



# Islander

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FEBRUARY 2023

## State OF THE City

*Mayor Larisa Svechin*

*“ It is my distinct privilege to be giving the 2023 State of the City Address for the first time as your Mayor. I first moved to Sunny Isles Beach in 1987 and am committed to furthering my previous work on the City Commission, now as your duly elected mayor. ”*

Going into our 25th year, 2022 was an exciting year for the city. We gained two new commissioners, Jerry Joseph and Fabiola Stuyvesant, and most recently following the elections in November and run-off election in December, myself, Commissioner Alex Lama and Commissioner Jeniffer Viscarra were reelected. It was a year of unprecedented elections, sometimes the campaigns were inimical. But now is the time for accord. A passion for the city is an important part of elected office. I applaud the commission for their fortitude and dedication. I am sure that this commission will unite through our collective motivation to bolster Sunny Isles Beach and all it has to offer.

Having been away from city business this past year, experiencing our city as a resident only and not also as a Mayor, I have a unique perspective, fresh eyes, and a deeper understanding of what we the residents want to see in 2023. I have big goals for 2023 and beyond, which include bringing absolute budgetary transparency to the public, fostering a culture of governmental accountability and reliability,

providing much needed resources to residents, taking on our school overcrowding, providing for the most inclusive community, and enacting the highest standards of service for our residents. Further it is critical in this economy that your government is right sized, providing both professional and efficient services, so that we can once again lower our tax rate. My goals for the future are ambitious, but I am confident that our Commission and City staff will make great strides in the coming years.

In the last three years our city saw a population boom. This created a test of our infrastructure and services. Our city staff and Police Department strived to meet the demands. However, our local school suffered. For the first time in twelve years Norman S. Edelcup Sunny Isles Beach K-8 saw an influx of hundreds of new students over years past, topping out at over 2300 students. The commission, local volunteer groups, and parents, united to call for change. One of my top priorities is to ensure that all our residents and their children have access to the best possible facility. Already working with the district, I

intend to do all things necessary so that our school is the jewel which attracted so many of our young families to begin with.



2022 Residents' Academy Graduates

The City started the process of a new standard for assuring accuracy, accountability, and transparency across all levels of the government. This will continue through active engagement by the public, civic groups, religious institutions, and volunteer groups. It is important that all new projects and existing programs are reviewed using a systemic process allowing for the best result for the amount of effort, time, and money invested. The city launched a roundtable series for seniors and teens, as well as the Residents' Academy, an annual course that introduces residents to the operations of the city. As a continuation of the work we have been undertaking on the Comprehensive Plan over the last few years, the city is in the process of completing a holistic review of the city's Comprehensive Plan. The city not only supports but encourages local civic groups to meet and bring ideas to the commission. That is why we provide free meeting space for these groups, with more information available at [sibfl.net/clerk-facilities](http://sibfl.net/clerk-facilities).

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Most importantly, the commission appointed residents to sit on the Charter Review Commission. This is done every ten years to improve our City Charter and make revisions so that our government runs more effectively and efficiently. I applaud the women and men of this committee and thank them for their time and taking on this big responsibility. The public is also invited to attend these meetings and provide feedback to the committee. Once the committee completes their findings, they will present the revisions to the commission so that the commission can set a date for residents to decide. And then it's back to the polls! Voters will have an opportunity to vote for revisions they support sometime in May 2023.

Public safety has been top of mind for our city and me personally. Moving into 2022 we continued to increase

enforcement and visibility, while promoting our public safety strategy. Longtime SIBPD employee Edward Santiago was sworn in as Chief of Police in April 2022. Exceptional officers were also promoted to sergeant and lieutenant. These efforts will increase in 2023 so that we provide the highest level of service and safety. Sunny Isles Beach Police are the best bar none. We will double efforts to partner with volunteer groups and other organizations, offering safety seminars for children and families.

Serving our residents remains a top priority as we are constantly looking at ways to enhance your quality of life. Through various outreach efforts, activities, facilities, and public art we strive to provide well-rounded and exceptional services for every citizen in Sunny Isles Beach.

Since opening Gateway Center in 2021, the city has provided expanded diverse programming for adults and seniors, including class offerings for seniors 62+ as part of our SIBHealthy program, a subsidized list of programming, which provides seniors two free classes every month. Starting this year, residents can now rent Gateway Center for personal events, in addition to corporate meetings and gatherings.

We are excited that early this year, The Spot, a brand-new center for teens located at 215 185 Street will be opening. The Spot will provide a dedicated space for our growing teen population to hang out after school, attend new classes, and meet new friends. Another new facility coming soon is the Intracoastal Courts Park at 15800 Collins Ave. Demo of the Ritz Carlton Sales Center was completed last year, and the courts are expected to open in 2023.

