



13TH ANNUAL
BEST PRACTICES
CONFERENCE
SESSION GUIDE

December 10, 2025
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13TH ANNUAL BEST PRACTICES
"IT'S ALL ABOUT OUR CITIES"
CONFERENCE



The Legacy and Future of Miami-Dade County

How do we honor Miami-Dade’s unique legacy while building a resilient, equitable future? This MDCLC Best Practices Conference Panel brings together distinguished leaders from Development, Environmentalism, Health Care, Education, and Government for a candid, solutions-oriented conversation. Panelists will examine the forces shaping our communities—from housing, mobility, climate resilience, and natural-area stewardship to hospital capacity, behavioral health, education pipelines, workforce readiness, and the role of municipal policy. Expect practical frameworks for cross-sector collaboration, real examples of what’s working (and what isn’t), and actionable steps cities can take now to balance growth with environmental protection, public health, and opportunity for all residents.



Louis Aguirre, Local 10 Anchor/Environmental Advocate. In September 2017, WPLG-Local 10 welcomed multiple Emmy-award winning journalist Louis Aguirre back home to South Florida and the Local 10 family. Louis co-anchors the station’s weekday 4:30 p.m., 5:30 p.m. and 10 p.m. newscasts. He also anchors Local 10 World News at 6:30 p.m. On Earth Day 2021, Louis became WPLG Local 10’s Environmental Advocate and the face of a new station-wide campaign called Don’t Trash Our Treasure. A longtime and staunch defender of the planet, Louis brings awareness of environmental issues in South Florida with the purpose of seeking solutions. Louis has received numerous accolades for Don’t Trash Our Treasure, including six of his eight Emmy awards for environmental reporting. He’s also been recognized with a commendation from the Miami-Dade County Board of Commissioners, a commendation from the City of Miami Beach for efforts involving International Coastal Cleanup Day and induction into the Boys and Girls Club Hall of Fame. Louis would later spend 14 years at WSVN in Miami before relocating to Los Angeles in 2014 to anchor the nationally syndicated program “The Insider.”



Nitin Motwani is Managing Partner of Merrimac Ventures and Managing Partner of Miami Worldcenter Associates. In his role with Merrimac Ventures, a Fort Lauderdale-based real estate investment and development firm, Mr. Motwani is involved in all aspects of acquisitions, development, and capital markets for the firm’s mixed-use projects as well as its hotel, office, retail, and residential assets on a national scale. Merrimac’s current \$3.7 billion portfolio of development projects includes the Waldorf Astoria Residences Pompano Beach, the Four Seasons Hotel & Residences Telluride, The Crosby Miami Worldcenter, 600 Miami Worldcenter, and the Riverside Wharf Dream Miami Hotel. In his role with Miami Worldcenter, one of the largest urban developments in the country, Mr. Motwani has overseen the development of the newly completed \$6 billion 27-acre mixed-use destination in the heart of Downtown Miami since 2006.

The Legacy and Future of Miami-Dade County



Mrs. Jeanette M. Nuñez is the President of Florida International University. The FIU Board of Trustees voted unanimously to name her as the university’s seventh president, with her appointment confirmed by the Florida Board of Governors on June 18, 2025. Prior to her appointment, Mrs. Nuñez served as Florida’s Lieutenant Governor, first elected in 2018 and re-elected in 2022. She oversaw the Florida Department of Health and chaired Space Florida, the Florida Cybersecurity Advisory Council, and the Health Care Innovation Council. She was reappointed as Chair of the Space Florida Board of Directors in February 2025. Before her tenure as Lieutenant Governor, Mrs. Nuñez served in the Florida House of Representatives from 2010 to 2018, holding key roles including Speaker Pro Tempore and Vice Chair of the Appropriations Committee. A proud FIU alumna, Mrs. Nuñez earned her Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Political Science and her Master of Public Administration from FIU. She has also served as an adjunct professor and guest lecturer at the university.



