



# Downtown NEWS

Issue 3 Volume 4. February 2021 | Facebook.com/DowntowNews | Twitter.com/DtownNews | Stay connected: Downtown-News.com

Editorial | Amal Solh Kabbani

## Pride of Ownership

Pride of ownership is a phrase often used to describe the pride owners of single homes have for their property and the attention put into that property to keep it in top notch condition. But what if the homeowner's property is a condo in a community? For some reason, that term disappears from our vocabulary. Also, for some reason, it loses the psychological benefit since HOAs have been known to handle the maintenance of all the common areas and condo living is more about a relaxed lifestyle than one that invests in home improvement to keep up with market real estate trends.

But is that how it should be? Why do we stop being vested in our surroundings, even when it has a direct impact on the value of our apartments? Those are questions that need further inquiry.



Amal Solh Kabbani is the President of the Downtown Neighbors Alliance (DNA)

### Community

DNA takes pride in seeing its members participate in programs that help beautify the neighborhood. Simple things such as gathering to clean-up our Bay, which we did this past December, and supports projects such as a mural planned for Avenue 3.

Of course, the DNA and our local government can do more. One step forward this avenue is convening the community and our elected leaders and authorities to assess what has to be done and together formulate solutions. On January 19, I was delighted to see the great turnout to a zoom-meeting DNA organized to facilitate a dialogue between Mayor Francis Suarez, County Commissioner Eileen Higgins, City Commissioner Ken Russell, Police Commander Regueira and our downtown residents.

Mayor Suarez touched upon a feeling of despondency residents have been experiencing: Brickell, Midtown, the Design District, the neighborhoods known generally as the greater downtown are all thriving, all except the downtown proper. And the mayor committed to making our neighborhood a priority, as did the commissioners and Commander Regeira. **Continues on page 3.**

Freedom of the press is not just important to democracy, it is democracy.  
**Walter Cronkite.**

Cover Story | Aaron DeMayo

## The Freebee Effect

Miami's Next Connect: Unlocking Opportunities in the Built Environment.



Miami's transportation system is one of the most diverse and unique in the United States. In addition to buses, trolleys, trains, and autonomous people movers, Freebee shuttles provide an important service. These electric powered shuttles offer convenience and connect people to places that might otherwise be difficult to reach by walking, thus unlocking numerous opportunities to redefine the built environment. On-demand free rides can be requested using the Freebee app or by flagging down a shuttle. Recently, the Miami Parking Authority initiated a one-year program with Freebee to determine the service's feasibility downtown. **Continued on page 7.**

Local Institutions / Raul Guerrero and Matilda Kalaveshi

## Bayside Marketplace

People from all over the world visit the downtown iconic venue. It's time local residents discover or rediscover an adventure just across the Boulevard. **Continued on page 5.**



Bayside Marketplace is Miami's number one tourist destination. Why? It's simple. Bayside Marketplace embodies Miami as few places do. Food, shopping, live music, dancing, boats, people from all walks of life... Not to mention Biscayne Bay in its brilliant magnificence.

And much has changed since we last visited, starting with the Miami Skyview Wheel that is soon becoming a landmark. **Continued on page 5.**

In Brief | Citizen Journalists

## News & Curiosities

### Nasal and Oral Antiseptics against COVID 19

Halodine is a nasal and oral rinse antiseptic that has been proven to inactivate the virus that causes COVID-19 in as little as 15 seconds. Halodine antiseptics were designed by practicing doctors and healthcare workers to help prevent the transmission of infectious virus aerosols from patients, from staff members and from health-care providers who may not even know that they have been infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. Administered to the nose and mouth before and after masking or other PPE physical barriers, it can be applicable for broader public use as additional layer of chemical protection at the source of COVID-19 infection whenever there is increased risk of exposure. Halodine is a Miami pharma. Info: [www.halodine.com](http://www.halodine.com)



### State of the County Address



Mayor Daniella Levine Cava delivered her state of the county *virtual* address. Here are highlights in her own words:

"We can tackle this moment not just as a crisis but a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to rebuild. And we will build back stronger than ever by investing in equity, our economy, our environment, and renewed engagement with the residents we serve."

About the COVID-19 vaccine: "My administration is rolling out a new centralized registration process for vaccine distribution. Accessible online and by phone... One-time registration, and no need to constantly re-apply."

In closing: "United we stand, divided we fall. I am dedicated to bringing everybody to higher ground so that we may build common ground for the road forward."

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Downtown NEWS  
February 2021 Issue

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From the Editor


The February issue comes at a time when we, downtown residents and humanity, dare to hope. The COVID-19 vaccines paint a light at the end of the tunnel. It is also a hopeful issue because February symbolizes love, incarnated in Saint Valentine, that Roman doctor who defying the powers to be married legions of young soldiers deployed far away from home. He lost his head, literally, for mitigating the solitude of soldiers, hence becoming the martyr of love. This past year we have seen many martyrs of love, men and women who lost their lives because of love, love for humanity, for those afflicted by the Pandemic.

On more pedestrian affairs, Downtown News correspondents tackle issues from the future of transit to a shuttle connecting drivers to available parking, from the responsibilities of citizens to what it means to live in Miami. As usual, we bring you an updated guide to *Eat & Drink*, and under *Spotlight* we feature Commissioner Eileen Higgins and Asylum Attorney Nejje Morales. We devote *Local Businesses* to Bayside Marketplace, and *Editorial Page* presents a serious take on the workings of the Covid-19 vaccine. Of course, our popular *Cultural Compass* brings you art, science, performance, and history.

