Los Vecinos de Northwest Tempe



December 2002 Vol. 3 No. 2

This newsletter is intended to keep Northwest Tempe residents informed about neighborhood development issues as well as other news of interest to *Los Vecinos*. All interested residents are welcomed to attend the meetings. Upcoming meeting dates: January 21st, February 17th, March 24th, April 21st, and May 19th, all scheduled at the Westside Multi-Generational Center located at 715 W. 5th Street in classroom *Los Vecinos*.

With

the coming of the New Year, we take

this opportunity to look back at some of the issues discussed at our monthly meetings in 2002. We have met at the Westside Multi-Generational Center in Los Vecinos Classroom every month with only two exceptions: November and December. December included our annual end of the year dinner hosted by Barbara Keeme at Rosita's Fine Mexican Food Restaurant. Los Vecinos thanks you!

Our meetings were filled with insightful discussions regarding our city and neighborhoods.

We had various city and state government candidates and officials address our concerns throughout the year. Los Vecinos continue to inform and educate themselves in order to better participate in the developmental plans that affect their neighborhoods. We look to continue this in the coming year becoming even more active to make sure that the City of Tempe hears our voice. We wish you all a great holiday season and we hope to see you at our next meeting in 2003. Happy New Year!

Before the Fire

Often, in the politics surrounding planning and development, citizens do not get involved until bulldozers begin to move earth in preparation for construction. Most residents do not know about development and redevelopment plans until most of the opportunities to input into the process have passed. The end result can be development that does not benefit the population that is impacted the greatest.

The development of Mill Ave. has not benefitted the neighborhoods as much as it has the developers who, working closely with the City of Tempe, were able to transform Downtown Tempe into a regional destination designed to serve a younger and more affluent crowd. Gone are the types of services and establishments that neighborhood residents used to patronize including doctors and dentists, hardware stores, pharmacies, and places that sold clothing and other goods that neighborhood residents used. Some have argued that downtown Tempe is much better than it ever was in the past. Others argue that all the changes have made the downtown area inhospitable for them. It is sad when the persons making this claim have family roots in Tempe that go back two and three generations.

If we apply the old saying "where there is smoke, soon comes fire" University Avenue (west of Mill) is sending up billowing clouds of smoke. Now that the developers, working with the City's planners, have built out Mill Avenue, they are now setting their sites toward the west. And just because the neighborhoods were bypassed on the development of Mill Ave. we are ready to provide input on how University Avenue will be changed. *Los Vecinos* does not want a repeat of Mill Avenue on University Avenue.

To prepare for our role as an equal community partner in the development of University Avenue, our group has been meeting on a monthly basis for over three and a half years. We have taught ourselves the language of planning, zoning and transportation. We have openly discussed the land use changes occurring in the neighborhoods and have strategized to find the most effective way to participate and be sure that our voices are not only heard, but also incorporated into the proposed designs.

Los Vecinos is not interested in blocking development, rather we seek a promise from the City's leaders that development along University will not be a repeat of Mill Avenue and that when all the dust settles, area residents will patronize the neighborhood establishments.

Los Vecinos invite all community residents interested in ensuring that their interests are not bypassed in the City's new plans for University Avenue to join us in our learning and advocacy in the New Year. We laid the foundation for effective participation these last three and a half years and will be exercising our rights as long-term residents of Tempe to have our voices heard. Please join us in making Tempe a neighborhood-friendly city by putting residents first.

Short News from Los Vecinos:

On October 13th, *Los Vecinos* had a voter registration booth at the Tempe Tardeada. Mr. Arnold Ruiz, Ms. Isabel Ruiz, Mr. Xavier Morales, Ms. Toni Ruiz, Mr. Frank Carrillo, and Mr. Carlos Posadas all helped register voters for about six hours. This was a great opportunity to register Latino voters, provide publicity for *Los Vecinos* and mingle with community residents. We considered our endeavor a success! Thank you to Rick Oliphant and his great staff at the Multigenerational Westside Center for working with us over the past year so that we could have our meetings there.

A Year in Review: Meeting Minutes

Since our last newsletter we had ten meetings. A brief review of what was covered follows:

February 4, we met for the first time in 2002 and welcomed new members Arnold and Isabel Ruiz to our group. Specific Area Plan for Northwest Tempe was briefly discussed. We found out that the 85281 Zip Code had the highest rise in property value over the last year. Affordable, lowincome housing is disappearing fast in Tempe and many feel the city is not helping (it allows developmental projects to replace affordable housing. Will the City use eminent domain? It has in the past, but it is not in plans for the near future.

