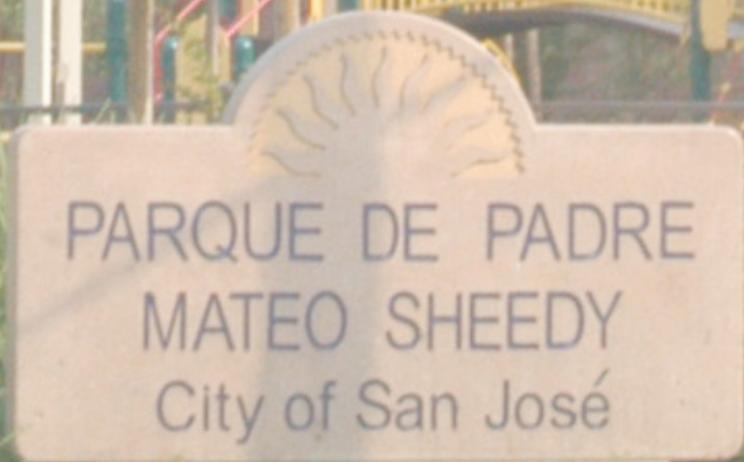
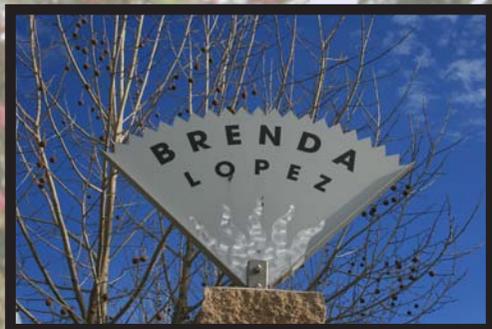


# Washington

## Neighborhood Improvement Plan Amendment



June 2008



Strong Neighborhoods Initiative

Strong Neighborhoods Initiative  
*Washington Neighborhood  
Improvement Plan  
Amendment*

City of San José  
June 10, 2008



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# Acknowledgements

*The following people are gratefully acknowledged for providing valuable assistance in the development of the Washington Neighborhood Improvement Plan Amendment.*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# Executive Summary

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The creation of the *Washington Neighborhood Improvement Plan Amendment (NIPA)* in 2008 was conducted as part of the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative's Renewing the Action Agenda process. The purpose of the *NIPA* is to document the new Top Ten Priority Actions that were created and prioritized by Washington residents.

## VISION

The structure and activities of the Washington Area Community Coalition (WACC) embody the community's vision, and can serve as a model for other traditionally-neglected communities. In particular, the community approaches issues of concern as part of an intertwining context rather than in isolation, and places an emphasis on engaging young people as future leaders of the community through various creative programs.

The WACC continues to pursue implementation of the vision set forth in the *Washington Neighborhood Revitalization Plan* (1998) and advanced again in the *Washington Neighborhood Revitalization Plan Update* (2002). The WACC envisions community centers with a strengthened and integral role in their neighborhoods by serving as hubs for recreational programs and services for adults, young people, and families. Finally, as part of its vision, the Washington community also wants to promote sustainability and to be a significant participant in the City's Green Vision Program.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Another function of the *NIPA* is to celebrate the accomplishments made since the release of the *Washington Neighborhood Improvement Revitalization Plan Update (NRPU)*. The list of "Top Ten" Priority Actions in the *NRPU* actually ranked thirteen actions due to the fact that the Washington Neighborhood was part of the Revitalization Strategy Effort, a precursor to the SNI Program. Significant progress was made on all of the Top Thirteen Priority Actions.

SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS MADE SINCE 2002 ON  
PRIORITY ACTIONS FROM THE *WASHINGTON NEIGHBORHOOD  
REVITALIZATION PLAN UPDATE*

(THE FOLLOWING PRIORITY ACTIONS ARE NOT LISTED IN PRIORITY ORDER)

Priority Action #1 – Pursue funding to acquire additional park sites, including skateboard parks.

**Accomplishments** – Parque de Padre Mateo Sheedy was completed and opened in 2005.

Priority Action #2 – Develop a single action program for funding and scheduling the improvement or closure of all area alleys.

**Accomplishments** – One alleyway was reconstructed, and one alleyway was partially reconstructed and partially closed.

Priority Action #3 – Improve recreation areas, facilities, and programs at the Alma Senior and Teen Centers.

**Accomplishments** – The *Alma Community Center Site Renovation Master Plan* was completed and approved by City Council in June 2007.

Priority Action #4 – Construct storm drainage facilities south of Alma Avenue in the Alma Neighborhood, particularly in Little Orchard Street and Pomona, Sanborn, and Ford Avenues.

**Accomplishments** – Storm drains were installed at Sanborn Avenue.

Priority Action #5 – Promote the City’s Curb and Sidewalk Repair grant program among property owners and assist property owners with Coalition grants to front the repair costs.

**Accomplishments – Significant improvements were made to sidewalks throughout the Washington SNI Area, including installation of approximately 90 handicap-accessible ramps.**

Priority Action #6 – Work with property owners to close the liquor store at the corner of Oak and South First Streets, and redevelop or rehabilitate building for different use(s).

**Accomplishments – Façade improvements were completed to the liquor store at Oak and South First Streets.**

Priority Action #7 – Continue working with the Redevelopment Agency on the proposed Bellevue Park and consult with the community on its design to address problems in the area such as homeless encampments along the railroad tracks and the presence of drug paraphernalia and other litter.

**Accomplishments – Bellevue Park was completed and opened in October 2006.**

Priority Action #8 – Implement a program to better notify residents of their scheduled street sweeping day and when warranted, utilize temporary and permanent “No Parking” signage to encourage residents to remove parked vehicles.

**Accomplishments – “No parking” signage was installed throughout the Tamien and Goodyear/Mastic Neighborhoods and along segments of Oak and Sutter Streets to facilitate street sweeping.**

Priority Action #9 – Conduct a study to consider the conversion of Vine and Almaden to two-way streets.

**Accomplishments** – Traffic lights were installed at the intersections of Oak Street and Almaden Avenue, and Oak Street and Vine Street. Handicap-accessible ramps were installed at the intersection of Oak Street and Almaden Avenue.

Priority Action #10 – Improve traffic flow and controls in the elongated Goodyear/Sherman/Graham intersection.

**Accomplishments** – Traffic flow, landscaping, and pedestrian safety were improved at the elongated intersection of Goodyear Street, Sherman Street, and Graham Avenue.

Priority Action #11 – Identify areas needing new or upgraded street lights and pursue funding.

**Accomplishments** – Seventy new streetlights were installed, and 55 existing streetlights were upgraded throughout the Washington SNI Area.

Priority Action #12 – Enhance existing basketball courts, turf field, and play equipment at Washington School, and explore possibility of making the play areas at Washington School accessible on weekends.

**Accomplishments** – A new synthetic turf was installed at Washington Elementary School. Grand Opening was held on March 07, 2007.

Priority Action #13 – Implement the plan to underground the utility lines along Oak Street in front of the Washington Elementary School.

**Accomplishments** – Utility lines were moved underground along Oak Street in front of Washington Elementary School.

## 2008 STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

A new Top Ten Priority Actions list is the core of the Strategic Action Plan. The following Actions will guide City services for the Washington community for the next five to seven years.

Priority Action #1

**Improve the Alma Senior/Youth Community Center.**

Priority Action #2

**Implement Improvements and Additions to Parks and Open Space and Increase Recreational Programs.**

Priority Action #3

**Implement Housing Rehabilitation and Painting Projects.**

Priority Action #4

**Reduce Crime and Associated Negative Activity.**

Priority Action #5

**Develop and Implement Traffic Calming and Pedestrian Safety Strategies for the Neighborhood.**

Priority Action #6

**Improve and Maintain Streets, Streetscapes and Sidewalks.**

Priority Action #7

**Close/Reconstruct Alleyways.**

Priority Action #8

**Explore Opportunities to Underground Utilities in the Washington SNI Area and Address Storm Drainage Issues along Mastic Street.**

Priority Action Item #9

**Address and Engage in Economic Development, Land-Use Issues, and Improve Business Services in the Community.**

Priority Action #10

**Promote the Façade Improvement Program.**

# Community Vision

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The vision for the future of the Washington SNI Area is embodied in the Washington Area Community Coalition (WACC), an exemplary organization of individuals and independent neighborhood associations dedicated to engaging and connecting local residents with their municipal government. The Coalition's strength comes from sustained participation by community leaders, who have a proven record of achieving common interests, through sustained engagement with self governance, and who have a strong passion and vital interest in enhancing the quality of life for community residents, visitors, and future generations. The Coalition takes a regional approach in pursuing projects and goals by providing policy recommendations, leveraging funding opportunities through grants and private-public partnerships, and by maximizing resources for positive impacts.

The Washington community desires to make their community a better place, so that future generations will have the resources to continue to improve their neighborhoods and contribute to civic life. Towards that end, the Washington community continues to pursue realization of the visions voiced in the *Washington Neighborhood Revitalization Plan*, and reaffirmed in the *Washington Neighborhood Revitalization Plan Update*.

Although the Washington community has a vision that is not dominated by single issues (consistent with their belief that everything that impacts their neighborhoods is part of an intertwining web), priorities persistently highlight the need to address economic development, public education, public safety, open space access, street improvements, and façade renovations. As progress is made on certain issues, the Washington community understands the importance of having the ability and flexibility to be proactive in addressing new issues impacting their community.

The Alma Senior and Alma Youth Community Centers upgrades remain a core concern for the Washington community, along with the continuation of partnerships with private and public/community-based organizations.

The Washington community foresees a future where community centers have an integral role in holistically providing vital resources for positive lifestyles, with an emphasis on relationships between elders and youth. The community envisions centers that build on the foundation set by current facilities and programs to expand education and enrich social services that encourage engagement in civic life, within and beyond local borders. The Washington community's ultimate aim is to promote unity beyond old divisions, while honoring unique, contextual cultural roots. Unity and uniqueness are seen as complementary poles for energizing civic life.

The Washington community vision moving forward echoes values in San José's Green Vision and the community plans to collaborate with elected representatives and City staff to incorporate sustainability features, which will transform their neighborhoods into walkable and livable environments. Neighborhood residents envision identifying opportunities to take leadership roles in using environmentally-friendly resources to mitigate and reduce pollutants, such as energy-efficient street lighting and recycled paving materials for streets and sidewalks. All involved will have a great opportunity to align assets in creative collaborations between grassroots activists, city agencies, social entrepreneurs, non-profit groups, and schools for lifelong learning.

# Conversations with Washington Community Leaders Regarding Long-Term Visions

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Through conversations with leaders in the Washington community, further thoughts and visions emerged regarding long-term goals for the neighborhood. Many of these ideas are centered around the Alma Senior and Alma Youth Community Centers. Although resources are currently focused on advancing the shorter-term goals and projects mentioned in the Washington Neighborhood Plan Amendment, these long-term visions are worth highlighting and discussing.

From interviews with local leaders, the most important point to know about this area is that the Alma Community Center serves an absolutely vital role in the lives of elders. Its improvement is ranked number one in the community's Top Ten Priority Actions List, and will remain in the Top Ten List until it is fulfilled. For them, the Center is a big home away from home, equal in value to their private homes by being the forum for their public lives. In the deepest sense, this Center uniquely embraces their identities and encompasses their community. At the Center they sing, dine, pray, share, and play; and at the Center they can enjoy being together with familiar friends and new folks. It is an essential element of their daily lives that keeps them eternally young at heart.

There is a natural evolution that could extend this vital relationship even deeper into the life of the community - by connecting more fully with the needs of local youth. These youth have stated that the Center's current programs are "boring" and that they want a place to be challenged and to be more involved in contributing to civic life. They want to learn to do new things and to help others and to participate in progressive programs such as those where teams build robots, improve local homes, upgrade parks, groom greenways, tend urban forests, create home movies of local

life, and convey stories of their families and communities. Teens here want to have more productive recreation opportunities.

Most significantly, both the young people and their elders want more opportunities for getting together in supportive settings that can be easily added to the Center. With so many parents working long hours and many kids getting home from school with “nothing to do,” the elders and teens agree that they would enjoy having more time to be together, like an extended community family. Support for the kinds of activities that seniors and teens can enjoy together should be the focus of further design development and proactive programming.

Community leaders have expressed a desire for new rooms, constructed to demonstrate green design practices that are just the right size and shape for organizing community projects, sharing stories, and serving as a safe haven for airing out the frustrations and aspirations that today's teens feel; where they can be heard by people who are like their grandparents, if not their very own relatives. Seniors within the community have gladly agreed that they would treasure the opportunity to commune with teens. Adding spaces for intergenerational socialization can be a natural next step for the Center's development. In that same spirit, the design and construction of the Center's expansion can serve as a powerful opportunity for teaching green collar job skills. By connecting teens with diverse professionals in fields spanning from engineering to ecological restoration, the Center can expand its role as a home away from home to also become a school away from school.

The Center can - with a series of upgrades - become a "community to college" opportunity escalator. With a few new classrooms for more interplay between elders and youth, along with technical transfer and leadership mentoring, the Center can rise to even higher prominence for people of all ages. As the most cherished public asset, the expansion of the Center can embody skill building projects through productive partnerships between local youth, helpful professionals, college outreach programs,

many serving alongside elders, to make a safe haven for teens to enjoy, year round. With more supportive spaces for spreading the social capital that is already evident, investments in the Center's expansion will be greatly multiplied by the benefits that will surely grow.

## **PROJECT NEEDS AND ASSETS**

Every good project begins with perceived NEEDS (gaps, problems, opportunities) and becomes realized by investing ASSETS (funds, materials, know how, tools, staff, etc.) to produce intended results. This project has a very definite set of NEEDS, plus a proven foundation of ASSETS built from goals envisioned by local leaders. The addition of a City foundation for public-private partnerships and sustained funding would round out the resources needed to successfully meet the goals and objectives for this SNI project.

### *NEEDS*

Communities are unique and each one's collective needs should be tailored to fit their cultural identities. There is no such thing as a cookie cutter remedy for social ills or a uniform means for realizing dreams. How people experience their everyday environment is directly affected by social ills that impact civic life. The hub approach of distributing community centers around San José contradicts with what is taking place daily, affecting whether or not centers serve their social purpose in specific contexts.

Costs of owning and operating vehicles (with rising fuel prices) prohibit local folks from having the typical portion of cars per household. Folks won't drive to centers that are too far away. Travel is dependent on bus service, bus stops, schedules and other factors that can be barriers or supports. Without proper bus shelters, bad weather can discourage use of public transportation to access community centers and other services.

There are many households in Washington that have large numbers of people living together, causing crowding in homes. Due to this situation,

providing community services close to these homes is crucial for providing a higher quality of life. Elders in particular may exert extra effort to visit a center which has “a good cook and real food,” rather than go to a closer center that lacks a real kitchen. While for many good food overrules poor accessibility, improving access with van service is essential for centers to fully serve their intended purpose.

*THEME: REPLACE TRAP DOORS WITH CONSTRUCTIVE OPPORTUNITIES*

Currently, the community’s physical environment has too many “traps” and not enough positive features that support healthy living. Specifically identified “traps” include:

- Hiding spots – walled off areas (e.g. the handball court by the Center); low lying gullies; overgrown shrubbery; unlit recesses; vacant alleys; etc.
- Locations with liquor - stores that sell liquor (e.g. markets and bars located near hiding spots) promote alcohol abuse.

