



Downtown NEWS

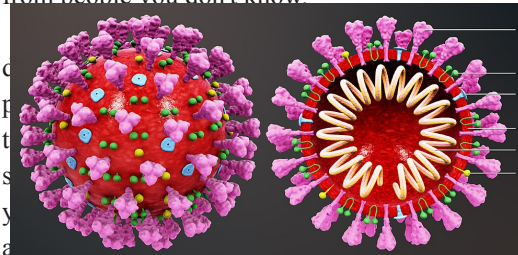
Issue 9 Volume 2. Anniversary Issue, May 2020 | Facebook.com/DowntowNews | Twitter.com/DtownNews | Stay connected: Downtown-news.com

Media Report | [Amal Solh Kabbani](#)

Local Media in Times of Crisis

Against all predictions, and local news outlets have been disseminated in the past few years, Downtown News, our local multimedia outlet focused exclusively on downtown Miami is about to celebrate its second anniversary. Downtown Miami has been for a long-time what experts call a news desert. How could that be? Simple. Downtown was a residential desert. At 5 pm, bureaucrats, businesspeople, the legal community, and tourists sped away to suburbia. The homeless population then took over the streets.

1. Social Distancing. Keep six feet away from people you don't know.



3. Work out. Rediscover in-home or outside exercise, like yoga in your bedroom and jogging outside. Or try other equipment-free alternatives. The gym can rank high for contamination (if you do go to the gym, sanitize the equipment before and after!).

4. Shopping. Minimize the number of trips you make to supermarkets and shops. Avoid crowds by going early before work or late at night. Reduce the amount of time in places where you don't know the level of infection. Disinfect products you buy before storing them.

5. Clothes. Don't mix inside and outside clothes and shoes. As soon as you get home, change your clothes and wash them. Create a designated area to change, and use this area to disinfect phones and keys. Wipe them out with water, soap, and alcohol.

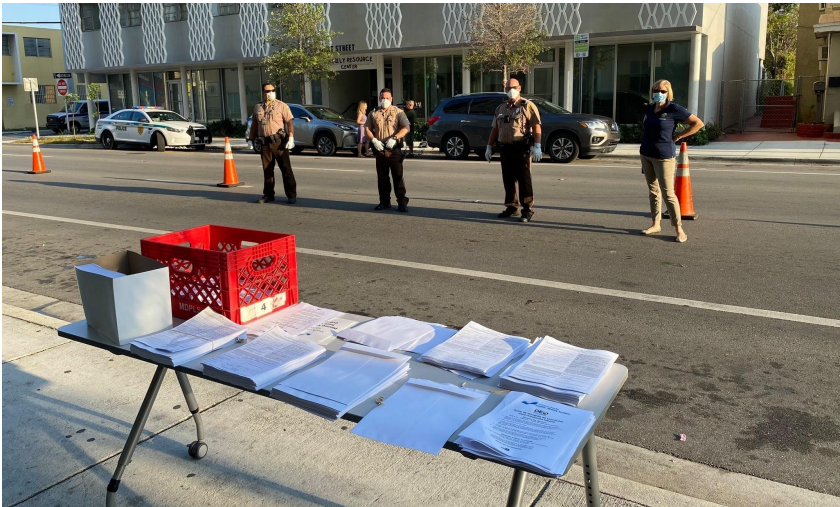
On a Different Note

A reader wrote, what about the volatility of the stock market? Echoing a wise editor at The Atlantic Magazine, my answer: Wash your hands and don't touch your stocks.

Cover Story | [Commissioner Eileen Higgins](#)

Economic Impact

This past month has been a whirlwind as the public health crisis of COVID-19 descended upon Miami-Dade County. Since day one, the District 5 team has been working hard to make sure that residents, businesses, and vulnerable populations have the information and resources needed to get through these challenging times.



Take a look around you and try to remember what Downtown Miami looked like 10 years ago. Our neighborhood has dramatically changed, with a bustling business district and a steep increase in the number of young families moving into our urban core — and it will continue to transform in the years to come.