**And there is beauty!**  
A picture, we all know, speaks a thousands words. Let this photograph speak of the simple and outrageous beauty found in downtown. Yes, despite all the issues we complain about.



Enjoy It!



**Raul Guerrero**  
Editor, Downtown News  
Academic Curator, Downtown Arts and Science Salon (DASS) [DASSMIAMI.COM](http://DASSMIAMI.COM)

Photo, Aurea Veras.

Letters to the Editor

Unsafe Street

Dear Editor,  
I am a downtown resident. Earlier this week, a homeless deranged man tried to touch me as I crossed the street. I ran to my car. The man followed me and started hitting the car. I tried calling the police but there was no answer. The incident took place at the corner of NE Second Avenue and Second Street.  
Thank you,  
**Rocio Montoya**,  
CBD Resident.

Bayfront Park

Dear Raul,  
Thank you for being the journalist who helps the downtown neighbourhood. We literally are trying to enjoy our homes, which seems far fetched. Incidents in our park and neighbourhood seem to be increasing, which statistically get ignored, if not reported.  
Here are a couple examples:  
1. January 25, the lady with the hot dog stand [Bayfront Park] got robbed by the group of 6 teens who have been terrorizing the neighbourhood for almost a year.  
2. January 27, a homeless individual takes his pants down in a public area in the middle of the park, not even worried about indecent exposure in front of a child, the mother and two other women, and many other people.  
3. Human feces in the middle of park, on the cement, with all pets exposed. Just shocking!  
City Commissioner Ken Russell needs motivation to solve smaller problems instead of adding on bigger ones like “scooters “ to our agenda.  
Thank you for your continued effort,  
**Desiree Lasrado**  
CBD Resident

Editorial Note

Downtown News contacted Police Commander Regueira. He acknowledged that crime and the presence of vagrants around Bayfront Park has increased, so he has deployed two police officers to Bayfront Park and Bayside Marketplace. And since the deployment, he noted, criminal activity has decreased.  
The Commander has also deployed officers to the corner of NE Second St. Downtown News spoke to residents in the area. The consensus is that things have improved greatly since LOFT 2 residents established direct dialogue with the Commander.



Police patrolling NE Second St, around the entrance to the Metromover where many vagrants congregate. Photo, Aurea Veras.

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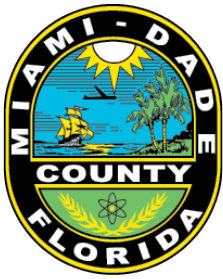
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Commissioner  
**Eileen Higgins**  
District 5



# The Covid-19 Vaccine What you Need to Know Today

Islara Souto

Two weeks ago, I got the COVID-19 vaccine at Jackson after waiting in the hot sun for four hours. Why? Because my shot-in-the-arm protects you, and yours protects me — and ours protect everyone else.

COVID-19 is extremely contagious, spreading easily from person to person, and causes severe illness or death. The virus is tricky, changing constantly to meet its one goal: to replicate itself as easily as possible. The only way to conquer this malevolent piece-of-protein is to achieve Herd Immunity, where at least 60% of us are protected and the virus eventually peters out. The fastest and safest route to Herd Immunity is mass vaccination of millions of people — an enormous undertaking slowed down in the U.S. by the hiccups from the past administration. The new administration promises to use science and the force of community action to accelerate mass vaccination in a fair, equitable way.

But what is a vaccine? It is simply any compound intentionally put into the body to start an immune reaction. A vaccine’s purpose is to prevent disease or make it less severe. Pandemics that killed and maimed millions of people (measles, diphtheria, mumps, whooping cough, polio) were abated by vaccines and driven by the people who bravely rolled up their sleeves to show their neighbors that a vaccine does not cause the illness.

When you are vaccinated (a.k.a. inoculated), you are given a weak piece of a virus or bacteria. It does not make you sick; rather, it stimulates your body to make antibodies that protect you from future attack by that same germ. Then, if you are ever again exposed to the actual disease-causing germ, your immune system remembers and is prepared to fight the infection. Some vaccines take longer than others to provide immunity. Others need to be given annually, more than once or by booster shots.

It usually takes 10–15 years for a vaccine to be made, thoroughly tested and distributed, but the two COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in the U.S. were created in only 10 months! The two vaccines, from Pfizer and Moderna, are similar: both are between 94% to 95% effective and both require two doses; neither is a live virus nor impacts your body’s DNA, instead using a new technology called mRNA. And both have similar side effects.

The National Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System collects adverse events from health-care providers, vaccine manufacturers, and the public. So far, a handful of people have had serious side effects, mainly allergic anaphylaxis (the allergy numbers have been far less than those of the annual flu vaccine). Mild side effects from the COVID-19 vaccines have been reported and include pain, redness or swelling where the shot was given; fever and chills; fatigue; headache; muscle and joint pains. These are normal, but it does NOT mean you have COVID-19. If you get these reactions, rest and allow your body to recover; if you have a fever, stay home. Current supplies of the COVID-19 vaccine are extremely low and cannot be made fast enough for everyone right away, but eventually the vaccine will be offered to everybody. Florida’s policy is to prioritize older people age 65+ first, then residents in long-term care facilities and health-care workers. The vaccine is not recommended for pregnant women or children under 16 years of age.



