

Kensington Park Neighborhood Plan



Accepted on September 20, 2016
by the Board of County Commissioners

Plan Prepared By:
Sarasota County Neighborhood Services

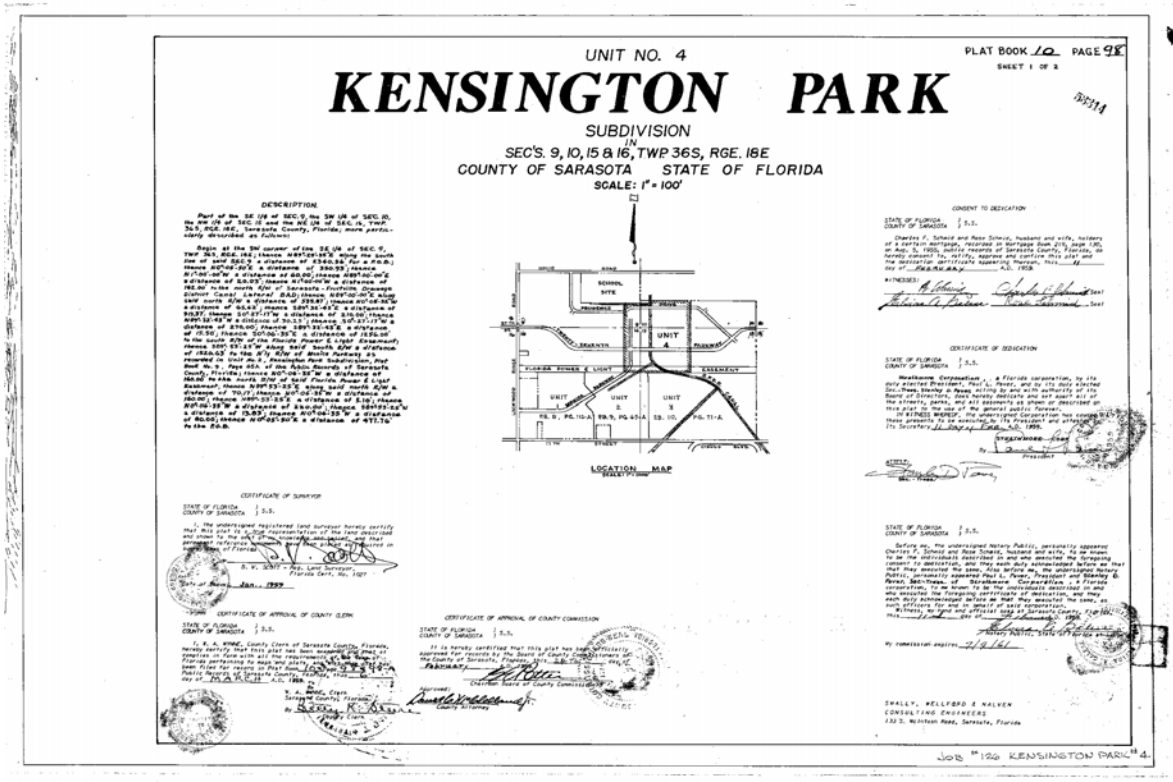
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Figure 1



Figure 2



Executive Summary

In 2007, the County Commission (Board) directed the County Administrator to facilitate a community-building effort within the Kensington Park Neighborhood. Funding was designated in the amount of \$10,000 for projects identified by the community, as well as surtax funds for a capital improvement project. Over the following 18 months, staff worked with residents to: identify areas for improvement; determine community assets; and address areas of concern. In addition, several small projects were completed that engaged residents and improved community aspects such as safety, crime prevention, beautification, street trees and overall civic involvement. On September 23, 2009, the Board received an update on community building efforts in Kensington Park and received the Draft, "Kensington Park Community Building Plan."

Developing upon the initial work of the Kensington Park Community Building Plan, the attached final "Kensington Park Neighborhood Plan" follows an extensive and extended history of collaboration with the community and encapsulates the issues and solutions that residents identified to enhance the future of their neighborhood, focusing on six priority areas: *Code Enforcement, Crime and Safety, Transportation, Utilities, Appearance and Beautification, and Community Building.*

The \$10,000 in county funds designated for the Kensington Park neighborhood was spent on projects that addressed residents' concerns of safety, appearance and beautification, and community building. These projects included:

- Creation, printing and distribution of a Kensington Park Neighborhood Safety Brochure

- Improvements to landscaping of neighborhood entrances
- Community building through a kick-off picnic, fall festival, outdoor movies, community meetings and family fun fest
- A total of \$730 remains from the initial \$10,000 in designated Kensington Park Neighborhood monies which will be used for public outreach regarding the proposed neighborhood park; funded through neighborhood grant program funds.

Additional projects of road resurfacing, street tree plantings and community clean-ups were funded through existing county program budgets. Just prior to initiating community building efforts began in the neighborhood, the county's Sidewalk Program extended sidewalks on several major pedestrian routes in the neighborhood as well.

Although not all projects identified in the Neighborhood Plan have been completed to date, some projects require additional research and funding. Neighborhood Services staff recommends designated Neighborhood Capital Improvements funds be allocated to the conversion of a portion of the decommissioned wastewater treatment facility into a neighborhood park as the neighborhood's capital improvement project.

Introduction

The Planning Process

The planning process for the Kensington Park Neighborhood officially began on September 29, 2007 with a Fall Festival held at Calvary Chapel Church. This event provided an opportunity for county staff to meet residents and gather information on what residents enjoyed and where they wanted to see improvements in their neighborhood. The information gathered defined the six priority areas:

