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Long-delayed Flagler Street revamp celebrates milestone under new city administration



A beleaguered project to revamp downtown Miami's historic Flagler Street celebrated a new milestone on Wednesday, as newly elected city leaders hope to close the book on an effort that's taken up six years and cost millions of taxpayer dollars.

City of Miami elected officials gathered at the intersection of E Flagler Street and NE 1st Avenue to announce the completion of the project's third phase, which opens up Flagler from NE 1st Avenue down to Biscayne Boulevard.

New changes to the streetscape include new electrical and storm drainage systems, public power outlets, new landscaping as well as curbsless sidewalks that allow for wider pedestrian zones when the street is closed for events and festivals.

The main achievement with the completion of this phase, according to city officials, is the reopening of the NE 1st Avenue intersection for traffic and buses. Bus routes were previously rerouted owing to the construction, adding extra time to public transit commutes. Now buses can drive through their original routes.

"It's been hard on our bus riders. These are some of the busiest buses in Miami-Dade County ... and it's a celebratory day when we can save hardworking people 10 to 20 minutes on their commute," said Miami Mayor Eileen Higgins.

Originally planned to start construction in [Spring of 2020](#), the Flagler facelift was delayed in part by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The city would eventually break ground in [May of 2021](#) on the first two

phases of the revamp from Biscayne Boulevard to NE 2nd Avenue. When the project is done, Flagler street will be repaved all the way to the Miami-Dade County Courthouse on SW 1st Avenue.



City Commissioner Damian Pardo, whose district includes downtown, told WLRN the project was additionally delayed by disputes with the contractor the city hired to work on the street.

The total estimated budget of the project is approximately \$31.6 million — funded by Miami-Dade County, the Miami Downtown Development Authority, Flagler area property owners and the city of Miami's own coffers.

Jose R. Perez, director of the city's Office of Capital Improvements and project manager for the Flagler revamp, told WLRN all five phases of the project should be completed within the \$32 million budget without additional increases.

Perez said new city leadership after last November's election of Mayor Higgins has made completing the construction much faster.

"Now with the new administration, I have the right tools in place and that's how we managed to move forward. And we actually got this intersection done in less than four days," Perez said.

One of Higgins' platform priorities during her campaign in 2024 was to speed up city projects and streamline permitting to get construction done faster. She specifically highlighted the Flagler revamp as a project that had lagged for too long and become a burden for downtown residents.



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"That's what's different now: when our employees see innovative ways of doing something better, faster, and more inexpensively, they have a city manager and a mayor that will support them," Higgins said Wednesday.

Work on the last two sections of Flagler Street are expected to start soon, as the city plans to repave parts of the road and repair damage caused by previous contractors.

Local business leaders on Flagler asked the city to also change the zoning code on the Flagler corridor to allow businesses that sell alcohol to operate street cafes on the sidewalk.