Army Spc. Angel Laureano holds a vial of the COVID-19 vaccine, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, Md. Photo by Lisa Ferdinando. Courtesy of Wikipedia Commons.

Not everything will change back to “normal” the second that syringe enters your arm. While many of us are thinking about the pandemic in binary terms — there’s life before I get the shot and life after I get the shot — it is better to think more gradually, like in three stages: Stage 1 is what you can safely do once you and your close friends and family are vaccinated; Stage 2 is what you can safely do once Miami-Dade County reaches Herd Immunity, when enough of us are protected against infection that the virus cannot easily spread; and Stage 3 is what we can ALL do once Herd Immunity is reached internationally.

There is a good chance we will not reach that last Stage 3 in 2021. The COVID-19 virus is expected to persist and mutate constantly, much like its influenza cousin virus does. New strains of COVID-19 appear daily, and we are not confident they will respond to the current vaccines. Around the world, scientists are using the new mRNA and older, proven vaccine-making techniques in the race against COVID-19 and its mutations.

Not all is grim, though. Incidence rates are much lower for this season’s flu, mitigating fears of a double-whammy pandemic. We now have one year of experience with COVID-19 and treatments are proving to help lessen its severity, if not its contagion. Death rates seem to be leveling. Dreams of working from home have come true and children are being prepared for a higher-tech future. The best thing we can do to reach Stage 3 is to consider COVID-19 a silent and persistent enemy — and get used to living with it as best we can.

**Islara Souto** is Downtown News Health Correspondent and Culturist.

## The Blight of Our Downtown

Titi Puente

It has been gradually coming for two years. The area where the Seybold building is started the trend and spread East. The gutting of those properties with the promise of revitalization and renewal created a total decay of that particular area. And the pandemic quickly accelerated the loss of many more downtown shops that will take years to replace.

Zoom and remote work has taken many of the customers these shops depended on, and the remaining ones are surviving on limited income—sometimes with no help from landlords who refuse to see the long term picture of this horrible pandemic.

I see a flaw in the representation downtown currently has: it doesn’t encompass the small business owners. Business projects such as the Flagler, with visions that excluded the impact construction would have on the real stakeholders of downtown, the storefronts along its path. It took years to do about one block in front of the Courthouse, and in the process forced business that had been well-established for years to close their doors.

When you talk about downtown, be aware that the discussions exclude most business owners. It is vital that someone begins to represent our interests also. Eyes in the street are needed. Not someone who is looking at trends and other projections from an office or worse yet remotely from a home far away from our Downtown.

**Titi Puente**, owner and operator of Sedici Cafe Grill Avenue 3.

## Policing on Horseback

Raul Guerrero

Some time ago, at the office of City Commissioner Ken Russell, the now existing Chief of Police Colina spoke about the Department’s investment in high tech policing. "Maybe part of the budget should be reserved for the medieval technology of patrolling on foot or on horseback," I quipped.

A laugh, and a change of conversation.

Last week, seeing an office galloping down Biscayne Boulevard, a downtown resident commented: “Nothing is more recomforting than seeing police officers patrolling on horseback! The actual presence of an officer is the greatest crime deterrent.”



Photo, Aurea Veras.

## Pride of Ownership (continued from Page 1.)

If Miami aspires to be a world-class city, the consensus was, it should start by showing pride for its downtown. Sure, it helps that the city provide financial incentives to new companies looking to relocate to our urban core, but a thriving urban core remains the best incentive for people looking to relocate.

Let’s call it a community pride of ownership!

**The Downtown Arts & Science Salon (DASS)**  
**The Art and Science of Conversation**  
**dassmiami.com**



The List. Who made it to The List?

When you first entered the restaurant, I thought you were handsome... And then, of course, you spoke. – Helen Hunt in “As Good As It Gets.

- Area 31**  
area31restaurant.com  
270 Biscayne Blvd Way, Miami, FL 33131
- BAYSIDE Marketplace**  
baysidemarketplace.com  
401 Biscayne Blvd. Miami, FL 33132
- Fratelli Milano**  
ristorantefratellimilano.com  
213 SE 1st St, Miami, FL 33131
- D'Oro Caffe & Market**  
17 NE 3rd Ave, Miami, FL 33132  
www.dorocaffe.com
- Jarras y Pollos (CVI-CHE 105)**  
www.ceviche105.com  
115 NE 3rd Ave, Miami, FL 33132
- Novikov Miami**  
www.novikovmiami.com  
300 S Biscayne Blvd, Miami, FL 33131
- RAKIJA GRILL**  
www.rakijagrillmiami.com  
139 NE 3rd Ave, Miami, FL 33132
- Red Carpet**  
www.redcarpetrestaurant.com  
69 E Flagler St, Miami, FL 33132
- Sagrado Cafe**  
www.sagrado.cafe  
900 Biscayne Blvd, Downtown Miami, FL 33132
- Sparky's Roadside Barbecue**  
sparkysroadsidebarbecue.com  
204 NE 1st St, Miami, FL 33132
- Soya & Pomodoro**  
soyaepomodorumiami.com  
120 NE 1st St. Miami, FL 33132
- SUSHI SAKE**  
www.sushisakemiami.com  
900 Biscayne Blvd, Downtown Miami, FL 33132
- Toro Toro**  
torotoromiami.com  
100 Chopin Plz, Miami, FL 33131
- Tuyo**  
tuyomiami.com  
415 NE 2nd Ave, Miami, FL 33132

“I was eating in a Chinese restaurant downtown. There was a dish called Mother and Child Reunion. It’s chicken and eggs. And I said, I gotta use that one.” – Paul Simon



Soya & Pomodoro. Filteto alla Provola.



