

City of Oceanside – Neighborhood Services Department

**CALLE MONTECITO NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION PROGRAM
Ten-Year Evaluation and Performance Review**

A. Original (1998) Statement of Problem/Need

Neighborhood Description

The Calle Montecito neighborhood, located in the Mesa Margarita community of Oceanside, is comprised of about 400 households. It was qualified as a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) eligible area as the result of a door-to-door survey conducted in 1997. The survey revealed that 90% of households are low- and moderate-income, and that the average household size is over five persons. The housing stock is primarily multi-family rental units and owner-occupied duplexes. Included in the neighborhood are the following streets: Calle Montecito, Calle Vallecito, Calle Las Positas, Calle Solimar, Calle Los Santos, Calle Estrella, and Calle Mariposa. There is one elementary school in the neighborhood and one park (Libby Lake Park), which serves as a flood detention basin during seasons of heavy rain. There are no community facilities in the neighborhood. A 7-11 convenience store that served the neighborhood has been abandoned and is boarded up.

According to police reports, this area has a higher level of crime, drug- dealing, and gang activity than other neighborhoods in the area. Many of the duplexes are in deteriorated conditions, and at least eight are boarded up. One larger apartment complex is poorly maintained and seriously overcrowded; the complex is known to house gang members and is occasionally used as “safe houses” for the transportation of undocumented workers from Mexico and Central America.

Partners for Healthy Neighborhoods (PHN), a collaboration of non-profit social service and health organizations, public agencies and neighborhood residents, completed a survey of Calle Montecito residents. The survey included 100 questions to assess quality of life issues such as health care, social services, neighborhood environment (housing, services, etc.), education, economic development, and cultural activities. Through the survey PHN was able to identify and prioritize community needs. The major problems identified were gangs, crime, speeding traffic, deteriorating physical infrastructure, overcrowded and blighted housing, and lack of a local market and post office.

Project Description

The **Calle Montecito Neighborhood Revitalization Project** (the “Project”) is a public-private partnership to comprehensively address the social problems and physical deterioration of this blighted neighborhood. The Project will involve neighborhood residents in the design and implementation of the revitalization plans. This project is a collaborative effort involving Partners for Healthy Neighborhoods, the newly formed residents association (Libby Lake Neighborhood Association), Community Housing of North County, and the City of Oceanside’s Housing, Community Services, Building, and Police Departments.

Project Goal and Objectives

Goal:

To significantly improve the quality of life in the Calle Montecito neighborhood by implementing a comprehensive revitalization project in coordination with residents, community-based organizations, service providers and the City.

Objectives:

1. Street improvements: resurface streets, construct new sidewalks, install better street and open space lighting, improve parkway and public area landscaping, and improve circulation and signage for vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
2. Housing rehabilitation: fund approximately fifteen loans for rehabilitation of owner-occupied, single-family homes and duplexes.
3. Homeownership: Provide approximately fifteen loans for acquisition and rehabilitation of single-family homes and duplexes. An effort will be made to rehabilitate and sell 8 boarded-up homes to low-income homebuyers. Homebuyer education and counseling will be provided.
4. Public safety: Establish a Police Resource Center with comprehensive programming; assign two new public safety officers to the neighborhood; initiate a community watch program; provide a "safe-walk home" program for children and seniors.
5. Code enforcement: Enhance code enforcement through campaigns to remove inoperable vehicles, illegal structures, and discarded items.
6. Overcrowded apartments: Work in cooperation with the owner of Lake Park Manor, a 168-unit apartment building, to relieve overcrowded and substandard living conditions.
7. Community facilities: Acquire and rehabilitate the boarded-up convenience store building for use as a community facility and/or daycare center. Improve Libby Lake Park and redevelop Boys and Girls Club site for expanded community facilities and services.
8. Economic development: Provide opportunities for unemployed residents to obtain job training, counseling, and placement assistance. Attract neighborhood retail services to within one-half mile of Calle Montecito.
9. Neighborhood organizing: Provide funding for neighborhood organizing and volunteer involvement efforts coordinated by Community Housing of North County. Activities to include clean-up and graffiti removal, peer-based education program on community services, community handbook, and leadership training.
10. Public Services: Expand programming for youth at the Boys and Girls Club site; increase awareness and access to health services; establish a childcare program.