These combined elements set the stage for drinking, hanging-out behind barriers, and inventing “something to do” in the absence of positive programs.

Many other factors undermine the healthy growth, moral development, and civic engagement of those who grow up in this community:

1. Poor diet – lack of access to fresh food rather than fast food.
2. Low income – few opportunities for upward mobility locally.
3. No local school - kids are bussed to a more affluent area for their entire socialization stage of life, internalizing the divides between the “haves” and “have-nots” in children.
4. Missing parents – kinfolks absent from home when kids return from school.
5. Minimal constructive programs – boring recreation devoid of meaning.

6. Digital divide – lack of computer-internet access.
7. Negative labeling - police eagerness to profile potential gang members undercuts confidence in social justice.
8. Lack of mobility – minimal bikeways, busses, and other transportation options that are safe and reliable make healthy mobility scarce.
9. Dangerous divides – intergenerational gang territories imprint environments as “safe” or “out of bounds.”
10. Few opportunities – aspirations are artificially limited by the simple fact that youth have minimal role models for inspiring self improvement.

The following comments are taken from interviews within the community, revealing the challenges faced.

“You have to be in a group, or at least associate with gang members, just to survive.”

“Lots of young moms live in impoverished areas with few constructive influences for their kids to draw from.”

“Prostitution is evident in the landscapes littered with condoms, needles, bottles and cans that trash places people go daily.”

### *ASSETS*

For the Community Center to attain its social potential, the key is to build on assets already present in the character of the community. Engaged community leaders and a long tradition of community cooperation are the most vital assets evident and are the foundation for future projects and programs. Willingness to join hands to do good work is a proven virtue that is the key to creating the Center envisioned. This project and related community improvements can be done as successive upgrades, managed in phased projects designed to provide opportunities for skill transference and college preparation through service learning. For this, pacing the project’s development should be managed differently from a typical one-shot deal done to rush ROI (return on investment).

To grow social capital, return on investment here will come from pacing development to maximize opportunities for learning-by-doing. By integrating skill transference ranging from water purification to solar power installation, building this Center can be a great opportunity for experiential education, as well as forming the social bonds that are essential for sustainability.

In local contexts divided by intergenerational identities, more opportunities for experiencing unity are needed. Locals know social barriers that outsiders can't see. They are not marked by signs that say "cross this street at your own risk." Like "glass ceilings" that block upward mobility, these streets have "glass wall" barriers to urban amenities, ranging from schools to parks and libraries. National Night Out helps local folks get to know each other, which is essential for peaceful relations. Specific hands-on elements, such as custom designed T-shirts with meaningful logos, spread positive messages in outreach headed up by local leaders (R. Pereida and D. Morillo). This kind of initiative merits more support in the form of funds for places, programs, and partnerships dedicated to perpetuating participation that bridges social divides.

As we look ahead at how the City of San José hopes to realize the vision of being a green city refreshed by urban forests, clean energy, zero waste, and so forth, we can foresee a variety of activities that express the cultural roots that are deeply established here. We can see how social bonds can be formed and sustained for doing good deeds that bridge divisions. Imagine a future headline that says "WACC members lead City Greening programs."

Many social ills are reversible and replaceable through positive place-making projects and programs, but only if handled wisely to create a critical mass. Daily stabs at piecemeal cleaning up, clearing out, sealing off, and keeping contexts fit for community life tends to result in burn-out. Elders feel overwhelmed by poking through the same old problems, over and over. They need help from unified, diversified programs, connected

with a new City foundation dedicated to reversing social ills and producing sustainable solutions through the greening of San José.

## **THE PROJECT - VISION FROM DIALOG WITH LOCAL LEADERS**

Community leaders envision new kinds of centers for expressing timeless cultural values: places that grow an individual's potential within a supportive circle of community identity; a place where people spread civic spirit by being deeply involved in a neighborhood context for spreading "social capital" – the bonds that unite people in common causes that enrich the quality of life for all involved. This is a place that grows from the inside out, like an organism, through continuous construction connected with educational opportunities.

As part of this vision, the Center would promote knowledge in architectural design, drafting, construction, and land use that encompasses diverse disciplines. It would serve as a satellite campus for Evergreen College, San José State University, plus other schools and companies united in a sustained campaign to train highly competent local employees. Programs would be modeled on successful schools, such as San Diego's High Tech High - where 100% of high school students continue on to college and beyond.

Diverse disciplines, from anthropology to geography, urban design and zoology would have satellite programs at the Center – forming an opportunity escalator with continuous classes and projects. Learning-by-doing activities could produce upgrades to the Center itself, utilizing clean energy, recycling, reuse, and more. Renovating the Center could build peoples' skills and grows community spirit.

Architectural ideas would be rooted in community identity. Skills and social capital grown at the Center would spread out into the local landscape, in the form of many physical many improvements tailored to the cultural context. Homes would be improved without putting people

into debt, energy and water would be conserved, and gardens would be grown and tended lovingly. Nutrition education would be a daily experience born from tending gardens, preparing meals, enjoying fresh food, and more.

The Center would embody community stories, as natural teachers and lifelong learners join in renovations. Building would not be a burden, but a celebration of the “hard fun” of getting good work done. Learning would not be to win approval from authorities who act as proxies for future bosses, but instead would involve serving one’s neighbors directly – right now – with heart, mind, body and spirit. With this, education would reclaim its genuine purpose in the life of the community. Morality would grow as naturally as the empathy that spreads through interactions that uplift community life.

The Center’s governing board would include designers, builders and fundraisers – all dedicated to sustaining the flow of assets required for continuous improvements. Costs would be kept down by integrating job training that is more than technology transfer. Knowledge and social bonds would grow inside the Center and flow outward to the larger landscape, as folks of all ages learn by making everything from clothing to books and websites. Media stories would be woven in home grown messages that blend perspectives sensitized by deep engagement in local life. Self governance would be as organic as the gardens that spread from the Center’s many programs.

Local folks who have seasoned skills could serve as mentors for other members of the community, especially younger members, who would learn more than job skills – they would embrace their cultural character with mutual trust and genuine affection. Work parties could form as needed to get good things done with an attitude of gratitude that blends playfulness, generosity, flexibility and sensitivity to the specific needs and assets of local environments and the people involved. No one willing to be

productive would be left out, and everyone would be valued as having intrinsic worth.

Working together provides many opportunities for growing social capital and self-respect, through producing places people love. Maintaining cultural contexts would be done with a sense of purpose and attention to detail that enriches environments plus the people who produce them, time after time. Places could grow more beautiful and meaningful, like world class cities where people flock to marvel at the ingenuity expressed and enriched over time.

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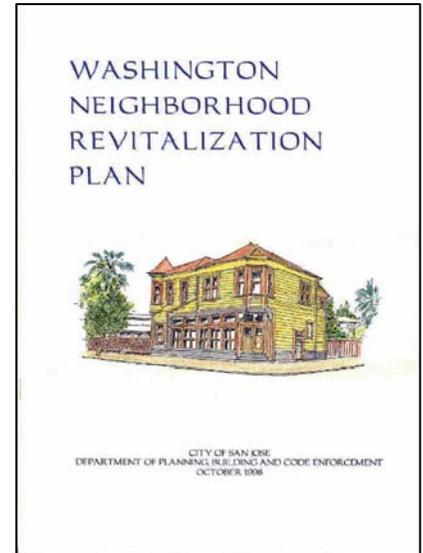
# Introduction

Since Council approval of the *Washington Neighborhood Revitalization Plan (NRP)* in 1998 and the *Washington Neighborhood Revitalization Plan Update (NRPU)* in 2002, significant improvements have been accomplished in the Washington Strong Neighborhoods Initiative (SNI) Planning Area. The effectiveness of these plans in creating real improvements in the Washington community provides the impetus to produce another significant improvement plan. The *Washington Neighborhood Improvement Plan Amendment (NIPA)* establishes a new set of priorities to guide the Washington community over the next five to seven years.

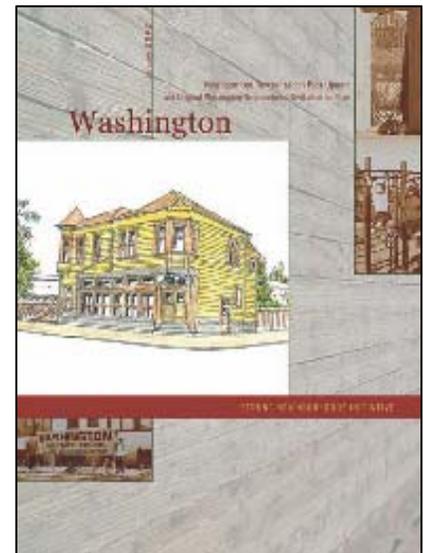
## STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS INITIATIVE'S RENEWING THE ACTION AGENDA PROGRAM

The City of San José Strong Neighborhoods Initiative, a partnership among the City of San José, the San José Redevelopment Agency, and the communities served, was launched in 2000 and led to the creation of 19 SNI Planning Areas, of which Washington is one. Each of these SNI Planning Areas created a *Neighborhood Improvement Plan (NIP)*, most of which were completed in 2002.

In 2005, under the auspices of the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative, the City of San José Redevelopment Agency launched a program called Renewing the Action Agenda (RAA) with the purpose of creating amendments to all of the original 19 Neighborhood Improvement Plans. This process was designed to produce a new list of Top Ten Priority Actions and to strengthen leadership and organizational capacity at the neighborhood level. This document is the final product resulting from the RAA process conducted in the Washington SNI Planning Area.



Cover of the *Washington Neighborhood Revitalization Plan* (1998)



Cover of the *Washington Neighborhood Revitalization Plan Update* (2002)

## THE STRUCTURE OF THIS PLAN

The Washington Neighborhood Improvement Plan Amendment is divided into four sections:

- The **Background** Section provides an update of the general demographics of the Washington SNI Area, an overview of the setting, information on General Plan Land Use Designations and Zoning Districts, and a description of the historical context, which includes a brief examination of community involvement in past revitalization efforts.
- The **Accomplishments** Section acknowledges and describes the progress made in achieving the high priority goals laid out in the *Washington Neighborhood Revitalization Plan Update*.
- The **Planning Process** Section reviews how the new community priorities were determined.
- The **Strategic Action Plan** Section lays out the results of the planning process, by enumerating an updated Top Ten Priority Actions list and the action steps necessary to implement the community's priorities.

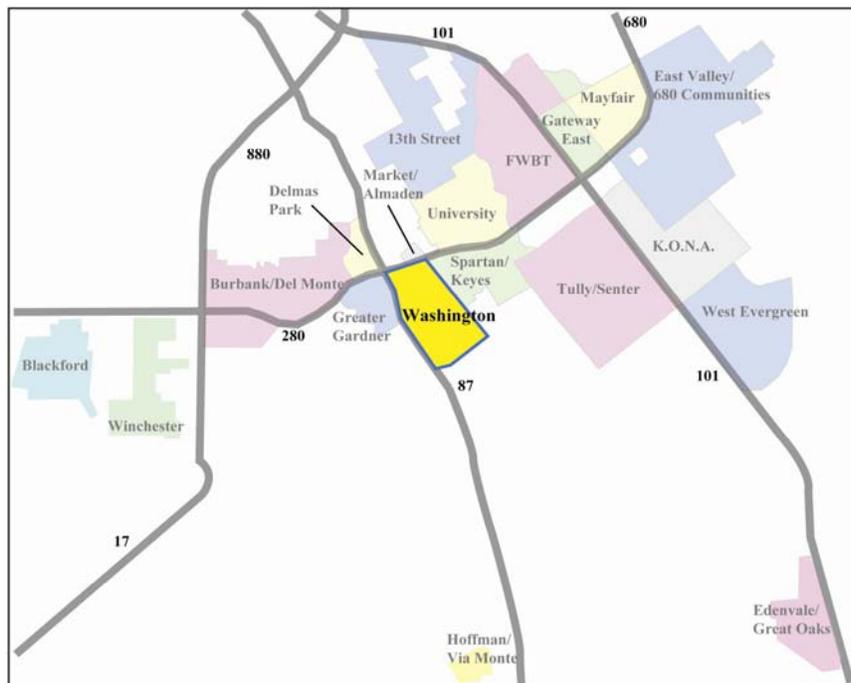
An appendix containing a matrix of the updated Top Ten Priority Actions appears at the end of this plan.

# Background

This section describes the general setting of the Washington Strong Neighborhoods Initiative (SNI) Area, identifies General Plan Land Use Designations and Zoning Districts, discusses its demographic profile, and provides a brief historical context, which includes an examination of community involvement in past revitalization efforts.

## SETTING

The Washington SNI Area is one of nineteen areas established by the SNI Program. The area covers 550 acres with borders defined by State Route 87 to the west, Interstate 280 to the north, South First Street to the east, and the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks south of Bellevue Avenue to the south. Major streets running north-south through the Washington SNI Area include South First Street, Almaden Avenue, and Vine Street. Major streets running east-west include West Virginia Street, Willow Street, and West Alma Avenue.



**Figure 1. Strong Neighborhoods Initiative Planning Areas**

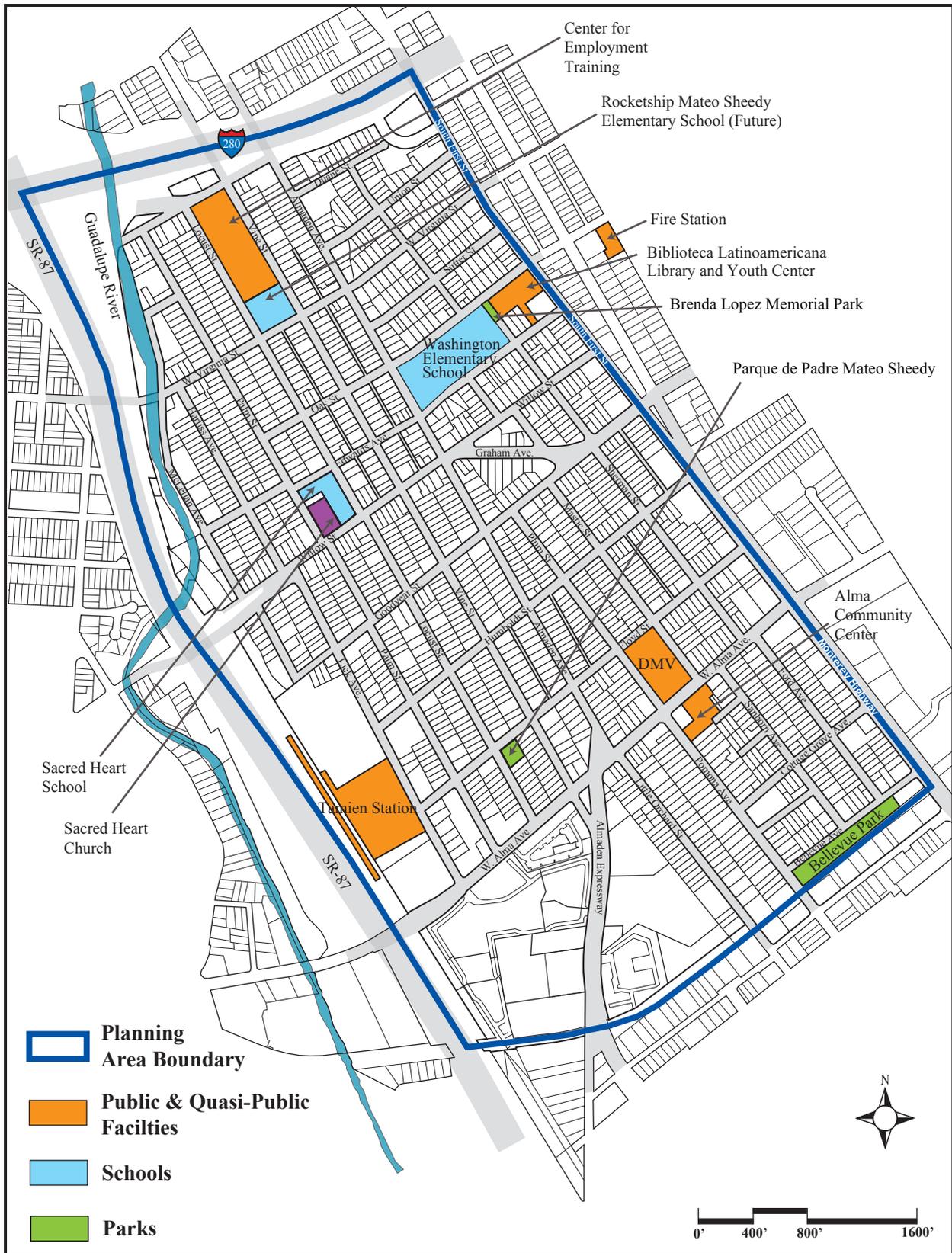
*Map based on SNI Planning Area boundary data courtesy of the City of San José Redevelopment Agency.*

The Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) operates five bus routes that serve the Washington SNI Area, three of which run along South First Street, while the other two run along Willow Street and Alma Avenue. Caltrain commuter-rail and VTA light-rail trains share a station in the Tamien Neighborhood adjacent to State Route 87.