For those who don't know, the federal and state resources allocated to our community are based on Census data. The Census takes place every 10 years and is tasked with counting every person living in the United States — and it's right around the corner. Initial invitation letters to complete the Census are being mailed this month, and it is the first time in history that the Census can be filled out online, over the phone, by mail or in-person — so there are no excuses! The Census data is vital to the future of our neighborhood, from the number of representatives in Congress to the growth of our businesses and academic institutions. It is up to us to make sure our community gets counted.

To put it into scale, every person counted represents \$1,800 a year for the next 10 years, in terms of federal and state funds allocated to our community. Each person who we miss means we're missing out on \$18,000 (\$1,800/year) for infrastructure, roads, public transit, and more. That's \$18,000 that could have gone to a child's participation in Head Start and data that could have led to the creation of more seats in our public schools.

The tricky part for Downtown residents is that we live in high-rise buildings with lots of people. Many residents live with roommates, and I know from my staff that some of our young folks never check the mail. **Continues Pg. 6**

On Language | [Words in the Age of COVID-19](#)

Pandemic. Lockdown. Quarantine.

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the coronavirus spread a pandemic and defined the word as the worldwide spread of a new disease for which people have no immunity.

Pandemic. The Center for Disease Control defines it as an epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people.

The word derives from the root *pan*, "all," and *demos*, "people," which is also the root of democracy. Pandemic came to English from French in 1755. So, what did we call pandemics before? The plague, mostly, as in the Bubonic Plague or Black Death, which killed 150 million people in the 1300s.

Lockdown. An emergency order of confinement to avoid a threat such as coronavirus. Synonyms: confinement, curfew, lockout, quarantine.

Quarantine. A state, period, or place of isolation in which people that have arrived from elsewhere or been exposed to infectious or contagious diseases are placed. The etymology is the Italian *quarantina*, "forty days." It comes from the Venetian policy to keep a ship from a plague-stricken country isolated for a period of forty days to make sure no latent cases were aboard.

Feature | [Raul Guerrero](#)

Journey around the Room

A young Frenchman, Xavier de Maestre, was sentenced to 47 days of house arrest for dueling, illegal in 1797. He occupied his solitude chronicling his movements around the bedroom, for which he used travel writing techniques. The book was titled *Journeys around my Bedroom*. The English version appeared two centuries later in 2004. I read the book from cover to cover in one go and selected it when facing the murderous challenge of reducing my library to a fraction before moving to Florida and forgot about it until COVID-19 subjected civilization to isolation.

So many moving parts contribute to our sense of well-being. To mention two examples, noise pollution and the opportunity to enjoy our parks. If you live



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Journalism is printing what someone else does not want printed: everything else is public relations.



Downtown Neighbors Alliance

DNA Members

10 Museum Park. 50 Biscayne. 900 Biscayne. Centro. Epic. Flagler First. Marina Blue. Loft II Downtown. Marquis. Met 1. One Miami. Vizcayne.

Downtown NEWS
Spring 2020

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Online Edition: Downtown-News.com

Email Letters to the Editor and Commentaries to RGuerrero@dassmiami.com

From the Editor

As we continue to observe social distancing to mitigate the COVID-19 Pandemic, museums, cultural organizations, and schools have turned to remote operations. So has Downtown News. You will have two options: 1) a replica of the print edition, with the feel of the actual print newspaper, and 2) the online version showing extended coverage, photos and video. Downtown News will resume the print edition when distribution is safe.

We feature for the Spring Issue Amal Solh Kabbani, President of the Downtown Neighbors Alliance (DNA), and Miami-Dade County Commissioner Eileen Higgins, championing the 2020 Census.

History Blogger Casey Piket takes us down memory lane to April 1896, when the first train arrived to Miami. Aaron DeMayo warns us about how vulnerable climate change makes cities like Miami. Fran Fenton offers a critical look at the neighborhood from a resident's perspective, and Michelle Comer questions the wisdom of allowing construction to go on when everyone else must abide by the government directives.