Strategy:

The City plans to submit a request to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to designate the Calle Montecito neighborhood as a "neighborhood revitalization strategy area". This designation will give the City greater flexibility in its use of CDBG funding. The City is also considering a Section 108 Guaranteed Loan Program application for \$1 million, which will enable the City to complete the revitalization in 2-3 years rather than 5-6 years. The more intensive time frame will enable the revitalization project to have a synergistic impact and address all of the social, economic, and physical problems in a comprehensive manner.

The revitalization project meets a number of the City's high priority needs as identified in the Consolidated Plan, including: small and large family rental housing (affordability, physical defects, and overcrowding); owner-occupied housing (physical defects); public facility needs (neighborhood facilities); infrastructure improvement (street and sidewalks); public services needs (youth services, employment training, health services); and code enforcement.

The Oceanside City Council approved the Project in 1998 as an amendment to the City's Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development and allocated \$15,000 of HOME funds for the initial revitalization study.

B. History / Chronology of Events and Activities

C. Outcomes after Ten Years

The City contracted with Community Housing of North County (now Community HousingWorks) in 1998 to prepare a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area plan for the Calle Montecito/Libby Lake neighborhood. The plan included specific benchmarks by which to measure progress; these benchmarks were based on the original goal and objectives for the Project as determined by residents. Benchmarks evolved over the period of Project implementation with some being completed, others adapted and new ones added; a few were not completed for a variety of reasons. The City reported on the outcomes and progress on meeting objectives in the Comprehensive Annual Performance Evaluation Report (CAPER) submitted to HUD at the end of each CDBG program year.

Following is a list of the original (1998) benchmarks; changes, additions and results are shown in *italics*.

Public Safety

1. Acquire (by 10/1/98) and rehabilitate (by 3/30/99) the abandoned 7-11 commercial building at the corner of Calle Montecito and North River Road (301 Calle Montecito).

An abandoned convenience store at the entrance to the neighborhood, representative of the decline the neighborhood had experienced, was purchased by the City in June 1999 at a cost of \$142,718. CDBG funds were

used for the acquisition and renovation of the building into a Community Resource Center to serve the neighborhood.

2. Open a community resource center staffed by two community safety assistants by 4/1/99.

The Community Resource Center, operated by the City Housing and Neighborhood Services Department in collaboration with Partners for Healthy Neighborhoods, opened in late 1999. The resource center provided a neighborhood site at which residents could obtain information and services from health and social service agencies, and was the site for a drop-in after school program. The Center provided a base for community involvement, providing the opportunity for community members to learn organizational and leadership skills through service providers, and to meet with neighbors and City representatives to address problems in the community.

3. Establish a "Community Watch" Program" and "Safe Walk Home" program for children and seniors by 1/1/99.

The resident association operates as an informal public safety watch program to report suspicious activity to the Neighborhood Policing Team. Residents also report concerns at the meetings of the resident association.

4. Establish an anonymous crime-reporting program by 7/1/99.

The Oceanside Police Department established a community policing program in 1999 called the Neighborhood Enhancement Teamwork (N.E.T. Work) Program, which involved sworn officers together with staff from the Building and Code Enforcement, Planning and Housing Departments of the City. These teams started work in the Calle Montecito neighborhood to address the issues in a comprehensive manner. Residents could leave information about neighborhood issues and criminal activity at the newly-opened community resource center for officers and other City staff.

