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**St. John/Coronado Hills Combined Neighborhood Plan**  
Wednesday, July 15, 2009 – Virginia Brown Recreation Center Room B  
**Code Compliance Workshop**

Overview: Shelia Balog, facilitator, began with introductions and a review of the ground rules that were developed during the Kick-Off meeting. Minal Bhakta, Associate Planner, provided a neighborhood planning process update and presented the workshop agenda and discussion topic, community life/code compliance. In framing the discussion, Minal introduced the guest speaker and subject matter expert, Lyle Adair, a Code Enforcement Investigator with the City of Austin's Code Compliance Division of Solid Waste Services.

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Before Lyle Adair began his presentation the SJCH participants had a few questions/comments that were addressed and are provided below:  
Neighborhood comments prior to Code Enforcement video presentation:

Comment: 1. The AISD bus depot is in a very problematic location, and a lot of traffic is being generated as a result. There has been talk in the community about having community members talk to the new AISD superintendent about this problem. 2. There seems to be a lot of new development that may be coming into SJCH; as a community we need to try and work with developers to find out what the opportunities are for our community. 3. There is a problem/issue on St. John Ave. with people feeling like they are being pressured to move.

Staff acknowledged Mr. Garcia's comment regarding new development in the area and encouraged him to share the information with rest of the community at the planning workshops as not all residents may be aware of the new development taking place in their neighborhood.

Concerns regarding crime on St. John Avenue were also acknowledged and staff requested that these issues be brought up at the next Crime and Public Safety Workshop as tonight's meeting was to concentrate on the topic of Code Compliance.

Lyle's presentation provided a comprehensive overview of the Code Compliance office, including their mission statement and information related to the projects and programs code enforcement officers have helped implement in the SJCH community. After Lyle's presentation was complete the Question/Answer/Comment period began.

*The following questions are related to the Rental Property Registration program as featured and described in Lyle's presentation*

1. Neighborhood: Many of the property owners of rental properties are out of state, and may not be aware that their properties are being poorly managed. Is there some way to fine the management company instead of the property owner or issue the fine to both?

a. CE: Code Enforcement (CE): The Rental Property Registration (RPR) would allow for property management as well as the owner to be ticketed for code violations.

2. Neighborhood: Is the rental program in effect now?

a. CE: No, we need community support to get the program going

3. Neighborhood: What is the process? Where does this stand? Can we insist that Single Family rental homes register?

a. CE: Contact the City Manager and go to City Council to show your support of this program. Bill Spellman is a Council member particularly interested in this topic. You can put whatever you want in the code; City Council and the City Manager need to know and make the decision on what they hear from you.

4. Neighborhood: Is there some way to make sure that the property management company is a local company to ensure that they are easy to reach in case of a problem or code violation?

a. CE: The RPR that is currently in use in Forth Worth (that the Austin RPR is modeled after) stipulates that property management companies must be located in-state. If the neighborhood would like to see these kind of requirements in the Austin RPR, they should contact City Council to advocate their position(s). Council member Spellman has been involved with CE regarding the RPR and has taken an interest in it.

5. Neighborhood: So, an ordinance needs to be passed to start this program?

a. CE: Yes. This concept is based on a model ordinance in Fort Worth.

Neighborhood: How long has Fort Worth been using their RPR?

a. CE: About 10 years.

6. Neighborhood: There are many landlords and management companies that are not doing their job well, and allow code violations to occur.

a. CE: The RPR would require that landlords accompany a Code Inspector every two years for a comprehensive exterior and interior inspection of the property. Ultimately, some kind of registration system with a score for each property would be available to the public, and hopefully a rating system would encourage managers to properly keep up their properties. Additionally, landlords would be required to take classes on crime prevention and code violation identification.

7. Neighborhood: How do the inspections and registration get paid for?  
a. CE: There would be a fee paid by property owners to support the RPR.

*The following questions are related generally to Code Compliance and are not necessarily specific to one particular program.*

8. Neighborhood: 7100 Bethune, for 7-10 years this property has been an eyesore; it is a bad structure.  
a. CE: This is an active case and we are in the process of looking into it. John McTier with Solid Waste Services can provide you with more information on this (John passes his business card/contact info to the participant).

