

# THE INSIDER

**ARTIST IN RESIDENCE:** Miami-based artist Xavier Cortada has been named Miami-Dade County's artist-in-residence by Mayor Daniella Levine Cava. He also serves as chairman of the Miami-Dade Cultural Affairs Council. His work has been focused on some of the most complex challenges the county is facing, including climate change, sea level rise and civic engagement, and has been displayed in the White House, the World Bank, the Stephen P. Clark Center, and other locations.



D. Levine Cava

**WAGE CONCERNS:** Low reasons are a main reason Americans quit jobs last year, a new Pew Research Center survey found. A lack of opportunities for advancement and feeling disrespected at work were other top reasons mentioned by those surveyed. Low pay was tied to 63% of resignations, no opportunities for advancement 63%, and feeling disrespected at work 57%. Other reasons listed include childcare issues (48% among people with a child younger than 18), a lack of flexibility to choose when they put in their hours (45%), or not having good benefits such as health insurance and paid time off (43%). Adults younger than 30 were found to be far more likely than older adults to have voluntarily left their job in 2021. For instance, 37% of young adults say they did this, compared with 17% of people 30 to 49, 9% of those 50 to 64, and 5% of those 65 and older.

**LOST PROPERTY VALUES:** Property owners in Black-majority neighborhoods can learn how to recover money lost in property values at a free symposium at 6 p.m. today (8/11) at Ampersand Studios in downtown Miami featuring Dr. Andre M. Perry, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. Data from the US Census found that owner-occupied units in South Florida's Black-majority neighborhoods are valued at \$41,012 less than comparable homes in non-Black majority neighborhoods. The aim of the event is to help residents reverse that trend.

**SMALL BUT PRICEY:** Miami has the smallest median square footage about 1,376 square feet, of homes for sale, with an average price of \$495,000 according to an August report by Home Bay using information from the US Census Bureau's Annual Characteristics of New Housing Data report. Miami ranks eighth highest in pricing per square foot with a median \$360, up 44% since 2016, when the figure was \$250. The national average was \$169 as of 2021. Miami is also the only Florida city in the top 10 highest price per square foot. Tampa ranks 19th, Orlando 21st and Jacksonville 22nd.

**HOTEL AUTOMATION:** As a labor shortage continues to impact the tourism and hotel industries nationwide, an answer to the struggle for human capital and skills talent could be in automation and technology, said Matthias Kammerer, chairman of the Greater Miami and the Beaches Hotel Association. "With certain traditional services being eliminated," he said, "there are options in the tech world. In some cases, you could bypass the front desk entirely because you can check in with your phone and use your phone as a room key. So, I think there is something worthwhile looking into it."



M. Kammerer

**HOTEL DEVELOPERS:** The Greater Miami and the Beaches Hotel Association is soon announcing a hotel development council to "advocate on key issues in the hospitality industry and act as a liaison for our hotel developers by providing a forum for those in the industry to meet, develop relationships and discuss common issues and trends in the marketplace," said President and CEO Wendy Kallergis. The association, she said, will work with the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, PortMiami, and Miami International Airport to include FIU Chaplin School of Hospitality and Tourism management and Miami Dade College's Miami Hospitality Center in future updates and opportunities.



Wendy Kallergis

**TECH DEMAND:** As Miami has become the target of many tech companies looking to relocate to South Florida, education institutions are trying to connect with them and prepare their students to satisfy the increasing demand for talent. Brian Breslin, director of the University of Miami's entrepreneurship center The Launch Pad and member of the Tech Innovation team of Miami-Dade County, said there's a lot of demand for digital marketing professionals and programmers of different skill sets at entry, mid and senior levels. "There's, surprisingly, a big demand for operational management," he said. "People are having a hard time finding the managers to run the business."



Brian Breslin

As a result, he said, the county has been working on a plan to identify and figure out how to influence the educational partners from K through 12, college, and post-college education to offer some programs to satisfy this demand. "There are a lot of folks who've been working in something for 10 years, and that job doesn't have another 10 years ahead of it, or if they want to make more money, more living wage or a more prosperous wage, they need to shift into a different career track," he said.

**BIKE 305:** An event in which Zoo Miami staff guides cyclists around the zoo for 3 miles is coming back to the county. The ride is to take place from 4:30-7:30 p.m. Sept. 24. Prices range from \$10 plus tax for kids to \$25 plus tax. Adult bike rentals will be available. Details: [www.zoomiami.org/zoo-events/event/bike305](http://www.zoomiami.org/zoo-events/event/bike305).

**SUPPLY CHAIN ISSUES:** Florida is 31st among states in supply chain disruptions, as 44.7% of small businesses in the state are experiencing domestic supplier delays and 26.1% face delays in delivery or shipping to their customers, says a report by Filterbuy with data from the US Census Bureau's Small Business Pulse Survey. Similarly, 20.5% of small businesses are seeing foreign supplier delays, 10.7% are having difficulties locating alternative foreign supplies, and 14.7% feel production delays, according to the report. Nationally, manufacturing, retail trade, construction, accommodation and food services and wholesale trade are the industries that have been hit hardest. Small businesses are finding that domestic supplier delays are extensively higher than foreign supplier delays, according to the Census Bureau's survey.

