

**GOOD MORNING AND WELCOME TO MIAMI-DADE COUNTY!**

**YOU'RE IN THE MOST POPULOUS COUNTY IN THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES, AND THE SEVENTH LARGEST COUNTY IN THE NATION BY POPULATION.**

**JUST OVER 2.6 MILLION PEOPLE CALL THIS HOME. AND WE CONTINUE TO GROW.**

**WE'RE OFTEN REFERRED TO AS THE "GATEWAY TO LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN," SO, IT'S NO WONDER THE LARGEST ETHNIC GROUP IN THE COUNTY IS HISPANIC OR LATINO AND REPRESENTS 65 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION, OR THAT 88 PERCENT OF OUR POPULATION IS MULTILINGUAL.**

**I LIKE TO OFTEN SAY THAT MIAMI-DADE IS THE WORLD'S NEXT GREAT METROPOLITAN AREA. IN FACT, I SAID THAT TO PRESIDENT OBAMA ON THE TARMAC AT MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO WHEN HE WAS IN TOWN VISITING.**

**I BELIEVE IT WITH ALL MY HEART, AND I WELCOME YOU ALL TO OUR HOME.**

**IT'S AN HONOR TO HOST THE FIRST NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION INNOVATION LAB AND BE AMONG PARKS LEADERS IN THE COUNTRY.**

**WE ARE EAGER TO SHARE WITH YOU HOW WE HAVE MADE MIAMI DADE COUNTY A MORE LIVABLE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITY -- THROUGH "THE PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACE WINDOW."**

**AS YOU ALL KNOW, PARKS ARE MORE THAN JUST PLACES TO PLAY – THEY SHAPE AND BUILD A STRONG COMMUNITY BY IMPROVING PUBLIC HEALTH, DEVELOPING OUR YOUTH THROUGH PROGRAMS, AND CREATING JOBS.**

**IN SHORT, PARKS ARE A PART OF THE DNA OF COMMUNITIES. OUR COUNTY IS NO EXCEPTION.**

**HERE IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, WE ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE TWO OF THE BEST LEADING OUR DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACES. I'M REFERRING TO OUR DIRECTOR JACK KARDYS AND THE LEADER OF MIAMI-DADE'S PARK AND PUBLIC SPACE MASTER PLAN MARIA NARDI.**

**AS YOU KNOW PARKS ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF A COMMUNITY, AND JACK AND MARIA ARE**

**GREAT LEADERS WHO HAVE MADE OUR COUNTY A MORE DESIRABLE PLACE TO LIVE. THANK YOU FOR WHAT YOU DO.**

**IN 2006, THE MIAMI-DADE PARKS DEPARTMENT DEVELOPED THE MIAMI-DADE PARKS AND OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN, AND IT WAS ADOPTED TWO YEARS LATER BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS.**

**TODAY, THIS IS THE “COMMUNITY’S PLAN” AND WE ARE SEEING IT TO FULL IMPLEMENTATION AS THE GUIDELINE AND FRAMEWORK FOR CONTINUING TO TRANSFORM MIAMI-DADE COUNTY INTO A DYNAMIC, PROSPEROUS AND HEALTHY COMMUNITY.**

**BECAUSE OUR COUNTY HAS SEEN THAT ONE CONSISTENT METRIC OF A SUCCESSFUL METROPOLITAN AREA IS A COMMITMENT TO FIRST-RATE PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACE, WE HAVE STAYED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK AND WORKED TO ENHANCE AND EXPAND ACCESSIBLE SIDEWALKS, BIKE PATHS, AND THE AVAILABILITY OF NEARBY PARKS AND CIVIC SPACES.**

**WE HAVE MUCH MORE WORK TO DO, BUT I BELIEVE WE ARE HEADED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.**

**JUST THIS PAST WEEKEND, I INVITED CITY MAYORS TO JOIN ME FOR A BIKE-TO-WORK RALLY TO DEMONSTRATE TO OUR RESIDENTS THERE ARE OTHER ALTERNATIVES TO DRIVING TO WORK IN A CAR.**

**THIS RIDE ALSO KNOWN AS *BIKE 305* IS A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT WITH MULTIPLE COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY...**

**THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF *BIKE305* IS TO PROMOTE HEALTH AND WELLNESS THROUGH CYCLING, AND SHOWCASING OUR BIKE TRAILS.**

