomey, "At Ground Zero for Rising Seas" in *Yale Environment 360* (2016)

Six Key Challenges & Constraints

- 1. Crandon Park needs to unify its mixed identity.** Crandon Boulevard bisects the overall venue both visually and spatially. Consequently, the Park must focus more heavily on building a unitary and unified identity. It must deliver a uniform and consistent level of maintenance throughout the entire property. The Park requires far greater uniformity in respect to furnishing styles and lighting elements. It also suffers from poor signage visibility, which further weakens its ability to project a uniform identity.
- 2. The Park is vulnerable to sea level rise and hurricane events.** Because of its low elevation and flat topography, Crandon Park has always been vulnerable to hurricanes, storm surges, and, increasingly, sea level rise. The Park appears to lack a strategy to address these urgent concerns. Moreover, none of its facilities or program areas appear to be equipped with proper resilience-promoting features. Crandon Park's eroding coastline and dune system pose risks to its survival. Although some measures were implemented in the early 1990s to stabilize Crandon Park's coastline and beaches, many of its natural assets are still heavily vulnerable to erosion. Experts have recommended dune protection and enhancement since the *Crandon Park: The Next Fifty Years* report in 1989, but these were never implemented.
- 3. Crandon Park suffers from poor accessibility and poor circulation.** The Park focuses too heavily on the automobile. Its circulation and access are confusing and, to an extent, dangerous to cyclists and pedestrians. There is limited access and connectivity among its various Specific Areas (e.g., Marina, Beach, Golf Course, Bear Cut Preserve, etc.).
- 4. The Park suffers from poor maintenance.** A number of facilities are either severely damaged, abandoned, or inaccessible to the public because of plant overgrowth. Many of the preserves seem to suffer from invasive species growth and such basic maintenance problems as broken fences. The West Point and Ibis Preserves are not accessible to the public even for passive nature observation activities, as recommended in the current *Crandon Park Master Plan*.
- 5. Crandon Park is underutilized and burdened by weaknesses relating to operations, management and revenue.** Preliminary on-site observation and an overview of the operational hours of the Park's concession stands, Crandon Gardens, the Tennis Center and Calusa Park clearly demonstrate that the Park is underutilized, particularly on weekdays. The Park is not optimizing its potential revenue sources. It must provide opportunities for more inclusive, community-oriented stewardship — and for broader and more balanced sources of revenue.
- 6. An excessively rigid planning framework stymies fundamental modernization:** The current *Crandon Park Master Plan* contains restrictive covenants that impose excessive levels of inflexibility in managing the Park's growth, in the maintenance of its facilities, structures and signage, and in the management of invasive, endangered or threatened species and vegetation overgrowth.

Crandon Park has Seventeen Specific Areas



6

West Point Preserve

6

5

Crandon Park Tennis Center

7

Calusa Park

Substation

16

Fire Station

15

Archaeological Site

17

Archaeological Site

17

14

Crandon Park Service Area

13

Crandon Garden

Cabanás

12

11

Parking & Beach Drive

10

10

Crandon Park Beach



2

2

4

Crandon Park Golf Course

3

Ibis Preserve

Crandon Park Marina

8

Bear Cut Preserve

1

Crandon Boulevard

11

Parking & Beach Drive

9

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Nature Center

17

Archaeological Site

10



1000ft

Site Analysis Overview

Why is Crandon Park underperforming today?

The Lasting Effects of Ad Hoc Development



Crandon Tennis Center (formerly known the Lipton Tennis Center), which opened in 1986, was built on the site of an illegal landfill in the Park. Although the stadium itself remains open to the public today, the Miami Open Tennis Tournament was eventually moved to another location in 2019.

Over the course of approximately thirty years, Crandon Park has suffered from largely unmonitored growth and *ad hoc* development. This has diluted the clarity of Phillips's *Vision Plan* for the Park.⁵ At various times, different constituencies undertook a succession of additions to the Park to meet a variety of needs. Yet no discernible attempt was made to fit these additions into the Park's overall composition in a coherent or orchestrated manner.

Unplanned additions include the massive and now-defunct Tennis Center, the largely unused Calusa Park that falls under the management of the Village of Key Biscayne. Other examples of added, *ad hoc* recreational spaces include a running track in the Central Allée and baseball fields in the North Parking Lot. Still other *ad hoc* uses served opportunistic or private interests, such as the Park's use as a landfill and the long-term hosting of a major, private tennis tournament.



Calusa Playhouse, once an artistic hub in Calusa Park, is now abandoned and inaccessible. Facilities such as these will eventually be torn down.

▶ For more info, see
Volume 2 | Part 1 - Site Analysis

5. It would be inappropriate to fully blame the County for the Park's history of ad hoc park development. Prior to 1957, Dade County did not enjoy home rule. It was governed largely by special acts of the State Legislature. Around this time, too, Fidel Castro took power in Cuba and the first wave of immigrants arrived in Miami, introducing enormous financial issues and cultural change.



The Central Allée was previously appropriated as a running track for a television show.



Crandon Park is overly car-oriented. Empty asphalt parking lots cover valuable upland. On-site observation suggests that the parking capacity exceeds current visitorship.



Beach sand wall acts as a blockage and restricts access from beach to the picnic grounds and vice versa

An Inability to Adapt to Change

It is the intention of this Report to point Crandon Park in a direction that would preserve the best of the past but incorporate best practices that were not known decades earlier and address environmental conditions that did not exist decades earlier. While Crandon Park is a Miami-Dade County public park, the condition of the park today is more of a result of what *was not* done. Inaction, poor maintenance, and the sprinkling of abandoned structures throughout the site seems to be a consequence of the *Master Plan's* restrictive nature. It prevents opportunity for philanthropic support, community involvement or decisions, and the improvement of facilities or operations. It does not allow the County the necessary flexibility to adapt Crandon Park appropriately to its ever-changing community or environment. The *Master Plan* governs all in intricate detail, and the process of changing the document is arduous and time consuming.