The Washington SNI Area consists of five neighborhoods, including Guadalupe/Washington, Tamien, Goodyear/Mastic, Almaden, and Alma (see Figure 3 on page 6). In 2002, the community agreed to change the name of the Cottage Grove/Pomona Neighborhood to the Alma Neighborhood to provide inclusiveness and unity to the area. Each of these neighborhoods is represented by a separate neighborhood association except the Almaden and Alma neighborhoods, which are both represented by the Alma Neighborhood Association.

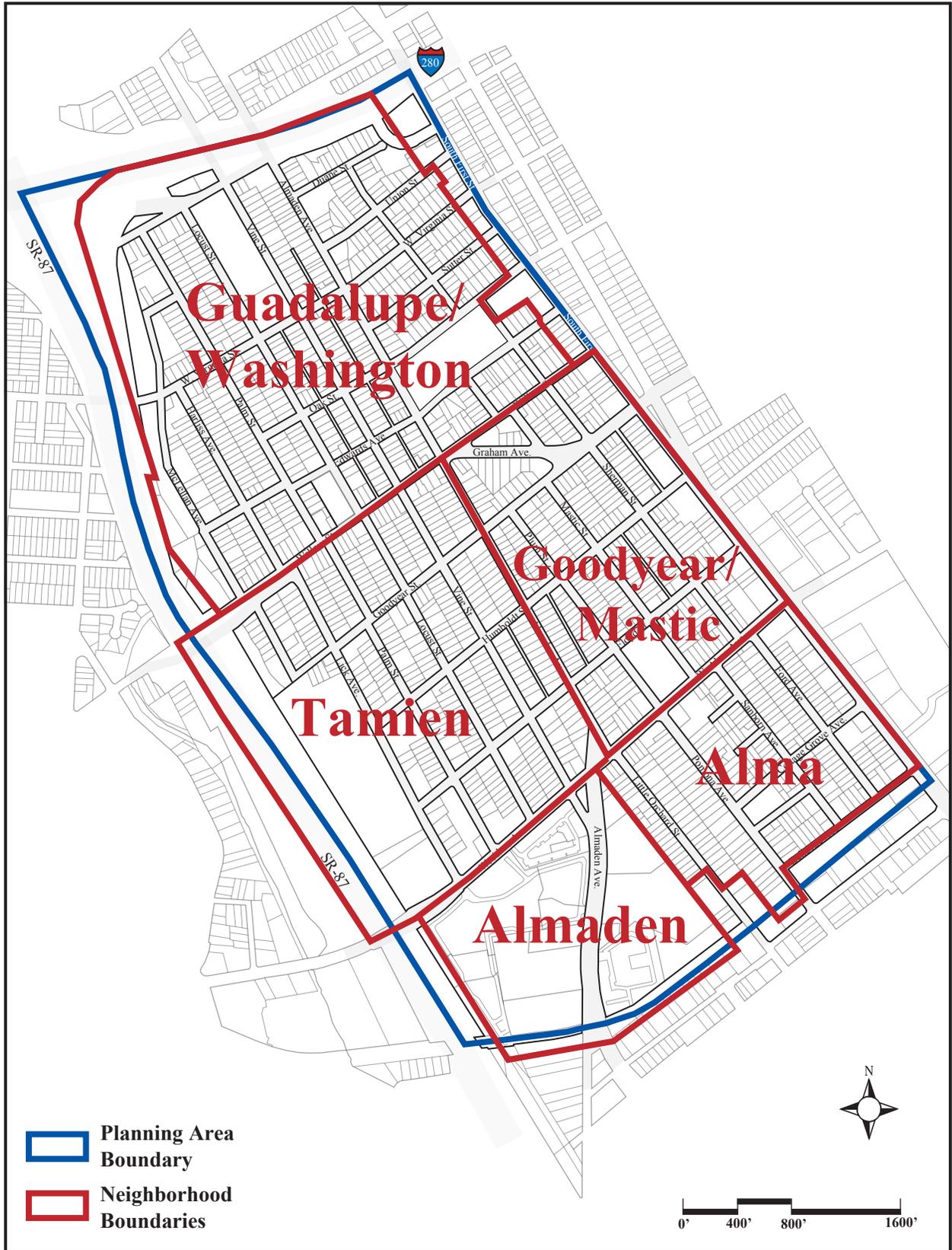
The Washington SNI Area contains several public and private facilities that are focal points of the area and provide programs and services to the community (see Figure 2 on page 5). Washington Elementary School is the main public educational facility in the area, and also functions as a recreational and gathering place for the Washington community. The new Rocketship Mateo Sheedy Elementary School is estimated to be opened in Fall 2008, and will be located at the south end of the Center for Educational Training site between Locust and Vine Streets. The Biblioteca Latinoamericana, San José's Spanish branch library, currently located on South First Street, is a vital educational and cultural resource for the community. The newly constructed Brenda Lopez Memorial Park, located between the Biblioteca Latinoamericana and Washington Elementary School, serves as a central gathering place for children and adults alike. The Washington SNI Area also contains the landmark Sacred Heart Church and Sacred Heart Community Center, and Alma Senior and Youth Centers. These resources reflect the importance of family and cultural identity to the Washington community.

Single-family homes, duplexes, and apartments are distributed throughout most of the Washington SNI Area while industrial uses are located in the eastern and southern portions of the Area. Main commercial corridors include Willow and South First Streets. Other commercial areas include Almaden and Alma Avenues.



**Figure 2. Washington Strong Neighborhoods Initiative Area**

Map based on the SNI Washington Planning Area boundary map, courtesy of the San José Redevelopment Agency.



**Figure 3. Washington SNI Area Neighborhoods**

Map based on the SNI Washington Planning Area neighborhoods map in the NRP, courtesy of the San José Redevelopment Agency.

## GENERAL PLAN LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

In the San Jose 2020 General Plan, the Washington SNI Area is planned predominately for residential use with a mix of housing types (see Figure 4 on page 9). The land use plan includes commercial nodes along two streets running east-west, and a major commercial corridor running the length of South First Street. Public facilities, such as parks and community centers, churches, and other community assets are embedded in the residential neighborhoods of the Washington SNI Area. Major land use changes from the existing uses are planned for the southeastern section of the Washington SNI Area as part of the Tamien Station Area Specific Plan, including a significant amount of new housing development, two new parks, and an intensified commercial node.

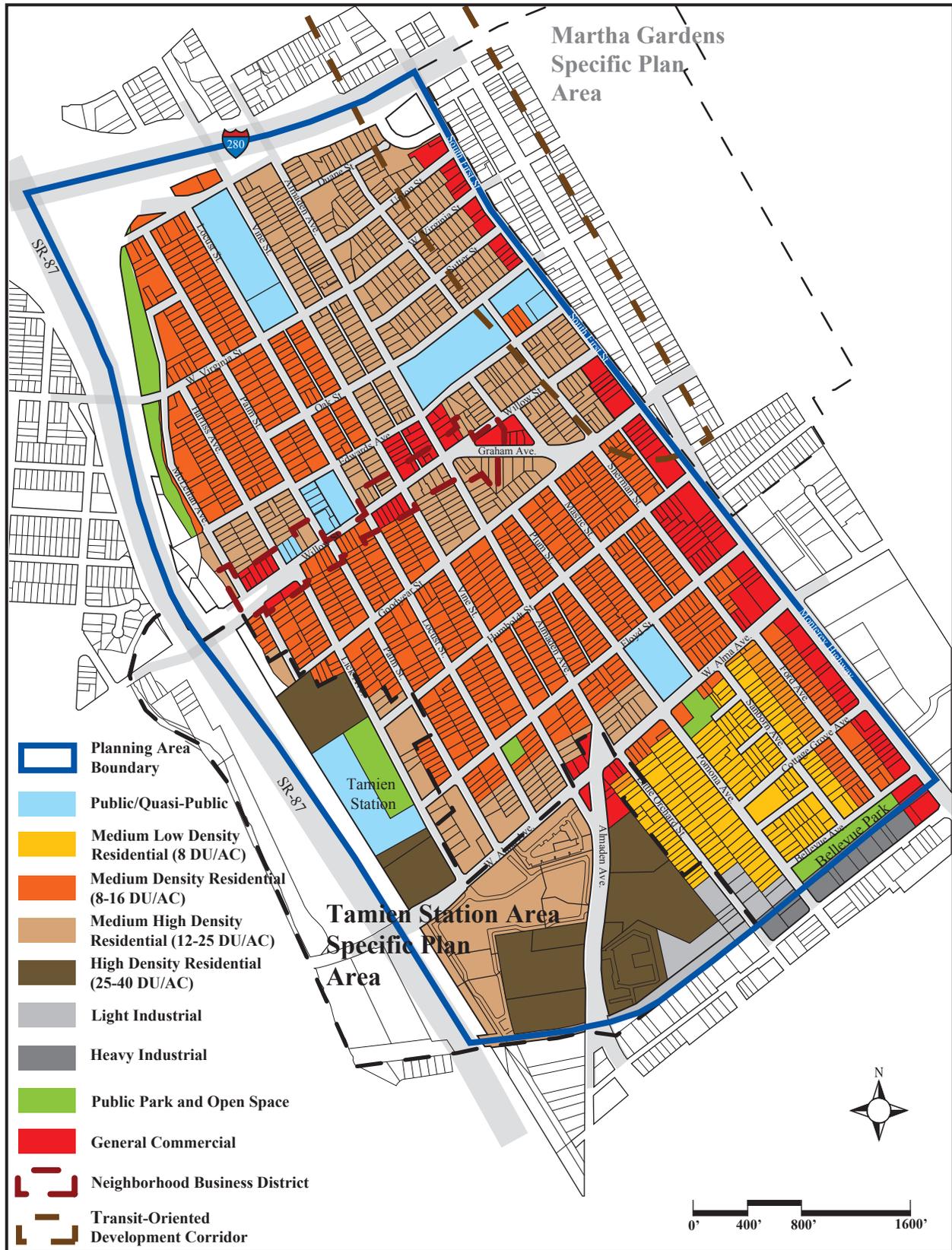
Most residential uses in the Washington SNI Area are designated as Medium Density Residential (8 to 16 dwelling units per acre) in the General Plan. Exceptions include the Alma Neighborhood, which is designated as Medium Low Density Residential (8 dwelling units per acre), portions of the Guadalupe/Washington and Almaden Neighborhoods, which are designated as Medium High Residential (12 to 25 dwelling units per acre), and areas on both sides of the Almaden Expressway, which are designated as Very High Density Residential (25 to 40 dwelling units per acre). Additionally, the area between Goodyear and Humboldt Streets is designated Transit Corridor Residential, which allows for 20 or more dwelling units per acre.

The General Commercial Designation is applied along South First Street, Willow Street, and the northern end of Almaden Avenue. Other General Plan designations include Public and Quasi-Public, which correspond to the various community facilities described above.

Additionally, the Tamien Station Area Specific Plan, completed in March 1995, is incorporated into the San José 2020 General Plan. The designations for this area include Transit Corridor Residential (25 to 55 dwelling units per acre), Very High Density Residential (25 to 40 dwelling units per acre), and Medium High Density Residential (12 to 25 dwelling units per acre). The area around the intersection of Alma Avenue and Almaden Road is designated General Commercial.

