

# Community Background Report

## City of Wilton Manors

### Boundaries

North: Oakland Park Boulevard and North Fork of the Middle River

South: South Fork of the Middle River

East: US1 Federal Highway

West: Mills Pond Preserve and I-95

**Community Type:** Municipality

**Report Last Updated:** May, 2011

### History

The City of Wilton Manors is approximately two square miles in area and is located just north of downtown Fort Lauderdale.<sup>1</sup> Wilton Manors is often referred to as the “Island City” because its boundaries primarily follow the North and South Forks of the Middle River.<sup>2</sup> Originally, the city was first developed as northern residential subdivision of the City of Fort Lauderdale in 1925.<sup>3</sup> In the mid-1940’s, leaders from the private Wilton Manors Civic Association petitioned the Broward County Circuit Court and the State of Florida to separate Wilton Manors from Fort Lauderdale; this request was granted and the city was incorporated in 1947.<sup>4</sup>

Over recent years, Wilton Manors has experienced tremendous economic revitalization and has embraced the vision of a “sustainable urban village.”<sup>5</sup> Considering that the Wilton Manors is nearly built-out, the City laid the groundwork for redevelopment by addressing its growth management strategy through a significant rewrite of its Comprehensive Plan and Unified Land Development Regulations (ULDRs).<sup>6</sup> Through this effort, the city promoted New Urbanism and Smart Growth principles that led to mixed-use development within Wilton Manor’s Arts and Entertainment District.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, the city has acquired a great deal of park and open space, much of which is located on Florida’s Middle River.<sup>8</sup> Wilton Manors also has numerous wildlife habitats and is the 17th municipality in the nation to be declared a Certified Community Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation.<sup>9</sup>

It is also interesting to note that the city’s only public school within its jurisdiction, Wilton Manor Elementary, was one of 11 winners of the 2008 National School of

Character Award; this is a prestigious honor that recognizes schools and districts for their outstanding work in character education.<sup>10</sup>

## Community Dynamics

The community considers its diversity was one of its strengths. Children from many different ethnic backgrounds attend Wilton Manors Elementary School; the City's Police Department employs African-American, Haitian, and Hispanic officers; and the City Commission includes openly gay elected officials.<sup>11</sup> Wilton Manors has experienced a dramatic transformation since the 1980s; this small city from a quiet blue color community to a growing affluent international community with one of the third largest concentration of gay couples in the nation.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, this diversity –especially the diversity in income- led the City to transform itself in yet another way: from a sleepy bedroom community to a self-contained urban village. The focus turned to upscale boutique shops, often gay-friendly, and a community of open-minded residents that embraced different lifestyles made Wilton Manors' success possible.<sup>13</sup>

Before the economic downturn, there was a high level of concentration in the development of new residential units. To name a few: a former beer distributorship site became a 272-unit Wilton Station project, a drug rehabilitation center was replaced with Island City Lofts; and a trailer park became 51 townhomes of Belle Isle.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, many of these developments have been plagued by slow sales. For example, just one year after construction finished, Wilton Station developers still own 47 of the 272 units.<sup>15</sup> Rental developments, on the other hand, are still in progress. The rental community, Gables Wilton Park, will comprise a multiplicity of urban buildings including a 9,000-square-foot ground-floor retail area on Wilton Drive.<sup>16</sup> The residential component will include 72 high-end apartments on the upper levels and 10 buildings housing 73 three-story apartments are planned in an Anglo-Caribbean style.<sup>17</sup>

## Demographic Highlights<sup>18</sup>

***The city has experienced a loss in population size since 2000 and projections show that the population will continue to decrease through 2014.***

The city's population in 2009 was 11,385 and population density per square mile was 5,648.<sup>19</sup> The city has experienced a 10 percent decline in population during the 2000-2009 period and it is forecasted to lose another 8 percent in the 2009-2014 period.

***Since 2000, the City of Wilton Manors has experienced a ten percent decline in households and it is projected to further decline through 2014.***

In correlation to population decline, the city has also experienced a 10 percent decline overall households from 2000 through 2009. As of 2009 there were 5,263 households in the City of Wilton Manors. Projections forecast show a further decline of 8 percent through the 2014 period.

***In 2009, the city had a low (six percent) vacancy rate and a large population (40 percent) who were renters.***

There were 5,615 housing units in 2009 of which the majority (94 percent) were occupied housing units. Of the occupied units, 40 percent were renter occupied. Approximately six percent of the city's housing units were vacant.

