



Islander

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FEBRUARY 2026

State OF THE City



Larisa Svechin
Mayor

It is my honor to deliver our State of the City address, as required by our City Charter. As we enter our 29th year, I would like to reflect on the accomplishments of 2025 and look ahead to the progress we look to make in 2026.

As always, we strive to lead with transparency. Our goal is to keep residents informed about the work we're doing to make Sunny Isles Beach a premier destination to live. We remain committed to maintaining a low tax rate while continuing to deliver the quality services, events, and lifestyle you have come to expect from our city.

Public Safety

The safety of our residents remains our top priority, and the integration of new technology within our police department has already proven successful. In July, the Sunny Isles Beach Police Department became the first law enforcement agency in the state of Florida to implement a fully operational Drone as First Responder (DFR) program. This new Drone Unit, operated by a team of FAA-certified officers, uses Skydio X10 drones to respond to emergencies faster, gain critical information before officers arrive on scene, and ultimately enhance safety for both the public and our officers.

To further improve traffic and pedestrian safety, we have installed two additional red-light cameras at key intersections. We've also added security cameras at Pelican Community Park, Gateway Park, Town Center Park and Senator Gwen Margolis Park, with another soon to be installed at our teen center The Spot. These cameras are equipped with advanced technology, including visual firearms detection and linked to our Communications Center Hiperwall.

Sunny Isles Beach has joined cities across Miami-Dade County to offer a Text-to-911 service, making it easier for residents to receive emergency help, especially when calling isn't safe or possible. Users must simply send a text to "911" with their location and type of emergency.

Our residents shared their concerns over scooter use in the City, and we're taking steps to address them. We launched a survey and held

two public events to gather the opinions of residents on potential changes to how scooters are regulated. I'm happy to share that we received the highest participation we have ever seen for a City survey. This unprecedented response will guide the Administration in developing increased regulations for the City Commission's consideration.

Capital Improvements

Our city has taken significant steps to mitigate the risk of flooding. Major upgrades to the Golden Shores Pump station are nearing completion, featuring high-capacity pumps and modern controls to better manage heavy rainfall. We have also deployed portable pumps in two locations and are finalizing the design for bidding of the Central Island Drainage Project, which will convert 10 existing drainage wells to pressurized wells to increase stormwater capacity.

You may notice some improvements to the North Bay Road Pedestrian Bridge. The bridge has been repaired and enhanced with a new ADA-compliant surface and upgraded safety bollards, and a green-striped lane was added for bicyclists and scooter riders.

Our city is moving forward with construction of the Government Center Annex, the future home of the Building Department and Crema Gourmet. This new space will enhance convenience and improve residents' access to city services.

Fiscal Responsibility

Sunny Isles Beach remains committed to fiscal responsibility, as demonstrated by our decision to lower the millage rate for the 13th year to 1.7 mills. Continuing the streak of excellence, our Finance Department was awarded the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the 16th consecutive year, as well as the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 14th straight year. In addition, our Procurement Department was honored with the Agency of the Year Award from the Board of the Southeast Florida Chapter of NIGP. These achievements reflect the hard work of our employees, and the transparency and efficiency of our budgeting process.

Community Engagement & the Arts

Our City Commission approved the first official Keys to the City to be presented to Israeli Consul General Maor Elbaz Starinsky and Global Empowerment Mission Founder Michael Capponi for their invaluable contributions to the community. We look forward to honoring more individuals who make a difference in Sunny Isles Beach with this meaningful recognition.

We continue to celebrate the arts, including talent from right here in Sunny Isles Beach. Our Art Uncorked series returned for another year, spotlighting the creativity of both international artists and a local sculptor. The winning works from the Sunny Spaces Art Contest will be added to the Gateway Artway later this year, and our Poetry in the Park event will also make a comeback.

Over the past year, our City Commission has hosted several town halls, covering topics such as antisemitism, gearing up for college, legislative updates, mind-body practices to release stress and improve mood, and my mentoring circle. We also welcomed visits from the Miami-Dade Sheriff and Property Appraiser.

This year also emphasized bringing essential services directly to our residents. Our DBPR Resident Support Sessions, All-in-One Services and Mobile Driver's License events allowed residents to access important resources without leaving Sunny Isles Beach.

In August we celebrated the inaugural Adaptive Beach Day, an event designed to make our beach more welcoming and accessible for everyone. The event was a total success and will return in 2026.

Recreation

2025 brought a year of record attendance at our premier City events. Egg Scramble, City Anniversary, Boogie by the Beach and Winter Fest all drew the largest community participation we have ever seen. With everything planned for 2026, I'm confident we can continue this exciting trend.

Soon, we will be opening our newest park-Intracoastal Sports Park. Residents will enjoy a vibrant outdoor space featuring multi-use courts for tennis and basketball, outdoor exercise equipment, and a pedestrian walkway. We hosted a groundbreaking ceremony last February and are happy to announce the park is expected to open by mid-year.