David Zambrana, PhD, DNP, MBA, RN, is the president and chief operating officer of Jackson Health System, one of the nation’s largest public academic health systems. He began his career as a trauma and intensive care nurse at Jackson Memorial Hospital and rose through leadership roles in public and private organizations. His responsibilities include oversight of Jackson Memorial, home to Ryder Trauma Center and the Miami Transplant Institute, as well as six additional hospitals, Jackson’s ambulatory network, long term care centers, and key support services. Before returning to Jackson in 2016, he served as chief executive officer of University of Miami Hospital, where he led major improvements in clinical care, operations, quality, and financial performance. He previously served as the hospital’s chief nursing officer and chief operating officer. Zambrana holds doctoral degrees in nursing from the University of Miami and an MBA and bachelor’s degrees from the University of Phoenix. He also serves as adjunct faculty and contributes to professional boards and publications.



Big Cities, Small Cities, One Vision: Regional Resilience Dialogue

Approval of caption: Cities big and small are facing the same climate challenges. In this Best Practices Session, leaders from Miami, Pinecrest, Palmetto Bay, North Bay Village, and beyond share their sustainability initiatives and resilience strategies—proving that innovative solutions know no city size. This collaborative session explores how municipalities of all sizes are tackling shared challenges, from sea-level rise and flooding to sustainable infrastructure and environmental adaptation. Discover what's working, what's next, and how regional cooperation is strengthening our communities for the future.



Karyn Cunningham was elected Mayor of Palmetto Bay on November 6, 2018, and re-elected in November 2022. A Miami-Dade County native and graduate of Miami Palmetto Senior High, she earned her degree Cum Laude from the University of South Florida and holds certifications in Elementary Education, Psychology, and Urban Education from Florida International University. An accomplished teacher, community activist, and advocate for education, Mayor Cunningham previously served as Councilwoman from 2014–2018. A graduate of Leadership Miami’s Class of 2012, she is a Board Member and past Vice President of The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment, and Co-Chair of the South Dade Coalition for Chamber South. Featured in Miami Today’s Book of Leaders (2021) and inducted into the Miami Palmetto Senior High Hall of Fame alongside Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson in 2023, she served as President of the Miami-Dade County League of Cities (2024–2025) and currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Florida League of Cities.



Louis Aguirre, Local 10 Anchor/Environmental Advocate. In September 2017, WPLG-Local 10 welcomed multiple Emmy-award winning journalist Louis Aguirre back home to South Florida and the Local 10 family. Louis co-anchors the station’s weekday 4:30 p.m., 5:30 p.m. and 10 p.m. newscasts. He also anchors Local 10 World News at 6:30 p.m. On Earth Day 2021, Louis became WPLG Local 10’s Environmental Advocate and the face of a new station-wide campaign called Don’t Trash Our Treasure. A longtime and staunch defender of the planet, Louis brings awareness of environmental issues in South Florida with the purpose of seeking solutions. Louis has received numerous accolades for Don’t Trash Our Treasure, including six of his eight Emmy awards for environmental reporting. He’s also been recognized with a commendation from the Miami-Dade County Board of Commissioners, a commendation from the City of Miami Beach for efforts involving International Coastal Cleanup Day and induction into the Boys and Girls Club Hall of Fame. Louis would later spend 14 years at WSVN in Miami before relocating to Los Angeles in 2014 to anchor the nationally syndicated program “The Insider.”

Big Cities, Small Cities, One Vision: Regional Resilience Dialogue



Joseph M. Corradino, AICP, is the President and CEO of The Corradino Group and the long-serving Mayor of Pinecrest, FL. A dedicated elected official since 2006, he brings decades of experience in infrastructure development, community planning, and civic leadership. Under his guidance, Corradino has become a national leader in engineering, planning, and construction management, driving innovative solutions in transportation and urban development. With a passion for community engagement and growth, Joe’s mission is to enhance the quality of life and build smarter, more connected communities across the United States.



