



Research Methods in Urban Planning – URP 6232
University of South Florida – City of Palmetto, FL
Community Sustainability Partnership Program, Spring 2017

Community Asset Mapping



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Executive Summary

This service learning project reports on results from a community asset assessment conducted in the City of Palmetto during April, 2017. University of South Florida graduate students enrolled in the Urban and Regional Planning program used an action research approach to collect qualitative data that might help the City better understand the needs of the underserved CRA community.

An asset assessment is designed to provide valuable information about the strengths, resources and challenges of a community. An asset assessment is a useful tool to arm local leaders with new knowledge about individual, organizational and institutional capacities that can be used in the development of policies and activities that further enhance community development.

This community assessment provides preliminary results on perceptions of opportunities and obstacles gathered from a convenience sample of individuals who live or work in the local area. Overall, participants perceive the City of Palmetto to have a very positive quality of life and identified several assets including outdoor recreation areas and downtown redevelopment efforts. Participants also acknowledged some issues of concern such as the crime rate, drug control, and issues with homelessness. The limitations of this service learning project hindered the ability to collect a well-rounded representation of the City of Palmetto's population as it only evaluated the perceptions of people over the age of 18 that speak English. Additional community outreach and engagement activities should be conducted in order to gather a broader view of the assets and challenges within the City of Palmetto.

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Introduction

This document reports on a service learning project conducted by students in a graduate course in Research Methods for Urban Planning at the University of South Florida. The goal of this service learning project was to gauge how people within the City of Palmetto perceive community assets. This service learning project was completed through the use of asset mapping and surveying of people who live or work in the City of Palmetto.

Background

The City of Palmetto is located on the west coast of Florida, within Manatee County. The City of Palmetto sits north of Bradenton, FL on the Manatee River. According to 2010 U.S. Census data, the City of Palmetto has a total population of 12,606 residents that make up 6,889 households with a median household income of \$36,990. Of the 12,606 residents, 1,117 are foreign born, while the white race makes up the majority of the population, with 10,682 residents. African Americans comprise the next largest subpopulation with 1,458 residents. There is also a prevalent Hispanic origin aspect to the population, with 3,651 residents identifying as either Hispanic or Latino. Economically, the City of Palmetto is home to 1,376 companies that range from manufacturing to health care services. According to 2010 U.S. Census data, 22.3% of the City of Palmetto's population lives below the poverty line.

The tool of Asset Mapping provides insight to a community's strengths and weaknesses that can provide solutions to issues related to land use, economic development, and community health. Asset mapping proposes the development of policies and activities based on an understanding, or 'map,' of the community's resources. Community asset mapping is designed to promote connections or relationships between individuals, between individuals and organizations, and between organizations in order to help the City of Palmetto better understand the community's needs.

Project Goal

The overarching goal of this service learning project was to evaluate, through the use of a community asset assessment and community engagement, how people who live and work in the City of Palmetto perceive the condition and quality of various community resources and services.

Methods

This service learning project uses Action Research as the primary method for data collection and analysis. The purpose of action research is to allow a group of stakeholders to collectively decide upon a solution to the problems they are currently faced with (Stringer, 2014). Action Research fits the overarching project goals. The guiding principle of Action Research is community and stakeholder involvement in the research process. For this particular service learning project, a short survey was administered at various locations within the City of Palmetto. These surveys helped to gauge the opinions of people who live or work in the City regarding Palmetto's community assets, strengths and challenges, and redevelopment efforts. The method of administering surveys allowed us to actively engage the stakeholder's of the City of Palmetto in the research process.

Data Collection

Data collection for this service learning project included primary and secondary data sources. Primary data collection sources consisted of a survey designed by the course participants with input from Mr. Burton, Director of the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) for the City of Palmetto. First-hand observations of the City of Palmetto by course participants also served as a primary data source. Secondary data consisted of contextual information related to the City of Palmetto, such as

demographics, that were obtained from U.S. Census data. Specific data collection tools are discussed below.