Crandon Park enjoys a unique and extraordinary setting. Unfortunately, its condition is badly degraded. Consequently, the Park's natural beauty, its beneficial location and the creativity of its first planner, William Lyman Phillips, are obscured by out-dated design, poor site layout, all made worse by abandoned facilities and poor maintenance.



The current *Master Plan* does not create many of the undesirable conditions existing today. However, it does make certain that the Park's current condition cannot easily be improved, leaving its extraordinary promise unfulfilled.

The current *Master Plan* does accomplish two important things: First, it ended decades of *ad hoc* development of the Park. Second, by locking the Park into its current condition for decades, the useful life of poorly located facilities has ebbed away, eliminating barriers to creating a holistic master plan for the very first time in the Park's history. In short, time and trends have revealed that the current positioning of the Park's facilities is today inefficient. Now that these facilities are in dire need of redevelopment, there is a chance to 'start fresh;' to strategically place these facilities according to contemporary standards and lifestyles.

Due to inaction and the passage of time, a revised plan could be developed with a holistic perspective, considering elevations (high land) in regards to imminent rising seas, suitable land use for environmentally sensitive areas, , and parking requirements for a multi-mobile community. William Lyman Phillips did not possess that information in 1942. The existing *Master Plan* stands in the way of a great public park.



Abandoned Relics



Barriers



No Signage



No Signage



Failing Infrastructure



Broken Pathways



Unused Kiosks



Confusing Signage



Fragmented Dune System

Up to the mid-1970s, Crandon Park attracted over 3 million people; however, today it appears abandoned and underutilized.



Poor Public Transit Connections



Invasive Flora



Crumbling Structures



Limited Operations



Minimal Sea-level Rise Protection



Car-oriented and Asphalt Everywhere



Underutilized amenities

Specific Areas Analysis and Recommendations

For more info, see
Volume 4 | Part II - Specific Areas

Crandon Park is divided into seventeen “Specific Areas” or districts as originally zoned according to the current *Crandon Park Master Plan*. This map provides an overview of allocation of each Specific Area and its approximate acreage.

The following pages provide a checklist of outstanding priorities and preliminary recommendations for each Specific Area as a launching point for public discourse.

We welcome and, strongly encourage, more community input so as to ensure that future park improvements are birthed from an inclusive and informed process.



Specific Areas

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Crandon Boulevard | 8. Bear Cut Preserve | 13. Crandon Gardens (former Crandon Zoo) |
| 2. Crandon Park Marina | 9. Marjory Stoneman Douglas Nature Center | 14. Crandon Park Service Area |
| 3. Ibis Preserve | 10. Crandon Park Beach | 15. Fire Station |
| 4. Crandon Park Golf Course | 11. Parking and Beach Drive | 16. Substation |
| 5. Crandon Park Tennis Center | 12. Crandon Park Cabanas | 17. Archaeological Sites |
| 6. West Point Preserve | | |
| 7. Calusa Park | | |

1. Crandon Park Marina



- The wet slips in the Marina are in good condition overall.
- Demand for Marina access vastly exceeds capacity. On weekends and holidays, boats are lined up for miles awaiting the opportunity to access one of the few facilities in the county to launch watercraft.
- "Sundays On The Bay" was once a popular restaurant destination and attraction; it was demolished and not replaced.
- The Marina's buildings are restricted to their current size and location. *The Crandon Park Master Plan* does not allow for the kind of flexibility or additional development that might help it meet current visitor capacities.

Recommendations

- ❖ *Reassess the best ways to accommodate current visitorship and parking capacities. Reconfigure vehicular circulation to reduce bottlenecks at the entrance.*
- ❖ *Generate revenue to support Park maintenance by hosting cultural and social programming or events at the Marina.*
- ❖ *Revise the Master Plan's restrictions on building growth and development to meet current visitorship needs.*

2. Crandon Boulevard



- The Boulevard functions more as a high-speed road than as a coconut palm tree-lined parkway, as originally envisioned by Phillips. Dense vegetation, planted in keeping with the **Master Plan's** recommendations, creates a heavily forested tunnel that inhibits visibility for drivers and poses potential danger to pedestrians or cyclists.
- The four-lane road severely inhibits park connectivity and identity, dividing its eastern and western sides.
- Crandon Boulevard's low elevation makes it vulnerable to sea level rise and storm surges.

Recommendations

- ❖ *Create a maintenance plan for the vegetative overgrowth and invasive species along Crandon Boulevard and restore its former "parkway" character, as reflected in Phillips's Vision Plan.*
- ❖ *Reconfigure the road and its access points to minimize the conflict among cars, bicyclists and pedestrians.*
- ❖ *Explore options to address sea level rise and storm surges, such as raising the road, improving on-site water management, or other grade change/topographical measures.*
- ❖ *Per a recommendation appearing in Richardson's 1993 iteration of the Master Plan, consider construction of a vehicular bridge along Crandon Boulevard with a pedestrian/cyclist underpass connecting the Central Allée and lagoon.*

3. Ibis Preserve



- This natural preserve is a valuable ecological asset.

