

**VOLUSIA COUNTY  
WEED AND SEED PROGRAM  
EVALUATION STUDY  
BY  
STETSON INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH  
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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **Executive Summary**

- I) History
- II) Organization
- III) Nature and Extent of Problem
- IV) Basic Strategies to Remedy Problem
- V) Evaluation Process
- VI) General Evaluation Conclusions
- VII) General Recommendations
- VIII) Details of Evaluation with Reference to Main Goals/Strategies
  - A. Law Enforcement
  - B. Community Policing
  - C. Prevention and Treatment
  - D. Neighborhood Restoration
- IX) APPENDICES
  - A. Management Structure
  - B. Major Incidents of Crime in Weed and Seed Area: Graphs
  - C. Major Incidents of Crime in Weed and Seed Area: Table – Volusia County Sheriff’s Office
  - D. Summary of Housing CFDC Services
  - E. Chisholm Community Center Information from Web Site
  - F. West Volusia Police Athletic League Information from Web Site
  - G. Blight Study for the Spring Hill Area Narrative
  - H. Spring Hill Demographics: Tables
  - I. Weed and Seed Funding Application for Projects
  - J. Resident Opinions of the Weed and Seed Area
  - K. West Volusia Habitat for Humanity Map of Homes Built
  - L. Map of Weed and Seed Area

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**[There is a substantial amount of detail in the report indicating findings concerning numerous specific objectives in the report, conclusions and recommendations. This executive summary is simply to draw together highlights of the report. It would be informative for all who are involved in the policy process to study also the more detailed information when time permits.]**

**History of Weed and Seed:** Nationally since 1991. Locally since 1997. Expanded 2001 from Spring Hill to wider area.

**Problem:** High crime rates, especially with regard to the use of drugs.

**Residential Characteristics Weed and Seed Area:** Low income, low education, high unemployment, ethnically mixed

**Mission:** Weed and Seed has the basic mission of weeding out crime and altering the infrastructure and social characteristics, including the social culture, that contribute to crime and lower the quality of life in a neighborhood

### Basic Strategies:

**Strategy A: Law Enforcement .** The basic objective is to bring all law enforcement agencies into coordinated activities to reduce criminal activity

**Strategy B: Community Policing..** The basic objective is to bring community residents and law enforcement personnel into cooperative relationships in fighting criminal activities

**Strategy C: Prevention, Intervention and Treatment.** The basic objective is to develop a healthy community with programs for adults and youth that contribute to a culture of community identity and self-development along positive lines. This is a key part of the “Seeding” to prevent criminal activity.

**Strategy D: Neighborhood Restoration..** The basic objective is to develop an environment that is physically appealing and satisfying as well as culturally supporting for residents as they engage in positive community and self-developmental activities

### Conclusions:

**Leveraging Resources of Community** Through the Steering Committee and personal efforts of the Director working with other organizations and government agencies this strategy is followed to a significant degree, but can be greatly enhanced. The widespread sources for funding coming from county government, city government, Volusia School Board District, Weed and Seed funds and other sources evince a broad community concern and willingness to pool efforts and resources in providing a better place for people to live both in the sense of reducing crime and producing a good quality of life that lessens the possibilities of developing criminal elements in the community. In effect there is a “greater Weed and Seed Program” in which numerous local participants are contributing time, effort and money to provide a safe environment and reduce the culture of crime while implanting a culture resistant to criminal activities. A major task of the Director of the Weed and Seed Program might be to help coordinate all the players in this “greater” effort. The total amount of money spent on such community enhancement programs is not clear since it involves money from Weed and Seed, CFCDC, City of DeLand, Volusia County, and the Volusia School District. It would be helpful to have a grasp of the funds being expended overall and from what sources in order to evaluate and make suggestions on programs and funding from a centrally focused perspective.

**Measurable Tasks:** The objectives stated in the grant proposal frequently refer to measurable tasks; however, in many cases the statistics are either not available or scattered throughout several sources

**Strategy Clarification: Strategies A and B** are clearly separate strategies with the first focused on coordinating law enforcement agencies in actions against criminals and the second focused on bringing law enforcement personnel and community residents together to establish an environment watchful of and hostile to criminal activity. Strategies C and D are not as clearly separated. For

example, job training can go into either category as could the Safe Havens. In 2003-2004 there is to be a special emphasis on computer training which is set outside the basic strategies.

**Awareness Objective:** The “awareness” objective indicated throughout the grant relative to different aspects of the grant is one that is important and should be viewed not only as a critical objective, but a doable one. However, it is an area that needs substantial improvement

**Program Objectives/ Residents Priorities:** The objectives of the program tie in well to high priority indicators by the residents surveyed. High on their list of priorities were:

- more police presence
- more youth centers
- increased educational opportunities for youth and adults
- affordable housing
- job placement assistance.
- day care facilities [Not mentioned in the Weed and Seed grant]
- health facilities [Not mentioned in the Weed and Seed grant.]

**Crime Reduction – Resident’s View:** It is generally positive, but for only slightly over a majority of the residents, while a substantial number feel that the police have not been successful in reducing crime overall or in drug dealing and robberies

**Fear of Crime – Directors at Chisholm Center and Oakland Terrace** say that the fear of crime has declined. However it is about a 50-50 split in the survey responses with 51% saying they feel safer now and 49% saying they do not feel safer.

**Crime Reduction -- Crime Statistics::** The Weed and Seed 2003 narrative indicates no significant decrease in simple assault and aggravated assault and refers to operations taking place. Notably no statistics are indicated which show a steady decrease in crime – the heart of the Weed and Seed Program. Crime statistics are notoriously problematic; hence, conclusions drawn from them must be done cautiously. For example, more cooperation with the police and more presence may result in more arrests; thus, the crime rates measured by arrests would go up. Simply more reporting due to more cooperation can also increase rates.

**Police Working Harder Against Crime:** There is a clear sense that the police are working harder against crime with 64% of the residents surveyed attesting to this. Nevertheless 36% disagree, thus leaving room for considerable improvement.

**Increased Presence:** Considerable accomplishment has taken place in pursuing this goal. The police presence is much more in evidence than several years ago. Almost half of those surveyed [45%] indicated they see police patrolling but, importantly, almost half did not [55%]. However, even though foot patrols and bike patrols have been placed in the area, very few of the residents surveyed indicated that foot and bike patrols have increased over previous years [only 14% agree foot patrols have increased and 30 % see an increase in bicycle patrols]. This is one of the areas where residents surveyed feel more needs to be done. Almost 60% of the residents called for more police presence and was the largest item by far in the open-ended question on what was needed to reduce crime concerned some type of police presence.

**Increased Cooperation:** In general, residents surveyed felt that the cooperation between police and residents had increased over the last several years [63%]; but a healthy minority of 37% disagreed. Directors at the Chisholm Center and Oakland Terrace were enthusiastic about the decrease in criminal activity in their areas and the cooperative relationships with the police. Residents surveyed indicate that more people are involved in cooperation with the police [60%] than several years ago, but 40% indicated otherwise.

**Social Activities:** Social activities with law enforcement personnel and residents of the area have taken place on a regular basis and appear to be helping to build a sense of working together.

**Lines of Communication:** Lines of communication to the police have been opened up in a significant fashion with instant contact to the police and rapid response reported by directors of the Chisholm Center and Oakland Terrace.

**Enhancing a Sense of Community:** The sheer quantity of the programs attests to substantial efforts to fulfill the strategy goal of enhancing a sense of community and developing constructive involvement in the community. The involvement of all local government units (including state representatives in obtaining state grants) , Stetson University, social organizations such as the Rotary Clubs, diverse grant-based programs such as the Central Florida Community Development Center testifies to the broad-based community concern for the problems being attacked and for finding good solutions for a healthier community.

**Safe Havens as Major Foci:** The Safe Havens programs described in some detail in this report are testimony to the extensive community efforts to provide educational and character-building opportunities as well as to provide places for constructive and enjoyable activities. These are critical foci for Weed and Seed efforts as far as “seeding” the community for healthier cultural developments. Notably these are funded mostly by various government agencies and private organizations with only a small amount of funding directly from Weed and Seed.

**Jobs, Jobs, Jobs.** Among the listing of priorities by respondents to the survey, the ones receiving constant high priority indications related to employment -- job training, job placement, GED programs for education . Only 21% of the residents surveyed indicated that opportunities for permanent jobs were increasing. The TechBridge program is especially helpful in meeting this need. GED programs are very limited.

**Streets and Sewerage:** The Neighborhood restoration strategy does not mention street repair and maintenance or water and sewerage, although these are items considered important to the reconstruction of a neighborhood and will be helped by a recent state grant. to the local government.

**Affordable Housing:** Affordable and livable housing appears to have increased, although some serious deficiencies still exist. The data are hard to bring together on this. Also, it does not appear that the Weed and Seed Program actually has much to do with aspect of the community although it is referred to in the grant proposal. This doesn't suggest that affordable housing is not relevant to the Weed and Seed mission but does raise the question as to how it is actually to effect this aspect of the community.

**Recommendations:** These are offered in the spirit of helping kick off points of discussion and not from a sense that the evaluators have all the answers to the complex problems and concerns involved in the program.

**Blight Study:** It is necessary to have a blight study report, similar to that done for the Spring Hill area, on the other specific areas of the Weed and Seed Program. This would broaden out the statistical base for future comparisons.

**Leveraging Resources:** A strong focus on finding more efficient and effective ways of bringing the various community elements together might bring good cost-effectiveness to the limited funds available to the program and more effective usage of funds and efforts throughout the community expended by various government agencies and private organizations.

**Centralized Statistics Management:** More statistics throughout the various programs from policing to the youth service programs and central accumulation of data are necessary to monitor the measurable objectives listed in the grant proposals. Police statistics and coordination along with regular analysis for action plans would seem to help the coordination strategies. *Statistics aren't the goal of the project – lowering crime is; however, they are a means for knowing whether the goal is being reached and a means with which regular assessments and planning can take place.*

**Surveys:** Annual surveys should be conducted to tap into community sentiments and seek to obtain some of the data hard to find. These need not be expensive surveys and part of a major evaluation process such as this one. The Stetson Institute on Social Research can help with this, utilizing personnel and experience from the present process.

**Information techniques:** The “awareness” objective indicated throughout the grant relative to different aspects of the grant is one that is important and should be viewed not only as a critical

objective, but a doable one. How to do this on a regular, efficient basis and in an economic manner should be the subject for the Steering Committee to give some careful attention and thought.

**Reordering of Strategies:** Strategies A and B are clearly separate strategies with the first focused on coordinating law enforcement agencies in actions against criminals and the second focused on bringing law enforcement personnel and community residents together to establish an environment watchful of and hostile to criminal activity. Strategies C and D are not as clearly separated. Strategy C perhaps can remain as prevention and treatment while Strategy D is broken into two major parts: (1) neighborhood restoration in the sense of community spirit and a healthy, safe community for positive programs and activities for youth (such as the Safe Havens), community clean-up projects, and community social activities and (2) physical aspects of neighborhood restoration such as affordable housing, more accessible transportation and better sanitation and water facilities.

**Foot and Bike Patrols:** Foot patrols in Oakland Terrace are already providing an effective action against criminal activity but more foot patrols have been recommended by residents for that area. The large majority of those surveyed did not feel that there had been an increase in foot and bike patrols.

**More Money Plus Volunteer Recruitments:** The Safe Havens depend on various sources of funding and volunteers. Both are often in relatively short supply. An increase in volunteers could be especially helpful both in the nature of the programs and relieving the programs from some of the financial limitations. This could be more of a targeted objective of Weed and Seed.

**Safe Havens as the Central Foci:** The Safe Havens exist to a large extent due to efforts other than Weed and Seed, yet provide excellent facilities and programs to accomplish the “seeding” part of the Weed and Seed Program. It might be best to focus the program funds of the Program on these safe havens rather than on a multiple of scattered projects.

**Ex-offenders Programs.** A broad-based, strongly supported ex-offenders regular program for the Weed and Seed area is missing. This means that young men and women, as well as adults, have minimal assistance, or none, in integrating themselves back into the community, back into their families, and back into the economic system. The establishment of such a program could be one of the most significant developments in the program.

**Educational Programs:** TechBridge, tutoring at the Safe Havens and after-school education programs are some of the critical activities in helping youth to healthy, productive lives. These are at the top of the priorities list for the survey respondents and probably should be also for the Weed and Seed Program.

**Coordination of Grant Efforts:** Close coordination between the Weed and Seed steering committee and local governmental officials and administrative personnel working on grants concerning housing, physical infrastructures and the like is a necessity in order to target the priorities. This is really the only role the Weed and Seed Program probably can play effectively in working directly on the problems of affordable housing and good physical living conditions.

## I) History

- a) The general history of the Weed and Seed Program is reflected in the Spring Hill Community program. Although more area is involved than Spring Hill, this provides a sense of not only the particulars of this large residential section of the Weed and Seed Program but also an idea of what is likely the case in some of the other areas. The Spring Hill Weed and Seed Program has been in existence for over seven years (beginning of program was October, 1996). The last two years of the program (2001-2003) included an expanded weed and seed designated area. The population of Spring Hill is 2212 and that of Oakland Terrace is around 800. There are no figures for the population in the other parts of the Weed and Seed area, but one can probably safely assume that all total the Weed and Seed area encompasses between 3,000 and 4,000 residents. The fact that Spring Hill was the only part of Weed and Seed for the first 5 years helps to explain why so little is said about the other areas in the Weed and Seed Program. All the news coverage in the last year has been on projects and programs in the Spring Hill area.
- b) The Spring Hill area was at one time a mixture of residential and transient housing for those employed in the agricultural industry. DeLand was in many ways a good central location for those employed in the agricultural industry in picking citrus, while offering more permanent employment for those willing to work in the fern industry. As the fern industry offers more permanent year-round agricultural employment, it was not uncommon for citrus workers to work in the fern industry as well.
- c) Since many of the agricultural workers moved between Central and South Florida, much of the rental housing in Spring Hill was small in actual housing size. Many of the houses had no bedrooms and were basically living rooms and kitchens. Since many of the workers stayed there only a couple of months at a time, affordability was a key factor with less emphasis on the quality of the living area or its relative size. For those homes that had bedrooms, it was not uncommon for a large family to share the home. The homes were small even by standards in the 1950s and 1960s and did not meet the relatively modest standards of the Volusia County zoning ordinance. Homes in the Lennox Court area are 500 to 600 square feet, smaller than most apartments, and have an appearance similar to small military barracks.
- d) Gradually, urban growth in the Central Florida region, combined with several consecutive years of freezes, destroyed much of the citrus industry in Central Florida. Volusia County was no longer a central location for citrus workers as the industry moved toward South Florida, where the likelihood and severity of freezes were less. In Volusia County, the citrus industry was almost completely wiped out while the fern industry in the DeLeon Springs and Pierson area remained the most viable agricultural industry. Since fern is a year round industry, most workers looked for more permanent housing and were not interested in residing in the smaller and temporary housing in the Spring Hill area. It was also an inconvenient location with workers who were transportation disadvantaged. Unfortunately, that left Spring Hill with a large number of small and inadequate houses as part of its housing market.
- e) Spring Hill is not located near large private employers other than a call center in the old Woodland Shopping Center. The biggest public employer close to the Spring Hill area is the City of DeLand, the County Seat of Volusia County, with the County Administration Center located in the downtown area as well. Commercial shopping centers have either moved toward DeLand's north gateway by International Speedway Boulevard or toward its south gateway where 17-92 and SR 472 intersect by the West Volusia Shopping Center. The closest grocery store to the Spring Hill area is the Winn Dixie on SR44 (New York Avenue) and 15A (Spring Garden.). In the study area, shopping opportunities are generally limited to convenience stores and a few restaurants along South Woodland Boulevard and a furniture store, a hardware store and some small businesses along 15A
- f) In 1991, the U.S. Department of Justice established Operation Weed and Seed as a national program— a community based multi-agency approach to law enforcement, crime prevention, and neighborhood restoration. In 1997 the local Weed and Seed Program began in Spring Hill. The

present Weed and Seed area encompasses the Spring Hill area, but as indicated by the map of the program [See Appendix L.], a considerable amount of other residential area is involved that is not in the Spring Hill area. The goals of Weed and Seed are to control crime, drug trafficking, and drug-related crime in designated high-crime neighborhoods and provide a safe environment free of crime and drug use for residents. The Weed and Seed strategy brings together federal, state, and local crime-fighting agencies, social service providers, representatives of the public and private sectors, prosecutors, business owners, and neighborhood residents under the shared goal of weeding out violent crime and gang activity while seeding in social services and economic revitalization. Weed and Seed began nationally with three pilot sites in 1991 and has spread quickly to more than 250 high-crime neighborhoods across the nation, including the Volusia County area.

