

**Paper One:**  
**Woodland Drives**  
**and the**  
**Woodland Drives Neighborhood**  
**Association**

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This paper is the first of three reports written by students in Community Development, Spring 2011, in cooperation with the Woodland Drives Neighborhood Association and the Parkway District Merchants' Guild. The students are:

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This paper explores the changing demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of Woodland Drives, the preferences of the neighborhood's current residents, and the potential role that the Woodland Drives Neighborhood Association could play in addressing them. First, we will discuss the methodology used to assess the demographics and preferences of neighborhood residents. We will then provide a review of the neighborhood's recent demographic trends. Finally, three key issues will be analyzed: the role of the Woodland Drives Neighborhood Association, the neighborhood's relatively large population of aging homeowners, and the tensions caused by the presence of a high-turnover apartment complex with significant socioeconomic differences from the rest of the neighborhood. Each issue will be briefly introduced from both a broad and neighborhood-specific perspective before residents' opinions on the issues are introduced. For each issue, the presentation of residents' opinions will be followed by our assessment, including recommendations for actions that might be pursued by the neighborhood association.

## Methodology

Along with other students from the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Florida State University, we compiled a survey and distributed it to all Woodland Drives residents within a boundary defined by the Woodland Drives Neighborhood Association. Respondents were asked to identify which of six sectors within the neighborhood they resided, so that we could better understand unique responses among certain segments of the population (see Figure 1). This 47-question survey instrument sought, among other goals, to identify the demographics of the Woodland Drives population and

Figure 1: Woodland Drives sector boundaries



Source: Woodland Drives neighborhood survey, March 2011

discern the residents' concerns as they related to safety, social cohesion, the availability of public

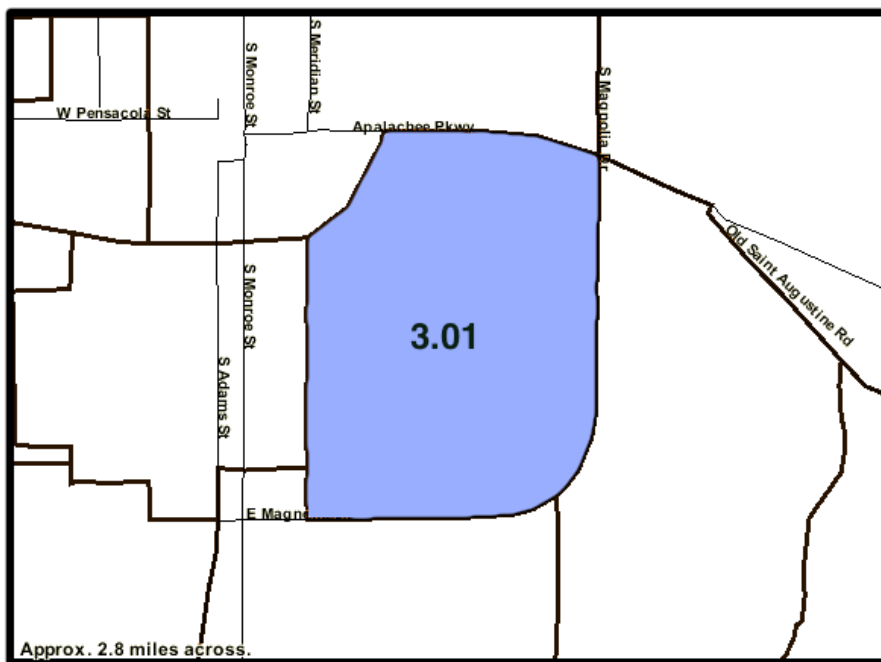
services, and access to commercial services in the neighborhood. The survey also sought to determine the residents' awareness of and thoughts on the Woodland Drives Neighborhood Association. Out of approximately 450 households, 112 returned a survey -- constituting a response rate of around 25%. Problematically, the voluntary nature of the survey may have led to the overrepresentation of certain groups. Residents who are active in the neighborhood association or regularly read its emails and newsletters may have been more likely to complete the survey. But still, the response rate was sufficiently high that it is possible to arrive at meaningful conclusions in many cases.

The historic demographic data analyzed in this paper came from the U.S. Census Bureau, Summary Files 1 and 3 from the 1990 and 2000 Decennial Censuses. Five-year estimates for 2005-2009 from the American Community Survey (ACS) were also used in some cases to better understand more recent developments. The ACS, intended to replace the "long form" Decennial Census questionnaire that informed Summary File 3, uses a very small sample size and as such is subject to a high margin of error, especially at smaller levels of geography. Because of this, ACS data were not always useful for our purposes.

Woodland Drives lies entirely within Leon County's Census Tract 3.01, but the boundaries of the census tract also include portions of an adjacent neighborhood and the controversial apartment complex that neighborhood association leaders suggested is not a part of the neighborhood (see Figure 2). Therefore, for most questions, we looked at Block Group 2 within that census tract -- a level that includes nothing but Woodland Drives while leaving out the apartment complex (in the northernmost section of the neighborhood) and the homes immediately to the west of it (see Figure 3). No significant sectoral disparities were discovered in the survey results for our purposes, so the exclusion of Census data for these homes in the northern part of the block group would probably not have a significant effect on neighborhood results.

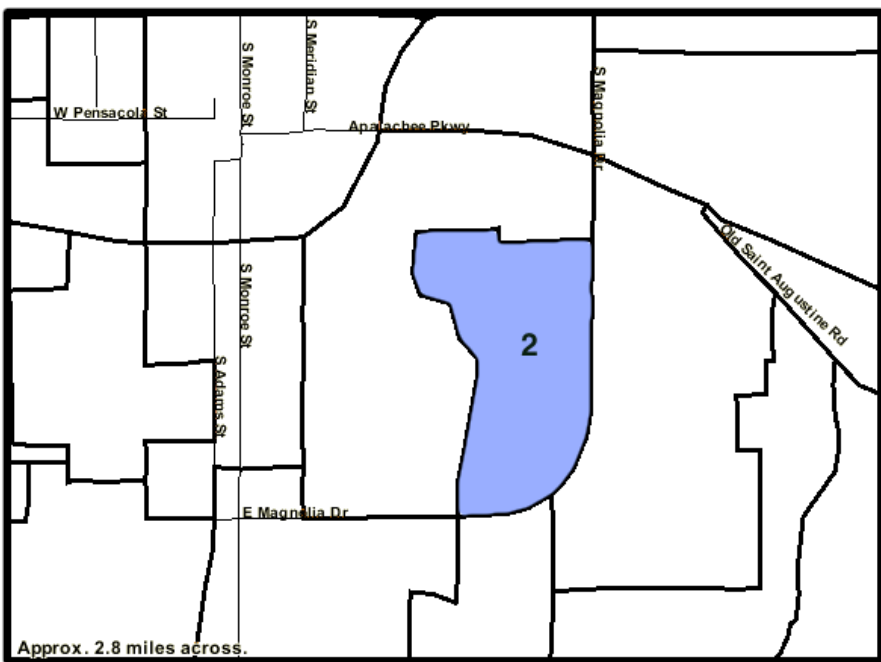
Even though the block group does not represent the entirety of Woodland Drives, it is still the most applicable geographic area made available to us. This point can be made by contrasting the percentage of renter-occupied households in 2000 of Census Tract 3.01 and Block Group 2.