9. Neighborhood: Who checks on AISD to make sure that they are not committing code violations?  
a. CE: It depends. Code Enforcement does some enforcement, but AISD is also somewhat self-policing in that regard.

Neighborhood: The buses at Nelson Field – they just keep adding more buses. Since 1984/85 we've been trying to get them to move the buses. They are bringing more buses – dead buses which pose health and safety issues. Who takes care of this? There are continually promises to move the buses, but what is going on with this?

- a. CE: It depends on the violation in terms of who takes care of the issue. Code Compliance may be able to address the issue, but it may be a different department. Lyle offered to give his contact information, research the issue and follow up with the participant on this.

10. Neighborhood: Why isn't Code Enforcement a pro-active department? If you see a violation while driving by, why don't you stop to cite it?  
a. CE: Right now there aren't enough resources/inspectors for Code Enforcement to be pro-active, it can only be reactive. As a comparison, Fort Worth has 150 code inspectors, while Austin only has about 50. But the Austin Code Enforcement department is growing. If you think that the Code Enforcement department should have more resources, you should tell your City Council.

11. Neighborhood: What can the neighborhood do about parts of the code violation ordinance that are too weak? For instance, junked cars are illegal, but seem to be a persistent problem.  
a. APD: Only District Representatives, of which there are only four, are allowed to issue tickets for that problem. If you think the ordinance needs to be strengthened or changed, tell you City Council.

12. Neighborhood: We need to have a 2-way street to better communicate what parts of the ordinance need strengthening; we need strong support, like

ANC, here is SJCH. We need to work together – APD and Code Enforcement depend on citizens and their support.

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The second part of the Community Life – Code Compliance workshop focused on a small group exercise consisting of three activities:

- 1) Brainstorming ideas for educational materials to address code issues
- 2) Identify areas in SJ/CH that are out of compliance with code and in need of community beautification
- 3) Matching solutions to the issues

Neighborhood planning staff facilitated three small groups where participants were encouraged to brainstorm and participate in an issue identification mapping exercise.

The following notes capture the thoughts and comments expressed by SJCH participants when asked to brainstorm about developing a Code Resource Guide:

What information, related to code, would you like to see in the guide?

*General Information*

- Any information is good
- Citizens on patrol information
- Loud music

*Information related to properties*

- Absentee landlord issues
- Information on how to contact rental property owners to report problems
- Improving condition of homes in poor condition, including apartments, single family and group homes
- Overcrowding dwellings; Number of people in residences
- Junk in yards and tree limbs

*Information related to automobiles*

- Cars in the Yard; Disabled Cars; Parking on grass; Inoperable vehicles; Front yard parking

*Information related to broader issue areas:*

- How do we show that we care and change the patterns/perceptions?
- Remove the fears
- Creating citizenry & community – how do we all give to help each other out?
- How do we take action; how do we teach respect?
- “We are all one neighborhood; one street should be concerned about the next, even if it’s not really “their problem”
- Create safe environment for single people who may be too scared to approach those violating the code
- How do we communicate with non-English speakers?

- How do we get renters to pay attention to the code ordinances?
- Is there some way to get schools involved in the educational process?

What are the first few steps in creating the code resource guide and, once developed, how should the community spread the word about the guide?

- Residents to work together on the resource guide (St. John & Coronado Hills to work as one to develop the guide)
  - Coronado Hills
  - Villas
  - Old Town
  - St. John
- Come to neighborhood association meetings
- Advertise in the newsletters
- Members of smaller groups come to CH neighborhood association

During the mapping exercise several locations were identified as issue areas that may not be in compliance with city code. These locations were marked on a “community beautification” working map. This map has been a work in progress since the previous June workshop focusing on community beautification. For the best perspective on the location of the issue areas, please see the [“community beautification”](#) map. In addition to the map, a text description of the issue areas is provided:

Location	Issue/Solution
Booker Avenue	Poor condition
Blessing Avenue	Poor condition
Area West of I-35; South of Delmar; North of Delmar; and East of Twin Crest Drive	Poorly maintained properties, Vehicle issues and junk and rubbish
Area East side of Cameron Rd. and just across the street from Wild Wood Apartments	Housing is in poor condition
Creek running parallel to E Anderson Lane	Trash
Area on East side of Cameron Road and along Reagan Hill Drive	Flea markets and food vendors