



Memorandum

TO: NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES **FROM:** Jon Cicirelli
AND EDUCATION
COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: Neighborhoods Association **DATE:** January 27, 2025
Engagement Model

Approved

Date:

2/6/2025

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the status report on the implementation and progress of the Neighborhood Association Engagement Model.

BACKGROUND

In spring 2024, City Council approved sunsetting the Neighborhoods Commission and transitioning to the Neighborhood Association Engagement Model¹. During the 2024-2025 budget process, a new staff position was added to the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department (PRNS) to facilitate the implementation of a new neighborhood engagement strategy. The Neighborhoods Association Engagement Model has three pillars:

1. The Foundational Model – *Neighborhood Association Forums*. This Foundational Model component includes the creation of a quarterly Neighborhood Association Forum facilitated by PRNS. The Forums will provide neighborhood associations with a centralized venue to learn about City resources, as well as seek support in accessing the resources they need;
2. Expanded Model – *Neighborhoods Support Team* - This component of the Engagement Model includes the creation of a new Neighborhood Support Team with dedicated PRNS staff called Neighborhood Navigators. The Neighborhood Navigators will equip neighborhood associations with the tools and connection they need to effectively address complex issues and leverage City resources; and

¹ Neighborhood Association and Engagement Model Status Report:

<https://sanjoseca.primegov.com/Portal/viewer?id=0&type=7&uid=7cf95874-0681-4cc6-a231-90466744d842>

3. *Neighborhood Services Advisory Group* - This expanded Model component also includes the establishment of a new Neighborhood Services Advisory Group. This would provide a venue for participants to weigh in on relevant issues in the community and gives participants a venue for driving action. Would create a Neighborhood Advisory Group highlighting the positive outcomes that the group will achieve, such as improved community safety, knowledge of city resources, and increased resident empowerment.

For 2024-2025, the initial focus of the Neighborhoods Association Engagement Model is the implementation of the first pillar, known as the Foundational Model. The implementation of the Foundational Model aligns with the resources that were budgeted for the current fiscal year. The Foundational Model includes the continuation of the Annual Neighborhoods Conference, and the addition of quarterly Neighborhood Association Forums. The Forums are designed to provide neighborhood associations with a centralized venue to learn about City resources and provide input to City administration on quality-of-life issues that impact neighborhood livability. Additionally, the Forums will provide an opportunity for neighborhood associations to learn and share best practices with one another and facilitate two-way communication between City Departments and neighborhoods.

ANALYSIS

The Neighborhoods Commission was sunset at the end of fiscal year 2023-2024 as staff began the transition to the Neighborhood Association Engagement Model. This new Model incorporates internal and external strategies for service delivery, such as internal cross-departmental collaboration and aligning internal neighborhood engagement programs such as Project Hope² with the current approach to neighborhood engagement. Staff is focused on implementing the first pillar of the new Neighborhood Association Engagement Model, which focuses on better engaging with neighborhood leaders through forums to address the key issues listed below:

- Capacity Building-neighborhood associations have expressed they need more City resources, so they have the training, funds, and knowledge they need to lead their associations effectively;
- Issue Support-neighborhood associations indicated that community members often struggle to navigate various City services to get their issues resolved in a timely manner;
- Connectivity-neighborhood associations cited a lack of consistent avenues to connect with other neighborhood associations, and when opportunities to connect

² Project Hope website: <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/parks-recreation-neighborhood-services/programs-activities/project-hope>

are created, neighborhood association leaders benefit greatly from shared knowledge and resources;

- Two-Way Communication- neighborhood associations expressed the lack of formalized venues for information sharing and feedback with the City, and individuals expressed concern that they rarely hear updates or receive follow-up when they do engage with the City; and
- Advising-neighborhood associations expressed that there should still be a forum or channel through which community perspectives can be elevated on key issues.

In October 2024, the Neighborhood Engagement Team hosted the 2nd Annual Neighborhood Conference at City Hall. This year's conference and breakout sessions centered around the theme of *"Neighborhoods are the Heart of San Jose."* The conference was attended by 250 neighborhood leaders, residents, and community partners. As part of the Conference activities, conference participants were invited to vote on the workshops for future quarterly forums. The three areas with the most votes are listed below:

1. Connectivity/Public Safety: San José Police Department; Connecting neighborhoods to one another so they can build community relations with partners, learn from each other, and strengthen self-efficiency;
2. Advising: Strengthening Your Neighborhood Association; Facilitating formalized processes and discussions for Neighborhood Associations to make recommendations on City policy and budget decisions and gain experience based on what others have learned; and
3. Advising: How to best communicate with city/elected officials; Use knowledge gained based on past experiences by city staff and former community leaders to increase the lines of communication.

