




BLUE ZONES®

**ASSESSMENT, READINESS,
AND FEASIBILITY REPORT**

Miami Beach, Florida

June 2025



Thank you to our sponsor, the City of Miami Beach, for collaborating with us on this assessment. We applaud them in their ongoing commitment to improving well-being in Miami Beach by bringing the best innovations to the region.

We want to acknowledge the support of our assessment planning team, champions of living better, longer in Miami Beach, and who share our vision of a happier, healthier future.

MIAMI BEACH



How to read this report:

The report is divided into six sections:

- The Executive Summary contains a high-level look at our major findings and recommendations.
- The next three sections provide detailed findings and recommendations for the Policy, Places, and People sectors we explored.
- The Conclusion, based on information collected and identified in this report, leading into a customized Blue Zones transformation proposal tailored to the unique needs and priorities of Miami Beach.
- The last section is the Appendix with additional data and supplemental information.

This Blue Zones Ignite assessment report builds upon what we have learned from Miami Beach over the past six months. It is not exhaustive of what is going on in all these arenas, but an assessment of the feasibility of applying the Blue Zones model to Miami Beach.

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Executive Summary

A coastal city situated on a barrier island between Biscayne Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, Miami Beach is connected to mainland Miami, Florida by multiple causeways. Miami Beach's geography features pristine white-sand beaches, lush palm-lined streets, and scenic waterfronts, making it a paradise for outdoor enthusiasts. Millions of visitors are attracted to the seven-mile island each year to witness its stunning Art Deco buildings, experience the diverse restaurant scene, and stroll along the Beachwalk and public parks. Living in Miami Beach means calling this unique and beautiful barrier island home. It also means navigating the balance of living in a thriving tourist destination with the desire to enjoy life in a connected, resident-focused city.

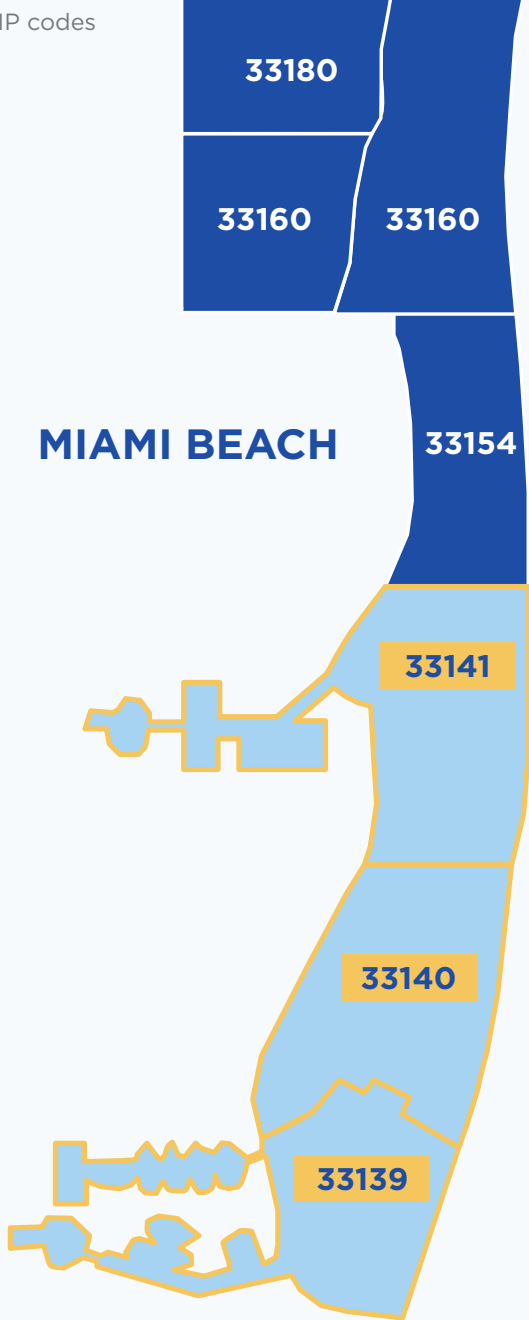
Miami Beach is well-positioned for a Blue Zones partnership as a community conducive to those seeking to live a healthy lifestyle. Its year-round warm weather encourages natural movement, and its thriving culinary scene offers many opportunities for initiatives to encourage residents and visitors to eat wisely. The city's public parks and beaches also provide places for social connection among residents, preventing loneliness and its associated health impacts across the population. But Miami Beach still faces several barriers to creating long-term, sustainable well-being for the population, including challenges related to healthy food access and natural movement opportunities for all residents.



The Blue Zones Project focuses on systematically improving well-being at the population level (measured by Gallup) by addressing the social determinants of health. Specifically, it improves environments to support:

- ✓ **INCREASED HEALTHY LIFE EXPECTANCY:**
By fostering habits and surroundings that naturally encourage healthy behaviors.
- ✓ **REDUCED RISK FACTORS AND CHRONIC DISEASE PREVALENCE:** Through interventions that make healthy choices easier.
- ✓ **ENHANCED MENTAL HEALTH:** By cultivating social connections and supportive communities.
- ✓ **IMPROVED OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE:** By optimizing the environments where people live, work, learn, play, and worship.

Focus area ZIP codes



Community Well-Being Priorities in Miami Beach

The 2023 Miami-Dade Community Health Needs Assessment, produced by a collaboration between Jackson Health System, Mount Sinai Medical Center, Nicklaus Children's Hospital, and the University of Miami Health System, highlighted critical challenges for Miami Beach and the whole of Miami-Dade County. Additional on-the-ground research by Blue Zones experts during the community assessment echoed findings and pointed to unique opportunities to improve the well-being of Miami Beach residents through a Blue Zones Project partnership.



Top opportunity areas for a Blue Zones Project partnership include:

- ✓ **NUTRITION AND FOOD INSECURITY:** Limited access to large grocery stores, heavy traffic congestion, and a lack of walkable options from many neighborhoods contribute to restricted nutritional choices.
- ✓ **CHRONIC DISEASES:** High prevalence of conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and obesity underscores the need for preventive measures.
- ✓ **SENSE OF COMMUNITY:** Trust and collaboration among residents and stakeholders remain insufficient to address complex health inequities effectively.
- ✓ **MENTAL HEALTH:** Resources for mental health care are limited, and cultural perceptions within minority communities can create additional barriers to support.
- ✓ **INCOME INEQUALITY AND FINANCIAL STABILITY:** The high cost of living, coupled with economic disparities, restrict many families' ability to meet basic needs.
- ✓ **HOUSING:** Miami Beach faces a severe housing affordability crisis, making it difficult for people who work in the city to also live within the city limits.



Blue Zones Project in Miami Beach

Blue Zones recognizes that creating lasting well-being isn't just about individual choices; it's about shaping the very environment in which we live. That's why we take a place-based approach, working hand-in-hand with Miami Beach's leaders, residents, organizations, and existing community structures. We focus on the 'People, Places, and Policy' that define this unique coastal community.

Instead of imposing external solutions, we collaborate to identify and address the root causes of health disparities within Miami Beach. We look to the Power 9® principles—those proven lifestyle habits found in the world's blue zones—and adapt them to the specific context of this community. We ask: How can we leverage the existing parks and beaches to encourage natural movement? How can we support local businesses to offer healthier food options? How can we work with policymakers to create policies and environments that make healthy choices easier?

Using the Life Radius® model, Blue Zones strategies focus on reshaping daily surroundings—such as neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, streets, and public spaces—to make the healthier choice the easier choice. Walkable neighborhoods, social gathering spaces, and purpose-driven initiatives foster strong connections, while programs like community gardens, group physical activities, and volunteer opportunities strengthen social bonds and encourage active engagement.



Blue Zones Project partners with Gallup to measure key well-being indicators across the focus area populations, ensuring data-driven insights that reflect the community's transformation are tracked annually. By embedding longevity principles into policies and infrastructure, Blue Zones transformation initiatives create sustainable, thriving communities where healthier living becomes second nature. To create a healthier, thriving Miami Beach, Blue Zones partners with community leaders across People, Places, and Policy to adopt and implement targeted strategies that are in line with the community's distinctive culture and its health goals.

During the assessment, the Blue Zones team identified top opportunities unique to Miami Beach that could make a profound impact on improving the well-being of the entire community:

1. ENHANCE THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- **Expand Multimodal Connectivity:** Build more protected bike lanes and improve pedestrian corridors to make walking and biking safer and easier; improve and better integrate transit options (buses, trolleys) across the city.
- **Prioritize North Beach:** Specifically improve transportation options in North Beach, where there's more affordable housing, to help residents get to jobs and services.
- **Address Last-Mile Connectivity Gaps:**
 - Strengthen “last-mile” transit solutions to connect different modes of transport smoothly.
 - Consider reintroducing shared micromobility programs (like bike sharing) with safety regulations for short trips.
 - Support the planned water taxi system to connect Miami Beach with mainland destinations, ensuring that there are stops that can be utilized for commuters between NoBe and SoBe.
- **Expand Slow Streets program under the Safety Action plan:** Leverage Vision Zero recommendations to create low-stress streets for walking and biking through low-cost traffic calming and street design.
- **Promote Sustainable Development:** A regulatory framework supporting mixed-use, transit-priority corridors along existing key corridors (such as Washington Avenue and Alton Road) will enhance mobility, support economic growth, and promote sustainable development.

- **Build Environmental Resilience:** Strengthen stormwater management, flood mitigation, and climate adaptation strategies through expanded green infrastructure, urban cooling, and sustainability initiatives.
- **Foster Community Development:** Enhance walkability and public spaces by integrating public art projects and community-focused urban design elements into the built environment to strengthen Miami Beach's unique identity.
- **Promote Economic Development:** Encourage business-friendly urban design and programming that fosters hospitality partnerships to drive economic growth and support local businesses.





2. ADDRESS HOUSING CHALLENGES:

- **Expand Affordable and Workforce Housing:** Develop a comprehensive housing strategy that leverages zoning incentives, local funding mechanisms, and public-private partnerships to increase the supply of affordable and workforce housing across the city.
- **Pursue Long-Term Affordability Tools:** Explore the creation of a Housing Trust Fund and a Community Land Trust to preserve affordability, prevent displacement, and support essential workers and long-term residents.
- **Modernize Land Development Codes:** Expand areas where ADUs, microunits, and missing middle housing can be implemented to diversify housing options.
- **Encourage Adaptive Reuse:** Promote the conversion of vacant or underutilized buildings into mixed-use developments that incorporate housing, office space, and community-serving amenities.
- **Expand Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborate with developers and employers to create mixed-income housing along transit-priority corridors, supporting equitable access to jobs and services.
- **Reevaluate Parking and Density Policies:** Review minimum parking requirements in areas well-served by transit to encourage residential development and reduce barriers to building affordable housing.

3. IMPROVE THE FOOD ENVIRONMENT

- **Promote Healthy Retail Practices:** Partner with mini markets, bodegas, and restaurants to promote healthier food choices through targeted retail initiatives and incentives that encourage retailers to stock and highlight nutritious options.
- **Increase Access to Fresh Produce:** Expand the use of federal nutrition assistance benefits and local incentive programs—such as Florida’s Market Match—to make fresh fruits and vegetables more accessible at farmers markets and other community food access points.
- **Strengthen the Local Food Supply Chain:** Connect existing agricultural services, such as those offered by the University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), with small and regional farmers to boost production, provide technical support, and enhance direct-to-community food distribution.
- **Expand Nutrition Education and Food Skills Programming:** Invest in community-based programs that build nutrition knowledge and practical food preparation skills, empowering residents to make healthier choices and improve overall well-being.

4. ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY

- **Build Local Capacity:** Offer training and professional development for city staff, neighborhood leaders, and community-based organizations on best practices in urban planning, zoning reform, economic development, and multimodal infrastructure. Strengthening local capacity ensures sustained, community-driven implementation of long-term strategies.



Transforming Miami Beach

Miami Beach is undergoing a significant transformation, moving beyond its image as a party city to emerge as a premier destination for health and well-being. This new vision embraces the city's natural beauty, rich cultural assets, and potential for a more balanced, sustainable lifestyle. Targeted marketing campaigns are already attracting a new wave of health-conscious travelers to Miami Beach, while enhancements to parks, bike infrastructure, and access to healthy food options can be designed to support active living for both residents and visitors.

As this transformation unfolds, it is essential to maintain a thoughtful balance between advancing well-being initiatives and sustaining economic vitality. Blue Zones offers a proven, evidence-based framework that can help Miami Beach realize this vision. By promoting healthier lifestyles, building strong social connections, and shaping environments that support long-term well-being, Blue Zones can play a pivotal role in positioning Miami Beach as a global model for community transformation.

Here's how Blue Zones principles can foster this change:



1. POLICY CHANGE AND COMMUNITY DESIGN

- **Urban Planning for Well-Being:**
 - Redesign public spaces to prioritize walking, biking, and social interaction, incorporating design elements such as rolling accessibility, shaded seating, and safe crossings. Expand pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, greenways, and public parks to promote daily activity and connection across all ages.
 - Make better use of existing assets by complementing nightlife areas with daytime-oriented uses—such as well-being hubs, farmers markets, and cultural spaces—to support a more vibrant, inclusive, and balanced public realm throughout more of the day.
- **Health-Focused Policies:** Collaborate with city officials to adopt policies that promote healthier living, including strategies like limiting fast-food outlets in key areas, introducing healthy vending options, and establishing smoke-free zones in public spaces.

2. CREATE A COMMUNITY-WIDE CULTURE OF HEALTH

- **Promoting Healthy Eating:** Collaborate with local restaurants, grocery stores, and markets to offer and highlight healthy, plant-based food options. Launch campaigns celebrating Miami Beach's interest in healthy options at events like the South Beach Wine and Food Festival and ensure healthy options are available alongside community favorites at all community events.
- **Community Engagement:**
 - Organize well-being events, such as yoga sessions on the beach, wellness retreats, and mindfulness workshops, which attract residents and tourists alike.
 - Ensure that the transformation is inclusive and community-driven by establishing well-being programs across the city for residents of all income and accessibility levels.

3. ENHANCE SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY

- **Building a Sense of Belonging:** Foster a sense of community by encouraging Blue Zones Purpose Workshops, volunteering opportunities, and intergenerational programs that bring diverse groups together.
- **Supporting Social Networks:** Create designated spaces for community gatherings, such as plazas, community gardens, and co-working hubs that prioritize collaboration and support.



4. EMPOWER LOCAL BUSINESSES

- **Engage the Hospitality Sector:** Partner with hotels, resorts, and spas to integrate Blue Zones principles into guest and employee experiences. Encourage programs that promote purpose, volunteering, movement, and healthy lifestyle choices—positioning Miami Beach as a year-round destination for well-being-oriented travel.
- **Partner with Restaurants:** Turn Miami Beach into a food mecca for health-conscious eaters by encouraging the integration of Blue Zones-inspired menu items that feature plant-based and nutrient-rich foods, without taking away from current menu options and local favorites.

5. LONG-TERM INVESTMENTS IN SUSTAINABILITY

- **Resilience and Environmental Health:** Leverage Blue Zones' emphasis on sustainability to promote eco-friendly tourism practices, expand public transportation options, and protect natural resources.

6. MEASURE AND SHOWCASE PROGRESS

- **Tracking Well-Being Metrics:** Use Blue Zones' tools to measure community well-being, such as reduced rates of chronic diseases, increased physical activity, and higher life satisfaction among residents.
- **Telling the Story:** Showcase Miami Beach's transformation through success stories, testimonials, and data-driven campaigns to inspire other cities and to attract global attention.



By adopting Blue Zones principles across the community, Miami Beach can transition into a world-class well-being destination. This shift will not only appeal to health-conscious travelers and residents but also strengthen the city's economy, enhance its global reputation, and improve quality of life for all residents. The Blue Zones Project provides the roadmap to achieve this vision while preserving Miami Beach's unique cultural identity.

Measuring Impact

A Blue Zones partnership provides communities with a transformative framework to address key health and wellness challenges while building long-term resilience and sustainability.

Blue Zones employs data-driven strategies to inform both immediate actions and long-term plans aimed at improving overall well-being in Miami Beach. A key component of this approach is our partnership with Gallup, which conducts large-scale surveys to assess well-being at both individual and community levels in Blue Zones Project communities.

As an initial step of a Blue Zones transformation, Gallup will conduct an oversample survey to establish baseline well-being metrics specific to Miami Beach. This data will help identify key areas for improvement and guide targeted strategies. The survey evaluates five key elements of well-being:

- ✓ **PURPOSE:** Enjoying daily activities and feeling motivated
- ✓ **SOCIAL:** Building strong relationships and support systems
- ✓ **FINANCIAL:** Managing economic life to reduce stress and increase security
- ✓ **COMMUNITY:** Feeling a sense of belonging and engagement in the place you live
- ✓ **PHYSICAL:** Maintaining good health and energy levels

To track progress, the Gallup oversample will be conducted annually, ensuring that Blue Zones initiatives are driving positive health and well-being outcomes.

In addition to Gallup data, Blue Zones collaborates with Miami Beach leaders to identify community-specific metrics that align with the priorities of residents and local organizations. These metrics are integrated into a Blue Zones Project Blueprint, serving as benchmarks to assess progress and ensure that well-being goals are met each year.

What We Do



The Blue Zones Approach

How can we improve all the places and spaces we spend the most time so that the healthy choice is the easiest choice?

In our work in communities, we improve the food environment and built environment to increase the availability and accessibility of healthy food and opportunities to walk, bike, and move. To improve the social environment and reduce loneliness, we help people find ways to connect, give back, and find their purpose. Optimize environments where people spend their time to encourage healthy habits.



We weave together a set of complementary strategies that are multi-faceted and multi-level and target the entire community — we use policy as the biggest lever to create positive change, but we also reach into all the places people live, work, learn, worship, and play.

We use Gallup’s Well-Being Data to inform our work. Well-being includes not just physical health, but also social, financial, community, and career health. You can predict someone’s life expectancy and health status based on their zip code, and this “Zip Code Effect” shows wide health disparities exist.

These disparities affect well-being and quality of life but also cost billions of dollars in terms of unnecessary healthcare costs and lost productivity. The interconnectedness of our health to that of our neighbors has never been more clear, and we believe that communities can bridge glaring gaps with a community-wide initiative that combines macroscale policies and micro-level grassroots action.

Community Collaboration

An essential component to Blue Zones is meeting the community where they are. A Blue Zones Initiative is not something that is “done” to a community, but rather in full collaboration with the community. From hiring the local team directly from within the community to hosting design charrettes to dedicated staff specifically for community engagement, the Blue Zones process is grounded on collaborating, listening, and learning from residents, stakeholders, and leaders within the neighborhoods.



In our work in over 75 communities in America, we’ve demonstrated a measurable ability to increase levels of physical activity and the consumption of healthy food over junk food. We’ve seen smoking, obesity, and loneliness decline. We are good at helping people find their purpose and put that purpose to work. All of these factors have a measurable impact on people’s well-being. We work with the world’s top experts, use the science of well-being, and find deep engagement at the community level. We build a collective vision with people and leaders to drive consensus around policies that will be most effective and feasible in creating a healthier and happier population.

We test rigorously, innovate relentlessly, and use evidence-based strategies to improve health at a population level. The result is that people improve their lives and strengthen their community at the same time.



Blue Zones aims to foster a healthy community environment that nudges people towards healthier choices that can have long-term impact. With a Blue Zones Community Transformation, Miami Beach has the opportunity to unlock up to \$196.9 million in medical savings, improved productivity, and regional economic benefits over the next decade. The Blue Zones approach relies on strong community partnerships that focus on sustainable progress in risk reduction, which in turn drives medical and productivity value.

In Miami Beach, our efforts will be focused on:



Policy

We've aggregated evidence-based policy strategies that favor healthy food, moving naturally, tobacco-free spaces, and responsible alcohol use. Then, we partner with the community to drive consensus around the most feasible and effective policies. Finally, we ensure that the chosen policies are implemented.

Places

We administer a Blue Zones Approval program that recognizes places that make it easy for people to eat nutritious food, move naturally, avoid tobacco and vape products, build strong social connections, and live with purpose.

People

Our teams will help 15 percent of the adult population optimize their homes for less mindless eating and more natural movement, upgrade their social circle so they have at least five healthy friends they see regularly, and identify their life purpose and put it to work through volunteering or other meaningful activities.

To conduct this assessment, Blue Zones engaged approximately 230 individuals from various organizations and sectors across Miami Beach. Fifty of these individuals participated in one-on-one interviews or focus groups. Gathering input from a wide range of leaders—representing local businesses, municipal government, community nonprofits, schools, and more—gave our team a wide swath of voices and perspectives. Stakeholder interviews and focus groups provided valuable insights into Miami Beach's strengths, challenges, and opportunities for enhancing community well-being in alignment with Blue Zones principles. Their feedback has been summarized to highlight key areas that can support Miami Beach's growth and vitality over the next 10 years.



Value Brief



Miami Beach has the opportunity to unlock up to \$196.9 million in projected value generation and savings through a partnership with Blue Zones.

Blue Zones Value Brief for Miami Beach, Florida

Over the next ten years, Miami Beach has the opportunity to unlock up to \$196.9 million in projected value generation and savings, directly benefiting the community through a partnership with Blue Zones.

Unlocking this value is centered on the science and knowledge that people with sustainably higher well-being have fewer health risks, medical and productivity costs, and perform better.

As such, the goal of a Blue Zones community transformation is making measurable improvements in well-being across the area - specifically, improving elements of individual and collective well-being that are proven to positively drive key economic indicators.

Research has shown that lifts in personal purpose, as well as social, financial, community, and physical health factors have direct implications on future medical costs and human performance. Reductions in lifestyle risks, disease burden, and medical spend are all results that influence individual lives as well as the collective, driving results that are not only felt but are calculable in terms of economic impact.

Creating Value for Miami Beach

The ten-year impact of a Blue Zones transformation:

- ✓ Projected medical cost savings of **\$81.6M**.
- ✓ Reduction in projected workforce lost productivity of **\$86.8M**.
- ✓ These two sources of value result in a projected **\$264 average annual per capita** medical savings and productivity improvement value for the adult population over the next decade.
- ✓ Approximately **\$28.5M** of direct and indirect benefits to the regional economy.
- ✓ Billions of expected positive media and brand impressions.
- ✓ Additional related follow-on community grants, gifts, and investments.
- ✓ **A cumulative total value of up to \$196.9 million for Miami Beach including medical cost savings, productivity savings, and regional economic impact.**

This analysis includes zip codes 33139, 33140, and 33141 with a total adult population of 63,809.

*See Appendix for full Value Brief

BLUE ZONES READINESS MEASUREMENT

Blue Zones measures a community's readiness to take on a Blue Zones community transformation and assigns a "Readiness Score" on a scale of 1-5 (low to high). This score is a reflection of key leadership engagement at events or one-on-one meetings and overall community input during the assessment process.



CRITERIA: Alignment of the Community's Current Initiatives and Strategic Plans with Blue Zones

Community leaders identified multiple opportunities for collaboration between Blue Zones and initiatives currently underway in Miami Beach. Many community leaders also voiced a desire to collaborate and come together around health and engage with Blue Zones. Commissioner Tanya Bhatt and the City of Miami Beach are extremely supportive of offering healthier options across Miami Beach; however, court rulings that mandate the reopening of Ocean Drive to traffic undermine efforts to create a safer, more walkable community.



CRITERIA: Leadership Support Across Sectors

The City of Miami Beach played a significant role in the Blue Zones site assessment. There was also strong interest in the built environment and food systems areas of focus; however, more information needs to be collected regarding faith-based organizations, hospital systems and large worksites, restaurants, and grocery stores. The media in Miami Beach also demonstrated a strong commitment and support for a Blue Zones Transformation. Many leaders and community members attended presentations and focus groups and were eager to share information and suggestions for alignment with Blue Zones. Several cited an opportunity for greater cross-sector communication and collaboration.



CRITERIA: Governing Body Support and Continuity

The City of Miami Beach is a strong partner in moving health and well-being forward across Miami Beach. The focus on parks and recreation, after school programming, and school scholarships for Miami Beach residents is unique to the city. Established community partnerships provide opportunity for support and continuity across Blue Zones sectors.



CRITERIA: Well-Being Improvement

Key well-being indicators show that there is a high need across the City of Miami Beach for a well-being transformation effort, such as a Blue Zones Project. According to Gallup, Miami Beach ranks in the first quintile for sense of purpose, social connections, and physical health; the city is still ranked 9th out of 154 MSAs. Miami Beach is also ranked in the second quintile for financial well-being and the fourth for a sense of community. By leveraging the Blue Zones model for transformation, we believe there is an opportunity to improve well-being for all residents of Miami Beach.

Power 9 and Blue Zones Opportunities

POLICY	PLACES
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Built Environment



- Enhance multimodal connectivity
- Enhance roadway safety
- Align an integrated land use/ transportation strategy: advancing transit priority corridors
- Expand green infrastructure
- Expand housing affordability
- Land development code updates
- Expand parks & amenities
- Adaptive reuse policy
- Leverage community engagement
- Leverage funding opportunities

Food Systems



- Strengthen healthy food skills across the community
- Local food incentives at farmers markets, farmstands, CSA subscriptions, and food retailers
- Strengthen policies and infrastructure at local food pantries
- Healthy food access at local retailers needs improvement
- Establish a formal affiliation with Miami-Dade County's Nutrition Security Plan
- Grow the number of community gardens on public land
- Develop a network to provide comprehensive support for growers
- Launch a Food is Medicine initiative in partnership with key healthcare providers

Schools



- Develop health and well-being infrastructure
- Develop and implement unified well-being policies and programs for youth
- Enhance school and community well-being
- Integrate mindful meditation for student well-being
- Blue Zones leadership training and collaboration spaces
- Blue Zones purpose workshops for teachers, staff, and youth
- Community engagement through culinary education

Key



Move

- Move Naturally



Right Outlook

- Purpose
- Downshift



Eat Wisely

- Plant Slant
- 80% Rule
- Wine at 5



Connect

- Right Tribe
- Loved Ones First
- Belong

PLACES

Worksites



- Establish well-being hubs in Miami Beach
- Create a Workplace Well-Being Network
- Integration of holistic well-being approaches
- Social and community well-being programs
- Optimized transportation & commuting solutions
- Flexible work & well-being integration
- Comprehensive leadership training
- Expand wellness offerings
- Increased sustainability efforts
- Leverage technology for well-being
- Promote health through community events
- Employee engagement and retention

Restaurants



- Implement healthy options
- Seasonal adaptability and cost control
- Support local schools and businesses
- Support farm-to-fork initiatives

Grocery Stores



- Product placement and promotion
- Embrace food assistance programs
- Foster local partnerships
- Implement healthy retail strategies
- Create healthy grab-and-go food options
- Diversify healthy food options
- Promote nutrition education
- Invest in staff training
- Leverage data analytics

PEOPLE

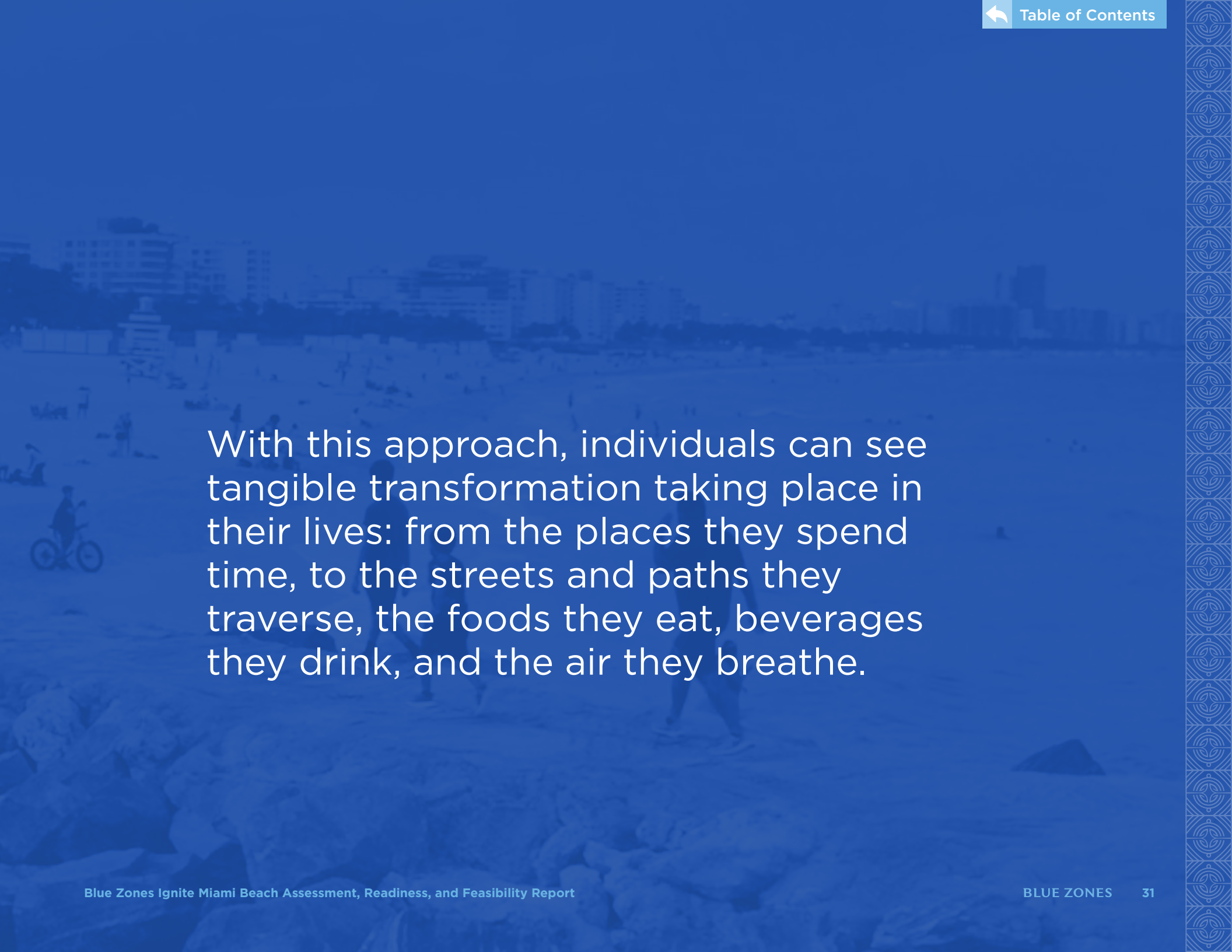
Community Engagement



- Structure events for meaningful connections
- Flexible and inclusive engagement opportunities
- Virtual volunteer hub
- Expansion of public spaces and events programming
- Leverage local partnerships
- Increase marketing and education on cultural opportunities
- Engage seasonal and tourist populations
- Health-focused community growth
- Partnerships with hospitality, retail, and tourism sectors
- Leverage the natural environment for cultural well-being
- Economic and workforce development for artists
- Policy integration

Policy Overview

Optimizing local built environment and food systems policies is a high impact, cost-effective strategy to reduce chronic disease and increase well-being.



With this approach, individuals can see tangible transformation taking place in their lives: from the places they spend time, to the streets and paths they traverse, the foods they eat, beverages they drink, and the air they breathe.





Built Environment

The built environment encompasses the human-made spaces where we live, work, learn, and play. This includes our streets, buildings, open spaces, homes, and sidewalks.



Blue Zones work in communities and research published in the *Health & Place* journal has shown that optimizing built environments can increase physical activity of an entire community by over 30 percent. It can also enhance the social life of a community by increasing a sense of belonging, ownership, watchfulness, and involvement in one's community.



The Blue Zones Built Environment Policy team had the privilege of visiting Miami Beach and speaking with a sample of local industry professionals and experts.

The team met with community leaders and various partners to identify built environment strengths, opportunities, and challenges. This process included:



Interviews with key stakeholders from multiple sectors, including transportation, planning, economic development, community service and advocacy groups, and housing-focused agencies.



An on-site visit, including focus groups and tours of area neighborhoods and parks.

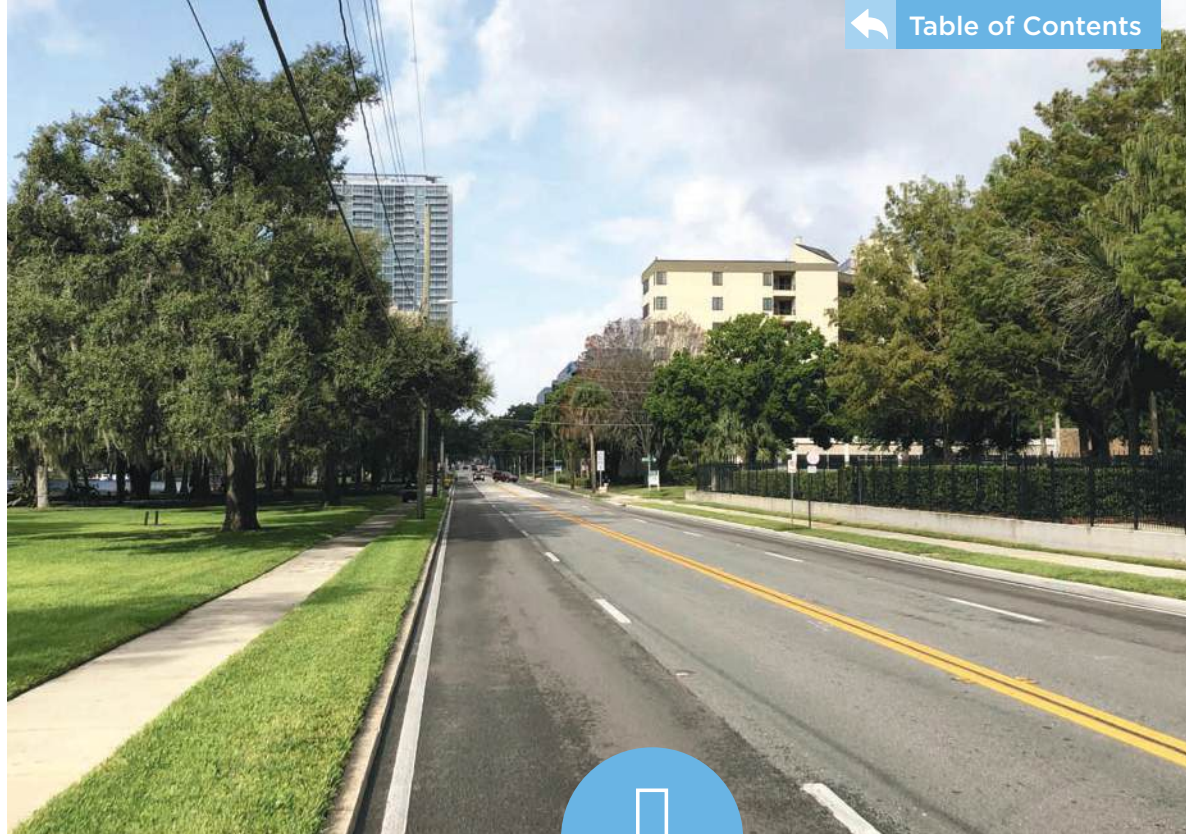


Prioritizing Pedestrians

Blue Zones' Built Environment approach highlights common-sense ways to make Miami Beach a safer place for everyone to walk, bike, and roll, including those who are vulnerable to traffic deaths and severe injuries: children, older adults, people with low-income, people with disabilities, and people who are unhoused. By adopting tactical placemaking strategies, updating policies and zoning regulations, and revising street design standards to encourage active transportation, Blue Zones provides expert support to enhance multimodal access, improve travel efficiency, and increase safety and connectivity for all users.



There is significant research that links walkable places with resilience and community well-being.



Blue Zones Guiding Principles for the Built Environment

Routine natural movement and social connection are foundational to the Blue Zones approach to well-being. This doesn't require structured exercise programs or formal gatherings—instead, it relies on designing environments that naturally support walking, biking, and spontaneous social interaction.

Key Blue Zones goals for the built environment include supporting natural movement, creating welcoming public gathering spaces, completing neighborhoods, and expanding housing choices. Decades of evidence-based research show that communities with these elements experience higher walkability, stronger local economies, increased social vitality, and improved health and safety outcomes for residents.

Each of these goals is detailed below and reflects the principles that guide our work in creating healthier, more connected communities.



The Blue Zones Built Environment Policy Menu has operationalized these goals into specific objectives and strategies. Our time in Miami Beach was primarily spent assessing the degree to which the city has adopted and implemented specific strategies found in our policy menus within the study area. Additionally, we assessed the appetite and interest of local leaders and stakeholders to adopt or implement additional built environment strategies to increase residents' well-being.



