

# Community Background Report

## Town of Miami Lakes

### County

Miami-Dade

### Boundaries

North: State Road 826

South: N.W. 135th Street

West: Interstate 75

East: N.W 57th Avenue

### Community Type

Municipality

### History

Miami Lakes lies in Northwest Miami-Dade County just north of the City of Hialeah. In 1919, Ernest Graham arrived in the area currently known as Miami Lakes, to create a sugar cane farm for the Pennsylvania Sugar Cooperation. Once the sugar company discovered that sugar cane would not grow on the land, Graham ended up buying the 3,000 acres of pines and palmettos. Shortly after, Ernest Graham abandoned the land and during the post-war era his three sons, Phillip, Bob, and William formed a development company, Sengra. In 1958, Sengra enlisted the help of Lester Collins, a landscape architect, to create a layout for the new area, currently known as Miami Lakes. Collins designed the layout and basic structure of the town to resemble his ideal of an ideal South Florida town, a conch shell.

Unlike many cities and towns created during the early 1960's the Grahams decided to create a master plan for the city that would allow for three decades of growth, construction, and changing market conditions. The Grahams followed the concepts of the carefully planned mid-Atlantic cities of Columbia, Maryland and Reston, Virginia, both created in the 1950s. The first families moved in the area in 1962. For nearly a quarter of a century, the development plans of Miami Lakes evolved according to Lester Collins methodical vision. Dredges made way for lakes, bulldozers cleared roadways, and numerous construction crews built houses, condominiums, churches, schools, banks, and offices. People who moved to Miami Lakes had to accept the rules of the community. The rules included, agreeing to paint houses regularly, mow lawns frequently,

landscape yards according to the big plan of the community, and walk dogs in the allocated places. Miami Springs has fully utilized the basic new town idea: To grow slowly and under a highly ordered plan.

William Graham eventually turned Sengra over to his son, Bill Graham, and the company restructured, becoming Graham Companies. The Grahams continued to oversee the commercial and other development in Miami Lakes. During the late 1990's Miami Lakes attempted to incorporate but met resistance with the county, whom halted incorporations in 1996 to reduce the eroding tax base. In 2000, the city made history, becoming the first city to contract services from the Miami-Dad police department and pay a \$1.4 million a year revenue agreement as conditions of incorporation. The city became the 31st city in Miami-Dade County and the first to incorporate since the 1996 incorporation moratorium.

## Community Dynamics

According the 2000 Census, 22,676 residents lived in Miami Lakes. Until incorporation in 2000, Miami Lakes was a donor community because it paid \$2.6 million more in taxes to the county than it did received in services. The city contains a 3.75 million square feet commercial park that is located west of the Palmetto expressway. Although Miami Lakes is not one of the most affluent populations monetarily, the community is rich in diversity by means of family financial status, ages, and ethnicities. The average household income for Miami Lakes is \$61,147. The population is 66 percent Hispanic, 27 percent Caucasian, 2.8 percent African American, and 2.9 Native Hawaiian or Pacific.

Miami Lakes has many small neighborhood parks that were an integral plan of the Grahams planned community concept. The town also has two large parks, Miami Lakes and Royal Oaks Park, and one of three county vocational-education training centers, Miami Lakes Educational Center. The center provides adult vocational training in conjunction with a full-service high school. High school students can attend regular academic classes and vocational training programs during the same school day on the same school campus. Upon graduation, the high school students can receive both a high school diploma and a certificate of completion from the vocational training program in which they participated.

Miami Lakes takes many steps to protect its residents and their desired quality of life. The town has a Citizen's Bill of Rights that lists rights that the residents are entitled to and cannot be taken away. A 2002 decision by the Miami Lakes Commission required those seeking election to public office reside within town limits for two years or more years prior to campaigning. In 2004, the city fought attempts to open neighborhood park usage to those residing outside of town boundaries, a restriction standing over 30 years.

## Sources

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