Mayor Vince C. Lago, elected in April 2021 and now serving his third term, is the youngest Mayor in Coral Gables history. With eight years as City Commissioner and service as Vice Mayor from 2019 to 2021, he has built a record of visionary leadership rooted in transparency, fiscal discipline, and community engagement. Under his direction, Coral Gables has strengthened public safety with a state-of-the-art Public Safety Building and two modern fire stations, expanded its park network, and advanced transportation initiatives focused on safety and accessibility. He has preserved the city’s architectural heritage through major landmark restorations while promoting smart, sustainable growth. A strong advocate for environmental stewardship,

Mayor Lago has championed large-scale tree preservation, recycling expansion, fleet electrification, solar incentives, and septic-to-sewer conversions. He holds a Master’s in Construction Management from Florida International University and a Bachelor’s in Business Administration and serves as an executive in commercial construction management.



Commissioner Ralph Rosado is a Miami native, a seasoned city planner, and a dedicated public servant with over 25 years of experience in local government and community development. Before his election to the City Commission, he served as City Manager, nonprofit leader, and educator, and played a pivotal role in shaping affordable housing and infrastructure policy throughout South Florida. Commissioner Rosado now proudly represents District 4, which includes Flagami, West Flagler, Little Havana, Coral Gate, Shenandoah, and Silver Bluff.



Rachel Streitfeld serves as Mayor of North Bay Village, where she brings a strong commitment to sustainability, transparency, and community engagement. Born and raised in South Florida, she has deep roots in the region and a lifelong passion for public service. She earned her undergraduate degree in Middle Eastern Studies and Political Science from The George Washington University before pursuing a career in law. She earned her law degree from the University of Miami in 2016. Before that, Streitfeld worked on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. Today, Mayor Streitfeld is a practicing attorney specializing in land use, zoning, environmental law, local government, and climate adaptation. Mayor Streitfeld served as Treasure Island Commissioner from 2020-2024 before becoming Mayor of North Bay Village.

Securing the Frontlines: Cyber Defense Strategies for Local Governments

Local governments are now prime targets for cyberattacks that can shut down services, expose sensitive information, and damage community trust. The strongest defense is a proactive approach: constant monitoring to catch threats early, safeguards that block malicious emails and websites, and regular checkups to find and fix vulnerabilities before they become problems. By adopting these best practices, cities can protect essential services, save taxpayer dollars, and give residents the confidence that their information and community are secure. What are your municipalities doing to keep your resident's data safe? Is it enough?



Mike Asencio is the Director of the Cyber Policy Program at Florida International University's Jack D. Gordon Institute for Public Policy. He leads the FirstLine Training Initiative, the Cybersecurity Leadership and Strategy Program, and the Veterans and First Responders Training Initiative, while also overseeing and supporting major convenings such as the NICE Conference & Expo, RICET, the Florida AI Policy Summit, and the AI and Democracy Forum. Mr. Asencio's work spans workforce development, AI policy, and international capacity building, with a focus on strengthening resilience, leadership, and collaboration in cybersecurity and emerging technologies. He also serves as Vice Chair of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce Technology and Innovation Committee.

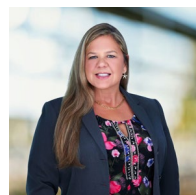


Robert Otten is a seasoned Cybersecurity and Risk Management executive with over two decades of experience driving strategic security transformations and building strong organizational cultures of risk awareness. As Senior Director of Cybersecurity and Risk Management at Flock Safety, he leads the development of digital governance and information risk programs for a rapidly growing public safety technology company. His achievements include launching the company's Cyber Risk Management Program and securing FedRAMP Authorization within six months. Previously, Robert led major security initiatives at CLEAR Secure Incorporated, ensuring compliance with TSA PreCheck Authority to Operate, SOX, PCI, ISO 27001, and NIST 800-53 standards. Earlier in his career, he spent nearly a decade with Ernst & Young and DLA Piper advising Fortune 50 companies on data protection, HIPAA compliance, and ransomware response. A certified CISSP and CIPT, he specializes in translating complex technical risks into clear business strategy and governance solutions.