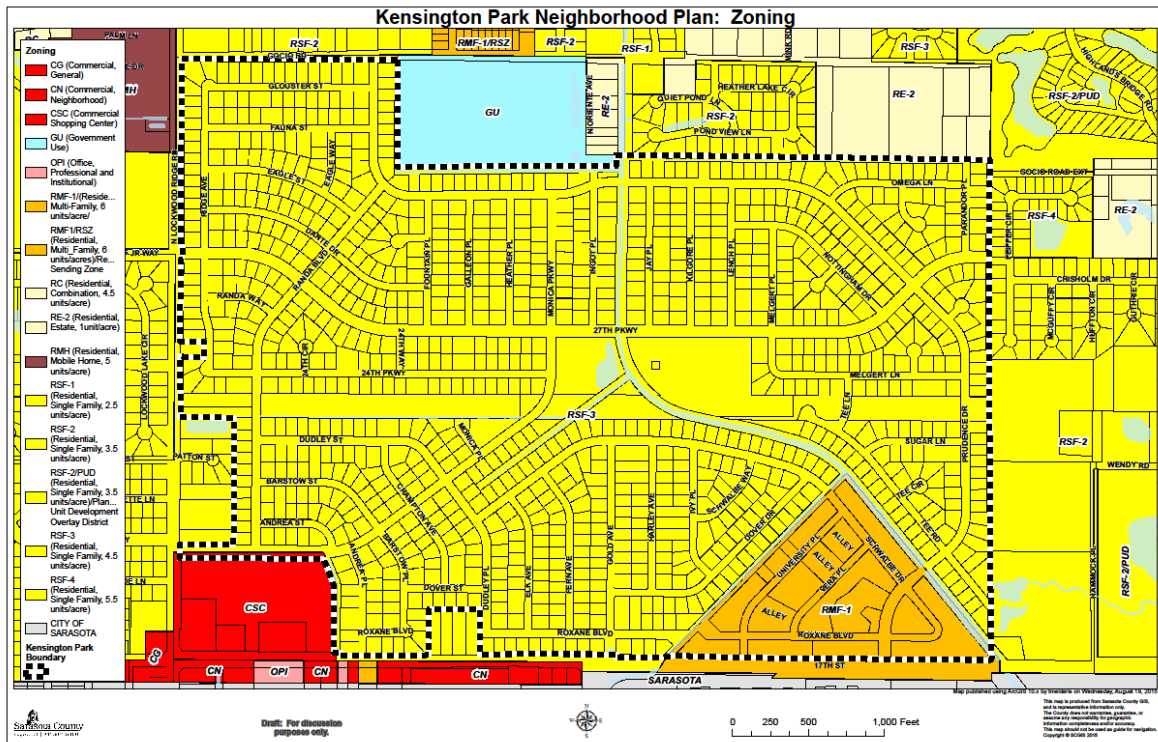
- *Code Enforcement;*
- *Crime and Safety;*
- *Transportation;*
- *Utilities;*
- *Appearance and Beautification; and*
- *Community Building.*

Over the next two plus years and more than 25 meetings' members of the Kensington Park Civic Association, residents, and county staff discussed the six priority areas and identified and implemented solutions to address these concerns. The great enthusiasm and volunteer spirit of the community propelled the neighborhood through several improvements. It also built a foundation for future communication, collaboration, and community initiatives.

Land Use and Development

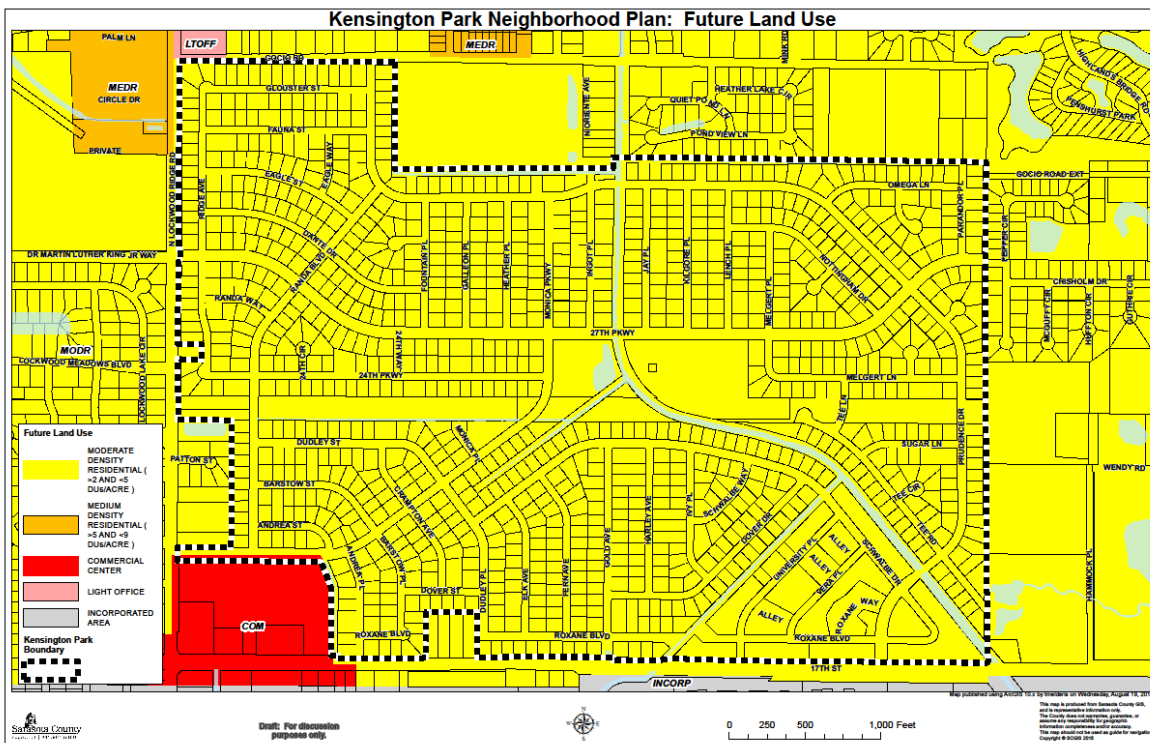
The Kensington Park Neighborhood located in north Sarasota County bordered by Gocio Road , 17th Street, Fieffer Circle and North Lockwood Ridge Road; was built as a planned community by the Paver family in 1958. It was the first subdivision in Sarasota to have its own central water and sewer system. Centered on a 14-acre Swim & Country Club for the exclusive use of residents; now home to