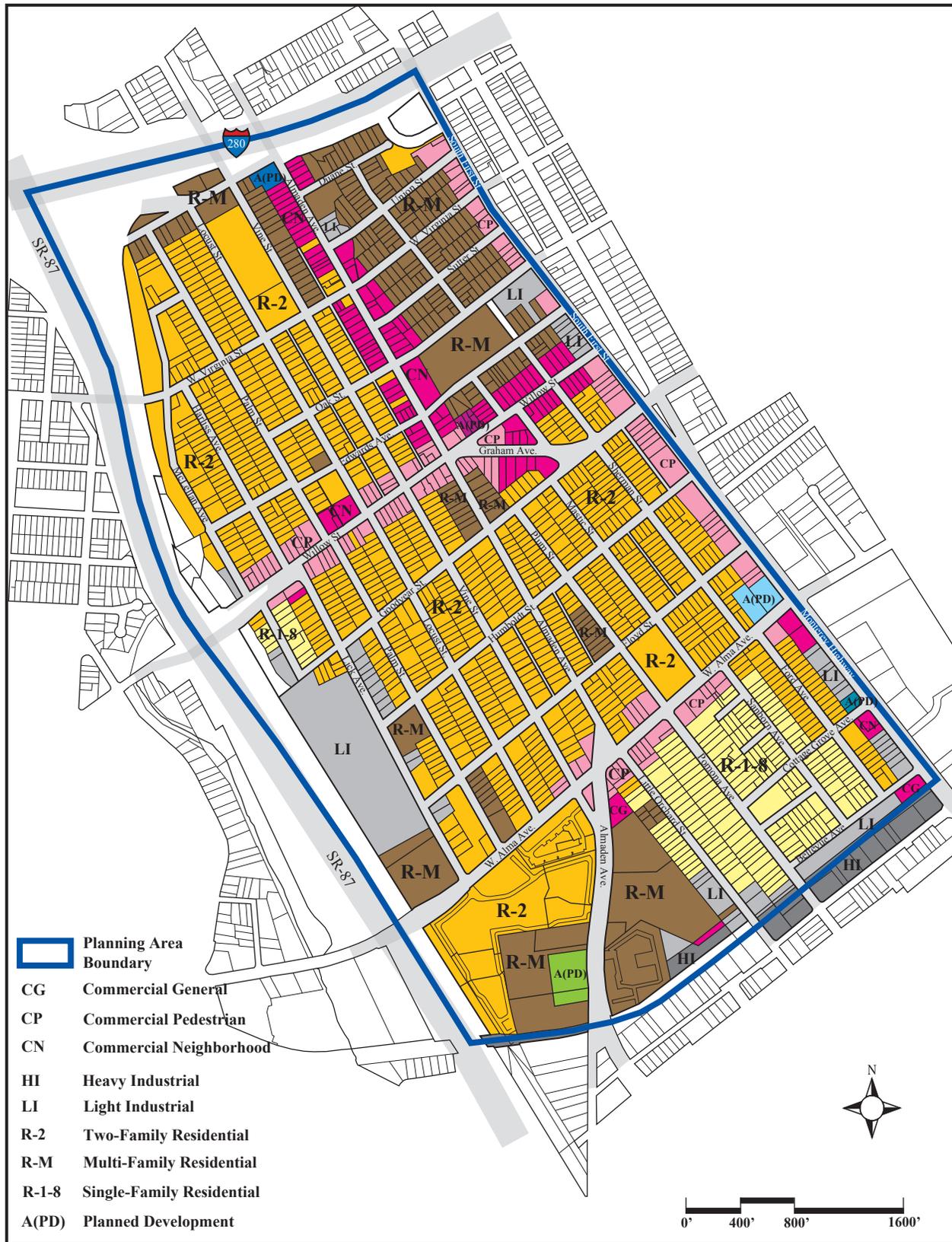
## ZONING DISTRICTS

The Washington SNI Area is predominately zoned R-2 (Two-Family Residential) and R-M (Multi-Family Residential). A third residential zoning district, R-1-8 (Single-Family Residential), exists mainly in the southeast portion of the Washington SNI Area. Properties with a Commercial Pedestrian Zoning District designation are found along South First Street, Willow Street, and Almaden Avenue. Properties zoned as Neighborhood Commercial are focused along Alma Avenue. Pockets of Light Industrial Zoning District designations exist along the rail lines that border the Washington SNI Area to the west and south (see Figure 5 on page 10).



**Figure 4. Washington SNI Area General Plan Land Use Designations**

Map based on maps from the San José General Plan and the Tamien Station Specific Plan, courtesy of the Department of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement.



**Figure 5. Washington SNI Area Zoning Districts**

Map based on San José Zoning Maps, courtesy of the Department of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement.

## WASHINGTON SNI PLANNING AREA DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The Washington SNI Planning Area remains a predominately Latino neighborhood. Youth make up a high percentage of the population. Incomes are significantly lower than the average for San José.

The following demographic profile was compiled from the 2000 U.S. Census. Data for population, race, age, number of households, and size of households was obtained for the entire Washington SNI Planning Area. Data for median household income, housing value, rental rates, ability to speak English, and occupation represents the entire Washington SNI Area except for a one block area, where data was unavailable for those categories.

In 2000, the Washington SNI Planning Area had a total population of 12,177 living in 3,016 households. Average household size was 3.17 people. Hispanics made up the majority of the population at 81%. The remainder of the population was composed of 12% White, 3.5% Asian, 1.5% African American, and 2% other. Residents under 20 years old made up the largest segment of the population at 35%. The next age category of 20 to 24 years old made up only 10.5% of the population. Other age groups included ages 25 to 34 at 21.5%, 35 to 64 at 28%, and over 65 at 5%. Of those over 25 years of age, 47% have a high school degree or equivalent.

In the 5 to 17 age group, 77.7% spoke Spanish. Of that group, 20% spoke little to no English. In the 18 to 64 age group, 66.5% of residents were Spanish-speakers, with 45% speaking little to no English. In the 65 and older age group, 49% spoke Spanish, of which 48% spoke little to no English.

The median annual household income was \$42,810, compared to the citywide median household income of \$74,413. Of all owner-occupied housing units, 24% were valued between \$200,000 and \$249,000, 27% between \$250,000 and \$299,000 and 27% between \$300,000 and \$399,000. The median monthly rental rate was \$1,129.

In the Washington SNI Area, 19% of the population was employed in management or professional occupations such as financial, computer, architecture, social service, healthcare, and other related positions. A 28.5% population group was employed in service jobs, 20% in sales and administration, 14% in construction and related industries, and 17% in production, transportation, or material moving.

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

The Tamien-speaking Muwekma Ohlone people have populated the Bay Area for over 10,000 years. Evidence of their presence in the Washington SNI Area is found in burial grounds which are referred to as shellmounds. Burial sites were recently discovered in and around the Tamien Station. The Ohlone's long history in the Bay Area began to decline in 1769, when the Spanish first made contact. Over time, they were "missionized" in the Missions in San Francisco, San José and Santa Clara. In recent years, the Muwekman Ohlone descendants have been in the process of revitalizing their spiritual and cultural traditions, which includes efforts to recognize the Muwekma Tribe as a "Federally Acknowledged Indian Tribe." The Muwekman Ohlone descendants still have a significant presence in the Washington SNI Area.

In 1777, during the Spanish/Mexican era, San José became the first Pueblo in California. The inhabitants of this new Pueblo were comprised primarily of Mexicans, Spaniards, Californios, Chileans and the indigenous populations. During this time the Washington SNI Area was made up of cultivation plots and grazing lands. Eventually a neighborhood was established in 1815 in the area. When the United States took Territorial control of California in 1846, a vast diversity of immigrants flooded into the state. San José became a main source of foods and material supplies to the masses that came with the Gold Rush in 1848. It was during this time that land was split up into large lots and distributed as part of a lottery. Eventually, the land began to be subdivided, especially in the 1880s, as the area became one of the first areas to accommodate the growing City of San José. The area became known as

the Fourth Ward, one of the four political districts that made up San José at the time.

Growth continued and intensified after World War I. Zoning districts were designated in San José in 1929, which supported the intensification of development and the construction of apartments on vacant lots. The land uses in the area have not changed much since 1930s.

Since the Washington SNI Area was developed early in the history of San José, the infrastructure was originally created for a pre-automobile society. As San José continued to grow all around the Washington SNI Area with modern standards of development, Washington was passed up for modernization of much of its infrastructure. For example, some areas never received storm drains along neighborhood streets and alleys.

In the 1980s the residents of the Washington SNI Area began to organize, which led to several programs and projects in conjunction with the City of San José. These included the establishment of the Willow Street Neighborhood Business District in 1989 and the Washington Project Crackdown area in 1997, as well as the construction of the Biblioteca Latinoamericana and the Washington United Youth Center in 1998. Following these major efforts to improve the Washington SNI Area, it became the first area to develop a neighborhood revitalization plan under the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Program. The *Washington Neighborhood Revitalization Plan (NRP)*, completed in 1998, served as a model for the creation of Neighborhood Improvement Plans for the 19 Strong Neighborhoods Initiative planning areas. The SNI Program succeeded the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Program and Washington became one of the 19 SNI Planning Areas. Under this program, the Washington SNI Area released an update of their *NRP* in 2002 which was titled the *Washington Neighborhood Revitalization Plan Update*. This document, the *Washington Neighborhood Improvement Plan Amendment*, is the next update and contains another set of priority action items to guide the Washington community in pursuing further improvements to the Washington SNI Area.

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# Community Planning Process

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The community planning process, which led to the creation of the *Washington Neighborhood Improvement Plan Amendment (NIPA)*, was conducted as part of the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative's Renewing the Action Agenda (RAA) process that began in 2005.

The RAA process was conducted through two community workshops and several Washington Area Community Coalition (WACC) meetings held over several months from February 2007 through April 2008. Outreach for these meetings included a mailer to every property in the Washington SNI Area, e-mails and letters sent to residents on the mailing list, and reminder phone calls made to the residents who regularly attend WACC meetings. The two community workshops were conducted to obtain input from residents living in the Washington SNI Area. Following the two community workshops, leaders from the WACC worked closely with City staff and consultants to produce the *Washington Neighborhood Improvement Plan Amendment* which reflects the vision and goals of the community.

To begin the process, two WACC meetings were held in which the Coalition reviewed and discussed the accomplishments of the original Top Ten Priority Action Items. There was discussion regarding neighborhood priorities, and decisions were made as to which projects were complete, partially complete, in progress, incomplete or not feasible. The WACC then moved into the next phase of the RAA Process, which included reviewing the original Top Ten Priority Action Items with the larger Washington SNI Area at the first community workshop.

### **COMMUNITY WORKSHOP #1 - APRIL 26, 2007**

The first community workshop was held on April 26, 2007 at the Alma Community Center. Ninety people attended the workshop which was facilitated by SNI staff. Included in the attendees were Councilmember Sam Liccardo and Councilmember Madison Nguyen. After a short presentation to orient residents to the RAA Planning process, progress on the top priorities from the 2002 Washington Neighborhood Revitalization Plan Update were reviewed and confirmed with community members. As part of this process, new goals were identified. The Washington community worked hard to incorporate current goals with the emerging needs of the Neighborhood. As a result of this conversation and workshop, a list of proposed action items was created. After the successful first community workshop, the WACC re-confirmed the progress made on the original Top Ten Priority Actions at a regularly scheduled WACC Meeting. They also brainstormed additional projects that could be valuable to the community. The community members were asked to focus on a variety of project types:

- Neighborhood Action Projects (projects that are the result of a community-based initiative that can be implemented relatively quickly by the neighborhood residents. Each project demonstrates change in a visible way and often has the greatest potential to involve community members),
- Service or Social Issues Projects (projects designed to enhance specific community services that are run via governmental programs, non-profits, and/or community-based organizations),
- Capital Projects (projects that focus on major, long-term improvements, and typically involves the construction of a community facility or other development), and

- Transformative Projects (projects that are visionary in nature with the potential to transform the community. Such a project inspires immense creativity, and challenges all involved to think and act differently for the good of the community).

In addition, the community members considered whether proposed projects were important to the whole neighborhood (or a significant part), and whether the City could and/or should have a role in the project's implementation. With that backdrop, neighbors brainstormed ideas for future projects. Community members tightly defined the project descriptions.

## COMMUNITY WORKSHOP #2 - JULY 12, 2007



Exercise to prioritize Actions at community workshop #2 on July 12, 2007

The second community workshop was held on July 12, 2007 at the Alma Community Center. SNI staff again facilitated the workshop. The list of potential action items was reviewed, discussed and prioritized. At the end of the second community workshop, the WACC had a list of Top Ten Priority Action Items.

Councilmember Sam Liccardo of District 3, who attended the second community workshop, stated “This renewal of the community agenda has emerged through the diligent and thoughtful efforts of neighborhood leaders in partnership with our Strong Neighborhoods team. I applaud them for their dedication to our community and I look forward to working with them to translate these critical priorities into action.”

### **PRODUCING THE *WASHINGTON NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT***

Following the community workshops, SNI staff, City Departments and other involved entities reviewed the list of New Top Ten Priority Actions to provide their input. Neighborhood leaders continued to work in conjunction with SNI staff and a consultant to produce this document. Meeting twice a month over approximately three months, the bulk of the report was completed. Following this intense report-writing period, the WACC reviewed, made comments, and confirmed the report as their own. Councilmember Madison Nguyen of District 7 commented that “The *Washington Neighborhood Improvement Plan Amendment* is the cumulative result of many hours of community meetings and input. From these community meetings, it is clear that residents envision the Washington SNI Area as one with an improved quality of life – a place where families and children can live and play in safety, and a place where resources are available to support the neighborhood. This *Neighborhood Improvement Plan Amendment* is a solid step to making this vision into a reality and I look forward to seeing many of the great changes to come in this community.”

# Accomplishments

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Since the publication of the *Neighborhood Revitalization Plan Update (NRPU)* in 2002, there has been substantial progress made by the Washington community to improve their five neighborhoods. In fact, significant progress was accomplished for all of the Top Thirteen Priority Actions described in the *NRPU*, with over 60% of projects related to the Actions completed. The community's tremendous success attests to the effectiveness of creating revitalization plans.

The list of "Top Ten" Priority Actions in the *NRPU* was actually thirteen items due to the fact that the Washington Neighborhood was part of the Revitalization Strategy Effort, a precursor to the SNI Program. Significant progress was made on all of the Top Thirteen Priority Actions. Additionally, the order of the Top Thirteen Actions, as listed in the *NRPU*, does not reflect the actual order of priority from one to thirteen. Rather, the Priority Actions are listed with no particular ranking. The *NIPA* follows the same order established in the *NRPU* so it is easy to use the two documents together.

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM THE TOP THIRTEEN PRIORITIES (FROM THE *NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION PLAN UPDATE*)**

The tremendous progress made by the Washington community is described in detail below. This thorough review is designed to help the Washington community celebrate their success and to remind them that all their hard work does have a major impact on the quality of life for residents.

**Priority Action #1 – Pursue funding to acquire additional park sites, including skateboard parks.**

*Accomplishments – Parque de Padre Mateo Sheedy was completed and opened in 2005.*



Parque de Padre Mateo Sheedy



Gazebo and playground at Parque de Padre Mateo Sheedy

In 2002, no parkland existed in the entire Washington SNI Planning Area. Facing this severe deficit of parklands, the community put the highest priority on increasing open space within the Washington SNI Area in their NRP. Since 2002, three parks were completed – Parque de Padre Mateo Sheedy, Bellevue Park, and Brenda Lopez Memorial Park. Bellevue Park is described in detail as part of the Priority Action #7 (see page 25). Brenda Lopez Memorial Park was completed in addition to the original Top Thirteen Priority Actions (see map on page 39 for the location of this park).



Easter egg hunt at Parque de Padre Mateo Sheedy

The community and SNI staff identified a 0.44 acre site for the Parque de Padre Mateo Sheedy at the southeast corner of Floyd and Locust Streets. Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy funds were leveraged to acquire the site. With the site secured, a master plan was undertaken and residents participated in creating the design of the park in two workshops. Construction soon followed, utilizing Strong Neighborhoods Initiative and San José Redevelopment Agency funds.

The Parque de Padre Mateo Sheedy contains recreational amenities such as picnic tables, barbecues, grassy areas, and a playground for children. Mary

Guzman, Vice President of the Tamien Neighborhood Association, observed that “Parque de Padre Mateo Sheedy has transformed the look of the community. People now have a place to unite.”

**Priority Action #2 – Develop a single action program for funding and scheduling the improvement or closure of all area alleys.**

***Accomplishments – One alleyway was reconstructed, and one alleyway was partially reconstructed and partially closed.***

Since the release of the *NRPU*, two alleyways received major improvements. The first alleyway, between Vine and Locust Streets from West Virginia Street to Oak Street, was completely reconstructed. The second alleyway, between Vine Street and South Almaden Avenue from Oak Street to Edwards Avenue, was partially reconstructed and partially closed. Reconstruction of alleyways included the addition of pavement and the installation of drainage. The portions closed were converted into additional backyard space for the residential properties adjacent to the alleyway. These changes provided a significant improvement over the previous conditions. Resident Javier Gonzales observed, “The alleyways went from looking like the city dump to a safer and cleaner place where residents could walk.”



