

# MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



July 9, 2013

Dear Fellow Residents of Miami-Dade County,

I am pleased to submit to you the FY 2013-14 Proposed Budget and Multi-Year Capital Plan. I am optimistic about where we are going as a community and as a government and what we've chosen as our priorities. This budget is another step along a path that allows us to deliver an efficient, responsive government at reasonable tax rates without the need for further employee concessions or layoffs. This document continues our effort to make the budget a transparent, readable publication that highlights the information of interest to you.

Our economy is improving. Housing sales have begun to bounce back and property values have increased from last year. Market driven revenues are also appreciating and our future looks even brighter. This budget has been developed on the basis of continuing our current levels of service throughout the County and includes millage adjustments for the voter-approved animal care initiative and voter-approved debt. However, it is necessary to adjust both the Fire Rescue District and Library District tax rates upward to maintain current service levels. Had we not been forced to absorb more than \$30 million worth of expenditures in the general fund alone (imposed by unfunded State mandates related to increases in Florida Retirement System and Medicaid rates), we would have been able to adjust the countywide and unincorporated area tax rates downward. Nonetheless, we have managed to absorb those increases – along with increased costs associated with our collective bargaining agreements – and kept those millage rates flat, with the exception of the adjustment for the animal care initiative.

Unfortunately, there isn't enough funding available at these tax rates to restore the 5 percent contribution to group health insurance currently paid by County employees. Additionally, we cannot cover the cost of other concessions included in current collective bargaining agreement reopeners. In order to restore the 5 percent contribution currently made by employees, it would be necessary to increase the countywide tax rate by 0.0832 mills and the unincorporated area tax rate by 0.1258 mills. To restore the other concessions subject to the reopeners, the tax rate increases would be 0.0363 mills for countywide and 0.1587 mills for the unincorporated area.

When I first took office, I made a pledge to the community that I would protect our future. Our government needs to be sustainable and our planning cannot be limited to the next 12 months or the next election cycle; rather, we must take an honest, long term view when it comes to our budget process. The first budget I proposed was based on property tax rates that sustained us for two years. As with that first budget, the FY 2013-14 Proposed Budget is based on property tax rates that could sustain us through FY 2014-15, provided that our personnel costs as governed by our collective bargaining agreements do not increase, the cost of health care is controlled, efficiencies are implemented as planned in Miami-Dade Transit, costs are carefully controlled throughout our organization and savings continue to be identified, and unplanned and unfunded expenditures that

local governments are forced to bear by actions of the State Legislature are not imposed. Our residents and taxpayers deserve predictability. We should always be looking forward and ensuring that current decisions about service levels and funding do not create problems in coming years.

My Proposed Budget includes an increase to the countywide tax rate of 0.1079 mills, which generates \$19.088 million to support a no-kill animal services facility and the efforts to improve animal care, which was approved by more than 483,000 voters. Our Building Better Communities General Obligation Bond Program is making steady progress and you have seen numerous projects initiated and many projects completed or nearing completion. The tax rate for the voter-approved debt must be adjusted to fund the required debt service to support this critical economic and infrastructure development program to improve our quality of life.

While not part of my recommendation, the Board of County Commissioners has expressed their desire for additional neighborhood beautification and enhancements and they have the option to increase the property tax millage for the unincorporated area to address their priorities. If a millage rate increase of 0.15 mills were imposed in the unincorporated service area over 5 years, \$23 million of investments in local parks and \$30 million of investments in neighborhoods could be supported. In addition, a separate plan to impose an additional voter-approved general obligation bond initiative is being developed by the Public Health Trust to maintain and improve the facilities of the Jackson Health System over the next 10 years.

We continue to make adjustments to improve the efficiency and responsiveness of our organization. A department is being reconstituted in this budget for operational efficiencies – the Department of Human Resources – which combines the human resources functions from the Internal Services Department and the fair employment and human rights functions of the Office of Human Rights and Fair Employment Practices. However, our overall number of departments remains at 25. Our efforts to streamline County government continue as we look for ways to serve our community even better.

My Proposed Budget is just the beginning to a comprehensive process that will last several months. Starting next week, the Board of County Commissioners will be holding public meetings to discuss your priorities for funding. I, too, will be holding Town Hall meetings as I have for the past two years to hear from you and to provide you with additional information about the budget and how it addresses my vision for our community. I look forward to participating in this process to ensure that you are as proud of Miami-Dade County and our government as I am.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carlos A. Gimenez', with a stylized, flowing script.

Carlos A. Gimenez  
Mayor