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South Beach

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Community Background Report

South Beach

County

Miami-Dade

Boundaries

North: Abe Resnick Blvd./Dade Blvd./23rd Street

East: Coastline

South: South Point/Inlet Blvd.

West: Intercostal Waterway

Community Type

Densely populated urban neighborhood

History

South Beach started as farmland in the late 1800's. Henry Lum, a Pennsylvania farmer, came with the idea of making what is now known as South Beach a coconut plantation. With the help of his son, Charles, the Lum's convinced a group of investors to purchase 165 acres on South Beach for 75 cents an acre for the purpose of harvesting coconuts. It wasn't until 1912 that the idea for a residential community began. Two residential bankers, John and James Lummus, John Collins (farmer), and Carl Fisher (financier) decided to build a bridge from the mainland (now the Venetian Causeway).

At this time, John and James Lummus, each presiding over Miami banks, began acquiring bay and beachfront land on the Southern end of Miami Beach. The brothers established The Ocean Beach Realty Company. Their vision was to build a city fronting the ocean made up of modest single family residences. The Lummus Brothers also recognized the need for a good beach for the tourists which were now pouring into Miami thanks to the railroad created by Henry Flagler.

The "barrier beach" became a popular recreational spot for Miami's mainland residents. A ferry operated between Miami and the Beach. A bathing pavilion called Tatum Pavilion was connected to the ferry by a wooden boardwalk, which cut through the mangroves. The Tatum

Pavilion represents the first permanent facility built to accommodate recreational activities on Miami Beach.

However, it was not until 1964 that the neighborhood really started to get a name for its self and with help from Jackie Gleason, an American comedian, actor and musician, who retired in the areas because he wanted to play golf every day, it started growing as a retirement community. Retirees could not afford the upkeep required in a coastal community and they started moving inland. In the 1980's South Beach was the playground for "cocaine cowboys," drug dealers who used the area as a base for their illicit drug activities. In the late 1980's South Beach began to emerge as the beautiful, economically successful tourist destination it is today.

Community Dynamics

The neighborhood of South Beach has a resident population of approximately 32,000. The estimated average median household income in the area was \$51,000, approximately 20 percent higher than the county average. The higher income is related to the higher educational attainment of the area residents. More than a third of residents have attained a bachelor's degree or higher.

The housing stock in South Beach is a combination of high-rise and low-rise residences, with a small percentage of single family homes. Most of the housing stock (78%) was built before 1970. Most of the housing is rental housing as only 24.9 percent of housing units are owner occupied.

The majority of residents are Hispanic (59%), while 34% are non-Hispanic Whites and only 3% are Black/African American. The non-Hispanic Whites in the neighborhood come from various backgrounds reflected in the various European, Semitic and other languages spoken. Portuguese (mainly Brazilian Portuguese), French (including Canadian French), German, Italian, and Russian are some of the most common languages apart from Spanish and English. Owing to the area's large Jewish and Israeli community, Yiddish, or Hebrew are spoken by 2% of the population.

An influx of gay men and lesbians moving to South Beach in the late-1980s to mid-1990s helped contribute to Miami Beach's revitalization. South Beach in particular is a popular destination for members of the LGBT. Approximately 2 percent of households are same-sex unmarried-partner households.

Business Landscape:

South Beach is the hub of tourist activity in the City of Miami Beach. According to the U.S. Census, there were over 2,200 business establishments in the area, most of them providing services and goods specifically targeted towards tourists.

Lincoln Road is an open-air pedestrian mall, considered South Beach's premiere shopping area. It is home to many restaurants and several night clubs as well as many high end retail outlets. With its unique boutique shops and restaurants, it has had "an esoteric chic that maintains its trendy appeal." The Miami Beach Preservation Board approved the closure of automobile traffic on the westward part of Lincoln Road, in favor of the renovation of the SunTrust building and the development of the acclaimed 1111 Lincoln Road parking garage. Several other parking garages nearby greatly facilitate commerce.

Ocean Drive is the easternmost street in South Beach, running in a north-south direction from south of 1st Street to 15th Street. Ocean Drive is responsible for the South Beach aesthetic that most out-of-town visitors expect. It is a popular Spring Break and tourist area, including predominantly local night spots. It is also home to several prominent restaurants (including "News Cafe," "Mango's," and the MTV-popularized "Clevelander") and is the site of Gianni Versace's former ocean front mansion. Ocean Drive is the center point of the Art Deco District in Miami Beach which contains the largest concentration of 1920s and 1930s resort architecture in the world. These vibrantly colored buildings represent an era when Miami was heavily promoted and developed as a "tropical playground." The district has historic designation since 1979 and contains 960 historic buildings.

Collins Avenue runs parallel to Ocean, one block west. It is also State Road A1A. Collins is home to many historic Art Deco hotels, and several nightclubs.

Española Way, which runs from Collins Avenue to Pennsylvania Avenue, was conceived by N.B.T. Roney (of the Roney Plaza Hotel) in 1925 as "The Historic Spanish Village," modeled after the romantic Mediterranean villages found in France and Spain. Today it consists of art galleries, restaurants, and quirky shops.

Washington Avenue is one of the best-known streets in South Beach. Running parallel with Ocean and Collins, Washington is notorious for having some of the world's largest and most popular nightclubs, such as Cameo and Mansion. During "season" the street is jammed with traffic until early in the morning (as late as 6 am) every night of the week. Washington Avenue is also home to countless shops, hotels, and such noted architectural features as Temple Emanuel, a historic synagogue.

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