

An Analysis of the Impact of Group Homes on Residential Areas

There is a perception among some citizens that Group Homes have a negative impact on the quality of life in residential areas and on the value of residential property. In order to test the validity of that perception, the Planning & Development Services Department analyzed the impact of specific group homes in Overland Park using data from five-year period of time.

Background

Although group homes are fairly common throughout Johnson County, including Overland Park, there is no comprehensive list of group home locations or comprehensive database of group home characteristics. A combination of state and federal laws essentially preclude any local government in Kansas from regulating group homes, imposing special requirements, or even requiring a permit or registration process. By law, group homes must be treated exactly the same as a single-family residence.

Group homes are often sponsored by private, non-profit organizations or are affiliated with one of several state agencies. They tend to keep a relatively low profile and generally do not advertise their locations. Homes typically fall into one of three functional types: homes for long-term elderly care, homes for the developmentally disabled, and homes for people recovering from substance abuse.

Methodology

The first step in the analysis was to select a sample of group homes for further study. Through a variety of sources including property records, social services websites, and state agencies, the staff developed a list of 20 candidate group homes. Although this list seems reasonably complete, the staff suspects that there are other group homes that were not on any of our lists. Thus, the total number of group homes is probably greater than 20, but how much greater is unknown. From that list, 11 homes were selected for the study based on the following criteria:

- a. geographic diversity;
- b. diversity of group home functional types; and
- c. some indication that the group home was fully active.

The working hypothesis was that if group homes had a negative influence on residential areas, then the residences immediately adjacent to the group homes should be less desirable to live in than the broader surrounding neighborhood. We used three different indicators to test this hypothesis. The first, and most direct, was the change in property values over the past five years. If the hypothesis is correct, then the residences immediately surrounding the group homes should grow in value at a slower rate than the broader neighborhood.

The other two indicators are indirect measures based on the assumption that if group homes were viewed as being undesirable, then adjacent properties would be more difficult to rent or sell which might eventually cause them to be occupied by less desirable residents. Consequently, these indicators look to see if the immediately adjacent residences show higher rates of crime or property maintenance violations. A fear of increased crime or code violations is certainly a part of the neighborhood anxiety that can surround a group home.

The “immediately adjacent” residences include all single-family and two-family residences within a radius of approximately 150 to 200 feet (2 to 3 houses in each direction). This yielded an average of 12 residences surrounding each group home location. For the “broader surrounding neighborhood,” we used the boundaries of the homes association or the neighborhood conservation area which contained the group home. Using this definition, the surrounding neighborhood averaged 386 single-family and two-family units. All of the measures were based only on single-family and two-family properties. No commercial or multi-family properties were included in any of the indicators.

All of the indicators are based on data for the five-year period from 2005 through 2009.

Although the staff is reasonably confident that the methodology used for this analysis is reasonable, there are several caveats that should be understood. First, it is impossible to control for the wide variety of factors that could influence the selected indicators. The data on code violations, for example, can be influenced simply by having a picky neighbor versus a “live and let live” type of neighbor. Second, both crime rates and property violation rates in Overland Park are relatively low, which can make even small variations due to random chance appear important. Third, we do not have any operational records for the group homes in this study. Thus, we cannot pinpoint starting dates nor can we control for staff turnover, organizational stability, or fluctuations in occupant load over time. Hopefully, the size and diversity of the selected sample will compensate for these issues.

Results

The statistical data from the 11 group homes are shown in the attached table and the locations of the group homes are shown on the attached map. Although the 11 sites shown on the map reflect the geographic diversity that was one of the selection criteria, it should be pointed out that there does not appear to be a tendency for group homes to cluster together even when all 20 possible locations are included. This is significant given that the City has no influence over where group homes decide to locate.

From the statistical data, the staff has concluded that there is no overwhelming evidence to either support or refute the hypothesis. Instead, the results are mixed and the direction of the impact (either positive or negative) is so evenly divided that it is difficult to conclude that it was caused primarily by the presence of a group home.

Of the three indicators, the one that the staff finds most compelling is the change in property value. Positive or negative perceptions that are widely shared tend to be reflected in value over time. In the case of this sample of 11 group homes, the value of the homes in the immediate area increased an average of 3.41% over the five year period while the value of homes in the broader neighborhood increased by only an average of 2.92%. This difference, however, was not consistent. In five of the locations the immediate area increased more than the neighborhood, and in six of the locations the neighborhood increased more than the immediate area. Interestingly, the value of the group homes themselves increased by an average of 6.44%, reflecting perhaps improvements made by the group home operators, although this varied widely among the group homes.

Crime incidents showed slightly better results for the broader neighborhood (0.18 crimes per residential unit) than for the immediately area (0.24 crimes per residential unit) for the five-year period. In five locations, the immediate area had more crimes per unit than the broader neighborhood, while in the other six locations the number of crimes per unit was either the same or lower in the immediate area compared with the neighborhood. Of the group homes themselves, six had no reported crimes and three others had only one crime reported during the five-year period. In addition, the group home with the most crime incidents had no property code violations and the second highest increase in appraised value.

