LITTLE HAITI
ECODISTRICT

MIAMI, FLORIDA, USA • JANUARY, 2018

NEIGHBORHOOD OVERVIEW

The culturally vibrant Little Haiti neighborhood is approximately 3.5 square miles in size, and is located within the City of Miami, Florida. Less than five miles north of the bustling downtown Miami development scene and nestled adjacent to the world renowned Miami Design District, as well as the trendy mixed-use Wynwood, Midtown, and Upper Eastside neighborhoods, Little Haiti stands out as an authentic reflection of the diversity of Miami’s cultural heritage. According to the US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates (2009-2013), Little Haiti is home to approximately 30,000 inhabitants, the majority of which are of Afro Caribbean and Haitian descent. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, Haitian immigrants migrated from Haiti and settled into the area, creating a vibrant neighborhood as envisioned by Viter Juste, the founding father of Little Haiti.

Today, the rising cost of real estate in adjacent neighborhoods has attracted a new array of art galleries, restaurants, and a handful of other creative industries that are expanding the cultural fabric of Little Haiti. At the same time, a possible passenger rail station and other larger scaled mixed-use projects unveiled by developers will soon change the face of Little Haiti. In May 2016, there was a show of solidarity by Haitian Americans and other community stakeholders to preserve the identity of the neighborhood after speculators attempted to re-brand the area as “Lemon City” in lieu of Little Haiti.

SNAPSHOT

PROJECT TYPE: Existing Neighborhood, Historic District

SITE SIZE: 3.5 square miles

RESIDENTS: 30,000

DEMOGRAPHICS
- Black 72.7%
- Hispanic 20.4%
- White 5.5%

ECONOMY
- Median Household Income: $33,509

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES
Community identity, affordable housing, economic development, placemaking, resiliency against climate change, transit-oriented development, innovation district, become a replicable Ecodistrict model.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS:
- City of Miami Planning Department
- Miami Dade Commissioners for District 3 (Little Haiti)
- Florida State Senator for District 38 (Little Haiti)
- State of Florida Commissioner
- Beacon Council
- Little Haiti Cultural Center

CAPTION IF POSSIBLE
As a result, the City of Miami voted to officially recognize and designate the area roughly between 54th Street and 79th Street, and Northwest Sixth Avenue and Northeast Second Avenue, as Little Haiti. This milestone has prompted the activation of community-wide stakeholders to explore a neighborhood development framework that is more equitable, sustainable, and beneficial to the community at large.

Following this historic milestone, the Little Haiti Ecodistrict was established to further galvanize Little Haiti’s community stakeholders with the goal to collaboratively implement comprehensive neighborhood development planning that will usher in a timely revitalization of Little Haiti and prioritize its sustainability amidst the effects of gentrification. Little Haiti found that the EcoDistricts Protocol aligned well with their planned efforts to create a next generation neighborhood from the inside out. The imperatives for Little Haiti’s stakeholder collaboration will be rooted in Equity, Resilience, and Climate Protection, together with the initial priority indicators focused on: 1) Place (Culture+ Identity, Affordable Housing, Inclusive Civic Engagement), 2) Prosperity (Access to Opportunity, Economic Development, Innovation), and 3) Health & Wellbeing (Active Living, Health, Safety, Food Systems).

This historic revitalization initiative will identify and prioritize key aspects of the re-emerging Little Haiti neighborhood that can collectively serve as a portfolio of assets that will help cultivate the community’s long-term socioeconomic and cultural vitality. As the first of its kind in Miami and in the broader South Florida region, the Little Haiti Ecodistrict can become a model for legacy protocols that will facilitate responsible neighborhood development in other underserved communities. The Little Haiti Ecodistrict is hereby the rise of Little Haiti’s revitalization.
PROJECT GOVERNANCE

To provide a governance structure for the Little Haiti Ecodistrict, community stakeholders formed the Greater Miami Ecodistrict Community Economic Development Corp (CEDC) in late 2017. The backbone organization formally launched on January 1, 2018. The CEDC’s goal is to cultivate the long-term socioeconomic and cultural vitality of Miami neighborhoods by leveraging the unique assets that define each community. This organization aims to establish synergies between Miami’s community stakeholders, as well as align the stakeholders with the broader comprehensive regional plans.