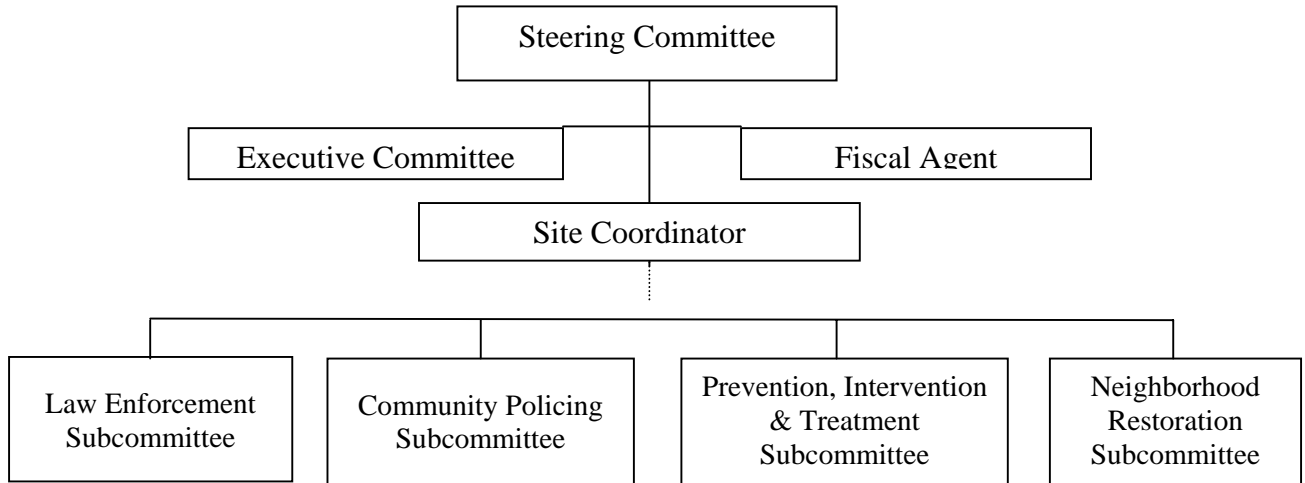
- g) The Weed and Seed approach is unique when compared to traditional crime prevention approaches of the past. The strategy is based on collaboration, coordination, community participation, and leveraging resources. Weed and Seed sites maximize existing programs and resources by coordinating and integrating existing federal, state, local and private section initiatives, criminal justice efforts, and social services. The strategy also puts heavy emphasis on community participation. Residents of Weed and Seed neighborhoods are actively involved in problem solving in the community. Neighborhood watches, citizen marches and rallies, clean-up events, drug-free zones, and graffiti removal are some of the common programs that encourage community participation and help prevent crime. The Spring Hill Weed and Seed strategy is based on the narrative above
- h) The program for reducing crime in the area started in the Sheriff's Department under a grant in 1995, but they did not want to be the major agency, so in 1997 Weed and Seed shifted to the Volusia County Administration. The key person at the time was Erin Blackwell who coordinated all the various programs, kept the records, worked with City of DeLand Administration, the Sheriff's Office and the DeLand Police Department, as well as with agencies involved with different projects [housing, social services, etc]. When Erin Blackwell retired in 2000 the County decided not to fill the position. Instead it contributed to the establishment of the Community Resources person who would be physically located in the site for Weed and Seed and who would take over all the coordination of the various elements of the program. The County, after Erin Blackwell's retirement, outsourced its part of the program to the Central Florida Community Development Corporation. The Central Florida Community Development Cooperation under the direction of Gerald Chester was asked to come up with a 5-year plan that included Weed and Seed. The CFCDC contracted Donna Banks to run the Weed and Seed Program The person hired was Donna Banks. Both the county, through the CFCDC and the City, through the CFCDC, provide funding for the Director's position..
- i) The Weed and Seed Program under the direction of Donna Banks was relocated to the Community Resource Center in Spring Hill in order to place the program inside the target community. This is the first time that the program has had a full-time director. **This move has been considered by all to be a significant and good development in the program with an on-site location and full-time director.**
- j) Each year with each new grant cycle Weed and Seed is encouraged to do a self-evaluation. This time it was decided to set aside some money to do the evaluation and the Stetson Institute for Social Research was asked to do the evaluation and make recommendations as to whether the strategies being followed have been successful and to make recommendation as to any changes in the strategies which might be made or changes in the way the strategies are seeking to accomplish goals and objectives.
- k) The grant amount has been around \$225,000 for each of the 7 years Weed and Seed has been in existence. The grant has been obtained by the County and the money distributed to the Sheriff's Office [25%], the DeLand Police Department [25%], Volusia County and the City of DeLand [50% combined]. The County and the City have essentially outsourced their functions through the CFCDC with their monies going to the CFCDC for the purposes of contracting a director and providing funds for social projects [through sub-recipients]. The money for social services flows

from the CFCDC to the Weed and Seed Director [Donna Banks] for social programs as well as expenses of the office.

**II) Organization:**

a) **As indicated in the 2003 Grant Narrative:**

- i) The County of Volusia is the fiscal agent for the Spring Hill Weed and Seed Program. The County is responsible for overall Weed and Seed grant coordination, implementation, and compliance for both programmatic and fiscal responsibilities. Although the day-to-day administration is coordinated through the Site Coordinator, the County maintains an active role in the grant implementation. The activities include federal grant preparation, review of and processing reimbursements to subrecipients, processing reimbursement requests to the federal grantor agency, completing the required federal reports, budget maintenance, supporting local funding applications, external coordination and partnership development, and providing technical assistance as necessary. This support is provided to both the “Weeding” and “Seeding” components of the program.
- ii) The Steering Committee shall be responsible for the governance of the Spring Hill Weed and Seed Program. The purpose of the Board is: (a) to serve as a planning body for the Weed and Seed Program; (b) to oversee the disbursement of Weed and Seed funding to subrecipients; (c) to ensure the successful implementation of the Weed and Seed Strategy; (d) to promote greater cooperation among all agencies delivering services within the Weed and Seed site; (d) to solve problems collaboratively regarding the major issues facing the Weed and Seed site; (e) to ensure that residents are represented; (f) to provide information to the community to increase accessibility and visibility of Weed and Seed services; and (g) to monitor implementation plans of subrecipients and evaluate services provided.
- iii) The Spring Hill Weed and Seed Program organizational chart is as follows:



\_\_\_\_\_ Direct lines of responsibility  
 .....In-direct lines of responsibility

- b) **Procedures that govern the funding and selection process:** Full details are contained in a committee approved “Funding Guidelines” document that is made available to all applicants. The process begins with a notification of funding availability announcement at least four months prior to EOWS grant award. The Site Coordinator will conduct a technical assistance session to explain

the grant application procedures, evaluation criteria, and key dates. The Spring Hill Weed and Seed Allocations Subcommittee is responsible for reviewing and rating each funding application. The rating criteria includes such items as budget, Weed and Seed goal being addressed, program objectives and performance measures to be achieved, agency capacity, prior programs and performance, and schedule. The Allocations Subcommittee will present their recommendations to the full Steering Committee for final approval. Each applicant is notified of the final decision. A subrecipient agreement is prepared for execution upon EOWS notification of grant award/release of funds.

- c) The Steering Committee is broadly representative of the community with its members actively engaged in the program; thus, a good community network is established.
- d) In discussions with some of the leaders of programs supported by Weed and Seed, questions were raised as to why some decisions are made. Applicants are not asked to appear before the committee, which could help elaborate on what is being proposed by the applicants as well as involving more dialogue as to the basis for program support decisions. Such a process would also enhance the understanding throughout the network of agencies as to what is being provided in the community at large as well as with regard to specific programs.
- e) There does not appear to be regular, clear feedback into the committee as to how well the programs are being carried out, including the meeting of goals of increasing the number of youth and adults affected. The Director is new and does not appear to be at the center of reports flowing from the various programs, thus making it difficult to regularly monitor if the grant objectives are being met. These reports should be part of the monthly Steering Committee meetings.

### III) Nature and Extent of Problem

- a) **Mission:** Weed and Seed has the basic mission of weeding out crime and altering the infrastructure and social characteristics, including the social culture, that contribute to crime and lower the quality of life in a neighborhood. Thus, the intent is not simply to develop better law enforcement but to establish a culture that breeds healthy neighborhoods and removes the social elements that provide fertile ground for the growth of criminal activities.
- b) **Crime Problem Defined: It is defined in the Weed and Seed 2003 narrative as follows:**
  - i) The major finding of a recent survey by the DeLand Police Department (DPD) reveals that illicit drugs are readily available in the designated area, with cocaine and cannabis continuing to be the most available product on the street. Crack cocaine continues to be as readily available as regular cocaine and cannabis. Other substances also have influenced the area, alcohol being one of the other leading substances that continues to devastate the designated area. The FY 2004 Weed and Seed grant narrative indicated 1,632 drug-related arrests in Volusia County in 2002 and 2,235 drug-related arrests in 2003, a 27% increase in arrests. Most of these arrests were for marijuana and crack cocaine. Seventeen percent of the County's drug related arrests were made in the designated area of Weed and Seed in 2002 with an increase of 25% of arrests in the Weed and Seed area in 2003 over 2002.
  - ii) Three major highways, US 17-92, SR 15A and SR44, surround the designated area, and provide drug traffickers many ways to escape detection in the area.
  - iii) Drug use of the so-called "hard drugs" are on the decline in the middle and elementary school level. Cannabis and alcohol however, are still readily available to this age group. The number of children, young adults and adults have increased substantially in the substance abuse treatment centers and programs in the designated area and outside of the designated area. There were 75 arrests for possession of Cannabis and nine arrests for distribution in the designated area for calendar year 2002. Crack cocaine is a common drug being used by males and females in the 20-35-age group. Eighty-four arrests were made in calendar year 2002 for possession of crack and 36 arrests for distribution in the Weed and Seed designated area. Crack cocaine continues to be the most inexpensive drug, its use is constant and the effect must be maintained. There were 75 cocaine arrest for possession and 13 for distribution and no arrest for the use of Heroin in the designated area in calendar year 2002. There were 1,632

drug-related arrests in the entire Volusia County, 17 percent of those arrests were in the Weed and Seed designated area.

- iv) The grant proposal refers to information obtained from crime reports, and public health facilities, indicating that violent crime is down mainly because of the diligent street presence of law enforcement and neighborhood watch programs. We do not find such a scenario at the moment. It appears that drug crimes and robberies are running at about the same levels as the previous 6 years. Domestic violence has increased slightly because of the increase in alcohol abuse. It is also the hardest statistic to track because of the lack of reporting to the police. Homicide remains on the decline in the designated area and in the entire jurisdiction of Volusia County.
- c) **Social Environment:** Notably, while the criminal aspects of the environment are targeted in the problem definition, the social characteristics that provide the backdrop for the criminal activity are not mentioned, although the strategies set out for the Weed and Seed Program clearly indicate the need for enhancing the quality of life in the community ranging from physical aspects of life such as housing, water and street quality to the cultural aspects of life such as community pride and a sense of civic belongingness and responsibility. The program also aims at problems of employment and the need for training to enhance the economic aspects of life. In a sense, the relationship between culture and crime is somewhat of a chicken and egg phenomenon since the crime leads to lower community expectations and to the lack of development of decent housing and community spirit while these social elements, in turn, are seen as having provided the backdrop for the development of the criminal culture and activity in the first place and in a continually supporting role. Hence, poor housing, blighted neighborhoods, unemployment rates that exceed local and national averages, median income levels below local averages, rates of poverty that exceed local averages considerably, and average educational levels below local averages constitute an environment that is generally considered to be conducive to the development of criminal activity. Such conditions lead, as Gerald Chester, Director of the Central Florida Community Development Center asserted, to a “sense of hopelessness and a sense of apathy.” [DBNJ, 2/26/04:7C] The information below indicates how much out-of-step Spring Hill is in living conditions when compared with the rest of the County and other near-by areas. It can only be assumed, since the data are not presently available, that the other areas in the Weed and Seed Program suffer from the same conditions. It is necessary to have a blight study report, similar to that done for the Spring Hill area, on the other specific areas of the Weed and Seed Program. This would broaden out the statistical base for future comparisons. Notably, areas such as Spring Hill are referred to as “traditionally black” neighborhoods and thought of as such when the population is more mixed than perceived. Spring Hill’s population is 55.30% black, 39.5% white, 9.2% Hispanic, and 1.4% other. Statistics on the other areas in Weed and Seed are not available at this time. It is clear that more Hispanics are moving into Oakland Terrace and the African American population is still very predominant in numbers, but specific numbers on ethnic break-down are not available. The number of residents at Oakland Terrace is around 800. [The data report on the blight study is in Appendix H.]
- i) **Income Levels.** The average resident in Spring Hill is much poorer than the average resident in Volusia County according to the Census. Median household income for an average Volusia County resident is \$35,219 per year versus \$21,633 per year for the Spring Hill resident. Volusia County’s median household income is well below the average of its geographical neighbors such as Brevard, Flagler, Lake, Orange and Seminole Counties. Considering this, the median household income average of Spring Hill, which is 61 percent of the County household income average, is well below the norm for the region. The lowest median household income average for a city in Volusia County is Daytona Beach at \$25,439. Yet that is still well over the median household income of Spring Hill. The per capita income, which includes all income including wages, savings, dividends and transfer payments, shows a wide gap as well. The Volusia County per capita average is \$19,664 versus the Spring Hill per capita average of \$11,314 which is about 58 percent of the County’s per capita income average. The per capita income gap is actually less than the household income gap, since transfer payments such as Social Security and welfare payments tend to help lower income

wage earners, although not at a level to make up that wide of an income gap. In addition, wealthier wage earners have dividends and savings that would make the per capita income gap greater if not for the transfer payments of government

