

City of Miami Beach

County

Miami-Dade

Boundaries

North: 87th Terrace

South: Southern shore of Fisher Island/Atlantic Ocean

West: Western shores of Palm and Hibiscus Islands/Biscayne Bay

East: Atlantic Ocean

Community Type

Municipality

History

Miami Beach, connected by bridges to mainland Miami, is a resort city on a barrier island between Biscayne Bay and the Atlantic. It is composed of a main island approximately seven miles long and a few smaller natural and manmade islands. Included within its boundaries are 7.7 square miles of land and 7.5 square miles of water.

In 1870 father and son Henry and Charles Lum purchased land on what is now Miami Beach for seventy-five cents per acre. In 1876 the only structure was a refuge for victims of shipwreck. In the 1880s a coconut plantation was established along the shore, but soon failed. One of the investors in the plantation was John S. Collins, who achieved success by buying out other partners and planting avocados and other crops. Collins family members saw the potential in developing the beach as a resort. This effort began in the early years of the 20th century, led by the Collins and Pancoast families, the Lummus brothers, and Indianapolis entrepreneur Carl G. Fisher. Until then, the beach was only a destination for daytrips by ferry from Miami, across the bay. By 1912 Collins and Pancoast were working together to clear the land, plant crops, supervise the construction of canals to get their avocado crop to market, and set up the Miami Beach Improvement Company.

Once a 1,600-acre, jungle-tangled sand bar miles from the mainland, Miami Beach grew to 2,800 acres when dredging and filling operations were completed. The Collins Bridge, spanning 2.5 miles of water, was constructed of wood, connecting the beach with the mainland. This bridge enabled the first

real estate boom after it opened in 1913. Fisher organized an annual speed boat regatta and promoted Miami Beach as a playground and winter retreat for the wealthy. By 1915, Lummus, Collins, Pancoast, and Fisher were all living in mansions on the island. Three hotels and two bathhouses had been erected, an aquarium built, and an 18-hole golf course landscaped. Carl Fisher was the main promoter of Miami Beach's development in the 1920s as a site for wealthy industrialists from the north to build their winter homes. Grand hotels such as the Flamingo were also built to attract wealthy vacationers. Fisher and others created islands out of landfill by dredging Biscayne Bay. This human-made territory includes Star, Palm, and Hibiscus Islands, the Sunset Islands, much of Normandy Isle, and all the Venetian Islands except Belle Isle. The Miami Beach peninsula became an island in April of 1925 when Haulover Cut was opened, connecting the ocean to the bay.

The great 1926 hurricane put an end to this prosperous boom era, but in the 1930s Miami Beach still attracted tourists. Investors constructed small-scale hotels and rooming houses for seasonal rental, which now comprise much of the Art Deco historic district. During World War II Miami Beach served as a training ground for the US military, and German submarines were spotted off the coast. Post-war economic expansion brought new residents to South Florida from the northern United States, which significantly increased the population of Miami Beach within a few decades. After Fidel Castro's rise to power in 1959, a wave of Cuban refugees entered South Florida and dramatically changed the demographic make-up of the area.

At the southern end of Miami Beach, South Beach is famed as a destination for models and celebrities, with nightlife centered on Ocean Drive. The National Register of Historic Places has designated one square mile of land as the Miami Beach Architectural District, more commonly called the Art Deco District. The district exhibits a high level of consistency in building scale and style, resulting from the rapid development of structures between 1923 and 1945, under the control of a small number of developers.

Longtime residents of Miami Beach divide it into three distinct geographic sections. These are South Beach (5th-41st Streets), Mid-Beach (41st-79th Streets), and North Beach (79th-87th Streets). These areas are divided still further into neighborhoods defined by natural barriers and restricted access. Even though all of Miami Beach has experienced tremendous, continued growth in both population and development, South Beach has seen the greatest expansion. It is one of the most pedestrian-friendly communities in the county. Miami Beach is progressive in its urban planning and zoning, and

the city carefully manages historic preservation, new parking garages, and new developments.

Community Dynamics

As of 2021, Miami Beach had a population of 83,469. The median age was 41.7 and the median household income was \$59,162. Between 2020 and 2021 the population of Miami Beach declined from 89,439 to 83,469, a decrease of 6.67%. At the same time, the median household income rose from \$57,211 to \$59,162, an increase of 3.41%. Regarding ethnicity in 2021, 35.1% of the population was White non-Hispanic, 30.5% was White Hispanic, 12.6% was Multiracial Hispanic, 11.7% was Other Hispanic, and 3.52% was Black non-Hispanic. None of the households in Miami Beach reported speaking a non-English language at home as a primary language, and 73.2% of the population were US citizens. As of 2021, 55.1% of the residents of Miami Beach were born outside the US, which is much higher than the national average of 13.6%. In 2020, the percentage of foreign-born residents was 55.4%, indicating that the rate has been decreasing. In 2021, the median property value was \$450,700, and the homeownership rate was 35.9%.

Business Landscape

The City of Miami Beach accounts for more than half of tourism to Miami-Dade County. Resort taxes make up over 10% of the city's operating budget and, on average, the resort tax revenue grows by three to five percent annually. The bulk of the Miami Beach tourism industry is in hotel accommodation and food services.

