

## Miami's Little Havana named a 'national treasure'

By [AFP](#)

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Little Havana, the neighborhood that is the heart and soul of Miami's Cuban diaspora, was named a US "national treasure" on Friday.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, a private organization, added the neighborhood to its list of sites it believes should be protected from developers, saying in a statement that it "stands as a testament to the immigrant spirit that built America."

Little Havana is home to the Versailles, a historic cafe that pulses with Cuban music and sometimes offers free Cuban pastries to exiles who gather there to protest or celebrate events on their home island.



**Miami's Little Havana, home to many Cuban Americans, was named a US "national treasure" by The National Trust for Historic Preservation on July 27, 2017 ©Rhona Wise (AFP/File)**

Several blocks away in Domino Park, dozens of retirees play the eponymous game amid sometimes heated political discussions every afternoon. Nearby, the city's most popular Cuban salsa club is a must-see tourist destination.

There's also a museum of weapons, photos and documents from veterans of the ill-fated 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion.

Bar patrons smoke cigarettes in the doorways and it's difficult to find people not speaking Spanish.

However, Little Havana's residents now worry about being forced out by real estate development and rising prices.

"Little Havana is a symbol of the immigrant experience in America," the historic trust's president Stephanie Meeks said.

"The National Trust welcomes the urban resurgence that is breathing new life into cities across the country, but we also believe that growth should not come at the expense of the vibrant historic neighborhoods like Little Havana."

The buildings, some them Art Deco, date back to the 1920s and 1930s. On the commercial hub Calle Ocho, or Eighth Street, many buildings have coral-colored floors.

But the burgeoning downtown and Brickell neighborhoods -- with their modern 20-story buildings -- are expanding toward Little Havana.

"As Miami continues to evolve, preservation will be essential in maintaining Miami's unique urban neighborhoods," Miami-Dade County heritage trust director Christine Rupp said.

"Our long-term goal is to protect specific historic properties that tell the story of Little Havana and assist with the restoration of those historic buildings."

Some 1.5 million Cubans live in the United States, 68 percent of them in Florida, according to the Pew Research Center.

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