***The city has a majority White population and is projected to remain the same through 2014.***

In 2009, 76 percent of the population was White; the majority (66 percent) considered themselves White Non-Hispanic. Approximately, 14 percent of the population was Black and only 12 percent of the city's population considered itself Hispanic. Projections through 2013 indicate that the White population will constitute 73 percent of the city (of which 64 percent are White Non Hispanic), 16 percent will be Black and 13 percent of population will consider themselves Hispanic.

***The average age in Wilton Manors is higher than the county and is projected to continue to increase.***

The city's population median age was 41 in 2009, older than the county (38) and it is projected to increase to 42 by 2013.

***The median household income was slightly less than the county's median income.***

Median household income in 2009 was \$49,601.00 -less than the median income of Broward County (\$56,291).

***The majority of the population in 2009 spoke English, were native U.S. Citizens, and had a High School/ some College/ College Graduate Degree.***

The majority, 75 percent, of the City of Wilton Manors spoke English in 2009; 14 percent spoke other Indo-European Languages, and only 9 percent spoke Spanish.

Also, 77 percent of the city's population were native U.S. citizens while 15 percent were not a U.S. citizen, and only 8 percent were foreign-born naturalized US citizens.

Furthermore in 2009, 70 percent of the city's population had a high school, college or graduate degree or some college education.

## **Transportation Trends<sup>20</sup>**

The tables below illustrate projected transportation trends in the City of Wilton Manors:

<b>Percent of the employed population travel time to work, 2014</b>		
	<b>City</b>	<b>County</b>
Work at Home	5 %	4 %
Less than 15 minutes	28 %	16 %
15-29 Minutes	38 %	33 %
30-59 Minutes	24 %	38 %
60+ Minutes	6 %	8 %

**Average household transportation costs**

	City	County
2009	\$8,398.06	\$8,836.33
2014	\$10,278.50	\$10,880.30

**Average household transportation costs in public transportation**

	City	County
2009	\$472.73	\$555.02
2014	\$599.50	\$721.64

**Forecasted percent of vehicles per household, 2014**

	City	County
0 vehicles	6 %	7 %
1 vehicle	48 %	40 %
2 vehicles	33 %	40 %
3 vehicles	10 %	10 %
4+ vehicles	2 %	3 %

**Forecasted percent employed individuals means of transportation to work, 2014**

	City	County
Car, Truck, Van to Work	89 %	93 %
Public Transportation to Work	4 %	2 %
Other Transportation to Work	3 %	2 %
Work at Home	5 %	4 %

The information provided below briefly summarizes transportation trends, services, or projects in the City of Wilton Manors:

**Transit Oriented Corridor<sup>21</sup>**

Since 2005, the South Florida East Coast Corridor Transit Analysis Study – Phase 1 (2005-2007) and Phase 2 (2008-Present) has been underway. A “town center” type station has been tentatively assigned to City of Wilton Manors in the 5-Points area along the FEC right-of-way. It was brought to the City’s attention that in order to secure a station it would have to make changes to the land use and zoning code to allow for greater density and mixed uses to have sufficient ridership capture.

County Commission unanimously approved a Transportation Overlay Corridor along the stretch of Dixie Highway in Wilton Manors. The city is trying to position themselves to take advantage of future mass transit on the FEC rail. Any multi-family housing and/or mixed-use re-development that may result from this important zoning change will be

built adjacent to the FEC railroad tracks so as to protect the integrity of the adjoining single-family neighborhoods. The proposed amendment approved establishing a "Transit Oriented Corridor" (TOC) in the city of Wilton Manors, as part of the 2010 amendments to the Broward County Comprehensive.<sup>22</sup> The TOC will be comprised of approximately 114 acres generally located between Northeast 11 Avenue and Northeast 15/16 Avenue, and between the South Fork of Middle River and the North Fork of Middle River.<sup>23</sup> The TOC would allow all the existing land use categories except they can be all mixed together. This land use amendment needs the approval of the City, the County, and the State, to be rezoned to a new TOC zoning category.

### **Wilton Drive Task Force**

Upon the mayor's request, the City's Commission is creating a task force to study the feasibility of narrowing Wilton Drive from four lanes to two lanes in order to increase parking and enhance pedestrian safety.<sup>24</sup> Pedestrian safety has been an issue for Wilton drive; last year there were 41 accidents, including one pedestrian fatality.<sup>25</sup> The proposed project from the Wilton Manors Main Street is<sup>26</sup>:

- Phase I (\$164,000): Wilton Drive will be restriped to narrow it and provide diagonal parking spaces with meters in front of businesses. That will be a trial run before the city takes over the drive from the Florida Department of Transportation.
- Phase II (\$4 million; partly funded by revenue from the new parking meters): Redoing drainage and gutters for wider sidewalks, creating a median and enhancing landscaping.
- Phase III: Beautify the landscaping, and create more crosswalks.