The Miami Beach Visitor and Convention Authority is a seven-member board, appointed by the City of Miami Beach Commission. The authority, established in 1967 by the State of Florida legislature, is the official marketing and public relations organization for the city, in support of its tourism industry.

Besides beaches, cultural events add to the city's attractions. Miami Beach hosts the annual Art Basel Miami Beach art show, a major draw. It is also the home of the New World Symphony and its world class building, the New World Center designed by Frank Gehry. The Miami City Ballet is based in Miami Beach, as well.

The municipal website of the City of Miami Beach features a portal for its "Business Concierge" service, designed to assist businesses with establishing or expanding operations in the city. Experts are available to provide free guidance in obtaining permits and licenses, accessing capital, and navigating the Miami Beach commercial landscape. Via the website, the user can access

training materials in both English and Spanish, as well as in-person or virtual coaching. There is a search engine for finding commercial space available for sale or lease. The user can also discover business grant opportunities, federal assistance resources, county and state business incentives, and historic preservation incentives.

The Miami Beach Redevelopment Agency focuses on the “City Center”, also known as the Historic Convention Village Redevelopment and Revitalization Area. It is bounded by 24th Street on the north, West Avenue on the west, 14th Lane on the south, and the Atlantic Ocean on the east. The North Beach Community Redevelopment Agency serves the city’s northern district, where a portion of the incremental growth in property taxes is collected and allocated specifically for purposes related to community revitalization. The projects and initiatives funded by the CRA focus on transportation and mobility, infrastructure, resiliency, affordable workforce housing, and community economic revitalization. The city’s municipal website shows the 2021 redevelopment planning document, a map of the CRA boundaries, the calendar of meetings, CRA board membership, relevant contact information, agendas, annual budgets, and meeting minutes and recordings.

Transportation Characteristics

The main transportation arteries serving Miami Beach provide access to the island from the mainland via causeways and run north and south the length of the island. The John F. Kennedy Causeway/Northeast 79th Street Bridge connects the mainland to Normandy Isles and the northern end of Miami Beach, crossing through the islands of North Bay Village in Biscayne Bay. The Julia Tuttle Causeway carries Interstate 195/State Road 112 from the mainland to Miami Beach at the level of 37th Street. The MacArthur Causeway carries Highway A1A from the mainland at the level of Northeast 13th Street, running southeast through Watson Island and Fisher Island before arriving on the southern end of Miami Beach at 5th Street. Collins Avenue/Highway A1A is the main north-south artery, hugging the eastern shore of Miami Beach. Indian Creek Drive/Highway A1A runs north and south parallel to and just west of Collins through North Beach and Mid-Beach. Alton Road forms the west side of a loop that circles the greater part of the island, south of Normandy Isles.

According to DATA USA 2021 statistics, most people in Miami Beach drove alone to work, with an average commute time of 26.7 minutes. The average car ownership was one car per household.

The 2040 Miami Beach Comprehensive Plan is available via the city's municipal website and includes maps illustrating crucial elements of the plan relating to transportation. The maps show flood zones and evacuation routes, coastal high hazard areas, federal functional classification of roadways, the existing roadway system, the existing roadway lane counts, existing and potential transit corridors and transit intermodal hubs, existing bicycle facilities, and the Atlantic Greenway/Bikeway Network.

Planning for resilience of roadways in the face of climate change and sea level rise has become a major element in the comprehensive plan. A look at the coastal high hazard areas map of Miami Beach shows that inundation during a category 1 hurricane is very widespread and concentrated heavily in the southwestern tip of the island. In recent years, standing water in the streets of this area has become commonplace, especially during periods of "king tides".

Planning for flood mitigation has included a five-year, \$500 million project for the installation of 60 to 80 pumps, construction of taller sea walls, planting of red mangrove trees along the sea walls, and the physical raising of road tarmac levels. Some streets and sidewalks have already been raised about 2.5 feet over previous levels. The four initial pumps installed in 2014 are capable of pumping 4,000 gallons per minute. There is concern that these efforts will not be sufficient to successfully adapt to rising sea levels.

Various methods of adaptation to climate change are detailed in the website "Miami Beach Rising Above". Mitigation efforts described include stormwater management, identification of adaptation action areas, groundwater monitoring, short- and long-term changes to public infrastructure, implementation of a "green" infrastructure, and the use of seawalls.

Public transportation operated by Miami-Dade Transit is used heavily in Miami Beach. Numerous Metrobus lines connect to Downtown Miami and Metrorail (i.e., the 'S' bus line). The South Beach Local (SBL) is one of the most heavily used lines in Miami and connects all major points of South Beach to other major bus lines in the city. The Airport-Beach Express (Route 150), which connects Miami International Airport to major points in South Beach, sees particularly heavy use.

Due to its dense, urban nature and pedestrian-friendly streets, many Miami Beach residents get around by bicycle. A bicycle sharing system called Citi Bike is operated by Decobike, Inc. Solar-powered bikes are featured.

The city operates the free Miami Beach Trolley seven days a week, with four routes: the South Beach Loop, Middle Beach Loop, North Beach Loop, and the

Collins Express. A mobile app is available for download, to track the progress of trollies in real time.

Freebee complimentary on-demand rides in electric automobiles are also available in the Mid-Beach area of Miami Beach. Users can download the Freebee app at no cost.

Sources

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