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Little Haiti Project Final Narrative Report

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Humanities Edge Grant Report
Little Haiti Confronts Gentrification and Displacement

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Florida International University
May 2020

Expenditures

Photo & art supplies: Blick Art Materials	\$144.55
Photo supplies: Unique Photo	\$859.00
Digital voice recorder: B&H	\$ 70.15
Student stipends	\$750.00

TOTAL **\$1,823.70**

Note: The remainder of the FIU budget (allocated for photo exhibition expenses) has not been spent due to the Covid-19 crisis, which, in addition to postponing the scheduled final project exhibition, has closed down FIU's campus photographic facilities and mandated stay-at-home orders). It is anticipated that the remainder of the budget will be spent when FIU's campus facilities reopen.

Project Documentary

“Little Haiti Confronts Gentrification” (by Playard Studios)

<https://vimeo.com/407678089>

Activities

- 1) The FIU and Miami-Dade College made frequent trips to Little Haiti, both independently and under faculty (Peggy Nolan, FIU; Joseph Tamargo, MDC-Wolfson; Richard Tardanico) supervision. A very successful interim project exhibition took place at MDC-Wolfson in February.
- 2) A series of final project exhibitions remain planned, within Covid-19 public health regulations, at the Little Haiti Cultural Complex, FIU's Green Library, and the FIU School of International & Public Affairs exhibit space.
- 3) Selected photos will be permanently displayed in FIU's Department of Global & Sociocultural Studies, while a broader selection of photos will be displayed permanently on the Department's web site.
- 4) Professors Tardanico, Nolan, and Tamargo will seek grant funding to produce photo mini-books for distribution to residents of Little Haiti; Florida State Senator Pizzo's office; City of

Miami Office of Planning, Planning & Zoning Appeals Board, and Commission; community organizations; FIU and Miami-Dade College administrative offices; and more.

5) Tardanico is drafting an article “Little Haiti Confronts Gentrification and Displacement” (attached) for eventual submission to the journal *Places* <https://placesjournal.org/about-places-journal/>. Nolan will select 20+ photos, both from the project and from other sources, together with other artwork and maps, to accompany the article.

6) The project’s photos will be incorporated in Tardanico future research-based publications on Little Haiti.

Instructor & Student Reflections

Peggy Nola: FIU Photography Faculty Instructor

I joined in this project in order to draw students into active engagement with the communities of Little Haiti. Academia often shelters inhabitants from the world outside its walls and students study many issues from afar without the experience of real time exchange.

This adventure took fledgling artists and photographers into the lives of strangers, folks struggling with survival issues of health and welfare unknown to those behind their cameras. Dialogues ensued and friendships were formed seamlessly between the subjects and the documenters. All of us came out of this experience humbled by our more fortunate positions and anxious to act, whether it be in pictures or civic engagement or both. Some students attended city government meetings and were shocked at the tangled web of political maneuvers carried on for hours on end in order to manipulate zoning laws and roll over existing communities. Many students made portraits of the residents of two trailer parks threatened with all manner of evictions and cruel management tactics. In all, it was a learning experience that will have unpredictable resonance for all of us. It will manifest in complex ways, due to the demands of a college education reconstructed in the field.....almost like a cake baked from a recipe that doesn’t turn out like expected.

Donelric Owens: FIU Student

Gentrification is a word I hear daily. I remember when my father was living at the time, there was a bowling alley that he used to take me to every weekend. After we played a game or two, we would get a slice of pizza. The effects of gentrification erased the history of the bowling alley that was part of my childhood, at least that is what I thought it did. What it could not do however is erase my memories. The memories I have held on to are the main reason why I have jumped on this project in Little Haiti. They have created a community that has a form of foundation. Some residents have memories themselves based on their childhoods. I cannot imagine the haunting intentions of these corporations trying to steal their community away from them. Most importantly I know what it was like to live in a low income home. I know what it is like to not have much. I know what it is like to make the best out of the little my parents were able to give. This project has overall given me a reminder to never forget where I come from.

Jeffrey Steele: FIU Student (now graduated)

Working on this project over in little Haiti has been something that I wouldn't have imagined: it really goes on so close to home it's almost like it's being done in secret. I live close by Little Haiti, maybe 5-10 minutes away, but I had no idea that there were trailers in the area; I just thought that specific area consisted of decent apartments and homes. One always hears about gentrification and the supposed benefits it has for the area, but you never hear anything about the people themselves. From this project I have been able to witness everyday families just doing what they can do to have a better life, but also finding people who are like them culturally. I have been able to see young people help one another with something as simple as a haircut or getting their hair done. They are trying to do something for themselves. Yes, we are taking pictures of people and their homes that are different from ours, but these are their homes—this is their lives. This project has opened my eyes a bit more on how life is different for everyone and how you just have to make it work. I have really enjoyed this project thus far and I am happy that the little I am doing is helping to push the needle of change a bit.

Conor Andrich: FIU Student

As the millstone of wealth inequality weighs on Miami, the communities that have given the city its vibrant, cosmopolitan reputation are being gravely threatened. It is crucial, now more than ever, that we do not allow the economic interests of the few, through gentrification and numerous other manifestations of systemic disparity, to devastate the lives of so many. This project proved that it is possible for anybody to use whatever tools are at their disposal to take a stand. By combining many of the necessary avenues for begetting material improvement, such as community organizing and giving a voice to those at risk, and using an artistic medium to impart this desire for improvement, we hope to play a continuing role in the fight against oppression in South Florida and beyond.

Draft Article (in progress) (beginning on next page)

Miami's Little Haiti Confronts Gentrification and Displacement

Richard Tardanico

Department of Global & Sociocultural Studies

Florida International University

Peggy Levison Nolan

Department of Art & Art History

Florida International University

DRAFT IN PROGRESS FOR EVENTUAL SUBMISSION TO *PLACES*

<https://placesjournal.org/about-places-journal/>

(with 20+ photos and other images)

“We are a fortified stronghold for culture and community.” So declare the advertisements—on Facebook, Eventbrite, and beyond—for The Citadel, a block-long, upscale food hall complex with a posh rooftop bar and lounge, trendy arts-and-crafts vendor space, family-friendly play area, and ample free parking, housed in a renovated, long-abandoned MiMo (Miami Modern) savings and loan bank building. The Citadel’s ownership touts the complex as a “shopping and entertainment destination” located in Miami’s Little River district.

But isn’t that Miami’s Little Haiti? And from whence the name “The Citadel” and its metaphor of upmarket shopping-entertainment as cultural and community “fortified stronghold”? Haitian-born writer France Francois (2019) calls out The Citadel food hall as emblematic of the

intensifying gentrification of what, unofficially beginning with Haitians fleeing the brutal Duvalier dictatorships of the 1960s to 1980s and officially since 2016, is the City of Miami's Little Haiti district. The original Citadel is a massive mountaintop fortress in Haiti, erected in the early 1800s after the Haitian Revolution expelled the most lucrative French colonial regime—whose sugar-export wealth derived from the highest slave mortality rate in the Americas—and established the world's first black republic (Knight 1990; Trouillot 1995). Constructed with stone, quicklime, molasses, and animal blood by some 20,000 former slaves, revolutionary leadership undertook the project in anticipation of a counterrevolutionary-military invasion (MSU n.d.; The Citadelle Laferriere n.d.). As Francois (2019) observes, “Without any sense of irony, the latest monument to the gentrification of Miami's Haitian community has appropriated the name of this Haitian beacon of resistance to white tyranny and encroachment, and whitewashed it to the degree that it's even in a Haitian neighborhood.” She adds that “To make matters worse, the Citadel has tried to aggressively rebrand Little Haiti as ‘Little River’ ...,” a marketing tactic of racial-cultural sanitization that harkens back to the contentious politics—cutting across diverse shades of black, brown, and white Miami—that culminated in the City Commission's designation of Little Haiti as an official district (Bojnansky 2016; Sandler 2016; Smiley 2016; Viglucci 2019; Gierczyk 2020; see Benfield 2011).