Figure 3



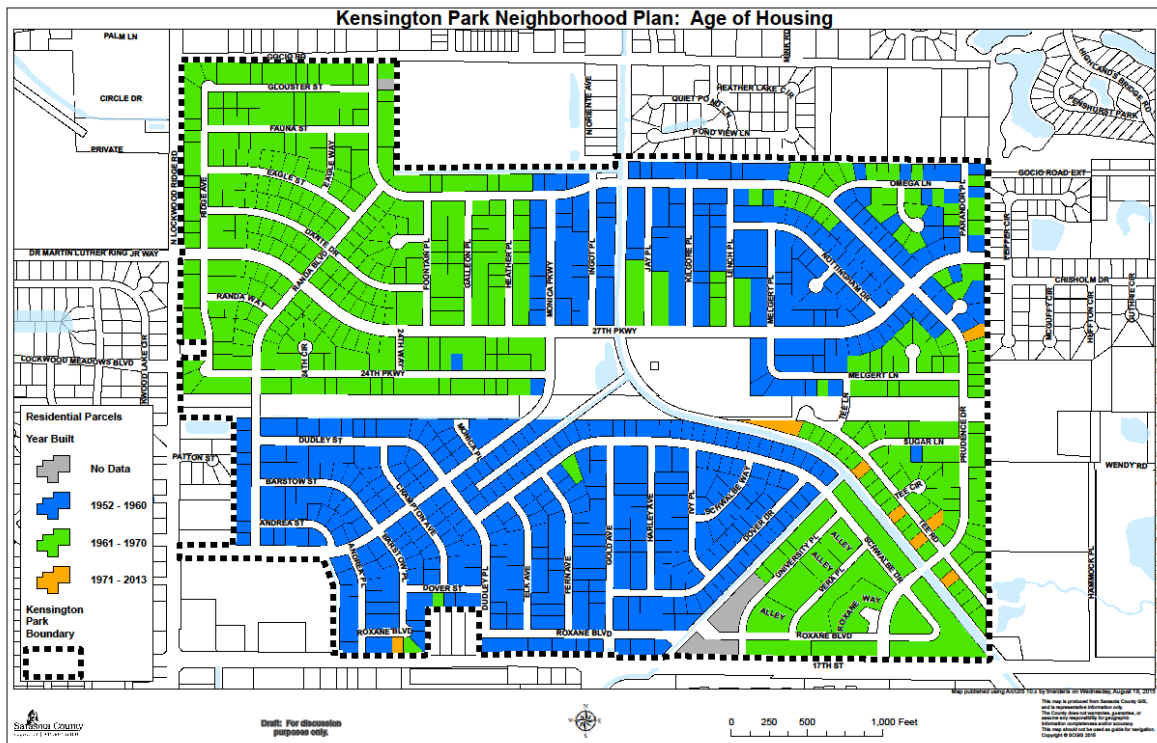
Calvary Chapel Sarasota, the neighborhood was marketed to those seeking a quiet community for “active retirement”. The neighborhood is primarily single family residences zoned RSF-3 (Residential, Single Family, 4.5 dwelling units/acre) see Figure 3, with a Future Land Use designation of Moderate Density Residential (no less than two and no more than 5 dwelling units per acre), see Figure 4. In

Figure 4



In addition to the residences, Kensington Park is also home to Main B waterway of the Philippi Creek Basin and a decommissioned waste water treatment facility which the county acquired in 2013.

Figure 5



The first phase of development for Kensington Park was built from 1952-1960, as shown in Figure 5, while the remaining lots were built out by 1970. With the exception of Strathmore Villa, the housing is all detached, single units.

To the southwest of the Kensington Park neighborhood is Northeast Plaza, a commercial plaza which houses a grocery store, bank, drug store, variety stores, clothing stores, restaurants, and support services. There is no direct vehicular access from the plaza into the Kensington Park neighborhood; vehicle access for the plaza is limited to 17th Street and Lockwood Ridge Road. Additionally, although there are no formal pedestrian access points between the plaza and adjacent neighborhood, the vegetation along the rear of the plaza does allow for pedestrian access.

Figure 6

Demographics

Kensington Park's estimated population for 2015 was 2,900 residents, consisting of roughly 680 families. They comprise approximately, 1,070 households (approximately 20% single parent households) with an average size of 2.5 persons. Compared to the rest of the county the median age of 43 years old is young; however, the younger population (0-64 years) in Kensington

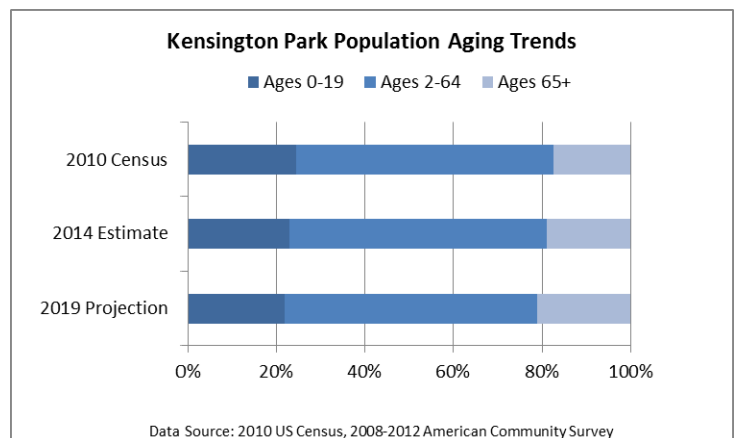
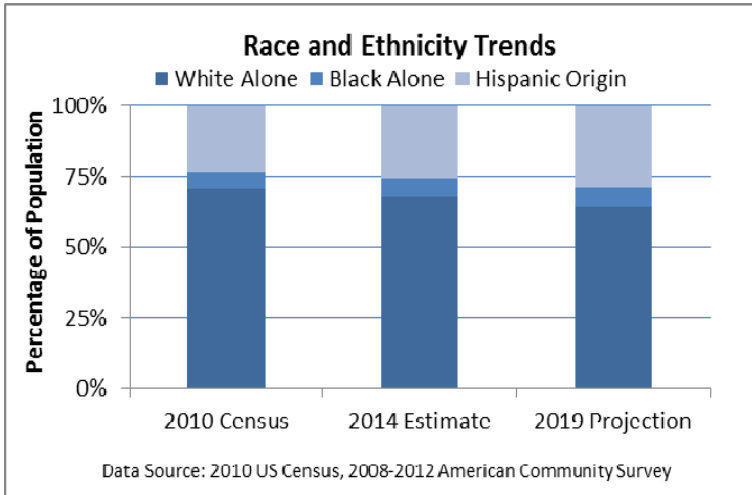