Recommendations

- ❖ *Work with an Environmental Consultant to create a management plan for trimming overgrowth and invasive flora and fauna.*
- ❖ *Introduce nature trails with minimal impact on existing wetlands—per Master Plan recommendations—and add guided tours by trained naturalists, as well as interpretive signage, to help educate Park visitors.*

4. Crandon Park Golf Course



- Designed almost fifty years ago, this championship golf course was once recognized as one of America's best public courses. It has become aged and is long overdue for redevelopment.
- The course's low elevation puts it at great risk of damage from storm surges and sea level rise.
- The locations of the Clubhouse, maintenance facility buildings and driving range are not optimal, because they require a long entry drive. This reduces usable land for golf and nature, brings cars into a serene environment, and makes it difficult to reach by biking or walking.
- The Arraya Tennis Center is another example of ad hoc development. Its clay courts are poorly maintained

Recommendations

- ❖ *Study various scenarios that would protect the Golf Course from storm surges and sea level rise.*
- ❖ *Where possible, fairways and recreational green areas should be elevated so they are protected -- and so golfers can enjoy unobstructed views of the City of Miami and Biscayne Bay above the shoreline mangroves.*
- ❖ *Consolidate the Clubhouse and its facilities closer to Crandon Boulevard to provide users with easier pedestrian and bicycle access. Explore potential to share parking with the North and South Parking Lots.*
- ❖ *Future updates to the Course should improve the tidal waters, employ best practices to reduce the amount of mowed open lawn, use salt-tolerant grasses, and implement contemporary stormwater retention techniques.*

5. Crandon Park Tennis Center



- The Tennis Center, its Stadium and Clubhouse were once famed for hosting the Miami Open. Since the tournament changed venue, its facilities are limited to casual recreational use. With the tournament gone, the Stadium has become largely abandoned and—according to the current Master Plan—must be demolished.
- The Tennis Clubhouse is generally in poor condition.
- Overall, the Tennis Center is an isolated and aesthetically disruptive element within the Park.
- The Tennis Center is sited on a former landfill and may require remediation.

Recommendations

- ❖ *Remove or repurpose the large stadium structure.*
- ❖ *Reassess the Tennis Center layout to be more suitable for recreational tennis (or other recreational uses), rather than the current arrangement placed to accommodate a professional tournament.*
- ❖ *Consideration should be given in connection to renovation of the golf course and tennis facility to a common golf/tennis clubhouse, pro shop and locker room facility to serve both recreational venues adjacent to Crandon Boulevard, eliminating acres of asphalt.*

6. West Point Preserve



- This natural preserve is a valuable ecological asset that is inaccessible to the public because of impenetrable growth. The current **Master Plan** had recommended developing a Mangrove Trail here.
- Although much of this area has returned to wetland and mangroves, there are many traces of human intervention and artificial development, such as mosquito ditches and human-made Brown Pelican Lake.

Recommendations

- ❖ *Introduce nature trails and informative signage with minimal impact on the existing wetlands and sensitive environs, per present-day Master Plan recommendations. Boardwalk trails could help reduce the impact of foot traffic on sensitive undergrowth.*
- ❖ *Facilitate guided tours by trained naturalists to educate Park visitors.*
- ❖ *Manage dangerous overgrowth and invasive species.*
- ❖ *Create natural waterways for Park visitors to take non-motorized watercraft—including kayaks and water paddles—for exploring the Park's wetlands.*

7. Calusa Park



- The area surrounding Calusa Park is so low relative to sea level that it floods at high tide, creating an environment that is very difficult to maintain.
- This community park, managed by the Village of Key Biscayne, is underutilized and unmaintained. The site includes cracked tennis courts and an abandoned historic playhouse.
- Following adoption of the current *Master Plan*, formerly active recreation areas, as well as children's playgrounds, were given over to wetland preservation. However, they were not reallocated into other parts of the Park.
- The location of the community park is not well advertised. It is poorly connected to the Village of Key Biscayne, with little signage.

Recommendations

- ❖ *A revised master plan should consider the viability of this site for any recreational use due to its vulnerability to flooding.*
- ❖ *If the facility has a future in light of the elevation of the land, work with the Village of Key Biscayne to identify suitable types of programming that would best fit the community's and park visitors' needs.*

8. Bear Cut Preserve



- Often used by visitors and school children visiting the Nature Center, this preserve is a valuable ecological and educational resource.
- The existing Fossilized Reef Trail is well trafficked by bicyclists and pedestrians coming from the City of Miami.
- The preserve suffers from some invasive species, minimal trail management and poor signage. One sign along the boardwalk to the fossilized reef is indecipherable.

Recommendations

- ❖ *Create a park maintenance plan to manage invasive species, vegetative overgrowth and trail safety. As a point of comparison, the Bill Baggs Florida State Park revises its ongoing maintenance plan every ten years.*
- ❖ *Post additional educational signage to help visitors learn about the ecology and landscape.*

9. Marjory Stoneman Douglas Biscayne Nature Center



- The Nature Center is one of the most popular and successful cultural and social attractions in the Park, working with many local and regional schools and inner-city programs.
- The current **Master Plan** currently prohibits its expansion, curtailing its ability to meet the growing population of the surrounding community and growing demand for outdoor educational programming.

Recommendations

- ❖ *Allow the Nature Center to expand to meet the needs of the community and facilitate its educational mission to help visitors learn about the Park's unique fossilized reef, coastal ecology and rich history. program areas on the west side of the Park.*

10. Crandon Park Beach



- Crandon Beach continues to be one of the more popular destinations in the Park. Compared with other Miami beaches, however, it appears to be largely vacant during the weekdays.
- The beach dunes are fragmented, and erosion has steadily increased shoreline recession.
- The food service is subpar and is limited to weekends and holidays.
- The Central Allée is one of the most beautiful moments in Park, offering stunning views to the Atlantic Ocean framed by a cathedral of banyan trees and coconut palms. Today, however, dense vegetation screens the view corridor over the lagoon to the Biscayne Bay, denying the public an historic view shed originally planned by Phillips.

Recommendations

- ❖ *Enhance the beach dunes for resiliency, and stabilize the shoreline.*
- ❖ *Improve concession stands and food service to attract visitors throughout the week. This source of revenue can help fund Park maintenance.*
- ❖ *Reopen the view corridor near the lagoon to the Biscayne Bay, restoring Phillips's desired physical and visual connection between the eastern and western sides of the Park.*

11. Parking Beach and Drive



- There is an excessive amount of impervious surface on site, i.e., asphalt parking lots and concrete sidewalks. This creates an “urban heat island” effect. The current *Master Plan* had recommended installation of permeable parking surfaces, which was never done.
- On-site observations suggest that parking lot capacity exceeds its usership.