Primary Data Collection

Surveys

A survey was designed by course participants and the CRA Director, to be administered locally within the City of Palmetto. The purpose of the survey to gather stakeholder views of the City's assets, strengths, weaknesses, and redevelopment efforts. The survey also served as a primary data collection method for gathering demographic data on the surveyed population. This data includes age, gender, race, and tenure of residing or working in the City of Palmetto. A copy of the survey instrument can be found in Appendix A of this report.

Observations

Observations consisted of first-hand observations by the course participants as they completed the surveying and explored the City of Palmetto. Observations occurred as course participants drove through and walked about the City of Palmetto looking for locations to survey community stakeholders. Some of the observations noted were where more populated areas were and where people tended to gather the most, as these proved to be prime locations to conduct the surveys.

Secondary Data Collection

Census Data

Census data from the 2010 United States Census report was used to document Palmetto's demographics, business statistics, quality of housing, and poverty levels.

Land Use List

The list of Land Uses within the redevelopment area of the City of Palmetto was used to build the survey. In addition, a specific question on the instrument was designated to determine people's perceptions of land use in the CRA. This land use list was used to target the land uses that stakeholders of the City of Palmetto would like to see as part of downtown redevelopment efforts. This list was also used to evaluate which current land uses in downtown need to be improved. See Appendix B in this report for the Land Use List.

Participants

This service learning project aimed to evaluate the perceptions of community assets within the City of Palmetto. For this purpose, the target population for the survey were people who live and/or work in the City of Palmetto and who are 18 years of age or older. In addition to these inclusion criterion, the survey was only administered in English, thus stakeholders who were surveyed needed to speak, read, and understand the English language. Given this criteria, the survey excluded those who were visiting or traveling through Palmetto, those who were not able to speak English, and those under the age of 18 years old.

Participants were recruited for the survey through convenience sampling. Course participants administered the survey to stakeholders that were willing and able to complete the survey at various locations throughout the City of Palmetto. These locations included Sutton Park, the Marina and Waterfront area, the Library, and various grocery stores.

Instrument

A survey was the primary instrument used to collect data for this service learning project. The

survey was developed in class by course participants, course instructor, and Director of the City of Palmetto CRA. Multiple drafts of the survey were created and evaluated before the final instrument was decided upon. The survey consists of twenty questions and takes approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete. The questions included on the survey were open-ended, multiple choice, ranking, short written response, and Likert scale. The survey was designed to grasp qualitative data related to perceptions of the City of Palmetto's community assets, as well as quantitative data on the demographics of the stakeholders who participated in the surveying. See Appendix A for a copy of the survey.

Procedure

The survey was verbally administered and conducted on a one-on-one basis, between a student researcher and a local participant. As the researcher read the survey questions, participants were able to read along and witness the responses the researcher was recording. This transparency was important to data collection as it contributed to building rapport within a short period of time and helped to elicit honest responses from survey participants. The survey was conducted using convenience sampling, as discussed above. Locations on where to conduct the survey were decided upon by the individual researchers as they walked around and drove through the City of Palmetto. Locations that had consistent pedestrian traffic were selected as sites to administer the surveys. It is also important to note that the survey was voluntary and only administered to those participants who met the inclusion criteria. Participants had the option to stop participation at any time and were able to skip any questions they did not wish to answer.

Before the survey was administered in the City of Palmetto it was pilot tested in class. Test piloting was done in order to ensure consistency in survey administration protocol among the various course participants. Consistency was necessary in limiting researcher induced bias and limiting variability. Test piloting was conducted to ensure that the survey could be completed in an acceptable amount of time (within ten to fifteen minutes) and that the questions were logical in collecting accurate data for the goals of this service learning project.

After the surveys were administered and data was collected, data analysis was conducted. The quantitative data was analyzed using statistical data analysis in order to better understand the demographics of the stakeholder population. Qualitative data was first coded into themes and then analyzed to better understand stakeholder's perspectives on the City of Palmetto's community assets, strengths, weaknesses, and redevelopment efforts.

Results

The results of the survey are presented below and common themes are addressed.