Ms. Toni Ruiz volunteered to sit on the Westside Community Center Advisory Committee.

Quick Note: Did you know that Cesar Chavez was born in Yuma, AZ?

February 25th, former City Council member Hugh
Hallman visited and suggested a master neighborhood association that could serve as an advocacy agent for all neighborhoods. He discussed zoning/rezoning classification that was coming up and encouraged us to get more people to attend City meetings and invite Dave Fackler to a future meeting. Regarding eminent domain, Mr. Hallman stated that it was only as a last resort that any case would be brought for review by the council and that it was a very slow process.

March 18, City Council member Mark Mitchell, Chairman of the Neighborhood Enhancement and Safety Committee, visited with us. Discussed how proud he was that Tempe was the 1st City to have neighborhood associations. He talked about City enforcement of rental registration since 52% of housing in Tempe is rental. The City was in the process of working

on a database to track all rental properties which would help keep track of any party houses or multiple complaints of certain units which in turn would help police enforce the City noise ordinance in order to be more proactive for the sake of the quality of life in Tempe. Fines go to the property owners, not the renters. Be persistent when reporting loud music, etc.

Council member Ben
Arredondo added that we could
also invite a code enforcement officer and encouraged us to support
working with the council and new
ASU President Crow. He added
that a grocery store on the corner of
University and Mill was still a possibility with Priest and Rio Salado
another potential site.

How can *Los Vecinos* work with ASU? Organize with city and meet jointly with ASU. Will ASU expansion ever end?

In regards to affordable housing, Council member Mitchell mentioned the council's approval of the Community Land Trust, but admitted that more work is needed. Both council members expressed that eminent domain was not likely unless it was something the community wanted. Currently the City has no funds and is in no position to use eminent domain. Mitchell expressed that for those residents who may be displaced, developers should help relocate residents within the neighborhood.

Ms. Toni Ruiz expressed that once houses are bought and boarded up, developers are leaving them as a blight to the community and a danger as well.

Council member Mitchell was very open and candid with our group and showed a lot of interest and concern with neighborhood issues.

Report from Westside Multigenerational Center Committee: Ms. Toni Ruiz stated there are many services and activities that the Center offers for senior citizens. The committee is made up of teens, school principal, and community residents and they all work together to schedule activities for all neighborhood residents.

Edwin Gonzales-Santin, member of the Human Relations Commission, expressed that he would be willing to sponsor a member of *Los Vecinos* to go and address the commission.

On April 8 and May 13, Los Vecinos held a candidate forum in which all four candidates for city council were invited to address our group. Leonard Copple and Pam Goronkin attended on the 8th, and Carol McKnight on the 13th, the fourth candidate cancelled. They were all given the opportunity to speak to our group and answer the same questions which ranged from issues of Downtown Tempe Development and use of eminent domain to the city planning process, affordable housing, and the Public Works Department. Their responses to these questions are available for those interested.

On June 10, Kirby Spitzer and David Lucier joined our meeting to discuss the Specific Area Plan.

Bonnie Richardson, City of Tempe Neighborhood Planning Manager, addressed the group, telling us about the City's hiring of Lance Decker to review all documentation related to the SAP. Ms. Richardson explained to us that there were two redevelopment preservation areas (study areas) in Northwest Tempe: Tempe Towne Center, Priest to Farmer and Roosevelt

to 1st to University. Current economy will prevent City from any major investments or major redevelopment.

July 15, we scheduled a voter registration drive at Food City on Apache and Terrace for Saturday, July 20. Low turnout and voter eligibility kept our registration number low.

Discussion on SAP meetings held June 13 and 15, meant to be informative but was not at all. The plan was put off until September, and people felt Lance Decker seemed to favor and support City urban planners instead of being as objective as possible.

Found that SAP plan may not be as important as the Zoning plan, since zoning ordinances have more power because they are laws while the SAP plan is more of a recommendation.

Member concerns: Cell phone tower at JC Park. Our guest, Lucy Urias, Tempe resident for over 45 years, has worked closely with the Tempe School District and explained that the rezoning and neighborhood plans affect the school district as well.

