Community Background Report
South Beach

County
Miami-Dade

Boundaries
North: Abe Resnick Boulevard/Dade Boulevard/23rd Street
East: Atlantic Ocean
South: South Pointe/Inlet Boulevard
West: Intracoastal Waterway

Community Type
Neighborhood

History

South Beach started as farmland in the late 1800s. In 1870, two brothers, Henry and Charles Lum, had the idea of making the area now known as South Beach into a coconut plantation. It wasn't until 1912 that the idea for a residential community began. Two bankers, John and James Lummus, along with John Collins (farmer) and Carl Fisher (financier) decided to build a bridge from the mainland (now the Venetian Causeway).

At that time, John and James Lummus, each presiding over Miami banks, began acquiring bayfront 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 to attract 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 as well as tourists. A ferry operated between Miami and the beach, and a bathing pavilion was accessible via a wooden boardwalk, which cut through the mangroves.

It was not until 1964 that the neighborhood really started to get a name for itself, with help from Jackie Gleason. The American comedian, actor and musician moved to the area because he wanted to play golf every day. He began producing his weekly television variety show in the neighborhood. South Beach started growing as a retirement community.

In the early 1980s, South Beach was the playground for "cocaine cowboys," drug dealers who used the area as a base for their illicit activities. In the late 1980s, South Beach began to emerge as the attractive, economically successful tourist destination it is today.

An influx of gay men and lesbians moving to South Beach in the 1980s and 1990s contributed to Miami Beach's revitalization. South Beach is a popular destination for members of the LGBT community.

Neighborhood associations are numerous in Miami Beach. The city's website has a Neighborhood Associations List page, giving detailed information on association contacts, mission statements, and meetings. Examples of associations located within the South Beach area are Flamingo Park, South of Fifth Neighborhood, and South Pointe.

Community Dynamics

According to U.S. 2010 Census and American Community Survey 2015 5-year data, South Beach has a population of 32,072, 74% of which are working age from 18 to 64. The average per capita income is $49,368, which is much higher than Miami-Dade County's average per capita income of $28,823. The population is 51% Hispanic and 49% non-Hispanic. Furthermore, 77% of the population is White (including Hispanic White), 4.3% is Black, 2.66% Asian and 15.6% multi-racial and others. A non-English language is spoken by 10.3% of the population. Regarding education level, 34.5% 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 54.4% of the population, out of which 39.3% are naturalized citizens, while 60.7% are not U.S. citizens. Of the foreign-born residents, 14.8% are from Europe, 26% are from the Caribbean, 24.4% are from Central American countries, and 23.5% are from South America.

Business Landscape

South Beach is the hub of tourist activity in the City of Miami Beach. A multitude of businesses offer services and goods that are specifically targeted towards tourists. Several South Beach streets are especially popular with visitors.

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 high-end retail outlets. With its unique boutiques and restaurants, it has a chic image and trendy appeal. Several 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, featuring a variety of night spots. It is also home to several prominent restaurants and is the site of Gianni Versace's former mansion. Ocean Drive is the centerpiece 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 had National Register of Historic Places designation since 1979.

Collins Avenue runs parallel to Ocean Drive, one block to the west. It is also designated as 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 to Ocean Drive and Collins, Washington is famous for having some of the world's largest and most popular nightclubs. During "season" the street is jammed with traffic until early in the morning (as late as 6 a.m.) 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.

A significant portion of the South Beach neighborhood lies within the boundaries of the Miami Beach Community Redevelopment Area (CRA). The area is in the northeast corner of the neighborhood, bounded on the north by Dade Boulevard. The Miami Beach Redevelopment Agency (RDA) page in the city's website offers contact information, a boundary map for the redevelopment area, and a wealth of documentation on planning, redevelopment finances and budget resolutions.

Transportation

The main transportation arteries in South Beach form a loop south of 23rd Street/Dade Boulevard. Alton Road runs north and south near the western edge of the neighborhood, with divided northbound and southbound lanes. Miami-Dade Metrobus runs on Alton Road (lines M and S), as well as the free Miami Beach Trolley, on the South Beach Loop route. Crossing the southern end of South Beach is 5th Street/Florida State Road A1A, which also has divided lanes. This stretch of roadway is served by Miami-Dade Metrobus (lines #120, #150, C and M), as well as the Miami Beach Trolley on the South Beach Loop. Collins Avenue/Florida State Road A1A runs north and south through the eastern edge of the neighborhood, and has Metrobus service (lines #120, #150, C, L, S and M), as well as Miami Beach Trolley service on the South Beach Loop, the Middle Beach Loop, and the Collins Express route. Metrobus and the Miami Beach Trolley also have stops on South Pointe Drive, on Washington Avenue, on 17th Street, and on Dade Boulevard/23rd Street.

Automobile congestion in Miami Beach is commonplace but living in South Beach without a car is a much more viable option than in most neighborhoods in the Miami area. The Miami Beach Trolley is free and operates from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. seven days a week, at intervals of approximately 30 minutes. The progress of the trollies can be tracked in real time using an online map or a free mobile app. The trollies feature bike racks, for the convenience of riders.

For local travel, South Beach has many Citi Bike stations scattered throughout the neighborhood. Bikes are available on a membership basis or as hourly rentals. The solar-powered bike sharing system consists of a fleet of specially designed, very durable bikes that are locked into a network of docking stations.

The City of Miami Beach website has a very useful "Getting Around" page with links to maps of the city's neighborhoods, directions for tourists arriving by air or by car, a parking lot/parking garage locator, a schedule of parking garage rates, information on parking space rentals and ADA accessible parking, information on the city's free trolley service, links to car rental agencies, and a link to the Citi Bike website.

The Visitors page in the city's website has a link to the FDOT Traffic Report & Interactive Map for Corridors to/from & in Miami Beach. The map shows current construction projects and lane closures with detailed information.

Reference

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6.) Miamibeachfl.gov. Miami Beach Redevelopment Agency (RDA), 2021. Url: https://www.miamibeachfl.gov/city-hall/economic-development/redevelopment-agency/

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