PROMOTE NATURAL MOVEMENT

In Blue Zones communities, natural movement is woven into daily life—not through structured exercise, but by creating environments that make walking, biking, and rolling the most convenient and appealing choices. A thoughtfully connected network of sidewalks, crossings, bike lanes, and trails invites residents and visitors to move naturally throughout their day. Streets are designed or retrofitted to safely and comfortably accommodate people of all ages and abilities, prioritizing slower speeds, shade, greenery, and human-scaled design. Key destinations—parks, schools, shops, and gathering spaces—are intentionally placed within walking distance through strategic infill development and mixed-use design. When movement is built into the rhythm of everyday life, it becomes a lasting foundation for health, connection, and vitality.



ENCOURAGE SOCIAL GATHERING SPACES

Creating opportunities for social connection is central to the Blue Zones approach. Social gathering spaces—such as parks, plazas, greenways, and neighborhood squares—should be seamlessly integrated into the built environment. These accessible, welcoming areas serve as community anchors, encouraging residents to pause, connect, and engage. Even underused or uninviting spaces, like excess pavement or oversized intersections, can be reimagined through placemaking into vibrant public amenities. By embedding social spaces into neighborhoods, cities foster the kind of informal interactions that build trust, strengthen social networks, deepen identity, and contribute to long-term well-being.



INCREASE COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOODS

Complete neighborhoods are places where residents can meet most of their daily needs safely and conveniently within a short walk, bike ride, or transit trip from home. They include access to fresh food, schools, health care, parks, local businesses, and community services—along with a connected network of sidewalks, bike lanes, and transit options. These neighborhoods support physical activity, social interaction, and daily routines that contribute to long-term well-being. Design features such as benches, shade structures, planters, water fountains, human-scaled lighting, and wayfinding elements make streets and public spaces more welcoming, especially for older adults and families. Well-placed bike parking, thoughtful site design, and pedestrian-friendly building elements—such as street-facing entrances and transparent facades—further enhance the experience. When neighborhoods are thoughtfully planned around access, comfort, and connection, they support healthier lifestyles, reduce transportation burdens, and create vibrant, livable communities.



INCREASE HOUSING OPTIONS

Expanding the range of available housing types is essential to creating vibrant, accessible, and resilient communities. Blue Zones encourages the integration of “missing middle” housing—such as accessory dwelling units, duplexes, townhomes, fourplexes, courtyard homes, and pocket neighborhoods—to meet diverse needs and support aging in place, multigenerational living, and affordability. Introducing a variety of housing options can gently increase neighborhood density while maintaining community character. This not only enhances access to housing but also strengthens social connectedness by fostering more walkable, mixed-use environments where people live closer to everyday destinations. A broader housing mix supports economic diversity, revitalizes underutilized areas, and contributes to the overall vitality and livability of a place.

Built Environment Introduction

Miami Beach, a vibrant coastal city in southeast Florida, is known for its beautiful beaches, Art Deco architecture, and a lively cultural scene. With ample outdoor space and a year-round warm climate, the city attracts residents and tourists with active lifestyles. Thus, Miami Beach is well-positioned to integrate Blue Zones principles into local transportation, open space, and urban planning efforts. Additionally, the city's emphasis on enhancing quality of life among residents has created a strong foundation for future community well-being initiatives in partnership with Blue Zones.



The built environment includes the human-made spaces where people live, work, learn, and play. These include streets, buildings, homes, bikeways, and sidewalks, as well as the natural environment, such as open spaces, parks, beaches, bike paths, plazas, and playgrounds. How well the built and natural environment are integrated is an essential predictor of natural movement, socializing, and downshifting in any community. The city of Miami Beach has been a transportation leader in Florida for forty years, having actively enhanced its transportation infrastructure to promote safety and accessibility for all users. The city has also seen to the broader function of its well laid out buildings and streets, designing and constructing with the right scales and patterns to give people a reason to return to the community again and again. Miami Beach now boasts approximately 45 miles of bike infrastructure, including bike lanes, shared-use paths, and sharrows, making cycling a viable transportation option for many residents and visitors. Additionally, the Miami Beach Trolley system offers free, interconnected transit across the North, Middle, and South Beach neighborhoods, providing another reliable transport alternative to personal vehicles. While some primary roads remain wide and pose challenges for pedestrians, ongoing projects aim to address these issues by improving crosswalks, expanding sidewalks, and filling in missing links along key corridors.

Miami Beach's leadership and residents have enthusiastically embraced transformative initiatives to enhance their community. The strong collaboration between city departments (such as the Public Works and Transportation and Mobility Departments) and regional partners presents a significant opportunity to achieve shared goals for sustainability, mobility, and public space enhancements. Additionally, the anticipated completion of Bayshore Park, a 19.4-acre passive park with resiliency enhancements and recreational components, positions Miami Beach as a leader in community innovation. Notably, the city is now pursuing Blue Zones community certification in an effort to promote well-being and longevity among its residents. The objective of the Blue Zones assessment of the built environment is to determine where and how the city and major stakeholders may be able to create nudges in the built and natural environments to encourage daily natural movement, increasing livability, sociability, and overall community well-being.

Miami Beach's built environment assessment was completed through research, observation, and conversations with local leaders. This process was facilitated by the Blue Zones Built Environment Team, which engaged with key stakeholders and conducted a tour to assess Miami Beach's status as a leader in active transportation and healthy living in the Southeast Florida region. During the assessment, the team gleaned insights into planning and leadership, multimodal network goals, and other considerations. This report provides a comprehensive assessment of the built environment in Miami Beach, identifying the city's strengths, challenges, and opportunities. It is intended to inform stakeholders and leadership, with the goal of advancing informed and strategic decisions about built environment priorities.

TOP OPPORTUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

During the Blue Zones Ignite assessment, the Blue Zones Built Environment team identified the following top opportunities for transforming the built environment of Miami Beach to enhance well-being:

**ENHANCE
MULTIMODAL
CONNECTIVITY**

**ENHANCE
ROADWAY SAFETY**

**ALIGN LAND
USE AND
TRANSPORTATION
—ADVANCE
TRANSIT-PRIORITY
CORRIDORS**

The 2023 Miami-Dade Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), produced by a collaboration between Jackson Health System, Mount Sinai Medical Center, Nicklaus Children's Hospital, and the University of Miami Health System, highlights several population health priorities, including addressing high rates of diabetes and mental health needs. Many CHNA priorities can be addressed beyond clinical care by integrating Blue Zones policies to promote natural movement and social gathering spaces.



**EXPAND GREEN
INFRASTRUCTURE
TO ENHANCE
RESILIENCE**

**EXPAND HOUSING
AFFORDABILITY**

**MODERNIZE
LAND
DEVELOPMENT
CODES**



**EXPAND PARKS
& COMMUNITY
AMENITIES**

**SUPPORT
ADAPTIVE REUSE
STRATEGIES**



Strengths

Miami Beach has made significant strides toward creating a built environment that promotes active transportation and micromobility, public health, and community resilience. The city can build upon these existing successes and help create an environment that better prioritizes pedestrians, supports natural movement, and creates social gathering spaces. The following are the community strengths and assets that the Blue Zones Built Environment team identified during engagement with local stakeholders.



“Miami Beach is a pedestrian-friendly city—the Beachwalk project is a fantastic project although expanding infrastructure is still needed.”

– Blue Zones Focus Group Participant

- ✔ **WALKABILITY AND MULTIMODAL ACCESS:** Miami Beach stands out as a leader in walkability and multimodal transportation access within Miami-Dade County. The city has invested significantly in creating a low-speed, pedestrian-friendly environment. Projects like the Beachwalk, pedestrian-friendly corridors, and expanded sidewalks have made walking a viable, inviting, and enjoyable mode of transportation for residents and visitors alike. Areas like Lincoln Road, where walking is encouraged for shopping, leisure, and social activities, further exemplify the city’s commitment to walkability.

Miami Beach’s focus on walkability is complemented by a strong commitment to multimodal access. The city’s Complete Streets Policy prioritizes safe and accessible infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users. The city’s Transportation Master Plan reinforces this commitment by establishing a modal hierarchy that prioritizes pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users over private automobiles. This is further supported by the city’s extensive network of 45 miles of bike facilities and ongoing efforts to expand cycling infrastructure, guided by the 2015 Bicycle Pedestrian Master Plan.

Furthermore, Miami Beach has completed a Vision Zero Action Plan (slated for adoption in late May), demonstrating a commitment to eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries. This comprehensive approach to safety aligns with the city’s overall goals of promoting sustainable transportation and active living.



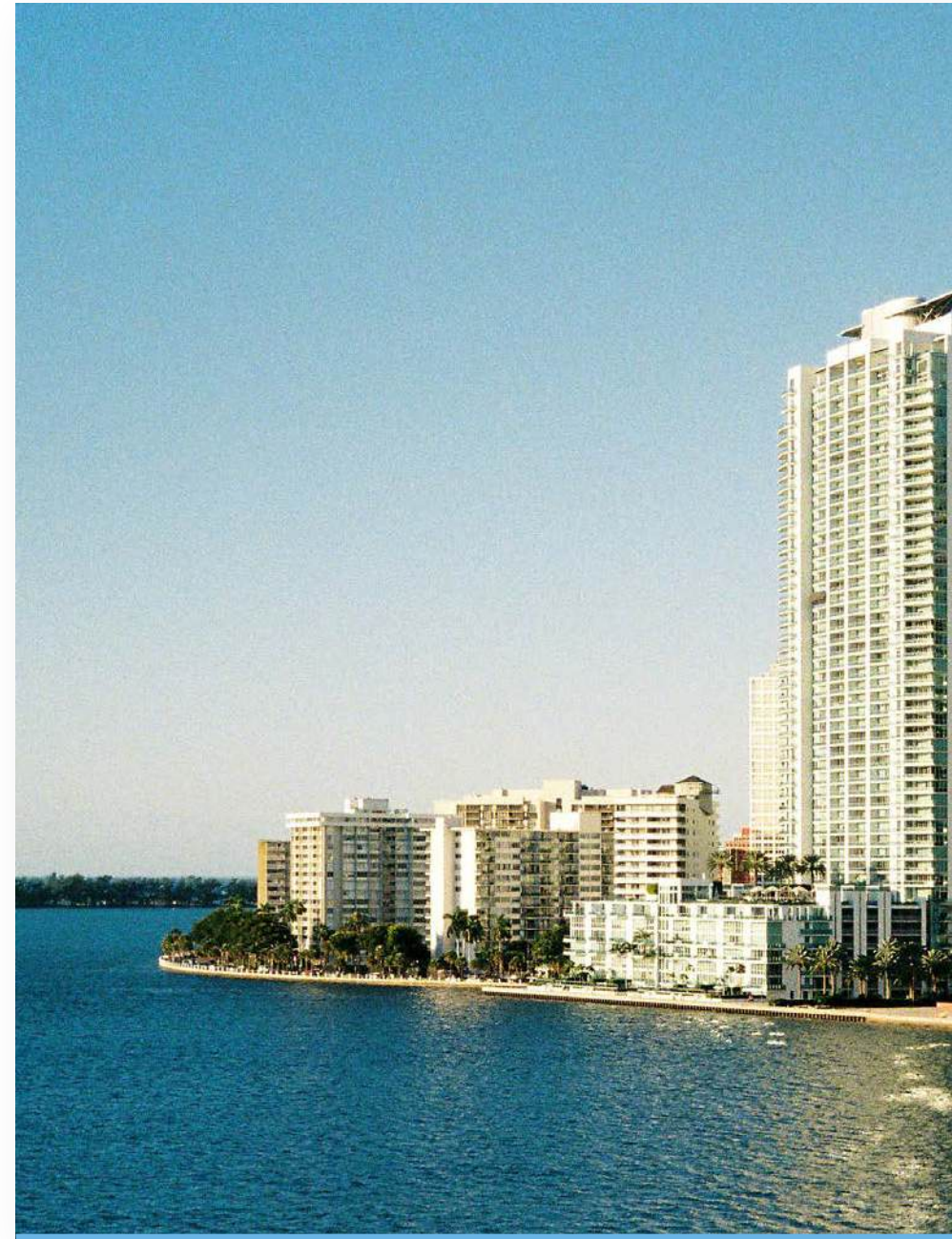
- ✓ **SAFE ACCESS TO SCHOOLS:** Some of Miami Beach's elementary schools stand out for their high rates of students walking, biking, or rolling to and from school, significantly exceeding both state and national averages. This reflects the city's walkable urban fabric, compact school catchment areas, and a culture of active transportation among students and families. Ensuring that safe, well-connected pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure continues to support these high participation rates is essential to promoting mobility choices and safe access to schools.

- ✓ **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY:** Miami Beach has taken significant strides toward providing accessible, flexible, and sustainable transit options to meet the needs of its residents and visitors. An extraordinary 44 percent of city residents, commuters, and tourists walk, bike, or use public transit for their daily commutes and activities. The city's commitment to multimodal transportation is further exemplified by its free trolley system, which offers four routes for an additional convenient and reliable transportation option across the city. The city is launching pilot programs with other areas in the near future.

Furthermore, Miami Beach has implemented innovative on-demand services and active transportation options to enhance connectivity and accessibility for all. The Freebee service, launched during the pandemic, provides door-to-door transportation using electric vehicles, catering particularly to the needs of elderly residents and those requiring essential trips. This service complements the city trolley system and expanded transportation access to those with mobility challenges. The presence of the well-established and accessible Citi Bike bicycle sharing program, formerly known as Deco Bike, also strengthens the city's commitment to sustainable transportation. With plans to incorporate electric-assisted bicycles, the program aims to increase accessibility and encourage wider usage among residents and visitors, and new resident-only discounts have been recently established for all bike types. The Citi Bike program's impressive annual ridership of 1.2 million demonstrates its popularity and contribution to reducing vehicle congestion while promoting healthy transportation habits.

These services collectively showcase Miami Beach's dedication to creating a truly multimodal and accessible transportation network. These initiatives not only reduce vehicle dependency and environmental impacts but also ensure that residents of all ages and abilities can conveniently access key destinations across the city.

- ✓ **PARKS AND RECREATIONAL ACCESS:** Miami Beach boasts a robust park and recreation system that enhances the quality of life for its residents. The city's commitment to providing quality park spaces is evident in its well-funded Parks and Recreation Department and the implementation of the city's Open Space Master Plan. This investment in parks and recreation demonstrates the city's dedication to providing quality amenities and services to its residents. According to the Trust for Public Lands scoring, a remarkable 98 percent of Miami Beach residents live within a mile of a park, highlighting the city's dedication to equitable access to open space and recreational opportunities. These parks and recreational facilities contribute significantly to community well-being, providing venues for social interaction, physical activity, and connection with nature. The quality and care of these spaces are evident in the well-maintained facilities and diverse programming offered by the Parks and Recreation Department.
- ✓ **ADVANCEMENT OF STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS:** Miami Beach's 10-Year Stormwater Master Plan stands out as a critical strength, providing a comprehensive and science-based approach to prioritizing infrastructure investments. The plan utilizes hydraulic models and data-driven evaluations to identify and address the most pressing stormwater and resilience challenges, ensuring that resources are allocated where they are needed most. Having this plan ensures a commitment to objective, data-backed decision-making, limiting political influence from altering project priorities. This approach ensures the city can implement the most effective flood mitigation and stormwater management solutions in a way that is both equitable and strategic. The long-term success of this plan, however, depends on securing adequate funding for project implementation.





✓ **RESILIENCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES:** Miami Beach demonstrates a strong commitment to environmental sustainability and resilience, evident in its proactive approach to addressing sea-level rise challenges. The city's Urban Forestry Master Plan, the recent completion of a Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment, and a soon-to-be-completed Sea Level Rise Adaptation Plan, illustrate its dedication to enhancing community resiliency against climate change impacts. Notably, the commitment to expanding the city's tree canopy from 17 percent to 22 percent will have a lasting positive impact on reducing the urban heat island effect. Additionally, establishing a Private Property Adaptation (PPA) program, which provides a free engineering property assessment and up to \$17,500 (as reimbursement; the property assessment is valued at \$2,500) for seawall elevation and flood mitigation improvements, showcases a commitment to upgrading conditions, especially on properties with overtopped seawalls. Miami Beach is potentially the only city in the country offering such a comprehensive flood mitigation grant for private property owners. Details about the program can be found in the Resources section of this report.

Miami Beach also incorporates green infrastructure into its projects, such as flood mitigation systems and nature-based solutions, to combat sea level rise, reduce urban heat, and manage flooding. In fact, the city's Resiliency Code requires the integration of bioswales, rain gardens, and permeable pavements in new developments. These measures collectively contribute to mitigating stormwater runoff, reducing flooding, and supporting the city's long-term climate resilience goals.



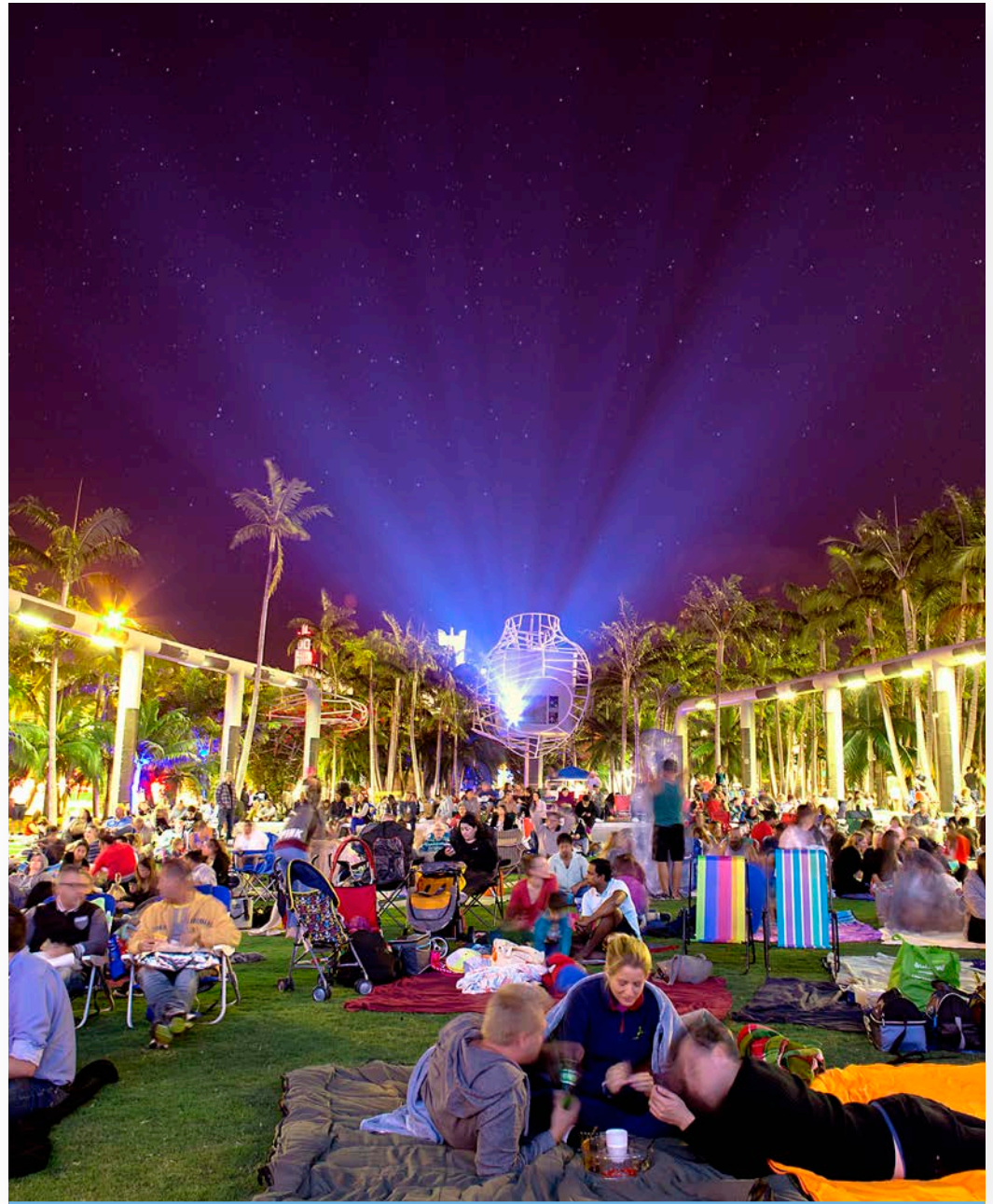
✓ **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** The City of Miami Beach is committed to engaging its residents, which can help foster a collaborative culture for shaping the built environment. The city conducts a Community Satisfaction Survey every two years to gather resident input and inform priorities for city leadership. Results from the 2024 Community Satisfaction Survey underscore this commitment, highlighting the city's dedication to incorporating

community feedback into its planning processes. This engagement is further evidenced by the active participation of residents and neighborhood associations in discussions and decision-making related to land use and transportation planning. This collaborative approach ensures that the built environment reflects the needs and desires of the community, fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for creating a healthy and vibrant city.

✓ CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC VITALITY:

Miami Beach possesses a rich cultural landscape and a thriving economy, both of which contribute to its overall appeal. The city still retains its historically unique identity and image, key for maintaining tourist activity, the ongoing social uses of outdoor places, and the community's financial success. The city's renowned and diverse cultural attractions include the annual Art Basel Miami Beach, whose success has begotten Art Week, with additional events all over Miami Beach and Miami proper, as well as various public art programs. The city's Art in Public Places program further enhances its cultural vibrancy by requiring art installations as a part of new development projects. These initiatives not only enrich the aesthetic appeal of public spaces but also create a more engaging and stimulating environment for both residents and visitors.

Furthermore, Miami Beach boasts a dynamic economy driven by tourism, commerce, and cultural activities. The city's iconic corridors, such as Lincoln Road and Ocean Drive, see high foot traffic from locals and visitors, contributing to the economic vitality of the region. This economic strength creates opportunities for growth and development in both the public and private sectors, further enhancing the city's overall appeal and quality of life.





- ✓ **COMMUNITY PRIDE:** Miami Beach benefits from a strong sense of community pride, particularly at the neighborhood level. Results from the 2024 Community Satisfaction Survey reflect that the majority of residents (74 percent) expressed satisfaction with Miami Beach as a place to live, and 70 percent were satisfied with their overall quality of life. This localized pride fosters a sense of belonging and ownership, encouraging residents to actively participate in shaping their communities and contributing to the city's evolution. In general, Miami Beach residents care about what is happening (or not happening) in their community and have a desire to be engaged. This strong community spirit is a valuable asset in implementing initiatives that promote community well-being and enhance the built environment, as residents are more likely to support and engage with initiatives that enhance their quality of life.
- ✓ **LEADERSHIP AND WILL:** The City of Miami Beach demonstrates forward-thinking leadership, driven by a commitment to achieving collective goals and furthering its already diverse and inclusive community. City leaders are enthusiastic about redefining Miami Beach's identity, shifting from a nightlife-centric reputation to a well-rounded destination that offers vibrant arts, culture, well-being, and family-friendly experiences.
- ✓ **INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION:** The City of Miami Beach maintains a collaborative relationship with Miami-Dade County, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and other key partner agencies. Despite some challenges, these partnerships are built on a shared commitment to advancing community-centered initiatives and coordinated implementation of improvement projects. The city's ability to leverage these partnerships enhances its capacity to deliver impactful projects that address community needs while aligning with broader county and state goals.



Challenges

Despite its many strengths, Miami Beach faces critical challenges that impact its built environment and the quality of life of residents and visitors. These challenges could prevent or impede the city, partner agencies, and other stakeholders from maximizing or fully capitalizing on the opportunities described above. The following challenges were discussed during the engagement led by the Blue Zones team with community stakeholders.



- ✓ **HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND POPULATION DECLINE:** Miami Beach faces significant housing challenges, primarily related to affordability, supply, and unit size needed to support a diverse and growing population. A substantial percentage of renter households in the Miami-Fort Lauderdale area are cost-burdened, with many spending over 35 percent of their income on housing. The city's high cost of living, combined with a lack of affordable housing options, is contributing to population decline and the outmigration of lower-income residents and essential workers. Without intervention, this trend threatens to deepen socioeconomic inequities and further erode the city's economic and cultural diversity.

One of the key barriers to affordability in Miami Beach is the absence of an Affordable Housing Trust Fund or a Community Land Trust, which limits the city's ability to proactively manage affordability and preserve long-term housing options for residents. Additionally, while zoning incentives exist to encourage affordable units within market-rate developments, these policies have not effectively yielded a substantial number of attainable units, as developers remain primarily focused on ultra-luxury residential projects. Furthermore, the development of micro-units and the expansion of accessory dwelling units (ADUs), a potential solution for increasing housing affordability and diversity, faces significant barriers due to zoning restrictions and community pushbacks. These regulatory constraints impede the city's ability to offer affordable, flexible housing options for young professionals, service workers, and lower-income households who wish to live and work in Miami Beach. Addressing these challenges through targeted policy interventions, such as affordability incentives and regulatory updates, could unlock new opportunities for diverse housing types within specific zoning districts while ensuring Miami Beach remains an inclusive and vibrant community for all residents.



“Miami Beach has a declining population due to properties being bought out by investors and displacing lower income families to build luxury housing.”

- Blue Zones Focus Group Participant

✓ **LIMITATIONS TO EXPAND PARKS AND OPEN SPACE:**

Miami Beach faces barriers to the expansion of recreational amenities due to its highly developed urban footprint and geographic constraints. The demand for more community facilities (including community gardens) continues to grow, yet opportunities for their integration remain scarce. Zoning restrictions, land use policies, and competition for developable space make it difficult to establish new green spaces that promote food security, environmental education, and community engagement. Without an innovative approach to land use, streets, and parks, the city risks falling short of meeting the recreational and well-being needs of its residents in the years to come, particularly as climate resilience and public health become higher priorities.



✓ **ZONING AND LAND USE CONSTRAINTS:** Miami Beach is an established urban area with very limited land available for new development. While Miami Beach has adopted forward-thinking policies, inconsistencies in policy application—particularly regarding historic preservation, zoning, and parking—hinder the effective execution of new initiatives. Miami Beach’s historic preservation requirements, high urban density, and limited buildable land create significant constraints on redevelopment. Strict preservation regulations can sometimes present challenges for redevelopment, particularly in neighborhoods like North Beach where adaptive reuse opportunities could support community revitalization. While historic preservation plays a valuable role in maintaining the city’s unique character, balancing these goals with the need for housing, economic development, and public amenities is essential. Clearer pathways for context-sensitive infill, flexible use allowances, and adaptive reuse within historic districts can help retain community identity while promoting affordability, sustainability, and inclusive growth. Furthermore, despite the city’s efforts to progressively reduce parking minimums, parking requirements in some areas still conflict with the city’s active transportation and sustainability goals. Conflicting priorities between tourism-based development and resident-focused quality-of-life concerns present challenges to cohesive planning and implementation. This tension underscores the need for a careful approach that serves both groups equitably.

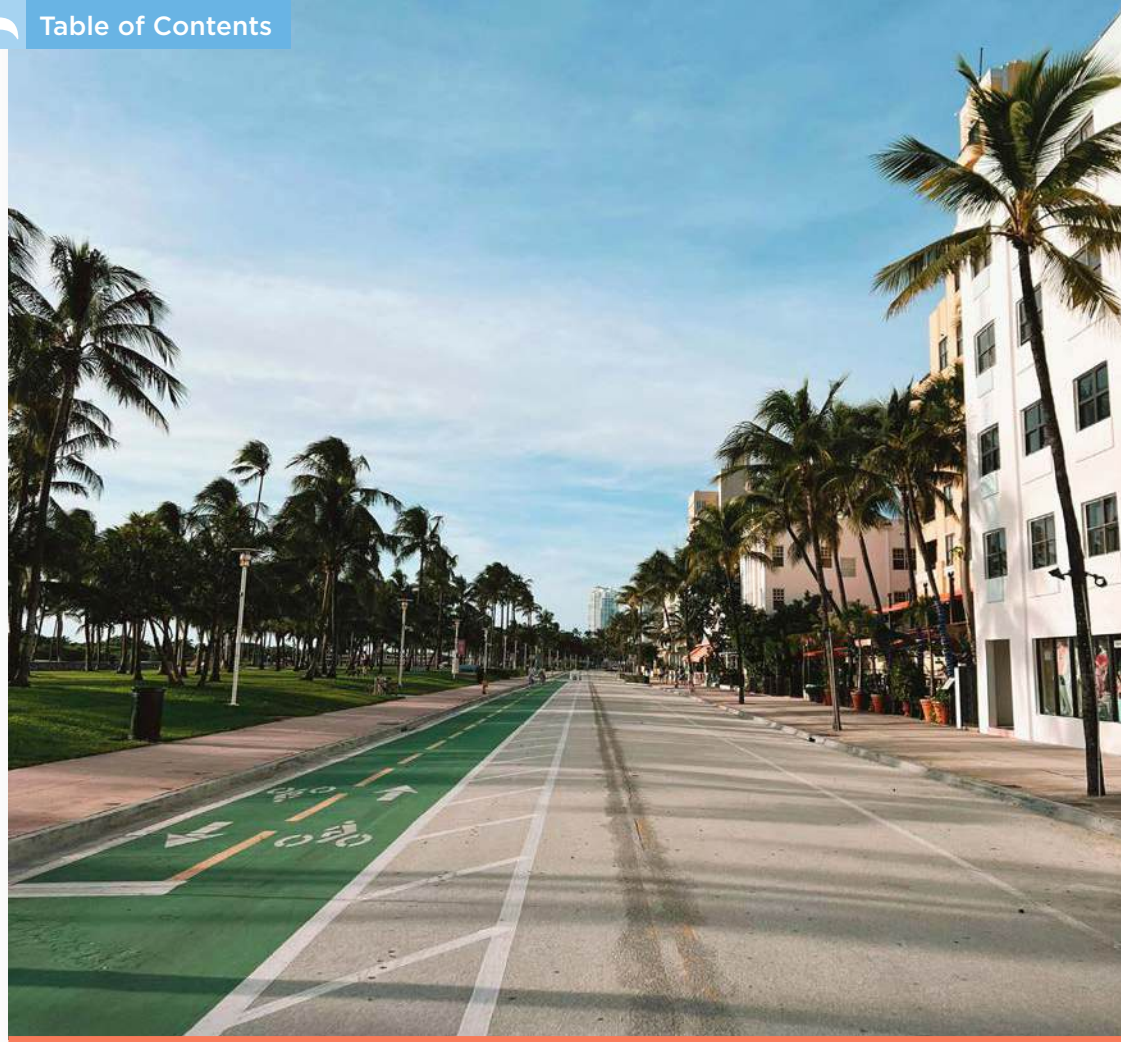
The proliferation of short-term rentals (STRs) has led to rising rents and decreased affordability. Investors and absentee owners either convert residential units into short-term rental properties or sit on their vacant properties with hopes of selling at a higher market value in the future, reducing the number of homes available for Miami Beach’s workforce and potential residents. Beyond affordability concerns, STRs often disrupt neighborhood stability and quality of life by increasing noise complaints from neighbors and enforcement challenges. The transient nature of STRs also makes it difficult to build strong, connected communities. Miami Beach has been proactive in finding innovative ways to navigate state restrictions while managing the impacts of short-term rentals.





- ✓ **TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY:** Miami Beach continues to experience traffic congestion, largely due to over-reliance on personal vehicles. The 2024 Miami Beach Resident Survey Findings Report says that residents cite excessive traffic, especially caused by tourism, as a major issue affecting quality of life. The city has two major North-South arterials—Collins Avenue and Alton Road—and four East-West roadways connecting to the mainland, all of which can experience high vehicle traffic. Despite an approximately 10 percent transit mode share (which is a great percentage in Florida), many in the labor force commute by driving alone. This makes motorized vehicles the dominant mode of transportation in Miami Beach, especially for those who commute from outside the city limits.

While transit services are available (the city is dependent on regional routes operated by Miami-Dade Transit), there is a need for better integration of transportation modes and strategies to reduce congestion. The city's ban on shared e-scooters and limited micro-mobility options restricts first- and last-mile connectivity, reducing access to active transportation options. Limited parking management strategies also contribute to congestion, particularly during peak tourism seasons. Tremendous progress has been made in developing bike and pedestrian infrastructure; however, there are connectivity gaps between the North, Middle, and South Beach neighborhoods. This limits the effectiveness of the city's multimodal network and creates safety concerns for cyclists and pedestrians. The recent court order to remove the two-way cycle track on Ocean Drive and restore two-way traffic sets a concerning precedent in relation to legal challenges to local transportation decisions driven by private interests.



- ✓ **ROADWAY SAFETY:** Pedestrian safety is a primary concern in Miami Beach, with a significant number of crashes involving pedestrians occurring in the South and North Beach neighborhoods. Although the city has adopted elements of Vision Zero and a Safety Action Plan is currently underway, the implementation of traffic-calming measures, crosswalk enhancements, and speed-management strategies is inconsistent across the various neighborhoods. Additionally, these speed management strategies often generate community pushback.

✓ **INTERAGENCY POLICY ALIGNMENT:**

The City of Miami Beach faces significant challenges in advancing pedestrian and cyclist safety due to outdated road design standards and policy misalignment among local, county, and state agencies. The lack of coordination in transportation policies, design standards, and implementation processes often creates barriers to achieving the city's active transportation goals. While Miami Beach prioritizes multimodal safety and Complete Streets principles, regional agencies such as Miami-Dade County continue to apply conventional roadway design standards that favor vehicle throughput and speed over pedestrian and cyclist accessibility. This disconnect between local and regional policy frameworks leads to delays, inconsistencies in street design, and missed opportunities for implementing infrastructure that reduces speeding and noise and truly supports walkability, bikeability, and transit connectivity. Without stronger alignment in roadway design criteria, speed-management strategies, and multimodal planning approaches, local efforts to enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety are diluted at the implementation level.



✓ **ENVIRONMENTAL VULNERABILITIES:** Miami Beach is at the forefront of climate change challenges, facing increasing risks from sea level rise, tidal and stormwater flooding, coastal erosion, and extreme weather events. These environmental pressures threaten critical infrastructure, housing, and economic stability, particularly in low-lying neighborhoods and coastal zones that are more susceptible to recurrent flooding.

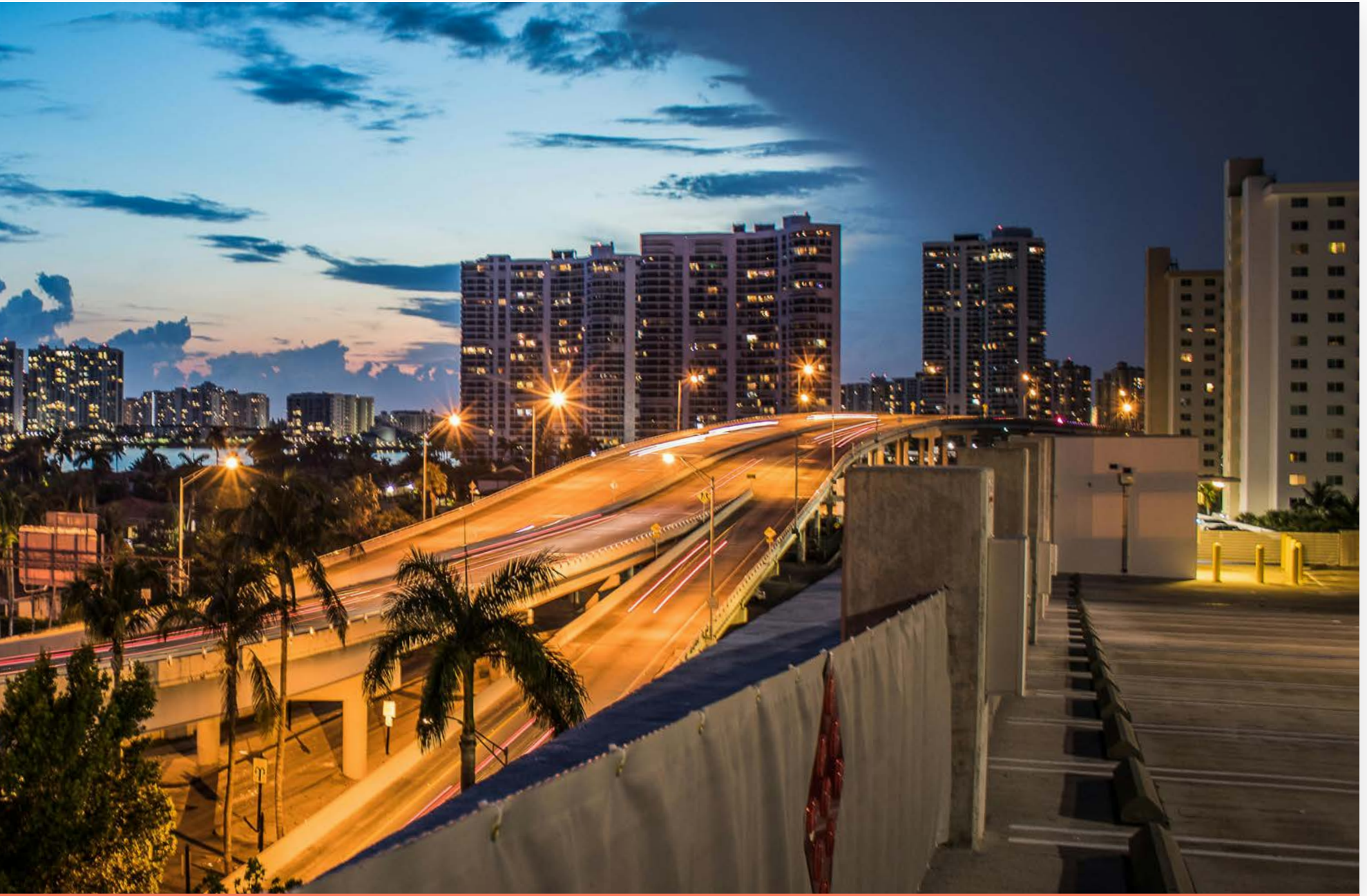
Furthermore, there are public health risks from standing water, which highlights the need for comprehensive strategies to address these issues.