Recommendations

- ❖ Reduce impervious surfaces and apply resilient materials and permeable pavement.
- ❖ Reduce or innovatively reimagine parking configurations to fit today’s usership, based on current traffic analysis.
- ❖ Fluidly integrate the parking lots with the Picnic Grounds, which would reflect a 1995 *Master Plan* recommendation to create zones for flexible, active recreation.

12. Crandon Park Cabanas



- The cabanas, although aged, appear to be in overall fair condition and are well used.
- The road leading to the cabana is closed and consists of a large amount of impermeable surface.

Recommendations

- ❖ Upgrade the cabana facilities and adjust their usership as needed.
- ❖ Remove and re-landscape the cabana road or at least reconsider its function and purpose.

13. Crandon Gardens



- With a crumbling picnic shelter and cracked pathways, this area is largely abandoned and minimally maintained.
- Many cages from the former zoo have not been retrofitted or repurposed for safe usage. An area designated as a petting zoo was never realized.
- Previous public efforts and recommendations were overridden by the Crandon Park Master Plan Amendment Committee, an entity discussed in some detail below.
- Footings of the abandoned children's mini-train ride remain, but the ride is gone.

Recommendations

- ❖ *Create tailored and adaptable creative art programming at Crandon Gardens that reflects community needs and interests.*
- ❖ *Create a coherent circulation and garden layout that takes into account both visitor and community interests.*
- ❖ *Upgrade the existing relics to make them safe and attractive.*

14. Service Area

- Facilities in the Service Area appear to be in fair condition.

Recommendations

- ❖ *While the Service Area appears to be in satisfactory shape, other maintenance and staff buildings across the site are largely abandoned or deteriorating, such as staff buildings along the Beach and Crandon Gardens. These should be restored or repurposed as necessary.*

15. Fire Station and 16. Substation

- Facilities in the Service Area appear to be in fair condition.

Recommendations

- ❖ *This area is close to Calusa Park and should be screened by vegetation where possible to block views of unsightly utility equipment.*

17. Archaeological Sites

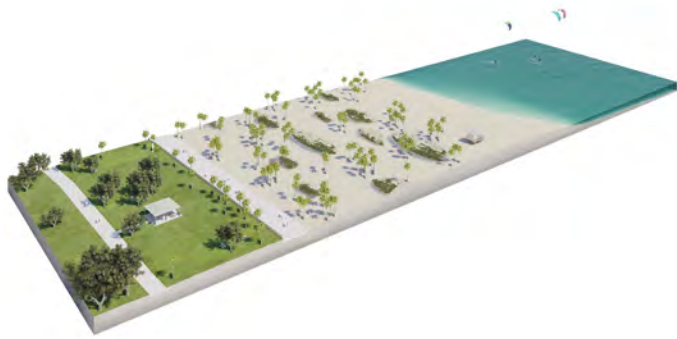
- There are three Tequesta Indian archaeological sites. Although documented in the current **Master Plan**, there is no signage or demarcation indicating their presence.

Recommendations

- ❖ *Increase and promote public awareness through educational signage and/or tours of these valuable historic sites. Educate the public about their relation to Crandon Park's rich history.*

Site Transects

Summary of Typical Existing Conditions



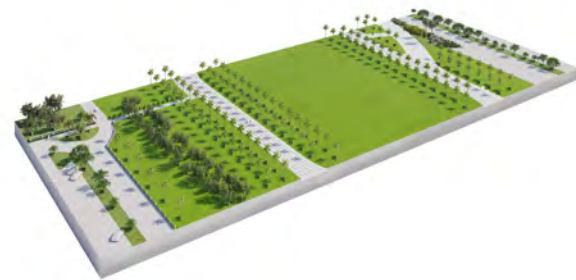
1. Crandon Beach



2. Picnic Area



3. North Parking Lot



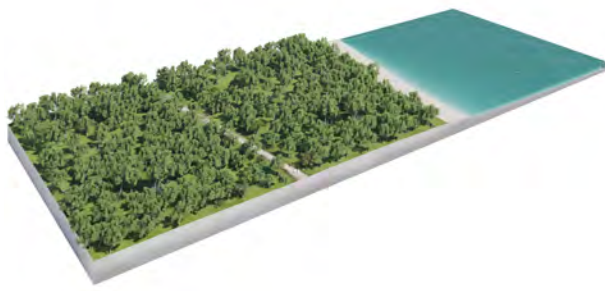
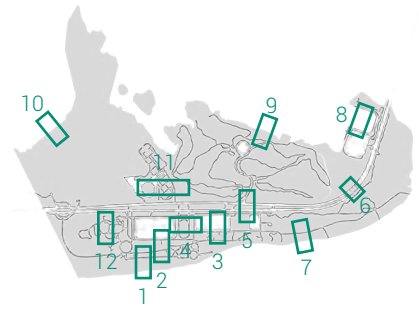
4. Central Allée



