



# SIB *islander*

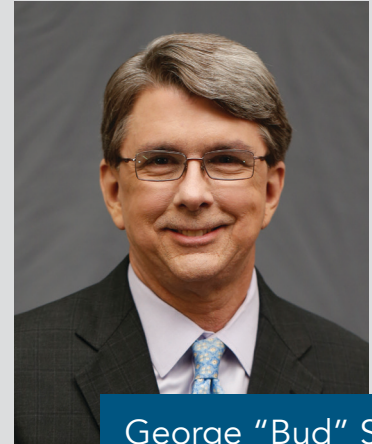
CITY OF SUNNY ISLES BEACH

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MARCH 2021

## A MESSAGE FROM THE Mayor

“ March marks one year since COVID-19 was first introduced into our lives in Sunny Isles Beach. A year of challenges, the like we have never seen before. The good news is that the COVID-19 vaccine has proven effective to protect you from getting sick with COVID-19. ”



George "Bud" Scholl  
Mayor

Currently in South Florida, the vaccine is being distributed to seniors ages 65 and older and healthcare personnel. Though there have been obstacles with the distribution as demand is exceeding supply, there are many options to receive the vaccine in our area. Several health systems offer vaccination appointments as do Walmart, Sam's Club, Navarro pharmacy, and now Publix beginning March 1. You can also pre-register for the vaccine with the County and State if you are eligible. Miami-Dade County's pre-registration system offers registration [online](#) or by calling [305.614.2014](tel:305.614.2014). The State of Florida offers pre-registration [online](#) or by calling [888.499.0840](tel:888.499.0840).

Many residents have asked for a vaccination site in Sunny Isles Beach. We are being proactive in pursuing different options to have the ability to distribute vaccines here in the City. Working with the State, Department of Health and several other organizations, we are optimistic that in the near future, we can bring a vaccination site to Sunny Isles Beach. In the meantime, we have been assisting eligible residents with accessibility and transportation to vaccination appointments at sites outside of the City.

The vaccine is considered the best opportunity for ending the pandemic. I know there has been confusion, questions

and misinformation circling about the vaccine. We debunk myths and provide in-depth information about the COVID-19 vaccine on page 6. And if you missed our conversation about the vaccine with Dr. Carrasquillo, Chief of the Division of General Internal Medicine at the University of Miami, you can view the whole video on our [YouTube channel](#).

It has been shown that COVID-19 can have serious, life-threatening and lasting complications; and if you get sick, you could spread the illness to family, friends, coworkers or others around you. Getting vaccinated is a vital step to protecting yourself, your family, and our community from COVID-19. The vaccine will work with your immune system so you are able to fight the virus if exposed. It is also essential to continue wearing masks and social distancing if we want the best chance at protection from COVID-19. In order to stop the pandemic, we must use all the tools at our disposal.

Whether you have already received the vaccine or are still waiting, it is important to stay informed. I encourage our residents to frequently check [Miami-Dade County's website](#) for the latest vaccine and COVID-19 updates for our county. As always, we will continue to distribute the most up-to-date vaccination information via email, social media and our website, [sibfl.net/vaccines](http://sibfl.net/vaccines).

Contact Mayor George "Bud" Scholl at [mayor@sibfl.net](mailto:mayor@sibfl.net) or [305.792.1751](tel:305.792.1751).

# Message from the City Manager

*Christopher J. Russo*

For the last two years, our City has been embroiled in a complex situation regarding the Town Center District and our Comprehensive Plan. I have received numerous inquiries from residents about this issue, development in the City and the false information that is spreading. It is important for me to set the record straight when misinformation about City business is circulating among our citizens. First and foremost, the City and I only deal in the truth. I will always put forth accurate and factual information to our residents.

It is challenging when I see third parties taking advantage of the complexity of the Town Center situation and disseminating falsehoods, misrepresenting the City, my actions, and those of my staff. I want to clear up some misconceptions. The Town Center District was defined in the City's Comprehensive Plan and is located near the center of Sunny Isles Beach, demarcated by Town Center Park to the northeast, Porto Bellagio to the northwest, Milton Office Tower to the southeast, and Bella Vista Bay Park to the southwest. In 2019, we uncovered an inconsistency between the City's Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations (Zoning Code) in the Town Center District, which left six buildings out of compliance with City code and vulnerable to legal action. Though the Town Center issue was recently discovered, City staff tracked the error back to 2007 when language from the Comprehensive Plan was removed to allow for greater flexibility within the Town Center District. The error was later exacerbated in 2011 when a new Florida State Statute strengthened the requirements for density and intensity to be included in cities' comprehensive plans and our City did not amend its Comprehensive Plan to include density and intensity in the Town Center District. Now, it is the responsibility of the City's current administration and staff to correct the aforementioned error.