Reconstructed alleyway between Vine & Locust Streets looking north from Oak Street towards West Virginia Street

**Priority Action #3 - Improve recreation areas, facilities, and programs at the Alma Senior and Teen Centers.**

***Accomplishments – The Alma Community Center Site Renovation Master Plan was completed and approved by City Council in June 2007.***

Significant progress on improving the Alma Community Center has been accomplished since the release of the *NRPU*. The first step toward improvement of the Center was accomplished in 2006, when the City of San José acquired two parcels of land along West Alma Avenue adjacent to the Center. The addition of this land laid the foundation for many of the site improvements residents had envisioned. The land purchase was followed by a public design process that culminated in the creation of the



Cover of the Alma Community Center Renovation Master Plan

*Alma Community Center Site Renovation Master Plan*, which was completed in June 2007. The creation of this *Master Plan* was a major accomplishment as it provided a roadmap for the implementation of improvements envisioned by the community. The *Master Plan* outlined four improvement phases, the first of which is currently underway.

The improvements included in Phase One are as follows:

- Reconfiguring the parking lot by utilizing the new land acquired along West Alma Avenue.
- Creating a new designated area for a basketball court.
- Creating a new dumpster area.
- Installing new sidewalks, curbs, and gutters adjacent to the reconfigured parking lot.
- Installing additional lights and security cameras in the parking lot.
- Installing new drainage in the parking lot.
- Improving the irrigation and landscaping at the property edges.

In addition to the improvements outlined in the *Alma Community Center Site Renovation Master Plan*, other improvements were completed to the Alma Community Center, which include the following:

- Improvements to the bathrooms, including new flooring, auto-flush toilets, and new automatic water faucets.
- Replacement of interior blinds and cabinets.
- Exterior and interior painting.
- Installation of a handicap button for opening the front and restroom doors of the senior center.

**Priority Action #4 – Construct storm drainage facilities south of Alma Avenue in the Alma Neighborhood, particularly in Little Orchard Street and Pomona, Sanborn, and Ford Avenues.**

***Accomplishments – Storm drains were installed along Sanborn Avenue.***



New storm drain and handicap-accessible ramp

Certain portions of the Alma Neighborhood were originally developed without storm drains. When the *NRPU* was released, this deficiency still had not been completely rectified, creating flooding problems on neighborhood streets. Resident D. Morillo recalls, “During the rainy season, residents often had to walk through one foot deep stagnant pools of water that attracted mosquitoes.” The Alma Neighborhood Association worked with the WACC and SNI staff to eliminate this lack of basic city infrastructure. With the implementation of storm drains along Sanborn Avenue, the flooding issue has been resolved. According to Rosa Pereida, “Today, we celebrate having access to basic city services which makes our community healthier and brings us into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.”

**Priority Action #5 – Promote the City’s Curb and Sidewalk Repair grant program among property owners and assist property owners with Coalition grants to front the repair costs.**

***Accomplishments – Significant improvements were made to the sidewalks and curbs in the Washington SNI Area, including installation of approximately 90 handicap-accessible ramps.***

Approximately 90 handicap-accessible ramps were added to curbs throughout the Washington SNI Area. Due to these new ramps, a significant portion of the curbs are now compliant with the Americans



Example of new handicap-accessible ramp

with Disabilities Act. Additionally, significant improvements were made to sidewalks. The improvements led resident Javier Gonzales to comment, “We went from mothers having to push strollers on the street to a more walkable and livable community.”

**Priority Action #6 – Work with property owners to close the liquor store at the corner of Oak and South First Streets, and redevelop or rehabilitate building for different use(s).**

*Accomplishments – Façade improvements were completed to the liquor store at Oak and South First Streets.*



Liquor store at the corner of Oak and South First Streets before improvements



Liquor store after façade improvements

During the creation of the 2002 *NRPU*, the Washington community placed a high priority on closing the liquor store at the corner of Oak and South First Streets due to its close proximity to the Washington Elementary School and other community assets such as the Biblioteca Latinoamericana, Washington United Youth Center, and Brenda Lopez Memorial Park. Though this was not feasible, façade improvements to the building were made that included new paint, signage, and new awnings. In response to these improvements, resident Javier Gonzales said, “The liquor store looked like a prison with ugly window bars. Now, it is a friendly neighborhood market.”

**Priority Action #7 – Continue working with the Redevelopment Agency on the proposed Bellevue Park and consult with the community on its design to address problems in the area such as homeless encampments along the railroad tracks and the presence of drug paraphernalia and other litter.**

***Accomplishments –Bellevue Park was constructed and opened in October 2006.***

In addition to the opening of Parque de Padre Mateo Sheedy, Bellevue Park was opened in October 2006. Having completed two new parks since the release of the *NRPU* is a major accomplishment for the Washington community. Residents’ understanding of the problems associated with homelessness and drug use along the railroad ROW just south of the park site helped to determine the design of the park. According to resident Rosa Pereida, “The last park built in the Washington SNI Area was in 1889. We have waited a very long time for this.” Bellevue Park includes a large grass field, picnic area, fountain, playground, and bathrooms.



Bellevue Park looking east



Fountain and benches and playground at Bellevue Park



“No Parking” signage for street sweeping

**Action Priority #8 – Implement a program to better notify residents of their scheduled street sweeping day and when warranted, utilize temporary and permanent “No Parking” signage to encourage residents to remove parked vehicles.**

*Accomplishments – “No Parking” signage was installed throughout the Tamien and Goodyear/Mastic Neighborhoods and along segments of Oak and Sutter Streets to facilitate street sweeping.*

Proper street sweeping requires that cars are out of the way so that the entire street can be cleaned all the way up to the curb. However, many parts of the Washington SNI Area lacked “No Parking” signs, resulting in a situation where street sweeping trucks were only able to clean the middle of the road. This problem was remedied along Oak, Plum, and Sutter Streets and Mastic Avenue with the installation of new “No Parking” signs. Tamien Neighborhood Association Vice President Mary Guzman commented, “After the signs came in, for the first time I saw the curb of the street clean.”



Handicap-accessible ramps at the intersection of Oak St. and Almaden Ave.

**Priority Action #9 – Conduct a study to consider the conversion of Vine Street and Almaden Avenue to two-way streets.**

*Accomplishments – Traffic lights were installed at the intersections of Oak Street and Almaden Avenue, and Oak Street and Vine Street. Handicap-accessible ramps were installed at the intersection of Oak Street and Almaden Avenue.*

The original goal of the Washington community was to convert Vine Street and Almaden Avenue from one-way streets to two-way streets. Since this was determined not feasible in the short-term, the community worked with SNI staff and the San José Department of Transportation to make short-term improvements, including the addition of traffic signals at the intersections of Oak Street and Almaden Avenue, and Oak and Vine Streets. Four handicap-accessible ramps were also installed at the Oak Street and Almaden Avenue intersection. Past WACC President Autumn Gutierrez recalls, “Freeways don’t belong in neighborhoods. One-way couplets and limited stops along the way contribute to the division of communities, inhibiting access to vital neighborhood uses. A school, park,

youth center, and library lay just on the other side of two lanes of one-way traffic moving unimpeded by signals. After eight years of community prioritization, two signals at major couplet intersections were finally funded and installed. As drivers now move through our streets, the stop at the signal allows them to recognize that they are in a community and hopefully drive accordingly as they would have others do in their own neighborhoods. The signals are one step in the traffic calming community priority. As part of the citywide strategy to convert one-way couplets to two-way streets, the community is dedicated to the idea that the use of our streets reflects the concept of a neighborhood. Before Highway 87 was built, the need existed for a faster way to access downtown and beyond. The need no longer exists and measures should be taken to reduce the traffic impacts created by the couplets by converting them to two-way streets.”

**Priority Action #10 – Improve traffic flow and controls in the Goodyear/Sherman/Graham intersection.**

*Accomplishments – Traffic flow, landscaping, and pedestrian safety were improved at the elongated intersection of Goodyear Street, Sherman Street, and Graham Avenue.*



Improvements completed at the Goodyear Street, Sherman Street, and Graham Avenue intersection

According to residents, before improvements were made to the Goodyear, Sherman, and Graham intersection, it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, to cross the street. Due to this dire situation, numerous improvements were made at this intersection including:

- Installation of two handicap-accessible ramps.
- Modification of two median islands (which created a paved pathway from Goodyear Street to Graham Avenue).
- Installation of two stop signs.
- Re-striping the crosswalks.
- Placement of additional pedestrian signage.

These improvements have increased the pedestrian safety at the intersection.

**Priority Action #11 – Identify areas needing new or upgraded street lights and pursue funding.**

*Accomplishments – Seventy new street lights were installed, and 55 existing street lights were upgraded throughout the Washington SNI Area.*

Many locations within the Washington SNI Area had insufficient lighting including some blocks with no lighting at all. To rectify this dangerous problem, residents conducted walking tours with SNI staff and other City staff to identify where lighting improvements were needed. Additionally, they helped determine the placement and level of lighting on a block-by-block basis. The result has been a tremendous improvement in the lighting conditions throughout the Washington SNI Area.



New street light

**Priority Action #12 – Enhance existing basketball courts, turf field, and play equipment at Washington School, and explore possibility of making the play areas at Washington School accessible on weekends.**

*Accomplishments – A new synthetic turf was installed at Washington Elementary School.*



Soccer game on the new synthetic field at Washington Elementary School

The field at the Washington Elementary School has always been more than just a place for sporting events for the community. In the absence of parks,

in the past, it served as a gathering place for families and other community members, and it continues to be a central gathering place. When the time came to replace the grass turf, the community decided to install a new synthetic grass turf. A partnership between the San José Unified School District, the San José Redevelopment Agency, and the California Waste Management Board was formed to fund the project. The grand opening for the new field was held on March 7, 2007. At the opening, WACC President Mark Lopez stated, “We dreamed of a field where we could run all day, play sports all day, and never get tired of it. Almost 10 years have passed and I am proud to say that our dream in getting a new field has now come true.”

**Action Priority #13 – Implement the plan to underground the utility lines along Oak Street in front of the Washington Elementary School**

***Accomplishments – Utility lines were moved underground along Oak Street in front of Washington Elementary School.***

Washington Elementary School is a very important part of the community. The *NRPU* goal of removing ugly power lines from the front of the school demonstrated the pride residents feel toward the school. In fact, this goal was such a high priority that residents, in partnership with City staff and the school district, were able to complete the project before the *NRPU* was officially published. The result has been a much nicer view of the school.

# Strategic Action Plan

The Strategic Action Plan provides the Washington community with a roadmap for the next five to seven years. Contained in the Strategic Action Plan are the new Top Ten Priority Actions. These new priorities reaffirm and continue many of the priorities from the 1998 *Washington Neighborhood Revitalization Plan (NRP)* and the 2002 *Washington Neighborhood Revitalization Plan Update (NRPU)*. The job of addressing community priorities is well underway with many significant actions having been completed from the *NRP* and *NRPU*, but the work is not complete.

## SUMMARY OF NEW TOP TEN PRIORITY ACTIONS

The New Top Ten Priority Actions summarized below represent high priority goals which consist of several projects or “action steps.” These actions steps will be listed in the detailed descriptions which follows this summary.

Priority Action #1

**Improve the Alma Senior/Youth Community Center.**

Priority Action #2

**Implement Improvements and Additions to Parks and Open Space and Increase Recreational Programs.**

Priority Action #3

**Implement Housing Rehabilitation and Painting Projects.**

Priority Action Item #4

**Reduce Crime and Associated Negative Activity.**

Priority Action #5

**Develop and Implement Traffic Calming and Pedestrian Safety Strategies for the Neighborhood.**

Priority Action #6

**Improve and Maintain Streets, Streetscapes, and Sidewalks.**

Priority Action #7

**Close/Reconstruct Alleyways.**

Priority Action #8

**Explore Opportunities to Underground Utilities in the Washington SNI Area and Address Storm Drainage Issues along Mastic Street.**

Priority Action #9

**Address and Engage in Economic Development, and Land-Use Issues, and Improve Business Services in the Community.**

Priority Action #10

**Promote the Façade Improvement Program.**

## CORE STRATEGIES

The Washington community understands the challenges they face in implementing many of their priority actions. There are fewer City resources available than in past years. Given this reality, the community has developed several core strategies for implementing their priorities. These core strategies are designed to empower residents to rely less on government funding through a combination of local leadership development, high levels of civic engagement, and the formation of various partnerships.

The strategies below will apply to all the new Top Ten Priority Actions and are designed to promote civic empowerment:

- Partner more with universities and other higher education institutions, to create learning-through-service projects so students can assist with the planning and implementation of community projects.
- Collaborate and partner with existing non-profits, such as the United Neighborhoods of Santa Clara County and Kaboom, so neighborhood projects can benefit from tax-deductible donations.

- Promote the Washington Area Action Coalition (WACC) as the pilot Neighborhood to operate under a future citywide nonprofit organization or consider turning the WACC into a nonprofit organization.
- Work to form public-private partnerships, so corporate donations of labor and material can be accessed. Work with City officials to review and restructure City policies that prevent such public-private partnerships.
- Work with the City to expand the ability of SNI planning areas to use volunteer labor for community projects. A model to expand upon is the “Adopt-A-Park” Program, which allows volunteers to supervise neighborhood parks and perform certain maintenance.
- Work with the Labor Council to provide apprenticeships for work on both City property and other properties in the Washington SNI Area.
- Pursue various grants for projects that lack funding.

## DESCRIPTION OF NEW TOP TEN PRIORITIES ACTIONS

The new Top Ten Priority Actions are described in detail below, including the action steps developed by the community during two community workshops. The timeframe and responsible parties are designated for each action step.

### Priority Action #1

#### ***Improve the Alma Senior/Youth Community Center***

The Washington community places great importance on improving and expanding the Alma Community Center because they envision a place capable of welcoming residents from all walks of life to join in sharing good will, exchanging knowledge, engaging in self-governance, and expanding community capacity. The expanded Alma Community Center should provide for many neighborhood and resident uses, such as a safe place for children to play, after-school activities, and various activities for seniors. The community envisions a place where all can enjoy a safe haven for lifelong learning and enjoyment. They imagine a center where it is possible to build new ladders of opportunity in programs ranging from apprenticeships in traditional and emerging green trades, as well as a place for the incubation of new local businesses. The community understands the long-term challenge they face in realizing this dream but have still made this their highest priority.

#### Issue

While Phase One improvements of the *Alma Community Center Site Renovation Master Plan* are underway, Phases Two, Three, and Four still need to be engineered and developed. These improvements, to name a few, include relocating the play lot to the current location of the handball courts, changing the configuration of interior walks, adding landscaping and drainage, improving roof drainage, updating lighting, adding picnic tables in the yard and a constructing a covered walkway between the two existing buildings.

Another major item that needs improvement at the Alma Community Center is the heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) system. The current



Entrance and parking lot of the Alma Community Center

system is subject to breakdowns and its cooling capacity is insufficient in certain areas of the Center. Previous examinations found that it will be difficult and expensive to install an effective HVAC system due to the fact that there have been several additions to the original structures. Another challenge for this upgrade is that the HVAC project was not included in the original *Alma Community Center Site Renovation Master Plan*, making it more difficult to obtain funding.

