

Magaly, thank you for your introduction, and thank you for the work that you do for the Chamber.

Organizations like yours are the backbone of the Miami-Dade economy, and we are appreciative of all your efforts.

Between all of you combined, just think of how many jobs are created and supported by everyone in this room.

Think of all the families that put food on the table because of the businesses you are all involved in.

All of you make it easier for people and businesses in Miami-Dade County to move forward, and I am happy to be here with you this afternoon.

While all of you are out there making our economy run, many times unfortunately government serves as a barrier.

We want to change that.

We want government to be partners with all of you, working together for a better Miami-Dade County.

So let me briefly share with you some of the ways that we are working to create opportunities for greater economic prosperity.

The first thing we are doing is **TRANSFORMING THE WAY WE SERVE THE PUBLIC.**

We are, in essence, a service delivery organization.

Our “customers” are the over 2.5 million people who call Miami-Dade home, plus the millions more who visit our County every year.

As with other government entities however, we have significant budgetary challenges due to increased costs and less revenues.

For the next fiscal year, Miami-Dade County faces a 200 million hole in the budget.

And let me be clear on something:

From the beginning, my administration has been based on fiscal discipline and stewardship. Absent a public referendum to the contrary, I will present a budget that “holds the line” on taxes.

We are doing more with less, and we will continue to focus on the “core missions” of government – maintaining public safety, and the delivery of services, especially to our youth and elderly

We are emphasizing the “street level services that touch and improve people’s lives,” getting people away from sitting behind desks, and putting them in contact with people.

I have begun a top to bottom restructuring of County government that will make us leaner and more efficient.

We are also seeking ways to “stretch every public dollar,” and we are doing this by looking to partnerships with the “private sector.”

Let me give you an example of this.

In the past two months, we have cut the ribbon on three new elderly housing apartment buildings that were renovated working with the private sector.

These renovations used to take a long time, but we threw out the old blue print and we called upon the private sector expertise of the Related Urban Group.

The new apartments were renovated faster than we could have done it alone, and they are beautiful!

Most importantly, they give our seniors a place they can be proud to call home.

Another example is the way in which we are seeking to replace and improve our outdated water and sewer infrastructure system.

In November, we asked for input from the private sector, and we received over thirty responses from around the world to help put together more than \$7 billion worth of projects.

In all areas, we will continue to analyze and compare the value of public and private sector approaches.

If the private sector offers a better option, then we’ll proceed with that choice.

We will also promote private sector friendly ordinances that remove barriers to innovation

And, we will continue “strengthening the environment for doing business,” so that anyone in this room with a good idea and a good product or service can partner with us.

**Next, we are Enhancing our status as a global commercial and cultural gateway**

Miami-Dade County is already recognized as the Gateway to the Americas, the Caribbean and beyond.

And we are doing everything we can to take full advantage of this unique opportunity.

Our urban core is one of the hottest real estate markets in the world, and that growth has spread to other parts of the county.

People want to live here!

And they want to do business and visit here too.

In 2013, the value of total trade through the County topped \$93 billion.

And we must continue to expand our opportunities for international trade and commerce.

Last year, I led a successful trade mission to Spain which is a leader in both the number of multinational companies doing business in South Florida and Foreign Direct Investment in our region.

This morning, I hosted Xavier Trias, the mayor of Barcelona, and we signed a Friendship Cities agreement to cooperate in areas of commerce, trade, tourism, and the development of Smart Cities technology based solutions.

This year, I will lead a trade mission to Brazil, to strengthen our ties to our #1 trade partner.

We are reaching out to the world, and the world is coming to us.

In order to continue this growth, we need to make sure our top two economic engines – the Airport and Seaport - continue to thrive.

Already MIA has made over \$6 billion in improvements, making it easier to travel in and out of Miami.

MIA also broke a record with over 40 million passengers in 2013, making it one of the busiest airports in the nation.

And Port Miami had a record number of cruise passengers. This may, we're opening the Port Tunnel on time and on budget. And by finishing the Deep Dredge, we're ensuring that Port Miami thrives in the post PanaMax era.

While enhancing the entry points to our community, we are also working to position ourselves as a premiere center for sports, arts and culture, learning, and recreation.

These are all the things that attract visitors to Miami-Dade County and make the quality of life of our residents second to none.

Just last year, we had a record 14.2 million overnight visitors to Miami Dade spend more than \$22.8 billion in our community.

Visitors and residents alike expect and deserve the best in sports and recreation, and the best in arts and culture.

They also expect and deserve a great parks system. When we think of parks, we think of GREEN. But our parks are GREEN in another way.

Great parks generate \$1.4 Billion annually in revenue to the County. They help create over 10,000 jobs, two-thirds of which are in the private sector.

This coming Friday, I will host the Great parks summit, to connect elected leaders, park advocates, business people and park and urban planning experts, for a conversation on how to best connect our parks, cultural areas and all of the beautiful public places our cities and neighborhoods have to offer.

Our aim is to create world class shared public spaces for everyone to enjoy.

All of our investments taken as a whole serve to create a sense of place that attracts people to our community.

And it ALL affects the bottom line.

With every new business and tourist, every new airline and cruise ship, when you invest in arts, sports, and parks, it all means JOBS.

Our unemployment rate is at its lowest since the start of the Great Recession. But it's still not low enough.

Studies show that one of the main concerns in the minds of business leaders is access to a talented workforce.

All of you in this room need workers with the right skills that will help you successfully expand your business opportunities.

This is why we are **POSITIONING MIAMI-DADE COUNTY TO BE COMPETITIVE IN THE NEW ECONOMY**

I am proud to chair the one community / one goal initiative. This is where we connect business and government with education, to make sure that our young people will be well prepared and have the skills necessary to actively engage in the new economy.

An example of this is my Executive Internship program where we take 30 top students from FIU and have them put to use what they learn in the classroom, giving them real-world experience they can use for later jobs.

By improving the skills of our people, we can seek ways to expand business opportunities into new sectors, and unleash the entrepreneurial spirit of our community.

The Miami urban area is now viewed internationally as the emerging location for new and innovative companies, and we're on our way to being recognized as a "start-up" center.

This coming May, we'll host the "e-Merge Americas" conference, a gathering of the brightest leading-edge tech thinkers and innovators.

As part of "e-Merge," I have invited mayors from throughout the world to meet for the Mayoral Innovation Summit, with the goal of sharing ways on how to transform our communities into "Smarter Cities" through technology.

We're taking advantage of technology in all our functions to do things smarter, better, faster, and cheaper!

One example is our partnership with Town of Miami Lakes to review plans and permit applications electronically.

Before, an applicant would have to take the plans to Miami Lakes, wait for approval, and then bring them to the County, and wait for approval.

Now, we have a Municipal e-plan review system that allows cities to submit permit applications and plans electronically to Miami Dade County for Review.

Miami Lakes was the first to partner with us on this effort and we now have reduced the need for people to have to go to County Hall for review, saving them time and money.

In a world where you can get practically anything on line, it makes no sense that government still requires you to show up and fill out paper forms to get things done!

We are working to change that.

And with everything we are doing, we need your help.

Government cannot do any of this alone; we need our partners in the private sector to lead the way.

And that's where all of you come in.

Any ideas you may have as to how we can make the business climate friendlier...

Any ideas on how we can improve our services...

Any ideas on how we can be innovative, be more efficient, be better at what we do...

Let us know!

You have a friend at County Hall.

And I know that working together, as partners, we can all make Miami-Dade county a community we all proud to call home.

Thank you!

