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**Worth the Trip: Brandon's
Bistro is Pembroke Pines
Hidden Gem**

VOL 24 - DONATIONS ONLY



POMPANO BEACH **DIVIDED VISION** POMPANO'S DOWNTOWN FUTURE STILL UNSETTLED

By Attiyya Atkins, Villij
News Staff

POMPANO BEACH, FL — The vision for a transformed downtown Pompano Beach - once pitched as a catalyst for economic growth, culture, and connectivity - is still moving forward.

BUT it is not moving together. At the center of the debate is a sweeping redevelopment plan spanning roughly 70 acres along Atlantic Boulevard and Dixie Highway, including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, designed to reshape the city's core into a walkable, mixed-use district.

Backed by a mix of public and private investment, the effort is widely described as a \$2 billion long-term



transformation, placing it among the largest redevelopment projects in Broward County.

- Plans for the district include:
- A new City Hall and civic campus
 - A 600-space parking garage
 - Infrastructure upgrades, including drainage and road improvements

- 150 room hotel
 - Approximately 9 acres of public green space
 - Mixed-use buildings with housing, retail, and restaurants
 - A commitment to workforce housing (about 15% of units)
- A proposed 12-block waterway corridor
- *DIVIDED VISION, see page 11*



Smackin Jay's: Big Flavor, Real Value, No Shortcuts

OWNER JACKSON MARSHALL
TURNS FAMILY INSPIRATION
INTO A GO-TO LOCAL SPOT
SERVING QUALITY MEALS THAT
HIT—WITHOUT THE HIGH PRICE.

By Attiyya Atkins

At Smackin Jay's Deli & Grill, it starts with the food—but it doesn't stop there. From the first smell of fresh, hot meals to

■ *Smackin Jay's, see page 9*

Pompano Beach Weighs Return to City Police Department

By Attiyya Atkins

POMPANO BEACH, Fla. — The Pompano Beach City Commission is studying whether the city should end its long-standing contract with the Broward Sheriff's Office and re-establish a municipal police department — a move that would mark the return of a city force for the first time in more than two decades.

Pompano Beach disbanded its police department in 1999 and

began contracting with BSO for law enforcement services. Now commissioners are reviewing a consultant's study outlining the costs, risks and logistics of bringing policing back under city control.

According to the report, the city currently pays roughly \$75 million annually for BSO policing services. Creating an independent Pompano Beach Police Department could cost about \$108 million per year, along with

■ *City Police Department, see page 11*





Apostle Alonzo Neil
CATEGORY: WORSHIP

Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus Church
Service Times: Sundays 10 a.m.
2990 NW 5th Street, Pompano Beach, FL 33069
Website: thespiritoflifemc.blogspot.com



Apostle John L. Mohorn Jr
CATEGORY: WORSHIP

Word of Living God Ministries
Service Times: Sundays 10 a.m., 7 p.m.; Fridays 8 p.m.
148 N.W. 26th Ave, Pompano Beach, FL 33069



Bishop Gary McLeod
CATEGORY: WORSHIP

Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church of Deliverance
Service Times: Sundays 9:45 a.m.; Tuesdays 7 p.m.
1401 S Dixie Highway E, Pompano Beach, FL 33069
Website: mtssinainbapt.org



Elder Harold Westley
CATEGORY: WORSHIP

Newborn Holiness Church
Service Times: Sundays 9 a.m.; Tuesdays 7:30 p.m.
400 NW 5th Street, Pompano Beach, FL 33069
Facebook: www.facebook.com/newbornholiness



Senior Pastor Nathan E. Austin
CATEGORY: WORSHIP

Zion Church Pompano
Service Times: Sundays 9 a.m.
1525 NW 7th Street, Pompano Beach, FL 33069
Website: www.positionedtoprosper.org



Pastor Robert Stanley
CATEGORY: WORSHIP

Hopewell Baptist Church
Service Times: Sundays 9:30 a.m.
890 NW 15th Street, Pompano Beach, FL 33069
www.facebook.com/HopewellBaptPompano



Pastor George Rich
CATEGORY: WORSHIP

P3 Church
Service Times: Sundays 9:30 a.m.
1525 NW 7th Street, Pompano Beach, FL 33069
Website: p3churchfl.com



Pastor Ron Harper
CATEGORY: WORSHIP

1 Ave Kingdom Ministries International
Service Times: Sundays 9 a.m.
432 SW 10th Ct, Deerfield Beach, FL 33441
facebook.com/1AVKINGDOMMINISTRIESINT



Pastor Norman Freeman
CATEGORY: WORSHIP

Greater Antioch Pompano
Service Times: Sundays 7-8:45 a.m. and 10-11:45 a.m.
430 NW 8th Avenue, Pompano Beach, FL 33069
Website: peoplewithpurpose.net



Reverend Tim Griffith
CATEGORY: WORSHIP

Follow The One Minute Preacher
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VILLIJ NEWS COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT AMARYAH JONES

Faith First: Amaryah Jones Builds a Platform with Purpose
Young radio host, author and speaker leads with God at the center. At just 13, Amaryah Jones is building a powerful platform rooted in faith, discipline, and purpose.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS & IMPACT:

- Host of "The Amaryah J Show" on Envision Radio, a globally streamed, faith-based program uplifting youth voices
- Recipient of the Rising Star Award at the IGen Film Festival
- Honored with the Legendary Icon Boss in Radio Award
- Published author, youth advocate, and motivational speaker
- Featured speaker at NAACP Black History programs and youth events across multiple states
- Creator of a Youth Spotlight platform highlighting young changemakers



Amaryah's Message:

"Keep God first. Let Him be your focus and don't get distracted."
Faith Anchor:
Psalms 23 – a reminder of God's guidance, protection, and presence.

