Community Background Report

Brownsville

County

Miami-Dade

Boundaries

North: N.W. 62nd Street
South: SR 112 (Airport Expressway)
West: N.W. 21st Avenue
East: N.W. 37th Avenue

Community Type

Neighborhood

History

Brownsville is a neighborhood within unincorporated Miami-Dade and a census-designated place. As of the 2000 census, the population was 14,393.

In the 1960s, with its population largely African American and Hispanic, Brownsville's unemployment rate was six percent and half of all families in the district lived on less than $15,000 a year (Census.gov). After World War II, thousands of manufacturing jobs left Miami-Dade County thereby increasing the importance of the remaining jobs to those with limited education and job skills. During this same period, large numbers of African-Americans immigrated to Miami-Dade County looking for employment (Dunn p.45) . North Miami-Dade County, no longer replete with the jobs new residents had come for, was faced with a host of new socioeconomic problems including widespread unemployment and crime (Dunn 1997). As early as the 1980s, Brownville had acquired a reputation as a breeding ground for crime. In a widely publicized incident characterizing Brownsville violence in the 1990's, a resident of Brownsville for over 20 years was attacked by a neighborhood mob then fatally shot on July 12, 1994 after he tried to help an 11-year-old girl whom he had accidentally struck with his car (Pugh 1994).

Conditions in Brownsville have improved since the 1980's, though there are still weedy lots and abandoned buildings. Thanks to the efforts of the community's neighborhood civic association, major improvements are on the way for Brownsville. The plans include the mixed-use transit

development of the Brownsville Metrorail Station, 5200 NW 27th Ave., by Community Service, a nonprofit arm of Transport Workers Union Local 291. The property has 8.79 acres and, the company got a 99-year lease on the property (Thompson 2006).

The neighborhood has seen much new housing built. New development will include commercial buildings, residential buildings and an educational structure for training in transit related fields. The project will include "100,000 square feet of office space, 20,000 square feet of commercial space, 300 housing units and 90 on-street parking spaces" (Thompson 2006). CEO of Community service J. Johnson further stated "I am hoping it will be a linchpin for future projects," Johnson said. Besides development the Metrorail site, Jefferson Reaves Sr. Park is scheduled for further development for senior citizens and children. George Mora of Capitol Improvement told members of the Brownsville Neighborhood Civic Association that the park will get two shuffleboard courts, benches and shaded canopies. This is the first phase of a parks improvement project for the County and the cost of $200,000 will be funded by the County General Obligation Bond (Miami-Dade County GOB). Everette Stewart President of the Brownsville Neighborhood Civic Association, also addressed concerns about the Bank of America branch at Northwest 54th Street and 27th Avenue being too small to handle the number of customers who do business with the branch. "I want a drive-through and a bigger bank in the Renaissance Shopping Center," Stewart said, referring to a strip mall at the corner of Northwest 54th Street and 27th Avenue (Thompson 2006). The association, founded in 1979, has about 130 members. Membership dues are $15 a year per family. "You don't have to live in Brownsville to be a member; we would be glad to have anyone," Stewart said. "We want the young people to be here. It's disappointing that they aren't involved with the association because they can give young ideas and are the people of tomorrow," Stewart added.

Robert P. Pearshall, manager of service planning for Miami-Dade Transit, gave an update on the 5-month-old Brownsville Circulator, a demonstration project to assess the amount of usage the bus route gets. "As we get more riders, we will expand the weekly schedule and add weekends," Pearshall said. "We want to see about 60 people a day." Daily ridership on the circulator now averages 36 people daily (Miami Dade Transit).

Cassandra Hudson, Neighborhood Compliance Supervisor with Team Metro, is concern with the number of junk cars left abandoned in the neighborhood. According to Hudson, seven junk cars were removed but 12 more were discovered around the neighborohood and needed to be towed away. Hudson has also asked residents to help locate the owners of several chickens wandering around in the area of Northwest 48th. "Wandering chickens are unsanitary for the community and the childrens who twarl the streets", Hudson said.

Team Metro is also working with Miami-Dade Transit to conduct a study of the intersection of Northwest 50th Street and 31st Avenue for placement of a traffic light. "This is a dangerous intersection," Stewart said. Another major road that impacts the neighborhood is the airport expressway that runs through the middle of the neighborhood, effectively separating it into two halves.

Art Teele a former Miami-Dade commissioner, now deceased, was for a time the active voice of the neighborhood. Today, many residents feel that when Art Teele past away, he took the voice of the communuity with him (Urbizu 2006).

Community Dynamics

As of the census of 2000, there were 14,393 people, 4,814 households, and 3,254 families residing in Brownsville. The racial distribution of Brownsville was 5.76% White, 91.23% African American, 2.71% from other races, and 1.30% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 8.22% of the population. The average household size was 2.98 and the average family size was 3.66.

Brownsville is a poor neighborhood. The neighborohood has a much lower median income $16,902, then that of the County, $35,966 and a lower family income, $19,703, compared to $40,260 for the County. Males had a median income of $21,098 versus $21,182 for females. The per capita income for Brownsville was $9,722. About 37.4% of families and 42.7% of the population were below the poverty line, including 54.6% of those under age 18 and 33.2% of those age 65 or over.

Sources

Burke, Mayor Ed. "How Our Village Came Into Being". Address to the Biscayne Park Civic Club (Personal Communication). 1999

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Salvatore Aneese (Personal Communication, October 29, 2004)