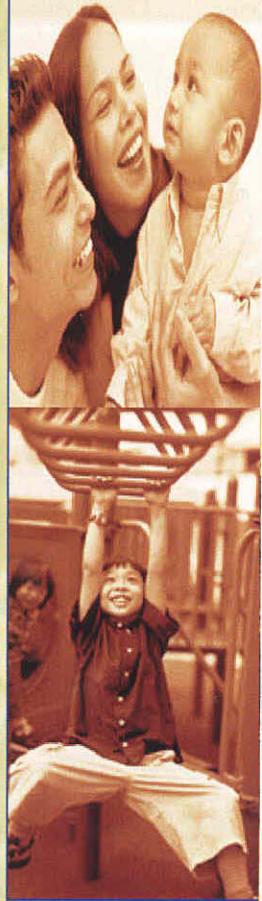


APRIL 2002

neighborhood implementation plan

Hoffman/Via Monte



STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS INITIATIVE



Contents

Executive Summary.....	ii
<i>IMPLEMENTATION PLAN</i>	
Vision.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Planning Approach.....	1
Development and Prioritization of Action Plan.....	1
Neighborhood Issues and Needs.....	2
Implementation Timeline.....	6
Implementation Actions/ Action Plan.....	7
<i>BACKGROUND INFORMATION</i>	
History.....	23
Study Area Land Use Characteristics.....	23
Transportation Characteristics.....	24
General Plan Designations and Zoning Districts.....	24
Property Ownership / Neighborhood Organizations.....	24
Housing and Infrastructure Conditions.....	26
Parks & Recreation.....	26
Criminal Activity.....	29
Lighting.....	29
Pioneer High School Master Plan.....	29
Neighborhood Assets.....	30
Challenges & Opportunities.....	31
Acknowledgements.....	32
<i>MAPS</i>	
Map 1 Planning Area.....	22
Map 2 General Plan.....	25
Map 3 Zoning.....	25

Executive Summary

The Hoffman/ Via Monte Neighborhood is one of the neighborhood's within the City of San José selected to be part of the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative process. This document, the Hoffman/ Via Monte Neighborhood Implementation Plan, is designed to focus City services and programs to make comprehensive improvements identified by community members. Combining the strengths of the community with the resources of the City and other partners within the community should help this community reach its full potential as an enjoyable and livable place. This action is part of the City's commitment to the improvement of living conditions in neighborhoods challenged by high crime rates, deteriorating residential and commercial properties, public infrastructure in marginal conditions, and other negative conditions.

The purpose of the *Plan* is to identify the issues that detract from the quality of life in the Hoffman/ Via Monte neighborhood and to develop a long term, comprehensive approach to creating a stronger neighborhood that is tailored to the needs and characteristics of the community. Direct involvement by community members was essential throughout the development of the *Plan* and was provided by a community based advisory group.

The *Plan* consists of key implementation items that will aim to improve the quality of life in the Hoffman/ Via Monte neighborhood, summarized below:

- Establish a neighborhood center in the neighborhood to provide supervised activities and programs for youth and adult residents.
- Address environmental design issues to discourage crime.
- Increase police presence by expanding community policing efforts.
- Maintain functioning lights on City streets, private alleyways, and driveways.
- Create and implement an alleyway architectural design that addresses neighborhood concerns and improves appearance.
- Establish a joint towing agreement among property owners.
- Improve landscaping and beautification efforts in the neighborhood.
- Implement a Neighborhood Watch program.

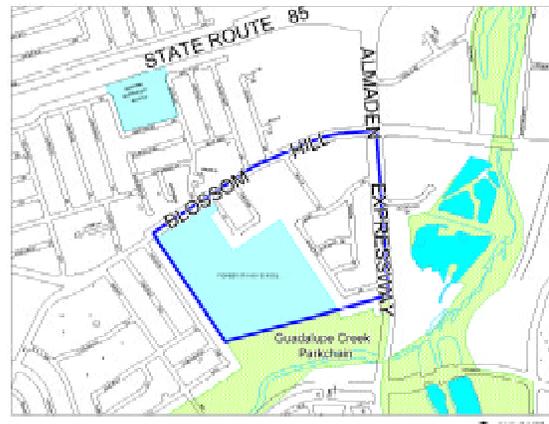
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Vision

The people who live, work, and play in the Hoffman/ Via Monte neighborhoods share a common sense of pride in their community. They appreciate the quality schools in the area, and enjoy the close proximity to shopping, parks, and other amenities in the community. The community wants to see a neighborhood that is self-sufficient and contains leaders who are both residents and property owners. Through partnerships with the City of San José and community-based organizations, the community will reach its full capacity of being a strong neighborhood.

Introduction

The Hoffman/ Via Monte Strong Neighborhoods Initiative area is bordered by Almaden Expressway to the east, Blossom Hill Road to the north, Guadalupe Creek to the south, and Pioneer High School to the west. The area is comprised of neighborhood and regional businesses and faith based organizations to the north, along Blossom Hill Road, Pioneer High School to the west, and a housing stock that is exclusively four-plex units covering the rest of the area.



Neighborhood Location

Planning Approach

The development of the Implementation Plan for the Hoffman / Via Monte neighborhood involved the following steps:

- ❑ Recognition of community assets and resources in the neighborhood through a series of community meetings, workshops, and outreach.
- ❑ Collection and documentation of information about the neighborhood including physical conditions of structures and infrastructure.
- ❑ Community identification of top issues that face the neighborhood.
- ❑ Development of a clear and realistic vision for the future of the Hoffman / Via Monte Neighborhood.
- ❑ Identification of the improvements and programs required to revitalize the Hoffman / Via Monte neighborhood.
- ❑ Development of an action plan for implementation of the planned improvements and programs.

Development and Prioritization of Action Plan

In January 2001, community members met and commented on issues in their neighborhood, and strategies for addressing those issues. A list of neighborhood priorities was created that reflects the top strategies that the neighborhood wants to see imple-

mented in their community. These top strategies were again prioritized by Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC) members at the August 15th NAC meeting, to reflect what order they would like to see action take place. The Hoffman/ Via Monte “Top 10” Action Items are listed below:

1. Establish a neighborhood center to provide supervised activities and programs for youth and adults.
2. To discourage crime, increase police presence by expanding current community policing efforts, and address environmental design issues.
3. Maintain functioning lights in alleyways.
4. Create and implement an alleyway architectural design that addresses safety and other concerns and improves appearance.
5. Establish a joint tow agreement among property owners.
6. Explore the feasibility of joint beautification projects between property owners with a focus on improved landscaping.
7. Implement Neighborhood Watch.
8. Implement a Community Clean-up event.
9. Expand front access to Pioneer High School taking more cars off the Blossom Hill Road during peak hours.
10. Perform a lighting assessment to determine the need for additional lighting or increased wattage on existing lights in the area near the proposed location of the neighborhood center.