Affordable Housing, One Unit at a Time

POMPANO CRA ADVANCES ONE-AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT

By Villij News Staff

POMPANO BEACH — A vacant lot in Northwest Pompano Beach is set to become an affordable home, but not without renewed questions about how decisions are made behind the scenes.

THE Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) approved a development agreement with Frasier Elite Homes to build a single-family home at 1910 NW 7th Street, a 7,350-square-foot, CRA-owned parcel designated for income-restricted housing.

The lot carries an estimated value of \$102,900.

The project began as an unsolicited proposal submitted in June 2025. After a required public notice, a second proposal was received, triggering a formal review process with presentations and scoring. Frasier Elite Homes ranked highest, receiving 276 points compared to 242.

Plans call for a 2,290-square-foot home for a buyer pre-qualified for a \$450,000 mortgage.

Midway through the discussion, Commissioner Beverly Perkins proposed donating the land — removing the original \$50,000 purchase price — to help offset rising housing costs.

“This is the perfect time to do



that,” Perkins said.

The board approved the change unanimously.

Still, the vote followed concerns raised in prior meetings about whether advisory com-

ments may have influenced the process. CRA attorney Claudia McKenna said a full review found no issues, noting that any questionable communication occurred after proposals were

submitted.

Public comment reflected both support and skepticism.

Supporters pointed to the developer’s community involvement, while others, including resident Delvin King, called for more consistent transparency in how information is shared with commissioners and the public.

The property, located in the Northwest CRA district, represents one of several efforts to bring housing and investment to historically underserved areas.

Moments later, the CRA approved a second project — four townhomes on NW 27th Avenue — signaling continued momentum in redevelopment.

Residents Raise Accessibility Concerns at Pompano’s Senior Activity Center

By Attiyya Atkins

POMPANO BEACH, Fla. — Concerns about accessibility and design at Pompano Beach’s Senior Activity Center continue to surface as residents adjust to the relatively new facility.

During public comment at a March commission meeting, resident Michael Skversky, criticized the placement of the parking lot walkway leading to the building’s entrance.

According to Skversky, the path was installed on one side of the lot rather than centrally, forcing some visitors to walk long distances around the parking area or cut across the grass to reach the building.

“A lot of these people are handicapped, so you have to make it easy for them to walk,” Skversky told commissioners, adding that he has already helped several seniors navigate the layout.

The issue adds to broader community concerns about the facility, which serves as the city’s primary gathering place for senior programs. The building became home to the Senior Citizens Club, which previously



met at the E. Pat Larkins Community Center before relocating to the new site.

Commissioner Beverly Perkins said the concerns residents are raising now echo broader worries about how city projects are designed and executed.

“The senior center is only maybe two or three years old, and those are the same problems people have when you say you’re going to demolish the E. Pat Larkins building and rebuild it,” Perkins said during the meeting.

Perkins added that residents

fear new projects may repeat the same issues.

“Those are the concerns we have because we know when it’s going to be built, it’s not going to be built properly,” she said.

As the city continues discussions about future redevelopment at the E. Pat Larkins Community Center, some residents say the experience at the Senior Activity Center highlights the importance of thoughtful planning — especially when designing spaces intended to serve older residents.

SNAP: New “No Junk Food” Proposal Could Impact Millions Starting April 20

By Akayliah Simpson

Millions of Americans who rely on SNAP benefits could soon see changes in what they are allowed to purchase, as policymakers advance proposals to restrict certain food items beginning April 20.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which serves roughly 42 million Americans, helps low-income households purchase groceries using monthly benefits loaded onto an electronic card. Currently, recipients can buy a wide range of food items, with a maximum benefit of about \$291 per person each month.

Under the proposed changes, certain items — including soda, candy, chips and energy drinks — could be restricted as part of a broader push to align SNAP spending with public health goals. Supporters argue the shift could help address diet-related illnesses, while critics warn it may create new barriers for families already struggling to access affordable food.

The impact could be especially significant in Broward County. According to the 2025 State of ALICE report by United Way of Broward County, 43 percent of households struggle to afford basic needs, including food, housing and transportation. Many of those households rely on programs like SNAP to fill the gap between income and rising living costs, according to United Way of Broward County, State of ALICE in Florida 2025.

For residents in lower-income neighborhoods, access to healthier food options is not always straightforward. Many communities are considered food deserts, where fresh produce and nutritious options are limited, and convenience stores or smaller markets — often stocked with shelf-stable,

■ *No Junk Food*, see page 4

A Glow Beneath the Surface: Pompano's Jellyfish Museum Opens Along a Changing Coastline

A new oceanfront attraction blends science and spectacle—anchored in a broader redevelopment push reshaping Pompano Beach

By Villij News Staff

POMPANO BEACH, FL — Just beyond the hum of traffic and the rhythm of the shoreline, a quieter kind of movement has arrived on Ocean Boulevard.

At 199 N. Ocean Blvd., steps from the beach and within walking distance of the Pompano Beach Fisher Family Pier, the city's new Jellyfish Museum opens not with noise, but with glow—soft blues, shifting purples, and the slow drift of creatures that have outlived nearly everything.

Inside, the pace changes.

Visitors move more slowly. Voices lower. The outside world fades into a curated, immersive experience built around light, motion, and stillness.

But outside those walls, something much bigger is moving.

Where Science Meets Stillness

The exhibits center on more than 20 species of jellyfish, including two that quietly anchor



the experience.

The moon jellyfish, nearly transparent, pulses through the water with a rhythm that feels almost meditative—its soft structure revealing the inner workings of a species that has existed for more than 500 million years.

Nearby, the Cassiopeia, or upside-down jellyfish, rests along the tank floor, pulsing upward and relying on a symbiotic

relationship with algae to convert sunlight into energy.

