

“Some of Our Best Leaders are Living Just Nextdoor”

Katy Sorenson, Former Miami-Dade County Commissioner

Over twenty years ago, I was first elected to represent District 8 on the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners. My district in southern Miami-Dade County included more than 170,000 residents of diverse backgrounds, and it encompassed three cities and a significant portion of the agricultural lands of the County. As a commissioner, I spoke out for human rights and equality for all residents, for the environment and managed growth, regional cooperation, child welfare issues, and support for the arts.

From 2010 to 2016, I also was equally proud to serve as President and CEO of the Good Government Initiative at the University of Miami, a program to educate elected officials at the state and local level in the important issues of governance. Eighty-six elected state and local elected officials, some of which ascended to higher office participated in our core program, *Leaders of Excellence*, a nonpartisan course to obtain the skills needed to become effective leaders through the support of more than 100 volunteer instructors.

From these experiences I have personally witnessed how Miami-Dade residents can rise to the occasion to run very successful cities that enhance: equality, environment, education, enforcement and economic well-being for all individuals. Don't let a few bad apples spoil the bunch – despite the occasional ethical issues that arise at local, county or state government, I have found most leaders to be of good moral character and not out for themselves. I have seen the way in which local leaders possess a greater level of accountability at a municipal level compared to county leaders addressing millions throughout UMSA. Further, I have worked with leaders who have agreed to serve as elected officials for zero or minimal pay with no fringe benefits due to their inherent desire to serve and safeguard their community's revenue and well-being.

The volunteers that have advocated for your community in the past, and hopefully the same and new ones that will do so in the future, truly will have a chance to augment their positive impact by way of a city structure and platform. Pursue your opportunity for cityhood with optimism, knowing that some of the greatest, most selfless leaders in our county and state truly reside among you as your neighbors ready to enhance your local community if you provide them with the opportunity.