Neighborhood Issues and Needs

The issues and concerns identified by the neighborhood in community workshops and Neighborhood Advisory Committee meetings were grouped into four categories. The order in which the issues are presented does not necessarily reflect community priorities. As part of the issue identification process, community members and committee liaisons often suggested solutions or strategies to address identified issues. In this section, neighborhood issues that have been identified as priorities are noted, with strategies to address those issues listed after each category. Specific actions are then outlined in the Implementation Timeline of this document.

Neighborhood Security

- **Reduce Public Drunkenness**

Many residents cite concerns about drinking in public and loitering within the area. Particular problems with drinking in the alleyways, especially along the Via Monte alleyway between the apartments and Pioneer High School’s football field, have been noted.

- **Increased Police Presence is needed**

While many long time residents and property owners note that past efforts at stemming criminal behavior worked through efforts coordinated by Project Crack-down, the neighborhood is in a constant state of change, with new tenants coming into the neighborhood on an ongoing basis. The community feels that an

increase in police presence and a specific effort to implement community policing in the neighborhood, at key times and locations, would help address concerns regarding criminal activity.

- **Address environmental issues to discourage anti-social behavior.**
Several properties have exterior landscaping and hardscapes where crimes may occur because observation is low. These features include high fences and shrubs, and other elements that allow people to “hide”. Improving the design of these areas should help people feel safer and allow a better vantage of properties.

Strategies:

- Increase police presence.
- Implement a neighborhood watch.
- Address environmental design issues to discourage anti-social behavior.

Neighborhood Character & Land Use

- **Prevent cars from parking too close to dumpsters**
Overflowing dumpsters can be a problem exacerbated by cars that park too close to these dumpsters. The Almaden Recreation Club Home Owners Association has an agreement with the GreenTeam of San José that pays for dumpsters to be pushed out to the streets, emptied, and pushed back. Some other property owners outside the Association boundaries pay for this same service on their own. Most tenants and property owners agree that redesigning the alleyways to maximize placement and storage of the dumpster bins will help keep this problem under control.
- **Increase lighting**
Maintaining functional lighting and ensuring adequate lighting in the neighborhood is important to the safety of everyone. Property owners have paid for the installation and maintenance of alleyway lighting by PG&E. Occasional maintenance is needed, but because some lighting is maintained by City of San José and some by PG&E, not all property owners and tenants understand whom to call when the existing lights are not functioning properly. Ongoing education is needed. Additionally, everyone agrees on the need for lighting in the student parking lot at Pioneer High School. The San José Unified School District is currently proposing a bond measure to voters. If passed, the measure would provide funds for school improvements that could potentially include additional lighting at Pioneer High School.
- **Improve traffic flow**
Improving the flow of traffic on the Pioneer High School property and surrounding streets is important to the school population and to the residents of the Hoffman/ Via Monte neighborhood. Traffic backups on Blossom Hill Road can occur before and after school. After studying the flow of traffic along key streets, possible adjustments should be considered. Public transportation options, including the placement of bus stops and the education of students about use of transit, should also be examined.

- **Increase available parking in front of Pioneer High School**

Parking at the front of Pioneer High School is difficult because of the small size of the parking area and the number of people who try to use the horseshoe design of the parking lot to drop off and pick up passengers. The Parent Teacher Association of the school has brought forward a recommendation to utilize a portion of the turf area at the front of the school for a larger parking area.

Strategies:

- Establish a joint towing agreement among property owners.
- Increase lighting at Pioneer High School.
- Create an alleyway architectural design that addresses concerns and improves appearance.
- Address environmental design issues to discourage crime.
- Conduct a traffic study of the following streets:
 - Blossom Hill Road near Pioneer High School
 - Ayrshire Drive
 - Mustang Drive
 - Almaden Road
- Explore public transportation issues at Pioneer High School.
- Implement an alleyway design.
- Expand front access to Pioneer High School, taking more cars off Blossom Hill Road.

Neighborhood Condition & Maintenance

- **Remove abandoned shopping carts**

The close proximity of shopping areas allows residents of the neighborhood to walk to their shopping destination. Returning from shopping may involve carrying many items, resulting in the removal of a shopping cart from store premises. These carts tend to become abandoned quickly and represent an eyesore to the community. Two different shopping cart retrieval services operate in the area and return carts to specific stores. Residents and property owners would also like a concerted effort to educate people about the new shopping cart ordinance.

- **Remove non-operational vehicles**

Abandoned and non-operational vehicles take up needed parking spaces and prevent street sweeping from occurring. Residents and property owners are hoping for increased vehicle code enforcement on city streets. The fact that the alleyways are private property, however, has caused confusion and frustration among property owners and tenants. Individual properties are responsible for their own tow permits. This often causes confusion about where to call when a car is blocking an alleyway, and even more confusion when a person finds that their vehicle has been towed and must determine which company towed their car.

- **Implement community clean ups**

A successful Community Clean-up event occurred in this neighborhood in June of 2001. Following the event, many residents express a desire to see Community Clean-ups scheduled on a regular basis.

- **Prevent car repairs on lots**

Car repairs on private alleyways frustrate property owners with the oil left on surface roads and containers that are left on the side of the road.

- **Increase landscaping on properties**

While some property owners tend to care for their properties and ensure that they are maintained, some units have no landscaping. This frustrates both property owners who want the neighborhood to look green and beautiful, and the tenants who have children that must play in a dirt lot.

Strategies:

- Educate the community on the new shopping cart ordinance.
- Implement a community clean up.
- Notify property owners and tenants of other beautification efforts.
- Explore joint landscaping opportunities between property owners.
- Explore grants programs to provide landscaping materials to property owners.

Neighborhood Organizations & Services

- **Reduce gang activity, graffiti, and other criminal activity, including juvenile mischief**

Many young people congregate in the afternoon and early evening in certain key areas of the neighborhood, particularly around the back parking lot of Pioneer High School and Cornerstone Community church. Many residents feel that the lack of activities for these young people allows deviant behavior to occur. While the ARK and the Recreation Club pool offer some supervised opportunities for youth, each of these also has issues. The ARK is antiquated and small in size. Most activities occur outside simply due to lack of space. The Recreation Club is only accessible to one-third of the community.

Strategies:

- Establish a neighborhood center to provide supervised activities for youth and adults.
- Strengthen the property owners association currently in place.
- Explore the formation of a neighborhood association.

Implementation Timeline

With the identification of the key issues and strategies for the neighborhood, the community has begun to implement the identified improvements listed. To help facilitate and offer guidance over the implementation of these improvements, the Neighborhood Advisory Committee will transition from a role of providing help in the planning process, to a coalition of concerned community members who will take an active role in seeing these improvements realized.

The City of San José – Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) will continue to coordinate the overall progress and implementation of the improvements. Additional City departments will be brought in to work and take the lead on specific projects.

The specific actions necessary to complete the identified neighborhood improvements are outlined in the following section. Each action is noted along with which party is responsible for completion of the action. An anticipated timeframe identifies the actions as either immediate (0 to 18 months), short term (0 to 3 years), mid-term (4 - 6 years), long term (over 7 years).

