Mobile Home Parks under Pressure of Redevelopment: A Participatory Survey Research Project

by

South Florida Jobs with Justice

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As urban leaders seek to revitalize their inner city neighborhoods by displacing poor people and replacing them with wealthier residents, they have put a price tag on urban spaces that, after years of devaluation and neglect, do not capture their true and full value: the very real communities formed in these urban spaces. State and county laws which regulate land use capture only a tiny part of the overall value of Mobile Home Park (MHP) communities—their relatively low economic price tag. As one South Florida reporter put it, MHP's have become the "low-hanging fruit for developers" in the post-boom housing market.

Between February 2009 and February 2010, the South Florida chapter of Jobs with Justice (SFJwJ)¹ and FIU's Research Institute on Social and Economic Policy (RISEP)² collaborated on a participatory action research project to document the problems as well as the community vitality that exists in mobile home parks in Miami-Dade County. The focus of this research was the mobile home parks facing the threat of redevelopment and displacement. As explained in greater depth in the appendix to this report, MHP resident-leaders were centrally involved in the design and implementation of this project. Through focus groups with mobile home park residents and 250 surveys collected from mobile home residents across six parks, this research demonstrates what is at stake for Miami-Dade mobile home communities facing displacement by development. The consequences for these county residences goes beyond the monetary cost and inconvenience of changing housing. In addition to documenting the problems and hardships faced by residents in mobile home parks, this research demonstrates the value and importance of community ties and the implications of displacement for residents and their communities.

Specifically, we find that half of mobile home—they would likely end up homeless.

The following report organizes the findings of this study into four sections: Overview of Mobile Home Parks and Study Sample, Living Conditions in Mobile Home Parks, Mobile Home Community Relations, and the Implications of Residential Displacement.

Overview of Mobile Home Parks and Study Sample

In Miami-Dade County there are 90 remaining mobile home parks with 14,954 registered mobile home units. Although the U.S. Census estimates 33,856³ persons living in mobile homes in Miami-Dade County, census counts of mobile homes are known to be inaccurate due to a variety of problems related to the fact that, unlike other types of housing, building permit data is not used to count mobile homes. Based on years of experience organizing in and assisting residents in Miami-Dade County mobile home parks, South Florida Jobs with Justice estimates the total residency across these parks to be 59,819 persons.

¹ www.sfjwj.org

² www.risep-fiu.org

³ American Community Survey 2006-2008, Miami-Dade County, Population in Housing Units by Units in Structure.

⁴ For more on this see, Smith, Stanley K., and Scott Cody. 2004. An evaluation of population estimates in Florida. *Population Research and Policy Review* 23 (1-24).

⁵ This is based on SFJwJ's estimate that the average household size in MHP's is closer to 2.2, which is higher than U.S. Census estimates for recent years.

These discrepancies pose problems for affordable housing advocates as well as local policy-makers in determining the extent of the affordable housing stock represented by mobile homes. While this study does not address this question directly, it sheds needed light on the conditions of and populations within some of the most affordable mobile home parks slated for redevelopment into more expensive housing.

Mobile Home Parks vary by size, housing and other costs, and the socio-economic status of their occupants. Our sample includes residents from the following six parks: Dixie Mobile Court, Lil' Abner, Palm Lake, River Park, Royal Duke and Trinidad and Sunnyland. With the exceptions of Lil' Abner which is located in western Miami-Dade County near the city of Sweetwater and Dixie Court located in the north-east corner of the county near Aventura, the mobile home parks surveyed are located along the northern and north-eastern edges of the City of Miami within low-income neighborhoods. Table 1 below reports the number of units in these mobile home parks as well as the average size of Miami-Dade County's 90 mobile home parks. Most of the parks we surveyed have slightly fewer units than is typical of parks throughout the county. Only Lil' Abner has substantially more units than the average of Miami-Dade County MHP's; Trinidad and Sunnyland is slightly larger and Dixie Mobile Court is relatively small.

Table 2 below reports the number of surveys collected in each park and the percent of surveys collected out of the total number of units in each park (see Table 1). In total we conducted 252 surveys. If we exclude the five surveys collected in Royal Duke Park, we surveyed 36.8% of the total population of the remaining five parks.

