

# Miami Herald

## BUSINESS MONDAY

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## Baby Boom

More people than ever live in downtown Miami — and they're starting to raise families

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Brickell Resident Angie Salazar enjoys taking her grandson on a bicycle ride in Miami.

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## More people than ever live in downtown Miami — and they're starting to raise families

■ According to a new demographic study by the Miami Downtown Development Authority, a record 92,235 people are now full-time residents of the Greater Miami Downtown area — and they're starting to raise families there, too.

BY RENE RODRIGUEZ  
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When Ana Grimaldi and her husband, Lucio, relocated from New York City to Miami six years ago, the couple already had a young son. But instead of a fam-

ily-friendly suburb, the pair opted to settle in Brickell, mostly to be close to Lucio's workplace.

Today, the couple now has two sons, ages 3 and 8 — and they still live in the same Brickell Key high-rise.

"When we first moved

here, we felt like pioneers, because Brickell was definitely not family-oriented," said Grimaldi, 39. "Back then, this was primarily a financial business district. But all that has changed drastically. There are more places and events for children. A lot of the new

buildings include pre-schools. It's a safe environment for kids, which is very important to a parent. And they get to grow up in an urban neighborhood that has the feeling of a community."

The idea of raising a family in the downtown

urban core — with its high-rise living, stop-and-go traffic and adult-oriented entertainment such as nightclubs and restaurants — might have seemed nutty as recently as a decade ago. But a new analysis of Greater Downtown Miami demographics by

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TEN YEARS AGO, WE WERE FOCUSED ON BUILDING DOWNTOWN MIAMI AS A GLOBAL BRAND. NOW WE'RE FOCUSED ON SERVING THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE HERE.

*Christina Crespi, acting director of the Miami DDA*

the Miami Downtown Development Authority, which uses data from the U.S. Census, shows the population in Greater Downtown Miami has hit an all-time high of 92,235 — a 65 percent jump from 2000-2010 and another 38 percent increase from 2010-2018.

The number is projected to swell another 19 percent by 2021, with the total population in Greater Downtown Miami expected to reach 109,617. By comparison, the downtown area populations in similarly sized cities range from 26,850 in Atlanta to 48,000 in Dallas to 80,000 in Denver.

Young professionals between the ages of 25-44 are the most populous group in downtown Miami, comprising 45 percent of dwellers. But the number of children aged 14 and under has grown 53 percent since 2010, to a current total of 11,484 residents.

The number of family households — defined as people related by birth, adoption or marriage — has also spiked 42 percent, to 47,958.

“Ten years ago, we were



MIAMI WORLDCENTER

Artist rendering of the Miami Worldcenter, a massive \$2.7 billion mixed-use project spanning 10 city blocks that will add 100,000 square feet of parks and public spaces to the downtown area. The project is due for completion in 2021.

focused on building downtown Miami as a global brand,” said Christina Crespi, acting director of the Miami DDA. “Now we’re focused on serving the people who live here. A lot of millennials have grown up and now have kids. We’re creating a sense of community so people who live in downtown don’t want to leave.”

A higher number of children translates into a greater demand for schools. Although there are plenty of elementary and middle schools with space to accommodate hundreds of students throughout the Greater Downtown area, the need for a high school will intensify in the next few years. The Mater Academy charter school

network has proposed a charter school, to be called Brickell Preparatory Academy, that would be built on Southwest Second Avenue and 17th Road and would ultimately serve grades K-12.

### CITY LIMITS

The Greater Downtown Miami area comprises 3.8 square miles east of I-95, west of Biscayne Bay, south of I-195 and north of the Rickenbacker Causeway. It is made up of seven neighborhoods: Brickell, Midtown, Edgewater, Wynwood, Historic Over-town, and the Central Business and Arts & Entertainment districts.