### **The Green Hopper: a free electric shuttle**

The Green Hopper is a private initiative that provides free service through Wilton Manor on its 5-passenger 100 percent electric vehicle. More information is available here:

<http://thegreenhopper.com/>

### **Traffic Calming**

To develop solutions to traffic-related problems in Wilton Manors, the city assembled the Traffic Management Team. When a problem area is identified, team members conduct a traffic management study, researching the area's street layout, traffic patterns, existing traffic control devices, school bus and mass transit stops, history of accidents, traffic violations, and other factors that may affect a proposed solution. This information is then reviewed by the team and one or more traffic management solutions may be proposed. Potential solutions, if any, are then presented to the neighborhood for consideration. A manual was produced in 2006 that contains information on how to request a traffic management study neighborhood.

### **Senior Transportation Program**

The Wilton Manors Leisure Services Department offers transportation to and from doctor's appointments within a five-mile radius on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and

Friday mornings and on Tuesday and Friday afternoons. Transportation is also available on Wednesdays to and from Publix Supermarket for grocery shopping. There is a \$1.00 round trip fee for all transportation services. To be eligible you must be a resident of Wilton Manors, over the age of 60 and have no other means of transportation. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call (954) 390-2130.

## Special Events

The City of Wilton Manors regularly updates the calendar of events. For more detailed information regarding any of the city events, please visit:

[http://www.wiltonmanors.com/index.asp?Type=B\\_EV&SEC={3EAA335F-57EE-47E9-80D5-98F135CE26AB}](http://www.wiltonmanors.com/index.asp?Type=B_EV&SEC={3EAA335F-57EE-47E9-80D5-98F135CE26AB})

Below is a sample of the reoccurring special events held in the City of Wilton Manors:

**Stonewall Street Festival and Parade-** is an annual summer Gay Pride event that draws an estimated 25,000 people for the combined events. For more information regarding exhibition booths please visit [www.pgfl.net/](http://www.pgfl.net/)

**Taste of the Island-** is an evening of food that features more than 50 restaurants and drinking establishments. The event is held at the Richardson Historic Park and Nature Preserve (1327 Wilton Drive) during the month of October. For more information please visit: <http://www.tasteoftheisland.org/>

**Taste of Oakland Park and Wilton Manors-** the Oakland Park and Wilton Manors Chamber of Commerce hosts the annual TASTE Food and Wine Festival at El Palacio Hotel (4900 Powerline Road) during the month of October. For more information please visit: <http://tasteopwm.com/>

**Island City Art Walk-** official participants include galleries, stores, cafes, boutiques, and restaurants. The walk is held on the 3rd Friday of each month, 7:00 – 10:00 p.m., November through April, along Wilton Drive, in the Wilton Manors Art and Entertainment District. For more information please visit: [www.islandcityartwalk.com/](http://www.islandcityartwalk.com/)

## Business Landscape

The City's major employers are: Marrinson Group Retirement Home, Kids in Distress, and Publix Supermarkets.<sup>27</sup> The majority of the City's employment in 2009 was in the Educational, Health, and Social Services (15 percent) and Professional, Scientific, Management (13 percent). In 2009 the City had 10 percent of unemployment.

The following lists a few of the recent developments in Wilton Manor's business landscape:

### **Wilton Manor's main street enhancements<sup>28</sup>**

The city's ambitious plan to create a more pedestrian-friendly downtown would cost \$4.4 million; the city is looking for funding through federal, state and county matching grants, as well as private donations. The project, centered on Wilton Drive, the 1.1-mile downtown hub, will narrow the street from four to two lanes, and address parking, safety and beautification issues.

### **New Clinic for Kids in Distress' main campus<sup>29</sup>**

A new Pediatric Dental and Optometry Clinic will be developed at the Kids in Distress' main campus in Wilton Manors. It is envisioned that the clinic will service more than 5,000 children and families annually. Kids In Distress is one of South Florida's leading not-for-profit agencies advocating for and providing services to children and families dealing with abuse and neglect. The \$700,000 project, which encompasses 9,000 square feet, will include a 12-chair dental clinic and eight fully equipped optometry exam rooms, special testing rooms, an optical dispensary and optical laboratory. As a joint venture with Nova Southeastern University (NSU) College of Dental Medicine and the College of Optometry, Nova's third and fourth year dental and optometry students and residents will be providing care at the clinics.