Table 1. Number of Units in Mobile Home Parks

Mobile Home Park Name	Units
Dixie Mobile Court	49
Lil' Abner	908
Palm Lake	124
River Park	110
Royal Duke	138
Trinidad & Sunnyland	278
Average of Miami-Dade MHP's ¹	178

¹ Source: Miami-Dade County MHP Directory

Table 2. Surveys Collected as a Percent of Total Park Units

Mobile Home	Surveys	Percent of
Park Name	Collected	Park Units
Dixie Mobile	49	1000/
Court	49	100%
Lil' Abner	82	9%
Palm Lake	27	22%
River Park	38	35%
Royal Duke	5	4%
Trinidad &	51	18%
Sunnyland	31	10%
Total	252	

The vast majority of survey respondents—219 or 88%—are homeowners and only 30 (12%) are renters. The survey sample is thus representative of the most stable and established mobile home park residents. The greatest difference between owner and renter respondents across all of

 $^{^6}$ According to the U.S. Census, about 70% of Miami-Dade County's mobile homes are owner-occupied while 30% are renter-occupied.

the parks surveyed is that homeowners tend to be older. The average age of homeowners is about 57 while the average age of renters is about 45 (Table 3 below).

Table 3. Average Age of Residents by Housing Tenure

Tenure	Average Age	Responses
Own	57	177
Rent	45	27
Total	55	204

The average monthly personal income of survey respondents is \$818 (Table 4 below). The steady over 12 months, this translates into an annual income of about \$9,186. Renters reported monthly personal incomes that are comparable to mobile home owners. We also asked respondents to estimate the combined incomes of all members of the household. The average monthly household income is \$974 (Table 5 below), which translates into an annual income of \$11,692. Again, renters' monthly household incomes are comparable to mobile home owners.

Table 4. Average *Personal* Monthly Income by Housing Tenure

Tenure	Average Monthly Household Income	Responses
Own	\$824	156
Rent	\$783	29
Total	\$818	185
Annual Income	<u>X 12</u> \$9,186	185

Table 5. Average *Household* Monthly Income by Housing Tenure

Tenure	Average Monthly Household Income	Responses
Own	\$979	132
Rent	\$949	23
Total	\$974	155
Annual Income	<u>X 12</u> \$11,692	155

Household incomes vary according to the number of household members earning income and contributing to the household's costs (see Table 6 below). The average monthly income of households with a single earner is \$749. Dual-earner households, with an average monthly income of \$1,241, are higher than the average of household incomes with three earners (\$1,068) as well as those with four or more earners (\$1,167). As Table 6 shows, in general multi-earner households have considerably higher incomes than those where the household's costs are supported by only one person.

⁷ The relatively large difference between average and median incomes is explained by relatively higher income in some parks (such as Lil' Abner and Dixie Mobile Court) compared to others, skewing the average upwards.

Table 6. Average Monthly Household Income by Number of Contributing Household Members

Contributing Household Members	Average Monthly Household Income	Responses
1	\$749	80
2	\$1,241	56
3	\$1,068	10
4-6	\$1,167	6
Total	\$968	152

Living Conditions in the Mobile Home Parks

Housing Costs

Renters pay monthly rent to their landlords, which are the mobile home owners. Mobile home owners pay rent for the lot on which their mobile home rests to the park owner. Depending on the park, the "lot rent" collected paid by homeowners is typically intended to cover the costs of park maintenance, such as cutting the grass, bushes or trees, garbage pick-up, sewer and plumbing maintenance and sometimes water use as well. Renters typically pay a fixed amount of rent to the mobile home owner but do not directly pay for maintenance and garbage services provided by the mobile home park owner (unless the mobile home owner has authorized them to send payments directly to the park managers). Nevertheless, what renters pay to their mobile home owner landlords is presumably calculated to cover the owners' "lot rent" plus a little extra to generate some net income. 8

It appears that residents who rent their mobile home in some parks are paying more monthly rent, on average, than the "lot rent" paid by homeowners. Table 8 below reports the average monthly rent for owners and renters across the different mobile home parks surveyed. Looking first at the "total" row, the average monthly rent of renters (\$441) is slightly higher than the average "lot rent" of homeowners (\$433). Upon closer inspection it is evident that this is because renters surveyed in two parks, Lil' Abner and Trinidad and Sunnyland, are paying more in rent, on average, than homeowners. In all other parks being a renter is more affordable; renters pay much less in monthly rent than what homeowners pay to rent their lot. ⁹ In spite of these

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⁸ The only scenario in which this is not the case is if the renter surveyed is renting a room or efficiency apartment attached to the mobile home which is also occupied by its' owner. In this case, owner-landlords may only charge the renter a portion of the overall household's costs.