Francois (2019) describes The Citadel's typical menu choices such as “\$18 truffle shuffles, \$14 bufala caprese salads and \$23 crab fried rice,” which are juxtaposed against Little Haiti's median household income of \$21,000 (ACS 2013-18). All the more jarring for a low-income immigrant neighborhood devoid of brick-and-mortar banking and whose residents have sparse access to e-accounts is that The Citadel is a no-cash zone; not even a special-occasion payday cash loan would suffice as entre into its culinary enclave, which, again without sense of irony, is located in a former bank building. The Citadel's owner, a co-principal of a Miami-based real estate development and construction firm, has responded to Haitian community criticism by asserting “We certainly embrace the conversation. We are extremely inclusive ... In fact, tomorrow [mid-May 2019] we have an event at The Citadel which is a hyper local Haitian event.

We are not by any means excluding any sort of group whatsoever” (WLRN 2019). Yet, despite The Citadel’s hosting of occasional Haitian musical-cultural entertainment events, there is no observational evidence of any concerted effort to hire employees at any level of skill, responsibility, and earnings from the Haitian community, whether in Little Haiti or other neighborhoods. More fundamentally ensuring that earnings and profits flow elsewhere is that, collectively, The Citadel’s food vendors, supporting business operations, and ownership-management have minuscule financial ties to Little Haiti aside from the enterprise’s location.

In short, The Citadel food hall is indeed a “fortified stronghold for culture and community.” But these are anchored in places beyond Little Haiti, such as the surrounding affluent districts of El Portal, Miami Shores, Upper East Side, and Design District (see Bojnansky 2018), as well as transnational Miami’s far-flung territorial connections. Further, The Citadel’s earnings and profits flow outward and with them the proceeds of government fiscal subsidies, reinforcing the decades-long momentum of private and public disinvestment in Little Haiti’s economic and social infrastructure.

The proprietors of Little Haiti’s gentrifying galleries, restaurants, gyms, and shops—including those that populate The Citadel—endeavor to do no more than seek affordable, promising business opportunities. Many of these happen to be located in Little Haiti, rendered vulnerable by longstanding disinvestment and the encroaching affluence of adjacent areas, while additionally being attractive due to its higher elevation than the expensive, more sea-level and hurricane-flood threatened zones to its east. Little Haiti’s activist-icon Marleine Bastien (2018) argues that the neighborhood’s gentrification is inevitable but, if modulated by meaningful public policies of Haitian and multi-cultural promotion, displacement mitigation, and grassroots social and economic development, it can potentially render wide-ranging community benefits. From this standpoint, the real threat to Little Haiti—and increasingly to other predominately black and brown, low-income neighborhoods within striking distance of the metropolitan area’s decentralized business hubs—is the predation of Miami’s winner-take all, mega-real estate bloc; and, ensconced within the global financialization of real estate and market-friendly federal and

state policies, the politico-regulatory machine its members have constructed and dominated (Flechas & Rodriguez 2019; Bastien & Winkler 2020; Bojnansky 2020; see Sassen 2014, 2015; Florida and Schneider 2018; Stein 2019). Their influence and actions trigger, in turn, speculative opportunities for a cascade of real estate players, and establish strategic allies among preexisting propertied and other community groups in and around the gentrifying districts.

Epitomizing the bloc's hegemony has been the City of Miami's implementation of the ostensibly path-breaking zoning code "Miami 21": a "holistic approach to land use and urban planning" intended to foster "well balanced neighborhoods and rich quality of life" (miami21.org). In the midst of housing affordability crisis and given the local power of corporate real estate interests, a loophole in Miami 21 has instead diverted public subsidies and channeled private speculative investment into the construction of massive luxury retail and residential complexes (Tagtachian et al. 2018; Bojnansky 2019; Winkler 2019), at least one of which imperils the Little Haiti community. What follows describes context, controversies, accommodation, and resistance as Little Haiti confronts residential, small business, and cultural displacement.

Miami: Economy, public infrastructure, and society

Steamy, swampy, hurricane-prone, and geographically out of the way, the Florida peninsula has been a cherished home to mosquitoes, cottonmouths, and alligators but historically marginal to European colonization, the Dixie plantation regime, and—until the end of World War II—the U.S. national economy. The previous centuries, however, established the template of Florida's contemporary political economy: subordination to external powers, events, cycles, and trends; devastation of indigenous populations and nature; refuge for exiles; haven for the rich; racialized repression and exploitation; centrifugal loyalties; atomized government; and the brazenly orchestrated image of tropical paradise. Superimposed on this template have been massive post-World War II in-flows of diverse peoples—first, from the U.S. North, as federal government programs created the Sunbelt; and second, from the Global South, unleashed by the

Cuban Revolution and reinforced by broader Caribbean-Latin American tumult and transformations (Portes & Stepick 1993; Connolly 2014; Dunn 2016; Portes & Armony 2018).

Latin American-Caribbean transformations since the Cuban Revolution have intersected with a new and intensifying thrust of globalization to establish Miami as a transnational corporate business hub, serving as the principal node for economic flows linking Latin America and the Caribbean with the U.S. and the world. Given Miami's strategic location, immigrant networks, and regional-international economic ties, *AméricaEconomía* (2016) ranks Miami as Latin America's best city for doing business. Various multinational enterprises have located their Latin American-Caribbean operations in Greater Miami, which has emerged as a regional-international hub for tourism, trade and logistics, banking and ancillary services, and media, fashion, and the arts (FIU 2016; Portes & Armony 2018). Moreover, since the economic downturn of 2007-2009, Greater Miami has become ranked among the national leaders in startup business activity (Dahlberg 2017).

An estimated 69% of Miami-Dade County's population is Latinx, 18% is black, and 53% is foreign born (U.S. Census 2019). Miami ranks within the upper tier of U.S. metropolitan areas in racial-ethnic diversity by mainstream demographic measures, but other aspects of diversity are more revealing of its uniqueness. Miami-Dade County's percentage of foreign-born residents is greater than that of any other major U.S. county, and its daily use of Spanish language is much more pervasive. Further, the overall business and political clout, affluence, and cultural impact of its Latin American-Caribbean populations is exceptional, as is Miami's transnational sociocultural connectivity (Portes & Armony 2018).

Yet, entwined with Miami's transnational vibrancy and image as tropical playground are profound problems of infrastructural deficiency, economic competitiveness, and socio-spatial inequality. Greater Miami's rate of startup business activity is impressive, but the employee and revenue growth of its startups rank near the national bottom (Dahlberg 2017; Wile 2018). The economic value of the area's export activities is concentrated in low-productivity, low-wage sectors (Berube et al. 2018); it ranks 87th among U.S. metropolitan areas in an index of tech

employment (Muro 2020); and its GDP per worker is substantially below the national average and comparable to that of deindustrialized areas such as Rocky Mount, North Carolina and Buffalo, New York (FIU 2016). Miami-Dade County's median household income ranks 24th and its official poverty rate 22nd among the nation's 25 most populous metropolitan areas (U.S. Census 2019). In dramatic contrast, Miami ranks 9th in worldwide share of billionaires and 14th in worldwide share of global billionaire wealth (Florida 2018). Integral to such problems of productivity and disparity is appallingly low state-government spending on education and public welfare. For example, Florida ranks 45th among states in education spending, 48th in overall health care, and 47th among states and territories in weekly unemployment benefits (Florida Trend 2018; Garcia and Rohrer 2020; PolitiFact 2020).