To accomplish this, we first adopted a moratorium stopping the consideration of any new projects in the Town Center District. We then adopted an ordinance subdividing the Town Center District into two overlays, north and south, to isolate the affected area so that we could efficiently bring the Town Center South Overlay, where the six affected buildings are located, into compliance. The amendment to the Comprehensive Plan

defined the density and intensity for only the Town Center South Overlay to align with the interpretation relied on for the last 12 years. The proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment package was transmitted to the State Department of Economic Opportunities (DEO) and other review agencies, and was found in compliance by the DEO. Currently, the process is being held up by a challenge to the State's decision regarding our compliance.

Our efforts are now focused on defining the Town Center North Overlay (TCNO) in conjunction with consultants, Calvin, Giordano & Associates (CGA), who have been conducting public outreach for the last year. Our goal with public outreach is to make the best decision in alignment with what our residents want for the future of the TCNO. After collecting feedback from the public through stakeholder meetings, workshops, pop-up activities, town halls, and an online survey, CGA presented their final report outlining four strategies for the TCNO at last month's Commission Meeting on February 18, 2021. The City Commission voted to adopt the report. This resolution did not approve any specific action in the report, it simply was accepting the report as a set of guidelines to move forward with. Before any further actions are taken or voted on, the City Commission will undertake more discussions. We must also resolve the challenge so that there are no outside obstacles impeding the process.

As we are a transparent and forward-looking municipality that seeks to provide access to factual information, please know my office is happy to arrange a meeting, in person or virtual, to show you all of the documents related to our Comprehensive Plan and to go over the details of development in our City. Please call my office at [305.792.1701](tel:305.792.1701) or email [kguzman@sibfl.net](mailto:kguzman@sibfl.net) to make an appointment if you would like to further discuss any matters as they relate to the Town Center District and the development in our City.



Contact City Manager Chris Russo at [crusso@sibfl.net](mailto:crusso@sibfl.net) or [305.792.1701](tel:305.792.1701).

# Time for Change on our Roads

Vice Mayor Larisa Svechin

We have a problem on State Road A1A (Collins Avenue) and State Road 826 (163rd Street/Sunny Isles Boulevard) with distracted driving. This is a pestilence on our community. We may be restricted as a City, however as a community working together, we are strong and unstoppable. While we have increased police presence and enforcement, there is still more to do, most of which will require collaboration with the State, including the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

I applaud the SIBPD for stepping up enforcement and holding a joint operation with FDOT over the next several weeks, which will remind motorists that the law will be strictly enforced in SIB. FDOT has approved immediate

action to improve pedestrian safety on SR 826. I've already reached out to community leaders, residents, business owners, and state leaders to join our upcoming workshop on putting pedestrians first.

This will include an in-depth examination and analysis of how to make our streets safer, so that FDOT can continue to meet our safety needs.

As a resident, you can immediately visit [nhtsa.gov/enforcement-justice-services](https://nhtsa.gov/enforcement-justice-services) for up-to-date recommendations, stats, and studies. It is time for change.

Contact Vice Mayor Larisa Svechin at [lsvechin@sibfl.net](mailto:lsvechin@sibfl.net) or [305.792.1754](tel:305.792.1754).



# Ironing Out the Wrinkles in the Town Center District

Commissioner Jeniffer Viscarra

As you may recall, in early 2019 the City discovered an inconsistency between its Comprehensive Plan and its Zoning Code, which caused great public outcry. To ensure that residents' voices were properly taken into account, the Commission supported a significant and unprecedented effort in community outreach. During the last City Commission meeting, the Commission formally accepted the Town Center North Public Engagement Report. The report is the compilation of all stakeholder feedback we received over the past 14 months of outreach. The outcome is boiled down to four different strategies; Let it Be, Toss it Away, a Narrower Focus, and a New Vision, that the City and Commission will consider. Though the report recommends the "Narrower Focus" option, this is still an open discussion. The report, which is available at [sibfl.net/towncenternorth](https://sibfl.net/towncenternorth), also provides a good summary of the events and errors over the years and the actions taken by the current Commission to correct and address the problems in the district.

