

# A Sample New Church Feasibility Study

*Sand Creek Village Site  
Kingwood, Texas*

Prepared by

Carol S. Childress  
Church Extension Research and Development Section  
Baptist General Convention of Texas

Used by Permission

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to assess the potential of a proposed new church in Kingwood to be located on property at the intersection of Kingwood Drive and Willow Terrace Drive in Sand Creek Village.

The study, along with accompanying planning model, can be used as a valuable tool in the planning process for the new church including the development of appropriate ministries and programs to meet the needs of the area population. In addition, the pastoral leadership profile section can serve as a resource in the selection of a pastor who is indigenous to the community.

Sources for the study include demographic data from National Decision Systems (updated as of December, 1987) and the Friendswood Development Company, school enrollment data from the Humble Independent School district, additional planning and development information from Friendswood Development Company, and church data from a telephone survey (May, 1988) and the 1987 Uniform Church Letter for existing Baptist churches in the area.

## **Community Profile**

Kingwood, located 22 miles northeast of downtown Houston off U.S. Highway 59, is one of the premier master-planned communities in the United States. Developed by the Friendswood Development Company and King Ranch, Inc., the 13,000 acre subdivision is organized around individual villages which are self-sustaining and provide the necessary community services. While single family homes are predominant, there is also multi-family housing in addition to retail and commercial trade areas.

According to Randy Creech, Marketing Manager for the Kingwood project, the estimated population of the entire subdivision as of March, 1988 was 34,942. Development is expected to continue into the next decade with a projected 1990 population of 40,316 and 63,857 in the year 2000. Friendswood Development Company averages selling between 550 and 600 lots a year for the construction of new houses in Kingwood.

While data is available for one and five mile radii, for purposes of this study, *the area under consideration will be defined as a three mile radius from the intersection of Kingwood Drive and Willow Terrace Drive in the Village of Sand Creek.*

*Population*

The population of the study area in 1980 was 9,483. The 1987 estimated population was 22,646 and the projected population for 1992 is 31,885.

An estimated 93.23% were Anglo, 1.42% Black, 3.33% Hispanic, 1.1% Asian, and .92% Other. According to enrollment records for schools in the Kingwood community, the student population is 97.6% Anglo, .8% Hispanic, .4% Black, and 1.2% Other, primarily Asian.

The 1987 estimated median age of the area was 28 and the average age was 29. The largest single segment was 35-44 (18.98%) followed closely by 45-54 (12.72%) reflecting the stability and maturity of the population. Children under the age of 14 accounted for 28.78% of the population.

The following are 1988-89 school enrollment projections obtained from the Humble ISD for schools in the area:

<b>School</b>	<b>1988-89 Projected Enrollment</b>
Deerwood Elementary	734
Greentree Elementary	694
Willow Creek Elementary	340
Creekwood Middle School	1,193

According to Friendswood marketing data, residents move to Kingwood from (in order): other states, primarily the Northeast and Midwest; other parts of Texas; and Houston.

### *Housing*

The dominant housing type in the study area is single family, accounting for 93% of the total housing stock. Another 5.06% is multi-family. A total of 89% of the housing stock is owner occupied.

Housing values in the individual Villages of Kingwood range from the upper \$50,000's to in excess of \$1 million. According to the Kingwood Marketing Manager, over one-half of all the houses sold in Kingwood exceed \$150,000 in price. Houses in Sand Creek Village, where the new church site is located, and the adjacent Kings Point Village, range in value from \$160,000-\$250,000. Other houses in Kings Point and the adjacent Fosters Mill Village range in price from \$240,000 to \$1,000,000.

The majority of remaining property in Kingwood available for future residential development lies to the immediate northeast and southeast of the new church site. Friendswood Development Company is projecting to sell 556 lots in the next 18-24 months and lots are not sold unless there is a contract for construction of a house.

According to Karen J. Collier, Public Information Officer for the Humble Independent School District, the school district has considered the area's growth in their long range planning and a new elementary school, Willow Creek, will open this fall. Located immediately south of the site on Willow Terrace Drive, the school will have a projected enrollment of 340 K through 5 students.

### *Education*

The area has a very high level of educational achievement. According to the Friendswood Development Company's most recent new homeowner's survey (February, 1986), the average adult male had completed 16.2 years of education and the average adult female 15.0 years. The villages near the new church site had the highest educational achievement in Kingwood. The importance of quality education to the community is also reflected in the high standards of the school system and the outstanding academic achievement of the student population.

### *Occupation*

According to the same Friendswood survey, the primary employment center for every village except one was downtown Houston. Many of the residents are employed by energy-related companies in executive and managerial capacities. Only one-third of the wives are employed outside the home in contrast to the national figure of one-half. According to the 1980 Census for the area, 80% of the employed adult population were engaged in white collar occupations.

### *Household Income*

In 1987, there were an estimated 6,895 households in the area with an average annual household income of \$63,783. The median income was \$56,823. Over one-fourth (26.2%) of the households had incomes in excess of \$75,000. Another 32.6% had incomes between \$50,000 and \$74,999. Only 5% of the households had an income less than \$15,000.

### *Lifestyle and Values Profiles*

The previous demographics of the area reflect the lifestyle and values profiles of the households and population.

One-half of the households in the area can be classified as "suburban wealthy" and characterized by their affluence, high valued homes, high level of education, and location in a top metropolitan area. Residents are employed in high paying profession/managerial and technical/sales jobs. The heads of households are generally over 35. There is a large number of teenagers still at home as well as children in college ("empty-nesters"). Family and career are important to these households.

