

# MIAMI TODAY

## 37 Years

WEEK OF THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2020

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**FREE FARES EXTENDED:** To continue safeguarding residents from contracting Covid-19 by eliminating contact with fareboxes and unnecessary interactions with operators, the Miami-Dade Department of Transportation will extend suspension of fares through Jan. 31 – one month past the date in the county’s 2020-21 budget. Mayor **Daniella Levine Cava** said in a statement of the suspension, which also extends to parking fees and auto-reloads

for monthly passholders, “Our No. 1 priority remains protecting the lives and livelihoods of residents during the pandemic, [and] continuing to waive fares will help keep public transit safe while supporting families through this difficult time as we create the foundation for a strong economic recovery.” The mayor and department will also hold a virtual town hall in January, a county press note said, “to dialogue with the community and receive direct input from the public regarding future decisions about reinstating fares. Department Director **Alice Bravo** last week said she was resigning to pursue private sector work.

**CONSTRUCTION SLIDE CONTINUES:** The value of construction starts in South Florida was off 30% in November from the total of November of 2019, Dodge Data & Analytics reported. The value of residential starts was off 38% to just over \$611 million, while nonresidential starts fell 22% year to year to \$610 million. For the first 11 months of 2020, total construction starts in the Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties area fell 27% to just over \$12 billion.

**CHARTER SCHOOL REBUFFED:** An appeals court last week turned down arguments by backers of a proposed charter school that the Miami-Dade County Commission had blocked. Somerset Academy Inc. and The University Baptist Church Inc. sought a county zoning exception to build a charter school and an accompanying religious facility, according to the ruling by three judges of the 3rd District Court of Appeal. The county commission, however, rejected the request, and the charter school backers sought a review in circuit court. But a circuit-court appellate panel denied review, and the 3rd District judges backed that decision. “Because the circuit court afforded procedural due process and applied the correct law, we deny the petition,” the ruling by Judges **Ivan Fernandez**, **Monica Gordo** and **Fleur Lobree** said.

**GAS PRICE DIPS:** Miami gas prices fell 1.2 cents per gallon in the past week to averaged \$2.21, according to GasBuddy’s price tracking service. Gas prices in Miami are 14.4 cents per gallon higher than a month ago but stand 28.4 cents per gallon lower than a year ago.

## THE ACHIEVER



Photo by Marlene Quaroni

### Philippe Houdard

Recruits businesses to Miami, heads Pipeline Workspaces

The profile is on Page 4

## State asked to reinstate film tax aid

By JESSE SCHECKNER

Miami-Dade is again asking the state to resurrect incentives to lure film and TV production, this time with the added urgency of a pandemic.

Commissioners unanimously urged the Legislature to fund a state rebate for productions, citing “high unemployment rates and a sinking economy resulting from Covid-19.”

The film, TV and digital media industry “has many attributes that give it a leading position in stimulating economic recovery,” Rebeca Sosa’s item said.

The program would replace one the state launched in 2010 that died unfunded in 2016. That program’s \$242 million tax credits went to productions filming in Florida, including USA Network’s “Burn Notice,” HBO’s “Ballers” and Netflix’s “Bloodline.”

Those shows and others reached over 1.5 billion viewers, equal to \$405 million in advertising, the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau said in 2012. Visit Florida reported that 23% of tourists interviewed that year said shows and movies shot in Florida influenced their travel to the state.

But by 2016, many in the industry had relocated to Georgia, North Carolina and elsewhere with funded programs.

Florida has since “lost more than 70 major films and television projects that would have spent \$1.3 billion statewide, creating 110,000 cast and crew jobs and would have booked more than 220,000 hotel room nights,” Ms. Sosa’s item said.

After repeatedly asking the state to restore funding, Miami-Dade in 2017 launched its own program, offering a \$50,000 tax credit to productions spending \$500,000 to just under \$1 million here and \$100,000 to productions spending more.

To qualify, productions must hire 70% of cast, crew and vendors locally and shoot 70% here.