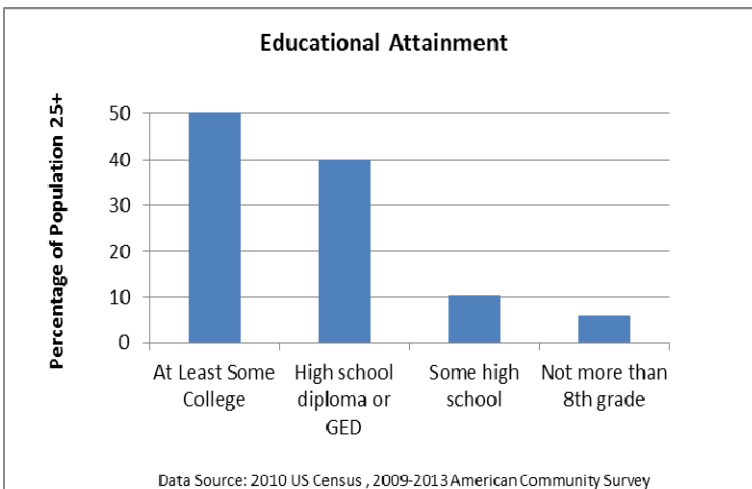
Figure 7



Park is decreasing while the older population (65 + years) is increasing, as illustrated in Figure 6. The loss of families at a rate of -0.5% per year is contributing to the overall -0.3% decline in the neighborhoods population each year.

The majority of residents, 70%, identified themselves as “White Alone.” While a growing percentage (25% in 2014) identified themselves as Hispanic in origin. The “Black Alone” responses hover just under 5% for each benchmark year. Almost half of all residents speak English as a second language with Spanish being the most common native language

Figure 8

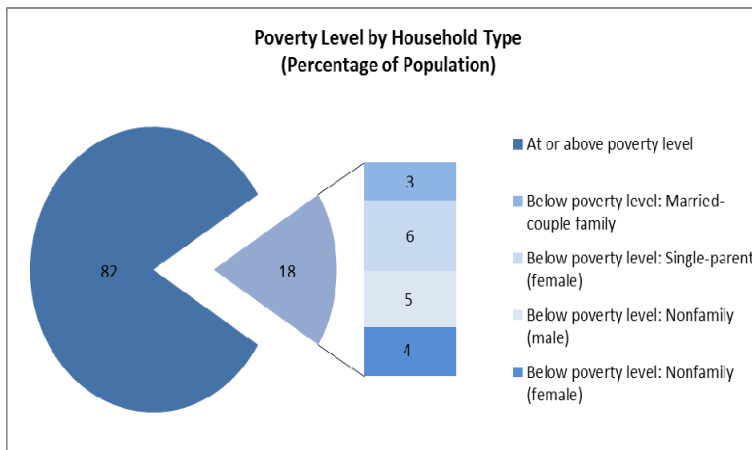


In 2015 an estimated 20% (600+) residents age 3+ were enrolled in school. Of residents 25 years and older approximately 1/3 have earned a high school degree or GED and 50% have completed as least some college or have a bachelor’s, masters or doctorate degree, see figure 8.

Residents 16 years and older are employed in a variety of occupations; the 5 most common occupations include:

- Office & Administrative Support
- Sales & Related
- Building & Grounds, Cleaning & Maintenance
- Personal Care & Service
- Healthcare Practitioner, Technologist & Technicians

Figure 9



The average household income of Kensington Park residents in 2015 was \$58,500 and is projected to increase to \$66,000 by the year 2020. Nearly 1 out of 5 households in the Kensington Park neighborhood has an income that places them below the national poverty level.

These income levels put roughly 2/3 of renters and close to 1/2 of home owners in the cost burdened category, meaning they

