



MAYOR MANNY DIAZ
STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS 2006
“THE NEW FACE OF AMERICA”

My fellow residents, Chairman Gonzalez, Vice-Chairman Winton, Commissioner Spence-Jones, city employees, elected officials, members of the consular corps, distinguished guests and friends, and my family. I welcome and thank you for being here.

Estimados ciudadanos de nuestra Ciudad de Miami, les doy la bienvenida.

Bonswa mesdam et messieurs, moin ta rémen salué citoyen miami yo.

Four years ago we began the process of altering the course of our city's history.

I promised that we would be different from any government this city had ever seen.

We would look beyond the same old cosmetic fixes that kept us barely afloat.

I promised to focus on our most valuable resource - the value and spirit of our people.

We have made a fundamental change to the character of our city.

There is no better proof of where we are today than the contrast to our recent history.

Miami was known as the capital of drugs and murder, of poverty and riots – a government unable or unwilling to alter this course.

A government that did not care, and a people that had given up.

This is not the Miami of today.

This past, however shameful, is one we must never forget - for as a famous thinker once said:

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

We have taken these lessons from our past to forge what we have today - a city at full employment - the lowest millage rate in half a century, - healthy reserves- an A+ rating from Wall Street, double digit population growth, and the lowest crime rate since the 1960s.

And this is the State of our City today.

Fulfilling our new destiny as the city that embodies the new face of America.

A city not called to imitate, but a model for others to follow.

People from throughout the world - political and social leaders, policy makers and institutes - look to Miami for leadership, innovation and inspiration.

And we must thank the people that brought us here.

Our City Commissioners. I thank you for your love of our city, your support and friendship. I am honored to serve with you.

Please join me in recognizing the best City Commission in our history.

And we would not be where we are today without City Manager, Joe Arriola. Thank you Joe.

You and your team have brilliantly engineered the greatest turnaround in modern American history,

And you did it while swimming against a decades old rip tide of corruption and ineptitude.

Please join me in recognizing the best team ever assembled.

This team has re-engineered government from top to bottom.

Driven by efficient and cost effective delivery of services to our residents.

During my first term, I pledged to reduce your tax burden, and we reduced your total millage by one full mill, returning to you \$55 million in tax savings.

I now pledge that we will reduce your millage rate by another ½ mill over the next four years, resulting in an additional savings to you of \$230 million.

And last year's 25% reduction in the fire assessment will be matched another 25% reduction in this year's budget.

These reductions could be greater were it not for our continued liability to fund skyrocketing personnel costs.

We take our role as the guardians of the public purse with great seriousness.

Make no mistake, our first duty and obligation comes to our taxpayers.

We will not sacrifice their well-being for the sake of perpetuating government.

Durante mis primer cuatro años, les prometí reducir la carga impositiva, y hemos reducido nuestro amillaramiento total por un punto completo, devolviéndole a ustedes \$55 millones de dólares en ahorros de impuestos.

Hoy me comprometo a reducir el amillaramiento otro ½ punto en los próximos cuatro años, resultando en un ahorro adicional para ustedes de \$230 millones de dólares.

Y tambien redujimos la tarifa de bomberos 25% y este año la vamos a reducir por otro 25%.

A more efficient and customer driven culture allowed us to plan and prepare to face one of the greatest challenges of last year, the record breaking hurricane season.

Our distribution sites were operational within 22 hours after Hurricane Wilma, prompting Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff to call it “perhaps the quickest response in the history of domestic disaster relief.”

In the days that followed, we handed out warm meals, water, and millions of pounds of ice,

Not just in our major distribution centers, but door to door in our neighborhoods and senior centers.

We launched Miami Recovers - the first of its kind post-hurricane relief effort.

And we established a special \$2 million housing fund to protect low and moderate income residents from being evicted, paid relocation costs and funded home repairs and reconstruction.

Miami Recovers will now move toward a neighborhood based model.

Every NET area will have their own distribution point for supplies-

The City’s disaster relief will now come to you.

Ultimately, our employees proved to be our greatest resource, and I thank them for their heroic efforts and their personal sacrifice.

I want to especially recognize our Urban Search and Rescue Team. These men and women have represented us throughout the world-

And when the time came to serve their own hometown, they made us proud.

Please join me in thanking America’s best Urban Search and Rescue team led by Joe Zahralban (z).

Miami will always face the threat of storms. We are in the center of hurricane alley -

And because of our global prestige, we also face the threat of a manmade disaster in the form of a terrorist attack.

Our Police Department has responded by launching Operation Shield - an anti-terrorism initiative that enhances security in public venues.

Although we pray that we never fall victim to a terrorist act, we thank the men and women of our police department for keeping our city prepared.

Creating the new face of America means that each of our citizens must have the opportunity to pursue and fulfill the American Dream.

