

# **SUGARMILL WOODS**

**A History and Concerns**

**Developed by the  
Sugarmill Woods Civic Association, Inc**

**July, 2006**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This document is intended to be a brief overview of the Sugarmill Woods community, its residents and issues of concern.

The target audience for this document are the leaders of the community – the Civic Association and Property Owners Associations.

The Sugarmill Woods Civic Association contends that the community has been a good neighbor and benefactor for Citrus County. Not only has the community provided significant monetary contributions to the County in the form of taxes and money spent in local facilities, but many community members have given generously of their time in support of civic, religious and benevolent organizations.

The community has given much and asked for little in return.

## **HISTORY OF SUGARMILL WOODS**

There is a rich lore of Florida and American history behind the modern villages of Sugarmill Woods. The community occupies an area that has attracted settlers and visitors alike since before Columbus. Its oak and pine trees, coupled with rolling range lands, are in surprising contrast to the tropical scenery typical of southern Florida. With a distinct spring and fall, but no significant winter to speak of, this section of Florida is a beautiful and comfortable place to live.

The site Sugarmill Woods now occupies is land that was known as the Twin County Ranch in 1972. The spread was part of the cattle operations of the Norin Corporation, owned by Bruce Norris. Mr. Norris presented plans for a joint development project to Punta Gorda Isles, Inc. – a developer of Florida residential communities. The two formed Parkland Properties, Inc. and the creation of Sugarmill Woods was underway. The original development spanned the northwest Hernando/southwest Citrus county line. The partnership lasted until 1975 when the Norris' share in Parkland was acquired by Punta Gorda Isles, Inc., the parent company of Sugarmill Woods, Inc.

Platting of the land was begun in early 1972 and by July the first ground was broken. The first nine holes of a golf course, two tennis courts and a swimming pool were completed in 1975. The second nine hole golf course was completed in November, 1978, and the third nine was completed in December of 1981. Another pool and a tennis complex in Oak Village were added later. All the recreational facilities have since been sold to a Japanese company. In addition, approximately 485 acres of land were sold to other companies.

To the credit of the developer, the design of Sugarmill Woods reflects an awareness of environmental and ecological concerns. Land use is warranted in deed covenant, assuring the community of the preservation of native flora and fauna. Government preserves to the east and west shelter the area from excessive future development.

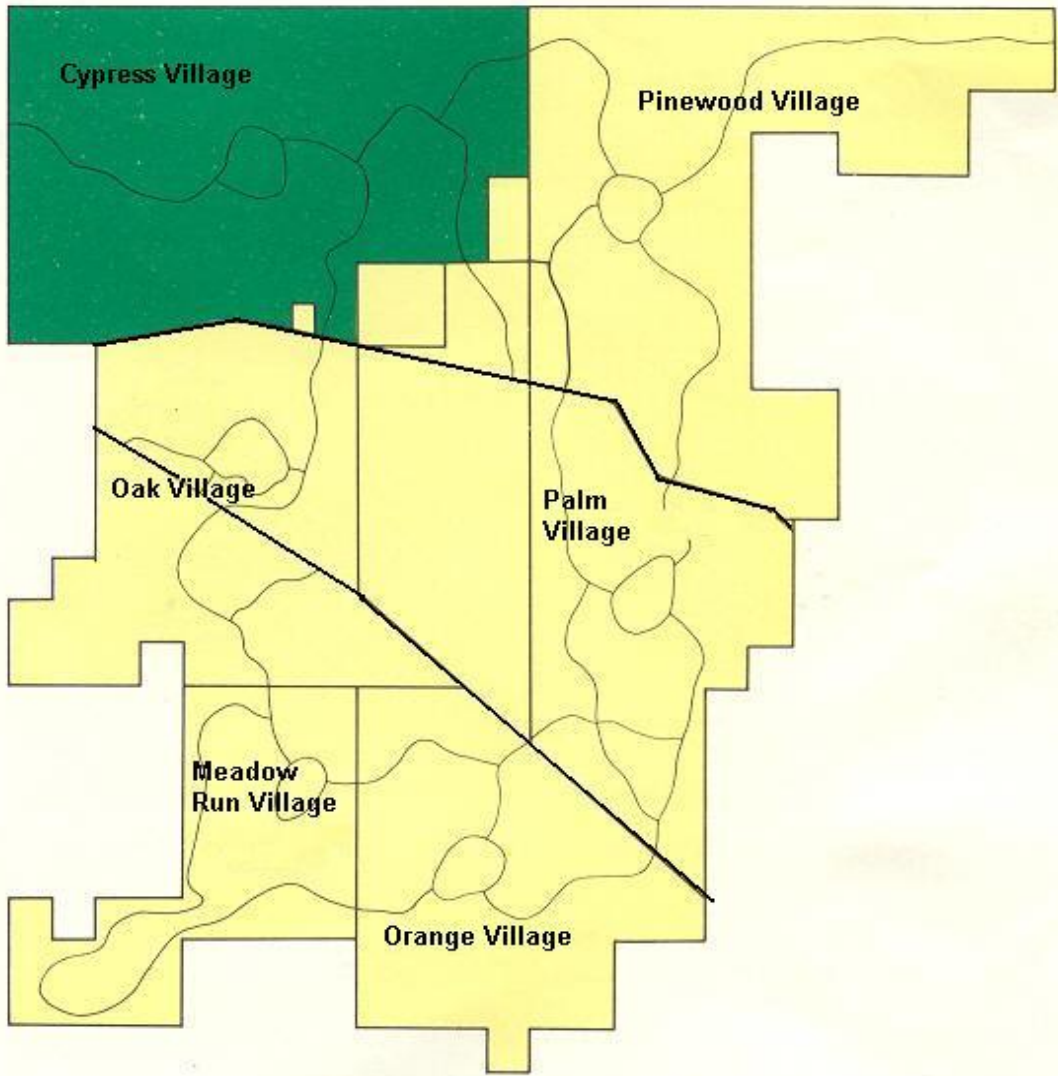
The original plat called for 6 villages, each with its own village center, with about a total of 24,000 lots. The original villages were Cypress, Oak, Meadow Run, Pinewood, Palm and Orange. The development would stretch from US 19 on the west to CR 491 on the east and from the current northern boundary to what is now the Dunes in Hernando County. By the early 1980's four of the villages were either sold to other developers or to the State of Florida leaving only Cypress and Oak. The land that was later to become Southern Woods was purchased and developed in a separate action.

The community of Sugarmill Woods now includes Cypress and Oak Villages and Southern Woods. No other development in Florida has a natural

environment of the size and sylvan beauty of Sugarmill Woods. This priceless asset is protected by enforcement of the deed restrictions of the respective villages.

In 1980, Dr. John N. Hamlet, a noted biologist and environmentalist, was engaged by Punta Gorda Isles to survey and comment on the ecological aspects of Sugarmill Woods. Writing in his book entitled "Land That I Love", Dr. Hamlet commented: "This project hopefully would provide 20,000 average Americans with a refuge without disturbing the creatures that have called this wilderness home for centuries". Dr. Hamlet went on to say that Sugarmill Woods will have no super highways and that everything possible (including garbage cans) will be underground. He made other references to the environmental efforts put forth by the original developers, but reserved his finest praise for the greenbelt. Dr. Hamlet said of the greenbelt: "Perhaps even these precautions take a backseat compared to the guarantee that every lot will have a wide green belt of common and that stretches far into the woods. These may not be touched or defaced. Every rock, gallberry bush, cypress hammock and brier patch must be left for the wildlife."

