

Community Background Report

Dorsey Park

County

Miami-Dade

Boundaries

North: Northwest 20th Street

South: Northwest 14th Street

West: Northwest 7th Avenue

East: Florida East Coast Railway

Community Type

Neighborhood

History

Dorsey Park’s boundaries encompass an area of nearly a quarter mile, all of it within the area of Overtown. The approximate boundaries of Dorsey Park are Northwest 20th Street on the north, the Florida East Coast railway on the east, Northwest 14th Street on the south and Northwest 7th Avenue on the west. These boundaries are documented in a 1961 City of Miami publication, which lists Lummus Park, Dixie Park, and Dorsey Park in the area now recognized as Overtown. References to the “Dorsey Park” neighborhood have faded from usage, as with several other older areas of Miami.

Dorsey Park is named after Dana Albert Dorsey (1872–1940), who was a businessman, banker, and philanthropist, and who became one of the first African–American millionaires in Florida and the [American South](#). Dorsey migrated to Miami in 1896. He worked as a carpenter for the Henry Flagler Florida East Coast (FEC) Railroad. During that time, he recognized the need to provide housing for Black workers and developed Black neighborhoods in Miami through the purchase of small lots, upon which he built a series of rental houses for Blacks. As he grew successful, he shared his wealth by donating his time, money, and property to the community. In 1917, during the period of segregation, he sold a large parcel of land to the City of Miami, to be used as a park for Blacks, now Dorsey Park. He also donated the land for the construction of the Dorsey Memorial Library, which today has been restored as a historical landmark. The D.A. Dorsey home was built in 1913 and lived in by Dorsey and his family until 1940.

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, Overtown’s economic activity remained relatively stable, though steadily declining. Civil rights were increasingly recognized in Miami and Blacks were more comfortable moving to suburban neighborhoods (e.g., Liberty Square) further north and west of the city center, because they offered less overcrowding. During the early 1960s, state highway engineers, planners and consultants routed Interstate 95 through Overtown, replacing densely

settled land with massive transportation structures. Later, State Road 836 (the Dolphin Expressway) further divided the two parts of Overtown into four. The previous landmarks forming Overtown's boundaries were eclipsed in their significance and no longer acknowledged as relevant to neighborhood transition. The interchange of expressways, standing some thirty feet or more above ground and visible from miles away, became the most obvious structure defining Overtown.

Through the 1970s and 1980s, Overtown's population declined and housing in the area suffered from neglect. Area businesses moved out of the area or suffered from a loss of clientele. After a series of riots during the 1980s, renewed efforts were made to improve the living conditions in many of Miami's Black neighborhoods.

Community Dynamics

According to U.S. 2010 Census and American Community Survey 2015 5-year data, City Center North Miami Beach has a population of 4451, 60.14% of which are working age from 18 to 64. The average per capita income of \$11,338.78 is much lower than Miami-Dade County's average per capita income of \$28,823. The population is 21.2% Hispanic, and 78.8% non-Hispanic. Furthermore, 12.8% of the population is White (including Hispanic White), 83.5% is Black, and 3.8% multiple races and others. A non-English language is spoken by only 5.46% of the population. Regarding education level, 64.4% of the population has less than a high school education, which is lower than Miami-Dade County's 48.86%. Foreign-born individuals make up 16.1% of the population, and 32.2% of the population are naturalized citizens, while 67.8% are not U.S. citizens out of the foreign born. Of the foreign-born residents, 48.4% are from the Caribbean, and 50.3% are from South America.

Business Landscape

There are two schools in Dorsey Park: Phillis Wheatley Elementary, the Theodore R. and Thelma A. Gibson Charter School.

Dorsey Park lies just east of the Health District, where there is a cluster of medical and justice institutions. The Camillus House is one of the recent additions to this neighborhood. Capital improvements to properties in this neighborhood have been permitted for the Camillus House, for a women's detention center, for the Culmer Community Action Center, and for the renovated Dorsey Memorial Library.

Dorsey Park does not have a Neighborhood Enhancement Team of its own, but Overtown has one, based at the Overtown Shopping Center. In addition, Overtown has numerous neighborhood associations. The Overtown Community Oversight Board has the following mission statement: "The purpose of the OCOB is to encourage and support housing, job creation, economic and business development, educational opportunities and historic and cultural preservation and to provide written recommendations to the City Commission regarding activities, developments and improvements within, or substantially impacting the residents of the Overtown area. The Overtown NET Administrator serves as the supervisor of the OCOB liaison and assists with the dissemination of information throughout the Overtown community and provides access to

information to the liaison on everyday functions, community initiatives, construction projects and other quality of life matters to report back to the board members.”

Transportation

The main transportation arteries in Dorsey Park are Interstate 95 and the Dolphin Expressway, which dominate the landscape of the southwest area of the neighborhood. The other main road is Northwest 7th Avenue/US 441, which defines the western boundary of the neighborhood, running north and south. Miami-Dade Transit bus lines (#77 and #277) run on Northwest 7th Avenue. Numerous other lines run throughout the neighborhood. The City of Miami operates a free trolley service, which also runs on Northwest 7th Avenue (the MIAOVT/Overtown line, the MIAHLT/Health District line, and the MIASTA/Stadium line). An app is available for tracking the trolleys.

Reference

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- 4.) Wikipedia. Dana A. Dorsey, 2021. Url: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dana_A._Dorsey
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- 8.) City of Miami. Neighborhood Associations Overtown NET, 2020. Url: <https://www.miamigov.com/Government/Departments-Organizations/Neighborhood-Enhancement-Team-NET/Association-Overtown?BestBetMatch=overtown|d13b95b2-5146-4b00-9e3e-a80c73739a64|4f05f368-ecaa-4a93-b749-7ad6c4867c1f|en-US>
- 9.) Google Maps, 2020. Url: <https://www.google.com/maps/>
- 10.) City of Miami. Get Trolley Information, Schedules, and Maps, 2021.

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