1. Demographics

A total of 31 stakeholders were surveyed out of 109 individuals that were approached in the City of Palmetto during data collection. This yielded a responses rate of 28%. Of the 31 stakeholders who participated in the survey, 97% (n=30) of them live in the City of Palmetto while the remaining 3% (n=1) work in the City of Palmetto. Years living in Palmetto ranged from 1 to 62 years. The average tenure of residing in the City of Palmetto was 34 years, while the median was 11 years. Of the total stakeholder's surveyed, 58% (n=18) were male. The range of age was 23 yrs to 78 yrs with the average age of all stakeholders surveyed being 57 years of age. Of the 31 individuals surveyed, 84% (n=26) of them live in households that do not have children. In terms of race, 90% (n=28) of those surveyed identified as white, 7% (n=2) identified as African American, and the remaining 3% (n=1) identified as Hispanic.

2. Community Assets

Below are results related to participant perceptions of community assets in the City of Palmetto. Community assets are classified into categories that include outdoor places and preferred businesses.

Outdoor Places

Participants were asked to identify some of their favorite outdoor places that are available for people to enjoy within the City of Palmetto. The following places were commonly named:

- Sutton Park
- Waterfront
- Marina facilities
- Emerson Point
- Blackstone Park.

More general outdoor places that were mentioned include parks and restaurants.

Preferred Businesses

Preferred and frequented businesses that were commonly recognized were categorized into restaurants and bars, hardware stores, supermarkets, gas stations, and other. Restaurants included Harbor, Rodney's, Sea Hut, Hungry Howie's, Seagrape, Pizza Hut, Peggy's, and fast food options. Preferred supermarkets included Winn-Dixie, Publix, Walmart, and Save-a-lot. The two gas stations that were mentioned numerous times were Marathon and Sunoco. Commonly mentioned hardware stores included Home Depot, Lowes, and Jackson's.

Several participants responded to this question by naming what appeared to be non-business entities and perhaps fit better under the heading of nonprofit or service organizations. These included the library, Moose club (lodge), First Baptist Church, the Yacht Club, Bank of America, Suds N Scissors, and various dollar stores and Mom and Pop stores.

3. Community Services

Another community asset that the survey aimed to evaluate was frequently utilized community services, as well as the quality of those services. The survey used a Likert scale question to measure how stakeholders rated the quality of community services available in the City of Palmetto. The services that were evaluated included schools, parks and recreation, health care, libraries, waterfront, emergency services (e.g. police and fire), and sewage/sanitation. The quality of services were rated on a Likert scale ranging from "outstanding quality" to "poor quality". "Good" and "fair" were also options for rating community services. Table 1 provides a summary of responses regarding how participants perceive the quality of local services.

Table 1. Rating of Community Services

SERVICE How would you rate the quality of:	4= OUTSTANDING QUALITY	3= GOOD QUALITY	2= FAIR QUALITY	1= POOR QUALITY	0= DON'T KNOW
SCHOOLS	23% (n=7)	13% (n=4)	10% (n=3)		55% (n=17)
PARKS/RECREATION	48% (n=15)	36% (n=11)	13% (n=4)		3% (n=1)
HEALTH CARE	19% (n=6)	32% (n=10)	7% (n=2)	3% (n=1)	39% (n=12)
LIBRARIES	65% (n=20)	13% (n=4)	3% (n=1)		19% (n=6)

WATERFRONT	71% (n=22)	16% (n=5)	7% (n=2)		7% (n=2)
FIRE SERVICE	68% (n=21)	13% (n=4)			19% (n=6)
POLICE SERVICE	74% (n=23)	13% (n=4)			13% (n=4)
SANITATION/TRASH	58% (n=18)	36% (n=11)	3% (n=1)		3% (n=1)

Overwhelmingly participants rated the quality of City of Palmetto emergency services as Outstanding for police (74%) and fire (68%). Another strong asset rated by participants is the Palmetto waterfront, with 71% of respondents indicating this to be an Outstanding community service. Other services listed in the survey received mixed results with ratings ranging from Fair to Good to Outstanding. In particular, local schools and health care services received the lowest scores for Outstanding quality at 23% and 19% respectively.

After rating the quality of services in the City of Palmetto, stakeholders had the option to included additional comments about the service. Not all stakeholders elected to add additional comments, nonetheless, significant and pertinent comments are below.