Resident Organization

1. Establish a community organization and train 6 block leaders by 12/31/98.

The Libby Lake Neighborhood Association meets regularly – at least once each quarter – at the Libby Lake Community Center for discussion of neighborhood issue sand planning for events. Neighborhood Police Team officers and Code Enforcement officers attend these meetings to hear resident concerns and to report on public safety activities in the area.

2. Develop a community handbook by 6/30/99.

This project did not develop. City staff persons at the resource center provide information and referrals for residents.

3. Perform clean-up programs once a quarter and incorporate an on-going graffiti removal program beginning 7/1/98.

The resident association has sponsored regular clean-ups in the area in partnership with the City. A small group of neighborhood volunteers in partnership with a local church does a weekly clean-up at Libby Lake Park;

their goal is to maintain the park as a positive place for the residents and to reduce the influence or impact of youth gang members by promoting positive programs and activities.

The City sponsored two one-day volunteer-based neighborhood improvement programs (S.U.N. 2006 and S.U.N. 2007) in the neighborhood to paint homes, remove trash and debris, clean up Libby Lake Park and eliminate graffiti throughout the neighborhood. The City repaired broken sidewalks and installed artificial turf between curbs and sidewalks. Over 850 volunteers plus City Public Works staff participated in the events.

Physical Conditions and Facilities

1. Improve lighting on streets and open space by 7/1/98.

Street lighting has been improved but is still vandalized on occasion by youth gang members by cutting wires at the base. The City continues to explore ways to eliminate access to the wires.

Libby Lake Park has been renovated with new picnic areas, installation of new lighting along the pathways and improvements to the lake itself. The lighting has eliminated the park as a hiding place for gang members and allows police to view the entire park at all hours. New pumps and fountains in the small lake, which serves as a flood drainage pond, have improved the water quality in the lake.

2. Design a vehicular and pedestrian circulation plan to reduce speeding by 12/31/99.

The City could not make any changes to the layout of streets but has put in some measures to reduce speeding. Improvements to sidewalks have been a positive factor for pedestrian safety.

3. Undertake an enhanced code enforcement program to remove 20 abandoned vehicles and to address 80 other exterior code violations beginning 7/31/98.

Code Enforcement officers were able to expand activity in the neighborhood through the establishment of the community policing N.E.T. Work teams. Officers developed a protocol of working with residents to explain code violations in order to gain voluntary compliance. Only when residents refused to comply did officers issue citations and/or engage in mitigation. Abandoned and inoperable vehicles were cleared from streets and from in front of houses.

4. Develop a multipurpose neighborhood facility on a city-owned parcel by 6/30/00.

- a. Acquire a 4-acre vacant parcel adjacent just west of Calle Montecito St. by 3/1/99.

The City acquired the parcel, immediately adjacent to the abandoned convenience store, in 1999. Initial planning called for development of the new community resource center buildings and parking on the southern portion of the parcel while reserving the northern portion for homes for first-time homebuyers.

- b. Procure architectural services for design of a 5000-6,000 sq. ft. multi-purpose facility by 1/1/99.
- c. Involve neighborhood residents and community partners in the design process and finalize design by 6/30/99.
- d. Apply for Section 108 loan guarantee by 2/15/99.

The City applied for a \$1,500,000 loan under the HUD Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program; the loan was approved in May 2002 with a seven-year repayment schedule, with repayment coming from the annual CDBG entitlement funds.

- e. Complete environmental review by 3/15/99.

The City Planning Department approved a Conditional Use Permit for the new facility in January 2002; State and federal environmental reviews were completed in April 2002. HUD approved a Request for Release of Funds in April 2002, which allowed for the use of CDBG funds in development of the facility.

- f. Procure general contractor by 8/30/99 and begin construction by 9/30/99.
- g. Complete construction by 6/30/00 and hold grand opening by 7/30/00.