We cover COVID-19: *The Language of the Pandemic*, and *Precautions*.

Under *Spotlight* we feature Christina Crespi, the new Executive Director of the Downtown Development Authority. **A Bonus:** A curated list of restaurants that will deliver to your door so you can continue having the delicious and diverse food that has made downtown a culinary destination. Some places even deliver cocktails. Also, we are adding online cultural and educational offerings.

A Serious Health Concern

The president of the DNA, Amal Solh Kabbani, pointed out a potential danger: "We are extremely troubled by the growing number of unattended homeless (count 60+) living at Bayfront Park during this Pandemic. With the County Mayor's "shelter in place" emergency order—maintain social distance, wash hands often and a curfew from 10pm–5am—none of which are being applied to our homeless population. Hence, residents and the homeless themselves are at greater risk of catching and spreading the pandemic. A resident witnessed two homeless, coughing profusely without so much as covering their mouths and many are congregating in clusters." It is time for the City and County leadership to do something about it.

Most important, Dear Readers, please, be safe!

Greetings,



Raul Guerrero

Editor, Downtown News

Academic Curator, Downtown Arts and Science Salon (DASS)
DASSMIAMI.COM



The Downtown Neighbors Alliance (DNA) has been advocating and improving the quality of life of downtown residents since 2013. Representing more than 30 thousand residents, DNA is the only organization exclusively focused on Downtown residents.

We help residents with noise violations, homelessness, pedestrian safety, zoning, and policing. And advocate for schools, and the preservation of our parks.

To join or sponsorship, please visit:

miamidna.org

Letters to Editor

A secluded nook in downtown Miami provided a convenient place to hide from the occasional passing security patrol. Vagrants knew about this political black hole between uncoordinated City and County governments that gave them a safe place to conduct nefarious activities unchallenged.

Residents at the adjacent building were familiar with the spectacle: drug use/sales, prostitution, armed robbery, sexual assaults and public urination/defecation.

Lack of public bathrooms in downtown, the Miami Business Center, made this secluded space an attractive open-air public toilet. Unfortunately, this created a significant public health hazard for the children and residents just on the other side of the fence. The higher land elevation under the train allowed urine and feces from the vagrants to regularly wash down into the adjacent pool area. No one enjoys a pool area with human and dog waste run-off. Lack of drainage from rainwater under the Metro Mover and poor land "percolation" forced human & dog waste into the adjacent pool and residential buildings. People living above the area could not open balconies or windows due to the stench. Unsanitary conditions were further escalated by rats that feed on discarded food, drinks, drugs and used condoms left in this unsecure location. Occasionally screaming in the night could be heard from this area or weapons fire. Predators were finally chased out by the coordinated efforts of Commissioner Eileen Higgin's team working in conjunction with local residents and Dade County Transit. The closure of this dangerous area finally provided relief to residents terrorized from years of neglect from other City and County officials. Commissioner Higgin's leadership supported the local community and found a sustainable solution for the huge health and safety problem created by a tiny area.



Thousands of dollars were spent in the past to creating a failed dog park and later an urban rock walkway. The thing that never changed was the vagrants that remained in the same spot despite the "re-uses" of the dark hidden alley. Unfortunately, South Florida suffers from political short-term memory and new arrivals don't understand what local residents have lived through in Central Business District over the past 10+ years. This is the case even with new arrivals landing jobs in government who want to implement projects that might have worked elsewhere but have failed miserably in downtown.

It took courage to say enough is enough and put an end to the nonsense. Trying to put a dog park under the First Street metro mover is a bad idea. Please, do not reopen the old crime alley!

Jorge Sanchez is a CBD resident.