Two different survival strategies. Same result: longevity.

It's a subtle lesson built into the experience—adaptation isn't one-size-fits-all.

Part of a Larger Vision

The museum doesn't stand alone.

It sits within a rapidly evolving beachfront district shaped

by significant public and private investment, part of Pompano Beach's long-term effort to redefine itself as a destination city.

From the redesigned pier to expanded public spaces, new restaurants, and nearby oceanfront hotels, the area has been intentionally built to create a full-day—and increasingly, multi-day—visitor experience.

The Fisher Family Pier—a centerpiece of that transforma-

tion—was part of a \$64.5 million public investment in the pier and surrounding beachfront improvements, according to the City of Pompano Beach.

And just steps away, a growing cluster of hotels—from boutique properties to nationally branded stays—signals a clear strategy: bring visitors in, and give them reasons to stay.

In a city announcement, Mayor Rex Hardin pointed to the project as part of Pompano Beach's continued investment in tourism, culture, and economic growth.

That push is part of a broader redevelopment vision estimated at more than \$2 billion in long-term public and private investment, with a 75-acre downtown district positioned as a key driver of future growth, based on city and Community Redevelopment Agency plans.

The Balance of Growth

Spend an evening moving between the pier, nearby restaurants, and the museum, and the vision comes into focus.

It's walkable. Polished. Intentional.

■ *Jellyfish, see page 5*

No Junk Food

continued from page 3

processed foods — are more common.

Policy discussions around SNAP intensified following the federal government shutdown from Oct. 1 to Nov. 5, 2025, one of the longest in recent history. Since then, lawmakers have debated a range of changes, including benefit reductions, eligibility requirements and now potential purchase restrictions.

Critics of the current system point to research showing that more than 20 percent of SNAP spending goes toward items often categorized as junk food. However, advocates say those numbers do not tell the full story, especially in communities where healthier alternatives are harder to find or more expensive.

Local food providers say even

small disruptions or changes to SNAP can have immediate consequences.

"I think it's important to say that so many people rely on SNAP for these benefits of getting food," said Luna, CEO of The Pantry of Broward. "As soon as people don't get food, it is a domino effect — a health decline for children, decline in school, decline in work perfor-

mance for working people. We really want to avoid people skipping meals."

As the proposed April 20 implementation date approaches, questions remain about how restrictions would be enforced and whether states will adopt or challenge the changes.

For families across South Florida, the issue is not just about nutrition policy — it's

about stability. In a county where nearly half of households are already financially stretched, even well-intended changes could reshape how and what families are able to put on the table.

The coming weeks will determine whether the proposal moves forward — and how millions of Americans adjust if it does.

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☎ 954-543-1423

✉ Villijnews@gmail.com

Tsunami at Ali Cultural Arts Center

Art in the Wake of Anxiety and Transformation

On view January 30 through April 25, *Tsunami* is a deeply personal and visually arresting 36-piece mixed-media series by Tracy Ann Simmonds that transforms predatory lending mail, house paint, braided hair, pearls, and other recycled materials into layered works about waste, identity, and resilience. What began as anxiety over the flood of junk mail — more than 100 billion pieces annually in the U.S. — and the weight of creative and emotional labor during the pandemic became a space for processing fear and change through imagery inspired by tsunami dreams and the fluid line work of Japanese masters.

T *SUNAMI* uses shredded credit card mailers not just as material, but as metaphor — turning detritus into vibrant surfaces that explore sustainability, mental health, and the alchemy of art as healing.

Simmonds' practice bridges photography, painting, installation, and cultural storytelling; her gallery also features evocative bodies of work like *Euphoric Vistas: An Ode to Palm Beach*, intimate nature photographs created for hospital healing environments, and *Botanical Intimacy*, which captures quiet floral moments woven into human experiences.

For the artist, *Tsunami* is



more than a series — its potential as an immersive installation with sculptural waves, soundscapes, and calming light reflects her belief that art can be both a catalyst for reflection and a balm for anxiety, inviting audiences to rethink consumption, presence, and transformation.



NEW POST OFFICE OPENS IN POMPANO

NEW TROPICAL REEF STATION BRINGS EXPANDED ACCESS ALONG FEDERAL HIGHWAY

POMPANO BEACH, FL — Pompano Beach residents now have a new place to handle their mail and shipping needs with the opening of the U.S. Postal Service's Tropical Reef Station.

Located at 860 S. Federal Highway, the new post office officially opened in early March, offering expanded retail services and improved access for the surrounding com-

munity.

The location operates Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. It is closed on Sundays.

Customers who previously held post office boxes at the former location will retain their existing box numbers. Keys must be picked up at the retail counter with valid photo identification.

The new station is part of the Postal Service's broader effort to modernize its network while continuing to provide reliable delivery and service to communities nationwide.

Jellyfish

continued from page 4

A place where someone can check into a hotel, spend the day on the beach, explore an attraction like the Jellyfish Museum, and end the night along the water—all within a few blocks.

That kind of cohesion doesn't happen by accident.

But as the city builds toward that future, the conversation continues.

Because while the beachfront is rising, residents across

other parts of Pompano are still navigating affordability, housing pressures, and what this next phase of growth means for them.

The museum becomes part of that story—not just as an attraction, but as a signal of where investment is landing.

