

# After Miami's Ritzy Bubble Bursts, Squatters Move on Up

## Residents say free-home seekers took over waterfront home

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Miami's squatter problem has garnered national media attention over the past year and a half, as the foreclosure crisis threatened to transform the Magic City into something resembling a lawless, "Mad Max"-esque landscape.

The squatters mostly kept a low profile, moving in -- with the help of activist group [Take Back the Land](#) -- to neighborhoods where they could take over unnoticed.

Take Back the Land placed squatters in Belle Meade, Opa Locka, Liberty City and [Overtown](#), finding modest dwellings for families without a place to live.

But now come reports that squatters are seeking out more ritzy neighborhoods, including the pricey, tree-lined streets of Coral Gables.



The Coral Gables house that residents say is the target of squatters.

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Squatters Take Over Tony Gables Home

"They seem to be squatters, I don't think that they pay rent. I don't think that they own the house, the house is in total disrepair," said Gables by the Sea resident [Bruce Hornik](#), who said he couldn't believe his eyes when he saw a family set up shop in the waterfront neighborhood.

"The screens are all torn, the windows are broken, the yard is not cut, there's trash in the back yard. It's terrible," Hornik said.

A check of county records found that the home went into foreclosure over a year ago, just about the time residents said the alleged squatters showed up.

The bank which owns the property hired a realtor to sell it last month, and the realtor said they have no idea who could be staying in the home. A man was spotted out in front of the home a few days ago, but no one answered the door yesterday.

[Max Rameau](#), head of Take Back the Land, said the squat on the home wasn't part of his effort but that he supports filling up the vacant houses, no matter the price range.

"We think that wherever there are empty homes there should be people in them," Rameau said. "The housing crisis is impacting people on all kinds of income levels."

With over 44,000 foreclosed properties in Miami-Dade this year and thousands in Broward, real estate experts say the potential of squatters is there no matter where you live.

And there's little authorities can do about it.

"The police department, if you check the records, have been out there numerous times. They cannot go into the house they say," Hornik said.

Real estate experts say the only way to get squatters out is to have owner get them evicted, which requires going to court.

Until then, Gables residents will just have to get used to their new neighbors.

<http://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/news/business/After-Miamis-Ritzy-Bubble-Bursts-Squatters-Move-on-Up-61444367.html>