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## Coconut Grove

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# Community Background Report

## Coconut Grove

### County

Miami-Dade

### Boundaries

North: US Federal Highway 1 and Brickell Avenue

South: North Prospect Drive (City of Miami Boundary)

West: Southwest 42 Avenue

East: Biscayne Bay

### Community Type

Neighborhood

### History

Coconut Grove, also known as “The Grove” is one of the earliest settlements in the City of Miami. Bahamian immigrants came to live and work in the area as early as the 1880s. Along with other points of international interest, The Grove attracts tourists to its annual Goombay Festival, Annual Art Festival, King Mango Strut Parade and other festivals. The Grove is large and sufficiently organized to incorporate but it would have to cede from the City of Miami, a possibility which has been rejected by the court system. The Coconut Grove Village Council holds regular meetings at the City of Miami’s City Hall.

### Community Dynamics

Coconut Grove is a 'Village' of 1.8 square miles in the southern portion of the City of Miami. It is connected to the rest of the county by major roads including US-1, Main Highway (South Bayshore Drive, Ingraham Highway and Old Cutler Road are alternate roadway names), SW 17<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 32<sup>nd</sup>, 37<sup>th</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Avenues. The Metrorail runs parallel to US-1 just to the north of The Grove and has stations at SW 37<sup>th</sup>, 32<sup>nd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> Avenues. This connectivity and its proximity to both downtown Miami and Coral Gables business districts makes The Grove an

optimal location to live for those who do not want to drive long distances or prefer to travel using public transportation.

There is a distinct difference between the western/southern parts and eastern/northern parts of Coconut Grove shown by the 2000 census. The two parts of The Grove are divided by McDonald Street and are highly segregated by race and economics. Poor individuals account for a much higher percentage of persons using public transportation to get to work. In the western/southern portion of The Grove, comprised of five blockgroups in 2000, people are usually black, poor and much younger than people in the eastern/northern portion. The western/southern portion also has higher rates of disability, and although this is true of South Florida in general, these high rates of disability are not dependent on old age.

The Miami-Dade County Public Works Department (PWD) recently held a series of charrettes to redesign SW 27<sup>th</sup> Avenue between US-1 and South Bayshore Drive. The roadway will include a large traffic circle and several traffic barriers to help maintain a continuous flow of traffic while discouraging drivers from illegally turning into one-way streets. The charrettes were held before the Village Council and planners and engineers spoke directly to the public. The Council later voted on the plan as a whole, which satisfied some residents and encouraged very vocal disagreement from others. The progressive rounds of the charrette seemed to provide those opposed to the traffic circle fuel in gathering dissent and evidence as to why it was not needed. Those present seemed to prefer no changes. The arguments of residents were personal and stronger from residents who owned property facing the roadway. As planners attempted to reach an agreement with residents, mostly concerned with the eastern/northern section, the only voice concerned with the western/southern section was in the form of leaflets advertising crime prevention.

## Demographic Highlights

According to 2000 Census figures, 57% of households were built before 1969 and the community of 18,953 persons had the following characteristics:

- There are approximately 8,851 households which yield a median income of \$64,917.
- Eighteen percent of these households have an income below \$15,000.
- Only fifty-six percent of occupied housing units are owner occupied.
- 14 percent of the population over the age of 25 is without a high school diploma.
- Eighteen percent of the population is below the age of 18.
- Eleven percent of family households are headed by women with children under 18 years of age.
- Fifteen percent of the population is 65 years of age or over.

## Business Landscape

The biggest challenge today in West Grove is ameliorating the effects of gentrification brought about by land values in the area. Homes within a block of the West Grove border have tripled in value over the past five years. Some are now worth nearly a half-million dollars. To this end, a collaborative effort has taken shape with the participation of the University of Miami's Center for Urban and Community Design, the Knight Foundation, the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD), Miami-Dade County, the City of Miami and local residents. The group plans to rehabilitate decaying homes, develop affordable housing, attract successful businesses, beautify the neighborhood and offer community education programs, all the while maintaining the neighborhood's Bahamian characteristics. The following are identified opportunities for development:

- Virrick Park, once crime ridden, was cleaned up during a \$3 million restoration project as abandoned homes were shut down and rebuilt, code enforcement has improved and the first national chain in the community's history, CVS Pharmacy, recently opened its doors.
- The Grand Avenue Vision Plan for the West Grove was funded in part by the Knight Foundation, HUD and the City of Miami. Recommendations to revitalize the commercial corridor included an infill strategy and mixed use development. Though there are no dollars yet attached to these recommendations, the long awaited plans to landscape and widen the sidewalks along Grand Avenue to make it more pedestrian friendly and help turn it into a fertile commercial district are finally in the development stages.

In 2007, a Business Improvement District (BID) has been established in downtown Coconut Grove to provide additional services the City could no longer provide. This BID is also looking to increase foot traffic in the area.

## Sources

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