It has lured 12 productions, including “Red Table Talks: The Estefans” and “Critical Thinking,” a motion picture about Miami Jackson High’s championship chess team.

## County trying to do what it can to slow evictions

By JESSE SCHECKNER

Miami-Dade residents facing potential evictions may soon be given longer to prepare for next steps.

County commissioners are to vote Jan. 20 on an ordinance that, if approved, would double the state-required notification period for evictions of month-to-month residential rental tenancies from 15 days to 30.

“Although this board does not have the power to stop the anticipated significant increase in evictions, it does have the power to take certain steps to assist residents who are facing the imminent threat of eviction,” a memo from sponsor Eileen Higgins said.

The new rule would apply only to rent arrangements “without a specific duration.” Properties with federally backed mortgages by entities like Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and residents in federally assisted housing, including public and section 8 housing, would not qualify.

The ordinance also wouldn’t change the required notice periods for yearly, quarterly or weekly tenancies – 60 days, 30 days and seven days prior notice, respectively.

Miami-Dade is within its rights to enlarge the

notification period required for rental evictions, according to a May 1994 legal opinion by then-Florida attorney general Robert Butterworth.

“A municipal ordinance that merely supplements the notice provisions in ... Florida Statutes would not conflict with the statute and would, therefore, be valid,” he wrote in response to an inquiry from former Miami Beach City Attorney Laurence Feingold.

Gov. Ron DeSantis let Florida’s freeze on evictions die in late September, deferring to a moratorium the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) ordered early in the month that extended the national deadline to Dec. 31.

Mr. DeSantis had ordered a halt of Florida evictions in April and extended the order five times since. A July extension limited protections only against the “final action at the conclusion of eviction proceedings” for tenants “adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.”

A Sept. 30 press release from his office said ending the state moratorium would “avoid any confusion over whether the CDC’s evictions order should apply in a particular circumstance.”

The CDC moratorium applies only to evictions for rent nonpayment.

Late Sunday, after months of gridlock on Capitol Hill, President Donald Trump signed a

new \$900 billion Covid-19 relief package that in part extended the moratorium through Jan. 31.

The package includes \$25 billion in emergency rental assistance.

Up to 39.9 million Americans in rented housing could face eviction once the moratorium ends, according to an analysis of weekly Census data by international nonprofit Aspen Institute.

Aspen found that Florida trailed only California, Texas and New York in the number of households statewide in peril, with between 818,000 and 1.11 million households at risk of eviction.

In Miami-Dade, 4,595 residential eviction cases have been filed since Sept. 1, the date the county clerk’s office separated residential and commercial filings.

The office received 7,467 eviction cases total from March 13 to Dec. 25, according to Senior Deputy Clerk Maria Tamayo.

After Miami-Dade commissioners voted unanimously Dec. 15 to advance the proposed county ordinance, acting Chairwoman Rebeca Sosa approved Ms. Higgins’ request to suspend rules requiring a committee hearing prior to a final vote by the full commission.

The Jan. 20 vote is to come after a public hearing.

## AGENDA

MIAMI BEACH MAY OFFER TENANTS MORE RENT RELIEF ...	2	COUNTY EXTENDS FEE WAIVERS FOR CRUISE VESSELS ...	7
COUNTY CLEARS JACKSON WORKERS FOR HAZARD PAY ...	3	MOST OF BEACH’S AID FOR RESTAURANTS UNCLAIMED ...	9
BUSINESSES USE ASSETS TO GIVE BACK IN HARD YEAR ...	3	AIRPORT MAY FORGIVE ITS TENANTS \$107 MILLION-PLUS ...	11
VIEWPOINT: HELPING MIAMI ACHIEVE A RENAISSANCE ...	6	DORAL TRANSFORMS PARKS WITH DOZEN SCULPTURES ...	15

# Philippe Houdard runs shared-workspace firm Pipeline...

Growing up on a farm in France taught Philippe Houdard the values of hard work and community, concepts he went on to build multiple successful enterprises around as an entrepreneur in the US.