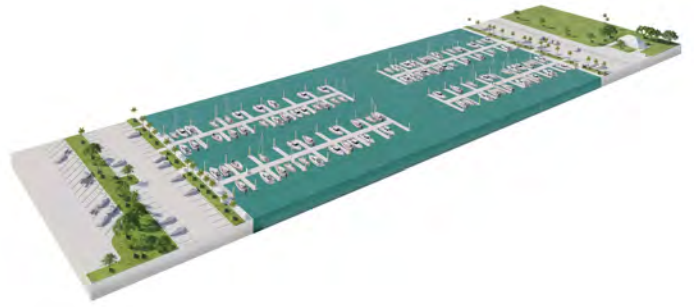
5. Crandon Blvd. - Typical Condition



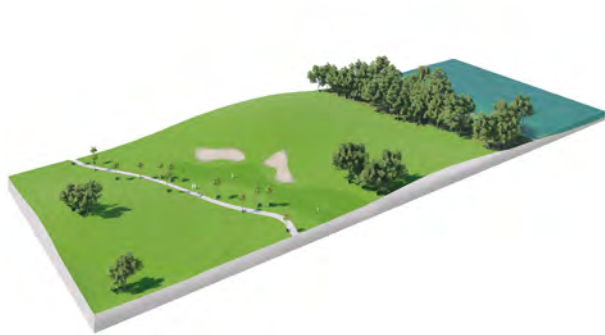
6. Crandon Blvd. - Entry Condition



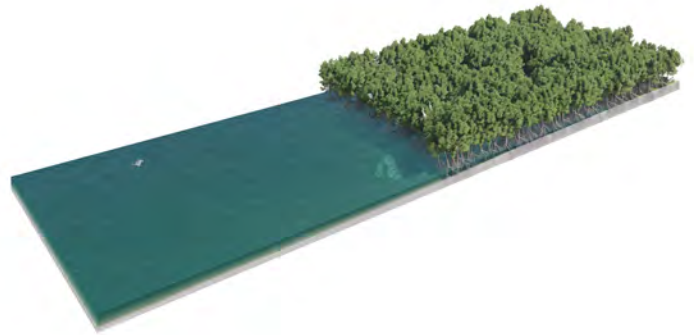
7. Bear Cut Preserve



8. Crandon Park Marina



9. Golf Course - Bay Edge



10. West Point Preserve - Mangrove Edge



11. Tennis Center



12. Crandon Gardens

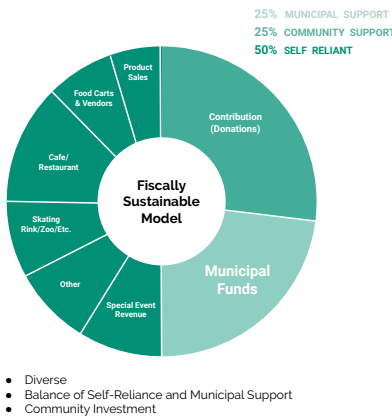
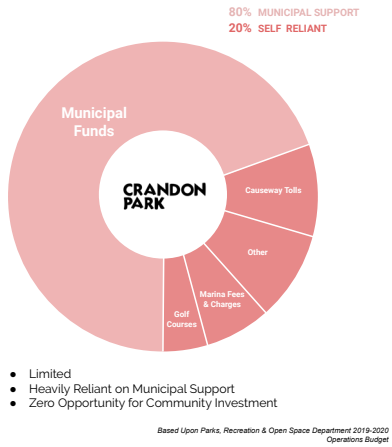
Inadequacies in Park Funding & Management

Why is Crandon Park underperforming today?

A summary of park operations and governance

The current *Master Plan* document's restrictions provide hurdles and blockades preventing community support and philanthropy, leaving the Park incapable of providing funds to properly maintain what exists today.

This gap in funding is likely a significant reason for why the current *Master Plan* recommendations have not been completed on-site. Further contributing to the Park's 25 year stall in progress are the lack of community engagement taken to create the *Master Plan*, and the vast restrictions placed on the management structure within the *Master Plan*. These restraints hinder the operation of the Park by preventing its governing body from their ability to make decisions regarding the land.