The Libby Lake Community Center was completed with a Grand Opening on October 4, 2003. The 13,000 square foot building contains a Community Resource Center, a primary care clinic and Teen REACH After School Program operated by Vista Community Clinic, the Boys and Girls Club of Oceanside Libby Lake Unit, Able-Disabled Advocacy, a job training center, and a community meeting room. The job-training component of the center was delayed and completed in early 2006 with a separate opening at a community resource fair on April 22, 2006.

Housing

- 1. Promote First-HOME to 50% of renters and single-family rehabilitation programs to 90% of all homeowners by 10/30/98.

The City has provided information at resident meetings and through the Libby Lake Community Center about loan programs for homeownership and homeowner rehabilitation. The housing economic recession beginning in 2007 has reduced opportunity for residents to take advantage of either program.

- 2. Provide homebuyer counseling to 20 households by 6/30/99.

The City has regularly provided information on homeownership for residents, most recently in conjunction with the development by Habitat for Humanity of Libby Lake Village with twenty homes for low-income families. The downturn in the housing market and economic recession beginning in 2007 has reduced the number of families who can qualify for homeownership, even with the lower payments offered by Habitat for Humanity.

The City has provided information to current homeowners on ways to avoid foreclosure when the owners have lost income in the recession.

3. Perform 100 inspections of rental units as part of code enforcement program to address building code violations by 7/31/98.

The City worked with new owners of large apartment buildings in the neighborhood for rehabilitation of the units and introduction of crime- and drug-free housing programs. The new owners evicted known gang members who had been engaged in criminal or drug activity, and others who were involved with human trafficking. Code officers continue to respond to complaints or any signs of deterioration at the buildings.

Community and Social Services

1. Set-up education, job training, and youth development programs at the new multi-purpose facility by 7/1/00; provide classes and services to 1200 people by 7/1/01.

The City worked with SER – Jobs for Progress to open a job-training program at the Libby Lake Community Center, which initially provided job-training and work preparation programs for youth. Reductions in funding have eliminated these programs except for a summer jobs program for youth.

The City is committed to support for the Teen REACH Program at the Libby Lake Community Center; this program works with at-risk and youth from low-income families to encourage them to stay in school, develop positive plans for their future, and reduce the incidence of substance abuse and risky sexual activity.

2. Provide public safety information and referral to services at the resource center to 1200 persons a year beginning 3/1/99.

The Neighborhood Services Department provides staffing for the Libby Lake Resource Center to respond to requests for information from residents and to assist residents in filing complaints with the police department or code enforcement division. Staff members also maintain referral information concerning health and social services, City services, youth programs and other such information. Resource center staff persons arrange programs as needed for residents concerning public safety or other resident concerns.

3. Continue funding youth development and recreation programs for 100 children, ages 6-18, at the Oceanside Boys and Girls Club - Libby Lake Unit.

The City has allocated CDBG funds to the Boys and Girls Club – Libby Lake Unit each year during the Revitalization Project with annual grants ranging from \$27,000 to \$10,000. Grants have been reduced since 2004 due to the steady reduction in the total CDBG entitlement received by the City. At the same time, operating and facility costs for the Libby Lake Unit were lessened when the program moved from its separate site at 489 Calle Montecito to the new Libby Lake Community Center. The City continues to fund the program as one component of positive youth development activities in the neighborhood, serving primarily children ages 6-12 while the Teen REACH Program serves youth ages 13-18. Vista Community Clinic manages the Teen REACH program for at-risk youth and youth from low-income families with sixty to seventy youth participating each year.

