

# Memorandum



**Date:** March 18, 2025

**To:** Honorable Chairman Anthony Rodriguez  
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

**From:** Daniella Levine Cava *Daniella Levine Cava*  
Mayor

**Subject:** Report Examining the Feasibility of Establishing a Library in the Brickell Area –  
Directive 241583

June 3, 2025  
Agenda Item No. 2(B)(3)

## **Executive Summary**

The Board of County Commissioners (Board) adopted Resolution No. R-949-24, sponsored by Commissioner Eileen Higgins, on October 16, 2024, directing the Miami-Dade County (County) Mayor or Mayor's designee to examine the feasibility and fiscal impact of establishing a library in the Brickell area. A number of options are summarized in this report. The Administration will continue to develop these options and update the District Commissioner in six months on the best approach and possible timeframes to bring library services to the Brickell area.

## **Background**

The Miami-Dade Public Library System is currently comprised of 50 library locations ranging in size from the 144 square foot UHealth/Jackson Station (formerly Civic Center Station) Library Kiosk to the approximately 200,000 square foot Main Library in downtown Miami. The number of library locations has remained largely the same since 2011, while areas of the County that were previously undeveloped have become major residential areas, especially in the southern and western portions of the County, and areas, such as the Brickell neighborhood and others, have grown into major residential centers. While this report is focused specifically on possibilities for establishing a future Brickell Library, it is recognized there are areas throughout the County that would benefit from a new public library location due to the growth that has occurred since the last major expansion of the Miami-Dade Public Library System as a result of the 2004 Building Better Communities, General Obligation Bond.

## **Options in Brickell Area**

In reviewing options for a library location within the Brickell area, this report focused on four possible approaches, with a goal of establishing an 8,500-square foot library space, which is similar in size to the upcoming replacement Allapattah Branch Library and would provide an adequate floor plan and service level for a neighborhood-type library location. For purposes of visibility, user convenience, and accessibility, the preference would be for a location that is located at street level:

1. Partnership with a developer as part of a community benefits incentive or co-location in a future project in Brickell.
2. Purchase of a storefront space in an existing building.
3. Lease of a storefront space in an existing building.

4. Establishing a location around the Brickell Metrorail Station.

For each of these approaches, there are differences in the amount of potential up-front and recurring operating or capital costs, however, some cost factors, such as building out of space, including design, construction, and purchase of furniture, fixtures, and equipment, common area maintenance costs, and staffing will be similar throughout these options and are addressed further below in this report.

***Partnership with a Developer***

With many new multi-use projects being planned in the Brickell area, there may be opportunities for having a library included as part of a community benefits incentive or co-location in a new development. This is the approach taken with the existing Allapattah Branch Library, which is currently located on City of Miami-owned property, soon to be replaced and included as a public amenity within the future Dulce Vida Apartments project that will be constructed at this site. This project serves as an example of maximizing the use of available government-owned property to co-locate affordable and/or workforce housing with public amenities, such as libraries. This approach has proven successful for other library projects on County-owned property, including the Hispanic Branch Library at 1398 SW 1 Street and the Tamiami Branch Library in the Gran Via Apartments Building on SW 8 Street and SW 127 Avenue. Advantages to this approach include: a) long-term (over thirty-year) lease terms that provide a level of permanency and stability that may not be afforded when leasing space in shorter-term increments, and b) no need to acquire separate parcels of land for construction, which are already limited and arguably not financially realistic to obtain in the Brickell area.

***Purchase of a Storefront Space***

Another approach is to purchase a storefront or commercial space in an existing building. Based on average asking price of recently advertised units for sale in the Brickell area, a \$1,110 per square foot purchase price for commercial or retail space would equate to an \$9,435,000 purchase price for an 8,500-square foot library. While outright purchase and ownership of a space would provide the highest level of long-term permanency and stability for a new library location, a capital outlay of this level is not included in the Library FY 2024-25 Adopted Budget or projected in the Library's Five-Year financial forecast.