**Figure 2: Census Tract 3.01**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

**Figure 3: Census Tract 3.01, Block Group 2**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

In Census Tract 3.01, 46.8% households were renter-occupied in 2000, while only 12.2% households were renter-occupied in the block group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). This disparity between the percentage of renters within Woodland Drives and the broader area may be attributed to the nearby apartment complex and other mid- to low-income households located in the vicinity of Woodland Drives. Therefore, the most useful and representative geographic unit for this study is the block group, at least in the case of census data.

### **Demographics in Woodland Drives**

Assuming that Block Group 2 accurately reflects the demographics of Woodland Drives, the following analysis will compare data from the U.S. Census and the class survey in order to better understand demographic changes over time. Also, comparing the two sources will also allow us to draw tentative conclusions about the degree to which the survey results accurately represent the neighborhood.

As shown in Table 1, 31.4% of residents were over the age of 65 in 1990, compared with 31.0% in 2000, and 32.9% in 2011 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000). It is reasonable to assume that the population over age 65 is either stable or increasing, though data from the 2010 Decennial Census will provide a more accurate representation of this phenomenon than the class's voluntary survey. Meanwhile, the proportion of children in the neighborhood appears to have increased substantially. No children under five years-old were documented in the 2000 Census, but our recent survey found that 6.3% of the population consists of children under five.

**Table 1: Children and the elderly in Woodland Drives, 1990-2011**

	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2011</b>
Under 5	2.6%	0.0%	6.3%
Under 18	8.7%	8.3%	13.5%
Over 65	31.4%	31.0%	32.9%

Sources: 1990 and 2000 data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 data from the Woodland Drives survey

Even with our survey's possible representation issues taken into account, this is evidence of a significant shift, as we would not expect to see any children if there had been no change since 2000. This small boom in the population of children, especially under the age of five, indicates a growing need for family events in the neighborhood and plans to better accommodate concerns over children's safety.

Turnover in the neighborhood has remained fairly low and stable over the past two decades, although our survey indicates a possible recent decline. In 1990, 33.3% of householders in Block Group 2 had lived in the same house for over twenty years (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990). In 2000, 39.3% of householders in Block Group 2 had lived in the same house for over twenty years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). However, in 2011, only 29.1% of our respondents had lived in the same house for over twenty years. Still, despite this apparent reversal, 83.8% of respondents expressed that they had no plans to move. This low rate of residential mobility may indicate strong social ties within the neighborhood (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997).

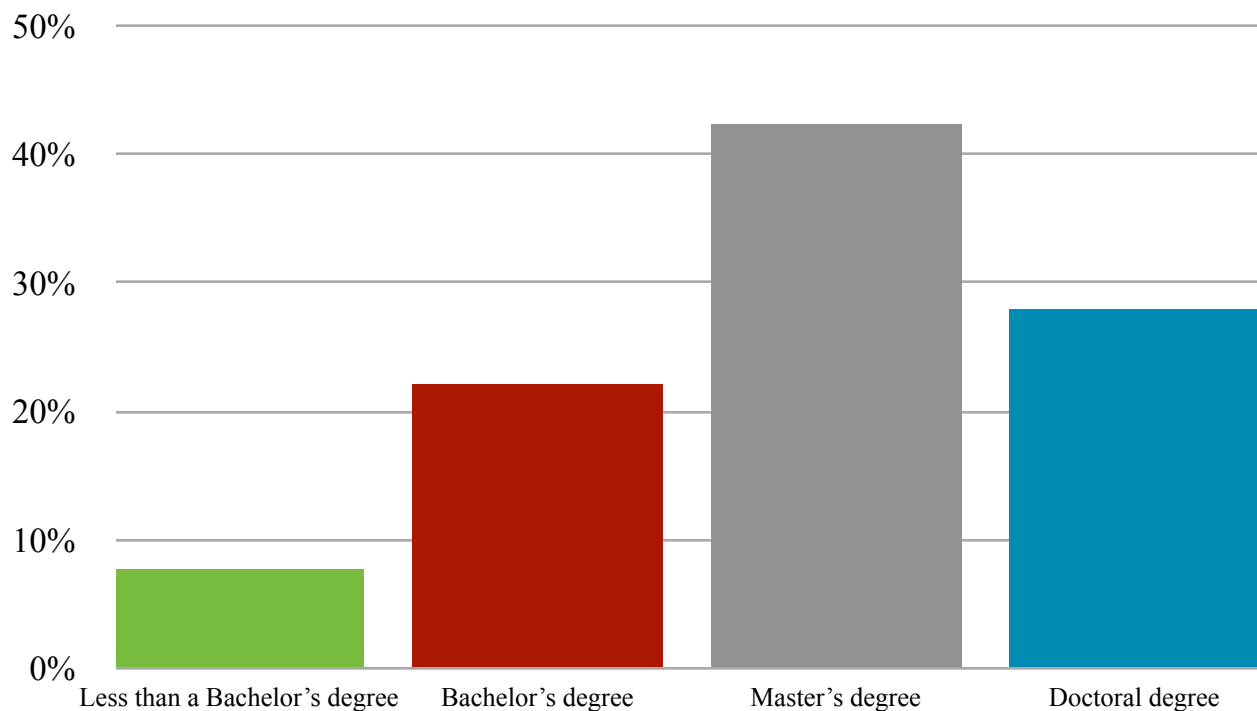
Turnover may have increased in the last ten years due in part to the number of renters in the neighborhood. Renters tend to not stay as long in a neighborhood, as indicated by the 2000 Census, in which no renters in Block Group 2 had lived in the neighborhood for longer than four years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Rental units in Woodland Drives have increased as proportion of occupied houses. In 2000, 12.2% of householders in Block Group 2 rented their homes, up from 4.3% in 1990 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000).

In our 2011 neighborhood survey, only four survey respondents (3.6%) indicated that they lived in a rented home. This low percentage, especially compared to the 12.2% of rented households found on the 2000 Census, indicates a possible underrepresentation of renters in our survey. To better understand this discrepancy, we constructed a confidence interval for tenure based on our survey results. From this calculation, we found that one could be 95% confident that the true proportion of renters in Woodland Drives is between 0.15% and 7.01% *if* our sample had been randomly selected. However, since the percentage of rented households in 2000 is so far out of our confidence interval, it is reasonable to suspect that renters in Woodland Drives did

not respond to the class survey, indicating that the data do not properly represent the entire neighborhood with regard to renters, as well as their preferences.