In addition to renovating the Alma Community Center, community members would like to expand the size of the Center so it can accommodate additional facilities, such as an outdoor patio area for events, a computer lab, space for exercise and sports activities, a stage for performances, and a homework center. To accommodate all the activities envisioned by the community will require major additions to existing structures or the complete reconstruction of the entire Center. The cost for either approach will be substantial. Currently, there are no funds identified for the planning or construction of any of these improvements.

#### Discussion

In the near term, the Washington community will need to focus on monitoring the development of Phases Two, Three, and Four of the *Master Plan* and search for solutions to problems associated with the HVAC system.

For the long term, the Washington community understands that a sustained effort is needed if they are to realize their dream of building a much larger Alma Community Center. With no funds as yet identified, the community is looking to conduct a feasibility study for the project. Such a study could include an examination of several design options for replacement or expansion, preliminary cost estimates, case studies, and next steps. The community is considering partnering with university students to complete the feasibility study. This type of document will give the community a good idea what will be necessary to implement construction of the new facilities envisioned.

For the eventual construction of a larger Alma Community Center, community members are interested in working with the Labor Council and community college students to help build the new center. Through such partnerships, they

envision the project as a learning laboratory. Preliminary ideas to raise money for the design and construction are focused on tapping into grants tied to green buildings.

Action Steps

a) *Begin the master plan process to replace the Alma Community Center so that it meets the needs of the community.*

- Explore potential funding sources to implement a master plan.
- Consider utilizing university students to assist with a master plan.

**Time Frame:** Short- to medium-term (0-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** Alma Advisory Council (AAC) and Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) staff

b) *Complete the improvements outlined in the Alma Community Center Site Renovation Master Plan.*

- Monitor the implementation of the improvements at the Center.

**Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)

**Responsible Parties:** AAC, Department of Public Works (DPW), and PRNS staff

c) *Improve the heating, ventilating and air conditioning system (HVAC) at the Alma Senior Center.*

- Explore low-cost solutions for a HVAC system.

**Time frame:** Short- to medium-term (0-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** AAC and PRNS staff

**Priority Action #2*****Implement Improvements and Additions to Parks and Open Space and Increase Recreational Programs*****Issue**

The Washington SNI Planning Area currently has approximately two acres of park and open space land serving over 12,000 residents, well short of meeting the City of San José goal to have 3.5 acres of neighborhood/community-serving parkland per 1000 residents.

In addition to the deficiency in park and open space land, residents have several concerns related to parks, which include the following:

- The distribution of parks and open space so all neighborhoods within the Washington SNI Area have easy access to them.
- Poor maintenance of existing parks.
- The reduction of recreational programs for youth in recent years.

**Discussion**

There has been great progress made on addressing the shortage of parks and open space in the Washington SNI Area. Currently, there are three parks, which include: (1) the Bellevue Park at Pomona and Bellevue Avenues, (2) the Parque de Padre Mateo Sheedy at Floyd and Locust Streets, and (3) the Brenda Lopez Memorial Park on the closed portion of Sherman Street between the Washington Elementary School and the Washington Youth Center.

The community has a great opportunity to expand on the progress they have made by working to complete two additional parks and one new trail. A park is currently being designed along the west side of the Almaden Expressway. With funds secured, the community will be monitoring this development. Another park is being planned for the site just north of the Tamien Station parking lot. In this case, not all funds are identified to complete the project. Therefore, the community's role will include working to obtain necessary funding and participating in the planning for the park.

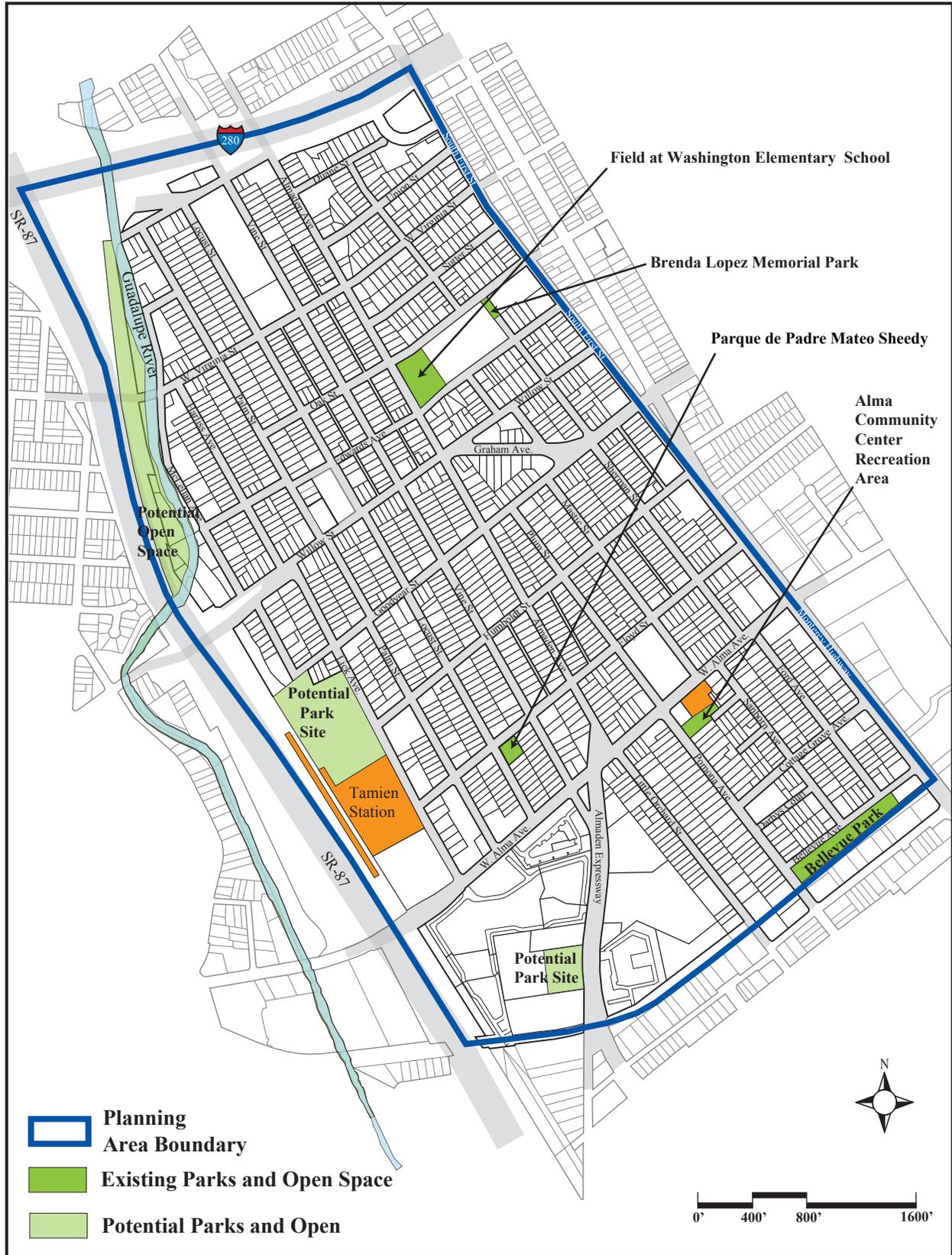
Additionally, an extension of the Guadalupe River Trail is being planned by the Santa Clara Valley Water District in conjunction with their project to construct

an overflow channel along the Guadalupe River. In addition to the trail, the community would like to see the overflow channel used as open space containing public amenities.

With increased parkland in general, one challenge Washington residents face is access. Even with the completion of two additional parks and a new trail with possible open space, most of the large parks will reside on the periphery of the Washington SNI Area, providing close access for only a portion of the population. There are very few pocket parks distributed throughout the neighborhoods for casual and frequent usage by nearby residents. Parque de Padre Mateo Sheedy is a good example of a pocket park that is easily accessible. One potential site for a pocket park had been the vacant southern portion of the Center of Employment Training site. However, this site may be unavailable as the land may be leased for the development of a new charter school. Community members will need to search for other appropriate sites to create additional pocket parks in the future.

The maintenance of the new parks has already become an issue. With a lack of funding, it has been difficult for the city to provide the necessary maintenance. Residents are doing some maintenance work as part of the Adopt-A-Park Program, but they are only allowed to perform certain tasks. Residents are interested in exploring the possibility of expanding the types of maintenance tasks volunteers are allowed to perform.

With a lack of funding, recreational programs for youth have also been scaled down in recent years, creating a challenge to keep activities going at parks and other open spaces. Again, community members are interested in determining how programs can be expanded by leveraging volunteer labor based in the community. They want to put an emphasis on increasing such programs by working to strengthen their partnership with Catholic Charities and Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department.



**Figure 6. Washington SNI Area Parks and Open Space**

Map based on the SNI Washington Planning Area boundary map, courtesy of the San José Redevelopment Agency.

Action Steps

a) *Install lights and benches at Washington Elementary School.*

**Time frame:** Short- to medium-term (0-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** WACC and PRNS staff

b) *Explore options to build a new skate park.*

**Time frame:** Medium-term (4-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** PRNS staff



Railroad right-of way just south of Bellevue Park

c) *Explore options to convert the railroad right-of-way adjacent to Bellevue Park into additional open space and trail.*

- Conduct a feasibility study that would determine the cost to purchase the additional railroad right-of-way, examine conceptual designs for use as open space and trail, and provide cost estimates to implement improvements.
- Explore utilizing university students to conduct a feasibility study.

**Time frame:** Short- to medium-term (0-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** San José Redevelopment Agency (RDA) and PRNS staff

d) *Conduct more youth recreation programs.*

- Continue and strengthen partnerships with Catholic Charities and PRNS.
- Explore opportunities to involve more volunteers in providing recreational programs for youth.

**Time frame:** Immediate and ongoing

**Responsible Parties:** WACC and PRNS staff

e) *Work with the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) and the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services to maximize open space opportunities in conjunction with the construction of an overflow channel along the Guadalupe River and the extension of Guadalupe River Trail.*

- Determine the possibility of providing open space facilities within the overflow channel.

**Time frame:** Long-term (7+ years)

**Responsible Parties:** WACC, SCVWD and PRNS staff



Land adjacent to Guadalupe River

f) *Improve the existing condition of the restrooms and install more lighting at Bellevue Park.*

**Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)

**Responsible Parties:** PRNS staff

g) *Build a new park along the Almaden Expressway.*

- Monitor development of the park.

**Time frame:** Short- to medium-term (0-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** PRNS staff

h) *Improve the landscaping at the Biblioteca Latinoamericana.*

- Apply for a CAP grant and/or a beautification grant.
- Encourage community members to take part in the landscaping installation.

**Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)

**Responsible Parties:** WACC and PRNS staff



Area at the Biblioteca where the community wants additional landscaping

i) *Explore options, and if feasible, install more parking at the Biblioteca Latinoamericana and Washington United Youth Center.*

**Time frame:** Short- to medium-term (0-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** Department of Transportation (DOT) and PRNS staff



Locust Street looking south

*j) Explore options, and if feasible, close half of Locust Street that runs adjacent to the Parque de Padre Mateo Sheedy to create additional open space for a basketball court.*

**Time frame:** Medium-term (4-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** DOT, PRNS, and DPW staff

*k) Increase park maintenance at the Parque de Padre Mateo Sheedy.*

**Time frame:** Immediate and ongoing

**Responsible Parties:** PRNS staff

*l) Install more lights at the Parque de Padre Mateo Sheedy.*

**Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)

**Responsible Parties:** PRNS, DPW, and RDA staff

*m) Monitor the development process of the new Tamien Community Park.*

**Time frame:** Short- to medium-term (0-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** WACC and PRNS staff

**Priority Action #3**  
***Implement Housing Rehabilitation and Painting Projects***

**Issue**

The long history of the Washington SNI Area as one of the original settlements of San José gives many of its homes significant historical value. The community places great value in the area's housing preservation. Due to the age of many houses in the Washington SNI Area, there is a need for basic rehabilitation work, including exterior painting, façade repair, replacement of roofs, and electrical upgrades. Some low-income households lack the funds to make the necessary repairs and painting to bring homes into good condition.

Also of concern are the remaining homes that lie under the flight path of the Mineta San José International Airport. These homes south of Humboldt Street, fall just outside the boundary of eligibility established by the Federal Aviation Administration to qualify for federal funds to provide noise mitigation. Unfortunately, residents in this area still endure significant exposure to aircraft noise.

**Discussion**

San José Housing Department offers grants and loans for rehabilitating and painting houses of qualifying low-income homeowners. The Washington community is interested in working with SNI and the Housing Department staff to reach out to eligible property owners whose homes are in a state of disrepair. Additionally, they would like to explore the possibility of utilizing the Housing Rehabilitation Program for soundproofing homes under the airport flight path located south of Humboldt Street.

Community members are also very interested in hosting home improvement workshops to provide education about rehabilitation and painting programs, the importance of preserving the historic character of housing, and the history of housing in the area. They see these workshops as an opportunity to strengthen community bonds and neighborhood pride by having elders share memories of community life, as well as by exhibiting historical pictures of the neighborhood.



Example of housing in disrepair

Action Steps

- a) *Explore options to access grants and loans from the San José Housing Department (Housing) for use in soundproofing the homes under the airport flight path located south of Humboldt Street.*

**Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)

**Responsible Parties:** Individual property owners, WACC, SNI and Housing staff

- b) *Work with Housing and community-based groups, such as Neighborhood Housing Services Silicon Valley (NHSSV), to coordinate and complete house painting projects to improve low-income, owner-occupied (as a first priority for this item) and rental (as a second priority) homes.*

- Partner with housing and community-based groups, such as NHSSV to coordinate projects.

**Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)

**Responsible Parties:** Individual property owners, WACC, Housing, SNI and NHSSV staff

- c) *Work with Housing to encourage resident participation in the Housing Rehabilitation Program to improve housing conditions and focus on health and safety improvements, such as roof repair/replacement and electrical upgrading projects.*

- Educate residents about the Housing Grant and Loan Program for home improvements.

**Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)

**Responsible Parties:** Individual property owners, WACC, SNI and Housing staff

**Priority Action #4*****Reduce Crime and Associated Negative Activity*****Issue**

Residents face several issues related to crime. Prostitution is prevalent along the South First Street corridor and is spreading into the adjacent neighborhoods. The presence of inexpensive motels along South First Street contributes to this problem. Another concern associated with the inexpensive motels is that they have become havens for parolees who engage in criminal activities such as drug dealing.

Problems associated with liquor are also prevalent. These include illegal liquor sales to minors, public drunkenness, and a negative community image caused by the presence of too many liquor stores. Some businesses in the area have incurred criminal violations by serving alcohol to minors.

Homeless people are attracted to the area because the Washington SNI Area provides several social services that are absent in surrounding neighborhoods. These include community services run by Sacred Heart Community Services, the Emergency Housing Consortium, and Martha's Kitchen. Homeless people linger in the neighborhood near these social service centers, which is a perceived negative activity.

The Tamien Station is also a concern of residents due to a variety of criminal activity that has been reported in recent years and by the fact school buses use the location to pick up and drop off children for travel to several schools. Additionally, the Station area is perceived to be very dark in months with limited light, creating an unsafe feeling in children and adult commuters.

There is also gang activity in the Washington SNI Area. Residents often live in fear of where they can walk without crossing into gang "territory."

**Discussion**

While residents acknowledge that problems associated with criminal activity have improved in recent years, the high priority placed on addressing crime reflects the continuation of the problems discussed above. Community members would like

to focus on improving their relationship with local law enforcement officers as a foundation to decreasing the various criminal activities in the area.

