

# Florida Trend

FLORIDA'S BUSINESS AUTHORITY

SEPTEMBER 2023

## Sowing Solar

Finding sites for millions of solar energy panels sparks a land rush in rural Florida.



*PLUS...*

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\$4.95



Michael Fechter  
mfechter@floridatrend.com



Rachel Silverstein is executive director of Miami Waterkeeper, a non-profit that advocates on behalf of South Florida's watershed.

SPOTLIGHT

## Driving Climate Conversations

Miami is considered especially vulnerable to sea level rise fueled by climate change. It's also becoming an epicenter for resiliency initiatives to mitigate impact on the city and its residents. But that doesn't mean the community fully understands what future adaptations it will require.

To increase awareness and drive community engagement on the topic, the **Knight Foundation** has made \$8 million in grants to two local organizations.

The money, \$5 million to **Miami Waterkeeper** and \$3 million to the **Everglades Foundation**, will support public awareness campaigns about the pending challenges and ways to reduce their severity. The Knight Foundation says flooding events have quadrupled over the past three decades and estimates up to \$23 billion of property could be impacted by rising seas by 2050.



Eric Eikenberg

"Everglades restoration is Miami's most powerful tool" in reducing those threats, says Everglades Foundation CEO Eric Eikenberg. It can protect water wells from saltwater encroachment, buffer storm surge by bolstering coastal mangroves and "provide massive carbon sequestration."

Miami Waterkeeper, founded in 2010, works to protect the watershed and adapt to rising seas. The Florida Wildlife Foundation named it 2022 Water Conservationist of the Year.

Public awareness and support is central to the community's

ability to weather climate change successfully, says Executive Director Rachel Silverstein. The Knight Foundation money, more than double this year's Miami Waterkeeper budget, will be used over the next five years to support hiring additional staff and creating multimedia outreach on the issues to policy makers, teachers and the public.

"Climate change is an incredibly complex and wide-reaching topic, and messaging the issues — as well as proposed solutions — requires specialized communication platforms," Silverstein says.



A 13-acre chunk of Hialeah Park, the historic horse racing track, is being turned into a 341-unit multifamily development. The project is led by the Prestige Companies and the Brunetti Organization, which owns the land. It will be called **Flamingo Village**, a nod to the 100 wild flamingos living on the grounds and protected through Hialeah Park's designation as a National Audubon Society sanctuary.

COMMUNICATIONS

► Miami-based **Avenue Z Network**, a strategic communications and digital media company, has bought out tech and venture capital communications consulting firm **Bevel**. Together, Avenue Z says it hopes to build a digital communications unicorn, meaning a \$1-billion valuation.

ENVIRONMENT

► **Monroe County** officials touted gains made during the Florida legislative session, including \$20 million in funding for the Florida Keys Stewardship Act, created in 2016 to protect the region's coral reef, seagrass beds and mangroves. Monroe County received another \$10 million for a Florida Keys artificial reef program, \$5 million for land acquisition spelled out in the act and \$6.25 million for the Monroe County Emergency Operations Center at Marathon's airport.

FINANCE

► The Miami-based **Claire Group** has launched a \$500-million growth equity fund aimed at Latin American startups. Led by former SoftBank Group International executives **Marcelo Claire** and **Shu Nyatta**, the **Bicycle Capital** fund has secured \$440 million in commitments. "Latin America," Claire says, "has a unique combination of excellent founders, a digitally savvy population and more opportunities than capital."

REAL ESTATE

► **STAX Equity**, a private equity and commercial real estate firm

founded in 2022, announced it's leasing 6,000 square feet of office space on Lincoln Road in Miami Beach. Stax seeks out underperforming retail outlets, such as gas stations and convenience stores.

► **Terra** and **Lion Development Group** teamed up to buy a \$40-million, 1.6-acre property located on Northeast First Avenue, just south of Interstate 195. The groups say they will break ground next year on a condominium tower at what Terra CEO **David Martin** describes as "the gateway to the Design District." ► Construction is underway on the

first phase of **Southpointe Vista**, a 332-unit affordable housing development in South Miami-Dade's Goulds neighborhood. Most units will be reserved for people earning 70% of the area's median income. Miami-Dade County's Public Housing and Community Development Department is providing \$2.5 million in surtax money for the project, the first phase of which should be open by the end of 2024. ► New York's **Dwight Capital** and **Dwight Mortgage Trust** opened an office in Sunny Isles Beach, leasing 4,000 square feet inside the 14-story Milton Tower on Collins Avenue.

TRANSPORTATION

► **Tri-Rail** completed a week of trial runs in anticipation of a 9-mile service expansion directly into downtown Miami using Brightline's MiamiCentral Station. In addition to using Florida East Coast Railway lines, the test runs provided training for Tri-Rail crews. The expansion is expected to be in operation later this year or early 2024. 📺



**Marker 88**, an Islamorada restaurant that's been serving guests since 1967, has reopened following a four-year renovation. The 2.5-acre site now offers two tiki bars, docks and the capacity to host private gatherings of up to 450 people, as well as a menu influenced by West Indies, Polynesia and French Caribbean traditions.