See the following page for an overview of the original development.



## **HISTORY OF THE SUGARMILL WOODS CIVIC ASSOCIATION**

In late 1979, the layout of Cypress Village was complete and nearly 400 homes were built. At this time, a group of residents began to discuss the creation of the homeowners association to interact with the developer, Punta Gorda Developers, Inc. (PGDI), the county, other governmental agencies and the utility companies. The end result of these meetings was the establishment of the Cypress Village Association. The Association was incorporated and chartered as a not-for-profit entity on July 30, 1980. (Charter number: 753499).

Over a period of about 15 years the organization changed names to reflect changes in the community and on January 11, 1995 the members voted to change its name to The Sugarmill Woods Civic Association.

Since its inception, the Civic Association has:

- Pressed for the construction of a fire station on CR 480;
- Urged 24/7 manning of the CR 480 EMS facility;
- Fought for fair water and wastewater rates through testimony in front of various state and local regulatory commissions;
- Lobbied for improved cable service in the development;
- Worked to ensure the reasonableness of electrical rates;
- Opposed a proposed landfill in Hernando County adjacent to Oak Village South;
- Resisted the creation of an amusement park on the west side of Highway 19;
- Discouraged the construction of an auto race track near Oak Village South;
- Lobbied for improved emergency medical support;
- Made numerous contributions benefiting the community, e.g., defibrillators to the golf and tennis club, support equipment for the fire station;
- Opposed the building of a construction debris landfill on Cardinal Street just to the north of Cypress Village;

- Published the annual telephone directory and sponsored various citizen information meetings;
- Produced periodic newsletters;
- Established a Neighborhood Watch Program;
- Initiated the biennial "Candidates' Nights" where seekers of office in this county, district and state come to present themselves, in person, to the citizens of Sugarmill;
- Managed a recycle program; and
- Pressed the county to assume water and wastewater rate making authority from the Public Services Commission.

The Civic Association has not won every battle. Efforts to defeat legislative initiatives allowing telephone companies to have double digit rate increases and for water companies to have a margin reserve were thwarted. But for the most part projects supported by the Association have met with success because they were in the best interests of Sugarmill residents and the citizens of Florida.

The Civic Association is also unique in that the organization retains the services of an attorney and lobbyist to represent its interests in utility matters. This relationship, going back to the mid 1990's, has been extremely successful in matters pertaining to utility rates, particularly the defeat of the uniform water rates initiative in the mid 1990's. While it costs the Association a number of thousands of dollars each year, the positive results have been well worth every cent.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

A demographic profile of Sugarmill Woods can be drawn with some degree of accuracy using census records (last census was in the year 2000) and extrapolating to the current year.

In 1990 Sugarmill Woods fell with census district BNA 9816. This district included all of Sugarmill Woods and lands to the north up to Cardinal Street and lands to the east up to CR 491. The district also included a small piece of land for about a mile north of Cardinal Street immediately adjacent to US 19. By the 2000 census this district was designated as the Sugarmill Woods Census Designated Place (CDP), but it appears to encompass the same land area.

What is known is that in 1979 there were about 400 homes in Sugarmill Woods. According to residents who lived in the community in 1979 most were retirees. Assuming a typical retiree household is made of 2 people, the population of the development was probably about 800.

### Census 1990

No other population data is available until the 1990 census. Some of the pertinent facts from census area BNA 9816 are:

- There were 5,259 persons.
- 1,948 individuals were 65 years and over.
- There were 749 children between the ages of 1 through 18 with 538 between 5 and 18 (the school age years).
- There were 2,858 housing units of which 2,326 were occupied and 532 vacant.
- There were 1,829 single unit detached facilities.
- There were 826 mobile homes.
- There were 114 multi-unit structures with between 2 and 10 units per structure. A number of these are the condos found in Sugarmill Woods.

By 1990 the make up of Sugarmill Woods had started to change with younger families moving in to the community. The following are some conclusions that can be drawn using the above data and some interpretative license.



- Sugarmill is made up of mostly single family dwellings save for the multi-unit condos. Also most likely all units were occupied. There are some non-mobile home/manufactured home units in the census area, but not in Sugarmill. So it's likely that there were 1,600 to 1,700 homes in Sugarmill Woods in 1990.
- With a census derived occupancy rate of 2.19, it can be assumed that there were between 3,500 and 3,700 persons in single family units.
- There were approximately 146 individual condo units. It can be assumed that no more than 2 people occupied each unit and in many cases, just one person. Accordingly, it's reasonable to estimate about 250 people lived in the condos.
- Considering the above data, the estimated population of Sugarmill Woods was between 3,750 and 3,950.
- The number of school age children residing in Sugarmill Woods isn't known. All that is known is 538 school age children resided in census area BNA 9816. Since there are no schools in the immediate area, all of the children had to be transported to schools in Homosassa or Lecanto.

### Census 2000

The Sugarmill Woods CDP still included some residents outside the boundary of Sugarmill Woods as the demographic profile shows 398 mobile homes. Some of the more interesting statistics from the census are:

- 6,409 people resided in the CDP
- There were 646 residents under 19 years of age and 446 children enrolled in Kindergarten through high school. These children continued to be transported to schools in Homosassa and Lecanto.
- There were 3,440 housing units. Of these 379 units were vacant and 239 were for seasonal or occasional use.
- The occupancy rate remained about 2.1 (6409 individuals / 3061 occupied units).

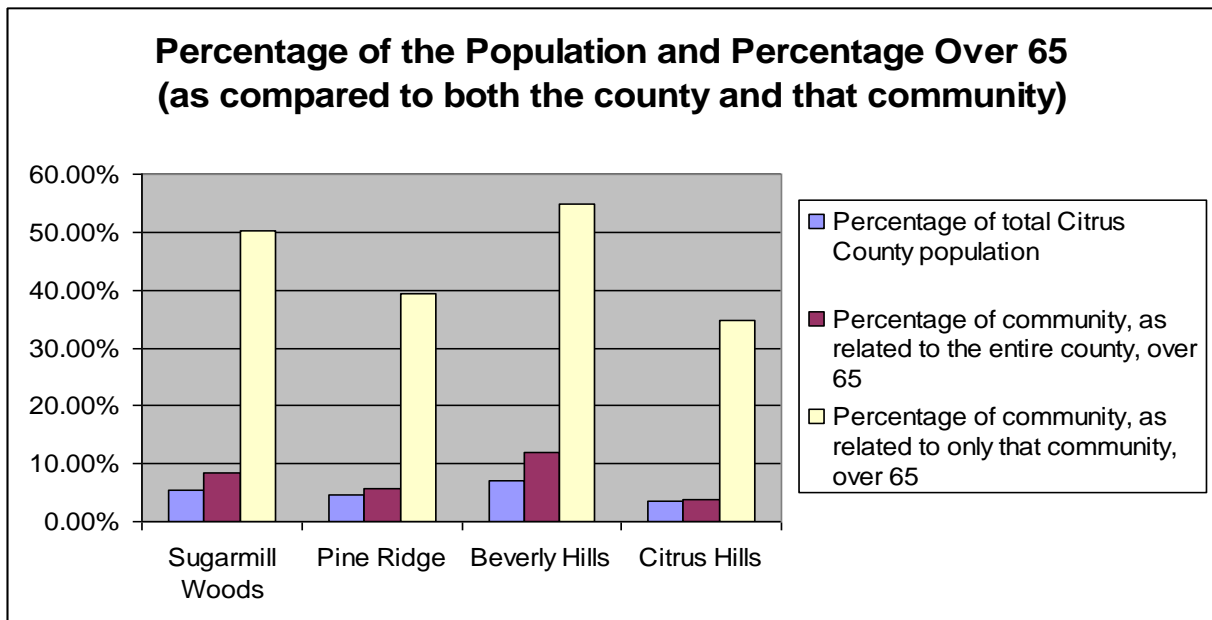
At the end of 2005 there were approximately 4,300 dwelling units in Sugarmill Woods. Using the 2.1 occupancy rate it is estimated that at least 8,800 people

