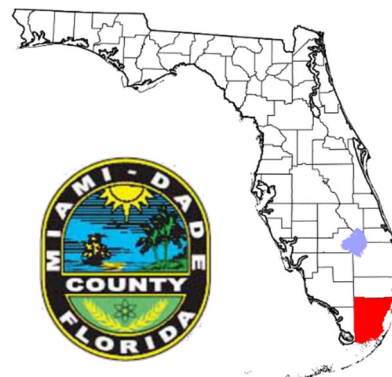


OUR COUNTY

Miami-Dade County has always been the center of cultural, economic, and environmental challenges. Early in our history, our region was a site of conflict between Native Americans and European explorers. Later, Miami-Dade County was a transportation hub serving as the end point of Henry Flagler’s railroad that extended from Jacksonville to the Miami River and what later became Downtown Miami. As a diverse community, we are representative of the American experience, reflecting both the conflict and concord that comes with bringing different people together. Our geographic location has put us squarely at the epicenter of climate change. We stand today at the intersection of our past and the future.

Dade County was created in 1836 and encompassed an area from present-day Palm Beach County to the Florida Keys. Interpretations of the name “Miami” include the Native American words for “very large lake,” “sweet waters” and “friends.” Major Francis Langhorne Dade, our County’s namesake, was a soldier killed during the Second Seminole War. In 1997, the County electorate voted to combine the two names to become the current Miami-Dade County. With an estimated population of 2.7 million residents, Miami-Dade County is the most populous county east of Chicago and the seventh largest in the nation by population.



Approximately 424 square miles (excluding bay and coastal waters) of the County are within the urbanized area, while the total county area currently covers a total of 2,431 square miles, bound by Biscayne Bay and the Atlantic Ocean to the east, Everglades National Park to the west, the Florida Keys to the south and Broward County to the north. Miami-Dade County has the unique distinction of being the only metropolitan area in the United States that borders two national parks: Biscayne National Park and Everglades National Park.

Because of our location, Miami-Dade County is considered to be one of the most vulnerable areas to climate change. The impact of sea level rise has been the focus of our resilience efforts from the beginning. In 2009, Miami-Dade County joined the Southeast Florida Climate Change Compact to collaborate with our neighbors on issues related to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Since its creation, the partners in the Compact have successfully completed a Regional Climate Action Plan, developed a unified sea level rise projection for Southeast Florida and completed a regional greenhouse gas emissions inventory and a regional vulnerability to sea-level rise analysis. We take into account future climate change impacts in making decisions regarding capital development, operational needs and land use. By learning more about the people who comprise our community and the economic realities they face, we can better prepare for the future. Miami-Dade County is a diverse, international community. More than half of the people living in Miami-Dade County at the beginning of this decade were foreign-born and more than 70 percent of residents spoke a language other than English at home. Based on 2021 population estimates, individuals of Hispanic origin comprise 69 percent of the population of Miami-Dade County, followed by Black (14 percent) and White (13 percent) individuals.

FY 2023-24 Adopted Budget and Multi-Year Capital Plan

The average income of residents in Miami-Dade County is lower than that of the nation as a whole and our rate of poverty is higher than the average for the United States. The estimated 2023 Area Median Family Income (MFI) for a four-person household as determined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development is \$74,700. For 2021, the American Community Survey (ACS) estimated that approximately 15 percent of the residents of Miami-Dade lived below the poverty line. Miami-Dade County is an area with a high degree of income inequality, with the top 8 percent of Miami households earning an average income of more than \$200,000 annually, while the lowest 17 percent earn just under \$20,000 per year – ten times less. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment, foreclosures, and poverty rates were all higher in South Florida since the Great Depression. Recently, all these metrics were greatly improved from their worst recent performance.

The tourism industry is playing a vital role in our local economy's growth. Our beaches, events, attractions, and weather make us a desirable destination for both domestic and international visitors. In 2022, greater Miami and the beaches were visited by more than 26.5 million people, 19.2 million of which stayed overnight. Approximately 80% of all these visitors came from within the United States and 20% were international tourists. In 2022, the total economic impact of all visitors to the area was \$20.8 billion. Based on May 2023 data from the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau, air travel is almost at pre-pandemic levels. Moreover hotel room bookings and dining have surpassed pre-pandemic levels. The cruise industry continues to rebound. Passenger movements for FY 2022-23 are forecasted to be 6.5 million passengers and are projected to increase to 6.8 million in FY 2023-24.

In addition to our vibrant tourism industry, small businesses are a vital component of Miami-Dade County's economic vitality. Our Strive305 program supports the small business community with an online small business and entrepreneurship hub for information, education and networking; a virtual small business incubator for education and mentorship; a countywide network of physical incubators to assist the launch of new businesses; and technical assistance boot camps to assist small businesses obtain access to capital, finances, business planning, branding, digital marketing, sales, operations and more.

Like many other regions in the world, Miami-Dade County faces a number of current and future challenges including the impacts of climate change, aging facilities and transportation infrastructure, cost of housing and other economic disparities, pandemics, cyber-attacks, terrorism and other natural and man-made disasters. To provide for a safer and more resilient community, we need to continue our focus on these challenges including making wise infrastructure investments, providing affordable and workforce housing, developing a diverse economy, increasing community engagement and promoting public safety. Development of a diverse economy is perhaps the most critical because a healthy economy can provide the resources needed to fund the other needs.