- ii) **Poverty:** Poverty numbers for Spring Hill are far below the Volusia County average. The number of individuals in poverty in Spring Hill is 37.4 percent versus an average of 11.6 percent for individuals in Volusia County. The gap is wider among female heads of household with no husband present. Sixty-eight percent of such families in the Spring Hill area live in poverty versus a 24.3 percent average in Volusia County as a whole. Female-headed households with children under 5 in the Spring Hill area have a 51.4 percent poverty level versus a county average of 46.3 percent. The percentages, whether unrelated individuals or families, show that three times as many residents in Spring Hill are below the poverty level than the average for Volusia County as a whole. Part of the problem appears to be the large number of both retirees and female head of households not in the labor force in the Spring Hill area. The number of people not in the labor force in Volusia County is 44.6 percent, which is high, although expected given the large retiree population. In Spring Hill the combination of female-headed households with young children and retirees makes that number 56.3 percent. Those who do earn income in Spring Hill earn just over 50 percent of the County average. The number of households with income earnings in the County is 69.2 versus 52.85 percent in Spring Hill. The combination of a lower annual wage and a lower percentage of wage earners account for the large disparity in household income between Volusia County and Spring Hill.
- iii) **Spring Hill residents versus County residents as a whole:** Given the wage gap, it is not surprising that the Spring Hill area has 30.7 percent of its workers in service occupations versus the 18 percent average for Volusia County. It is also not surprising that Volusia County has 28.1 percent of its employees in management and professional occupation versus an 18 percent average for Spring Hill. Mobility may be a factor in the wage and occupation disparity as well. Thirty-four percent of residents in Spring Hill car pool or walk to work despite a lower 17.2 minute average commuting time compared to 16.4 percent of County residents who travel an average 25.4 minutes of commuting time to work. Higher wages are paid in the adjacent counties of Seminole and Orange Counties which many Spring Hill residents cannot reach. Considering that 3.4 percent of Spring Hill residents walk to work (almost twice the County average), the lack of reliable transportation is likely a factor.
- iv) **Educational Differences between Spring Hill and Volusia County:** The number of people who are without a high school diploma is 18 percent in Volusia County versus 36.3 percent in Spring Hill. A high school diploma is often an entry-level requirement of well-paying manufacturing jobs in tool and die, auto mechanics and numerous other skilled and semi-skilled blue-collar jobs. Without a high school diploma, even entry jobs in sales may be limited to areas such as the food service industry instead of jobs in department stores or other white-collar sales professions. Without a high school diploma, management-training opportunities may be extremely limited or denied completely. The number of people with a bachelor's degree or higher in Volusia County is 17.6 percent versus 14.9 percent in the Spring Hill area. In upper level management, a minimum of a bachelor's degree is required, and more places are looking for people with graduate degrees.
- v) **Housing Conditions in Spring Hill versus Volusia County:** The housing demographics paint much the same picture as the income demographics. Although Spring Hill residents have cheaper rents and mortgages than Volusia County residents as a whole, they still pay more of their income for rent or as a mortgage payment even though the value of the home is only about 60 percent of the value of the average County residence. For example, the Census lists an average Spring Hill rent as \$484 per month compared to \$597 per month in Volusia County. Yet 59.1 percent of Spring Hill residents pay 35 percent or more of their income for rent versus 33.9 percent of Volusia County residents, where County rents are 36 percent higher. The median value of a home in Volusia County is \$87,300 versus \$62,031 in Spring Hill. Even with a wide disparity in value, 17.9 percent of County Residents pay 35 percent or more of their income as a mortgage compared to 47 percent of Spring Hill residents. The

conditions of the homes are where the widest disparity appears. Only 0.3 percent of all houses in Volusia County lack plumbing facilities. The percentage of homes in Spring Hill that lack plumbing facilities is 4.2 percent or 13 times the County wide average. Only 0.4 percent of all homes in Volusia County lack a kitchen. In Spring Hill that number is over eight times that percentage, at 3.3 percent. While only 2.1 of all County residents lack phone service, 13.2 percent of Spring Hill residents lack phone service, or almost 6.3 times the County average. 9 percent of residences in Spring Hill have more than one person per room versus a County average of only 3 percent. Nature of the Population: Spring Hill versus Volusia County.

- vi) **Length of Residency:** Spring Hill residents are more permanent and lifelong residents than the average residents of Volusia County. More than a quarter of Spring Hill residents (26 percent) moved into its housing units before 1980 while that is true of only 12 percent of County residents. That means the housing stock is much older than the typical housing stock in Volusia County. The older housing stock, which was likely overcrowded with inadequate plumbing facilities and with more than one of eight residents without phone service has not likely improved with the passage of time. Since a greater percentage of Spring Hill residents in both rent and mortgage pay more than 35 percent of their income for housing, the likelihood of the older housing stock being given adequate maintenance and repair is much less than Volusia County as a whole.
- vii) **Population Density:** The Spring Hill Area is an overcrowded area: It has a high level of overcrowding, a lack of adequate plumbing facilities in a higher percentage of the units than what it is normal for Volusia County and Code violations involving unlicensed electrical and construction work. Spring Hill has a number of older houses, which are already inadequate for human habitation. Census indicators of overcrowding, lack of plumbing and kitchen space plus a large number of residents without basic phone service are other factors that endanger life and property.
- viii) **Public Transportation:** Public transportation facilities are lacking. The lack of adequate public transportation facilities is shown by the 3.4 percent of Spring Hill residents who walk to work. This is twice the Volusia County average but there is no indication from the Census that Spring Hill area residents use public transportation despite the higher percentage of residents walking or carpooling to work.

#### IV) Basic Strategies to Remedy Problem

- a) **Four Basic Strategies:** The grant proposals over the last several years have indicated four basic strategies for Weed and Seed:
  - i) **Strategy A: Law Enforcement Strategy:** Law enforcement plans to coordinate multi-agency task forces which will include, City, County and State law enforcement agencies along with the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) to facilitate multi-agency actions and to concentrate on pursuing drug cases across jurisdictional lines. The benefits of these multi-agency task forces will extend beyond the designated area, particularly when the focus is on high-level drug dealers who control large operations. This will also help foster federal commitment to the Weed and Seed designated area. The basic objective is to bring all law enforcement agencies into coordinated activities to reduce criminal activity.
  - ii) **Strategy B: Community Policing Strategy:** Law enforcement plans to incorporate programs that involve the designated Community, such as Crime Stoppers and establishing a Citizen Police Academy, to reactivate neighborhood watch programs and to encourage the community to have monthly crime prevention meetings with local law enforcement and other local government agencies. The basic objective is to bring community residents and law enforcement personnel into cooperative relationships in fighting criminal activities.
  - iii) **Strategy C: Prevention, Intervention and Treatment Strategy:** To coordinate with local community agencies to develop programs in the designated area on prevention, intervention and treatment of drugs and alcohol abuse and offer positive programs and projects that would give the designated area a sense of Community, develop and identify available programs with treatment facilities that will provide specific services in the designated area, and develop a

community reference manual for residents in the designated area. The basic objective is to develop a healthy community with programs for adults and youth that contribute to a culture of community identity and self-development along positive lines. This is a key part of the “Seeding” to prevent criminal activity.

- iv) **Strategy D: Neighborhood Restoration Strategy:** To develop a collaborative agreement among agencies to explore and support job training programs for residents in the designated area, locate unsafe housing units and coordinate with other resources to replace or restore these houses for habitation by residents in the designated area, and establish a “Feels Like Home” neighborhood networking by initiating community projects and events that will give the designated area a sense of community pride and cohesiveness. The basic objective is to develop an environment that is physically appealing and satisfying as well as culturally supporting for residents as they engage in positive community and self-developmental activities.
- v) **Special Strategy for 2003-2004** is to contract a research partner to compile a comprehensive evaluation of the current Weed and Seed Program in the designated area and strive to strengthen any weak points in the current strategy
- b) **Comment on Strategies:** Strategies A and B are clearly separate strategies with the first focused on coordinating law enforcement agencies in actions against criminals and the second focused on bringing law enforcement personnel and community residents together to establish an environment watchful of and hostile to criminal activity. Strategies C and D are not as clearly separated. For example, job training can go into either category as could the Safe Havens. In 2003-2004 there is to be a special emphasis on computer training which is set outside the basic strategies. It might be clearer to have Strategy C contain various substance abuse programs and any educational programs whether tutoring for elementary school children or computer training for youth and adults. Strategy D might then contain two major parts – unless one wanted to establish an additional strategy. The two parts would be (1) neighborhood restoration in the sense of community spirit and a healthy, safe community for positive programs and activities for youth (such as the Safe Havens). community clean-up projects, and community social activities and (2) physical aspects of neighborhood restoration such as affordable housing, more accessible transportation and better sanitation and water facilities.. As separate strategies, they would look like this: [How one labels them, is less important than moving to a clearer distinction of strategies which are being suggested here. For example, one might want to label Strategy D as Community Cultural Development to emphasize the “community” aspect of the strategy rather than simply the physical neighborhood.] Then add a new strategy – Strategy E – for neighborhood physical restoration.

#### Suggested Revision of Strategies List

- i) Strategy A: Law Enforcement Strategy
  - ii) Strategy B: Community Policing Strategy
  - iii) Strategy C: Prevention, Intervention and Treatment Strategy
  - iv) Strategy D: Neighborhood Cultural Development Strategy
  - v) Strategy E: Neighborhood Physical Restoration
- V) Evaluation Process Used by Stetson Institute for Social Research:**
- a) Data from law enforcement agencies with regard to arrests/crimes. The basic end-result of the program will be found here, that is, less crime
  - b) Qualitative data from law enforcement personnel on strategies and actions obtained through interviews and some correspondence
  - c) Reports in government offices with regard to agencies with Weed and Seed grants
  - d) Interviews with directors of safe-haven sites

- e) Public information sources such as Web sites for PAL and Chisholm Community Center
- f) Survey data encompassing 165 persons in the newly established Weed and Seed area. The data represent a sample of about 10% of the households in the area. The questions were derived from the Weed and Seed 2003-2004 grant proposal which indicated the numerous goals, objectives and expectations. The sample is not a scientific one in the pure sense of targeting randomly selected individual houses and insisting on obtaining responses from those residents by repeatedly returning at different times if possible. However, the survey does seek a wide distribution of respondents scattered throughout the Weed and Seed area with a systematic plan for obtaining information from specified blocks of houses in specified sections. The population of the sample indicates success here in that each quadrant has approximately the same number of respondents. Level of education is represented well with 46% having 7-12 years of education and 38% with 2-4 years of college. Forty percent are high school graduates. Income levels are distributed fairly well with 14% at or below the poverty line for a family of four, 24% just a little above it and 33% at \$30,000 or more family income. A little over a fourth of the respondents are single parents and most families have 2-4 children. There are almost twice as many women as men in the sample – probably reflecting the times when the surveys were conducted. The African-American population is slightly more represented than the white population but close to the overall census population break-down. The Hispanic population is significantly underrepresented despite the attempt to use questionnaires that had been translated into Spanish. Time and money are factors constraining what can be done. We feel confident that the 10% return rate with the wide distribution of respondents and the good breakdown between African-American and white respondents provides us with some solid, good information that will provide a good baseline for annual surveys using this rather economical and effective technique. Some slight changes in the process can easily bring in more of the Hispanic population which is an important one given its continued growth in the area.

**NOTE:** The survey process is one that can be economically and easily done on an annual basis by Weed and Seed staff using personnel like those used this year [and perhaps some of the same persons annually].

**NOTE:** The percentages used are percentages of those who provided an answer; thus the “no opinion” and “don’t know” responses were not used. However, in instances where useful the percentage of non-responses are indicated also.

- g) Minutes from the Steering Committee were helpful especially in showing the kinds of discussions held between members who represented a wide-variety of the city and county agencies linked in some manner with the Weed and Seed Program.

## VI) Basic Conclusions:

### a) **General Conclusions:**

- i) **Leadership Structure and Location** The present leadership structure and location is a significant and good development in the program with an on-site location and full-time director
- ii) **Leveraging Resources:** The grant proposal refers to the following key strategy: The strategy is based on collaboration, coordination, community participation, and leveraging resources. This is a strategy that is within the realm possibility given the extensive number of community activities – government and private – in operation. Through the Steering Committee and personal efforts of the Director working with other organizations and government agencies this strategy is followed to a significant degree, but can be greatly enhanced.
- iii) **Sub-grant Process:** The present process for applications for sub-grant projects is clear but could be enhanced through more direct contact between the applicants and the committee making recommendations for the grants
- iv) **Strategy Clarification: Strategies A and B** are clearly separate strategies with the first focused on coordinating law enforcement agencies in actions against criminals and the second

focused on bringing law enforcement personnel and community residents together to establish an environment watchful of and hostile to criminal activity. Strategies C and D are not as clearly separated. For example, job training can go into either category as could the Safe Havens. In 2003-2004 there is to be a special emphasis on computer training which is set outside the basic strategies.

- v) **Stimulus Effects:** Evaluating the impact of a program over time can leave out effects on programs not now directly affected but influenced by the program at some point in the development of programs. For example, the development of the Neighborhood Resource Center now sponsored by The House Next Door obtained much of its initial impetus in funding and development from the Weed and Seed Program and now operates on funding from other sources.
  - vi) **Measurable Tasks:** The objectives stated in the grant proposal frequently refer to measurable tasks; however, in many cases the statistics are either not available or scattered throughout several sources.
  - vii) **Program Objectives/ Residents Priorities:** The objectives of the program tie in well to high priority indicators by the residents surveyed. High on their list of priorities were more police presence, more youth centers, increased educational opportunities for youth and adults, affordable housing, and job placement assistance. Two items not mentioned in the general grant are day care facilities and health facilities. Both of these items were among the highest priorities for the residents surveyed. The child care services do seem to be available, however. Near Oakland Terrace is Twinkle Star Day Care, a long-established day care facility with ample room. Near Spring Hill is Sugar 'N Spice Child Care and Pre-School Center, which also has ample space. This problem may be simply a matter of information.
  - viii) **Awareness Objective:** The "awareness" objective indicated throughout the grant relative to different aspects of the grant is one that is important and should be viewed not only as a critical objective, but a doable one. However, it is an area that needs substantial improvement.
  - ix) **Old WS Area Compared with New:** Some striking differences exist here. The old WS area residents indicate more pride in their community, less fear of crime in their area than several years ago and more participation in youth activity programs by at least one member of their family. The new WS area residents in comparison with the old WS area residents indicate more participation in job training programs and community clean-up projects, more knowledge of the Crimestoppers telephone number, more awareness of persons involved in illegal drugs not being stopped by police, more information on funds for new or renovated housing, more participation in community policy programs, more contact with government officials, more incidents of criminal acts against them, more police patrolling of their area, and more satisfaction with repairs and maintenance of streets in their area. Thus, it appears that the old WS area does seem to have a reduced fear of crime and a healthy sense of pride in community – both of which are major goals of the program; but the new WS area residents indicate already a higher degree of community awareness and participation in terms of several of the "seeding" functions. The area which has been under the program since only 2001 is in better shape with regard to several major goals, although indicating more personal contact with the effects of crime. Given the sample size one needs to be careful about drawing too sharp of conclusions from this data, but they provide good baseline data as one evaluates progress on an annual basis from this year forward. The data help to localize success and lack thereof as well as special problems and understandings in working with various areas within the overall Weed and Seed area.
- b) **Strategy A Conclusions: The basic goal is to bring all law enforcement agencies into coordinated activities to reduce criminal activity.**
- i) **Crime Reduction – Resident's View:** The sense of the community residents regarding crime reduction as indicated through our survey is generally positive, but is only slightly over a majority of the residents, while a substantial number feel that the police have not been

successful in reducing crime overall or in drug dealing and robberies. In the open-ended responses the most prominent, by far, was more police action and presence needed to reduce crime. [The most unique response was the one that replied to how to reduce crime: "I move out."] The directors at the Chisholm Community Center were enthusiastic about the increased safety of the area. Previously it has been one of the most infested parts in the areas but now is one of the cleanest sites. Likewise, the director of the Oakland Terrace programs was very positive about the effects of the policy activity there.

- ii) **Fear of Crime** – Directors at Chisholm Center say that the fear of crime has declined. Likewise at Oakland Terrace a survey reported an increased feeling of being safe and able to sit outside comfortably at night. However it is about a 50-50 split in the survey responses with 51% saying they feel safer now and 49% saying they do not feel safer.
  - iii) **Crime Reduction -- Crime Statistics**:: The Weed and Seed 2003 narrative indicates no significant decrease in simple assault and aggravated assault and refers to operations taking place. Notably no statistics are indicated which show a decrease in crime – the heart of the Weed and Seed Program. After several years of operation the narrative essentially refers to operations such as stings and undercover operations, coordination between crime agencies, maintaining a presence in the community, encouragement of citizen involvement, and increased presence of law enforcement in the areas of concern. As indicated below many of these activities are in place and the efforts to combat crime have been increased in significant ways. Thus, the discussion on and development of efforts to combat crime are ongoing and vigorous but results in terms of reduced criminal activity are not in evidence. A slight majority of residents surveyed [54%] believe that there has been a reduction of drug dealers while 46% believe there has been no reduction. One of every three the residents surveyed indicated claimed knowledge of drug dealers who were not being stopped by police. Specifics are presented in the section below on detailed evaluation and in Appendices B and C. A major difficulty is obtaining good comparative statistics from city law enforcement. Also note that increased community concern could lead to increased reporting of crimes [for example, low-priority crimes in the city], thus the statistics indicate increased crime rates when it may mean increased reporting of crime. However, the number of arrests avoid this problem to some extent [not entirely, since arrests are depending on citizen reports much of the time] and do reveal little to no change over the past years. Notably the latest crime statistics on the city and county areas as a whole indicate decreases in crime. For DeLand the decrease is 7.8% from last year and for the unincorporated areas under the jurisdiction of the Sheriff's office there was a decrease of 8.1% overall. [2003 Florida Uniform Crime Report at <http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/FSAC/UCR/2003/cntyMun03annual.pdf>] These are general statistics involving several types of crimes, hence not directly comparable to the data on the Weed and Seed area, but the general tenor is in a downward direction compared to the general tenor of the Weed and Seed area which is a status quo direction of little increase or decrease in any of the statistics on particular crimes.
  - iv) **Police Working Harder Against Crime**: There is a clear sense that the police are working harder against crime with 64% of the residents surveyed attesting to this. Nevertheless 36% disagree, thus leaving room for considerable improvement.
- c) **Strategy B Conclusions: The basic goal is to bring community residents and law enforcement personnel into cooperative relationships in fighting criminal activities.**
- i) **Increased Presence**: Considerable accomplishment has taken place in pursuing this goal. The former substation at Oakland terrace which is still used intermittently, is an example of increased presence. The police presence is much more in evidence than several years ago. Almost half of those surveyed [45%] indicated they see police patrolling but, importantly, almost half did not [55%]. However, even though foot patrols and bike patrols have been placed in the area, very few of the residents surveyed indicated that foot and bike patrols have increased over previous years [only 14% agree foot patrols have increased and 30% see an increase in bicycle patrols]. This is one of the areas where residents surveyed feel more needs to be done. They feel that patrols and police presence overall needs to be greater. Almost 60%

of the residents called for more police presence and the largest item by far in the open-ended question on what was needed to reduce crime concerned some type of police presence.

