

# Downtown NEWS

Issue 3 Volume 6. May 2021 | Facebook.com/DowntowNews | Twitter.com/DtownNews | Stay connected: Downtown-News.com

Editorial | James Torres

## Miami Is for All

We should strive for a shared vision

I believe that we should have more accountability in a City that harbors different cultures and people. Miami is for all, and we should have a shared vision.

Let's look at the City of Miami's mission statement, which reads as follows: The City of Miami is committed to elevating the quality of life of its residents by improving public safety, housing, mobility, diverse shared spaces that foster community, and efficient and transparent government.

When reading it, ask yourself, is this statement being honored? I believe that Downtown Miami needs to be more proactive when it comes to quality of life, for example, or addressing homelessness — we should be looking at what other major cities are doing on that issue. A recent survey conducted by Miami Dade County of over 26,500 residents shows that for younger downtown residents housing is a priority. We should be looking at ways to bring more affordable housing and making sure those "impact fees" are used correctly. Another major priority is mobility, creating a better transportation system, and by better we mean safer, more reliable, and affordable.



**James Torres** is  
President of the  
Miami DNA.

### Parks

Of course, when people move to the city, public parks become essential, they become the backyards and front porches for apartment and condo dwellers. Moving from suburban areas with green spaces, we sacrifice that privilege for the benefits cities offer, culture, architecture, great food, diversity, and all within walking distance. That is why it is so important to keep our parks safe and available. Some politicians believe these are not local parks, but municipal parks that can be used as venues to make money.

Well, yes and no. Downtown residents pay enough taxes to demand accessibility to parks most of the time. Downtown residents have kids that need parks, and have pets that need parks. I believe in negotiating the best solutions for all parties involved. There is no reason why residents and official should negotiate from an adversarial position. My vision is clear for Miami. Let's clean it up and let's make it better and let's all do our part as best we can!



Online Edition  
Downtown-News.com.

Downtown Geometry, photo by Niels Johansen.



Cover Story | Raul Guerrero

## Self-Portrait

Downtown Miami is an archipelago of zip codes, said a resident. Buildings disconnected from one another like islands. Each it's own unique culture.

Downtown News asked residents and stakeholders to draft a brief semblance of the neighborhood for a self-portrait. We wanted to model it after an early portrait young Rembrandt did. "He painted it the way he would paint a model, without personifying it," observed Pat Steir for the New York Times. "It's letting go of imparting wisdom to the figure. Brilliance, scale, beauty-letting go of all that. That's what's hard to do."

We wanted a portrait of Downtown devoid of ego.

We sent this email randomly: Working on a story about residents' and stakeholders' perceptions of downtown Miami. We'd like to include yours. Some answers already received might give you an idea: A place without political representation. Another: The only place in the area that is authentic, with historical buildings..."



Ballerina at the DuPont Building, photo by award-winning photographer Marc Schmidt.

From a condo overlooking Maurice Ferré Park and Biscayne Bay, a resident replied: "I wouldn't totally agree that we have no political representation. I think we have the wrong political representation. Our commissioner is a bit of a pushover and allows a commissioner who is an unchecked bully from Little Havana to extend his reach into our community."

Can't corroborate nor dispute. My job is simply to report. I would echo, however, Commissioner Manolo Reyes, District 4, which does not include downtown — : "When I took office, my oath was to serve the entire city of Miami. I am a commissioner of the City of Miami." In that sense, the five commissioners have a right and duty to guard the interests of downtown — the original Magic City. Continued on page 5.



The Downtown proper combines the Central Business District, in pink, and the Arts and Entertainment District, including the Park West enclave, in orange. Brickell is the neighborhood south of the Miami River, in blue. Downtown Map, courtesy of the Downtown Development Authority.

In Brief | Citizen Journalists

## News & Curiosities

### County Priorities

"Policy has to reflect the constituents' priorities", said County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava. To this end, a survey was conducted. 26,500 residents answered.

An interesting fact: Pre-pandemic, parks occupied the last priority. Post-pandemic, it's the top 3 priority. Miami-Dade County residents believe that the roadmap to economic recovery is helping large employers relocate and job apprenticeships. Safety and security were also important. For generation Z, the priority is affordable housing. Reliable Transit, too, ranked high. The top concern for people using transit was feeling safe while riding, also less expensive fares and more reliable service.

Miami seems optimistic. Downtown News asked the Mayor, what triggers such optimism? "It's their future," she said. Collaborating is a way of taking the future in one's hands.



To celebrate the collaborative initiative, distinguished artist Xavier Cortada created this electronic mural that contains 300 messages from county residents.

### Revamping the Metromover

Why only one car runs the Omni loop, and always packed, while 2 half-empty cars run the Inner loop? Not enough power to pull two cars outside the Inner loop. Another question: Why don't we have express connections, say, between the Downtown Business District and the Brickell Finance District? The Metromover can only go in one direction. The reason for both problems is an aged control system. That is changing. The County is spending \$200 million for a needed revamping of the Metromover.

### Cruises Get the Green Light

Starting in July, the CDC is authorizing Cruises to restart in US waters, provided COVID-19 vaccination levels are met. Miami is closer to once again reign as the world's cruise capital!

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Downtown NEWS  
May 2021 Issue

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Online Edition: **Downtown-News.com**  
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From the Editor

The Downtown News adventure started three years ago with a simple idea: a publication focused exclusively on a growing Downtown. The Downtown Neighbors Alliance (DNA) funded it. The challenge was doing it with a budget that couldn't have paid half the salary of a part-time journalist. Not only that, but we also aimed for print and online editions. (Online means video, music... Multimedia.)

The Downtown Arts + Science Salon (DASS) volunteered many a service, and together with the DNA helped organize a team of citizen journalists. Eventually, a generous grant came from the office of Miami-Dade Commissioner Eileen Higgins, and other sponsors. Still, the story of Downtown News is best defined as Downtown residents committed to producing reliable information on issues affecting the various enclaves of the neighborhood. Information not available elsewhere.



Purposes

One objective was to help build a neighborhood common interest. Commonality translates into political representation. Working on the cover story for May, *Self-Portrait of Downtown*, we contacted dozens of residents and stakeholders to give us their perception, and not few coincided in pointing out our inadequate political representation. Of course, that brings to mind the old saying, it takes two to tango. Even though our tax-base, among the highest in Miami, ought to speak loud and clear when it comes to representation, politicians respond to the language of votes, and contributions.