Figure 10

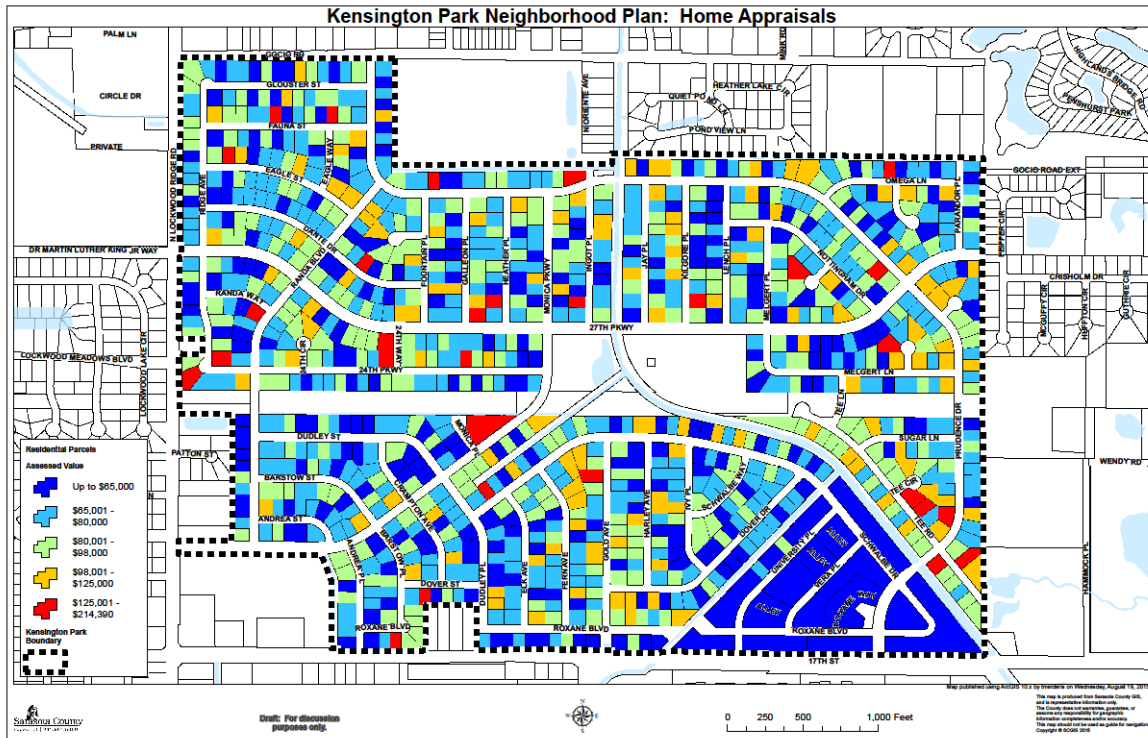
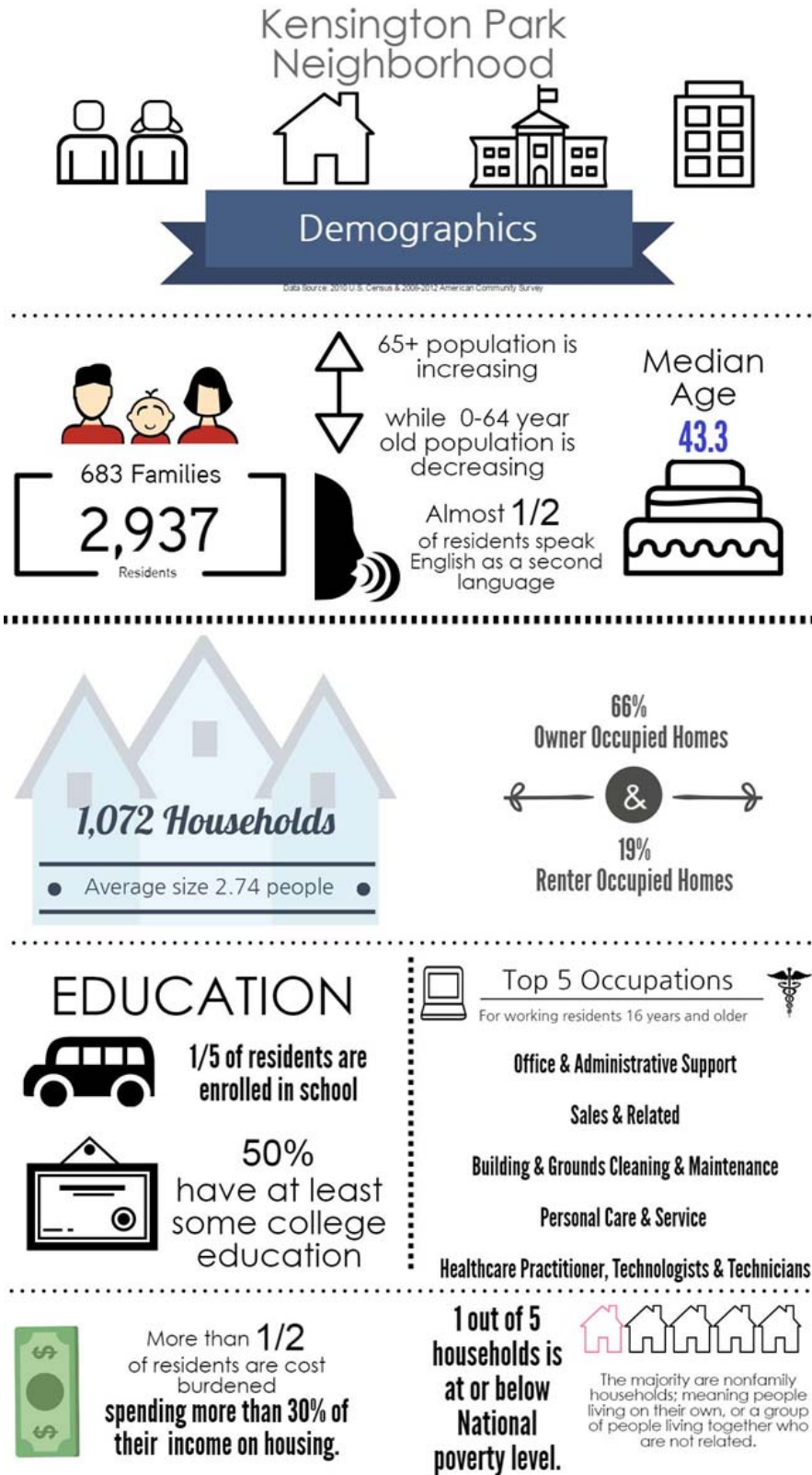


Figure 11



Figure 12



are spending more than 30% of their income on housing. The average household value from 2008-2012 was \$145,953. Additionally, nearly 20% of residents are renting; paying on average \$702 per month.

Code Enforcement

Code enforcement concerns were identified by residents early in the planning process. The concerns centered on maintenance of abandoned homes and how that affected the overall neighborhood appearance, multiple families living in a single home and renting rooms. Code Enforcement staff attended neighborhood meetings and discussed what falls within their area of control. They asked that the community continue to communicate with them as residents are “the eyes of the neighborhood.” To address neighborhood concerns residents identified the following solutions:

- Holding a **neighborhood clean-up** with Sarasota County Code Enforcement. During the initial clean-up a total of 27 tons of debris was collected and removed. Neighborhood clean-ups have continued each year, resulting in a total of 207 tons of debris removed from 2008-2015.
- Creation of a **beautification committee** to address concerns around the appearance of the neighborhood with a focus on enhancing roadways with street trees, plantings at neighborhood entrances, and residential landscaping and maintenance.

Fiscal Year	Tons of Debris Removed
2009	27
2010	36
2011	21
2012	28
2013	34
2014	34
2015	27

In 2006 the Kensington Park Civic Association Board of Directors attempted to update the neighborhoods deed restrictions to better align with the current needs of its homeowners. Upon investigation it was discovered that under the Marketability of Real Estate Title Act the deed restrictions for the Kensington Park Neighborhood that were established when the neighborhood was built expired after 30 years (approximately 1990). The Board of Directors began the process of reinstating the original deeds; however it was found that current County Code restrictions were more stringent than the original deeds and restrictions and would supersede the original deeds and restrictions. Due to the buy-in required to reinstate the original deeds and restrictions, and the county’s regulations superseding the original deeds and restrictions, the community determined that efforts to reinstate the original deeds should terminate.