On August 19, Mr. Arnold Ruiz facilitated our meeting and did a fine job. We hosted two more candidates: Mr. Jaime A. Molera who was trying to become the Republican candidate for Superintendent of Public Instruction for the state of Arizona and Ms. Laura Knaperek who was the Republican candidate for the state senate running against Harry Mitchell. Both discussed their agendas and answered questions from Los Vecinos.

On September 17, we hosted Janet Garcia of

the Tumbleweed Homeless Youth Center in Phoenix. She told us that a center in Tempe would not be opening up near Rosita's Plaza and that it was instead going back to the original site (1st Congregational Church). Ms. Garcia explained that the center was for all of Tempe, not just homeless youth on Mill Avenue and was very interested in receiving input from the community. A video depicting the good opportunities a homeless youth center offers was shown to Los Vecinos. The daytime-only center would provide food, clothing, shower, counseling, job development skills, and a case manager to help youths establish goals to help them get off the street.

Luis Fernandez and Allen Carlson from New Town Community Development Corporation addressed the group telling us about the community projects they are involved in: Cradle House, which provides affordable childcare to five infants/toddlers and increasing to ten soon, and the Community Land Trust which has already purchased two properties. They have two goals: Increase affordable housing in Tempe and increase owner occupied homes which provide more neighborhood stability.

We welcomed Ms. Michelle Woods to *Los Vecinos*.

On October 15, Arizona State Senator Harry Mitchell addressed our group and answered our questions. Senator Mitchell was very candid and open with us, discussing affordable housing, effective citizen participation, eminent domain, noise pollution, and the Public Works Department for the

City of Tempe. He encouraged us to keep voicing our concerns to City officials.

Announcement: Congratulations to Mr. Harry Mitchell on his re-election for Arizona State Senator.

Guest: Zita Johnson addressed the group, asking for our support in her candidacy for a seat on the Tempe Union High School Governing Board.

Nicole Roberts, Managing Partner for Context
Development, presented a planned condominium project for the southeast corner of University and Beck.
These condominiums would range in price from \$100,000 to \$400,000 with underground parking to keep building height as low as possible.

We welcomed Ms. Barbara Keeme, Mr. Roy Hoyt, and Mr. Ed Wong to Los Vecinos.

On November 13, we met at Xavier's office building, the old Children's Hospital on 200 E. Curry Rd, and had two presentations. Dr. Ed Valenzuela, Executive Director for the Arizona Fair Housing Center, informed us about the problem of housing discrimination and the resources available to help those who may have been discriminated against based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, color, gender, disability status or familial status. \$180 million in damages have been awarded over the years to victims of housing discrimination.

Dr. Valenzuela and the Arizona Fair Housing Center hire testers to make sure housing discrimination is not occurring. Report any suspicious housing practices and share information with others are ways in which we can help.

Ari zona Fair Housing Center: 602-548-1599

Mr. Carlos Jurado, representative for Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), not a county agency, presented a video depicting the role of MAG and the importance of receiving community input. MAG is composed of city and tribal leaders and they all help each other by discussing any problems or concerns that their city/community may be facing. MAG is also responsible for the Regional Transportation Plan that deals with highway/freeway construction for the next 20 years. MAG projects about 6–7 million people in Maricopa 20 years from now so it is important to get the transportation plan complete. The 2004 election will include a vote for whether we would like to continue the half-cent tax, which expires in 2005, with special permission from the legislative. MAG is responsible for recommending how money is spent.

How can we help?
Attend meetings (once a month, every second
Wednesday) and as a group voice our concerns and input to our City Mayor, since he is chairman of Transportation Policy Committee.
MAG is also involved in other citywide concerns such as pollution, human services, information technology, water quality, and domestic violence.

MAG: 602-254-6300 Thank you to all of you who attended meetings in 2002, thank you to all of our guests, and thank you to all those who support *Los Vecinos*.

Credits:

Articles contributed and edited by Xavier Morales, Dr. Ed Valenzuela, Bob Leighninger, and Carlos Posadas. Any concerns or requests can be addressed to Mr. Carlos Posadas at 965-9216 or email Carlos.Posadas@asu.edu. Article submissions welcomed for the next newsletter. *Vecinos*, remember this is your newsletter, so let us know how we can make it better for you.

