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Sunkist Grove

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Community Background Report

Sunkist Grove

County

Miami-Dade

Boundaries

North: Northwest 135th Street

East: Northwest 7th Avenue

South: Northwest 119th Street

West: Northwest 17th Avenue

Community Type

Residential neighborhood

History

World War II Veterans from Pennsylvania and Iowa relocated to Sunkist Grove (formally known as Westside) in 1947. The “Westside” neighborhood stretched west of I-95 between NW 7th and 17th Avenues and 119th and 135th Streets. As the neighborhood began to grow, large Polish, Italian, and Greek populations migrated from New York. This neighborhood was heavily segregated; once North Miami Beach became a municipality, laws were enacted to keep racial groups segregated. As Miami-Dade segregation laws were dismantled in the mid 1960’s, Sunkist Grove and other North Miami neighborhoods were slow to integrate. For a short period of time, white real estate agents would collectively buy homes from anyone who wished to sell to African-Americans as a way to keep the neighborhood segregated. It was not until 1968 that the first African-American family, headed by a drug store owner, moved into Sunkist Grove.

Many city officials, including council members and mayors, lived in Sunkist Grove. As the demographic begin to change, the more affluent members of the community moved to the eastside of the city or outside of Miami-Dade County. In 1980, only five percent of residents in this neighborhood were African-American. By 1990, the U.S. Census reported 32 percent of residents in North Miami Beach were African-American, with many living in the “Westside” community. The area was renamed to Sunkist Grove in 2006.

The Sunkist Grove Homeowners Association has been active for almost 25 years, though for the first 20 it was known as Westside Homeowners Association.

Community Dynamics

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the neighborhood of Sunkist Grove occupies 1.11 square miles and is home to 8,276 people. The average per capita income is \$13,674 and 26 percent of residents are below the poverty line. 32.9 percent of residents have attained a high school diploma and 30.1 percent have not completed high school. 69.5 percent of residents are African-American; 24.1 percent of residents are White with 19.1 percent classified as White Latin or Hispanic. (2006-2010 American Community Survey, 5-year estimate)

There are 2,297 housing units in the community. Of those, 1,791 are owner-occupied, 365 are renter-occupied, and 141 are vacant. Sunkist Grove consists of small (studio to 2 bedrooms) to medium (3-4 bedrooms) single-family homes and apartment complexes. Homes in this community are classified as older homes (Built 1940 - 1969), established (Built 1970 – 1994), newer (Built 1995 or later) or Historic (Built 1939 or earlier).

The neighborhood has four parks, Claude Pepper Park, Kiwanis Park, Oleander Park, and. The neighborhood forms a square and within it are five squares which interrupt the straight streets and avenues. Kiwanis Park, Oleander Park and the Winson Water Plant lie on NW 121 Street, while Thomas Sasso Pool and the Sunkist Grove Community Center are located on NW 125 Street. Another recreational area in the neighborhood is Ben Franklin Park.

The Winson Water Plant pumps ground water from the Biscayne Aquifer. The Plant supplies about 60 percent of the total demand in the city.

The Sunkist Grove Community Center is the epicenter of this community. Serving as polling precinct 135, the center also hosts community meetings, special events, and children activities. The nearby Thomas Sasso Pool is located in the heart of the neighborhood, and is a key destination for North Miami's kids. The pool was named after the city mayor who promoted the construction of the pool in the 1950s. Most activities are sponsored by the North Miami Beach Department of Parks and Recreation.

The City of North Miami runs NOMI Express, a free community bus service funded by the Miami-Dade People's Transportation Plan. The four routes of the bus connect the eastern parts of the city with the western parts where Sunkist Grove is located. Sunkist Grove is located just west of a major highway, Interstate 95, which allows for an easy connection with other parts of the county.

There are several schools in or in the vicinity of Sunkist Grove. The only public school within the neighborhood boundaries is Ben Franklin Elementary but Westview Elementary and Middle Schools are just west of it and Doctors Charter School of Miami Shores is just east. Doctors Charter School is a middle/senior high school offering instruction for grades 6-12. The school which received the Florida Gold Seal of Excellence and was named one of America's best high schools in 2010 by Newsweek Magazine.

Business Landscape:

The two of the four roads which serve as boundaries for Sunkist Grove are also the business corridors for the neighborhood. Along NW 7th Avenue and NW 119th Street are located a variety of bars, restaurants and other eateries. There are no major shopping centers in the neighborhood but a BJ Wholesale Club is within a mile distance. There are no major retailers and the grocery stores in the vicinity of the community are small local stores such as Alpha Supermarket and Popular Supermarket.

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