■ BY THE NUMBERS

\$2B+ — Estimated long-term redevelopment vision tied

to downtown and citywide investment plans

\$64.5 million — Public investment in the Fisher Family Pier and beachfront improvements

75 acres — Size of the downtown redevelopment district along Atlantic Boulevard

20+ species — Jellyfish featured inside the museum

Source: City of Pompano Beach, Community Redevelop-

ment Agency documents, and public redevelopment plans

■ Know Before You Go

Location: 199 N. Ocean Blvd., Pompano Beach (near the Fisher Family Pier and Fishing Village)

Nearby Hot Spots: Fisher Family Pier, beachfront restaurants, oceanfront hotels

What You'll See: Live jellyfish exhibits, including moon

jellyfish and upside-down *Cassiopeia*

Experience Style: Immersive, low-light, calm environment

Best Time to Visit: Evening for full visual effect

Parking: Public garages and beachfront lots nearby (limited on weekends)

Make It a Night: Pair with dinner, a pier walk, or a beachfront stay

BSO Deputy Fired After Arrest on Sexual Battery Charges in Deerfield Beach

By Villij News Staff

DEERFIELD BEACH — March 17, 2026 — A Broward Sheriff's Office detention deputy has been terminated following his arrest on multiple felony charges stemming from an alleged sexual assault at a Deerfield Beach house party.

ACCORDING to the Broward Sheriff's Office, 25-year-old Edwin Horace, who was hired in June 2025, was arrested Tuesday by detectives with the agency's Special Victims Unit. He faces two counts of sexual battery and one count of false imprisonment.

Investigators say the incident oc-

curred in the early morning hours of Monday, March 16, when a woman reported she was sexually assaulted while attending a house party. Detectives identified Horace as the suspect.

During questioning, Horace admitted to engaging in sexual activity with the victim but told investigators the encounter was consensual. The victim, however, stated the acts were not consensual, leading to the charges.

Following his arrest, Horace was immediately terminated from his position with BSO, where he worked in the Department of Detention and Community Programs for less than one year.

As the investigation continued, detectives identified a second adult female victim who was also at the

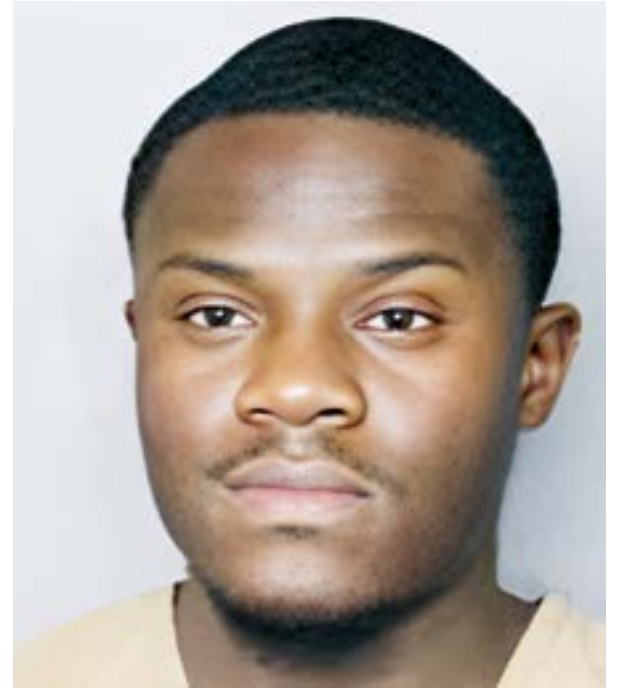
party. Authorities say additional charges have been filed, including another count of false imprisonment, one count of strangulation related to dating violence, and two counts of battery.

BSO officials confirmed the investigation remains ongoing.

In a statement, Sheriff Dr. Gregory Tony said the allegations prompted swift action.

"On and off duty, I expect all employees to conduct themselves lawfully and with decency. I find the allegations in this case deeply disturbing and concerning. Therefore, immediate action was taken to terminate the probationary employee," Tony said.

Authorities have not released additional details about the victims.



Coral Springs Vice Mayor Nancy Metayer Bowen Killed in Domestic Violence Shooting

HUSBAND CHARGED AFTER ALLEGED CONFESSION; LEADER WAS PREPARING CONGRESSIONAL RUN

By Attiyya Atkins, Villij News Staff

POMPANO BEACH, FL — Coral Springs Vice Mayor Nancy Metayer Bowen was shot and killed inside her

home in an alleged domestic violence incident on March 31, sending shockwaves across Broward County.

Authorities say her husband, Stephen Bowen, is accused of shooting her three



times. According to arrest documents, he contacted family members and allegedly said he "couldn't take it anymore." He has since been charged with her murder. Metayer Bowen, the first Black and Haitian American woman elected to the Coral Springs Commission, had recently been selected as vice mayor and was widely seen as a rising voice in South Florida politics. In the days before her death, she was preparing to announce a run for Congress, according to sources familiar with her plans.

News of her killing has reverberated across the region, including in Pompano Beach, where leaders are reflecting on her impact. Pompano Beach Vice Mayor Alison Fournier called her "a light, a force, and a heart that beat deeply for Coral Springs," adding that "she didn't just

serve—she gave of herself fully, leaving a lasting imprint on everyone she touched."

BY THE NUMBERS: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN BROWARD

Broward County records more than 7,000 domestic violence cases each year, according to state data. Women in Distress of Broward County supports thousands of survivors annually through emergency shelter, crisis intervention, and advocacy services.

NEED HELP?

* Women in Distress of Broward County 24-Hour Hotline: 954-761-1133

* National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233

* Text START to 88788

This is a developing story. Villij News will provide updates as more information becomes available.

Worth the Trip: Brandon's Bistro is Pembroke Pines Hidden Gem

By Lisa Luvs Love

PEMBROKE PINES, Fla. — Brandon's Bistro co-owned by former NBA player Brandon Knight, along with food blogger Starex Smith ("The Hungry Black Man") and former NFL player Kayvon Webster feels like arriving at a celebration of culture and cuisine. On a recent evening visit, warm faces welcomed us while smooth old-school R&B played softly overhead.