When Mr. Houdard was a child, his father played for him records of former President John F. Kennedy's greatest speeches. Mr. Houdard went on to work as a legislative aide to Joe Kennedy and campaign staffer for Ted Kennedy before earning his master's in public policy from Harvard. After gaining experience in business and marketing working with mid-sized and Fortune 500 companies including Lucent Technologies, he founded SkyBank Financial and boutique shared-workspace firm Pipeline.

With six locations in Florida and one in Philadelphia to oversee, Mr. Houdard is kept busy as Pipeline's CEO. But he still dedicates time to the community as a chair of both the Downtown Development Authority's Enterprise Committee and the nonprofit Developing Minds Foundation, which he founded in 2006 to serve children affected by conflict and poverty.

"I always try to focus on something that resonates with me personally," he said of his many roles. "I try to focus on areas that are important from a human standpoint. Pipeline is all about trying to help companies be successful. Developing Minds is focused on trying to help people emerge from difficult circumstances, and the DDA is focused on creating a platform for people to pursue their dreams by building a healthy economy here in downtown Miami."

Mr. Houdard spoke via phone with Miami Today reporter Kylea Henseler.

**Q: What specific experiences led you to start Pipeline with co-founder Todd Oretsky?**

**A:** When we started talking about creating Pipeline, it was the idea of building a community where people could come together and work in a dynamic, diverse environment and exchange ideas. That was very appealing to me, and it resonated with my experience growing up in that village in France where everybody knew each other and to a certain extent were dependent on one another and thrived as a result. The fundamental concept of creating connection among people was one that I found inspiring.

**Q: How has the pandemic affected your business?**

**A:** Coronavirus has created an immense amount of suffering for many people, not just here in Miami but around the world. The instruction I gave to our general managers was to work with any members experiencing hardship so that we can support them and help them transition through this turbulent time. That has helped us do relatively fine; we're at about 80% occupancy across our platform, which is a little bit lower than what it was before. A couple of our locations in Brickell and Coral Gables are near full occupancy.

**Q: What steps have you taken to ensure customers feel comfortable in a shared space?**

**A:** My brother lives in China, so early on he told me what we might anticipate here. Before Covid started spreading in



Photo by Marlene Quaroni

Philippe Houdard created Pipeline with a concept of building a community for workers.

## The Achiever

### Philippe Houdard

CEO and Co-Founder  
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the US we started putting protocols in place which we've continued to ramp up.

We restructured space, changed furniture around and put up panels, though we have mostly private offices in the open areas. We put up partitions and buffers, and we enforce the protocols recommended by the CDC and the World Health Organization. Members are overwhelmingly self-regulating as well. We've been delighted by their adherence to those policies.

**Q: What are the benefits of working in a shared space like Pipeline?**

**A:** It's good to be surrounded by people and companies that are innovative and growing. For example, we had a robotics company called Neocis that was a tiny startup when they were first at Pipeline. I just read that they raised \$72 million in funding. It's great for Pipeline to play a small part in their success, but also for the other members to be around that.

We have other companies; one of our first members was Google. Uber opened up its South Florida operations with one person at Pipeline. They grew to 20 people until they outgrew us, which is always bittersweet.

**Q: Do you think co-sharing spaces will be affected by the work-from-home boom?**

**A:** For many people that we talked to, working from home can be an isolating experience. There's a limiting factor to

being in an environment where you're not connecting with others and able to think more broadly.

Even though the density in our space is lower, with fewer people at any one time, it's still useful for that connectedness. People feel better when they're able to go out for a little bit and connect and feel more motivated. We desire to be around other people, and as long as you provide a safe way for people to do that they have a strong inclination to come together.

**Q: How do you think changing commercial office space trends will affect your business model?**

**A:** Flexible office spaces are poised to experience tremendous growth coming out of the pandemic. A large part of it is that remote workers have demonstrated that they're highly capable of being productive and managing themselves. Workers are working from home, but may still desire to come into a space for shorter periods of time.

A principal driver is that companies desire greater flexibility now, and we're eager to provide that flexibility. So whatever company it is that may have some uncertainty about the future and want flexibility, Pipeline and other shared workspaces are there to address that need.