lived in the community. Quite possibly that number is conservative as more and more young families with children now reside in the community thus raising the occupancy percentage.

Sugarmill Woods has approximately 8,600 lots. Some homes are built on 2 lots so a fair estimate of build-out would be between 7,500 and 8,000 homes. Again, using the conservative 2.1 rate, at build-out there will be between 15,750 and 16,800 people in the development. At a building rate of just over 200 homes a year, build-out should occur around the year 2020.

Personality of Sugarmill Woods

Sugarmill remains a predominantly senior-citizen community. In looking at comparable communities, and using year 2000 census data, the percentage of seniors in Sugarmill Woods is exceeded only by the percentage of seniors in the Beverly Hills area.



Community Involvement

Sugarmill Woods residents are a diverse group of people. The community is made of retired military personnel, industry management, teachers, doctors, lawyers, assembly line workers, electricians, tradesmen, and civil servants. Constituting only about 5.4% of the county’s population, Sugarmill Woods residents are active in all aspects of local government and industry. Its citizens serve on numerous county boards and commissions and volunteer at the library,

hospitals and the wildlife park. Every aspect of county government is touched by a resident of Sugarmill Woods.

The Sugarmill Woods community has a long history of volunteerism and civic generosity. Asking little in return, but giving much, Sugarmill Woods residents are good neighbors.

### Lobbying and Legal Efforts

The Civic Association has maintained an extensive legal and lobbying effort at the state and local level. The community's active work on water and wastewater issues, e.g., curbing uniform rates, urging the county to assume water and wastewater regulating authority from the Public Services Commission, and the defeat of the sale of Florida Water to the cities of Gulf Breeze and Milton are but a few examples of efforts that have benefited citizens beyond the entrance to Sugarmill Woods.

Lobbying and legal work has not been confined to water issues. As a result of the Civic Association's work, Progress Energy's electric rates were held in check, and on 2 occasions, all customers of the utility received credits on their electric bills.

Sugarmill Woods residents also sit on a number of county boards and committees, e.g., the Water and Wastewater Authority.

### Volunteering in the Community

There are many benevolent organizations in the community where Sugarmill Woods residents volunteer.

#### Homosassa Wildlife Park

Nearly 25% of the approximately 300 volunteers at the Park come from Sugarmill Woods. In addition to working at the Park, many residents are members of the Friends of the Homosassa Wildlife Park which provides financial support to the facility.

#### Citrus County Library System

The Friends of the Homosassa Library has been largely run by residents of Sugarmill Woods. Without question, the new Homosassa library, which will be enjoyed by all, is a result of their dedicated efforts. In addition, residents of Sugarmill Woods have

sat on the library's advisory board. Residents also work at libraries in various support capacities.

Chassahowitzka Volunteer Fire Department and EMS facility on CR 480

Many years ago the Civic Association acknowledged that, due to age constraints, Sugarmill Woods residents were not capable of providing physical support to these units. In appreciation for the fine work done by the dedicated fire department and EMS personnel, Sugarmill Woods donated items that make their work just a bit easier. For example, the community has provided equipment for training materials in the form of a TV and video recorder, tables and chairs, and other creature comforts for their "ready room". The Civic Association's budget continues to include a line item for support of these facilities.

Sheriff's Department Crime Watch

The Sugarmill Wood Crime Watch is staffed by community residents. The unit's coverage includes Walden Woods, Chassahowitzka and a portion of Cardinal Street – all outside the boundaries of Sugarmill Woods.

Defibrillator Support

The Sugarmill Woods and Southern Woods golf clubs and Oak Village work out facility were recipients of Automated External Defibrillators provided by the Civic Association. There is a good chance the person being treated by one of these devices will not be a resident of Sugarmill Woods since residency is not a requirement for membership in these organizations.

Key Center

Sugarmill Woods residents have actively supported the Key Center, both at the facility as well as championing various fund raising efforts.

Other Facilities

The following is a list of just a few of the many other organizations where Sugarmill Woods residents volunteer:

Hospice of Citrus County  
Sugarmill Manor  
Habitat for Humanity  
Local fraternal and service organizations  
Churches  
St. Vincent dePaul  
Pregnancy and Family Life Care  
DayStar  
AARP Tax Assistance  
Horizons for the Blind  
Seven Rivers Hospital  
Guardian Ad Litem  
Take Stock in Children  
Boys and Girls Clubs  
SCORE

## CONTRIBUTED REVENUE

This section will address the revenue generated by the residents of Sugarmill Woods. While it will primarily address taxes paid by community residents, it is important to remember that Sugarmill Woods residents spend a great deal of money in the local area.

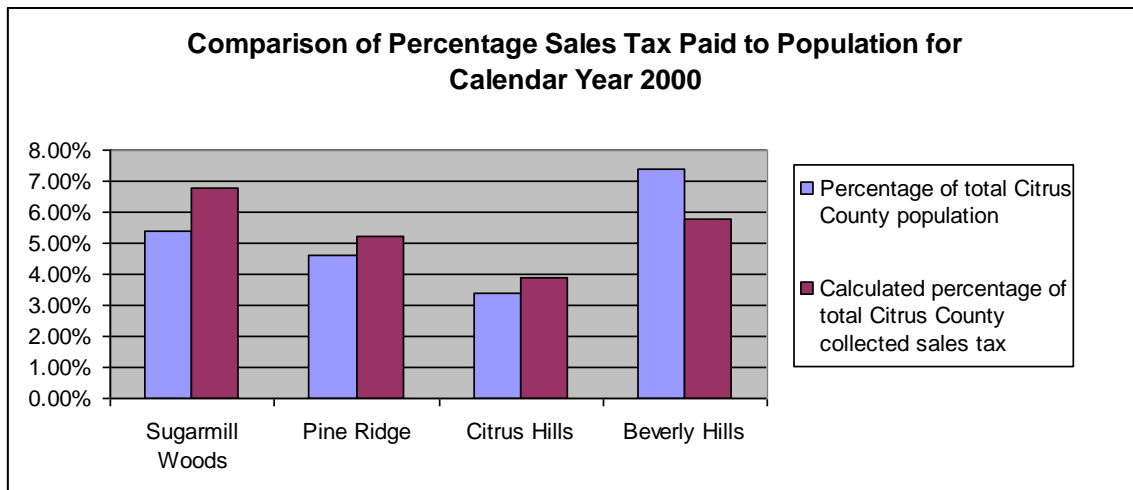
### Sales Tax

As specified in Florida Statute 212.20, each county shares in the sales tax revenue collected on taxable sales. While it is virtually impossible to calculate the dollar amount Sugarmill Woods residents pay in sales tax, it is possible to derive an estimate of the percentage of contributed sales tax paid by its citizens.