Education levels in Woodland Drives, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau and as reflected in the results of our survey, are relatively high. Still, the levels of education measured by the neighborhood survey are another possible sign that the survey results do not necessarily represent all population segments of the neighborhood. In 2000, an estimated 46.7% of adults over 25 in the neighborhood had at least bachelor's degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). In our survey, however, 92.4% of respondents had achieved at least a bachelor's degree. Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of education among respondents to the neighborhood survey. A confidence interval calculation indicated that one could be 95% confident that the true proportion of residents in Woodland Drives with at least a bachelor's degree is between 87.5% and 97.3% *if* our survey had been random. The measurement from 2000 is so far outside of this interval that one can assume that less educated people were less likely to respond to the survey, and as such are underrepresented (perhaps to a large degree) in the 2011 survey data.

**Figure 4: Education in Woodland Drives, 2011**



Source: Woodland Drives neighborhood survey, March 2011

Still, Woodland Drives can be considered an older, affluent, stable, and highly-educated neighborhood. Table 2 compares certain population characteristics of Woodland Drives with those of Tallahassee, Florida, and the United States. Age and race estimates for Woodland Drives are from the neighborhood survey, while estimates from the broader geographic areas are from 2005-2009 ACS five-year estimates. Homeownership rates and median household income are from the 2000 Census. More precise, recent information will be available as soon as the 2010 Census data are released at the census tract and block group level.

**Table 2: Demographic comparison by geography**

	<b>Woodland Drives</b>	<b>Tallahassee</b>	<b>Florida</b>	<b>United States</b>
Over 65 (survey/ACS)	32.9%	7.6%	16.9%	12.6%
White (survey/ACS)	94.1%	57.9%	76.6%	74.5%
Home ownership (2000)	87.8%	43.8%	70.1%	66.2%
Median household income (1999)	\$68,681	\$30,571	\$38,819	\$51,425

Source: Age and race data from the March 2011 Woodland Drives neighborhood survey and the American Community Survey, 2005-2009. Tenure and income data from the 2000 Census.

### **Neighborhood associations**

Neighborhood associations can play a central role in maintaining -- or even creating -- safety, economic stability, desirable design conditions, and high levels of social capital by addressing problems such as crime and unkempt properties through organized, cooperative action. Neighborhood associations can also exist to protect a neighborhood against an immediate outside threat, promote a shared vision, and engender a sense of community through special events (Mesch & Schwirian, 1996, p. 468). Additionally, they can serve as conduits for political power



by advocating on behalf of residents, facilitating communication between residents and local government officials, and helping residents to access services provided by the city or county. They can also further economic development by bridging the interests of merchants and residents and functioning as a channel for communication between the two groups.

For a neighborhood association to be successful, it must be carefully maintained. Murphy and Cunningham (2003) offer valuable guidance on this front. If a neighborhood association purports to represent a neighborhood, it should strive to accurately reflect the concerns of residents rather than the narrow interests of a select few (p. 115). It should also create plentiful opportunities for participation that reflect the schedules and lifestyles of its residents (p. 114). A broad agenda that's representative of resident interests alongside well-designed opportunities for participation can increase membership and resident buy-in. This increased level of interest can then be sustained through successful campaigns reflective of that shared vision (pp. 118-119). A large membership with sustained interest can keep a neighborhood association growing, especially if a diverse leadership is actively cultivated and maintained from among that large membership. Such a leadership helps to keep energy levels high and works to keep a neighborhood association from veering too far away from consensus and toward the interests of a small "core cadre" of activists whose opinions may not reflect the broader community (p. 113).

Because the Woodland Drives Neighborhood Association wishes to remain active and successful, and perhaps even grow, it is important to establish an improved working knowledge of who lives in the neighborhood, what issues these residents prioritize, and what sort of availability and interests they have with regard to neighborhood activism. If the neighborhood has changed or is about to undergo change, there are ways that the neighborhood association can acknowledge those changes and work to incorporate them into its plans and practices. If residents are especially concerned about any specific issue, or particularly ambivalent about others, an awareness of those opinions would help the neighborhood association to better target its actions and reflect the interests of its members and would-be members.

### Woodland Drives Neighborhood Association

The Woodland Drives Neighborhood Association was officially incorporated in 1971 (Florida Department of State, 2011). As shown by Figure 5, the association's active dues-paying membership (represented in blue) is distributed fairly evenly throughout the neighborhood, although active membership along Magnolia Drive is very low (comprising only two households). Still, despite an even geographic distribution of members, only 27.5% of the neighborhood's households paid dues in 2010.

Interestingly, 75.9% of the neighborhood survey respondents were dues-paying members.

Survey respondents who indicated that they were dues-paying members of the association were slightly more likely to respond positively to questions assessing certain aspects of social capital. They were also older, more racially homogenous, and slightly better educated than other survey respondents -- although the small sample size of respondents who did not report paying dues limits the validity of these findings (see Table 3).

Figure 5: Payment of neighborhood association dues by household

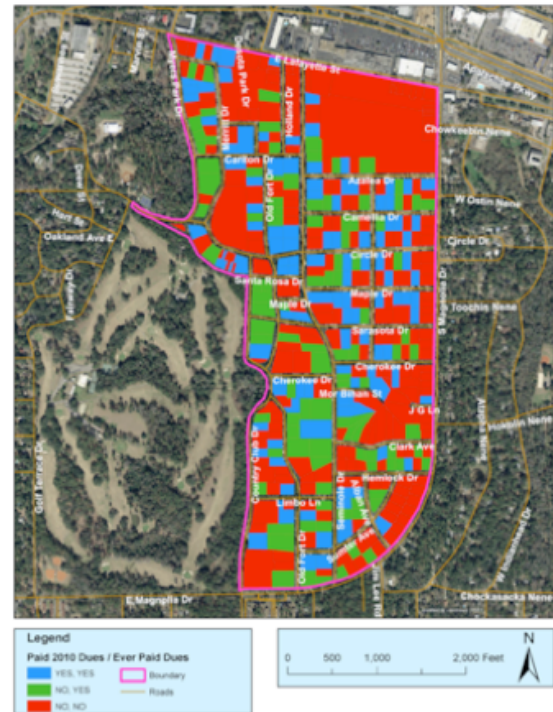


Table 3: Difference among dues-paying respondents and all other respondents

	Dues-paying respondents	Other respondents
Persons in households aged 65 and over	37.7%	18.2%
White	98.7%	80.0%
With at least a Master's or professional degree	75.3%	52.2%
Responded that neighbors are "very likely" to come together in an emergency	51.2%	38.5%

Source: Woodland Drives neighborhood survey, March 2011, and authors' calculations

