

Park Forest Neighborhood Action Plan



**Proudly presented by the residents of the Park Forest Neighborhood
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Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

The Park Forest Neighborhood was selected to participate in the Neighborhood Planning Program because of the challenges facing the area and a demonstrated interest on the part of the residents to improve their neighborhood. Over a period of six months, the Neighborhood Planning Team met to develop a vision for the neighborhood and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their neighborhood. The team then developed five goals and supporting objectives that help to define what the residents of Park Forest are trying to achieve. The goals contained in the Park Forest Neighborhood Action Plan are:

1. Create a positive community image and instill community pride. Maintain and preserve the quality of the existing residential properties by promoting homeownership, housing rehabilitation, and code compliance.
2. Provide a variety of recreational opportunities and open space. Continue to ensure that parks are well maintained.
3. Assure safe and efficient mobility for cars, trucks and pedestrians while protecting the stability and residential character of the neighborhood.
4. The tree canopy is a major neighborhood asset. Preserve neighborhood trees as part of the resources that contribute to the character and beauty of the neighborhood.
5. Enhance recognition of the Park Forest area and further develop neighborhood identity and cohesiveness. Encourage a neighborhood spirit which will preserve the friendly, open relations between neighbors and make Park Forest a fine place to live.

***Executive
Summary
(Continued)***

To help achieve the stated goals, this plan establishes a series of objectives that offer specific plans of action and identify the parties responsible for implementation. Expected costs to implement this plan are approximately \$1700 from existing budgets and \$8,000 - \$12,000 from future bond elections.

Background

Purpose

The Park Forest Neighborhood Action Plan was developed by members of the Park Forest Neighborhood working in conjunction with the City of Plano Neighborhood Planning Program to define a vision for the future of the neighborhood. The Plan utilizes a strategic planning methodology to accomplish this vision through direct revitalization efforts and targeted action plans. The plan is based on the Neighborhood Planning program initiated in 1998.

The Planning Process

The Park Forest Neighborhood was selected to participate in the Neighborhood Planning Program because of the challenges facing the area and a demonstrated interest by the residents to improve their neighborhood. This planning effort began in July 2004 and meetings were held biweekly through December 2004 to identify community issues and develop strategies for their resolution and improvement.

Community outreach was very important to the planning process; efforts included direct mailings, an e-mail distribution list, a neighborhood opinion survey, and a website. Meeting notices were mailed to lot owners and targeted stakeholders. Neighborhood surveys (please see Appendix A) were distributed to every home in the neighborhood. The Park Forest Neighborhood Planning team met with representatives from many City departments to formulate action strategies. Information gathered in these meetings, through the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis (please see Appendix B) and through the neighborhood survey was used to help formulate the goals and objectives contained in this plan.

***Neighborhood
Vision***

We the residents of Park Forest envision a neighborhood that is **safe, beautiful and clean**. We see a neighborhood that is **inviting for families** with good schools and vibrant parks.

The **parks are clean, safe and easily accessible**. Various recreational activities are provided for all residents.