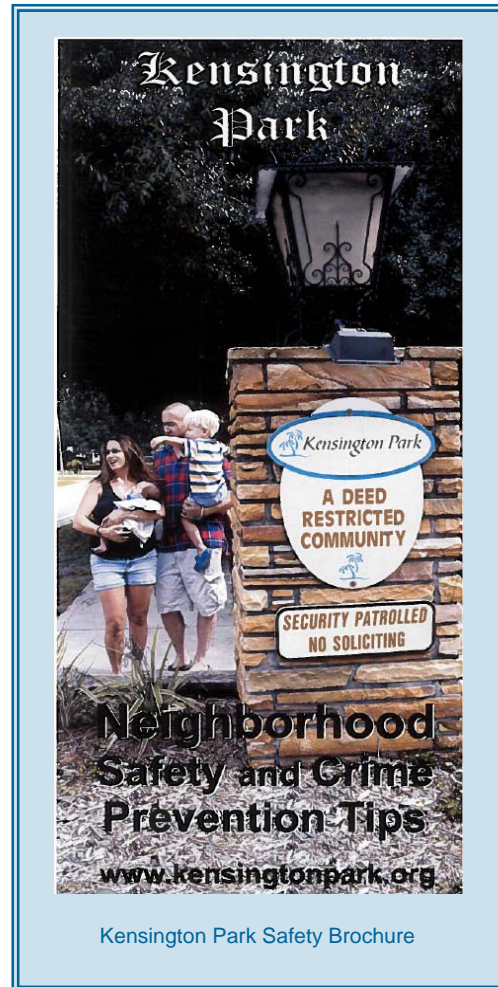
Crime and Safety

Of the 4 main types of neighborhood crimes: burglary, theft, vandalism and juvenile crime, Kensington Park had 10 reported crimes over the last six months from December 1, 2015 – May 1, 2016.

The Kensington Neighborhood has been actively addressing crime and safety concerns since the reinstatement of the neighborhood Security Patrol run by the Kensington Park Civic Association Inc. in 1996. Residents safety concerns centered on speeding vehicles, parking vehicles on the right of way and observations of questionable activities. Sarasota County Sheriff’s deputies spoke with residents about the simple ways they could take an active role in preventing crime in their neighborhoods including locking doors, turning on lights and keeping valuables out of sight.

In response to the issues identified residents generated several ways to tackle their concerns:

- Implement **Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)** principles. County staff presented CPTED principles to residents to identify measures that could be taken to reduce opportunities for crime: keep entryways clear; keep shrubs low to improve visibility, light your space, know your neighbors, and use common sense.
- Maintain **communication** with the Sheriff's Office; residents are the eyes and ears of the neighborhood and provide valuable information on the daily activities within the neighborhood. In order for law enforcement to address issues they need to be aware of the issue. The best way to keep the Sheriff's department informed is to report any crimes and suspicious activities.
- Development of a **safety brochure** specific to the Kensington Park Neighborhood to be distributed to every household. A volunteer resident committee created a brochure with information on personal and residential safety specific to Kensington Park. A total of 1300 copies were printed and distributed along with the Kensington Park newsletter to residents in the summer of 2008.



To address traffic safety and emphasize the shared responsibility between the county and residents, county staff provided information on the process for initiating roadway signage requests to the Traffic Operations department, Traffic Advisory Council (TAC) and Board. Equipped with this information residents initiated the process for requesting:

- Installation of **stop signs** (\$150.00 per sign) at eight intersections. As per county protocol an analysis was conducted by TAC. Two of the eight intersections warranted the installation of stop signs. The new stop signs were installed at: *27th Parkway at Randa Boulevard & Dudley Place at Monica Parkway*. Following the installation of the stop signs residents have reported a reduction in speeding issues.
- Installation of **School Zone signs** (\$150.00 per sign), and **flashing beacon** for School Zone Sign (\$4,000.00* each) on 27th Parkway. School Zone signs were installed east and west of Calvary Chapel School on 27th Parkway.

Transportation

In addition to the transportation safety issues and resolutions identified previously under crime and safety residents also expressed concerns with roadway quality, pedestrian connectivity and street lighting. County staff investigated the following topics based on residents' concerns:

- **Roadway resurfacing** to improve roadway quality and address cracks and vegetation growing through the asphalt. Through the county's 15 year capital program for roadway resurfacing several neighborhood roadways were resurfaced in 2002, while the remaining 23 lane miles were resurfaced in 2009.
- Improve pedestrian connectivity with the installation of a **footbridge** over the drainage canal on Prudence Drive between Tee Road and Schwalbe Drive. Public Works provided two options for solutions:
 1. installation of a metal footbridge (estimated cost \$300,000+) which would require securing Capital Improvement funds.
OR
 2. submitting a gap sidewalk request for installation of a sidewalk on the east side of Prudence Drive over the drainage canal. New sidewalks are installed as deemed appropriate based on comparison with all other county sidewalk gap projects. Due to the recent installation of sidewalks in Kensington Park in 2006, the return to this area for additional sidewalks is not likely to happen soon, as there are more than 10 other communities in the county waiting for new sidewalks.
- Installation of a **bike rack** on corner of Monica Parkway and 27th Parkway, primarily for use by transit riders. Two U bike racks have been installed next to the bus shelter at the southeast corner of the intersection.
- Installation of **upgraded street light fixtures** to improve safety and visibility. County staff consulted with Florida Power & Light who quoted the cost as a \$160.00 one-time per parcel charge and approximately \$6.00 increase in residents' annual energy costs. Due to the resident cost burden, this project is still under consideration by the community.



Kensington Park roadway before resurfacing project.



U-bike racks at SCAT stop on Monica Pkwy & 27th Pkwy.