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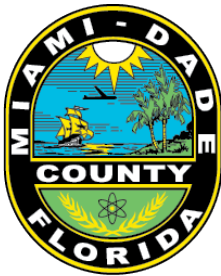
GOLD



Regular



Generous Grant by

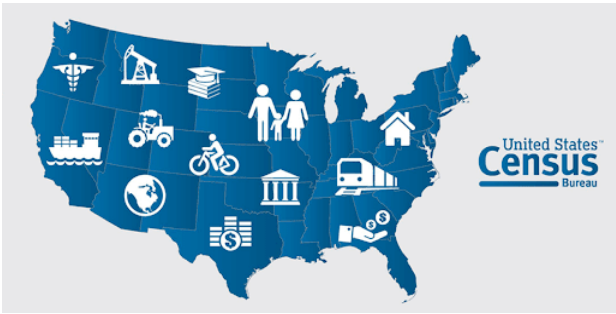


Commissioner
Eileen Higgins
District 5

Comentary

Amal Solh Kabbani

Stand Up and Be Counted



The U.S. Constitution mandates that the population be counted every ten years. The 2020 Census begins on April 1. (Starting March 12, notices are sent out.)

The importance of being counted can’t be overstated: Census data are used to determine the allocation of \$1.5 trillion in federal funds to states, cities and communities, including Downtown Miami. Census data also determines the number of seats each state has in the House of Representatives and votes in electoral colleges.

Commissioner Ken Russell appointed me to the City of Miami Complete Count Committee, a team of local representatives dedicated to developing and implementing a locally based outreach and awareness campaign for the 2020 Census. In that capacity, and as your downtown neighbor, I kindly urge you to respond to the Census when you receive the materials by snail mail or email. Or go online, look for the Census form, fill it out, and submit it. You can do it from your phone, tablet or laptop.

If you don’t receive the materials or should you have any questions, do contact me at AmalKabbani@gmail.com.

Again, It’s Crucial.

Let me just reiterate what’s at play, from firefighters and police officers to hospitals and road maintenance. From wildlife preservation and funding for natural disasters like hurricanes and flooding to housing assistance for the elderly and programs for the homeless. Of course, schools are greatly impacted. You might think, but local schools are a matter for the County School Board... Well, let me point out just two examples. Funds for the Head Start program depend on Census data, as do grants to support special education.

Privacy

Many people have concerns about the confidentiality of their answers. No need to worry. The U.S. Census Bureau is bound by law to protect your information and keep it confidential. Every employee takes an oath to protect your personal information for life.

The official word: “Under Title 13, the Census Bureau cannot release any identifiable information about you, your home, or your business, even to law enforcement agencies. The law ensures that your private data is protected and that your answers cannot be used against you by any government agency or court. The answers you provide are used only to produce statistics. You are kept anonymous.”

Please Do Your Part

And don’t be surprised to hear me knocking on your door to make sure that you did. Let’s make sure we stand up and get counted. Let’s make sure Downtown Miami gets it right!



Amal Solh Kabbani is the President of the Downtown Nighbors Alliance (DNA). Also presides over the Young Patronesses of the Opera, an organization devoted to bringing music education to schools, and keep the love of opera alive.

Michelle Comer

Essential Luxury Condo Construction during COVID-19

Open Letter to Mayor Suarez and Governor DeSantis.

Gentlemen: thank you for your time, energy, and leadership during the COVID-19 crisis. Full disclosure, I am a registered republican and a capitalist. That said, I just received an email from my building management. It reaffirms the county's COVID-19 guidelines and mandates which clearly indicate that the construction of luxury residential condominiums (open construction sites) is considered "essential" and can continue under "regular inspections."

So here is my concern/question in three parts:
1) Please explain to me how open construction sites involving luxury condos are essential?
2) How does a construction worker, who cannot maintain social distancing, possibly wearing the same clothes from the day before, potentially having been around others who have the virus, who are handling common items and working within inches of each other, NOT pose a transmission threat; but an office worker who isolates in a cube or their own office must stay home?