Like crime, the indicator based on property code violations tended to favor the broader neighborhood over the residences in the immediate vicinity of the group home by a small margin. The immediate area averaged 0.69 code violations per residential unit compared with 0.53 violations per unit for the broader neighborhood over the five year period. The immediate area had more violations per unit than the broader neighborhood in five locations, while in the remaining six locations the rate was either the same or favored the immediate vicinity. Only three of the group homes themselves had any code violations during the five year period.

Summary

As indicated above, there is no clear evidence to support the position that group homes are either generally good for a neighborhood or generally bad for a neighborhood. The results are decidedly mixed, indicating that a given group home might have either a positive or a negative impact on the neighborhood, but in either case the impact is minimal and so variable that it is hard to pinpoint whether it is caused by the group home at all. Given the complexity of urban life, this result is not particularly surprising.

Thus the safest conclusion is that we shouldn't generalize about the impact of a group home on a particular neighborhood one way or the other. The data does, however, support the conclusion that group homes are not universally bad. The impact of a particular group home will probably have more to do with how the group home is run and the sponsoring agency's level of emphasis on being a good neighbor than with the group home use itself.

★ Group Home Location

NEIGHBORHOOD STATUS

Active Neighborhood Organization

Homes Association

BOUNDARIES

Neighborhood Planning Area

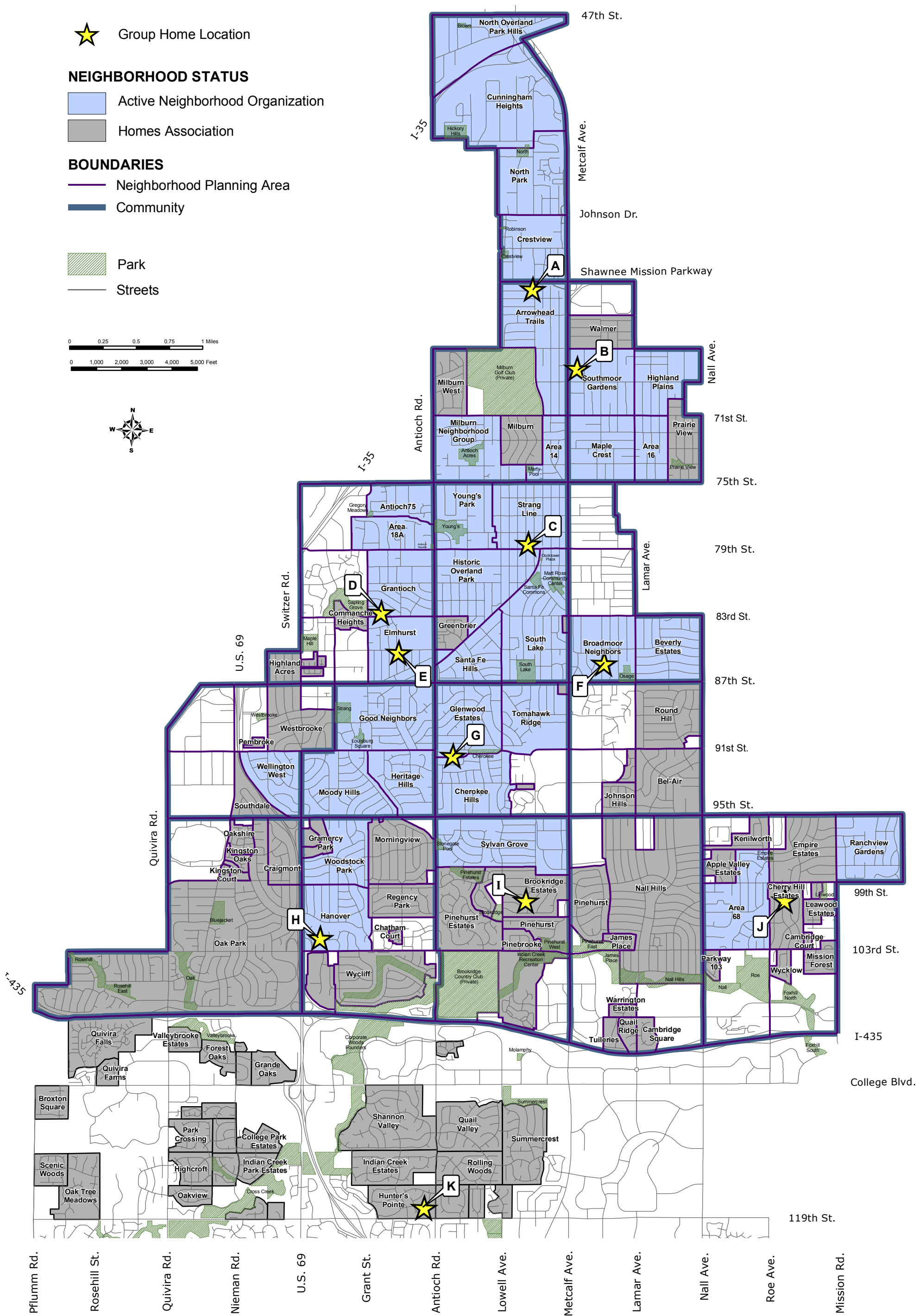
Community

Park

Streets

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

0 1,000 2,000 3,000 4,000 5,000 Feet



GROUP HOME ANALYSIS

GROUP HOME ANALYSIS (2005 - 2009)