Another 41% of the households can be classified as "suburban affluence" and characterized by their high household income, property values, education level and mobility. Generally younger than "suburban wealthy," these households are located in the new suburbs of the southwest and have a higher concentration of ages 30-34. Well educated, they are career conscious and employed in white collar jobs, many with the new "high tech" companies of recent years.

Based on the previous information, it is not surprising that the major values profile of the population is "Achiever." A total of 41% of the population, twice the national average, has this profile. "Achievers" are well educated, and success and career oriented. Leaders among the American public, they take risks when it is necessary to achieve their goals. Their chief characteristic is confidence in themselves and their abilities.

The second highest values group in the study area are classified as "Socially Conscious." Highly educated, they are considered liberal in their social and political ideals. Heavily involved in community and civic events, they are often considered "single issue" or "cause" people being concerned with the environment, poverty, racial or social injustice, etc. This group also has the highest number of dual income families. Almost 23% of the area population is classified as "Socially Conscious," again, a number that is twice the national average.

The final values group of any significance in the area population is "Belonger" at 19%, a figure one-half of the national average for this group. "Belongers" are older, conservative, trusting, and enjoy strong linkages to their community. They are not risk-takers. Their chief characteristic is that of belonging or fitting into a group and the most important group to them is their family.

#### Existing Churches in the Area

According to the 1987 Kingwood Newcomer Guide, there are 24 congregations of various faiths in the area. Kingwood, First Baptist, and Forest Cove Baptist Church are the only existing Southern Baptist churches in the immediate area. Strawbridge United Methodist Church is located within two blocks of the new church site and the First Presbyterian Church is nearby. Also nearby is a site designated for an additional Catholic church.

The following are the results of a June, 1988, telephone survey of existing congregations in the community:

<b>Name of Church</b>	<b>Attendance (Sunday AM)</b>	
Church on the Rock	50	
First Church of Christ, Scientist	450	
Church of Christ of Kingwood	350	
Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd	250	
Evangelistic Temple North	150	
First Presbyterian Church of Kingwood	350	
Forest Cove Baptist	589	
Grace Church	89	
Holy Comforter Lutheran Church	140	
Kings Church	70	
Kingwood Christian Church	60	
Kingwood Community Church	250	
Kingwood Faith Fellowship	100	
Kingwood First Baptist	541	
Kingwood United Methodist Church	700	
Kingwood Victory Christian Center	55	
North Forest Christian Fellowship	60	
North Lake Houston Christian Church of Kingwood	80	Strawbridge United Methodist Church
	148	
<b>TOTAL SUNDAY MORNING ATTENDANCE</b>	<b>4,482</b>	

Using the March, 1988, population estimate of 34,942, the survey indicates that only 12.8% of the study area's population was churched.

## **Description of the Site**

The present site is an 8.914 acre tract located in east Kingwood and bounded to the south by Kingwood Drive, to the north by Rocky Brook Drive, to the east by the Kingwood greenbelt, and to the west by Willow Terrace Drive. Access to the site is excellent by virtue of the southern boundary being Kingwood Drive, one of the major thoroughfares in the entire development.

Heavily wooded and located adjacent to both the greenbelt and a beautiful residential area, the site will require careful master planning to take advantage of the topography while obtaining the maximum use of the land area for a church plant.

There are plans to build a bridge across Lake Houston and when completed, it will provide access to the subdivisions in Atascocita for additional outreach.

The P and I balance on the loan for the property is \$303,934. As of August, 1987, the appraised value of the property was \$725,000.

## **Possible Meeting Sites**

Approximately one-quarter of a mile south of the property is the new Willow Creek Elementary School scheduled to open in the fall of 1988 which would be the closest temporary meeting site. Other nearby schools are Greentree and Deerwood Elementary Schools.

Humble ISD policy is to permit the use of school buildings as temporary meeting sites for a period of two to three years with demonstrated evidence that the church is making progress toward obtaining a permanent facility. Mr. John Ennis of the Humble ISD (540y5020) is the contact person from whom to obtain additional information concerning the lease of school property.

## **Appropriate Pastoral Leadership**

Compatibility of the founding pastor to the community is one of the most important factors in the development of a new mission/church. Based on the demographics of the area, it would be advantageous if the founding pastor had the following characteristics:

Education: College and Seminary including graduate degree if possible

Abilities and Skills:

Pastoral experience in successful church plant or a record of growth in an established church

Ability to relate well to executive and professional people

Understanding of affluent population needs and values

Catalytic leadership style

Personal evangelism skills

Age: Mid-thirties to early fifties

Marital Status: Stable marriage, preferably with children

## **Possible Core Group Members/Families**

**An analysis of the membership directory of Kingwood, First Baptist indicates that there are 28 families living in Sand Creek Village (6.8% of the total families in Kingwood, First) and three additional families living in King's Point Village, the two closest villages to the site.**

Additional core group member/families might come from the Forest Cove Baptist Church.

## **Assessment of Growth Potential**

Due to a number of factors, the potential for successful development of this site as a new mission/church is excellent.

The site is more than adequate in size and has excellent access from Kingwood Drive, a major thoroughfare. Its location is in the growth area of Kingwood and the future construction of the bridge across Lake Houston will open additional areas to the south for potential outreach and membership.

Possible temporary meeting facilities are nearby at the new Willow Creek Elementary School or Greentree and Deerwood Elementary Schools.

There is a strong existing population base and growth projections indicate the population is expected to almost double in the next ten to twelve years or by the year 2000.

There are at least 28 Baptist families already living in the area and are potential core group members. With the appropriate pastoral and lay leadership, an effective new church can be planted that will impact this area for the Kingdom.