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Village of Key Biscayne

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Community Background Report

Village of Key Biscayne

County

Miami-Dade

Boundaries

North: Crandon Park

South: Bill Baggs Cape Florida Park

West: Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve

East: Atlantic Ocean

Community Type

Municipality

History

Key Biscayne stretches 4 miles long and is just 1.25 square miles wide. The municipality is located on an island that it shares with a park to its north and another to its south. Key Biscayne is located between 4 and 5 miles from the coast of Coral Gables and is accessible by land only through the Rickenbacker Causeway. Although Key Biscayne is newly incorporated, the village has served as an important historical aspect of South Florida. Juan Ponce de Leon officially discovered the island in 1513, claiming it for the Spanish King and naming it Santa Marta.

In the 1700s, the island was known as Rat Key. In the 1800s, Slaves from across the South and members of the Seminole Indian tribe were at times able to make their way to the island and await the arrival of ships taking them from slavery, to the Bahamian Islands. It is estimated that around 100 to 300 slaves used this route to obtain their freedom. Due to this history in 2005, the area was commemorated as a portion of the historical Underground Railroad.

In 1838, the United States Military established a base on Key Biscayne called Fort Bankhead. This base was strategically located to protect settlers from revolting Seminole Indians. The concept of Key Biscayne was platted in 1838. Wealthy landholders planned the first town of Key Biscayne in 1839, offering 264 lots at \$500 each, using the lighthouse compound as a central plaza. Rickenbacker Causeway, a scenic roadway, which connects the island to the rest of Miami-Dade County, was opened in 1947. The U.S military used Key Biscayne as an affordable

housing community for WWII veterans during the 1950s. The village of Key Biscayne incorporated on June 18, 1991.

Community Dynamics

Key Biscayne is one of the wealthiest communities in the United States. The community, which is only accessed by boat and the Rickenbacker Causeway, served as the Florida home to former president, Richard Nixon and actor Andy Garcia. As travelers cross the Rickenbacker Causeway onto Key Biscayne they pass the Miami Seaquarium and Virginia Key Beach, the historical black beach of the 1960s.

The community of Key Biscayne is an affluent population by local and national standards. As of the 2000 Census, the population of the village was 10,507 residents, whom occupied 6,318 residential units within the village. Of the 10,507 residents 49 percent is Hispanic and 45 percent of are Caucasian. The median household income for Key Biscayne is \$86,599. Of Key Biscayne's residents' 85 percent ages 25 and older have college degrees. The property values of Key Biscayne reach a total of \$2 billion and Key Biscayne ranked number 134 on Worth's' 250 Richest U.S towns in 2001. The community was also named one of the nation's top five permanent vacation spots.

The Village of Key Biscayne utilizes a Council-Manager form of government. The Village's 1995 comprehensive plan called for complete replacement of the old septic tank system to a centralized system for the island by 2008, the island has not completed this as of 2005. The city has received criticism for its current waste management system. Residents complain that the services received are not equivalent with the amount of revenue the department receives through taxes. In September of 2004, the town mayor restricted the use of wave runners and jet skis within 300 feet of the shoreline. The city also has begun the groundwork to implement new zoning codes that would prompt redevelopment and protect Key Biscayne's "character." By doing this, the community hopes to achieve a pedestrian friendly and aesthetically inviting area that would balance the rights of its business owners with the desires of the residents. The island currently contains five public parks and about 30 acres of beach. In order to protect and preserve its beaches the city has developed a 50-year program to replenish the beach with imported sand.

Key Biscayne is host to the annual NASDAQ 100 tennis tournament. The tournament includes large names in tennis and brings tennis fans from across the worldwide to this attractive vacation place. The city hosts an annual art festival that attracts over 200 artist and vendors. The Village's community center, which opened in late 2004, offers services to the residents such as ballet lessons, swim lessons, computer lesson, and other instructional classes for its residents. The Village has a proposed a and included a Civic Center in every budget since the 1995 comprehensive plan, however, the final project has yet to be completed.

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