4. Establish childcare co-operative for 30 children beginning 7/1/99.

With the Libby Lake Unit of the Boys and Girls Club moving to the new Libby Lake Community Center, the site formerly used by the Club was now available for other uses. In Program Year 2004 the City leased the site and awarded a ten-year forgivable loan of \$248,000 to Quality Children's Services (QCS) for a child development center on the site, located adjacent to Libby School and across the street from Libby Lake Park. Development was slowed by the initial need to remove trailers used by the Boys and Girls Club and grading to eliminate drainage problems on the site. QCS acquired three new modular units that met State of California Title XXII requirements for preschool facilities and installed these on the site. Program services are funded primarily by State of California Preschool Program; all enrolled children are legal residents and come from families that meet the low- and very low-income eligibility requirements. The Libby Lake Child Development Center opened on June 30, 2006, and reached full enrollment by September 30, 2006. The curriculum is based on a Montessori teaching method and meets the "ready-to-learn" objectives of the Oceanside Unified School District for children entering kindergarten.

5. Establish awareness of and access to health services for 200 households by 1/1/99.

One of the major concerns of residents as demonstrated in the original survey for the Project was access to health care. The North San Luis Rey Valley neighborhoods had little immediate access to social and health services; most services were concentrated in the Mission Avenue and Oceanside Boulevard corridors with the local hospital located even farther away. The City worked with Vista Community Clinic (VCC) to establish a neighborhood full-service clinic as one component of the planned Libby Lake Community Center; VCC agreed to provide all tenant improvements, equipment and staffing for the clinic. The City leases the clinic space to VCC with monthly rental fees paid to the City to cover the clinic's pro rata share of general costs (utilities, site maintenance, etc.) of the center; the initial lease expires in 2013 and can be extended for an additional ten years. The clinic opened in September 2003 in time for the Grand Opening of the Libby Lake Center on October 4, 2003. The clinic is now open 40 hours per week; services are offered on a sliding fee scale based on income and number of dependents. Patients may qualify for a variety of public and private programs that will help cover the cost of their medical care. Bilingual staff, transportation, and assistance applying for insurance programs are available. The clinic has reached capacity and is looking for ways to expand space at the community center.

Jobs and Education

1. Assess education, job training, and employment needs for 150 welfare recipients by 6/30/99.
2. Provide employment information and placement services to 150 welfare recipients by 12/31/99.

3. Provide technical assistance with micro-business development to 10 low-income entrepreneurs by 7/1/99.

The job-training and employment placement components of the NRSA Plan have not developed; this is a least successful component of the plan. The City will continue to identify ways to promote economic development in the neighborhood and throughout the City.

D. Performance Evaluation

Implementation of the ten-year Calle Montecito Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area Plan has resulted in the following improvements:

- *Public safety has improved with significant reduction of youth gang activity and other criminal or drug-related activity in the area, with a consequent increase in resident perception of safety and security. Libby Lake Park is no longer a haven or hiding place for gangs but a place for residents. A somewhat minor but telling comment about the increase in safety is that "we can get pizza delivered after dark now."*
- *The overall appearance of the neighborhood has improved through regular resident association clean-ups and two one-day volunteer-based neighborhood enhancement projects to paint homes, remove trash and debris, and repair streets and sidewalks. Residents take more pride in the appearance of their homes and noted that, until the onset of the recession and housing downturn, a steady increase in the value of their homes and in the number of families interested in purchasing homes in the neighborhood.*
- *Residents have taken a greater interest in neighborhood safety and improvements. The resident association provides a venue for residents to share their concerns with Neighborhood Police officers and Code Enforcement officers, and to learn about how to effect positive change for themselves and their neighbors.*
- *Residents have greater access to health and social services with through the Libby Lake Community Center. The clinic operated by Vista Community Clinic at the center has reached capacity. Resource Center staff persons can refer residents to agencies both public and private that offer social services.*
- *The Libby Lake Community Center provides a site for other organizations to offer programs and services to the community. Most recently the Veterans Village in San Diego in partnership with Mental Health Services, Inc. has begun a program to support and assist veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts who live in the area, especially those who are dealing with mental or emotional scars from their experiences in battle.*
- *The residents have increased access to child care programs to ensure that children are "ready to learn" when they enter kindergarten, and afterschool and summer programs for children and youth to promote academic excellence to high school graduation and beyond.*