Paltry earnings and state-government social subsidies, equity losses due to the subprime financial crisis, toughened credit requirements, transnational speculative investment, and a slow pace of residential construction that is geared to the affluent have plunged Miami into the tier of least affordable housing markets. Richard Florida and Steven Pedigo (2018, 4) write that "Greater Miami's housing stock suffers from a mismatch. It has a glut of expensive housing and not nearly enough affordable housing." On the expensive side, Miami has become a top-ten global city for speculative real estate investments by the world's ultra-wealthy (Gerrity 2015; Frank Knight 2016; see Sassen 2014, 2015; Florida & Schneider 2018; Stein 2019). Foreigners comprise 50% of the dollar value of its real estate sales, a key factor in driving up housing prices and displacing local residents (Viglucci 2019). According to Florida and Pedigo, Miami combines very low median incomes with the 11th most expensive housing market—including the 8th most expensive rental market—among U.S. metropolitan areas. A consequence is that Miami ranks second, behind Los Angeles, in cost-burdened homeowners and first, ahead of New Orleans, in cost-burdened renters (Florida and Pedigo 2018). The financial squeeze for renters and homeowners becomes even tighter when transportation costs are considered, in view of a sprawling metropolitan area with woefully deficient public transportation (FIU 2016, 27-28).

More than half of Miami's black households and nearly half of its Latinx households are renters, versus only about a quarter of white households (Florida and Pedigo 2018). This racial-ethnic divide is ensconced within a socio-territorial distribution of problems of public infrastructure, economy, and society that is disturbingly unequal. Miami ranks 10th among large U.S. metropolitan areas—considerably worse than upper-tier economies such as New York City, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., and Boston—in the spatial segregation of households with incomes of at least \$200,000 (Florida and Pedigo 2018, 11). One-third of Miami-Dade County's residents live in zip codes of “great socioeconomic need,” which correlates with serious health deficits and low average life expectancies (University of Miami 2020, 11; Chokey and Maines 2018). ACLU (2018, 5) identifies “punishment ‘hotspots’” in black neighborhoods, as non-Latinx blacks have a 2.5 times greater rate of incarceration than their share of the county's population and Latinx-blacks have a 6.0 times greater rate. The median asset value of Miami-Dade's Caribbean black households is 88% less, and that of its U.S. black households 94% less, than the median asset value of the county's white households (Aja et al. 2019). Among the troubling implications is racialized housing insecurity, such as utilities cutoffs, foreclosures and evictions, disaster displacement, homelessness, infectious disease contagion, and their repercussions (Shumow and Gutsche 2017; Earth Economics 2019; Holder 2020; The Eviction Lab n.d.). Slicing across such inequalities are divisions among immigrant communities by social class, race-ethnicity, national origin, and citizenship, which expose many South Florida immigrants to daunting threats (Portes & Armony 2018; FLIC 2019; Lee 2020; Madan and Charles 2020).

N.D.B. Connolly (2014) and Marvin Dunn (2013, 2016) address the history of Miami's racialized socio-territorial inequalities. Against the backdrop of black migrations to South Florida, they describe its history of land expropriation from Native Americans and blacks. They proceed to document the systematic deployment of violence, exclusionary zoning, and eminent domain by white Miami's government and business interests during the twentieth century to construct a Jim Crow-apartheid foundation for the city's “tropical paradise” economy. Post-

World War II's changing business climate, the local black elite's commercial and political negotiations with the white establishment, federal investments in the "Sunbelt," the Cuban Revolution and its refugees, and civil rights mobilization and federal legislation supplanted overt Jim Crow with more streamlined enforcement of the city's racial regime such as through exclusionary zoning codes and redlining (Connolly 2014; but see Cohen 2020 on continued violent police repression). Consistent with nationwide suburbanization, Miami's black population, crucially including its business and propertied classes, began to decentralize. Local decisionmakers, by opting to ram the city's segment of I-95 through the Overtown district, dealt the definitive blow to the city's "Harlem of the South" and created an enduring symbol of black marginalization (Connolly 2014, 282-286; Dunn 2016). The Cold War's federal largesse for the early waves of wealthy and middle-class Cuban refugees initiated the long-run political and economic displacement of Miami's white establishment and further marginalized black elites (Portes and Stepick 1993; Portes & Armory 2018). The eventual arrival of masses of low-educated black Mariel-boatlift Cubans and Haitian "boat people"—the latter of whom were less educated, faced determined federal deportation threats, and had scant institutional and social supports—exacerbated competition and rifts across the less-skilled segments of Miami's diversifying black communities (Portes and Stepick 1993; Skop 2001; Connolly 2014; Dunn 2016).

Little Haiti

Little Haiti (*Ti Ayti* in Haitian Creole), as officially designated in 2016, encompasses all or part of districts historically known as Lemon City, Edison, and Little River, but not Buena Vista to its south, which, despite its substantial Haitian presence, City of Miami Commissioners ceded to the fast-encroaching, upscale Design District (Smiley 2016; Viglucchi 2019). The historical Lemon City, located some five miles north of Miami's downtown and originally extending far westward and eastward to Biscayne Bay, is Miami's most continually settled location by others than Native Americans (Sandler 2016). It was populated as separate small, black and white communities of farming homesteaders—principally Bahamian blacks working

for whites from the Bahamas, American South, and Key West—during the 1870s (Peters 1976; Bojnansky 2014; Fields 2016; Sandler 2016). The locale was one of South Florida’s scattered sites of sparse population, as the region was mainly accessible by sea and tenuously connected to the wider world (Connolly 2014, 46; Portes and Stepick 1993). It became known as “Lemon City,” as citrus groves were planted across its original vast expanse. Lemon City’s commercial importance further rose as its bayside dock, incipient Miami’s first vessels dockage, became an entry point for the region’s supplies (Bojnansky 2014; Sandler 2016). By the mid-1890s Standard Oil Company co-founder Henry Flagler built the Lemon City Depot for his Florida East Coast Railway, inaugurating Miami’s tourism-based integration with the U.S. economy. The depot rerouted economic activity away from the Biscayne Bay dock and Lemon City, as more definitively did the establishment of the Buena Vista Depot to its immediate south (Peters 1976; Buena Vista East Historic District 1987; Fields 2006). The population growth associated with the railway’s continued southward extension enabled Flagler to successfully advocate for the incorporation of the City of Miami in 1896 (Bojnansky 1994; Connolly 2014, 20).

