

# City of Plantation, FL

## Demographic Information

- ★ Self-reported suburban area with population of 78,287
- ★ Poverty rate: 6.0
- ★ Race and Ethnicity breakdown:

<b>Non-Hispanic White</b>	<b>74.0%</b>
<b>Non-Hispanic Black or African American</b>	<b>17.0%</b>
<b>Non-Hispanic Asian</b>	<b>3.0%</b>
<b>Non-Hispanic American Indian and Alaskan Native</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Non-Hispanic Other</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Non-Hispanic Other race</b>	<b>4.0%</b>
<b>Non-Hispanic Multiracial (two or more races)</b>	<b>1.0%</b>
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	<b>17.0%</b>

- ★ Graduation Rate (%): 68%

## Overview

I am lucky ... I grew up in Plantation. As a student, I was involved in Brownies and Girl Scouts, PAL cheerleading and middle and high school band. My best friend and I would meet at the Better Boys Bridge and ride our bicycles through tree-lined Plantation streets. Like many of my friends, I went away to college, and after graduating, I moved out of the area – twice. But both times I returned to Plantation. There is a real history and sense of community that Plantation provides. While it continues to grow and evolve, providing new opportunities, there are beloved traditions that do not change. I love that I can take my daughter to the parks and facilities I played at as a child and show her “where mommy grew up.” I love that we anxiously wait for the City-sponsored Santa to drive by our home on Christmas Eve, wishing everyone Merry Christmas, and throwing out candy canes, just like when I was a kid. I love that the same parades I participated in as a teenager, we now enjoy together. When it was time to buy home, I looked all around Broward County, but ended up purchasing in Plantation. And when it came to buying a home with my husband, we stayed in Plantation. It is real source of pride to the Mayor that many the kids she knew, who moved away as young adults, came back to the area when it came time to raise their family. I was married here, in the same church where I attended confirmation class in the sixth grade – with the Mayor’s daughter, I might add. And now that my daughter is old enough, she attends summer camp and Sunday School there, as well.

I now work here – believe it or not – as Public Relations Supervisor for the City, and it has been the most fulfilling job I’ve ever had. Every day, I get to tell others about our tree-lined streets; our amazing landscape programs, many geared toward educating our students on the importance of trees and gardening; about our parks and recreation facilities and classes; about our brand new golf course and the kids clinics that are teaching a whole new generation how to be “Tiger Woods;” and about the economic growth that the City is experiencing, allowing our older youth to find lucrative jobs close to home. We have several large national corporations and 4,000 small businesses that help sustain the tax base and provide income to support capital projects like two Olympic-size swimming pools, water playgrounds, 42 parks within 650 acres of open space, the newest public golf course in Broward County, and three community centers with hundreds of meeting rooms housing literally thousands of volunteers. Partnerships with those same businesses help support and run events and programs for children of all ages and abilities.

The City of Plantation's commitment to youth is consistently recognized by local, state and national agencies, and is a benchmark for other Broward municipalities. Most recently, our golf course became Audubon-certified, and the Frank Veltri Tennis Center, part of Plantation Central Park, won the prestigious national award, USTA Facility of the Year. These facilities were envisioned by our Mayor to be a place where residents could meet and recreate, becoming stronger athletically and spiritually, and she was relentless in their pursuit. Our City's founder, Frederick Peters, moved to South Florida and founded Plantation because of his son's ailing health, so I guess you could say our origin is due to helping a child in need!

### **Commitment, Collaboration, Awareness, Data and Advocacy**

- ★ The Plantation Junior Woman's Club (PJWC) works with City departments to fund children's services and programs. Events such as Art in the Park and Holiday Tour of Homes, benefit the Fire Department's Care- A-Little Program (donating toys and food baskets to Plantation families); Dress for Success (providing resume development and clothing for graduates getting ready for job interviews); and 4Kids of South Florida (creating safe houses for children who are victims of neglect and abuse and are awaiting suitable foster homes). These and other fundraising projects also fund scholarships, and provide financial assistance to families who are in need of housing, utility bills, food, medication, clothing and school supplies. Founded in 1961, PJWC first brought Make-A-Wish to Broward County, and has donated over \$700,000 to the program.
- ★ The Plantation Fire Department partnered with Plantation General Hospital on "Watch the Water, Watch the Kids," a communications campaign reminding parents to never leave their children unattended near any body of water. The City has experienced no child drownings during the past six years the campaign has been implemented.
- ★ Plantation United Methodist Church was named "Partner of the Year" by Mirror Lake Elementary, and members act as school guides on the first day of the year, participate in the mentoring program and are classroom assistants. PUMC clergy are called upon in times of need for counseling. The church houses Boy and Cub Scout Troop 111 and several Girl Scout troops and is home to three 12-step programs, and a Christian-based recovery program,