Lost Boy, the quintessential downtown bar.

Watering Holes

In wine there is wisdom, in beer there is freedom, in water there is bacteria. — Benjamin Franklin

- Black Market**  
blackmarketmia.com  
168 SE 1st St, Miami, FL 33131
- Lost Boy**  
lostboydrygoods.com  
157 E Flagler St Miami, FL 33131
- Mama Tried**  
mamatriedmia.com  
207 NE 1st St, Miami, FL 33132
- Bar Journe**  
https://www.fpjourn.com/  
270 Biscayne Boulevard Way. Miami, FL 33131
- Habana Lounge**  
https://www.havanaloungemiami.com/  
140 SE 1st Ave. Miami, FL 33131
- E11even Miami**  
https://11miami.com/  
29 NE 11th St. Miami, FL 33132
- Le Chat Noir**  
https://www.lechatnoirdesalis.com/  
2 S Miami Ave. Miami, FL 33130

Making rules about drinking can be the sign of an alcoholic.





## Bayside: An Adventure Across the Boulevard.

Early one January morning, the charming and dynamic Pamela Weller, VP Asset Management at Bayside Marketplace, gave us a tour. Most stores, restaurants, kiosks, and amenities had yet to open. A couple have closed for good, a remarkably low number in comparison to other areas. The Pandemic has not spared anyone, but Bayside seems to be on the rebound.

**Local Businesses.** Raul Guerrero. Matilda Kalaveshi collaborated.

"I remember when only a handful of visitors wandered by," Pamela says, "and now we can see the place bustling, especially on weekends and holidays."

**Downtown News:** Who is the typical visitor?

**Pamela Weller:** It has changed. The tours used to be predominantly Central and South Americans. Now the majority of is domestic, from the Northeast... New York, New Jersey, and further south. Georgia is well represented. Miami offers amazing hotel deals these days. And Bayside Marketplace offers the full Miami experience: food, music, shopping and beautiful settings! What can top Biscayne Bay, right? Here you can enjoy Miami's seafood, salsa rhythms, and mojitos and other tropical cocktails. We are restarting our live music on weekends at the Marina Stage. Bayside Market place being an open space, it's perfect for outdoor dining, drinking, and letting the body do the talking, as one visitor defines dancing.

**DN:** Of course, we must adhere to safety regulations...

**PW:** One of our goals has been to educate tenants about social distancing, and making it safe for the public. We made sure each one of our tenants had a plan. In that sense, we have been successful following protocols.

### Change

Common wisdom has it that one key to success is innovation. Bayside is undertaking some serious renovations. They are adding 22 feet of balconies and terraces on the second floor. Imagine all that extra space for outdoor dinning, beer gardens, and cigars and rum. Construction should start in April.

New ventures like Margaritaville, Landshark Bar & Grill, and the Venezuelan Lola and La Industria, to mention a few, are now joining staples such as Mambo Caf , Hard Rock Caf , Segafredo, Chili's, and Bubba Gump. And for libations, in addition to Mojito Bar, there is Bavarian Beerhall, the Other Daiquiri Bar and Hooters

**DN:** People need more than food and drink, people need shopping....

**PW:** Sportive has just opened. And we have an expanded GUESS and EXPRESS, also Crocs, Victoria's Secret, Steps New York... And all kinds of electronics, souvenirs, beauty products...

### The Wheel

Speaking of successful newcomers, Skyviews Miami, best known as the Wheel, is fast becoming a Miami icon. 20 thousand people have ridden it since opening last October. It towers almost 200 feet above Bayside Marketplace, offering great views of Biscayne Bay, Bayfront Park, and Downtown skyline, with 42 enclosed and climate-controlled Gondolas, including one VIP Gondola that features leather bucket seats, a custom LED light show, and a glass bottom floor.

**DN:** Has the Wheel marked a difference for the other tenants?

**PW:** Yes, it has generated lot of traffic.

I returned on a Saturday. The place was bustling. (Most people wore masks, and kept social distance.) That so many people were there demonstrates the traction the place has, and considering it caters to the Cruise-lines and the Arena, both of which have been closed.

As Bayside looks to open a new chapter, Pamela Weller can't hide her excitement, "We have signed an agreement with Big Bus out of London, the largest operator of open-top sightseeing bus tours in the world, to build a terminal at our northern end, where the parking is. Big Bus is prominent in the Port of Miami, and once it opens, we expect to have constant movement back and forth. We will have an office area where tourists can store luggage.

That is an exiting point to conclude our tour. Just one final thought. For downtown residents, Bayside Marketplace really is an adventure waiting to happen. People come from all over the nation and the world and we have it across the Boulevard.

## The Miscellaneous Column

### The Quote

"If Miami aspires to be a world-class city, the consensus was, it should start by showing pride for its downtown. Sure, it helps that the city provide financial incentives to new companies looking to relocate to our urban core, but a thriving urban core remains the best incentive for people looking to relocate."