Securing the Frontlines: Cyber Defense Strategies for Local Governments



Joseph Pontillo serves as the Information Systems Manager for the Miami Police Department, where he leads a 22-person IT team supporting over 1,800 personnel in a 24/7 public safety environment. With more than 20 years of experience in municipal IT leadership, he oversees cybersecurity, infrastructure modernization, and compliance with federal and state security standards, including the FBI's CJIS policy. His work includes managing enterprise systems such as CAD/RMS, virtual infrastructure, and communications platforms. Joseph has led major initiatives involving cloud integration, data migrations, and secure application deployment. He holds both B.S. and M.S. degrees in Computer Engineering from Florida International University. Prior to his current role, he held IT leadership positions with the City of Miami and worked in the private sector at IBM and Alienware. His career reflects a strong commitment to operational excellence, innovation, and public service in government technology.



Janette Smith is an attorney whose practice seamlessly blends a comprehensive grasp of AI technologies and legal experience with broad industry knowledge. As Co-Chair of Weiss Serota Helfman Cole + Bierman's Artificial Intelligence & Emerging Technology Practice, she received her J.D. and M.B.A. from Nova Southeastern University and holds a Certified Government Chief Information Officer designation from Florida State University. She has also served government entities, municipalities and academia as a skilled technologist providing senior leadership in the areas of information technology, security, procedures and standards. A frequent speaker on AI technologies and trends, Janette has lived and worked on the cutting edge of both business innovation and AI for decades.



Andrew Weidenhamer is a principal in the RSM LLP technology risk advisory services practice. With close to 20 years of consulting experience within the information security and data governance field, Andrew has a unique combination of technical and business-related skills which allow him to perform in multiple roles. The bulk of his Security/Privacy experience has been consulting within the public sector field leading a myriad of engagements including tactical penetration testing and red teaming engagements to large statewide NIST cyber security efforts and strategic roadmap development. As the Security and Privacy Risk Public Sector lead, Andrew's responsibilities range anywhere from overseeing large government engagements to providing thought leadership, talent development, and other business growth activities. Outside of work Andrew is the co-lead for the DC OWASP chapter and has held the responsibility of helping to organize large information security conferences such as OWASP's annual US flagship conference, AppSec USA. Andrew has had the privilege of speaking at national industry conferences such as Maryland Association of Counties (MACo), ISACA, Defcon, OWASP AppSec, and Rochester Security Summit to name a few.

Mental Health Matters: Explore Local Resources and Support

This session will explore the Miami Model of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit Court and examine the core features of the program: We will address structured accountability, treatment mandates, and diversion pathways. We'll also discuss challenges of replicating success in different contexts, including legal frameworks, funding mechanisms and cultural adaptations. Participants will leave with actionable insights for implementing a peer-support system in their jurisdictions, and key pitfalls to avoid in program design and scaling.



Commissioner Walter Thompson Sr. was born on September 6, 1965, in Albany, Georgia. He is the youngest of 15 children. He was elected in January 2022 and currently serves as the Commissioner of Florida City, Florida. He also is a Peer Recovery Support Specialist and works at the 11th Circuit Court Jail Diversion Program (JDP). He is a retired Non-Commissioned Officer in the U.S. Army after serving more than 20 years. He is also an Ordained Minister at Greater St. Matthews Holiness Church in Florida City, Florida, and advocate for mental health. He is on the Board of Director of the Miami Dade County League of Cities (MDCLC). He is also on the Dade Miami Criminal Justice Council. He attended Central Texas College and Miami Dade College. He is a Certified Peer Specialist and Group Instructor. He is also an Intentional Peer Specialist (IPS), Wellness Recovery Action Plan Facilitator (WRAP), Interactive Journaling (IJ) Facilitator, and Small Group Instructor (SGI). He is committed to mentoring underprivileged youth and being a leader in his community. He currently serves as the Peer Specialist of National Center of State Courts (NCSC) Task Force.