Los Vecinos Mission Statement:

To preserve and maintain Hispanic culture in Tempe by: identifying and communicating resident and neighborhood concerns to each other and to the city while promoting awareness and participating in community dialogue in an effort to improve the quality of life for all citizens of Tempe.

Diversity Audit for Tempe Offers Changes for Employees

The law firm of Jamieson & Gutierrez completed the city's \$300,000 diversity audit in mid-August this year. This audit was intended to look at the City of Tempe's diversity as well as measure employee satisfaction. Overall results showed that well over half of all employees surveyed felt that the City was a good place to work and that the City was headed in the right direction. Almost three-quarters of City employees rated their respective departments positively on diversity performance.

While the racial discrimination that has plagued the Public Works Department over the years was not necessarily the reason the diversity audit was conducted, it should help the department.

Not all the news from the audit were positive. Over a quarter of the employees surveyed were pessimistic, discontented and embittered with their working conditions and also felt that their jobs would be jeopardized if they spoke up about work concerns. Ethnic or racial discrimination was not the only concern some employees expressed, they also felt gender discrimination occurs. The audit made recommendations to help address some of the concerns raised by the employees.

It is interesting that the Audit made no attempt to get information from middle management. This is where both top management and workers believe the problem really lies. Perhaps the long-range plan is simply to replace all these people. But if some are going to stay, wouldn't it make sense to find out how they view their jobs and the charges made against them? It might help efforts to change their attitudes and behavior if we knew more about why they think and act as they do.

The City intends to reach out to disenchanted employees, create a fairer merit-only promotion system, create safe reporting procedures so employees do not have to fear retaliation, shift from the old boss-authority model to the supportive-coach model (pressure on managers and supervisors, as well as training), and will empower the Tempe Employee Council to better serve as a forum for communication and problem solving. Rosa Inchausti was hired as Tempe's first Diversity Director.

The new diversity director is one of the new avenues available for employees to voice their concerns anonymously, or not, without fear of retaliation if they do not feel safe going to their direct supervisor. Employees have been told that they have many options: they can speak and voice their

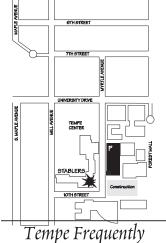
work-related concerns with their direct supervisor, department head, city manager (Will Manley), human resources manager (Bill Hernandez), human resources staff, mediation program, diversity director, city attorney (Brad Woodford), and the State Attorney General's Office and the Federal EEOC Office.

Have conditions really improved for employees in the Public Works Department? It may be too soon to tell if these new resources that have been made available for the employees actually have improved their working conditions. After speaking with various different people, we found some optimistic, but also some pessimistic views. The plan to be implemented as a result of the diversity audit is not without faults, though the City seems to be giving it a good faith effort to make it work and help improve the working conditions of all employees, including those in Public Works.

LOST Grocery Store Update

Is a new grocery store coming to the Tempe Towne Center? That question has still not been answered, though development of the center is moving forward. In early November, it was announced that ASU's College of Business would be constructing a new building with 300,000 square feet and four floors including one floor underground. Developers of the Tempe Towne Center had planned to include a grocery store, but the effect the new College of Business building will have on those plans is still unclear. The last we heard from Council member Ben Arredondo, a grocery store at Mill and University was still a possibility.

Los Vecinos Contact Numbers		
Mr. Joe C. Barriga	966-6154	
Mr. Gabino Montana	894-6182	
Mr. Arnold Ruiz	967-6898	
Mrs. Isabel Ruiz	967-6898	
Ms. Toni Ruiz	966-2776	
Dr. Xavier Morales	727-6324	
Mr. Carlos Posadas	965-9216	



Tempe Frequently Called Numbers

Cuncu In without 3		
	Abandoned Vehicles	
	Private Property	350-9372
	City Streets/Alleys	350-8311
	Animal Control	602-506-7387
	Chamber of Commerce	967-7891
	City Hall	350-8221
	Crime Prevention	350-8305
	Department of	
	Public Safety	602-223-2000
	Events Calendar Line	898-5665
		x2601
	Historical Museum	350-5100
	Mayor's Office	350-8865
	Neighborhood	
	Program Office	350-8234
	Streets	
	Cleaning/Maintenanc	e 350-8265
	Closures	350-8219