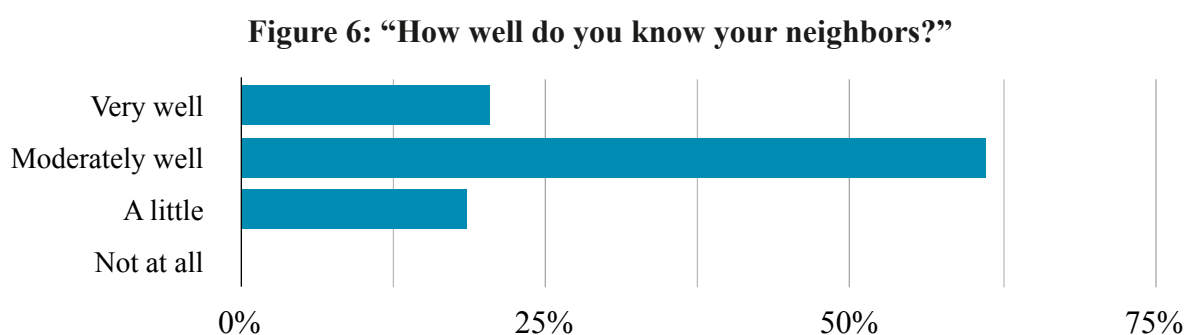
The neighborhood association has historically prioritized beautification, social events, and informing residents of issues that might affect them (M. Shargel, personal communication, January 14, 2011). In more recent years, members of the neighborhood association have begun collaborating with merchants along Lafayette Street with the shared goals of improving safety, walkability, aesthetics, the presence of nature, and “sustainability” (Woodland Drives Neighborhood Association [WDNA], 2009b). These interests are reflected in many of the association’s activities. A committee on beautification recruits volunteers for occasional “street sweeps” while a committee focused on Lafayette Street has worked with merchants and property owners to address issues regarding trash placement and building appearances (M. Shargel, personal communication, January 14, 2011). Two annual picnics provide a forum for neighborhood-wide social interaction while a group called “Women in the Hood” organizes bimonthly house parties for neighborhood women to meet (WDNA, 2011). In addition, a committee on hospitality organizes outreach to new residents. Both the hospitality committee and a neighborhood parents’ council were inspired by the recognition that, as our survey suggests, increasing numbers of young families and children have been moving into Woodland Drives (WDNA, 2009d).

Additional committees focusing on crime and communications work to alert residents of safety issues in the neighborhood, as well as opportunities for volunteerism and social interaction. A seasonal newsletter, personally distributed by the neighborhood’s 29 block captains, alerts all residents to these issues and opportunities, as well as public events and broader concerns that might be of interest to the neighborhood (WDNA, 2011). A pedestrian safety workshop for elderly individuals, for example, was advertised in the fall of 2010, while the threat of a power generation facility being sited in or near Woodland Drives was invoked in April, 2009 as a way of encouraging residents to participate in an energy efficiency challenge (Tallahassee Senior Foundation, 2010; WDNA, 2009c). Residents receive crime alerts by email through the association’s neighborhood watch program, annual meetings give members an opportunity to steer the direction of the association, and a weekly “growers’ market” has been established in conjunction with the Parkway District Merchants’ Guild to help revitalize Lafayette Street.

### Residents' assessment of the neighborhood association

Our survey indicates a very high level of awareness of the neighborhood association. While active members of the neighborhood association may have been overrepresented in our sample, it would not be surprising to find that this high level of awareness extends to non-members as well, considering that the association distributes a newsletter to each home within its boundaries once every three months. Despite the aforementioned demographic differences between members of the neighborhood association and non-members (see Table 3), the organization appears to be well-known. The association might be encouraged to learn that, of those respondents not paying dues, 54.2% find the \$25 annual fee to be “appropriate.” An additional 12.5% expressed that a higher fee would be appropriate. Of those who are paying dues, 55.0% found \$25 to be an appropriate expectation while another 33.8% expressed that they might consider paying more.

In compiling the survey that was distributed to Woodland Drives residents, we included a number of questions meant to evaluate how residents perceived the neighborhood's status with regard to some of the neighborhood association's apparent priorities. Among these questions, we sought to better understand the level of trust and social cohesion among neighbors. When residents were asked how well they knew their neighbors, 61.1% chose “moderately well” and 20.4% chose “very well” (see Figure 6).

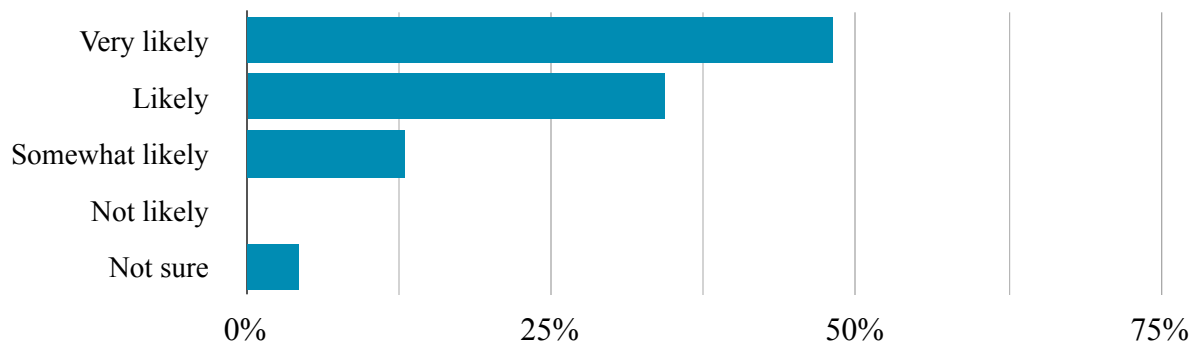


Source: Woodland Drives neighborhood survey, March 2011

As shown in Figure 7, when asked how likely it would be for people from their neighborhood to “work together” in dealing with problems in an emergency, 48.1% found

cooperation to be “very likely” while another 34.3% found it to be “likely.” The remaining respondents either found it “somewhat likely” or were uncertain. No respondent found such cooperation to be unlikely. This reflects an encouraging level of trust and social cohesion, at least among the survey respondents.

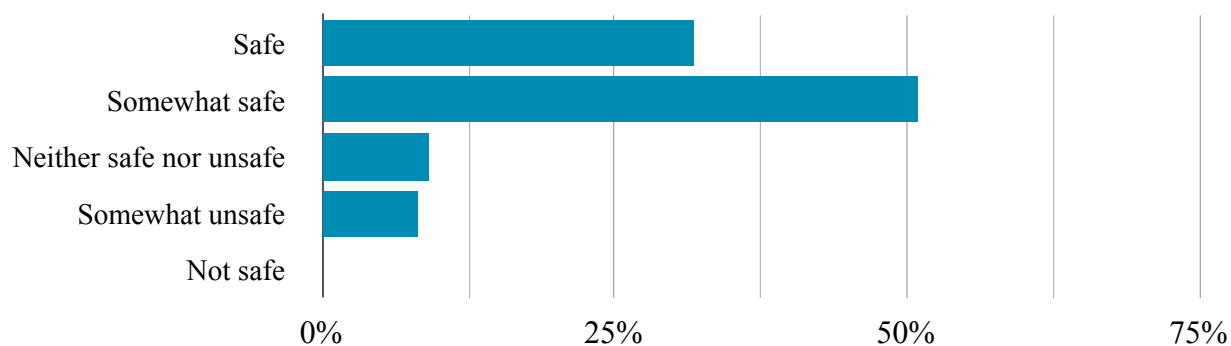
**Figure 7: Perceived likelihood of neighbors coming together in an emergency**