UPON entering I spotted Executive Chef Gerald Harvey handling a guest's concern with genuine care, Chef Harvey asked the guest multiple questions while answering the multitude with such patience, he spent a good five minutes going over the specifics of how to prepare the guest's meal to his particular liking — Most executive chefs would balk at this as it detours from its original preparation. This was a telling moment that spoke volumes about the restaurant's ethos.

The bistro's commitment to honoring Black culinary heritage runs deep. The wine list features only Black-owned wineries, and the walls honor trailblazing Black chefs like Edna Lewis and James Hemings. Hemings, classically trained



in France, brought macaroni and cheese to America. Does the last name sound familiar? It should—he was none other than the older brother of the historic Sally Hemings, the formerly enslaved woman freed in Paris and known as Thomas Jefferson's common-law wife.

Our dinner began with happy hour starters: Bistro Shrimp and Chicken Wings. The shrimp sauteed to perfection was, coated in a glaze laced with sesame and subtle Southern-Asian notes, were an early standout. Flavorful, balanced, and expert-

ly prepared. The wings, while well-seasoned, were less remarkable—solid, but not memorable.

Next came the Braised Short Ribs, plated with a blueberry glaze, brown butter, garnet yam purée, and celery leaf. It was a revelation. I'm not one for sweet-savory blends or yams, but this dish checked me and I had to submit. The richness of the short ribs paired seamlessly with the tart glaze and velvety purée. It had me at hello

For the final course, I had the Surf and Turf: buttery, well-sea-



soned lobster alongside boldly spiced lamb chops. The lobster was abundant and tender. The lamb, while slightly chewy maybe a minute or 2 over cooked for my particular preference, brought island warmth with flavors that echoed Trini-style seasoning, especially hints of shado beni.

Too full for dessert, I lingered over a glass of Red Blend from Black Cloud, letting the music and mood round out the night. I spent over 2 hours there because who wants to leave a place where the vibe is vibing, wine is perfect and the service was warm and while the made-to-order dishes took time, it was well worth the wait. The only surprising part; The dining room wasn't packed. This place is easily now a first recommendation for those who ask. It's low key yet special and great for a date or friends night out.

Currently located at 207 N Hiatus Rd, Pembroke Pines, FL, Brandon's Bistro is adding

a location to Miramar Towne Center (2300 Civic Center Pl, Miramar, FL 33025), Opening date TBD.

Brandon's Bistro is poised for a larger stage and it's ready. It's a rare pleasure to find a place where the food, service, history, and atmosphere come together so naturally it seems destined.

5 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW: BRANDON'S BISTRO

- Imaginative Flavors That Work – Unexpected pairings like blueberry glaze and yam purée are bold, creative, and beautifully executed.

- Deep Culinary Legacy – The menu and décor honor Black culinary pioneers like Edna Lewis and Alexander Smalls with intention and respect.

- Exceptional Value – Generous portions, scratch-made quality, and fair prices make every dish feel worth more than it costs.

- Support for Black-Owned Businesses – The bistro exclusively features wines from Black-owned wineries and champions community partnerships.

- It's a Vibe—The music, food and service is unmatched. It feels like a place where it could feel like home.



SUPPORT LOCAL JOURNALISM



Attiyya Atkins

Scan to pay \$Tiyais

Primary Trust at Cleveland Play House's Outcalt Theatre

At the intimate Outcalt Theatre, inside Cleveland Play House, Primary Trust proves why it earned the 2024 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

WRITTEN by playwright Eboni Booth, the play is deceptively simple. A man loses his job. He finds a new one. He makes a friend. But beneath that quiet arc is something deeper: the rebuilding of “primary trust” — the foundational emotional safety formed (or fractured) in childhood.

The title works on two levels. Kenneth, 38, begins working at a bank called Primary Trust. But psychologically, he is also grappling with the loss of his own primary trust unit — the early emotional security disrupted by childhood trauma. That fracture follows him into adulthood, shaping how he connects, avoids, copes and survives.

The lead performance is riveting. The actor portraying



Kenneth — known to many audiences from *Power*, part of *Power Book II: Ghost* in the 50 Cent *Power* universe — brings layered vulnerability to the role. Television audiences may recognize his intensity, but on stage, he reveals restraint. His Kenneth is awkward, tender, funny and quietly unraveling all at once.

The acting across the ensemble is dynamic yet controlled. Moments that could tip into melodrama instead land with precision. The audience responded in waves — soft laughter, deep silence, and more than a few tear-jerking pauses followed by the whispered recognition of “that’s sad.”

The set design at the Outcalt’s 360-style configuration enhanc-

es the storytelling. Minimal and fluid, it mirrors Kenneth’s inner world: sparse, contained, but fragile. The staging allows the actors’ emotional shifts to carry the weight rather than spectacle.

At its core, *Primary Trust* is about mental health and the slow courage of change. Kenneth copes in unhealthy ways, clinging to imagined stability after losing his long-time book-

store job. He declares at one point that he does not believe in God, heaven or hell — but he believes in friends. For some, that line lands as humanist faith. For others, it underscores the spiritual void that trauma can create. The play does not argue theology; it examines loneliness. And that’s what makes it powerful.

■ *Primary Trust*, see page 9

WORTH THE TRIP

Rock & Roll Hall of Fame | Cleveland, Ohio

A cultural time capsule where music history, influence and identity collide.

The Rock & Roll Hall of Fame isn’t just a museum—it’s the official archive of music’s most influential voices. Since opening in 1995, it has honored artists across rock, hip-hop, R&B, and soul while shaping one of the industry’s most debated milestones: induction into the Hall itself.

Right now, that conversation is active.

Fan voting for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Class of 2026 runs through April—and Black artists are leading the public vote, including Lauryn Hill, New Edition, Luther Vandross, Sade and Mariah Carey.