In other words, a political analyst mused, Downtown Miami needs to get politically involved to realize its enormous potential.



Collaborators

Our gratitude to the team of writers, photographers and editors who made the May issue, our third anniversary issue, possible: Left to right, Aaron DeMayo, columnist. Islara Souto, editor and columnist. Aurea Veras, photographer. Marc Schmidt, guest photographer. Niels Johansen, photography editor. Matilda Kalaveshi, columnist. Stephen Dutton, copy editor and columnist. Ria Iparraguirre, online intern and musical guest.

Two ladies who believed in the project must be acknowledged, former DNA Presidents Cristina Palomo and Amal Solh Kabbani. Last but not least, Itai Benosh.

Enjoy it!



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

Not much is needed. At the City Commission level, for example, elections are decided by a couple hundred votes, and the Greater Downtown accounts for more than 110,000 residents. Yes, we are a political sleeping giant.

Culture

From the outset, we celebrated culture, one important catalyst for the Downtown prosperity now beginning to materialize. The Director of the Perez Art Museum Miami (PAMM) told us: "Downtown is the future of Miami. Art, culture and commerce will lead the way!"

And Mayor Francis Suarez echoed the sentiment: "Downtown is rapidly becoming the model neighborhood every City in America dreams of having-a robust city center where people can live, work, and play without ever having to leave home."

Amenities is an indicator of a city's desirability. Our cultural amenities have no match in South Florida and beyond.

Where do we stand?

We are a promise standing on a solid foundation. Downtown has amenities, we breathe diversity, ethnic, generational, and in food, language, and architecture. As tech and finance companies flock to Miami from New York and California, Downtown is labeled the Wall Street of the South, implying wealth.

But a few clouds loom on the horizon: Scarce affordable housing, sea-rise level, a diseased Biscayne Bay, aged infrastructure, and the absence of schools. Transit is at best mediocre, and we can't omit the never-ending issue of homelessness. One resident reminded us that both Bayfront and Maurice Ferré Parks, our two green oases, need some TLC. Other residents are less pacifist regarding the inviolable right of residents to local parks, and have taken on the powers that be with a well-known diplomatic stance: Speak softly but carry a big stick!

At this inflection point, if one word could capture Downtown News' disposition pondering the future for Downtown, one strong candidate would be optimism.

Letters to the Editor

Three Years Through Letters Received.

**Inaugural Issue**  
Congrats on your inaugural edition! We are honored to have been a part of it and thank you for raising awareness of this jewel of a Public Library in Downtown Miami.

**Ray Baker**, Director, MDPLS

**First Anniversary**  
I congratulate Downtown News on its one year anniversary. Downtown News presents purposeful and vigilant coverage of the myriad issues impacting residents and businesses Downtown. As a hyper-local paper, Downtown News successfully hones in on the unique aspects of Downtown with precision...

**Ken Russell**, City of Miami Commissioner.

**Homelessness**  
This is an excellent article [Chronicling the Homeless] that depicts the reality surrounding homelessness in our neighborhoods. Many residents are not aware that there are some who actually choose to live this way of life. We know this to be true as we have talked to these individuals in trying to better understand the problem and help them. They have refused work, shelter, and drug/alcohol treatment. We all respect designs to protect the homeless, however, this does not grant them rights to break laws that hurt honest taxpayers that live and work in the areas.

**Riverfront Condo Owners**

**Local News**  
“People, citizens, have to determine how valuable local news outlets are for them and do something about it. That is what the DNA did, downtown residents decided to create their own newspaper. Downtown residents chose to be informed and engaged through their hyper-local Downtown News... An example of a community taking action, creating a publication that is newsworthy but also fun and social...”

**Eileen Higgins**  
Miami-Dade County Commissioner.



**Latest Issue [Self-Portrait]**  
I loved the story! I found myself glued to the next word, the next sentence, and your editorial comments in-between, AMAZING!!

**Pamela Weller**  
VP Asset Management, Bayside.

**Beyond the congratulating**, *Letters to the Editor* has given residents a forum to express their concerns. Just before closing this edition, Downtown resident Jorge Sanchez wrote: "Downtown has become a graffiti slum. We constantly spend money repairing what gangs that have moved to downtown do."



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Commissioner  
**Eileen Higgins**  
District 5



Photo Editorial by Aurea Veras

Without Enforcement  
Signage is Public Art



The Spanish Language

500 million people speak it worldwide. In the U.S., Spanish is the most studied and spoken foreign language. In effect, many no longer consider it a foreign language, wielding as evidence bilingual cities like Miami. Spanish-language media keeps flourishing — not for nothing Hispanics are close to commanding a purchasing power of 1.5 trillion dollars.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Hispanic population approximates 56 million, representing 17% of the total population, and by 2050 it is expected to reach 106 million. Pew Research Center breaks down Hispanics into three groups when it comes to language: 36% are bilingual, 25% mainly use English and 38% use primarily Spanish.

Financial statistics aside, and despite derogatory allusions and xenophobic currents, Spanish remains a language of literary excellence, with 11 Nobel laureates in Literature.

Here are two samples: 1. *Todos los seres humanos tienen tres vidas: pública, privada y secreta.* "All human beings have three lives: public, private, and secret." Garcia Marquez. 2. *Demasiada cordura puede ser la peor de las locuras, ver la vida como es y no como debería de ser.* "Too much sanity may be madness and the maddest of all, to see life as it is and not as it should be" Cervantes.



**Islara Sousa**, culturist, translator, health couch, CEO at Ydeas. She is a cultural and health columnist.

Preserving Our  
Subtropical Paradise



Aaron DeMayo

No one is free from the effects of Climate Change. Our response must come from the individual property to the block, from the neighborhood and city to state and country.  
**By Aaron DeMayo.**

Our city’s natural beauty allows for a very high quality of life. The Magic City is in the spotlight, and our population continues to rise, drawing people from around the U.S. and the world.

We have the third-largest skyline in the U.S., and yet also a sprawling traffic-filled city, we have some of the most luxurious residences in the world a few blocks from people who are struggling, and we have the second most unaffordable County in the US for renters. Affordable housing is, according to Daniella Levine-Cava, Miami-Dade County Mayor, “the top priority for Generation Z in the county.”

As the city has grown, we have generated more revenue. How and where we reinvest will largely determine the following chapters of our history. Citizens and business and political leaders have the opportunity to not only bring our Quality of Life back to the pre-pandemic status quo but to elevate it to where we would like it to be in the future. Our decisions will determine the City’s future population, visitors, and job growth, all necessary to continue to generate the revenue needed to build the necessary infrastructure while protecting residents from climate forces.

