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STROLLING THE STRIPS

A TOUR OF THE REGION'S BUSTLING BUSINESS AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICTS

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Top, Lincoln Road; center, Las Olas Boulevard; above left, Brickell; above right, Clematis Street

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COVER STORY



residents

CEO of the Fort Lauderdale Downtown Development Agency. The new downtown residents range from millennials to baby boomers who frequent Las Olas for their eating and shopping needs, she said.

The city has responded by making improvements to pedestrian crossings and traffic lights to enhance safety, Morejon added.

"There's always someone crossing the street or walking on the sidewalk, any time of day," she said. "That wasn't the case five years ago."

— Brian Bandell



A view of Brickell Avenue from Bilzin Sumberg's space on the 23rd fl. of 1450 Brickell.

Brickell gives rise to a bustling city center

Miami's Brickell neighborhood was once a place where local lawyers and bankers congregated in office buildings by day, before heading to buzzy locales in the evening.

That began to change during the Great Recession.

The economic crisis hit during a surge in high-rise condo construction, leading to plummeting real estate prices and a flood of new, younger professionals itching to live in an urban center.

Christina Crespi, deputy director of the Miami Downtown Development Authority, said that was the first step in Brickell's revitalization.

Downtown Miami's residential population — including Brickell — hovers at 92,000, a 38% increase since 2010, according to the DDA. With the addition of commuters, the area's daytime population surpasses 250,000 and generates a \$38 billion annual economic output.

With the population surge came commercial amenities including outdoor retail center Mary Brickell Village and luxury shopping mall Brickell City Centre. Surrounding bars and restaurants have helped create an entertainment district that rivals South Beach, Crespi said.

But it didn't happen overnight. Danet Linares, vice chairman of Blanca Commercial Real Estate and a DDA board member, said banks — previously the anchor tenants of many buildings — began scaling back in 2009, leaving thousands of square feet of vacant office



The RazzleDazzle Barbershop at Mary Brickell Village.

space in their wake.

The Blanca team leased up 1450 Brickell Ave. during the height of the recession. The state-of-the-art office tower, featuring building-length hurricane impact glass, was under construction in 2009. Two years later, it was 88% leased.

"Our pitch was that you're next to hotels like the Four Seasons, close to major highways and an easy drive from South Miami," Linares said. "All these little things make sense to [commuters]."

Those factors were attractive to law firm Bilzin Sumberg, which leased an 80,000-square-foot space at 1450 Brickell in 2010. It was the building's first

major tenant.

Back then, Brickell had "no activity after 5 p.m.," said Al Dotson Jr., the firm's managing partner. Now, his team has several options for dining and entertaining clients.

The DDA's Crespi said she expects the area will continue to attract locals who are sick of sitting in South Florida's notorious traffic jams.

"Being able to walk to work, take out a client, walk home, make dinner and see the kids well before bedtime — that quality of life keeps bringing people to Brickell," she said.

— Ashley Portero