Implementation Actions/ Action Plan

1. Establish a neighborhood center to provide activities and programs for youth and adults.

Timeframe:

Short term

Lead Department/ Division:

PRNS (Recreation and Neighborhood Services)

Responsible departments/ entities:

PRNS; San José Unified School District; Community Members

Action:

At the writing of this plan, several important preliminary steps have been completed that should facilitate a relatively quick and successful installation of a neighborhood center.

PRNS staff surveyed the neighborhood to determine what types of services and programs residents would want to see at the center, and where they would like to see the center placed. This led to the eventual selection of the Pioneer High School site. San José Unified School District officials have been contacted, with discussions underway to formalize a joint use agreement. A neighborhood center for youth programming was recently opened at another San José Unified School through a joint use agreement with the City. Known as “The Spot”, this facility at Bret Harte Middle School is similar in size and programs to be offered at the Pioneer High School Site. This successful precedent should contribute to a relatively smooth process for establishing the new center.

The past two budget cycles have set aside monies for the neighborhood center. Fiscal year 2000-2001 includes item BD#101 - \$300,000 for the design, site preparation, and installation of a portable building. Fiscal year 2001-2002 includes item BD# 92 - \$350,000 to match the FY2000-2001 funds. The combined \$650,000 represents adequate funding for the completion of this neighborhood goal.

Next steps include formalizing the joint-use agreement between the City of San José and San José



“The Spot” at Bret Harte Middle School



Proposed location of the Neighborhood Center

Unified School District, as well as drafting preliminary designs for the center that take into account the results of the community survey administered PRNS staff. These plans will be presented to the community for feedback at a Neighborhood Advisory Committee meeting. This should occur before moving forward with the installation.

The desire for additional youth programming in the neighborhood has been made easier by the neighborhood survey administered by PRNS. In the summer of 2001, the Boys & Girls Club of Silicon Valley began offering youth programs targeted to the Hoffman / Via Monte neighborhood. This summer programming was a natural complement to the ARK and was run out of a classroom on the Pioneer High School campus. The Boys and Girls club will continue to offer programs for the neighborhood until the modular building is completed and open. At that time, programming options will be considered and may result in operating in tandem with PRNS at the new center. Additionally, staff should explore collaborating with the Smart Start program to help ensure that the young people in the neighborhood can have an enhanced opportunity for growth and engagement.

2. To discourage crime, increase police presence by expanding current community policing efforts, and address environmental design issues.

Timeframe:

Short term

Lead Department:

Police Department

Responsible departments/ entities:

PRNS; Police Department; Community Members

Action:

PRNS staff will be coordinating efforts with the Community Policing division of SJPD. Community members will be recruited to bring neighbors together for a community meeting that will help educate them on ways to report criminal activity and inform SJPD when problems occur so additional police patrols can be added to the appropriate locations/ times.

Environmental design refers to the physical layout and structures associated with the area, but primarily includes fencing, lighting, and landscaping. In both the Hoffman and Via Monte areas, there is existing landscaping, such as high bushes and trees with low branches, that reduce visibility in the neighborhood.

Lack of lighting, particularly in the private alleyways, also causes low visibility. Additionally, some properties contain high fences that are built to the alley, sometimes creating narrow paths between two of the fences. These narrow paths provide no visibility where the path intersects with other paths or the sidewalk. Lack of visibility in areas of the neighborhood creates unsafe areas for anti-social behavior and criminal activity to occur. It is likely that landscaping, fencing, and lighting improvements would help improve safety in the neighborhood.

PRNS will work together with Code Enforcement and SJPD to identify specific locations where environmental design improvements are needed. Tall fences and shrubs, narrow walkways, and other items that can hide deviant behavior will be brought to the attention of property owners, and suggestions for enhancements will be given to both property owners and tenants.

3. Maintain functioning lights in the alleyways.

Timeframe:

Short term (immediate) and ongoing

Lead Department/ Division:

PRNS (Neighborhood Services)

Responsible departments/ entities:

PRNS; Almaden Recreation Club Home Owners Association; Community Members

Action:

PRNS will help educate property owners and tenants on the correct contacts and procedures for reporting lights that are non-functional, and will re-establish contact between the property owners and PG&E.

4. Create and implement an alleyway architectural design that addresses safety and other concerns and improves appearance.



Current alleyway conditions on Carlsbad Drive

Lead Departments/ Divisions:

Public Works (Architecture) and Department of Transportation (Planning)

Timeframe:

Mid - Term

Responsible departments/ entities:

Public Works; Department of Transportation; Environmental Services Division; Redevelopment Agency; Planning, Building & Code Enforcement; Community Members

Action:

There are numerous neighborhood issues that could be addressed through a redesign of the

alleyways. Some of the main objectives are to provide enclosures for the dumpsters, increase lighting, and address drainage problems. Also, an alleyway design process could include evaluation of the existing parking configuration to determine if reconfiguration could provide additional parking stalls.

The Department of Public Works has designed preliminary plans for possible alleyway redesigns. These plans were presented to the community at the November 14, 2001 Neighborhood Advisory Committee meeting.

The community supports the general idea of alleyways improvements, and has made several comments that should be noted:

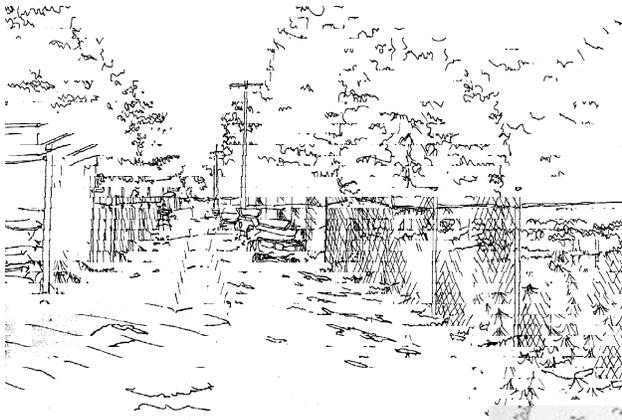
- ❑ Fencing material should avoid wood and encourage wrought iron fencing
- ❑ Everything should be done using the best materials. Using quality materials will help improvements last.
- ❑ Explore using spacing between block walls (in the bin enclosures) to allow for visibility.
- ❑ Place parameters on owners that ensure maintenance.
- ❑ Explore requiring shared dumpsters, and examine policies requiring 1 dumpster per apartment.
- ❑ Explore introducing CCNR's into areas that lack them.
- ❑ Look at forming a property owners association in the Southern Via Monte and Hoffman areas while doing these improvements.
- ❑ Utilize landscaping (i.e. bushes, ivy) to deter graffiti on hardscapes (block walls, bin enclosures)
- ❑ Offer incentives to form a property owner association such as cutting back on billing (trash billing, etc.)
- ❑ Consider that some properties have garage doors and the owners will not want to have their carports opened up.
- ❑ Determine how to waterproof and protect the carports if they are opened up.
- ❑ Incorporate additional lighting with bulbouts, especially at corner garage properties.
- ❑ Explore easements with Chris Hotts Park, other areas that may allow for additional space in alleyways.
- ❑ Consider any future changes to the waste removal service and, as such, seek the counsel of the Environmental Services Division.