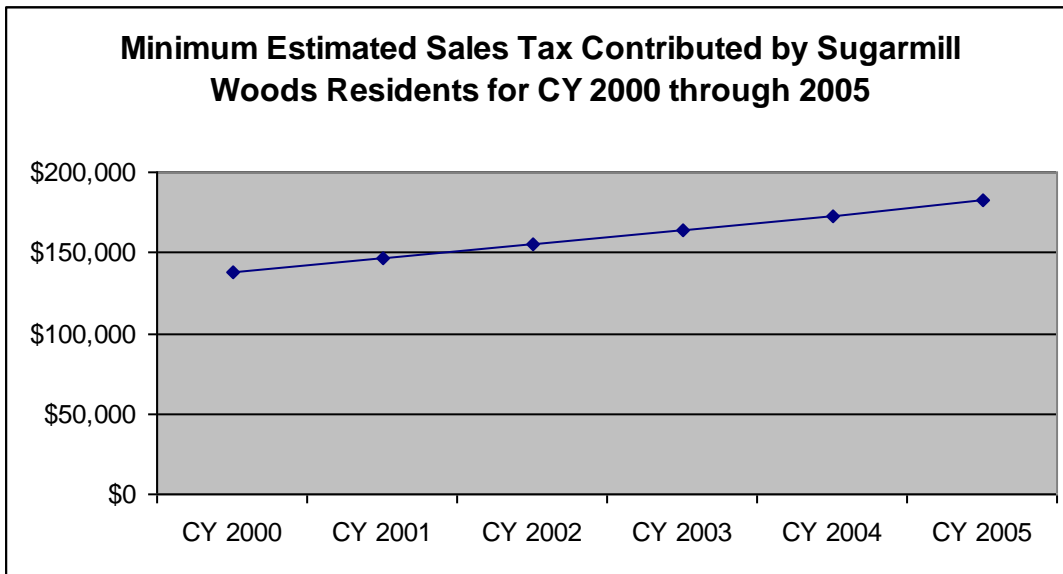
It is estimated that in calendar year 2000 Sugarmill Woods residents paid about 6.8% of the collected tax returned to the county. This in contrast to constituting only 5.4% of the county's population. See Appendix A for the explanation of calculations.

It is also reasonable to assume that the tax-to-population relationship is even more disproportionate as a significantly higher percentage of Sugarmill Woods homes are without a mortgage encumbrance leaving more disposable income for big ticket items such as automobiles.

It is also interesting to view a comparison of Sugarmill Woods contributed sales tax to population in comparison with the three other major incorporated areas of the county: Pine Ridge, Citrus Hills and Beverly Hills.



Using the logic from Appendix A (number of households times IRS allowed sales tax times 6%) the following chart shows a minimum estimate of the sales tax contributed to the county by Sugarmill Woods residents for years 2000 through 2005.



## Impact Fees

As a growing community, Sugarmill Woods has made a significant contribution to the County in terms of Impact Fees. The following table shows the number of new home building permits and impact fees collected during the years 2000 – 2005:

<b>SWM Building Permits &amp; Impact Fees</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Permits Issued</b>	<b>Impact Fee</b>	<b>Total Fees</b>
2000	195	\$3,131	\$610,545
2001	210	\$3,131	\$657,510
2002	235	\$3,131	\$735,785
2003	250	\$3,131	\$782,750
2004	275	\$3,131	\$861,025
2005*	175	\$3,131	\$547,925
2005**	230	\$6,464	\$1,486,720
<b>Total Fees Collected</b>			<b>\$5,682,260</b>
<b>*Fees from 01/01 to 06/30 2005</b>		<b>**Fees from 07/01 to 12/31 2005</b>	

According to the County's website, impact fees "are an assessment made against all new development that contributes to the burden of public facilities and services". The following table shows how the approximately \$5.6 million dollars in collected impact fees have been allocated to the various designated categories and how each category has directly benefited Sugarmill Woods:

<b>Impact Fee Allocation</b>		<b>Impact Fee Use In/Around Sugarmill Woods</b>
<b>Category</b>	<b>Funds Allocated</b>	
EMS	\$13,069	No new EMS facilities in/around Sugarmill Woods
Fire	\$136,942	No new fire facilities in/around Sugarmill Woods
Law Enforcement	\$118,759	No new law enforcement facilities in/around Sugarmill Woods
Libraries	\$134,670	New library under construction in Homosassa Springs
Parks & Recreation	\$382,416	No new parks in/around Sugarmill Woods
Public Buildings	\$202,288	No new public buildings in/around Sugarmill Woods
Schools	\$1,635,923	No new schools in/around Sugarmill Woods
Transportation	\$3,058,192	No new county roads in/around Sugarmill Woods
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$5,682,260</b>	



## Property Tax

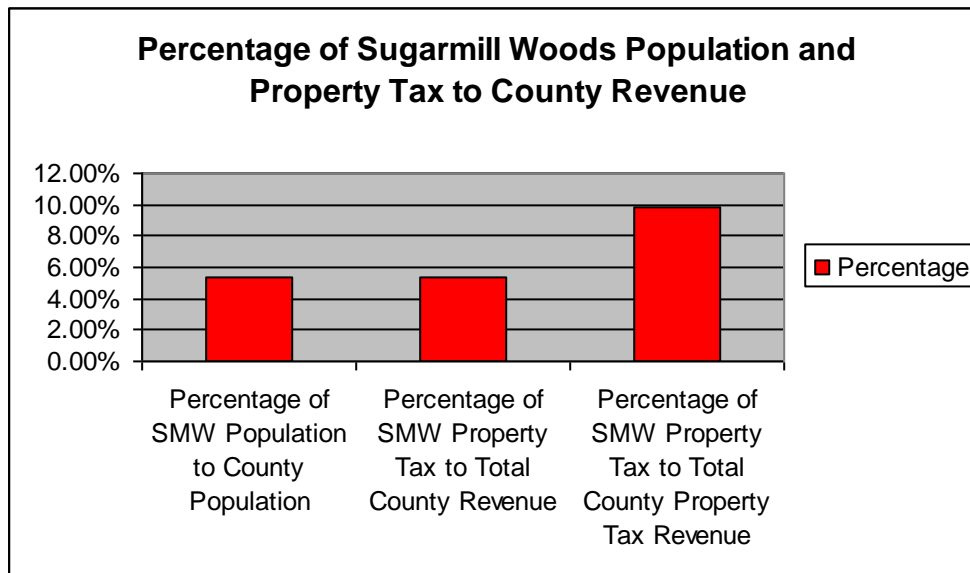
As both a growing community and one with above average/high value homes, property taxes on Sugarmill Woods residences account for a significant percentage of the Citrus County budget.