Source: Woodland Drives neighborhood survey, March 2011

With regard to crime and safety, despite some nuance when respondents were asked to assess the safety of their neighborhood under certain conditions, 50.9% characterized their neighborhood overall as “somewhat safe” while another 31.8% found it to be “safe.” 9.1% found it to be “neither safe nor unsafe” and another 8.2% found it to be “somewhat unsafe.” No respondent characterized their neighborhood as “not safe” (see Figure 8). When the responses to

**Figure 8: “In your opinion, how safe is your neighborhood?”**



Source: Woodland Drives neighborhood survey, March 2011

these questions are compartmentalized by the sector within which the respondent lives, no significant differences are evident. Still, elsewhere in the survey, respondents made it clear that crime is a major concern.

Almost half of respondents identified the shops along Lafayette Street as a part of the neighborhood. Another 37.6% found that to be “somewhat” part of the neighborhood. Likewise, through a number of questions assessing the frequency with which certain stores are visited, it was made clear that nearly all of the survey respondents regularly utilize the services and shopping opportunities available to them on Lafayette Street. With this in mind, it seems that collaboration with the merchants along Lafayette Street is an appropriate path for the neighborhood association. Survey responses with regard to Lafayette Street are further discussed in the second and third papers of this series.

Finally, an impressive 91.7% of respondents reported that they read the seasonal newsletter. This includes 97.6% of dues-paying members and 73.1% of the non dues-paying members. This seems to be a positive testament to the neighborhood association’s ability to communicate with its residents, although one might speculate that a willingness to fill out our survey would correspond with a willingness to read the newsletter.

One of the survey questions asked residents to rank a list of nine possible neighborhood objectives in the order that they thought those objectives should be prioritized, with “1” indicating the highest priority. Through this, we hoped to more directly assess which issues mattered the most to the residents of Woodland Drives. To make sense of the results, we developed a scoring system whereby priority assignments of “1” would attach eight points to an issue while a priority assignment of “9” would attach zero points to an issue. The raw point scores for each issue were then divided by the number of responses given. This was done for the entire neighborhood and for the individual sectors within the neighborhood. The results, depicted in Table 4, indicate that crime prevention was the highest priority throughout the neighborhood. In addition to its score in our weighting system, this issue -- out of all nine choices -- was given the highest priority by 44.4% of respondents. The next highest recipient of

first priority assignments was the introduction of new sidewalks, which was given the highest priority by 18.1% of respondents. With the exception of new sidewalks, which have not been a major priority of the neighborhood association, the scores derived from our weighting system show that the priorities of the neighborhood association largely reflect those of the residents. Access to public transportation, which has not been an issue pursued by the neighborhood association, was most often given the lowest priority. Interestingly, despite a high proportion of elderly residents and the accessibility issues inherent in the neighborhood's design, elderly accessibility was also given a low priority.

### **Our assessment: The neighborhood association**

While the neighborhood association's priorities generally reflect those of the survey respondents, there are some differences. New sidewalks have not been a priority of the neighborhood association, but many respondents were adamant about their importance -- especially in sectors 4 and 5, where they were given the second highest priority (see Table 4). Also, while the neighborhood association runs a neighborhood watch program and distributes information on

**Table 4: Resident issue prioritization scores by sector**

	All	1	3	4	5	6
Crime prevention	7.14	6.89	6.67	6.53	6.50	6.00
Neighborhood beautification	4.90	4.29	4.61	1.20	3.43	4.68
A revitalized Lafayette Street	4.78	4.88	3.47	4.33	4.86	4.50
New sidewalks	4.62	3.20	4.39	5.00	5.00	4.17
Improved sense of community	4.61	4.65	4.44	4.13	3.67	3.83
Park maintenance	4.22	4.07	3.33	3.50	3.80	4.05
Healthy resident-merchant relationship	4.15	3.64	4.43	4.13	3.86	2.95
Elderly accessibility	3.22	2.63	4.13	2.48	1.40	3.68
Better access to public transportation	3.06	2.63	3.00	2.72	3.50	3.00

Source: Woodland Drives neighborhood survey, March 2011, and authors' calculations

criminal activity via email, the elevated level of concern about crime expressed by so many residents indicates that more action may be desired. Because of this concern, crime and safety issues are discussed in more detail in Paper #3 of this series of three papers. Along with the neighborhood watch program, the next two most-cited priorities for respondents -- neighborhood beautification and the revitalization of Lafayette Street -- have constituted the bulk of the association's recent hands-on work.

The demographic differences between dues-paying respondents and all other respondents reflect possible representation issues within the neighborhood association. Non-dues-paying respondents were younger and more diverse. Despite not being as educated as dues-paying respondents, more than half still reported having at least a Master's or professional degree. These residents could bring a number of strengths to the neighborhood association, and the association could bring benefits to them as well: these non-members were also significantly less likely to express confidence that their neighbors would come together in an emergency. Older residents may tend to have more time to get involved and volunteer, but the recruitment of younger members can help to sustain an organization.

Reflecting on these issues, we have developed three recommendations for the Woodland Drives Neighborhood Association: 1) develop additional approaches for prioritizing crime prevention, 2) discuss the topic of sidewalks with residents and city planners, and 3) create opportunities for improved participation and representation. To approach the first recommendation, the neighborhood association might partner with the Tallahassee Police Department (TPD) to host public safety seminars for its residents. The association might also consider working with TPD to schedule in-person residential security surveys (which they conduct for free) for homes in the neighborhood's most vulnerable areas (TPD, n.d.). Additionally, less formal workshops might be held so that residents in the neighborhood who have been burgled could share their stories with other residents and work to develop unique crime prevention techniques appropriate for Woodland Drives.

A discussion over new sidewalks, while a priority for many residents, would likely be somewhat divisive. For this reason, before planning any sort of advocacy, we recommend the



neighborhood association organize a town hall gathering to discuss the issue in a structured manner with all stakeholders -- Woodland Drives residents, Lafayette Street merchants, and perhaps representatives and/or residents from the Palms of Magnolia. When residents in the northern part of the neighborhood suggest that they see sidewalks as a priority, are they requesting more and/or better sidewalks in their part of the neighborhood, or are they more interested in improving connectivity in the southern part of the neighborhood? Do residents prioritize better sidewalks on Lafayette and Magnolia? In addition to these questions, it may be highly unlikely that the City of Tallahassee would be able to make any investment of that nature in the near term. As such, bringing in a city planner -- perhaps Zach Galloway, with whom the neighborhood association already has a relationship -- for perspective on how the city would view such a proposal could be instructive (M. Shargel, personal communication, October 18, 2010). It could be that long-range plans are in place, but do not necessarily reflect the interests of local stakeholders. A quasi-visioning exercise of this nature could also help to catalyze cohesion in the neighborhood and bring new residents into the association's fold.<sup>1</sup>

On a related note, more could be done to reach out to not only more residents, but to residents who may not necessarily reflect the backgrounds of those currently constituting the neighborhood association's membership. Members of the hospitality committee and the parents' council could engage in an outreach campaign targeted at those households that have not paid dues. Members of these households should be invited to at least one fun event, such as a block party or a family day in one of the neighborhood's parks, and at least one productive event, such as the proposed sidewalk meeting. In addition, member meetings could perhaps be more frequent -- occurring more than once per year, as is currently the case -- and be scheduled at a flexible time that would accommodate young, busy families. New participants will not join if there are not explicit, welcoming opportunities in which to participate. And they will not stay unless those opportunities are rewarding.