Our teens now have more ways than ever to enjoy the City through expanded programming at The Spot. Seven new programs and events teach a range of skills – from cooking and baking to entrepreneurship, creating clothes, and e-gaming.

City Services

Our Building Department achieved accreditation from the International Accreditation Service – one of the highest recognitions in the industry. This achievement is a testament to the hard work and expertise of our staff and confirms that our Building Department meets the highest standards in customer service and building safety.

We introduced a new recreation registration platform, CivicRec, which has made signing up for events and programs easier than ever before. Since its launch this past year, we have received more than 34,000 registrations across all programs and events.

On the beach, we installed new lifeguard towers to replace older ones that had served the community for more than 25 years. Constructed from marine grade aluminum, the new towers offer enhanced durability and significantly reduce maintenance needs and long-term costs.

Your opinions are important to us, so we have set up customer service kiosks at the Government Center, Building & Code Compliance, Pelican Community Park, and Gateway Center where you can rate your experience and leave comments. We are here to serve you and welcome any feedback.

New elevators were installed at the Gateway Park Pedestrian Bridge. These upgraded elevators are enhanced with safety features including new glass doors and surveillance cameras with around-the-clock monitoring.

Communication

Keeping residents informed about what's happening in the City is a top priority for me and the City Commission. This year we launched a new text and voice call service that alerts residents of news and updates including road closures, weather updates, holiday reminders, and event updates - straight to their phone.

Our Media Division was recognized with an Outstanding Award from the Florida Municipal Communicators Association (FMCA), winning first place in the website category. The City's new website, sibfl.gov, provides an enhanced digital experience for residents, businesses and visitors, reflecting our commitment to service, transparency, and digital accessibility.

Looking Ahead

Taking a ride on our City Bus will soon be easier with the launch of a new mobile-friendly application. The new app will feature multiple language options, improved route tracking, and a passenger counter for reporting ridership. Other enhancements to the City Bus include ADA-compliant ramps, updated cameras, and infotainment LCD screens.

To further promote safety, Speed Detection Systems will soon be installed within the school zone around Norman S. Edelcup K-8. This new tool will support efforts to reduce speeding and improve public safety in school zones by issuing notices of violations.

I am excited for what 2026 holds for Sunny Isles Beach and look forward to all we will accomplish together as a united community.



Contact Mayor Larisa Svechin at mayor@sibfl.net or 305.792.1753.

Engage in Civic Leadership: Sunny Isles Beach Residents' Academy Returns

Vice Mayor Jeniffer Viscarra

I am happy to announce that the SIB Residents' Academy is back! Over the course of seven weekly sessions, starting on Wednesday, February 4, and running through March 18, participants will interact with our guest speakers and learn about the city's different departments, operations, elections, and more.

The presentations are interactive and designed to improve participants' civic engagement and connection to local government. To keep it fun, we will even include a little friendly competition. The program is free, and if you can make the time commitment, I encourage you to join. So far, we've had a lot of fun!

With the input of students, guest speakers, and Department Heads, the Academy's content continues to improve. I am happy to share that FIU's Maurice A. Ferre Institute for Civic Leadership will once again join us for our first session as the Academy's only out-of-city guest speaker.

Furthermore, in the interest of broader inclusion, we are opening spots for high school students who are at least 17 years old. While I welcome our high schoolers to join for the sheer joy of learning, successful completion of the program can also earn them community service hours.

Participating in the Residents' Academy is an opportunity for civically inclined locals to work and grow together, and perhaps make new friends. That has certainly been the case in previous sessions. In addition, successful participation in the Academy will help foster an environment of civic engagement and service in the community. Ideally, it will allow for informed and productive conversations that can adequately address residents' concerns beyond the classroom. I hope to see you in attendance!



Contact Vice Mayor Jeniffer Viscarra at seat4@sibfl.net or 305.792.1750.

Community Feedback Drives Proposed Updates to Scooter Ordinance

We asked for your opinions, and you delivered! Our Scooter Survey received an unprecedented amount of community engagement, with nearly 1,900 residents weighing in on potential changes to how motorized scooters are regulated across the City.

Based on the input received, the City Commission has agreed to make changes to the Ordinance, which will be considered at the Commission meeting on February 19. Potential changes may include an age restriction, increased fines, or other adjustments as directed by the Commission.



Commission Recap

Below are some of the key approvals and decisions made by the City Commission at the January 15, 2026 meeting. For the full agenda and meeting recordings, visit sibfl.gov/meetings.

Vice Mayor Appointment

The City Commission approved the Mayor's appointment of Jeniffer Viscarra as Vice Mayor.

Legislative Priorities

The City Commission set its priorities for the 2026 Florida Legislative Session, focusing on advocating for home rule, sustainability, and condominium reform. Stay informed about the issues your City Commission is championing on your behalf by visiting sibfl.gov/advocacy.