Additional Comments

“Mayor does a wonderful job of promoting activities in the parks” (Female, age 76)

“Mayor and Mayor’s office are doing a good job at promoting and regrowing” (Male, age 74)

“I believe the city, the mayor and administration is very good at development” (Male, age 59)

4. Top Strengths and Challenges

The survey asked participants to identify what they believe to be the top three strengths and challenges for the City of Palmetto. The most common responses for both are presented below through the use of common themes.

Strengths

The survey results yielded common themes throughout stakeholder responses in regards to strengths of the City of Palmetto. Stakeholders were asked to list what they believed to be the top three strengths for the City of Palmetto. Overall responses included amenities, economics, sense of place, outdoor recreation, city government, and future development. Specifically, the top three strengths identified were amenities, sense of place, and outdoor recreation.

- Amenities include restaurants, health care facilities, businesses, and historical sites.
- Sense of place was described as a small town feel, the people, location, being more rural, and no heavy traffic.
- Outdoor recreation facilities included participants naming facilities such as the specific parks, the waterfront, fishing, and greenspace availability.

Other strengths that were brought to attention were the economy, city government, and future development efforts.

Challenges

Stakeholders were asked to list what they believed to be the top three challenges facing the City of Palmetto. Specifically the top three challenges were classified into common themes related to congestion, redevelopment, and safety.

- Congestion contained concerns with traffic, overcrowding, and the need for road improvements.
- Redevelopment encompassed concerns with clean up, homelessness, and the plight of old buildings.
- Safety concerns included slow police response times, drug control, and crime rates.

Other challenges for the City of Palmetto that were brought to our attention were concerns about an aging population and the conduct of government.

5. Land uses

Stakeholders were asked to rank various land uses that they would prefer to see in the downtown community redevelopment area (CRA) of the City of Palmetto. Participants were able to select from a predetermined list of land uses provided by the Palmetto CRA Director. This list included suggestions for things individuals might feel are missing and necessary in the downtown area that will improve redevelopment efforts. Table 2 provides results from the survey.

Table 2. Land Use Preferences

[n=7 (23%)] Art gallery	[n= 14 (45%)] Ice cream shop	[n=5 (16%)] Medical/Dental office
[n= 10 (32%)] Museum	[n= 10 (32%)] Restaurant	[n=11 (36%)] Hotel
[n=7 (23%)] Library	[n=5 (16%)] Bar	[n=3 (10%)] Business/Prof office
[n=2 (7%)] School	[n= 3 (10%)] Dollar or general store	[n=2 (7%)] Bank
[n=0] Tobacco shop	[n=2 (7%)] Liquor store	[n=5 (16%)] Marina
[n= 4 (13%)] Newsstand	[n=1 (3%)] Contractor/Construct office	[n=12 (39%)] Parking
[n=15 (48%)] Bakery	[n=1 (3%)] Funeral home	[n=5 (16%)] Printing shop
[n= 11 (36%)] Delicatessen	[n=2 (7%)] Animal hospital	[n=6 (19%)] Other:____

Results from the survey indicate the most desired land use was a bakery, with 48% of responses. An ice cream shop had the second most selections at 45%. Land uses including parking, a hotel, and a restaurant were also selected frequently, at 39%, 36%, and 32% respectively. “Other” was also an option for land uses in order to grasp land use needs that were not listed. Those who selected “other”

suggested the following land uses: a fitness facility, historical sites, a marine store, a movie theater, and a bowling alley.

6. Message to City Leaders

A key component of the survey was an open ended question that allowed stakeholders to send a message to the leaders of the City of Palmetto. Given the open ended nature of this question, the responses varied drastically. Whether the comments were positive or negative, there were key themes that arose from the data. These themes were quality of life, infrastructure improvement, complements, inclusion of all populations, and job opportunities. Direct comments from stakeholder responses are listed below.

Positive Comments

"Keep the small town atmosphere" (Female, age 70)

"Doing a decent job. Improve police numbers and training" (Female, age 72)

"Keep up good work" (Female, age 72)

"Try to keep doing what you're doing. More children activities needed" (Male, age 70)

Negative Comments

"Need to recognize low income families, promote more adequate needs i.e. a food pantry"
(Female, age 76)

"More job availability is needed" (Male, age 45)

"We need more young people. It'd be nice to have a younger crowd" (Male, age 28)

"City needs improvement, too much crime" (Male, age 23)

7. Final thoughts

The final question on the survey asked participants if they had any final comments on living or working in the City of Palmetto. Not all participants had a response for this question but those who did commented on the City of Palmetto's growth and on why they enjoy living in the City of Palmetto. Sample direct quotes are listed below.

