



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Councilmember Johnny Khamis

**SUBJECT: SAFE COMMUNITIES  
MULTI-HOUSING PILOT PROGRAM**

**DATE:** September 18, 2017

Approved

Date

9/18/17

**COUNCIL DISTRICT: 10**

## RECOMMENDATION

Accept the final report of the one-year Safe Communities Multi-Family Housing Pilot Program in the Hoffman-Via Monte area with the following additions:

1. Request that the City Manager, as part of the 2018-2019 budget process, identify funding to expand the educational work conducted by the SJPD Crime Prevention Unit so that they may continue to engage with residents in the Hoffman-Via Monte neighborhood and other neighborhoods with similar challenges.
2. Request that the City Manager have PRNS identify funding for a community organizer, either through San José BEST grant program or through a different funding source, to bolster civic engagement within the Hoffman-Via Monte neighborhood so that this pilot program has a lasting effect.
3. Direct the City Manager to have Code Enforcement continue to engage with property owners through warning letters and hearings to create an environment where property owners are encouraged to interact with their tenants about neighborhood problems.
4. Since Hoffman-Via Monte continues to be a gang hot spot, as recognized by the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force, direct the City Manager to have PRNS explore the possibility of having annual Viva Parks events at Chris Hotts Park so neighbors can grow to know each other better, becoming more confident and empowered to tackle the challenges going on in the neighborhood.
5. Request that the City Manager have the Housing Department keep a high priority on the neighborhood gaining its own meeting space within the upcoming low-income development on the two City-owned lots at Gallup and Mesa.
6. Request that the City Manager have the SJPD explore extending the pilot with My90 or initiate a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the functionality My90 provided in confidentially communicating with residents about meeting opportunities and engaging with residents about neighborhood problems.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Safe Communities Pilot Program began in June 2016 after two years of organizing the property owners and regular attempts to organize the tenants. Our monthly meetings with property owners involved the entire neighborhood of 133 buildings, and our average attendance at our meetings was 25 owners. The topics for these meetings included presentations by Code Enforcement, a rental property attorney, property management, education on rental control regulations, and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design.

District 10 staff also attended monthly Almaden Recreation Club (ARC) meetings to support the efforts of the ARC Board of Directors to improve neighborhood safety. The ARC is the homeowners' association that covers 51 buildings which make up 38% of the Hoffman Via Monte neighborhood. The ARC Board tackled reconfiguring how garbage is collected among their HOA properties, they hired armed security during targeted hours, obtained the agreement of several owners who volunteered to install security cameras, created new Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs) for their members, changed towing companies, posted new towing signs, and repainted fire lanes.

Simultaneously, while organizing the property owners, District 10 staff attempted to organize the residents. The Blossom Neighborhood Association was formed with a property owner volunteering to be its first president. Association officer positions were filled, except for treasurer. Few tenants attended the six, monthly, scheduled meetings throughout the year. Blossom Neighborhood Association submitted and was awarded a grant request for \$1,600.00 from the United Neighborhoods of Silicon Valley. Unfortunately, the association was never able to take advantage of this grant due to lack of a treasurer and bank account.

Once the Safe Communities Pilot Program started, tenants became interested in attending meetings presented by Crime Prevention staff. They were introduced to the National Night Out event, child safety tips, Neighborhood Watch techniques and a four-week crime prevention "Safety Talks" series. Since the neighborhood does not have a community space to hold meetings, our meetings were held at Almaden Hills United Methodist Church and at Menlo Church.

My90, a confidential service to improve communication with residents, was helpful in reminding residents when meetings were occurring. In addition to canvassing the neighborhood with flyers about upcoming events, MY90 used their texting capabilities to remind residents about meetings on the day preceding the meeting, which helped improve attendance.

The SJPD also engaged with the neighborhood through community policing. Officers walked the neighborhood and engaged with neighborhood children, playing basketball and soccer, for example. Over several months, our police officers built trust with residents, and saw an increase in calls for service and crime reporting.

Safe Communities has become invaluable in peaking tenants' interest in neighborhood safety. The program also introduced key City resources to residents and included important education on the SJPD's policies on immigration, employment, and opportunities for their children.

### **ANALYSIS**

The Hoffman Via Monte neighborhood has made great strides in building trust with the police and in becoming more empowered, but they continue to struggle with high crime rates, gang activity, absentee property owners, illegal dumping, homeless encampments, and blight. The neighborhood has undergone several City initiatives in the past, like the Safe Neighborhoods Initiative (SNI), and has seen improvements such as conversion of streetlights to LEDs major park renovations at the neighborhood park, Chris Hotts Park, Council-district-sponsored dumpster clean up days, and Beautiful Day projects.

One of the main reasons this neighborhood has not been able to become more self-sufficient is the lack of interest in a minority of property owners in becoming responsible landlords. We must continue to engage with property owners and utilize active code enforcement to hold disengaged or irresponsible property owners accountable for the condition of their properties.

Safe Communities has made a huge difference in empowering residents to address the challenges facing the neighborhood. The three Viva Parks events throughout the year were very effective in getting residents out of their units to interact with one another. The neighborhood has been infused with hope for the future and it is incumbent that we continue our efforts and not give up on a low income neighborhood that is now well-prepared to continue improving neighborhood safety. We have recently identified neighborhood leaders who are now willing to step up in leadership positions of the Blossom Neighborhood Association, so it is important that we keep up the forward momentum and lend support to these emerging leaders.