

[Link to Article](#)

Miami Downtown Development Authority Expands Board, Appoints New Leaders



Following another year of rapid growth in the Downtown Miami corridor, the Miami Downtown Development Authority (DDA) announced the appointment of five new board members. The appointees include Miami Dade College's (MDC) Vice President for External Affairs & Strategy and Chief of Staff, Dr. Maryam Laguna Borrego; Mana Fashion Services Managing Director, Martu E. Freeman-Parker; Brightline President, Patrick Goddard; Publicis Groupe Vice President, Amal Solh Kabbani; and founder of the nonprofit organization Skate Free and owner of Andrew Skate Shop, Nick Katz.

The new board members were sworn in during a special meeting of the board of directors on Thursday, Feb. 2, 2023. The board also honored the contributions of exiting board members Danet Linares, executive vice chairman of Blanca Commercial Real Estate, Inc., Nitin Motwani, managing principal of Miami Worldcenter Associates, and Richard Lydecker, senior partner at Lydecker, LLP, for their many years of service to the DDA.

Current DDA board members, District 5 Commissioner Eileen Higgins, Akerman LLP Chair T. Spencer Crowley, III, and Biscayne Bay Brewing Company's President Jose Mallea were also re-appointed to the 15-member board.

The five new members were initially selected by a Nominating Committee comprised of Miami DDA board members who reviewed applications from dozens of candidates. The committee's nominations were then approved by the DDA's full board of directors and subsequently accepted by the City of Miami Commission.

"Downtown Miami is thriving as the epicenter of a world-class city. Thousands of new residents and dozens of new businesses call this neighborhood home every year, and as we have grown exponentially, so does the need for us to expand our board with more dedicated leaders," says City of Miami

Commissioner Manolo Reyes, who also serves as Chairman of the Miami DDA. “The new additions to our board of directors are stewards of the community who live and breathe Downtown Miami and are committed to seeing the area reach its full potential.”

Dr. Maryam Laguna Borrego, Vice President for External Affairs & Strategy and Chief of Staff to the President, Miami Dade College

For more than a decade, Dr. Laguna Borrego has turned her passion for advancing higher education into an accomplished career. At MDC, she serves as a facilitator and conduit between the Office of the President and key internal and external stakeholders, including the College’s Board of Trustees. As the external affairs vice president and chief of staff, she provides leadership and operational oversight for MDC’s government affairs, cultural affairs, The Idea Center, the 10,000 Small Businesses Program, strategic plan implementation, and leads the Office of the President.

Martu E. Freeman-Parker, Managing Director, Mana Fashion Services

Freeman-Parker has worked with some of the most recognized names in fashion and design, including Ralph Lauren, Victoria’s Secret, Calvin Klein and Condé Nast Publications, and currently serves as the managing director of Mana Fashion Services. Freeman-Parker also operates her apparel consultant business, M.E.F. Productions LLC, in Miami, where she offers a variety of services to budding designers, in addition to being the founder and host of Fashion TALKS Miami and authoring the book, “Get the Hell Out!”

Patrick Goddard, President, Brightline

As President of Brightline, Goddard is responsible for leading the multi-billion-dollar intercity passenger rail’s development and expansion, which will connect South Florida to Central Florida. He also oversees the company’s go-to market strategies, including more than 1.5 million-square-feet of transit-oriented development. As a recognized leader and philanthropist, Goddard was recently recognized as one of the South Florida Power 100 by City & State Florida. He has also been named one of the South Florida Business Journal’s “Power Leaders 250” and Florida Trend’s “500 Most Influential Leaders”. He also serves as a member of the Florida Council of 100, is a graduate of Leadership Florida’s Executive Class and sits on the board of Camillus House.

Amal Solh Kabbani, Vice President, Publicis Groupe

With deep experience in retail, finance, automotive, and hospitality industries, and an exceptional record for account retention and mature market growth, Kabbani is leading the charge in revolutionizing enterprise communications at one of the oldest global marcomms agencies, Publicis Groupe. She previously held positions at Inter Régies/M&C Saatchi in Beirut, YAR Advertising, MullenLowe, and SourceLink. In addition, Kabbani has served as the president of the Downtown Neighbors Alliance and Young Patronesses of the Opera and is a founding officer of Magic City Opera. She currently serves as the president of 50 Biscayne Homeowners Association.

Nick Katz, owner of Andrew Skate Shop and founder of Skate Free

Born and raised in Miami, Katz found a way to combine a profoundly influential force in his life, skateboarding, with his passion for giving back to his hometown through his nonprofit, Skate Free, which helps underprivileged youth find an outlet through the sport. The organization partnered with the Florida Department of Transportation, the Miami Parking Authority, and the City of Miami Commission to open the City's first public skatepark, Lot 11 Skatepark, in the heart of Downtown. Since opening its gates in 2019, Lot 11 has become known as one of the best skateparks in the U.S., with global visitors and public endorsements from top professional athletes. Katz is also the owner and operator of Downtown Miami's Andrew Skate Shop, which opened in 2017, solidifying him as a beacon in skate culture for the city and the world. His brand is sold in over 25 stores worldwide and has been featured in Vogue, GQ, HypeBeast, The Face, Complex, i-D and Thrasher.

About the Miami Downtown Development Authority

The Miami DDA is an independent agency of the City of Miami funded by a special tax levy on properties in its district boundaries. It is governed by a 15-member Board comprised of three public appointees and 12 downtown property owners, residents and/or workers who are tasked with overseeing the direction of the agency and setting policy. The agency is committed to grow, strengthen, and promote the economic health and vitality of downtown Miami. As an autonomous agency of the City of Miami, the Miami DDA advocates, facilitates, plans, and executes business development, planning and capital improvements, and marketing and communication strategies. Visit www.MiamiDDA.com for more information.