**Q: What sets you apart from competitors like WeWork?**

**A:** While some big box type shared workspaces are operations driven, we're more of a boutique environment; deeply personalized. Our general managers know practically everything about our members. When our general managers have a birthday it's almost embarrassing all the flowers and gifts that they get from members. That reflects on the personalization that people value.

**Q: You already have seven locations including one outside of Florida. Do you have plans for expansion?**

**A:** When the pandemic broke out we had to make a decision about whether to take on additional space in Orlando. And while there was a lot of anxiety in the economy, we decided to expand our space in May. That ended up being a great decision. We have plans to continue to grow, and once the demand really starts to scale up we'll start to place emphasis on that.

**Q: Are there any particular locations that you're looking at?**

**A:** We generally like markets that have a strong urban core with suburban areas that connect. Here, for example, we have Brickell, which serves as the flagship location, and then we have a lot of connections like Pipeline Doral, Coral Gables or Fort Lauderdale. People like to have what we call a passport to be able to work in locations in different neighborhoods. That's generally the hub-and-spoke model that we like to apply to whatever city we choose.

**Q: Aside from growth, what goals do you have for the company?**

**A:** The main goal right now is to keep our employees and our members safe. The second is to ensure that as many of our members as possible have the support to manage through the complications in the economy and with the pandemic.

**Q: How did you become involved with the Downtown Development Authority?**

**A:** I was deeply involved with entrepreneurs and the tech and startup communities here in Miami. And somebody from the DDA reached out to me because I live downtown, my business is in Brickell and I have my finger on the pulse.

Pipeline has over 2,000 companies as clients, a large number of which are in downtown. So I think that DDA thought that I might make a useful contribution since I could reflect some of the interests of those types of businesses.

**Q: What is your main focus as co-chair of the DDA's enterprise committee?**

**A:** I co-chair the committee with Nitin Motwani, who has made a tremendous contribution to the DDA and to the city. What we're really focused on now is attracting great companies, particularly in the finance and technology sectors, to come to Miami and produce high paying jobs.

Blackstone recently announced that they're moving to downtown and will be hiring several hundred workers. Goldman Sachs just announced that they're looking at downtown.

In technology we have great companies. We have 500 Startups based downtown. We have Genius Plaza that moved to downtown Miami and a lot of others.

What we're really focused on is growing that ecosystem so that even more companies will be attracted here and we can continue to grow as a city.

**Q: Tell me about the initiative you started to bring tech companies downtown.**

**A:** We organized the Innovation Advisory Committee last year, housed in the Enterprise Committee, for luminaries in the tech sector down here. Representatives from Magic Leap, Knight Foundation, Chewy, Uber and other companies really focus on this question: How do we make sure that companies around the world know about the tremendous talent that exists in Miami, and how do we go about reaching those companies and attracting them?

Miami has emerged as a real center for talent; we have over 250,000 college and university students here. Numerous Fortune 500 companies have their Latin American headquarters here. We have a huge startup culture. And so this has been


  
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# ...while chairing Developing Minds, building downtown

an evolution, where Miami has turned into a real center for technology.

**Q: What has it been like to recruit and work with leaders from these companies?**

**A:** We're refreshing the image of Miami. For so long Miami was associated with just sun and fun and tourism, and it has all of that. But what surprises many companies is when they learn what other companies are here. They learn about the talent, and they learn about how business friendly the environment is.

Needless to say the low taxes and business friendly policies are appealing to companies, but it's also just getting them a sense of the culture of Miami. It's a center of innovation, a center of original thought. It's an extremely diverse community and a city of immigrants, and all of that comes together to form a unique way of approaching problems and building companies. This resonates deeply with companies that are looking for an edge.

**Q: Is the DDA actively trying to bring Goldman Sachs to Miami?**

**A:** We have focused since 2013 on trying to educate the market about what Miami has to offer. All of that has laid the groundwork for companies like Goldman Sachs to take Miami seriously, and Covid really accelerated that process. Once it became clear to the highest performing companies like Goldman Sachs that their workers could work remotely, all of a sudden that became a viable option.