***Lease of Storefront Space***

Based on an average asking price of recently advertised units for lease in the Brickell area, base rental rates are averaging \$107 per square foot plus common area maintenance fees in the \$15 per square foot range. If an appropriate location could be identified, and assuming approximately 8,500 square feet could be obtained, this would equate to an approximately \$1,037,000 per year recurring rental cost, likely increasing at approximately three percent per year. In general, the private leasing model has worked at other library locations as they provide a certain level of permanency and stability. However, due to the competitiveness of the real estate market in certain areas, we are beginning to experience uncertainty at some locations, both due to increasing rental rates at renewal and Landlords considering redevelopment or changing of their tenant mix at their properties.

### ***Brickell Metrorail Station***

The area outside the Brickell Metrorail Station was explored as part of a partnership with the Florida International University, College of Communications, Architecture + The Arts (CARTA). Due to the timing of this Directive, one of the semester architecture projects was to envision the possibilities for a new library outside the Brickell Metrorail Station. Attachment 1 includes links to some of the project booklets that include conceptual renderings developed by the architecture students. While we were inspired by the creativity and thoughtful approaches taken by these students, this option will require further discussion with the Department of Transportation and Public Works, the Parks, Recreation & Open Spaces Department, and the Underline to understand the viability of incorporating a library at this location. For this option, we would assume design and construction costs similar to purchase of a storefront space of approximately \$9,435,000.

### ***Additional Cost Factors for a New Library***

#### Staffing Costs

Additional staff will be needed to operate and serve a new library location for any of the approaches discussed above. Based on current staffing models for other library locations in the 8,500-square foot size range, the initial annual salary and benefits for a staff of eight full-time equivalent employees is estimated at \$586,000.

#### Common Area Maintenance Costs

For both lease or purchase options, recurring maintenance and service costs, either common area maintenance expenses in the case of a lease, or services directly contracted by the library will be needed. Compared to other libraries of similar size, we would anticipate annual costs for services such as janitorial, security, pest control services, and utilities to be approximately \$142,000 per year, and growing by approximately three percent per year.

#### Interior Buildout

For the approaches discussed, there will be a need for design and construction to build out a new library space. Using the same estimates being utilized for the Allapattah Library replacement, we estimate \$466 per square foot for design, permitting, and construction for an 8,500 square foot space, the buildout could be approximately \$4.31 million. Additionally, new furniture, fixtures, and equipment are estimated at \$135 per square foot, or approximately \$1.13 million, equaling a total \$5.44 million for a space that requires a full renovation and buildout.

#### Parking

Additionally, while the Brickell area has numerous options for public transportation, including Metromover, Metrorail, the Miami Trolley system, micro transportation options, and is a walkable area for many, some level of free/affordable parking will be needed for library users and staff. In some cases, this cost factor may be built into any lease costs or common area maintenance costs, but availability of parking will be an important factor to consider.

**Funding Sources**

The Library's FY 2024-25 Adopted Budget and Capital Plan, and the Five-Year Financial Forecast includes funding budgeted for current capital obligations but does not include funding or project funding availability for new library locations. Potential future funding sources would likely be from Library Taxing District revenues (ad valorem taxes), the State of Florida Public Library Construction Grant program (provides only up to \$500,000 per project), and other grant funding that may become available.

**Recommendation**

The Library will continue to explore the various approaches/options discussed above, including determining with the development community upcoming projects where there may be a collaboration opportunity, and working with other County and City departments on identifying potential co-location opportunities for projects that may come up in the Brickell area. Of the approaches discussed, we believe the most feasible option will be finding an opportunity with the development community or other County/City projects where a long-term co-location could be established.

Pursuant to Rule 5.06(j) of the Board's Rules of Procedures, this report will be placed on the next available Board meeting agenda without committee review. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Ray Baker, Director, Miami-Dade Public Library System, at [ray.baker@miamidade.gov](mailto:ray.baker@miamidade.gov) or 305-375-5026.

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