**AS A RECREATIONAL CYCLIST, I VALUE THE EMERGING “CONNECTIVITY” IN MIAMI-DADE, AND AS MAYOR I STRONGLY SUPPORT ITS EXPANSION. THAT IS WHY WE ARE DEVELOPING OUR CONNECTIVITY THROUGH A VERY EXCITING PROJECT CALLED, *THE UNDERLINE*.**

**THE UNDERLINE WILL CONNECT NEIGHBORHOODS IN OUR COMMUNITY BY TRANSFORMING A TEN-MILE STRETCH UNDERNEATH OUR METRORAIL**

**SYSTEM BETWEEN BRICKELL STATION TO DADELAND SOUTH INTO A LINEAR PARK.**

**THIS IS A PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE MIAMI DADE PARKS AND TRANSIT DEPARTMENTS, AND THE FRIENDS OF THE UNDERLINE. THE UNDERLINE WILL BECOME A WORLD-CLASS URBAN TRAIL CREATING A WALKABLE, BIKEABLE CORRIDOR TO IMPROVE CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOODS WITH DOWNTOWN DESTINATIONS.**

**IT IS IMMEDIATELY CONNECTED TO TRANSIT AND EVERYTHING FROM GETTING TO WORK, SHOPPING, LEARNING, AND VISITING HISTORIC SITES LIKE VIZCAYA MUSEUM AND GARDENS WILL BE WITHIN REACH OF THE UNDERLINE.**

**THE UNDERLINE IS DRAWING NATIONAL ATTENTION IN ITS EARLY STAGES—AND I'M PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE NEW YORK DESIGN CONSULTING FIRM OF JAMES CORNER FIELD OPERATIONS HAS BEEN SELECTED TO DEVELOP THE MASTER PLAN FOR THE PROJECT.**

**THE FIRM HAS BEEN TOUTED AS ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL DESIGN FIRMS BY TIME MAGAZINE AND IS RENOWNED FOR SUCH HIGH-PROFILE PROJECTS AS THE NEW YORK CITY HIGH LINE, SEATTLE'S CENTRAL WATERFRONT, AND SOUTH PARK OF LONDON'S QUEEN ELIZABETH OLYMPIC PARK.**

**MASTER PLANNING IS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED BY SEPTEMBER OF THIS YEAR.**

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO CONTINUING THE WORK TO BUILD THE UNDERLINE!**

**IN ADDITION TO ALL MIAMI-DADE HAS TO LOOK FORWARD TO, WE ARE ALSO VERY FORTUNATE TO BE THE ONLY METROPOLITAN COUNTY IN THE COUNTRY THAT IS BORDERED BY TWO NATIONAL PARKS: BISCAYNE NATIONAL PARK AND EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK.**

**INDEED, IT IS A PRIVILEGE TO LIVE HERE.**

**FOR MOST OF OUR HISTORY, OUR LOCAL ECONOMY HAS BEEN BASED ON TOURISM. IN 2014 MORE THAN 14.6 MILLION OVERNIGHT VISITORS CAME THROUGH GREATER MIAMI, INFUSING THE LOCAL ECONOMY WITH \$26 BILLION IN DIRECT SPENDING**

**ON HOTEL ROOMS, RESTAURANTS, SHOPPING, TRANSPORTATION, AND ATTRACTIONS.**

**WITH THE ADDITION OF THE UNDERLINE, ALONG WITH THE PRESERVATION OF OUR PARKS AND GREEN SPACES, MANY MORE VISITORS MAY CHOOSE TO VISIT US, OR EVEN EXTEND THEIR STAYS TO ENJOY SOME OF THE OTHER ATTRACTIONS WE HAVE TO OFFER.**

**MIAMI-DADE COUNTY WILL CONTINUE ITS COMMITMENT TO FIRST-RATE PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACE SO THAT WE CAN CONTINUE TO BECOME A WORLD-CLASS COMMUNITY TO LIVE, WORK, PLAY AND INVEST.**

**I HOPE YOU ENJOY YOUR TIME HERE AND RETURN AGAIN IN THE NEAR FUTURE.**

**THANK YOU. GOD BLESS YOU ALL AND MAY GOD BLESS CONTINUE TO BLESS MIAMI-DADE COUNTY!**