

## **A Needs Statement for Renaissance Village**

(This document was written by Carl House using the best information available in 1997. Data for some of the trends identified is different today, most importantly, crime and teen pregnancy rates. Both have declined in recent years.)

Southeast Florida is defined as the eight counties from Indian River and Okeechobee to Monroe, equivalent to Districts 9, 10, 11 and 15 of the Florida Department of Children and Families. That area included 4.5 million people and 307,000 children ages 13-18 in 1990.

29% of kids entering 9th grade drop out of school without receiving a high school or a general equivalency diploma. In 1996, 11,117 children over the age of 16 were not attending school, had not graduated, and were not considered exempt. In 1995, 17 to 18 percent of public school students in grades 6 to 12 were absent from school for 21 or more days during the academic year. In the same year, 18 percent of the same group of students were suspended in-school; 16 percent of students were suspended out-of-school. In 1994, 16 percent of all arrests were of children. In 1990, 14 percent of people in Florida lived in poverty, and 18 percent of all children lived in poverty. In 1994, the overall population living in poverty totaled 15 percent; while data is currently unavailable, it can be surmised that the percentage of children in poverty has likewise increased.

Teenagers are 3.5 times more likely to commit serious crimes than the average American. The highest crime rate is of youngsters 16 and 17 years old, four times the rate of all Americans. There was a fifty-seven percent increase in violent crimes committed by juveniles aged 10 through 17, and a forty-three percent increase in unmarried girls aged 15 through 19 having babies.

Between 1985 and 1995, violent crime arrest rates increased substantially, with the rate of juveniles ages 14, 15 or 16 up more than eighty percent. The violent crime arrest rate for 17 year olds increased more than seventy percent.

In March, 1994 "local youth gang experts" estimated that Broward County had between 30 and 40 gangs (with up to 60 smaller or less developed gangs) and as many as 3000 youths affiliated with a gang.

In 1995, six percent of murders in the U.S. were juvenile gang killings, which were up thirty-eight percent over the past five years. Ninety-six percent of juvenile gang killings were by means of firearms.

A number of the illicit drugs other than marijuana also continued longer term increases into 1996. Hallucinogens (other than LSD) taken as a class, continued gradual increases in 1996 at the 8th, 10th and 12th grade levels (taken as a sample of all grade levels).

The use of cocaine in any form continued a gradual upward climb.

In 1996, the proportions of students having five or more drinks in a row during the two weeks preceeding the survey were sixteen percent, twenty-five percent and thirty percent for the 8th, 10th, and 12th graders, respectively.

Child sexual abuse medial examinations increased dramatically from 1980 (175 cases) through 1992 (1381 cases), nearly a sevenfold increase.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death in Broward County of persons 15-24 (accidents being the leading cause). The rate per 100,000 population for persons 15-24 is 15.3 in Broward. In Florida, the rate is 14.4 and is the third most frequent cause of death.

Florida has one of the nation's worst school drop-out rates.

The fastest growing segment of the Florida population between now and the year 2010 will be teenagers 15-19. In 1995 there were 1.2 million teenagers in Florida and there will be nearly 1.7 million by the year 2010, an increase of 36 percent. The total population of Florida is expected to increase by twenty-six percent during this time (from 14.1 to 17.8 million).

More information on these subjects and the sources of this information is identified by the topics below.

### **Teenagers have the highest crime rates**

### **Trends in Juvenile Crime Arrest Rates**

### **Trends in Crime Arrest Rates by Age**

### **Teen gangs**

## **Substance abuse**

### **School dropout rates**

Southeast Florida is defined as the eight counties from Indian River and Okeechobee to Monroe, equivalent to Districts 9, 10, 11 and 15 of the Florida Department of Children and Families. That area included 4.5 million people and 307,000 children ages 13-18 in 1990.

Data on educational accomplishments is available from "The 1996 Florida Kids Count Data Book". 29% of kids entering 9th grade drop out of school without receiving a high school or a general equivalency diploma. In 1996, 11,117 children over the age of 16 were not attending school, had not graduated, and were not considered exempt.

In 1995, 17 to 18 percent of public school students in grades 6 to 12 were absent from school for 21 or more days during the academic year. In the same year, 18 percent of the same group of students were suspended in-school; 16 percent of students were suspended out-of-school. In 1994, 16 percent of all arrests were of children. In 1990, 14 percent of people in Florida lived in poverty, and 18 percent of all children lived in poverty. In 1994, the overall population living in poverty totaled 15 percent; while data is currently unavailable, it can be surmised that the percentage of children in poverty has likewise increased. (statistics abstracted from "The Florida Benchmarks Report" published by the Florida Commission on Government Accountability to the People, Feb. 1996)

### **Jobs will be harder to find for those not prepared**

Lots of young people won't be able to function in the information society we are becoming. "Economists say the swift pace of high tech advances will only drive a further wedge between... youngsters (who are computer literate and those who are not)... Nearly every American business from Wall Street to McDonald's requires some computer knowledge. Taco Bell is modeling its cash registers after Nintendo controls..."

"Like it or not, America is a land of inequities. And technology, despite its potential to level the social landscape, is not yet blind to race, wealth and age. The richer the family, the more likely it is to own and use a computer, according to 1993 census data."