- ii) **Increased Cooperation:** In general, residents surveyed felt that the cooperation between police and residents had increased over the last several years [63%] but a healthy minority of 37% disagreed. Directors at the Chisholm Center and Oakland Terrace were enthusiastic about the decrease in criminal activity in their areas and the cooperative relationships with the police. Residents surveyed indicate that more people are involved in cooperation with the police [60%] but 40% indicated otherwise [However, this was a question that also had a 33% “don’t know” response rate. The 60%/40% are of those respondents who did have an opinion.] Also, only 23 % of the survey respondents indicated that either they or a member of their family was involved in a community policing program. A substantial number [45%] indicated they were aware of how they might be involved but a majority [56%] did not know. Programs for community participation are clearly in evidence: The Neighborhood Watch program has been increased by one and the program of community responsibility for reporting criminal activity has been a solid success at Oakland Terrace. A Citizen Police Academy has been functioning since 2001 with bi-annual training
  - iii) **Social Activities:** Social activities with law enforcement personnel and residents of the area have taken place on a regular basis and have been helping to build a sense of working together
  - iv) **Minority Officers:** The active recruitment of minority officers from the Spring Hill area has the potential to contribute significantly to this goal.
  - v) **Active Involvement in Community Meetings:** The active involvement of law enforcement personnel in Weed and Seed meetings and on the Steering Committee provide regular, positive contacts.
  - vi) **Lines of Communication:** Lines of communication to the police have been opened up in a significant fashion with instant contact to the police and rapid response reported by directors of the Chisholm Center and Oakland Terrace.
- d) **Strategy C Conclusions . The basic goal is to develop a healthy community with programs for adults and youth that contribute to a culture of community identity and self-development along positive lines. This is a key part of the “Seeding” to prevent criminal activity.**
- i) **Quantity of Programs:** The sheer quantity of the programs attests to substantial efforts to fulfill the strategy goal of enhancing a sense of community and developing constructive involvement in the community. The involvement of all local government units (including state representatives in obtaining state grants) , Stetson University, social organizations such as the Rotary Clubs, diverse grant-based programs such as the Central Florida Community Development Center testifies to the broad-based community concern for the problems being attacked and for finding good solutions for a healthier community. The programs target all age groups and provide for a wide variety of interests to include art, music, athletic activities, learning opportunities, community cooperative endeavors, and leisure time community contact opportunities. The activities have the capability to foster a sense of community, secure environments, and personal pride. They provide for character growth such as teamwork and personal accomplishment and also open opportunities for the development of skills – both social and technical – for employment opportunities. The involvement of youth in constructive and enjoyable activities with encouragement towards educational enhancement is a significant part of the community activities offered. Over half of the respondents or a member of their families had participated in at least one of the youth programs.
  - ii) **Safe Havens as Major Foci:** The Safe Havens programs described in some detail in this report are testimony to the extensive community efforts to provide educational and character-building opportunities as well as to provide places for constructive and enjoyable activities. These are critical foci for Weed and Seed efforts as far as “seeding” the community for healthier cultural developments. The directors of the safe havens at Chisholm Community Center, Oakland Terrace and the West Volusia Police Athletic League indicated that they provide varied types of social interactive and individual counseling services and

opportunities. Children at risk are targeted, as well as their parents, in some of the efforts to head off the development of situations where persons find themselves in the midst of criminal activities. As indicated by the director of the Safe Haven program at Oakland Terrace, efforts are made to counsel and redirect individuals before moving to harsher methods such as eviction from the housing units [which is done in coordination with the police when necessary]. The development of youth centers was at the top of the list of priorities for respondents to the survey, ranking along with job placement and other top items.

- iii) **Educational Services:** Educational services either for tutoring or for employment skills are among the most sought-after items by the respondents to the survey. Over 75% of respondents gave each of these items a “High Priority” designation. The GED program received a “High Priority” designation from 70% of the respondents. Programs in the Chisholm Center and at Oakland Terrace help meet this need with after-school programs, tutoring and ESL programs.
  - iv) **Jobs, Jobs, Jobs.** Among the listing of priorities by respondents to the survey, the ones receiving constant high priority indications related to employment -- job training, job placement, GED programs for education . Only 21% of the residents surveyed indicated that opportunities for permanent jobs were increasing. The TechBridge program is especially helpful in meeting this need. GED programs are very limited.
  - v) **Community-Wide Coordinator Role:** The funding for the safe havens is only supported by Weed and Seed money directly in a relatively small amount; although, the funds expended by the Weed and Seed grant on the “Seed” part of the program, that is, the community projects to enhance the quality of life and develop personal opportunities and characteristics that work against the growth of criminal attitudes and behaviors, is almost half of that expended outside of the cost of the Weed and Seed Coordinator and various administrative costs. The widespread sources for funding coming from county government, city government, Volusia School Board District, Weed and Seed funds and other sources evince a broad community concern and willingness to pool efforts and resources in providing a better place for people to live both in the sense of reducing crime and producing a good quality of life that lessens the possibilities of developing criminal elements in the community. In effect there is a “greater Weed and Seed Program” in which numerous local participants are contributing time, effort and money to provide a safe environment and reduce the culture of crime while implanting a culture resistant to criminal activities. A major task of the Director of the Weed and Seed Program might be to help coordinate all the players in this “greater” effort. The total amount of money spent on such community enhancement programs is not clear since it involves money from Weed and Seed, CFCDC, City of DeLand, Volusia County, and the Volusia School District. It would be helpful to have a grasp of the funds being expended overall and from what sources in order to evaluate and make suggestions on programs and funding from a centrally focused perspective.
- e) **Strategy D Conclusions: The basic goal is to develop an environment that is physically appealing and satisfying as well as culturally supporting for residents as they engage in positive community and self-developmental activities.**
- i) **Centrally Focused Perspective:** As indicated in the conclusion on Strategy C, the development of a community network of safe havens, youth developmental programs and adult self-development programs is a strong network with numerous successful programs reaching all ages, genders and interests. This is due more to the growth of various programs without the assistance of Weed and Seed funds or coordination. Relatively little of the Weed and Seed money has gone into these community activities, but where it is it has made a positive mark of some significance. As stated in the above conclusion for Strategy C, it would be helpful to have a grasp of the funds being expended overall, on what and from what sources in order to evaluate and make suggestions on programs and funding from a centrally focused perspective.
  - ii) **Community Projects:** Numerous community projects including activities such as Easter egg hunts and mural painting as well as neighborhood clean-up days have been coordinated by the program to build a sense of community.

- iii) **Streets and Sewerage:** The Neighborhood restoration strategy does not mention street repair and maintenance or water and sewerage, although these are items considered important to the reconstruction of a neighborhood and will be helped by a recent state grant. to the local government.
- iv) **Affordable Housing:** Affordable and livable housing appears to have increased, although some serious deficiencies still exist. The data are hard to bring together on this. There are a couple factors that can go into guessing how much the increase in affordable and livable housing has been. One positive factor is that Central Florida Housing Development is just starting to get strongly involved with the Weed and Seed Program. However, better records need to be kept at the county government as to how many people have received their assistance over the past., otherwise it is a guess .The County government does not have these numbers readily available, and it's possible that they might not have these numbers at all. Better organization at the county government would make answering questions, like this, more possible. From a Weed and Seed perspective there is relatively little the program itself can do since none of its funds are dedicated to building, maintenance or other physical housing/living developments. However, it can help gather and coordinate information as well as bringing together the respective agencies for grant suggestions and proposals and for the kind of emphases needed in particular areas. In fact, listing various objectives in the Weed and Seed Program grant proposal seems out-of-place in the sense that the program itself has very little to do with the implementation of the goals. For example, to indicate an increase in affordable housing as one of its goals when all the funds are directed to law enforcement and cultural seeding activities leaves little outside of the publication of information and discussion with officials and programs responsible for such actions. Active involvement with organizations such as Habit for Humanity is presently not the case, nor are statistics gathered to use in discussions with city and county officials concerning community physical needs.

## VII) Recommendations:

### a) General

- i) **Blight Study:** It is necessary to have a blight study report, similar to that done for the Spring Hill area, on the other specific areas of the Weed and Seed Program. This would broaden out the statistical base for future comparisons
- ii) **Leveraging Resources:** The grant proposal refers to the following key strategy: "The strategy is based on collaboration, coordination, community participation, and leveraging resources." This is a strategy that is within the realm possibility given the extensive number of community activities – government and private – in operation. Through the Steering Committee and personal efforts of the Director working with other organizations and government agencies this strategy is followed to a significant degree, but can be greatly enhanced. A strong focus on finding more efficient and effective ways of bringing the various community elements together would bring good cost-effectiveness to the limited funds available to the program and more effective usage of funds and efforts throughout the community expended by various government agencies and private organizations. For example: . It would be helpful to bring the leaders of the 3 different Safe Havens together on a regular basis, as well as leaders of other community youth groups, to find out what each is doing, see where coordination might take place and how, and to become more aware of the nature of the programs available to youth and adults in the area. The latter could lead to better information throughout the community raising awareness of program availability, another objective of the program.
- iii) **Grant Application Process:** Applicants for project grants should be asked to appear before the committee. This could help elaborate on what is being proposed by the applicants as well as involving more dialogue as to the basis for program support decisions. Such a process would also enhance the understanding throughout the network of agencies as to what is being provided in the community at large as well as with regard to specific programs.

- iv) **Monitoring Subrecipient Grants:** There should be regular, clear feedback into the committee as to how well the programs are being carried out, including the meeting of goals of increasing the number of youth and adults affected. The Director should be at the center of reports flowing from the various programs, thus making it less difficult to monitor regularly if the grant objectives are being met. These reports could be part of the monthly Steering Committee meetings. This would allow shifts in the money being allocated when it is felt that the money is not being used sufficiently or in accordance with the sub-grant expectations.
- v) **Centralized Statistics Management:** More statistics throughout the various programs from policing to the youth service programs and central accumulation of data are necessary to monitor the measurable objectives listed in the grant proposals. Law Enforcement reports such as those provided by the Sheriff's Office and the DeLand Police Department presently could be gleaned for information that could be placed in comprehensive data sheets to measure specific law enforcement outcomes from all sources for the area. Measurable objectives are now a key part of the Weed and Seed national grant application requirements. Such statistics would provide solid baselines to measure increase and decrease, thus success and lack thereof as far as persons affected. It doesn't answer all the qualitative questions such as what really happens to human lives but it does get at the objective environment and whether it is improving, standing in place or declining. A Stetson student with good computer spreadsheet and graphing skills could easily gather the statistics from the various agencies and programs, including police data that is being gathered and that is public, post it in computer information format and make it available in various formats relative to different needs. This need not be an expensive operation but could involve only a few hours a week at a modest hourly wage. This necessitates the keeping of good statistics by participating agencies including all police elements and community service elements.
- vi) **Surveys:** Annual surveys should be conducted to tap into community sentiments and seek to obtain some of the data hard to find. These need not be expensive surveys and part of a major evaluation process such as this one. The Stetson Institute on Social Research can help with this, utilizing personnel and experience from the present process.
- vii) **Information techniques:** The "awareness" objective indicated throughout the grant relative to different aspects of the grant is one that is important and should be viewed not only as a critical objective, but a doable one. How to do this on a regular, efficient basis and in an economic manner should be the subject for the Steering Committee to give some careful attention and thought. .
- viii) **Reordering of Strategies:** Strategies A and B are clearly separate strategies with the first focused on coordinating law enforcement agencies in actions against criminals and the second focused on bringing law enforcement personnel and community residents together to establish an environment watchful of and hostile to criminal activity. Strategies C and D are not as clearly separated. For example, job training can go into either category as could the Safe Havens. In 2003-2004 there is to be a special emphasis on computer training which is set outside the basic strategies. It might be clearer to have Strategy C contain various substance abuse programs and any educational programs whether tutoring for elementary school children or computer training for youth and adults. Strategy D might then contain two major parts – unless one wanted to establish an additional strategy. The two parts would be (1) neighborhood restoration in the sense of community spirit and a healthy, safe community for positive programs and activities for youth (such as the Safe Havens), community clean-up projects, and community social activities and (2) physical aspects of neighborhood restoration such as affordable housing, more accessible transportation and better sanitation and water facilities.. As separate strategies, they would look like this: [How one labels them, is less important than moving to a clearer distinction of strategies which are being suggested here. For example, one might want to label Strategy D as Community Cultural Development to emphasize the "community" aspect of the strategy rather than simply the physical neighborhood.]

(a) Law Enforcement Strategy

- (b) Community Policing Strategy
- (c) Prevention, Intervention and Treatment Strategy
- (d) Neighborhood Cultural Development Strategy
- (e) Neighborhood Physical Restoration

**b) Strategy A Recommendations: Law Enforcement Activities to Reduce Crime**

- i) **Statistics Gathering and Monthly Tactics and Strategy Meetings:** Making recommendations here is difficult in terms of what law enforcement can do better in order to bring the crime rates down. What is the magic number for prosecutions, police patrols through an area, number of officers working in an area, sting operations, etc? Circumstances may alter any of these variables. The bottom line is simply the number of crimes being committed and whether they are increasing and decreasing and how this relates to what numbers of officers, stings, etc. are taking place. For this one needs good statistics on a regular basis. The long-run effects of many of the community efforts will not be known until the young grow into adulthood and we see if they have fewer tendencies to crime than the generation before them. In the short run we need a careful count of what is happening to see if on a monthly basis crime rates are increasing and decreasing. These numbers need to be coordinated among the various units involved. Each month the various law enforcement units should be able to view the statistics for crimes in specific areas, go over tactics, strategies and events that took place and plot the tactics, strategies and events for the next month. At the moment there are only fragments of statistics which can be pulled together, as was done so well for us by the person responsible for data gathering and analysis in the Sheriff's Office. This should be an on-going, monthly procedure in all law enforcement agencies along with monthly meetings to analyze and ask what happened, why and what effect on what will be done in the following month. *Statistics aren't the goal of the project – lowering crime is; however, they are a means for knowing whether the goal is being reached and a means with which regular assessments and planning can take place.*

**c) Strategy B Recommendations: Community Policing**

- i) **Foot and Bike Patrols:** Foot patrols in Oakland Terrace are already providing an effective action against criminal activity but more foot patrols have been recommended for that area. The large majority of those surveyed did not feel that there had been an increase in foot and bike patrols. The residents surveyed generally felt there were not enough foot patrols and that more police presence was needed. These patrols would allow not only presence but increased rapport with residents. Likewise, the already helpful rapport created by DeLand Police presence at social activities could be increased in order to develop this rapport even further in order to assist in the comfort level of working with police in maintaining a crime-free area. The development of closer working relationships with members of the community and the police is clearly in evidence. However, this needs to be emphasized at this time in order to maintain the developments that have taken place and to encourage even further development in these relationships.
- ii) **Substation at Oakland Terrace:** This seems to have a very positive effect. Continued use of this at least intermittently appears warranted.
- iii) **Community Coordination of Police Activities:** The composition and dedication of the Steering Committee is notable, but other routes of community coordination need also to be explored. For example, as was suggested by one of the persons closely involved in the Weed and Seed Program, more partnerships formed through specialized committees to include all of both city and county governmental departments may be helpful. For example, coordination on working towards coordinated enforcements may be better approached and corrected if representatives from fire, code enforcement, law enforcements, residents, public works, and city hall come together as a team to better formulate solutions to resolved concerns. It's possible to become inundated with committees and efforts to coordinate activities; however, it is worth exploring to see if various specialized coordinating groups would be helpful in

dealing with some of the problems. Some of these might not fit neatly within one of the four major goals but overlap a couple of them.