Accelerating the Pace and Scale of Adaptation In the face of these challenges, policymakers and business leaders will need to put in place the right tools, analytics, processes, and governance to properly assess climate risk, adapt to risk that is locked in, and decarbonize to reduce the further buildup of risk. If Miami acts expeditiously and judiciously, the greater our chance for success.

The need for new infrastructure allows for us to create a more inclusive, sustainable and economically productive city that embraces our natural resources and can even replenish the ecosystems that we have significantly degraded.

Community is defined by people. People coming together driven by a common purpose. Creating literal and figurative fortifications to protect and provide prosperity for the community should be our common purpose and is within our abilities. Literal Fortification, like the walls of medieval times, will not be able to protect everyone. The opportunity we can find through figurative fortifications — policies and actions that shape the environment — will be the true test of what defines our community.



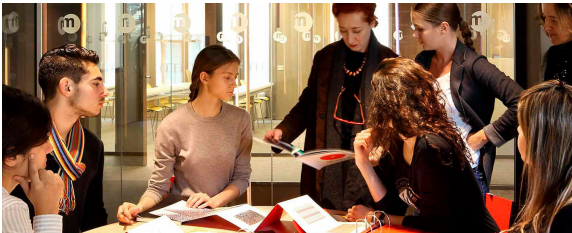
**Aaron DeMayo**, Architectural designer, principal at Future Design, is an environment and urbanism columnist.

Fashion as an  
Economic Engine

The fashion industry, my area of expertise, has the potential to become an important driver of our economy. When we think fashion, we think glamorous models, paparazzi, the ultra-rich, social media, Milan, Paris or New York. However, that is just a representation of the narcissistic veneer. Drill a little deeper and a more comprehensive understanding of fashion is realized by focusing on the business of retail, branding, customer shopping habits, the garment industry, factories, supply chains, jobs and beyond.

In fact, Miami may be perfectly positioned for success. Given its geography, the cultural and financial connections to Latin America and its diverse population, we are poised to become the next fashion capital as long as we take the initiative to create an inclusive and dependable fashion community for ourselves and future fashion leaders.

Miami is now fostering education in fashion at an incredible pace. Downtown is home to the Miami International University of Art and Design and Miami-Dade College with its well-recognized Fashion Institute. A stone’s throw away, the Marangoni Fashion Institute offers our future professionals an array of certificates and degrees. Additionally, Miami presents phenomenal retail possibilities for entrepreneurs with the Miami World Center opening, Brickell City Center, and the Design District.



Courtesy of Istituto Marangoni

It is clear that the Magic City is trying to vie for a place at the forefront of international fashion that goes beyond just the superficial. Miami has been dubbed as the Latin American capital and is considered an important destination for Europeans, Asians and Americans alike. In order to realize its true potential, our city will need to invest in fashion at a grass roots level. Sound business strategies can translate into successful business practices when guided by fashion academia, collective collaboration, local business support and the natural flair for the exceptional inherent in Miami.



**Matilda Kalaveshi**, Downtown News Business Columnist, teaches retail and business at Miami-Dade College and Istituto Marangoni.

Only in Downtown Miami

Who Needs UBER?

In Downtown Miami, stories take place that novelists would envy. A young homeless lady sleeps in Maurice Ferre Park every night on a king size duvet. How does she carry it around all day? She has a gentleman come in the morning to pick it up in his supermarket cart, and stores it who knows where. Miami’s entrepreneurial spirit alive and kicking!





Who made the *List*?

Taste a city to understand it!

**Area 31**  
area31restaurant.com  
270 Biscayne Blvd Way, Miami, FL 33131  
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**Arson + NIU Kitchen**  
niukitchen.com  
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**BAYSIDE Marketplace**  
baysidemarketplace.com  
401 Biscayne Blvd. Miami, FL 33132  
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**Steak Brasil**  
steakbrasil.com  
190 SE 1st Avenue Miami, FL 33131  
Rodizio service.

**Fratelli Milano**  
ristorantefratellimilano.com  
213 SE 1st St, Miami, FL 33131  
Northern Italy.

**POLLOS Y JARRAS (CVI-CHE 105)**  
ceviche105.com  
115 NE 3rd Ave, Miami, FL 33132  
Peruvian inspired. Best ceviche.

**Miami Diner**  
themiamidiner.com  
140 SE 1st Ave. Miami, FL 33131  
All American with a 1960's ambiance.

**Melinda's**  
melindasmiami.com  
1306 N Miami Ave., Miami, FL 33136  
Eclectic food, drinks, music, and crowd.

**Soya & Pomodoro**  
soyaepomodoriomiami.com  
120 NE 1st St. Miami, FL 33132  
Italian, simple food made with love.

**SUSHI SAKE**  
sushisakemiami.com  
900 Biscayne Blvd., Miami, FL 33132  
Sushi overlooking the park.

Question: Do bars make a city?

**Black Market**  
blackmarketmia.com  
168 SE 1st St, Miami, FL 33131  
Sports with chicken wings

**Over Under**  
overundermiami.com  
151 E Flagler St Miami, FL 33131  
Come as you are casual.

**E11even Miami**  
11miami.com  
29 NE 11th St. Miami, FL 33132  
Upscale Exotic

**Mama Tried**  
mamatriedmia.com  
207 NE 1st St, Miami, FL 33132  
Quiet bohemian afternoons and roaring nights

**Lost Boy**  
lostboydrygoods.com  
157 E Flagler St Miami, FL 33131



Photo by Patrick Walsh.

I love orchids, so right there I was sold on the place. I love a good bourbon, so, if another reason was necessary to recommend Melinda's, there: they make a good *Old Fashion*. And the selection of tequilas is impressive, said one of my companions who prides himself of knowing tequilas.

Then came the food, oysters with choriso, corvina ceviche, an assortment of tacos and pizzas... Eclectic is one adjective to describe it, edging Latin America and Southern Europe. Another adequate adjective is delicious.

There is more, some evening they have live music. Last Wednesday it was jazz, not a famous band, more like a neighborhood vibe.

Melinda's is a gem on the downtown's northwest end (the Omni District.)

Not cheap, but certainly not pricey. And Happy Hours is alluring.

**Aurea Veras.**



Photo courtesy by Lost Boy.