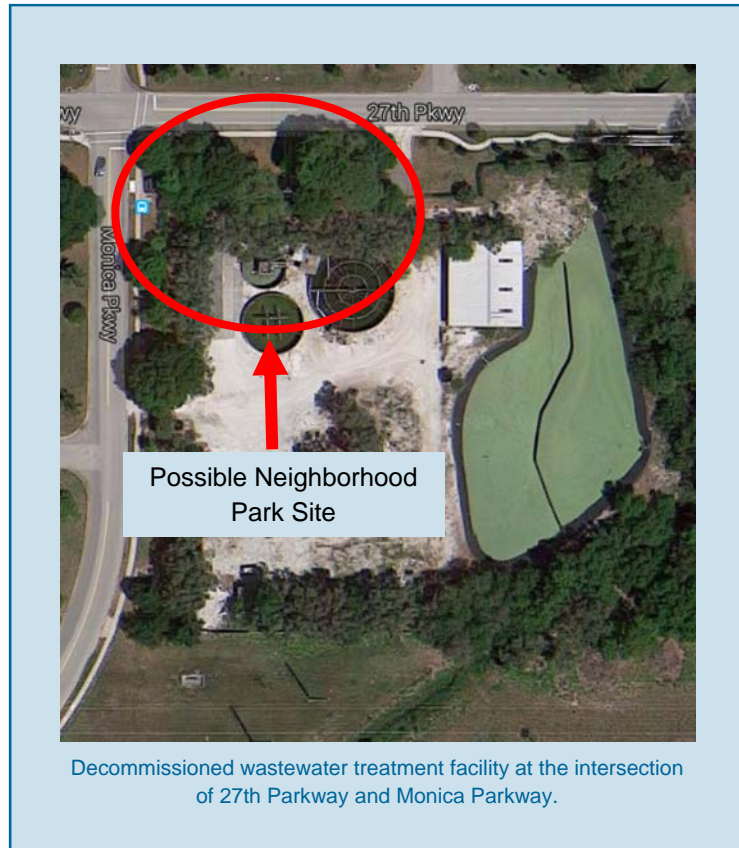
Advanced intersection warning signs for northbound traffic on Beneva Road as vehicles approach 17th Street.

An additional issue identified outside of the scope of the neighborhood planning process was growing concerns over the intersection of **Beneva Road & 17th Street**. In 2010 the concerns prompted an engineering study to identify options for intersection improvements. The county hired a consultant to study the intersection and provide options for improvements. Based on the findings of the study it was determined that only minor improvements would be implemented, as any major investments such as installation of concrete barriers, rumble strips or changes to the control radius would not provide significant benefits. Minor improvements to improve the intersection included installation of flashing intersection warning signs for northbound traffic on Beneva Road and trimming back vegetation to increase sign visibility.

Utilities

The Kensington Park neighborhood is centered on the former Community Club house and decommissioned wastewater treatment facility. In 2013 Sarasota County acquired the Aqua Utilities franchise which included the decommissioned wastewater site. To date it has remained mostly untouched. Since the acquisition, several county departments including Public Utilities, Parks Recreation and Natural Resources, Neighborhood Services, and Planning and Development Services have been working together to determine the most appropriate use of the site. Residents have provided input and requested conversion of the site to a neighborhood park.

- Creation of a **neighborhood park** at the site of the decommissioned wastewater treatment facility. The Public Utilities department has agreed to relinquish a portion of the site in the northwest corner to the creation of a neighborhood park. Neighborhood Services will continue to work with applicable county departments and the Kensington Park neighborhood to ensure the neighborhood park is the result of a collaborative process between Parks Recreation and Natural Resources and the Kensington Park community.
- Creation of a **linear park** approximately one mile in length along the utility corridor that runs east/west through neighborhood. This project would require acquisition of land and at this time does not have funding. The creation of a nearby neighborhood park may fulfill the recreational needs for the community.



Appearance and Beautification

While discussing neighborhood concerns about the general appearance and beauty of Kensington Park, issues relating to code enforcement were revisited. County staff provided ideas and information on ways the residents of Kensington Park could take an active role in creating the desirable neighborhood appearance they envisioned. To assist residents in identifying projects that would improve neighborhood appearance and beauty information was presented on the county resources available to residents including: the Neighborhood Initiative Grant Program, Tree Streetscape Program, and Florida Friendly Landscaping. Based on the information provided residents identified the following solutions for improving the appearance and enhancing the beauty of Kensington Park:

- Formation of a **beautification committee** with a primary role of identifying beautification options for the neighborhood as well as coordinating the implementation of those options. The beautification committee met several times during the planning process and presented options to the residents for community based beautification projects:
 - ◇ Updates to neighborhood **entrance landscaping** with Florida Friendly Landscaping. Through the coordinated efforts of the beautification committee, neighborhood volunteers and county staff the neighborhood entrances at both Lockwood Ridge & 27th Parkway and Gocio Road & Andrea Place were updated with new Florida friendly landscaping. This was completed in 2008 and paid for through county designated community improvement funds.
 - ◇ Installation of **backflow preventers and water lines** at each of the landscaped entrances to assist with maintenance of the new Florida friendly landscaping. This was completed in 2009 and paid for through county designated community improvement funds.
 - ◇ Replacement of **Plexiglas** in the lamps at each of the neighborhood entrances to improve appearance and visibility of the lights. New Plexiglas was installed in 2009 and paid for out of the Kensington Park Civic Association dues.
 - ◇ Establish a **yard of the month**



program to encourage and recognize residents who take pride in the appearance of their properties. This program was implemented in 2008 continues to this day. It allows neighbors to nominate yards they feel are beautiful and the beautification committee determines the winning yard. Winning yards are recognized through placement of a sign in their yard and recognition in the Kensington Park Civic Association neighborhood newsletter and website.

- Development of a **Street Clean-Up Program** to assist neighbors with exterior improvements including paint, landscaping, and general cleanup through a partnership with Lowes. A total of 15 potential homes for this project were identified, however due to lack of resources this project was not implemented.
- Address **Gold Avenue median**. To improve the look and function at the south extent of Gold Avenue a bio swale was planted to remove silt and pollution from surface run off water. This was completed in 2009.
- Implementation of the Forestry departments' **tree streetscape** program. A total of 800 street trees were added to the Kensington Park Neighborhood along Prudence Drive, 27th Parkway, Gold Avenue and 17th Street. To celebrate the neighborhoods new appearance a ribbon cutting ceremony was held on September 19, 2009.
- Removal of **melaleuca trees** along Lockwood Ridge Road. A records search found that the location of the melaleuca trees is on property owned by the Paver Family Corporation. The county owns the easement interested and accepted the easement for public use but disclaimed any duty to maintain or repair the easement. To date the melaleucas still remain.
- Hosting a **community playground clean-up** at Calvary Chapel. A clean-up was held in August 2008.