***Existing conditions in alleyways (above)
Suggestions for improvements in alleyways (below)***



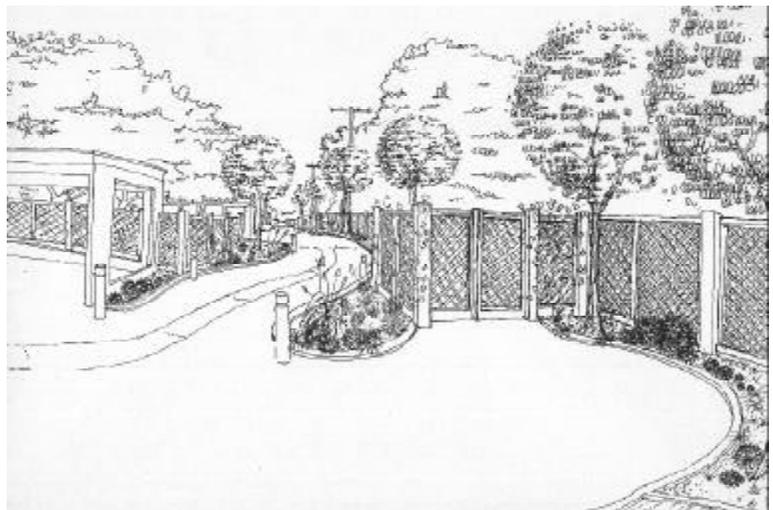
Implementation of the alleyway design would address the main objectives, but there would be additional opportunities to include in the implementation. Resurfacing and any grading work would provide an opportunity to resolve some of the issues relative to curb striping to help designate areas where parking is and is not allowed.



Existing conditions in alleyways



Two potential alleyway improvements, using alternative material types (above and below)

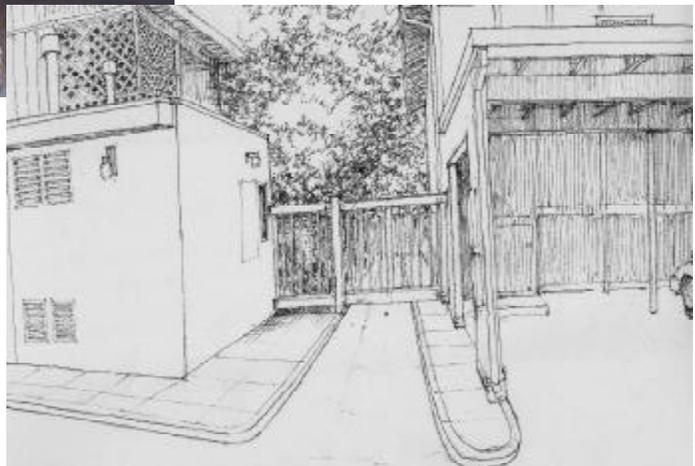




Existing conditions along pedestrian walkways and access points (above)
Suggested improvements for drainage and pedestrian safety (right)



Existing conditions at pedestrian access points (above)
Suggested improvements for visibility, security, and pedestrian safety (right)



5. Establish a joint towing agreement among property owners

Timeframe:

Short Term

Lead Departments/ Division:

PRNS (Neighborhood Services) and Police Department (Permits Unit)

Responsible departments/ entities:

Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services; Police Department; Community members

Action:

The purpose of a joint towing agreement is to facilitate the prompt towing of abandoned, non-operational, and improperly parked vehicles from the private alleyways. Due to City regulations relative to towing vehicles from private property, it is often confusing and expensive for each individual property owner to maintain a current and valid towing agreement with the City and the towing company. A joint towing agreement between many property owners in the area would reduce the cost for each property owner and establish a system for implementing towing more rapidly.

PRNS and SJPDP Towing Unit staff have been involved in educating property owners on the process and requirements for obtaining towing permits. Throughout the process, property owners have expressed an interest in forming a joint towing agreement that should help with parking issues that the community has expressed. Staff and the community should also work with the respective towing company to avoid penalizing residents on street sweeping days, currently the fourth Monday of each month.

The Almaden Recreation Club Property Owners Association recently formed a voluntary joint towing agreement. The successful implementation of this agreement has tremendous potential for serving as a model for the property owners who are outside of the association boundaries.

6. Explore the feasibility of joint beautification projects between property owners with a focus on improved landscaping.

Timeframe:

Short to mid Term

Lead Department/ Division:

PRNS (Neighborhood Services)

Responsible departments/ entities:

PRNS; Department of Housing; Almaden Recreation Club Property Owners Association; Community members

Action:

PRNS should coordinate efforts between property owners who are interested in improving the exterior of their units with improved landscaping. Staff should also work with the Almaden Recreation Club Property Owners Association to generate interest in projects that will beautify common areas within that part of the community.

PRNS coordinated a presentation to the NAC by the Department of Housing that focused on grants and loans available to property owners for improvements on their land. PRNS staff should also assist the Property Owners Association with grant requests and projects that help beautify the area, including but not limited to, CAP grants.



An example of a property in need of improved landscaping

Any joint landscaping projects should be executed with maintenance in mind. Property owners who would like to become part of a joint landscaping improvement project should be required to install irrigation, preferably on a timer. Community members have also expressed a desire for the City of San José to enforce the new blight ordinance requiring landscaping of property frontages.

7. Implement Neighborhood Watch.

Timeframe:

Short term

Lead Departments/ Divisions:

PRNS (Neighborhood Services) and Police Department (Crime Prevention Unit)

Responsible departments/ entities:

PRNS; Police Department, Community members

Action:

PRNS staff should work with concerned neighborhood residents and property owners and staff from the Crime Prevention Unit of the Police Department to re-educate the community on ways of reporting anti-social behavior without feeling threatened. Neighborhood watches should be re-established and strengthened in the neighborhood. Collaboration with CrimeStoppers, and informing the community of cash rewards associated with reporting criminal activity, will also help promote and encourage residents to become active in a neighborhood watch program.

8. Implement a Community Clean up event.

Timeframe:

Short term

Lead Department/ Division:

PRNS (Neighborhood Services)

Responsible departments/ entities:

PRNS; PBCE (Code Enforcement); Environmental Services Division

Action:

This item had been a high priority for the community prior to the summer. With the clean up that took place in June 2001, many NAC members expressed the desire to work on the completion of other projects that strengthen their neighborhood. However, the community would like to see another clean up scheduled for the neighborhood that would be more frequent than past scheduled clean ups. Smaller scale clean ups that are organized by residents and paid for, at least in part, through alternative funding sources, should be explored. In November 2001, the Neighborhood Advisory Committee, in partnership with the Almaden Recreation Club Home Owners Association, submitted a Community Action and Pride (CAP) grant to the City of San José for \$4500 to assist with a future community clean up.