The popular downtown bar Lost Boy is the epitome of a neighborhood bar. A somewhat dislocated urban philosopher and regular at Lost Boy takes offense at what has become a meaningless designation. "One article mentioned that this is the authentic downtown neighborhood watering hole, and five or ten bloggers and journalists immediately parachuted in and started to parrot the first one, without allusion to the social impact local bars exercise." Perched on a stool, the urban philosopher downs a Guinness with gusto, and concludes, "Voltaire said it best: the first man to compare a woman to a flower was a poet, the second an imbecile."

The previous is from Downtown News' archive, an interview with Commissioner Higgins for the column *Politics and Happy Hour*. A corner not overly loud: "A definition is in order," I suggested. Commissioner Higgins, nursing a glass of red wine, elaborates on the importance of public places to forge a sense of community. People frequent Lost Boy not only to drink but to discuss local issues, get to know neighbors, analyze soccer strategies and, one supposes, fall in love.

**Raul Guerrero.**

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The community Corner

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**Submissions to [rguerrero@dassmiami.com](mailto:rguerrero@dassmiami.com)**



## Self-Portrait Continued from page 1.

But two commissioners have direct impact on the lives of downtown residents. Commissioner Reyes is the Chairman of the important quasi-governmental Downtown Development Authority (DDA), and Commissioner Joe Carollo, District 1 — downtown is not included — chairs the Bayfront Park Management Trust, which oversees Bayfront Park and Maurice Ferré Park. Only Commissioner Ken Russell, District 2, has jurisdiction over downtown, but has no saying in the two crucial institutions for downtown — one in charge of economic development and the other in charge of its parks.

### Popular Geography

For outsiders, downtown extends from Brickell to the Design District. Bureaucrats coined the Greater Downtown to engulf Brickell, the Downtown proper, and Edgewater. Locals know Downtown is the three square miles north of the Miami River to the Omni District around 15th street, and from I-95 eastward to Biscayne Bay.

That is the Downtown Neighbors Alliance’s footprint. The DNA is an association of most Downtown buildings, hence the one independent organization representing residents, and fomenting a sense of community. “Other places where one feels a sense of neighborhood are the parks, Whole Foods, and for sure local bars like Lost Boy, Mama Tried, and a number of beloved restaurants,” volunteered a resident

The population for the Greater Downtown, the Census Office estimates, surpasses 109,000. The Downtown proper accounts for some 30,000. Downtowners are young, averaging 35, mostly college educated, love dogs, and buy into the 15-minute city: health, entertainment, diversity in food, architecture, demographics, and work, all within a fifteen-minute walk or bike ride.

### Culture

What is Commissioner Ken Russell’s take on downtown? “Downtown is the vibrant heartbeat of the City with many good projects on the way. I will be prioritizing the renovation of Flagler Street and the restoration of the Olympia Theater.



Both PAMM and Frost Science Museum are architectural gems, landmarks comparable to the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, said the noted architect and urbanist Juan Mullerat.

Ortega y Gasset, the Spanish philosopher and Princeton University Professor, famously said, I am I and my circumstance. By circumstance we are to understand all outside ourselves, including others’ perceptions. And the perceptions others have of Miami as a crazy and a cultural wasteland is no secret. Neither is a secret that such external perception is distorted by media reports like the South Beach incidents. “There is a geographic arrogance that reduces people who should know better to stereotyping. It’s the lazy thing to do, repeating platitudes,” a painter fumes over the sensationalism.

But what is Downtown? One aspect is a cultural destination. Not many cities can boast having world-class museums, a center for the performing arts second to none, or an urban college anchoring the Miami Book Fair, arguably the largest in the country, and the internationally recognized Miami Film Festival, pointed out Beatriz Gonzalez, President of the Miami Dade College, the downtown Wolfson campus.



The President of Frost Science, Frank Steslow, observed: “Downtown Miami is a cultural epicenter that serves as a showcase of innovation and technology to a local and international audience.”

Speaking at a recent Salon on community building, Miami-Dade County Commissioner Eileen Higgins stressed the evolution of the arts, science, and culture as catalysts for the future of Downtown. High-tech and financial institutions are fleeing New York and San Francisco for South Florida’s enviable weather, and the promise of a renovated, cultured and diverse Downtown.

Franklin Sirmans, Director of the Perez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), sees it like this: “Downtown is the future. Art, culture and commerce will lead the way!” If a city has an official word, it would be the mayor’s, right? The charismatic and always tanned Francis Suarez responded: “Downtown is rapidly becoming the model neighborhood every City in America dreams of having — a robust city center where people can live, work, and play without ever having to leave home.”

### A City of Architectural Contrasts

What makes downtown interesting is the contrast between historical architecture and the modern high-rises. Speaking of modern architecture, can’t omit 1000 Biscayne Boulevard, the 62-story luxurious building, designed by the distinguished Zaha Hadid. The exotic design features a curving exoskeleton that serves structural purposes, allowing the interior space to have fewer columns. Residents include mega celebrity David Beckham.

Long-time Downtown resident Terrell Fritz put it succinctly in a conversation with Downtown News: “Miami might not know it, but Downtown has the buildings through which we can experience the history of the city. Everything started here and some of those buildings are still here, and fortunately, we can preserve them for the future.”

Downtown News: Money moves the world. How can historic preservation be achieved vis-à-vis voracious development appetite?

Terrell Fritz: “One way is repurposing. The old La Epoca (1936) is coming back as a food hall. A brewery will occupy the Old U.S. Courthouse and Post Office Building (1912). Not to mention the DuPont Building (1937). Among other businesses, the DuPont lodges the popular bar Lost Boy.



Top photo collage: The Freedom Tower, the Paramount Condominium, and NE Second Ave. Bottom: Details from the historical buildings Ingraham, Huntington, and the Olympia Theater along NE Second Ave. Photos, Downtown News.

Downtown is easily the most important historical commercial district in the state of Florida, and one of the most important in the south. We have a critical mass of buildings... 58.”

Casey Piket, the man behind the Miami History Blog, remarked: “Development has occurred around downtown, for better or worse. I like that there are still a lot of buildings still standing from the building boom of the 1920s.”

### Time for the Nitty-Gritty

In their own words, here are selected responses: “Concrete canyons filled with character, and grit.”

