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## City of West Miami

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# Community Background Report

## City of West Miami

### County

Miami-Dade

### Boundaries

North: S.W. 8th Street

South: S.W. 24th Street

West: S.W. 67th Avenue

East: S.W. 57th Avenue

### Community Type

Municipality

### History

The City of West Miami occupies three quarters of a square mile in western Miami-Dade County. West Miami is nestled between S.W. 8th Street, better known to residents as “Calle Ocho”, and "Coral Way" or S.W. 24th Street. The community is landlocked between Hialeah, Miami Lakes, and Coral Gables. The city dates back to 1947 when four businessmen decided to incorporate the area west of Miami. The decision came in response to the Miami-Dade County's decision to reduce cocktail hours and ban gambling. The businessmen, along with a group of residents decided they did not want to lose their cocktail hours and gambling rooms. Each of the four men invested \$400 in bonds and then conjured possible names for the town including West Haven, West Gate and West Miami.

State law prevented the newly incorporated area from becoming a city based on its small population, forcing it to instead incorporate as a town. At the time of incorporation, 700 residents inhabited the area of West Miami. In 1949, the City of West Miami was one of the first in Florida to elect a female commissioner. Near the end of World War II, land and private enterprises were being distributed in the area of West Miami by the federal government as an incentive to attract residents. Soldiers returning from war took advantage of the free lots and built homes in West Miami. The city became known as a town of Veterans.

In the early 1950s, West Miami also saw an influx of Jewish Families. The families relocated from northeastern states and northern Miami-Dade settling close to Temple Zion on S.W 17th street. Eventually Jewish families comprised up to 50% of West Miami's population. However, from the 1960s to the 1980s the city experienced demographic changes including an influx of newly arrived Cuban refugees. The city also changed its form of government to a city manager format. In 1994, the city found itself in a \$300,000 deficit as a result of miscalculating funds and nearly went bankrupt. The city has since adopted a strict budget policy to follow and has rebounded, reporting a \$200,000 surplus in 1997.

## Community Dynamics

West Miami has maintained a high standard for the city's residential business and community. West Miami has a large elderly population, comprising 25 percent of the population. In 2005, the city has made addressing the needs of its elderly community a priority. The city is considering renovating the current city hall into a senior citizens community center with \$18 million dollars from the General Obligation Bonds (GOB) program election decision in November 2004. The current city hall would be relocated to an unspecified location in the city; a final decision has not been made as of March 2005.

As of the 2000 Census, West Miami had a population of approximately 5,863 residents. Currently the per capita income for West Miami is \$17,850; this is 17% lower than the county average of \$26,780. Due to the below average household income, affordable housing is a prevalent issue for the city. Since West Miami is landlocked, the only opportunity for expansion is through annexation. The city is currently pursuing annexation of areas westward, between SW 67th Avenue and the Palmetto Expressway, and southward, between S.W 8th Street and Coral Way. The annexation would increase the cities population by nearly 3,000 residents. The county currently serves these residents with police and sewer operations.

Since 1990 the city has undergone several capital improvements and many are still being proposed. The city is currently addressing its flooding issues and working to comply with state and federal requirements. West Miami's current sewer system's first construction phase began in 1987 and the second phase was completed in 1992. Five to ten percent of the residents are still unconnected from the system. In 2005, the city will receive \$500,000 for the General Obligation Bonds (GOB) decision to bring public structures and facilities into compliance with the American's with Disabilities Act. West Miami also offers a Jitney Service to its residents that ventures as far north as the Blue Lagoon Area and plans on expanding the routes with funding from the People's Transportation Plan. The city also has added the use of two police motorcycle patrols to increase enforcement of traffic rules in its residential areas.

The West Miami community possesses four parks for recreational usage. In 1995, the Trust for Public Land identified 170 park projects that needed improvement in Miami-Dade County. Voters approved the \$200 million Safe Neighborhood Parks Bonds in 1996. Between 1996 and

1999 West Miami received \$182,000 to improve Lorraine Park, Cooper Park, and the West Miami recreation Center. In 2004, the city also received \$130,000 from the GOB decision that will go toward city park projects.

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