According to 2017

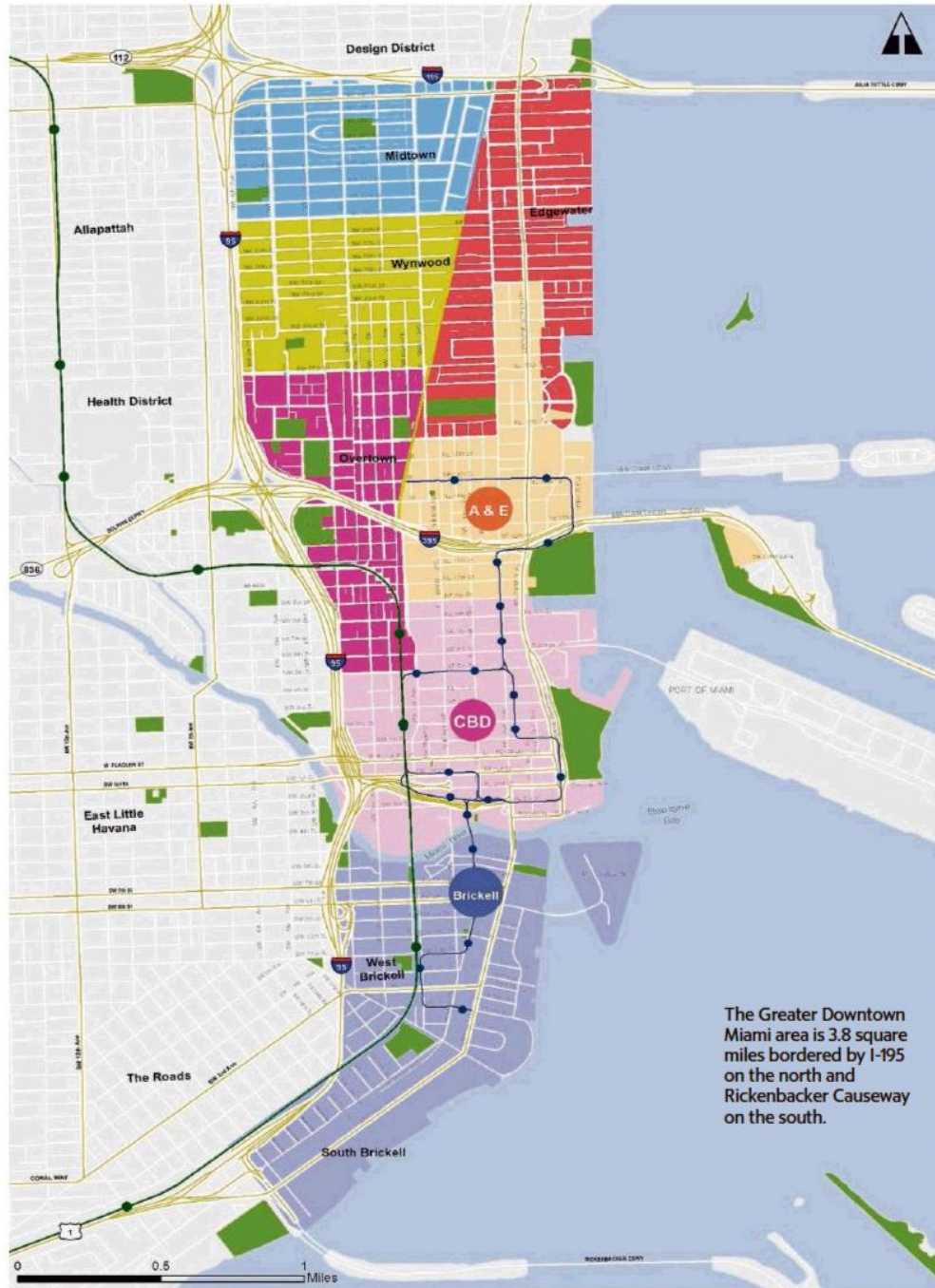
SEE DOWNTOWN, 12G



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The 5,000,000 square-foot Brickell City Centre, which opened in 2016, features three levels of retail and restaurants, two office towers and a hotel. The project, developed by Swire Properties, has been instrumental in creating a sense of community in the Brickell area.

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The Greater Downtown Miami area is 3.8 square miles bordered by I-195 on the north and Rickenbacker Causeway on the south.

Miami Downtown Development Authority

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## DOWNTOWN

fourth-quarter figures from the DDA, the average rental for a condo in Greater Downtown Miami was \$2,525, a 4 percent drop from 2016. The average resale price of existing condos was \$405 per square foot, which was higher than Aventura (\$352), Coral Gables (\$274) and Doral (\$191). Only Miami Beach fetched more, at \$1,025 per square foot.

The number of completed condo units at the end of 2017 was 6,312, which is higher than the number of units under construction (5,002). That's an indication that developers continue to use caution before launching new projects, with the exception of uber-luxury towers such as the Aston Martin Residences or the Missoni Baia in Edgewater, which are being financed privately and are pitched at ultra-wealthy buyers and investors.

Massive developments such as the \$2.7 billion Miami Worldcenter and the six-acre MiamiCentral project that houses the Brightline train station are still under construction in the Central Business Corridor and will add more apartments and office spaces to the neighborhood. Tere Blanca, president and CEO of Blanca Commercial Real Estate, said the two retail/office towers that comprise MiamiCentral are 75 percent leased, with tenants including Ernst & Young, Cisneros Group and Florida East Coast Realty.