The CEDC will be in charge of implementing the EcoDistricts Protocol and managing Ecodistrict initiatives. In addition, with Miami’s active real estate industry having an impact on local neighborhoods across sectors including transportation or affordable housing, the CEDC wants to help local stakeholders sustain the values and priorities of their local neighborhoods. Ultimately, the CEDC will use the Little Haiti Ecodistrict as a pilot project to kick off the creation of Ecodistricts throughout Miami’s emerging neighborhoods.

IMPERATIVES

The Imperatives Commitment is the first step in achieving EcoDistricts™ certification. The Imperatives Commitment is a rigorous public pledge of action towards Equity, Resilience, and Climate Protection.

1. EQUITY
The Little Haiti Ecodistrict is committed to embracing equity throughout all of its future district-scale activities. Affordable housing is one of the top priorities for the Little Haiti Ecodistrict. A housing and renter affordability analysis demonstrated significant affordability gaps at the median household income for each census block group. This project also defines equity as the ability to position the Little Haiti district itself as a stakeholder and viable asset to the City and region. A key anticipated outcome is building district capacity, leading to viable engagement in procedural, distributional, structural, and generational equity in the municipality’s economic development initiatives.

2. RESILIENCE
The Little Haiti Ecodistrict is committed to incorporating resiliency into its social, economic, and environmental activities. Hurricane Irma in 2017 gave Miami neighborhoods a wake-up call. The Ecodistrict intends to establish and diversify its network for access to emergency goods & services so that when an issue does arise, alternatives can be leveraged to address the community’s needs. We are also exploring the role of innovation via renewable energy options and use of technology that can benefit the community. Additionally, the Ecodistrict is committed to enhancing its local economy, encouraging entrepreneurship throughout the area and lessening the community’s need to travel to downtown Miami for jobs.

3. CLIMATE PROTECTION
The district’s carbon neutrality efforts will be developed over time.
EARLY WINS + FUTURE PROJECTS

The Little Haiti Ecodistrict is galvanizing community to collaborate on comprehensive neighborhood development planning with priorities including sustainability, affordable housing, job creation, improved health, and increased safety. Though the Little Haiti Ecodistrict is in the beginning stages of its planning, projects and milestone achievements have already occurred in the Ecodistrict.

PLACE

COMMUNITY IDENTITY (EARLY WIN)
The creation of legal boundaries for Little Haiti was pushed by the local community for 16 years. However, the efforts were always unsuccessful in the past due largely to overlapping boundaries with Lemon City, a historic neighborhood that predated the incorporation of Miami. Haitian community stakeholders emphasized the importance of preserving the historic Haitian neighborhood and its contribution to the multicultural richness of Miami. Commission chairman Keon Hardemon, who represents the Little Haiti neighborhood and proposed the boundaries, said informal recognition isn’t enough for a community that has often felt like second-class citizens in Miami. On May 26, 2016, Miami leaders voted to designate Little Haiti as an official city neighborhood.

CARIBBEAN MARKETPLACE RE OPENS (EARLY WIN)
For years, the Caribbean Marketplace has been a strong figure along Little Haiti’s main corridor and has been easily identified by its bright colors and vibrant activity of vendors, as well as Haitian and Caribbean culture. This cultural gem underwent a lengthy renovation to become a community staple for unique arts and crafts, Caribbean culture, special events, and community events. The highly anticipated re-opening occurred in 2014 and positioned the Caribbean Marketplace as a vibrant addition to the Little Haiti Cultural Center next door and the burgeoning arts and culture spirit in Little Haiti.

The re-establishment of the Marketplace was a collaborative effort by the City of Miami in partnership with the Miami-Dade Department of Cultural Affairs, the Little Haiti Cultural Complex, the Northeast Second Avenue Partnership, and District 5 Commissioner Keon Hardemon. The 9,500-square-foot space includes a refreshment and concession area, gift shops, arts and crafts, retail vendors, and space available for private events. New businesses were created in this cultural hub, resulting in employment opportunities for the local community.
Established in 2008, the Northeast Second Avenue Partnership (NE2P) is a non-profit organization committed to creating and sustaining a vibrant commercial center in downtown Little Haiti, and works strategically to empower residents and business owners in the area. Many residents and local businesses in the corridor have concerns regarding the lack of police presence, the impact of the road construction on local businesses, the need for small business grants, and the need to stimulate the neighborhood economy.