Not surprisingly, the report indicates that the Town Center North Overlay is a complex issue. The City can address it in various ways. When the time comes, the City will choose its path by vote of the Commission. There may be those

who will disagree with whatever decision is made, and that's all right. There is room for different opinions as to what is best for our community, and I am always happy to listen to residents willing to share their perspectives. You are also welcome and encouraged to review the records yourself and talk to staff if you so desire.

Clearly, the City could and should have done better with the Town Center District. Going forward, I am confident we will. However, it takes time to iron out mistakes of this magnitude. There are legal hurdles and challenges to clear, including securing residents' input in a time of a pandemic. The completion and adoption of the Town Center North Public Engagement Report is an important accomplishment. We are on our way, iron in hand, determined to smooth out whatever wrinkles remain.

As I cautioned in my last article, there is a lot of information and misinformation floating around. I encourage you to use all of your resources when forming your own independent opinion, including your very accessible City government.

Contact Commissioner Jeniffer Viscarra at [jviscarra@sibfl.net](mailto:jviscarra@sibfl.net) or at [305.792.1750](tel:305.792.1750).



## March Meetings & Events

### Virtual Lecture: Common Hand/Wrist Injuries & Problems: When To See a Doctor

Thursday, March 4, 11 AM | [Live on Facebook](#)  
Presented by Mount Sinai Medical Center

### Virtual Public Arts Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday, March 4 | 4 PM

### Blood Drive

Friday, March 12 | 10:30 AM - 5 PM  
SIB Government Center  
*Appointments are required.*

### Hybrid Regular City Commission Meeting

Thursday, March 18 | 6:30 PM

For complete details, visit [sibfl.net/events](http://sibfl.net/events).



SUNNY ISLES BEACH

## FOOD TRUCK FEST

Thursday, March 25  
6 - 9 pm

Pelican Community  
Park, 182 Drive

Grab a socially  
distanced bite  
from a variety of  
food trucks.



For more information visit [sibfl.net/events](http://sibfl.net/events).



# HIGH VISIBILITY ENFORCEMENT

## IN SUNNY ISLES BEACH

Miami-Dade County ranks in the top 25 counties in Florida for traffic crashes resulting in serious and fatal injuries to pedestrians and bicyclists. The Sunny Isles Beach Police Department, in an effort to protect the safety of these most vulnerable road users, is conducting High Visibility Enforcement Details (HVE) along the 17000 block to 18900 Collins Avenue through May 14, 2021.

In addition to this partnered initiative, our SIBPD has increased their enforcement citywide. The goal of these ongoing enforcement activities is to reduce the unsafe behaviors of all road users and increase compliance with traffic laws that protect the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists.

*HVE details are funded through a contract with the University of North Florida in partnership with the Florida Department of Transportation's focused initiative to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety.*

## SAFETY REMINDERS

### DRIVERS

Obey speed limits, never drive impaired, always watch for pedestrians and bicyclists.

### BICYCLISTS

Obey traffic laws, ride in the direction of traffic, use lights when riding at night.

### PEDESTRIANS

Cross in crosswalks or at intersections, obey pedestrian signals, ensure visibility when walking at night.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [SIBFL.NET/HVE](http://SIBFL.NET/HVE).

# Tax Return Information & Tax Fraud Scams

Tax season began in February when the Internal Revenue Services (IRS) started accepting and processing 2020 tax year returns. The deadline to file your taxes is April 15.

## TO HELP WITH YOUR TAX FILING, THE IRS REQUESTS PEOPLE TO FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

- File electronically and use direct deposit for the quickest refunds.
- Check [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov) for the latest tax information.
- Remember, advance stimulus payments received separately are not taxable, and they do not reduce the taxpayer's refund when they file in 2021.
- For those who may be eligible for stimulus payments, they should carefully review the guidelines for the [Recovery Rebate Credit](#). Those who didn't receive a payment or only received a partial payment may be eligible to claim the Recovery Rebate Credit when they file their 2020 tax return.

This time of year brings an increase in deceitful phone calls trying to take advantage of people. You may receive calls threatening you with fines and jail time for money you supposedly owe the IRS. Please be aware that the IRS does not call you at home with threats. The IRS will communicate only via the U.S. Postal Service with a letter regarding any tax owed or refund due. If you

receive a scam phone call, never give out personal information or offer to pay. Make note of the caller ID, hang up, and go online to report the incident. Refer to the [IRS chart](#) explaining the different types of activity and the appropriate method to report. You should also report the instance to the [Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration](#) at [800.366.4484](tel:800.366.4484).



