

The Planter

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Apopka recognized as one of the top friendliest cities

Apopka was chosen by *Forbes* magazine as the 14th friendliest city in America. Apopka was the only Florida city to make the list of the top 15 friendly cities across America.

"That's a great honor," said Mayor John H. Land. "I think it is all true. We are happy that we are recognized nationally by *Forbes*."

"The population of this Orlando-area town has more than doubled over the past decade, even as Florida's economy has suffered through the downturn," wrote Morgan Brennan, *Forbes* staff writer.

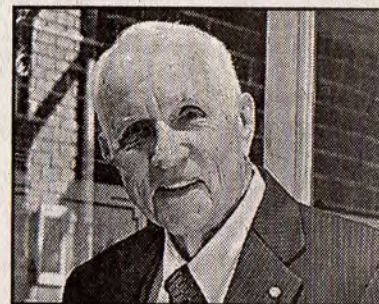
"Despite a relatively high crime rate, more than 80 percent of Apopka residents still own their homes and the number of college graduates outranks the state's average. One of the town's biggest events is the three-day Old Florida Outdoor Festival in February that features outdoor activities like hunting, a farmers' market, and a backyard chili cook-off. In general, neighbors on Nextdoor have been known to organize charity golf tournaments, Boy Scout fundraisers, Super Bowl parties and karaoke events."

Forbes said the results

came from research results in partnership with Nextdoor.com. They surveyed approximately 500 small metro areas with populations between 5,500 and 150,000.

"Friendliness can mean different things to different people, and certainly what seems like a welcoming town to some can be unpleasant to others," Brennan said. "Nonetheless, in any place, there are measurable factors that we believe are associated with a strong sense of community or that serve to promote good-feeling among neighbors."

Forbes said the business



Land

news magazine used data from the U.S. Census, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Chronicle of Philanthropy, and City-Data.com, and ranked the towns based on four data points: percentage of owner-occupied homes (studies have shown a direct correlation between home-

ownership and neighborhood stability); crime rate; charitable giving; and percentage of college graduates (research has found that college-educated folks typically display more civic engagement, with higher rates of voting and volunteering). Nextdoor then conducted qualitative surveys among its membership in the towns that rated the highest to help finalize the ranking of the top 15.

Land credits members of the community, and the events that they sponsor, for