

State of the City 2015

It is my privilege as your recently elected Mayor to present the State of the City Address for 2015. I am honored for the opportunity to serve this great community and am committed to addressing your concerns, as well as maintaining and enhancing our quality of life. Many important projects and initiatives will be addressed throughout this upcoming year to insure our quality of life and to maintain our City of Excellence. Many of these projects respond to concerns expressed by our citizens and community groups. The following is an overview of some of the major projects and initiatives:

County Library Branch

I am pleased to report that the Northeast Miami-Dade County Library branch is scheduled to be complete in May of this year. We look forward to the grand opening of this facility and invite the entire community to attend. This state of the art facility will provide a central meeting place for our community, to fill the void left by not having a library, as well as the loss of local bookstores.

Aventura Arts & Cultural Center

The Aventura Arts & Cultural Center will be celebrating its fifth season in November of this year. In its fourth season, the Center increased the number of ticket buyers and expanded the number of days the facility was booked. In fact, many of the events were sold out, which shows the continued support of this beautiful facility.

City's Finances

The results of our recently completed audit show that the City continues to maintain a strong financial outlook while retaining adequate reserves to address emergencies. The model of privatizing many service areas of the City's operations over the years has served the City well and has allowed for a more cost effective service delivery system as compared to the traditional government structure. We are proud of the fact that the City's tax rate still remains the lowest in the County, while we have maintained a high standard of providing services to the community.

Transportation Improvements

As a City we continue to explore alternative transportation opportunities to alleviate traffic congestion. Over 25,000 riders a month utilize the City's free shuttle bus service, to travel to their destinations throughout the City. Although the lack of right-of-ways precludes the addition or expansion of more road lanes, several turning lane projects have been completed to facilitate traffic flow. Recently, the expansion of the southbound turning lane at Miami Gardens Drive was completed and has already resulted in improved traffic flow. We are working with the Florida Department of Transportation to address traffic flow issues on

Biscayne Boulevard and the area around Country Club Drive and the Lehman Causeway.

Police Protection

The safety of our residents, businesses and visitors remains a high priority. The crime rate for 2014 decreased, compared to the prior year. The City is proud of the efforts of our Police Department. The Department was recently reaccredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. The men and women of our Police Department, as well as our security partners at the Aventura Mall and the various condominiums, have played a major part in creating the reputation for a safe community in which to live, work and play.

Pedestrian and Bike Friendly Community

This past year the City focused on fostering a more pedestrian and bike friendly community. Pedestrian Warning signs were placed at the intersections along Country Club Drive as a safety measure. They will be replaced by reflective flashing beacon signs in the near future. The Florida Department of Transportation completed a project requested by the City to provide for bike paths along the Lehman Causeway that connect our internal system to Collins Avenue and Biscayne Boulevard. Some of our main roads will be converted to dual use for both bikes and cars. The Police Department initiated a bike safety program to educate both motorists and bike riders about the rules of the road.

Design of New Park located on NE 188th Street

Recently, the City Commission approved the conceptual design for the new park to be located on NE 188th Street. This 1.5 acre park will include an open play area, two playgrounds, one for ages 2-5, one for 5-12 under protective screening, and an adult exercise area that will be open 24 hours adjacent to the waterfront promenade. This project speaks to our goal to provide additional recreational facilities for our growing younger population and addressed the needs expressed from our community. Construction is scheduled to begin in October, with a park opening in the summer of 2016.

Drainage and Infrastructure Improvements

Since the incorporation of the City, many improvements have been made to the stormwater system throughout the City, including upsizing pipes, adding drainage pipes where none was available, and increasing capacity to the existing system. In fact, over \$10 million, including State funding, has been spent on these improvements over the past 19 years. The City continues to monitor the system and include projects in our Capital Improvement Program, to improve drainage and reduce flooding. Next month, the NE 29th Place and Aventura Boulevard drainage improvements, partially funded by State grants, will commence. Next year's improvements will include NE 191st Street. Bids have been awarded to begin the restoration and repair of the Don Soffer Exercise Trail on Country Club Drive. This 3 mile path in the heart of our City is an important part of our park system and is utilized by many of our residents.

As we look forward, your new City Commission recently adopted a list of policy goals and priorities to focus on over the next several years, which was developed based on input from the community:

- Work with the Miami-Dade County School Board to address high school capacity issues by reviewing all alternatives.
- Continue to explore alternate transportation modes to alleviate traffic and support pedestrian and bicycle friendly initiatives.
- Collaborate with Northeast Miami-Dade Cities to review traffic issues.
- Ensure that redevelopment projects that require land use/zoning revisions do not have a negative impact on the community.
- Work with the County to ensure that the hours of operation and the programming at the new Library facility address all age groups in the City.
- Monitor and participate in regional efforts to address the impact of rising sea level.

We have already started work and have made some progress on many of the items on the list.

In November of this year the City will be celebrating its 20th anniversary since incorporation in 1995. I want to take this time to thank the City Founders and all of the previous Mayors and City Commissioners who have served over the years, and have truly made this the "City of Excellence." I look forward to Founders Day this fall, to celebrate this important milestone.

As you can see, 2015 will be a busy and exciting year for your City. I am excited and proud of the state of our City as we embark on enhancing our great community. The City Commission, staff and I welcome your input throughout the year and appreciate the participation of residents at the various City functions and meetings.

Mayor Enid Weisman