3) These individuals go to OUR neighborhood stores, pharmacies, banks, etc. How can this activity NOT be high risk of transmission and spreading this virus within our neighborhood? I'm no epidemiologist, but according to those experts, this clearly opposes their advice.

Gentlemen, none of this is adding up. This very idea defies all logic and leaves me to believe that this allowance has more to with money, and less to do with the common welfare of our neighborhoods. Meanwhile, small businesses, restaurants, and a myriad of others remain at financial risk and are spiraling down economically.

These examples are not mutually exclusive. In fact, from what all of the experts are indicating and in order to beat this, all forms of gathering need to halt for everyone, not just small businesses and individual members of society. It appears to me that while rich people and companies continue business as usual, everyone else is expected to make huge sacrifices for the common good. It's not fair, and there's no doubt in my mind that leaving these non-essential construction projects open is directly contributing to the spread of COVID-19.

Moreover, we are not talking about the construction of a hospital, or a critical warehouse in our food supply chain, or even a necessary bridge or overpass; we are talking about million-dollar Aston Martin condos. At a very minimum, the optics are not good and leave people wondering just how serious you are about containing the virus. Many budding businesses in Miami will not come back from this financially. I suppose we can take solace in knowing that when this is all said and done, that what is important is that the wealthy can still purchase an Aston Martin condo.

I have tweeted, emailed, called, and left messages, etc., all in vain. Not one of you, or anyone from your offices, has had the courtesy to contact me with an answer. Not to be disrespectful, but isn't it your job to guide and protect your communities? To help maintain calm and exhibit transparency? That's what you keep telling us on the TV, so now it's time to prove it.

I'm not the only one to notice this is a problem, so a comprehensive explanation is not only expected, it's required.



Michelle Comer is a Downtown Miami resident.

Aaron DeMayo

Vulnerable Tropical Miami

Climate Change is a global issue that knows no boundaries on a map, and from which no one is isolated from the effects. Change must occur at multiple scales. We are all interconnected, from the individual property to the block, the neighborhood, city, county, state, country, and the planet. In today’s hyper-connected digital world, those links are greater than ever, yet keeping that perspective can pose challenges.

As proposals to protect people emerge, the boundaries on maps blur. For instance, on behalf of the City of Miami, CDM Smith is designing the Storm Water Master Plan. As they map the existing infrastructure, from drains to pipes to outfalls and everything in between, they have found portions of the physical system that move across city borders. Natural topographical features cause water to move across map borders as well. Lines on a map do not define our community.

Residents, Government, Business, & Investor Confidence

As we consider options and contemplate difficult decisions, there will be areas where people may need to retreat, leaving their homes. These conversations are already occurring, and people are beginning to leave. The most at-risk areas are both the lowest topographically on the water’s edge, and on higher ground along our ridge where development will need to occur.

If portions of our city are chosen for retreat, how we handle the buyouts of properties or allow market forces to evolve will play a crucial role. As the first group of properties adapts or retreats, other communities facing similar situations will be closely watching. The method for determining which streets and seawalls receive capital improvements and adaptations, and which buyouts occur, will also be scrutinized.

The level of confidence in the community’s ability to adapt will determine in large part the residents’ decisions to remain in place, continuing to invest by paying their mortgages and paying into funds to adapt, or to sell and leave. Some residents may stay within the South Florida community or choose to move to locations where they feel safer, farther away. If the process is properly thought-out and equitable, it will signal that we have a holistic plan with the greater good of the community at the forefront of decision making. If not handled well, a snowball effect may occur with people rushing to cash out and leave.

In the face of these challenges, policymakers and business leaders need to put in place the right tools, analytics, processes, and governance to assess climate risk properly, adapt to risk that is locked in, and decarbonize to reduce the further buildup of risk. The cities that act the most expeditiously and judiciously with a focus on the entire community of people will have the greatest chance for success.