"I love the small town feel" (Female, age 72)

"Happy to be here" (Female, age 76)

"Better than Sarasota" (Male, age 24)

"I am blessed to live here" (Female, age 71)

"I enjoy it, it is cool to see you guys doing stuff like this (surveying)" (Male, age 28)

"They could be more user friendly" (Female, age 50)

"We love it" (Female, age 68)

"I like living here, it is centrally located" (Male, age 78)

"I like it here, looking forward to downtown improvements" (Male, age 61)

Discussion

A service learning project was conducted among people living or working in the City of Palmetto. This service learning project was completed in an effort to evaluate stakeholder perspectives on the City of Palmetto's community assets, strengths, weaknesses, and redevelopment efforts. The implications and limitations of the survey results and this service learning project are discussed below.

Implications

Overall, participants perceive the City of Palmetto to have a very positive quality of life, although some issues are of concern. The community assets that support this positive perception of quality of life are due to the redevelopment effort of the City's government, the availability and accessibility of outdoor space, and the quality of community services. The issues of concern are the crime rates and homelessness that some suggest is prevalent in the City of Palmetto. Specifically mentioned was the notion of the term "Palmghetto" that one participant used to describe one of the City's challenges. Other issues of concern include traffic congestion, an aging population, and a lack of activities for the youth population of Palmetto.

Despite these concerns, participants were excited about the redevelopment initiatives. The results of the survey revealed positive feedback in regards to community development and growth that has occurred. Participants notice that change is occurring and they are on board with it but as growth and development continues to happen within the City of Palmetto, it is important that concerns are noted and addressed by City officials in order to maintain a high quality of life within the City of Palmetto.

Limitations

As with any research project, there are limitations and this service learning project is no exception. One limitation of this assessment is the limited number of responses that were recorded by course participants. Only 109 people were approached to participate in the survey, and of that 109 only 31 people (28%), completed the survey. This is only a fraction of the City of Palmetto's population. Another limitation of this assessment was the inability to administer the survey to the native Spanish speaking population of the City of Palmetto. The survey missed the opinions and views from this group that makes up a large portion of the City's total population. Another important group that the survey missed out on was the youth population of the City of Palmetto because the survey was only administered to those over the age of 18 years old.

Recommendations

This Community Asset Assessment report provides preliminary information on possible ways to further engage the community in building social capital within the City of Palmetto. This service learning project accomplished the goal of utilizing action research to engage the community in evaluating the City of Palmetto's assets, strengths, weaknesses, and redevelopment efforts. The results provide a glimpse into stakeholders' perspectives of the City of Palmetto. More in-depth community engagement is needed to grasp a well-rounded representation of stakeholder views. This might be accomplished through focus groups with particular sub-populations or groups of the City of Palmetto such as youth, the elderly, families with children, Spanish speakers, and others who frequently visit Palmetto. These focus groups can be used to target the specific needs and views of these populations. Another way to obtain a well-rounded representation is through distributing surveys to more of the population and establishing an incentive for completing the surveys. It is important to capture the perspectives of these populations and to take them into consideration in order to create a place that people want to raise children and entices them to make the City of Palmetto home.

Conclusion

This report summarizes a service learning project conducted as part of a graduate level course in Research Methods in Urban Planning at the University of South Florida. This project utilized community asset assessment and surveying to evaluate citizens' perceptions of the City of Palmetto's strengths and weaknesses. This project was also successful in identifying community assets that are valued by

stakeholders, such as outdoor recreation areas and downtown redevelopment efforts. This report also brings to light concerns for the City of Palmetto. These concerns include the crime rate, drug control, and issues with homelessness. This service learning project serves as a foundation for utilizing community engagement in order to address concerns and continue to improve the quality of life in the City of Palmetto. More extensive community engagement methods should be used in the future in order to grasp a well-rounded representation of all populations within the City of Palmetto for these efforts.