# Unique chamber health plan gains on its ambition to stretch statewide

BY GABRIELA ENAMORADO

The Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce small business health insurance, Greater Health Trust, has been so far successful though it had a delayed start. The insurance covers businesses with five to 50 employees. Greater Health Trust plans to expand across South Florida eventually.

Since Greater Health Trust launched in 2021, about 120 companies have enrolled in the insurance. The number of individual employees plus their dependents covered is 1,637. Since this is the only such program in Florida, there was a delayed start to enrollment.

"We were supposed to offering the program in July," said Alfred Sanchez, chamber president and CEO. "So, we had a bit of a delayed start. We're the only one of our kind in the state, so we got a lot of scrutiny from the state Office of Insurance Regulation because of course they should check everything out. So, there was a lot of delay with certification and approval."

The health trust originally planned for about 250 companies enrolled for the year, but due to the delay it is only about halfway to the goal.

Moving forward, Greater Health Trust is expected to expand throughout the state eventually, starting with South Florida counties, expanding it throughout Miami-Dade and eventually reaching neighboring counties such as Broward and Palm Beach.

"I think the next step now is to start expanding it," said Mr. Sanchez. "Hopefully next year we'll be able to expand across Dade County and eventually we'll see if we can expand our county and we'll be able to offer this across the state. But of course, we want to walk before we fly. But, at some point I fully expect us to offer this for small businesses across the state."



*"We want to walk before we fly. But, at some point I fully expect us to offer this for small businesses across the state."*

Alfred Sanchez

The estimated time to try to expand is the next year or two. People have already reached out to the chamber asking about the program.

"We've already had many requests from our chamber partners to the north," said Mr. Sanchez. "Even within Dade County. So, in order to do those partnerships, we are trying to figure out what's a good way to sort of bring them into the fold."

Mr. Sanchez had been running nonprofit, small to midsize businesses throughout his 30-year long career. He noticed small businesses rarely had control over their health insurance. Once he took on his current position, he began to research the topic.

"As employers, almost everybody wants to give our employees health insurance. It makes us more competitive and makes our employees more productive," said Mr. Sanchez. "It's good for business. But the headache of trying to control those costs is really overwhelming especially for small businesses. "So that's why we got into it."

What we hope will happen is more and more small businesses will opt-in to offering health care who may have not done it before. Those who were offering it before will be able to break from the cost which they can then invest in their business in another way. That will make our small businesses more profitable. And if covid didn't teach us anything, it taught us the importance of having health care."

Greater Health Trust is in insurance partnership with AvMed, one of Florida's largest and oldest not-for-profit health plans, covering employer groups in 52 counties across the state. Their insurance is the exclusive health insurance of Greater Health Trust. The partnership came about around the time the Trump administration declared that organizations like chambers could offer association health care plan.

"So, I have been trying to put this together for almost five years now," said Mr. Sanchez. "We looked at other healthcare providers, Florida Blue, AvMed, Humana and United Health. United Health originally wanted to partner with us but that fell through. AvMed came to us and said there was another way we could go about this."

They wanted to partner with somebody that was known for great service and great healthcare. So, they partnered with AvMed through the multiple employer welfare association. AvMed does not make the chamber pay a fee.

Greater Health Trust aims to benefit individuals throughout Miami and eventually other parts of South Florida by providing healthcare that helps companies save money. The original plan was to help people save up 25% of open market costs, but some have been saving more.

"What we found is that most companies that enrolled were saving between 20% and 30%, some even 50%," Mr. Sanchez said, "so we have had a lot of happy members."

# Rising costs slow Gables Mobility Hub

BY ABRAHAM GALVAN

Challenging market conditions continue to hinder the construction start date for the Coral Gables Mobility Hub.

Due to current market conditions, construction costs have increased substantially and many materials are in short supply, so city staff determined it was best to wait to begin construction, said City Manager Peter J. Iglesias. Groundbreaking was originally slated for September.

"We are currently evaluating the path forward and haven't decided as to when we will begin demolition and construction," he said, "but the design has been approved."

In April, city commissioners approved updating design plans for the Coral Gables Mobility Hub that cost an additional \$640,000. Design consultants M. Arthur Gensler Jr. & Associates Inc. were initially paid \$2 million to design the first renderings of the hub.

The estimated \$40 million mobility hub, which is set to be at 245 Andalusia Ave., was projected to

be completed by the first quarter of 2024. The city has already signed an agreement with Weitz Company to manage construction, including demolition of the existing parking garage where the hub will rise that will cost the city an additional \$1.5 million once the project gets the green light to start.

The hub is to have an internal drive-through lane for ridesharing services, retail and bicycle storage. It will also offer dockless vehicle parking, bike share docking stations, a wi-fi lounge, e-commerce logistics for drone package deliveries and pop-up coffee shops.

Earlier this year, city staff met with the Florida Department of Transportation, which was reportedly thoroughly impressed and encouraged the city to apply for the federal grants. The city is also working with a federal lobbyist, who is actively looking for grants and monies to fund the project.

"While it's been delayed, this is a project we are excited to begin and one which we are committed to moving forward with," Mr. Iglesias told Miami Today. "The mobility

hub is a project that will position Coral Gables for the future. We look forward to breaking ground on this important project."

## MIAMI TODAY

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