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City of Homestead

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Community Background Report

City of Homestead

County

Miami-Dade

Boundaries

North: S.W. 288th Street

South: S.W. 328th Street

West: S.W. 132nd Avenue

East: S.W. 192nd Avenue

Community Type

Municipality

History

Homestead is the second oldest municipality in Miami-Dade County. The city is located in the southern tip of Florida, 30 miles south of Miami. To the west of the city is the Everglades National Park and to the east are Biscayne Bay and its underwater national park. The railroad laid out the settlement for workers of the Florida Eastern Corridor and later became a popular settlement for homesteaders in the late 1890s. At this time, there was only one way in and one way out of the area, which was a path nicknamed "homesteaders trail."

Homestead incorporated in 1904. As railroad traffic increased so did the town's population and economy. In 1915, the town's businessmen formed a Chamber of Commerce, the second founded in Miami-Dade County. Many of the existing businesses of the early 1900s were directly related to agriculture. Packers and distributors in the Homestead area shipped their harvest of vegetables and tropical fruits to markets all over the county. Due to the opportune location of Homestead, the United States Armed Forces opened an Air Force base there during World War II. At the peak of operation, Homestead Air Force Base generated as much as \$500 million into the local economy.

Historically, Homestead was known as a residential area containing middle-class to upper class farmers. In actuality, most of the town's residents were renters with modest to low incomes. Prior to Hurricane Andrew, Homestead was one of the most Anglo communities in Miami-Dade

County. By 1994, two years after Hurricane Andrew, the population of non-Hispanic whites dropped by 30 percent and remains relatively low. Since the hurricane, the Mexican and Haitian immigrant population has grown significantly while the Anglo population has moved away.

Community Dynamics

Many identify Homestead with the destruction resulting from Hurricane Andrew in 1992. Although the economy is largely based in the agricultural sector, Hurricane Andrew set economic development back greatly as it destroyed Homestead Air Force Base, which was a vital part of the local economy. Although the Homestead Air Force Base was already listed as one of several bases to be down-sized, the immediate loss of a functioning Air Force base resulted in a concentrated economic loss to the local economy within a single fiscal year.

In March of 1995 the Homestead Economic and Rebuilding Organization (HERO) used \$30 million in federal and state funds to restore Homestead's downtown area. This project received criticism from local residents, because of the inability for residents to afford the new homes.

Homestead's community goals are to sustain organizational performance, to stimulate growth, motivate economic development, stress community emphasis, and increase the quality of life for its citizens. The City has a Mayor's Youth Council that is comprised of 30 youths from the area in grades 9-12. The purpose of this council is to allow the youth to have a voice in the decision making process as well as provides them opportunities for self-growth and leadership development. Homestead wants to maintain a small town atmosphere, but with urban amenities.

According to the 2005-2009 American Community Survey, twenty percent of households were built before 1970 and the demographic information is as follows:

- 14 percent Black, 62 percent Hispanic, and 22 percent White, Not-Hispanic
- 34 percent are under the age of 18 and 7 percent of the population is aged 65 or over
- 15 percent of family households are headed by single women with kids
- 69 percent of City residents aged 25 or older have attained a high school degree or higher while 17 percent have attained a bachelor degree or higher. The County percentage of residents holding high school diplomas is 77 percent and 26 percent have bachelor degrees or higher.
- An average of 5.5 percent of the civilian workforce was unemployed between 2005 and 2009
- 83 percent of all housing units are occupied
- The median household income is \$36,300
- 29 percent of families are in poverty; this is higher than the County's 13.5 percent poverty rate

- 44 percent of households are owner occupied

Business Landscape

The City of Homestead is looking forward as the community redevelopment agency is encouraging Homestead as a business incubator. The industries that are "deemed best-suited" are biomedical, film & entertainment, financial services, information technology, international commerce, telecommunications, and the visitor industry. High-paying jobs in fast-growing industries in turn create others at all levels that cut across governmental, social, ethnic, economic, and political constituencies. The first phase of the business incubator center is operating in Homestead and can assist soon-to-be entrepreneurs and new business owners in the basics to help them succeed. A grant from NASA and assistance from Miami-Dade Community College is making this venture possible. Public and private centers including the Vision Council, the Perrine-Cutler Ridge Council, and the Beacon Council are assisting the City to attain their vision.

Currently, there are lucrative incentives for businesses that locate in the Enterprise and Empowerment Zones, in which a portion of the greater Homestead and Florida City area lie.

Agriculture is still a great source of revenue and serves as a mainstay of the economy. Nearly half of the winter vegetables consumed in the United States are grown in the area (Miami-Dade County's agriculture, which represents nearly \$1 billion annually in local economic impact, is located on just six percent of the county's available land). The former Homestead Air Force Base remains underutilized, but can be developed as a major attractor within relatively few years. Other recent developments include an expansion of the nuclear power facilities at Turkey Point. Recently the City has attracted big box retail chains such as Wal-Mart, Sedano's, Home Depot, and Office Depot. Sprawl and encroachment endangering the urban development boundary are issues that the City continues to address.

Sources

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