**Amal Solh Kabbani** (Front page.)

### The Question

To make Downtown News more relevant, we need your input regarding our editorial content. We only have one question: What type of stories would you like to see more?

Five categories: 1. Opinion (residents not pundits). 2. Spotlight local residents and businesses. 3. In-depth covering of neighborhood issues. 4. Local government. 5. Cultural events, including restaurant reviews.

Please, submit answers to

**rguerrero@dassmiami.com**

### The Thought

February symbolizes love, incarnated in Saint Valentine, that Roman doctor who defying the powers to be married legions of young soldiers deployed far away from home. He lost his head, literally, for mitigating the solitude of soldiers, hence becoming the martyr of love.

**Raul Guerrero** (Page 2.)

### Only In Downtown Miami

Motorists driving eastward on NE Second Street turn right on to Second Avenue at high speeds. This is a very busy intersection. After years of complaining, two signs went up. One after the other.



The intention of the first sign, to curtail dangerous turning at high speeds, was eclipsed by the second sign allowing delivery trucks to park in the corner and obstruct the *Yield to Pedestrians Sign* from motorists and, more dangerous, prevent pedestrians from seeing oncoming traffic.



A pedestrian asked: What gives?  
Only in Downtown Miami, my friend!



Looking Out for Her Constituents

Eileen Higgins



While Miami-Dade County Commissioner Eileen Higgins is committed to the entire District 5, we'd like to think she has a special bond to her own neighborhood. For starters, local issues are not mere hearsay. The Commissioner walks our streets every day and knows what's going on.

I mentioned, for example, how disruptive the Scooter Program has been. How disrespectful and irresponsibly the scooter companies have acted in our neighborhood, turning a potential alternative mode of transportation into a jungle dominated by underage kids. She understood. She had seen people ran over, and though it is not her jurisdiction , the City Commission initiated and championed the pilot program, she believes it's time to let it go. The job of elected officials is to try different things to solve problems, but it is also their job to know when to quit.

**Transit**  
Commissioner Higgins is the new Chair for the Transportation, Mobility and Planning Committee (TMPC). So, what can we expect? "As Chair of the TMPC, my top priority is getting people moving. We will continue to advance the SMART plan, but also prioritize our bus network, walkability, bicycle safety, and traffic calming to make Miami-Dade a more livable community."

Specifically, speaking of moving, let's condense her vision to three transit projects to impact downtown residents.

**The Beach Corridor.** A monorail from downtown Omni Station to 5th Street in South Beach. Yes, we will be able to take the train to beach, and beach residents ride to access world-class museums or the Arsht Center for the Performing Arts. A cultural and financial win-win for both sides of the Bay.

**Northeast Corridor.** Express trains running on Brightline's tracks will take anxious shoppers from downtown Miami to Aventura in 15 minutes. A commuter train is also on the works, making stops in mid-town, the design district... It will deliver Downtowners to Aventura in 30 minutes. And those North Miami residents longing for a sophisticated shopping experience can hop to the next train and enjoy the Design District, the upcoming Miami Worldcenter or the Brickell Center. It's okay to take a day off from suburbia.

**East-West Corridor.** A dedicated lane across Southwest Eighth Street for a rapid bus starting at Eighth Street and Southwest 147th Avenue, with one route ending at the Miami Intermodal Center next to MIA, and another ending in downtown Miami. The single lane would be reversible, and buses that are going against traffic will simply use regular lanes, indicates the Commissioner. The cost for the project is \$265 millions. A second phase will run from the Dolphin park-and-ride complex in Doral to the Miami Intermodal Center. "People who live in Doral and work in Brickell, or students driving from downtown to FIU, the Bus Rapid System should drastically reduce commute time."

Spotlight: The Immigration Attorney

US Asylum Laws



When we speak of corporate law, the assumption is transactions, contracts, paper, lots of paper, but the immigration angle has different connotations. I sat for a coffee with this no-nonsense local lawyer.

**Downtown News:** What was most impacting going from one world to the next?

**Nejjie Morales:** The world of asylum has a very deep human side. You get immersed in the lives of your clients, in their increasingly harsh reality. Here in Miami, we deal with a very diverse clientele, ranging from a Guatemalan farmer who only speaks a Mayan language, and has been subjected to racial persecution and gender violence, to the tragedies of Venezuelans fleeing the destruction of their country and their democracy. And then there are Central Americans fleeing powerful criminal groups, or Cuban families making unimaginable journeys to the United States, having exposed themselves to the dangers encountered in each country they had to go through. These are just some of the examples. Listening to each story fills you with humility and gratitude at the same time.

**DN:** There have been new regulations, who qualifies for asylum?

**NM:** Almost all immigrants have a legitimate reason to flee their countries, but only a very small percentage meet the strict requirements to qualify for asylum here in the United States. US asylum law applies to those who have a well-founded fear of persecution “on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.” Establishing these grounds is not always easy.

**DN:** Can you talk about the increase in arrests of those who request asylum when entering the US-Mexico border?

**NM:** The arrests of these people, despite seeking asylum and having entered through one of the ports of entry authorized by the United States government, did not increase in 2020, but in many cases, people remained imprisoned with common criminals for a year, even more... They are taken to various detention centers throughout the country. In many cases these detention centers are so remote and isolated that it is difficult to access lawyers.