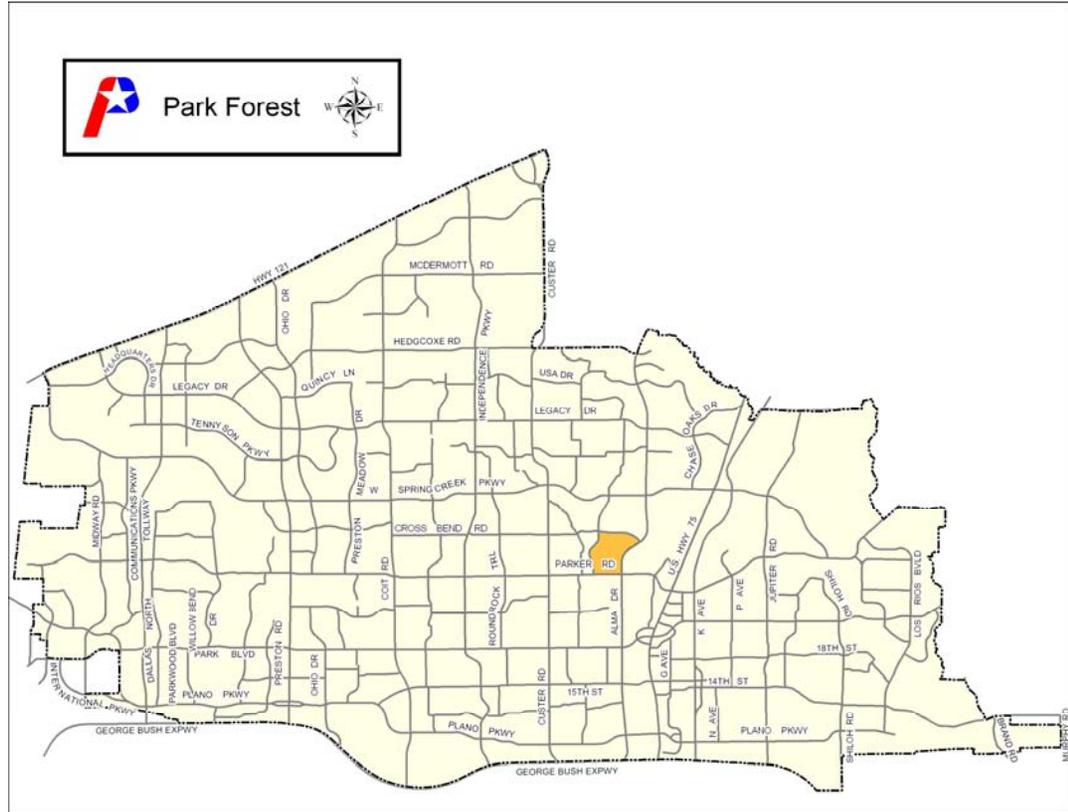
Traffic travels through the neighborhood in a **safe and respectful** manner.

We **celebrate the diversity** of our neighborhood and welcome newcomers. People of many different cultures and several generations live together harmoniously.

Neighborhood Description

Land Use and Zoning

The Park Forest Neighborhood is located just to the east of Big Lake Park, Christie Elementary School and Carpenter Middle School. The neighborhood is bounded by Alma Drive to the east, Rainier Road to the west, Cross Bend Road to the north and Parker

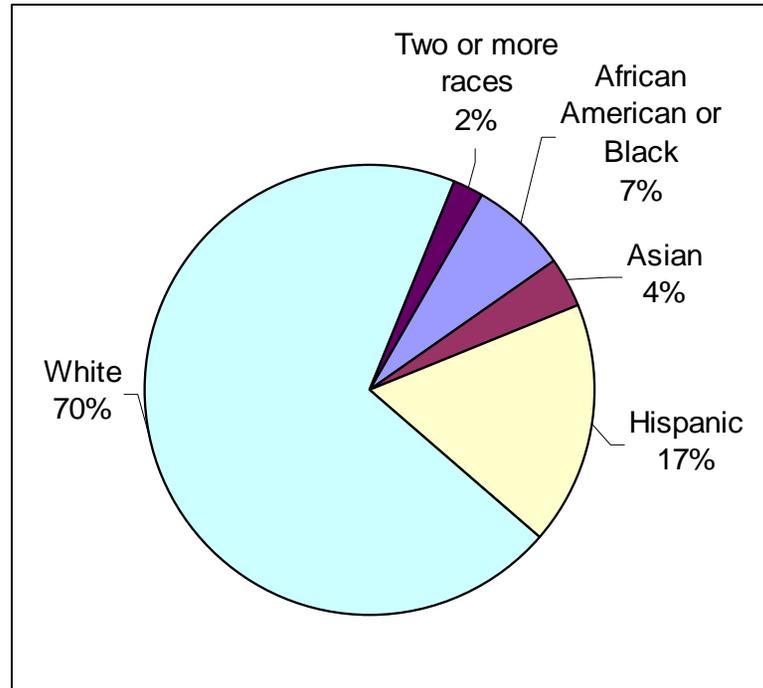


Road to the south (please see location map to the right). The neighborhood includes over 600 homes. The majority of the Park Forest neighborhood is zoned for single-family residential use (SF-7) but the neighborhood also includes an area on the southeast corner zoned as a Planned Development District for retail uses (PD-36 and PD-69R). (Please see Appendix C for a detailed map of these zoning boundaries).