Using information provided by the County and rounding for general readability, the following data is of interest:

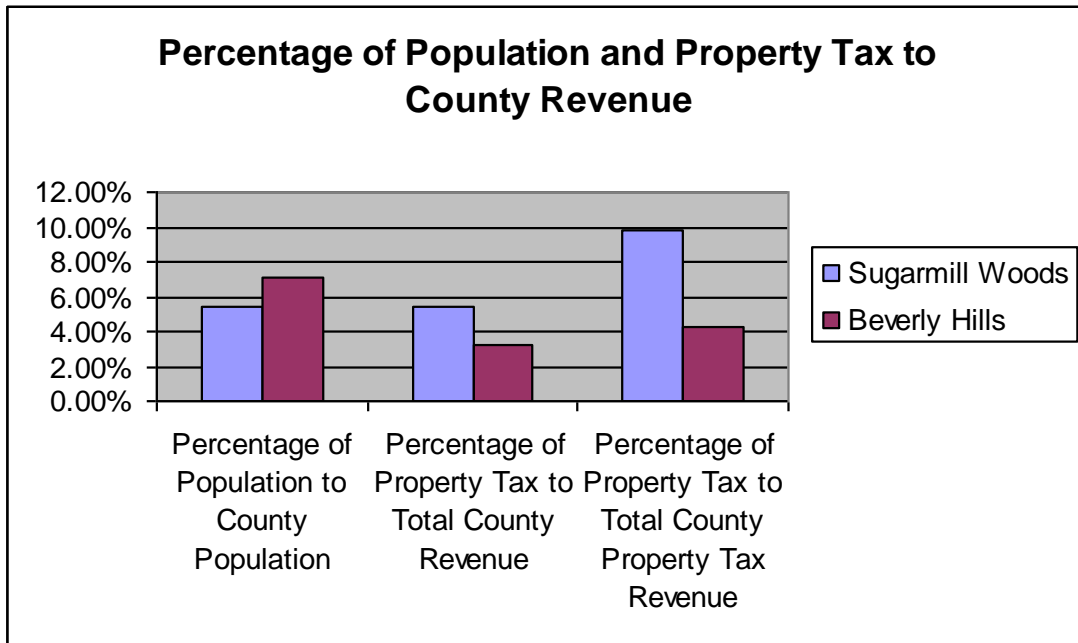
The total 2005 tax revenue for the County was about \$157 million. Property taxes paid by Sugarmill Woods residences was about \$8.6 million resulting in Sugarmill Woods contributing about 5.6% of the total County revenue.

More importantly, compare the relationship of the Sugarmill Woods property tax to only the County revenue derived from residential tax. These figures are about \$94.6 million with Sugarmill Woods contributing about \$8.6 million or approximately 9.0% of the total property tax revenues. This in contrast to constituting only 5.4% of the County's population.

The following graph is self-explanatory.



The following graph compares the Sugarmill Woods population and taxes paid percentages, shown above, to that of Beverly Hills (the only other community for which comparable data is available).



## **WATER and WASTEWATER**

Water and wastewater issues continue to dominate the concerns of Sugarmill Woods residents whether it is the adequacy of the system, cost of the services, or quality of the water supply.

### History

The water and wastewater system supporting the community was built by the original developer and operated under the name of Twin-County Utilities. Their foresight in installing water mains and sewer lines throughout the entire community enables citizens to build their homes assuring a minimal cost to hook up to the system. It is largely because of this advanced planning that Sugarmill Woods residents enjoy reasonable rates whereas some communities face higher rates in order to support line construction as their development expands.

Over time Twin-County was sold to Southern States Utilities, then to Florida Water Services (FWS). Then, in the early 2000's the Florida Governmental Utility Authority (FGUA) purchased the assets of FWS. While the system was under ownership of Florida Water the Civic Association fought to ensure that rates reflected only the expense of operating the Sugarmill Woods' system and in so doing opposed all efforts to establish the subsidizing of less efficient and more costly to operate systems. The Association engaged in a lengthy and expensive legal action when, in the mid 1990's FWS, under direction of the Florida Public Services Commission, imposed uniform rates. Under this rate structure the Sugarmill Woods system, a more efficient and up to date entity, heavily subsidized other FWS systems. After a protracted legal battle uniform rates were rescinded in favor of a modified capband structure. While this rate structure still had an element of subsidization to it, it was not as punishing as uniform rates which saw many residents paying at least \$600 more per year than under the previous standalone rate program. By one estimate the imposed uniform rates cost Sugarmill Woods residents about \$1.4 million.

Sugarmill Woods has historically fought and will continue to fight for a rate structure commensurate with the true costs of operating the facilities supporting the community. Base water and wastewater fees should be predicated on the cost of operating the Sugarmill Woods plant plus a reasonable percentage for general system overhead.

### Distribution System

The Sugarmill Woods water distribution system has been in place since the early 1990's. In fact, the last potable water well was drilled about 10 years ago. Currently this community has seven 10" wells each rated at 600 gallons per

minute (gpm) and two 6" wells each rated at 300 gpm. However, the Association understands that one of the 6" wells is no longer in service. This places usable capacity at 4,500 gpm or about 6.4 million gallons per day. The Association also understands that 3 new 12" wells, rated at approximately 1,200 gpm, are planned for drilling in calendar year 2006/2007.

Sugarmill Woods wastewater is collected through a series of gravity sewer systems which collect and convey the wastewater to lift stations for further transport to the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). The wastewater treatment process, currently rated at 700,000 gallons per day, includes screening, extended aeration, and clarification. Treated effluent is then pumped to storage ponds and ultimately disbursed into an adjacent spray field.

## Current Issues

### Water Use

Sugarmill Woods residents use a lot of water. According to the FGUA, the community's water provider, Sugarmill Woods users averaged about 18,000 gallons from mid May to mid June, 2006. The target is about 9,000 gallons per month. Even more staggering is the fact that 224 customers in Sugarmill Woods used between 50,000 and 200,000 gallons of water during the aforementioned period.

In order to bring the community's water use in line with prescribed guidelines, the Association believes all concerned parties (Sugarmill Woods deed restricted villages, Board of County Commissioners, Southwest Florida Water Management District, Citrus County Water and Wastewater Authority, etc.) must press for a viable water use education program to include promotion of such water conservation measures as Xeriscaping. Additionally, consistent and fair water irrigation rules must be established and then a methodology developed to enforce these rules.

### Inverted Rates

Under this rate structure high water users will pay a higher gallonage fee than low water users. At first glance this may seem fair; however, there are a number of mitigating points that need to be addressed.

- How much water is used by commercial interests served by Sugarmill Woods' wells? Would consideration of these entities consumption have an appreciable impact on the gallonage per person target mandated by the water authority?

- How much water is pumped but lost to leaks?
- How much water is used to establish a new lawn? The County allows a new home owner to water 30 consecutive days in order to establish their lawns. Is this still practical? Can a less water-demanding grass be used?
- Generally high water users are homes without irrigation wells. An inverted rate structure penalizes a homeowner without a well even though the home with the well is drawing from the same water source. On the other hand, the homeowner with an irrigation well spent upwards of \$2,000 for its installation, and that fact must be considered in any solution.