We are shining a light on Senator Gwen Margolis Park with the installation of new field lights. This project will allow our soccer stars to have greater visibility when practicing on the field and is expected to be completed by the end of spring this year. At Pelican Community Park, the city installed fencing around the playground and a walkway to secure the entrance and exit for visitors. With locking gates on both sides, we can restrict access to the gym, playground and restrooms while keeping the park open to the general public. Keeping our parks secure allows our patrons to feel safe while enjoying the vast amenities they offer.

The Cultural and Community Services (CCS) department supplemented current program offerings at Pelican Community Park with a diverse set of new courses including ballroom dancing, guitar, theatre and two competitive travel volleyball teams, who competed in local tournaments and the AAU Junior



*Girl's Soccer Practice at Pelican Community Park*

parent and me classes and pee-wee sports, in addition to offering new after-school options in lieu of our traditional after school program, including study hall, e-gaming, and DIY classes. After a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, Summer Camp was reintroduced providing service to more than 370 participants. My goal is to bring back aftercare and other options for working parents so that our youngest residents are active and safe after school.

Our parks remain a center focus for the CCS department, and they are always studying ways to improve our residents' experience. That is why they are in the process of creating a Parks and Recreation Master Plan that will define the direction, development, and delivery of the City's parks and recreation services over the next 10 years.

The City's Public Art Program continues with one of the first projects involving a meditation garden located in the western area of Town Center Park. This is the site of the old skate park which was relocated to Haulover Park. This meditation garden is the result of many volunteer hours by the Public Arts Committee, who worked many years to bring this project to fruition. I thank them for all their hard work, expertise, and dedication. This project is fully funded, and construction is expected to begin this year.

Nationals in Orlando. Our competitive sports programs continue to reign supreme as the Advanced Cheer & Dance team received their first bid to compete in a national level competition, and the SIB Select Soccer teams won several tournaments including the United Soccer Cup & Showcase, Enigma Cup, and multiple divisions in the City's SEAS Soccer League. CCS successfully implemented new

The IT department is spearheading the deployment of a citywide fiber optic network, a project that has been in the works for the last 10 years. Until now, the city has relied on wireless for connectivity between all city facilities, without any physical infrastructure connecting our locations. This project will interconnect every city property to provide superior redundancy and resiliency that will offer better service to our staff and residents. The final phase of this project will commence this year and is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

The Building department hosted a Condominium Workshop to inform stakeholders of the possible policy, procedural and protocol changes to the building recertification process to ensure our buildings are designed, constructed and maintained in a safe manner. The department has also been working closely with properties to guarantee the proper maintenance and integrity of our buildings. By implementing an online appointment and queuing solution, Building has been able to increase efficiency with customers visiting the third-floor lobby. We will build on this improvement so that permits, and meetings can be completed electronically and seamlessly. Our city should have the most state of the art electronic system and process to ensure ease and minimize the cost to residents.

Our Code Compliance department hired additional officers to provide enhanced service, the goal is augmenting enforcement on the beach, along Collins Avenue, and in our single-family neighborhoods. The Licensing division performed Local Business Tax Receipts and Certificates of Use renewals electronically when business owners had all documents uploaded to their accounts. The Planning and Zoning department issued more than 700 valid short-term vacation rental licenses while continuing their strategy of monitoring delinquent licenses and violations. The department also worked with an independent consultant to conduct a full review of the City's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code to identify conflicts and discrepancies.

The City's roster of city projects remains extensive. We have many exciting initiatives currently in progress and several slated to begin this year. I want to thank the entirety of our city staff for demonstrating continued excellence in their work. All of the work accomplished would not be possible without the individualized efforts of our departments and staff. I also want to acknowledge my fellow commissioners, both familiar and new colleagues, who I am ready to get to work with this year. There is much to do, and I look forward to the progress and accomplishments we will make together.

Contact Mayor Larisa Svechin at [mayor@sibfl.net](mailto:mayor@sibfl.net) or 305.792.1753.

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## FEBRUARY

### Doc Chats:

*Keeping the Romance as We Age*

**Wednesday, February 1**

**11 AM - 12 PM | FREE**

Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.

*Lunch is included. Pre-registration required.*



**February 1, 8, 15, 22**

**Wednesday | 3 - 4 PM**

**\$2 per game**

Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.

### Gateway Market

**Wednesday, February 1, 8, 15, 22**

**5:30 - 10 PM | FREE**

Gateway Park, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.

### Family Movie Night on the Beach:

*Lightyear*

**Saturday, February 4**

**7:00 - 9:00 PM | FREE**

Gateway Park, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.



### Full Moon Yoga

**Sunday, February 5**

**5:45 - 6:45 PM | FREE**

Samson Oceanfront Park (on the beach),  
17425 Collins Ave.

