

City of South Miami

County

Miami-Dade

Boundaries

North: Southwest 48th Street and

Southwest 40th Street/Bird Road/State Road 976

South: Southwest 80th Street and Southwest 88th Street

West: Southwest 69th Avenue and Southwest 67th Avenue

East: Southwest 57th Avenue/Red Road/ State Road 959

Community Type

Municipality

History

The City of South Miami occupies 2.31 square miles in southeast-central Miami-Dade County. It is bordered to the east by the City of Coral Gables, to the south by the Village of Pinecrest, to the west by unincorporated Glenvar Heights, and to the north by unincorporated Coral Terrace. On the northern end of the municipality, boundaries are extremely irregular, with multiple incorporated parcels of various sizes surrounded by broad unincorporated areas.

Although Native Americans (Tequesta, Calusa, and Jaega), had inhabited the locale for centuries, the recorded history of South Miami began around the turn of the twentieth century. The rich farmlands of South Dade attracted pioneers to areas called Little Hunting Ground (now known as Coconut Grove) and Big Hunting Ground (now known as Cutler). In 1896 Wilson Alexander Larkins, an early settler and founder of South Miami, brought his family into the lush wilderness at the southernmost end of the wagon trail that is now the Ingraham Highway. There he started a small dairy.

When the Miami to Homestead extension of the Florida East Coast Railroad (FEC) was completed in 1906, Larkins bought the property west of what is now Red Road and south of Sunset Drive, opening the first grocery and general store in the area. When the post office was also established, Larkins became its postmaster. The surrounding community was named Larkins in his honor.

The first African American to purchase land in the Larkins area was Marshall Williamson, who moved there from Madison, Florida. He built his home at 6500 SW 60th Avenue and allowed it to be used for church services even before the construction was completed. By 1917, the population of Larkins had grown to 350. The real estate boom of the 1920s drastically inflated local land values, reaching an all-time high when a 10-acre tract sold for \$100,000. The epicenter of the boom was near the original Riviera Theater, now the site of the Shops at Sunset Place.

In the mid-1920s, many citizens of Larkins expressed a desire to incorporate their expanding community. In March of 1926, a group met and voted to annex an area of approximately six square miles, which was named the Town South Miami. This section of land was bounded on the east by Red Road, on the south by Southwest 104th Street and Kendall Drive, on the west by Ludlam and the Palmetto, and on the north by Bird Road. Within weeks, the new town council had established a town seal, formulated a town code, rented a building to serve as the town hall, purchased a fire truck, and appointed a health officer, an engineer, and an attorney.

The great hurricane of 1926 caused extensive damage to the Town of South Miami. Although the town requested federal assistance, asking Congress to "relieve the people of their income tax for the current year", no help was forthcoming. In addition, the FEC station burned down, leaving the town without a station for many years. Being in a hurricane-prone zone, South Miami residents again suffered storm damage from Hurricane Andrew in 1992 and from Hurricane Bonnie in 1998.

When many citizens felt that South Miami was being ignored by the state and federal governments because of its status as a town, a city charter was prepared and presented to the Florida Legislature during its 1927 session. The charter was approved, and the community became the City of South Miami. On June 25, 1927, W. A. Forster was sworn in as South Miami's first mayor.

Financial problems and local dissension generated a temporarily successful movement to abolish the city in 1931. All city operations were suspended for approximately six months. In 1932 the courts intervened, requiring South Miami to return to municipal functioning in order to settle its outstanding debts. In 1933, in an effort to lessen municipal responsibilities and to appease many concerned citizens, South Miami's total area was reduced from its original six square miles to just over three-square miles. In 1937, the city's area was reduced again, as many dissatisfied northern residents sued to opt out of the city. These actions created most of the irregular boundaries that still characterize the northern section of South Miami today.

Following World War II, South Miami, like most of Miami-Dade County, experienced a boom. The existing city charter was found to be inadequate and was replaced by a new charter in 1953, instituting a city manager-commission form of government. South Miami has a mayor, a vice mayor, and three commissioners. A schedule of upcoming City Commission meetings is available on the municipal website, as well as past agendas, meeting minutes, and meeting videos going back to 2011.

Community Dynamics

As of 2022, South Miami had a population of 11,944. The median age was 39.6 and the median household income was \$78,830. Between 2021 and 2022 the population of South Miami declined from 11,997 to 11,944, a decrease of .442%. At the same time, the median household income rose from \$67,110 to \$78,830, an increase of 17.5%. Regarding ethnicity in 2022, 27% of the population was Multiracial Hispanic, 25.9% was White, 25.8% was White Hispanic, 9.12% was Black, and 5.38% was Multiracial non-Hispanic. None of the households in South Miami reported speaking a non-English language at home as a primary language, and 81.9% of the population were US citizens. As of 2022, 44.2% of the residents of South Miami were born outside the US, which is much higher than the national average of 13.6%. In 2021, the percentage of foreign-born residents was 43.3%, indicating that the rate has been increasing. In 2022, the median property value was \$692,400 and the homeownership rate was 57.4%.