Community members working at the June 2001 clean-up (above and below)



9. Expand front access to Pioneer High School, taking more cars off Blossom Hill Road during peak hours.

Timeframe:

Mid term

Lead Departments/ Divisions:

PRNS (Neighborhood Services)

Responsible departments/ entities:

PRNS; Pioneer High School; San José Unified School District; Department of Transportation

Action:

During peak demand, vehicles overload the existing “horseshoe” parking and drop off area. If determined necessary by the traffic study, the horseshoe could be expanded to provide additional parking and a more efficient and safe loading and unloading area for pedestrian drop-off.

The current proposal for expansion of the front access to Pioneer High School should be brought to the attention of SJUSD officials for review. PRNS should coordinate with DOT and SJUSD for further consideration and recommendation.

10. Perform a lighting assessment near the location of the proposed neighborhood center.

Timeframe:

Short term

Lead Department/ Division:

PRNS (Recreation)

Responsible departments/ entities:

PRNS; San José Unified School District

Action:

The placement of the neighborhood center on school property will necessitate additional lighting on school property, especially in the student parking area. PRNS staff should coordinate additional lighting in the parking area in tandem with plans for the neighborhood center. Should additional funding be needed to pay for lighting, NAC members should be prepared to request this in future fiscal cycles.

11. Explore public transportation issues at Pioneer High School.

Timeframe:

Short term

Lead Department/ Division:

PRNS (Neighborhood Services)

Responsible departments/ entities:

PRNS; San Jose Unified School District; Pioneer High School

Action:

The purpose of exploring public transportation issues at the school would be to determine ways to increase use of public transportation. PRNS should work with Pioneer High School's Parent Teacher Association to examine the current bus routes and stop placements near the school, with the goal of eventually providing a recommendation on possible relocation of some bus stops. Coordination with Department of Transportation and the Valley Transportation Authority is recommended.

12. Educate the community on the new shopping cart ordinance.

Timeframe:

Short term and Ongoing

Lead Department/ Division:

PBCE (Code Enforcement) and PRNS (Neighborhood Services)

Responsible departments/ entities:

PRNS; PBCE

Action:

PRNS staff, working with Code Enforcement, has completed a two-pronged approach to the issue of abandoned shopping carts. While the new ordinance banning shopping cart removal was emphasized to the community, staff also went out with detailed maps highlighting which areas tend to accumulate shopping carts. Area businesses and supermarkets were targeted, as were the two shopping cart retrieval services. In the process, staff discovered that the shopping cart service had hired new drivers who were not aware of the concentration of carts along the alleyways and certain streets. While this has lessened the eyesore, staff also recognizes that this will be an ongoing effort directed at making the neighborhood better.



Abandoned shopping carts contribute to blight.

13. Conduct a traffic study of the following streets:

- Blossom Hill Road near Pioneer High School
- Ayrshire Drive
- Mustang Drive
- Almaden Road

Timeframe:

Short term

Lead Department:

Department of Transportation

Action:

The purpose of the traffic study would be to determine how to address traffic congestion and safety during peak demand times, and to explore the feasibility of relocating the bus stop on Blossom Hill across from Pioneer High School with the goal of reducing congestion. The traffic study could also analyze the benefits of expanding and/or reconfiguring the “horseshoe” in front of the school. Pedestrian and vehicular safety near the school is another issue that could be addressed in the traffic study.

14. Strengthen the property owners association currently in place.

Timeframe:

Short term and ongoing

Lead Division:

PRNS (Neighborhood Services)

Responsible parties/ entities:

PRNS; Community members

Action:

SNI staff should coordinate speakers and offer additional tool sets that will strengthen and foster new collaborative efforts with the Almaden Recreation Club Property Owners Association.

15. Explore the formation of a neighborhood association.

Timeframe:

Short term

Lead Division:

PRNS (Neighborhood Services)

Responsible parties/ entities:

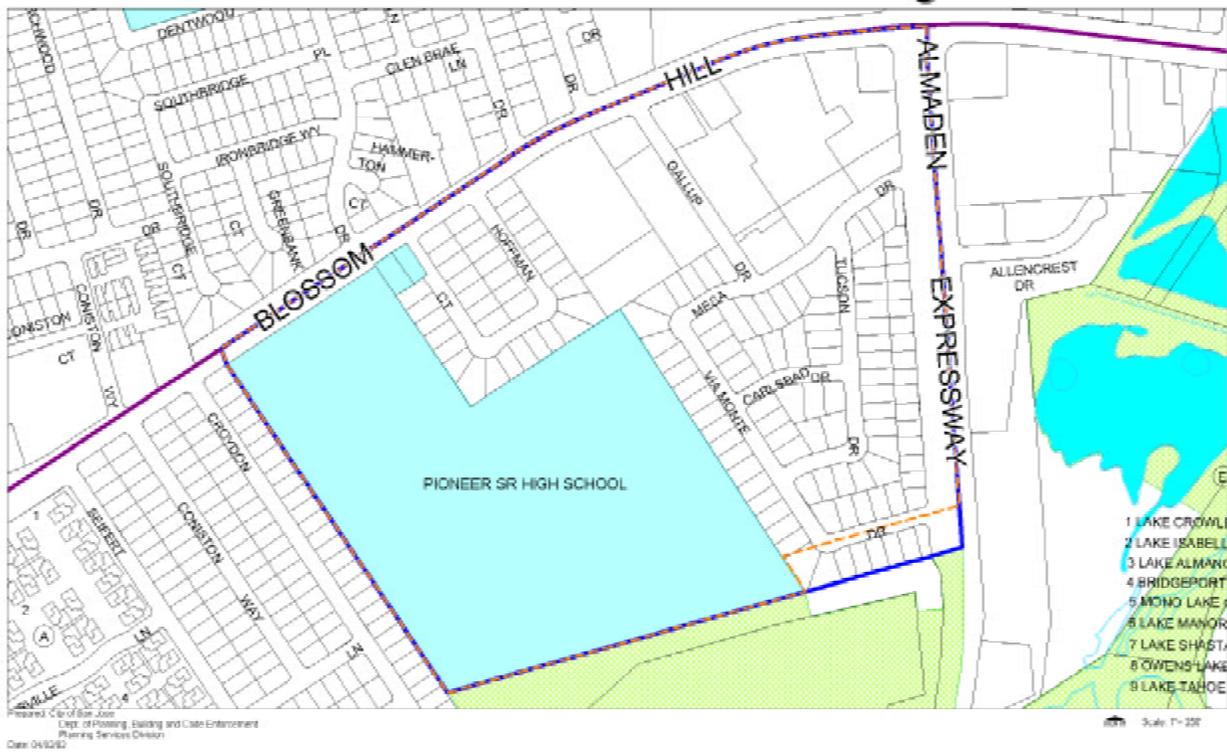
Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services, Community members

Action:

SNI staff should work with Neighborhood Advisory Committee members to build community leaders that live within the SNI boundaries. This effort should have the catalytic effect of fostering a stronger sense of community that encourages the formation of a Neighborhood Association. Potential support from the Neighborhood Development Center should be sought.

