Neighborhood Associations:
A Closer Look at Neighborhood Preservation

Direct Observational Field Research

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Appendix
Introduction

The organizations being evaluated in this project are the Neighborhood Associations of the greater Long Beach Area. A Neighborhood Association is a non-profit group of neighbors, who come together to solve a problem or to help beautify their city, and who have regular meetings (Neighborhood Resources Center). They participate in these meetings to discuss actions they need to take in order to make their lives better in their specific neighborhoods. This can mean cleaning up the houses, graffiti on signs, historical sites preserved, and so forth. This project will take an in depth look of what the Neighborhood Associations are doing to better the lives of their citizens. This project will evaluate the functions, actions and concerns of the organization, and the effectiveness of Neighborhood Associations. We are grading their performance on how they are improving the quality of life of the people living in the neighborhood and how effective their actions and goals are. We will not include people of other organizations associated with the Neighborhood Associations, as there was not enough time to research their involvement. An additional limitation is that we are also not evaluating the quality of the projects they undertook nor how well they performed them, but only what they tried to accomplish.

Information on this project is highly accessible. People are more than willing to help supply much needed information. Meetings and responses from heads of Associations are easily available. The justifications for the purpose of the Neighborhood Associations are mostly to protect the historical aspect of the city, which includes but not limited to buildings, sites, monuments and objects, as well as improving the appearance
and appeal of their cities and ensuring the maintenance of property values. The city is
very cooperative with the Associations and tries to compromise with whatever wishes
they make; they even come to their events and meetings. The city finds Neighborhood
Associations to be a good thing and a pro-active part of society (Member of California
Heights Neighborhood Association).

What worked best when retrieving information for this project was getting
involved. Calling the city to get a list of Neighborhood Associations was easy. People
were very eager to e-mail us back, their meetings happen frequently and offer an in depth
perspective of how Neighborhood Associations function. Research material was easy to
find with librarian help and search engines on line. There were many articles having to do
with these organizations and what they have done for their community. And now let's
explore.

History
The origin of Neighborhood Associations is quite simple. Organizations are made
up of people, like an extended family, in a certain community who want to improve their
surroundings. The demands of these many people are then taken to the meetings and get
approved and then taken to the city in order to raise funding and permission to carry out
these desires. Some of the times the Neighborhood Associations need to raise the money
for their projects they undertake with the help of the city. Associations take great interest
in protection of historical buildings and places, such as the Pike in downtown Long
Beach. They also try to improve their surroundings by taking on projects that beautify the
city, such as the graffiti clean up day and tree plating. They put demands on themselves
and the city to make it a cleaner friendlier environment to help the population and growth of the citizens and its assets. Most of their goals are reasonable, however, on occasion, Associations tend to get out of hand with their rules and regulations. Some even try to overpower the city officials and make decisions for the whole city when it only concerns a few. So instead of it being a compromise of all citizens in the community, it becomes the demands of a few and the members that show up and participate. For example, there was a boy who had a tree house in his yard. However, the people of his Neighborhood Association claimed it was 6 feet too tall and they must destroy it. In the end support from many others for the boy made the Neighborhood Association back down from its demands ("Child With Leukemia"). Older people who do not see the joy in playing around in a tree house probably took on these kinds of demands; instead they want their neighborhood to be more of an elderly "sophisticated" area.

Another example comes from the Long Beach Press Telegram. The article was printed May 17th, 2005. The headline states "Neighbors look down on house face-lift". The article describes a man who is remodeling his house which is considered a historic site. However, his Neighborhood is up in arms about the remodel because of its drastic changes. Yet the Neighborhood is up in arms about nothing because they refuse to understand that the architect rebuilding his house is specialized in maintaining historic sites (Mellen). If the Neighborhood just took time to understand what was going on then this would not be such a problem. Sometimes Associations get too over zealous when it comes to controlling what goes on in their Neighborhoods. These are some of the good and the bad of the Associations.
Goals

The goals of the Associations try to maintain and protect their city. They want to make it much more desirable for people to move in and live there for many years and preserve property values of the homes in their neighborhood. They also try to get rid of eyesores and criminal activity. Mostly all the associations are paired up, or are historical preservation societies. This is because many cities have historical buildings and places they want to preserve and maintain; either tangible or intangible with museums and pictures. The Los Alamitos Neighborhood Association did this with the 1942 earthquake. They preserved pictures and documents concerning this great quake in our own city. Many of the houses now and structures have been rebuilt or restored. The associations try to keep their city's history alive and remembered.