#### Randy Alonso.

“Downtown is like a mirage in the desert. You are not certain if better things are ahead or not!” **Dan Cruz.**

“I love what Mayor Suarez has been doing. The demographics of our neighborhood have changed and it’s happened so quickly. I’ve overheard tech startups chatting in the sauna, seen 30 strollers in a circle in the park on several occasions which I refer to as “stroller conventions”, and noticed so many more dogs in the park. I’m so happy to see our spaces in Downtown being activated by the people who live here! I hope that the influx of professionals to our community will have a positive ripple effect of being seen as more than just a party city and addressing issues our city has always faced such as environmental and employment issues. I moved to Miami in 2001 and have lived on the NE 2 Ave corridor in various locations. Downtown Miami is finally becoming what I always knew it could be!”

#### Jessica Boudreaux.

“Bayfront Park views of beautiful turquoise waters, except when the park is not a park, but a walled-off venue rented to the lowest bidder.” **Martin Fenton.**

Martin also wrote: “I wanted to add the decade long dormant fountain, but I am sure that would have been too long.” Coincidentally, another resident had a comment on the same fountain.

“That waterless thing in the middle of Bayfront Park I used to think had no purpose, but now I realize it must be a toilet for extraterrestrials. And when extraterrestrials don’t use it, our large contingent of homeless do.”

#### Resident requested anonymity.

Continued on page 6.



Continued from page 5.

“The downtown community is close to non-existent, a sight for sore eyes, as the commercial sharks, the construction lords have deemed it doomed... Assisting in, allowing it to disintegrate right before our eyes, not only to become a victim of desolation, but also a hub for the forgotten community... To us it will always be home, the place we have grown to live in, and love in our hearts. The fight for its upkeep will continue regardless of the political and financial divide, which does not benefit money-hungry giants unless a piece of it is sold for a song and a dance. Regardless, as the name defines it, 305 will always be our forever zip code.”

**Desiree D’Souza Lasrado.**

For me Downtown is where our community began. The Flagler’s, Julia Tuttle, the Burdines family, the Merrick’s, the Fisher’s they all played an important role in the birth of Miami. The root of a community is also the heart of the community. I thoroughly love the history, the performing arts, the sports and concerts, and people watching. When I moved to Miami my first apartment was at the Dupont Plaza in Downtown and I instantly fell in love. It’s historical, colorful and real!”

**Pamela Weller.**

“A jewel that is just starting to show her beauty, unequaled anywhere.” **Sergio Rok.**

“I’d describe it as a kaleidoscope of cultures,” **Steve Simeonidis.**

“Downtown is a work in progress. What does it need most? A Political voice and organization.” **Michael Fueling.**

Of course, someone had to speak for the Miami Heat: “The Miami Heat, and their Championship run was the local highlight of the pandemic. We are lucky to have one of the best franchises in the league walking distance from Downtown residents.” **J.J. Colagrande.**

“I witnessed the other day a homeless man cut himself and almost bled to death. I was left wondering that it could have been a pedestrian the victim of his mental disorder. It’s not an indictment on the homeless, but on the negligence of authorities to let people with mental issues roam freely our streets.” **Aurea Veras.**

“Flagler Street is a disgrace. Speculators have free rein. No control. No accountability. Real developers build, the Melo brothers, for example, have revitalized sections of the city. Speculators just bank on real estate... In the process have reduced Flagler Street to emptiness, rats, and danger.” **Gilda Velazquez.**

Editor’s note: Many responses addressed issues pertaining to Flagler Street and homelessness. Speaking to a sociologist, she offered that, “residents who must endure the consequences of perceived negligence sometimes grow impatient, frustrated and can pass quick judgements. It’s hard for the public to understand business strategies designed behind closed doors, especially when you see developers in other parts of town actually building.”

“Downtown Miami comprises the best and, unfortunately, the worst of what a city can be — kind of a love-hate relationship.” **Cheryl Jacobs.**

“My perception of Downtown Miami reflects upon the old saying of good things come to those who wait. I wouldn’t ordinarily use this saying, however knowing the large amount of work that we, the stakeholders, have put into the area over the past few years, I am confident that the fruits of our hard work will come to fruition in the very near future.” **Dylan Finger.**

“The ‘Little Engine that Could,’ Downtown is the undervalued neighborhood that will continue to aspire to greatness and motivate its residents and the City of Miami to work hard on realizing its potential.” **Joy Prevor.**

“I would describe the Central Business District (CBD) as a jack-in-the-box on the cusp of revival.” **Gary Ressler.**

A more geometrical image, showing a perfect arch: “From Cocaine Cowboys to a vibrant city of the 21st century.” **Claudia Roussel.**



Top row: Old and New, DN. Central Business District North View, DN. Public Art by PAMM at MFP, DN. Center row: Signage, Aurea Veras. Fireworks, Niels Johansen. Park West Enclave, DN. Bottom: Bloody Street Drama, Aurea Veras. Bayside Marketplace, DN. Moon and Wheel, Aurea Veras.

**Final Strokes**

Downtown is the most walkable neighborhood in Miami. I walk every day. Lately, one hour is not enough — must be the one year pandemic confinement. But being a writer, walking is a luxury I indulge in, and maybe it’s a necessity: thinking, observing, listening, capturing the aromas. Writing about a city from behind a screen strikes me as reviewing gardens from a subterranean train. Every single walk is a lesson on urbanism, sociology, politics, and history, urbanist Michael Sorkin taught.

I live right in the center of Downtown, so every day I must decide which way to go. The possibilities promise many a reward. North takes me past MDC and its young students hurrying from one class to the next. Not all are college-age, some are professionals retooling their skills for the changing work market. Further up is the Miami Worldcenter’s incessant construction. One constant throughout downtown is construction; accordingly, Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine-Cava jokes that Miami’s official bird is the crane. Final destination is the paseo edging Biscayne Bay. Not seldom a bunch of tourists run all excited at the sight of dolphins or a manatee family

Sometimes I go south along Second Avenue — parts of it fashioned after New York’s Fifth Avenue, and a handful of buildings stand to attest to the ambition.

Other times, I turn westwards on Flagler and take photos of the few stores in operation, the empty shop windows, the Seybold Jewelry Building. I would stop for coffee with artists at the pop-up galleries.

The intended walk is all the way to the River, but at times, halfway through, North Miami Avenue draws me to the Courts District.

Before appearing in court, people do carry contrition on their faces, and fear and anger. Sometimes a wife waves up to the narrow windows of the detention building, and cries.

On the left on 6th is the Brightline terminal. During office hours, this corridor is bustling, a good portion of the 250,000 day Downtowners make a living here. Culturist Islara Souto explains that the “day people” represent government employees, students, lawyers and court personnel, hospitality workers, and tourists.