- iv) **Crimestoppers Information:** Information on Crimestoppers and the number to call should be more widely disseminated. Apparently few persons actually know it. Perhaps decals that could be posted on windows like is done for home security permit information would be helpful.
  - v) **Ways to Become Involved:** Residents surveyed generally disagreed that persons know how to become involved in crime prevention programs; hence, more effort in this appears warranted.
  - vi) **Minority Hiring:** Continued efforts to hire minorities should be encouraged, including Spanish speaking personnel given the increasing Hispanic population. How many are hired as percentage of the law enforcement personnel and over time would be a useful measurement to see if the efforts are really paying off in actual hires.
- d) **Strategy C Recommendations: Prevention, Intervention and Treatment**
- i) **More Money Plus Volunteer Recruitments:** It's hard not to say always that more money would certainly help, whatever the program; but it is a fact of life. The Chisholm Community Center has 5 full-time staff members and only one can be available at night, a time when as many as 75 youngsters are present. The Safe Havens receive only \$5,000 each for a total of \$15,000. The City and the Weed and Seed Program should aim for more assistance at night at the Chisholm Center. But not all is money. The need for volunteers at the Safe Havens is a critical one. There does not appear to be strong community volunteer support at the Chisholm Community Center in terms of volunteers nor at Oakland Terrace, hence making it necessary to find more grant funds to pay for staffing. There have been a few – but very few – regular volunteers. Stetson University students have generated numerous volunteers at Chisholm Center and have been the saving grace for providing sufficient instructors for the classes and obtaining community help. One person connected with the Chisholm Center program commented that there is lots of talk in the community but not much action in helping with volunteer efforts. None of the Weed and Seed objectives refer to generating a large pool of volunteers for the Safe Havens. This should be a major item, especially in order to increase the number of participants in programs without running into financial roadblocks.
  - ii) **Coordination of Safe Havens:** The three Safe Havens programs operate separate from each other without regular contact and coordinating of efforts. It would be helpful to bring them together, as well as other community youth groups, to find out what each is doing, see where coordination might take place, and to become more aware of the nature of the programs available to youth and adults in the area. It would be helpful for the Director of the Weed and Seed Program to be the central point in coordinating activities from local public and private agencies and organizations to maintain a more comprehensive and integral-coordinated network of efforts to seed the community with a positive cultural resistant to the development of criminal activities. A task force might be helpful with the task of evaluating the Safe Havens programs very closely and coordinating efforts to enhance existing program and develop new ones where warranted. Such a task force could provide information to city, county and Weed and Seed personnel that could be useful in deciding the role of the Safe Havens program for the overall goals and what is needed to see that they maintain present effectiveness and move beyond to enhancing the “seed” part of the program. The Safe Havens provide excellent foci for efforts in accomplishing the “seed” part of the program especially with regard to the community youth – and this is arguably the most critical part of turning the tide against any criminal culture development. .
  - iii) **Safe Havens as the Central Foci:** The Safe Havens exist to a large extent due to efforts other than Weed and Seed, yet provide excellent facilities and programs to accomplish the “seeding” part of the Weed and Seed Program. It might be best to focus the program funds of the Program on these safe havens rather than on a multiple of scattered projects. At least, it might be considered to place an overwhelming amount of program money in these locations..

- iv) **TechBridge:** The TechBridge program appears to be one of the most successful and useful programs for getting young men and women directed towards success and a productive life. At the moment there are only 29 participants but 45 can be accommodated. This program was praised by all and would be well worth increased funding support as well as information in the community. It is especially helpful for GED program completion. Given the heavy emphasis on this item by respondents in listing high priorities, a stronger emphasis on establishing programs and drawing residents into them is probably warranted
  - v) **Adult Education Program:** A strong adult education program, similar to the one for youth, aimed at teaching skills for the modern computer might be very helpful in providing better job opportunities for individuals with also good fall-out in terms of providing better family income and stable job prospects. An expansion of the program for youth would also be beneficial. The provision of the kits for “make it – take it” is not so expensive that this could not be expanded significantly with relatively few dollars.
  - vi) **Parenting Programs:** Development of strong “parenting” programs would be helpful in ameliorating some of the problems faced by “at risk” children. Dealing with the pressures and tensions, as well as the effects of low-incomes on quality of life within families could reap substantial positive effects on the lives of persons and the lessening of the temptations and pressures that bring youngsters into criminal activity.
  - vii) **Ex-offenders Programs.** A broad-based, strongly supported ex-offenders regular program for the Weed and Seed area is missing. This means that young men and women, as well as adults, have minimal assistance, or none, in integrating themselves back into the community, back into their families, and back into the economic system. The establishment of such a program could be one of the most significant developments in the program. The safe havens with all of their programs also do not reach youngsters who have been jailed in any really significant way. This is a glaring gap in the Weed and Seed Program that needs to be filled. Especially for young, teenage offenders, these havens may be one of the best routes for transition back into the community in a healthy fashion.
  - viii) **Public Information.** Information is sent through several channels ranging from school programs to flyers broadly distributed to notices in the newspapers. But a basic mailing list needs to be established that includes all residents within the designated areas. This would also involve costs, which would probably have to be picked up by either City or County money. This might also help with the job placement information. Since no one comes to the Resource Center to check the bulletin board, regular notices through the mail might enhance and encourage residents to check it out and be aware of opportunities. The grant proposal refers to a manual listing services. This can probably be done inexpensively by using a one-time person to put it together and print in an inexpensive format. Once done it can be easily kept up to date with names, addresses, etc. of services.
  - ix) **Subrecipients’ Outcome Indicators:** Subrecipients should be required to present performance outcome indicators that can be used to measure if they are succeeding at their tasks. These measures should be evaluated monthly and when a subrecipient is not performing adequately the funds should be shifted to those subrecipients who can show progress. This should not be an annual process, but a monthly process. Those organizations able to show solid performance on a regular basis should be preferred over those who don’t and the money shifted during the year when it is deemed appropriate. Some of this is presently done, but perhaps needs to be a monthly evaluation process. Money should not be lying around waiting for promised action when it can be used by those organizations showing regular good outcomes. If a monthly report is not filed, the subrecipient should be notified that funding will be withdrawn after a 5 day grace period if no report is forthcoming.. Statistical information from all subrecipients should be collected and maintained in an overall worksheet showing the various subrecipients, projects, number of participants.
- e) **Strategy D Recommendations: Neighborhood Restoration**

- i) **Coordination of Grant Efforts:** Close coordination between the Weed and Seed steering committee and local governmental officials and administrative personnel working on grants is a necessity in order to target the priorities. This is really the only role the program can effectively play in working directly on the problems.
- ii) **Information Gathering:** Gathering information such as that gleaned from surveys concerning housing needs could be an effective role for the program. The steering committee for Weed and Seed, the present survey and Oakland Terrace's monthly resident meetings work towards this goal. Annual surveys should be instituted as a means for tapping sentiment of the people. This could be part of the larger effort in this matter by CFCD which is the contracting organization for Weed and Seed.
- iii) **Habitat for Humanity:** Coordination with organizations such as Habitat for Humanity should be included. Weed and Seed cannot build housing, but perhaps can influence what and where houses are built with good cooperation with Habitat.
- iv) **Child Care Information:** Residents surveyed expressed a need here but the facilities already exist; thus, information on existing facilities and the processes for obtaining aid through Child Care Resources Network might be very helpful. This helps especially those seeking employment.
- v) **Health Facilities:** Like child care, this may also be a matter of where the Weed and Seed Program can be an important source of information in a pro-active manner, that is, providing it regularly and not waiting until someone asks. However, the problems of obtaining good, regular and affordable health care are indicated by residents at the top of their priority list and perhaps Weed and Seed could, at least, be a stimulus for more governmental action in this area. This seems to be one of the concerns of CFCD, which is the contracting organization for Weed and Seed.

#### VIII) Details of Evaluation with Reference to Main Goals/Strategies

**Note:** The specifics of the evaluations were generated by turning goals, objectives and tasks from the grant proposals into questions and seeing what has been accomplished. In most instances information could be located to provide the evaluation. In some cases information is very difficult to accumulate – a problem that should be rectified by providing a more centralized flow of information – or the process is still on-going as in the 2003-2004 grant which is still in process or the results are long-term and require the establishment of good baselines to measure progress over the years.

##### a) Strategy A: Law Enforcement Goals/ Strategy

- i) **Goals and Objectives:** Reduce drug trafficking / open air sales and related criminal activity in the designated area through law enforcement activities, presence of the same officers to breed familiarity in the designated area and address neighborhood restoration and coordinate federal, state and local law enforcement as well as legal aid agencies to help service the designated area and maintain a balance of hands-on policing and prosecution of repeat
- ii) **Findings:**
  - (1) What procedures have been implemented to ensure prosecuted cases result in longer jail times / federal prosecution? There is a policy referred to as “make a sale, go to jail,” for anybody who sells drugs in the Spring Hill area, whether they are a first time offender or otherwise. Any cases that are federally prosecuted are done so by Rick Jancha
  - (2) Has crime been reduced generally in the eyes of the residents?
    - (a) Have the number of dangerous criminals involved in drugs and the use of weapons been reduced? Drugs: Yes; some dangerous criminals have been arrested, while others have been “displaced” (They moved to another area of town after officer presence in Spring Hill increased). Over 50% of those surveyed indicated that the police were successful in reducing crime generally [65%], in reducing drug dealing [54%], and in reducing robberies [60%].. However, notably , a substantial percentage saw much crime still in existence with 35% indicating lack of success by police

overall, 46% seeing lack of success in reducing drug dealers and 40% saying lack of success in reducing robberies. Weapons: They have never been a problem in Spring Hill; most crimes involving weapons were domestic violence related rather than drug related.. Persons surveyed had little knowledge of the existence of weapons with only a relatively small percentage referring to whether they had been reduced or not

- (b) Do residents have less fear of crime? The survey indicates a slight majority[51%] feel they are safer but 49% say no. Part of the reason for this answer may be that 37% indicated that a criminal act had been committed against either them or a member of their family.
- (3) Have the mid-and high-level drug dealers known to live in the area been identified? Has this number of identifications increased? Is there a sense that all have been identified? Specific individuals are identified at the Steering Committee meetings where reports on law enforcement activity are presented. However, good statistics as to how many have been identified and whether there is a sense that all have been identified is not readily available and one can assume that given the statement of the problem in the 2003-2004 grant referring to the extent of crime in the area that much is left to do in this area [“Crack cocaine continues to be as readily available as regular cocaine and cannabis.” ]. A slight majority of residents surveyed [54%] believe that there has been a reduction of drug dealers while 46% believe there has been no reduction. One of three of the residents surveyed indicated they knew drug dealers who were not being stopped by police.
- (4) Have prosecutors been assigned to prosecute all target area cases? (goal was one adult / one juvenile)Yes; the prosecutor assigned to adult drug cases from Spring Hill is Heather Caeners. The prosecutor assigned to juvenile drug cases is Jill Fitzgerald.
- (5) How many successful arrests and prosecutions of drug, violent or repeat offenders were conducted within a 3 year period? (goal was 3)At least three were conducted. The ongoing nature of the problem is seen in the discussion at Steering Committee meetings, for example, video buys are still being made regularly and a rash of armed robberies have taken place. There were 17 felony warrants drafted for three individuals in connection with those robberies. Two are in custody and one remains at large. Flyers were placed around Spring Hill asking that the at-large person turn himself into the police. The number of warrants served has remained somewhat constant over the last 7 years at around 70/year but peaked in 2000 and 2003 with 100 in 2000 and 105 in 2003 according to the Sheriff’s Office. This could reflect good news in that the police are getting hold of more of the criminal element or could reflect bad news in that crimes continue on a steady basis with peak years coming most recently. Until a clear trend line up or down is shown it is difficult to conclude any success or failure of the program in this area. Success could be that potential crimes were held down and the situation would have been worse without the program or the lack of any notable impact so far could be read from the lack of any significant change in the number of crimes being committed and the number of warrants served and prosecutions conducted. The statistics could be influenced by both the tendency of persons to report crimes and the consistency of records in keeping track of crimes in the Spring Hill Area. However, since these statistical problems are found throughout the years, the problems are perhaps seen in the sharp peaks and dips at some points and one can cautiously interpret the data as holding to a somewhat consistent status quo in terms of the number of crimes committed and the number of criminals being apprehended. This does not signal failure of the program but may indicate a positive note of keeping the criminal element from increasing while the various social infrastructure programs begin to take place and the community activities begin to take hold as consistent features in building the kind of civic concern and pride that will lead to the desired regular downturn trend in the crime statistics and an upward trend in the sense of security in the community.
- (6) Have federal, state and local law enforcement agencies and prosecuting agencies coordinated efforts to target higher-level career criminals? Yes; local agencies such as the

DPD and VCSO have coordinated with the U.S. Attorney's Office to prosecute criminals, while the DEA has agents within the VCSO to also target high-level drug dealers within Spring Hill.

- (7) How many planned operations in the target area aimed at street level drug sales and related criminal activities been conducted? [2003-2004 grant indicates 6 as possible goal] – Since October 1, 2003 there have been eight operations thus exceeding what was the targeted number.
- (8) Have there been efforts to coordinate efforts of law enforcement and prosecution to target repeat offenders to longer jail time and/or federal prosecution? A member of the State Attorney's office is a member of the Weed and Seed Steering committee and is kept up-to-date on law enforcement activity. Also since Weed and Seed is a federal grant, the DeLand Police Department communicates with the United States Attorney's Office and forwards to them information with regards to arrests made which involved narcotics and/or firearms.
- (9) Has an aggressive and cohesive approach been implemented with the DeLand Police Department and the Volusia County Sheriff's Office? An aggressive approach is maintained through not only communication between agencies, but with street level operations. DeLand Police Department has a member assigned to the Volusia County Sheriff's Office west side narcotics task force which has formed a tool for operations. This partnership also increases possibility to be more proactive because of the larger pool of equipment and personnel available from both agencies.
- (10) What law enforcement activities have been implemented to reduce the number of drug trafficking/street sales and related criminal activity in the target area? DeLand Police Department indicated that besides active patrols, law enforcement has taken a more active role in identifying the cause of narcotics sales rather than just the symptoms. The activities have been an increase in patrol, street level narcotics operations, and awareness programs. However these activities are only the surface of what is done. Communication, education, and partnerships with the community have become a valuable tool for law enforcement in its problem solving tool box. Identifying the community's concerns is helped through Weed and Seed meetings, survey, and officers conducting foot patrols in the neighborhood which creates familiarity between the residents and the officers. This has helped to foster cooperation between the community and law enforcement. The information gained from the community and their interaction with police is vital to the reduction of criminal activity. The Sheriff's Office changed the hours and the days that officers will patrol Spring Hill so that the criminal element within Spring Hill would not have a definite time on when and where an officer might show up. [Minutes 6/26/03]
- (11) How many reverse sting and undercover operations have been conducted involving the resources of the West Volusia Narcotics Task Force, Drug Unit at the Police Department and the Oakland Terrace Police Unit? As indicated by the DPD: There is no dedicated housing police unit. On average, there are two sting operations each month, which mainly depends on personnel availability. Undercover work is conducted, on average, 5 – 8 times per week.
- (12) How many operations have used the assistance of informants to gather intelligence information? The DPD indicates that about 90% of narcotics investigations are initiated by citizen complaints, information offered by suspects arrested for other crimes, or through information learned from road patrol and documents informants. The other 10% are on-view arrests. Steering Committee Minutes reveal examples of cooperation between police and community member in discussion concerning problems at one location and what is being done to eliminate them
- (13) How many planned operations in the target area aimed at street level drug sales and related criminal activities were conducted? Since October 1, 2003 there have been eight operations.