Crespi said cultural attractions such as the Pérez Art Museum and the Philip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science, as well as a surge of retail and restau-

rant options, have been critical in growing the Greater Downtown area's population. Neighborhood amenities such as the Whole Foods supermarket at 299 SE Third Ave. and the upcoming 16-screen Silverspot Cinema at Southeast Third Street and Third Avenue reduce local residents' reliance on their cars.

Areas that had remained dormant for decades are now being activated by the growth in population. Mika Mattingly, executive vice president of Colliers International, represented the billionaire developer Moische Mana in the \$12.9 million purchase of a retail condominium at 201 East Flagler St. The sale closed on May 18.

Mattingly confirmed that two other historic properties — the former Walgreens building that currently houses La Epoca department store at 200 East Flagler Street and the Metro Mall building at 1 Northeast First Street in the jewelry district — are currently under contract. Over the past seven years, Mana has amassed more than 50 lots and properties on Flagler Street, which he plans to transform into a mixed-use district built around a tech hub.

"We used to refer to Flagler Street as the Rip Van Winkle of downtown because nothing on it had moved for 100 years," Mattingly said. "It was ignored by investors for a very long time, but now we're getting a rush of people and there's very little inventory left."

### WALKABILITY ISSUES

Some developers are looking beyond condos and

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residences to anticipate what the downtown area's next needs might be. The Related Group will be opening the doors to its latest Brickell project, the 57-story SLS Lux at 805 S. Miami Ave., in early June. The building offers 78 hotel suites and 450 condos, all of which have been sold.

The company's Brickell Heights condo tower at 850 South Miami Ave. opened last summer. All of its 690 units were sold. Related is also wrapping up construction on the Hyde Suites and Residences condo hotel in Midtown, with 94 percent of its 410 condos sold, and the four-tower Paraiso District in Edgewater, which will add 1,341 units to the market and is 97 percent sold.

"We always said from the time we started developing residential projects in downtown that we envisioned this," said Carlos Rosso, president of The Related Group's condominium division. "We used to put a photo in our sales brochures of a guy with his tie undone walking his dog, as if he had just gotten home from work. Now you walk around Brickell and you actually see people like that."

Still missing: clear walkways where pedestrians could stroll from Brickell to Edgewater and back without having to dodge traffic or breathe exhaust fumes.

In its latest annual list of the 15 most walkable cities in the U.S., the website WalkScore ranked Miami sixth — ahead of Seattle, Philadelphia, Chicago and Washington, D.C. — specifically citing the neighborhoods of Wynwood, Edgewater and downtown. But Rosso said the city could do much better. He is a big supporter of the Biscayne Line, a proposed bayfront walkway that

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PEOPLE WILL START USING SPACES WHERE THEY CAN RUN AND BIKE ON THE WEEKENDS BECAUSE WHEN YOU LIVE IN AN APARTMENT, YOUR SPACE IS SMALLER.

*Carlos Rosso, president, The Related Group's condominium division*

would connect Edgewater to downtown and Brickell.

"You see what places like New York have done with the High Line," the elevated public park that runs down the western side of Manhattan, Rosso said. "People will start using spaces where they can run and bike on the weekends, because when you live in an apartment, your space is smaller."

Other key findings from the Greater Downtown Miami demographics study:

- Downtown's daytime population, which includes residents, workers, students and tourists, is 250,757, or nearly 66,000 people per square mile — the densest in Miami-Dade County. Fort Lauderdale's downtown daytime population is 79,962, while West Palm Beach hits 25,187.

- The median household income in 2018 was \$76,610, nearly double the Miami-Dade County median household income of \$44,224, according to the U.S. Census. The per capita income was \$52,200, more than double the Miami-Dade per capita



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Brickell residents Margarita and Yakov Villasmil cross the street with their baby in Miami.

income of \$24,515.

- The average asking rent price per square foot for Class A office space in Brickell is \$52.53 — the highest in Miami-Dade County — according to the 2018 first quarter report by JLL. Still, the vacancy rate is 10.3 percent, which is lower than the county-wide average of 12.3 percent.

Some experts say that although downtown's

boom is good for Miami as a whole, the high cost of living in the urban core has consequences.

"A lot of people who work in downtown have been forced to move out into Kendall and Homestead," said Dr. Ned Murray, associate director of the Metropolitan Center at Florida International University. "Miami-Dade is the proverbial tale of two

cities. The growth of downtown has no effect on the lack of public transit, the high cost of transportation and the housing index for people in Kendall and Doral and Homestead.

There's no progress there. "Then you combine that with the environmental issues of sea-level rise and climate change," Murray said. "Brickell is in a storm surge planning zone that

gets evacuated for Category 2 storms and above. We're not building a very resilient Miami right now, but it continues to grow. At some point we're going to have to face the consequences of that unless we take planning more seriously."

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