According to findings from the Vulnerability Assessment, the sea level has risen six inches in the last 24 years, underscoring the importance of seawall, ground, and road elevation management. Additionally, the City of Miami Beach only owns 9 percent of its seawalls—91 percent of them are on private property. According to the 2024 Resident and Business Survey Findings Report, only 42 percent of residents are satisfied with stormwater drainage and flood management, highlighting the need for continued investments. According to the city's Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment Report, the water and wastewater pipeline network contains several large areas of the city with pipelines that are over 70 years old. To ensure long-term climate resilience, the city must modernize and expand its stormwater infrastructure to keep pace with increasing climate risks.

From a climate resiliency and adaptation perspective, there are also policy alignment and coordination challenges with Miami-Dade County. Existing county policies do not adequately address the unique challenges posed by sea level rise to the city. Strategies such as the expansion of living shorelines and implementing green infrastructure are efforts that Miami Beach is trying to move forward; however, other regional regulations currently prevent effective implementation. There is a need for customized regulations in Miami Beach to reflect the community's unique coastal challenges as a barrier island, as well as for coordinated efforts to overcome regulatory barriers at the county level.

- ✓ **RISK OF FALLING BEHIND ON STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS:** As a flood-prone coastal city, Miami Beach faces long-term infrastructure vulnerabilities that require proactive investment in stormwater management to mitigate flooding and enhance resilience. Failure to keep pace with these critical infrastructure needs could leave the city increasingly vulnerable to sea level rise, extreme weather events, and aging drainage systems, ultimately jeopardizing public safety, public health, and economic stability. To ensure the continuation of stormwater improvement projects, there is a critical need for city leadership to approve necessary water and sewer rate adjustments to provide sustainable funding for these essential upgrades. The current proposal includes increasing rates by \$70 per month for single-family homeowners over five years, a necessary adjustment given that rates have remained unchanged for years. Without this funding, ongoing projects may be halted, future improvements delayed, and overall costs could rise significantly due to inflation, increased construction expenses, and deferred maintenance issues. Approving the proposed rate increase would enable the city to expand its stormwater infrastructure projects from two to four per year, accelerating progress on flood mitigation, pump station upgrades, and drainage improvements.





Opportunities

Blue Zones and Miami Beach can use many of the city’s existing assets to foster a healthier, more livable community and to address gaps in housing affordability, mobility, land use policies, environmental resilience, and community engagement. Opportunities to use existing assets to increase well-being across the city include:



✓ ENHANCE MULTIMODAL CONNECTIVITY:

By addressing infrastructure gaps and expanding multimodal connectivity, Miami Beach can create a safer and more accessible city to live, work, learn, and play.

- Expanding protected bike lanes, improving pedestrian corridors, and further integrating transit options are key strategies to enhance connectivity and support active transportation. Addressing existing gaps in multimodal infrastructure with an emphasis on safe access to schools and parks will ensure that residents and visitors have safe, convenient, and equitable access to key community destinations.
- North Beach—where there is a higher concentration of affordable housing—presents an opportunity for improving multimodal access for marginalized communities. Expanding the protected bike lane network would promote healthier mobility choices and improve access to jobs and essential services.
- Last-mile transit solutions can be strengthened to bridge connectivity gaps and ensure seamless integration between different transportation modes. Adopting policy to reintroduce shared micromobility programs with a focus on safety-focused regulations could further enhance first-and last-mile connectivity. These programs would provide a flexible option for short trips and complement Miami Beach’s existing transit services.



Capacity-Building Opportunity

PLANNING ASSISTANCE: Blue Zones staff have provided training to technical staff, stakeholders, and neighborhood leaders on how to identify and seek opportunities to increase walking, livability, housing, safety and access, placemaking, and other key elements that impact quality of life. Miami Beach would benefit from the following:

1. **Community Engagement:** Guidance on exercises that engage residents in the exploration of an inclusive vision for their community. It is particularly critical that this is done in a way that includes voices that are often not heard, including families and workers with demanding schedules.
2. **Technical Support for Municipal and Agency Staff:** Training on best practices in zoning and land use policies can help staff achieve desired outcomes, such as compact mixed-use development and more diverse and affordable housing. Training and educational efforts could also be dedicated to increasing staff efficiency and awareness about how funding sources can be leveraged to support community enhancement projects. Countywide training on topical areas such as a Housing or Transportation Summit would encourage collaboration across agency partners and neighboring jurisdictions.

- Given Miami Beach's unique waterfront location and its proximity to the mainland, expanding a reliable and efficient water taxi system presents a major opportunity to enhance mobility. This service could connect key destinations such as Downtown Miami and Edgewater, offering both residents and visitors a convenient option to access the mainland. Miami Beach, in coordination with Miami-Dade County, should advance a study that explores frequency, affordability, docking locations, and seamless integration with existing transit services such as the Metromover, Metrobus, and Miami Beach Trolley.
- Bicycle infrastructure improvements should also include expanding the supply, quality, and variety of bicycle parking throughout the city. Increasing both short-term and long-term bike parking options—particularly near commercial districts and transit stops.
- Update the Comprehensive Active Transportation Master Plan to include active transportation goals that emphasize integration with SMART Plan transit-oriented development projects, as well as dedicated transit lanes and priority treatment for pedestrians, cyclists, and micromobility users. This plan should prioritize underserved neighborhoods and set a goal to increase walking and biking mode share by 10 percent over five years.

✓ **ENHANCE ROADWAY SAFETY:** The adoption of a comprehensive Safety Action Plan (soon to be completed) will serve as a strategic framework to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries, advancing the city’s commitment to safe, multimodal, and livable streets. This plan should establish safe target speeds and a commitment to implement a range of speed-management and safety countermeasures across the city’s street network. This initiative will open the door for coordinated project implementation, ensuring alignment with Miami-Dade County’s Vision Zero Plan and FDOT’s Target Zero initiatives, and positioning the city to secure state and federal funding for safety improvements.

- A key opportunity within this framework is the expansion of the Slow Streets program, which has already demonstrated success in improving neighborhood safety and encouraging active transportation. Expanding this program into more residential areas—particularly those near schools, parks, and community centers—can create safer environments for pedestrians, cyclists, and families.
- To reinforce slow speeds within neighborhoods, a target speed of 20 miles per hour should be adopted on all local or residential streets, in alignment with the speed-management considerations in the city’s Safety Action Plan.
- Adopt a safe access to school plan to provide safer routes for students and families within half-mile from schools. These efforts should also be paired with community engagement and outreach efforts, including conducting walking and bike audits around schools, sponsoring a biannual “Walk and Bike to School Days” and establishing a Task Force to monitor ongoing improvements.

- With the reintroduction of shared e-scooters, Miami Beach should develop a Micromobility Safety and Operations Plan that ensures the safe use of micromobility devices, implements a permitting program for shared operators, requiring safety protocols and data-sharing, and incorporates a public education campaign to promote safe riding behaviors and practices, particularly in high-traffic pedestrian zones such as Ocean Drive. The plan should also revisit policies on speed limits and usage zones to ensure compatibility with pedestrian needs.
- Expanding public amenities and placemaking elements along key corridors can help create a more pedestrian-friendly environment while reinforcing safety and vibrancy in high-traffic areas. There is an opportunity to expand curb extensions at intersections and mid-block crossings, which improve visibility for pedestrians, shorten crossing distances, and naturally calm traffic. High turning speeds at intersections can be managed with the implementation of strategic intersection design improvements. In the short term, quick-build treatments such as painted curb extensions, flexible bollards, and high-visibility crosswalks can provide immediate safety benefits while allowing for community feedback and refinement. Long term, these interventions should be complemented by well-integrated streetscape amenities such as attractive waste receptacles, enhanced street lighting, bicycle racks and micromobility storage/parking, and seating options, which altogether will enhance pedestrian safety and reinforce a sense of place that prioritizes people over cars.



Capacity-Building Opportunity

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY WORKSHOP:

Facilitate a strategy workshop with city leadership and Economic Development staff to provide training, guidance, and best practices for navigating public-private partnerships, aligning development incentives with community priorities, and implementing policies that support sustainable and equitable growth. Topics covered in the workshop could include zoning and regulatory frameworks, financial mechanisms for incentivizing mixed-use and workforce housing, and strategies for balancing private investment with public benefits.

- ✓ **ALIGN AN INTEGRATED LAND USE/ TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY— ADVANCING TRANSIT PRIORITY CORRIDORS:** By integrating land use and transportation planning, Miami Beach can align growth with programmed/planned transit investments. Establishing a regulatory framework that fosters mixed-use, transit-priority corridors along key corridors such as Washington Avenue and Alton Road will enhance mobility, support economic growth, and promote sustainable urban development. These areas would be designed to prioritize transit riders, pedestrians, and cyclists through features such as dedicated transit lanes; enhanced bus stops; traffic signal prioritization; and safe, accessible crossings. From a land use perspective, transit-priority corridors would encourage a mix of residential, retail, office, and entertainment uses that would generate a vibrant, walkable, and transit-friendly place. This strategy promotes higher-density, transit-oriented development (TOD) along specific corridors, maximizing land efficiency while maintaining the unique character of Miami Beach's neighborhoods.

✓ **EXPAND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE:** Continue implementing strategies to enhance stormwater and resilience infrastructure, integrating policies into zoning and building codes, and expanding the use of green infrastructure and flood mitigation techniques on capital improvement projects to enhance overall environmental sustainability.

- Expanding green infrastructure such as bioswales, permeable pavements, and tree canopy will continue to help manage stormwater, mitigate urban heat, and improve air quality. Furthermore, implementing living shorelines will enhance flood mitigation, particularly in flood-prone areas.
- A key opportunity lies in ensuring that lower-income and vulnerable communities are prioritized in resilience planning and infrastructure investments. Historically, these communities have been disproportionately impacted by flooding and climate-related risks.
- To incentivize private sector participation, the city could introduce programs that encourage/require property owners and developers to incorporate on-site stormwater management and sustainability practices such as rain gardens, green roofs, permeable pavements, and solar panel installations.
- Expanding the city's urban forestry program to increase tree canopy coverage, combat extreme heat, and provide additional shade in public spaces.



"I would love for the city to prioritize residents and community well-being goals with bold leadership that stands up against development pressures."

- Blue Zones Focus Group Participant

✓ **EXPAND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY:** Collaborating with developers to incentivize affordable and workforce housing is essential to addressing Miami Beach's growing housing challenges. Establishing a comprehensive housing strategy that integrates zoning updates (incentives), public-private partnerships, rehabilitating existing structures, and local funding mechanisms will be critical in ensuring a diverse range of housing options. To proactively manage the affordable housing supply, Miami Beach should consider establishing an Affordable Housing Trust Fund or a Community Land Trust (CLT). These mechanisms would allow the city to ensure long-term affordability, provide financial assistance for workforce housing, and acquire land for future development.

✓ **LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATES:** Complete a policy audit to identify opportunities to better align zoning and land use policies with sustainability goals, affordability needs, and smart growth principles.

- Establishing a comprehensive housing strategy that integrates zoning updates (incentives), public-private partnerships, and local funding mechanisms will be critical in ensuring a diverse range of housing options. The city should explore expanding zoning flexibility to allow for micro-units, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and missing middle housing types within appropriate zoning districts. These updates could consider:
 - Expanding ADUs in single-family residential districts on suitably-sized lots with minimal restrictions would provide homeowners multigenerational housing solutions while also offering a potential additional income stream. Removing unnecessary barriers to ADU development can increase affordable and adaptable housing options.
 - Encourage missing middle housing (duplexes, triplexes, courtyard apartments, etc.) in targeted areas to expand housing alternatives. This could include allowing corner-lot missing middle housing in single-family residential districts to expand housing options and price points while maintaining neighborhood character.
- Encourage developer incentives for mixed-income housing developments will promote more balanced residential growth, especially in mixed-use projects along transit priority corridors.



- Expand Parking Management Districts with reduced parking requirements and promote shared parking strategies. Reducing or eliminating minimum parking requirements in areas well-served by transit (or corridors programmed to be served by premium transit) and active transportation infrastructure can promote walkability and reduce congestion.
- While Miami Beach's historic preservation policies have played a crucial role in maintaining the city's distinctive character, greater flexibility may be useful to allow adaptive reuse and responsible redevelopment. Streamlining regulations to facilitate context-sensitive renovations, mixed-use conversions, and small-scale infill development will allow historic properties to evolve with modern needs.
- Expand Housing Affordability: Address short-term rental impacts by enforcing existing noise ordinances, parking requirements, and property maintenance standards to maintain neighborhood quality. Enhanced monitoring of compliance with safety codes and rental registrations can also help address community concerns. By leveraging these tools, Miami Beach can work to preserve residential stability while accommodating its tourism economy.



“If I had a magic wand, I would love to see more [tree] canopies and walking paths.”

– Blue Zones Focus Group Participant

- **EXPAND PARKS & AMENITIES:** With limited available land for new parks and open spaces, Miami Beach has the opportunity to adopt creative and strategic approaches to expand recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. By embracing multi-functional open spaces, encouraging rooftop gardens on new developments, and implementing pocket parks, parklets, and temporary street closures for recreational use, the city can maximize its urban footprint to expand the existing supply of green and active spaces.

A clearly available opportunity is to adopt and implement a Pavement to Parks program, which is successfully underway in Seattle, Washington, and San Francisco, California. San Francisco has installed 65 parklets citywide and seven street plazas. Easily five to 10 percent of Miami Beach’s paving can be converted to well-shaded plazas through creative placemaking initiatives. Through public-private partnerships, the city can work with developers to integrate recreational amenities such as green roofs or rooftop gardens into new developments, encourage private sector investment in public spaces, or activate privately owned spaces for community use. Leveraging underutilized public property by collaborating with Miami-Dade County, state agencies, and private landowners could also unlock opportunities to repurpose vacant or underutilized parcels into pocket parks, community gardens, or recreational areas.

Capacity-Building Opportunity

INTERAGENCY WORKSHOPS:

Explore interagency workshop opportunities with partners such as the Miami-Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works (DTPW), Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization, and FDOT to foster stronger collaboration and policy alignment. These workshops would serve as a platform to identify shared mobility and safety goals, address policy barriers, and streamline coordination efforts that impact the city’s ability to implement Complete Streets, resiliency, multimodal infrastructure, and pedestrian safety improvements. By engaging stakeholders in structured, solution-oriented discussions, these workshops can help align regional and local transportation priorities, modernize outdated roadway design standards, and identify opportunities for joint planning and funding strategies. Additionally, the workshops would provide a forum for agencies to collaborate on policy adjustments, refine implementation processes, and establish a unified approach to advancing the city’s active transportation and livability objectives.

- ✓ **ADAPTIVE REUSE POLICY:** Adopting a comprehensive adaptive reuse policy can unlock opportunities to repurpose underutilized infrastructure such as parking garages, vacant commercial spaces, and aging structures into new housing, office space, or community amenities. By encouraging the conversion of outdated or underutilized properties, Miami Beach can help revitalize neighborhoods, optimize land use, and support economic development—all while reducing the environmental impact associated with demolition and new construction. For example, parking structures in key areas served by transit could be transformed into developments featuring affordable housing and co-working spaces.
- ✓ **LEVERAGE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** Miami Beach’s engaged residents provide a valuable resource for participatory planning. To broaden the reach and effectiveness of existing engagement efforts, the city could enhance multilingual and digital outreach strategies, ensuring that citywide initiatives resonate across all demographic groups. Additionally, leveraging the Resident-Led Advisory Board for Active Transportation & Housing would further supports a formalized structure for ongoing public input, empowering community members to help shape policies and projects related to mobility, housing affordability, and neighborhood livability. This board could serve as a bridge between residents and city officials, facilitating a continuous dialogue and ensuring that grassroots perspectives are integrated into policy decisions.
- ✓ **LEVERAGE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:** Miami Beach can leverage grants, such as those from the Bloomberg Philanthropies Asphalt Art Initiative, and partnerships with regional agencies to fund built environment projects. Aligning city policies with regional and national goals will streamline access to these resources.

Miami Beach is at a pivotal moment to build upon its strengths, address key challenges, and seize opportunities to create a more livable, resilient, and connected community. By implementing strategic actions through the Blue Zones framework and continued stakeholder collaboration, the city can improve the quality of life for residents and ensure long-term sustainability for future generations. This assessment serves as a roadmap to guide policy and planning decisions that—with a Blue Zones partnership—will shape Miami Beach’s built environment in alignment with shared health, equity, and environmental priorities.





Food Systems

The food system includes all of the components and activities associated with growing, handling, packaging, distributing, accessing, preparing, and eating food. These elements are supported and shaped by policies and systems that ultimately result in the design of a community's food environment, which encompasses the availability of healthy and unhealthy food and beverages in the places we work, live, learn, and play.



According to research highlighted by the National Institutes of Health and the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, the extent to which a community's food system enables people to have easy, reliable access to affordable, healthy food is a key predictor of people's dietary choices and risk for diet-related chronic diseases.

The local food system is the most important determinant of whether or not a resident will be overweight or face diet-related chronic diseases. By designing community environments that facilitate healthy eating, we can measurably improve the health of residents.

This Food Systems Policy Readiness and Feasibility assessment is based on a multi-method research approach, which included:



Hearing from People

Stakeholder interviews and focus groups with leaders collaboratively identified by the Blue Zones National Food Policy Expert and Food Policy Research team



Exploring the Community

Virtual meetings and site visits with local leadership, as well as discussions with relevant organizations and groups across multiple sectors (such as public health, hunger relief, institutional food service, restaurants and food retail, elected and appointed local officials, Extension, agriculture, and more)



Reviewing What's Known

Background research, including review of federal, state, and local datasets and relevant reports (such as Community Health Needs Assessment, local food systems publications, etc.)



20% of our health is
related to genetics



10% determined by our
access to healthcare



70% can be managed
through behaviors and the
design of our community's
environment

Source: The Boston Foundation and
the New England Healthcare Institute

Blue Zones Guiding Principles for Food Systems

The Blue Zones Food Policy Menu identifies main goals and best practice strategies that improve the food system and move the needle on community health and well-being. These include:



GOAL ONE

Making healthy food accessible and affordable for everyone

- ✓ Increase participation in healthy food programs
- ✓ Ensure children have enough healthy food to eat
- ✓ Foster healthy hunger relief programs



GOAL TWO

Building food skills

- ✓ Prioritize education on how to grow and cook healthy food
- ✓ Foster opportunities for families to eat together



GOAL THREE

Increasing healthy food environments

- ✓ Ensure healthy options and habits for young children, children in K-12 environments, and on college campuses
- ✓ Increase healthy eating behaviors in hospitals and public institutions
- ✓ Promote healthy options and habits for everyone



GOAL FOUR

Growing long-term community health

- ✓ Establish lasting leadership on food issues for the community
- ✓ Build a base of resources to keep children healthy
- ✓ Make healthy grocery access easy for everyone



GOAL FIVE

Growing the local food supply

- ✓ Use public land and planning to enable food production by local residents
- ✓ Care for natural resources needed to grow food
- ✓ Support area farmers and food enterprises to raise and sell food for local markets

The Blue Zones Food Policy Menu has operationalized these goals into specific objectives and strategies. The assessment yielded clear findings about the degree to which Miami Beach has undertaken strategies described in the Blue Zones Food Policy Menu. The Food Policy Assessment surfaced strengths, challenges, and opportunities, generating recommendations that amplify good work already underway and that strategically leverage promising opportunities for impact.



Food Systems Introduction

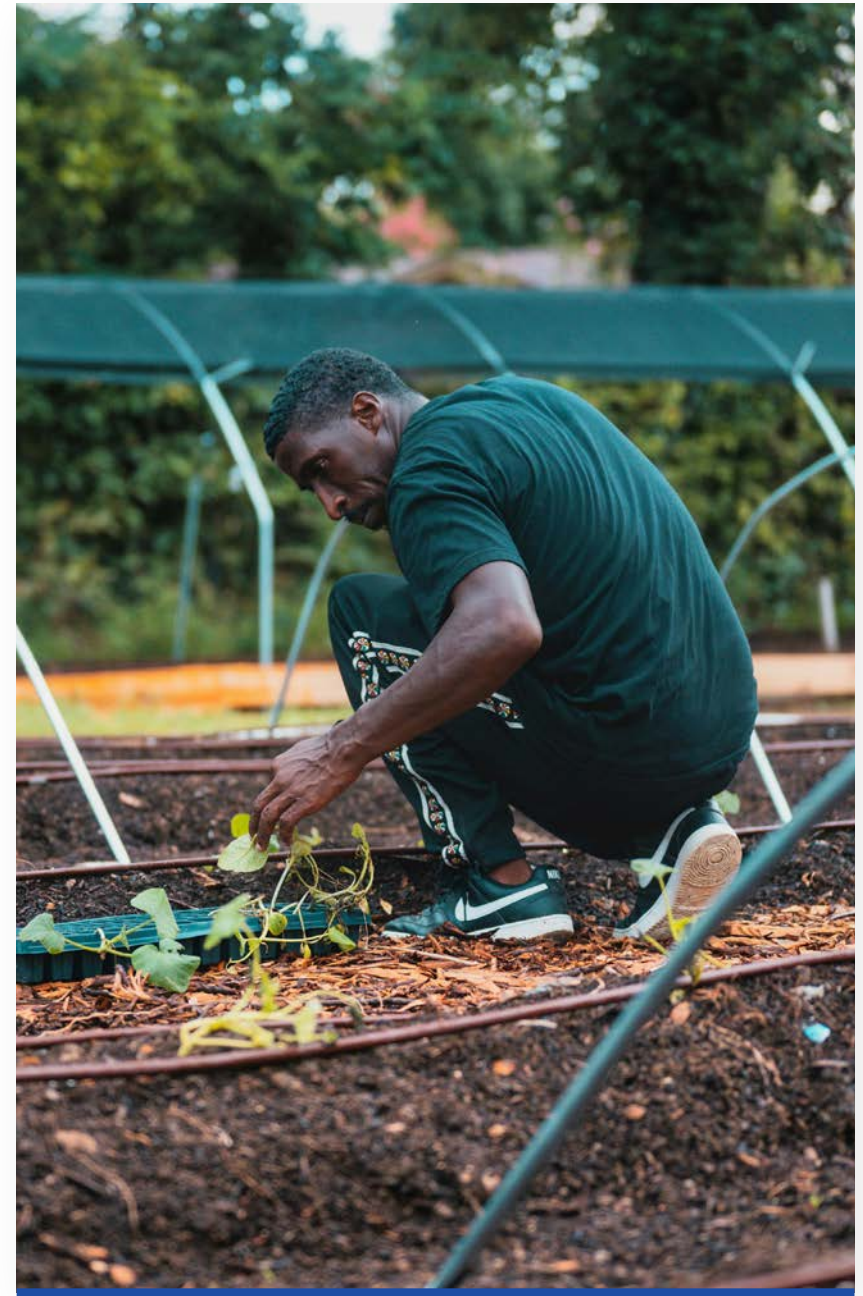
The Miami Beach community is diverse and dynamic, with a mix of locals, tourists, and international residents all contributing to its vibrant culture—including its food system. The city is known for its strong Latin American influence, and more than half of the city's total population identify as Hispanic or Latino. Many are drawn to Miami Beach for this vibrant atmosphere as much as for the beautiful scenery, making it a premium and desirable place to live, visit, and eat.

Miami Beach is a food lover's haven, offering a blend of high-end dining, trendy cafes, and casual dining. From fresh seafood and Cuban sandwiches to gourmet international cuisine, the city's culinary scene is as colorful as its surroundings. High-end boutiques, resort-style amenities, and entertainment also reflect the city's upscale lifestyle, catering to residents and tourists alike.

However, the cost of living is high in Miami Beach. This is driven by its desirable location, luxury real estate market, and tourism-driven economy; placing it among the top 4 percent of the most expensive cities in the world. Housing is costly, with rental rates and home prices 51 percent higher than the national average. The cost of housing means that renters make up 63 percent of the housing market in the city.

While Miami Beach’s median household income is \$71,073; approximately 15.4 percent of Miami Beach residents live below the federal poverty guidelines, higher than the state average. With incomes strained to capacity, many residents and workers also grapple with other costly daily expenses, such as utilities, transportation, and out-of-pocket healthcare costs. These economic concerns are compounded by ongoing challenges with reliable access to affordable, healthy food options for people who live and work year-round in Miami Beach. Most upscale restaurants are out of reach as a regular source of food for everyday residents of the community. A limited number of grocery stores—particularly in low-income areas of the community—mean residents must often travel outside their immediate neighborhoods to obtain fresh produce and other nutritious foods. Furthermore, the city’s reliance on its tourism-driven market channels means that many food options cater to demand for convenience and fast food.

The potential for supply disruptions during storms further exacerbates food system challenges. The high cost and limited accessibility of affordable, healthy foods ultimately impacts population-wide, diet-related health issues. For example, heart disease and type 2 diabetes are among the top 10 leading causes of death in Miami-Dade County, at higher rates than the state averages.



TOP OPPORTUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

During the Blue Zones Ignite assessment, the Blue Zones Food Policy team identified the following top opportunities for transforming the Miami Beach food system to enhance well-being:

**STRENGTHEN HEALTHY
FOOD SKILLS ACROSS
THE COMMUNITY**



**FUEL HEALTHY
FOOD ACCESS
AT CORNER STORES**

**ESTABLISH
A FORMAL AFFILIATION
WITH MIAMI-DADE
COUNTY'S NUTRITION
SECURITY PLAN**

Strengths

- ✓ **COUNTY AND CITY ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS PLAY AN INSTRUMENTAL ROLE IN HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS:** Miami-Dade County's public library system supports SNAP-eligible individuals through program application assistance, food budget guidance, and healthy food access efforts. This one-on-one assistance helps people overcome language barriers, lack of internet access, and confusion about eligibility requirements. These services are available at the North Shore and Miami Beach Regional library branches, where community members can schedule one-on-one appointments with social service providers.

The City of Miami Beach's Housing and Community Services and Parks and Recreation departments provide essential food access for residents. They manage USDA-funded summer meal and Smart Snack programs for K-12 afterschool programs. In partnership with the Miami-Dade County Community Action Agency, these departments also provide food delivery services, contracting vendors to deliver prepared meals to the Unidad in NoBe, and resuming at the South Shore Community Center in SoBe. To promote healthy food environments, the city has enacted policies to ensure nutritious options are available at city-managed facilities, including vending machines and the afterschool snack and summer meal programs. The city also operates walk-in centers to assist eligible residents with SNAP applications and partners with Feeding South Florida to provide a monthly food distribution at Muss Park, focusing on fresh fruits and vegetables and serving over 100 low-income households.

Additionally, the Children's Trust funds three youth programs that provide referrals for food assistance, parent-child cooking classes, nutrition education, and entrepreneurship training. Through programming at Nautilus Middle School and summer camps for students in grades 6 through 8, community members can participate in a variety of activities to promote well-being.



✓ AN ECOSYSTEM OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS EQUIPS LEARNERS WITH HEALTHY FOOD SKILLS AND PROVIDE NUTRITIOUS FOOD:

Public schools, private schools, and childcare providers serve daily meals to children and youth, with some implementing policies to ensure menus include healthy items. While all public schools are required to provide meals and snacks that comply with USDA-mandated nutrition standards, private schools and childcare centers (as long as they are not participating in federal nutrition programs) are not bound by these mandates. However, organizations such as the Montessori Academy at St. John's and the Rainbow Intergenerational Learning and Childcare Center voluntarily commit to serving meals and snacks that comply with nutrition requirements.

On the food skills front, an array of PreK-12 educational institutions provide healthy eating and cooking classes. Montessori Academy incorporates from-scratch cooking for student meals and includes cooking classes in its curriculum. School gardens at Miami Beach Fienberg Fisher K-8 and Miami Beach South Pointe Elementary School integrate gardening education into the school day. Additionally, local schools like Miami Beach Senior High School receive support from city government for nutrition education, culinary arts vocational training, and workforce development programs.

Innovation Spotlight

A collaboration between the City of Miami Beach, Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce and the school district has resulted in a state-of-the-art kitchen and a comprehensive culinary training program at Miami Beach Senior High School. The facilities and curriculum greatly enhance student learning experiences and equip them with valuable skills for future careers in the hospitality industry—an essential sector in Miami Beach.





Municipally-funded food skills classes are taught at Scott Rakow Youth Center & Ice Rink in partnership with Common Threads, a national nonprofit organization that provides healthy food skills education in communities across the United States, including the greater Miami area. These nutrition and cooking classes are taught by local chefs and take place at after-school program sites that serve school-age children and youth. Additionally, healthy cooking classes for the entire family are available on weekends, focusing on budget-friendly, healthy grocery shopping.

Several nonprofit organizations such as Overtown Youth Center (OYC), Health in the Hood, A Yummy Future, and the Urban Oasis Project exemplify community-focused healthy lifestyle initiatives and food skills education initiatives in the greater Miami area. However, it is unclear whether these programs also serve Miami Beach. Expanding access to these types of programs could help strengthen healthy food skills across the community.

- ✓ **THE HUNGER RELIEF SYSTEM PROVIDES CRITICAL SERVICES TO THOSE IN NEED:** Local food access programs offer an array of resources and services to help people meet their daily nutritional needs while building healthy food skills. These programs include food pantries, feeding programs, pop-up food distributions, and nutrition education initiatives.

Feeding South Florida provides direct services and distributes food to various hunger relief programs while adhering to USDA nutritional guidelines. In addition to food distribution, the organization offers cooking classes and runs initiatives such as the Produce Program, Retail Store Donation, After School Meals, Backpack Program, School Pantry Program, and Summer Meals, all designed to support food-insecure individuals and families.

On a weekly and monthly basis, area food pantries provide both perishable and non-perishable food items such as fresh produce. The Backpack Program offers eligible K-12 students two breakfasts, lunches, and dinners composed of non-perishable foods.

Numerous organizations distribute free food, provide meal programs and hot meal services, offer food delivery and shopping assistance, and facilitate enrollment in federal food access programs. The Good News Community Outreach Center provides free food and supplemental meals to low-income families by distributing donated surplus from stores. Jewish Community Services of South Florida assists families that require kosher food and provides food to elderly adults, including Holocaust survivors. Both Joshua's Heart Foundation and Love to

Help Foundation assist families with food delivery and shopping, operate food pantries and senior hot meals programs, and teach nutrition and cooking classes to promote residents' long-term well-being. Catholic Charities provides congregant hot meal programs designed to help seniors by promoting independence, encouraging nutrition, reducing loneliness, fostering social connections, and increasing self-esteem.



- ✓ **MIAMI BEACH'S HOSPITAL OFFERS TARGETED INITIATIVES AND OUTREACH EFFORTS TO ADDRESS DIET-RELATED CHRONIC ILLNESS:** Mount Sinai, the only hospital in Miami Beach, offers support to both its employees and community members. Through its Employee Wellness Diabetes Care Program, hospital staff have access to a registered dietitian and a personal care team to help manage diabetes symptoms. More recently, the HealthSnap Remote Patient Monitoring and Chronic Care Management Platform has expanded support for patients dealing with chronic conditions such as diabetes and obesity. Local leadership is keen to partner with Mount Sinai to explore possible partnerships focused on healthy eating and other food-related initiatives.



- ✓ **RESOURCES FOR GROWERS OF ALL SCALES TO CULTIVATE HEALTHY FOOD:** Miami Beach residents embrace and promote a gardening culture. Community gardens at Pine Tree Park, Parkview Island Park, and the Joseph Villari Victory Garden provide free space for residents to cultivate their own produce. Due to high demand, these volunteer-run gardens have long waitlists, such as the Villari Victory Garden, which has only 20 plots and a two-year waiting list. Many residents also garden at home on balconies or small plots of land.

The University of Florida's Cooperative Extension (UF/IFAS) Master Gardener and 4H Youth Development programs provide information and training on home and community gardens, with a focus on vegetable gardening. Additionally, the Cooperative Extension also supports small farmers by providing research-based education, practical training, and resources designed to improve crop yields, livestock management, tropical fruit production, and sustainable farming practices. These programs enable growers to adapt to changing agricultural trends, enhance productivity, and contribute their locally grown produce to nearby markets.



- ✓ **BILINGUAL RESOURCES ENHANCE ACCESS TO SERVICES AND PROGRAMS FOR THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY:** Miami Beach is a multilingual community, with many residents who speak Spanish as their first language. Information about existing services, programs, and events is available in Spanish. Miami Beach Magazine shares information in Spanish about cooking classes, afterschool programs, and summer programs available in the community. The city's Housing and Community Services Department provides in-person support in Spanish at its walk-in center, where staff assist residents with food assistance applications and other essential services.



Challenges

✓ GROWING RATES OF HUNGER AND UNDER-RESOURCED HUNGER RELIEF PROGRAMS CANNOT MEET EXISTING DEMAND:

Many Miami Beach residents face barriers to accessing nutritious food due to the high cost of food and the low quality of fresh produce. Poverty and food insecurity are often underreported, as some residents hesitate to seek assistance due to their immigration status, stigma, or fear stemming from the current political climate. Even those enrolled in federal food access programs often find the support insufficient to meet their food needs throughout the month, leaving many struggling to maintain consistent access to healthy meals. Countywide, 13.7 percent of residents lack consistent access to enough nutritious food for an active, healthy life.

Local hunger relief leaders report limitations in the existing infrastructure and equipment for food bank warehouses and food pantries. Inadequate refrigeration and freezer capacity hinder food access programs from storing and distributing perishable, healthy foods. While these programs aim to provide more nutritious options, infrastructure upgrades are necessary to do so.

Moreover, food costs remain concerningly high. The impact of post-pandemic inflation continues to drive up food costs, particularly for healthy items. Combined with cuts to federal food access programs, many residents struggle to afford healthy food.



"I'm looking for more healthy restaurants. In fact, there are no healthy restaurants as far as I'm concerned in Miami Beach, and I'm hoping to have some choices here."

- Blue Zones Focus Group Participant

- ✓ **LOCAL RETAILERS AND RESTAURANTS OFFER TOO MUCH UNHEALTHY FOOD AND NOT ENOUGH NUTRITIOUS OPTIONS:** There is uneven access to full-service grocers throughout Miami Beach, and residents in lower-income areas have particularly limited access to grocers that sell affordable healthy food. Miami Beach has many convenience stores, mini markets, and bodegas, which typically stock shelf-stable products with limited nutritional value, a small selection of low-quality produce, and an abundance of unhealthy options. In North Beach, where a higher concentration of low-income residents live, there is a notable lack of full-service grocery stores.

Farmers markets are often a source of fresh, healthy, locally grown food in many communities. However, all farmers markets that serve Miami Beach are privately owned and do not currently accept federal food access benefits such as SNAP, WIC, or the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program. Partnerships with these markets can facilitate the acceptance of these benefits and expand affordable, healthy food options for residents while also increasing the profitability of these markets.

Restaurants also serve as an important source of food in many communities. While Miami Beach's thriving local food culture reflects the community's diversity, there is a lack of healthy menu options offered by many locally owned restaurants. Although there are numerous culturally relevant dishes that embrace the diverse traditions of residents, healthier food choices are often limited.

- ✓ **GAPS IN FOOD SKILLS NEGATIVELY IMPACT FOOD CHOICES:** Interview participants report a concerning gap in healthy food skills among community members, which they identify as a key factor influencing healthy behaviors and poor dietary choices. A broader, more comprehensive effort is needed to increase demand for healthier options through a combination of targeted education, marketing, promotion, and community-wide partnerships.
- ✓ **SMALL GROWERS SERVING MIAMI BEACH FACE BARRIERS TO SCALING UP OPERATIONS:** Small farmers outside the city who provide fresh produce to the Miami Beach community face significant challenges, including land loss due to rapid urbanization, which often forces them to sell their land for development. Additionally, small farmers need more support, equipment, and education to effectively address emergent climate challenges, implement innovative growing practices, and identify new market channels to sustain their operations.
- ✓ **THERE IS CURRENTLY NO PERMANENT OR EXISTING MECHANISM TO DEVELOP AND ADVANCE CITYWIDE FOOD POLICY:** While county-level leadership is working to establish a cross-sector coalition to address food and health issues, there does not appear to be an organized body dedicated to facilitating strategic collaboration on high-impact, multi-sector food systems initiatives. Miami Beach would benefit from an organized initiative with an appointed body to develop and spearhead implementation on key food systems projects. Such an initiative could improve access to affordable, culturally relevant healthy food; foster a vibrant local food system; and equip community members with the food skills they need to maintain their well-being.