References

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Appendix A (Survey)

USF Quick Asset Assessment: City of Palmetto

Hello,

The University of South Florida is working with the City of Palmetto Office of Community Development to conduct an Asset Assessment of the city. We are very interested in your opinion. This is a short survey and should take about 5-8 minutes to complete. This is all anonymous and voluntary. The results of the survey will be used to help elected officials and the Office of Community Development make decisions in planning for the future quality of life in the City of Palmetto. To participate, you must either live or work in the City of Palmetto and be at least 18 yrs old: Would you like to help us?

NOTE: Record “no” responses on separate tally sheet.

1. Do you live or work in the City of Palmetto?
[] Live [] Work
2. How long have you lived or worked in the City of Palmetto?
[years] [months]

3. I'm going to ask you to rate the quality of several services offered in the City of Palmetto. For each one, rate it on a scale from 1 – 4 with 4 being Outstanding Quality and 1 being Poor Quality.

SERVICE How would you rate the quality of:	4= Outstanding QUALITY	3= GOOD QUALITY	2= FAIR QUALITY	1= POOR QUALITY	0= DON'T KNOW
SCHOOLS					
PARKS/RECREATION					
HEALTH CARE					
LIBRARIES					
WATERFRONT					
FIRE SERVICE					
POLICE SERVICE					
SANITATION/TRASH					

Comments:

4. In the City of Palmetto, what are some favorite outdoor places available for people to enjoy?
5. In the City of Palmetto, what businesses do you use the most?

6. In the City of Palmetto, what volunteer activities do you participate in the most?

7. In the City of Palmetto, is there a place you enjoy spending your free time the most?

8. When and where do people gather to socialize, and what do they do together?

9. Outside of family members, is there a member of the community whose opinions influence your own regarding public matters?

10. How do you typically learn about what's happening in the Palmetto community?

11. What do you believe are the top 3 assets or strengths of the City of Palmetto?

[1] _____

[2] _____

[3] _____

12. What do you believe are the top 3 challenges or weaknesses of the City of Palmetto?

[1] _____

[2] _____

[3] _____

13. If you could improve one aspect of the Palmetto community, what would it be and why?

WHAT: _____

WHY: _____

14. If you could send a message to an elected official in the City of Palmetto about the Quality of Life here, what would it be?

15. Take a look at this list of "Land Uses". Which do you think are needed in the Downtown area of the city? (check all that apply);

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| ☐ Art gallery | ☐ Ice cream shop | ☐ Medical/Dental office |
| ☐ Museum | ☐ Restaurant | ☐ Hotel |
| ☐ Library | ☐ Bar | ☐ Business/Professional office |
| ☐ School | ☐ Dollar store/general store | ☐ Contractor/Construction office |
| ☐ Tobacco shop | ☐ Liquor store | ☐ Marina |
| ☐ Newsstand | ☐ Bank | ☐ Parking |
| ☐ Bakery | ☐ Funeral home | ☐ Printing shop |
| ☐ Delicatessen | ☐ Animal hospital | ☐ Other: _____ |

16. Gender:

- ☐ Male ☐ Female

17. Current age?

_____ [years]

18. Children in your household under the age of 18 yrs?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

19. Race/Ethnicity:

- ☐ White (not Hispanic) ☐ African American ☐ Hispanic ☐ Other: _____

20. Any Final Comments about living or working in the City of Palmetto?

Surveyor Initials:

Date:

Time:

Location:

Appendix B (Land Uses)

APPENDIX B: CRA INCENTIVIZED LAND USES

Art galleries

Museums

Libraries

Schools

Tobacco shop

Newsstand

Bakery

Delicatessen

Dairy products store

Eating establishment

Drinking establishments

Shopper's goods

Liquor stores

Banking

Business services

Funeral home - no crematory

Animal hospital – no crematory

Medical and dental laboratories

Hotels

Business/professional offices

Personal services

Contractor's – office – no storage yard

Marinas

Parking, accessory

Printing, light

Other allowable Downtown Commercial Core uses not listed may be applied for an *Agency Advisory Board* recommendation and Agency Board approval.