It is government's duty to create the climate where those dreams can be pursued, and to eliminate the barriers that keep people from reaching them.

We are tackling the greatest barrier to opportunity-the poverty that robs people of the hope for progress.

Our Anti-Poverty campaign has now become Access Miami - offering a continuum of services that equips the entire community with wealth building tools needed for economic self-sufficiency.

Our free tax preparation sites serve as the primary entry point for Access Miami.

Residents can now triple their EITC refunds through a City sponsored Individual Development Account.

They can apply for a small business or micro-loan, increasing their take home income on average by 38%.

Visiting our Benefit Banks enables residents to simultaneously complete forms for a variety of State and Federal benefits.

Our Financial Literacy Program served more than 25,000 newly arrived immigrant families and has been recognized by the United States Conference of Mayors as the best financial literacy program in the nation.

These programs were the first of their kind and have been adopted as a national model by other cities.

Because we have a responsibility when spending public funds to set a standard that permits full time workers to live above the poverty limit,

I am proud to report that we recently approved a Living Wage Ordinance enabling our citizens to support themselves and their families with dignity.

And who would have thought five years ago, when our unemployment rate was at 12%, that Miami would become a national leader in job creation.

Our record low unemployment has given every resident of Miami eligible to work the opportunity to gain the economic security and the freedom that comes with a job.

Quien hubiera pensado que hace solo cinco años, cuando nuestra tasa de desempleo estaba al 12%, que miami se convertiría en el líder nacional en la creación de empleos. Nuestra reducida tasa de desempleo sin precedentes le ha proporcionado a cada residente de miami, elegible para trabajar, la oportunidad de obtener la seguridad económica y la libertad que llega con el trabajo.

The American Dream includes owning a home. And, while our success has made us a desirable place to live, it has made it difficult for many to achieve that dream.

Four years ago, Miami had no affordable housing problem because no one wanted to move here.

Today, the availability of affordable housing is a national problem - but we began to prepare from the moment I took office.

In spite of State and Federal funding cuts, we created our own plan.

A plan that has generated a half billion dollar investment to expand affordable housing.

I announced this milestone in Overtown, where over 700 affordable housing units are being made available.

And our efforts do not end there.

Little Havana has the lowest home ownership in the city.

Commissioner Joe Sanchez has created the Little Havana Home Ownership Zone that has given keys to 30 new homeowners and is expected to create another 60 homeowners within the next six months.

And, even though she took office recently, Commissioner Michele Spence Jones is bringing us less talk and more results.

Under her new plan for the Model City Homeownership Trust, 21 homes have been completed or are under construction, and another 40 homes will break ground within a year.

Housing affordability has become an issue for working professionals and families, especially those who provide public service to our city.

Our developer-funded Affordable Housing Trust Fund has grown to \$8 million with another \$10 million in the pipeline.

This fund has allowed us to set aside \$2.5 million for city employees, so that these professionals can find places to live in the places they serve.

Working with Representative Randy Johnson and our local delegation, I have asked the state to partner with cities in providing greater affordable housing opportunities -

Urging them to Scrap the Cap on the Sadowski funds, freeing over \$900 million in state funds for affordable housing.

Urging them to protect our rental market from the Gentrification through Taxation that has resulted from skyrocketing property tax appraisals.

We continue to look for sites for affordable housing opportunities, but we are running out of land; our In-Fill Housing Program has reduced the number of available lots in our economically depressed areas by 98%.

But there is more we can do.

I will propose an Ordinance to facilitate the foreclosure of abandoned and vacant buildings.

Because other governments own property in the City, we are actively supporting state legislation that will require them to inventory sites available for affordable housing.

And next year, we will ask the Legislature to extend ad valorem tax abatement to affordable housing built for first time home buyers in Enterprise Zones.

All of these actions will help insure that we meet our affordable housing goal of 700 units per year.

Hoy, a pesar de los recortes federales y estatales,

Hemos generado 500 millones de dólares en inversiones para aumentar las viviendas accesibles.

Esto ayudará a asegurar que lleguemos a nuestra meta de 700 unidades de viviendas accesibles por año.

Expanding opportunity means we reach out to everyone - including the men, women, and children for whom the streets means home.

Our 10-year plan to End Chronic Homelessness has served thousands of people with a 78% success rate, and has helped reduce the number of homeless in our city by 39%.

Our Miami Cares project brings our community together as volunteers to serve hundreds of needy souls with meals, counseling, showers and even haircuts - referring them to treatment and housing.

We are one of the few cities invited to highlight our success at a national forum hosted by the President's Inter Agency Council on Homelessness.

And soon we will be joined by a 1000 volunteers for the second Miami Cares, part of our commitment to hold Miami Cares 3 times a year.