Until such time as the above issues are fully understood and considered and other water conservation measures are exhausted, the Civic Association believes inverted rates must be held in abeyance.

#### Pollution of Potable Water

Pollution can come in many forms, e.g., salt water to spillage from roadways.

The most likely form of pollution is expected to be from the spillage of hazardous materials resulting from a motor vehicle accident. There are at least 2 possible ways pollutants can intrude into the water supply. One would be their entry to the aquifer, e.g., through the karst sensitive recharge area known as the Brooksville Ridge. The other likely cause of pollution will be to the drinking water wellheads if the Suncoast Parkway is extended through Sugarmill Woods. The issue here is that the Parkway would run very close to the wellheads and a motor vehicle accident near these wellheads or some sort of spillage during construction would see quick penetration into the water supply. (See the following section addressing the Suncoast Parkway.)

#### Capital Improvements

In 1992 a 10-Year Water and Wastewater Master Plan for Sugarmill Woods was prepared by Hartman and Associates. Quoting from that report: "Projected growth of the potable water system is expected to occur as a result of: 1) build-out of the existing developed areas with the present service area, 2) redevelopment of existing developed areas to higher densities, 3) development of presently undeveloped lands within the service area mainly the area east of the existing development, and 4) an increase in the occupancy rate of existing residential units." The study projected similar growth and demand scenarios for the wastewater treatment system.

In analyzing that report it is noted that Sugarmill Woods has experienced considerable growth. With approximately 4,300 occupied units existing in 2005, and given a conservative 200 - 300 homes per year growth rate, build-out is expected to occur within 15 years. There are approximately 8,600 platted lots in Sugarmill Woods. Since some homes are built on 2 lots, a fair estimate of build-out would be between 7,500 and 8,000 homes.

The Civic Association feels that the following capital improvements will be needed in order to meet future demands.

#### Wastewater Treatment Plant

Upgrading to 700,000 gpd is merely a stop-gap measure accomplished by adding an aerator to the existing facility. Clearly what will be needed is a major upgrade bringing capacity to at least 1,000,000 gpd.

#### Water Treatment Plants

The chlorination process needs to be reviewed, and where required, brought up to current specifications.

#### Lift Stations

Some lift stations were installed in the middle of major roads. These stations should be relocated.

#### Storage/Pressure Tank

The provision of water to Chassahowitzka, the potential provision of water to commercial interests on US 19/98 and continued growth in Sugarmill Woods will necessitate construction of a water storage/pressure tank to ensure adequate water pressure is available.

#### Preventative Maintenance

A dedicated preventative maintenance program is needed to investigate and replace weakened water/wastewater pipes before they break and cause a major health concern.

### System Study

A new water/wastewater master plan study should be made. Similar to the 1992 study, the effort should examine the needs and suggest action where appropriate.

### Monitoring Wells

The original monitoring wells were installed in Cypress Village about the same time as the first potable wells were drilled. Since then additional potable wells have been installed. Clearly additional monitoring wells are needed. A further issue is that homes opposite the CR 480 fire station use septic tanks. Given the recent information on the deterioration of septic tanks in the Chassahowitzka area is it safe to assume the homes on CR 480 face similar problems mandating more caution in monitoring the water supply. Furthermore, the Hernando County landfill is just a few miles to the east of the Sugarmill Woods well fields.

### Fire Hydrants

For the public safety hydrants need to be periodically tested. Additionally, the blue street markers denoting the presence of a hydrant need to be replaced as they break, hydrants need to be painted, and grass and weeds mowed around hydrants.

## **SUNCOAST PARKWAY 2**

The Suncoast Parkway 2 (SCP2) is a major concern to Sugarmill Woods residents. The Civic Association has taken no official stance on the Parkway, e.g., build or no-build. The Association opposes the S1 alternative, the western most path as shown in Appendix B, as it would sever Sugarmill Woods and expresses the concern that the S2 alternative, which abuts the northeast section of the development, would be disruptive to the tranquility of the community.

### BOCC and the Parkway

In March, 2003 the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) wrote a letter to the Florida Turnpike Enterprise (FTE) objecting to the road going through Sugarmill Woods (the S1 alternative). The BOCC is also on record in the news media and in BOCC minutes stating their objection to the S1 Alternative

In that same letter, the BOCC iterated their support for the Parkway and to have it go through the Annutteliga Hammocks and Lecanto Sandhills (the S2 Alternative).

### The Parkway and Sugarmill Woods Potable Water

The Civic Association contends that the Parkway, if built, should be at least 3,000 feet from the community's potable water wells. This figure is based on calculations using a formula provided in the Citrus County Land Development Code (LDC). (Appendix B shows the location of the community's wells in proximity to the proposed SCP2 pathways.)

The LDC was written after Sugarmill Woods was established and, per a clause in the LDC, Sugarmill Woods is exempt from this formula. The FTE states the Parkway will be 500 feet away from the wells as per Florida Department of Environmental Protection guidelines.

The Civic Association contends that the FTE should err on the side of caution. Additionally, not only are Sugarmill Woods wells in danger, but wells for other communities, i.e., the Homosassa Special Water District are in peril.

### The Sugarmill Woods Greenbelt

The greenbelt is commonly owned land and per state real estate acquisition rules each landowner would be entitled to hire an attorney to represent their interest should the FTE attempt to purchase greenbelt land for right-of-way. The FTE must pay the attorney fees.



The Environmental Resource and Regulatory Agency Group (ERRAG), a group constituted to examine environmental issues, noted the issue of commonly owned lands in its meeting notes. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has also “acknowledged” the issue when it leased land from Oak Village for the US 98 widening project.

The ERRAG recommended the S1 route as the least invasive of the environment.

The Sugarmill Woods Civic Association contends that the greenbelt is an environmentally sensitive area no different than the Annutteliga Hammocks or Lecanto Sandhills and that to penetrate the greenbelt is tantamount to penetrating the Hammocks/Sandhills.

#### Cost to Acquire Sugarmill Woods Land

In February, 2006, the Civic Association studied the cost to acquire Sugarmill Woods land, both homesites and the greenbelt. The Association acknowledges that the study was done by lay persons and to compensate for that all cost estimates tend side toward the conservative.

A conservative estimate places approximately 325 lots directly in the path, 62 of which currently have homes on them, either built or under construction.

The Civic Association feels that property outside the main path, but within an additional 300 feet of the highway’s boundary, would be adversely affected by the noise and pollution generated by traffic on SCP2 and would suffer significant loss of property value. According to the February study, there are about 300 lots in the collaterally affected area, 75 of which have homes on them or are in the process of construction.

In estimating the lost property tax revenue to the county, the Civic Association study assumed that homes were taxed at \$2,500 (minimum) per year and unimproved lots at \$400. Using these figures, a conservative estimate is that Citrus County would lose at least \$260,000 in property tax revenue (in 2005 tax dollars) per year.

The study also suggests those homes and lots immediately adjacent to SCP2’s path will decrease in property value which determines property tax revenue. So it’s possible that another \$200,000 could be lost to the county due to the decrease in property values.