"In public schools, the computer gap is closing. More than half the students have some kind of computer, even if its obsolete. But schools with the biggest concentration of poor children have the least equipment... Prosperous Montgomery County, Md., has an \$81 million plan to put every classroom online. Next door, the District of Columbia public schools have the same ambitious plan but less than \$1 million in the budget to accomplish it." (Newsweek, February 27, 1995, pages 50-53)

A new book by William Julius Wilson called *When Work Disappears* offers further insight into the dilemma of the changing work world. "For the first time in the 20th century," Mr. Wilson writes, 'most adults in many inner-city ghetto neighborhoods are not working in a typical week.' Difficult as life was for many urban blacks in the 1940's and 50's, they at least enjoyed reasonable hopes of landing steady, if low-paying, work. Now, mainly because of global economic reorganization and the disappearance of unskilled factory jobs, he asserts, those hopes have nearly vanished. The collapse of the low-wage economy has, in turn, destroyed neighborhood businesses and encouraged the departure of upwardly mobile young adults. In a little more than a generation, formerly viable if relatively lowly black communities have become chaotic, crime-infested, welfare-dependent slums... Without the spiritual and financial anchor of respectable employment, there is little chance that the acute social disorganization of the black inner cities will improve.... The technological advances and global economic shifts of the past 30 years have had devastating effects at the bottom of American society." (reviewed by Sean Wilentz in the *New York Times Book Review*, p.7).

### **Collapse of the family, and missing father figures**

"The National Center for Health Statistics reported that in 1993, 50.2% of the births in New York City were to single mothers (43% among white women and 71% among blacks) -- an illegitimacy rate that is actually smaller than that in other major cities. The rate was 72% in Detroit, 70% in St. Louis, 68% in Newark and Washington, 67% in New Haven and Cleveland, and 65% in Baltimore and New Orleans. Nationally, 31%, or nearly 1 in 3, of all births are to unwed mothers." (by Sam Roberts, *New York Times*, October 1, 1995)

"A new survey by the Florida Family Council draws a direct link between juvenile crime and missing fathers... Nearly three out of four juvenile offenders come from homes where their mothers and father were not married. Two-thirds of the offenders surveyed said their fathers were gone at least some of the time. More than half said their fathers had either a negative influence or no influence at all. 'Father absences is a problem that has no basis in class, ethnic group or geography,' said Peter Schweizer, co-author of the study. 'It affects all communities and is equally damaging in all communities.'"

"Most of our kids come from single family homes where the parent is usually working and there's lack of supervision.' said Johnny Brown, Broward County district administrator of the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. 'Without the supervision, the youngsters end up violating the law and wind up in our system.' (Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel, March 3, 1997).

## **Suicide**

According to the Center for Disease Control, suicide rates for youths 15-19 quadrupled in this country between the years of 1950 (2.7 per 100,000) and 1988 (11.3 per 100,000).

As part of the 1990 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of U.S. high school students in grades 9-12, students in the study were asked whether they had seriously thought about suicide in the previous 12 months, whether they had made a specific plan about how they would accomplish suicide, how many times they had attempted it, and whether the suicide attempt(s) required medical attention. 27.3% of U.S. high school students reported they had thought seriously about suicide, 16.3% had made specific plans, 8.3% had made one or more suicide attempts, and 2.1% had required medical attention because of their suicide attempt(s).

Suicide is the second leading cause of death in Broward County of persons 15-24 (accidents being the leading cause). The rate per 100,000 population for persons 15-24 is 15.3 in Broward. In Florida, the rate is 14.4 and is the third most frequent cause of death (Florida Vital Statistics, 1993).

### **Abuse and neglect**

The law defines an "abused or neglected child" as one whose physical, mental health, or welfare is harmed or threatened with harm by the acts of omissions of the parent or other person responsible for the child's welfare.

In 1994, there were 986 Broward County youths in foster care placement. HRS estimates the need for 265 beds in a variety of special foster care programs and indicates that many of these youths are not in the recommended type of placement. Many youths are placed out of the County or State each year at a cost of \$1,092,118 for special foster/group home placement. Many of these foster care placements are a result of either physical or sexual abuse having occurred in the home.

The Broward County Child Protection Team, which is responsible for providing medical examinations and consultant services to HRS in the area of physical abuse cases reported 1064 cases for 1994. This is a decrease of 46% from the 1956 cases referred to the Child Protection Team in 1992.

Information collected by the Broward County Sexual Assault Treatment Center, now the Phoenix Centre, indicates a trend in reported adult sexual abuse cases versus those involving children. Child sexual abuse case medical examinations increased dramatically from 1980 (175 cases) through 1992 (1381 cases), nearly a sevenfold increase. Reports of adult cases of sexual assault have decreased over this period of time with 337 cases reported in 1980 vs. 242 cases in 1992, a 28% decrease.

Since 1992, reported cases of both physical and sexual child abuse have decreased. Individuals working in these areas believe that both increased public awareness and prevention activities over the last ten years, along with improvements to the state's anonymous Child Abuse Hotline, are having a positive impact on the incidence of child abuse in our community. (Broward Needs Assessment)

### **More of us will be teenagers**

#### **Birthrates for teen age mothers have increased**

(births to teen age mothers will be discussed in the next draft)

#### **Life outcomes of low birthweight babies**

(life outcomes of low birthweight babies will be discussed in a future draft)

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