By the early 1920s Miami’s city government, lobbied by the chamber of commerce, established a segregationist city charter. Regional land speculation gained steam after George Merrick successfully launched his whites-only Coral Gables district, projecting the image of tropical fantasy land by means of “a pastiche of derivations from Spanish, Italian, French, Greek, and even pre-Columbian architectural forms ...” (Connolly 2014, 48). The mass of violent deaths inflicted by the Great Hurricane of 1926 ended the land boom until after World War II, though federal and local implementation of New Deal housing policies during the Great Depression was among the official instruments that reinforced Jim Crow spatial inequalities. Most prominent was the construction of Liberty Square, the South’s first public housing project for blacks, to the west of Lemon City and away from white residential areas, thereby promoting the segregationist decentralization of Miami’s black population (Connolly 2014, chapter 3; Shumow and Gutsche 2017; see also Cohen 2020). As for Lemon City, a portion of its western

edge became known as “Edison” after its high school was renamed for Thomas Edison. The river marking Lemon City’s northern boundary begat that sub-area’s name of “Little River.”

Post-World War II Haitian emigration gained speed under “Papa Doc” Duvalier’s dictatorship during the 1960s, led by exiled professionals. Under “Baby Doc” Duvalier’s dictatorship, middle and lower-middle class Haitians increased their share among the exodus during the 1970s and, especially by the late 70s and early 80s, so did poor “Boat People.” While New York City and Montreal were the focal North American destinations of the early migrations, later waves of Haitians have become increasingly concentrated in South Florida. The region’s Haitian population came to fully represent the entire diaspora, as, with the burgeoning of the Sunbelt, many Haitians immigrants and their children have relocated from elsewhere in the U.S. and abroad to South Florida, particularly suburban Miami (Portes & Stepick 1993; Metellus 2005; Flesher et al. 2012; Bojnansky 2014).

The federally subsidized Cuban-American transformation of Miami-Dade County’s economy, politics, and culture was well underway by the early 1980s. Together with the massive Mariel and Haitian arrivals, the transformation intensified the displacement of whites across the class structure, reconfigured the socioeconomic and political subordination of American blacks, and pitted the diversifying black communities against each other at the lower rungs of the labor market (Portes & Stepick 1993; Connolly 2014; Dunn 2016). Intersecting with these profound shifts were spatial realignments that created vacancies and opportunities north of downtown Miami for new Latin American-Caribbean arrivals: accelerated post-war suburbanization; the boom, anti-union decentralization to Cuban neighborhoods, and, with global competition, decline of the city’s Jewish and Cuban-owned garment industry; the local effects of national economic downturn and politico-economic restructuring during the 1970s-80s; the impact of nearby violent black protests; and, consequently, private and public disinvestment in the districts being left behind. Buena Vista and Lemon City joined Wynwood, where Puerto Ricans had concentrated during the 1950s, as north-of-downtown, gateway neighborhoods for circum-Caribbean

newcomers (Portes & Stepick 1993; Clemente 2007; Shell-Weiss 2009; Feldman 2011; Savchuk 2013; Connolly 2014; Picket 2014; Dunn 2016; Bojnansky 2018).

Political mobilization by prominent national black leaders, such as Andrew Young, Jessie Jackson, and Shirley Chisholm, together with Senator Edward Kennedy's vociferous critique of U.S. foreign policy's racial bias, pressured the federal government to ease its hardline stance against Haitian refugees. Local and national movements prodded philanthropic entities such as the Ford Foundation to fund the Haitian Refugee Center and Haitian Task Force, and Miami's city and county governments to fund a new social service agency for Haitians. This political space enabled the refugees, joined by middle-class Haitians from the northeast and undocumented Haitian arrivals, to begin transforming Buena Vista and Lemon City into a community in exile (Portes & Stepick 1993, 53-54; Bennett 2012; Bojnansky 2014).

Viter Juste, a Haitian immigrant who had settled in Buena Vista during the early 1970s and opened a Haitian book and record store, first in downtown Miami and then in Lemon City, envisioned a prosperous ethnic enclave district like the emerging Little Havana. He proposed the name "Little Port-au-Prince" which became shortened to "Little Haiti." Juste spearheaded the period's movement for Haitian-immigrant civil rights, social welfare, and business subsidies (Viter Juste <https://vimeo.com/54448190>). The movement's accomplishments included the establishment of the Haitian Task Force and the Haitian American Community Association of Dade, and, by the early 1990s, the building of the Caribbean Marketplace, which hosted Haitian vendors and cultural activities as an intended anchor for tourism-based commerce (Bennett 2012; Bojnansky 2014; Gierczyk 2020).

Marleine Bastien describes Buena Vista and Lemon City when Haitians began arriving en masse as a "depressed and drug-infested area" (quoted in Bolstad 2017). By the early 1990s it was described as having "... storefronts [that] leap out at the passerby. Bright blues, reds, and oranges vibrate to Haitian *merengue*, blaring from sidewalk speakers" (Portes & Stepick 1993, 185). The area's number of Haitian businesses grew from the low 30s during the early 1970s to some 300 by the late 1980s, though most of these were precarious small family enterprises and,

within and beyond the neighborhood, underpinning them was “a vast informal economy composed of microbusinesses that bypass official regulation: gipsy cabs, home child care, informal restaurants, unlicensed auto and electric repairs, no-permit residential improvements ...” (Portes & Stepick 1993, 185; Stepick 1991; Bojnansky 2014). There was, at the same time, significant upward professional mobility for the Haitian community in general. And despite the absence of federal subsidies, continued deportation of new Haitian refugees, the labelling of Haitians as a prime tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS threat, tensions with native blacks, and broader confrontation with U.S. racism, there was optimism that Little Haiti, like Little Havana, would prosper as a tourism-cultural magnet (Portes & Stepick 1993, 185-188).

By the late 1990s, though, the Caribbean Marketplace went bankrupt and closed down, reopening nearly a decade later as the Little Haiti Cultural Complex and operating since then with no more than sporadic local vendor activity (Bojnansky 2014; author’s interviews and observations). Deteriorating storefronts, housing, and infrastructure preceded the bankruptcy, and, combined with racist stereotypes and fears of crime, kept tourists and South Florida residents away, as they took their dollars instead to fast revitalizing Miami Beach, trendy Coconut Grove, and Little Havana’s *Calle Ocho*. Nascent Little Haiti displayed not even a glimmer of Little Havana’s success. The explanation starts with federal hostility to Haitian refugees, together with overarching American racism. It continues with the end of post-World War II America’s robust and widely shared economic growth, beginning with 1970s stagflation and then the Reagan presidency’s assault on labor protections and social programs, followed by continued social program austerity and immigration restrictions during subsequent federal administrations.

Against that backdrop, the Haitian professional and middle classes have generally resided in South Florida’s suburbs, and—reproducing Haiti’s pronounced racial and class hierarchies—are commonly lighter skinned, French speaking, and geared to the American Dream rather than to solidarity with darker skinned, Creole speaking, working class and poor Haitians (Portes and Stepick 1993, chapter 8; Brookings 2005). Besides the Cuban refugee advantages of greater

wealth and generous federal subsidies, sizable Haitian business investments have sidestepped Little Haiti (Stepick 1984, 1992). Unlike the strident anti-communism that has united Cuban refugees across the class divides, Haitian refugees became politically splintered after the Duvalier years (Portes and Stepick 1993, chapter 8). And consistent with the nationwide trend, upwardly mobile settlers of incipient Little Haiti have tended to depart for South Florida's suburbs, while the district's more recent Haitian and other immigrants have been overwhelming poor (Brookings 2005; Portes & Armory 2018).

