

Strengthen the neighborhood from within to create a safe, vibrant and healthy place to call home.



# City of Modesto

## Airport Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy



The City of Modesto formally requests that the Airport Neighborhood receive designation as a Revitalization Strategy Area. Through the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy, the City seeks to re-establish and revive the Airport Neighborhood by utilizing targeted funding for Housing Rehabilitation, Down Payment Assistance, Affordable Housing Development, Code Enforcement, Education and Economic Development.

The City of Modesto has a strong history of working well together with citizens and ensuring constant communication with our partners in the community. Community organizations, as well as the citizens of Modesto, have come together on many occasions to help those in need. The Airport Neighborhood is an area of Modesto that will require an immense investment of time and resources. The City of Modesto plans to focus on the area to work toward housing rehabilitation and providing economic development. The City's vision is to strengthen the neighborhood from within to create a safe, vibrant and healthy place to call home.

### **Neighborhood and Demographic**

The Airport Neighborhood is a small geographic area in southeast Modesto known for its shanty style housing; many of the homes without foundations, flooring or indoor plumbing. In stark contrast to the dilapidated neighborhood is the scenic Tuolumne River and Tuolumne River Regional Park. Additionally, the small neighborhood is home to an internationally known winery, the local municipal airport, nearby municipal golf course and a small but active group of residents working to improve conditions. The affected community is an area with disproportionate poverty, poor infrastructure, criminal activity, and few economic resources. The recommended target area is located in Census Tract 22.00 Block 3, and consists of 386 parcels of land and approximately 461 housing units. Seventy-three percent of the households in the area are reported as low-income.



Due to the recent economic downturn, the neighborhood has been hit hard with foreclosures. Several families have lost jobs or have suffered a large reduction in their monthly income. With the majority of households in the extremely low income bracket, there has been a huge increase in foreclosures and bank repossessions of homes. More than thirteen percent of the homes are currently vacant foreclosed properties, with several more in the

process of foreclosure.

## City of Modesto Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy

The Community and Airport Neighborhood residents are frustrated by illegal dumping of garbage, tires and debris into their neighborhood. The City of Modesto and County of Stanislaus have worked to reduce and prevent this problem with neighborhood clean-up events, targeted code enforcement, police partnerships and promotion of waste reduction and recycling. In the 2006-2007 fiscal year neighborhood cleanups resulted in approximately 100 tons of garbage removed from the neighborhood.



Police partnerships with the City's Building Official and Code Enforcement Departments have resulted in 17 demolitions of extremely unstable and uninhabitable properties. Tire cleanup efforts have resulted in over 1,000 tires removed from the neighborhood. While these efforts have had positive results, the problem continues. Assisting the neighborhood with clean-up efforts to target illegal dumping and blight in the neighborhood has helped the neighborhood; however, living conditions are still substandard.

There was an influx of residents moving into the neighborhood during the depression era. The majority of homes were built between 1920 and 1948. At that time, this location was ideal due to the proximity to the scenic Tuolumne River and the rail lines which drew a large number of residents in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Over the past 80 years there has not been much improvement to the homes in the neighborhood. There is a trend of homes passing from one generation to another without change. Maintenance has been deferred and the properties severely neglected over the past decade. The quality of the neighborhoods' public amenities resembles that of a much older community with deteriorating roads and areas lacking standard infrastructure, such as, sidewalks, curbs and street lighting.

In the mid 1950's the E&J Gallo Winery opened a glass bottling plant on the outskirts of the area. The opening of Gallo glass provided economic opportunities for the residents in the neighborhood, but also created a neighborhood that is bordered by industrial business.

Over the past 50 years the industrial climate has changed the Airport area from a once thriving area to a dilapidated and decaying area without the economic opportunities that exist in other areas of the City. A drive through the neighborhood will show boarded up and vacant businesses, homes that are run-down, blight, illegal dumping areas and vagrant camps along the river.

Establishing a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy and Plan with a pro-active education and community involvement component will engage residents and

promote local pride and ownership of this neighborhood which is truly a gem in the rough. There has been little or no new development in the neighborhood in the past few decades and the neighborhood shows scars from years of property neglect.