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<sup>1</sup> Paper #3 provides specific recommendations as to the location of sidewalk improvements and additions to better connect the Woodland Drives neighborhood to Lafayette Street, based on walkability and economic development considerations.

## **Aging in place**

Older adults are expressing a desire to remain in their homes and communities as they age. However, continuing to live in detached single family homes may present challenges that elderly residents did not experience as young and middle-aged adults (National Association of Area Agencies on Aging [N4A], 2007, p. 10). For example, remaining in place may be financially difficult for residents on fixed incomes as property taxes rise and increased investments in repairs and maintenance are required (Partners for Livable Communities, 2007, p. 1). The development patterns typical of many post-World War II neighborhoods, in which lot sizes are relatively large and sidewalks are limited, can also cause seniors difficulty in accessing services and opportunities for socialization. If older residents are not mobile enough to reach social events, they may experience isolation, which can cause physical and mental decline (Arizona State University, 2005, p. 108).

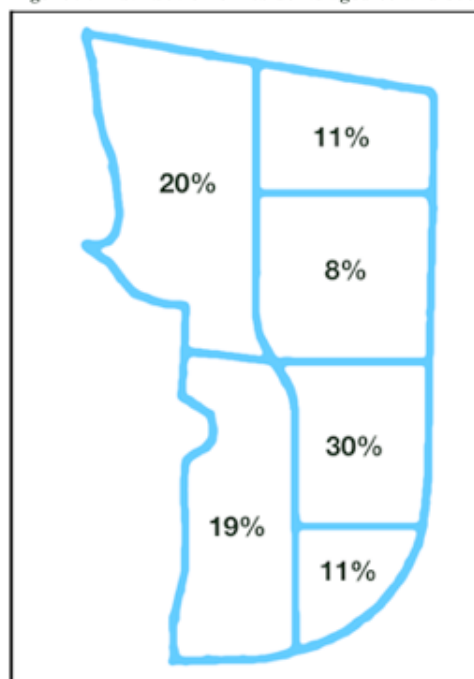
A community prepared to address the needs of elderly residents and help them to age in place could be poised to enjoy significant benefits. Older residents represent a solid tax base and offer stability to a neighborhood (N4A, 2007, p. 9). Retired residents also often have the time to volunteer for neighborhood associations and other groups. Furthermore, a community that supports elderly residents can assist informal caregivers by alleviating some of their duties. Both neighborhoods and older residents stand to benefit from adaptations that encourage aging in place (Partners for Livable Communities, 2007, p. 3).

## **The ability of Woodland Drives to facilitate aging in place**

Woodland Drives can best be described as an automobile-oriented neighborhood. The neighborhood is mostly composed of single-family homes with large setbacks from the road. With about half of its structures having been constructed between 1950 and 1959, the neighborhood's housing stock is aging and may begin to require significant maintenance. Less than 7% of the neighborhood's homes were built in 1990 or later (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

The suburban character of the neighborhood is maintained by the separation of commercial and residential land uses. Woodland Drives is adjacent to the Lafayette Street commercial corridor on its northern edge. While Lafayette Street provides the neighborhood with proximity to a commercial area, there is not a mixture of land uses throughout the neighborhood. This is especially problematic in Woodland Drives, as our survey indicated that 60.3% of the neighborhood's elderly population resides south of Sarasota Drive, in the half of the neighborhood that is both furthest from Lafayette Street and the most lacking in sidewalks (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Distribution of residents aged 65 and over



Source: Woodland Drives neighborhood survey, March 2011

Automobiles appear to be the preferred mode of transportation for the vast majority of Woodland Drives residents (with 94.1% expressing a preference to travel to Lafayette Street by car), but Tallahassee's public bus service is available. Currently, a StarMetro route runs along Lafayette Street on the northern edge of Woodland Drives. The neighborhood will also gain a bus route along Magnolia Drive on its western edge when the service's new decentralized system is introduced in the summer of 2011 (StarMetro, 2010b). But still, even with this new bus service, for those older residents in the central area of the neighborhood, the walk to and from the bus stop may be too long to be of interest. In addition, anecdotal evidence from social service professionals suggests two reasons why public bus service may not be of significant help to the elderly. First, elderly residents who have not been bus riders, previously, typically do not start to ride the bus later in life. Second, many of the same physical and mental impairments associated with the need to give up driving an automobile are the same impairments that prevent an elderly resident from riding the bus without assistance or special transit service.

### **Residents' assessment of issues related to aging in place**

Of the residents who participated in the survey, 25% were between 65 and 74 years of age and 7% were over 75 years or older. Additionally, nearly 85% of Woodland Drives survey participants indicated that they have no plans to move from the neighborhood. Of residents 65 and over, 88.9% expressed that they had no plans to move, while 9.7% expressed uncertainty. Only one elderly resident, who was over 75 years-old and living alone, indicated that he or she would definitely be leaving the neighborhood. From these data, it appears that there are a significant number of households hoping to age in place in Woodland Drives. The remainder of this section will address the issues of transportation, walkability, access to services, and social opportunities for the elderly. These issues will be discussed using data from surveys completed by residents 65 years-old and over, as well as by residents who indicated that they have no plans to move. These groups are of a particular interest to a discussion on aging in place because they represent the population that is most likely to experience aging-related problems in the neighborhood.

Survey respondents indicated a preference for using cars as a primary mode of transportation. 94.4% of respondents indicated that they travel to Lafayette Street by car. No respondents indicated that they traveled there by bus. With regard to walking, 89% of respondents indicated that they walk at least once a week. Further, nearly a third of all respondents indicated that they walk in the neighborhood at least five times per week.

66.4% of respondents explained that they walk in the neighborhood for pleasure, while 78.2% reported walking for exercise. A smaller, but still significant, 39.1% of respondents reported that they walk to restaurants and stores. 35.5% of respondents reported walking in the neighborhood to visit friends and family members. With regard to the walkability of the neighborhood, 69.0% of respondents noted that the neighborhood accommodated pedestrians well, but even still, 57.4% of respondents expressed a belief that limited sidewalks prevent pedestrians from walking more. While residents seem to feel comfortable walking in Woodland Drives, it is clear that many would nonetheless like to see expanded sidewalk infrastructure.