A quarter of a mile up is the old cemetery. I chat with caretakers about the latest technology in historic monuments’ preservation and ghosts.

A detour to Overtown is in order, hoping to engage octogenarians in conversation and hear stories passed down generations. How, for example, Henry Flagler sent black laborers to clear the wilderness that was Miami, and how these laborers made it possible for Miami to incorporate as a city, an act that required a minimum of 300 signatories. The Miami Metropolis reported that 163 of the 344 signatories were registered as “colored.” The colored laborers who made the city possible with their work and votes could not live in the Miami they built. Florida, Deep South, observed the laws of segregation, and relegated them to Colored Town, behind the cemetery, today’s Overtown.

Occasionally, during my walks, I step on dog poop, and curse, and look for the careless human responsible for the four-legged guy. The anger never lasts. In the final analysis, the bride is just fine. “Cities are like lovers,” a poet told me; “look past the petty and discover. But remember, what you get is what you plant.”

One last perception to end this Baroque portrait: “Full of contradictions yet guided by the promise of what is to be, Miami’s downtown represents the entire landscape of the human condition and the hope embodied therein.” **Matilda Kalaveshi.**



The Downtown Neighbors Alliance (DNA) has been advocating and improving the quality of life of downtown residents since 2013. We are the only organization exclusively representing Downtown residents. We help residents with noise violations, homelessness, pedestrian safety, zoning, and policing. And advocate for schools, and the preservation of our parks.

**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**



A Lady with a Purpose



A conversation with Beatriz Gonzalez, the President of Miami Dade College, the Wolfson Campus, one of the important Downtown institutional neighbors. We talked mostly about training for a new business and tech climate.

"The Wolfson Campus sits in the heart of our exuberant City of Miami," she observed. " Diversity, necessity, and opportunity combine to give Miami its creative energy. In this sort of environment, innovation is more likely. I see asset after asset, and that asset-based approach towards the community in which we educate allows us to partner with stakeholders to build a better education for our students and a stronger public sphere."

**Downtown News:** Speaking of partnerships, tell us about the influx of tech companies from New York and California and the relationship with the College.

**Beatriz Gonzalez:** Miami Dade is a community college. Our focus is on getting students into the workforce immediately. Our focus is on human work at a time when machines are doing what people used to do. During the last recession, 5 million jobs were lost and never came back. So, one goal is to attach people to meaningful jobs, where they feel fulfilled and are able to contribute more to society. Colleges have to expand how they think about work. MDC is doing that. Working with the many tech companies that are coming to Miami we had to rethink and reshape our programs, so they are of high level. I think we are doing it with things such as cyber security, or cloud computing. But at the same time, we must think how we can help all students develop the deep critical thinking that is necessary to compete with machines. Do the jobs that only people can do. We don't want to train students to have just specific skills, but also train them how to reason ethically or serve people with empathy. Machines can't do that, despite the advances in artificial intelligence.

Programs Relevant for Downtown Residents

**DN:** What kind of feedback do you get from local employers and the companies coming to Miami as to what programs to develop?

**BG:** They are interested in all things assisted by technology. FinTech, to give you an example, is very popular. How technology is revolutionizing the world of finance, how businesspeople use technology to make predictions and plan their logistics. Also wealth management, even though the economy is taking a hit right now, is high growth. The confluence of technology and business. The hospitality industry, for which Miami is very famous for... Hotels are popping up, and the industry is ready to go... For the last year we have been helping prep their people on issues like safety. And healthcare is always important.

**DN:** The population in Downtown is young, mostly college educated. Given the Pandemic and disruptive emerging technologies, many have to retool their skills, or change careers all together. How can MDC help?

**BG:** We offer certificate programs that are much shorter, and focused on specific sets of skills. We have them in cloud computing, IT, digital marketing, etc. Imagine, you got a bachelor's in marketing seven, ten years ago, and now a certificate in digital marketing would be really great to upskill yourself. People might think community colleges are the place where you do the first two years and then go on to get a bachelor. But really, it's so much more than that now. You can get a bachelor at MDC, and post bachelor's certificates. We have a business innovation and technology center where seminars are offered all the time. It can be four hours on Facebook strategies for my new business. Very targeted learning that helps you bring new value to an employer, or perhaps to your own business.

**DN:** Miami is known for its entrepreneurial spirit. How can MDC help those thinking of opening a business?

**BG:** We do have college certificates in entrepreneurship. And we also have the Idea Center, dedicated to entrepreneurs-starting entrepreneurs and those established that feel a little stuck and need a new skill set. The Idea Center is home to the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses program, an investment to help entrepreneurs create jobs and economic opportunity by providing greater access to education, capital and business support services.

The End

MDC, the Wolfson Campus, is also a cultural force within the Downtown community. It anchors the world-famous Miami Book Fair, the Miami Film Festival, and the Museum of Architecture and Design at the historic Freedom Tower. I can't think of a better ambassador for MDC than its president, Dr. Beatriz Gonzalez.

Flagler Street Beautification Under Way

The Flagler Street Beautification Project has been going on for so long that people are saying it is like soccer in the US, the sport of the future, and that is the problem, always a future possibility.

No more, apparently. Words have become phase 1 of the construction project starting on May 4.

The project is divided into three phases.

1. Biscayne to NE Third Avenue.
2. Third to NE Second Ave.
3. NE Second Ave. to NE 1st Avenue.

Estimated completion time is two years, but the construction industry is notoriously unpredictable. Downtown News overheard someone commenting at the corner of 3rd and Flagler: "Who knows when we can actually enjoy the beautified Flagler Street... My estimate is *mañana, mañana!*"



Top: Project area in pink, divided in to three phases. Bottom left, rendering of the end-product. Right, programmed detours.

Citizens Police Academy



Photo courtesy of the Miami Police Department.

The City of Miami Police Department presented the first Citizens Police Academy graduating class last month at the Miami Police College, now renamed for Chief Clarence Dickson, the City’s first black police chief. Downtown resident Steve Dutton was one of the eleven graduates (6th from the left back row.)

Training takes place over five consecutive weekday evenings from 6 to 9pm. Participants said they were enthralled by the information presented each night. Major Albert Guerra, who leads the Department’s Community Relations Section, welcomed the class. Then each night various Police units gave presentations and demonstrations that allowed participants to gain a firsthand look into the Police Department’s day-to-day operations. Surprises abounded as participant experiences included wearing the body-worn cameras now required of all patrol officers, to participating on the 4th night in hands-on Defensive Tactics training by Officer Joseph and Sergeant Reyes.