The quarterly Forums will allow staff the opportunity to engage with resident leaders in solution-oriented conversations and foster productive discussions between community members and City officials and staff. Moreover, this collaborative approach will allow City staff to work in partnership with neighborhoods to address both simple and complex issues that impact neighborhood livability.

The shift to this model has allowed PRNS to engage with more neighborhoods, expand engagements with neighborhood associations, reduce obstacles to participation, and enable a more cohesive approach to providing services. In the end, the model has allowed the City to effectively support and empower neighborhood associations. The shift to this model has empowered PRNS to connect with a wider range of neighborhoods, including Project Hope, fostering deeper relationships with existing neighborhood associations

Additionally, this year, to better align resources for more impact, the Project Hope program transitioned to the Neighborhood Association Engagement team to help increase overall neighborhood engagement efforts. Project Hope is an initiative aimed at improving the quality of life in specified San José communities by supporting the development of neighborhood associations in underserved areas impacted by crime, blight, and violence. Currently, the program operates in nine (9) neighborhoods across the City of San José.

Project Hope is currently active in nine San José Council District (CD) neighborhoods:

- Cadillac Winchester (CD1)
- Guadalupe Washington (CD3)
- Roundtable (CD2)
- McKinley Bonita (CD3)
- Foxdale (CD5)
- Poco Way (CD5)
- Mclaughlin Area Tenants (MAT) (CD7)
- Welch Park (CD8)
- Hoffman Via Monte (CD10)

Project Hope's objectives aim to enhance the Neighborhood Association Engagement Model by:

- Establishing sustainable and organized groups of community leaders;
- Promoting safer and cleaner neighborhoods;
- Empowering residents with the knowledge and resources to effectively access City services; and
- Building community partnerships to support ongoing initiatives.

Project Hope has consistently developed new community leaders while enhancing residents' understanding of City services and supporting neighborhood blight reduction efforts. Through extensive experience and strong relationships with neighborhood leaders and residents, the program is well-positioned to further empower residents with greater access to resources and City services via this neighborhood engagement model.

Below is the Neighborhoods Association Engagement Model workplan for 2024-2025

Table 1.
2024/2025 Neighborhood Association Engagement Model Implementation Plan

Timeline	Expected Outcomes and Activities
July 2024 – September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hired Program Manager to lead the Neighborhood Association Model ▪ Sunset the Neighborhoods Commission ▪ Develop 2024-2025 Neighborhoods Association Engagement Model workplan
October 2024 – December 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ October 2024 - Held Annual Neighborhoods Conference ▪ Transitioned Project Hope to the Neighborhood Engagement Team
January 2025 – March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public Safety Neighborhoods Forum – Saturday, January 25, 2025, at Roosevelt Community Center 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. ▪ Strengthening Your Neighborhood Associations Forum – March 2025, at Kirk Community Center 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
April 2025 – June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communicating with city/elected officials Neighborhoods Forum, June 2025, Location: TBD, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. ▪ Plan for 2025 Annual Neighborhood Conference (October)

PRNS has a long-standing commitment to engage with and support neighborhood associations and neighborhood groups. The newly established Neighborhood Association Engagement Model seeks to strengthen the collaboration between the City and neighborhood associations/groups to ensure that residents and neighborhood leaders have an opportunity to:

1. Collaborate with the City and advocate for the needs of neighborhood associations, and
2. Integrate the perspectives of neighborhood associations into the City of San José solution-based approach to solving problems. The implementation of pillars beyond the foundational model is based on the addition of new resources. PRNS will continue to focus on the implementation of the foundational model for 2025-2026.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This memorandum will be posted on the City's Neighborhood Services and Education Committee Agenda website for the February 13, 2025. The information in this memorandum is informed by community engagement from approximately 250 residents at the October 2024 Annual Neighborhoods Conference.

COORDINATION

This memorandum was coordinated with the City Attorney's Office and the City Manager's Budget Office.

/s/
Jon Cicirelli
Director of Parks,
Recreation and Neighborhood Services

For questions, please contact Olympia Williams, Deputy Director, Community Services Division, Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department, at olympia.williams@sanjoseca.gov or (408) 793-4162.

The principal author of this memorandum is Aurelia Bailey, Interim Division Manager, Community Services Division, Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department. For questions, please contact aurelia.bailey@sanjoseca.gov or (408) 535-3540.