

OUR COUNTY

Miami-Dade County has always been the center of cultural, economic, and environmental challenges. Early in our history, our region was a site of conflict between Native Americans and European explorers. Later, Miami-Dade County was a transportation hub serving as the end point of Henry Flagler's railroad that extended from Jacksonville to the Miami River and what later became Downtown Miami. As a diverse community, we are representative of the American experience, reflecting both the conflict and concord that comes with bringing different people together. Our geographic location has put us squarely at the epicenter of climate change. We stand today at the intersection of our past and the future.

Dade County was created in 1836 and encompassed an area from the present-day Palm Beach County to the Florida Keys. Interpretations of the name "Miami" include the Native American words for "very large lake," "sweet waters" and "friends." Major Francis Langhorne Dade, our County's namesake, was a soldier killed during the Second Seminole War. In 1997, the County electorate voted to combine the two names to become the current Miami-Dade County. With an estimated population of 2.7 million residents, Miami-Dade County is the most populous county east of Chicago and the seventh largest in the nation by population. Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties comprise the Miami-Fort Lauderdale - Pompano Beach, Florida Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), the nation's seventh largest MSA and fourth largest urbanized area, with a total population of nearly 6.2 million.



Approximately 424 square miles (excluding bay and coastal waters) of the County are within the urbanized area, while the total county area currently covers a total of 2,431 square miles, bound by Biscayne Bay and the Atlantic Ocean to the east, Everglades National Park to the west, the Florida Keys to the south and Broward County to the north. Miami-Dade County has the unique distinction of being the only metropolitan area in the United States that borders two national parks: Biscayne National Park and Everglades National Park.

Because of our location, Miami-Dade County is considered to be one of the most vulnerable areas to climate change. The impact of sea level rise has been the focus of our resilience efforts from the beginning. In 2009, Miami-Dade County joined the Southeast Florida Climate Change Compact to collaborate with our neighbors on issues related to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Since its creation, the partners in the Compact have successfully completed a Regional Climate Action Plan, developed a unified sea level rise projection for Southeast Florida and completed a regional greenhouse gas emissions inventory and a regional vulnerability to sea-level rise analysis. We take into account future climate change impacts, along with other shocks and stresses, in making decisions regarding capital development, operational needs and land use. By learning more about the people who comprise our community and the economic realities they face, we can better prepare for the future. Miami-Dade County is a diverse, international community. More than half of the people living in Miami-Dade County at the beginning of this decade were foreign-

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born and more than 70 percent of residents spoke a language other than English at home. Based on 2019 population estimates, individuals of Hispanic origin comprise 69 percent of the population of Miami-Dade County, followed by Black (15 percent) and White (13 percent) individuals.

The average income of residents in Miami-Dade County is lower than that of the nation as a whole and our rate of poverty is higher than the average for the United States. The estimated 2022 Area Median Family Income (MFI) for a four-person household as determined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development is \$68,300. For 2019, the American Community Survey (ACS) estimated that approximately 16 percent of the residents of Miami-Dade lived below the poverty line. Miami-Dade County, a region of extremes, is one of the most extreme examples of economic inequity, with the top 5 percent of Miami households earning an average income of more than \$200,000 annually, while the lowest 20 percent earn just under \$20,000 per year – ten times less. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment, foreclosures and poverty rates were all higher in South Florida since the Great Depression. Recently, all these metrics were greatly improved from their worst recent performance.

As our local economy continues its recovery from the lingering effects of the pandemic, the tourism industry is playing a vital role. Our County's beaches, events, attractions and weather make us a desirable destination for both domestic and international visitors. In 2021, Greater Miami and the beaches were visited by more than 24.2 million people, 15.9 million of which stayed overnight. Roughly 80% of these visitors came from within the United States and 20% were international tourists, with the most coming from South America and Europe. In 2021, the total economic impact of visitors was \$19.2 billion. Based on June 2021 data from the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau, air travel is almost at pre-pandemic levels, and hotel room bookings have surpassed pre-pandemic levels as have dining and attraction attendance. The cruise industry continues to rebound since the lifting of the federal government No Sail Order in June of 2021. Passenger movements for FY 2021-22 are forecasted conservatively at 2.8 million and are projected to increase to 3.1 million in FY 2022-23.

Like many other regions in the world, Miami-Dade County faces a number of current and future challenges including the impacts of climate change, aging facilities and transportation infrastructure, cost of housing and other economic disparities, pandemics, cyber-attacks, terrorism and other natural and man-made disasters. To provide for a safer and more resilient community, we need to continue our focus on these challenges including making wise infrastructure investments, providing affordable and workforce housing, developing a diverse economy, increasing community engagement and promoting public safety. Development of a diverse economy is perhaps the most critical because a healthy economy can provide the resources needed to fund the other needs.

In addition to the Mayor's Thrive305 public input initiative and resulting updates to our Strategic Plan, the Strive 305 program released in 2020 is designed to help the growth of small businesses and support entrepreneurial efforts to launch and grow new businesses. This new program supports the small business community through online small business and entrepreneurship hub for information, education and networking; a virtual small business incubator for education and mentorship; a countywide network of physical incubators to assist the launch of new businesses; technical assistance boot camps to assist small businesses in access to capital, finances, business planning, branding, digital marketing, sales, operations and more. Strive 305 will be an ongoing initiative critical to our community's economic recovery.