Community Background Report

City of Sweetwater

County

Miami-Dade

Boundaries

North: N.W. 7th Street
South: S.W. 8th Street
West: S.W. 117th Avenue
East: S.W. 100th Avenue

Community Type

Municipality

History

The City of Sweetwater occupies approximately 532 acres of land in western Miami-Dade County. The area known as Sweetwater was founded during the Florida land boom of the 1920s when the Miami-Pittsburg Land Company purchased the acreage and laid out the original plat of "Sweetwater Groves". In 1938, Clyde Andrews acquired most of "Sweetwater Groves" and began to market lots to tourists and migrants.

In 1941, Sweetwater successfully incorporated as a City. The town's first mayor was Joe Sanderlin. By 1959 Sweetwater had attracted 50 residents and contained a church, a town hall, a grocery store, a service station, and 183 homes. The town also had a two-man police force and a volunteer fire department.

In 1970, 3,000 residents inhabited Sweetwater. During the 1970s the city's growth was propelled by several events including the establishment of Florida International University to the south, the construction of State Road 836 to the north, State Road 826 to the east, and the influx of Hispanic residents and immigrants. During this time a large amount of Nicaraguan refugees established their presence in the City of Sweetwater. The town then became known as a largely Nicaraguan community. All of the events above led to the doubling of the Sweetwater population throughout the 1970s.

In Sweetwater's 1998 Comprehensive Plan it is stated that the town had developed 97% of their land and only 3% of available land remained vacant. In 2004 the city began consideration of partnering with Florida International University to establish a University City along 109th street corridor through Sweetwater that would include new or redeveloped housing catering to the university's student and faculty population. In 2005 Mayor Manuel Marono and his staff began the annexation process to include areas northward to Northwest 25th Street, westward to the Florida Turnpike, and eastward to SW 107th street.

Community Dynamics

At the time of the 2000 census, the City of Sweetwater had a population of 14,226 residents. 93 percent of these residents are Hispanic. The city now includes a more diverse Hispanic community compared to the predominant Nicaraguan population seen throughout from the 1960s to the 1980s. A specific age group does not dominate the population. Sweetwater is not an affluent community with a per capita income at $11,098. 16.4 percent of Sweetwater's population falls below the national poverty line and an estimated 15 percent of the population needs affordable housing.

Although seniors make up only 13 percent of the population, Sweetwater has numerous programs and services that are directed towards aiding the senior citizens of their community and as well as surrounding communities. In 2005, interviews conducted by the FIU Metropolitan Center of the City of Sweetwater staff indicate the primary concerns as needs for more housing for the low-income and elderly, healthcare, and more funding from the government and private organizations to assist the needy populations. The city's senior center serves 200 clients and has over 100 on the waiting list. At the center, clients are provided meals and are monthly taken on field trips to local attractions outside of the city's boundaries. On the last Friday of each month the city distributes bags of food to its low-income residents which include items such as dry-milk, beans, and canned goods.

In 2005, the mayor and nine other county employees became volunteers for the Bigs in School program, the school-based Big Brothers Big Sisters program that matches mentors with kids at participating schools. The Police Force has also taken various steps to ensure the safety of their residents. The Sweetwater Police Department contains 25 full time officers, and 10 reserve officers. In 2005, the police department came under fire for proposing to sell about 20 guns that the department has confiscated over the past 10 years to generate revenue for the police department. With that revenue they planned to purchase new guns for the entire department staff.

The City of Sweetwater has 4 four parks. Construction on Dominoes Park, located at n 10620 SW Seventh Terrace, began in mid-2004. The park is a place for Sweetwater senior citizens and children. The Dominoes Park project is still under construction and has experienced problems with funding. The city's current mayor, Manuel Marono is considering turning a large portion of property west of 107th on NW 12th street, a portion of their future annexed area, into a park. The

land is mostly comprised of dredged sediments, includes a small lake, and houses some exotic species of plants. The proposed annexation, if passed, will change the size and land use of the City of Sweetwater dramatically.

Sources

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