⁹ The higher rents paid by renters in these two parks are not explained by higher incomes (ability-to-pay) among renters since in both parks homeowners reported substantially higher incomes than renters. The average monthly household income among Trinidad and Sunnyland homeowners, for example, was about twice as much as renters.

differences among parks, overall rent levels make mobile homes the most affordable housing option in Miami-Dade County, where 2009 "fair market rents" for single-room occupancy units (SRO's) and zero bedroom (studio) apartments are \$631 and \$842, respectively.

Table 8. Average Monthly Rent by Housing Tenure by Mobile Home Park

Mobile Home	Homeowners		Renters	
Park Name	Avg. Rent	#	Avg. Rent	#
Dixie Mobile Court	\$300	42	\$250	2
Lil' Abner	\$495	70	\$535	7
Palm Lake	\$491	25	\$300	1
River Park	\$471	25	\$377	10
Royal Duke	\$441	5		
Trinidad and Sunnyland	\$403	40	\$496	9
Total	\$433	207	\$441	29

In addition to paying the rent, the average of the monthly electricity costs reported among homeowners was \$125 while the average monthly electricity costs for renters is \$61 (the overall average electricity cost is \$116).

As noted above, compared to single-earner households, multi-earner households have considerably higher incomes and therefore higher capacity to cover the housing expenses. Owner-occupied mobile homes tend to have a greater number of household members contributing to housing costs, compared to renters (see Table 9 below). Across all six parks a large majority of renters (66%) live alone or are the sole support of the household (single-earner households), whereas among homeowners only 42% were single-earner households, 43% were dual-earner, 9% were triple-earner households and the remaining 6% of owned homes had four or five members contributing to the household's costs.

Table 9. Number of Household Members Contributing to Housing Costs by Housing Tenure

Number of	Owners		Ren	ters	To	tal
Contributors	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
One	83	42%	19	66%	102	45%
Two	85	43%	7	24%	92	41%
Three	18	9%	1	3%	19	8%
Four	8	4%	1	3%	9	4%
Five	3	2%	-	-	3	1%
Six	-	1	1	3%	1	0%
Total	197		29		226	

¹⁰ Determined by the federal government, Fair Market Rents are based on the 50th percentile (median) of rents across Miami-Dade County reported through the American Housing Survey.

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The average price paid for mobile homes by their owners is \$13,257 (Table 10 below). We also asked respondents what year they purchased their home. About three-quarters of respondents bought their home at some point since 1995. While the price of a mobile home among survey respondents has increased only slightly since 1995 and had declined substantially before that, the steady number of housing purchases over the years suggests there continues to be demand for this form of affordable housing.

Table 10. Average Home Purchase Price by Year Home Purchased

Year Purchased	Average Price	Homeowner Responses	Percent	
2005-2009	\$14,170	43	23%	
2000-2004	\$12,398	49	26%	75%
1995-1999	\$11,490	51	27%	
1990-1994	\$14,206	16	8%	
1980-1989	\$16,375	28	15%	
1970-1979	\$12,500	3	2%	
1969 or before	\$6,000	1	1%	
Total	\$13,257	191		

Physical Conditions

When asked for their general opinion on the living conditions in their mobile home park on a scale of 1 to 3 (Table 11 below), where 1 is bad, 2 is regular and 3 is good, 57 residents or almost one-quarter (23%) rated their park as "bad," 102 residents (42%) rated their park as "regular", and 82 residents (34%) rated their park's conditions as "good". These general opinions varied by park (see Table 12 below), such that the majority of residents reporting "bad" conditions lived in Palm Lake, River Park or Trinidad and Sunnyland, whereas most of the "good" ratings came from residents in Dixie Court and Lil' Abner.