Opportunities

✓ **STRENGTHEN HEALTHY FOOD SKILLS**

ACROSS THE COMMUNITY: Use existing infrastructure like school and community gardens to increase food-skills educational opportunities for the community. This can be supported by conducting an audit of all current activities.

✓ **LOCAL FOOD INCENTIVES AT FARMERS MARKETS, FARMSTANDS, CSA**

SUBSCRIPTIONS, AND FOOD RETAILERS: There is potential to improve access to fresh produce, particularly at farmers markets, by ensuring that those serving Miami Beach are able to accept federal food access benefits and participate in local food incentive programs. Florida's statewide Market Match program can support this effort by offering benefits at retail locations, farmers markets, and produce stands, making healthy food more affordable for residents.





✓ **STRENGTHEN POLICIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE AT LOCAL FOOD PANTRIES:**

Food pantries that serve Miami Beach can establish and enact healthy food donations, procurement, and purchasing policies that incorporate nutritional guidelines and prioritize culturally relevant foods. Additionally, investing in cold storage infrastructure would enable these food pantries to source and distribute a greater amount of healthy, perishable items such as fresh fruits and vegetables.

✓ **HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS AT LOCAL RETAILERS NEEDS IMPROVEMENT:**

Launching a healthy food retail initiative can encourage and support mini markets, bodegas, and restaurants to offer healthier items and adopt best practices in merchandising, promotions, and associated behavioral nudges to prompt healthy choices by the customer. Store owners can receive incentives as part of this effort, such as funding, free signage and shelving, or discounts on equipment, enabling them to stock fresh produce, whole grains, and other healthy food options. Technical assistance for store owners to deepen their know-how on how to merchandise and procure healthy options is another programmatic component with this type of approach.



“I think we try to be as creative as possible to bring in services so that our residents don’t have to go out. To my estimation, [the City of Miami Beach] has been more than supportive in trying to bring in that programming.”

– Food System Stakeholder



- ✓ **ESTABLISH A FORMAL AFFILIATION WITH MIAMI-DADE COUNTY'S NUTRITION SECURITY PLAN:** Appoint a working group composed of key leadership from across Miami Beach's food system as part of the countywide Food and Nutrition for All Initiative.
- ✓ **INCREASE THE NUMBER OF COMMUNITY GARDENS ON PUBLIC LAND:** City-owned vacant lots or other suitable properties such as church grounds present valuable opportunities to expand access to fresh produce and strengthen residents' food gardening skills. Transforming underutilized land into productive garden spaces can create important community hubs where local residents can connect with others, grow food, increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables, and showcase innovative urban agricultural practices such as vertical gardening, composting, and water conservation.

- ✓ **DEVELOP A NETWORK TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT FOR GROWERS:** The University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) can collaborate with small regional farmers to provide much needed support to improve agricultural practices, increase production, enhance the quality and diversity of the food they grow, and strengthen the local food supply chain. This collaboration could take many forms, including technical assistance, training, and resources to help farmers adopt innovative farming techniques.

Access to funding or grants can enable small farmers to invest in necessary equipment, technology, or infrastructure to improve productivity and sustainability. Furthermore, educating the community about the value of supporting local farmers and the environmental benefits of buying locally grown produce can help generate stronger demand for regional products. This can lead to more stable markets for farmers and a more engaged, health-conscious community.

- ✓ **LAUNCH A FOOD AS MEDICINE INITIATIVE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH KEY HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS:** Expand the work of Common Threads in Miami Beach through a collaboration with Mount Sinai Hospital to adopt the Food as Medicine initiative for medical students. This innovative program, which has already launched at HCA Florida Mercy Hospital in Miami, provides future healthcare professionals with essential nutrition education, equipping them to integrate healthy eating into patient care. By strengthening the connection between medicine and nutrition, this initiative promotes a more holistic approach to health and wellness within the community.



Places Overview

SCHOOLS | WORKSITES | RESTAURANTS | GROCERY STORES

The Blue Zones approach to community transformation is to optimize the places and spaces people spend the most time so that healthy choices are easier or even unavoidable. Large worksites and public schools are a focus because they are where most adults and children spend the majority of their waking lives. Administered and run by our locally hired Blue Zones Project Team, we deploy a Blue Zones Approval program for schools, worksites, restaurants, and grocery stores.



Over time, our objective is to get a minimum threshold of these places Blue Zones Approved™ or Blue Zones Certified®. **In Blue Zones communities, we typically have 70% or higher name awareness and recognition**, so a Blue Zones designation is highly coveted. By working collaboratively to make permanent and visible changes, healthy choices become easy choices in all the places where people live, work, learn, pray, and play.





Schools

Schools shape healthy habits for life. Whether it's adding physical activity, social-emotional support, or nutrition education, students and teachers see benefits such as increased motivation, decreased disciplinary problems, and a stronger school community.



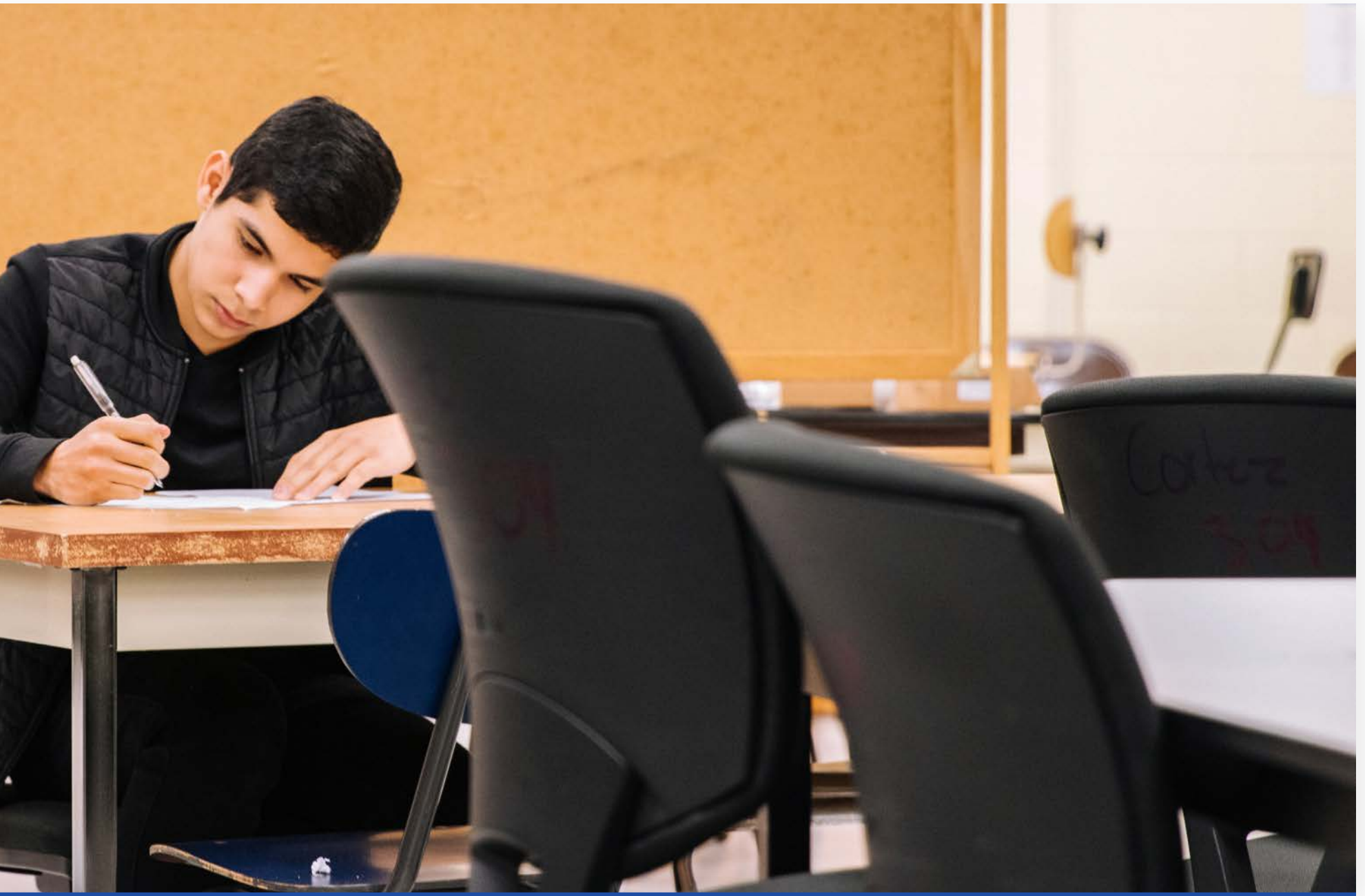
The Blue Zones team focuses on reaching a critical mass of best practices in order to ensure success in this critical learning environment.

Blue Zones Project in Schools

We administer a Blue Zones Project Approval Program that helps schools implement up to 30 evidence-based interventions that have been shown to improve students' well-being and performance. For a community to achieve certification, we require 50 percent of all public schools in the focus area to achieve certification.

During the school readiness assessment, meetings with stakeholders, including school leaders, building and district-level personnel, community engagement professionals, community organizations, and other representatives proved instrumental in capturing valuable information. The purpose of these conversations was to gain a better understanding of local school districts and determine their readiness for working with Blue Zones to revitalize school environments and better promote physical, social, and emotional health throughout the focus area.







Good habits adopted at an early age lead to healthier, happier, and more productive lives—an enormous cost savings in medical and social expenditures.





Benefits for Schools:

Our work in schools and recent success stories from Blue Zones Project communities

- ✓ **School performance and well-being:** Simple changes in the school environment can boost student health, attendance, focus, and performance. Activity breaks can improve on-task behavior in the classroom. Beverage policies can cut the consumption of excess calories that lead to children being overweight. Movement opportunities in and out of PE class can increase fitness.

 - K-5 obesity in the Redondo Beach Unified School District is down 64 percent since 2016 as a result of well-being programs implemented.
 - Students at Blue Zones Project Approved™ schools in Southwest Florida get an average of 225 more minutes of physical activity each week than students at other schools.
- ✓ **Economic and community vitality:**

 - Blue Zones Project-related initiatives in Cedar Falls, IA, helped earn a Physical Education Program (PEP) grant valued at \$1.3 million.
 - \$6.4 million in grant funding was secured to support a Safe Routes to School initiative in Fort Worth, Texas.
- ✓ **School-community connection:** School involvement sends a positive message and connects staff, parents, and students around a shared goal. Blue Zones Project social media, web, and community promotions fuel enthusiasm for healthy action.
- ✓ **Proactive position:** The Blue Zones Project School Pledge reflects the growing recognition that helping kids develop healthy habits affects lifelong well-being and healthcare costs. Participation puts you on the healthy side of government mandates and public opinion.



Schools Overview

The Miami-Dade County School District and the City of Miami Beach have both recognized the critical link between student well-being and academic success. The district and city have integrated physical, mental, and emotional health initiatives into school policies, programs, and community engagement efforts. These efforts aim to foster a supportive and inclusive educational environment and to equip students with the skills and resources necessary for lifelong well-being.



Current Well-Being Policies and Programs in Miami Beach Public Schools

Public schools in Miami Beach adhere to district-wide policies and programs that are led by the Miami-Dade County School (M-DCPS) District, the third largest school district in the United States with over 330,000 students enrolled. The public schools in Miami Beach are Miami Beach Senior High School, Miami Beach Nautilus Middle School, Miami Beach Fienberg Fisher K-8, North Beach Elementary School, Biscayne Beach Elementary School, and South Pointe Elementary School.

- ✓ **FOOD GUIDELINES:** Nutritional standards ensure that school meals meet federal guidelines, offering balanced, nutrient-rich options to support student growth and learning.
- ✓ **PHYSICAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS:** Many schools incorporate physical education programs that encourage activity with varied requirements across elementary, middle, and high schools and differences within public, private, and charter schools. The City of Miami Beach has provided over \$600,000 towards projects to improve spaces for physical activity including basketball court improvements at South Pointe Elementary, lighting for the basketball courts at Nautilus Middle School, and field improvements at Biscayne Elementary to transform underutilized fields into fully designed hoops and soccer facilities that will be open to the entire community when school isn't in session.
- ✓ **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS:** Schools identify and document process improvements on a school-by-school basis. For example, Miami Beach Senior High School's School Improvement Plan states that the school has a goal of "100 percent of teachers agreeing that their ideas are listened to and considered in the school improvement process." Incorporating strategies from Blue Zones Leading Well-Being program into teacher trainings can promote idea sharing and help schools develop strategies that advance overall student and staff well-being.

✓ **APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH:**

Mental health is a key focus for Miami Beach schools, and the City of Miami Beach goes above and beyond state requirements for mental health resources for students and staff. The Nurse Enhancement Initiative for Behavioral Health/Mental Health allows students at select Miami Beach public schools to access mental health support sessions with a licensed social worker stationed on campus. The city is working towards implementing a whole-child program to offer physical and mental health telewellness services to approximately 2,753 students at select Miami Beach public schools. In addition, M-DCPS has partnered with programs like Mindfulness Champion and Mindful Peer Exchange to provide mental health resources for students and teachers, and 50 teachers and principals will be attending the 2025 World Happiness Summit in Miami.

✓ **CITY-FUNDED ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS:**

The city provides free after-school programs across various public schools, focusing on diverse areas like music education and STEM topics. In July 2023, the city allocated nearly \$123,000 for these programs for the fiscal year 2024 and subsequent years.



Private and Charter Schools in Miami Beach

Miami Beach is also home to a network of private and charter schools that provide a diverse range of educational opportunities for students from early childhood through high school. There are ten private, one charter, and more than 20 private early childhood learning centers. Many of these schools offer specialized programs and curricula like religious learning. Public, private, and charter institutions combined serve nearly 12,000 students throughout the city.

The Unique Role of the City of Miami Beach in Supporting Schools

The City of Miami Beach plays a distinctive and proactive role in supporting schools in its community, going beyond traditional municipal responsibilities to enhance education, student well-being, and family engagement. Unlike many cities where school operations are managed solely by school districts, the City of Miami Beach actively partners with Miami-Dade County Public Schools to provide additional resources, funding, and innovative programs tailored to the needs of local students.

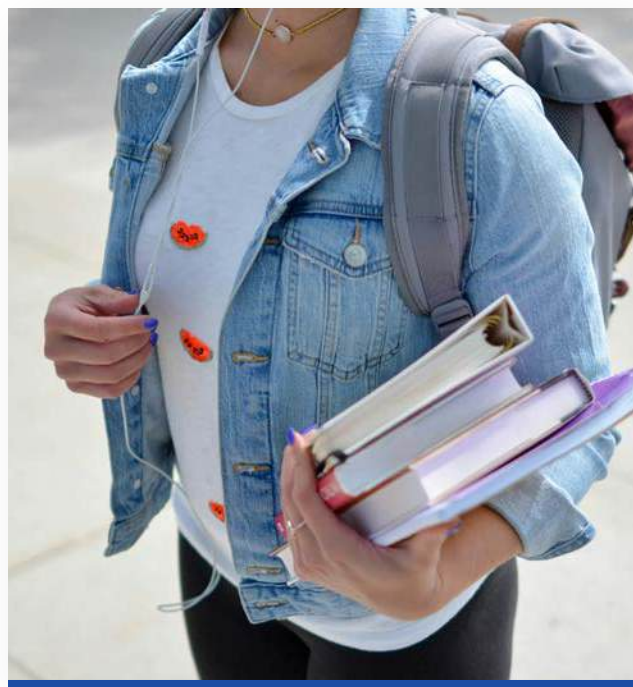
The city allocates \$2.7 million per year to spending on high-quality educational experiences for Miami Beach students, including programs like the No Place for Hate anti-bias and diversity training, a College Prep Program (free SAT/ACT preparation), the Common Threads Program (hands-on cooking and nutrition), a STEAM Plus Program (enrichment in science, technology, engineering, arts, and music), and more.

Miami Beach's unique approach to student well-being in its jurisdiction serves as an example of how local governments can take an active role in enhancing school environments, improving student performance and well-being outcomes, and building a more connected and supportive community.



A Blue Zones Approach to Well-Being in Miami Beach Schools

Blue Zones principles can be tailored to schools to enhance the well-being of students and staff, promote a culture of well-being, and support academic success. While many of these principles overlap with the good work that the city of Miami Beach is already doing in and with its public, private and charter schools, a more structured and evidence-based approach—with the support of a Blue Zones team—can yield even better results for all involved.



Blue Zones principles can be applied to Miami Beach schools as follows:

- ✓ **MOVE NATURALLY:** Miami Beach public schools adhere to the State of Florida’s physical education requirements—150 minutes weekly for elementary students, one class per day for one semester for middle school students, and one credit with the integration of health for high school students. Together with the City of Miami Beach, Blue Zones can develop a “Move Naturally” program that includes, among other things, ways for students to get in more natural movement throughout the day.
- ✓ **RIGHT OUTLOOK (PURPOSE AND BELONGING):** In Miami Beach schools, initiatives like Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs and college and career readiness efforts are designed to help students discover their passions, build resilience, and contribute meaningfully to society. This aligns with the Blue Zones principle of fostering a sense of purpose and belonging. Schools can inspire a sense of direction and personal goals by bringing Blue Zones Purpose Workshops to Miami Beach schools to encourage students and staff to find their reason for getting up each morning. Many schools that have partnered with Blue Zones also implement a student-led well-being club that focuses on hosting events to increase a sense of belonging among students.
- ✓ **EAT WISELY:** As part of the larger Miami-Dade County Public Schools District, Miami Beach public school students have access to free breakfast, lunch, snack, and after-school meal service (the latter for students enrolled in after-school enrichment programs) for the 2024-2025 school year. These meals come courtesy of the National School Lunch/School Breakfast Program and adhere to USDA guidelines. Blue Zones cooking and gardening programs can enhance the school nutrition programs and teach students about the importance of balanced eating habits. By offering nutritious meal options, promoting plant-based diets, and integrating nutrition education into the curriculum, schools can help students make informed food choices that support their health and academic performance.

- ✓ **CONNECT:** Strong social connections are vital to well-being, and Miami Beach schools prioritize family and community engagement through partnerships with local organizations, family involvement in school activities, and community events. These efforts mirror the Blue Zones emphasis on building strong social networks, which are essential for mental and emotional health. Encouraging peer connections and community involvement can strengthen relationships and create a sense of belonging among students, staff, and families.
- ✓ **DOWNSHIFT:** Recognizing the importance of mental health, Miami Beach schools incorporate mindfulness practices and stress-reducing strategies into the school day. Activities such as meditation, yoga, and quiet reflection time help students and staff manage stress and maintain balance, aligning with the Blue Zones focus on downshifting. Providing resources for mental health support, along with professional development on stress management for educators, can further promote a balanced, healthy environment conducive to learning and personal growth.



The Blue Zones Assessment and Miami Beach Schools

Students spend most of their waking lives at school, in after-school programming, and at youth recreation centers. A well-being approach to policy and programs in these arenas can give students a solid foundation for success at school and carry over into other areas of their lives.

During the Blue Zones Miami Beach Ignite assessment, Blue Zones subject matter experts (SMEs) conducted site visits and met with 20 school leaders to discover and explore current school well-being policies and to understand school leaders' approaches and attitudes towards the place of well-being in education.

The in-community assessment visit also included on-campus visits and meetings (as well as drive-by tours) with Miami Beach Senior High School, Miami Beach Fienberg Fisher K-8, and the Rabbi Alexander S. Gross Hebrew Academy.

Through these visits and conversations, the team identified the following strengths, challenges, and opportunities that may be applied to schools and youth engagement as a whole.

Strengths

✓ EXISTING PUBLIC HEALTH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

FRAMEWORK: Miami-Dade County schools benefit from a well-established public health infrastructure supported by the Florida Department of Health and various community partnerships. This framework includes comprehensive educational campaigns, data-driven health initiatives, and collaborations with local organizations to promote student well-being. Programs such as school-based health services, mental health support, and nutrition education contribute to fostering a culture of well-being. Additionally, initiatives like the Blue Zones Project could further enhance these efforts by creating school environments that prioritize long-term health, physical activity, and well-being through healthier school policies and community engagement opportunities.



✓ **ROBUST LOW-COST OR FREE AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS AND ENRICHMENT THROUGH MIAMI BEACH PARKS & RECREATION:**

In partnership with local schools, the city's Parks and Recreation Department offers a variety of after-school programs that provide academic support, sports, arts, and leadership development for students. These programs include free and low-cost STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) initiatives as well as music, visual arts, and performing arts, ensuring children and teens have access to diverse learning experiences in a safe, structured environment.

✓ **COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS & CAREER READINESS INITIATIVES:** Miami Beach partners with Miami-Dade County Public Schools to support the International Baccalaureate (IB) Graduate Certificate, offering students an internationally recognized curriculum that fosters academic excellence, critical thinking, and leadership skills. Additionally, the city collaborates with local businesses and organizations to provide paid internships for students attending local South Florida colleges, job training, and mentorship programs for high school students.

To further support post-secondary success, the City of Miami Beach funds scholarships to FIU and Miami Dade College for first generation Miami Beach Residents. The city also facilitates college-readiness workshops, scholarship resources, and financial aid guidance, ensuring students have the tools needed for higher education and career advancement.



✓ **ACCELERATED CAREER PATHWAY WITH COMMUNITY**

IMPACT: The City of Miami Beach funds all dual enrollment through FIU, Miami Dade College and University of Florida, including culinary college courses for high school students that lead to a minimum of twelve 12 college credits and pro start certifications. The competency-based culinary program allows students to train and earn a degree quickly, preparing them for careers in Miami Beach’s hospitality industry. Covering essential skills such as food safety, sanitation, leadership, and employability training, the program equips graduates for immediate employment in restaurants, hotels, and catering businesses. Beyond career readiness, it empowers students to introduce healthier dining options in local restaurants by applying their knowledge of ingredient selection, cooking techniques, and dietary trends. As these skilled professionals enter the workforce, they help shape a more health-conscious and innovative culinary scene, promoting fresh, locally sourced ingredients and enhancing Miami Beach’s restaurant industry with high-quality, nutritious menu offerings.

✓ **CITY-FUNDED MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN**

SCHOOLS: Recognizing the critical need for mental health support, the City of Miami Beach funds two full-time mental health professionals shared across six public schools and one shared across our neighboring municipal schools. This initiative ensures students have direct access to consistent, on-campus mental health services, filling gaps in countywide support. By taking a proactive approach, these professionals provide preventative care, early intervention, and guidance for families and educators, helping to address emotional well-being both at school and at home.

✓ **STRENGTHENING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS:**

Collaborating with the Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce Education Foundation provides valuable funding opportunities for health and well-being projects in local schools. With initiatives like the Fall Community School Projects, which have already contributed \$20,000 to enhance educational and environmental programs, these partnerships can support nutrition-focused initiatives, well-being programs, and sustainable food education. By leveraging these resources, schools can expand culinary and health-focused projects, such as community gardens, farm-to-table programs, and cooking workshops that promote nutritious eating habits. These partnerships not only enrich student learning experiences but also create a lasting impact on the well-being of the Miami Beach community.

✓ **TOBACCO FREE FLORIDA IN SCHOOLS:** The Tobacco Free Florida program plays a vital role in promoting a tobacco-free culture within Miami Beach schools by implementing youth-targeted prevention strategies and educational initiatives aimed at reducing vaping and tobacco use. Programs like Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) empower students to take an active role in advocacy and peer education, raising awareness about the dangers of tobacco and e-cigarette use. Schools also benefit from tobacco-free policies, cessation resources for students, and partnerships with community health organizations to ensure that youth receive the support they need to make informed, healthy choices. These efforts align with Miami Beach’s broader public health goals, reinforcing a commitment to a smoke-free and healthier learning environment.



Challenges

- ✓ **LIMITED NUMBER OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS LOCATED IN MIAMI BEACH:** While the Blue Zones Schools Well-Being Program offers a promising framework for promoting health and well-being in schools, implementing it within Miami Beach's schools presents a unique challenge because of the city's position within the larger Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) District. Miami Beach has a relatively small number of schools compared to the vast district, so implementing a city-specific initiative without broader district-wide adoption and support may be difficult.

One of the primary obstacles is policy alignment and administrative approval. Since M-DCPS governs all public schools in Miami Beach, major curriculum and well-being program changes require approval at the district level, where priorities may differ from those of the Miami Beach community. Securing district-wide buy-in for a program that directly impacts only a small subset of schools can be difficult, particularly when resources and initiatives are typically designed to serve the entire county.

Additionally, funding and resource allocation pose a challenge. Miami Beach may be willing to invest in well-being initiatives, but without district-wide implementation, securing dedicated funding and staffing for Blue Zones programs in just a few schools out of hundreds may not be seen as a priority.





- ✓ **LIMITED ENGAGEMENT IN SELF-DIRECTED STAFF WELL-BEING PROGRAMS DURING HIGH-STRESS PERIODS:** Staff well-being programs within the Miami-Dade County School District are accessible through the district's webpage, which offers resources and opportunities for individual participation. However, these programs require staff to take proactive steps to engage, which can be difficult during high-stress periods such as testing seasons, the start of the school year, or other times of peak workloads. The reliance on individual initiative limits participation, as staff members may struggle to find the time or energy to utilize the available resources. While the district provides information on its webpage, the lack of built-in, easy-access support systems during these high-pressure times reduces the effectiveness of the programs, when staff need well-being resources the most.

Opportunities

✓ **DEVELOP HEALTH AND WELL-BEING INFRASTRUCTURE:**

Blue Zones Project and Miami Beach can develop holistic health and well-being infrastructure that integrates physical, mental, and emotional health across all educational institutions—public, private, and early education. Given the city’s commitment to ensuring that every school, regardless of type, is included in the implementation of the well-being pledge, Blue Zones can play a crucial role in aligning the school experience with broader community efforts. This includes a Blue Zones

team member working with schools and community spaces to create healthy infrastructure that supports the Blue Zones pledge. For example, city-sponsored after-school programming, events, and parks and recreation spaces can promote organized physical activity, provide access to healthy food and beverages, and make health information available to youth. By integrating these elements, Blue Zones can help create a sustainable, citywide culture of health that extends far beyond the classroom and into every aspect of student life.



✓ **DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT UNIFIED WELL-BEING POLICIES AND PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH:**

Miami Beach's diverse student population presents a unique opportunity to enhance well-being across various cultural, religious, and ethnic communities. Blue Zones has developed inclusive and adaptable frameworks for unified well-being policies from working with communities across the U.S. that support all students. Given the small proportion of M-DCPS schools in Miami Beach, a district-wide implementation of Blue Zones programming may not be feasible. However, our expertise in cross-sector collaboration allows us to bridge the gap by facilitating partnerships between schools, local government agencies, healthcare providers, and community organizations. By aligning resources and efforts, we can integrate well-being initiatives at the school level, ensuring a cohesive approach to student health and engagement.

- ✓ **ENHANCING SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING:** Promote physical activity through school-wide initiatives such as walk-to-school programs, outdoor learning on good weather days, and integrating movement into lessons. Encourage hands-on well-being education with school gardens and hydroponic gardening grants for classrooms, combining physical activity with learning. Remove barriers like costs to ensure all students have access to fitness opportunities while addressing challenges like weather.



- ✓ **INTEGRATING MINDFUL MEDITATION FOR STUDENT WELL-BEING:** Adding mindful meditation to school schedules presents a valuable opportunity to help students manage stress and anxiety, improving focus, emotional resilience, and overall well-being. Short, guided meditation sessions before class, during transitions, or as part of physical education can provide students with essential coping strategies to navigate academic and personal challenges. By incorporating mindfulness practices into daily routines, schools can foster a calmer, more focused learning environment, equipping students with lifelong skills to enhance their mental health and emotional balance.



✔ **BLUE ZONES LEADERSHIP TRAINING AND COLLABORATION SPACES:** Collaborative leadership training can significantly enhance the school environment by fostering teamwork, inclusivity, and shared decision-making among educators, students, and administrators. For example, when teachers undergo training in collaborative leadership, they learn to work more effectively in professional learning communities, sharing best practices and supporting one another in lesson planning and student engagement. This creates a more dynamic and cohesive teaching environment that benefits students. Additionally,

student leadership programs that incorporate collaboration, such as peer mentoring or student councils, empower students to take an active role in school improvement initiatives, increasing their sense of ownership and responsibility. Administrators who embrace collaborative leadership can also build stronger relationships with staff, leading to improved morale and a more positive school culture. By encouraging open communication, shared goals, and collective problem-solving, collaborative leadership training creates a school environment where everyone feels valued and motivated to contribute to success.

✓ **BLUE ZONES PURPOSE WORKSHOPS FOR TEACHERS, STAFF, AND**

YOUTH: Blue Zones Purpose Workshops can greatly enhance the school environment and after-school programming for high school students, teachers, and staff by fostering a sense of meaning, well-being, and connection. These workshops help participants identify their personal strengths, passions, and values, encouraging them to set meaningful goals and engage in purposeful activities. For students, this can lead to greater motivation in academics and extracurriculars, as well as improved mental health and resilience. In after-school programs, workshops can inspire students to take part in service-learning projects, leadership initiatives, or career exploration opportunities that align with their purpose. For teachers and staff, the workshops promote a sense of fulfillment in their roles, reducing burnout and enhancing collaboration. By integrating purpose-driven discussions and activities, schools can create a more engaged, supportive, and positive environment where both students and educators thrive.

✓ **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH CULINARY EDUCATION:**

The culinary program and kitchen at Miami Beach Senior High School presents a unique opportunity to educate the community about healthy food options through catering events and cooking demonstrations. By utilizing the school's state-of-the-art facilities, students can showcase nutritious, locally sourced meals while gaining hands-on experience in large-scale food preparation and event catering. Other opportunities, such as after school nutritional and culinary skills programs, begin in elementary school and provide an opportunity for healthy food education beginning at a early age. Hosting interactive cooking demonstrations for local schools, community groups, and businesses can raise awareness about healthier eating habits, sustainable cooking practices, and the importance of balanced nutrition. These initiatives not only enhance students' real-world skills but also position them as leaders in promoting well-being within the Miami Beach community.





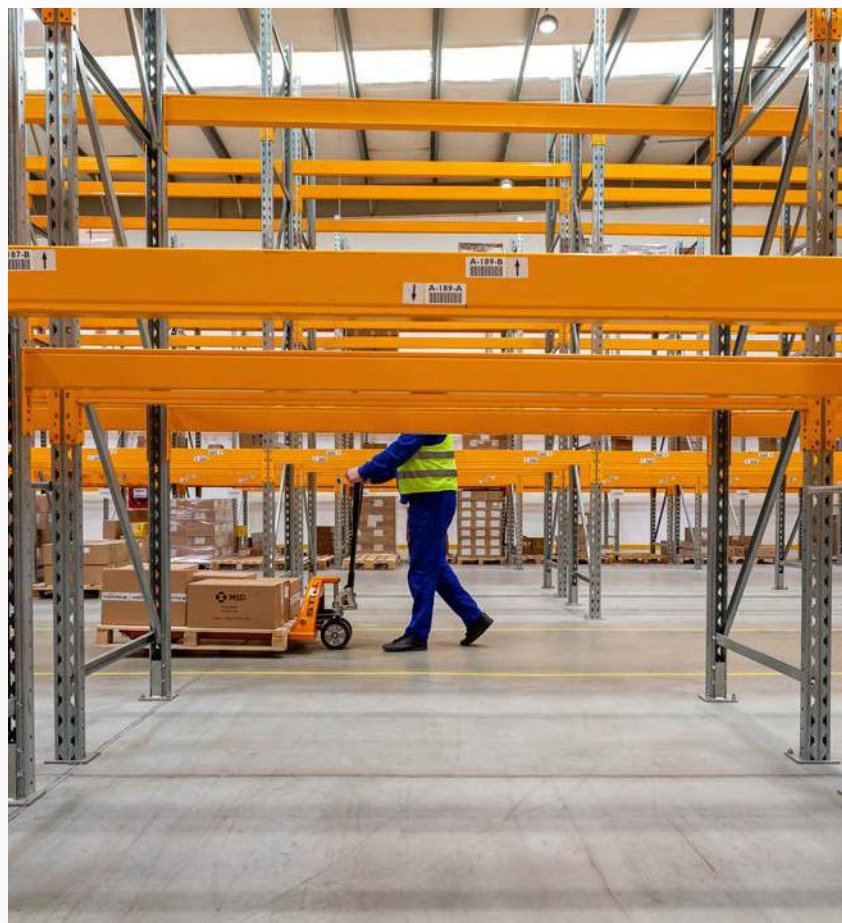
Worksites



When well-being is an imperative in the workplace, the business benefits. Most Americans spend nearly half their waking day on the job, making worksites a critical area when it comes to encouraging healthy habits. Workplaces significantly influence the health and well-being of individuals and communities because they are a central part of people's lives, shaping social, economic, and environmental factors that affect health including driving social determinants of health outcomes.

What the Blue Zones Worksite Pledge Does

To achieve Blue Zones Certification, we require either **50 percent of the largest workplaces or 25 percent of the workforce** to become Blue Zones Project Approved. We do not charge employers for our consultancy nor the approval process, but we do require employers to take the process seriously and follow through on their initiatives.



The Blue Zones Worksite Pledge is designed along five areas of best practice:



Leadership



Purpose



Physical Environment



Social Connection / Engagement



Policies and Benefits

To that end, our assessment involved identifying the top employers in Miami Beach and then meeting with a representative sample of those employers to assess their readiness.



Benefits to Employers

Recent worksite success stories from Blue Zones Project communities

Largest Health Insurer in Hawaii (HMSA):

- 2% reduction in smoking prevalence
- 3.5% increase in employees exercising 30+ minutes at least 3x's per week
- 1.9% increase in employees eating 5+ servings of fruits and vegetables per day

Large Grocery Chain in Hawaii (Foodland):

- 72% report of being less sedentary per day
- 46% participation in volunteer experience through work
- 5.5% decrease in employee turnover

Large Hospital System in Southwest Florida (NCH):

- 34.1% positive shift in BMI
- 2.8% improvement in social well-being score
- 17.6% positive shift in blood pressure



According to research published in *Frontiers in Psychology* and *Human Resource Management*, employees who are in good physical, mental, and emotional health are more likely to deliver optimal performance in the workplace.





The Blue Zones Worksite Pledge Highlights:

- ✓ Greater quantification of well-being and associated benefits
- ✓ Expansion of programs to improve financial well-being
- ✓ Focus on social connectivity and purpose
- ✓ Expansion of commute options
- ✓ Focus on the Life Radius around the worksite to improve healthy eating options

Our worksite program provides free purpose workshops and moais—a process by which we build employee social networks around walking and healthy eating.

Throughout the assessment period, we met with leading employers and prominent health and well-being leadership. These conversations informed the worksite opportunity analysis that follows.



MOVEMENT INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- ✓ Walking paths and trails created around worksites
- ✓ Mandatory 15-minute physical activity break for all employees
- ✓ Walking Wednesday program
- ✓ Walking Meetings and Standing Desks
- ✓ Physical activity or stretch breaks

Role of Workplaces in Individual and Community Health

Workplaces play a critical role in shaping both individual and community well-being because they influence key social, economic, and environmental factors that drive health outcomes. Many Americans spend nearly half of their waking hours at work, so businesses are well-positioned to help employees foster healthy habits and positively impact the lives of their workforces.

Miami Beach businesses have an opportunity to influence the well-being of their workers by addressing access to healthcare, opportunities for social connection, and sense of purpose among their employees. Thoughtful workplace policies, inclusive cultures, and proactive health initiatives can improve not only employee health and productivity but also the well-being of the broader Miami Beach community.



Key areas where Miami Beach businesses can make a significant impact on community well-being outcomes include:

- ✓ **ACCESS TO HEALTH RESOURCES:** Comprehensive health benefits and well-being programs improve access to preventive care, chronic disease management, and mental health services.
- ✓ **SOCIAL CONNECTIONS:** Workplaces can help foster meaningful social interactions among coworkers, reducing feelings of isolation and enhancing social support networks, which have a positive impact on mental and emotional well-being.
- ✓ **EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT:** Training programs and tuition assistance promote continued education and improve health literacy, fostering lifelong healthy behaviors and encouraging career growth.
- ✓ **ENVIRONMENT AND SAFETY:** Safe work environments and environmental sustainability initiatives improve employee health and benefit communities through reduced pollution and enhanced infrastructure.
- ✓ **SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT:** Inclusive workplaces and community engagement initiatives can address systemic inequities in well-being and strengthen social cohesion.