In this context, the neighborhood's large McArthur Dairy plant predated the arrival of Haitians and has never had more than tenuous connections to the Haitian community. This has also been true of neighboring supermarkets as well as many of the vicinity's assorted warehouses, industrial and repair shops, and other commercial enterprises that have employed skilled and semi-skilled labor (Bojnansky 2014, 2018). Lacking political clout, Little Haiti—aside from the Little River Industrial District that predates the neighborhood's official renaming—has received only a marginal share of city and county business subsidies and spending on physical infrastructure. Slashed public social and housing programs and fears of deportation among undocumented or temporary-status immigrants have taken further tolls on the community (Brookings 2005; Portes & Armory 2018; FLIC 2019; Gierczyk 2020; Madan and Charles 2020). Small neighborhood-serving businesses—owned by local or suburban Haitians—indeed proliferated into the 2000s, in particular laying claim to the Northeast 2nd Avenue corridor, as have churches and social service organizations. Even so, Little Haiti's infrastructure, economy, and living standards have withered, as is typical of predominately black communities across Miami and the U.S. The pattern has contributed to Greater Miami's widening territorial polarization, disturbing racialized social and public costs, and economy that is big on hype but small in substance.

A Haitian-American cultural and political reawakening began, nonetheless, during the late 1990s and gathered steam into the 2000s. Alex Stepick (cited in Olaechea & Diaz n.d.) attributes its start to the music of New Jersey-based Haitian immigrant Wyclef Jean. The

rapper's music and performances galvanized open and enthusiastic expression of ethnic pride among Miami's Haitian youth, who had suffered years of African-American student ridicule and violence in Edison High School and had publicly concealed their ethnicity within African-American "slang, dress, and body language ..." (Portes & Stepick 1993, 191). Space for Haitian ethnic expression was solidified by new and maturing community institutions, by deepened familiarity with Miami-style American culture, and by Haitian-American political action ranging from local to international human rights (HDORHP interviews with Jan Mapou 2011 and Marleine Bastien 2013). The Haitian Revolution's Bicentennial in 2004, which Miami-Dade County prominently celebrated, bolstered this reawakening, as did newly commonplace public and media celebrations of Haitian arts, music, and culture (Olaechea & Diaz n.d.; Salnave 2017). The devastation of Haiti's 2010 earthquake, which triggered far-reaching activism on behalf of humanitarian assistance not only for Haiti but also for the thousands of refugees displaced to South Florida and beyond, became another potent galvanizing force (HDORHP interview with Marleine Bastien 2013; Lee 2020)

Juxtaposed, then, with continued erosion in Little Haiti's conditions of infrastructure, economy, and housing was a pronounced upswing in its cultural and political assertiveness. These contrasting trajectories spawned a local quest to seek the district's official designation as "Little Haiti," rather than Lemon City. Further impetus to the movement arose from mounting threats to the neighborhood posed by the rapidly encroaching Design District from the south, art studios and small businesses fleeing the rising rents of the Design District and the massively gentrifying Wynwood, upmarket residential conversions, and the entry of wealthy land speculators. Rising rents were displacing Haitian businesses and residents, crisscrossing with the repercussions of stunted local purchasing power. In response, Haitian-American business proprietors and community organizations organized to press the City of Miami to officially rename the neighborhood and establish its boundaries. Their overarching motives were twofold: to protect the neighborhood's Haitian cultural identity and to revive its promotion as a cultural tourism magnet. The movement provoked a cross-racial-ethnic amalgam of opposing real estate

developers, landlords, business owners, homeowners, preservationists, and academicians. The opposition's motives mixed anticipation of diminished commercial opportunities and stagnant property values with objections to privileging Haitian identity over that of the diverse groups—principally black and white Bahamians and Americans—represented in the history of Lemon City (Weber 1999; Beatty 2013; Bojnansky 2014; Gambino 2016; Ladra 2016; Sandler 2016; Smiley 2016; Gierczyk 2020; see Mays 2018; Davidson & Fagundes 2019).

Controversy did not abate after the City of Miami Commission unanimously approved the renaming in May 2016, with a compromise that ceded southern territory to the fast expanding Design District (Smiley 2016; Viglucchi 2019). On the winners' side, Jan Mapou, owner of Little Haiti's iconic bookstore, acknowledged the daunting reality that lay ahead: "Maybe in the next five to ten years, we'll be invaded by the Design District. There's nothing we can do. These people, they've got money, big money. We cannot stop them" (quoted in Sandler 2016; see Alvarado 2016). This reality has involved more than the continued displacement of Little Haiti's small businesses and residents, here and there, by comparatively small land speculators. It has also involved the growing momentum of a much larger force that, according to Saskia Sassen (2015), represents "a systemic transformation in the pattern of land ownership in cities ... which has deep and significant implications for equity, democracy and rights." The transformation she describes is a global surge in large-scale corporate real estate acquisitions following the Great Recession of 2007-2009. Among the surge's features, most pertinent to Little Haiti's near future has been "The spread of mega-projects with vast footprints that inevitably kill much urban tissue: little streets and squares, density of street-level shops and modest offices, and so on" (Sassen 2015; see Sassen 2014; Florida & Schneider 2018; Stein 2019). In fact, in 2016—the year of the official renaming of Little Haiti—several large real estate investors teamed up to announce their pursuit of city approval for the Magic City Innovation District, consisting of 18 acres and more than 200,000 square feet of rentable space with 2,500 apartments in towers ranging up to 25 stories, as well as massive retail, entertainment, studio, business-start-up, co-work, and warehouse space, situated approximately adjacent to the Little Haiti Cultural Complex (Elfrink

2016; TRD 2016; <https://magiccitydistrict.com/inside-magic-city/>). During the same year, SVP Realty of New York announced plans to seek city approval for Eastside Ridge, a proposed 22-acre project located in Buena Vista, just north of the upscale Design District and just south of Little Haiti's official lower boundary. Its plan encompasses more than 400 hotel rooms, 3,000 residential units, 97,000 square feet of offices, 280,000 square feet of other commercial space, and 5,000 parking spaces in 14 buildings as high as 28 stories (Ianelli 2016; The Next Miami 2016; Bojnansky 2017).

While the Magic City and Eastside Ridge investors were laying the political groundwork to obtain official approval of their mega-projects, displacement of Little Haiti small businesses and residents continued, if not accelerated, in spite of the renaming (Alvarado 2016). Zillow predicted that Little Haiti would be Miami-Dade County's "hottest residential neighborhood" in 2017, with anticipation that it would become "the next Wynwood" motivating a surge in real estate speculation (Rodriguez 2018). A prime target for business displacement has been the neighborhood's Northeast 2nd Avenue corridor, which extends southward from the affluent El Portal district. By 2019 the corridor became the site of The Citadel food hall, whose owner, Nick Hamann of the Urban Atlantic Group, purchased and began renovating a long-abandoned bank building in 2016 (Valys 2019). Hamann can say with justification that this venture has rehabilitated a neighborhood eyesore, respected the local architectural scale, and not displaced existing businesses. But despite finding himself on the losing side of political contention over the neighborhood's official name, Hamann simply named his property The Citadel at *Little River*—not Little Haiti. A deft display of "big money" negation of the local Haitian-American cultural campaign, doing so has cleansed the marketing of this consumption and financial enclave of contamination by its predominately low-income, black immigrant neighborhood. Touting the food hall complex as a "sustainable creative ecosystem" (Abravanel 2019) completes the deracialized sales pitch (see Sandler 2016). The Citadel, on balance, epitomizes grey areas that, when detached from the history of racial discrimination and neighborhood impoverishment, obfuscate the politics of gentrification in cases such as Little

Haiti's: removing neighborhood blight and respecting local architectural scale without displacing existing businesses, while, at the same time, establishing a cultural and profit-making enclave that creates momentum toward massive, racialized neighborhood displacement and its largely hidden public costs (see Shumow and Gutsche 2017; Earth Economics 2019; Stein 2019).