It’s a reminder that the influence shaping music history isn’t up for debate—it’s already been decided by the culture. The real question is whether recognition keeps pace.

THE VIBE

Set along the waterfront in Cleveland, Ohio, the energy hits as soon as you walk in.

This isn’t a quiet museum.

It’s immersive, emotional—and personal.

WHAT HITS FIRST

It’s the details—not just the legends.

Mary J. Blige’s boots — bold, unmistakable

Destiny’s Child’s iconic outfits — instantly nostalgic

Queen Latifah’s jewelry — power and presence

These aren’t just artifacts.

They’re moments.

THE MOMENT

Standing next to Michael Jackson’s red *Thriller* jacket stops you.

You’ve seen it your whole life.

Now it’s right there—real.

FOR THE CULTURE

The deeper you go, the clearer it becomes:

Rock and roll doesn’t exist without Black culture.

From The Jackson 5 to The O’Jays, Tracy Chapman to Ice-T—the influence isn’t a side note.

It’s the foundation.

REAL TALK

The Chuck Berry exhibit doesn’t just stand out—it corrects the narrative.

Berry was among the first class of inductees into the Hall of Fame. Not an afterthought. Not a footnote. Foundational.

And when you see his handwritten lyrics up close, it becomes undeniable:

This is his genre.

Not Elvis Presley’s.



Berry created the blueprint—the sound, the storytelling, the energy—that others commercialized. The museum shows it clearly, even if history hasn’t always said it out loud.

WHY GO

Half-day (or more) experience
Interactive exhibits + real artifacts
Culture, not just history

BOTTOM LINE

This isn’t just a museum—it’s a mirror.

You don’t just walk through it.

You see the culture, the influence, and the impact up close.

Verdict: Worth the trip.

Nicki Minaj's Political Shift Sparks Backlash as Fans Question Loyalty and Influence

By Attiyya Atkins

Once a cultural pillar for Black and Caribbean audiences, the global superstar's alignment with Trump-era politics is now dividing the community that helped build her.

FOR more than a decade, Nicki Minaj has been one of the most powerful figures in music—and culture. The Trinidad-born rapper has sold more than 100 million records

worldwide and built one of the largest fanbases in hip-hop history. She has also become one of the most-followed artists globally, with over 200 million Instagram followers and tens of millions more across platforms.

For many Black and Caribbean fans, she wasn't just an artist. She was representation.

Her relationship with Donald Trump, however, hasn't always been aligned.

In her earlier work, Trump appeared more as a symbol—or even a point

of critique—than a political ally. In “Black Barbies” (2016), released shortly after Trump's election, she rapped:

“Island girl, Donald Trump want me go home...

Now I'm prayin' all my foreigners don't get deported.”

The lines reflected concern about immigration policy and its potential impact on immigrant communities.

Years later, her tone appeared to shift. On “Endless Fashion” (2023) with Lil Uzi Vert, Minaj delivered the line:

“Made my a** great again, MAGA,” prompting renewed discussion among listeners about whether the reference was satirical or political.

That evolution moved beyond lyrics in January.

On Jan. 28, 2026, Minaj appeared alongside Trump at a U.S. Treasury Department summit in Washington, D.C., where the administration introduced its “Trump Accounts” initiative—providing \$1,000 investment accounts

for children born between 2025 and 2028.

During her remarks, she called herself “probably the president's number one fan” and pledged hundreds of thousands of dollars to support the program, according to event transcripts and national reporting.

At the same time, new reporting has raised questions about how Minaj's political messaging is spreading online. A 2026 analysis by disinformation-tracking firm Cyabra, cited in Politico reporting, found that approximately 30% to 40% of accounts engaging with her political content showed signs of being inauthentic or automated.

In some instances, the share of suspected bot activity was even higher, with coordinated bursts of engagement helping push posts further into algorithm-driven feeds. The report does not allege Minaj directed the activity, but it underscores how digital amplification can expand the reach and visibility of political messaging.

The reaction to Minaj's recent moves has been immediate—and divided.

Commentary on high-traffic social media posts, includ-

ing a widely viewed segment from Jimmy Kimmel, reflects a range of responses from fans and the broader public. Some commenters questioned her shift, describing it as inconsistent with earlier messaging and community alignment. Others defended her, framing her actions as independence and a refusal to follow expected political norms. A third group expressed fatigue—less focused on her stance and more on the broader influence celebrities hold in political conversations.

Minaj's reach remains undeniable, with a platform that spans hundreds of millions of followers worldwide and influence that extends far beyond music. Her appearance alongside Trump and public support of a federal initiative place her squarely within a political landscape she once only referenced from a distance.

For many longtime fans, the shift is less about a single moment and more about what it represents—how influence is used, who it aligns with, and what it signals moving forward. As her role continues to evolve, so does the conversation around her, reflecting a broader tension between cultural identity, public power, and accountability.



Primary Trust

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This is not a flashy story. It is happening every day — grown adults walking around with unhealed childhood wounds, masking pain with routine, isolation or denial. Booth's writing honors that reality without judgment.

The ending is hopeful, not because everything is magically resolved, but because Kenneth chooses connection. He shows up. He risks friendship. He steps into the unknown.

In a theater city often described as second only to Broadway, this production reminds audiences why Cleveland's stage scene remains vital: elemental storytelling, strong performances and stories that reflect the quiet battles people fight every day.

Primary Trust restores something simple yet essential — the belief that change is possible, and that friendship can be the first step toward healing.*

https://youtu.be/uka_8KSXPP0

Smackin Jay's

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the welcoming, come-as-you-are atmosphere, this is the kind of spot that feels easy, familiar, and worth coming back to.

For owner Jackson Marshall, that experience is intentional.

