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# Little Haiti

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# Community Background Report

## Little Haiti

### County

Miami-Dade

### Boundaries

North: Northwest 79th Street

South: Interstate 195

West: Interstate 95

East: Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway

### Community Type

Neighborhood

### History

Little Haiti is situated between El Portal, Miami Shores, West Little River and Liberty City. Little Haiti's main corridors are Northeast 79th Street, Biscayne Boulevard, Northeast 2nd Avenue and Northeast 54th Street. Little Haiti also has direct access to the Florida East Coast (FEC) railway. Northeast 2nd Avenue is known as "Avenue Felix Moisseau Leroy" and it leads directly to Toussaint Louverture Elementary School, two heroes of Haitian history.

Little Haiti is known as the largest Haitian neighborhood outside of Haiti, though it is only 0.6 square miles. From the late 1950's and 1960's many Haitians began to flee their country, because of conditions in Haiti and thousands more fled in the 1970's and 1980's for the same reason. The majority of those who came over settled in the historical subdivision of Miami called Lemon City and transformed it into Little Haiti.

Little Haiti has a number of buildings of historic value, which help to maintain its neighborhood identity. Among the most prominent buildings in this neighborhood are the DuPuis building at

6045 NE 2nd Avenue, which was built in 1902, and the Villa Paula at 5811 North Miami Avenue built in 1926. Another nearby fixture is Miami-Edison Middle School, which was built in 1928. More recent neighborhood landmarks include the Caribbean Market Place and the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) Building. This last structure is embraced not because of its architecture but rather for its close history with Haiti and the people of Little Haiti. There are plans to move the INS (now part of Homeland Security) from this site.

## Community Dynamics

The residents of Little Haiti are poorer and not as well educated as the average resident in Miami-Dade County. Residents travel outside of the neighborhood to purchase goods and services. People in Little Haiti rely more on mass transit than do people in the rest of the city. In the 1980's and 1990's neighborhood residents traveled to the beaches and downtown Miami for work. More recently migration patterns have changed and residents are working to the northeast of Little Haiti and more often moving away from the neighborhood. Those remaining in Little Haiti are less upwardly mobile and more recently arrived.

The City of Miami Master Plan is targeting improvements to the area's Caribbean Cultural Center and area parks. The Little Haiti Park is envisioned to be a first class, full service park that would include four non-contiguous components: recreational, cultural, governmental and child development. With \$25 million available, the City's plan is to build soccer fields and improve the area around former Caribbean Marketplace at Northeast 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and 59<sup>th</sup> Terrace. Little Haiti Park will include a large soccer field and will be supported by pedestrian friendly, mixed-use development, which will connect to the proposed FEC Greenway. Northeast 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue will also be improved inviting pedestrians and casual shoppers into the redesigned commercial area.

## Demographic Highlights

According to the 2000 Census, 74% of homes in Little Haiti were built before 1970 and the population of 23,436 residents is characterized as follows:

- Little Haiti has approximately 7,357 households with a median income of \$19,383.
- Forty-four percent of these households have an income below \$15,000.
- Twenty-nine percent of occupied housing units are owner occupied.
- Fifty-seven percent of the population over the age of 25 has not attained a high school diploma.
- Thirty percent of the population is below the age of 18.
- Forty-three percent of families with children under 18 are headed by single-women.

- Sixteen percent of the population is aged 60 years of age or older.

## Business Landscape

Business in Little Haiti continues to capitalize on Haitian culture. As a business strategy this may help to attract a clientele from other areas while shoring up ethnic cohesion. This strategy also attracts nearby residents of the design district and midtown neighborhoods, residents who generally have more disposable income than the average resident of Little Haiti. However, this business strategy concentrates efforts in retail and low skilled service industries, which generate wages and salaries for employees that rarely meet area median income levels.

Little Haiti's commercial corridors are many for its size. Commercial property is located along Northeast 54th and 62nd Streets, Miami Avenue and Northeast 4th Court. These corridors are characterized by businesses such as restaurants, botanicas, hair and beauty shops, record stores, grocers and automobile repair shops.

Little Haiti houses an industrial center of growing economic importance, becoming one of the major employers in the area and one of the major manufacturing and distribution centers in the city. Light manufacturing and warehouse uses are concentrated in Little River Industrial Park on Northeast 55th Court and in scattered locations along the FEC right-of-way.

The Caribbean Marketplace would be the "Cultural Component", which will feature a Black Box Theatre, a "state -of-the-art" dance facility, an art gallery and a community room. The development of the Market Place is an attempt to reopen an important community landmark that first opened its doors in 1990 and was a place where the locals met and shopped. Once completed, the Caribbean Marketplace is expected to help reenergize the neighborhood and bring a much needed economic revival to the area, where locals and visitors will have the opportunity to support area restaurants, galleries, boutiques and specialty stores.

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