Without question, the recent increase in property values has made the acquisition of land and homes a costly process. For this calculation the study

assumed that homes are conservatively valued at an average of \$250,000 and lots at \$50,000.

Given these values it will cost at least \$15.5 million to acquire the existing 62 homes and another \$13.1 million to purchase the remaining unimproved lots.

The Civic Association believes the land would probably be acquired under the law of eminent domain (which permits the state to acquire land for public use). However, a landowner has the right to dispute the government's offering price and hire both an attorney and property appraiser to defend his claim. The government is obligated to pay for that attorney and appraiser. So in addition to the absolute costs to acquire Sugarmill Woods homes and lots, the government could be liable to pay significant legal fees.

In addition to the private property, there are a number of acres of greenbelt that must be taken in the acquisition.

There are a number of issues associated with this potential procurement:

- At this point no one knows the exact number of acres involved, but given that 25% of Sugarmill Woods is greenbelt, a best estimate of between 80 to 100 acres is reasonable.
- No one knows what a reasonable cost per greenbelt acre would be. If a typical lot is one-quarter acre and the cost of a lot is \$50,000, then an acre of greenbelt should cost about \$200,000. Therefore, the best guess of the cost of 80 acres of greenbelt would be about \$16 million.
- A most important point: the greenbelt is commonly owned land. It is not owned by the property owners associations. It is jointly owned by every landowner in Sugarmill Woods. With an estimated 8,600 lots in Sugarmill Woods, there are potentially 8,600 partial owners of the greenbelt. That raises the possibility that 8,600 people can dispute the government's offering price and hire 8,600 attorneys and 8,600 property appraisers. In addition, a number of land owners are overseas residents so foreign attorneys would have to be factored into the equation.
- The original developer intended the greenbelt to be left untouched, to serve as a nature reserve. A number of wild animals, some of which are protected species, call the greenbelt "home".

The FTE in its draft project comparison chart notes that the S1 route through Sugarmill Woods, would be the most costly with the right-of-way acquisition costs being the highest of all 10 alternative routes.

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FACILITY and SHERIFF'S SUBSTATION

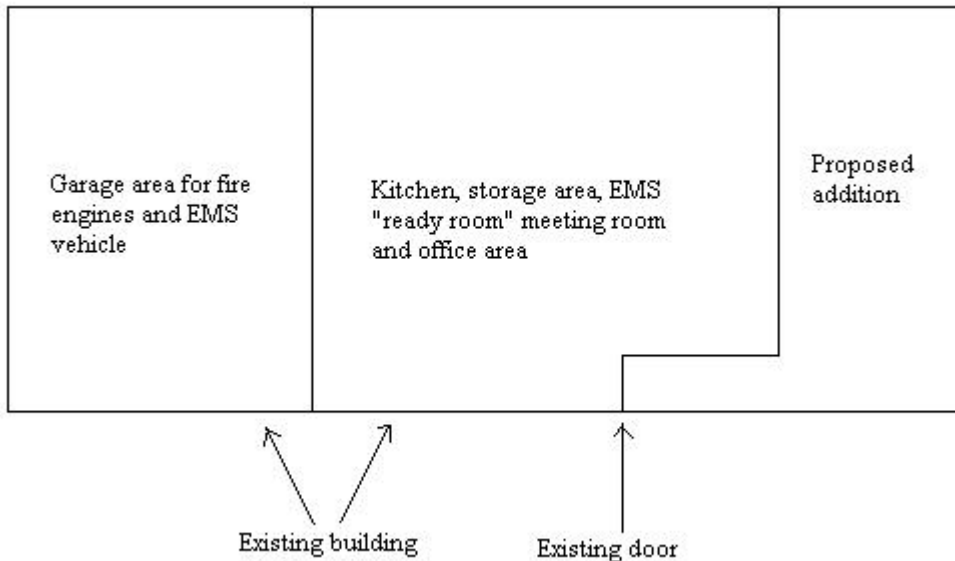
### Disaster Management

Citrus County has been fortunate to escape the ravages of a major natural disaster, but is still preparing to deal with situations through such efforts as the appointment of an emergency operations center (EOC) coordinator and the construction a new EOC facility. Coordination at a central level is all well and good, but unless information is received from and passed to local communities, it is of little benefit.

In August, 2004, on the heels of Hurricane Charley, the Civic Association noted that the growth in Sugarmill Woods and the immediate surrounding area, the marked increase in vehicular traffic in the area brought about by the increased population and the Suncoast Parkway, as well as other demographic changes pointed out the need for an improved emergency management facility and Sheriff's substation in the Sugarmill Woods area.

The Association proposed an addition to the existing CR 480 building that now houses Fire and EMS equipment and personnel to become a combination law enforcement substation and emergency management facility to serve the needs of residents in this area of the county.

The addition would be on the right side of the fire station as one faces the building. Currently the right side wall is a solid CBC wall. The addition would be about 12 feet wide and run the length of the existing building.



In addition to being an emergency management center, the facility could serve as Sheriff's substation. In its proposal, the Civic Association stated it would purchase an emergency generator and a refrigerator for storing perishable drugs that many of our senior citizens need, and which drugs would be in peril in the event of an extended power outage. The Civic Association will also furnish the facility with furniture such as desks, chairs, and whatever else might be needed for emergency management.

### General Security

The Cypress and Oak property owners associations currently contract for night-time security patrols for their respective villages. At present Cypress engages an off-duty sheriff's department deputy whereas Oak utilizes a private security firm. While it is hard to measure the effectiveness of each service, there appears to be merit in night-time patrols.

However, a community the size of Sugarmill Woods should not have to contract for outside security. The sheriff's department should provide all and whatever security is required for the community. The problem, as viewed by the Civic Association, is that Sugarmill Woods is in the extreme southwest corner of the county. Yet there is clearly an increase in traffic through this community brought about by such entities as the termination of the Suncoast Parkway at US 98. And with traffic comes the potential for unsavory issues.

The Sugarmill Woods Civic Association would like to see the substation (referenced above) be constructed and a greater presence of sworn law enforcement patrols.

## **SCHOOL ISSUES**

Per the 2000 census there were 446 school age children in the entire Sugarmill Woods CDP. And, according to the Citrus County School Superintendent's office, in early 2006 there were 270 Sugarmill Woods children in the school system: about 100 in Lecanto Elementary, 90 in Lecanto Middle and 80 in Lecanto High.

Although the percentage of Sugarmill Woods (and immediate vicinity) school age children is small in comparison to other communities in Citrus County, the number of families in Sugarmill Woods continues to grow every year. According to reports from parents, some of the Sugarmill Woods children ride a bus for up to an hour in each direction.

In March, 2006 the Civic Association's Board met with Superintendent Sandra Himmel to discuss a number of education related issues and, in particular, a school in the southwest section of Citrus County.

Superintendent Himmel discussed the status of schools in the county to include the impact on the county's school system resulting from the class size legislation, teachers to be hired and the new elementary school being constructed in the Citrus Springs area. According to Ms. Himmel, there are many factors to be considered in building a school, e.g., the number of students, the inventory of student stations (basically are there enough desks for the students), and funding.