Inspired by his father's footsteps in the restaurant business, Marshall created Smackin Jay's, located at 1301 W. Copans Rd, Ste 1A, Pompano Beach, with a clear goal: serve food so good, people can't stop thinking about it—and price it so they don't have to.

That's exactly where the name comes from.

“You're going to be smackin' your lips because of how good the food is,” Marshall said.

And the menu delivers on that promise.

First-time customers are pointed straight to J's Cheesesteak, the house favorite known for its flavor and portion. But it doesn't stop there. Regulars also rave about the Smackin' Chicken Hoagie, the pressed El Cubano, and the bold, loaded J's Special Sub. For something different, options like Shrimp & Grits and the Chicken Caesar Wrap round out a menu that hits across the board.

What really sets Smackin Jay's apart is the balance.

While many places are raising prices or cutting portions, Marshall has stayed focused on doing both

right—serving high-quality food at a price point that still works for everyday people. Most menu items land comfortably between \$10 and \$18, making it a go-to for anyone who wants a real meal without second-guessing the bill.

“We serve the best food around with good service,” Marshall said.

It's a simple statement—but inside Smackin Jay's, you can taste the difference.

Every dish is made with care. Every order is built with consistency. And every visit delivers the same thing: food that hits, service that feels genuine, and an experience that keeps you coming back.



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AS I SEE IT: A NEW FUTURE FOR E. PAT LARKINS CENTER

By David Miller

Sometimes people just don't get it. Whether it's because their brain can't process change, emotions get triggered, or some people are simply stubborn and resistant to it.

But one thing is clear: the E. Pat Larkins Center is valuable to the citizens of this city, especially residents in Northwest Pompano Beach. That's why the community must continue to have a center that proudly carries the name E. Pat Larkins Center, clearly displayed on the building.

Many residents now in their 60s and 70s loved and regularly used the current building, which the city constructed in 2005. For two decades it has served the community well. Now, 20 years later, there is an opportunity to upgrade the facility and create something even better.

Upgrades open the door to new possibilities. With imagination, the center could host larger events, concerts, and programs that bring new life and activity to the Northwest area.

At the same time, some res-

idents question why, in a tourism-driven economy, original landmarks are sometimes removed during redevelopment. That question ultimately falls to the city's decision-makers.

The downtown redevelopment project includes three key elements: a parking garage, a new E. Pat Larkins Center, and a new City Hall. The funding allocated is meant to begin those three projects—not to be spread across every new idea that emerges during development.

There is also a generational per-

spective being raised. Residents in their 40s are asking what their next 20 years will look like. If billions of dollars are being invested in downtown and the Northwest community, many believe the next generation deserves a larger, modern facility—not simply renovations to the existing one.

Some have suggested preserving the current building, but that proposal always raises the same question: who would fund the preservation?

Many residents feel that simply renovating the current center

may not meet the community's expectations because the building itself has limitations.

Pompano Beach is not a poor city. The taxes residents pay should reflect continued investment in modern community spaces and a quality of life that moves forward with the community's growth.

For many in Northwest Pompano, the goal is clear: a center that honors the legacy of E. Pat Larkins while creating a larger, modern space that can serve the community for decades to come.

DIVIDED VISION

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ridor—designed to function as both stormwater infrastructure and a pedestrian-friendly destination—has also emerged as a signature feature of the plan.

City officials have said the project could generate thousands of jobs, including construction and permanent positions tied to new businesses and development.

WHAT'S ALREADY IN MOTION

To bring the vision to life, the city has already invested heavily in land acquisition—spending more than \$25 million to assemble key parcels, in addition to land it already owned within the project area.

Commission approvals in 2024 allowed for additional property purchases and expansion of the redevelopment footprint, while public roundtables held in March and April 2025 invited residents to weigh in on design,

financing, and community priorities.

THE VOTE THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

In 2024, a key decision on how to finance the city's downtown redevelopment ended in a 3-3 deadlock, halting momentum at a pivotal moment.

In favor of public financing:

- Mayor Rex Hardin

- Commissioner Rhonda Eaton

- Commissioner Beverly Perkins

Opposed / raising concerns:

- Vice Mayor Alison Fournier

- Commissioner Andrea McGee (no longer on the commission)

- Commissioner Barry Moss (no longer on the commission)

With no majority, the motion failed—leaving the future of the project unresolved and exposing

deep divisions within city leadership.

NEW FACES, SAME QUESTIONS

Since that vote, the makeup of the commission has changed:

- Audrey Fesik now holds the seat formerly occupied by Andrea McGee

- Darlene Smith has replaced Barry Moss

But despite the new leadership, no defining vote has taken place to reset the direction of the downtown project.

Instead, conversations have continued through workshops and incremental steps—without a clear, unified decision on financing or long-term execution.

CITY HALL: APPROVED, BUT NOT FINAL

A new City Hall remains a central feature of the redevelopment plan and is intended to anchor

the downtown civic core.

However, while included in the broader development agreement, the commission has not taken a single, definitive vote finalizing its financing and construction, leaving key details unresolved as the project advances in phases.

Vice Mayor Alison Fournier has remained one of the most consistent voices calling for caution, emphasizing that the issue goes beyond development itself.

"Every decision we make is about process and trust and how it's done," she said.

Her stance reflects ongoing concerns about transparency, public input, and whether the city is moving too quickly without full alignment.

PERKINS: NORTHWEST RESIDENTS DEMAND A VOICE

Commissioner Beverly

Perkins has tied the downtown debate to long-standing concerns in the Northwest community.

During March 2025 community roundtables at the E. Pat Larkins Community Center, Perkins stated:

"We do not want E. Pat Larkins to be destroyed, moved, or town down. My residents do not want it rebuilt and neither does his widow."

She also warned: "Even after the new downtown is built, the northwest community outside the project zone will continue to live in slum and blight."

