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2016 OLYMPICS

## Brazilians in South Florida savor chance to be in Olympic spotlight

*Brazilians in South Florida erupted in joy and optimism after their home country won its bid to host the 2016 Summer Games.*

BY LAURA FIGUEROA, JARED GOYETTE AND TRENTON DANIEL

Brazilians in South Florida view the winning bid to host the 2016 Summer Olympics as an enormous lunge forward for their country, a game-changing boon not just for Brazil but for Miami-Dade and Broward businesses.

There's pride, of course, in being from the first South American country to host the games. There's also the money that's sure to come with the honor.

"It's the beginning of a new era for Brazil," Marcelo Prado, 36, a paralegal, said from Cafe Brasil USA in Pompano Beach. "Brazil is going to show the world the best that we have to offer."

And that could translate into jobs for some of the 200,000 to 300,000 Brazilians who call South Florida home.

"It's going to affect a lot of trade between South Florida and Brazil," said Claudio Cury, president of the Brazilian-American Chamber of Commerce of Florida.

At a Brazilian restaurant on Collins Avenue in Miami Beach -- green, blue and gold flags displayed among the wooden cut-outs of parrots -- Joe Menezes viewed the victory as a chance for his native Brazil to redefine itself in the world's public imagination.

"We're going to show the world that we have something besides soccer and women," said Menezes, 53, a shop owner.

Prado, the paralegal at the Pompano Beach cafe, paid close attention to news from Brazil flickering from a TV. With his laptop before him, he scanned articles online of the swelling celebrations in Brazil.

"It's not just Rio celebrating," Prado said. "It's all the Brazilians. We want the world to share in the beauty of Brazil."

Hosting the Olympic Games also will put Brazil and Rio de Janeiro under intense scrutiny, both for its long-standing crime problems in the mountainside slums, called *favelas*, and for its stewardship of the Amazon region, vital for the globe's environmental health.

"Brazil has always responded well to external pressure, so I believe issues related to Amazon, to safety, to governance, people in Brazil know we will be under not a microscope but more attention," said Paulo Sotero, a Brazilian who runs the Brazil Institute at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, a research organization in Washington, D.C.

In securing the Olympic bid, Brazil defeated other world-famous cities, including Madrid, Chicago and Tokyo.

"It is Brazil's time," said the country's charismatic president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Chicago was knocked out in the first round by the committee of former Olympians, sports administrators, royals and other VIPs.

IOC members said the rejection of Chicago -- after impassioned pleas for the Games from President Barack Obama and

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first lady Michelle Obama -- was more directed at the U.S. Olympic Committee than to the Windy City itself.

The win was decisive: Rio beat Madrid by 66 votes to 32.

Chicago got just 18 votes in the first round, with Tokyo squeezing into the second round with 22. Madrid was leading after the first round with 28 votes, while Rio had 26.

For Brazilians in South Florida, the news spread lightning-fast, in restaurants and shops, by telephone and text.

"Rio needs this," Luiz Ribeiro said as he waited for lunch at the Feijao Com Arroz Brazilian Restaurant in Pompano. "Hopefully, it will bring lots of jobs, fill up lots of hotels, bring construction work. That's one of the main reasons I'm so happy."

Business leaders said the Olympics would definitely bring jobs -- lots of them. As has been the case with other Olympic host cities, Rio de Janeiro would be forced to improve its infrastructure and build hotels to accommodate the influx of visitors, business leaders say.

In downtown Miami on Friday night, about 150 people gathered to kick off the completion of a street project envisioned by Brazilian landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx. There were *capoeira* demonstrations, drums and samba.

It doubled as a victory party.

"I feel proud to see the world recognize Rio de Janeiro," said Elaine Pereira, 43, a bartender. "It's an honor."