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## Manolo Reyes: Downtown Miami is the economic driver for the city – we need to keep it that way | Opinion



Miami has always taken pride in doing things its own way. However, our bold economic ambitions will be for nothing if we do not have a robust downtown. The Miami Downtown Development Authority (Miami DDA) is working to achieve this in a sustainable way that keeps pace with our city's growth. The Miami DDA, an independent agency of the city of Miami, focuses on attracting new companies, assisting small business owners and promoting the growth of our business ecosystem and talent base. It is also responsible for ensuring downtown is clean, safe and appealing, with a focus on quality of life.

Since I became chairman of the Miami DDA Board of Directors in 2019, I have been dedicated to revitalizing our urban core. Working alongside a dedicated team of residents and business owners that comprise the organization's board, we have worked diligently to ensure that every action we take will achieve positive outcomes for downtown Miami. As we approach the start of the new fiscal year, it's a time to look back on what we have accomplished and lay the groundwork for the future.

We know that security is top of mind for our residents, visitors and business owners and we are planning to significantly expand our efforts in this area. We are increasing police services by up to 650 hours monthly with off-duty officers, installing security cameras throughout the Central Business District, Brickell and the Arts & Entertainment District, and providing grants to continue improving lighting. In the coming year, we plan to expand our support of organizations, like Lotus House Shelter, Hermanos de la Calle, Chapman Partnership and Camillus House, to provide bed access, outreach and programming services, and education and employment opportunities for formerly homeless individuals.

This includes expanding our Downtown Enhancement Team, which is comprised of formerly homeless individuals, to keep downtown clean and beautiful through power washing, graffiti clean-up and garbage removal. We're expanding our business incentive program that, in only a few short months, has already helped several businesses open or expand in downtown Miami, to attract more start-ups, retail and mid-sized businesses.

Our Permit Clinic will also benefit from more resources to continue to help businesses and residents navigate the permitting process, with more than 500 businesses owners receiving assistance already.

Understanding the vital role that the arts play in the community, we will continue to offer much-needed grants to support cultural institutions and encourage creative visionaries to activate in our district.

Our Downtown Creative Collaborator Grants program has already helped more than 28 organizations, and we look forward to supporting more in the coming year. We also partner with leading organizations to create a reliable and interconnected urban core that promotes mobility for pedestrians, bicycles, and transit, while creating safe and inviting places. Projects of focus this year include connecting the Baywalk and Riverwalk, Flagler Beautification, expanding our Freebee downtown circulator into Brickell, and supporting the Downtown Mobility Network. We encourage all downtown Miami business and property owners, along with all residents and visitors, to learn more about how the organization works to accelerate our urban core.

Through careful budgeting and effective partnerships, the Miami DDA is committed to economic growth while creating an environment that can sustain it.

*Manolo Reyes is a Miami city commissioner representing District 4. He is also the chairman of the board of directors of the Miami Downtown Development Authority.*

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