***Neighborhood
Description
(Continued)***

Residential Population and Demographics

Census data for the Park Forest neighborhood indicate that the neighborhood is experiencing some significant changes. Over the past 20 years the number of people living in the neighborhood has declined slightly from 1727 according to the 1990 census to 1621 people in the 2000 census. Housing



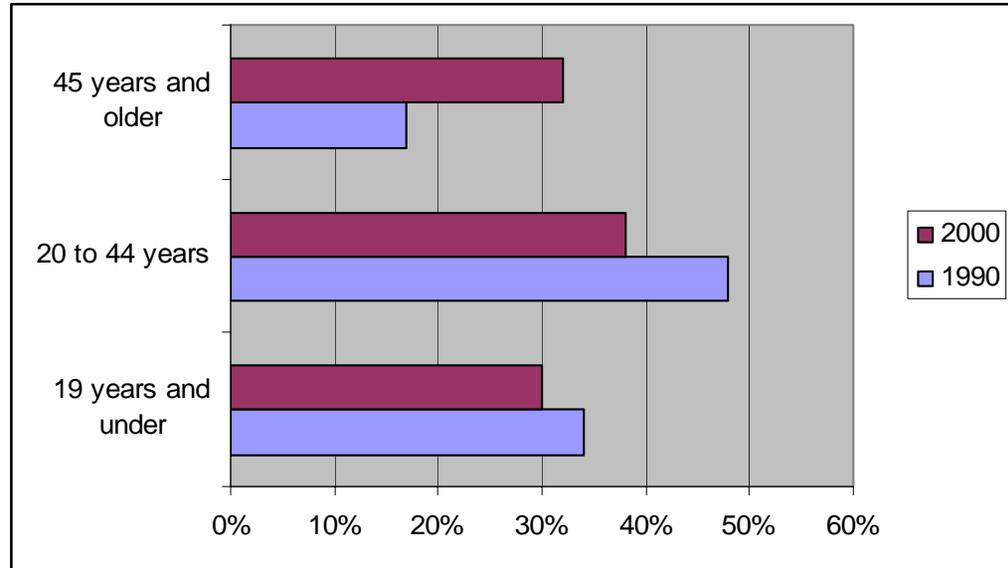
occupancy rates have remained high – rates were approximately 97.5% at the time of the 2000 US Census but the percentage of rental properties is much higher in this neighborhood than they are for other single family areas city-wide. Based on information from the Collin County Appraisal District, 74% of the housing units in the neighborhood are currently owner occupied with the remaining 26% being rentals. This rate is significantly higher than the citywide statistics (93.3% owner occupied, 6.7%

renter occupied) as well as the 1980 census results (10% rentals); however, this number is lower than the 1990 rate, which was 30% (Please see Appendix D).

***Neighborhood
Description
(Continued)***

Other definitive changes are occurring in the neighborhood; the 2000 U.S. Census shows that the neighborhood is home to a more diverse group of people than ever before. While the number of people living in the neighborhood has remained constant, the groups of people living in the neighborhood have changed over the past 20 years. There are a greater number of people from different races and ethnicities; today the neighborhood is 70% white, 17% Hispanic, 7% African American, 4% Asian and 2% two or more races (see chart above). The age structure of the neighborhood, consistent with national trends, has also changed. There are more people in the neighborhood over the age of 55 and fewer children than there

were ten and twenty years ago. The 2000 U.S. Census indicates that the annual median household income for Park Forest was \$58,302 (1999 dollars) which is approximately 7% less than it was in 1990 (\$62,607).