Overview

Miami Beach boasts several strengths that make it an attractive destination for businesses. Its strategic location as a gateway between the United States and Latin America provides significant advantages for international trade, tourism, and business development. Miami Beach's tourism and hospitality sector is thriving and the city draws millions of visitors each year. This creates high demand for products and services in the hospitality, retail, entertainment, and real estate sectors. The region's diverse economy also includes activity in key sectors like finance, technology, healthcare, and the arts. Miami Beach's unique reputation as a cultural and creative hub, with events like Art Basel and a growing arts community, makes it an exciting place for cross-sector innovation and collaboration. The favorable tax environment, including no state income tax, also contributes to the city's business-friendly atmosphere.



However, businesses in Miami Beach also face several challenges. The high cost of living and rising real estate prices can make it difficult for businesses to retain talent and keep operations affordable. Traffic congestion and aging infrastructure present logistical challenges, affecting business efficiency and accessibility. Miami Beach is also vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels and extreme weather events, which require businesses to plan for environmental risks.

Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities for businesses in Miami Beach. The city's vulnerability to climate change presents opportunities for businesses focused on sustainability, renewable energy, and environmental innovation. Miami Beach's increasing focus on becoming a tech hub, along with investments in innovation districts and incubators, creates a favorable environment for startups and established tech companies. The city's thriving cultural and creative industries also offer opportunities for businesses in design, fashion, film, and entertainment. The growing emphasis on health and well-being presents a market for businesses in fitness, nutrition, mental health services, and wellness tourism.

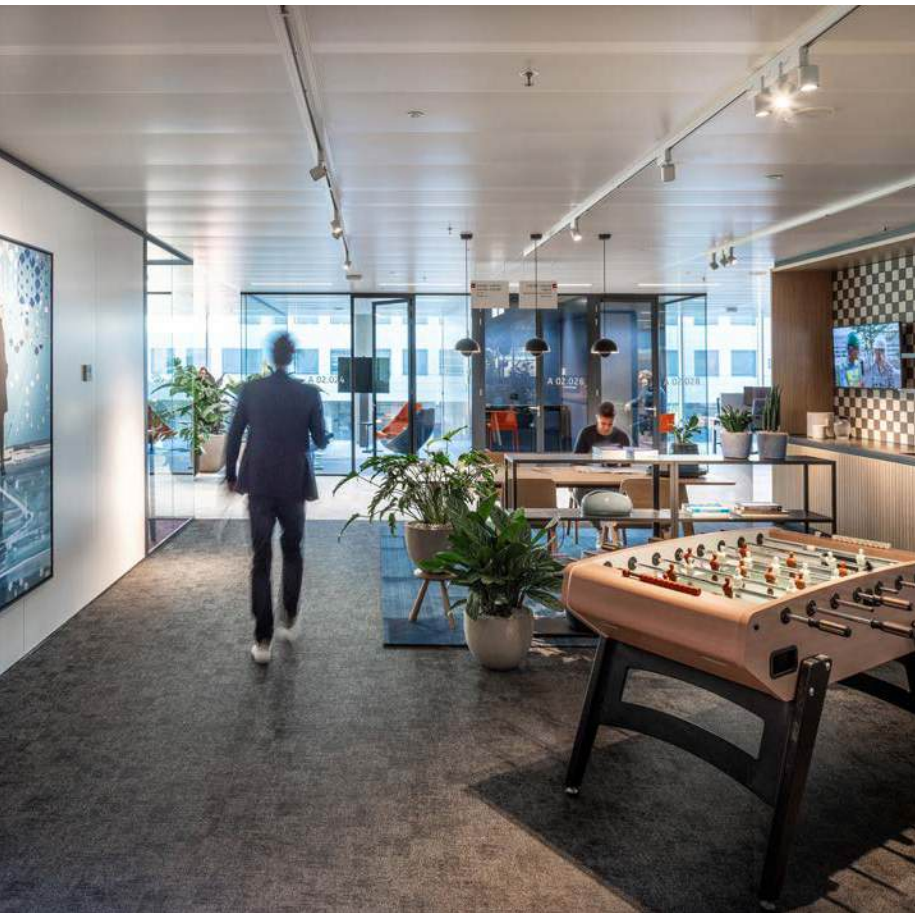
Enhancing Employee Well-being and Community Health

Worksites in Miami Beach can support physical and mental health through well-being programs and flexible work arrangements, both of which can enhance employee satisfaction and productivity. Businesses can also engage in corporate social responsibility initiatives to strengthen local infrastructure and social capital and benefit both their workforce and the broader community.

Blue Zones Project Workplace Strategies and Certification

A Blue Zones Project partnership requires 50 percent of the largest workplaces in an area to become Blue Zones Project Approved. This pledge ensures that businesses contribute meaningfully to the well-being of employees and the broader community.

The Blue Zones Project Worksite Pledge is not just a workplace initiative—it is a transformative step toward creating a healthier, happier community by directly addressing employee needs. Blue Zones Workplace Certification programs drive workplace engagement and have been proven to result in higher productivity and reduced turnover rates.



Blue Zones Project Worksite Outcomes

Large Employer, NCH Healthcare System, (Naples, Florida)

- ✓ **6 year** initiative
- ✓ **4.9 point jump in** overall well-being among employees
- ✓ **54% decrease** in healthcare expenditures over six years
- ✓ **\$27 million reduction** in self-insured medical claims
- ✓ **Nearly 60%** of all employees pledged participation
- ✓ **40% decline** in lost work days due to injury



The Blue Zones Worksite Pledge emphasizes actions that align with community health and well-being principles:

- ✓ **QUANTIFICATION OF WELL-BEING:** Tracking well-being outcomes and their benefits enables workplaces to make data-driven decisions that promote health and reduce disparities. This fosters a culture of accountability and continuous improvement. Blue Zones promotes the use of regular surveys to gauge employee engagement and satisfaction with the workplace as well as self-reported health risks. These surveys can help establish health and well-being programs that are most impactful for employees.
- ✓ **FINANCIAL WELL-BEING PROGRAMS:** By expanding financial well-being initiatives through partnership with local banks and financial services, workplaces can alleviate financial stress—a major driver of poor mental and physical health. Programs can be designed to incorporate budgeting and long-term savings strategies to meet employees where they need support in their financial well-being.
- ✓ **SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY AND PURPOSE:** Focusing on social interaction and fostering a sense of purpose directly combats isolation and mental health challenges, creating stronger, more connected communities. Blue Zones implements moais across all worksites. The “moai” concept originates from the blue zones region of Okinawa, Japan. The term means “meeting for a common purpose,” which is most likely for shared hobbies or interests. By creating structured social meet ups with small groups of employees, employers foster an increased sense of social well-being throughout the worksite.

✓ **EXPANDED COMMUTING OPTIONS:**

Providing diverse, sustainable transportation options improves access to workplaces while reducing environmental impacts. Worksites can offer alternate transportation incentives to encourage walking, biking, or shared-ride pools to help manage commuting concerns.

✓ **HEALTHIER LIFE RADIUS AROUND WORKSITES:**

Enhancing access to healthy eating options within the vicinity of worksites empowers employees to make nutritious choices, supporting their overall health while benefiting the surrounding community. Blue Zones encourages partnerships between approved worksites and restaurants to benefit employees looking for healthier options and local restaurants hoping to increase business.

By taking this process seriously, workplaces can achieve Blue Zones Certification and contribute to positive community well-being outcomes. A commitment to these initiatives builds healthier, more resilient, and happier communities, and solidifies the role of workplaces as key drivers of systemic change.



Strengths

✓ THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH'S CURRENT INITIATIVES AND BENEFITS FOR CITY EMPLOYEES:

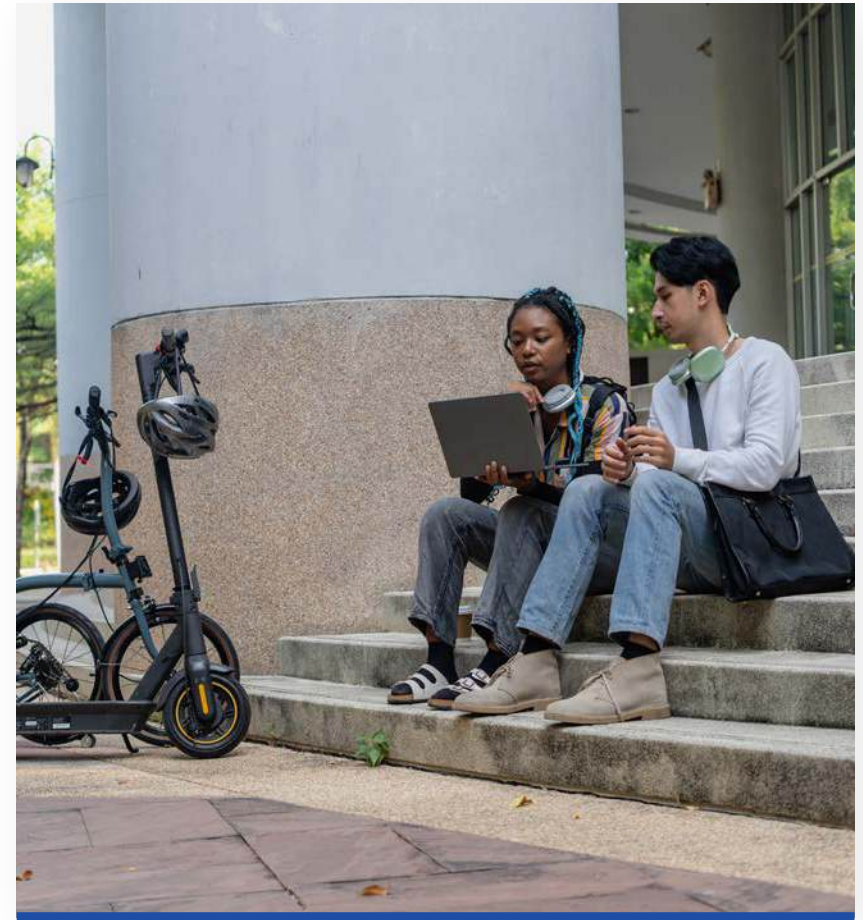
The City of Miami Beach is committed to fostering a holistic well-being culture that enhances city employees' physical, mental, and emotional health:

- **Digital Wellness Incentives:** Employees can participate in digital wellness challenges that offer financial rewards and impact insurance premiums, reinforcing a proactive approach to health.
- **Exercise & Fitness Programs:** The city offers instructional exercise courses, providing opportunities for physical activity, though improvements in accessibility and scheduling could enhance participation.
- **Hybrid Work Benefits for Some:** Flexible work arrangements have improved the work-life balance of city employees who can take advantage of the benefit, which has contributed to employee retention and well-being. Hybrid work reduces commuting stress, supports mental health, and allows employees to manage their schedules more effectively. However, given the nature of the work done in certain city departments, not everyone can participate in this benefit.

- ✓ **COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY EFFORTS:** Miami Beach hotels have strong partnerships with local organizations and sustainability networks, creating a holistic approach to well-being. Hotels like The Betsy Hotel and Carillon Miami Wellness Resort collaborate with the Blue Zones Project to promote longevity and healthy living, while the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau (GMCVB) partners with Green Key Certification, demonstrating a commitment to environmental sustainability. The Carillon Miami Wellness Resort and The Betsy Hotel set industry standards by incorporating wellness-focused experiences for both guests and employees, including mental and physical health initiatives.



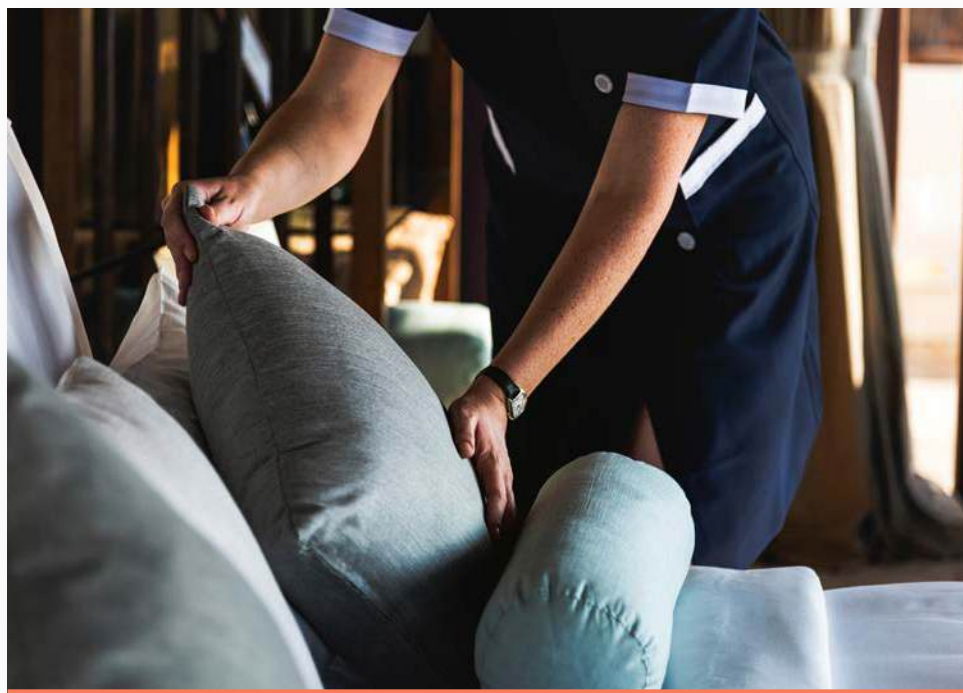
- ✓ **COMPREHENSIVE WELL-BEING APPROACH:** Miami Beach hotels integrate well-being into every aspect of their operations, addressing physical, emotional, and mental health. The Carillon Miami Wellness Resort offers integrative medicine programs and organic, locally sourced wellness menus, while employees benefit from volunteer time off (VTO) for well-being and environmental initiatives. Hotels also support workplace well-being with access to fitness centers and innovative wellness technologies, enhancing employee satisfaction and well-being.
- ✓ **EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMS:** Many hotels prioritize work-life balance by offering programs that support employees' physical and mental health. The Betsy Hotel provides Volunteer Time Off (VTO), allowing employees to participate in community and environmental projects, while the Carillon Miami Wellness Resort ensures access to wellness facilities and fitness programs. Employee recognition is also a key focus, with Carillon Miami Wellness Resort celebrating milestones like birthdays and anniversaries to foster a positive work culture and improve retention.
- ✓ **BRAND ALIGNMENT AND COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY:** Hotels such as The Betsy and Carillon align their brands with global health and environmental goals, positioning themselves as well-being and sustainability leaders. The Betsy Hotel emphasizes mind-body-soul wellness experiences, while the Carillon tailors wellness options to individual needs. Community involvement is also a priority, with hotels sponsoring wellness-focused events and collaborating with nonprofits to promote public health, such as The Betsy's Global Wellness Day initiatives.



- ✓ **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** Miami Beach hotels actively participate in wellness-focused events, enhancing their reputation as well-being leaders. Additionally, partnerships with local institutions, such as Miami Beach Senior High School's sustainable culinary training programs, further integrate well-being education into the community, fostering a culture of health and sustainability beyond hotel walls.

Challenges

✔ **LACK OF FACILITIES:** Many workplaces do not provide essential well-being amenities such as showers, locker rooms, or designated spaces for exercise and relaxation. Without these facilities, employees may be discouraged from engaging in physical activities before or during work hours, fearing discomfort, inconvenience, or lack of proper hygiene. For example, someone who bikes to work or exercises during lunch may find it impractical to continue their routine if they cannot freshen up afterward. This lack of infrastructure creates a significant barrier to participation in workplace well-being initiatives.



✔ **ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS:** Miami Beach's consistently high temperatures and humidity levels make outdoor physical activities less appealing during peak temperatures. Employees may avoid outdoor workouts or well-being events due to discomfort, excessive sweating, or health risks such as heat exhaustion. Additionally, due to the high cost of living in Miami Beach proper, many employees endure long commutes, leaving them fatigued and less likely to participate in after-work well-being programs. As a result, engagement in health initiatives remains low, particularly for those who rely on public transportation or have lengthy drives home.

✔ **RIGID WORK SCHEDULES:** Many employees, especially those in shift-based roles or high-demand professions, struggle to participate in well-being programs due to inflexible work hours. Strict schedules make it difficult to attend well-being activities that occur during standard business hours or require a significant time commitment. For instance, workers in healthcare, hospitality, or customer service often have little control over their schedules, preventing them from accessing well-being resources when they are most needed. Without flexible options, such as staggered breaks or on-demand well-being sessions, participation rates will remain low.



✓ **SELF-DRIVEN NATURE OF PROGRAMS:**

Many workplace wellness programs, like the City of Miami Beach employee wellness program, rely heavily on individual motivation rather than being seamlessly integrated into the organization's culture. Employees are expected to take the initiative to participate in activities, but without structured support, engagement tends to be inconsistent. When well-being is treated as an optional, personal responsibility rather than an organizational commitment, employees may struggle to prioritize it amidst their other professional and personal obligations.

- ✓ **HYBRID WORK CHALLENGES:** While remote and hybrid work models have improved work-life balance for many employees, they have also diminished opportunities for spontaneous social interactions that often contribute to workplace well-being engagement. In-person activities such as team fitness challenges, group well-being sessions, and casual movement breaks are less effective when employees are scattered across different locations. Additionally, remote workers may struggle with setting boundaries between work and personal well-being, leading to increased sedentary behavior and isolation. Companies must find ways to promote well-being that cater to both in-office and remote employees to maintain engagement.



✓ **TRANSPORTATION ISSUES:** Traffic congestion and limited commuting options make it challenging for employees to participate in workplace well-being programs, particularly those held before or after work hours. Lengthy or stressful commutes can leave employees feeling drained, reducing their motivation to stay for well-being activities at the end of the day. Public transportation limitations may further complicate participation, especially if programs are scheduled at times when transit services are infrequent. Without solutions such as virtual options, flexible scheduling, or well-being activities incorporated into the workday, many employees will continue to face barriers to participation.

✓ **EMPLOYEE COMMUTES AND HOUSING ISSUES:** The high cost of living in Miami Beach makes housing unaffordable for many employees, affecting retention and overall satisfaction. Many workers face housing instability or high commuting expenses, limiting their ability to participate in well-being initiatives. Additionally, limited mass transit options and heavy traffic congestion create transportation barriers, leading to long, stressful commutes. Employees who spend over an hour commuting daily may struggle to engage with well-being programs, further exacerbating the issue.



✓ **COMMUNICATION AND PERCEPTIONS:** Shifting Miami Beach's long-standing image as a party destination to a well-being focused community remains a challenge. Despite efforts to promote health and sustainability, many still associate the area with nightlife and tourism. Hotels like The Betsy Hotel face difficulties in repositioning their brands, requiring targeted messaging and storytelling to highlight their wellness-focused initiatives and reshape public perceptions.

✓ **WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH STRESSORS:** Employees balancing multiple jobs or enduring long commutes often experience significant mental health strain, impacting their ability to engage in well-being programs. Carillon Miami Wellness Resort and The Betsy Hotel offer stress-reducing benefits, but external pressures such as job insecurity and immigration-related stress remain major hurdles. While well-being programs can help, systemic issues like under-compensation, long work hours, and job uncertainty continue to undermine employee well-being.

Opportunities

During the Blue Zones Miami Beach Ignite assessment, Blue Zones experts met with approximately ten leaders in the business and hospitality community and identified the following strengths, challenges, and opportunities:

- ✔ **ESTABLISH WELL-BEING HUBS IN MIAMI BEACH:** Create centralized well-being hubs in key locations across Miami Beach, allowing multiple worksites in the same area to share access to well-being resources, workshops, and community events. These hubs can serve as dedicated spaces for fitness classes, mental health workshops, nutrition seminars, and stress management programs, making well-being more accessible to a broader workforce population. By collaborating with local businesses, healthcare providers, and well-being experts, these hubs can offer on-site health screenings, guided meditation sessions, ergonomic assessments, and group fitness activities. Establishing these shared well-being spaces fosters a sense of community, promotes cross-company networking, and enhances overall employee engagement in well-being initiatives.



- ✔ **CREATE A WORKPLACE WELL-BEING NETWORK:** Provide employees with accessible and engaging health and well-being opportunities through a strong workplace well-being network developed by key local partners. For example, the Miami Beach Hotels Association and local fitness studios can provide discounted gym memberships, access to well-being workshops, and group fitness classes for various fitness levels. Employees can benefit from guided group activities such as yoga on the beach, boot camps, and corporate-sponsored running clubs. Additionally, engaging with healthcare providers, nutritionists, and well-being experts will allow organizations to offer on-site or virtual educational sessions covering essential topics like balanced nutrition, mental resilience, and chronic disease prevention. Employers can host quarterly well-being fairs featuring health screenings, cooking demonstrations, and stress management workshops to encourage active participation. By embedding well-being within the company's culture and making it easily accessible, employees are more likely to stay engaged and benefit from long-term health improvements.

✓ **INTEGRATION OF HOLISTIC WELL-BEING APPROACHES:**

True well-being extends beyond physical health, requiring a comprehensive approach that includes mental, emotional, and financial well-being. Organizations should develop stress management programs, employee assistance programs (EAPs), and financial well-being resources to support employees in all aspects of life. To create a supportive work environment, companies can implement on-site meditation rooms or quiet spaces where employees can take short breaks to decompress and practice mindfulness. These designated areas can be equipped with calming elements such as soft lighting, guided meditation apps, and aromatherapy to promote relaxation. Mental health awareness campaigns and supervisor training should also be implemented to reduce stigma and encourage open conversations about mental health. Companies can empower employees to prioritize their mental well-being and seek support with workshops on emotional resilience, burnout prevention, and work-life balance.

✓ **SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING PROGRAMS:**

A sense of community and social connection is essential for sustaining long-term well-being habits, and moais—small, consistent social support groups based on shared interests—can create accountability and camaraderie among employees. These groups can focus on walking, biking, yoga, or even healthy meal preparation, encouraging members to support each other in achieving their well-being goals. To further enhance engagement, organizations can introduce team-building well-being challenges that integrate movement, nutrition, and mental well-being into daily routines. These challenges might include step-tracking competitions, mindfulness challenges, or healthy cooking contests, with incentives such as gift cards, additional paid time off (PTO), or well-being-related prizes. By making well-being interactive and socially engaging, employees are more likely to participate and sustain healthy habits.



✓ OPTIMIZED TRANSPORTATION & COMMUTING SOLUTIONS:

Commute-related stress can significantly impact employee well-being. Implementing bike-sharing programs, expanded water taxi routes, and carpool incentives can provide employees with alternative transportation methods that reduce congestion, encourage movement, and promote a healthier lifestyle. To further incentivize participation in health-promoting activities, employers can offer subsidized transit passes or ride-share credits for employees who actively engage in workplace well-being programs. For example, Miami-Dade County residents whose annual income is between \$23,475 and \$31,300 can ride Metrobus and Metrorail for half-price with the Commuter-Reduced Fare EASY Card. However, in speaking to community residents, many were unaware that these programs exist. By making commuting more efficient and health-conscious, companies can alleviate stress while simultaneously promoting environmentally friendly alternatives.

- ✓ **FLEXIBLE WORK & WELLNESS INTEGRATION:** Rigid work schedules often make it difficult for employees to engage in well-being activities. Introducing flexible start and stop times allows employees to balance their personal and professional lives while maintaining productivity. Employees could choose to start their workday earlier or later based on their well-being routines, such as attending a morning yoga session or taking an extended break for physical activity. Integrating “walking meetings” or designated well-being breaks into the workday can encourage employees to stay active without disrupting productivity. Teams can hold meetings while walking outdoors or take short, structured movement breaks to counteract prolonged sitting. These small changes can lead to improved focus, creativity, and overall well-being in the workplace.

Hotels can offer flexible work schedules while ensuring 24/7 service coverage by:

- ✓ Implementing shift bidding and preference systems, allowing employees to bid for or indicate preferred shifts
- ✓ Rotating and split shifts, distributing morning, evening, and overnight shifts fairly or allowing split shifts for work-life balance
- ✓ Implementing compressed workweeks, offering longer shifts (e.g., four 10-hour days) to provide more days off
- ✓ Offering part-time roles and job sharing, enabling employees to work reduced hours or split a full-time position
- ✓ Offering flexible start and end times, staggering shift options to accommodate commutes or personal commitments
- ✓ Having on-call and float staff, maintaining a backup team for sick calls or peak demand
- ✓ Utilizing self-scheduling tools, using software that lets employees swap shifts and request time off, paid time off, and mental health days
- ✓ Offering PTO and wellness days to support employee well-being

These strategies help maintain smooth operations while improving employee satisfaction, reducing turnover, and enhancing work-life balance.



- ✓ **COMPREHENSIVE LEADERSHIP TRAINING:** A well-being-oriented culture starts at the top. Educating leadership on prioritizing and modeling well-being behaviors ensures that it becomes a core part of an organization's values rather than an afterthought. Leaders can be trained to recognize signs of burnout, encourage participation in well-being programs, and integrate well-being into everyday workflows. By implementing well-being leadership training, executives and managers can learn how to create a supportive environment where employees feel empowered to prioritize their health. This could include hosting leadership well-being retreats, providing mental health first-aid training, and setting up mentorship programs where senior leaders guide employees in maintaining a balanced and healthy work-life dynamic. When leaders actively participate in and advocate for well-being initiatives, employees are more likely to follow suit, fostering a long-lasting culture of well-being within the organization.
- ✓ **EXPANDING WELL-BEING OFFERINGS:** Hotels like the Carillon Miami Wellness Resort are enhancing their wellness-focused dining options by introducing Blue Zones menu items inspired by longevity principles from regions like Sardinia and Japan. Expanding these offerings through well-being retreats, fitness programs, and spa services—such as meditation and yoga retreats—can strengthen Miami Beach's reputation as a health-conscious destination. Leveraging social media and partnerships with wellness influencers can further amplify awareness and attract health-focused travelers.

- ✓ **INCREASED SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS:** Miami Beach hotels have the opportunity to become leaders in environmental sustainability by expanding their commitment to initiatives like Green Key Certification to improve resource efficiency. Hotels such as The Betsy Hotel and Carillon Miami Wellness Resort have already made progress in this area but can further integrate sustainability into their well-being programs by emphasizing eco-friendly amenities and locally-sourced organic products. Collaborating with local government agencies and nonprofits can help create a more sustainable and health-focused tourism ecosystem, reinforcing Miami Beach's growing reputation for well-being and sustainability.



- ✓ **LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY FOR WELL-BEING:** Innovations like touchless wellness technology provide an opportunity to enhance health offerings while maintaining convenience and safety. Expanding the use of digital tools—such as virtual wellness coaching, health tracking, and telemedicine services—can personalize well-being experiences for guests and employees. Integrating these technologies into daily operations fosters a healthier environment and aligns with modern well-being trends.
- ✓ **PROMOTING HEALTH THROUGH COMMUNITY EVENTS:** Hosting or sponsoring well-being focused events, such as Global Wellness Day, allows hotels to engage with both locals and visitors while showcasing their commitment to health and well-being. Partnerships with initiatives like the Blue Zones Project and health organizations can expand these efforts through public health campaigns and joint well-being programs, positively impacting the broader community.
- ✓ **EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION:** Addressing challenges like housing affordability and transportation barriers can improve employee retention and satisfaction, creating a more stable and engaged workforce. Providing affordable housing subsidies or shuttle services can ease commuting burdens, allowing employees to participate more fully in well-being initiatives. Expanding wellness benefits—such as stipends, flexible wellness hours, and mental health days—can further enhance employee well-being, ultimately leading to better service and guest experiences.





Restaurants

According to the 2024 U.S. Foods American Dining Habits Report, on average, Americans eat out nearly five times a month, up from three times a month in 2023. The way a menu is designed, how food items are prepared and described, and the restaurant environment itself are all factors that Blue Zones takes into consideration when working with this important group of business owners during a community transformation.



Our goal is to ensure a critical mass of restaurants offer healthy options for residents, while making sure the restaurant keeps its unique flavor and flair. By adding plant-based menu options, offering smaller portions, and swapping out a few recipes, restaurants can see major returns.

The Blue Zones Restaurant Pledge promotes nationally recognized best practices including:



Increasing Plant-Based Entrées



Offerings Healthier Side Dishes and Portion Sizes



Staff Education and Awareness



Improved the Work Environment



Enhancing Food Preparation and Presentation



Driving Healthy Choices in All Neighborhoods

In Fort Worth, there was a Blue Zones Project Approved restaurant in every neighborhood, including historically excluded areas. Our neighborhood teams had success by creating strong relationships with neighborhood gatekeepers like faith-based leaders or neighborhood association directors. With the right trusted community partners, the Blue Zones teams were then able to make connections with restaurant owners who were willing to try offering healthy options on their menus.



A recent study of the nation's top 50 chain restaurants found that 86 percent of kids' menu items are too high in calories, 55 percent are too high in saturated fat, and 66 percent are too high in sodium. Approximately two thirds of parents surveyed said they are willing to pay extra for nutritious food when dining out, compared to 41 percent of non-parents.



Blue Zones Project Approved restaurants tend to save money on food costs and attract more business through customers who want to eat healthier.



Findings from the International Food Information Council Food and Health Survey indicate that people who follow a plant-focused diet more than doubled, increasing from 12.1% in 2019 to 25.8% in 2022.



“Becoming a Blue Zones Project Approved restaurant has positively impacted our business. Although Taco Heads has always promoted clean and healthy living, we now have a respected organization that further confirms our dedication to health and wellness.”

- Sarah Castillo, Taco Heads Restaurant Owner - Fort Worth, Texas

Benefits to Restaurants:

- ✓ Attract new diners by offering healthier options
- ✓ Increase overall revenue with sales of healthy food and beverage options
- ✓ Community recognition for Blue Zones Project Approved status
- ✓ Promotion through Blue Zones social media and website



Overview

Miami Beach boasts a dynamic and diverse restaurant industry, reflecting its status as a global tourist destination and a melting pot of cultures. The city's culinary scene offers something for everyone, from high-end fine dining establishments to casual beachfront cafes and local hidden gems. With its vibrant energy, stunning waterfront views, and international appeal, Miami Beach has become a hub for food enthusiasts seeking unique and memorable dining experiences.

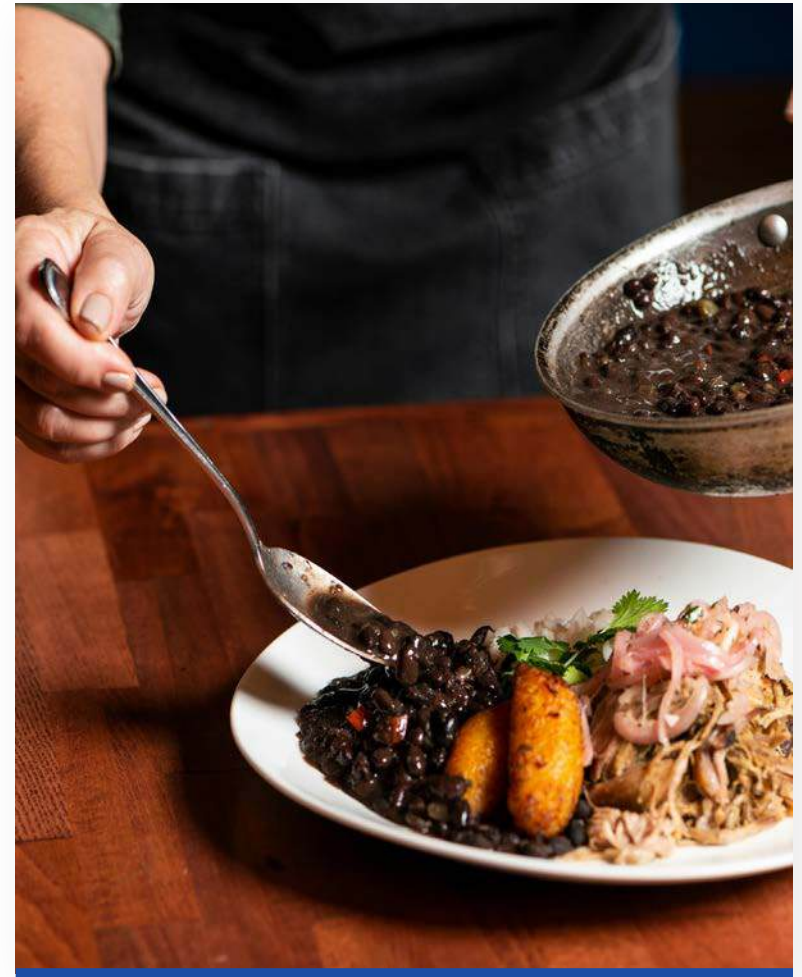


The restaurant industry in Miami Beach is heavily influenced by the city’s multicultural population, with flavors and cuisines from Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, and Asia all prominently featured among area restaurants. Cuban, Peruvian, Brazilian, Italian, and Japanese cuisines are particularly popular options, alongside fusion concepts that blend global flavors into innovative dishes. Iconic neighborhoods like South Beach and Sunset Harbour are home to trendy eateries and celebrity chef-owned restaurants, while smaller neighborhoods feature authentic, family-owned establishments.

Health-conscious dining is a part of the Miami Beach restaurant scene, catering to the city’s active and wellness-focused residents and visitors. These restaurants emphasize fresh, locally sourced ingredients and offer organic, plant-based, gluten-free, and sustainable menu options. These offerings align with the city’s growing emphasis on healthy living and environmental sustainability.

The local restaurant industry also thrives on its connection to Miami Beach’s vibrant nightlife and entertainment culture. Many establishments double as bars or lounges, offering creative cocktails, live music, and a lively atmosphere that attracts both locals and tourists. Rooftop venues and alfresco setups further enhance the dining experience, capitalizing on the city’s year-round tropical climate.

However, the Miami Beach restaurant industry faces several challenges, including high operating costs, staffing shortages, extreme differences in restaurant traffic during the tourist season and the off-season. Despite these hurdles, Miami Beach restaurants continue to adapt through innovative concepts, diverse offerings, and a commitment to delivering exceptional dining experiences.



The restaurant industry in Miami Beach will continue to be a cornerstone of the city’s cultural and economic identity, blending culinary creativity, international influence, and a commitment to health and sustainability. It remains a vibrant and evolving sector that is well-positioned for impactful involvement in a Blue Zones community transformation initiative.

Strengths

✓ FOCUS ON FRESH, LOCALLY SOURCED INGREDIENTS:

Many Miami Beach restaurants prioritize using fresh, locally-sourced ingredients in their dishes. This commitment to quality ensures that diners have access to meals prepared with seasonal fruits, vegetables, and seafood, which are not only healthier but also support local farmers and sustainable practices. Restaurants like Pura Vida emphasize organic and locally-sourced produce, catering to health-conscious diners.

✓ ABUNDANCE OF HEALTH-FOCUSED MENUS: The city's

culinary scene offers a wide variety of restaurants with health-conscious menus, including options for organic, gluten-free, vegan, and plant-based diets. Establishments like Under the Mango Tree and Full Bloom Vegan specialize in wholesome, nutrient-rich meals, making it easy for residents and visitors to find dishes that align with their dietary preferences and well-being goals.

✓ CULTURAL DIVERSITY PROMOTING HEALTHY CUISINES:

Miami Beach's multicultural restaurant landscape features cuisines that naturally emphasize fresh and nutritious ingredients. For example, Mediterranean eateries offer heart-healthy options like hummus, grilled fish, and salads, while Latin American restaurants highlight lean proteins, fresh herbs, and tropical fruits. This diversity provides a wide range of flavorful and healthy choices for diners.



✓ INTEGRATION OF WELLNESS TRENDS: Restaurants

in Miami Beach are quick to embrace wellness trends, featuring menu items like “superfoods”, cold-pressed juices, açai smoothie bowls, and other functional foods that promote health and vitality. Many establishments also feature menu items with reduced sugar and sodium content or use healthier preparation methods, such as grilled or steamed instead of fried.

✓ **CUSTOMIZED AND FLEXIBLE DINING**

OPTIONS: Many Miami Beach restaurants cater to individual dietary needs by offering customizable menu options. Diners can request modifications to accommodate specific preferences, such as low-carb, keto, or allergen-free meals. This flexibility allows residents and visitors to maintain their health goals without sacrificing flavor or variety.

✓ **ALFRESCO DINING AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLE INTEGRATION:**

The city's outdoor dining culture complements its emphasis on health and well-being. Many restaurants provide vibrant, alfresco settings that encourage diners to enjoy fresh air and sunshine while eating. Locations near parks, beaches, and fitness hubs also make it convenient for residents and tourists to combine healthy dining with an active lifestyle.