Karen Milia Annunziato joined the Miami-Dade Office of the State Attorney in 2023, where she prosecutes felony cases involving mental competency and oversees Baker Act petitions for all crisis-stabilization units in Miami-Dade County. She also supervises the office's participation in diversionary courts, including Mental Health Court, Drug Court, and Veterans Treatment Court, evaluating cases for appropriate transfer in lieu of traditional prosecution. Before joining the State Attorney's Office, Ms. Annunziato served with the Florida Department of Children and Families, beginning as an Assistant General Counsel in 2013 and later as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health State Director for Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties. In that leadership role, she oversaw the State's largest behavioral-health services contract, managed substance-abuse licensing, forensic services, and community programs, and collaborated with key stakeholders to advance behavioral-health initiatives. Her extensive experience in mental health law continues to shape her commitment to improving South Florida's behavioral-health systems.

Mental Health Matters: Explore Local Resources and Support



Alejandro Aristizabal with deep expertise at the intersection of behavioral health, substance use, and criminal justice, Alejandro Aristizabal is motivated by driving innovative solutions that enhance care delivery and improve quality of life. His core competence lies in mental health jail diversion, focusing on reducing reliance on incarceration by transitioning individuals to community-based treatment and services. He specializes in integrating complex systems, fostering cross-sector collaboration, and implementing progressive strategies within behavioral healthcare and criminal justice. Alejandro played a substantial role in the creation and development of what is now nationally recognized as the Miami Model of mental health jail diversion — an approach that leverages existing community-based treatment and supports to provide cost-effective and treatment-effective solutions. This model has become a benchmark for jurisdictions across the country seeking to humanize justice through recovery-oriented care. As a seasoned leader in the nation's 4th largest court system, Alejandro has successfully managed teams, led initiatives, and influenced policy to improve outcomes for both individuals and communities. He is dedicated to reshaping the future of behavioral health and justice systems through compassionate leadership and forward-thinking approaches.



Chief Ed Hudak has dedicated 38 years to a distinguished career in law enforcement, serving the City of Coral Gables in every facet of police work and rising through the ranks to lead the department. With extensive experience across multiple areas of policing, he has directed numerous large-scale training exercises emphasizing multi-agency coordination. A 2010 graduate and Class President of the FBI National Academy's Session 242, Chief Hudak has been recognized with multiple honors, including the 2023 Chief Law Enforcement Executive of the Year Award from the Florida Police Chiefs Association, the Fred Maas Outstanding Law Enforcement Leadership Award, and the 2025 President's Leadership Award from the Miami-Dade County Association of Chiefs of Police. Appointed by Governor Ron DeSantis to the Criminal and Juvenile Justice Information Systems Council, he holds bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Miami and remains deeply involved in community service and mentoring student-athletes.

Notes:

Connecting County and City: The Future of Local Permitting

This session will explore opportunities for joint permitting between Miami-Dade County and cities, with the goal of streamlining overlapping processes and eliminating bureaucratic hurdles. Attendees will gain insight into how collaborative approaches can accelerate approvals, improve customer service, and foster stronger County–City partnerships. Panelists will discuss:

- Their long-term vision for comprehensive municipal integration into the County's permitting process
- A groundbreaking pilot program that brings government services closer to entrepreneurs by embedding virtual Miami-Dade County kiosks directly within municipal building departments.
- How the County is merging DERM into its internal permitting system, simplifying the process for both businesses and homeowners.



Mayor Daniella Levine Cava was elected Miami-Dade County's first-ever woman mayor in November 2020, and re-elected in August 2024, after 40 years of advocacy for South Florida families. As mayor, she oversees approximately 23,000 County employees, serves nearly 3 million residents, and manages an annual budget of approximately \$12 billion. She is focused on building a more resilient and prosperous Miami-Dade. Her initiatives include combating gun violence, building a future ready economy full of opportunity, tackling the housing crisis, and preserving our precious environment. A social worker, lawyer, and activist, she previously served as the County Commissioner for District 8 and worked with vulnerable populations through Legal Services of Greater Miami and Catalyst Miami, an organization she founded. With her husband, Dr. Robert Cava, she raised two children, Eliza and Edward, in Miami-Dade.