(14) How do the monthly crime reports and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement Annual crime reports help determine the impact of efforts on criminal activity? The crime reports essentially act as report cards. They tell law enforcement officials if their efforts are having any impact in particular areas and assist in tracking purposes as to where the criminal element has been displaced to. At the moment, these reports are not sent regularly to the Director of the Weed and Seed Program, thus, a lack of coordinated regular evaluation of progress in meeting the goals of the Weed and Seed Program is evinced here.

b) **Strategy B: Community Policing Strategy/Goals**

i) **Goals and Objectives:** To establish and publicize the community as a crime free neighborhood. The objectives are to identify and prioritize problems in the designated area and develop action plans to research and resolve the problems, reduce resident's fear of crime in designated area, develop cooperative relationships between police and citizens, encourage resident participation in law enforcement initiatives and increase enforcement of low priority crimes.

ii) **Findings:**

- (1) Have the number of low priority crimes been reduced through a collaborative effort by residents and law enforcement? Yes, according to the DeLand Police Department these have been reduced by 25-30% in some areas but the regular availability of statistics in this area makes it difficult to maintain a monthly, or even annual, evaluation process. These statistics are not readily at hand for a comparison over the past 7 years and need to be more systematically gathered and recorded, along with reports to the Director of the Weed and Seed Program in the light of the grant expectations for which funding is received. Numbers may not be as accurate in assessing developments as might first appear to be the case since as the community becomes more comfortable with the police they will begin to report more criminal activity in their community than they have in the past. The effort by the DeLand Police Department to reduce low priority crimes begins with the effort to put police officers through extensive training in community policing, crime prevention, and problem solving. The DeLand Police Department has also established a community bike patrol, and presents educational and awareness programs during community meetings. The DeLand Police Department also plans to conduct a security survey for residents and businesses who have been victims of thefts or burglaries to better secure their building or belongings, and thus help to ensure that they are not victimized again. The increase in the number of deputies and police officers in the area has worked to decrease low priority crimes, for example, the increase by the DPD of their presence through extra patrols and the bike unit.
- (2) How has the Crimestoppers telephone number been advertised? – What percentage increase in calls annually? An “increase” evaluation depends on regularly generated statistics. These are not available for the Weed and Seed area since the city and county utilizes this number. A tracking system indicating locations from which calls generate may help but some homes have no phones and some calls may be made from public phones. Persons surveyed indicated that few people in the community knew the number and only 25% of those surveyed said they knew it while 75% said they did not.
- (3) Has the police presence been increased through the use of Park/Walk initiative/bicycle patrols? Yes, bike patrols have been very successful in the Spring Hill area. The Weed and Seed grant money has been used to purchase new bikes for the DPD to increase officer presence in Spring Hill through bike patrols. Spring Hill residents are reported to have positive responses to the bike patrols. In Oakland Terrace the bike patrols have been regular and effective in helping to reduce the presence of crime. It should also be noted that the police substation at Oakland Terrace no longer is in full operation but the building is kept for use by the police and the police do come there to fill out reports and do a few other things in order to indicate a police presence and to provide for unpredictability as to when police will be around the area. Despite the increases in patrols

there is still a feeling among the residents surveyed that this is an area that is sorely deficient.. Only 30% said there were more police patrols now than several years ago and only 14% said there were more foot patrols. One of the most frequent responses in the open-ended question on what was needed to reduce crime was the need for more patrols. This included a variety of types of patrols.

- (4) Has the community been strengthened as a crime-free neighborhood? One of the things that take place as crime is chased out of an area is its simple relocation, referred to as the displacement theory. DeLand police indicated that as work is done at a particular area, the criminal element begins to move and sometimes only a short distance away. However, as the police continue to partner with the community and other city departments, such as code enforcement, the police keep removing the source of the problem. This type of activity will soon impact places the criminal elements tries to attach itself; therefore, removing the source, removes the problems. The Director at Chisholm Center indicated that clearly the area around the Center has become more crime-free than in previous years. Likewise, the Director of the Safe Havens program at Oakland Terrace indicated that crime has been reduced considerably at Oakland Terrace. However, the residents still sense a substantial amount of crime despite some significant reduction. Over 50% of those surveyed indicated that the police were successful in reducing crime generally [65%], in reducing drug dealing [54%], and in reducing robberies [60%].. However, notably , a substantial percentage saw much crime still in existence with 35% indicating lack of success by police overall, 46% seeing lack of success in reducing drug dealers, and 40% saying lack of success in reducing robberies. Weapons: They have never been a problem in Spring Hill; most crimes involving weapons were domestic violence related rather than drug related.. Persons surveyed had little knowledge of the existence of weapons with only a relatively small percentage referring to whether they had been reduced or not.
- (5) Has the fear of crime in the target area been reduced? According to the DeLand Police Department there has been a reduction in the fear of crime. . Residents are taking a more active role in helping to clean up their community, and report that they feel more secure with the increased police presence. The Director of the Safe Haven program at Oakland Terrace indicated that residents clearly feel more safe than a year ago. A survey of residents done recently there by the Oakland Terrace authorities supported this assessment. Simply being able to sit outside at night at Oakland Terrace comfortably and without fear is a good sign of the positive development of a community with less fear of crime. However, the general survey this year indicates a more qualified view of whether the fear of crime has been reduced. The survey indicates a slight majority[51%] feel they are safer but 49% say no. Part of the reason for this answer may be that 37% indicated that a criminal act had been committed against either them or a member of their family
- (6) Have cooperative relationships between police and citizens been developed? Yes, the DeLand Police Department has funded the painting of a Spring Hill mural done by the community's citizens. The DPD has also been present at the 2003 Spring Hill T.U.R.N. festival with an information booth. The DPD officers on bike patrols are encouraged to communicate with Spring Hill residents (which they have), and in doing this they learn from the residents what their concerns about the community are. Additionally, the DPD has a program that emphasizes active recruitment of minorities from the Spring Hill area. Interested individuals are hired by the department (not as officers at first), and the department pays for them to go through police academy. The department then hires the individuals as full officers upon completion of the academy. At Oakland Terrace the DPD Chief-of-Police gave his direct phone number so residents could call him immediately if there were a problem. Residents also have a means to inform of problems in residences through a confidential process which has been working effectively in gathering information and acting against criminal elements. For example, several evictions were the result of information from residents about "drug houses" in some of the units. This information was coordinated with the undercover police to reveal the true existence of

drug activity. Residents surveyed had a positive response generally to whether the DeLand Police Department and the Sheriff's Office were making good efforts to work with the people [62% agreed with regard to the DPD and 54% agreed regarding the SO]. However, 38% disagreed with regard to the DPD and 46% with regard to the SO. It should be taken into account that a relatively large number of respondents had no opinion [19% and 24% respectively]. Also, it may be the case that residents are not sure if it's the DPD or the SO which should be operating in their area.

- (7) Have existing neighborhood watch programs been reactivated? Yes, one has been reactivated in the past 7 months. At Oakland Terrace it is not called a Neighborhood Watch program, but there is a process for community responsibility in helping to locate criminal activity. Residents have a means to inform of problems in residences through a confidential process which has been working effectively in gathering information and acting against criminal elements. For example, several evictions were the result of information from residents about "drug houses" in some of the units. This information was coordinated with the undercover police to reveal the true existence of drug activity.
- (8) Has the police presence been increased through the use of Park/Walk imitative and foot / bicycle patrols? Yes; bike patrols have been very successful in the Spring Hill area. The Weed & Seed grant money has been used to purchase new bikes for the DPD to increase officer presence in Spring Hill through bike patrols. Spring Hill residents are reported to have positive responses to the bike patrols. Oakland Terrace clearly has benefited from increased bike and foot patrols, according to the director there.
- (9) Describe measures taken to establish a Citizen Police Academy. A CPA was established in 2001. Flyers are distributed that advertise their meetings and training sessions. Training sessions are bi-annual and involve hands-on training and education in several areas such as self-defense, CPR, drug awareness and prevention, etc..
- (10) Were officer friendly Crime Prevention events, such as bike safety, conducted within the target community? If so, how many? (2 recommended) Yes, several such events have been held. They include Police Athletic League (PAL) football practices that involve community residents, the DPD information booth at the 2003 Spring Hill T.U.R.N. festival, as well as the painting of the Spring Hill mural (funded by the DPD), and its unveiling at the 2004 Martin Luther King Day festival in Spring Hill. The DPD was also present at this festival. At Oakland Terrace drug awareness classes have been held monthly with instruction from the DeLand Police officers. The drug awareness program known as D.A.R.E. is active in the county although not a direct part of Weed and Seed Program grants or coordination. Nevertheless, it does add to the comprehensive Weed and Seed idea throughout the county as well as in the Weed and Seed area.
- (11) How has resident participation in law enforcement initiative been encouraged? Such participation has been encouraged through the police department's active recruitment of minority officers from the Spring Hill area. At Oakland Terrace the use of confidential means of communication with signed, but confidential forms transmitted to the police and to judges have been effective. The residents have developed a sense of responsibility and confidence in the procedure that allows them to participate without placing themselves or their families in harm's way.
- (12) Has a complaint tracking system to identify community problems been implemented? Yes, when an officer has identified a problem he or she completes a "response of service" form which is circulated throughout the department. Depending on what the problem is, a specialty unit like traffic or narcotics will review and identify the source. As the problem is worked using S.A.R.A. [scan, analyze, respond and assessment] concept, the work is documented.
- (13) Have monthly Community Policing meetings for residents and law enforcement commanders been coordinated by the Sheriff's Office and the Police Department? Both

departments attend a monthly Weed and Seed meeting. The police also attend at Oakland Terrace a monthly resident advisory board and public housing resident meetings.

- (14) Has the cooperation between law enforcement officials and community residents been increased?
- (a) Minutes of the Steering Committee are good evidence of the regular contact between police and the community. The attendance [17 at one of the meetings attended by one of this report's researchers] illustrates commitment as well as broad representation [city, county, DeLand Police Department, Sheriff's Office and other community units were represented]. These meetings reflect varied lines of cooperation ranging from indications of where specific criminal elements may be located to community projects to face-to-face contact between community members and police officials.
  - (b) Issues such as minority hiring with the City, working with juveniles in obtaining good jobs, and the problematic use of juvenile records regarding applicants seeking government jobs were discussed. The program is too young to have statistics on actual effects of such discussions, but to help this discussion items such as minority hiring could be included in future evaluations. A new hiring plan adopted by City of DeLand to recruit minorities and hire them as Police Officer trainees has gone into effect. With regard to what definition is used for "minority", it was indicated that the DeLand Police Department wants to focus on African American recruits, but that Asians, Indians, Women and Hispanics are also considered minorities and would be considered for this program. Given the large number of African-Americans and the increasing number of Hispanics in the area, having more law enforcement officers representing such groups seems to be a useful means for gaining the confidence of the community.
  - (c) Another example of the type of cooperation between police and community is evinced in the Steering Committee meeting of 11/19/2003 with a report on complaints about drug activity in area of Beresford and Adelle and the police increase in bike and regular patrols in that area. Also the use of buy busts and reverse operations are to continue in that area. The Director at the Chisholm Community Center indicated that if there appear to be drugs at the site, they tell them to leave and also call for police "drive-throughs" which help to move any of the problems out of the area. The cooperation between police and the Center is excellent and effective.
  - (d) Another good example of police-community interaction is revealed in the Steering Committee Minutes where reports on law enforcements operations were given such as an operation by the narcotics task forces in Spring Hill involving the Corner Store where 24 arrests were made. There was also an operation at Bruton Park to slow down the prostitution trade and drug activities in the Park. It was indicated that prostitution has increased in Spring Hill. Lt. Ehrhart of the Sheriff's Office said to the residents that if they call, a police a car will be sent into the area. Lt. Ehrhart also reported that regular patrols are going out to Southwestern Middle School during the PAL practices and games. This issue had been raised at a previous meeting, hence this was a clear, positive response to the request. At meetings such as this not only do residents become informed but the police are encouraged to tackle specific areas and problems and then are held to some reporting later as to what actions have been taken. This provides a continuous stream of communication – action – communication.

c) **Strategy C: Prevention and Intervention Strategy/Goals**

- i) **Goals/Objectives:** These goals and objectives involve various prevention and intervention programs focusing on drugs, alcohol abuse and positive programs that seek to provide safe havens for youth development and training/educational opportunities for youth and adults.

**ii) Findings:**

- (1) Has a reference manual for residents that will provide them with information on the various services available for them been provided? No.
- (2) What efforts have been taken to collaborate efforts between agencies currently offering services to youth and programs sponsored by Weed and Seed? ----Very little to none appears to be the case. This is an area where the program can make its mark since its funding is very limited in terms of actually providing many of the necessary programs. However, to coordinate the numerous efforts in the city and county would be a role not in existence except for the Weed and Seed Program.
- (3) Has there been collaboration with agencies outside the target area to offer programs to target area youth, specifically YMCA and Boys & Girls Club? Yes, but very limited. Boys and Girls Clubs receives \$5000. Collaboration with the YMCA is not in existence at the moment.
- (4) What percentage increase in the number of programs has occurred? (goal 30% increase in the number of programs in 3 years). This is presently planned in the 2003-2004 grant proposal. No baseline data seems to be available to measure this, nor is a list of all service possibilities available for the general public at the moment. Such a list is called for in the grant. The general sense of the residents surveyed was that there had been an increase in the number of youth programs [62% of those with an opinion] although 38% of those with an opinion disagreed. However, about 25% of the respondents did not have an opinion on this. Over half of the respondents or a member s of their families had participated in at least one of the youth programs. The development of youth centers was at the top of the list of priorities for respondents to the survey, ranking along with job placement and other top items.
- (5) Have the number of prevention, intervention and treatment programs for HIV/AIDS increased? How many new programs? What number of participants--increase in number? It is indicated in 2003-2004 Grant Proposal that an HIV/AIDS outreach program is being pursued. How large? Where? How many participants? Meetings are held each week in the Community Resources Center. Two volunteers are paid for by the Community Outreach Program connected with The House Next Door under a government grant. HIV prevention devices are distributed. About \$6,000 is provided by Weed and Seed. How many are affected is not known due to lack of statistics. These could easily be maintained without compromising any anonymity and sent into the Director of Weed and Seed as part of the process of keeping track statistically of the various programs affected by Weed and Seed money.
- (6) What is being done with regard to narcotics prevention? A Narcotics Anonymous program meeting takes place every Wed. at the Community Resource Center. How successful is it? Limited data are available but is known that approximately 2 – 10 persons attend the meetings each week. Given the necessity to maintain anonymity, names cannot be collected but simple numbers could be collected and left with the Directory of Weed and Seed each week. The number of new persons, persons who seem to be successfully moving away from addiction, etc. could be gathered without sacrificing anonymity and without requiring much time and effort. The program is run by volunteers who are recovering addicts. Flyers are used to get the information out into the community.
- (7) Have efforts been made to coordinate services with Stewart Marchman Treatment Center, Serenity House or other agencies to bring their services to the neighborhood?--if yes, how?--People are regularly brought from Stewart Marchman Treatment Center and other organizations to use the facilities and participate in the programs at the Chisholm Community Center. Oakland Terrace links up with Stewart Marchman Center with regard to individual cases. The House Next Door is involved in some of the support services needed for youngsters at risk who are discovered in some of the programs. However,

none of this seems to be a result of any coordination by the Weed and Seed Program, but is due to coordinating agencies such as Oakland Terrace and the Chisholm Community Center.