On the other side of Northeast 2nd Avenue, the Urban Atlantic Group teamed with real estate investor Thomas Conway (Conway Commercial Real Estate) to transform another MiMo building, previously a Bellsouth headquarters, into MADE at The Citadel, a 25,000 square feet, co-working space that opened in 2015 (Cordle 2015; Alvarado 2016). The grey areas of gentrification pertain to this project, as they do to its architectural sister across the street. The grey areas evidently do not pertain, however, to various other Conway real estate dealings along Northeast 2nd Avenue. As the *Miami Herald* reported:

On April 1 [2018], Pierre-Richard Maximilien wrote his monthly rent check of \$3,200 for the travel agency he has run for the past eight years at a strip mall on Northeast Second Avenue and 82nd Street. He handed the payment to his new landlord Thomas Conway, who bought the property in March. Conway had come to collect the rent in person. But a few days later, Maximilien said, his rent check came back in the mail—followed by a notice informing him his month-to-month lease was being terminated because of non-payment of rent. He has been ordered to vacate the premises by May 31 (Rodriguez 2018).

Other tenants with month-to-month leases, including a tuxedo-formal wear shop that had occupied its locale for 30 years, described the same experience in the two strip malls that Conway purchased along Northeast 2nd Avenue. The evictions, generally given with 15 days to vacate the premises, were legal according to Florida's landlord-friendly law. Court records indicate that Conway had pressed for termination of tenancy or eviction for 13 of the 15 tenants, sparing a couple of recent tenants who held two-year leases (Rodriguez 2018). As one of the remaining tenants, the proprietor of a Metro PCS store, said, "Most of these businesses have been here for 20 or 30 years, so it feels like a family. My family does their taxes at the place next door... It's unfair. It means he could kick us out, too. He could

kick everybody out” (quoted in Rodriguez 2018). As of the spring 2020, that proprietor and the neighboring tax-accounting business are the remaining original tenants of one of the strip malls, following its renovation. The new tenants include a personal-training gym priced beyond local affordability, a “Boho Chic” women’s clothing and accessories store, and, appropriate for the neighborhood, a store that is part of a chain selling infant foods for federally subsidized low-income families. Even when Adar Investments, after purchasing and beginning to renovate a strip of stores in Little Haiti, has offered owners relocation to newly upgraded shops and provided a grace period of discounted or no rent, eventual steep rent increases and distance from former loyal walk-in customers have driven the proprietors out of business (Viglucchi 2019).

LLCs are also capturing an increased share of Little Haiti’s housing through foreclosures and other purchases (Viglucchi 2019). The trend includes the practice of deploying Haitian-Creole speakers to harass homeowners via phone calls, in-person visits, and email to sell their properties for cash. Besides foregoing potential future price increases, selling now commonly places Little Haiti’s sellers at serious risk of housing and broader insecurity due to South Florida’s expensive alternative housing options, the high costs of moving elsewhere, the otherwise scant financial resources of seller households, consequent geographic distance away from family, community, and income-earning networks, and relocation to more flood- and crime-prone areas. Rentals in Little Haiti have risen from 77% to 88% of its occupied housing units over the last decade or so, and, as median household income has stagnated at an inflation-adjusted \$21,000, median rents have increased by 27% (ACS 2005-09, 2014-18). As with the district’s small businesses, month-to-month housing leases or even absence of leases are common (Viglucchi 2019) but as yet there is no systematic evidence concerning residential displacement patterns and rates. Data do not yet reveal significant changes in Little Haiti’s demographic composition; its proportion of blacks in general hovers around 80% (ACS 2005-09, 2014-18). What clearly has changed is the steep growth of real estate speculation in Little Haiti, the massive scale of two proposed projects—Magic City and, as shall be described, Eastside Ridge—and speculation’s mounting threat of widespread community displacement.

Does this threat represent “climate gentrification”? South Florida confronts existential crisis due to the intersection of coastal geography and climate change—most immediately their attendant sea-level rise and heightened hurricane vulnerability—with the metropolitan area’s pronounced wealth polarization and housing unaffordability (UCS 2019; Luscombe 2020). The area’s history of racialized land-use and housing practices has situated its majority black and Latinx low-income districts more inland and at higher average elevations than coastal affluent districts. Thus racial discrimination has ironically situated Miami’s poorer residents in zones that are more protected from extreme weather events than are wealthy districts. This racialized geography has precipitated cries that rising real estate speculation in locations such as Little Haiti is significantly, if not principally, a consequence of investors and upscale classes seeking inland and higher ground in the face of worsening coastal flooding risks (Harris 2018; Green 2019; Nathan 2019; Weir 2019; Wright et al. 2019). For example, Little Haiti (average elevation 7 feet, approximate range 3-17 feet, above sea level) is located about one mile west of the midpoint of wealthy Morningside, which borders Biscayne Bay, and beyond the relatively high ridge occupied by the tracks originally built by the Florida East Coast Railway. Little Haiti’s elevational range is not dramatically higher than that of Morningside and other East Side zones (roughly 1-12 feet above sea level). Nevertheless, Little Haiti’s matrix of elevations and distances from Biscayne Bay substantially reduces its predicted vulnerability to sea-level flooding compared with the coastal zones (FIU Eyes on the Rise n.d; Miami-Dade County Flood Maps n.d.; Wright et al. 2019).

Yet many researchers, real estate professionals, and investors cast serious doubt that so-called climate gentrification is a driver of increasing real estate activity and property prices in Little Haiti and comparable Miami areas. They point out that mega-project speculation has not abated in South Florida’s coastal and river zones. They observe, moreover, that Little Haiti and such other areas are drawing real estate attention most basically because they combine ample cheap land and transportation advantages with proximity to the economy’s locational hubs and upmarket residential districts (Gonzalez 2018; Villano 2020; see Sassen 2014, 2015; Florida and

Schneider 2018; Stein 2019). Researchers further emphasize that the growing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events portend to devastate Miami's infrastructure of water, sanitation, transportation, public health, and economy, regardless of elevation (Villano 2020; MDC Office of Resilience n.d.).

There is no denying that sea-level rise and flood risk are increasingly salient factors in Miami's real estate market, as evident in property insurance rates, real estate advertising, investor and buyer decisions, and wider public concern. Indeed, Magic City's investors themselves cited the property's elevation as a risk mitigator in applying for City of Miami approval (Green 2019). Likewise, "climate gentrification" is a potent, unifying trope for otherwise disconnected climate-environmental and social-racial justice movements. The denial, rather, is that mitigation of climate-based real estate investment risks has been a principal reason for surging real estate speculation in Little Haiti and other low-income Miami neighborhoods.

Miami 21 and Special Area Plans

Officially adopted in 2009, "Miami 21," a comprehensive zoning code for the City of Miami, transformed the city's previous "land-use-based zoning code into a form-based code" (DPZ n.d.). Miami 21 has been "lauded by the international planning community as a progressive commitment to New Urbanist ideals" (Patton 2016). What was the context of this zoning code overhaul, and what do these concepts mean?