	Residential Units	CRIME				PROPERTY VIOLATIONS				APPRAISED VALUE	
		Number of Crimes	Crimes per Unit	# of Units with Crime	% of Units with Crime	Number of Violations	Violations per Unit	# of Units with Violation	% of Units with Violation	% Change in Appraised Value	Five Year Average
Group Home A (Arrowhead Trails)											
GROUP HOME	1	1	1.0	1	100.0%	0	0.0	0	0.0%	-0.3%	\$141,784
IMMEDIATE AREA	12	2	0.2	2	16.7%	23	1.9	5	41.7%	10.9%	\$112,091
NEIGHBORHOOD	633	167	0.3	136	21.5%	457	0.7	169	26.7%	4.2%	\$141,894
Group Home B (Southmoor Gardens)											
GROUP HOME	1	0	0.0	0	0.0%	0	0.0	0	0.0%	-6.8%	\$188,240
IMMEDIATE AREA	12	1	0.1	1	8.3%	2	0.2	2	16.7%	5.2%	\$190,322
NEIGHBORHOOD	331	49	0.1	41	12.4%	170	0.5	55	16.6%	8.2%	\$183,117
Group Home C (Strang Line)											
GROUP HOME	1	2	2.0	1	100.0%	0	0.0	0	0.0%	16.7%	\$266,834
IMMEDIATE AREA	7	2	0.3	2	28.6%	2	0.3	1	14.3%	2.3%	\$140,173
NEIGHBORHOOD	420	85	0.2	67	16.0%	280	0.7	111	26.4%	4.8%	\$119,566
Group Home D (Grantloch)											
GROUP HOME	1	1	1.0	1	100.0%	1	1.0	1	100.0%	0.1%	\$170,260
IMMEDIATE AREA	15	6	0.4	5	33.3%	17	1.1	5	33.3%	6.0%	\$153,550
NEIGHBORHOOD	461	108	0.2	83	18.0%	318	0.7	119	25.8%	1.4%	\$147,669
Group Home E (Elmhurst Community)											
GROUP HOME	1	3	3.0	1	100.0%	0	0.0	0	0.0%	16.8%	\$183,470
IMMEDIATE AREA	13	3	0.2	3	23.1%	14	1.1	4	30.8%	-1.7%	\$114,183
NEIGHBORHOOD	401	138	0.3	88	21.9%	422	1.1	184	45.9%	2.1%	\$132,497
Group Home F (Broadmoor Neighbors)											
GROUP HOME	1	1	1.0	1	100.0%	2	2.0	1	100.0%	4.1%	\$126,660
IMMEDIATE AREA	10	5	0.5	2	20.0%	3	0.3	2	20.0%	5.1%	\$149,366
NEIGHBORHOOD	369	62	0.2	47	12.7%	225	0.6	91	24.7%	1.1%	\$153,720
Group Home G (Glenwood Estates)											
GROUP HOME	1	0	0.0	0	0.0%	0	0.0	0	0.0%	2.3%	\$160,100
IMMEDIATE AREA	14	2	0.1	2	14.3%	13	0.9	4	28.6%	3.3%	\$150,473
NEIGHBORHOOD	479	75	0.2	62	12.9%	311	0.6	111	23.2%	2.3%	\$159,786
Group Home H (Hanover)											
GROUP HOME	1	0	0.0	0	0.0%	1	1.0	1	100.0%	0.9%	\$217,560
IMMEDIATE AREA	12	5	0.4	2	16.7%	16	1.3	3	25.0%	0.8%	\$195,126
NEIGHBORHOOD	455	83	0.2	66	14.5%	149	0.3	60	13.2%	2.5%	\$193,385
Group Home I (Brookridge Estates)											
GROUP HOME	1	0	0.0	0	0.0%	0	0.0	0	0.0%	11.4%	\$232,300
IMMEDIATE AREA	10	1	0.1	1	10.0%	2	0.2	2	20.0%	-0.7%	\$215,348
NEIGHBORHOOD	342	45	0.1	36	10.5%	38	0.1	29	8.5%	0.6%	\$215,849
Group Home J (Cherry Hill Estates)											
GROUP HOME	1	0	0.0	0	0.0%	0	0.0	0	0.0%	23.9%	\$256,216
IMMEDIATE AREA	12	1	0.1	1	8.3%	0	0.0	0	0.0%	1.1%	\$227,210
NEIGHBORHOOD	173	20	0.1	17	9.8%	35	0.2	8	4.6%	2.2%	\$212,416
Group Home K (Hunter's Pointe)											
GROUP HOME	1	0	0.0	0	0.0%	0	0.0	0	0.0%	1.7%	\$186,280
IMMEDIATE AREA	15	3	0.2	2	13.3%	4	0.3	3	20.0%	5.2%	\$190,649
NEIGHBORHOOD	182	24	0.1	21	11.5%	47	0.3	24	13.2%	2.7%	\$211,593