Gold Avenue bio swale planting.

Community Building

Residents of the Kensington Park Neighborhood had a common goal of strengthening the sense of community through community outreach. Throughout the planning process staff emphasized areas and projects that lend themselves to building community while also addressing neighborhood concerns. Options identified for community building include:

- Creation of a **community cookbook**
- Hosting **events**: quarterly dance, monthly potluck, weekly walks, community parade, movies on the lawn, community concerts, car show, Fall Festival, Trunks for Treats, Easter egg hunt, community clean-ups
 - The first **outdoor movie** night was held on August 8, 2008.
 - **Fall Festival** was held on November 15, 2008
 - **Trunks for Treats** was held on October 30, 2009
 - Annual **Community clean-ups**.
 - Annual **Kensington Park Civic Association Holiday Party**.
 - **Family Fun Fest** held October 17, 2015
 - The first **Park Night Out** monthly social event held on February 27, 2016



Fall Festival 2007



Movie Night 2008



Flea Market 2008



Family Fun Fest 2015

- **Weekly walks** were held by the walking committee on Monday evenings. Walks started at Calvary Chapel and lasted approximately 30 minutes; followed by refreshments.
- **Contests:** pet, Christmas decorations, Yard of the Month
- **Sponsor local kids soccer team** by Kensington Park Civic Association
- Creation of **Committees:** Safety Brochure, Walking Committee, Beautification Committee, New Member Committee.

This list of solutions for community building identifies a variety of ways that residents can participate with varied levels of commitment. Furthermore, most of the options have minimal financial implications. Although community building cannot happen overnight, the Kensington Park Neighborhood through the neighborhood planning process have built themselves a strong foundation for moving forward.

Follow-up

Over the course of the neighborhood planning process many projects both community led and part of the county's programs were implemented to address the residents' areas of concern. However, some projects still remain. In order to determine the priority of remaining projects left to be implemented residents were asked for their input through a survey. Based on survey responses the following projects were identified as top neighborhood priorities:

Next Steps

During the planning process county staff worked with residents to equip them with the knowledge and skills to address their six areas of concern: *Code Enforcement, Crime and Safety, Transportation, Utilities, Appearance and Beautification and Community Building*. The community was able to complete several projects to address their concerns and have continued to work together to improve their neighborhood. Ongoing communication between residents, the Kensington Park Civic Association and county staff have led to the installation of a neighborhood historical marker in 2012 and involvement in the Family Fun Fest in 2015.

The final component of the Kensington Park Neighborhood Plan is the completion of the capital improvement project, a neighborhood park.

Following Board approval, Neighborhood Services will initiate the next steps required to proceed with implementation of a park; which include:

- Coordination with Public Utilities on timing for demolition and preparation of the site for transfer of use to Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources (PRNR);
- Develop a scope of work including operating and maintenance costs associated with the park;
- Collaboration with Real Estate, PRNR and Public Utilities on a use agreement or transfer of property from Public Utilities to PRNR;
- Coordinating with PRNR to design the park based on feasibility and community input;
- Communicating with the Kensington Park neighborhood on the status of the park as the project progresses, seeking feedback on details as design is finalized; and

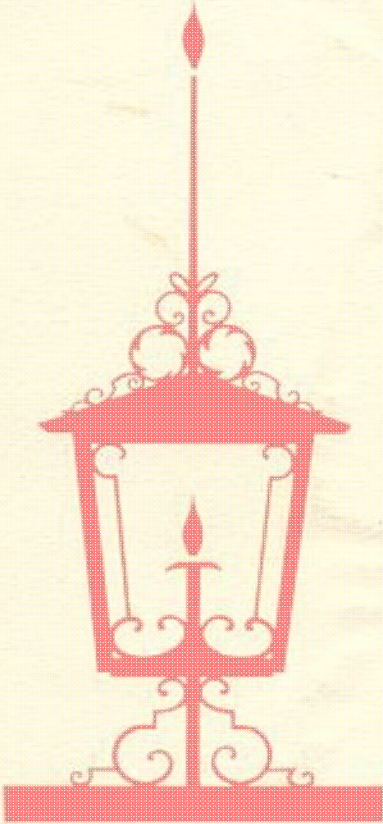
- Coordination with the neighborhood and PRNR for park opening celebration.

Coordination with the various departments is ongoing. Demolition is included in Public Utilities FY 2017 budget. Additional design and coordination prior to final development of the park is anticipated for approximately three to five years to complete.

Project Description	Status
Neighborhood Park at decommissioned wastewater treatment plant on southeast corner of Monica Parkway & 27 th Parkway.	IDENTIFIED AS CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
Plant Entrances with Florida Friendly landscaping and replace existing signs.	COMPLETED: 27 th Parkway and Monica Street entrances planted in 2008. Gocio entrance replanted in 2015.
Options to limit dumping at canal on Monica next to Lockwood Ridge Road	COMPLETED
The removal of Melaleuca trees along Lockwood Ridge Road	RECONSIDERED: Cost prohibitive, issues around property ownership and maintenance.
Updated crosswalk at Prudence and Ingot	RECONSIDERED: Crosswalk is currently marked with pavement markings. Additionally, east and west of the intersection on Prudence "SCHOOL" pavement markings and school crossing signs with beacon light are present.
Install sidewalks on one side of the street (Schwalbe, Dudley, others)	RECONSIDERED: Sidewalks installed in Kensington Park in 2006, additional sidewalks will not be installed in the area until remaining 10+ other communities with requests receive their sidewalks.
Pedestrian bridge on Prudence Drive between Tee Road and Schwalbe Drive.	RECONSIDERED: High cost with limited community benefit.

Acknowledgements

The Kensington Park Neighborhood Plan would not have been possible without the time and effort of the many Kensington Park residents. Neighborhood Services staff and the Board would like to thank the organizations, especially the Kensington Park Civic Association, citizens, and property owners who furnished information and their time to attend numerous neighborhood meetings in the preparation of this document.



Kensington Park Homes