Sonia Hirt (2014, 32) describes zoning as "... a law adopted by a local government [in the U.S. case] that separates the land in a particular locale into sections, or zones, with different rules governing the activities on that land." She describes each zoning district as having rules concerning three principal characteristics of land and buildings: permitted functions (such as residential, commercial, or industrial), shape (such as building height), and bulk (volume of building on a unit of property). The permitted functions, Hirt observes, have been the anchor points of zoning codes in the United States. Given metropolitan planning challenges and their surrounding political contentions, each category typically became much more differentiated and new categories (such as open-space, historic, and special-purpose districts) were added over the

years. The resulting codes eventually “created urban and suburban worlds in which everything was not only in its place but was also in its own *separate* place ...” (Hirt 2014, 36; see Stein 2019). From as early as the 1880s, codes likewise served as veiled mechanisms for putting racial-ethnic minorities in separate, and profoundly unequal, places (Connolly 2014; Capps 2017; Rothstein 2017; Stein 2019, 21-23, 27-28; Tagtachian et al. 2019).

The City of Miami’s original, land-use-based zoning code was established in 1936, a decade after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled zoning codes as legal. As elsewhere, the City of Miami’s code became increasingly complex and, especially as the city’s population and construction boomed during the 1990s and early 2000s, the code permitted chaotic growth. For instance, developers could erect “15- or 25- or 40-story buildings anywhere they wanted, even right next to a leafy neighborhood of small homes. High-rises sprouted like weeds overnight. One building might be 10 feet from the sidewalk, while the one next door was set back 30 feet. Blank walls stretched along sidewalks for entire blocks” (Patton 2016). By the early 2000s Mayor Manny Diaz recruited architect Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk to devise a new, alternative code, intended “to encourage and manage growth, while ... conserving our neighborhoods and collective history” (http://www.miami21.org/Miami_Zoning_History.asp). Plater-Zyberk, with Andres Duany and their firm DPZ, has been a leading international proponent of “New Urbanism,” which takes aim at the disjointed metroscares produced by land-use-based zoning codes.

New Urbanism, according to its charter principles, aspires to create neighborhoods that are compact, human-scaled, walkable, mixed-use, safe, and socially and economically diverse; single-use districts and transportation corridors that reinforce such neighborhoods; integrated green and open space; place-based identity; overall sustainability; and venues for citizen planning and design participation (<https://www.cnu.org/who-we-are/charter-new-urbanism>; see Steuteville 2017). To these ends it advocates supplanting land-use-based zoning codes with form-based codes, which specify, not disparate and disconnected land-use districts, but rules governing “the relationship between the street and buildings, pedestrian and vehicles, public and

private spaces, and the relationship between multiple buildings, a block, a neighborhood and transitions in scale” (City of Miami n.d.; DPZ n.d.; for critical perspectives, see, e.g., Harvey 1997; Larsen 2005; Talen 2008; Sennett et al. 2018; Tagtachian et al. 2019). Such rules vary, by permissible uses, height, and density, across “transect zones” on a continuum from “natural” to “district” (commercial-industrial). Plater-Zyberk’s team spent several years drafting Miami’s new, form-based code and making public presentations. Objections to the many drafts ranged from fears of sharply restricted property development rights to wariness of rigid design guidelines (Kasdin & Frey 2009; Patton 2016). Despite enduring objections, the City of Miami (not the wider Miami-Dade County) officially approved “Miami 21” in September 2009, becoming the first major U.S. city to have a comprehensive form-based zoning code (Kasdin & Frey 2009; DPZ n.d.; Tagtachian et al. 2019).

Since its approval, however, Miami 21 has contained a potential exception to the principles of New Urbanism. Special Area Plans (SAPs) are standard components of zoning codes, meant to provide flexibility when government, business, or community interests deem existing regulations inadequate to address specific local conditions or projects. In the case of Miami 21’s Article 3.9, an SAP is intended:

... to encourage the assembly and master planning of parcels greater than nine (9) Abutting acres in size, in order to provide greater integration of public and private improvements and Infrastructure; to enable Thoroughfare connectivity; to encourage a variety of Building Heights, massing and Streetscape design, and to provide high quality design elements, all in order to further the intent of this Code expressed in Article 2 [which describes Miami 21’s New Urbanism principles] (City of Miami Zoning Code n.d.).

An SAP must allocate a minimum of 5% of its lot area to a “Civic Space Type.” It may be combined with Article 3.14, “Public Benefits” (financial contributions to a public trust fund such as for affordable/workforce housing, public parks, green building, historic preservation, and

larger civic space) to obtain upzoned, bonus building heights and densities. The allowable bonus heights and densities vary by transect zone and proposed initial building dimensions.

The City of Miami's current planning director, Fernando Garcia, who was previously employed as a member of Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk's code-writing team, praises the SAP provision as providing a forum "where the city comes in, stakeholders come in, and we can all figure out what the optimal shape this project can take is" (quoted in Smiley & Vignuzzi 2017). Prominent land-use lawyer Neisen Kasdin argues that "The [Miami] SAPs built to date are some of the most spectacular, highly regarded projects in the country" (quoted in Bojnansky 2020a). But critics observe that nearly all such built projects have been massive, luxury shopping-residential projects in and around the high density of Miami's downtown area. Among these are Brickell City Centre, Miami River, River Landing, and the posh Design District's New Urbanism townscape version (with private security patrols serving as barriers against its adjacent stretch of homeless persons). The critics point out that, contrary to the planning director's stance, the political access and influence of mega-developer SAP stakeholders dwarfs that of virtually all other stakeholders. They fear the growing momentum of SAP height-density upzoning in residential neighborhoods, which, both by direct impact and by indirectly raising surrounding property values, portends displacement of families and communities and exacerbation of South Florida's affordable housing crisis. They further decry the absence of required community benefits such as housing land trusts, and they observe that current regulations provide no way to assess the collective impact of SAPs when more than one project is proposed for an area (Smiley & Vignuzzi 2017; Bojnansky 2017, 2020a; Bastien and Winkler 2019; Parish & Winkler 2019; Tagtachian et al. 2019; Winkler 2019). Plater-Zyberk herself, who acknowledges the generic importance of SAPs as a Swiss-knife planning tool, declares "It was not the intention to be enabling wholesale upzoning... The intent was to make the city a better form" (quoted in Bojnansky 2020a). Indeed, given the global financialization of real estate, local hegemony of corporate real estate players, and supportive federal and Florida fiscal policies, the combination of SAPs and height-density bonuses became a gaping hole in Miami 21's attempted line of

defense against chaotic urban landscape. More fundamentally, without robust requirements for community decision-making, benefits, and affordable housing, the combination exacerbates the region's deep-seated problems of racialized socio-spatial inequality, disaster vulnerability, and a productivity-laggard economy.

During the fall 2019 residents and activists representing not only Little Haiti but also neighboring affluent communities began mobilizing, without overarching coordination, for the repeal or modification of Miami 21's SAP provision. Most directly instigating the campaign, and creating significant common cause across these disparate communities, are the threats of scale, residential displacement, and environmental impact that three specific SAPs have posed: the defeated Legions West (Upper Eastside), the approved Magic City (Little Haiti), and the proposed Eastside Ridge (Buena Vista/Little Haiti)—each with anticipated repercussions extending across north-of-downtown neighborhoods. The campaign initially targeted the City of Miami's Planning and Zoning Appeals Board (PZAB).

According to Miami 21, PZAB is a quasi-judicial body whose core duties are to rule on routine property-specific zoning applications and variances as well as appeals of Planning and Zoning Department decisions. Among PZAB's further duties are to make recommendations to the City Commission concerning “ordinances, regulations and other proposals promoting orderly development for the area of the city regulated by Miami 21” and “whether proposed developments of regional impact conform to the requirements of Miami 21 ...” Another duty is to “perform such other functions as may be given it by appropriate action of the City Commission” (<http://egov.ci.miami.fl.us/Legistarweb/Attachments/76104.pdf>).