The key to the American Dream is ensuring that future generations will be academically equipped to succeed.

Our education plan became the basis for the Miami Compact - a partnership with the school board - that recognizes that as we lift our schools, we lift our city.

To accommodate our growth, the Compact calls for improving existing schools and building 8 new schools - with 4 early childhood centers in new high rise buildings.

We will also work so that in 5 years, no Miami school earns less than a B.

The goal is simple: every high school graduate from Miami will be fully prepared to enter college or a career.

The College Pipeline Program will guarantee enrollment in partner Universities to qualified high school graduates.

And to further ensure that deserving youth will have the opportunity to attend college, - I announce the creation of the Miami Future Scholars Award - a \$5,000 award to 100 students - based on merit and need.

Our success with the Miami Compact has led the County and other cities to form similar partnerships.

The Broad Foundation recently named our school system one of five finalists for a one million dollar award given to the urban school district that has made the greatest increase in student achievement.

I want to thank Chairman Agustin Barrera, our School Board, Superintendent Rudy Crew, and our teachers for letting us be their partners in creating the learning gains that led to this recognition.

We are also keeping our neighborhoods safe.

In Miami, we don't keep our criminals guessing, we put them behind bars.

And we can thank Chief John Timoney for heading a department that is a national leader in crime reduction - with another 5% drop in crime last year, a 12% drop for the first quarter of this year, and a 21% drop in the murder rate, the lowest it has been in nearly 50 years.

We promised to restore public confidence in our Police.

We have regained professional accreditation - a designation that was lost prior to Chief Timoney's arrival.

I invited the Department of Justice to conduct a Patterns and Practice Review of our Police, and this past February we received a clean bill of health.

We have the nation's most progressive and successful use of force policy.

Over the past 39 months, there has been a dramatic decrease in police shootings - using historical data from the 1990s, we could have expected almost fifty shootings - instead, only 7 shootings occurred during this period.

While we are reducing homicides to a record low, more people are being killed by cars than by guns.

We have all read the headlines - seniors, school age children and expectant mothers, all killed.

This is why we launched Operation Red Light Green Light, an effort to end these senseless tragedies.

We continue our efforts to make Miami a Drug Free City.

This past January, the National Drug Czar helped us announce the Miami Comprehensive Drug Strategy.

Our new Drug Mapping Program compliments the already highly acclaimed Operation Difference.

These efforts - led by Commander Jorge Gomez and Lieutenant Joseph Schillaci - have helped end the days of cocaine cowboys to where we lead the nation in drug reduction efforts.

And in order to keep pace with our city's growth, we will need to add more police officers.

This year's budget added 20 new officers... and today, I announce our goal to place an additional 160 officers in our neighborhoods.

We have greatly increased capital investments in all of our neighborhoods.

Our Capital Improvement Plan has completed 55 miles of roadway paving and 25% of our sidewalk and curb restoration and replacement.

Our \$120 million Flood Mitigation Plan will, for the first time ever, include the western neighborhoods of our city.

We continue our commitment toward becoming one of the cleanest large cities in America.

We have made great strides - but our efforts are frustrated by furniture, refrigerators, and mattresses dumped on our swales and streets.

For years, people had an excuse - but not any more. Last September, we opened a new Mini Dump to provide an alternative.

I will not tolerate nor do I want to live in a city where sofas and mattresses take the place of grass and trees - this is not the city we want, nor the city we deserve.

We need your help to take back our streets and neighborhoods from those who use them as private dumping grounds.

Today I am announcing the launch of Clean Watch - a neighborhood based program where residents can help us monitor illegal dumping.

Continuamos nuestro compromiso de ser una de las ciudades mas limpias de la nación.

Hemos logrado mucho – pero nuestros esfuerzos se ven frustrados por los muebles, los refrigeradores y los colchones que se desechan en nuestras calles.

Por años, las personas han tenido una excusa – pero no mas. este pasado septiembre, abrimos un mini-vertedero para proveer una alternativa.

No quiero vivir en una ciudad donde los colchones y los sofás tomen el lugar del césped y los árboles – esa no es la ciudad que queremos, ni la que nos merecemos.

Necesitamos la ayuda de todos para recuperar nuestras calles y vecindarios de aquellos que los usan como sus basureros particulares.

We are tackling the problems that cause a decline in the livability of our neighborhoods.

Our Quality of Life Task Force led by Chairman Angel Gonzalez continues to rid our neighborhoods of societal ills that plagued us far too long.

Code enforcement has seen a 50% increase in activity.

In a city once infamous for lax code enforcement,

We are now accused of too much code enforcement - given the two, I choose the latter, every resident of miami - regardless of their lot in life-deserves to live in a clean neighborhood.

Every resident also deserves a neighborhood with active parks and green spaces.