Neighborhood Maintenance

Most of the Park Forest planning area was built during the period from 1972 to 1978, though several sections were built in the late 60's and early 70's. Park Forest has an abundance of beautiful shade trees, good access to services, major thoroughfares, provides some of the more affordable housing within the city, and is within walking distance of several parks and schools.

Most of the homes in Park Forest are at least 30 years old and as a result some signs of age are apparent. Many homes in the neighborhood are no longer owner occupied. Residents have observed some problems with code compliance, trash and graffiti. There are also some infrastructure problems that need to be addressed. Some streets in the area need to be patched or repaved, as do some sidewalks and alleys.

The condition of a neighborhood sends a message to residents and visitors about how well people care for the area. If properties are poorly maintained people will observe this and may conclude that no one cares for the home and perhaps even the block. Apathy encourages littering, poorly



Figure 1: Many homes in Park Forest are well maintained; however, property standards violations and rental properties are growing concerns for neighborhood residents.

***Neighborhood
Maintenance
(Continued)***

maintained yards, graffiti and eventually more serious crimes. The residents of Park Forest are proud of their neighborhood and have embraced a proactive approach to keeping their neighborhood vital.

Goal: Create a positive community image and instill community pride. Maintain and preserve the quality of the existing residential properties by promoting homeownership, housing rehabilitation, and code compliance.

Objective: Be vigilant in the reporting and enforcement of Property Standards code violations.

Objective: Improve compliance with Property Standards regulations by educating residents about the “Top Ten Code Violations”.

Objective: Promote homeownership by sending a targeted mailer about the City of Plano First Time Homebuyer’s program to rental properties in the neighborhood.

Objective: Encourage home maintenance by educating residents about the City of Plano Housing Rehabilitation Program.

Area Parks

The Park Forest neighborhood is located adjacent to two City parks – Big Lake Park and Chisholm Trail Park. These parks are well loved by neighborhood residents for the recreational opportunities they provide and the natural beauty they bring to the community. Overall these parks meet the needs of residents and are well utilized.



Figure 2: Big Lake Park is a favorite destination for neighborhood residents.

Goal: Provide a variety of recreational opportunities and open space. Continue to ensure that parks are well maintained.

Objective: Repair damage to the playground equipment at Chisholm Trail Park.

Objective: Treat for fire ants around Big Lake Park, especially under the benches.

Objective: Conduct a periodic review to ensure that these parks continue to meet the needs of a changing neighborhood demographic.

Objective: Install additional lighting along the pathways in Big Lake Park to create a more inviting environment at the park during the evening hours.

Transportation

Some of the biggest problems that residents have been experiencing in the neighborhood are a high volume of cut-through traffic and speeders. Safe and efficient transportation contributes significantly to the overall livability of an area. Children should be able to walk or ride their bikes safely to and from schools and parks, elderly residents should be able to walk to and from nearby bus stops, and families should be able to walk comfortably around their neighborhood. A pedestrian friendly environment helps to establish a feeling of community, and connection to the neighborhood reduces automobile traffic and creates safer streets.

In Park Forest, pedestrian facilities, with a few exceptions, are good; the neighborhood has a relatively continuous network of sidewalks and has access to the City of Plano's trail network through two adjacent parks, Big Lake Park and Chisholm Trail Park. In some places, there are problems with uneven and/or cracked sidewalks that need to be addressed. Overall, streets in the Park Forest neighborhood are in good condition though a few spots are in need of repairs.

Goal: Assure safe and efficient mobility for cars, trucks and pedestrians while protecting the stability and residential character of the neighborhood.



Figure 3: Vehicles parking on both sides of the street often restrict traffic flow in the neighborhood.

***Transportation
(Continued)***

Objective: Protect the residential character of the neighborhood from cut-through traffic and speeding, while maintaining convenient access to and across major arterial streets by working with the City of Plano Safe Streets program.