**DN:** What does a detainee do in such cases?

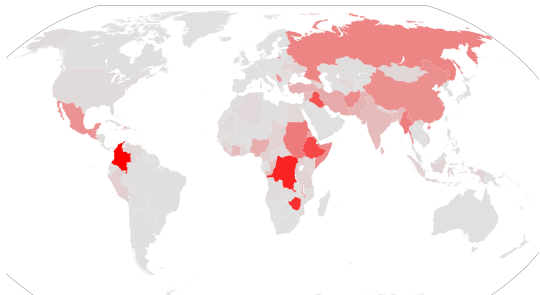
**NM:** Those who have relatives in the US, and funds, may retain counsel to represent them, but the vast majority try to represent themselves at the court hearings, often losing a great opportunity to win their asylum case.

**DN:** For many the Immigration System is broken, and overly politicized. Do you agree?

**NM:** Asylum is an internationally protected right. Our regulations and our behavior towards asylum seekers must be consistent with international agreements. In my experience, the clients that I have represented in court are people whose main objective is to live in a country that respects human rights. We, immigration law practitioners, do reflect not only on how effective our immigration system is but also on the immense cost it represents for taxpayers. The solution to the problems in the immigration system is not rejecting immigrants and denying them a fair process, but rather working to achieve an efficient, compassionate, and non-politicized system. That would be a win-win situation for all.

**DN:** And to conclude...

**NM:** We, immigration attorneys, hope that 2021 brings a more organized and fair immigration system.



Photos clockwise, Commissioner Higgins, Nejjie Morales, and a map of asylum seekers, courtesy of Wikipedia.

**Commissioner continued**  
Time flies when talking to Commissioner Higgins. And, even over Zoom, her optimism is contagious, which combined with her command of facts and the

indefatigable energy make for a good definition of leadership. Downtown Miami is lucky to have her as a representative.



Rendition of the monorail to depart from the Omni Station and run 3.45 miles to South Beach. Rendition by Gannet Corporation.



Downtown NEWS is the only publication, online and in print, exclusively focused on Downtown Miami.

If you wish to know what’s going on around the neighborhood and behind government closed doors, and if you want a curated cultural compass or a guide to eat & drink, or simply want to know what your neighbors are thinking, then subscribe to Downtown News.

It is free!

Dassmiami.com



Here are some facts. The average downtown resident is college-educated, and according to the Downtown Development Authority, commands an income of over \$110,000.

Downtown NEWS, the print-edition, reaches 7,500 apartments, and the online-edition over 15,000 residents.

Because Downtown NEWS is published by the DNA, and because content is relevant and timely to residents, it is the only publication distributed within member-buildings, in some buildings delivered to each apartment.



Downtown News is not a business. It is an effort to foster a sense of community.

Downtown-News.com

The Freebee Effect

.Continued from page 1.

The first mile and last mile issue is often discussed regarding occupants of public transit. Within the Freebee Shuttle Downtown Service Area sits Government Center and Overtown Metrorail stations, 13 Metromover Stations, and numerous bus, trolley, and jitney stop. What is often overlooked is that First Mile and Last Mile issues are also being created due to dependence on private vehicles. People often search for spaces close to their destination even though it may be far easier and cheaper to park slightly farther. Providing simple and safe options for movement from garages or parking lots to destinations, and back, is key to the future viability of a pedestrian and people-focused downtown.

Manolo Reyes, City Commissioner for District 4 and Chair of the Downtown Development Authority has supported the Freebee shuttle service and advocates higher usage of Miami Parking Authority garages. Most trips into Downtown Miami still occur by car, and frequently with only a single occupant. Cruising, the act of driving while looking for parking, often of an on-street parking space, creates significant traffic and dirty emissions that pollute our air quality. This also makes our city less efficient as cruising is often done at slow speeds, creates traffic and can result in accidents.

The Miami Parking Authority manages over 46,800 parking spots with approximately 11,800 on-street spaces. In Downtown Miami, there are tens of thousands of public parking spaces available from the MPA and private operators within garages and parking lots. Yet Downtown Miami still prioritizes most of our public space to the movement and parking of private vehicles, with only a small amount of the space for sidewalks.

If more people utilized the thousands of parking spaces in the existing garages and parking lots, we could remove some on-street parking to create wider sidewalks, increase street trees to reduce the heat island effect, add protected micro-mobility/bike lanes, make space for outdoor dining, add dedicated loading zones, and allow for more efficient on-street vehicular movement. These changes are already in the works with the Flagler Street Renovation, the proposed Avenue 3, and Biscayne Green. Designated Mobility Hubs can be created next to MPA garages, Metro Rail, and Metromover stations. The hubs would include dedicated spaces for Freebee shuttles to charge and idle waiting for riders and designated electric bikes and scooters pick-up and drop-off stations. Widening sidewalks will make it safer for pedestrians. As a result, there would then be numerous options to get from garages and lots to people’s final destinations, safely, conveniently, and economically.