Once abandoned, unsafe, and neglected parks have been turned into vibrant centers of activity, learning and community.

We are funding our parks at record levels, and expect an additional \$8 million in Impact Fees to be collected from development projects.

Our parks are recognized for their artistic excellence, providing arts, dance, and drama for children and adults.

And they are also recognized for athletic excellence.

We are joined by Bryan Park Manager Noel Cubela - Noel was named the 2005 Coach of the Year for the State of Florida.

With him is the Bryan Park-Dream Tennis Team that will play in Spain this summer. Good luck. You make us proud.

And this year, we will finally develop a plan to open all city pools year round so that every resident, especially children, can learn how to swim.

Our New Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan marks the first step toward becoming a Gold Standard Park System.

This Master Plan will compliment Miami 21 by setting forth a new vision for open spaces - parks, playgrounds - new walking and bicycle paths - along with an implementation strategy to make that vision a reality.

And at the end of this process, our goal is to have a city park within ½ mile of every resident - so that all of us will have access to a park within our own neighborhood.

Cada residente merece vecindarios con parques activos

Por eso nuestra meta es tener un parque municipal a ½ milla de cada residente – para que todos tengamos acceso a un parque dentro de nuestro propio vecindario.

We also have a responsibility to ensure that future generations will enjoy our city’s natural beauty.

Miami has had an unfortunate past with its environment.

Prior administrations dumped toxic materials into our parks and waterways – places like Virginia Key, Grapeland Park, Fern Isle, and Wagner creek - ruined by a criminal disregard for our environment.

This is no longer the case.

Guided by the words of an ancient Native American saying:

“We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.”

We have launched an aggressive and ambitious environmental program to clean our parks, our bays and waterways, brown fields, storm drains, and improve our water quality, erasing decades of environmental neglect.

And this is not enough.

The National Science Academies of 11 nations, including the United States, have warned that climate change is now sufficiently clear to justify prompt action.

Fortunately, our City is taking action now. I was one of the first Mayors to sign the U.S. Mayor’s Climate Protection Agreement pledging to reduce global warming emissions.

Every gallon of gasoline burned creates 28 pounds of heat-trapping carbon dioxide pollution.

This is why I am announcing our Miami Green Fleet, converting 1,000 city vehicles to hybrids or other fuel efficient vehicles by 2012 –

Starting with my own car - my new hybrid - these cars reduce gas usage by 600 gallons, carbon dioxide emissions by 8 tons, and save \$2,000 in gas every year. I call upon my fellow Mayors in this County to join me in this endeavor.

And we will promote energy efficiency through Green Buildings - working to make new and existing buildings substantially more energy efficient, lowering energy costs and pollution - starting with city buildings.

To encourage further development of Green Buildings, I will propose an Ordinance to create an expedited permitting process.

These efforts are essential for our environment,

And with oil at \$70 a barrel and gas at \$3 a gallon and climbing, the savings to the taxpayers will be enormous.

I am creating a Greening Miami Commission - to be led by Commissioner Joe Sanchez - to seek further ways to preserve our environment and restore our tree canopy so that we leave our children a Miami cleaner and greener than the one we inherited.

Finally, we have continued to step back in order to plan our future.

For years, our city evolved without a clear plan or a clear direction.

Those days are over.

I want to thank Commissioner Winton for his leadership and vision.

And I want to thank the thousands of residents who have lent their voices to help plan our city's future through Miami 21, and the Parks and Open Spaces, Virginia Key, Coconut Grove Waterfront, and Museum Park Master Plans.

As these plans are completed - we will all take pride in the knowledge that we planned ahead, and that we paid homage to the code of our humanity.....

It began when I stood before you four years ago with a bold commitment - that we work together toward One City, with One Future.

Today we are the face of the new America.

Nothing shows this better than being chosen as the first city for the National Anthem Project.

The year long effort to rekindle an appreciation for this collective act of patriotism was not launched in Baltimore where the National Anthem was written,

Or Boston where the American Revolution began --

Or even in our Nation's capital,

But here, in Miami -- where on a bright morning outside of City Hall, faces of every color, nationality, age, and background - joined with one voice to sing the Star Spangled Banner - proclaiming together that we truly live in “the land of the free and the home of the brave.”

This is who we are.

We confront the issues of every major city.

We succeed because we have chosen to control our own destiny.

We create the opportunity for self determination.

We do not fear mistakes, we fear inaction.

And that makes us who we are.

We are the city that gives hope to those who seek opportunity,

Refuge to those who seek freedom.

The city where people from all continents converge.

We have opened ourselves to the world, and the world has come to us.

A city that future generations will be proud of,

Inspiring them to proclaim.....

That we followed in faithful service that unwritten commandment that says that we shall give our children better than we received.

Thank You and God Bless.