The Board was advised that a typical new elementary school is designed for about 800 students and that as of now there are no plans to build an elementary school in the southwest area of the county.

The Board agreed to continue a dialogue on the subject.

## Appendix A – Sales Tax Calculation

This section will use data from the year 2000 census – Table DP-1 (Profile of General Demographic Characteristics). The two figures extracted are the number of occupied housing units and median household income. In 2000 these figures were:

	<u>Occupied units</u>	<u>Median income</u>
Sugarmill Woods	3,061	\$43,447
Citrus County	52,634	\$31,001

The other necessary figure is the IRS calculated optional state and local sales tax taken from the 2005 Schedule “A” Tax Table. The mixing of year 2000 census data with year 2005 tax data is irrelevant, and it is not important to calculate the exact amount returned, as the purpose is to show the relationship, not an exact figure.

The 2005 tax tables reflect sales tax at \$482 for a family of 2 with income between \$30,000 and \$40,000, and sales tax of \$561 for a family of 2 with income between \$40,000 and \$50,000. The family of 2 is used since the occupancy rate for both Sugarmill Woods and Citrus County in general is more than 2 but less than 3 persons per household.

The last item to note is approximately how much of the collected sale tax is returned to Citrus County. In 2005 approximately 8% of the collected tax was received back by the county. This appendix will assume the county consistently receives about 8%.

Using the above data, for the year 2000, it can be estimated that Citrus County received back about \$2,029,567 in sales tax (\$482 times 52,634 times .08) of which about \$137,377 (\$561 times 3,061 times .08) came from taxes paid by Sugarmill Woods residents.

Note: The actual sales tax shared by Citrus County in 2005 was closer to \$7,000,000. The difference between the actual, \$7,000,000 and the estimated \$2,029,567 can be attributed to at least 3 factors: the purchase of big ticket items such as automobiles is not reflected in the IRS tables, the IRS tends to estimate on the low side, and sales tax paid by visitors. Again, the point is not to show an exact figure, but a relationship.

Dividing the \$137,377 by \$2,029,567 results in Sugarmill Woods residents paying about 6.8% of the collected tax received by the county.

Using the above logic, the percentages can be calculated for Citrus Hills, Pine Ridge and Beverly Hills – the other three major unincorporated areas of Citrus County. Data to be used is:

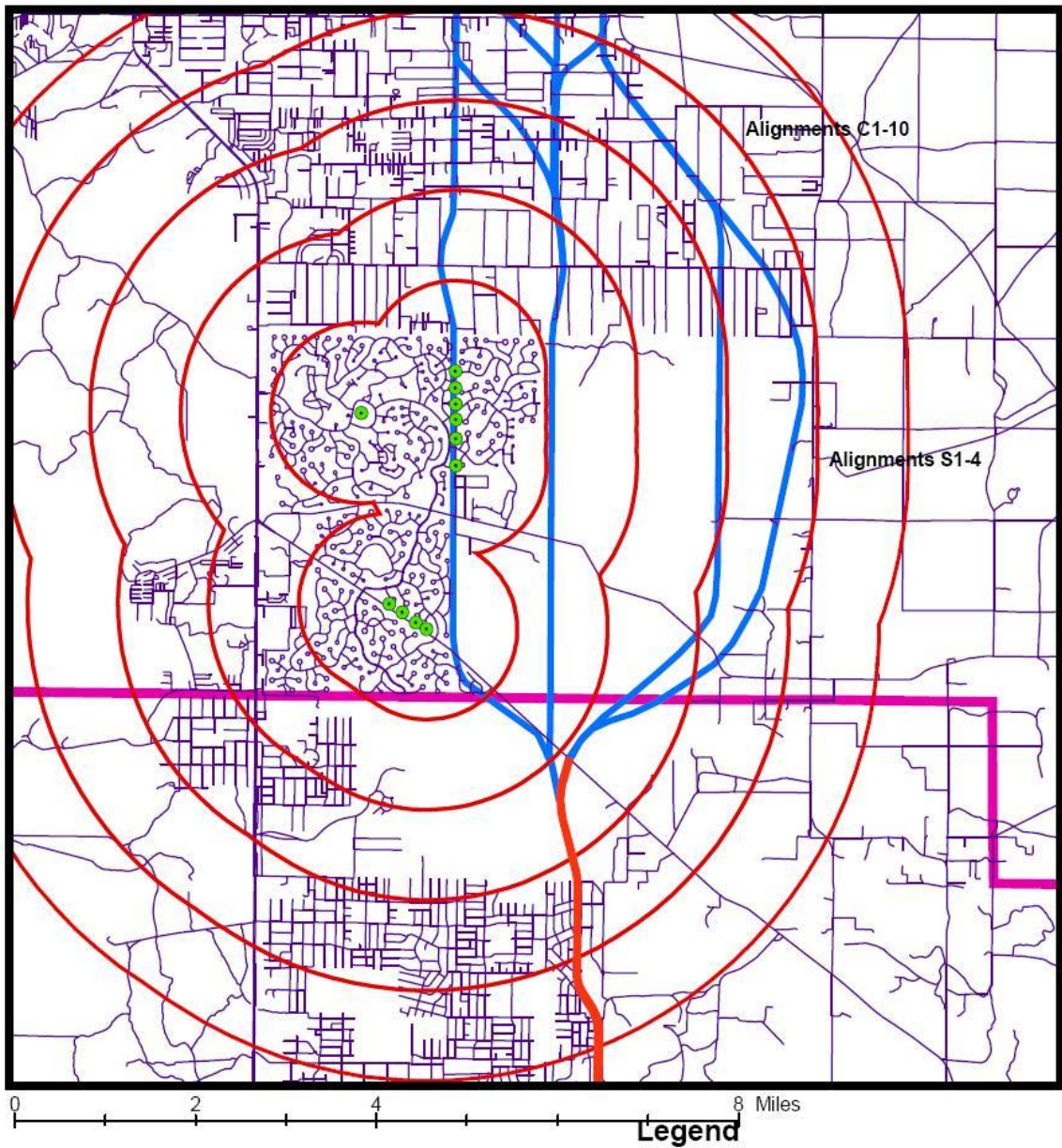
	<u>Occupied units</u>	<u>Median income</u>	<u>Occupancy</u>	<u>Allowed tax</u>
Pine Ridge	2355	\$43,464	2	\$561
Citrus Hills	1783	\$48,229	2	\$561
Beverly Hills	4401	\$24,875	1	\$335

Pine Ridge contributed sales tax return percentage:  
 $2355 \text{ times } 561 \text{ times } .08 \text{ divided by } 2029567 = 5.2\%$

Citrus Hills contributed sales tax return percentage:  
 $1783 \text{ times } 561 \text{ times } .08 \text{ divided by } 2029567 = 3.9\%$

Beverly Hills contributed sales tax return percentage:  
 $4401 \text{ times } 335 \text{ times } .08 \text{ divided by } 2029567 = 5.8\%$

Appendix B – Map of Parkway Alternatives and Sugarmill Woods Wells



Sugarmill Woods Wells and Buffers (1 mile increments)  
**SUNCOAST PARKWAY 2**

September 14, 2003  
 File: SMW wells