



NS&EC: 10-11-07

ITEM: e2

Memorandum

TO: NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES &
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

FROM: Mark Linder
John Weis

SUBJECT: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE SAN JOSÉ SNI AS IMPLEMENTED IN
THE RICHMOND-MENKER NEIGHBORHOOD
(BURBANK/DEL MONTE SNI PLANNING AREA) **DATE:** September 25, 2007

SNI Area: Burbank/Del Monte
Council District: 6

INFORMATION

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the attached *Assessment of the City of San José Strong Neighborhoods Initiative as Implemented in the Richmond-Menker Neighborhood* in the Burbank/Del Monte Strong Neighborhoods Initiative (SNI) Planning Area by Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to the Neighborhood Services and Education Council Committee.

OUTCOME

The *Assessment of the City of San José Strong Neighborhoods Initiative as Implemented in the Richmond-Menker Neighborhood* by LISC consists of a detailed summary of major barriers to small multifamily property rehabilitation, existing City financial resources for rehabilitation and strategies for leveraging city funds. This summary will be used to replicate the Richmond-Menker model, now referred to as Project Alliance, throughout the Strong Neighborhoods area as well as to pursue potential private funding opportunities.

BACKGROUND

The Agency and the City have provided substantial funding to improve the quality of life in each of the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative (SNI) Redevelopment Project neighborhoods. This report is an assessment of the SNI model for rehabilitating the Richmond-Menker apartment complex within the Burbank/Del Monte SNI planning area. The Richmond-Menker community challenges include public safety, environmental challenges and social troubles. Much of the housing stock within the complex is comprised of small multifamily properties in need of substantial rehabilitation. The Redevelopment Agency has an interest in identifying key strategies to work with property owners to facilitate the rehabilitation of multi-family housing and therefore commissioned this study to use as an example in other areas.

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The consultant was asked to conduct an overall assessment of the housing stock in the Richmond-Menker apartment complex as well as, report back with an improved public safety plan. The consultant was also asked to, in particular, report on ways to leverage limited financial resources by identifying private lenders that can offer favorable pricing on rehabilitation loans for existing property owners.

ANALYSIS

The 50-page *Assessment of the City of San José Strong Neighborhoods Initiative as Implemented in the Richmond-Menker Neighborhood* consists of a four-page Executive Summary, a detailed report on the Richmond-Menker SNI area, and supplemental appendices with supporting documentation.

The Richmond-Menker apartment complex consists of 124 units within 22 buildings. It is primarily occupied by working, low-income families. Of the key challenges in the area, public safety, environment and social aspects, the SNI model has positively affected all three. In the area of public safety, residents have a positive perception of improvement and there is increased tenant and landlord cooperation with the San Jose Police Department. The report also outlines a decline in narcotics and other quality of life crimes while foreseeing a potential downward trend in violent crime.

Another of the key problems facing the Richmond Menker neighborhood is the poor condition of many of the multi-family properties in the area. The SNI program is addressing one important aspect of the issue by changing the standard practice of code enforcement efforts. In Richmond-Menker, the SNI program shifted standard code enforcement practices from an approach that reacted to complaints limited to health and safety violations to a pro-active approach extending to exterior blight. Housing and neighborhood appearance has greatly improved and there is an increase in public area use by the families that live at Richmond-Menker.

The blight problem in the apartment complex was found to extend beyond typical code compliance problems. Much of the multi-family housing stock is in need of major rehabilitation. The SNI program is making an effort to combine resources and address these issues. The LISC report outlines barriers to financing such major rehabilitation to include market conditions, use restrictions and repayment requirements and a negative track record of developer/owner involvement.

The final key challenge addressed in the LISC report relates to Social Capital. With a boost in resident empowerment and training there has been an increase in outdoor life, community events, community gardening and volunteer efforts. A resident council has been formed and there is an emergence of resident leadership.

The LISC assessment concluded that the SNI model, as it was implemented in the Richmond-Menker neighborhood, was sound and can lead directly to the duplication of community revitalization activities and clear improvements to the quality of life in other San Jose communities. As a model of an inclusive, multi-party, process for delivering concrete results,

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the Richmond-Menker example compares favorably to similar efforts in other cities, and represents a solid model going forward for Project Alliance.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

The *Assessment of the City of San José Strong Neighborhoods Initiative as Implemented in the Richmond-Menker Neighborhood* by LISC will be used as a tool to replicate best practices for rehabilitation of multifamily property neighborhoods and standard practices of code enforcement efforts as the Project Alliance program moves forward.

PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST

This memorandum does not meet the criteria listed below. LISC worked collaboratively with the Richmond-Menker community, the Redevelopment Agency and City department partners to write this report. Additionally, local neighborhood leaders received a draft of the report and provided input. The report will be posted on the SNI website in conjunction with this item.

- Criterion 1:** Requires Council action on the use of public funds equal to \$1 million or greater.
- Criterion 2:** Adoption of a new or revised policy that may have implications for public health, safety, quality of life, or financial/economic vitality of the City.
- Criterion 3:** Consideration of proposed changes to service delivery, programs, or staffing that may have impacts to community services and have been identified by staff, the Board or Council, or a community group that requires special outreach.

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with the Housing Department and the Redevelopment Agency's General Counsel.

CEQA

Not a project.



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Assessment of the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative

Richmond-Menker Neighborhood
City of San Jose

Local Initiatives Support Corporation
October 11, 2007

Presentation Outline

- Strong Neighborhoods Initiative Principles and Study Questions
- Richmond-Menker Characteristics and Problems
- Strong Neighborhoods Initiative Response and Results
 - Public Safety
 - Housing and Neighborhood Quality
 - Social Capital
- Elements of Success

Core Principles of SNI

- High-quality projects responsive to highest resident priorities
- Community empowerment through city organizers working with special code enforcement staff and police
- Effective planning and implementation of inter-departmental programs and projects

Study Questions

- Were Strong Neighborhoods Initiative interventions successful?
- Why did changes happen?
- What agency and team competencies are key to success?
- What is transformative and replicable?

Profile of Richmond-Menker

- In Burbank/Del Monte Strong Neighborhoods Initiative
- Garden apartment complex of 124 units
- Fragmented ownership: 13 owners of 22 buildings
- Primarily occupied by working low-income Latino families

Community Problems in Richmond-Menker

- Public safety
 - gang control over public spaces, witness intimidation
 - drug dealing, prostitution, vandalism, theft, assault
- Environmental
 - dumping, inoperable vehicles,
 - deteriorated landscaping, poor lighting
 - divided interior spaces, not visible from street
- Social
 - Apathetic, intimidated residents
 - Lack of connections among people,
“disorganized” community

Strong Neighborhoods Initiative Response

- Public safety
 - community-oriented policing, foot patrols
 - STOP program to combat trespassing
 - flexible assignments and staffing

- Environmental
 - proactive code enforcement
 - high profile litigation
 - courtyard redesign and exterior improvement

- Social
 - community organizing to combat crime and blight
 - creation of landlord and tenant associations

Assessment of Strong
Neighborhoods Initiative, LIISC

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Strong Neighborhoods Initiative Results

- Lower crime, reduced fear, more active community life

- Gains depend on continued police presence, more progress on resident and owner involvement

- Dramatic improvement in quality of outdoor spaces

- Solid improvements to community strength, increased participation in civic life

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Public Safety: Interventions

- Community policing supported by Strong Neighborhoods Initiative community organizer
- Organize and train landlord and resident associations
- Build trusting and effective relationships between police, community organizers, code enforcement staff, and residents
- STOP anti-trespassing order, full landlord cooperation, increased resident willingness to report crime.
- Creation of defensible space conducive to community interaction

Public Safety: Results

- Resident perception of improvement in public safety.
- Increased landlord and tenant cooperation with police.
- Decline in narcotics and “quality of life” crimes.
- Potential downward trend in violent crime.

Housing and Neighborhood Quality: Interventions

- City Attorney litigation of building code violations
- Proactive inspections from specially assigned Code staff
- Flexible, resident-influenced financing from BDM NAC
- SJRA and Housing support for multi-family revitalization
- Strong, participatory design and responsive Planning staff
- Owners joint creation of common areas and exterior improvements

Housing and Neighborhood Quality: Results

- Improvements in appearance
- More easily defended space; better police access
- More active public area use by families

“Social Capital”: Interventions

- City staff motivate and train residents to help solve problems
- Respect for, and response to, resident interests
- Increased “participation skills” of residents and property owners
- Multiple paths to exercise skills and satisfy interests.

Social Capital: Results

- Increased cooperation with police, crime reporting
- Landlord cooperation to stop trespassing, abate poor conditions
- Resident sweat equity to construct new outdoor spaces, remove graffiti
- Resident councils and emergence of resident and owner leadership
- Increased outdoor life, community events, community gardening, volunteer efforts, and children’s activity

Elements for Success

- Resident engagement in community problem-solving
- Cooperative, team approach to design, implementation and follow-through
- Paid, highly-trained organizers to build community and agency capacity to work together
- Direct Strong Neighborhoods Initiative support from Office of City Manager
- SJRA funding to NAC for flexible responses to high-priority problems