With an improved relationship with the San José Police Department (SJPD), residents hope to implement specifically identified strategies. Many of these strategies deal with businesses that are either encouraging criminal activity or are actually violating the law primarily with prostitution and liquor violations. Other strategies include increasing the presence of law enforcement in public areas to reduce crime.

Action Steps

- a) *Address problems associated with the motels along South First Street.*

**Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)

**Responsible Parties:** WACC and SJPD staff

- b) *Work with San José Police Department to increase enforcement on small businesses that sell liquor and cigarettes to minors, especially at Union Market and Pomona/Alma Liquor Store.*

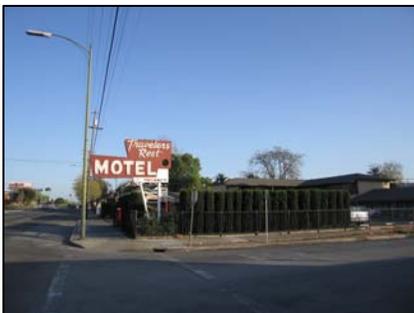
**Time frame:** Immediate

**Responsible Parties:** WACC and SJPD staff

- c) *Reduce prostitution throughout the neighborhood, especially at motels such as the Travelers Rest Motel at South First Street and Floyd Street.*

**Time frame:** Immediate

**Responsible Parties:** WACC and SJPD staff



Travelers Rest Motel

- d) *Reduce problems associated with homelessness throughout the neighborhood. Focus on West Alma Avenue, and on Pomona Avenue where it intersects with West Alma and Bellevue Avenues.*

**Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)

**Responsible Parties:** WACC and SJPD staff

- e) *Increase neighborhood awareness and participation in the process of liquor license/renewal and the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control.*

**Time frame:** Immediate

**Responsible Parties:** WACC, SNI, SJPD, and Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement (PBCE) staff

- f) *Continue to provide enforcement of public drunkenness ordinances, especially at: the bus stops in front of and across from the DMV on West Alma Avenue; in the back of Wendy’s on West Alma Avenue; at the Pomona Handball Courts; at Pomona Liquors; and at El Rancho Liquor.*

**Time frame:** Immediate

**Responsible Parties:** WACC and SJPD staff

- g) *Provide more security at the Tamien Caltrain Station, such as adding more lights and increasing police presence.*

- Reach out to transit security officials to discuss problems.
- Work with transit agencies to improve lighting in an around the Tamien Station area.

**Time frame:** Short-Term (0-3 years)

**Responsible Parties:** WACC, Caltrain, and DPW staff



Tamien Caltrain and Light-Rail Station

- h) *Improve neighborhood’s working relationships with police officers.*

**Time frame:** Immediate

**Responsible Parties:** WACC and SJPD staff

- i) *Increase the enforcement of the liquor license at Mountain Mike’s Pizza on South First Street and the off-sale of alcohol at the liquor store located at Pomona and West Alma Avenues.*

**Time frame:** Immediate

**Responsible Parties:** WACC and SJPD staff



One-way Vine Street looking south

**Priority Action #5**

***Develop and Implement Traffic Calming and Pedestrian Safety Strategies for the Neighborhood***

Issue

The impact of a large volume of cars speeding through neighborhood streets is an ongoing concern for residents. Pedestrians don't feel safe when walking in many areas of the neighborhood.

Discussion

Vine Street and South Almaden Avenue lie at the heart of the Washington SNI Area, and are one-way streets that run southbound and northbound respectively. These streets are currently designed to move large volumes of commuter traffic through the neighborhood. However, they also serve as neighborhood streets for local traffic and are used by pedestrians who live nearby. Converting these streets one-way streets to two-way is central to the community's desire to slow traffic and to increase pedestrian safety.

For the remainder of neighborhood streets, community members have identified key locations where targeted traffic calming strategies can be used. These measures include the addition of traffic signals and stop signs at selected intersections, and the additional of speed bumps, handicap-accessible curbs, and crosswalk improvements.

Action Steps

- a) *Explore, and if feasible, install traffic signals at the intersection of Humboldt and Vine Streets.*

**Time frame:** Short- to medium-term (0-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** DOT and DPW staff

- b) *Evaluate existing traffic conditions on Oak Street, Humboldt Street, Mastic Street, Sherman Street (between Humboldt Street and West Alma Avenue), Pomona Avenue, and Little Orchard Street to determine appropriate traffic calming measures such as speed bumps, if warranted.*

**Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)

**Responsible Parties:** DOT staff

- c) *Explore, and if feasible, install four-way stop signs at Goodyear Street and Lick Avenue.*

**Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)

**Responsible Parties:** DOT staff

- d) *Construct a couplet conversion and install handicap-accessible ramps along Vine Street and South Almaden Avenue.*

**Time frame:** Short- to medium-term (0-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** DOT staff

- e) *Repair of the crosswalk in front of Mountain Mike’s Pizza at the intersection of Floyd and South First Streets.*

**Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)

**Responsible Parties:** DOT staff

- f) *Install handicap-accessible ramps at the corner of State and Sutter Streets.*

**Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)

**Responsible Parties:** DOT staff

- g) *Explore, and if feasible, install four-way stop signs at Floyd and Locust Streets.*

**Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)

**Responsible Parties:** DOT staff

- h) *Explore, and if feasible, install stop signs at the intersection of Pomona and Cottage Grove Avenues.*

**Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)

**Responsible Parties:** DOT staff



Crosswalk at Floyd and South First Streets

**Priority Action #6*****Improve and Maintain Streets, Streetscapes, and Sidewalks*****Issue**

There are many streets in poor condition in the Washington SNI Area. Of particular concern is West Alma Avenue, which suffers from uneven pavement. Potholes are also found on streets throughout the neighborhood and, at times, it takes a long time to get them filled. In addition, there is still a need for street lights along certain streets, “No Parking – Street Sweeping” signs for street sweeping, and the improvement of sidewalks. Residents also desire amenities for their streetscapes such as pedestrian-scale street lights that have nice architectural features.

**Discussion**

Great progress has been made in improving the quality of the streetscape in the Washington SNI Area. Improvements include repairs to sidewalks, and the installation of new “No Parking – Street Sweeping” signs, streetlights and handicap-accessible ramps. However, much remains unfinished and the community is, once again, placing a high priority on the improvement and maintenance of neighborhood streets. The community would also like to explore the feasibility of installing streetscape amenities along certain streets such as pedestrian-scale street lighting.

**Action Steps**

a) *Explore, and if feasible, install pedestrian-scale street lights on Lick Avenue, Sutter Street, State Street, and Harliss Avenue.*

**Time frame:** Medium- to long-term (4-7+ years)

**Responsible Parties:** DOT and DPW staff

b) *Explore, and if feasible, install “No Parking – Street Sweeping” signs on Edwards and Ford Avenues and State Street.*

**Time frame:** Short-term (0-3 years)

**Responsible Parties:** DOT staff

- c) *Encourage neighbors to report to the City when street light maintenance and tree trimming are needed throughout the neighborhood, especially on Plum, Floyd, and South First Streets, as well as Ford Avenue.*

**Time frame:** Immediate and ongoing

**Responsible Parties:** WACC

- d) *Improve the condition of the street surface and sidewalks along West Alma Avenue, from Almaden Avenue to Lick Avenue.*

**Time frame:** Medium-term (4-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** DOT and DPW staff



Poor condition of the pavement along West Alma Avenue

**Priority Action #7**  
***Close/Reconstruct Alleyways***



One of the six alleyways residents want to improve

**Issue**

The condition of alleyways in the Washington SNI Area has been an ongoing concern of residents. Some of these alleyways are unpaved and others have deteriorating pavement. Additionally, all unimproved alleyways lack drainage and proper street lighting. These conditions attract littering, graffiti, loitering, and criminal activities such as drug dealing, gang activity, and illegal dumping.

**Discussion**

The alleyways of the Washington SNI Area were constructed in a pre-automobile era and were designed for horse carriages serving homes in the area. Attempts to close alleyways have been difficult in most cases because residents need to use the alleyways for access to their parking spaces or garages. In alleyways with few parking issues, residents have worked to close them and convert the space to enlarged backyards. However, for the majority of alleyways, residents are now focusing on reconstruction.

Action Steps

a) *Explore, and if feasible, conduct alleyway closures and/or reconstructions at the following locations:*

- Alleyway between Vine and Locust Streets, from Oak Street to Edwards Avenue.
- Alleyway between Vine and Locust Streets, from Edwards Avenue to Willow Street.
- Alleyway between South Almaden Avenue and Vine Street, from Edwards Avenue to Willow Street.
- Alleyway between South Almaden Avenue and Vine Street, from Humboldt Street to Floyd Street.
- Alleyway between Mastic and Sherman Streets, from Humboldt to Floyd Streets.
- Alleyway between South First Street and Sherman Street, from Goodyear Street to Humboldt Street.

**Time frame:** Medium-term (4-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** RDA, DPW, DOT, and PBCE staff

b) *Explore, and if feasible, install speed bumps on reconstructed alleyways.*

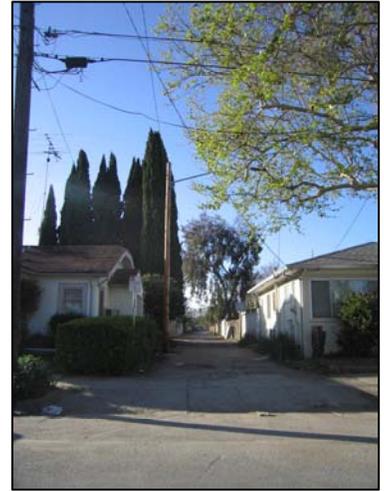
**Time frame:** Medium-term (4-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** RDA and DOT staff

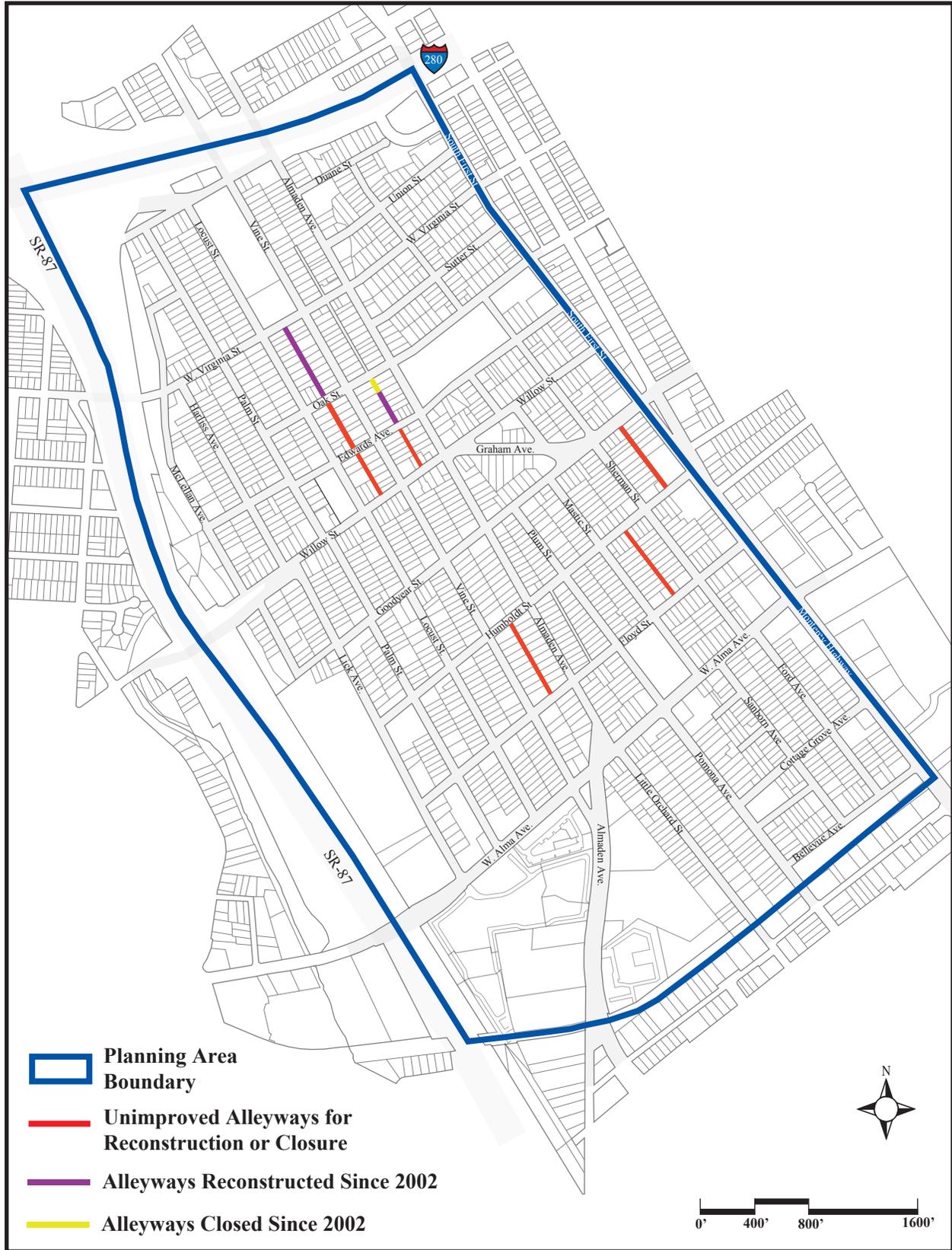
c) *Explore, and if feasible, install pedestrian-scale street lights along reconstructed alleyways.*

**Time frame:** Medium-term (4-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** RDA, DPW, and DOT staff



Example of unimproved alleyway



**Figure 7. Washington SNI Area Alleyways for Closure/Reconstruction**  
 Map based on the SNI Washington Planning Area boundary map, courtesy of the San José Redevelopment Agency.

**Priority Action #8*****Explore Opportunities to Underground Utilities in the Washington SNI Area and Address Drainage Issues along Mastic Street*****Issue**

Many residents would like to see unsightly overhead utility wires placed underground.

Much of the Washington SNI Area is built atop unstable ground that was once a water-holding pond, a swamp, and a river. These soils tend to settle over time and as the land gradually moves, gutters that once drained properly no longer flow to the storm drains placed along city streets. Residents have reported poor drainage along Mastic Street, between Goodyear Street and West Alma Avenue, and suspect that the street gutters are no longer properly carrying water to the storm drains.

**Discussion**

Placing overhead utility wires underground is very expensive. The recent work to underground utilities in front of the Washington Elementary School may serve as a model of how to find resources to pay for undergrounding. A focus on partnerships with other institutional entities to underground utilities adjacent to their buildings may be a way to begin to address the unsightly view of overhead utility wires.

A full roadway assessment is needed to determine the exact cause of the drainage problems along Mastic Street. Once the cause is fully understood, planning to correct the issue can be pursued.

**Action Steps**

- a) *Examine drainage problems that exist along Mastic Street, from Goodyear Street to West Alma Avenue, explore solutions, and implement them.*
  - Work with the Department of Public Works to address the problem until corrected.

**Time frame:** Short- to medium-term (0-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** DOT, and DPW staff

b) *Underground utilities within the Tamien Neighborhood Association area.*

- Examine the feasibility of such a program and determine whether to pursue further.