Objective: Ensure that neighborhood streets, alleys, and sidewalks are well maintained. Work with City of Plano Public Works to complete an inventory of existing conditions and necessary repairs.

Objective: Ensure that streets and sidewalks are well lighted. Evaluate existing street lighting to make certain that it meets minimum City distance standards. In cases where lighting is obscured by the tree canopy, work with property owners to get these trees trimmed.

Preservation of Natural Resources

Just as streets, sidewalks, public buildings and recreational facilities are a part of a community's infrastructure, so are neighborhood trees and creeks. Trees -- and, collectively, the urban forest -- are important capital assets that require care and maintenance just like any other property. The Park Forest neighborhood has a wealth of trees, an important asset residents would like to preserve and enhance.



Figure 4: Mature trees are prevalent throughout the Park Forest neighborhood.

Goal: The tree canopy is a major neighborhood asset. Preserve neighborhood trees as part of the resources that contribute to the character and beauty of the neighborhood.

Objective: Request a survey of neighborhood trees by the City of Plano Urban Forester to identify and inventory neighborhood trees. Meet with the City of Plano Urban Forester to review the survey results and to learn about tree care and maintenance. Share this information with other residents in the neighborhood.

Objective: Maintain the existing tree canopy by replacing dead or dying trees.

*Preservation of
Natural Resources*

Objective: Seek funding to offset the cost of buying trees by participating in the Keep Plano Beautiful Matching Grant Program and/or the Plano Park Foundation's matching grant program.

Community

Residents in the Park Forest neighborhood would like to foster a stronger sense of community in their neighborhood. They would like to encourage neighbors to get to know one another, to embrace diversity and to participate in neighborhood activities.

Goal: Enhance recognition of the Park Forest area and further develop neighborhood identity and cohesiveness. Encourage a neighborhood spirit which will preserve the friendly, open relations between neighbors and make Park Forest a fine place to live.

Objective: Reduce crime and increase an overall sense of peace and safety in the neighborhood by forming a neighborhood crime watch group.

Objective: Improve sense of community and neighborhood cohesiveness by forming a neighborhood association.

Objective: Provide an opportunity for neighbors to get to know one another by organizing an annual block party.

Objective: Promote broader recognition of Park Forest's name and boundaries with the installation of sign toppers in the neighborhood.

Park Forest Neighborhood Action Plan: Implementation Matrix

Neighborhood Maintenance	Responsible Parties	Cost
<p>Goal: Create a positive community image and instill community pride. Maintain and preserve the quality of the existing residential properties by promoting homeownership, housing rehabilitation, and code compliance.</p>		
<p>Objective: Be vigilant in the reporting and enforcement of Property Standards code violations.</p>	Residents/City of Plano Property Standards	Staff Time
<p>Objective: Improve compliance with Property Standards regulations by educating residents about the “Top Ten Code Violations”.</p>	City of Plano Property Standards	Staff Time
<p>Objective: Promote homeownership by sending a targeted mailer about the City of Plano First Time Homebuyer’s program to rental properties in the neighborhood.</p>	City of Plano Neighborhood Services	Staff Time/Approximately \$150.00 from CDBG Funding
<p>Objective: Encourage home maintenance by educating residents about the City of Plano Housing Rehabilitation Program.</p>	City of Plano Neighborhood Services	Staff Time

Park Forest Neighborhood Action Plan: Implementation Matrix (Continued)

Area Parks	Responsible Parties	Cost
Goal: Provide a variety of recreational opportunities and open space. Continue to ensure that parks are well maintained.		
Objective: Repair damage to the playground equipment at Chisholm Trail Park.	City of Plano Parks Department	Existing Parks Budget
Objective: Treat for fire ants around Big Lake Park, especially under the benches.	City of Plano Parks Department	Existing Parks Budget
Objective: Conduct a periodic review to ensure that these parks continue to meet the needs of a changing neighborhood demographic.	City of Plano Parks Department/Residents	Staff Time
Objective: Install additional lighting along the pathways in Big Lake Park to create a more inviting environment at the park during the evening hours.	City of Plano Parks Department	\$8,000-\$12,000 (funding dependant on future bond election)

