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City of Miami

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Community Background Report

City of Miami

County

Miami-Dade

Boundaries

North: Northeast 79th Street

South: Southwest 72nd Street

West: State Road 826/Palmetto Expressway

East: Biscayne Bay

Community Type

Municipality

History

Developed as a tourist-oriented resort city, Miami acquired a “playground” mentality that created a built environment with a sense of fantasy and impermanence. Years of dramatic growth and an ever changing population also hindered the development of a sense of identity – a sense of place. To Miamians, growth was more important than reminders of past accomplishments. Added to this transient population and frontier mentality was what seemed like an inexhaustible supply of undeveloped land.

The City of Miami’s Comprehensive Plan sums the City’s origins as it states, “Miami was discovered early and settled late”. Although the Spanish walked around on these shore in the early sixteenth century, it was not until the railroad arrived in 1896 that Miami could boast more than a handful of residents. From its incorporation, the City’s history has been defined by fluctuations of accessibility, real estate development, the enforcement of civil rights legislation, federal redevelopment, periodic natural disasters and periods of intense migration.

The arrival of Henry Flagler’s railroad and the incorporation of Miami occurred in 1896. During the first decade of the twentieth century, the winter tourist season revolved around Henry Flagler, his Florida East Coast (FEC) Railroad, his Royal Palm Hotel, and his Fort Dallas Land

Company. Miami developed so rapidly that it called itself “The Magic City”. The Boom of the 1920’s transformed this small southern town into a metropolis. Miami stepped into the national spotlight as investors, speculators, and hopeful new residents poured into town from all over the United States. The 1926 hurricane ended the Boom and thrust Miami into a depression three years before the rest of the country. After 1927 development in Miami all but stopped with the exception of the Biscayne Boulevard development during the late 1920’s and early 1930’s.

During the 1930’s Miami continued to attract the working middle class tourist who could escape the gloom of the Great Depression. Building activity did not pick up, however, until the late 1930’s. The City’s recovery was generally halted by World War II but Overtown continued to grow. Though this area was largely considered a slum, it was also a liberating enclave where Blacks could reside, work and own businesses, worship and enjoy music and other performing arts. In the 1950’s, Blacks began to relocate northwest of Overtown, which was later divided by the construction of I-95 and I-395.

In 1959 a revolution took place in Cuba, installing a Communist government and sparking the beginning of a mass migration to Miami. By the 1960’s Cubans were largely settling northwest areas of Miami but maintained a separation from Black neighborhoods. Civil Rights legislation enforcement brought desegregation of the schools and better housing choices for Blacks. In the 1970’s Haitians began to migrate to Miami in large numbers. By the 1980’s ethnic competition culminated in racial tension and expressed itself in several riots. Simultaneously, the County built the Metrorail and escaped the economic recession, which had stymied the growth of many cities around the country.

Today the City of Miami is a large and bustling city busy with activity surrounding centers of tourism, finance, commerce, culture, entertainment, fashion, and education. Its local economy is concentrated in service and retail sectors, while manufacturing has waned. Miami is recently recovering from its most recent housing boom, with occupancy levels returning to normal, and there is little doubt that property values will increase in the future.

Community Dynamics

As with many large cities, Miami is a city of neighborhoods. Its corridors function to move people throughout the city and to define the character of each neighborhood in the City's 36 square miles. The City of Miami’s population is a little over 430,000 with a population density of approximately 10,000 persons per mile. The major traffic generators and attractors remain in and near the city's downtown and near the coast north and south of Flagler Street. These are also the areas where the population density is highest as structures are higher along the coastline.

Recent development has brought multi-family 'waterfront' development north along the Miami River. These developments are at odds with existing marine industries. Higher density residential development is also extending further west along Miami's major corridors.

The City of Miami has adopted a transportation level of service based on person trips, not vehicle trips, which is a standard used in most municipalities in Miami-Dade County. The approach recognizes future constraints on corridor width and promotes public transportation, higher levels of vehicle occupancy, and alternative modes of transportation. The Person Trip level of service is accompanied by a bicycle level of service and a pedestrian level of service. Along with the focus maximizing the capacity of Miami's existing corridors, the City has adopted a Street Tree Master Plan that lays the foundation for an Urban Canopy lining city streets.

The City of Miami has been, and continues to be, a comfortable home for some and a place of refuge for others. Many Miami neighborhoods continue to collect and sustain poor immigrants and poor families who find work in the City's tourism and service industries. As Miami becomes less affordable, the poor move on, finding cheaper housing further west in the county or leaving altogether.

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

- 19 percent Black, 62 percent Hispanic, and 12 percent White, Not-Hispanic
- 21 percent are under the age of 18 and 17 percent of the population is aged 65 or over
- 9 percent of family households are headed by single women with kids
- 67 percent of residents are aged 25 or older have attained a high school degree or higher while 22 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 4.6 percent of the civilian workforce was unemployed between 2005 and 2009
- 85 percent of all housing units are occupied
- The median household income is \$29,800
- 22 percent of families are in poverty; this is higher than the County's 13.5 percent poverty rate
- 37 percent of households are owner occupied

Business Landscape

Tourism continues to be the principal industry in Miami but the city's economy has become more diversified as trade is becoming increasingly vital to the economy. Its close proximity to Latin America and the Caribbean make it the center of international trade with those areas. Nearly \$50

billion in total merchandise trade came through the Miami Customs District in 2002 (because many companies choose to establish their Latin American headquarters in southern Florida, Miami-Dade County is known as the "Gateway to the Americas"). In 2003 approximately 1,200 multinational corporations were established in the region. Miami International Airport is the nation's top airport for international freight and third for international passengers. The Port of Miami, which contributes \$8 billion to the local economy, ranks first among the state's containerized ports and ninth in the United States. Miami is home to more than 64 foreign consulates, 25 international trade offices, and 32 national chambers of commerce. The 'Miami Free Zone' is one of the world's largest privately owned and operated zones. The top imports into the Miami Customs District in 2002 were apparel and accessories; the leading exports were electrical machinery and photographic and medical equipment.

International banking is another growing segment of the economy. With total deposits of \$74.3 billion in 2003, about 100 commercial banks, thrift institutions, foreign bank agencies, and other banks are located in downtown Miami, representing the largest concentration of domestic and international banks on the east coast, south of New York. Still, domestic banks dominate the market, led by Bank of America Corp., which has total deposits of over \$7.8 billion in its 25 local offices.

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