Respondents to our survey believe that they have good access to services. Respondents indicated that they use the grocery stores, retail stores, and restaurants along Lafayette Street frequently. Further, the majority of respondents believe that it is not difficult for residents over 65 years-old in Woodland Drives to access goods and services. The belief that the neighborhood accommodates the elderly does not change significantly among different age groups, including the elderly themselves -- who, if anything, appear more convinced of the neighborhood's satisfactory accessibility than their younger neighbors. Still, residents would like to see more grocery stores, retail, and restaurants along Lafayette. Increasing the number of commercial opportunities would encourage roughly 30% of respondents to walk to Lafayette Street and Magnolia Drive.

Recreational and social activities prevent isolation and help residents maintain a healthy lifestyle. To judge the probability of isolation, the survey asked how well respondents knew their neighbors. As we have discussed, those responses suggested varying degrees of familiarity with neighbors, but no responses indicated that neighbors did not know each other at all. However, even though respondents reported knowing their neighbors, those over 75 years-old indicated that the neighborhood association should prioritize an improved sense of community. Other comments by older respondents suggested that the neighborhood association consider walking clubs, more social get-togethers, and activities for all ages as a means of increasing social interaction.

### **Our assessment: Aging in place**

According to our survey, elderly residents in Woodland Drives feel well served by their neighborhood. However, based on our review of the literature and the conditions in Woodland Drives, it appears that certain adaptations will be necessary to meet the changing needs of the large number of residents who desire to age in place. Access to transportation, walkable environments, services, and social activities will be increasingly important to aging residents. There are varying degrees to which a neighborhood can change to meet the needs of its elderly

residents. The neighborhood association can begin developing the role it would like to play in accommodating the elderly population.

The issue of transportation will likely require multiple programs to fully assist residents. First, residents that still desire to drive may benefit from brighter pavement markings and traffic signals. Additionally, large street signage can make it easier for an older driver to identify streets, while converting two-way stops to four-way stops makes intersections more comfortable for older drivers (N4A). However, implementing these initiatives would take a great deal of effort and involvement with the city, and despite the good they may do, it does not seem that the neighborhood would believe them to be urgent enough to warrant such effort.

Still, there are actions the neighborhood association can pursue without the city's involvement, such as working with residents who cannot drive to aid them in using the StarMetro system. Volunteers could be recruited to help residents understand routes, transfers, and fares (Arizona State University, 2005, p. 26). Volunteers could possibly even ride the bus with elderly residents to help them feel comfortable learning the system.. The neighborhood association may also encourage residents to use the Dial-A-Ride program, which provides curb-to-curb services for elderly residents (StarMetro, 2010a). However, if the residents of Woodland Drives are not interested in using public transit, the neighborhood association may consider arranging a driving program. Such an initiative would allow residents to delegate some of their errands to a volunteer. The program could also encourage the volunteer and resident to travel together so that the resident could maintain a schedule of social interaction (N4A, 2007, p. 25).

Residents of Woodland Drives seem to feel comfortable walking in their neighborhood. However, many comments suggested a need for an expanded sidewalk system. To further improve walkability for seniors in the neighborhood, sidewalks should be shaded when possible. An occasional bench to serve as a resting place may also assist older residents. Additionally, any obstructions, such as overgrown brush or broken sidewalks need to be repaired to ensure a safe walk (Arizona State University, 2005, p. 49). Neighborhood walkability and the accessibility of shopping and services can be increased in Woodland Drives with the development of commercial and office uses along Lafayette Street and Magnolia Drive. As mentioned previously, 30% of

respondents would walk to these areas if more stores and services were available. Further, by adding some services or stores that elderly residents need, such as healthcare offices, the livability of the neighborhood improves for residents aging in place.

The neighborhood association may also assist in providing elderly residents with social and recreational opportunities. As the comments on the surveys indicated, residents may enjoy more opportunities for social gatherings with neighbors. Elderly residents may benefit from an organized exercise group that promotes socialization and staying active (N4A, 2006, p. 8). This could be done by organizing a walking group. Creating opportunities for retired residents to serve the community through volunteering also provides social opportunities for elderly residents (Partners for Livable Communities, 2007, p. 2).

Some initiatives that could benefit elderly residents -- such as alterations to road signs and the provision of accessible health services -- are likely to be beyond the scope of the neighborhood association. Even though the neighborhood association may not be able to implement these changes, they can build coalitions with other community groups to lobby the appropriate decision-making authorities on behalf of their members, given that their members understand and desire the changes that are being advocated.

### **Demographic and socioeconomic changes**

In addition to aging, other demographic changes can significantly affect a neighborhood -- especially one as homogenous and stable as Woodland Drives. Relatively subtle changes in tenure, turnover, cultural backgrounds, household incomes, and household types can bring a sizable effect. Social cohesion, property values, economic development, safety, and aesthetics can suffer -- and, in turn, perpetuate further decline -- alongside increases in renters, low-income residents, and non-family households (Rohe & Stewart, 1996, p. 71). Certain demographic shifts might cause anxiety while high turnover could encourage some long-term residents to consider leaving a neighborhood (Skogan, 1986, p. 206). Located next to a dense apartment complex in a city with a major university and a relatively high level of poverty, Woodland Drives might be

especially vulnerable to these less desirable changes. On the other hand, other changes might be positive: an increased number of young homeowners with plans to start families could revitalize a neighborhood, pockets of density might enhance prospects for economic development, and diversity can be socially enriching.

An understanding of how Woodland Drives is changing, and to what extent, would allow the neighborhood association to assess where it faces challenges and where it faces opportunities. However, even in the cases of demographic and socioeconomic shifts that might signal challenges for the neighborhood, early and creative action could generate opportunities. If turnover is increasing, perhaps the neighborhood association could consider incorporating renters in some way, thereby bringing in a more youthful and diverse group of members who, upon inclusion, might feel inclined to stay. If more students are moving into the area, perhaps their presence could be used as leverage in discussions with possible new commercial tenants along Lafayette Street. Likewise, increases in the number of young families would indicate a set of emerging issues similar to those accompanying an aging population. More children might suggest that the neighborhood association could play a role in coordinating events in which parents could bring their children to play in a park, providing them with an ability to meet one another and perhaps discuss ways to collectively alleviate each others' child-rearing burdens. As such, knowledge of these changes -- to the extent that they're occurring in Woodland Drives and the nearby apartment complex -- would enable the Woodland Drives Neighborhood Association to be proactive in fine-tuning its approach and preserving the neighborhood character that is important to the association's leadership.