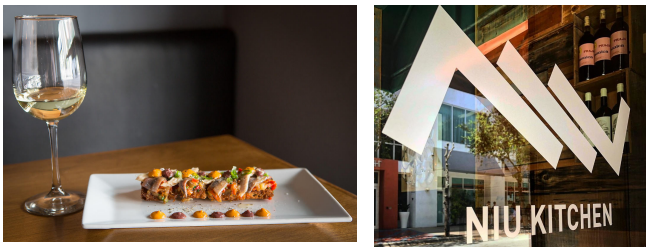
Excerpted from An Architectural Design Approach to Climate Adaptation by Aaron DeMayo.



Aaron DeMayo is the Principal at Future Vision Studios, and a local Architectural Designer, Urban Planner, and Commercial Real Estate Associate. More information: futurevisionstudios.us

A fusion of Latin-Mediterranean flavors served tapas-style.

NIU



As a downtown neighbor and born in Barcelona my favorite restaurant could not be other than NIU. The place is tiny and very familiar, you feel at home. Chef Deme Loma can transport you to the first bite to Barcelona, the smell, the flavors... It's unique!!!

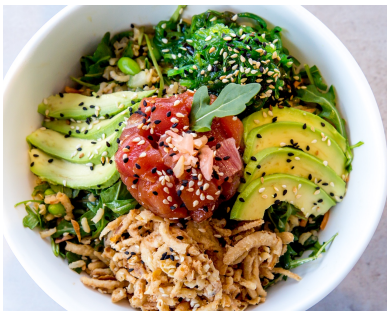
My favorite dishes: The anchovy coca (delicate fusion of tomato, crispy bread and Mediterranean anchovies.) And El arroz, "rice," that according to the season can be with mushrooms, prawns, calamari, meat... And just the right amount of broth.

By the way, NIU is nest in Catalan. So, this can be your Catalan niu in downtown. Order online for take out or delivery @ www.niukitchen.com

Pilar Lecha is a downtown resident.

A balance of delicious plus nutritious food.

Carrot Express



The popular South Beach eatery Carrot Express has made its sixth debut in Downtown Miami (98 NE 2nd Avenue). If you are a Carrot Express fan; get ready to savor their delicious healthy menu. Be sure to try their luscious wraps like The Liv Wrap, some of the classics like Mario's Favorite or possibly Miami's best Poke Bowl (it's seriously that good!). For those looking for a fruity option the Açai bowls, freshly squeezed juices and smoothies are a must! A customer said: "Have you been searching for healthier food when you're eating out? For a great tasting meal that is also healthy, try the new Carrot Express at 98 NE 2nd Avenue in downtown Miami."

Order online @ www.eatcarrotexpress.com for takeout or delivery.

Aurea Veras writes about food and culture.

Ordering take-out or delivery is a way to support local businesses during the COVID-19 Pandemic, and a way to help yourselves. Here you have some options.

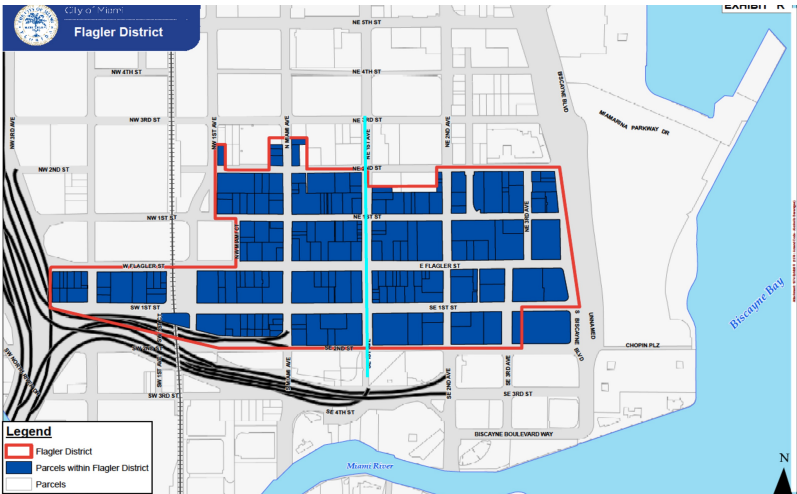
Take-out & Delivery

Restaurants in the Central Business District (CBD)

Reinventing the wheel is not what we do. So, for comprehensive and updated information on restaurants around the Flagler District, which encompasses a great part of the Central Business District, under the direction of our friend Terrell Fritz, the Flagler BID Website provides a great catalogue of culinary offerings.