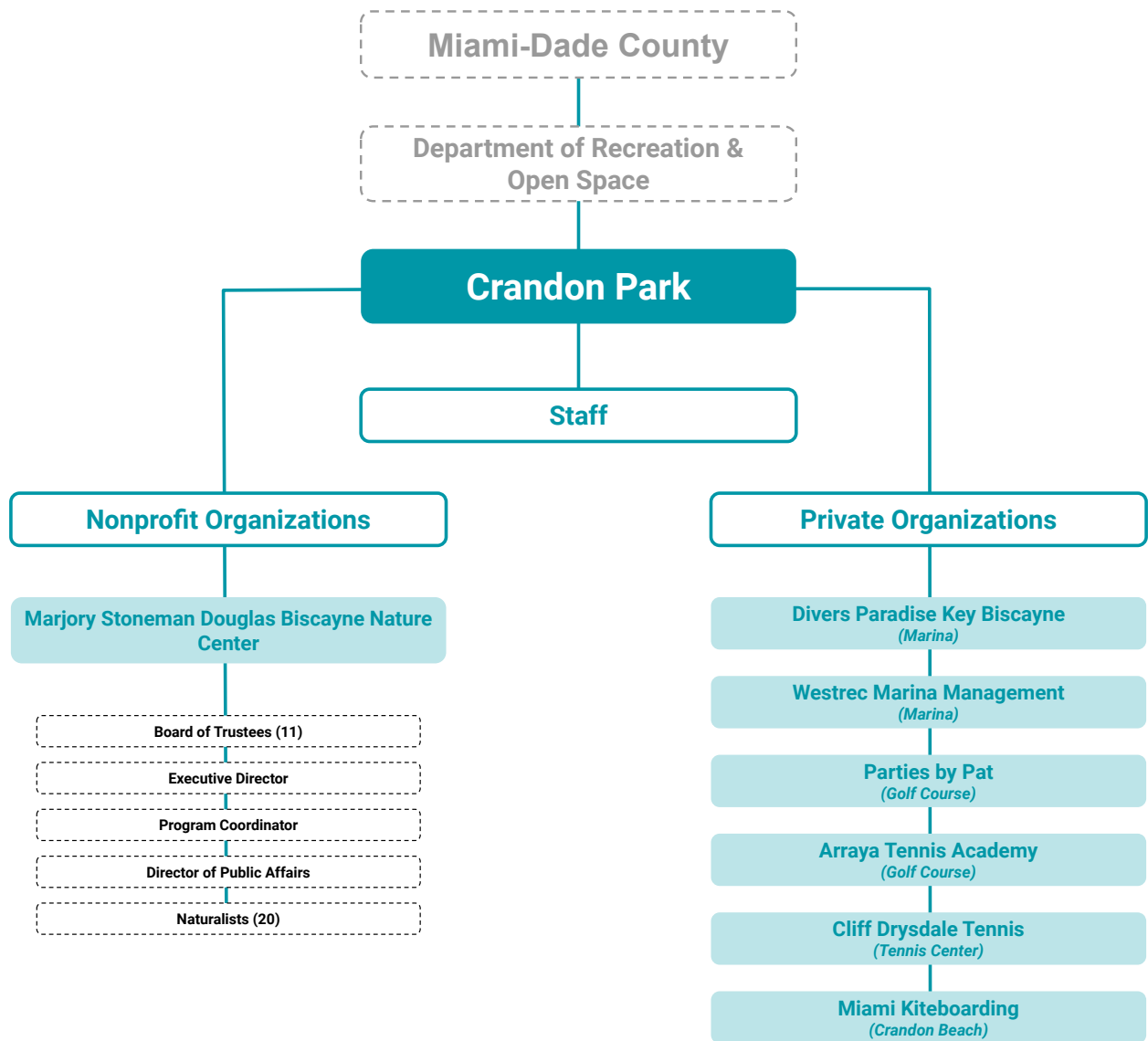


Limited Revenue Sources: An analysis of Crandon Park's fiscal performance—per Miami's 2018-19 *Proposed Budget Report*—reveals that roughly 80% of the Park's revenue derives from municipal funds and causeway tolls.

Yet, other exemplary parks rely far less heavily upon municipal funding. For example, only one-quarter of New York City's Central Park budget comes from municipal sources.

Other comparable parks diversify their funding models by soliciting community donations, by forging private and non-profit partnerships with various organizations, and by engaging in other revenue-generating programming.

Lack of Philanthropic and Other Non-governmental Support: Few local governments generate a level of tax and fee revenues that would enable them to maintain public parks of Crandon Park's size and scope at a high level. Crandon Park, however, does not attract adequate non-governmental financial stewardship to make up the difference. Regrettably, it is clear to the study team that this money gap will forever prevent the Park from providing adequate facilities and service, much less attain



Crandon Park's Current Governance Structure

the level of achievement its location and natural beauty would otherwise allow.

A comparative analysis of similarly scaled parks reveals that Crandon Park would benefit by diversifying its revenue sources and increasing philanthropic support. Capital budgets for the most successful parks are supported by large eleemosynary contributions.

Operating budgets are supported by revenue from attendance and user fees – and by vendors providing services and facilities that draw people to the park. Costs are frequently further reduced by tapping volunteer labor stemming from community involvement.

Absence of a Strong Management Infrastructure:

Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department owns and manages Crandon Park. The Village of Key Biscayne manages Calusa Park, a small community park within the overall Park. There are three other divisions: the County's Division of Golf Enterprise manages Crandon Golf; the County's Division of Beach Maintenance manages Beach maintenance; and the County's Division of Coastal Park and Marina Enterprise manage day-to-day Park operations, the Marina and the Tennis Center.

This jumble of responsible entities reveals the relative absence of a strong and coherent management structure. The present management mix hampers the Park's capacity to recognize and address both long-standing and emerging issues. The study team's assessment of three other major parks showed that comparable facilities were managed by better-integrated and more robust leadership teams. Moreover, if the *Master Plan* were indeed to be revised, the implementation of various improvements would inevitably be facilitated by the presence of a strong, well-organized and empowered management team.



For more info, see
Volume 5 | Park Governance &
Funding

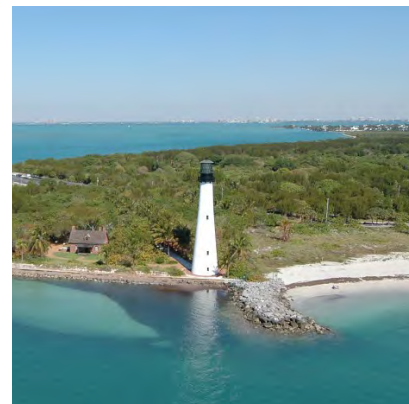
Case Studies:



Central Park, New York City



Governors Island, New York City



Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park, Key Biscayne

A Path Forward for Crandon Park

How can Crandon Park be improved?

In an effort to provide objective analysis, in many ways, our extensive report of the condition of Crandon Park understates the Park's dire condition. A first hand observation of the site reveals a park that is largely neglected — with the exception of its isolated facilities such as the Marina, Golf Course, Tennis Center, and Nature Center. As detailed in the above, absent a substantially revised or amended *Master Plan*, this deterioration and dysfunction will continue. To be clear, it is possible for a Park to decline into a state of disrepair should action not be taken.

That being said, what was also immediately apparent was that the site possesses the potential to stand as a model of coastal resilience — and as a world-class beach park and preserve. It is large enough to serve many diverse park functions and activities. A quiet refuge. A place to explore unique natural habitats and learn about local native flora and fauna. A gathering space for a family picnic or group celebrations. A place to relax and swim from a beautiful beach. A well-managed and developed marina to provide public access to the ocean and bay. And, the highest level of recreational golf, tennis and other sports favored by the County's diverse community.

To achieve greatness, the *Master Plan* cannot continue to be a barrier to high levels of public interest and public involvement and high levels of philanthropic support. The key to the Park's future is to bring the public back to this public park.

The tools to do this are within reach. The vision of Phillips gave the Park great “bones” from which to build. With the resources that a comprehensive plan will allow, the Park can celebrate Phillips's design elements rather than hide them, while giving the Park a unified identity and an organization that eliminates the need for acres of heat generating impermeable surfaces.