Hoffman/ Via Monte
 Strong Neighborhoods Initiative
 Planning Area
 Map 1

Hoffman/Via Monte SNI Planning Area



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

History

The Hoffman / Via Monte area is located within an area of San José that, until recently, had been part of rural Santa Clara County. The 1876 Santa Clara County Historical Atlas (Thompson & West) identifies the area as part of the San Juan Bautista Narvaez Rancho, lying immediately East of land owned by the Almaden Winery. The area was divided into three parcels with three owners.

At the turn of the century, the land had changed hands. By 1902, Santa Clara County land surveyor J.G. McMillan had recorded the existence of Almaden Road (Almaden Expressway today). Downer Ave ran east from Almaden Road, along the same route that Blossom Hill Road runs today. At Almaden Road, the road was known as Kooser Road, and ran West to Los Gatos. The naming of the roads reflected the then common practice of naming the land that abutted the road. Two of the larger parcels, owned by H.H. Kooser and H.H. Downer, eventually were developed into the present day Pueblo Plaza shopping center and four-plex units.

Turn of the century maps refer to the area as the Pioneer area, located just South of a small town known as Robertsville. Both were eventually annexed into the City of San José. A small school and the Pioneer Post Office were located near the present day intersection of Almaden Expressway and Blossom Hill Road. The area West of this and immediately East of Pioneer High School was subdivided into many smaller plots.

The majority of development in the area occurred in the 1960's. The Hoffman Court area was built in 1962, and the Via Monte Area was built in 1963. The Pueblo Plaza Shopping Center was built in phases, between 1965 and 1969. Pioneer High School, located within the Hoffman / Via Monte Strong Neighborhoods Initiative area, was established in 1960.

Land Use Characteristics

The Hoffman/Via Monte neighborhood consists of multi-family housing, a shopping center located at the intersection of Blossom Hill Road and Almaden Expressway, two community churches, and Pioneer High School. There are **508** residential dwelling units in the study area. All of the residential units are with-in four-plex buildings.

The commercial uses in the neighborhood are located in the Pueblo Plaza shopping center near the corner of Blossom Hill Road and Almaden Expressway, and on the corner of Gallup and Blossom Hill Road. Pueblo Plaza currently includes a drug-store, restaurants, video store, and other neighborhood serving retail uses. There is an auto parts and video rental store located in two buildings at the Northeastern corner of Gallup and Blossom Hill. A small neighborhood center consisting of donut and

bagel shops and telecommunications services is located at the Northwestern corner of Gallup and Blossom Hill.

Transportation Characteristics

A major arterial, Blossom Hill Road, and an expressway, Almaden Expressway, bound the Hoffman/Via Monte area. Direct access is provided from Blossom Hill to the Hoffman neighborhood via Hoffman Court. Access to the Via Monte neighborhood is provided via Gallup Drive to Blossom Hill, and via Mesa and Via Monte Drives to the Almaden Expressway.

Currently, the Valley Transportation Authority runs bus lines that serve bus stops on both Almaden Expressway and Blossom Hill Road. Bus Route 27 includes a bus stop near Pioneer High School and at the Pueblo Plaza Shopping center. Bus Route 64 includes a bus stop near Mesa Drive and Almaden Expressway and runs from the southern Almaden Valley to the Alum Rock area of San José. Bus Route 67 also includes bus stops near Mesa Drive and Almaden Expressway and runs from the Almaden Valley to the Tamien Light Rail station.

General Plan Designations and Zoning Districts

The General Plan land use designations and zoning in the Hoffman/Via Monte area generally mirror the existing pattern of development. Portions of the neighborhood that are zoned for high and medium density residential contain multi-family residential housing. Portions of the neighborhood that are designated in the General Plan as Regional and General Commercial contain uses that are compatible with those designations.

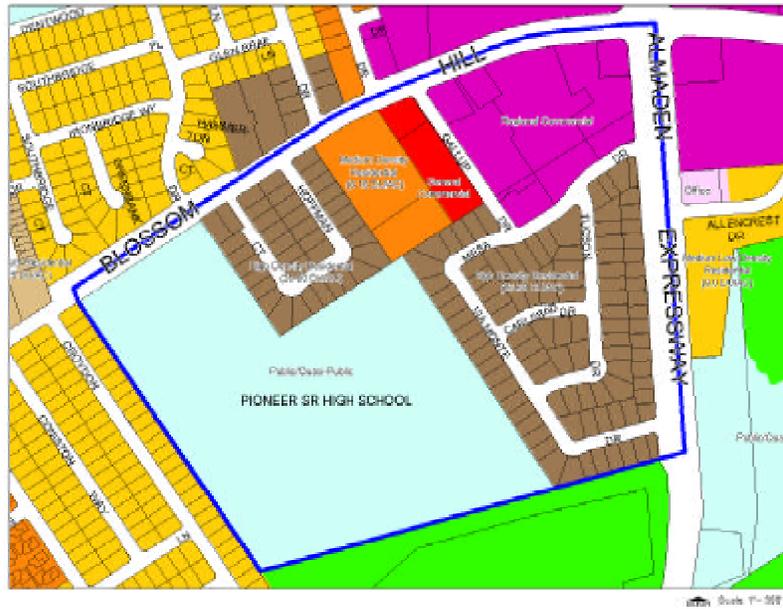
Property Ownership & Neighborhood Organizations

A very small portion of the property owners lives within the units. The remainder of the units are used as rental properties.

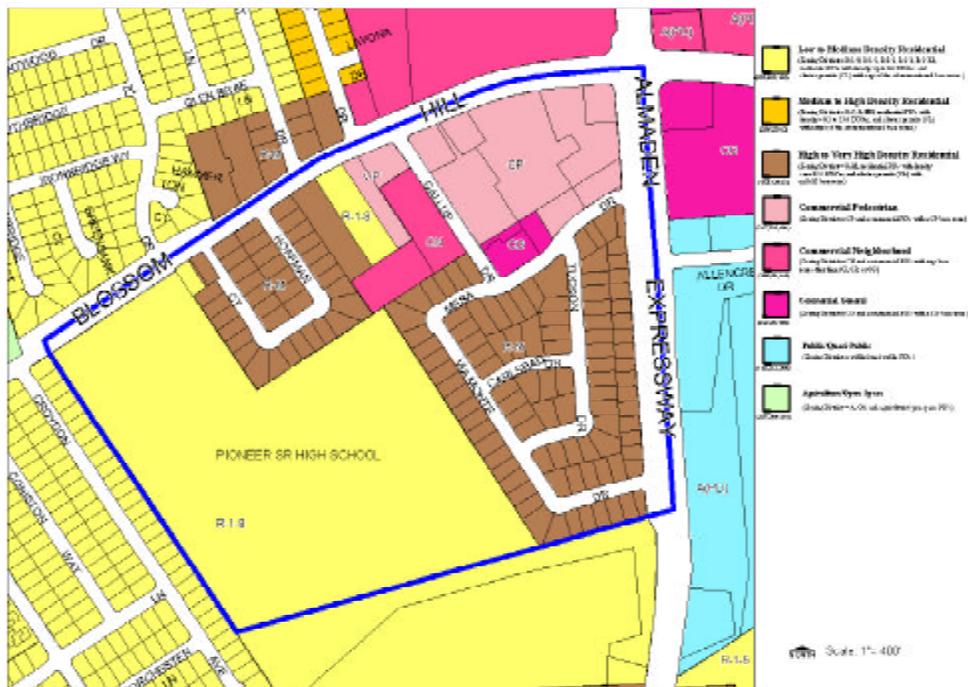
No formal neighborhood association for tenants exists within this Strong Neighborhoods area. Approximately one third of the properties participate in the Almaden Recreation Club Home Owners Association (ARC HOA). This association borders Mesa Drive to the North, Almaden Road to the East, Carlsbad Drive to the South, and the Via Monte alleyway to the West. The ARC HOA operates and maintains a pool and clubhouse for tenants of HOA members.