Table 11. Perception of General Living Conditions in the Parks

Condition	Responses	Percent
Good	82	34%
Regular	102	42%
Bad	57	23%
Total	241	

Table 12. Perception of Living Conditions by Park Name

Park Name	Bad	Regular	Good	Total
Dixie Mobile Court	2	11	34	47
Lil' Abner	2	41	37	80
Palm Lake	10	14	3	27
River Park	17	17	2	36
Royal Duke	4	1	0	5
Trinidad and Sunnyland	22	18	6	46
Total	57	102	82	241

We also asked residents about their perception of the changes in park conditions in the last five years. The results of residents' views of changes in conditions are presented in relation to their rating of general park conditions in Table 13 below. The "Total" and "Percent" columns indicate that one-third of residents (33%) perceive a decline in park conditions during the past five years. About half (50%) of residents perceive that conditions have stayed the same and only 17% feel that their park's conditions have improved. Table 13 also indicates a correlation between the rating of park conditions and residents views of changes in conditions over time. The parks which were rated to be in "good" condition were also typically the ones rated as having improved or stayed the same over time, whereas parks rated to be in "bad" condition were also the most frequently perceived as becoming worse over time.

Table 13. Perception of Change in Living Conditions in Last Five Years, by General Conditions Rating

Change	Gene	General Conditions			Damagnet
Change	Bad	Regular	Good	Total	Percent
Worse	50	25	3	78	33%
The same	6	64	47	117	50%
Improved	1	12	28	41	17%
Total	57	101	78	236	

Mobile home parks are owned by individuals who typically hire managers or management companies to take care of the day-to-day business of maintaining the park and collecting "lot rents" from mobile home owners. Some mobile home park owners pay for all of the water use in the park (instead of installing water meters on individual mobile home lots and leaving mobile home owners to pay it themselves) and include the cost of water use in the "lot rent" of mobile home owners. In such parks, each mobile home owner pays an equal share of the overall water use in the park. Mobile home owners are required by law to maintain their lots up to specific standards, although such standards are not always effectively communicated to residents or consistently applied. However, it is the park owners (not individual mobile home owners) who

are responsible for maintaining park infrastructure, such as the park's sewer system, streets, and other common spaces.

Despite the seemingly steady market for mobile home sales among these parks (see Table 9), there appears to be insufficient will and/or funds among mobile home park owners for adequately maintaining the physical condition of the parks. Tables 14 through 17 (below) report resident's responses when asked about garbage pick-up, and street and sewer maintenance. Eighty two residents reported that their garbage had not been picked up at some point since living in the park (Table 8), comprising one-third (33%) of the total survey respondents. Of those who at some point lacked garbage services, 38% reported that it happened between twice but less than 12 times per year, and almost half (48%) reported lacking garbage pick-up on a monthly basis (or more frequently). Residents also reported widespread problems with street and sewer maintenance. When asked about unrepaired holes in the streets, 109 residents (44%) reported problems with the streets in their park (Table 15).

Table 14. Residents Lacking Garbage Pick-Up

No Garbage Pick-Up	Responses	Percent
Just Once	12	15%
Two or More Times	31	38%
Monthly or More	39	48%
Total	82	

Table 15. Unrepaired Holes in The Streets

	Responses	Percent
No	139	56%
Yes	109	44%
Total	248	

In addition, 127 residents or over 51% of residents reported that the streets in their park flood when it rains (Table 16 below). Of the 127 residents reporting flooding, 61 or 48% said that such flooding typically contains wastewater (Table 17 below), that is, sewage that seeps to the surface (probably because of backed-up or broken plumbing under the streets).

Table 16. Streets Flood when it Rains

	Responses	Percent
No	121	49%
Yes	127	51%
Total	248	100

Table 17. Wastewater When it Floods

	Responses	Percent
No	64	51%
Yes	61	48%
Don't know	1	0.8%
Total	127	100

Many residents noted that security was a major problem in their park. Only one of the six parks surveyed employed a private security guard, and the guard works only part-time, overnight. In another park residents relied on steady Metro-police patrols to provide needed security. Over half (56%) of the survey respondents felt that security in their park was not adequate (Table 18 below), citing problems such as gang and domestic violence, drug sales and drug use, prostitution, theft and robbery, stray animals, speeding automobiles, squatting in mobile homes, and a general lack of control over who comes in and out of the parks. Several residents also

disliked the fact that some of their neighbors used their mobile home lot to repair automobiles and machinery, while many residents also claimed their ability to do this was a key benefit of living in mobile home parks.