### **Community Consultation**

During the several neighborhood clean-ups as well as neighborhood meetings and service group meetings the City has had the opportunity to connect with the residents of the Airport neighborhood to assess the needs of their community. Meetings were held with the input of all the stakeholders including, schools, parents, community members and area businesses. The area has a couple of active community organizations including a parent group “Second Cup of Coffee” that meets twice a month to discuss the issues facing the youth of the community, another group is the Airport Neighbors United which is a small group of residents striving to better the conditions of the area. Responses received from the stakeholders are very positive and proactive. The area is excited and optimistic of becoming a Neighborhood Revitalization area.

### **Assessment**

Rehabilitation Specialists from the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhoods Department conducted a windshield survey of approximately 66% or 308 of the



461 housing units in the targeted area. Approximately 21% of the owner-occupied units sampled, or 65 of the 308 units, appeared to need major rehabilitation. Approximately 33% of the multi-family units or 103 out of the 308 units appeared to need major rehabilitation.

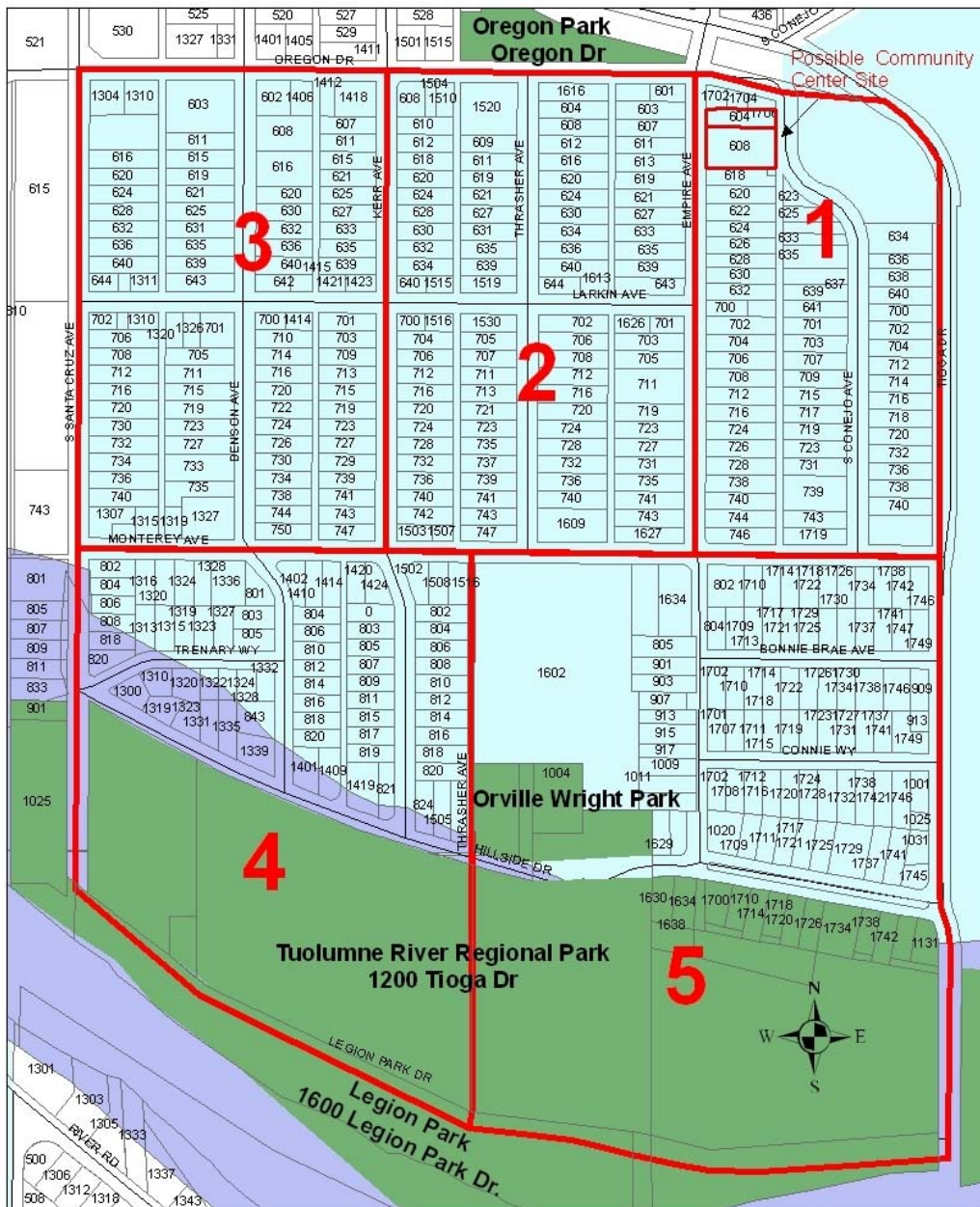
Several of the homes are without foundations and are in violation of several