Most property owners within the Hoffman Via Monte SNI area own more than one four-plex unit. Many of these owners have owned the same units for several years. A large number of these owners live within the City of San José, and fully 80% of the property owners live in Santa Clara County.

Hoffman/ Via Monte
 Strong Neighborhoods Initiative
 General Plan
Map 2



Hoffman/ Via Monte
 Strong Neighborhoods Initiative
 Zoning
Map 3





Example of housing conditions on Via Monte Drive

Housing & Infrastructure Conditions

The housing in the neighborhood appears to be generally in fair to good condition, based on several windshield surveys of the area. There are a few properties that appear to be in poor condition based on exterior inspection, while there are also a few that appear to be in excellent condition.

Public Infrastructure

Overall, the public streets are in excellent condition, because most public streets were resurfaced in 2000. There are two streets in the neighborhood that will be resurfaced within the next two years. Hoffman Court is scheduled for resurfacing during the year 2001. Almaden Road, a frontage road that runs parallel to the Almaden Expressway, will be resurfaced during 2002 or 2003. Sidewalks, curbs and gutters are generally in good condition. There are some areas where the sidewalk has been raised or cracked by the roots of street trees.



The alleyway next to Chris Hotts Park

Private Infrastructure

The private alleys that extend behind Hoffman Court and most of the Via Monte neighborhood are mostly in poor condition due to cracking pavement, poor drainage, illegal dumping, abandoned vehicles, etc. These alleyways also lack clear and consistent markings that designate where vehicles can and cannot be parked. Some property owners are diligent about repainting these markings, while other properties lack any visible curb striping.



Alleyway next to Pioneer High School athletics field

Parks & Recreation

Greenprint

In 1999 the City of San José began an interdepartmental study of current assets and needs relative to parks and recreation uses throughout the City. The eventual 20-year plan became known and adopted as the City of San José Greenprint. The Greenprint speaks to a vision of how City services can be placed to accommodate the desire for more parks and recreational activities within the next 20 years. Each City Service Area (CSA) is broken out into capital action plans that will guide the placement and delivery of these goals.

Within CSA #10, and more specifically within the Hoffman/Via Monte Strong Neighborhoods Initiative Area, the Capital Action Plan calls for renovation and improvements of Pioneer High School property (specifically the athletic fields) and Santa Clara Valley Water District property behind Chris Hotts Park. These properties would then be utilized for district sports and recreation. Approximately \$1M is earmarked for this renovation, to take place between 2010 and 2020.

The Greenprint also calls for \$1.4 M to be spent on expansion of the creek trails in CSA#10, including the Guadalupe Creek Trail in the southern portion of this neighborhood. This expansion and connection to existing trails is planned to take place between 2005 and 2010.

Chris Hotts Park

Chris Hotts Park was built in 1998, in tribute to Christina Hotts, who was a tireless contributor to the quality of life for young people in the Almaden area. The park is approximately one half acre in size and is located in the South Eastern corner of the SNI area. The park has three picnic tables, a playground, and is absent bathrooms. The size of the park and its deliberate absence of parking reflect the desire to create the park specifically for the Hoffman/ Via Monte community.

The ARK

The ARK is an after school recreation program offered for youth in the Hoffman Via Monte neighborhood and operates out of a portable building placed on the parking lot of the Almaden Hills United Methodist Church. After school recreation is offered for elementary aged youth beginning at 3:00 every school day and is coordinated through the Parks & Recreation Division of the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department. At 5:00 PM this program ends, when an evening program geared towards teens is offered through the California Youth Outreach services. While many participants note the value of the ARK, they also quickly point out that the building is old, and its size inadequate to meet the service needs of the community.

Almaden Recreation Survey

In March of 2001, PRNS administered a survey in the Hoffman/Via Monte Neighborhood. The Survey team attempted to reach 284 individual apartments, or approximately 56% of the units within this SNI area.

A total of seven questions were asked of participants. These questions were aimed at gathering feedback into the types of programs community members wanted to see established within the neighborhood, and was accomplished by introducing the idea of a neighborhood center to the participant, then asking:

- 1) How many children are in your household?
- 2) What are their ages?
- 3) What type of activities would they like to do?
- 4) What times of the week would be the best time for participation?
- 5) How far would you be willing to travel for your children to participate in recreation?
- 6) Where would you like to see the youth center located?
- 7) Anything else you want to share?



Children's play area in Chris Hotts Park

Survey Results

Of the surveys administered, 144 households were reached and gave responses. The results showed that:

- 91% responded that they had children
- 9% responded that they did not have children
- 66 children were tallied as being under 6 years of age
- 84 children were of elementary school age (6 to 12 years)
- 77 children were aged 13 to 18

Of the activities that the respondents noted as ones that they would like to see offered in the area:

- 57.6% said that general recreational activities should be offered
- 47.2% responded that they would like to see sports programs offered
- 33% specifically mentioned football or soccer
- 23.6% asked that skateboarding be offered to young people
- Respondents also requested other activities that include theatre, scooters, games, crafts, computers, music, painting, dolls, and coloring.



Front entrance of the ARK

When asked about which times and days would be best to offer these activities,

- 43.7% said that afternoons, until about 8:00 PM, were the best time to offer the activities
- 42.4% said that week-ends would be a good time for these activities
- 37.5% asked to have programs offered from 7:00 AM until 8:00 PM
- 50% felt that the programs should be offered five days a week
- 34% wanted to see Saturday programming
- 25% wanted youth programs offered seven days a week

All respondents indicated that they would prefer the programs be offered within walking distance (under 1 mile)

When asked about a preferred location,, the respondents indicated:

- "The pool" (Almaden Recreation Club) as a good location by 61 households (42.3%)
- 38.2% said that the Pioneer High School campus was a good location
- The ARK was identified by 34.1% of households
- 26.4% mentioned the Pueblo Plaza Shopping Center as a possible location.
- 23.6% pointed out Chris Hotts park as another possible location for holding youth activities

It should be noted that while the community survey showed a strong desire to locate a neighborhood center and programming at the pool as a favorite location, when community members, City staff, and members of the Almaden Recreation Club Home Owners Association met to explore this possibility, the size of the pool area made locating a building and/or programming there difficult. The second choice, located within the Pioneer High school area, proved to be more feasible. Community support for the second choice has allowed City staff to begin discussions with San José Unified School District on the design and installation of a neighborhood center that would offer youth programming.