Table 18. Feel Security Is Adequate?

	Responses	Percent
No	125	56%
Yes	95	43%
Total	223	

Mobile Home Park Community Relations

Residents were also asked about the extent and quality of community relations in their mobile home park, including relations with other residents as well as with park managers and owners.

Resident Relations with Park Owners and Managers

Despite the fact that Florida statutes 723 specifically requires that meeting spaces be made available for mobile home park homeowners associations (HOA's) to conduct their park-related business, none of the parks we surveyed had a designated community center or meeting room for residents. Yet, as Table 19 below shows, about 22% of residents reported using some public space in or near the parks to meet with the residents to discuss issues and problems in their park community (75% said they had no such space to meet). When asked for details about where they were meeting with their neighbors, the most common responses included meeting in the streets or front patios (not public space) in front of homes, meeting at a nearby city park in the case of one park, meeting at a small playground in the case of another park, and a few residents reported meeting or trying to meet in front of or inside the offices of their park manager. Despite the lack of an official meeting space for residents, these findings suggest that a substantial portion of residents have taken it upon themselves to create time and space for discussing important park issues with their neighbors.

Table 19. Public Space Used for Meeting with Neighbors

	Responses	Percent
No	174	75%
Yes	52	22%
Total	232	
Don't Know	5	2%

Residents were asked specifically about the extent and nature of their interactions with the park manager. Of the 202 people (80% of respondents) who said they had been contacted (in person or by mail) by the park management (Table 20 below), the most common reasons were to be informed of a rent increase (183 responses or 91% of responses), to warn residents to stop doing something (e.g., auto repair) or to remove an illegal structure (90 responses or 45% of responses), and to inform residents of a change in services, typically a reduction in services (90 responses or 45% of responses).

Table 20. Reasons for Receiving Contact (in person or by mail) from Park Management

Reason for Manager Contact	Responses	Percent
because of Rent Increase	183	91%
to warn me to stop doing something or remove something	90	45%
because of a change in services	90	45%
Total	202	

Many residents have reached out to their park managers to get help with specific problems, such as fixing holes in the streets, cutting the grass in common spaces, helping to remove stray animals which pose a threat to young children, to discuss recent rent increases, among other problems. Of the 127 residents who contacted their managers for help, only 24 or 19% feel they were helped (Table 21 below). The rest (103 responses) report not receiving the assistance they needed or being told there was nothing that could be done.

Table 21. Received Assistance from Park Manager Following Report of a Problem

Of the 127 Respondents who attempted to contact				
their manager about a problem				
Helped?	Helped? Responses Percent			
No	103 81%			
Yes	24 19%			
Total 127 100				

Many residents, including those who have never attempted to contact or have never been contacted by their park manager, reported being informed by the park manager that there are not enough funds for making specific, needed repairs, or that budget deficits are causing the owner to cutback on park services, such as garbage pick-up or cutting the grass. These reasons are given at the same time as residents seem to be experiencing dramatic rent increases asserted by park owners to plug these budget deficits. As Table 22 below shows, the average rent increase over the previous 12 months reported by residents was \$60. Average rent increases vary greatly across the parks. The largest rent increases appear to be occurring in the parks that were also perceived by residents to be in the worst condition. Most residents' believe that this is because in these

poor-condition-parks, nonpayment of rent by some residents is causing park owners and managers to raise rents dramatically on all tenants.

Rent increases in some parks seem to be greater than the average of rent increases among the most affordable apartments in Miami-Dade County. Focusing on the annual increase in "fair market rents" for "zero bedroom" (studio) apartments, which are the most comparable in terms of size and cost to mobile homes, Table 23 shows that the county-wide fair market rent increased only \$12 between 2007 and 2008, \$89 between 2008 and 2009, and \$36 from 2009 to 2010. These increases are somewhat comparable to the average increases reported for Mobile Home Park rent increases shown in Table 22, suggesting that the affordability of mobile homes may be eroding.