The DDA this year started an initiative called Follow the Sun, which provides up to \$150,000 to companies moving to Miami to help defray costs. That's just part of the overall strategy. Beyond the money is really helping guide them through the process and understand how they can find the best place for them here in Miami.

**Q: How can the DDA improve the process of recruiting companies, particularly from the Northeast?**

**A:** Making sure that the reality is presented to companies in the Northeast. We have the talent. We have the business

conditions. We have the tax structure. We have the policies and we have the quality of life.

Over the last decade we've had the New World Symphony. We've had the Perez Art Museum, we've had this explosion of quality of life and entertainment opportunities here.

So it's really just being able to tell that story in a crisp way and ensuring that we remove any doubt they have that they'll be able to perform well.

**Q: What drove you to start Developing Minds in 2006?**

**A:** Growing up I spent a lot of time with my grandparents and people of their generation. They had gone through World War I and II, and I was always curious why some people ended up faring well after that and why some didn't.

I reached a point where I wanted to make a contribution to society, and I decided to focus on using education to help people affected by conflict the way my grandparents were and to focus on areas that are going through difficult times.

So, I started focusing on the favelas in Rio de Janeiro. We build schools and support innovative education projects there. In Colombia we work with former child soldiers and offer literacy programs. Here in Miami, we have a project in Little Havana that provides after school programming for children mostly fleeing violence from Central America.

**Q: How did you choose these specific projects?**

**A:** We focus on areas affected by armed conflict, that's the constant theme. We partner with a local organization and expand on their existing projects.

I spent a lot of time in Brazil for work. I spent a year living in Rio, and a lot of time living in the favelas and hanging out with the people who live. We looked at 100 different projects and narrowed it down to three projects that had a proven track record.

We took the same approach in Colombia: looked at another 100 projects and ended up partnering with Ciudad Don Bosco Catholic Organization in Medellin,

Colombia. We've worked with them for 15 years with children that were formerly with paramilitary groups. We sponsored a new dormitory for the kids to live in, and over the years we introduced a lot of programming from English language to yoga and mindfulness to prepare them for reintegration into society.

We try to remain focused on the mission, which is to transform the lives of people who have gone through conflict and poverty.

**Q: You've started two successful businesses and one charity. Do you have a creative process or something that drives you to keep innovating?**

**A:** In fact I do. And it's mostly driven by being selective in who we hire and distributing decision-making broadly among our employees, so that we can all collaborate and consistently come up with new ideas, evaluate those ideas and execute them.

The key for me is that creativity is a collaborative process; the idea of a lone creative genius is practically nonexistent. The most creative companies are those where all the employees feel a personal stake and feel compelled to come up with ideas themselves, test them, and have a culture that is permissive of making mistakes and rewarding the process even if the outcome is not what was initially hoped for.

**Q: What companies do you look up to for the culture they create?**

**A:** Tony Hsieh and the company that he built, Zappos, are focused on delivering happiness. We at Pipeline are focused on making companies successful and providing the atmosphere that will allow them to flourish.

I spent a lot of time studying that company and was inspired by the general concept of developing a deep engagement with our members so that we can walk the road with them, so to speak. We get to know the entrepreneurs in our space. We live the ups and downs with them. And it's incumbent upon us to not just be a physical space for them to work out of, but to really partner with them and

and help them in any way that we can.

**Q: What personal characteristics do you believe have contributed to your success?**

**A:** Hard work. I grew up with my parents working excessively hard, and I grew up on a farm where there was no rest for the weary. People lived close to the land and had an insane work ethic. I'm always trying to live up to that standard.

The other is remaining focused on what I'm passionate about, because when your work ethic might fade a little bit from fatigue, the passion can keep you going.

**Q: You recently became a father. How do you strike a work-life balance?**

**A:** It's the greatest thing that's ever happened to me. We all have to make choices, and I would say that, while the pandemic has been so difficult for so many people, we all have to search for the silver lining. And for me that silver lining is that I've been able to spend an extraordinary amount of time with my son as a result of working from home.