Park Forest Neighborhood Action Plan: Implementation Matrix (Continued)

Transportation	Responsible Parties	Cost
<p>Goal: Assure safe and efficient mobility for cars, trucks and pedestrians while protecting the stability and residential character of the neighborhood.</p>		
<p>Objective: Protect the residential character of the neighborhood from cut-through traffic and speeding, while maintaining convenient access to and across major arterial streets by working with the City of Plano Safe Streets program.</p>	Residents/City of Plano Traffic Engineering	Staff Time
<p>Objective: Ensure that neighborhood streets, alleys, and sidewalks are well maintained. Work with City of Plano Public Works to complete an inventory of existing conditions and necessary repairs.</p>	City of Plano Public Works	Staff Time
<p>Objective: Ensure that streets and sidewalks are well lighted. Evaluate existing street lighting to make certain that it meets minimum City distance standards. In cases where lighting is obscured by the tree canopy, work with property owners to get these trees trimmed.</p>	City of Plano Engineering/Residents	Staff Time/ approximately \$3,000 per light, if warranted (Existing budgets)

Park Forest Neighborhood Action Plan: Implementation Matrix (Continued)

Preservation of Natural Resources	Responsible Parties	Cost
<p>Goal: The tree canopy is a major neighborhood asset. Preserve neighborhood trees as part of the resources that contribute to the character and beauty of the neighborhood.</p>		
<p>Objective: Request a survey of neighborhood trees by City of Plano Urban Forester to identify and inventory neighborhood trees. Meet with the City of Plano Urban Forester to review the survey results and to learn about tree care and maintenance. Share this information with other residents in the neighborhood.</p>	City of Plano Parks Department/Residents	Staff Time
<p>Objective: Maintain the existing tree canopy by replacing dead or dying trees.</p>	Residents	N/A
<p>Objective: Seek funding to offset the cost of buying trees by participating in the Keep Plano Beautiful Matching Grant Program and/or the Plano Park Foundation’s matching grant program.</p>	Residents	Existing Budgets

Park Forest Neighborhood Action Plan: Implementation Matrix (Continued)

Community	Responsible Parties	Cost
<p>Goal: Enhance recognition of the Park Forest area and further develop neighborhood identity and cohesiveness. Encourage a neighborhood spirit which will preserve the friendly, open relations between neighbors and make Park Forest a fine place to live.</p>		
<p>Objective: Reduce crime and increase an overall sense of peace and safety in the neighborhood by forming a neighborhood crime watch group.</p>	Residents	N/A
<p>Objective: Improve sense of community and neighborhood cohesiveness by forming a neighborhood association.</p>	Residents	N/A
<p>Objective: Provide an opportunity for neighbors to get to know one another by organizing an annual block party.</p>	Residents	N/A
<p>Objective: Promote broader recognition of Park Forest's name and boundaries with the installation of sign toppers in the neighborhood.</p>	City of Plano Neighborhood Services	Sign toppers – approximately \$1500 (from existing Neighborhood Planning Budget)

Appendix A

The following survey was sent to every home in the Park Forest study area. One hundred and sixteen surveys were received back, a response rate of 19%. The results are summarized below:

1. How do you travel?

Auto- 94%

Bicycle – 46%

DART Light Rail – 6%

Bus / mass transit – 4%

Walk – 33%

2. Are there transportation or traffic problems in your neighborhood?

Yes – 78%

No – 22%

If so, what are the problems?