municipal codes. The main issue with the homes is that they are not safe for the families and individuals that inhabit them. Many have faulty wiring, inadequate plumbing, no heating or air conditioning not to mention the majority of homes are without standard safety features like smoke detectors. Health and Safety hazards need to be addressed and funding needs to be available to assist the homeowners in making the appropriate and much needed repairs. Standard maintenance by homeowners has been put off for several years, leading to overwhelming repairs.



Since the revitalization program is an ambitious program, it will be necessary to take a multi-phased approach. Implementing a phased approach to Housing

Rehabilitation by breaking the area up into 5 target areas would allow the City of Modesto to take a comprehensive approach to rehabilitation of the residences while preserving the affordability of the housing. A needs assessment of each area will determine the various actions that are needed. Over time and by working closely with the neighborhood, inevitably new challenges and projects will present themselves. The implementation process will be flexible and allow for unforeseen circumstances in order to take advantage of the opportunities as they may arise.



Airport Neighborhood Proposed NRS Areas 1-5

There is a small parcel within the neighborhood where a community garden once thrived. In recent years, crime, theft, illegal dumping, safety issues and transient activities have spread throughout the neighborhood and the residents have lost their sense of unity and community. In meetings with residents, there is a need for a Neighborhood center, an area where the neighbors can come together and discuss the issues facing their neighborhood. This center would also spark a sense of ownership to make progress toward change. The people of the airport neighborhood need an area where they can hold neighborhood watch meetings, a place where they can be referred to resources provided by the City of Modesto and other public service groups. The Neighborhood Center is a place residents can be proud of a place they can come together to support and help each other. There are two vacant lots located on Empire Avenue which combined would be approximately .75± acres and a central location for a Neighborhood Center. The site could easily accommodate a 4500 - 6000 square foot building with ample parking.

The Neighborhood Center is a place where parents can take a resume building class, while the children participate in recreation activities. Public Service groups can utilize the Center for services such as income tax preparation assistance, nutrition and parenting classes, as well as focus group discussions. The Parks, Recreation and Neighborhoods Department can offer programs to the residents who have limited access to transportation in order to participate in programs offered in other areas of the City.

The City of Modesto will establish a dedicated code enforcement officer at the Neighborhood Center to become an integral part of the neighborhood, so that the area can be renewed through comprehensive treatment and proactive enforcement. With a dedicated code enforcement office, the City of Modesto would provide resource development. There would be a dedicated tool bank where residents could “check-out” tools in order to maintain their homes as well as their yards. One problem the residents face is that a lack of readily available resources in order to perform standard maintenance. Providing a tool bank would allow the residents to stay on track, rather than defer maintenance.

### **Economic Empowerment**

There are several block corner parcels that are zoned for commercial use, yet the buildings are boarded up and vandalized. Commercial uses within the neighborhood are mostly industrial and not considered neighborhood-serving. These parcels are prime locations to promote new business and facilitate economic development within the proposed revitalization neighborhood. The neighborhood has expressed interest in specific types of businesses they would like to see in their neighborhood.

The area is lacking a major grocery store. There are a few corner stores, but the nearest supermarket is several miles away. Due to the poor socioeconomic

conditions of the area, lack of transportation is a major issue and therefore getting across town to a supermarket is a problem for a lot of the residents. There are many vacant buildings that could meet the needs of a supermarket and are within the neighborhood. With absence of a supermarket there is a lack of fresh produce and healthy food choices readily available to the residents which in turn could lead to serious health related issues.