Business Landscape

Called “The City of Pleasant Living”, South Miami is mostly residential. The Future Land Use Map (dated March 2022) shows the vast majority of its surface devoted to Single-Family Residential use. Commercial uses are centered in the southeast-central area of the city, along and around US Highway 1/South Dixie Highway. This major roadway runs diagonally from southwest to northeast through the southeastern section of the city. Most of the commercial uses along this corridor are designated as Mixed-Use Commercial Residential and Transit Oriented Development District. There is also a zone for Commercial Retail and Office use along the southernmost section of the corridor. A small area on the eastern boundary of the city, between US Highway 1/South Dixie Highway and Southwest 72nd Street/Sunset Drive/State Road 986, is designated as “Downtown SoMi”. Parks and open spaces are scattered throughout the city.

South Miami has a Town Center Advisory Board, which is charged with oversight of the “Downtown SoMi District” and the “Hometown District”. As

of 2024, these places were being planned and branded by a design consultancy. The Hometown District was conceived in 1992 as an epicenter for activity, and a charming, walkable environment. Sunset Drive, the “Main Street” and heart of the district, is a destination where residents and visitors partake in outdoor dining and annual community events. The overall objective of the design project is to strengthen the district as a destination for locals and visitors that provides mobility choices and helps foster places where people want to invest their time and money. The municipal webpage describing the Hometown District project has a wealth of detailed planning documentation defining the district’s uses and context, as well as transportation and travel mode characteristics. Regarding public engagement, there is also a document summarizing a Needs and Opportunities Workshop held in September of 2024. More public engagement events are scheduled for 2025. Multimodal transportation recommendations for the area are also available via this page.

The municipal website features a “Shop SoMi” page, with an interactive map showing 1,785 South Miami businesses and services. Contact information is given for each. There is a special focus on the SoMi Town Center, located just south of US Highway 1/South Dixie Highway and the South Miami Metrorail Station. The Shops at Sunset Place and the AMC Sunset Place 24 Theaters provide a major draw to this area.

The Chamber South chamber of commerce has the mission of fostering economic growth, promoting community engagement, and enhancing the quality of life in Greater South Dade. Its coverage includes South Miami, Pinecrest, Palmetto Bay, Cutler Bay, and Greater Kendall. Its office is located in South Miami.

Transportation Characteristics

A major transportation artery in South Miami is US Highway 1/South Dixie Highway, which runs diagonally from southwest to northeast through the southeastern section of the city.

Another major roadway is Southwest 72nd Street/Sunset Drive/State Road 986, running east and west through the southern section of the city.

Southwest 57th Avenue/Red Road/State Road 959 runs north and south along the city’s eastern edge, forming part of its eastern boundary.

Along the city’s northernmost boundary, Southwest 40th Street/Bird Road/State Road 976 is a major roadway, running east and west.

Along the city's eastern boundary, US Highway 1/South Dixie Highway intersects with Southwest 72nd Street/Sunset Drive/ State Road 986 and with Southwest 57th Avenue/South Red Road/State Road 959, forming a triangle. Within and below this triangle is the city's commercial hub, bringing heavy traffic to the area. Transportation planning documentation from a 2024 study relating to this commercial district is available on the city's website, on a page entitled "Hometown District: Placemaking, Branding, and Community Planning and Urban Design". Transportation characteristics documented include conditions relating to traffic, safety, right-of-way, bike and pedestrian access, and transit modes. Maps are included. Among other documents available on the page is a detailed report from August 2024, giving a wide variety of multimodal transportation recommendations, illustrated with maps.

According to DATA USA 2022 statistics, most people in South Miami drove alone to work, with an average commute time of 32.4 minutes. The average car ownership was two cars per household.

South Miami is served by Miami-Dade Metrobus throughout the municipality, on busier streets. The South Miami Metrorail Station is located on US Highway 1/South Dixie Highway, just north of the intersection with Southwest 72nd Street/Sunset Drive/State Road 986.

South Miami offers Freebee on-demand ride service to its residents, using a small electric shuttle vehicle. Users can download the app for free, and rides are available every day except Sunday. A map of points of interest and service area boundaries is available on the municipal website.

Sources

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