I'm so much more deeply engaged in the life of my young son as a result of this, and for that I'm very grateful and thankful.

**Q: What do you consider your greatest achievement?**

**A:** We've had over 100,000 kids go through our education programs at Developing Minds. Through social media I'm able to observe from a distance the evolution in the lives of so many of these kids who had a difficult start. To see their lives unfold in a better way where they get married, have children, get jobs and most importantly just have some peace and tranquility, to me, is the thing that I'm most proud of aside from my family.

**Q: What's a good book you've read lately?**

**A:** I've read everything that Hemingway has ever written, and now I'm working on Charles Dickens. I'm just starting to read Great Expectations.

**Q: Do you have a favorite book?**

**A:** The Sun Also Rises, also Hemingway.

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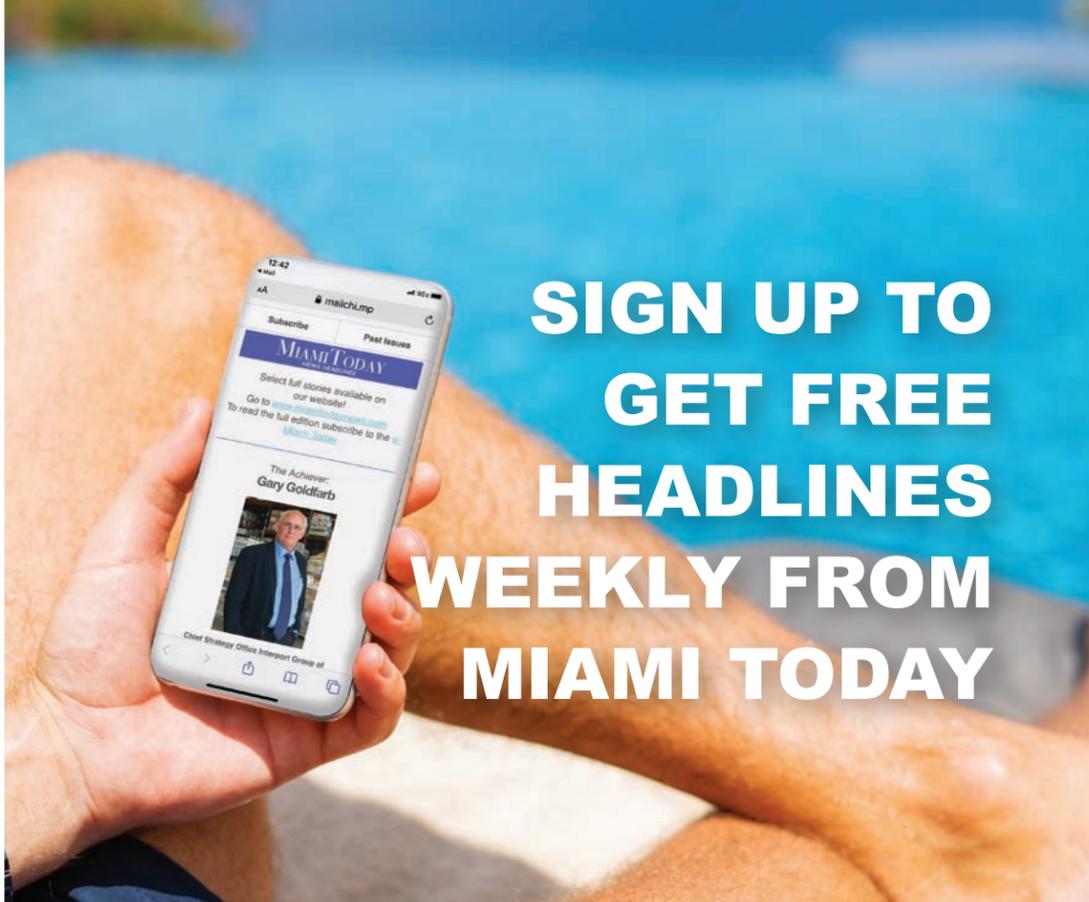
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