The Department is planning to offer the training program each month, hoping the program will help bridge the gap between the police and the community.

Steve Dutton told *Downtown News* that he highly recommends the program, and hopes all the City’s neighborhoods, including Downtown, will recognize the importance of exploring greater means of partnering with the Police Department to provide a safe and secure environment for all residents and businesses.

**Downtown News:** Did the training trigger ideas for specific projects to make downtown streets safer?

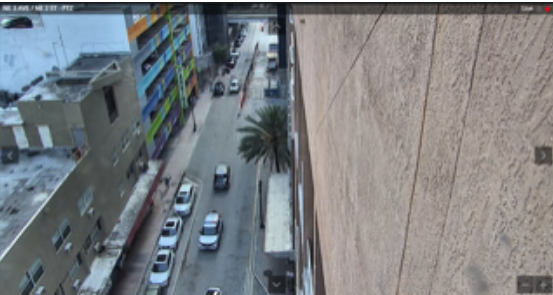
**SD:** One project that I would like to set in motion as Chairman of the DNA’s Quality of Life Committee is a Neighborhood Watch, also known as Neighborhood Crime Watch, which is an organized group of civilians devoted to crime and vandalism prevention within a neighborhood.



I am hoping other Downtown residents and business owners will consider attending the Citizens Police Academy so we can begin the Neighborhood Watch and the Police Department acknowledged they can help make this happen.

Smile, you are on security camera!

The Vizcayne Board of Directors authorized the installation by the City of Miami Police Department of a security camera overlooking NE 2nd St and 3rd Ave. “The Downtown Neighbors Alliance (DNA) appreciates enhanced surveillance for public safety and crime prevention in our fast growing neighborhood,” said Jim Torres, DNA President.



Camera installed at the Vizcayne Condominium. Photo courtesy of Steve Dutton.

Robots Seen Delivering Dinner in Downtown

The self-driving Cartken robots deliver orders from REEF’s network of neighborhood kitchens in 30 minutes or less. The robots were designed to make short-distance deliveries of small orders more efficient, and help to reduce road congestion and pollution.

Matt Lindenberger, Chief Technology Officer at REEF, observed: “We’re looking at our robot delivery service as a long-term solution that can advance the delivery ecosystem by offering speed, quality and scale while reducing congestion and carbon emission.”

When the robot arrives at a house or apartment building, it sends a text message alerting the customer that the delivery has arrived. While it makes its delivery, the robot’s compartment is locked so that no one but the recipient can access the food.

The robots’ sensors and cameras help them navigate through busy sidewalks and street crosswalks as well as over steps and curbs. We are curious to learn how the bot navigates traffic across the Brickell Bridge, given that most participating places are in Brickell. Also curious to see how they interact with scooters.





FROST SCIENCE / Pterosaurs: Flight in the Age of Dinosaurs

The exhibition – May 15 through September 6, 2021, takes the audience to the world of the largest flying animals that ever existed. Not dinosaurs. Not birds. Just amazing Pterosaurs.



Organized by the American Museum of Natural History in New York, Pterosaurs is the largest exhibition about these flying reptiles ever mounted in the United States. It highlights research by scientists and leading paleontologists around the world and features rare pterosaur fossil casts from Italy, Germany, China, the United States, the United Kingdom and Brazil.

The exhibition includes life-size models, captivating videos and interactive exhibits that immerse visitors in the mechanics of Pterosaur flight, including a motion sensor-based interactive that allows you to use your body to “pilot” two species of pterosaurs through virtual prehistoric landscapes.

Info: [frostsscience.org/pterosaurs](https://frostsscience.org/pterosaurs).

ARSHT CENTER / LIVE AT THE PLAZA - Sol and Tribu

Friday May 7. Performance starts at 7:30 p.m. Doors open at 6:00 for Happy Hour!



Sol and The Tribu is a group of Cuban musicians who blend traditional Caribbean music and modern technology with a Miami twist. As ambassadors of the New Miami Sound, they pride themselves on what makes Miami “The Magic City,” with its blend of Caribbean influences and American swamp funk.

Sol and Tribu has seven members, but more than 20 musicians and creatives. They curate and produce original material that represents the 305 and its cultural diversity. Hailing from Miami, the band performs in its native tongue, Spanglis, and encourages positive thinking.

Live on the Plaza is a series of outdoor, socially distanced performances.

Info: [Arshcenter.org](https://Arshcenter.org)

DOWNTOWN NEWS ONLINE / Musical Performance

A fabulous jazzy rendition of John Lennon’s song Imagine for voice and piano performed by Ria Iparraguirre exclusively for Downtown News.



Info: [Downtown-News.com](https://Downtown-News.com)

SILVERSPOT / Movie DEMON SLAYER

English dub or subtitled. Action, Rated R. 1 Hr 57 Minutes. Silverspot Cinema, Downtown.



Tanjiro Kamado, joined with Inosuke Hashibira, a boy raised by boars who wears a boar’s head, and Zenitsu Agatsuma, a scared boy who reveals his true power when he sleeps, board the Infinity Train on a new mission with the Fire Pillar, Kyojuro Rengoku, to defeat a demon who has been tormenting the people and killing the demon slayers who oppose it!

Info: [silverspot.net](https://silverspot.net)

PAMM / Art at the Park. Fresh Air | Fresh Art

An outdoor installation at the Maurice A. Ferré Park. On view through June 16, 2021.

There are replicas throughout the park of abstract works, landscapes, collages, graphite drawings on paper, and much more, with something different for everyone.

Featured artists include: José Bedia, Ed Clark, Morris Louis, Wangechi Mutu, Beatriz Milhazes, Christina Pettersson, and Sandra Ramos.



Anita Braham, PAMM Associate Director of Adult Programs and Audience Engagement: “We are thrilled to continue to find new ways to make the museum’s permanent collection — really Miami’s art collection — more accessible to all. We strive to extend our reach and impact well beyond the museum walls and *Fresh Air | Fresh Art* helps us do just that, while also encouraging Miamians and visitors to spend a little more time in the beautiful Maurice A. Ferré Park and the larger downtown cultural campus...”

Downtown News: What role does public art play in fostering a sense of community?