### **Alliance Priorities: Dropout Prevention/School Readiness and the National Action Strategies**

- ★ Ninth grade students at Plantation High participate in AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), working with dedicated counselors and administrators to develop a 4-year plan to ensure success in high school and beyond. 2006 graduates were accepted at prestigious colleges such as Duke, Stanford, University of Pennsylvania, Smith and Dartmouth, many with full scholarships. For high school students, there is FCAT Explorer, an online practice program featuring Reading Timeline and Math Timeline. Thanks to these and other support systems, Plantation's FCAT scores are right in line with district and state scores.
- ★ Florida's health insurance program for uninsured children under the age of 19 is called "KidCare." KidCare is available to every uninsured child under the age of 19 who meets eligibility requirements. The City of Plantation recently placed an announcement and link to the Florida KidCare website alerting parents to its availability. We also place a link with the phone number on our Service Providers page. We are planning to include an article on KidCare, its cost, eligibility requirements, availability and importance in an upcoming edition of Plantation Quarterly, the City's resident news magazine, mailed to all households in Plantation (approximately 36,000) four times a year.
- ★ At Plantation Middle School, the student/teacher ratio is 21 to 1. It has an extremely active parent organization that commits hundreds of hours annually and has received the Five Star school award for community involvement year after year. It does not have a job shadowing program, but there is a partnership with the Florida Center for the Book, which introduces students to the business of publishing. Famous authors speak to students about writing, getting work published and marketing their products. At Seminole Middle School, each grade has a dedicated guidance counselor. Additionally, two family counselors are on site and available to work with students as needed. It has a mentoring program, and its PTA membership is well over 400. Students who elect to participate in the DECAL Program may take advanced engineering, communications, foreign language and other courses, some for high school credit.

### **Resources Youth Receive: The Five Promises**

- ★ **Caring Adults:** Plantation employees participate in a mentoring program to benefit Peters Elementary. Employees devote one hour each week to act as a tutor, friend and role model to students who otherwise may not have an adult around for guidance. Plantation General Hospital provides classes to help parents

identify and address pre-teen issues, a pediatrician outreach program available to local organizations, and prenatal classes including childbirth preparation, baby care, breastfeeding support and infant CPR.

- ★ **Safe Places:** The Parks & Recreation Department Kids' Day Off programs, for ages 5-10, are held on days that school is not in session, and during spring and winter holidays. They are safe, secure places for children, and provide structured activities, free play, arts and crafts and field trips. Counselor to participant ratio is 1:10. The Plantation Police GRADE (Gang Resistance And Drug Education) Program is a ten-week course covering topics like self-respect, conflict resolution, leaders and followers, drug awareness and gang awareness.
- ★ **A Healthy Start:** Proceeds from the Girls 14 USTA Tennis Tournament, held in July, fund free tennis clinics at the Jim Ward Community Center, located in a lower socio-economic neighborhood, to children who may not be exposed to the sport. Since 2002, over 100 children have participated in the free program, and some have gone on to take lessons at the City's main tennis facility.
- ★ **An Effective Education:** Computers are available at no cost in the City's library, and are loaded with the most recent versions of Microsoft products. Printers are available. Additionally, computer competency is a requirement for high school graduation, and over 70% of elementary students report having sufficient access to computers and technology in schools. The average number of years experience for Plantation elementary teachers is 13.0 years, higher than the county (12.0) and state (12.5). An average of 39.4%
- ★ **Opportunities to Help Others:** Middle school students participate in the National Junior Honor Society and Kids in Nature's Defense. NJHS raises money for the poor and homeless locally as well as victims of natural disasters. They provide gifts baskets during the holidays through food, clothing and toy drives. KIND students plant trees and find safe homes for animals displaced by natural disasters. They also established and maintained an on-campus "green space" as part of last year's city-wide campaign. Total numbers of donated hours are in the thousands each year. Plantation's Boy Scout program encourages participation in shared and total leadership situations, and encourages participants to serve others without expectation of reward or recognition. One scout member credits the leadership and values based skills learned with his ability to think and act quickly and appropriately to save the life of one of his friends while on a summer camp field trip. "My City – I'm part of it, I'm proud of it" helps to educate fourth graders at Peters Elementary about government, including duties of municipal officers, how a City is formed and operates, and services it provides.

### **Media Issues/Challenges Identified:**

The biggest challenge facing the City today is providing safe places for children to grow and learn, despite intense growth that Plantation, and the entire South Florida region, is currently experiencing. While Plantation is still considered "suburban," it is facing some real "urban" challenges. The City's population has grown by 20,000 since the 1990 census; 3,000 since 2000 alone. Broward County school system, of which Plantation is a part, is the sixth largest in the United States, and continues to grow by thousands each year. We face struggles with additional traffic, maintaining open space for parks, children's safety and exposure to gangs, and a solid and effective education. In light of these issues, the community has made open space, public safety and partnerships with our schools a priority. In doing so, children are given a strong foundation that will serve them well as they grow, all in a safe, secure environment. In 2006, Seminole Middle School introduced Division of Enhanced Communication And Law (DECAL). DECAL is for those 6th, 7th and 8th graders who have shown interest in legal studies, speech and debate, psychology, foreign language and communications. Students who elect to participate are offered the opportunity to take advanced courses in these and other subjects, some for high school credit, creating a stronger, more prepared wave of students entering South Plantation High.

Plans are in the works to introduce similar programs to enhance the relationship and strength between Plantation Middle and Plantation High schools. During the past several years, millions of dollars have been spent developing the City's Multi-Use Recreation Trail. MURT provides connectivity between several parks and City facilities, and safe places for pedestrian, bicycle and inline skate traffic. Plantation's Police Department has worked closely with City elementary schools during the past six years to prepare students to deal with issues such as self-respect, conflict resolution, leaders and followers, and drug and gang awareness. The BIKE program awards academic excellence as well as good citizenship; and the GRADE program helps students make the right decisions when faced with peer pressure. Both programs are embraced by the community, and elected officials regularly participate. These and more initiatives are how Plantation addresses its growth concerns. While we embrace the exciting changes that are taking place within our City limits, we understand the importance of keeping an eye on what is important – ensuring a safe, secure, active and enjoyable future for our children.