- (8) Has a list of service providers in operation in East Volusia and West Volusia that would provide service to the target area been developed? If so, how many service providers have been identified?--who? No, such a list is not available.
- (9) Has the number of service agencies increased? If so, by what percentage? (goal 50% within 3 years). No information available to calculate percentage increase. This is the sort of data which can be generated with some part-time assistance in tracking data for measurable objectives.
- (10) Has the number of residents involved in programs recorded by service agencies (through collaborative agreement to report numbers) increased? If so, by what percentage? (goal 30% annually) --Not available. This is the sort of data which can be generated with some part-time assistance in tracking data for measurable objectives
- (11) Have efforts been coordinated with DBCC, to offer youth mentoring programs at Southwestern and DeLand Middle School?--how?--which programs? Not in existence. There was some effort with DBCC to set up a GED program but this fell through due to lack of qualified participants.
- (12) Has the number of students using tutoring services at Safe Havens increased? If so, what percentage? (goal 20% annually). Have the grades of tutored students increased during the school year? If so, what improvement has been shown? See comments on Chisholm Community Center and on Oakland Terrace below. Note that the Chisholm statistics on tutoring are sent to the City administration since the Center is under City administration and funding and that the Oakland Terrace program comes under the School District Administration. . These data could be made available to the Weed and Seed Program also to have some overall picture of what is happening in the area in this effort. Tutoring and educational development was seen by the residents surveyed as among the highest priorities with 77% of the respondents giving it a top priority rating [tied with childcare for the highest percentage of respondents giving an item top priority].
- (13) What preventive programs would be accepted and used by the community? What has been the percentage increase of residents participating in prevention annually? Which programs covered here? Has the number of preventative programs available for adults in the target area increased? If so, what was the percentage increase? (goal 50% increase within 3 years)--number of participants? The HIV/Aids and the Narcotics Anonymous programs can be viewed as part of the prevention programs. In a general sense all of the programs dedicated to helping youth in education, creative and healthy activities and job skills training can be included here. Preventative programs, outside of job skills programs, specifically targeted at adults for prevention are very few. The Greater Union Baptist Church runs an ex-offenders' program with some financial support from Weed and Seed. .
- (14) What type of youth and adult programs are involved? One of the main strategies is to provide substantial youth programs both in quantity and quality in order to provide creative and positive uses of energy and time and draw the community together in a cooperative manner that develops a non-receptivity to ideas and actions that would result in personal criminal behavior and in damage to the community. There is a wide variety of programs utilized by the Weed and Seed Program as part of the effort to achieve the neighborhood community development goals. [see Appendix A]. Some of these programs are directly targeted on the youth and some on the adults. Some involve residents of all generations in community participation and enhancement projects. The Safe Havens Program described below is one of the most active, wide-spread, comprehensive, and effective programs.

- (15) The Safe Havens Program includes many of the programs affecting youth and adults, including after school and summer activities. Three programs are designed to provide community points of social contact, outlets for creative and athletic activity and educational opportunities. Each of the Safe Havens Programs is given \$5,000 from the Weed and Seed Grant. This amount will decrease from a total of \$15,000 for the three programs to around \$12,500 total. These Programs are: The Police Athletic League, The Chisholm Community Center and the Oakland Terrace Program
- (a) The extensive programs offered through the Police Athletic League provide a continual and diverse set of activities for youth such as basketball, football, wrestling, community projects, and tutoring [See Appendix F]. The West Volusia PAL states its mission as follows: to provide quality athletic and educational activities for at-risk children in the greater DeLand area at low or no cost to the participant. PAL is based on the strong belief that youth sports programs help instill positive social and moral values as well as discipline, and that they contribute significantly to the reduction of juvenile delinquency. It is located in the Nathaniel E. Jackson Gymnasium that is easily accessible to the youth in the Spring Hill area. The structure was refurbished in 1995 through the cooperation of the Volusia County School Board and funding provided by a Community Development Block Grant. The PAL is a non-profit joint venture between the Volusia County Sheriff's Office, the DeLand Police Department and the community. A Volusia County Deputy Sheriff and a DeLand Police Officer are assigned to manage PAL programs. These programs affect several hundred youngsters each year. The football program has 240 participants, including cheerleaders; the basketball program has around 200 participants; the day camps involve 30 youngsters each camp for a two-week period. The day camps involve volunteers from Stetson University and the House Next Door. These camps include athletic activities, educational field trips and educational readings. The summer youth camps at Barberville involve 70 students for each of two sessions. It used to be three sessions but Weed and Seed required that its funds to PAL go to football instead so this year one session was dropped. Project Harmony involves middle school youngsters with each middle school in Volusia having one two-week camping at Barberville. This is sponsored by the Volusia School Board with partnering with Stetson University and other local organizations. Tutoring through Americorps, Stetson University and the House Next Door is provided during the year. This involves mainly Hispanic youngsters as the Hispanic population continues to grow and language skills in English are a major necessity. Overall the program services a large population of low-income youngsters, mostly from Spring Hill area, but also from other areas as well including Oakland Terrace and sections of DeLand that are in the Weed and Seed area and from different ethnic groups [approx. 65% black, 10% Hispanic and 15% white]. The largest number of participants are male but girls are also involved in such things as tournament basketball along with the varied camping activities. One of the good fall-outs from the PAL programs is the constant contact with law enforcement officers in a way that encourages respect and cooperation. The sense of community is enhanced with youngsters and law enforcement in cooperative and friendly relationships. Another special feature of the program is the cooperation between the Sheriff's Department and the DeLand Police Department. This type of cooperation between different law enforcement agencies is not common in other PAL organizations throughout the nation. With regard to the Weed and Seed area, this is particularly notable since the Weed and Seed area is in both county and city jurisdictions. PAL financing comes from a variety of governmental and private sources. The Weed and Seed money is a very small part of their funding.
- (b) The Chisholm Community Center is run by the DeLand Parks and Recreation Department. [See Appendix E]. It houses a game room, classrooms, meeting room and kitchen. A swimming pool and bath house are available along with an equipped play area, two outdoor basketball courts, a tennis court and picnic pavilion. Most

classes and clinics are free of charge. For classes sponsored by Weed and Seed money --a very small amount of money relative to the costs of all the programs at the Center --there is no charge but some charge may be levied on those outside of the area. . It involves all age levels in its multitude of activities such as “Adult Mix and Meet”, Music Classes, Instructional Boxing, Youth Choir, Weight Training, Theatre Arts, Chess and Checkers Fellowship, among other things. Adult computer classes are offered for those desiring to increase their job skill. For 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders a structured after-school reading program is available. A computer reading lab is available to enhance children’s reading and math skills. The Center provides a main arena for youth activity. As many as 75 – 100 youngsters are involved at the Center during the day. Groups from outside the Center, such as from Stuart Marchman, come to participate in some of the activities. Notably these youngsters are black, white, Hispanic, male, female, very young and teenagers. Thus, it is not simply a “black community” operation but a diverse community with significant participation from the various racial, ethnic and gender groups. The WS 2003-2004 Grant asks: Has the number of students involved in educational mentoring programs increased? Has the number of those involved in tutoring programs increased? Have the grades of tutored students increased during the school year? If so, what percentage? (goal 40% within 3 years)The educational mentoring programs at the Safe Haven at Chisholm Community Center is one of the brightest spots in the Weed and Seed Program. The program has varied responses to different age groups with some children receiving 1:1 tutoring where necessary and the older youngster (16-21) going into tech training classes with the program run by Rob Davidson . A GED program has also been started at the Center. This was stimulated by the youngsters who were hanging out at the Center for sports who were encouraged to obtain their GED degrees. At Chisholm Community Center records are being kept on the participants. These will provide a good baseline to measure whether the objective of increasing the number of students involved is obtained. The effectiveness of the program is measured by looking at report cards throughout the school year. This past year no ‘F’s” were reported on any of the students in the program. One should not simply focus on the numbers. What is especially significant is the personal contact and concern that is taking place. Often Youngsters are brought to the Center at the insistence of their parents, but , also, many youngsters are not brought by the parents and the staff at the Center seeks to find out who the teachers are that are connected the particular persons and to work with them concerning the person. This kind of personal attention adds a depth to the nature of the program and effectiveness not seen easily simply in the numbers. Likewise, simply indicating that a student’s grades went from “F’s” to “C’s” doesn’t reveal the huge leaps made when someone, such as one of the youngsters in this program recently, goes from not being able to read to being able to read. However, one thing which may stand in the way of increases is the lack of volunteers from the community. Presently as many as 40 youngsters are involved. To work effectively with these youngsters it is necessary to have low teacher-pupil ratios,; thus, the more volunteers, the more effectively the program can work and expand. At the moment the four instructors are from Stetson University. In fact, this is the basic source of the instructors. With more volunteers from the community more children and more individual tutoring can take place.

- (c) DeLand Public Housing Authority and the Oakland Terrace Program The WS 2003-2004 Grant asks: Has the number of students involved in educational mentoring programs increased? Has the number of those involved in tutoring programs increased? Have the grades of tutored students increased during the school year? If so, what percentage? (goal 40% within 3 years) ---What programs are available for juveniles who can be assisted with community resources prior to being incarcerated? The Oakland Safe Havens program has numerous programs aimed at various age groups and needs. A very small percentage of these are funded by Weed and Seed with much of the funding from country, school district, and city funds. All of the

programs combined provide an extensive safe haven for youth. Programs include a drug awareness class monthly for children ages 5-12 sponsored by the DeLand Police Department [generally 40 participants], an after-school program sponsored by the School Board Monday– Friday[40-45 participants], a summer camp for academic tutoring sponsored by the School Board [generally 3 staff members], a computer training class by TechBridge with some of the equipment purchased with Weed and Seed money –approximately 12 participants each month in 2002-2003 for a total 86 for the year [see description of TechBridge program below], monthly social gathering for children in middle schools sponsored by School Board to bring youth together to discuss topics affecting their lives [college preparedness, sex education, self-esteem, etc. –approximately 15 persons on average attend], field trips to places during the summer such as Islands of Adventure to provide not only fun but also a sense of having done something special during the summer [Weed and Seed funds with approximately 100 youngsters taking part], ESL programs for Spanish-speakers to learn English, and workshops on substance abuse from teenagers’ point of view [One Voice of Volusia program]. Significantly what holds many of the activities together is the networking done in moving people to the organization and/or program that is most relevant. Thus, a person may attend a drug-abuse workshop and later coordination with Steward Marchman Center may provide additional help. The networking among agencies and programs in the Volusia County area is critical to the overall success of Weed and Seed even though its funds and activities are encompassed within a small area of the county. Also, it should be noted that the counseling services and many others are open to other city residents and not only to those in Oakland Terrace, although some are strictly limited to Oakland Terrace due to the nature of the funding. A program not referred to in the basic grant proposal is the summer food program which is available at Oakland Terrace. This provides a healthy meal and snack each day for qualified children in the county. [County funded] Such a program is a means for providing healthy children which, in turn, contributes to avoiding health problems and also to develop a sense of well-being. This assists in the “safe haven” concept.

- (16) Another organization receiving support from the Weed and Seed Program is the Boys and Girls Clubs. This organization provides sports activities and character/leadership development programs for 3 groups of youngsters: 6-10 year olds, 11-13 year olds and 14-18 year olds. The \$5,000 from Weed and Seed is about 1/6 of the budget needed to staff and run these activities. The different programs offered have different numbers of participants but the general participation is between 15 – 20 youngsters.
- (17) What programs are available for juveniles who can be assisted with community resources prior to being incarcerated? It is not clear what is truly expected from this objective. However, there is a Juvenile Justice Program run under a government grant to The House Next Door that meets regularly to provide community service opportunities for youth required to do so. This operates out of the Community Resource Center and involves around 15 youngsters. The Tech Bridge Program which seeks to provide employable skills in computer technology is a means for helping students into paths that avoid criminal activity and incarceration. All the youth programs such as those found within the Safe Havens Program aid in avoiding criminal activity and, eventually, incarceration. Counseling is available in these programs. The Chisholm Community Center receives youngsters who need to perform community service projects as part of a judicial mandate. Also, some youngsters who have been, or perhaps are heading for trouble, are brought to the Center for mentoring and to provide a healthy environment for sports activity and educational opportunities. The latter are especially important in helping to develop job –needed skills and job-oriented processes such as applying for jobs and succeeding in holds a job. Sometimes convicted felons come by who now “want to do the right thing.” They are counseled and helped with how to pursue and obtain a job. Notably nothing is provided for youth offenders except for having some projects for youth who need community service hours. This is a serious matter for the Department of

Juvenile Justice which seems to be consistently facing large case loads for its staff and more financial pressures on the county for predetention youngsters.

- (18) The Weed and Seed Program has also been linked to the economic development projects sponsored by Stetson University. This is an effort to increase the small business opportunities for residents in the Spring Hill area. So far several projects have been initiated with loans of \$1,000 or more for a total of \$12,000. Five have been tried and three have succeeded.
- (19) The Spring Hill Park project is coming off of the drawing boards and should begin in 2004 or 2005. Given the money that is needed 2005 looks like a more realistic date. The improvements will include a basketball half-court and open play field. . The county has \$70,000 available for improvements available for 2004. Funds are expected from the two Rotary Clubs in DeLand and from Community Block Grants. The first phase of the park cost \$159,000 and was accomplished in December 2002 when the park opened. It includes a quarter-mile paved walking trail, picnic tables, grills, benches and a playground for children ages 2 to 12. The park is near the center of Spring Hill
- (20) Among the listing of priorities by respondents to the survey, the ones receiving constant high priority indications related to employment -- job training, job placement, GED programs for education. Notably only 22% of the survey respondents indicated that they or a member of their families had participated in a job training program. One of the most impressive efforts to help develop a climate of upward mobility and movement away from the temptation of criminal activities to finding long-term job prospects is the TechBridge Program. It is formally Hendels and McCoy, Inc, one of the largest privately held engineering, network development and construction firms serving the communications, information technology and utility industries. The program is contracted by Workforce Development Board/ Volusia/Flagler(WDB/VF) and works closely with the Weed and Seed Program. It is located at two of the Safe Haven sites: Chisholm Community Center and Oakland Terrace. At both sites facilities are available for computer labs and training sessions. Some funding has been provided by Weed Seed, although the bulk of the funds for the program come from varied funding stream including WDB/VF. The Weed and Seed funds enabled TechBridge to buy brand new Ranger Kits for students in the program. These are educational computer assembly kits that each student uses to build a PC from the motherboard up. They then earn the privilege of taking these computers home with them by fulfilling the program goals. The age groups involved are 16 – 21. For 2004 the program served 40 in-school youth and 45 out-of-school youth.
  - (a) TechBridge's Academic Goal is that all students entering the program will complete a TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) test to measure their grade level in reading, math and comprehension. Upon completion and scoring of the exam every student will be assigned an individualized educational goal. Many achieve higher standards and go on to earn their G.E.D.
  - (b) Developing Computing Technology Skills: TechBridge believes that fluency with information technology can be the key towards continued educational and economic success. A key component to our program is each of our young people receives an educational computer assembly kit. These kits are used to build confidence, encourage team efforts as students build their computers together and instill a sense of pride as the students are allowed to take home their own, personally built computer. Earning the privilege of taking their computer home occurs only after the youth completes one of the following: Earns their GED diploma, pursues either vocational or post secondary education, enters the military or completes 90 days of continuous employment with a single employer. Studies have shown that an employee, who maintains their employment beyond 90 days, will seek to maintain a long-term relationship with their employer.