✓ **COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY:**

A growing number of Miami Beach restaurants are committed to sustainable practices, including sourcing ingredients from local and organic farms, reducing food waste, and offering eco-friendly packaging. This approach not only benefits the environment but also aligns with the values of health-conscious diners seeking responsibly prepared meals.



Challenges

- ✓ **HIGH PRICES FOR HEALTH-CONSCIOUS MEALS:** Many restaurants in Miami Beach charge premium prices for organic, plant-based, or sustainably sourced menu items. This can make it challenging for budget-conscious residents and visitors to consistently choose healthy options, especially in high-end dining areas like South Beach.
- ✓ **LIMITED HEALTHY OPTIONS AT SOME ESTABLISHMENTS:** While many restaurants emphasize health-conscious dining, others focus on indulgent or comfort foods that may not align with a healthy lifestyle. Visitors may find it difficult to locate balanced meals in certain establishments, especially in tourist-heavy areas where menus prioritize crowd-pleasing, calorie-dense options.
- ✓ **PORTION SIZES AND CALORIC CONTENT:** Even when healthy ingredients are used, some restaurants serve large portions or add high-calorie dressings, sauces, or sides that can detract from the nutritional value of a meal. Diners may inadvertently consume more calories, sugar, or fat than intended, despite choosing seemingly healthy dishes.
- ✓ **INCONSISTENT NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION:** Many Miami Beach restaurants do not provide detailed nutritional information for their menu items, leaving diners uncertain about calorie counts, macronutrient breakdowns, or sodium levels. This lack of transparency can make it difficult for individuals to make informed choices, especially for those with specific dietary restrictions or health goals.





- ✓ **LANGUAGE BARRIERS:** Miami Beach's multicultural population and international visitors may face language barriers when navigating menus or asking about ingredients and preparation methods. This can lead to misunderstandings about the healthiness of a dish or difficulty in customizing orders to meet dietary needs.
- ✓ **PLETHORA OF INDULGENT OPTIONS:** The vibrant and indulgent dining culture in Miami Beach often highlights rich, decadent dishes and cocktails that appeal to tourists seeking a luxurious experience. For residents and visitors trying to eat healthy, the abundance of less nutritious options can make sticking to health goals more challenging.
- ✓ **TIME CONSTRAINTS AND CONVENIENCE:** For individuals with busy schedules, finding a restaurant that offers quick, healthy meals can be difficult. Many fast-casual options prioritize speed and convenience over nutrition, leaving residents and visitors with fewer choices for grabbing a healthy bite on the go.
- ✓ **CULTURAL AND SOCIAL INFLUENCES:** Dining out in Miami Beach is often tied to social events, nightlife, and celebrations, where indulgent foods and alcoholic beverages are common. Peer pressure or the desire to partake in the full Miami Beach experience can make it harder for individuals to prioritize healthy eating during their stay.

Opportunities

Restaurants can benefit from implementing Blue Zones proven best practices for eating wisely while dining out, including:



✔ **IMPLEMENT HEALTHY OPTIONS:** By introducing healthy menu options, restaurants can attract health-conscious diners who might otherwise avoid eating out. Some examples include:

- **Increase plant-based offerings:** Offer a wider variety of vegetarian and vegan dishes, including creative and flavorful options.
- **Don't leave the kids out of healthy options:** Ensure that children's menus feature nutritious choices beyond the typical fried and processed options. Incorporate fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins into kid-friendly meals that are both delicious and nutritious. Consider offering smaller portions of regular menu items to encourage healthier eating habits from a young age.
- **Incorporate whole grains:** Use brown rice, quinoa, or whole-wheat pasta as bases for dishes.
- **Offer lighter fare beyond salads:** Provide options like grilled or steamed dishes as well as bowls of grains, beans, vegetables, and soups.
- **Create bite-size portions of desserts** so patrons can purchase a smaller portion of their favorite dessert.
- **Create a separate mocktail menu** with a variety of interesting non-alcoholic drinks. Include classic mocktails as well as unique signature creations. Price the mocktails competitively, but position them as an upgrade to regular soft drinks. The perceived value will allow a higher price point.



✓ **SUPPORT LOCAL SCHOOLS AND BUSINESSES:**

Restaurants have a unique opportunity to make a positive impact in their communities by supporting local schools and businesses. Here are some ways restaurants can get involved while also benefiting their own bottom line:

- **Host restaurant fundraisers:** Restaurants can partner with local schools, sports teams, clubs, or nonprofits to host fundraising events. Restaurants can donate a percentage of sales during the event to the organization. This brings in extra business, attracts new customers who are there to support the cause, and generates goodwill in the community. The average restaurant fundraiser brings in \$650 in additional sales.

- **Source ingredients locally:** Build relationships with local farmers, bakeries, breweries, and other food producers. Sourcing ingredients locally supports other businesses in the community. It also allows restaurants to offer fresh, seasonal menu items and promote the use of local products, which many customers find appealing.
- **Offer discounts to school employees:** Restaurants can show appreciation for teachers, administrators, and school staff by offering them a discount on meals or catering. This encourages them to visit the restaurant and spread the word to colleagues. Restaurants can also donate gift cards or cater events like teacher appreciation lunches.
- **Sponsor school events:** Restaurants can build brand awareness by sponsoring school events like sports games, theater productions, proms, or graduation parties where they provide food, monetary donations, or branded items. This puts the restaurant's name in front of students, parents, and faculty and shows their support for education in the community.
- **Participate in career days and internships:** Restaurants can help students learn about careers in the restaurant industry by participating in school career days or offering internships. This introduces restaurants to young people and their families and provides mentoring opportunities for restaurant staff.

✓ **SUPPORT FARM-TO-FORK INITIATIVES:**

Restaurants can promote healthier lifestyles and support other local businesses by participating in farm-to-fork programs. By sponsoring local initiatives, offering community cooking classes, and supporting farm-to-fork efforts, restaurants can establish themselves as integral to the health and connectedness of their communities. These efforts foster goodwill, drive business, and allow restaurants to make a positive local impact. A few ways to get involved:

- **Host farm-to-table dinners:** Restaurants can partner with local farms to host special farm-to-table dinners, showcasing fresh, locally-sourced ingredients. Highlighting the farms involved adds authenticity and allows their high-quality produce to take center stage in each dish. This educates diners about local agriculture and allows them to taste the difference of farm fresh food.
- **Participate in CSA programs:** Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs connect consumers directly with local farms, offering seasonal subscriptions to fresh produce. Restaurants can participate by purchasing a CSA share and incorporating the ultra-fresh, seasonal ingredients into their menus. Promoting this involvement helps connect customers to the local food system and reinforces a commitment to sustainability.

✓ **COMMUNITY APP OR ONLINE DATABASE HIGHLIGHTING HEALTHY OPTIONS:**

Creating a community app or online database of restaurants that note dietary restrictions and healthy options presents a significant opportunity to empower consumers and foster inclusivity. Such a platform would provide users with a centralized, easily accessible resource to identify dining establishments that cater to specific needs, such as gluten-free, vegan, allergen-free, or low-calorie options. This tool would save time, reduce stress, and enhance dining experiences for health-conscious individuals and those with dietary restrictions. By promoting transparency and convenience, the platform could also encourage local businesses to adopt more inclusive practices, ultimately driving community engagement and supporting healthier lifestyles.

✓ **REDEFINING MIAMI BEACH'S CULINARY IDENTITY BEYOND INDULGENCE:**

Miami Beach's initiative to "break up with Spring Break culture" provides a timely opportunity to redefine its culinary identity, shifting focus from indulgent, party-centric dining to a more sophisticated, wellness-oriented food scene. By promoting healthy, vibrant dining experiences that align with the city's evolving image, Miami Beach can attract a broader audience seeking mindful and balanced lifestyles. Restaurants can play a pivotal role in this transformation by offering innovative, health-conscious menus that emphasize fresh, locally sourced ingredients and wellness-driven options. Culinary events such as health-focused food festivals and wellness-themed dining experiences can further reinforce this shift. By celebrating Miami Beach's multicultural heritage through globally inspired, nutrient-rich dishes, the city can appeal to both residents and visitors looking for enriching dining experiences that go beyond the traditional party atmosphere. This approach not only supports the city's goal of fostering a more refined and inclusive culture but also positions Miami Beach as a leader in the growing movement toward health and sustainability in the culinary world.







Grocery Stores

Grocery stores and local markets are cornerstones of a healthy eating environment. Equally as important is the opportunities they provide for community connection.



Utilizing best practices from around the country, Blue Zones works with grocery and corner stores to show how they can meet growing customer demand for healthy food while increasing revenue. These businesses heavily influence what people choose to eat, and it is important to show them that promoting health can be good business.

The Grocery Pledge includes 35 proven best practices designed along these areas:



Healthier beverages: Promoting healthier drinks and decreasing the focus and promotion of sugar-sweetened beverages



Physical environment: Re-imagining the store layout to make healthy choices more prominent



Education and promotion: Adjusting marketing strategy and timing of promotions to highlight healthier options

We have found that customers tend to reward Blue Zones Project Approved stores with more business. They see increased profits on sales of high-margin foods, while also attracting health-minded customers.





Blue Zones works with neighborhood and larger grocery chains in Blue Zones Project communities to show them that promoting health can be good business.

Benefits to Grocery Stores

Recent success stories from grocers in Blue Zones Project communities

- ✓ **Healthy Sales:** Through Blue Zones work in Albert Lea, Minnesota, and seven Iowa communities, Hy-Vee stores grew sales of healthy product categories like whole grains, produce, frozen vegetables, and healthy snacks.
- ✓ **Customer Growth:** Blue Zones social media, web, and community promotions connect your store to potential new customers and other involved organizations. Participating Iowa communities averaged 70 percent public awareness with several communities reaching nearly 90 percent. More than 50 percent of residents reported being highly engaged in the work.
- ✓ **Customer and Staff Satisfaction:** The Blue Zones Grocery Store Pledge fits with evolving consumer preferences for healthier foods. Participation helps you optimize and showcase these offerings. Involvement also sends a positive message to customers and employees: You're doing your part to help your community thrive.



Grocery Stores Overview

Miami Beach's grocery stores cater to the needs of its multicultural population and health-conscious residents.

From major supermarket chains to specialty stores the city provides a range of options for shoppers seeking convenience, variety, and quality.

Large grocery chains such as Publix and Whole Foods Market serve as staples for residents, offering extensive selections of fresh produce, pantry staples, and prepared foods. These stores are complemented by smaller, locally owned markets that focus on personalized service and unique offerings. Miami Beach also boasts a rich array of ethnic grocery stores, reflecting the city's cultural diversity. Latin American, Caribbean, European, and Asian markets provide authentic ingredients and specialty products that cater to both locals and visitors looking to recreate traditional dishes or explore new cuisines. Farmers markets such as the Lincoln Road Farmers Market creates an opportunity to offer more healthy, locally sourced items.

In addition to traditional grocery shopping, many stores and markets in Miami Beach are embracing sustainability and health trends. Options for organic, gluten-free, and plant-based products are widely available, meeting the demands of the city's health-conscious and environmentally-aware population.

Overall, Miami Beach's grocery store landscape reflects the city's vibrant culture, diverse population, and commitment to quality and sustainability, offering something for every shopper's taste and lifestyle.



Strengths

- ✓ **ETHNIC MARKETS WITH FRESH INGREDIENTS:** Miami Beach's multicultural community is reflected in its abundance of ethnic grocery stores, which provide fresh and affordable staples from around the world. For example, Latin American markets like Presidente Supermarket and Sedano's Supermarket offer tropical fruits, plantains, and fresh herbs commonly used in Caribbean and Latin cuisines. These stores enable residents to explore global cuisines while accessing nutrient-rich ingredients at reasonable prices, promoting healthy and diverse eating habits.
- ✓ **FARMERS MARKETS:** Farmers markets in Miami Beach, such as the Lincoln Road Farmers Market, provide a platform for local farmers to sell fresh, seasonal produce directly to the community. These markets feature a variety of fruits, vegetables, and artisanal goods, often grown or made locally and sustainably. Vendors frequently offer competitive pricing on items like leafy greens, tomatoes, and tropical fruits, making it easier for residents to prioritize fresh, nutrient-dense foods. Additionally, the markets create a community-focused shopping experience, fostering connections between consumers and producers while supporting local agriculture.
- ✓ **HEALTH-CONSCIOUS OFFERINGS:** Health-conscious products are widely available across Miami Beach's





grocery stores, reflecting the city's commitment to well-being. Stores like Whole Foods and The Fresh Market carry extensive selections of organic produce, plant-based proteins, and minimally-processed snacks. Even mainstream chains like Publix have expanded their health-focused offerings, including gluten-free bread, dairy alternatives, and low-sodium prepared meals. Retailers often run sales or loyalty programs that make these items more accessible, encouraging residents to incorporate healthier options into their diets without exceeding their budgets.

- ✓ **CULTURAL EMPHASIS ON FRESH FOOD:** Miami Beach's rich cultural tapestry emphasizes fresh, whole foods that are central to many traditional cuisines. Latin American and Caribbean diets, for example, often feature fresh vegetables, beans, and lean proteins, while Mediterranean influences bring an abundance of olive oil, fresh seafood, and whole grains. This cultural emphasis drives demand for fresh, affordable ingredients, ensuring that grocery stores and markets in the area prioritize stocking these items. This focus on fresh, nutrient-rich foods contributes to healthier eating habits across the community.
- ✓ **PARTNERSHIPS AND PROGRAMS:** Many grocery stores and markets in Miami Beach collaborate with local organizations to promote healthy eating through community initiatives. For instance, some farmers markets accept SNAP benefits, making fresh produce more accessible to low-income families. Retailers like Publix often partner with health organizations to provide educational resources such as meal planning guides, cooking demonstrations, and nutrition workshops. Programs like these empower residents to make informed food choices, bridging the gap between affordability and health. Additionally, some stores offer discounts or special pricing on health-conscious items, further supporting equitable access to nutritious foods.

Challenges

- ✓ **HIGH COST OF LIVING:** The elevated cost of living in Miami Beach impacts grocery prices, which are seven percent higher than the national average. This is especially true for health-focused items like organic produce, specialty foods (e.g., gluten-free or vegan), and sustainably sourced products. Many residents find it challenging to balance affordability with purchasing nutritious foods, especially when faced with competing financial priorities such as housing and transportation.
- ✓ **LIMITED FOOD ACCESSIBILITY IN SOME NEIGHBORHOODS:** While Miami Beach offers a range of grocery stores, not all neighborhoods have equal access to them. Residents in marginalized areas may face limited options for purchasing fresh, healthy foods, leading to reliance on convenience stores or fast-food outlets that often lack nutritious offerings. This disparity exacerbates food insecurity for low-income households.
- ✓ **TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING ISSUES:** Miami Beach's dense urban environment and limited parking make grocery shopping more difficult for those without easy access to transportation. Public transit may not always align with store locations, and carrying heavy groceries can be a logistical challenge for residents without personal vehicles, particularly when buying fresh produce or bulk items.



- ✓ **SEASONAL AND PRICE VARIABILITY:** Farmers markets and local produce often reflect seasonal availability, which can limit options for specific fruits and vegetables at certain times of the year. Additionally, prices for locally sourced or organic products can fluctuate, making it harder for individuals to budget consistently for healthy food.

✓ **TIME CONSTRAINTS:** For working individuals and families, the time required to shop for and prepare healthy meals can be a significant barrier. Grocery shopping at multiple locations to find affordable and nutritious options, combined with meal preparation, may feel overwhelming for those with demanding schedules.

✓ **LACK OF NUTRITION AWARENESS:** Some residents may lack the knowledge or resources to make informed decisions about healthy eating. Without proper education in reading food labels, understanding nutrition, or meal planning, individuals may struggle to identify affordable, nutritious options, even when they are available.

✓ **LANGUAGE BARRIERS AND CULTURAL PREFERENCES:** Miami Beach's diverse population includes many non-native English speakers, which can create challenges when navigating grocery stores or understanding product labels. Additionally, cultural food preferences may not always align with the available healthy options, limiting residents' ability to find affordable ingredients that fit their traditional diets.

✓ **MARKETING OF UNHEALTHY FOODS:** The prominence of highly processed, packaged, and sugary foods in grocery stores can overshadow healthier choices. Aggressive marketing and attractive pricing for less nutritious items often make it more challenging for individuals to prioritize healthier options within their budgets.



Opportunities

Blue Zones partners with local grocery stores to encourage nationwide best practices to make healthy choices easier for consumers. There are a variety of small changes grocery stores can make that have a large impact on consumers:

- ✔ **PRODUCT PLACEMENT AND PROMOTION:** Use product placement, pricing, and promotion techniques to encourage healthier choices. This includes placing healthier items at eye level, offering competitive pricing on healthy foods, and using signage to highlight nutritious options.
- ✔ **EMBRACE FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS:** Grocery stores can partner with government and non-profit organizations to accept SNAP, WIC, and other food assistance benefits, expanding their customer base while supporting community nutrition.

- ✔ **FOSTER LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS:** Collaborating with local farms, community gardens, and mobile markets can help grocers source fresh, affordable produce while supporting the local economy and reducing transportation costs.
- ✔ **IMPLEMENT HEALTHY RETAIL STRATEGIES:** Stores can use evidence-based techniques such as strategic product placement, competitive pricing of healthy items, and targeted promotions to encourage customers to make more nutritious choices.
- ✔ **CREATE HEALTHY GRAB-AND-GO FOOD OPTIONS:** Prioritize the development and promotion of quick, easy, and healthy grab-and-go meal options using fresh, wholesome ingredients that provide a balance of lean proteins, colorful vegetables, and nutritious whole grains.





- ✓ **DIVERSIFY HEALTHY FOOD OPTIONS:** Providing a wide range of healthy foods at various price points can help attract and retain a diverse customer base, from budget-conscious shoppers to health-focused consumers.
- ✓ **PROMOTE NUTRITION EDUCATION:** By providing free nutrition classes, healthy recipe demonstrations, and well-being resources, grocery stores can position themselves as community health champions while potentially increasing sales of featured healthy products. Leverage the expertise of registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs) to offer nutrition counseling, cooking demos, and informative store tours that highlight nutritious products and meal solutions.
- ✓ **INVEST IN STAFF TRAINING:** Educating employees about healthy food options and improving customer service skills can enhance the shopping experience, build customer loyalty, and potentially increase sales of nutritious items.
- ✓ **LEVERAGE DATA ANALYTICS:** Utilizing data on local demographics, shopping trends, and competitor analysis can help stores optimize their product mix, pricing strategies, and marketing efforts to better serve their community while maintaining profitability.

People Overview

CIVIC & FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Blue Zones engages people in activities that change mindsets and habits in lasting ways. We provide individuals tools, tips, and resources that empower them to transform their lives so that healthy choices become the easy choice. During a community transformation, our staff administers a Blue Zones Ambassador Program aimed at 15 percent of the adult population (a tipping point needed for widespread change).





Civic & Faith-Based Organizations



In addition to business and government, a third sector exerts a major influence upon every aspect of life in a community: religious congregations and civic organizations, ranging from service clubs like the Rotary to advocacy groups. Very little progress is made in any direction without their valuable involvement. Civic organizations and faith-based communities have a unique ability to connect and engage a large number of residents from a wide range of ethnic, cultural, and racial backgrounds and language groups.

During the life of a Blue Zones Project, faith and civic organizations are involved as leaders, designing the overall well-being plan for the community, as engagement partners that mobilize an informed community to support and amplify the work, and by utilizing the Blue Zones Project Organization Checklist that supports the well-being of their employees and stakeholders.



Our research and other data show that getting people involved with faith-based communities statistically raises life expectancy and well-being and lowers healthcare costs.



Blue Zones Project partners with faith and civic leaders to come together under a common purpose to create healthier, happier congregations, organizations, and communities.



Overview

Civic, faith-based, and volunteer organizations play a vital role in fostering community cohesion and addressing community well-being challenges. In addition to providing social connection opportunities, these organizations provide essential health services and resources that contribute to the overall well-being and resilience of a community.

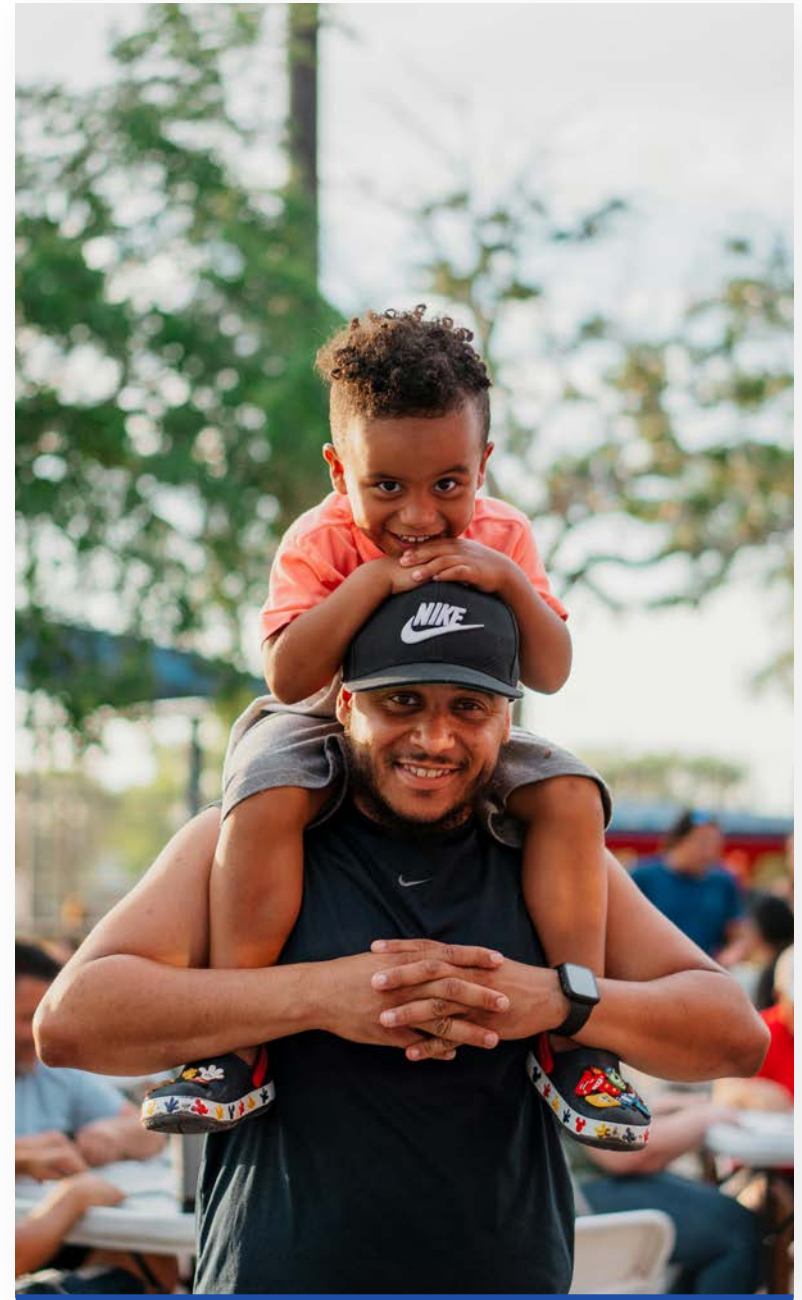


Miami Beach's thriving civic and faith-based sector, as well as its diverse and vibrant arts and cultural programming, serve the following purposes (and more) in the community:

- ✓ **Civic organizations in Miami Beach**, such as neighborhood associations, cultural councils, and advocacy groups, actively engage residents in shaping local policies and initiatives. Community groups such as the Collins Park Neighborhood Association and Miami Beach United have active social media followings and encourage residents to participate in a variety of cultural activities in their neighborhoods.
- ✓ **Miami Beach's faith-based organizations** regularly hold religious services, meetings, and community events to keep their members—and members of the wider community—engaged and connected. For example, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul at St. Patrick's provides meals to between 150 to 200 families in need every Saturday morning.
- ✓ **Volunteer organizations** offer a range of opportunities to support the Miami Beach community, from beach clean-ups and dune restorations to food distribution sites and more. Organizations like the Surfrider Foundation and Clean Miami Beach bring people together through their passion for the ocean to protect the nearby waterways through an influential activist network.

As Blue Zones research confirms, having strong social connections, belonging to a faith-based (or common-interest) community, and having a life purpose (through volunteering or other avenues) are powerful drivers of health and longevity. All three factors can positively influence one's physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

- ✓ **Social connections** reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation, which are linked to higher risk for chronic conditions like heart disease, depression, and cognitive decline. Supportive social relationships foster emotional resilience, provide stress relief, and can encourage healthier behaviors like regular exercise and healthy diet choices. Social ties also create networks that can help individuals access health and well-being resources.
- ✓ **Faith-based communities** provide people with a sense of belonging and large emotional support systems. Regular involvement in faith-based communities has been linked to lower stress levels, enhanced coping mechanisms, and reduced risk of depression. Many faith-based organizations also promote health-positive behaviors and offer resources like counseling, food assistance, and well-being programs. The sense of hope and purpose often derived from faith-based practices also contributes to improved mental health and greater life satisfaction.
- ✓ **Volunteering** by contributing one's time and energy to meaningful causes creates a strong sense of purpose and accomplishment, which research has shown is directly associated with increased longevity. Volunteering also encourages physical activity, reduces stress, and builds self-esteem. It also promotes community involvement, strengthening the social networks that support mental and emotional well-being. People who volunteer are more likely to report high levels of life satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment.



Arts and Culture in Miami Beach: A Unique Place for Belonging

Arts and culture contribute to Miami Beach’s sense of community through inclusive and engaging programming. Public art installations like the Bent Pool, Starchild, and the Banyan Tree projects serve as cultural landmarks that connect residents and visitors to shared narratives while events such as Miami Beach Live, outdoor movies, and free and paid programming at the Miami Beach Bandshell (which has been recognized on the National Register of Historic Places) create gathering spaces that encourage social interactions and collective experiences.

Additionally, institutions like Wolfsonian – Florida International University (FIU), New World Symphony, and Miami New Drama offer programming that promotes mental well-being, curiosity, and lifelong learning. The Wolfsonian – FIU offers the Miami Beach Culture Crawl, which provides free access to The Wolfsonian’s exhibition and film screenings and highlights other art installations around the city.

However, challenges like Miami Beach’s high cost of living, particularly for artists, and a lack of community awareness about free and low-cost programs highlight the importance of continued investment in the city’s many cultural initiatives. By supporting an accessible arts and culture scene, Miami Beach can nurture creative expression among residents and reinforce a sense of belonging and community well-being.





Strengths

✓ EXISTING COMMUNITY GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES:

Miami Beach has a strong foundation of well-being-focused and community-driven activities that promote health, sustainability, and social engagement. Residents and visitors alike can participate in free yoga classes at Lummus Park, which is organized by local well-being groups and supported by the City of Miami Beach. The Miami Beach Swim Club provides a welcoming space for swimmers of all levels. Community involvement extends beyond fitness, with numerous environmental and civic initiatives. Organizations like the Surfrider Foundation and Miami Beach Cleanup host monthly beach cleanups, inviting residents to protect and preserve the local coastline. Meanwhile, the Miami Beach Botanical Garden offers workshops on native plants, sustainability, and urban gardening.

✓ ANNUAL AND SEASONAL WELL-BEING EVENTS:

Regular events further enrich the community, including the Miami Beach Fitness Festival, which celebrates active lifestyles with fitness classes, wellness panels, and interactive activities. The Ocean Drive Community Walk brings together residents for a fun, scenic stroll promoting health and neighborhood connections. Other notable events, such as the Earth Day Miami Beach Festival, Turtle Fest and the Wellness & Sustainability Expo, highlight the city's dedication to environmental consciousness and holistic well-being.



- ✓ **DIVERSE NEIGHBORHOODS:** Miami Beach is home to a rich tapestry of cultural communities, each contributing to the city's vibrant identity. The multi-generational Latin American population brings a strong sense of heritage to the community, reflected in local businesses, festivals, and community programs. The historic Jewish community has established deep roots, with institutions like the Jewish Museum of Florida preserving the community's history and organizations such as the Miami Beach JCC offering cultural programs, social events, and educational workshops. The city is also home to a thriving LGBTQ+ community, centered around iconic neighborhoods like South Beach. Events such as Miami Beach Pride Festival & Parade and the OUTshine Film Festival highlight the city's commitment to diversity, while community organizations like Miami Beach Pride and Miami Beach Cares provide advocacy, resources and support.

- ✓ **ART INSTALLATIONS AS CATALYSTS FOR CITY BEAUTIFICATION AND ENGAGEMENT:** By merging artistic expression with public spaces, Miami Beach cultivates a vibrant, visually-enriching environment that strengthens social connections and enhances overall quality of life. Miami Beach creatively incorporates art into urban infrastructure, transforming exercise spaces into artistic installations and leveraging walkable neighborhoods and bike-friendly streets to encourage active participation in cultural programs.

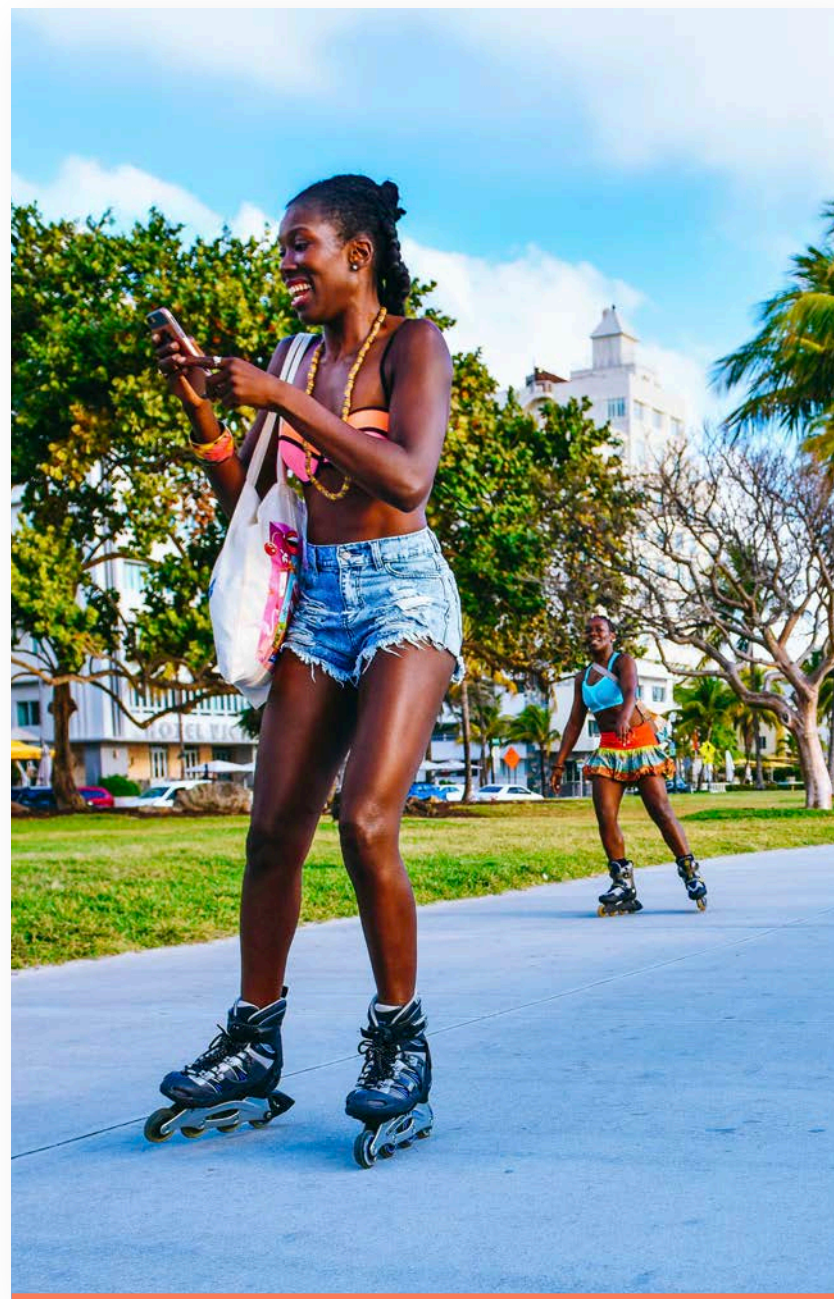


- ✓ **YEAR-ROUND EVENTS AND PROGRAMMING:** Miami Beach boasts a vibrant and diverse calendar of events that fosters ongoing community engagement and showcases its rich arts and culture scene. Art Basel Miami Beach and Miami Beach Art week draw global attention, featuring renowned and emerging artists through exhibitions, installations, and interactive experiences in locations such as the Miami Beach Convention Center, the Bass Museum, and the Faena District. Complementing these large-scale events, institutions like The Wolfsonian – FIU and the FIU Jewish Museum of Florida offer rotating exhibits that explore history, design, and cultural narratives. Beyond the visual arts, the performing arts community, featuring local theater companies, dance troupes, and musicians through performances at venues like the Colony Theatre, home of Miami New Drama, and the New World Center. Meanwhile, organizations such as the Miami City Ballet and the Miami Beach Classical Music Festival provide year-round programming that brings world-class performances to local audiences. Community-driven events, including the SoundScape Cinema Series at the New World Center, offer free outdoor movie screenings, while cultural festivals such as the Miami Beach Classical Music Festival, Brazilian Festival, and Miami Jewish Film Festival celebrate diverse artistic traditions.

- ✓ **ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES:** Projects such as the Reefline, a seven-mile sculpture park, snorkel trail, and a hybrid reef off Miami Beach’s shore (slated to break water in late spring 2025) successfully integrate eco-tourism with cultural appreciation. Miami Beach’s commitment to fusing art with sustainability positions it as a leader in cultural and environmental consciousness.

Challenges

- ✓ **MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS:** Marquee events like Art Basel and the Miami Beach Culture Crawl offer entertainment and cultural engagement for residents and visitors alike. However, the city’s transient nature and emphasis on large-scale events can make it difficult to foster strong, lasting community connections. Creating more inclusive and locally rooted experiences can help build a sense of belonging—particularly for new residents—strengthening civic pride and encouraging deeper community involvement.
- ✓ **BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN ARTS & CULTURE:** Many residents perceive traditional art institutions, such as theaters and museums, as intimidating or exclusive compared to more universally-accessible cultural spaces like public libraries. Additionally, marketing efforts often fall short of effectively informing residents and tourists about the full range of existing arts and culture programs, leading to lower participation rates. Economic disparities also prevent many residents from fully engaging in community activities, well-being initiatives, and volunteer opportunities, further widening gaps in cultural participation.
- ✓ **TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND CLIMATE CHALLENGES:** Traffic congestion, transit options, and ongoing bridge and construction projects create logistical challenges for artists, cultural workers, and residents trying to engage with arts and well-being programs in Miami Beach. Extreme heat and hurricane threats also impact outdoor cultural programming, while a lack of shaded public spaces further discourages participation in artistic and well-being-related activities. These environmental and infrastructure limitations make it harder for residents to consistently engage with Miami Beach’s offerings.





✓ **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND MARKETING CHALLENGES:** Miami Beach's transient population, dominated by tourists and seasonal residents, makes it difficult to establish long-term community bonds and sustain meaningful engagement. It also makes the marketing of smaller community events less effective (and, perhaps, less likely to be undertaken). Despite the availability of various community programs, many residents remain unaware of these opportunities.

✓ **LACK OF FREE TIME:** Middle-aged residents often face significant time and financial constraints that limit their ability to volunteer or participate in civic engagement. Many individuals in this age group juggle demanding work schedules, family responsibilities, and financial pressures, making it challenging to attend community meetings, cultural events, or advocacy initiatives. For young professionals and working parents, long hours, commuting, and childcare responsibilities can reduce opportunities to engage in civic activities. While Miami Beach offers a wide range of events, many are scheduled during standard work hours or require a level of time commitment that is difficult for those managing career and family obligations. Additionally, the rising cost of living, including housing and childcare expenses, often forces residents to prioritize paid work over unpaid volunteer opportunities or recreational community events.

Opportunities

✓ **STRUCTURING EVENTS FOR MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS:**

To build more meaningful relationships among community members, Miami Beach can structure events that promote deeper interaction, shared experiences, and long-term social bonds. One powerful approach could be the introduction of Blue Zones moais, a concept inspired by the Blue Zones regions where people live longer, healthier lives through strong social ties and community support. These moais are small, purpose-driven groups that meet regularly to build trust, encourage personal growth, and create a sense of belonging. Miami Beach could organize community-building events that form these moais around shared interests—such as fitness, art, sustainability, or cultural exchange—facilitating authentic connections among residents. Additionally, small group discussions, workshops, and team-building activities within these events would encourage deeper, more personal conversations and foster lasting friendships. By intentionally structuring events to focus on connection-building rather than just entertainment, the city can create a more engaged and supportive community.