Across the Bay

Miami Beach installed street signs directing motorists to the nearest garages and identifying the cost savings available for drivers who park in garages. Similar signage can be installed downtown so that visitors and residents are aware of changes. By moving more drivers to specific garages, traffic patterns and signalization can be improved downtown. By charging the right prices for on-street parking, we can maintain one or two open spaces per block. Prices will balance supply and demand. The availability of on-street parking at higher costs also increases the turnover rate and increases short trips into shops when people are confident, they can quickly find a space. Thus, increasing business for our ‘Main Street’ shops and restaurants. Currently, the MPA is offering a 50% discount for parking in its four downtown garages for riding Freebee. As this effort gains traction and MPA garages fill up, perhaps mobility hubs and discounted rates can also be offered at private lots as a Public-Private Partnership.



Aaron DeMayo, Principal of Future Vision Studios, writes about architecture design and urban policy for Downtown News.

Walkability

Research from City Observatory, Redfin, and Zillow has found significant correlations that homes with high walkability levels measured by Walk Score command a premium over otherwise similar homes in less walkable locations. In South Florida, there is a 20.2% premium for homes in walkable neighborhoods over car-dependent. Data show that the walkability premium has continued to increase over time.

Improving parking policies may be the cheapest, quickest, and most politically feasible way to achieve many social, economic, and environmental goals within the urban core. The increased pedestrian safety from wider sidewalks, safer protected mobility lanes, and less expensive parking options in garages would incentivize people to choose those options. Each of these ideas supports each other and would become a self-sustaining positive feedback loop. A major key to allow for this transformation of our built environment is the ability for people who either choose not to or are unable to walk or utilize electric scooters or bikes to have a convenient On-Demand means for door-to-door service, this is the Freebee effect.

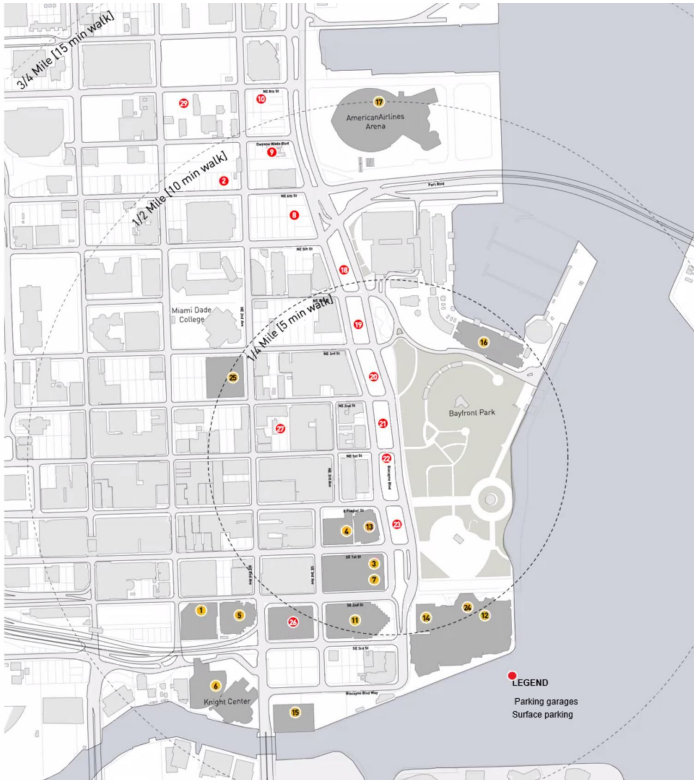
PARKING AVAILABILITY  
PARKING

Name	Address	Type	Location	Public	Private
1. Miami Beach	1500 Collins Ave	Hotel	South Beach	No	Yes
2. 1500 Collins Ave	1500 Collins Ave	Hotel	South Beach	No	Yes
3. One Bayfront Plaza	1000 Biscayne Blvd	Office Building	Downtown	No	Yes
4. 1000 Biscayne Blvd	1000 Biscayne Blvd	Office Building	Downtown	No	Yes
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98. 1000 Biscayne Blvd	1000 Biscayne Blvd	Office Building	Downtown	No	Yes
99. 1000 Biscayne Blvd	1000 Biscayne Blvd	Office Building	Downtown	No	Yes
100. 1000 Biscayne Blvd	1000 Biscayne Blvd	Office Building	Downtown	No	Yes

Total Public and Private  
Parking Spaces Available  
16,511

Parking Garages  
18 [15,239 spaces]

Surface Lots  
11 [1,272 spaces]  
\* 392 of which are MPS's



Some of the parking options in downtown, created by Kimley Horn and TY Lin International.



Future Vision Studios  
Architecture  
Urban Planning  
Feasibility Analysis  
Resiliency Design  
www.FutureVisionStudios.us  
305-988-3097



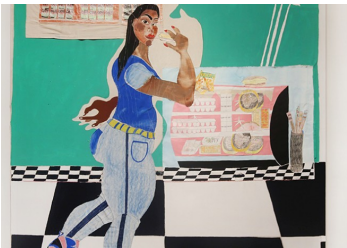
# Cultural Compass

Many artists have gone out of their way to perform for first responders, for COVID-19 patients in intensive care units, and for all of us quarantining in our homes—and they did it while avoiding media attention. Whatever the genre, music, theater, books, the visual arts... Culture has helped us in these times of crisis to enlighten us, to console, delight, and save us from isolation, even fear. Downtown News salutes all our local and national artists!

## Art

### PAMM

Currently on view—Spring 2021  
*Polyphonic: Celebrating PAMM’s Fund for African American Art* highlights a group of paintings, sculptures, and photographs that have since become quintessential for the museum—including works by Terry Adkins, Romare Bearden, Kevin Beasley, Ed Clark, Leslie Hewitt, Faith Ringgold, Xaviera Simmons and Juana Valdes, among several others.