## SUPPORT SIB LOCAL

Live Here, Eat Here, Shop Here

There are many benefits to shopping local. One is the promotions offered by local Sunny Isles Beach businesses participating in the Support SIB Local program. Participating businesses are offering a variety of promotions exclusively for Sunny Isles Beach residents. Some promotions are also offered for hotel guests. All you need to do is show your valid SIB Resident ID Card at a participating business to take advantage of their promotion.

View participating businesses at [sibfl.net/supportlocal](https://sibfl.net/supportlocal).

Renew or apply for your SIB Resident ID Card at [sibfl.net/residentid](https://sibfl.net/residentid).

We're always looking for new businesses to join our program. Submit your exclusive promotion for SIB residents and hotel guests at [sibfl.net/supportlocal](https://sibfl.net/supportlocal).

## INSIDE THE *Isles*

### A FIRST LOOK AT OUR NEW DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

At the start of 2021, we merged the Code Compliance and Planning and Zoning departments to form the new Development Services department. To better serve our residents, we consolidated and renamed these two important sectors of our local government. This change will improve operating efficiency, provide higher levels of service where needed, and free up strategic time for leadership. Code Compliance and Planning and Zoning now operate as divisions within the overarching Development Services department.

# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE VACCINE

- 1 The COVID-19 vaccination works by teaching your immune system how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19, and this protects you from getting sick with COVID-19. Being protected from getting sick is important because even though many people with COVID-19 have only a mild illness, others may get a severe illness, have long-term health effects, or even die.
- 2 After the COVID-19 vaccination, you may have some side effects. This is a normal sign that your body is building protection. The side effects may feel like the flu and might even affect your ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days.
- 3 All the COVID-19 vaccines being used have gone through rigorous studies to ensure they are as safe as possible. The FDA has granted Emergency Use Authorizations for COVID-19 vaccines that have been shown to meet rigorous safety criteria and be effective as determined by data from the manufacturers and findings from large clinical trials.

## MYTHS DEBUNKED

### IF I HAVE ALREADY HAD COVID-19 AND RECOVERED, DO I STILL NEED TO GET VACCINATED?

**Yes.** Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that re-infection is possible, the vaccine should be offered to you regardless of whether you already had COVID-19. At this time, experts do not know how long someone is protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. The immunity someone gains from having an infection (natural immunity) varies from person to person. Some early evidence suggests natural immunity may not last very long.

### IF I RECEIVED THE COVID-19 VACCINE, DO I NEED TO CONTINUE WEARING A MASK AND SOCIAL DISTANCING?

**Yes.** It's important for everyone to continue to cover your mouth and nose with a mask when around others, stay at least 6 feet away from others, avoid crowds, and wash your hands often. It is unknown whether getting a COVID-19 vaccine will prevent you from spreading the virus that causes COVID-19 to other people, even if you don't get sick yourself. Together, the COVID-19 vaccination and following the CDC's recommendations will offer the best protection from getting and spreading COVID-19.

### CAN THE VACCINE MAKE ME SICK WITH COVID-19?

**No.** COVID-19 vaccine cannot make you sick with COVID-19. None of the authorized and recommended COVID-19 vaccines or COVID-19 vaccines currently in development in the United States contain the live virus that causes COVID-19.

## BEWARE OF SCAMMERS

As more vaccination sites and resources open, there have been increased reports of fraud schemes. Scammers are using calls, texts, social media platforms, and door-to-door visits to perpetrate COVID-19-related scams. Residents are urged not to share sensitive data, such as banking, social security or insurance information. The COVID-19 vaccine is free and you cannot pay to receive early access nor pay to have the vaccine shipped directly to you. If you suspect a COVID-19 health care fraud, report it immediately [online](#) or call [800.HHS.TIPS \(800.447.8477\)](tel:800.HHS.TIPS).

## COVID-19 VACCINE RESOURCES

[City of Sunny Isles Beach Vaccine Resources](#)

[Miami-Dade County Vaccine Resources](#)

[CDC Vaccine Resources](#)

## ICYMI (IN CASE YOU MISSED IT)

Watch our conversation about the COVID-19 vaccine with Dr. Olveen Carrasquillo, Chief of the Division of General Internal Medicine at the University of Miami, on our [YouTube channel](#).