Jennifer Baez is an operational leader and systems strategist dedicated to reimagining how public institutions create value for people and communities. As Miami-Dade County's Transformation Officer, she leads countywide initiatives to modernize operations, align performance and data systems, and strengthen the link between strategy and execution. Known for removing process friction and turning complexity into coordinated action, Jenn builds the connective infrastructure that enables government to deliver results that matter. Her work includes enhancing the County's Strategic Management System to bring transparency to how day-to-day execution maps to long-term objectives and elevating performance accountability through executive dashboards and reporting systems. She also leads resilient infrastructure partnerships that align innovation and operational excellence with County goals of risk reduction and resilience. Her background spans venture capital at SoftBank, supporting underrepresented founders and portfolio scaling, and management consulting in global logistics, leading international projects and major operational overhauls.

Connecting County and City: The Future of Local Permitting



Jane Lanahan Decker is the Development Services Administrator for the City of Doral, leading the departments of Building, Planning & Zoning, Code Compliance, and Licensing under the shared mission of “One Voice.” Since joining Doral in 2012, she has brought a blend of public service and technical expertise, helping bridge the gap between AEC professionals and the municipal systems in which they work. She has led major initiatives including a \$1.2M permitting system launch and the Building Department's IAS Accreditation—the first in Miami-Dade County. A licensed architect, code official, floodplain manager, and residential contractor, Jane holds degrees from the University of Miami and Nova Southeastern University, plus a Graduate Certificate in Public Administration from UCF. She is a 2022 graduate of the ICMA Emerging Leaders Program and was appointed by Governor Ron DeSantis to the Florida Building Code Administrators & Inspectors Board. Jane is also author of *Ready, Set, Architect!* and remains committed to innovation and excellence in public service.



Lourdes Gomez is the Director of Miami-Dade County's Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources (RER), overseeing more than 900 employees responsible for land development, construction permitting, business licensing, environmental stewardship, and economic research. Since joining the County in 2002, she has held key policy and legislative roles, helping guide major initiatives in aviation, transportation, and economic development before becoming RER Deputy Director in 2014 and Director in 2020. Gomez has led transformative improvements to streamline and modernize the County's regulatory processes, including converting plan review and permitting systems to fully electronic, transparent, and customer-focused platforms. Prior to her government service, she was a Senior Admissions Officer at Harvard University, where she also earned her bachelor's degree in government and master's degree in administration, planning, and social policy. She is a certified planner with the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP).



Vince Seijas is the Director and Building Official for the City of Miami Beach, where he leads a team of code enforcement professionals and remains deeply engaged in statewide industry leadership. He serves as Legislative Chairman of the Florida Floodplain Managers Association and is the Immediate Past President of the South Florida Building Officials Association. A U.S. Marine Corps veteran, Vince enlisted in 1997 as a Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Defense Specialist, earning his bachelor's degree in 1999 and deploying twice—first in support of NATO weapons inspections in Iraq and later for counterterrorism operations and Operation Iraqi Freedom. After his military service, he returned to the construction industry, earning General and Roofing Contractor licenses and working in structural repair and residential development. He later joined Miami-Dade County as a Building & Roofing Inspector and Senior Code Officer before serving as Building Official in Doral and now Miami Beach. Vince remains active in BOAF, SFBOA, statewide code development, hurricane research, and legislative initiatives.

Legal & Ethical Considerations
When Exercising Quasi-Judicial Authority:
What Local Elected Official Should Know

This panel will explore the key responsibilities and legal framework guiding elected officials when acting in a quasi-judicial capacity. This panel will explain the critical terms associated with quasi-judicial hearings, such as bias and ex parte communications, and will identify behaviors that could create voting conflicts for decision-makers. Panelists will also examine applicable evidentiary standards elected officials must follow when exercising quasi-judicial authority as well as reviewing the penalties that could be imposed for denying the parties a fair hearing. The objective of this discussion is to provide attendees with clarity on the safeguards, expectations, and procedural requirements that ensure fairness, transparency, and due process in conjunction with quasi-judicial decisions.