THE COST OF WAITING

City officials have warned that delays tied to indecision could increase overall costs, particularly as construction timelines shift and market conditions evolve. Right now, the cost is \$3 million a month for fees and consultants until the next vote.

City Police Department

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significant startup expenses for facilities, vehicles, equipment and recruitment.

The proposed department would require about 400 to 425 personnel, including sworn officers and civilian staff. Consultants outlined a phased transition that could take two to three years, emphasizing the complexity of recruitment, training, and infrastructure buildout. The study stops short of making a final recommendation, instead presenting scenarios for commissioners to evaluate based on cost, control, and service levels.

The discussion around accountability has taken on added weight following a February incident involving Jeremiah Taylor, who was reportedly kicked and beaten by BSO deputies across the street from Mitchell Moore Park.

Details of the encounter remain limited, but the case has continued to circulate among residents and community leaders, fueling ongoing concerns about policing practices in Northwest Pompano. As of publication, no official findings have been released.

Commissioner Beverly Perkins, who has long supported bringing back a city-run police department, said she is aware of the situation and is committed to seeking answers.

"I am going to get to the bottom of it," Perkins said.

Perkins has previously said a municipal force could strengthen local accountability and give residents a greater sense of connection to the officers serving their neighborhoods. She has also emphasized that a locally based department would allow the community to be more

involved in public safety and build relationships with officers who are dedicated specifically to Pompano Beach.

Supporters say a municipal department could allow the city to tailor policing strategies to local needs and priorities. Critics point to the higher cost and the potential loss of specialized resources currently provided by BSO.

Mayor Rex Hardin said commissioners are continuing to review the study and gather public feedback before making a final decision.

"We've got a lot of homework

to do before we come together and make decisions," Hardin said.

The debate comes as other Broward County cities review their policing arrangements. The Deerfield Beach City Commission recently voted to separate from BSO and move toward establishing its own police and fire departments.

Pompano Beach officials say additional public meetings will be held before the commission determines whether to remain with BSO or move forward with building a city-run police department.

Letter From the Editor



By Attiyya Atkins, Publisher – Villij News

As I sit in my garden, I catch myself thinking: What a wonderful world.

OUT here, I talk to my plants like old friends. The lemon and lime trees are doing their thing—one of them even sprouted thorns, which made me laugh a little. Nature has its own way of reminding you that growth isn't always soft.

My mango tree might be my favorite story in the yard. We've had her for five years, ever since I picked her up as a tiny plant at the Water Matters Festival. Last year she gave us two little mangoes, and the squirrels got them before we could. But that's how life works sometimes—you nurture something for years before you ever taste the fruit.

Nearby, the pea tree is blooming bright yellow flowers even while aphids try to chew through the leaves. The pineapple is still taking its sweet time doing absolutely nothing. Sugarcane is sprouting. Cuban oregano and its cousins are spreading out. The collard greens are thriving. The papayas are getting big—three pounds big. Even the sweet potatoes are doing their thing—this is my first time growing them, so we're learning together. These are all gifts from the Patricia Davis Community Garden.

Some plants love me back easily. Others... not so much. Basil, my favorite herb, refuses to cooperate year after year. Gardening humbles you like that.

The banana tree is stretching toward the sky, and I'm hoping it doesn't grow so tall that the fruit ends up on the neighbor's side of the fence.

But the real lesson of the garden isn't just what grows.

It's the quiet.

Right now the world feels loud. War and global tensions dominate the headlines. Gas prices rise and fall with international conflict. Conversations about racism, immigration, safety, and the rising cost of living continue across the country. The news cycle moves fast, and sometimes it can feel overwhelming.

But sitting in my garden reminds me of something important: peace often lives in the things that are your own.

Your home.

Your children.

Your community.

Your small patch of earth.

Spring has arrived in South Florida, bringing a little rain after weeks of drought. Each morning I water the plants and watch life push through the soil again. And in those moments, I'm reminded how much there is to be grateful for.

My children are safe. They're fed. They have a bed to sleep in that their dad built with his own hands. And I'm grateful for the family we've built together. Life isn't perfect, but in the garden I'm reminded that growth often happens quietly, beneath the surface, before anyone sees the fruit.

In a world that sometimes feels chaotic, creating and protecting spaces of peace is an act of power.

Sometimes that peace is a garden.

Sometimes it's a family dinner.

Sometimes it's a neighborhood newspaper reminding us that the story of a community is written not just in headlines, but in the everyday lives of its people.

Because while the world may be uncertain, there is still beauty in tending the things that belong to you.

It takes a Villij.

— Attiyya Atkins

Publisher, Villij News

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WORKING HARD, STILL BROKE—AND IT'S AFFECTING EVERYONE

Dear Annie,

I'm working nonstop, and I'm still broke.

Everything goes to bills, and I've got nothing left. It's affecting my intimate relationship with my wife. I'm working so hard for my kids, my family...everybody, and I'm stressed, tired, and can't perform.

— Running on Empty

Dear Running on Empty,

Baby... you're not failing. You fried.

You're out here trying to be the provider, the problem-solver, the safety net for everybody—and you forgot about self.

That's not strength, that's self-destruction.

EVERYBODY ELSE WARM.

Because while you're burning, everybody else is getting comfortable.

And now you're the one tired, broke, irritated—and lowkey resentful.

That ain't love. That's overload.

Do what you need to do for you. Some folks in your life are gonna have to feel a little discomfort. They might have to wait. Figure it out. Do without, because you need to breathe too.

Take your time back and protect your energy. Get clear on what's yours to carry and what's not. Because right now, you're carrying people who got legs, and that don't make no sense!

— Annie

STOP SETTING YOURSELF ON FIRE TO KEEP