Once the area is designated as a revitalization area, a marketing campaign will be created to promote the area and offer incentives to specific types of businesses to draw them to the area. There is prime commercial properties located along Yosemite Boulevard that would be ideal for a supermarket. Supermarket companies will be actively recruited as well as other business located within or new to the airport neighborhood to offer technical assistance. Not only will new businesses provide additional services to the residents, but also create meaningful jobs for the residents within the neighborhood. Economic development opportunities will also include programs to provide façade improvements and building rehabilitation for existing businesses in the neighborhood. Economic empowerment of the community will help to turn the neighborhood around and provide a sense of pride and ownership of the area.

### **Performance Measures**

Revitalization of the neighborhood will be a thoughtful process with steps and improvements designed to make sure that the goals of the neighborhood are met. This process will not happen overnight, but will be staged within five target areas. The City of Modesto will lay the groundwork for a stronger and safer neighborhood. By encouraging ongoing investment of human and financial capital, the city can work to prevent neglect and create a more positive environment.

The key to sustainability of the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy is to engage the residents in taking ownership of the area. One way to ensure the continued progress in the area is to create an active Neighborhood Watch group that will show the criminals in the area, that the residents are united and ready to report the illegal crimes that are taking place.

A strategic site will be acquired for the development of a Neighborhood Center. As public facility, the Center will be able to host a variety of community events and classes. The pre-development activities that need to be addressed to develop a Neighborhood Center is one of the projects that will be undertaken as part of phase one. Sites will be identified for purchase or donation, feasibility studies will take place and environmental concerns will be addressed. Working toward the realization of the Neighborhood Center will take place throughout the revitalization process.

Preserving, upgrading and improving housing within the Airport Neighborhood is a key component of the Revitalization Strategy. The Rehabilitation Staff within the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhoods Department will strive to improve and bring 70% of the homes within the neighborhood up to current standards.

One narrow stretch of Empire Avenue is lacking standard infrastructure such as curbs, gutters, sidewalks and lighting. Working with the residents to widen the road to allow for the standard infrastructure will help to provide the basic streetscape. The Parks, Recreation and Neighborhoods Department will also work with the Public Works Department to review the infrastructure repairs that are needed to ensure that the needs of the neighborhood are met.

Determining the factors that have hindered the economic achievements of the neighborhood will be done during the first phase of revitalization. Further research of available commercial properties and the feasibility of new businesses will continue in order to establish the assistance that could be provided to new and existing businesses. Facilitation of discussions with the current businesses to expand and grow their businesses and ways to improve economic viability will take place. Rehabilitation Staff will also be available to discuss façade improvements with the businesses in hopes that a more aesthetically pleasing exterior, will bring consumers into the stores.

### **Implementation Plan**

During the first year, assessments will be made to determine the extent of the work needed to ensure that the infrastructure is stable and up to City standards. Research regarding vacant properties for a Neighborhood center and feasibility of the site will take place. Once the background research has been done and a site selected, an appraisal of the land will be requested and cost analysis completed on constructing a Neighborhood Center or looking at the option of having a prefabricated building put in place. During phase 1, the homes will be evaluated and a plan will be developed to address the needs of the homes to bring them up to code and ensure that any health and safety issues are taken care of. A neighborhood watch group will be established and education of the residents will begin. Extensive market research will commence to look into Economic Development opportunities.

Years two and three and will continue and build upon the work started. Coordination with the Neighborhood Center and Economic Development activities will continue. By year four, the Neighborhood Center should be open and the community will begin to see the background work that has been taking place with Economic Development to blossom. By year four, the City is optimistic that a supermarket will show interest in the possibility of developing a store in the area. The area should be enthused and the wheels of change and revitalization actively moving to bring this neighborhood forward.

**Ensuring Success**

As part of the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy, extensive education of the residents will be a key component. By educating the residents to the resources available as well as the municipal codes and the reasoning behind the codes it will help the residents to understand how to renew the neighborhood. Proactive enforcement of issues will ensure that the area does not deteriorate to the current state that it is in today.

The formation of a neighborhood watch group partnered with the City of Modesto Police Department will help to prevent future crimes. The group will let the criminals in the area know that the residents are frustrated and willing to unite together to report and fight back against crime.

Partnerships across the City of Modesto organization will not only help to revitalize the blighted area but will be key in maintaining the accomplishments in the area.

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