CALENDAR

FEBRUARY OF EVENTS

Full Moon Yoga

Sunday, February 1
6 - 7 PM

On the beach by Samson Oceanfront Park, 17425 Collins Ave.

DBPR Resident Support Session

Wednesday, February 4
10 AM - 2 PM

Government Center, 18070 Collins Ave.



February 4, 11, 18, 25

Wednesdays | 3 - 4 PM

Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.

Concert in the Park

Wednesday, February 4
6 - 8 PM

Samson Oceanfront Park, 17425 Collins Ave.

Mini-FLOW (Florida Licensing on Wheels)

Monday, February 9
10 AM - 1 PM

Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.

Teen Talk

Tuesday, February 10
5 - 6 PM

The Spot, 215 185 St.

Teens Only: Valentine's Day Bash

Saturday, February 14
12 - 3 PM

The Spot, 215 185 St.
Pre-registration is required.

Cultural Trip: Jungle Queen

Saturday, February 14
4 - 11 PM

Bus will depart from and return to Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.
Price: \$80
Resident ID Cardholder: \$40

Federal Holiday: Presidents' Day

Monday, February 16
City offices closed.

Only the City Bus orange line #2 will operate from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Parks open regular hours.

City Commission Workshop: Agenda Review

Tuesday, February 17
10 AM

First Floor Meeting Room, Government Center, 18070 Collins Ave.

City Commission Workshop: Special Presentations & Discussion Items

Thursday, February 19
3 PM

Commission Chambers, Government Center, 18070 Collins Ave.

Regular City Commission Meeting

Thursday, February 19
6:30 PM

Commission Chambers, Government Center, 18070 Collins Ave.

Beach Cleanup

Saturday, February 21
8 - 11 AM

Ellen Wynne Beach Access, 19333 Collins Ave.

Senior Roundtable

Wednesday, February 25
12 - 1 PM

Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.
Pre-registration is required.

Special Magistrate Hearing

Thursday, February 26
10 AM

Commission Chambers, Government Center, 18070 Collins Ave.

Commission Workshop: Pre-Budget Vision, Goals, and Events

Thursday, February 26
2 PM

First Floor Meeting Room, Government Center, 18070 Collins Ave.

29th Anniversary Celebration

Saturday, February 28
6 - 9 PM

Samson Oceanfront Park, 17425 Collins Ave.

Price: \$50
Resident ID Cardholder: FREE
Pre-registration is required.

FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF EVENTS, VISIT sibfl.gov/events

Disclosure: Events are subject to change.

Miami-Dade County Sunny Isles Beach Branch

FEBRUARY **LIBRARY PROGRAMS**

Talking is Teaching – Talk, Read, Sing for Preschoolers
(ages 3 - 5 yrs.)

Monday, February 2, 9, 23
11 AM - 12 PM

Chess Club
(ages 9+)

Tuesday, February 3, 10, 17, 24
4 - 6 PM

Talking is Teaching – Talk, Read, Sing for Toddlers
(ages 18 mos. – 3 yrs.)

Wednesday, February 4, 11, 18, 25
11 AM - 12 PM

Homework Help and Tutoring
(students grades K-12)

Saturday, February 7, 14, 21, 28
10 AM - 1 PM

For more information, contact tutoring@mdpls.org or call 305.375.1413.

For more information on Miami-Dade County Sunny Isles Beach Branch Library programs, call 305.682.0726 or email vazquezh@mdpls.org.

Citizenship Class
(ages 19+)

Saturday, February 7, 14, 21, 28
10 AM - 12 PM

The Kids Reading Club
(ages 6 – 11 yrs.)

Saturday, February 14
1 - 2 PM

Russian Social Club
(ages 19+)

Saturday, February 21
3:30 - 5 PM

Furry Tales
(ages 4 – 8 yrs.)

Saturday, February 28
2 - 3 PM

Unless otherwise noted, classes and programs are held in the First Floor Meeting Room of the Sunny Isles Beach Government Center, 18070 Collins Avenue.





CONCERT in the Park

Presents

**Jason Webb and
The Caribbean Chillers**

Wednesday, February 4

6 – 8 PM

Samson Oceanfront Park, 17425 Collins Ave.

Enjoy the sound of live music with a free concert by the beach.

Escape to Margaritaville with a tribute performance to the legendary Jimmy Buffett.

Food will be available for purchase. For more information, visit sibfl.gov/concertinthepark.





29th
ANNIVERSARY

CELEBRATION

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28 / 6 - 9 PM

Samson Oceanfront Park, 17425 Collins Ave.

Price: **\$50** / Resident ID Cardholders: **FREE**

Wristbands will NOT be sold at the event.

Registration will only be available through Friday, February 27.

Get into the spirit of Carnival as we celebrate 29 years of Sunny Isles Beach. Sport your most vibrant colors and enjoy a night of music and food on the sand.

For more information, visit sibfl.gov/anniversary.

Pre-registration is required.



Islander

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COMMISSIONER Alex Lama

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