Robert Meyers, Esq. practices in ethics and governance and serves as ethics counsel to the firm’s municipal clients. As more regulations are adopted, he advises municipal officials on new standards and helps them make informed choices. A former Executive Director of the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust, Robert oversaw enforcement, advice, training, and education. He drafted hundreds of ethics opinions, analyzed state, county, and municipal ethics codes, and helped create model codes and amendments across Florida. Under his leadership, the Ethics Commission was recognized as a model local commission, earning accolades from Transparency

International, the National Association of Counties, and the National League of Cities. A former professor at Florida International University and the University of Tennessee, he taught courses in law, ethics, and government. As a leading authority in governmental ethics, Robert has served as a panelist at conferences sponsored by the National League of Cities, the Florida League of Cities, the ABA, FMAA, NIGP, and COGEL.



Joseph M. Corradino, AICP, is the President and CEO of The Corradino Group and the long-serving Mayor of Pinecrest, FL. A dedicated elected official since 2006, he brings decades of experience in infrastructure development, community planning, and civic leadership. Under his guidance, Corradino has become a national leader in engineering, planning, and construction management, driving innovative solutions in transportation and urban development. With a passion for community engagement and growth, Joe’s mission is to enhance the quality of life and build smarter, more connected communities across the United States.

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Benedict Kuehne, known as the “Iron Lawyer” for success and accomplishments in complex, protracted trials and appeals, as well as for being an Ironman athlete (140.6 miles of swim, bike, and run), Benedict P. Kuehne has made his formidable career in trial and appellate courtrooms throughout the State of Florida and across the nation. While best known as a white-collar criminal defense and civil trial lawyer, he is also one of the premier election law specialists in Florida, having represented Vice President Al Gore and the Gore/Lieberman Recount Committee as trial and appellate co-counsel in the 2000 election recount trial and the appeals to the Florida Supreme Court, the

Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals, and the United States Supreme Court. Ben is often referred to as a “go to” lawyer for public officials and professionals involved in investigations and inquiries, disciplinary and ethics proceedings, and criminal litigation. He is triple certified by The Florida Bar in Criminal Trial Practice, Appellate Practice, and Criminal Appellate Law, and by the National Board of Trial Advocacy as a Criminal Trial Advocate. He received the Selig Goldin Award for lifetime contributions to the criminal justice system by the Criminal Law Section of The Florida Bar.



Victoria Méndez is a Partner in the Miami office of Shutts & Bowen LLP, where she is a member of the Land Use & Zoning and Government Practice Groups. Victoria is Board Certified by The Florida Bar in City, County & Local Government. Victoria is an experienced municipal lawyer with a wide range of capabilities in all phases of municipal operations, including general municipal law; land use and zoning; environmental law; election law; eminent domain; civil rights law; public finance; building and code enforcement; procurement law; utilities law; real estate; platting; and the litigation thereof. Victoria uses her vast experience advising local agencies on policy matters,

statutes, rules and regulations, so that she can better advocate for and serve her clients’ strategic business interests.



Rachel Streitfeld serves as Mayor of North Bay Village, where she brings a strong commitment to sustainability, transparency, and community engagement. Born and raised in South Florida, she has deep roots in the region and a lifelong passion for public service. She earned her undergraduate degree in Middle Eastern Studies and Political Science from The George Washington University before pursuing a career in law. She earned her law degree from the University of Miami in 2016. Before that, Streitfeld worked on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. Today, Mayor Streitfeld is a practicing attorney specializing in land use, zoning, environmental law, local government, and

climate adaptation. Mayor Streitfeld served as Treasure Island Commissioner from 2020-2024 before becoming Mayor of North Bay Village.

A Conversation with our Miami Dade Constitutional Officers One Year Later

A year into the implementation of the constitutional offices, we will explore their ongoing impact on local government and the partnerships shaping governance today. During this time we will revisit how the newly created constitutional offices are shaping local government one year later and how their decisions, priorities, and evolving roles continue to influence our community. This discussion will highlight lessons learned, emerging priorities, and opportunities for stronger collaboration within Miami-Dade County.