✓ **FLEXIBLE AND INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES:** Addressing time and financial constraints can enhance community participation by offering more accessible and adaptable engagement options. Some organizations have already begun implementing virtual town halls, weekend and evening events, and employer-supported volunteer programs to accommodate busy schedules. Expanding initiatives such as family-friendly community service projects; drop-in, low-commitment volunteer opportunities; and on-demand civic engagement platforms can provide residents with more ways to get involved on their own terms. Additionally, introducing free childcare during civic meetings and expanding discounted admission for locals to cultural events can further remove barriers to participation, ensuring a more inclusive and engaged community.

✓ **VIRTUAL VOLUNTEER HUB:** An exciting opportunity for Miami Beach to foster healthy, community-centric tourism is the establishment of a virtual volunteer hub that can be promoted to residents and within hotels to encourage visitors to engage with local causes and initiatives. This online platform would provide information about local volunteer opportunities such as beach cleanups, community gardens, well-being events, and cultural workshops, allowing them to easily sign up for activities that align with their interests and schedules. Hotels can play a pivotal role in promoting this hub by featuring it in guest welcome packages, on their websites, and through in-room digital devices, ensuring that tourists are aware of these opportunities. By integrating this virtual volunteer hub into the hotel experience, Miami Beach can not only provide guests with a deeper, more meaningful connection to the local community but also promote well-being through activities that emphasize environmental sustainability, health, and cultural exchange. This initiative would align with the city's values of health, community-building, and inclusivity, offering tourists a unique way to enrich their stay while making a positive impact on the community.

✓ **EXPANSION OF PUBLIC SPACES AND EVENTS PROGRAMMING:** Expanding pedestrian-friendly areas, enhancing farmers markets, and organizing more community-focused events will encourage organic social interactions and strengthen the community fabric. These efforts will help create accessible, welcoming spaces for residents to engage with one another.

✓ **LEVERAGE LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS:** Collaborate with local organizations, businesses, and city initiatives to expand engagement efforts, increase participation in civic and cultural programs, and create more sustainable community programs.

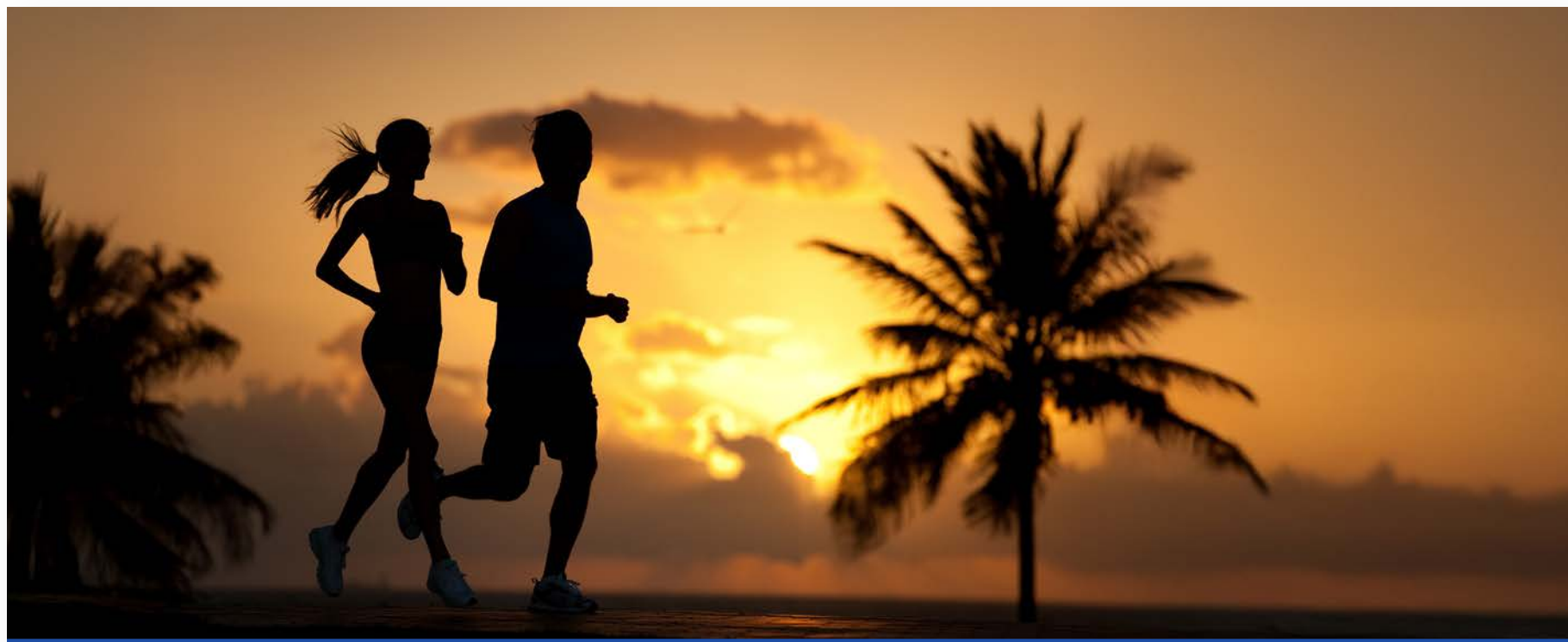
✓ **INCREASE MARKETING AND EDUCATION ON CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES:** To ensure broader participation, Miami Beach could enhance its marketing and outreach strategies to inform residents about free cultural programs. Promoting centralized digital platforms (like Miami Beach's Tourism and Culture website) can help residents stay up-to-date on local events and engage more fully with Miami Beach's cultural offerings.

✓ **ENGAGE TRANSIENT POPULATIONS:** Developing initiatives that involve transient populations—such as tourists and seasonal residents—in community experiences like beach cleanups, cultural events, and well-being activities will foster a sense of belonging and connection, even for those who are temporarily in Miami Beach.



✓ **HEALTH-FOCUSED COMMUNITY GROWTH:** The City of Miami Beach can align community engagement with its existing culture of health and well-being by hosting initiatives like purpose workshops, well-being weekends, and free health-focused activities. To support this strategy, hotels can play a crucial role by partnering with local health organizations, well-being experts, and fitness professionals to host and promote well-being events. Hotels can offer well-being weekends that include yoga retreats, guided beach walks, nutrition workshops, and stress management sessions, which not only support the health of guests but also encourage local residents to join in. Hotels can also

serve as community hubs by opening their event spaces for free health-focused classes and activities, such as outdoor fitness classes, meditation sessions, and holistic health seminars. By creating an accessible environment for well-being programming, hotels can help expand participation beyond their guests and engage with the wider community. Additionally, hotels can provide discounted or free access to well-being amenities such as fitness centers and spa services to local residents on designated days, further fostering a sense of community and making health resources more accessible.



✓ **PARTNERSHIPS WITH HOSPITALITY, RETAIL, AND TOURISM**

SECTORS: To effectively integrate art into everyday experiences and foster shared connections across diverse communities, partnerships with businesses in the hospitality, retail, and tourism sectors can play a key role. Hotels, restaurants, retail stores, and cultural venues can collaborate to create immersive art experiences that are accessible to both residents and visitors and promote natural movement by creating walking routes throughout the city.

- Hotels can host local art exhibitions in their lobbies or event spaces, showcasing works by Miami-based artists, and offer guests the opportunity to interact with creators through artist talks or live painting demonstrations. This allows both tourists and local residents to experience art in a setting they already frequent, helping to normalize artistic expression in daily life.
- Retail businesses can integrate art by displaying temporary art installations or interactive public art pieces within their stores or outdoor spaces, creating spaces where people can engage with art while shopping. These businesses can also partner with local galleries and artists to host pop-up art shows or art walks, promoting local culture and enhancing the shopping experience. Restaurants can integrate local art into their dining spaces and host events like art-themed dinners or music performances, where patrons can enjoy culinary experiences alongside live art.
- Tourism companies can support these initiatives by offering art-focused tours that highlight local galleries, public art installations, and cultural landmarks, encouraging visitors to explore the artistic richness of Miami Beach while promoting local businesses. Additionally, collaborative cultural festivals or community art days could be created, where local businesses work together to host art activities, live performances, and exhibits throughout their storefronts.

✓ **LEVERAGE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT FOR CULTURAL WELL-BEING:**

Miami Beach can expand green spaces by incorporating art installations designed for meditation and mindfulness. Efforts to improve walkability through pedestrian-friendly zones and enhanced streetscapes will encourage residents and visitors to engage more actively with their surroundings. The Elevate Española project, designed to connect Ocean Drive to Española Way with cultural elements, further promotes community connection through art and public space design.

✓ **ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOR ARTISTS:**

Expanding affordable live-work spaces for artists in Miami Beach will help support the local creative community and encourage more artists to live and work in the area. Offering more grants and funding opportunities, such as the No Vacancy Art Competition, will provide crucial financial resources for local artists. Developing art incubators and co-working spaces will foster sustainability for emerging artists, ensuring a thriving creative ecosystem in Miami Beach.

✓ **POLICY INTEGRATION:**

Implementing public policies that prioritize well-being, public spaces, and community-building initiatives will provide lasting structural support for engagement efforts. Policy integration will ensure that community engagement and well-being become embedded into the fabric of Miami Beach.



People and Organizations Engaged

Blue Zones acknowledges and thanks the following participants for lending their time, expertise, and insight in contribution to the development of this report.

Arts & Culture

Name	Role	Organization
Erin Wilson	Resident	Self
Fern Resnick	Plant-based Diet Advocate	Self
Molly Crouch	Director of Sustainability for North America	Sodexo Live!
Paco Velez	President and CEO	Feeding South Florida

Built Environment

Name	Role	Organization
Alba Tarre	Office of Housing and Community Services	City of Miami Beach
Alejandra Balsells	Resident (former City employee)	City of Miami Beach
Amy Knowles	Chief Resilience Officer and Director, Environment & Sustainability Department	City of Miami Beach
Annabelle Yopis	Executive Director	Lincoln Road BID

Name	Role	Organization
Bradford Kaine	Director Public Works Department	City of Miami Beach
Chris Rosenberg	Chief of Transportation Planning	Miami Dade TPO
Cynthia Casanova	Assistant Director, Parks and Recreation Department	City of Miami Beach
Debbie Tackett	Historic Preservation and Architecture Officer, Planning Department	City of Miami Beach
Jeff Jenkins	Resident	City of Miami Beach
John Rebar	Director, Parks and Recreation Department	City of Miami Beach
Jose Gonzales	Director of Transportation and Mobility Department	City of Miami Beach
Juanita Ballesteros	Sustainability and Resilience Manager	City of Miami Beach
Robert Wolfarth	Board Chair	Miami Dade County Citizens Independent Transportation Trust (CITT)
Rodney Knowles	Assistant Director Public Works Department	City of Miami Beach
Rogelio Madan	Development & Resiliency Officer, Planning Department	City of Miami Beach
Samantha Tiffany	Environmental Resources Manager	City of Miami Beach

Civic/Faith/Engagement

Name	Role	Organization
Amy de Saint-Seine	Executive Director	Palm Hibiscus Star Islands Association, Inc.
Casey Steadman	Director	The Wolfsonian
David Nguah	Resident Advocate	Miami Beach
Francys Vallecillo	Assistant Director, Tourism and Culture	City of Miami Beach
Heather Lajoie	Adjunct Professor	Palm Beach State College
Irene Bigger	President	Art Deco Neighborhood Association
Jennifer Samway	Resident	Home Business
John Rebar	Director, Parks and Recreation Department	City of Miami Beach
John Stuart	Associate Dean, Cultural and Community Engagement	FIU-MBUS
Lisette Garcia Arrogante	Director, Tourism and Culture Department	City of Miami Beach
Matthew Rosenberg Passe	Program Director	Miami Beach Run Club
Melissa Berthier	Director, Office of Communications	City of Miami Beach

Name	Role	Organization
Merle Liivand	Director	Swim Club
Mihaela Plugarasu	Associate Teaching Professor	FIU Global Collaborative Online International Learning
Patty Henao	Treasurer	Surfrider Foundation
Ray Breslin	President	Collins Park Neighborhood Association
Robert Primavera	Director	West Avenue Neighborhood Association
Seth Bloomgarden	Resident	Miami Beach

Food Systems

Name	Role	Organization
Erin Wilson	Resident	Self
Fern Resnick	Plant-based Diet Advocate	Self
Molly Crouch	Director of Sustainability for North America	Sodexo Live!
Paco Velez	President and CEO	Feeding South Florida

Hospitality

Name	Role	Organization
Freddie Peterson	General Manager	Miami Beach Convention Center
Heather Shaw	Assistant Director, Economic Development Department	City of Miami Beach
Jonathan Plutzik	Owner	The Betsy Hotel
Patrick Fernandez	Executive Managing Director	Carillon Miami Wellness Resort
Tammy Pahel	VP, Spa & Wellness	Carillon Miami Wellness Resort

Schools

Name	Role	Organization
Ailette Rodriguez-Diaz	Administrative Director	Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Annie Bendetti	Program Director	Rainbow Daycare at South Shore Community Center
Cynthia Rodriguez	Director	Montessori Academy at St. John's

Name	Role	Organization
Cynthia Casanova	Assistant Director, Parks and Recreation Department	City of Miami Beach
Elizabeth Soto	Resident	Montessori Academy at St. John's
Faiza Liban	Resident Member	Quality in Education Commission, Miami Beach Senior High School
Hayley Ross	Resident Member	Quality in Education Commission, Representative for Commissioner Suarez
Heather LaJoie	Adjunct Professor	Palm Beach State College
James Orlowsky	Resident Member	Quality in Education Commission, Miami Beach Nautilus Middle School
Jessica Diaz	Director	Montessori Academy at St. John's
John Rebar	Director, Parks and Recreation Department	City of Miami Beach
Jonathan Rothman	Resident Member	Quality in Education Commission, Miami Beach South Pointe Elementary
Dr. Leslie Rosenfeld	Chief Education and Performance Officer, Education and Performance Initiatives Department	City of Miami Beach
Michelle Marchante	Reporter	The Miami Herald
Robert Primavera	Director	West Avenue Neighborhood Association
Tami Muller	Happiness and Positive Psychology Coach	Miami Beach

Windshield Tour

Name	Role	Organization
Brad Kaine	Director	City of Miami Beach Public Works Department
Cynthia Casanova	Assistant Director	City of Miami Beach Parks and Recreation Department
Heather Shaw	Assistant Director	City of Miami Beach Economic Development Department
Jay Fink	Deputy Public Works Director	City of Miami Beach Public Works Department
Dr. Leslie Rosenfeld	Chief Education and Performance Officer, Education and Performance Initiatives Department	City of Miami Beach
Melissa Berthier	Director	City of Miami Beach Office of Communications
Othniel Rodriguez	Assistant Director	City of Miami Beach Transportation and Mobility Department
Tanya K. Bhatt	Commissioner	City of Miami Beach

Worksites

Name	Role	Organization
Heather Lajoie	Adjunct Professor	Palm Beach State College
Lorena Bravo	Assistant Director, HR	City of Miami Beach
Mark Chevalier	Risk Manager	City of Miami Beach
Tami Muller	Happiness and Positive Psychology Coach	Miami Beach





Conclusion

Blue Zones initiatives offer a comprehensive approach to fostering community connections that address the social determinants of health in Miami Beach, Florida.

By promoting policies and programs that prioritize healthy environments, social engagement, and equitable access to resources, these initiatives create opportunities for residents to connect meaningfully with one another. These connections not only enhance a sense of belonging but also empower the community to collectively tackle challenges like housing, food security, education, and access to healthcare. Through collaboration with local stakeholders, businesses, and residents, the Blue Zones framework can build a culture of health and well-being, ultimately supporting a more resilient and vibrant Miami Beach. By aligning community efforts with proven strategies to improve health outcomes, the Blue Zones initiatives pave the way for sustainable change and a stronger, more inclusive community.



Blue Zones transformation initiatives offer a comprehensive approach to enhancing well-being in Miami Beach so that the healthy choice can be the easiest choice in all the places and spaces that residents spend the most time.

Together with local stakeholders, businesses, and residents, Blue Zones can support opportunities for well-being improvements in Miami Beach, such as increasing healthy food access, creating opportunities for social connection, increasing movement options through tailored well-being programs and policies across sectors.

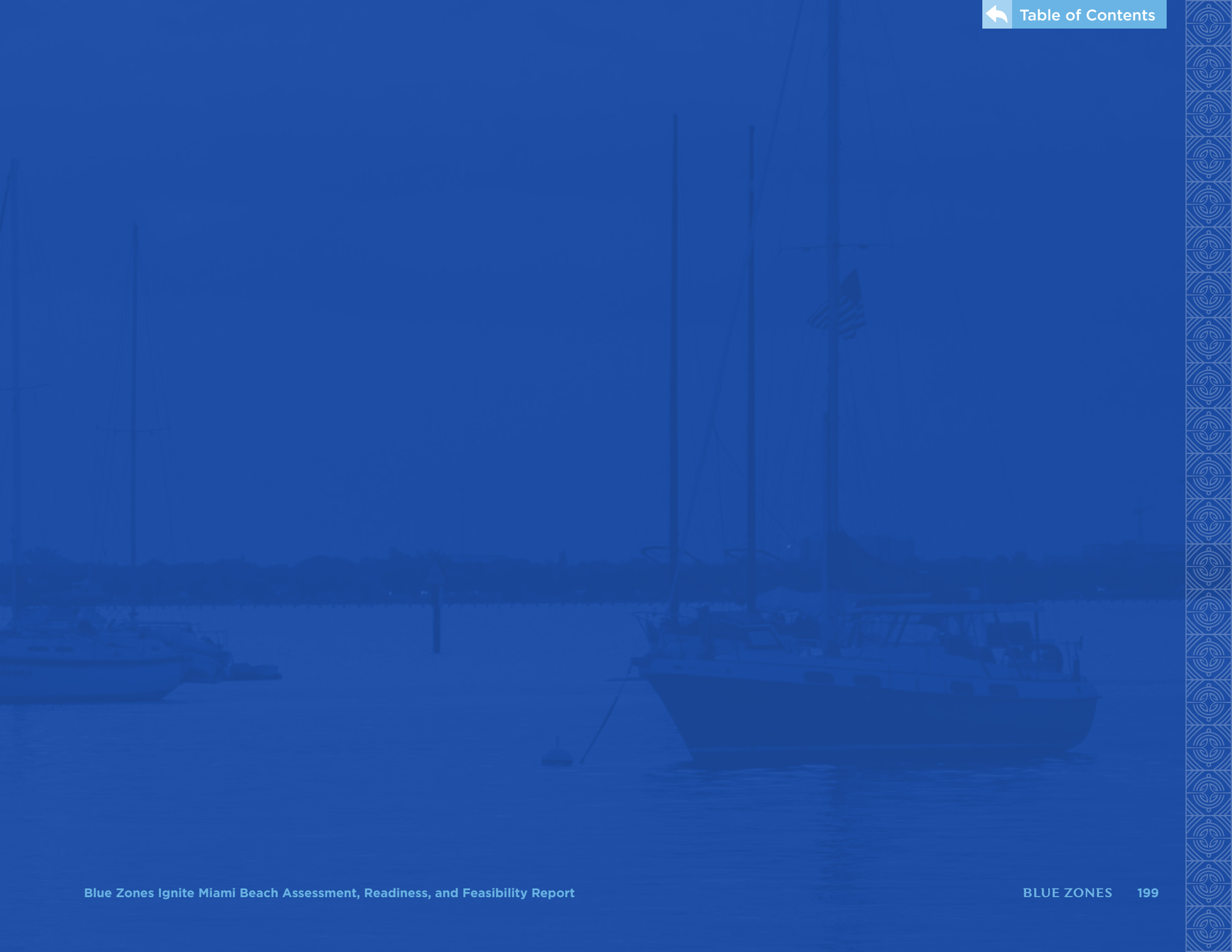
Based on the information collected and identified in this assessment, Blue Zones has developed a customized transformation proposal tailored to the unique needs and priorities of Miami Beach, ensuring alignment with the community's own vision for improved health and well-being. By leveraging proven strategies and best practices, the proposal outlines actionable steps and measurable outcomes for the next phase of a Blue Zones partnership.

Blue Zones will continue to work closely with community leaders to foster engagement, build momentum, and secure the resources needed to implement the proposed initiatives effectively. This collaborative approach ensures that our partnership remains community-driven, sustainable, and impactful for enhancing the long-term well-being for all Miami Beach residents.



Appendix

The Blue Zones Approach



What is Blue Zones

The Original Blue Zones

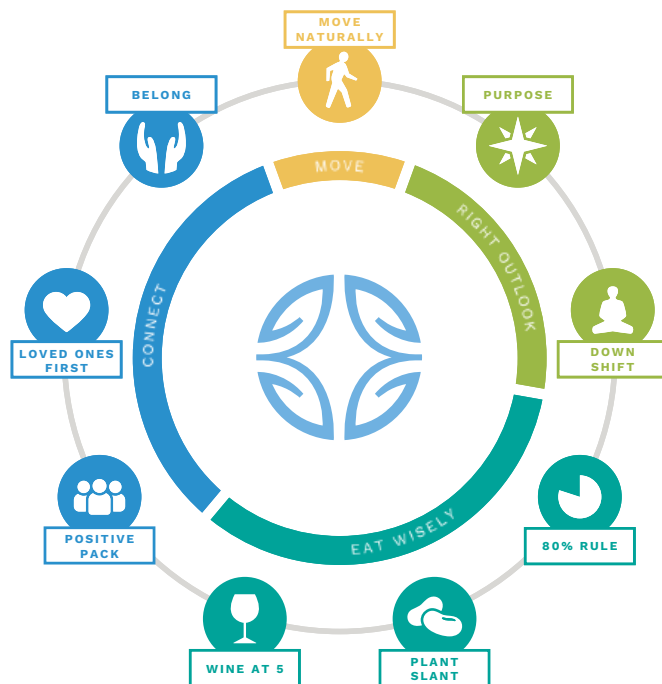
Places where people
live measurably longer,
healthier lives

In 2004, Dan Buettner teamed with National Geographic, the National Institute on Aging, and the world's best longevity researchers to identify pockets around the world where people lived measurably better, longer. In these blue zones, they found that people reach age 100 at rates 10 times greater than in the United States.



Power 9®

Though the original blue zones are located across vastly different parts of the world, their residents share nine specific traits that lead to longer, healthier, and happier lives. We call these the Power 9®.



1. Move Naturally

The world's longest-lived people are in environments that nudge them into moving without thinking about it.

2. Purpose

Waking up in the morning knowing your purpose is worth up to seven years of extra life expectancy.

3. Down Shift

Stress leads to chronic inflammation and is associated with every major age-related disease. The world's longest-lived people have routines that shed stress.

4. 80% Rule

"Hara hachi bu"—the Okinawans say this mantra before meals as a reminder to stop eating when 80 percent full.

5. Plant Slant

The cornerstone of most centenarian diets? Beans. They typically eat meat—mostly pork—only five times per month.

6. Wine at 5

Moderate drinkers outlive non-drinkers, especially if they share those drinks with friends.

7. Positive Pack

The world's longest-lived people chose or were born into social circles that support healthy behaviors.

8. Loved Ones First

Centenarians put their families first. They keep aging parents and grandparents nearby, commit to a life partner and invest in their children.

9. Belong

Attending faith-based services four times per month—no matter the denomination—adds up to 14 years of life expectancy.



Blue Zones Mission: We help people live better, longer by improving their environment.

Blue Zones focuses first on changing the human-made surroundings and systems that have such a big impact on our health instead of focusing on changing individual behaviors. We take an environmental approach to improving the health and well-being of entire communities by impacting the places and spaces people live, work, and play.

We focus on the Life Radius®, the area close to home where people spend 90% of their lives.



Blue Zones Helps Communities Transform

The Blue Zones approach applies the principles of the world's longest-living communities to create comprehensive, lasting change by transforming the environments where people live, work, learn, and play. Unlike siloed methods that address isolated challenges, Blue Zones focuses on addressing root causes, reshaping environments to make healthy choices easier, and improving the well-being of entire populations.

Blue Zones initiatives blend science and creativity, combining evidence-based policies and interventions with the energy and insight of local communities. This community-driven transformation begins with the Ignite Assessment, which serves as the foundation for understanding and addressing specific needs and opportunities.



Transformation in Blue Zones is not subjective; it is measurable. Communities that achieve Blue Zones Certification demonstrate significant, quantifiable improvements in health and well-being, alongside environmental changes that sustain these benefits over time. Certification reflects a community's evolution to function more like an original Blue Zone area, with measurable results across key areas: food systems, organizational practices, built environments, health outcomes, and overall happiness.

The certification process starts with a nine-month Foundation phase of deep planning and preparation, aligning Blue Zones best practices with the unique characteristics of the community. During this phase, baseline well-being measurements are established to guide and evaluate progress. Strategies are developed collaboratively to address the community's readiness, landscape, and resources.

While Blue Zones Certification is the ultimate goal, every stage of the journey delivers economic benefits and measurable improvements in quality of life. Communities experience positive changes across the three core pillars—policy, places, and people—laying the groundwork for sustained transformation. This approach ensures that each step forward is tailored to the community's specific needs, fostering a healthier, happier, and more resilient future. Through focus groups, one-on-one meetings, and collaborative planning, Blue Zones works alongside communities to create a roadmap for meaningful change.



Fort Worth, Texas, the largest Certified Blue Zones Community®

Since we began work in 2014, the largest gains in well-being came among those who needed it the most. Neighborhoods and sectors of Fort Worth whose residents showed the highest well-being disparities in 2014 now show the greatest gains in well-being. Higher risk populations have lower health outcomes and higher-than-average rates of healthcare costs; this significant achievement comes at a time when most cities in the U.S. see widening gaps in health disparities.



Fort Worth moved from **185th to 31st healthiest in the nation** since launch of Blue Zones Project.



Physical activity is **up 16.8 percent since 2014.**



\$9.9M funding secured for built environment policies and infrastructure projects and **\$656k secured for community and school gardens.**



\$425M
Muscatine, IA
received in grants



31% DECREASE
in smoking in
Fort Worth, TX



25% INCREASE
in property values in
downtown Albert Lea, MN



15% DROP
in overweight and obese adults in Beach Cities, CA
68% DROP
in childhood obesity



54% DECREASE
in healthcare spending
over 6 years at NCH
in Florida





Transformation is Possible

In 2009, Blue Zones worked in partnership with the AARP and the United Health Foundation to apply the Power 9 principles to Albert Lea, Minnesota.

It worked: After just one year, participants added an estimated 2.9 years to their average lifespan, while healthcare claims for city workers dropped 49 percent.

Blue Zones has since expanded to over 70 communities across the United States, impacting millions of people.

At Blue Zones, we transform communities. Applying the principles of the world's longest lived people, we are pioneers in creating big picture change through altering environments — the places where people live, work, learn, and play. Rather than a siloed approach that concentrates on specific challenges, we represent a paradigm shift to a focus on root causes, not just the symptoms. We help re-engineer environments and cultures to make the healthy choice the easy choice and measurably improve the well-being of entire populations.



BLUE ZONES™

“...the biggest healthy living experiment in America.”

— DALLAS MORNING NEWS

Value Delivered and Measured

Transforming communities takes time, but every step of the way adds value. Blue Zones rigorously measures this value throughout the entire process so that change is not just felt, but proven. Our work is quantifiable through three levels of meaningful impact:

Reduction in lifestyle risks

Well-being isn't just an idea. It's calculable. We measure risk reduction with the Gallup Well-Being Index® and survey elements tied to overall well-being improvement and Blue Zones interventions.

Movement in community-prioritized metrics

This isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. Your community has its own unique challenges and concerns, and a Blue Zones activation is tailored to make them a priority. We work with community leadership to identify and track community-specific metrics utilizing available data sources.

Media interest

Working with Blue Zones is a partnership with a global brand, respected for our pioneering longevity research and groundbreaking work transforming communities in America. Media interest in our work becomes media interest in your work, helping you generate support and secure grant funding for your project.

The New York Times



TEDMED



THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

SCIENTIFIC
AMERICAN

Newsweek

Men'sHealth



HUFFPOST





The Economy of Well-Being is defined as the ‘capacity to create a virtuous circle in which citizens’ well-being drives economic prosperity, stability and resilience, and vice-versa.

- Angel Gurría,
Organisation for Economic Co-
operation and Development
(OECD) Secretary General

Well-Being Imperative

In February of 2021, consulting firm Deloitte released a new report that predicted healthcare spending as a percentage of GDP would decelerate over the next 20 years. **They expect healthcare spending to grow to \$8.3 trillion by 2040, which is \$3.5 trillion less than the current federal government estimate.** The discrepancy is what they call a “well-being dividend,” or the return on investment for tools, systems, or protocols that help consumers to take an active role in their health and well-being.





60%

In January of 2021, the Office of the Surgeon General and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released a Community Health and Economic Prosperity report. The first of its kind, it raises awareness to business leaders of the advantage of investing in community health for the health of their businesses and the health of their economy. It shows that the return on investment in community well-being is economic development which means more prosperity and happiness for individuals, organizations, and the community at large.

By 2040, 60% of healthcare spending will go to improving health and well-being.

DELOITTE CONSULTING



COMPROMÉTETE CON BLUE ZONES

BLUE ZONES PROJECT
Live better. Longer!

Juntos, podemos hacer de
Petaluma un lugar más
saludable y feliz



BLUE ZONES PROJECT®

Volunteers & Ambassadors

Our community engagement program is aimed at reaching 15 percent of the population that is 15 years and older (a tipping point for the population). We offer a number of programs, tools, and services for volunteers and ambassadors.

Volunteers, community ambassadors, and any interested community members are encouraged to:

Use the evidence-based Blue Zones Checklists in their homes to optimize them for better eating, more movement, and better sleep



Take the Blue Zones Project Pledge



Take a Purpose Workshop



Join one of our curated volunteer programs



Take the Blue Zones True Vitality Test to measure life expectancy to get a health baseline as well as personalized recommendations



Join a Blue Zones Moai

We offer monthly moai events throughout the community. These events organize clusters of people who share values, interests, and schedules around plant-based eating and walking. They're highly successful in improving well-being and relieving loneliness because people make long-term relationships around healthy behaviors.





Value Brief



Miami Beach has the opportunity to unlock up to \$196.9 million in projected value generation and savings through a partnership with Blue Zones.

Blue Zones Value Brief for Miami Beach, Florida

Over the next ten years, Miami Beach has the opportunity to unlock up to \$196.9 million in projected value generation and savings, directly benefiting the community through a partnership with Blue Zones.

Unlocking this value is centered on the science and knowledge that people with sustainably higher well-being have fewer health risks, medical and productivity costs, and perform better.

As such, the goal of a Blue Zones community transformation is making measurable improvements in well-being across the area - specifically, improving elements of individual and collective well-being that are proven to positively drive key economic indicators.

Research has shown that lifts in personal purpose, as well as social, financial, community, and physical health factors have direct implications on future medical costs and human performance. Reductions in lifestyle risks, disease burden, and medical spend are all results that influence individual lives as well as the collective, driving results that are not only felt but are calculable in terms of economic impact.

Creating Value for Miami Beach

The ten-year impact of a Blue Zones transformation:

- ✓ Projected medical cost savings of **\$81.6M**.
- ✓ Reduction in projected workforce lost productivity of **\$86.8M**.
- ✓ These two sources of value result in a projected **\$264 average annual per capita** medical savings and productivity improvement value for the adult population over the next decade.
- ✓ Approximately **\$28.5M** of direct and indirect benefits to the regional economy.
- ✓ Billions of expected positive media and brand impressions.
- ✓ Additional related follow-on community grants, gifts, and investments.
- ✓ **A cumulative total value of up to \$196.9 million for Miami Beach including medical cost savings, productivity savings, and regional economic impact.**

This analysis includes zip codes 33139, 33140, and 33141 with a total adult population of 63,809.

The Origins of Blue Zones Project

To discover the cultural traits that lead to greater well-being, scientists researched the five areas of the world where people are living longer, happier lives. We call these blue zones, as coined and well-documented in Dan Buettner's New York Times best-selling book, "The Blue Zones: Lessons for Living Longer from the People Who Have Lived the Longest."

This research, coupled with a now 20-year worldwide longevity study, has been used to develop Blue Zones tools and programs that are designed to tackle the chronic disease crisis and health disparities plaguing our nation.



Our Approach to Community Well-Being Transformation

In collaboration with community leadership, Blue Zones ignites broad-scale well-being transformations that focus on creating systemic changes to the environments in which we live.

- At the focal point of our approach is affecting policy change in our human-made surroundings to make the healthy choice the easy choice.
- To unite our communities under a common cause, an extensive outreach and marketing campaign rallies everyone from employers, grocery stores, and restaurants, to government entities and non-profits, schools and universities, the faith-based community, the media, and of course, individual community members.
- In addition, a variety of individual engagement strategies strengthen social connection and foster personal integrity and accountability for each community member's part in the community's transformation.

Due to the permanent and semi-permanent nature of environmental and policy changes, the value of Blue Zones grows and compounds over time from the initial investment – in many aspects creating true generational impact.

Measuring the Impact of Well-Being

Research demonstrates the link between well-being, medical costs, and job performance

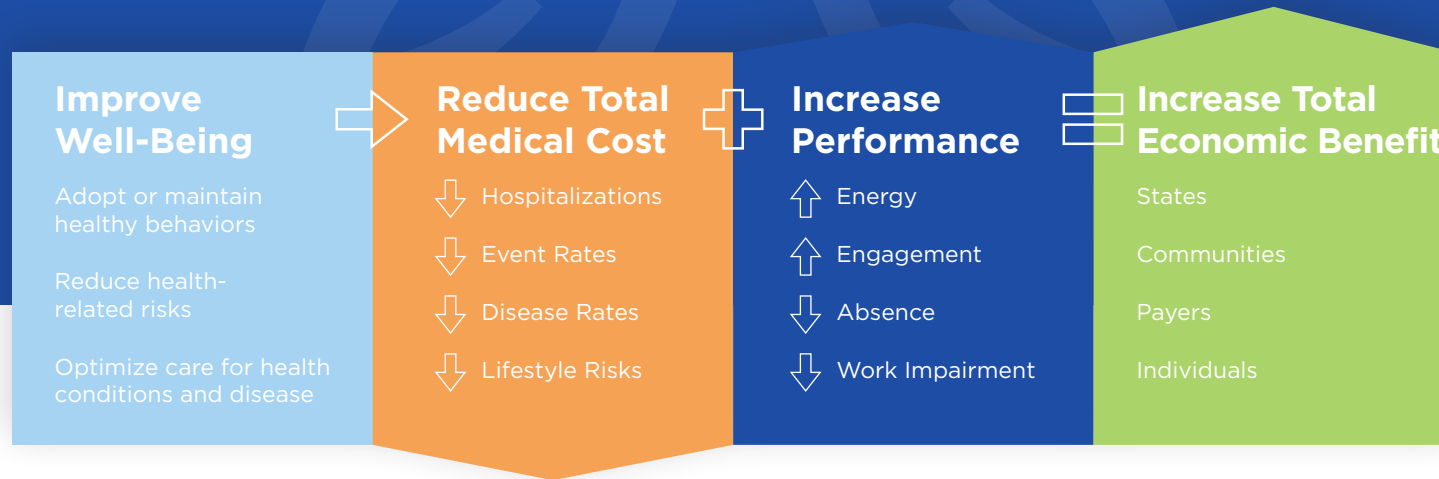


Figure 1

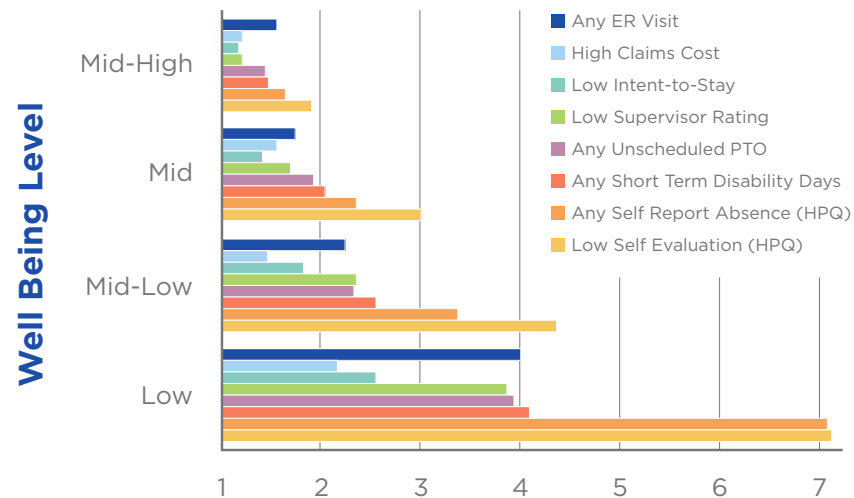


Figure adapted from: Overall Well-Being as a Predictor of Healthcare, Productivity and Retention Outcomes in a Large Employer. *Population Health Management*, 2013.