*Pre-registration encouraged.*

### Lunch n' Learn with Florida Historian Cesar Becerra

**Tuesday, February 7**

**11 AM - 12 PM | FREE**

Pelican Community Park, 18115 N Bay Rd,

*Lunch is included. Pre-registration required.*



### Adult Sex Seminar

**Wednesday, February 8**

**5:30 - 6:30 PM | FREE**

Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.

*Pre-registration is required.*

### 3D Mammograms

*Florida Mobile Mammography*

**Friday, February 10**

**8 AM - 3 PM | FREE**

Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.

*Pre-registration is required.*

### Mini-Flow

**Friday, February 10**

**9:30 AM - 1:00 PM**

Pelican Community Park, 18115 North Bay Rd.

*Pre-registration is required.*

### Adult Game Night:

*Battle of the Sexes - Family Feud*

**Friday, February 10**

**5:30 - 6:30 PM | \$2 per game**

Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.

*Pre-registration is required.*

### Beach Cleanup

**Saturday, February 11**

**8 AM - 12 PM | FREE**

Ellen Wayne Beach Access,

192 Street & Collins Ave.

### Cultural Trip:

*Jungle Queen River Boat*

**Tuesday, February 14**

*Bus departs Gateway Center at 4:45 PM*

801 Seabreeze Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, FL

**Residents: \$55 | Non-Residents: \$65**

### Teen Talk

**Tuesday, February 14**

**6 - 8 PM | FREE**

The Spot, 215 185 St.

*Snacks and drinks will be served.*

### Hygiene Pack Distribution Program

**Thursday, February 16**

**12 - 1 PM | FREE**

Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.

*Residents only. Pre-registration required.*

### Regular City Commission Meeting

**Thursday, February 16 | 6:30 PM**

Commission Chambers, Government Center,

18070 Collins Ave.

### City Commission Workshop:

*Golden Shores Undergrounding,  
Committees & Red Light Cameras*

**Thursday, February 16 | 12 PM**

Commission Chambers, Government Center,

18070 Collins Ave.

### Teens Only:

*Silent Dance Party*

**Friday, February 17**

**7 - 9 PM**

Gateway Park, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.

*Pre-registration is required.*

### Federal Holiday:

*Presidents' Day*

**Monday, February 20**

City facilities closed.

Only the SIBshuttle Orange Line #2 will  
operate from 8 AM - 3 PM.

### Senior Round Table

**Wednesday, February 22**

**12 - 2 PM | FREE**

Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.

*Pre-registration is required.*

### Illuminating Bridges of Peace

**Friday, February 24**

**4:30 - 6 PM | Free**

Pedestrian Bridge, 172-174 St.

& North Bay Rd.

### GatewayLIVE:

*Featuring Beethoven on the Beach*

**Sunday, February 26**

**4 PM | FREE**

Gateway Park, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.

### Midday Movies: Dirty Dancing

**Monday, February 27**

**10 AM - 12 PM | FREE**

Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.

*Pre-registration is required.*

**FOR COMPLETE EVENT  
DETAILS, VISIT**

[sibfl.net/events](http://sibfl.net/events)



## PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN

### *New Heights for Parks, Culture & Community*

We're on a mission to improve our parks and recreation services, but we need your help! The Cultural & Community Services Department is looking to gain important feedback from YOU, our residents, to build a longstanding future for the City's parks and recreation services.

If you have not already explored [oursibparksplan.com](https://oursibparksplan.com), visit the website and take a look around. We launched an online survey and encourage everyone to take a few minutes to share your input.



Coming soon this February, our virtual interactive open house will be live on the website with videos, information, and engagement activities for everyone to participate in.



Check out our  
Virtual Open House at  
[oursibparksplan.com](https://oursibparksplan.com).

Follow us on social media, @CityofSIB, and sign up for email blasts at [sibfl.net/notifyme](https://sibfl.net/notifyme) to receive the latest updates.

# STAY CONNECTED



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**SUNNY ISLES BEACH TV**  
Breezeline Channel 662  
Formerly Atlantic Broadband  
Hotwire Channel 161

# MISSING ISLANDER IN YOUR MAILBOX?

The *Islander* is the City's monthly digital publication to provide residents with the timeliest news and information. However, if you would like a printed copy of the newsletter mailed to your home each month, please let us know by calling the Cultural and Community Services department at [305.792.1706](tel:305.792.1706) or online at [sibfl.net/islander](http://sibfl.net/islander).

Residents can always view current and past issues online at [sibfl.net/islander](http://sibfl.net/islander).

To receive the newsletter straight to your email inbox, sign up today at [sibfl.net/notifyme](http://sibfl.net/notifyme).



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MEDIA DIVISION**

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