Table 22. Average Annual Rent Increase

	Average Rent
Park Name	Increase in
	Last 12 months
Dixie Mobile Court	\$25
Lil' Abner	\$22
Palm Lake	\$40
River Park	\$77
Royal Duke	\$140
Trinidad and Sunnyland	\$136
Total	\$60

Table 23. Annual Increases in Miami-Dade County Fair Market Rents

Average Rent Increase		
(among affordable* apartments)		
2009-2010 \$36		
2008-2009 \$89		
2007-2008 \$12		

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

* U.S. HUD Fair Market Rents, 2007-2010. Zero bedroom fair market rents are used here because they are the closest to typical rents in mobile home parks

Community Relations between Residents

Residents were asked about whether they felt that park neighbors supported or helped each other. Presented below in Table 24, only 15% of residents felt there was no support or help from their neighbors, while a combined 85% of residents perceived at least some support or help. Close to one-third of respondents felt they were supported "a lot" by their neighbors.

Table 24. Feel Support or Help from Neighbors

Support	Responses	Percent	
Not at all	36	15%	
A little	140	57%	85%
A lot	69	28%	8370
Total	245		

To gain a better sense of the kind of support that exists among park residents, respondents were asked specifically whether they ever received from or provided others within the park with

different kinds of services. Some of the services we asked about and the response rates offered by residents are shown in Table 25 below. The most frequently cited services shared (provided or received) among park residents was carpentry and auto-mechanic services, followed by electrician services, lawn-cutting services, produce and/or food sales, beauty salon-type services (hair care, manicure, pedicure), child care services, nursing/ health care services and computer-related services (including internet connections). It appears that residents rely on each other for key services instead of obtaining them from outside of the park.

Residents were also asked about the frequency with which they have personally received services from neighbors within their park (see Table 26 above). Although 52% claimed to have never used services from their neighbors, 19% reported obtaining services within the park at least once before; over one-fifth of respondents have used in-park services on a monthly basis and the remaining 8% rely on services from their neighbors every week. A combined total of 48% of respondents rely on other park residents for some of the key services listed in Table 25 above.

Table 25. Services Used or Provided Between Neighbors

Detween i telginous			
Responses	Percent		
133	54%		
131	53%		
111	45%		
104	43%		
101	41%		
79	32%		
77	31%		
74	30%		
57	23%		
	Responses 133 131 111 104 101 79 77 74		

Table 26. Frequency of Use of In-Park Services by Respondents

Frequency	Responses	Percent	
Never	124	52%	
Once	45	19%	
Every Month	50	21%	48%
Every Week	20	8%	
Total	239	100	

Although some residents indicated that such services are sometimes provided or obtained for free, or traded for other services, the vast majority of respondents using in-park services claimed to have paid for them. When asked whether they believe obtaining such services inside the park is cheaper than seeking them outside of the park (Table 27 below), well over two-thirds reported that they were, suggesting that mobile home parks offer additional ways of saving money for low-income residents beyond the relatively low cost of housing.

Table 27. Believe In-Park Services Are Cheaper than Outside-Park Services

	Responses	Percent
No	57	30%
Yes	132	70%
Total	189	100

The Implications of Mobile Home Park Displacement

When asked about their potential relocation options if their mobile home park were to close and residents had to leave, the most common response given was that there are no relocation options and they would likely end up homeless or living in their car (50% of responses). The second most common response was to move to another mobile home park that is comparably affordable (35% of responses). The third most common response was to move to a private sector apartment (21% of responses), followed by the option of moving in with family (13% of responses) and the option to leave the Miami area altogether (5% of responses). These findings, shown below in Table 28, suggest that the redevelopment of mobile home parks and displacement of residents would lead to homelessness for many residents, particularly if sufficient relocation assistance and alternative affordable housing is not provided.