Criminal Activity

Reported crime in the Hoffman Via Monte area was reduced through neighborhood efforts coordinated through Project Crackdown. The program brought residents and property owners together in mid-1990 and educated them on ways to work together to report and combat criminal activity. Criminal activity in the area continues to remain stable even after Project Crackdown coordination was no longer needed.

Lighting

Property owners have worked together to have additional lighting installed within the alleyways in the area. While street lighting is maintained by the City of San José, alleyway lighting is maintained under service contract with PG&E. Each property realizes a \$5.00 monthly surcharge for maintenance of these lights. Property owners will note that occasionally PG&E falls behind in replacing burnt out and broken lights.

The majority of requests for additional lighting in the neighborhood focus on the parking lot of Pioneer High School. The student parking lot, located in the rear of the school and fronted on two sides by four-plexes, has no lighting and tops the list of locations that community members mention as needing additional lighting.

Pioneer High School Master Plan

In 2000, Pioneer High School completed a master plan for the possible redesign and redevelopment of its athletic fields. The plans call for maximizing the use of field space at Pioneer so that a regional soccer and sports complex can be developed, encompassing as many as seven soccer fields in the plan; to be used by school and community groups. An initial walk through of the school campus identified the area known as the “old agricultural studies area” as an ideal location for a modular neighborhood building. Subsequent discussions with staff from San José Unified School District identified that location as a possible future soccer field, but did identify an adjacent, unused area due East of the rear student parking lot as an alternative location for possible joint City/School District use.

Neighborhood Assets

Neighborhood assets can be characteristics, organizations, places, and/or people within the community and are generally things that the community would like to preserve, maintain and enhance. Neighborhood assets such as community organizations and institutions can also be vital resources that can assist with the development and implementation of the neighborhood's plan for revitalization. Following are the neighborhood assets identified by the community.

- **Almaden Recreation Club Home Owners Association**

Approximately one-third of the units in the Hoffman/Via Monte area are within the boundary of the Via Monte Property Owner's Association. This association began with the intent to coordinate efforts and communication between the property owners of the area. The association is headed by property owners who serve volunteer terms of office, and has several paid staff who help maintain facilities and properties, especially the pool and recreation club owned and operated by the association.

- **Almaden Recreation Club**

Operated by the Via Monte Property Owners Association, this club is often identified as an asset to the community as one of the few places where the youth in the neighborhood can go to cool off in the summertime, and where residents feel safe sending their children. Located at the corner of Mesa and Gallup drives, the club is only open to residents who live in the units located within the Via Monte Property Owners Association (about one third of all the residents).

- **Almaden Hills United Methodist Church**

Although a church with a regional congregation, the church recognizes the dynamic needs within the community and attempts to address those needs through a variety of programs, including the ARK after school recreation program. The Almaden Hills United Methodist Church, built in 1964, also serves as a rotating men's shelter and hosts a variety of community events, including a health and community fair that targets the neighborhood and offers free health services and advice.

- **Cornerstone Community Church**

Located on Gallup drive and built in 1971, the original use of the building was that of a movie theater. The theatre was eventually converted to a regional church.

- **Pioneer High School**

Pioneer High School has a student population of approximately 1200 students, taught by about 65 teachers and 30 support staff. It participates in a Science Magnet within the San José Unified School District. The campus is part of modernization occurring throughout the school district. Regional recreational use has been identified through a master plan (previously noted).

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges:

- There are some four-plexes that are not well maintained, landscaped, and managed.
- Nearly all of the units are renter-occupied, and there is turnover of tenants.
- There are few owner-occupants, which may contribute to instances of deferred property maintenance and other property management issues.
- Tenants and property owners are concerned about anti-social behavior in their neighborhood (e.g. gangs, graffiti, juvenile mischief, drug dealing).
- There are limited recreational opportunities for youths, adults, and seniors.
- There are no existing Neighborhood Watch programs that engage residents in deterring anti-social behavior and criminal activity in the neighborhood. Neighborhood watches had been started in the past but are no longer active.

Opportunities:

- There are long-term renters living in the neighborhood who are interested in participating in neighborhood improvement projects.
- Long-term property owners know each other, and many of the four-plexes have been owned by the same owner for 20+ years.
- Many property owners own more than one four-plex. This can make for an easier transition to a consistent and clear focus of priorities and programs offered.
- There may be property owners and/or property managers who would participate in and benefit from the City's Project Blossom Property Owners training program to learn better property management skills.
- Residents and property owners are genuinely interested in seeing an increase in police presence in the neighborhood. The interest level can serve as a catalyst to bring other interested community members in the neighborhood together.
- There are two existing formal recreational programs: the ARK at the Almaden Hills United Methodist Church, and the Boys and Girls Club of Silicon Valley, recently introduced into the neighborhood. Informally, the Almaden Recreation Club offers a pool and clubhouse for use by residents whose property owners participate in the Property Owners Association.

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Kris Bhola
Merriam Broumas
Julia Cruz
Josephine DeMalta
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Karl Harris
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Mayor and City Council

Mayor Ron Gonzales
Linda LeZotte, District 1
Forrest Williams, District 2
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George Shirakawa, Jr., District 7
David D. Cortese, District 8
John Diquisto, District 9
Pat Dando, District 10

City Manager's Office

Del Borgsdorf, City Manager
Mark Linder, Assistant City Manager
Jim Holgersson, Deputy City Manager

Neighborhood Team

Juanita Baca, Code Enforcement Division
Lt. Richard Calderon, Police Department
Jim Cogan, Council District 10
Emily Eggleston, City Manager's Office
Robert Fitzsimons, Parks and Recreation
Brenton Lee, Neighborhood Services
Erin Mayer, Planning
Liz Ortiz, Neighborhood Services
Paul Pereira, Neighborhood Services
Suzanne Rostamizadeh, Library
Juaquina Twidwell, Redevelopment Agency

Department of Planning, Building, & Code Enforcement

Stephen M. Haase, Director
Joseph Horwedel, Deputy Director
Laurel Prevetti, Acting Deputy Director
Patricia Colombe, Principal Planner
Michael Brilliot, Senior Planner
Jamie Matthews, Code Enforcement Administrator

Department of Parks, Recreation & Neighborhood Services

Albert Balagso, Acting Director
Joe Mosley, Acting Deputy Director
Mario Maciel, Community Services Supervisor
Dick Busse, Parks & Recreation

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