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The Roads

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Community Background Report

The Roads

County

Miami-Dade

Boundaries

North: Southwest 11 Street

East: Southwest 1 Avenue

South: Southwest 22 Street

West: Southwest 12 Avenue

Community Type

Neighborhood

History

The Roads is a neighborhood different from other neighborhoods in Miami-Dade County because of its character and street layout. The neighborhood consists of 17 roads and nine avenues, just west of Southwest 1 Avenue, roads which are set at 45 degrees to the rest of the City of Miami's grid. It is a quiet neighborhood bounded by some of Miami's most important traffic arteries. The fact that it has traffic ways running contrary to the logic in most parts of the city has discouraged motorists from seeking shortcuts through the roads. Recently, traffic circles were installed to manage the flow of traffic.

In the 1920s, generally marginalized groups including Lebanese, Greeks, and Jews populated the roads. The homes in this area were cinder-block stucco homes with hardwood floors, attic fans, and casement windows for cross ventilation. Though ethnically diverse in the 1960s, it was considered an "all white" residential neighborhood. In the 1980s, 66 percent of the population was Latin, according to Miami-Dade Planning Department estimates.

Community Dynamics

Civic organizations in the Roads are stronger than in many neighborhoods of Miami-Dade County. This strength comes from the attributes of residents as well as a long tradition of civic engagement. Residents of the area are generally wealthier, more professional, and have more leisure time to dedicate to civic life than residents of other areas. Neighborhood traditions of civic engagement have grown from a strong neighborhood identity and a perceived need to protect that identity. The Roads has homeowners associations, condo associations, associate members in umbrella groups (such as Miami Neighborhoods United) that come together on specific issues, and political action committees that empower many non-citizen residents and businesses. These groups use existing networks to launch and maintain their own initiatives. It is not unheard of for organizations within the same neighborhood to embrace opposing sides of the same issue.

While some homeowners in the Roads were calling for traffic circles (2005-2006) to be placed in their neighborhoods, preventing too much traffic from cutting through the neighborhood, others oppose the improvements. The benefit of these devices comes secondary for residents who focus on higher quality design, signage and the aesthetic appeal of the traffic circles. Residents of the Roads have both supported and expressed opposition to plans for the City of Miami Street Car project. The street car was not planned to stop or travel through the neighborhood but representatives of neighborhood organizations had taken a position that funding dedicated toward the street car project would detract from other City needs. Before this project was put on hold in 2009, there was a general skepticism among residents that the \$200 million price tag was only the first and lowest figure presented to the public.

Neighborhood organizations chose their meeting places according to the availability of space. Often they frequent well established churches such as the St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church or Our Lady of Lebanon Church. The Roads is also home to Beth David, Miami's oldest Jewish congregation and one of the most well attended temples in all of Miami-Dade. It draws worshippers from the Roads and many surrounding neighborhoods, a true neighborhood institution. In the Jewish religion, members are strongly encouraged to walk to services on the sabbath, which indicates a strong bond between a Jewish temple and nearby residents.

Temple Beth David was founded in 1912, and has been at its present location just south of downtown Miami on Coral Way since 1949. In 1985, as the area around Beth David began to lure well-to-do Cubans new to Miami, a number of members in the 1,000-family-strong shul argued that for the congregation to survive it should move the Coral Way site to Kendall. Half the congregation supported the move and half resisted. In the end, 500 families split off and opened a new synagogue in Kendall, taking the conservative day school with them. Beth David has capitalized on the growth of downtown Miami, especially among Hispanic Jews, whose population has doubled in the last decade. Beth David was re-energized in the mid-1980s after Rabbi Marshall Meyer, a native of Argentina, took the reins and brought with him a highly musical service, with Spanish, Hebrew and Latino melodies and a sensual kind of Jewish romanticism to the shul. Rabbi Hector Epelbaum points to Congregation B'nai Jeshurun on

Manhattan's Upper West Side as something of a model for what he is trying to build at Beth David.

Business Landscape

Nearly all businesses located within the Roads are found along Coral Way (SW 3 Avenue). A large proportion of these businesses offer professional services, such as medical or legal consultancy, and others range from neighborhood pharmacies and convenience stores. This business corridor offers bicycle lanes along side on-street parking.

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