While this *Executive Summary* and eight volumes of the *Research & Analysis Report* reflect our own findings from a professional landscape architect's perspective, we encourage early engagement with interested constituents and policymakers. We would like this research and preliminary analysis to set in motion a public dialogue about ways to elevate Crandon Park to a position of preeminence among American parks.

The Master Plan process must absolutely unfold as a group enterprise. As a “public park,” a refreshed and resilient Crandon Park must be formed out of an inclusive chorus of voices.

Four Key Recommendations

What should the revised Master Plan Address?

The revised Master Plan should address each of the following deficiencies in the current Master Plan, which are discussed extensively in the Research Volumes.



Design for Sea level rise and enhance resiliency

- The Master Plan Amendment must address sea level rise and resiliency of the Park's natural elements and structures.



Create a Flexible Planning Framework that Allows the Park to Adapt to Changing Times

- Because of the history of the Park, it is reasonable for a master plan to limit what the County can and cannot do with the land. The current *Master Plan* takes those limitations to an unheard of extreme, making it difficult for park professionals and elected officials to respond to changing conditions and public interests, leaving the public with little interest in the Park or its future.
- The revised *Master Plan* should prevent the County from commercializing the Park, limit commerce to operations that enhance or serve a public park experience but not so severely that no one will want to use the Park.
- The County's park professionals should be allowed the flexibility to operate the Park within much broader parameters, and opportunities for community participation and decision making identified and encouraged



Encourage Capital Investment and Set the Stage for Substantial Increases in Park Use and Operating Revenues

- Crandon Park is a large parcel with very substantial needs for capital investment and operating revenue. The current *Master Plan* has not adequately financed to support proper maintenance and care of its grounds. A revised *Master Plan* should propose a management and innovative revenue model for sustainable investment.



Create an Aspirational Site Plan

- An Aspirational Site Plan should be developed in connection with a revised *Master Plan* document that would allow the County the freedom over time to achieve each element of the aspirational plan. Ideally, the aspirational site plan would establish a sequence for development of the principal plan elements.
- A Revised Site Plan should bring to the fore the genius of William Lyman Phillips – hidden in the current Park's divided layout – eliminate acres of unsustainable asphalt and concrete, open up access to more acres of natural preserve, and create an engaging range of programs and social/cultural anchors specific to Crandon Park's community.

What is the process for revising the Master Plan?

- 1. Preliminary Process:** The 1993 *Settlement Agreement* and current *Master Plan* itself provides a mechanism for amendment. These three steps are listed below, and represent a long path to develop a plan that would meet the exacting standards of the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA). Therefore, prior to embarking on this path, it would be prudent of relevant parties to converse and engage seriously on the future of the Park. This Report is the first step in that conversation, bringing the dire condition of the Park to the attention of the NPCA and others.

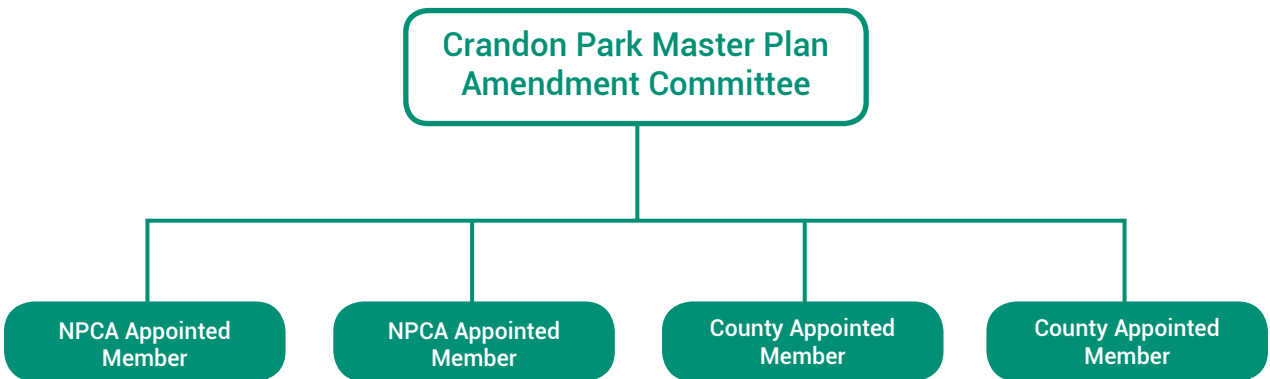
Therefore, preliminary steps preceding the formal process listed below are necessary. We speculate the following must occur in order to determine if the a Master Plan Amendment process should begin:

- **Preliminary Step One:** The National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) considers this Report, its conclusions and its recommendations, and designates independent people to visit the Park and determine if the reported assessment is accurate and a new Master Plan worth considering.
- **Preliminary Step Two:** Should the NPCA find that the Park is inadequate and in need of an update, the NPCA would advise and engage the **Public** on its condition, and express a willingness to consider proposals for improvement.
- **Preliminary Step Three:** One or more public or private entities commences a process to develop a **Revised Crandon Park Master Plan** for consideration by the Miami-Dade County Commission and, if approved, by the Crandon Park Master Plan Amendment Committee.

2. Formal Process:

- **Step One:** Preparation of a Revised Master Plan. There is no limitation as to who may prepare and submit a proposed change.
- **Step Two:** Consideration by and approval of a Revised Master Plan by the Miami-Dade County Commission.
- **Step Three:** Consideration by and approval of a Revised Plan approved by the County Commission by at least three of four members of the Crandon Park Master Plan Amendment Committee, two of whom are appointed by the County and two of whom are appointed by the National Parks Conservation Association.

The Master Plan Amendment Committee is composed of two appointed members by Miami-Dade County and two members appointed by the National Parks and Conservation Association (NPCA)



The Master Plan can be revised if approved by at least three of the four members.