Tschabalala Self. Chopped Cheese, 2017

PAMM has established a mechanism for the diversification and enrichment of the Museum’s permanent collection through the acquisition of contemporary art by African American and African diaspora artists.

### Art + Soul 2021

Eighth Anniversary Celebration of the PAMM Fund for African American Art is back again in a new way! February 6, 2021 at 7pm. Enjoy it from the comfort of your home.



Pamm.org

## Science

### FrostScience Homeschooling

Enrich your homeschool curriculum through our unique Homeschool science sessions – offered both safely in-person and virtually. Explore a science topic in depth through hands-on lessons designed to spark their curiosity and ignite an interest in STEM.

Each homeschool session is four weeks in duration, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. in the museum’s Knight Learning Center classrooms or via Zoom.

**Session 4: Engineering 10.**  
February 2 – 25. Build and test your skills while designing, creating and trying out inventions that respond to challenges across various engineering fields. From aerospace to ocean engineering, students will discover the vital roles that engineers play in science and technological advancements all while applying the engineering design process to fictional and real-world scenarios.

**Session 5: Environmental Science Investigation.**  
March 2 – 25. Dig into the intersection of science research with the natural world during this session dedicated on cultivating the next generation of environmental scientists! Students will investigate environmental issues such as marine debris, pollution and climate change while designing and experimenting solutions exploring renewable energy sources, natural resource management and contamination control.  
[homeschool@frostsscience.org](mailto:homeschool@frostsscience.org).

## History

The Miami International Map Fair is back, and going virtual. Wednesday Feb 10, 2021 - Sunday Feb 14, 2021. Now in their 27th year, 30 dealers from across the globe are joining, virtually.

The Miami Map Fair will showcase the extraordinary and unique maps, atlases, and globes. Over a 5-day period the public will be able to drop into the fair any time of day or night to browse material from favorite dealers.



The fair will feature Zoom lectures by renowned speakers, and live virtual booths to connect directly with dealers. The virtual map fair is free to attend. The speaker series is ticketed. Museum Members: free.

**Highlights**  
Wednesday, February 10 12-1 pm (EST). *Mapping the Transformation of the American Landscape During the 19th Century: The Price of Progress?* Ronald E. Grim, Ph.D. Friday, February 12-1 pm (EST). *Connecting the Past to the Future.* Saturday, February 13 at 12 pm (EST). *Discovering the Cartographic World of Joseph Jacinto “Jo” Mora.* Peter Hiller.  
**HistoryMiami.** 101 West Flagler Street. Miami, FL 33130. Contact: 305-375-1492. [www.historymiami.org](http://www.historymiami.org)

## Performance

### Adrienne Arsht Center LIVE AT THE PLAZA

#### Yoli Mayor

February 5 at 7:30 p.m.  
In person | Tickets are \$15.



Singer-songwriter and Miami native Yoli Mayor is reminiscent of Amy Winehouse, Etta James and other soulful singers. Mayor’s vocals propelled her to the semifinals of America's Got Talent in 2017 and media outlets such as Miami New Times and HuffPost have deemed her a “Miami-grown vocal powerhouse.”

**Keba & The Usual Suspects.**  
February 19 at 7:30 p.m. In person | Tickets are \$15



A Trinidad-born artist with rhythm in her blood, Keba’s soul-flavored songs are a sensual fusion of pop, R&B and soul, accented with exotic rhythms and cinematic climaxes. Her playful yet powerful lyrics are anthems of empowerment and inner strength.

[www.arshtcenter.org](http://www.arshtcenter.org)



Olympia Theater launches Street Stages, bringing FREE community programming to Downtown Miami’s Flagler Street on Friday and Saturday evenings through March 2021. Since we can’t present entertainment inside, Olympia brings the show outside so everyone can enjoy Miami’s talented Performing Artists in a safe, socially distanced, responsible way.  
Every Friday and Saturday from 4:00p to 8:00p Singer/Songwriters, Jazz/Pop Ensembles, Jugglers, Electronica, Comedians, Opera and Performance Art pop up in front of Storefront Art Installations at two locations on East Flagler Street. Sets are short and a perfect fit between drinks and bites in Downtown restaurants and bars.  
Street Stages is part of the #Flagler District #SafeStreets / Alt-B initiative, activating vacant storefronts with Art, and is funded by Miami DDA, Miami-Dade County, Florida Division of Cultural Affairs and supported by Flagler District BID.  
The line-up varies, upcoming shows and artist info are available at [www.OlympiaTheater.org](http://www.OlympiaTheater.org).

Rediscover the art of conversation. [dassmiami.com](http://dassmiami.com)



The Downtown Neighbors Alliance (DNA) has been advocating and improving the quality of life of downtown residents since 2013. We represent more than 30 thousand residents. We are 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," said the DNA President.

**The DNA Member Towers**  
10 Museum Park. 50 Biscayne. 900 Biscayne. Centro. The Epic. Flagler First. Marina Blue. The Loft II, Downtown. The Marquis. Met 1. One Miami. Paramount Miami Worldcenter. The River Front Master Association. The Vizcayne.  
[miamidna.org](http://miamidna.org)