As Mr. Fritz has explained, the Flagler District is a Downtown food destination with more than 100 restaurants and fast-casual establishments.

Check the website @ www.downtownmiami.net



Park West Neighborhood

For our Park West neighbors, there are choices as well for take-out and delivery.

- Sagrado Café @ www.sagrado.cafe
- Sushi Sake @ www.suchisakemiami.com
- Pucci Pizza @ www.puccisonline.com

Melinda's

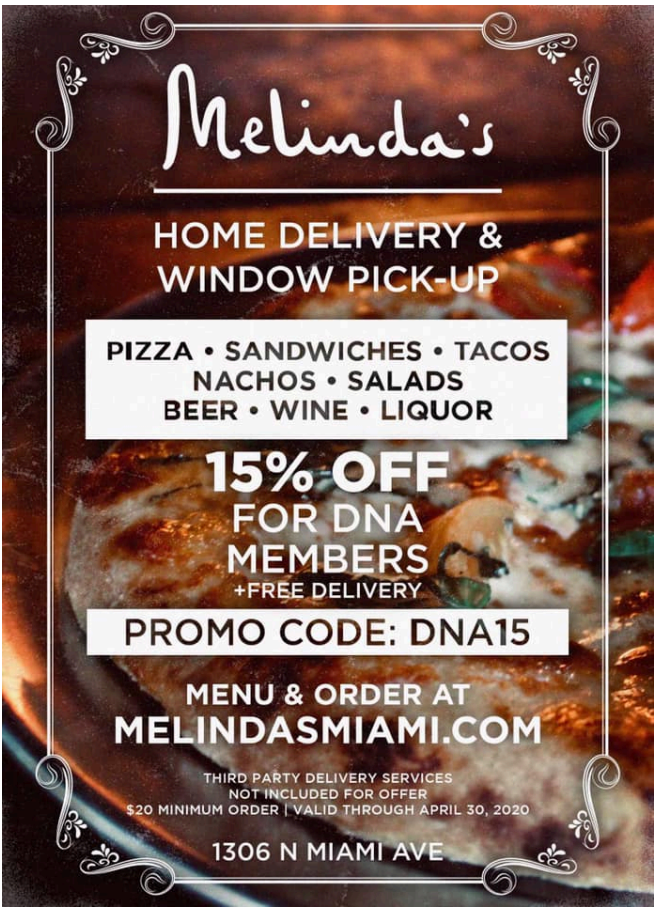
During difficult times, either you adapt or perish, said Melinda's Brad Koffer. Melinda's now offers home delivery and window-up. And DNA members (most downtown residents) receive a 15% discount. Promo code: DNA15. Menu and order @ Melindasmiami.com

A DESTINATION SHOPPING EXPERIENCE



- Holiday Shopping
- Seasonal Family Events
- New Year's Eve Fireworks
- Waterside Dining
- Daily Live Music
- Farmer's Market

- Brew-ville
- MammaMia Gelato
- Pucci's Biscayne Bay Pizza
- Sakura Reflexology Spa
- XIMI Vogue



Grocery Delivery

Supermarkets

Publix (publix.com), and Wholefoods (wholefoodsmarket.com) deliver groceries, toiletries, and liquor.

Also, the family that runs Sedici's Cafe Grill is offering a Grocery Delivery Service. A list of products available and prices, text (305) 979- 2400. Email to sedicicafe@gmail.com