NE2P strives to preserve and highland Haitian arts, music, and culture. NE2P has been instrumental in organizing Haitian Heritage Month events, the grand opening of the Caribbean Marketplace, and establishing the Little Haiti Small Business Association. Currently, NE2P host two monthly events, including an educational, social and cultural event for young professionals every second Friday of the month. Each event features a guest speaker who discusses various topics in French and Haitian Creole affecting the Haitian diaspora.

One of the most important strengths of NE2P is its inclusivity and collaborative approach to community development. The partnership brings all the stakeholders together including government officials, city agencies, business owners, non-profit organizations, and local residents to assist in moving the organization’s agenda forward and helping the community to achieve its goals.

In 2010, NE2P was awarded Volunteer Florida’s BEST Neighbourhood Grant to further implement its mission to create downtown Little Haiti. Over 300 new volunteers were recruited to participate in various activities that would lead toward a long-term revitalization plan for the area. NE2P collaborated with community organizations such as the Rhythm Foundation, Barry University, and the MLK community mural project that had established local projects dedicated to furthering the development of Little Haiti.

Over the last three years, NE2P has been awarded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) contracts from the City of Miami through their fiscal agency, the Haitian American Community Development Corporation (HACDC), to provide technical assistance to micro-enterprises in District 5 which includes Little Haiti. NE2P assisted local small business in obtaining and managing City of Miami grant funding.
HAITIAN HERITAGE MUSEUM (FUTURE PROJECT)

The Little Haiti Ecodistrict CEDC is committed to creating an expansion of the already established Haitian Heritage Museum in Little Haiti. The Ecodistrict team is working with local commissioners to establish the much-needed cultural institution and anchor within the neighborhood.

Building the Haitian Heritage Museum project in Little Haiti is very timely given the growing outcry by the community to preserve Little Haiti’s cultural identity. Additionally, the museum project ties in well to Miami Dade County’s Economic Initiatives related to Transit Oriented Development which is focused on neighborhoods adjacent to major transit corridors, like Little Haiti. The Little Haiti Commercial Corridor (NE 2nd Ave) is envisioned as an authentic mixed-use neighborhood, incorporating retail development, light manufacturing, housing, and active recreation within the context of the existing Haitian community, making for a growing magnet for business, entertainment, and tourism.

Meeting with a wide range of community stakeholders has demonstrated strong interest and support for the project with broad recognition of its potential long-term benefits to both the Little Haiti community and to Miami’s economic initiatives. The proposed development of the new museum facility within the heart of downtown Little Haiti is envisioned as an innovative cultural incubator and entrepreneurial learning center, focused on engaging the community on a global scale through a cross-cultural lens.

The new museum will be a highly interactive venue for local families and international visitors alike to discover how culture and heritage are vital catalysts for innovation, evolution, and sustainability of our international communities in Miami. It has been proposed that the museum be centered around three key program elements: exhibitions focused on Haitian history and traditional culture; a Creative Industries Business Incubator dedicated to promoting entrepreneurship and business opportunities within the creative fields and tourism for local residents in the Little Haiti; and a theater and multipurpose space for special community events. The museum will serve as a cultural mecca for Little Haiti where visitors will be able to enjoy beautiful Haitian art, historic artifacts, the sounds of Haitian music, as well as viewing Haitian films and literary works.

The establishment of the museum within the Little Haiti Ecodistrict limits would maintain history and identity of the community, as well as increase tourism and local economics. The museum will serve as a catalyst for urban revitalization that inspires equitable community development and participation in Little Haiti.
“Today I’m confident that Little Haiti will succeed in creating a next generation neighborhood from the inside out. We are truly thankful to EcoDistricts for developing a stakeholder-centric Protocol that aligns with our core values, and a legacy framework for comprehensive neighborhood development that will usher in another 40 years of Little Haiti’s vitality, and emergence as a world class neighborhood.”

– SERGE RODRIGUEZ, LITTLE HAITI ECODISTRICT PROJECT LEAD