

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 became 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 2.8 million residents, Miami-Dade County is the seventh largest county 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. As far back as 2009, Miami-Dade County has been part of the Southeast Florida Climate Change Compact to collaborate with our neighbors on issues related to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Compact partners 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 always consider 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. Moreover, 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 2024-25 Proposed Budget and Multi-Year Capital Plan

Along with our diversity, recent data reveals important challenges presented by our local economic environment. For example, the median income of our residents is lower than that of the nation as a whole, and our rate of poverty is higher than the average for the United States. In 2022, the American Community Survey (ACS) showed that the median family income nationwide was close to \$92,000 while for Miami-Dade it was less than \$75,000. The ACS also estimated that approximately 14.4 percent of our residents lived below the poverty line while nationally, the poverty rate was 12.6 percent. Miami-Dade County is also an area with a high degree of income inequality. The top five percent of Miami-Dade County households earned an average annual income of more than \$555,000, while the lowest 20 percent had an average of just over \$13,000 – a ratio of 42:1.

An economic driver performing well is the tourism industry. Our beaches, events, attractions, and weather make us a desirable destination for both domestic and international visitors. In 2023, 27.2 million people visited greater Miami and the beaches, with 19.3 million of them staying overnight. Approximately 80 percent of all these visitors came from within the United States and 20 percent were international tourists. These visitors spent \$21.1 billion here. Based on May 2024 data from the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau, air travel, hotel room bookings, and dining have surpassed pre-pandemic levels. Furthermore, the cruise industry continues to be an important part of our local economy with total cruise passengers exceeding 7.2 million passengers in FY 2022-23.

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, 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.