- (c) Work Readiness : TechBridge use a combination of computer based, interactive and role playing programs to cover topics such as conflict resolution in the workplace, resume writing, mock interviews and dress for success. The lessons align with employer expectations for employees. Each student completes a post-test with a minimum score requirement, which documents skills mastered.
  - (d) The typical client is 16-21, out of school, without a diploma, lacking in work experience and usually basic skill deficient (testing below 9th grade in math, reading or language arts). Some of our clients come from area schools, Juvenile Justice System, Foster Care facilities and a lot of word of mouth referrals. The program prepares youths to enter the world of work with the knowledge, skill and ability to succeed in an ever increasing technological world. The program provides an individualized, computer based, instructor-supported model, focusing on the specific needs of industry. Outcomes are connecting youth to employment and/or higher education or the military.
  - (e) Success stories indicate the effectiveness of this program. TechBridge currently has helped 22 youths obtain jobs with an average wage of \$7.04/hour. This may not seem like a lot of money but of this group only three had a high school diploma, most had little or no work experience or references and had no idea how to obtain anything other than a minimum wage job. An example would be the student who joined TechBridge in September of 2003. He had no high school diploma, was a 16 year old drop out, was considered a slow learner, had no desire to return to high school and had never been employed. Today he has his GED and is earning \$8.00 per hour working at an investment firm. As of today, he has been on the job for 265 days and is talking about taking college classes at DBCC in the fall.
  - (f) Facilities are available at Chisholm Community Center and Oakland Terrace with computers for training located regularly there. What is especially needed is more Ranger Assembly Kits which allow students to take home computers they have made.
- (21) Has a GED program been successfully established? No. Some rudiments and prospects but not a thriving program. DBCC had planned to start a GED program at Chisholm Center but this did not work out since students needed to be at a higher level of educational development than was the case. Thus, the Weed and Seed money returned to the basic program and was redistributed [\$2100 to PAL and \$1200 to Community Outreach]. DBCC is still interested in establishing a GED Program but beginning with basic educational skill that could lead to the GED program level. A GED program was also located at Oakland Terrace but moved, and it is not known at the moment if in operation.
- (22) Need also to ask what programs for those who have been incarcerated. Ex-offenders programs are, for the most part, missing. There is an ex-offenders program at one of the local churches which is highly effective but none sponsored by Weed and Seed. Some private counseling is done by staff at the Chisholm Community Center. Oakland Terrace has provided contact with Big Brothers/Bid Sisters but this has not had much success. Representatives from substance abuse programs in Daytona and the Family Preservation Group in Daytona will come to Oakland Terrace to help. Without such a program ex-offenders often have little guidance on how to integrate themselves back into their families, renew relationships with children and spouses, and deal with an employment community that is reluctant to hire ex-offenders.
- (23) Has a job application center been located at the Community Resource Center? Yes. However, this is simply a board for posting notices and is very seldom, if ever, used. There is a One-Stop Career Center on Woodland Boulevard that is not connected with Weed and Seed. Possibly some regular contact and coordination in getting information to those who can be helped by the program could fit into the task set up by Weed and Seed in its grant proposal to help with employment. The Center also has an ex-offenders program to which persons can be referred by the Weed and Seed Director.

d) **Strategy D: Neighborhood Restoration Strategy/Goals:**

- i) **Goals and Objectives:** To develop a collaborative agreement among agencies to explore and support job training programs for residents in the designated area , to locate unsafe housing units and coordinate with other resources to replace or restore these houses for habitation by residents in the designated area, and to establish a “Feels Like Home” neighborhood networking by initiating community projects and events that will give the designated area a sense of community pride and cohesiveness. In conjunction with medical facilities in the surrounding area, present health fairs for the community, that would help to bring about change in health care and awareness of AIDS and STDs
- ii) **Findings:**
- (1) What steps have been taken to encourage a proud heritage and community pride? This is being done with events such as mural painting and egg hunts and clean up days as well as the African American Museum of Arts[not a part of Weed and Seed but contributes to this goal as a part of the community and was initially encouraged through assistance from Weed and Seed] Residents surveyed indicated a belief that there existed a sense of community pride [74%] with 26% disagreeing. When asked if they had more pride in the community the percentage went up to 81% in agreement and fell to 19% in disagreement. That this community pride was the result of developments over the last several years was indicated by the 67% positive response to the question as to whether community pride had increased, although 33% disagreed.
  - (2) How many residents participated and or attended the community events? What was the percentage increase in number of attendants and participants annually? (goal 50% increase annually) . The largest event each year is the annual Spring Hill festival which brings together approximately 800 persons. Numbers on smaller events are not maintained at this time, e.g., the number of participants at the Oakland Terrace community events which involve law enforcement personnel along with the residents. A stronger type of involvement is when residents contact government officials. The survey indicated that relatively few residents do this [35%].
  - (3) How have job training and vocational education programs increased the economic opportunities of residents? There is no way to know at the moment.
  - (4) Has a task force of City, County, Chamber of Commerce and residents on job training and vocational education issues been established? If so, how often does the task force meet and how many meetings are held annually? (goal 6 meetings annually) Another major coordinating effort linked into Weed and Seed is the Central Florida Community Development Corporation. It is the agency that established the contract with the present director of Weed and Seed. The DeLand City Government and Volusia County Government work with the CFCDC in coordinating efforts to meet the goals of the Weed and Seed Program. One of its areas of focus is the Spring Hill area which makes up a large portion of the Weed and Seed area. However, as indicated in a *Daytona News Journal* article the long-range plans are “light on details but heavy on optimism.” Further: “The five-year plan has broad goals including creating job and educational opportunities, delivering health services, and developing community pride. “ These goals match those of the Weed and Seed Program. Gerald Chester puts the time-frame as about two years before the necessary grant money will be available for the new programs, hence now is a good time to set baselines against which the programs can be measured as grants are received, projects undertaken]. At the moment, Chester indicated: “There is a sense of hopelessness and a sense of apathy. The intent is really to get (residents) sparked and slowly try to feed that into other things.”
  - (5) What job training and vocational training programs for residents have been established? How many residents are participating in such programs? Job openings are posted at Community Resource Center---See comments on TechBridge above. TechBridge provides excellent computer training opportunities. Given the heavy emphasis on this

item by respondents in listing high priorities, a stronger emphasis on establishing programs and drawing residents into them is probably warranted.

- (6) What has been the percentage increase in the number of residents helped through task force efforts and collaborative agreements? (goal 50% increase within 3 years) . No available information.
- (7) What has been the percentage increase in the number of jobs created/offered to residents? (goal 75% increase within 5 years) No available information
- (8) What has been the percentage increase in the number of residents placed in permanent jobs with increased economic opportunity? (goal 50% increase within 5 years) No available information
- (9) How have lines of communication between local government and community been aimed to address resident's quality of life concerns? The steering committee for Weed and Seed, the present survey and Oakland Terrace's monthly resident meetings work towards this goal. Annual surveys and means for tapping sentiment of the people are needed.
- (10) Has a collaborative agreement among local governments to identify and address common problems been developed? (goal to have program developed within 1 year) . No. There is coordination of a sort through the Steering Committee and an implicit collaborative agreement to work together in addressing common problems.
- (11) Has survey of resident's satisfaction of local government's services been completed? Yes, the results are indicated throughout this report.
- (12) What steps have been taken to encourage resident involvement in community wide initiatives, i.e. Weed and Seed? (suggested flyers, newsletters and postings) Flyers have been sent to churches. Information also flows to some degree through various activities at the Safe Haven centers.
- (13) Has a survey of resident's opinions on the effectiveness of community projects and their participation been completed? Yes, the results are indicated throughout this report
- (14) Has the percentage of residents on the Steering Committee increased? Yes, goal of 50% reached.
- (15) What programs have been identified and/or developed that relate to parenting, conflict resolution and communicating with one's children. There is a "Positive Parenting" program that meets monthly at the Community Resource Center during the school year. However some concern for more to be done in this area noted in the discussion with personnel at Oakland Terrace
- (16) Have service providers not in the target area been recruited to provide services? Yes, Stuart Marchman Center, local churches, One Voice of Volusia, and other organizations have been networked into varied needs in the Weed and Seed area
- (17) What funds are available to have a significant impact on housing and residential development in the Weed and Seed area? The availability of tax dollars at the local level for redevelopment of Spring Hill is still under discussion. The development of a community redevelopment agency could raise an estimated \$482,000 - \$625,000 for the area under a special tax district. However, there is debate as to whether such a district should be established or not despite the blight study showing serious need of roads, sidewalks and utility improvements. A major part of the effort to improve the neighborhoods is the constant application for grants from different governmental agencies. Close coordination between the Weed and Seed steering committee and local governmental officials and administrative personnel working on grants is a necessity in order to target the priorities.
- (18) What major efforts to increase the basic living environment with regard to streets, water and sewerage? The neighborhood restoration strategy does not mention street repair and

maintenance or water and sewerage but this is a part of the present effort to upgrade neighborhood living standards. The Florida Legislature and the Governor in 2004 approved a \$250,000 appropriation that will help extend sewer lines to homes. According to the *Daytona Beach News Journal*, this also has the potential to help with impact fees needed for residents to connect water/sewerage lines to their home. The residents surveyed were split almost 50-50 as to satisfaction or not with street repair and water and sewer services. In indicating priorities a little half of the respondents [around 60% generally] indicated a high priority for water/sewer development, street improvements, sidewalk improvements, garbage/trash removal and additional lighting on streets.

(19) What developments have taken place in affordable housing?

- (a) Affordable and livable housing in the community has increased. Although there is a difference in opinion as to the significance of the increase, the area seems to be moving in the right direction. Residents surveyed placed this generally in the high priority category. Over 70% of the residents saw this as a top priority. They also indicated a low level of awareness of the affordable housing available [60% aware and 40% unaware and of programs for housing improvement [53% aware and 47% unaware]. Only a third of the respondents were aware of new programs or, notably, 25% of those surveyed had no opinion on this item.
- (b) The DeLand Housing Authority has put a big emphasis on apartments. They have used Section 8 funding to subsidize rent payments for low income people. The Housing Authority typically likes to partner with businesses to build new apartments for mid to low income people. One of these new complexes is being built at the corner of Garfield and Euclid.
- (c) The county government has been the most active and effective in increasing the number of affordable and livable housing units. They have built a couple of large apartment complexes on the peripheral areas of Spring Hill.
- (d) The county government is also working on building low to moderate income houses in the Spring Hill area. At the corner of Adelle and New Hampshire they are hoping to build twelve units, and at the corner of Adelle and Baltimore they are working with a developer to build homes on ten lots.
- (e) The County also has a popular 1<sup>st</sup> time home buyer and rehabilitation program. This is a program that the county offers to low income people. It includes doing fix-ups and providing subsidies to purchase homes. Many people are on the waiting lists to receive the benefits of this program.
- (f) . What housing improvement resources have been identified . The county government has been the most effective agency in this area.. It uses primarily three government resources to improve housing. Those three are the Home program, SHIP (state housing initiative program), and CDBG (Community Development Block Grant).
  - (i) The SHIP (a state program) and Home Program (a federal program) are used for three main purposes. First, they provide subsidies for low to moderate income people so that they can afford to buy a house. This is what the county calls the "Down Payment Assistance" program. The money given to the recipient must be repaid if the home that the person bought is sold within 30 years of receiving the funds. Anyone who makes 80% or less (adjustments are made for family size) than the median income for Volusia County is eligible to receive funds. The Down Payment Assistance Program is not limited to providing funds for existing housing. Sometimes new construction can be purchased.
  - (ii) Secondly, the SHIP and Home Program also provide money for housing rehabilitation. This is done through the county's program known as the "Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation" program. This is a loan eligible to people

making 80% or less of the median income (adjustments are made for family size) in Volusia County. This is a loan and must be paid back, unless the recipient is older than 62.

- (iii) Thirdly, the SHIP and the Home Program allocate funds to chip in for costs of developers when they create low income housing. Developers receive this subsidy on a competitive basis.
- (g) CDBG, a federal program, is the program that is most associated with Weed and Seed. A park in Spring Hill was paid for with CDBG money, and a current project to extend the park is also being funded by CDBG. The Community Resource Center at Spring Hill was built with money from this program as well.
- (h) Habitat for Humanity has not collaborated in any way with Weed and Seed. However, the head of West Volusia's Habitat for Humanity has said that Habitat for Humanity has had a history of partnering with other agencies, and he would be interested in working with the Weed and Seed Program.
- (i) Although Central Florida Housing Development (also known as CDC) is working with Weed and Seed, the relationship is very new (only one year). Central Florida Housing Development has plans to assist in the construction for three to four houses. These homes will be within a four block radius of the Community Resource Center.
- (20) What sources of funding for housing improvements and new housing have been identified? Have residents been informed of these sources? The CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) is the major source of funding for improvements. One main restriction of CDBG is that it cannot be used for regular maintenance (e.g. painting a house). The county government is the agency that directs the CDBG funds. Only 31% of residents surveyed were aware of information on programs for new or renovated funds and 70% were unaware.
- (21) Have government programs such as Section 8, Housing Rehab, and Buyer Assistance programs been used?
- (a) Section 8 has been used through the city government (See above.). CDBG has been used for housing rehab (See above.). (The SHIP and Home program have been used to pay for Buyer Assistance (See above.)
- (b) Central Florida Housing Development is a great resource to be utilized for Buyer Assistance Programs. One of their specialties is working with low and moderate income people to make up the amount of money they need to purchase a home. For example, let's say that a person could only afford a \$40,000 home, but they wanted to buy a \$50,000 one. Central Florida Housing Development would then try to find a way to get that person the extra \$10,000 they needed. When the person eventually sells their home, they then owe \$10,000 to Central Florida Housing Development.
- (c) Residents are quite aware of these sources. Typically when rehabilitation is being done on a home the county will put a sign in front of the house to let everyone know what is going on and to advertise the program. There is an extensive waiting list of people that are trying to get renovations done on their home. So, as always, there is clearly a lack of funding.
- (22) What percentage increase in number of residents assisted in acquiring affordable and safe housing through available resources? (Goal 75% within 5 years) No one really knows what the actual percent increase is. However, no one thinks that it is 75% The basic consensus has been that there has been an increase in the percentage, but the amount is not close to the goal of 75%. There are a couple factors that can go into guessing how much the increase in affordable and livable housing has been. One positive factor is that Central Florida Housing Development is just starting to get real involved with the Weed and Seed Program. However, better records need to be kept at the county government as to how many people have received their assistance over the past. The

County government does not have these numbers readily available, and it's possible that they might not have these numbers at all. Better organization at the county government would make answering questions, like this, more possible.

- (23) Have community events in target area, such as neighborhood clean ups been conducted? Yes, about two serious clean ups are done every year. The latest one occurred in early March of 2004. Although these clean ups are not limited to the Spring Hill area, extra emphasis is typically placed on it.
- (a) These cleanups many times bring in large dumpsters for cumbersome trash, clean wooded areas, paint houses, and remove abandoned cars. The Chamber of Commerce has also been very helpful in these cleanups.
  - (b) How many blighted areas have been cleaned up and maintained? (Goal is 5 areas within 3 years) Blighted areas are regularly cleaned up. Two recent cleanups were conducted at Voorhis and Clara and at Adelle and Beresford. Regular cleanups, however, are not the problem. Maintenance of the cleaned areas has shown to be the toughest to deal with.
  - (c) Has nuisance abatement program that identifies/tracks and removes unsafe homes, businesses and overgrown lots been implemented? Some nuisance abatement programs have been implemented at the city and county government levels. However, these programs have been criticized as being only reactive and not proactive. Perhaps this is because the city and county are understaffed in the amount of people they have dealing with nuisance abatement.

**e) Special Emphasis Narrative**

- i) **Strategy/Goals:** (1) To provide for an evaluation of the Weed and Seed Program and (2) to focus on providing a computer learning center.
- ii) **Findings:**
  - (1) **Local Evaluation:** The Spring Hill Weed and Seed Program will have been in existence for seven years beginning in October 2003. The last two years of the program included an expanded weed and seed designated area. The program has not undergone a thorough evaluation of the identified strategies by an outside agency since it's inception. The local evaluation activity will provide the Steering Committee constructive feedback on the current effectiveness of the strategies and recommendations to improve the program for the future. This was the stimulus for this present study by the Stetson Institute for Social Research which fulfills this goal.
  - (2) **Computer Learning Center:** Has a Center been established to accomplish the specific goals of increasing job skills, offering expanded educational programs using the computer laboratories, and enhancing area residents' employability? Is this effectively operating within the \$25,000 budget indicated? TechBridge fulfills all of these goals in an admirable fashion. See the above comments on TechBridge.

**IX) APPENDICES**