Speeding

Parking on both sides of the street

Need bike trails

Traffic lights change too fast

Need street lights

People running stop signs

Trim bushes

Need speed bumps

*Appendix A
(Continued)*

3. What would increase your desire to walk/cycle?

Improved lighting – 70%

Pedestrian/bicycle paths – 14%

Speed bumps – 24%

Sidewalks – 9%

Pedestrian Crosswalks – 7%

4. Mark the appropriate box:

a. It is convenient for me to get around on DART

Strongly Agree – 7%

Agree – 38%

Disagree – 28%

Strongly Disagree – 15%

No answer – 12%

b. Crime is a serious problem in my neighborhood:

Strongly Agree – 4%

Agree – 18%

Disagree – 59%

Strongly Disagree – 9%

No answer – 10%

***Appendix A
(Continued)***

c. City government is responsive to our needs as a neighborhood:

Strongly Agree – 4%

Agree – 50%

Disagree – 21%

Strongly Disagree – 6%

No answer – 19%

d. Overall my neighborhood is clean:

Strongly Agree – 5%

Agree – 62%

Disagree – 24%

Strongly Disagree – 7%

No answer – 2%

5. Do parks in your area meet your recreational needs?

Yes – 88%

No – 12%

**Appendix A
(Continued)**

6. On average, how often do you visit a park?

- Daily – 18%
- Weekly – 36%
- Once/month – 14%
- Few times/year – 21%
- Never – 4%
- Other – 4%
- No answer – 3%

7. What do you like best about your neighborhood?

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Trees | Quiet |
| Location | Mixed ethnicity |
| Close to parks | Feels safe |
| Close to schools | Close to schools |
| People | Long term residents |

*Appendix A
(Continued)*

8. What three improvements would you most like to see in your neighborhood?

- More lighting
- Street sweepers
- No on-street parking
- More code enforcement
- Speed bumps
- Trim trees

9. In Plano, some home occupations, such as construction, auto repair, and landscape services are prohibited. Have you noticed any of these businesses operating out of peoples homes?

- Yes – 28%
- No – 69%
- No answer – 3%

10. What types of crime concern you in your neighborhood?

- Burglary – 47%
- Vandalism – 47%
- Juvenile crime – 32%
- Drugs – 15%
- Auto theft – 13%

*Appendix A
(Continued)*

11. How long have you lived in the neighborhood?

Less than one year – 11%

One to five years – 21%

Six to ten years – 13%

More than ten years -54%

12. What is your present housing situation?

Own – 91%

Rent – 9%

Appendix B

The results from the Park Forest Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (S.W.O.T.) analysis are reported below.

Strengths / Opportunities

- Provides housing for moderate income families
- Close to shopping and restaurants
- Close to major highways
- Close to schools
- Attract good homeowners
- Mature trees
- Diversity of residents
- Most lawns are well kept
- Well established neighborhood
- People being involved in these (neighborhood) types of meetings
- Nice older homes in a potentially great neighborhood
- Close to the bus lines, train, and schools
- Roads are in good condition
- Close knit community
- More getting to know each other activities, block parties
- Close to walking park and trail

***Appendix B
(Continued)***

- Neighbors get to know each other and look out for each other
- West of 75 – good for real estate

Weaknesses / Threats

- Keep the trees and brush cut back from creek along trail at Big Lake Park
- Yard Maintenance
- Homeowners need to improve upkeep of property
- Park and bike trail need better maintenance
- Add color to yards
- Thefts from garages
- Response to complaints on street repairs
- Aging houses – foundation problems
- Property standards violations
- Need closer recreation centers for children
- Becoming much older
- Growing number of homes for sale or rent – lots of good people want to move
- Need tax on rent houses
- Rent houses need revised code for property standards
- Speeding traffic

***Appendix B
(Continued)***

- Junk cars
- Dead trees on private property need to be removed
- Becoming increasingly noisy in the past year
- Cars with very loud radios
- Street parking and parking facing the wrong direction
- Street cleaning and sidewalk maintenance
- Many rental house
- Older neighbors passing away, newer neighbors don't communicate
- Litter in the streets
- Unkempt yards
- Too many cars parked on the streets
- Too much rental property
- Aging property
- Aging infrastructure