The city commissioners appoint from their respective districts 10 of PZAB's members, with the mayor appointing one member plus an alternate. The criteria for appointment are relevant expertise and absence of conflicts of interest (Miami 21, 7.1.1.4). The occupations of PZAB's current members involve, not surprisingly, varied aspects of local real estate, though little or nothing to do with large-scale projects.

In response to activists' public statements at its December 2019 session, PZAB voted 8-1 to recommend that the City Commission repeal Miami 21's SAP provision. Prior to the vote the board members discussed whether or not to recommend piecemeal revisions to the SAP provision, in view of their trepidation that the City Commission would simply disregard a recommendation to repeal SAPs. The decisive moment was PZAB chair Charles Garavaglia's declaration that "Ultimately the Commission will do what the Commission wants ... I think the message has to be strong and draconian, that it's [the SAP provision] tearing certain areas of the city apart" (https://miamifl.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=1&clip_id=278). PZAB approved the recommendation's final wording at its January 2020 session. Board member Alex Dominguez responded to further debate over whether or not to propose incremental modifications by asserting that fine-tuning the SAP provision would be "like putting lipstick on a pig, and at the end of the day it's still a pig" (quoted in Bojnansky 2020b; see Flechas & Rodriguez 2019). The 6-3 PZAB vote reflected continued worry that the Commission would dismiss PZAB's recommendation to repeal, as opposed to reform, SAPs.

Recall that among PZAB's official duties is the performance of "other such other functions [beyond zoning appeals and the like] as may be given it by appropriate action of the City Commission" (<http://egov.ci.miami.fl.us/Legistarweb/Attachments/76104.pdf>). Nevertheless, soon after the board's initial repeal vote, Commissioner Manolo Reyes laid the foundation to bypass PZAB by proposing to establish a Miami 21 Ad Hoc Task Force, claiming that he was unaware of the PZAB repeal vote (Bojnansky 2020a). As approved by the Commission, the Task Force's mandate is to conduct a comprehensive review of Miami 21 and make recommendations to the Commission within six months after its meetings commence.

The City Commission addressed the repeal recommendation at its regularly scheduled, but due to Covid-19, virtual session during the following May. Prior to the meeting there were numerous citizen calls to the Commission supporting or opposing SAPs. The anti-SAP calls variously urged the Commission to repeal the provision or, given expectations that the Commission would dismiss PZAB's repeal recommendation, to postpone voting on the issue

until local citizen presence and voice at Commission sessions return to some semblance of normalcy. After the audio of the calls was played, the commissioners engaged in perfunctory discussion before announcing their unanimous decision: to hand the matter over, not to PZAB, but to the Miami 21 Ad Hoc Task Force.

Who are the Task Force's members, and what are the provisions for transparency and accountability? The enabling legislation stipulates the following membership, with the mayor and district commissioners each appointing two members:

- six electors from the City of Miami, preferably having expertise in financial fields, sustainability/resilience, or transportation planning/civil engineering;
- two members each in land-use law and real estate development; and
- one member each in sustainability/resilience and architecture/engineering/neighborhood planning.

All members are required to have experience with Miami 21 or related code issues. As for transparency and accountability, the Task Force is required to have publicly noticed, monthly or more frequent meetings. It must comply with Florida's Sunshine Law (guaranteeing public access to most records of government-associated meetings), and is responsible for providing comprehensive recommendations to the Commission.

In principle, of course, no commissioner opposes affordable/workforce housing or neighborhood preservation. Three members of the Task Force—Rev. Nathaniel Robinson of the Greater St. Paul A.M.E. Church, West Coconut Grove (the sole black member); architect/planner Juan Mullerat; and planner Adam Old—are strong advocates of affordable/workforce housing and neighborhood preservation. Another member, lawyer/developer Andrew Frey, a former associate of the Magic City SAP's lawyer Neisen Kasdin, has proposed that mere modification of a zoning component of Miami 21 would permit increased housing density and thereby significantly alleviate the problem of local housing affordability without disrupting neighborhood scale (Alvarado 2019; Frey 2019; Bojnansky 2020b).

Yet the Commission appointed no activists to the Task Force who have militated against the Little Haiti-endangering SAPs, Magic City and Eastside Ridge, the former having been unanimously approved by the Commission and the latter having yet to progress beyond PZAB to the Commission. Besides the above-mentioned members, the Commission appointed a real estate agent who works with large-scale properties and an engineer who works with developers. Much more blatantly, the Commission appointed the heads of the architecture firms associated with the Magic City and Eastside Ridge SAPs, Arquitectonica and Kobi Karp respectively, together with three highly influential property-rights lawyers: Vicky Leiva (Eastside Ridge's lawyer), Iris Escarra (the defeated Legions Park West's lawyer), and Melanie Tapanes Llahues. Although the Task Force membership guidelines specify the appointment of *two* real estate lawyers, the Commission appointed a *third* such lawyer under the rubric of *elector*—as suggested by the city attorney (Political Cortadito 2020). Each of these lawyers is a partner in a prominent land-use law firm that is a major financial contributor to commissioner political campaigns. Each is also a registered lobbyist for at least 69 clients, including corporate real estate players; has been executive director of Miami's politically powerful Latin Builders Association; and is thoroughly networked with the higher echelons of Miami politics (Political Cortadito 2020; Winkler 2020). Echoing a common theme in Miami politics, all three lawyers trace their passion for defending property rights to, as Vicky Leiva describes for herself, “The experience of having property rights taken away from my family, having to leave our country of origin [Cuba] due to persecution and the loss of the rule of law ...” (quoted in Dinkova 2019a; see Dinkova 2018, 2019b; Portes & Stepick 1993; Portes & Armory 2018). Referring to the appointment of the three lawyers, neighborhood activist-lawyer David Winkler asserts “Miami has an image problem, and these appointments are the quintessential ‘foxes guarding the chicken coop’” (Dinkova 2020; Political Cortadito 2020). Ignoring that both in numbers and political clout the Task Force is heavily weighted in favor of Miami's corporate real estate bloc, Tapanes counter-claims that the Commission's appointments carefully balance stakeholder interests to

neutralize any “inherent bias or position they [the members] represent as a result of their education and experience” (Dinkova 2020).

Footnote: Miami-Dade commissioner claims that labor protections are like Castro Cuban totalitarianism. <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/coronavirus/article242577446.html>

The Magic City SAP

“The Magic City”: the moniker fashioned by fledgling Miami’s commercial-hype machine of speculators and publicists during the early twentieth century to entice (white) Americans from the frigid and gritty Northern U.S. to the tropical paradise that “as if by magic” was being spun out of South Florida’s mosquito and alligator-infested swamps and mangroves (Connolly 2014, 19-20; see Portes & Stepick 1993, chapter 4).

* the trailer park

* the Magic City developers “Haitian” event, etc.

The investors had assembled the properties since 2012, including the purchase and closing of the nearly 90 year-old “Magic City” mobile homes park and the expulsion of its residents (Bojnansky 2015; Alvarado 2016; Ianelli 2018). Much like the case of The Citadel food hall, the investors played the name-game that typifies real estate marketing (Benfield 2011): in this instance, they shamelessly named their project after the displaced mobile homes park, “Magic City.”

Bibliography