Table 28. Relocation Options if Park Closes

Relocation Options	Responses	Percent
I have no option; will end up homeless	108	50%
To Another Mobile Home Park	74	35%
To a Private Sector Apt. (not MHP)	48	21%
Move with Family	28	13%
I have to leave Miami	11	5%

Conclusion

This research demonstrates the special vulnerability of mobile home park (MHP) residents to residential displacement if their parks are sold and redeveloped. Mobile home residents, whether home owners or renters, tend to have very low incomes and rely on each other (neighbors within the park) to save money to get by. MHP residents rely most on the unique affordability of mobile homes within Miami-Dade County. Despite rapidly rising rents in some parks under pressure of redevelopment, the average monthly costs associated with living in a mobile home are much lower than any other form of private sector housing. Average monthly rents for mobile homes are about \$433 while the average monthly household income of residents is \$974 (or \$11,692 annually). Half of the residents surveyed reported that if they had to leave their mobile home they would have no viable alternative and would likely end up homeless.

The context of impending redevelopment has a detrimental effect on the quality of mobile home park life for residents. One-third of residents report that the conditions in their park worsened in the last five years. For example, one-third report that their garbage is not always picked up and 16% of residents report lacking garbage pick-up on a monthly basis. Over half of residents report flooding in their streets when it rains and almost one-quarter (24%) report that wastewater is part of the rain-related flooding. While security is a major problem for most residents, little to nothing is done to address security issues except for calling the police.

While residents seem to relate to each other in mostly positive ways (85% feel that neighbors support each other), sharing and helping each other and getting together to discuss park problems, relations with park managers and park owners appear to be tense and deteriorated. Park owners' and managers' communication with residents is largely limited to asserting rent increases, issuing warnings for code violations, or to inform of service reductions and changes. In a few cases angry confrontations between park managers and residents have erupted, revealing not only harsh and authoritarian park management practices and differential treatment of some residents compared to others, but also racial and ethnic discrimination against certain residents.

In the meantime, rent increases over the last 12 months in the mobile home parks surveyed are comparable (if not higher) than rent increases among other low cost apartments throughout the county, suggesting that the unique affordability of mobile homes is eroding and one of the most affordable types of housing in South Florida is steadily disappearing. Given the testimony of half of survey respondents that closure of their mobile home park would result in them becoming homeless, it appears that failing to appropriately regulate the redevelopment of mobile home parks would lead to a sudden crisis of homelessness for thousands of Miami-Dade County mobile home residents.

Appendix: Participatory Methodology

This project was designed using a participatory research design, meaning that residents and community leaders from the mobile home parks surveyed were centrally involved in both the design of the survey as well as its implementation. Sixty nine percent of the actual surveys were administered by the women leading the grassroots organization, Vecinos Unidos South Florida Mobile Home Council, and the remaining 31% were administered by research staff at the Research Institute on Social and Economic Policy.

The survey was designed through a focus group and series of workshops and meetings with the leaders of Vecinos Unidos and the Miami-Dade Mobile Home Council, as well as other residents of the mobile home parks included in this study. The first workshop was organized as a two-part meeting: the first part was designed as a focus group to elicit information from residents about their parks to inform the design of the survey instrument. Information about park conditions, the types, nature and value of social relationships within mobile home communities and the implications of residential displacement for residents was collected. The second part of the meeting was a hands-on workshop about the purpose of survey research generally and the purpose of this project specifically, about the role of research in activism and advocacy, and specific training on how to design and administer social science surveys. The focus group and workshop was audio and video recorded and participants' input was used to generate a draft survey questionnaire. Following the first workshop, several additional meetings were held with the leaders of Vecinos Unidos and the Mobile Home Council to continue editing the survey instrument and practicing (through role-play sessions) the administration of survey questions, including two "pilot" research sessions in which surveyors honed their skills by surveying friends and neighbors in their mobile home parks. During the data collection phase, the entire research team including RISEP, SFJwJ, Vecinos Unidos and Mobile Home Council members met on a bi-weekly basis to review progress and discuss issues with the ongoing survey.

The preliminary results of the survey research were presented by the lead RISEP Researcher to SFJwJ, Vecinos Unidos and Mobile Home Council members during their December, 2009 monthly meeting. Input from SFJwJ staff and grassroots organization leaders was used to shape the interpretation of the findings and subsequent meetings were used to decide on strategies for the application and dissemination of this research in SFJwJ's strategic campaign initiatives centered on affordable housing/mobile home park housing.