1. Preliminary Process

1. National Parks Conservation Association reviews Crandon Park Report
2. If the NPCA approves of the Report, it will engage the Public
3. Public/Private entities develop a Revised Crandon Park Master Plan to be reviewed in a Formal Process

The goal of the entire process is to arrive at a conclusion the public would support, County park professionals would endorse, the County Commission would approve, and one that the NPCA would accept as consistent with its impeccable standards.

What will be necessary to achieve these preliminary steps?

There are many “unknowns” and assumptions in the above preliminary steps. There must be a force driving forward this call to action for Crandon Park’s future.

The cost and time required to prepare a Revised Master Plan will be considerable. A plan worthy of consideration must be developed in a highly transparent fashion with considerable opportunity for public input and criticism. While the task should be sequenced so everything is not done all at once, to reach the end of the process will require a host of professional consultants to address a myriad of issues, including water quality, soils, traffic and parking, engineering, utility placement, landscape materials, sustainability and resilience, archeology, and park planning. Financial consultants and cost estimators will be required to understand what facilities will cost and how the revenue to carry out plans will be obtained.

The goal of the entire process is to arrive at a conclusion the public would support, County park professionals would endorse, the County Commission would approve, and one that the National Parks Conservation Association would accept as consistent with its impeccable standards.

This is a difficult task to assign to a public agency that has limited resources. Therefore, we speculate that if a plan emerges to address the problems it will be as this Report is - funded by philanthropy.

No matter who undertakes the tasks, it is expected that the end product will be subject to the gauntlet of public agency approvals, community input, and the 1993 *Settlement Agreement* processes.

Our experience in public parks throughout the world suggests that public recognition of the problems discussed in this Report, coupled with an expression of interest by the National Parks Conservation Association to improve this public land over which it has stewardship, can incentive considerable private interest in funding the planning process to bring to the NPCA a plan it can proudly endorse.

2. Formal Process

1. Prepare a Revised Crandon Park Master Plan
2. Miami-Dade County Commission approves Revised Master Plan
3. The Master Plan Amendment Committee approves the Revised Master Plan

Preparation of a Revised Crandon Park Master Plan

As **Step One** of the formal process for a Master Plan Amendment, we outline below the sub-steps necessary to produce a revised Master Plan document and plan drawing.

1. Develop an **Initial Aspirational Site Plan for Crandon Park** that would among other things:

- *Honor and display Phillips's "bones" of Park*
- *Address an expectation of rising sea levels*
- *Provide for the protection of the hundreds of acres of wetlands and dense woods*
- *Eliminate acres of asphalt and concrete and introduce sustainable materials*
- *Improve and reduce beach parking*
- *Enhance the beach dune system*
- *Reflect design elements to reduce heat island effect in the Park*
- *Provide clear and efficient internal circulation*
- *Improve the standards for uniform signage*
- *Provide a design for a 21st Century parkway that would be as desirable as the one that exists for those driving through on the way to or from somewhere else but be less of a barrier to Park connectivity and simplify access and egress*
- *Provide a connected and complete system of dedicated roads for cyclists and pedestrians*
- *Create a visually and spatially unified park to create One Crandon Park.*
- *Better utilize the limited upland acres*
- *Create elevation changes*
- *Provide view corridors*
- *Provide a grand opportunity for public access to the vista of Biscayne Bay*
- *Address opportunities to improve access and circulation at the Marina in connection with development of a new Bear Cut Bridge*

2. Seek and listen to public comments directed to the initial Aspirational Site Plan, from which a **Second Iteration of the Aspirational Site Plan** would be developed and circulated.
3. Identify issues arising from the Aspirational Site Plan requiring **Professional Advice**, studies and reports such as traffic consultants, engineering, archeology, water quality, soils, environmental consultants, architecture, legal and others and following that process, finalize the Aspirational Site Plan and estimate the cost of development of each of its principal elements.
4. Seek preliminary approval of the Aspirational Site Plan from **Miami Dade County** and the **National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA)** as being consistent with the deed restriction, consistent with the *Settlement Agreement* and a plan that would improve the public's use and enjoyment of Crandon Park.
5. In the event preliminary support is derived from the County and the NPCA, prepare a **Revised Master Plan Document** that would:
 - *Adopt the aspirational site plan and provide for its implementation over time;*
 - *Provide express limits on commercial operations in Crandon Park;*
 - *Provide limits on the kinds and number of special events using the Park or any part of it;*
 - *Establish opportunities for public participation in Park operations and decisions;*
 - *Eliminate obstacles to philanthropy;*
 - *Establish standards for commercial services provided to Park visitors;*
 - *Establish the parameters in which the County park professionals can establish and change operational rules and guidelines;*
 - *Provide an appropriate level of flexibility for future Park adaptations by substantially reducing the micro-management replete within the existing Master Plan.*
6. Publish the **Revised Master Plan** and seek and consider public comment from any interested person or organization and all existing and potential stakeholders, following which the plan is finalized.
7. Seek **Preliminary Approval** from the County and the National Park Conservation Association and if obtained, seek County Commission and Amendment Committee approval of the **Revised Master Plan**.
 - Record the **Revised Master Plan** in the County's Official Records.

Concluding Statement

*Based on the findings presented in this Executive Summary and Research & Analysis Report, the study team recommends a **Revision to the Crandon Park Master Plan** that stands to position Crandon Park as a cultural heritage landscape, an ecological treasure to be protected, and a tropical retreat for locals and visitors alike. We believe that amending the current Master Plan, paired with implementation of a robust management and funding plan, will properly propel Crandon Park into the 21st century.*

We humbly submit this report in the hopes that its preliminary recommendations will help illuminate ways that Crandon Park can achieve its full potential as a community resource, a cultural resource, an environmental resource — and a national treasure.



Credits

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Citizens for Park Improvement (CPI)

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See *Crandon Park: A Call for Change - Executive Summary* for full list of Acknowledgments.