### **The apartment complex**

The Palms of Magnolia apartment complex, in the northeast corner of Woodland Drives, was established in 1972. It contains 228 dwelling units and makes up almost the entirety of Block 1007 within Census Tract 3.01, Block Group 1. As such, the 2000 Decennial Census is a useful tool for determining some of the characteristics of the complex's residents. While the data are a decade old, they seem to reflect the present conditions as observed by members of the



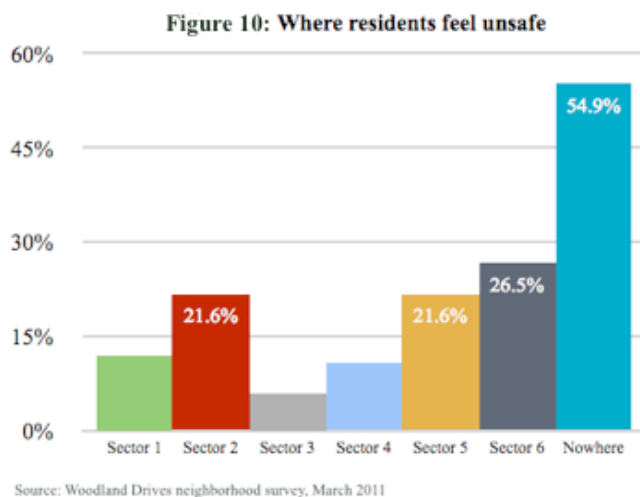
neighborhood association and our own visits to the area. In this data, after removing the residents from the eight homes that were also within the block (which was done by identifying their population characteristics by tenure), 81.4% of residents are black, 12.6% of residents are white, and 4.2% are Hispanic or Latino. Of the 211 units that were occupied at the time of the 2000 Census, only 32.7% were occupied by families. And of these families, three quarters featured a single parent householder. Interestingly, 49.2% of the residents were between the ages of 18 and 24, suggesting that -- perhaps -- some of the residents may have been (and may continue to be) college students. Both FSU and the historically black Florida A & M University are less than two miles away from the apartment complex.

Members of the Woodland Drives Neighborhood Association and the Parkway District Merchants Guild have expressed frustration with the Palms of Magnolia, associating it with crime, visual decay, economic stagnation, and declining property values. In attempts to address some of these issues, Majken Peterzen of the merchants' guild has characterized the management of the complex as "uncooperative." As such, both the neighborhood association and the merchants' guild have begun to pursue a strategy of dealing with some of the issues, especially those regarding visual decay, through municipal code enforcement (M. Peterzen, personal communication, January 14, 2011). However, on March 17, 2011, a new property management company -- Aspen Square Management -- took control of the Palms of Magnolia. The new property manager, Erica Herald, has suggested that "significant changes" will be made to the complex in the near future. Rates have been "raised significantly" to an average of \$722.50 per unit to reflect pending remodeling and upgrades (E. Herald, personal communication, April 15, 2011). In addition, a review of Aspen Square's other properties across the country reveals that they specialize in student housing. As such, their new approach may result in major changes to the issues that trouble the neighborhood association and merchants' guild.

### **Residents' assessment of the apartment complex**

Despite the notion that the Palms of Magnolia is the catalyst for crime in Woodland Drives, it was not identified by most residents as a particularly unsafe part of the neighborhood. In

constructing the sector map in Figure 1, we made it a point to isolate the area containing the Palms of Magnolia so that it could be singled out by residents who might have an issue with it. However, when asked to identify all of the sectors in which the respondent felt unsafe, only 21.6% of respondents identified Sector 2, in which the apartment complex is located, as unsafe. As shown in Figure 10, the same proportion



described Sector 5 as unsafe, while an even larger proportion -- 26.5% -- described Sector 6 as unsafe. Still, a majority of respondents, 54.9%, indicated that none of these areas were unsafe.

Elsewhere in the responses, seven individual comments were made about the apartment complex, six of which were in response to a question asking the respondent to identify the three things that he or she “least liked” along Lafayette Street. Another was in response to a question asking respondents to suggest ways to make the neighborhood safer. In these comments, three people complained about the crime coming from the complex, two people expressed displeasure about “bums” coming from the apartments, one person complained of traffic issues, and another expressed distaste for an unkempt privately-owned easement that can be used to access the apartments from Lafayette Street. This easement is further discussed in Paper #3.

### **Our assessment: The apartment complex**

With the exception of seven surveys, it did not seem that issues relating to the Palms of Magnolia were a major focus for most residents. Still, some issues should be addressed. While it was not ranked as the least safe part of the neighborhood, a number of residents clearly have some safety concerns attached to the complex. Likewise, despite some ambivalence toward the apartments reflected in the survey, some members of the neighborhood association and merchants’ guild see it as a serious threat to the safety and stability of the neighborhood. However, the complex’s new

property management company -- which appears to be quite stable and successful -- offers new opportunities. Their lofty redevelopment plans suggest that some of the issues regarding aesthetics may be resolved in the near term. Other issues might be addressed through collaboration among the new management, the neighborhood association, and the merchants' guild, assuming the new management company will be more cooperative than that which preceded it. And if the complex's population changes to match the increased asking price for units, the merchants' guild may find itself able to leverage the complex's density for the purposes of economic development.

To initiate this process, stakeholders from the Woodland Drives Neighborhood Association and the Parkway District Merchants' Guild should seek a meeting with representatives from Aspen Square Management. In this meeting, past issues could be discussed, ongoing issues such as crime and visual decay could be touched on, and hopefully, a plan for working together to pursue shared interests could be developed. For those residents who expressed concern about safety and other specific issues regarding the Palms, the Aspen Square Management team could perhaps be approached about including a description of their plans in the neighborhood association's seasonal newsletter.

Secondly, although the neighborhood association has been hesitant to identify residents of the Palms as actual members of the neighborhood, involving them in some of the previously proposed crime prevention workshops and seminars could be to the benefit of everyone in the area. Although our survey instrument was not distributed to the apartment complex, it would not be unreasonable to suspect that crime prevention is also a priority of residents in the apartment complex. Their perspectives could be useful in discussing the determinants of crime in the area and effective techniques for preventing burglary.

## **Conclusion**

While crime, an aging population, other potentially changing demographics, and neighborhood representation present challenges to the Woodland Drives Neighborhood Association, many new

opportunities exist as well. With knowledge that elderly residents are more highly concentrated in the southern portion of the neighborhood, where design conditions are least friendly to mobility-challenged residents, the neighborhood association can better direct its efforts to address issues relevant to that group.

Likewise, knowledge that residents' safety concerns are most focused on the southeastern corner of the neighborhood rather than the area in which the Palms of Magnolia is sited may help the association to broaden its crime prevention activities. Opportunities also exist for the neighborhood association in regard to the Palms of Magnolia as the apartment complex's new management appears to be more compatible with the interests of the association. This will hopefully result in a less tense working relationship in which collaborative efforts to improve the area might be pursued.

Finally, the apparent youth and diversity among residents not yet actively involved in the neighborhood association suggests that new kinds of outreach might be needed to engage these residents. That might be a significant challenge. But the perspectives and vitality that neighborhood associations gain from newcomers present an opportunity that would justify the effort.

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