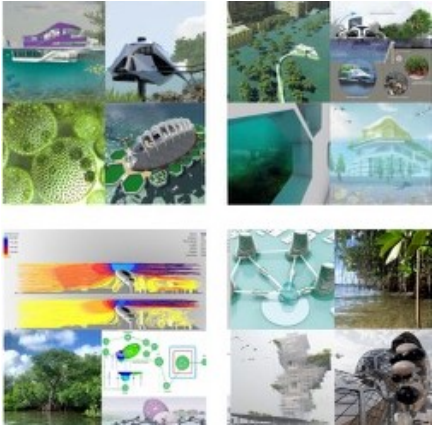
Anita Braham: Art is at the core of what Miami does best and public art provides the space and opportunity for Miami’s diverse communities to gather together around art that can be interpreted in a multitude of ways. I see public art as an entry point to finding your own artistic community and your people in Miami, a city that often feels overwhelmingly large until you find where you are meant to be. Public art can take many forms and is key to community building because it creates a common ground upon which to connect with others... *Fresh Air | Fresh Art* aims to give the public a good feel for what our larger permanent collection with absolutely no barriers to access it. We hope it makes art in general more accessible and really a part of daily life in Miami.

A free audio tour is available on the PAMM App. If you find yourself wanting more art, the museum is just a few steps away!

Info: [pamm.org](https://pamm.org)

MCAD / MIAMI CRUNCH. The Food- Water-Energy Nexus

Through May at the Miami Center for Architecture & Design. In person and virtual.



Greater Miami is one of the most climate-vulnerable regions on planet Earth. In the coming decades, the low-lying areas of Miami are set to be swallowed by sea-level rise combined with increased yearly threats of hurricanes, king tides, tropical storm surges and heatwaves. Municipal, state and federal governments, and the private sector debate, strategize, borrow and spend billions to defend the region.

Climate Resilient Urban Nexus Choices (CRUNCH), and the Food-Water-Energy Nexus research looks through this exhibit at designing adaptive, resilient, biology-inspired, off-the-grid and carbon-positive green-blue infrastructures, self-growing coastal barrier islands and buildings on a timeline from 2019 to 2100.

These systems and structures act as dynamic self-powered hybrids that are floating, sitting in, out, or under the water with the ability to be completely self-sufficient. The exhibit features experimental scenarios of selected design approaches each envisioning and testing self-sustaining, adaptive, and resilient green-blue infrastructures with living shorelines, buildings and neighbourhoods, all benchmarked against 100% carbon-neutrality and the Food- Water-Energy nexus.

Downtown News: What is CRUNCH? Thomas Spiegelhalter: It consists of over 19 project partners in the UK, Poland, Netherlands, USA, and Taiwan addressing all three sectors of the food, water, and energy nexus through an integrative, multidisciplinary approach. The Miami team is working on data-driven planning and scenario tools for integrated decision making using the Urban Living Lab (ULL) approach based at Florida International University's MBUS Studio. The team is identifying a data and mapping a baseline for the cities of Miami Beach and South Miami and developing a framework for testing and analyzing models using different carbon-neutral and resilient scenarios.

Thomas Spiegelhalter is the professor for Sustainable and Resilient Architecture and Co-Director of the Structures and Environmental Technologies Lab at the FIU, and the principal investigator for the CRUNCH Miami research project.

Info: [crunch.fiu.edu](https://crunch.fiu.edu).

Exhibit info: [miamicad.org](https://miamicad.org)

LECTURE / Defining Moments in South Florida History

Class with Dr. Paul George. May 25 -Jun 29. Tuesdays 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM. Via Zoom.

Join HistoryMiami Museum’s Resident Historian, Dr. Paul George, for virtual classes covering a variety of historical topics. Each class includes a lecture, discussion, and virtual tour of some of South Florida’s neighborhoods.

Participant will have access to recordings of sessions on-demand.

Info: [miamihistory.org](https://miamihistory.org)

Travel the World without Leaving Miami with Books

Raul Guerrero

A book will transport you far and deep into cultures and distant lands. No tickets necessary, no convoluted airports, no packing... Only you and the author. An intimate conversation. Cocktails are optional.

We count on books to comfort and entertain us, to escape and for companionship, guidance and education, even to keep the window open. “But just because you know that you can find anything you need in a book doesn’t mean you can easily find your way to the right book at the right time,” said Will Schwalbe. Better let experts recommend how to travel the world without leaving Miami in these almost post-pandemic days.

Gaël LeLamer, Head Buyer at Books & Books, recommended five books.

Five Books

1. **UNDERLAND** by Robert MacFarlane
2. **ARCTIC DREAMS** by Barry Lopez
3. **A FIELD GUIDE TO GETTING LOST** by Rebecca Solnit
4. **WORLD TRAVEL** by Anthony Bourdain
5. **ATLAS OBSCURA** by Joshua Foer

And the Critics said...

We searched for what critics had to say about the books in publication worldwide. Here it is:

1. In *UNDERLAND*: A Deep Time Journey, British writer Robert Macfarlane pursues the subsurface evidence of today’s major environmental changes, following what trickles down into the Earth and what migrates upward from beneath. This plunge beneath the planet’s topsoil into caves, catacombs, sinkholes, mines, and whirlpools opens new terrain to a naturalist whose adventures before now have soared skyward and reached outward. *Atlantic Magazine*.

2. “The Arctic has for centuries been a destination for the most ambitious explorers — a place of dreams, fears, and awe-inspiring spectacle. This “dazzling” account by the author of *Of Wolves and Men* takes readers on a breathtaking journey into the heart of one of the world’s last frontiers.” *The New York Times*.

3. “She [Rebecca Solnit, *A FIELD GUIDE TO GETTING LOST*] covers an amazing amount of ground, zigzagging through history, politics and art, wandering from subject to subject, lurching excitably from one thing to another. She describes her dreams, old friends, some walks, several snippets of family history, a love affair, a play that she started writing but never finished.” *The Guardian*.

4. “Filled with travel logistics, restaurant recommendations, Bourdain observations, personal essays from loved ones and colleagues, and illustrations throughout from artist Wesley Allsbrook, the book is both a literal guide for seeing the world as well as a source of inspiration as we plan post-pandemic travel.” *The Washington Post*.

5. “Inspiring equal parts wonder and wanderlust, *Atlas Obscura* takes readers off the beaten path and celebrates over 600 of the most curious and unusual destinations around the globe.

Goodreads.

Bon Voyage.



Post Script

Independent bookstores have been hit hard by the pandemic. If considering buying a book, please buy local, and support Books & Books, our important cultural landmark.