* Affected city neighborhood sees slowdown, temporary closures
* ‘It’s crazy, the streets are bare,’ says local gallery owner

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Cafes and art galleries in Miami’s Wynwood Art District would normally be bustling this week, even during some of the hottest days of the year, but with Zika [virus spreading](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-07-29/florida-says-zika-cases-likely-transmitted-locally-in-u-s-first)in the area, businesses like Wynwood Yard and Gallery 212 are keeping their doors shut.

There were 16 cases of mosquito-transmitted Zika reported in the mainland U.S. as of Friday, and health officials have traced most to a [square-mile](http://www.floridahealth.gov/newsroom/2016/08/080516-zika-update.html) area north of downtown Miami. Empty streets there reminded Gallery 212 owner Michael Perez of when he had to temporarily close a store in New York in 2001, after the Sept. 11 attacks.

“I’m just like living my life all over again, with this Zika thing,” he said in a telephone interview. “It’s crazy, the streets are bare right now.”

The vast majority of the 1,825 [Zika cases](http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/united-states.html" \o "Link to CDC Website" \t "_blank) in the U.S. have involved travelers to more severely affected countries. With the Florida outbreak, business executives are hoping the Zika-caused slowdown in other regions won’t come to the U.S. as well. SeaWorld Entertainment Inc., with theme parks Tampa and Orlando, tried on Thursday to reassure investors that the Miami transmissions will be contained.

“Could it impact us? Yes, but we’re doing everything we can to make sure we’re on top of it,” Chief Executive Officer Joel Manby said Thursday on an earnings conference call. “The whole industry in Orlando does an incredibly good job of mosquito abatement so we think we can keep it to a minimum.”

Business and government leaders are hoping the Florida cases won’t morph into the kind of [epidemic](http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11599:regional-zika-epidemiological-update-americas&Itemid=41691&lang=en) seen in South and Central America, where thousands of infections have occurred, leaving hundreds of babies with severe birth defects. While emergency Zika spending proposals have bogged down in Washington, the state needs funds to make sure the virus doesn’t create more damage across the rest of the U.S., Florida Republican Governor Rick Scott said Friday on a conference call.

“It’s not going to just impact Florida, it’s going to impact our entire country, so we need to have more support from the federal government,” he said.

The stakes for Florida are high. A record 106 million people visited the state in 2015, pumping about $89 billion into its businesses, according to [Visit Florida](http://www.visitfloridamediablog.com/home/florida-facts/research/), an organization that promotes tourism. In Miami alone, around 15.5 million visitors stayed overnight last year, according to the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau.

**Travel Warning**

While most Zika cases are mild or symptom-free, women infected during pregnancy are at increased risk of giving birth to babies with abnormally small heads, a condition called microcephaly. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has issued a[travel warning](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-08-01/pregnant-women-should-avoid-miami-zika-outbreak-area-cdc-warns) advising pregnant women to avoid the Wynwood area. Health investigators are conducting door-to-door surveys, spraying and sampling in the affected zones. Some of those efforts appear to have worked in a 10-block area in the affected zone in Miami, where officials concluded Thursday that no local transmission has been detected.

The outbreak won’t halt Miami tourism, said Marc Shuster, a partner at the law firm Berger Singerman who works with hospitality clients.

“Miami just continues to be too attractive to avoid,” said Shuster, who expects the virus to wane by the beginning of high tourist season in mid-November. “This is a blip on the radar.”

**Threat Looms**

Still, the threat of a wider epidemic looms over public health and businesses. Hotel chain Marriott International Inc.’s second-quarter revenue per available room -- a key measure of rates and occupancy -- dropped 2.6 percent in the Caribbean and Latin America from a year earlier, according to a filing. Concerns about the virus’s spread in Brazil have also hurt results from Hyatt Hotels Corp. in Rio de Janeiro, Chief Financial Officer Pat Grismer said on a conference call this week.

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American Airlines Group Inc., Delta Air Lines Inc. and United Continental Holdings Inc. have all seen yields, the average fare per mile, to and from Latin America drop to 2009 lows amid contraction and Zika fears in the region, according to Bloomberg Intelligence analysts George Ferguson and Ian McFarlane. JetBlue Airways Corp., which gives passengers travelling to Zika-affected regions additional flexibility to apply for refunds or flight changes, updated its guidelines to include the Miami area.

As for local shops in Wynwood, they’re impatiently waiting for officials to clean up the area so they can get back to business.

“I’m scared I might get bitten, and I have a lot of responsibilities to my people, my employees, my gallery,” Perez said. “I can’t lose any time being sick.”