Rene Garcia is a product of Northwest Dade. He was born and raised in the City of Hialeah. Commissioner Garcia’s passion for serving his community began more than 20 years ago as a Councilman in the City of Hialeah. As a State Representative, and then as a State Senator, Rene focused on helping those most in need. Giving a voice to the voiceless has always been Rene’s number one priority. He advocated for comprehensive reforms to our mental health laws, sponsored legislation to end surprise medical bills after any hospitalization, promoted the importance of expanding health care services for children through the Florida KidCare program, and has been a staunch advocate for the seniors in our community. Elected in 2020 as County Commissioner for District 13, Commissioner Garcia truly believes in the importance of balancing the economic progress and growth of a community with the social needs of its people, while working together to address the pressing issues of the community such as workforce housing, the environment, our crumbling infrastructure and safety in our communities, using a pragmatic approach to leave this community a better place for our children.



Juan Fernandez-Barquin serves as the Clerk of the Court and Comptroller for Miami-Dade County, proudly overseeing public records and taxpayer funds. Initially appointed by Florida’s Governor in June 2023, he was sworn in on June 12, 2023, and elected in November 2024, reflecting the trust of over 2.7 million residents. Clerk Fernandez-Barquin began his legal career as an Assistant Public Defender before being elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 2018, where he was re-elected in 2020 and 2022. During his tenure, he chaired the Ethics, Elections & Open Government Subcommittee and served on key committees including State Affairs, Ways and Means, and Justice Appropriations. As Clerk and Comptroller, he leads a team of 1,300 employees, managing an annual budget of approximately \$145 million across the nation’s fourth-largest judicial circuit. A graduate of Florida International University and American University Washington College of Law, he resides in Miami with his wife, Catalina Santaella, and their two rescue cats.

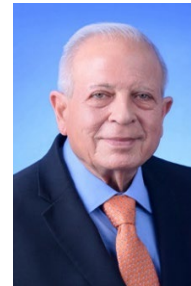
A Conversation with our Miami Dade Constitutional Officers One Year Later



Dariel Fernandez is a Miami-Dade County community leader dedicated to advancing small businesses and fostering community engagement. Since immigrating from Cuba in 2002, Dariel has built a career centered on service and entrepreneurship. As the founder of Ponemus Group, a consulting and technology firm, he leverages innovative tools to support small businesses. Dariel is active in several organizations, including serving on the Miami-Dade County Community Council Board, which addresses zoning, municipal services, and community concerns. In addition, he represents District 34 for the Miami-Dade Republican Party and contributes to local economic development through his work with the South Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.



Alina Garcia was elected in 2024 as Miami-Dade County’s first constitutionally elected Supervisor of Elections. A former State Representative for District 115 (2022–2024), she championed policies that strengthened communities, supported families, and promoted responsible use of public resources. With more than 30 years of experience in public service and leadership, Alina has dedicated her career to improving lives through compassion, integrity, and commitment. Raised in Miami by Cuban immigrant parents, she is a proud graduate of Miami-Dade County Public Schools and Miami Dade College. The values of hard work, perseverance, and community service continue to guide her in all she does. A devoted mother of three and grandmother of eleven, Alina’s faith and family remain at the heart of her life. Inspired by her brother, Monsignor Willie Peña, she is deeply rooted in service. As Supervisor of Elections, she is dedicated to ensuring security, fairness, and transparency in every election.



Tomás Regalado, Property Appraiser of Miami-Dade County, was born in Havana, Cuba and arrived in Miami in 1962 through Operation Pedro Pan. He began his journalism career at a young age with WFAB, WCKT, and WLTW, later earning international recognition as a correspondent reporting from Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. In 1983, he became the first Cuban American member of the White House Press Corps, covering the administrations of Presidents Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Clinton. In 1996, Mr. Regalado was elected to the Miami City Commission and was reelected three times. He went on to serve two terms as the 42nd Mayor of Miami beginning in 2009, leading major initiatives that shaped the city’s growth and governance. In 2018, he was appointed Director of the Office of Cuba Broadcasting. In November 2024, he was elected Miami-Dade County Property Appraiser. A lifelong public servant, he continues a family legacy of civic responsibility.

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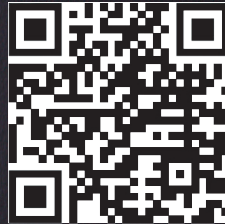
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