### **Bid to build a new resort<sup>30</sup>**

A developer attempted to turn the city's only trailer park in a gay-friendly luxury hotel. The plan is to build an \$80 million, 700,000-square-foot resort with a hotel, fitness center, spa, nightclub, restaurants, art gallery, banquet center and a movie theater. Instead, the resort bought a \$3.7 million 4 acres the site located at the First Church of Religious Science (1550 NE 26th St.)

### **Local chamber of commerce joined the larger regional council<sup>31</sup>**

Last year, the Oakland Park/Wilton Manors Chamber of Commerce merged with the Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber. As is with the case with many local chambers of commerce, it was having trouble operating independently.

## **Related Links**

City of Wilton Manors

<http://www.wiltonmanors.com/>

Wilton Manors Main Street

<http://www.wiltonmanorsmainstreet.org/>

Wilton Manors Business Association

<http://www.wiltonmanorsbusinessassociation.com/>

City of Wilton Manors Comprehensive Report

<http://www.wiltonmanors.com/vertical/Sites/{2C239055-61E9-4560-8E7D-93852EF4306C}/uploads/{CAABD8FA-D6E5-4ABE-A86F-4C02BD918D01}.PDF>

## City of Wilton Manors Traffic Calming Management Manual

<http://www.wiltonmanors.com/vertical/Sites/{2C239055-61E9-4560-8E7D-93852EF4306C}/uploads/{F1391FC9-0564-45D1-893A-98B3AE3793B9}.PDF>

## Wilton Manor Parks System Master Plan

<http://www.wiltonmanors.govoffice2.com/vertical/Sites/{2C239055-61E9-4560-8E7D-93852EF4306C}/uploads/{0F39835A-37D9-4AD7-B1B1-D60BBB8876E2}.PDF>

## Sources

<sup>1</sup> City of Wilton Manors. “About Wilton Manors” [www.wiltonmanors.com](http://www.wiltonmanors.com)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> “Recalling Wilton Manors History.” Kuta, Paul. May 2007.

[http://www.wiltonmanorshistoricalsociety.org/pdfs/Recalling\\_History\\_May\\_2007.pdf](http://www.wiltonmanorshistoricalsociety.org/pdfs/Recalling_History_May_2007.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> City of Wilton Manors. “About Wilton Manors” [www.wiltonmanors.com](http://www.wiltonmanors.com)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Wilton Manors East Neighborhood Association. [http://www.wiltonmanors-ena.org/city\\_event\\_calendar.html](http://www.wiltonmanors-ena.org/city_event_calendar.html)

<sup>10</sup> Broward Alliance. “Wilton Manors Elementary School Wins 2008 National School Of Character Award” October, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> City of Wilton Manors. “About Wilton Manors” [www.wiltonmanors.com](http://www.wiltonmanors.com)

<sup>12</sup> South Florida Business Journal. “Wilton Manors island of change.” May 5, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> South Florida Business Journal. “Is an urban village the future of Wilton Manors?” August 27, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> South Florida Business Journal. “Wilton Manors island of change.” May 5, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> South Florida Business Journal. “Wilton Station arrives at the wrong time in the real estate sales market.” October 19, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> South Florida Business Journal. “Niche residential projects under way as economy wobbles.” July 23, 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> All data cited in this section are from Simply Maps unless otherwise indicated. Note, there may slight round-off errors.

<sup>19</sup> According to the 2009 US Census Bureau Population Estimate, the City of Wilton Manor’s population was 12,868.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all information from this section came from City of Wilton Manors Town Crier. July-August 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Miami-Dade County Commission Regular Meeting, May 25, 2010.

[http://205.166.161.204/agenda\\_publish.cfm?mt=ALL&get\\_month=5&get\\_year=2010&dsp=agm&ag=183&seq=5513&rev=0&ln=30304#ReturnTo30304](http://205.166.161.204/agenda_publish.cfm?mt=ALL&get_month=5&get_year=2010&dsp=agm&ag=183&seq=5513&rev=0&ln=30304#ReturnTo30304)

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Sun Sentinel. “Wilton Manor seeks funding options for overhauling Wilton Drive.” July 7, 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Broward Alliance. “Wilton Manors.” [www.browardalliance.org](http://www.browardalliance.org)

<sup>28</sup> Sun Sentinel. “Wilton Manor seeks funding options for overhauling Wilton Drive.” July 7, 2010

<sup>29</sup> Broward Alliance. “Stiles to Build New Clinic for ‘Kids in Distress.’” July 15, 2010

<sup>30</sup> Sun Sentinel. “Company ends bid to turn Wilton Manors trailer park into gay resort.” July 18, 2010

<sup>31</sup> South Florida Business Journal. “Local chambers of commerce under pressure, in foreclosure.” January 15, 2010.