**Time frame:** Long-term (7+ years)

**Responsible Parties:** DPW staff

**Priority Action #9*****Address and Engage in Economic Development and Land-Use Issues, and Improve Business Services in the Community*****Issue**

The Washington SNI Area lacks certain basic business services such as a larger grocery store that offers good prices and healthy food, a post office, chain food outlets, and a variety of sit-down restaurants. At the same time, there is also a concentration of car sales lots in the area that do little to serve the needs of local residents. Additionally, residents have had difficulty monitoring the numerous development proposals that are put forth in the Washington SNI Area.

**Discussion**

To attract the business services desired by the Washington community, residents will need to engage closely in economic development and land-use issues. By identifying constraints that discourage desired business services from locating in the area, strategies can be developed to create the right economic environment.

The numerous car lots along South First Street create an atmosphere that does not promote the street as a commercial district oriented toward pedestrians. Progress has been made recently as zoning has been put into place to prevent additional car lots from locating along the street. Residents would like to see the existing car lots replaced over time with a variety of sit-down restaurants and other pedestrian-oriented commercial land uses.

In addition to changing the composition and the feel of the South First Street area, residents would like to find locations throughout the neighborhood to add a large grocery store, a café, a post office and some chain food outlets. South First Street should be explored for sites large enough for a grocery store, as it is likely to be very difficult to locate something suitable in the neighborhood commercial areas along West Alma Avenue and Willow Street. Smaller venues, such as cafes and small food outlets, are likely to integrate well into these neighborhood commercial areas.

Adding a post office requires action by the Federal government. As a short-term improvement, there have been preliminary discussions of adding some basic mail

services at a private business. Adding mail boxes around the Washington SNI Area is also under consideration, but there have been problems with vandalism in the past.

By monitoring development proposals that are in the Washington SNI Area, the community can look for opportunities to incorporate the desired businesses services into new development projects while not supporting unwanted business and development projects.

Action Steps

- a) *Encourage the development of a grocery store, coffee shop, and franchise restaurants (e.g, Jamba Juice, Subway, etc.) in the neighborhood.*

**Time frame:** Short- to medium-term (0-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** WACC, Office of Economic Development (OED), and RDA staff

- b) *Work with the United States Postal Service and/or a private mail service provider to develop a satellite post office in the Washington SNI Area.*

**Time frame:** Short- to medium-term (0-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** WACC and RDA staff

- c) *Work with the Planning Department to stay abreast of development applications received within the Washington SNI Area and actively participate in the planning process.*

**Time frame:** Immediate and ongoing

**Responsible Parties:** WACC and PBCE staff

- d) *Encourage a wider variety of restaurants along South First Street.*

**Time frame:** Short- to medium-term (0-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** WACC, OED, and RDA staff

**Priority Action #10*****Promote the Façade Improvement Program***Issue

While many façade improvements of commercial storefronts have taken place in recent years, there are still significant numbers that are not well-maintained, creating a sense of blight in the neighborhood.

Discussion

Several storefronts within the Willow Street Neighborhood Business District have received façade improvements in recent years. Additionally, two are in progress at the intersection of West Alma and Pomona Avenues. This progress has inspired the community to pursue additional façade improvements throughout the neighborhood with a focus on Willow Street, Pomona Avenue, and South First Street, where most of the area's commercial areas are located.

Education and assistance will be a key factor in convincing additional business owners to make improvements to their façades. Many business people are very busy and have little time to pursue improvements to their properties. Additionally, they are often apprehensive about participation in City programs due to concerns about the number of requirements or potential exposure to existing Code violations. A significant effort to outreach to business owners will be required so that they fully understand the Façade Improvement Program and to make owners feel comfortable participating in the Program.

Action Steps

*a) Work with Code Enforcement to minimize illegal home businesses throughout the neighborhood.*

**Time frame:** Short- to medium-term (0-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** WACC and PBCE staff

*b) Conduct façade improvements to businesses throughout the neighborhood, especially along Willow Street and Pomona Avenue.*

- Reach out to individual business owners who qualify for the Façade Improvement Program and assist them in applying for grants.
- Create a list of properties that the community desires to have improved.
- Develop strategies for educating business owners about the Façade Improvement Program.
- Partner with university students to assist businesses in designing façade improvements projects and to complete program applications.

**Time frame:** Medium-term (4-6 years)

**Responsible Parties:** WACC, RDA, and PBCE staff

# Appendix A

## MATRIX OF THE TOP TEN PRIORITY ACTIONS AND ACTION STEPS

No.	Priority Action / Action Steps	Time Frame	Lead Responsibility
<b>1</b>	<b>Improve the Alma Senior/Youth Community Center</b>		
	a) Begin the master plan process to replace the Alma Community Center so that it meets the needs of the Community.	Short- to medium-term	AAC, PRNS
	b) Complete the improvements outlined in the <i>Alma Community Center Site Renovation Master Plan</i> .	Short-term	AAC, DPW, PRNS
	c) Improve the heating, ventilating and air conditioning at the Alma Senior Center.	Short- to medium-term	AAC, PRNS
<b>2</b>	<b>Implement Improvements and Additions to Parks and Open Space and Increase Recreational Programs</b>		
	a) Install lights and benches at Washington Elementary School.	Short- to medium-term	WACC, PRNS
	b) Explore options to build a new skate park.	Medium-term	PRNS
	c) Explore options to convert the railroad right-of-way adjacent to Bellevue Park into additional open space and trail.	Short- to medium-term	RDA, PRNS
	d) Conduct more youth recreational programs.	Immediate and ongoing	WACC, PRNS

e) Work with the Santa Clara Valley Water District and the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services to maximize open space opportunities in conjunction with the construction of an overflow channel along the Guadalupe River and the extension of Guadalupe River Trail.	Long-term	WACC, SCVWD, PRNS
f) Improve the existing condition of the restrooms and install more lighting at Bellevue Park.	Short-term	PRNS
g) Build a new park along the Almaden Expressway.	Short- to medium-term	PRNS
h) Improve the landscaping at the Biblioteca Latinoamericana.	Short-term	WACC, PRNS
i) Explore options, and if feasible, install more parking at the Biblioteca Latinoamericana and Washington United Youth Center.	Short- to medium-term	DOT, PRNS
j) Explore options, and if feasible, close half of Locust Street that runs adjacent to the Parque de Padre Mateo Sheedy to create additional open space for a basketball court.	Medium-term	DOT, PRNS, DPW
k) Increase park maintenance at the Parque de Padre Mateo Sheedy.	Immediate and ongoing	PRNS
l) Install more lights at the Parque de Padre Mateo Sheedy.	Short-term	PRNS, DPW, RDA
m) Monitor the development process of the new Tamien Community Park.	Short- to medium-term	WACC, PRNS
<b>3 Implement Housing Rehabilitation and Painting Projects</b>		
a) Explore options to access grants and loans from the San José Housing Department for use in soundproofing the homes under the airport flight path located south of Humboldt Street.	Short-term	Individual property owners, WACC, SNI, Housing

<p>b) Work with Housing and community-based groups, such as Neighborhood Housing Services Silicon Valley, to coordinate and complete house painting projects to improve low-income, owner-occupied (as a first priority for this item) and rental (as a second priority) homes.</p>	<p>Short-term</p>	<p>Individual property owners, WACC, Housing, SNI, NHSSV</p>
<p>c) Work with Housing to encourage resident participation in the Housing Rehabilitation Program to improve housings conditions and focus on health and safety improvements, such as roof repair/replacement and electrical upgrading projects.</p>	<p>Short-term</p>	<p>Individual property owners, WACC, SNI, Housing</p>
<p><b>4 Reduce Crime and Associated Negative Activity</b></p>		
<p>a) Address problems associated with the motels along South First Street.</p>	<p>Short-term</p>	<p>WACC, SJPD</p>
<p>b) Work with San José Police Department to increase enforcement on small businesses that sell liquor and cigarettes to minors, especially at Union Market and Pomona/Alma Liquor Store.</p>	<p>Immediate</p>	<p>WACC, SJPD</p>
<p>c) Reduce prostitution throughout the neighborhood, especially at motels such as the Travelers Rest Motel at South First Street and Floyd Street.</p>	<p>Immediate</p>	<p>WACC, SJPD</p>
<p>d) Reduce problems associated with homelessness throughout the neighborhood. Focus on West Alma Avenue, and on Pomona Avenue where it intersects with West Alma and Bellevue Avenues.</p>	<p>Short-term</p>	<p>WACC, SJPD</p>
<p>e) Increase neighborhood awareness and participation on the process of liquor license/renewal and CA Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control.</p>	<p>Immediate</p>	<p>WACC, SNI, SJPD, PBCE</p>

f) Continue to provide enforcement of public drunkenness ordinances, especially at: the bus stops in front of and across from the DMV on West Alma Avenue; in the back of Wendy’s on West Alma Avenue; at the Pomona Handball Courts; at Pomona Liquors; and at El Rancho Liquor.	Immediate	WACC, SJPDP
g) Provide more security at the Tamien Caltrain Station, such as adding more lights and increasing police presence.	Short-term	WACC, Caltrain, DPW
h) Improve neighborhood’s relationships with police officers.	Immediate	WACC, SJPDP
i) Increase enforcement of the liquor license at Mountain Mike’s Pizza on South First Street and the off-sale of alcohol at the liquor store located at Pomona and West Alma Avenues.	Immediate	WACC, SJPDP
<b>5 Develop and Implement Traffic Calming and Pedestrian Safety Strategies for the Neighborhood</b>		
a) Explore, and if feasible, install traffic signals at the intersection of Humboldt and Vine Streets.	Short- to medium-term	DOT, DPW
b) Evaluate existing traffic conditions on Oak Street, Humboldt Street, Mastic Street, Sherman Street (between Humboldt Street and West Alma Avenue), Pomona Avenue, and Little Orchard Street to determine appropriate traffic calming measures such as speed bumps, if warranted.	Short-term	DOT
c) Explore, and if feasible, install 4-way stop signs at Goodyear Street and Lick Avenue.	Short-term	DOT
d) Construct a couplet conversion and install handicap-accessible ramps along Vine Street and South Almaden Avenue.	Short- to medium-term	DOT
e) Repair the crosswalk in front of Mountain Mike’s Pizza at the intersection of Floyd and South First Streets.	Short-term	DOT

f) Install handicap-accessible ramps at the corner of State and Sutter Streets.	Short-term	DOT
g) Explore, and if feasible, install 4-way stop signs at Floyd and Locust Streets.	Short-term	DOT
h) Explore, and if feasible, install stop signs at the intersection of Pomona and Cottage Grove Avenues.	Short-term	DOT
<b>6 Improve and Maintain Streets, Streetscapes, and Sidewalks</b>		
a) Explore, and if feasible, install pedestrian-scale street lights on Lick Avenue, Sutter Street, State Street, and Harliss Avenue.	Medium- to long-term	DOT, DPW
b) Explore, and if feasible, install “No Parking – Street Sweeping” signs on Edwards and Ford Avenues and State Street.	Short-term	DOT
c) Encourage neighbors to report to the City when street light maintenance and tree trimming are needed throughout the neighborhood, especially on Plum, Floyd, and South First Streets as well as Ford Avenue.	Immediate and ongoing	WACC
d) Improve the condition the street surface and sidewalks along West Alma Avenue from Almaden Avenue to Lick Avenue.	Medium-term	DOT, DPW
<b>7 Close/Reconstruct Alleyways</b>		
a) Explore, and if feasible, conduct alleyway closures and/or reconstructions at the following locations:	Medium-term	RDA, DOT, DPW, PBCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Alleyway between Vine and Locust Streets, from Oak Street to Edwards Avenue.</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alleyway between Vine and Locust Streets, from Edwards Avenue to Willow Street.</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alleyway between South Almaden Avenue and Vine Street, from Edwards Avenue to Willow Street.</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alleyway between South Almaden Avenue and Vine Street, from Humboldt Street to Floyd Street.</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alleyway between Mastic &amp; Sherman Streets, from Humboldt to Floyd Streets.</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alleyway between South First Street and Sherman Street, from Goodyear Street to Humboldt Street.</li> </ul>		
	b) Explore, and if feasible, install speed bumps on reconstructed alleyways.	Medium-term	RDA, DOT
	c) Explore, and if feasible, install pedestrian-scale street lights along reconstructed alleyways.	Medium-term	RDA, DPW, DOT
<b>8</b>	<b>Explore Opportunities to Underground Utilities in the Washington SNI Area and Address Drainage Issues along Mastic Street</b>		
	a) Examine drainage problems that exist along Mastic Street, from Goodyear Street to West Alma Avenue, explore solutions, and implement solutions.	Short- to medium-term	DOT, DPW
	b) Underground the utilities within the Tamien Neighborhood Association area.	Long-term	DPW

<b>9</b>	<b>Address and Engage in Economic Development and Land-Use Issues, and Improve Business Services in the Community</b>		
	a) Encourage the development of a grocery store, coffee shop, and franchise restaurants (e.g., Jamba Juice, Subway, etc.) in the neighborhood.	Short- to medium-term	WACC, OED, RDA
	b) Work with the United States Postal Service and/or a private mail service provider to develop a satellite post office in the Washington SNI Area.	Short- to medium-term (0-6 years)	WACC, RDA
	c) Work with the Planning Department to stay abreast of development applications received within the Washington SNI Planning Area and actively participate in the planning process.	Immediate and ongoing	WACC, PBCE
	d) Encourage a wider variety of restaurants along South First Street.	Short- to medium-term	WACC, OED, RDA
<b>10</b>	<b>Promote the Façade Improvement Program</b>		
	a) Work with Code Enforcement to minimize illegal home businesses through out the neighborhood.	Short- to medium-term	WACC, PBCE
	b) Conduct façade improvements to businesses throughout the neighborhood, especially along Willow Street and Pomona Avenue.	Medium-term	WACC, RDA, PBCE

**KEY**

**Time Frame**

Immediate: 0-8 months

Short-term: 0-3 years

Medium-term: 4-6 years

Long-term: 7+ years

## Appendix B – Glossary of Acronyms

<b>AAC</b>	Alma Advisory Council
<b>ADA</b>	Americans with Disabilities Act
<b>DPW</b>	Department of Public Works
<b>Housing</b>	San José Housing Department
<b>HVAC</b>	Heating, Ventilating, and Air Conditioning
<b>NHSSV</b>	Neighborhood Housing Services Silicon Valley
<b>NIP</b>	Neighborhood Improvement Plan
<b>NIPA</b>	Neighborhood Improvement Plan Amendment
<b>NRP</b>	Neighborhood Revitalization Plan
<b>NRPU</b>	Neighborhood Revitalization Plan Update
<b>OED</b>	Office of Economic Development
<b>PBCE</b>	Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement
<b>PRNS</b>	Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services
<b>RAA</b>	Renewing the Action Agenda
<b>RDA</b>	San José Redevelopment Agency
<b>ROW</b>	Right-of-Way
<b>SCVWD</b>	Santa Clara Valley Water District
<b>SJPD</b>	San José Police Department
<b>SJRA</b>	San José Redevelopment Agency
<b>SNI</b>	Strong Neighborhoods Initiative
<b>VTA</b>	Valley Transportation Authority
<b>WACC</b>	Washington Area Community Coalition

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## Appendix C – Reference List

The following documents were consulted during the creation of the *Washington Neighborhood Improvement Plan Amendment*:

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