Figure 1 illustrates the probability of specific outcomes based on well-being level. Low well-being individuals are more likely to visit the emergency department, have high medical claim expenditures, leave an employer, have low performance ratings, have unplanned absences, experience disability, and attend work with an inability to perform at their best. Optimal well-being leads to higher-performing, healthier, and more productive individuals and businesses, thus creating economic value for the region.

Our advanced modeling approach includes a simulation model, multivariate econometric models, and coarsened exact matching. At the heart, is an industry leading predictive population health simulation model called the Healthways Simulation Model™, developed by the Healthways Center for Health Research in collaboration with the World Economic Forum, Harvard University, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, and Boston Consulting Group. Using conservative to more aggressive assumptions concerning population readiness to change, the simulation model was run with a range of scenarios - the average of which has been used to estimate the impact of a Blue Zones community transformation for Miami Beach area over a ten-year period.

For our purposes, the simulation model is an epidemiology-based method used to forecast the complex and compounding relationships between existing chronic conditions and modifiable lifestyle behaviors. It is needed not only to calculate healthcare-related costs associated with conditions and behaviors based on a given set of data, but also to forecast the incidence and progression of these diseases over time.





Research has proven the value via reductions in medical claims costs, decreases in absenteeism, and increases in productivity of well-being improvement and population management interventions, and our simulation model is how we can quantifiably get to this goal.

Using the Gallup Well-being Index data and publicly available economic, health and demographic information, the simulation model creates a baseline of well-being risks, chronic disease burden and modifiable lifestyle risk for a population. From this baseline, the model then projects how these conditions and risk factors will interact over time to establish a future risks and disease burden profile. That future risk and disease burden profile is then converted to medical and lost productivity costs.

Changes in these costs are modeled and attributed to source and type in the form of medical expenditures and changes in workforce productivity and performance. With this information, the model can reasonably predict the cost of “status quo – or by not introducing transformational intervention” for populations over a given period. The accuracy of this model was scientifically and independently validated using data available from the Framingham Heart Study, the longest-running longitudinal epidemiologic public health study of its kind.

WELL-BEING VALUE for Miami Beach, Florida

Current State of Well-Being

The Gallup Well-Being Index is the nation's largest well-being survey and database. With the ability to track nightly changes in well-being at a national, state, regional, and community level, it can report on a year-over-year basis for states and large communities. Gallup and the Blue Zones team leveraged 2017 and 2018 Well-Being Index data to identify the current state of well-being in Miami Beach.

The following represents a preliminary analysis, with the goal of providing an understanding of Blue Zones measurement methodology and projected impact. If Miami Beach moves forward with a Blue Zones community transformation, **a real-time baseline of well-being will be established in a statistically rigorous oversampling by Gallup.**

Overall Well-Being Index Score

Florida ranks 20th out of 50 states in overall well-being, placing it in the second quintile for well-being nationwide. Miami Beach, when compared to 154 of the largest metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) across the nation for which the Well-Being Index provides standard annual reports, ranks 9th in overall well-being, and is in the first quintile of all MSAs (see Figure 2).

Figure 2



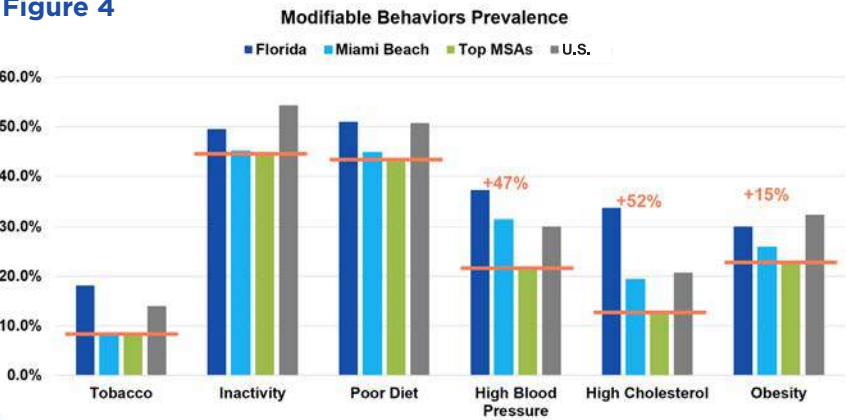
The graphic below (Figure 3) shows the Miami Beach ranking as compared to 154 MSAs across the nation on the five core elements of well-being measured with the Well-Being Index, contrasted with how the State of Florida ranks numerically among the 50 states (note the color of the numeric ranking indicates its quintile, see quintile ranking key). Notably, Miami Beach ranks in the first quintile in three of the core well-being measures. These include purpose (which measures knowing why a person gets up each day), social (which measures personal connections), and physical (which measures having the energy to do what a person needs to do each day).

Figure 3



Well-Being Index Risk and Disease Prevalence

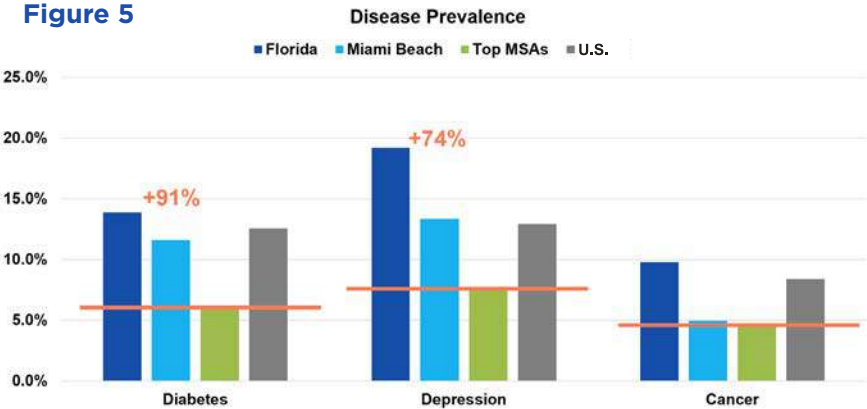
Figure 4



The Miami Beach focus area has several challenges in the risk profile of the population. Figure 4 compares the risk prevalence of the Miami Beach adult population to the state, nation, and benchmark MSAs. Benchmark MSAs represent the top ten performing communities within the category of comparison. In this comparison, we find that Miami Beach has higher rates of high blood pressure (47 percent higher), high cholesterol (52 percent higher), and obesity (15 percent higher) as compared to the benchmark MSAs in the U.S.

Disease prevalence rates of diabetes and depression far exceed that of the benchmark MSAs, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5

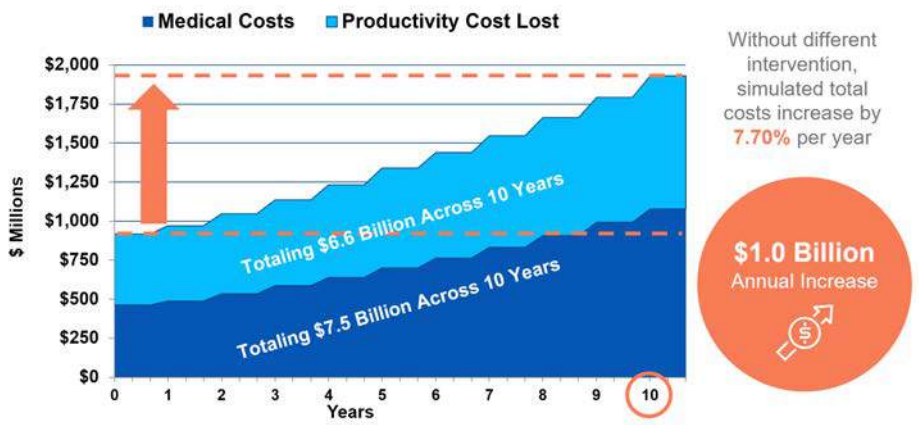


The Cost of Status Quo

Miami Beach struggles with many of the same chronic conditions and lifestyle behaviors that plague the entire state and nation. The cost of status quo—for doing nothing differently in the future—is significant. Using the simulation model, we conservatively forecast that over the next ten years, medical and lost productivity costs will increase annually by \$1.0 billion or 7.70 percent per year (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

Medical and Productivity Cost Projections Absent Intervention for Ages 18 and Up



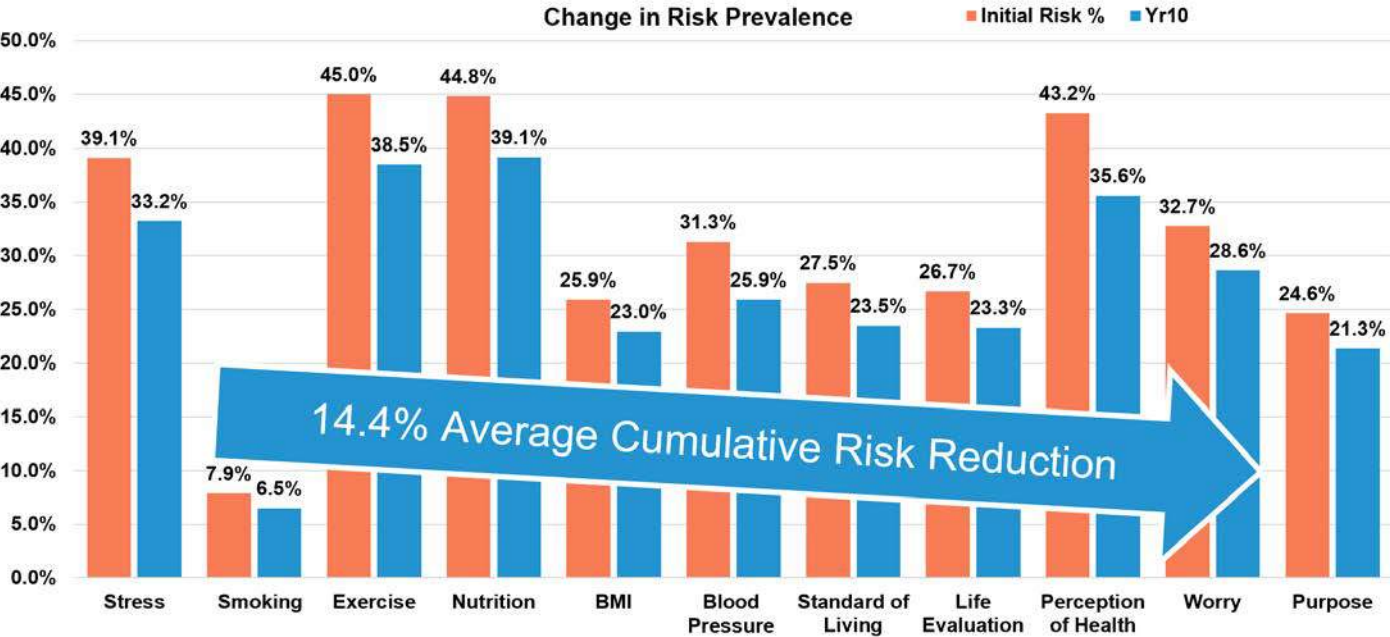
Key Well-Being Measures for Miami Beach Focus Area

1 in 2				1 in 3	2 in 3	3 in 7	7 in 10
Do not eat sufficient fruits and vegetables	Do not have a good perception of their health	Deal with stress daily	Are not proud of their community	Have a poor current life evaluation	Have worried about money in the last week	Do not exercise at appropriate levels	Are obese or overweight

Blue Zones Community Transformation Risk Reduction and Savings Analysis for Miami Beach

Over the next 10 years, we conservatively estimate an average cumulative risk reduction of 14.4 percent across the eleven risk factors shown in Figure 7 below. These critical factors are indicators of an individual's experienced well-being, and a reduction of prevalence produces improved well-being and value to the community. Our approach seeks to slow, steady, and maintain sustainable progress in the reduction of risks.

Figure 7



The 10-year average annual per capita medical and productivity value for Miami Beach is projected to be \$264 for the adult population, with a total of \$196.9 million in value when accounting for regional economic impact. Medical cost savings alone are projected to generate \$81.6 million for residents and employers within the region (Figure 8).

Within our framework lies a great opportunity to impact workforce productivity and provide significant economic benefit for Miami Beach. Over the next ten years, the model projects the Blue Zones Community Transformation to generate approximately \$86.6 million in workforce productivity improvement in the form of reduced absenteeism, improved workforce productivity (including reduced absenteeism), and increased workforce engagement and performance, among other productivity metrics. Medical cost savings and improved productivity savings account for a total aggregate savings of \$196.9 million (Figure 8).

Value increases further when the full regional economic impacts are considered. For every dollar of improved workforce productivity, the regional economy benefits in the form of increased direct and indirect household consumption. The regional economic impact from a Blue Zones Community Transformation is expected to be approximately \$28.5 million over ten years (Figure 8).

In total, we project a conservative gross value estimate of up to \$196.9 million in medical savings, improved productivity, and regional economic benefit for Miami Beach over the next decade as a result of implementing a Blue Zones Community Transformation (Figure 8).

Medical	Productivity	Regional Economic
\$81.6 Million	\$86.8 Million	\$28.5 Million

Figure 8



This analysis includes zip codes 33139, 33140, 33141 with an adult population of 63,809.

Built Environment Policy Menu and Scan

This built environment policy scan provides a sample list of relevant policies and legislation related to the goals, objectives, and strategies identified from the Blue Zones Policy Menu. The scan focuses on key regulatory and non-regulatory categories associated with the four Blue Zones built environment goals: 1) promote natural movement, 2) encourage social gathering places, 3) complete neighborhoods, and 4) increase housing options. Along with contextual information, these scan results may provide useful policy background when undertaking built environment initiatives aligned with Blue Zones.



Policy scans for the built environment are feasible due to the abundance of open-access resources and regulatory documents available for audit. In contrast, the Blue Zones food systems assessment often involves a more dispersed landscape, with information not typically housed in public repositories. As a result, we conduct one policy scan focused on the built environment, with food systems research integrated into the main assessment through interviews and direct engagement.

Blue Zones Built Environment Policy Menu - Miami Beach

GOAL I: PROMOTE NATURAL MOVEMENT		
Strategy ID	Strategy	Miami Beach Context
1.1	Adopt a Safe Routes to School Plan	Miami Beach, Miami-Dade Schools, and Miami-Dade County each appear to have Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs, although references are somewhat indirect. Some county funds have been allocated for SRTS, and an SRTS article includes a photo of children being guided along 13th Street near Pennsylvania Avenue in Miami Beach on their way to school. Miami-Dade County has also integrated SRTS objectives into broader safety efforts, such as the 2024 Vision Zero Action Plan, which identifies roads with high safety risks and potential improvements near schools in Miami Beach. Several social media sources highlight cost-cutting for bus service as one motivation for SRTS. A 2008 presentation titled Safe Routes to School: Saving Schools Transportation Dollars [and] Alleviating Parental Concerns about Student Safety further underscores these cost-saving and safety benefits.
1.2	Adopt or update a Comprehensive Active Transportation Master Plan	Miami Beach worked with Street Plans to complete a Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan in 2018, later updated in 2022 to include connections to the SMART Plan for transit-oriented development. The Beach Express passes through the city, though the 2022 plan did not include significant new recommendations for bicycles or pedestrians.
1.3	Adopt a plan for safe operation of micro-mobility solutions like e-scooters and e-bikes.	In December 2020, Miami Beach banned shared micromobility rentals due to safety concerns, although privately owned devices are still permitted. This echoes earlier safety concerns from the Miami-Dade County Mayor and expands on a previous ban affecting electric bicycles and scooters.
1.4	Adopt a Comprehensive Safety Plan targeting active modes and transportation disadvantaged populations.	Miami Beach does not currently appear to have a specific comprehensive safety plan for active modes but is reportedly working on a Vision Zero plan. The 2024 Proposed Budget Book and various documents mention funding or personnel for Vision Zero initiatives, though no formal plan is available online. The city generally endorses the Safer People Safer Streets: Local Action Plan, while Miami-Dade County has adopted a 2024 Vision Zero Action Plan.
1.5	Develop an interloop walking or cycling trail plan to advance safe routes.	Although Miami Beach does not have its own plan of this nature, the city is committed to the Atlantic Greenway Network and the Miami LOOP Project. There is no specific indication that it has formally endorsed Miami-Dade's 2050 Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan.
1.6	Adopt Complete Streets Policy by ordinance.	Miami Beach's Street Design Guidelines incorporate Complete Streets principles, but they do not explicitly reference Miami-Dade County's Complete Streets Design Guidelines, even though county roads within city limits fall under county jurisdiction. Miami-Dade's Parks Master Plan includes a "Great Streets" component that generally aligns with Complete Streets specifications and applies to Miami Beach.
1.7	Adopt a Vision Zero Policy by ordinance.	(See Strategy 1.4.) Although Miami Beach has budgeted for Vision Zero policies, they do not appear to have been enacted via ordinance. According to the Miami-Dade Vision Zero Fact Sheet, one of the county's designated high-injury network locations slated for improvements is in Miami Beach.
1.8	Adopt model street design standards.	The Miami Beach Street Design Guidelines (pdf) may function as the city's "model standards," although they are technically guidelines rather than mandatory standards.
1.9	Adopt model sidewalk standards.	The Miami Beach Street Design Guidelines (pdf) address sidewalks, and Section 7.1.2.2 of the Miami Beach Resiliency Code details short/long frontage standards. The city may also rely on Miami-Dade's Sidewalk Transition Plan to meet ADA accessibility requirements, which are legally mandated for public rights-of-way.

GOAL I: PROMOTE NATURAL MOVEMENT		
Strategy ID	Strategy	Miami Beach Context
1.10	Review, revise and adopt model parking policy.	In 2023, Miami Beach thoroughly revised its land development code, known as the “Resiliency Code,” which includes provisions aimed at minimizing parking requirements.
1.11	Develop a Traffic Calming program	Miami Beach implemented a “Slow Streets 2.0” pilot in the Flamingo Park neighborhood and expanded it in 2021, reclaiming space from vehicles to improve walkability and reduce traffic speeds. The city has also completed other traffic-calming projects.
1.12	Adopt a green infrastructure policy or program to increase tree canopy and reduce groundwater runoff	The city has multiple ongoing projects to increase tree planting for shade and stormwater management, such as the Beachwalk Reforestation and Urban Forestry Master Plan initiatives.
1.13	Establish pedestrian street-lighting/illumination standards	The city includes street-lighting requirements in its Street Design Guidelines and has explored “smart city” street-lighting systems for efficiency and maintenance. Environmental standards for beach areas limit lighting to protect wildlife habitats.
1.14	Establish bicycle parking policy and standards	Miami Beach mandates bicycle parking in various parking districts, as referenced in Sec. 130-33.(c)(7) of the city’s Code of Ordinances.
1.15	Expand/enhance transit service delivery with a focus on first and last mile connections	The Miami Beach Transportation Master Plan Update: First/Last Mile Connections to The SMART Plan (2022) outlines strategies for improving last-mile connections, particularly in anticipation of a planned rail transit line. (See Strategy 1.2.)
1.16	Permit micro-mobility options like electric scooters and shared bikes to encourage sustainable transportation choices.	Currently, Miami Beach bans shared electric scooters, e-bikes, and other micromobility rentals. (See Strategy 1.3.)
1.17	Update traffic signal policy and practice to prioritize the safe efficient movement of bicycles and pedestrians and ADA best practice.	The city has synchronized some traffic lights to improve flow, although benefits for pedestrians and cyclists are unclear. A county contract for traffic technology may include detection of pedestrians and cyclists, but there is no indication they receive explicit priority.
1.18	Adopt community-wide prohibition of Right Turn on Red (RTOR).	Miami Beach has not enacted a citywide RTOR ban, though certain intersections display “TURNING TRAFFIC MUST YIELD TO PEDESTRIANS” signage.
1.19	Adopt community-wide default 20 mph speed limit (exceptions must be posted).	The city has not done this. In South Beach, Washington Avenue and Ocean Drive are posted at 25 mph, while Collins Avenue has a 30 mph limit.
1.20	Establish a bicycle and pedestrian facility maintenance program.	There is no evidence of a dedicated maintenance program for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, though a 2010 report addresses shared-use trail upkeep in Miami-Dade. Miami Beach has installed bicycle parking and repair stations across the city.

GOAL II: ENCOURAGE SOCIABLE GATHERING PLACES		
Strategy ID	Strategy	Miami Beach Context
2.1	Adopt a Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan	Miami Beach does not maintain its own standalone recreation plan; rather, it falls under Miami-Dade's Parks and Open Space Master Plan, which aims to create a seamless, sustainable network of parks across county jurisdictions. For more detail on this two-tier system, see Recreation Program Plan – Miami-Dade County, FL (pdf). The Vision for a Seamless, Sustainable Parks and Open Space System lays out a 50-year plan for livable, interconnected public spaces throughout Miami-Dade County.
2.2	Adopt a comprehensive Trails Master Plan with a network focus.	While Miami Beach has not adopted a dedicated citywide Trails Master Plan, the Miami-Dade County Parks and Open Space System Master Plan includes a vision for countywide “Great Streets” and interconnected trails. At the city level, related elements can be found in the City of Miami Beach Bicycle Pedestrian Master Plan (pdf), the Park Structure and Landscape Pattern Book Exemplary Park Design Standards – Miami-Dade County (pdf), and the Transportation Master Plan – Final Report (pdf). The Atlantic Greenway Network is another relevant initiative that connects multiple waterfront and inland trails in Miami Beach.
2.3	Preserve and enhance natural spaces, such as parks, trails, and waterfronts for recreational activities and public access.	Preservation efforts in Miami Beach largely align with broader Miami-Dade County initiatives. The region's natural terrain has historically been a mixture of brush, wetlands, and shifting shoreline. See The Miami-Dade County Parks and Open Space System Master Plan for the county's overarching strategy on conservation and enhancement of natural areas.
2.4	Develop an Open Street, Festival Street or other Street Plan to encourage the use of streets as places for people.	While Miami Beach does not currently have an “Open Street” or “Festival Street” policy, the city's Street Design Guidelines do promote multimodal use. Additionally, Lincoln Road Mall has been a pedestrian space for decades. Ocean Drive has seen partial closures and parklet installations, though a recent court order requires restoring some traffic flow.
2.5	Develop a park-specific Engagement / Activation Plan to enhance community engagement and support accessible, year-round use.	No evidence suggests a formal citywide engagement plan, but the Operations – Parks and Recreation – Miami Beach (pdf) points to various programs that effectively activate and program local parks. These initiatives encourage regular park use without a formal “engagement plan” label.

GOAL II: ENCOURAGE SOCIABLE GATHERING PLACES		
Strategy ID	Strategy	Miami Beach Context
2.6	Develop a street tree program or policy	Miami Beach's Urban Forestry Master Plan (2020) serves this purpose, guiding how the city expands and maintains tree canopy for shade, aesthetics, and environmental resilience.
2.7	Establish street furnishing standards and policy	The Miami Beach Street Design Guidelines and Miami-Dade Complete Streets Design Guidelines both include detailed recommendations for street furnishings, covering aspects like benches, trash receptacles, and wayfinding elements.
2.8	Establish flexible share public spaces policies to facilitate alternate uses for public spaces such as schools, parking lots, streets open spaces	Miami-Dade has piloted shared-use agreements with certain schools, and similar efforts are underway in Miami Beach. These initiatives build on existing processes for renting school facilities, aiming to expand public access and recreation options on school properties.
2.9	Integrate public art into urban design to enhance the aesthetic appeal and cultural richness of neighborhoods.	Miami Beach boasts a well-developed public art program, including large-scale annual events like Arts Week Miami Beach. The city's art scene is world-class, complemented by nearby districts such as Wynwood in mainland Miami.
2.10	Adopt standards for parks within reach and set targets for parks within walking distance from every residence.	While Miami Beach does not have formal city-level standards for walkable park access, Miami-Dade County has extensive requirements for recreational space distribution. The Community Schoolyards Program further promotes more accessible facilities for children within walking distance.
2.11	Adopt inclusive playground standards to ensure parks and playgrounds meet the needs of all ages and abilities.	No explicit standards appear in city ordinances, but Miami Beach maintains about two dozen parks for children under 12, several of which offer accessible features. The city's parks and facilities directory indicates that 46 parks are accessible overall, with at least one specially designed for children with accessibility needs.

GOAL III: COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOODS		
Strategy ID	Strategy	Miami Beach Context
3.1	Create master plans for downtown and other neighborhood centers, providing guidance for mixed-use infill development and redevelopment.	Miami Beach has an overall Comprehensive Plan and a North Beach Master Plan. Multiple plans also address South Beach, though current efforts focus on economic development along Lincoln Road. Mixed-use corridors are emphasized in all plans, but there is some concern about preserving local businesses and preventing displacement. The North Beach plan proposes rehabilitating historic buildings, encouraging sensitive infill, and supporting local merchants. It also envisions tools like transfer of development rights and includes climate-resilience strategies such as raising building elevations.
3.2	Advance a neighborhood connectivity plan to enhance pedestrian and bicycle connections within and between neighborhoods.	Several existing plans collectively serve this purpose. The Transportation Master Plan – Final Report (pdf) devotes significant attention to transit, bicycle, and pedestrian networks. However, Better Streets Miami Beach has called for urgent improvement to the northern portion of Collins Avenue. Relevant documents include the City of Miami Beach Bicycle Pedestrian Master Plan (pdf) and the Atlantic Greenway Network initiatives.
3.3	Create pedestrian overlay districts with model sidewalk design standards	Miami Beach’s “Resiliency Code” (MBRC) includes provisions for a 10-foot circulation zone on all nonresidential frontages, with five feet remaining unobstructed. (See 7.1.2.2 Resilience and Adaptation Standards for Buildings). The code also mandates a design review process reflecting the Miami Beach Street Design Guidelines (pdf) and the Design Review Criteria – TC Design Review Standards – Miami Beach (pdf), both of which address bicycle and pedestrian needs
3.4	Implement a School Siting Policy emphasizing the preservation and refurbishment of neighborhood schools.	Because Miami Beach consists largely of connected islands, schools naturally remain in established urban areas. The Education Element of the Miami-Dade County Comprehensive Development Master Plan (CDMP) directs schools to serve local residents. Despite this, Miami-Dade’s robust magnet school system can draw students from broader geographic areas.
3.5	Incorporate bicycle and pedestrian friendly elements to existing zoning ordinances and standards for new developments.	Most of Miami Beach is designated as Parking District 1, but Districts 2–9 could be considered specialized parking management districts with reduced parking requirements. See § 130-31 and § 130-33 of the city’s Code of Ordinances for maps and specific regulations.

GOAL III: COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOODS		
Strategy ID	Strategy	Miami Beach Context
3.6	Establish a Parking Management District	Most of the city is in parking district 1, but districts 2-9 could be considered parking management districts. In them, parking requirements are reduced. See § 130-31. - Parking districts established Code of Ordinances for maps of their locations and § 130-33. - Off-street parking requirements for parking districts nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 Code of Ordinances for ordinances pertaining to districts 2-9.
3.7	Update zoning ordinances to reflect human-scale, accessible, mixed use environments	Miami Beach's zoning already supports human-scale mixed use. In more flexible residential zones, retail may be an accessory use. However, reconciling flood-related building elevations with ADA accessibility can be a challenge. (See 7.1.2.2 Resilience and Adaptation Standards for Buildings – Miami Beach Resiliency Code.)
3.8	Establish main street corridors targeting revitalization and neighborhood investment.	(See Strategy 3.1.) Multiple corridors fall under this objective: 41st Street Corridor; Lincoln Road; Ocean Drive; and 71st Street Corridor. Plans for each aim to enhance business vitality, streetscape appeal, and neighborhood character.
3.9	Incorporate health and equity objectives into comprehensive policies and plans.	The 2040 Miami Beach Comprehensive Plan (pdf) does not include standalone “health” or “equity” elements, though it references equity in transportation, housing, and capital improvements. The county’s Miami-Dade County Health Equity Plan (pdf) addresses health disparities at a broader scale, though it is less about resource redistribution and more about equitable health outcomes.
3.10	Create cultural districts that celebrate diversity, arts, and community traditions.	Miami Beach effectively did this with the Art Deco Historic District in the 1980s-1990s and maintains a “cultural anchors” program. It also hosts Arts Week Miami Beach, an internationally recognized event that strengthens the city’s standing as a cultural hub.
3.11	Establish designated neighborhood slow zones.	Miami Beach has adopted Slow Streets on selected roads, as shown in City of Miami Beach Slow Streets (pdf). However, efforts to implement citywide speed limit reductions may be challenging, as Miami Today notes potential political and traffic flow considerations.
3.12	Establish Transit Oriented Development (TOD) districts.	The city has explored development around two stations of the Strategic Miami Area Rapid Transit (SMART) corridor planned to extend into Miami Beach. However, these efforts do not yet constitute formal TOD plans, and no major updates have emerged since 2022.
3.13	Establish and implement a way-finding system.	Miami Beach maintains a comprehensive signage and wayfinding program, also referenced in the Miami Beach Street Design Guidelines (pdf). The Miami DDA Signage & Wayfinding initiative can offer guidance for future expansions or refinements.

GOAL IV: INCREASE HOUSING OPTIONS		
Strategy ID	Strategy	Miami Beach Context
4.1	Conduct a comprehensive housing study to assess current conditions and requirements, outlining the subsequent actions for expanding housing opportunities.	Miami Beach completed a HUD-mandated 5-year action plan spanning 2023–2027. Meanwhile, the University of Florida conducted a housing study for all of Miami-Dade County, though it offers relatively few actionable steps.
4.2	Reduce or eliminate impact fees for affordable housing projects, where applicable.	Miami-Dade County levies impact fees in both unincorporated and incorporated areas (including Miami Beach). However, it has a fee waiver program for affordable housing, and Miami Beach itself offers expedited review for workforce housing. The city is also considering (or has recently discussed) a program to prioritize specific groups—such as city employees, law enforcement, and educators—for workforce housing.
4.3	Adopt or modify zoning regulations to permit missing middle housing in single-family zones.	Evidence that Miami Beach has eased restrictions on missing-middle housing in single-family areas is limited, aside from accessory dwellings. Still, much of the city’s housing stock comprises small multifamily buildings, and commercial districts also allow apartments. The Town Center Vision – Plan NoBe Proposed North Beach Master Plan (pdf) supports “sensitive infill” and encourages transferring development rights from historic properties, potentially adding more apartments. The city has reduced minimum unit sizes and parking requirements to facilitate affordable housing, according to its 2022–23 Consolidated Action Plan (pdf). Meanwhile, the new Resiliency Code thoroughly rewrote land development regulations, allowing accessory dwellings in single-family districts.
4.4	Establish a community land trust or similar entity, if one does not exist, to provide and manage affordable housing.	Miami Beach has not created a community land trust, but Miami-Dade County has one in place. The county does not maintain a land bank; instead, it auctions off surplus real property.
4.5	Establish an affordable housing fund.	Miami Beach does not have an affordable housing fund of its own, but Miami-Dade County operates one under § 17-132. – Affordable Housing Trust Fund of the county’s Code of Ordinances.



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Meet Our Team

Blue Zones Ignite Miami Beach Team

Aislinn Kotifani, Communications Manager

- For the last 8 years, has managed the Blue Zones brand, website, and social media presence
- Experienced with large diverse city, small community, and niche neighborhood program engagement and launches

Amelia Clabots, Chief Finance Officer

- Experienced operations professional with deep experience managing cross-functional Blue Zones teams
- For the last 10 years, has helped Blue Zones transition from a small research company to a global brand with multiple products, channels, and initiatives

Ben Leedle, CEO

- Former CEO and President of Healthways, Inc.
- Transformed small business into world's top population health management company
- Co-founder, Blue Zones Project
- Co-founder, Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index

Claudia Morales, Food Systems Expert

- Experienced non-profit leader and social entrepreneur
- Specializes in working with new initiatives, pilot projects, and start-up organizations and companies
- Master of Science in Social Entrepreneurship from University of Southern California
- Bachelor of Science in Social Sciences from University of Southern California

Dan Buettner, Blue Zones Founder

- National Geographic Fellow and Explorer
- Emmy award winning journalist and producer
- New York Times bestselling author of eight Blue Zones books

Dan Buettner Jr., Chief Development Officer

- Advancing Return on Well-Being models and archetypes for businesses and communities
- Blue Zones International Speaker
- Global commercial real estate expert

Fabian De La Espriella, AICP, Built Environment Expert

- Founding Principal at Urbe Studio, providing transportation planning and urban design and visioning services to government agencies, municipalities, and private organizations
- AICP Certified Planner
- Masters in Planning & Urban Design from the University of Florida
- Bachelors degree in Architecture from Pontificia Universidad Javeriana

Genna Mazor, Project Manager

- Co-Founder and Chief Marketing Officer at Element Farms
- Previously held positions in the entertainment industry, directing integrated partnerships at truTV and managing integrated marketing at Comedy Central
- Experienced in strategic planning, project management, team leadership, and building strong client relationships

Jaclyn Cheves, Director of Policy & Partnerships

- Experienced public health programs professional with over a decade of experience in public and private sector health programs and policies
- Master's in Public Health in Behavioral Science and Health Education from Emory University
- Past Health Program Analyst at the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
- Past Director of Tobacco Prevention and Policy Services at Bay Area Community Resources

Kelsie Cajka, Transformations Operations Director

- Over a decade of experience in driving transformative community well-being initiatives
- Spearheaded the successful Blue Zones worksite certification for six major employers—including healthcare systems, government offices, private schools, and utility companies—across the United States
- Joined Blue Zones Project in 2015, and has since supported numerous community transformation projects
- Masters of Human Resource Management from Southern New Hampshire University
- Masters of Wellness and Lifestyle Management from Rowan University
- Bachelor's in Communication Arts from Allegheny College

Margaret Brown, VP, Business Development

- Community well-being advocate that specializes in developing cross-sector partnerships to transform and empower communities
- Over 10 years of experience working at the intersection of healthcare, population health and public health
- For the last five years, has worked in partnership with more than 70 Blue Zones communities to ignite well-being transformations
- Masters of Science in Healthcare Leadership from Dartmouth College
- Bachelor's in English Literature from Francis Marion University

Naomi Imatome-Yun, Editor-in-Chief

- Wall Street Journal bestselling author
- Curator of the historic Flashlight exhibit at the Mayme Clayton African-American Museum in Los Angeles
- Experienced reaching and engaging hard-to-reach audiences (niche, underserved, millennial)

Sarah Bowman, VP, Policy Operations & Development

- Co-founder of the Walkable and Livable Communities Institute
- Spearheaded policy implementation efforts in over 1,300 communities across the United States, Canada, and Ireland
- Played a pivotal role in assisting teams in securing funding exceeding \$400 million to implement community transformation efforts in Ireland and the United States

- Former Director of Strategic Engagement and Impact Assessment within the Office of the Dean of Research at Trinity College Dublin
- Former Planning Commissioner for the City of Port Townsend, Washington

Sarah Kearney, Executive Director, Blue Zones Project Scottsdale

- Has led Blue Zones Project Scottsdale since the initiative's launch in 2023
- Previously held several leadership roles at Experience Scottsdale, whose mission is to enhance the Scottsdale community through tourism
- Masters in Business Administration from the University of Phoenix
- Bachelor's in Communication from Arizona State University

Shelly Trumbo, Chief Transformations Officer

- Senior healthcare executive with over a decade of strategic and operational experience focused on maximizing the impact and value of community and population health investments, and leading implementation and evaluation efforts to measurably and sustainability improve individual, organizational, and community well-being
- Led numerous well-being transformation strategies as Vice President of Well-Being for Adventist Health System, including numerous well-being transformation strategies such as partnering with communities to launch the largest Blue Zones Community Project initiative in the world
- Advisory Board Member at American College of Lifestyle Medicine

Sophia Piña-McMahon, Editorial & Digital Specialist

- Master of the Environment in Sustainable Food Systems from University of Colorado Boulder
- Multimedia storyteller with a background in journalism, photography, design, and editing. Published writer featured in Lonely Planet, the Mad Agriculture Journal, and more
- Previously held roles in marketing and communications for scaling environmental non-profits

Steve Samples, Senior Financial Analyst

- CPA by training
- 40 years of healthcare experience
- Analyzed well-being, health, and claims data for hundreds of organizations
- Created numerous models to analyze and present value projections, costs, and outcomes
- Former SVP at Healthways, Inc. leading its Financial Operations Group

Tamara Altman, Ph.D., Production Coordinator

- Founder and Principal of Altman Insights LLC, specializing in market and social science research, project management, and strategic insights
- PhD in Clinical Psychology from UCLA, with a background in behavioral health research
- Former Research Analyst at the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, supporting assessments of community health initiatives
- Former Director of Research and Evaluation at Alere Wellbeing, leading evaluations of health behavior change programs



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