Organizations also help beautify their cities so that it will become an attractive place to settle for all people who live in the area. This can be deciding what colors are allowed on houses and buildings to how many trash cans they receive. The Associations decide on what the needs of the members are and the others in the city and then take action in problem areas. They also solve safety issues involving crime and protection. They have monthly visits with officers and criminal justice workers who in turn give them advice on how to stay safe and not become a victim. This helps in their effort to try to make their city safer, more beautiful, and richer with history in order to provide a great place to live. If people are happy with where they live, their quality of life will greatly improve because of their clean atmosphere and the trust neighbors have with each other and their mutual concerns. They have a history. Neighborhood Associations are needed.
to enrich the lives of citizens. People then feel they are doing something pro-active and positive for their communities and making a difference. Such a feeling of accomplishment is great for a city because it gives them a new perspective and a new existence they can strive for along with the other objectives and goals of the association.

Contact

We had three initial contacts from three different associations. We looked up associations in the neighborhood resource center and picked out three different ones in all different areas in Long Beach. All the contacts had regular meetings and ways to get a hold of them.

Our first pick was Neighborhood Association number one, which is a historical preservation based association. They are all volunteers in a non-profit organization working to protect and preserve historic and architectural resources in a middle class neighborhood. They have meetings every two months instead of every month. They have a web site up and running of all their current projects and updates of what they are doing in the future.

Neighborhood Association number two has 198 members and meet every fourth Wednesday of the month at seven pm. We were not able to attend their meetings or talk to a representative.

Our favorite Association is Neighborhood Association number three. They are so with it and have so many activities and meetings to attend. They have 50 - 100 members on board and meet every second Thursday of the month. They are very connected to their community and to its officials. They have all sorts of websites and exhibits to go through
and see just what kind of progress their making. They are connected with the Historical Society of Long Beach and members interact with each other to make their city beautiful. They have police officers come in every other month to check up on the progress or challenge since last meeting. They get tips from the citizens and then the officers go out and take care of the problem. The members claim they are very good at doing this in a time efficient manner. They discuss problems facing their city and their history and also new companies and industries coming into their cities. They create a clan in which they trust and share with one another like a family does at reunions. They were very pleasant and very welcoming to our visits. They seem to be making great progress.

As another source we talked to a neighboring city's leaders and they mailed us information on their Neighborhood Associations. This helped in determining the differences between the two cities and their similarities and differences in dealing with mismatched communities. They were very helpful and kind and knew what to give us and who to connect us with. Unlike the Long Beach City office where it took hours to get a hold of a person only to find they had no idea what we were talking about. We had to call a whole different office just for them to tell us that we had to come in and view the needed information. This was a little concerning and confusing to know that the associations were private knowledge. It was odd that public institutions would be privatized by the city by only letting people who go into this building, quite hard to find, and view the documents there without offering a copy to put into the report. There was a huge difference with help from the cities, but that did not affect the performance or helpfulness of their organizations.
Findings

We found that the Neighborhood Associations were very effective and efficient in their ways of dealing with community problems and issues. They helped citizens with their needs and special interests. They set up memberships and activities and special interest meetings to help inform their neighbors. They are run and put on by people who live in the community itself so that they are aware and care just as much as the people there.

Summary and Conclusion

We grade the Neighborhood Associations a high B. They put much effort and devotion into theft projects which bring their neighbors a higher quality of life. They did not receive and A because of the issues some neighborhoods have with theft dominance over what they can and cannot do to theft own property. Theft over zealously may cause more stress for neighbors than satisfaction with the Association. However, the good ultimately out-weighs the bad and the Neighborhood Associations deserve a high B.

Bibliography

"Child With Leukemia Is Allowed to Keep Tree house." Los Angeles Times 2005 13 January 2000 B19

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Mellen Greg, "Neighbors look down on house face-lift" Long Beach Press Telegram 17 May 2005: A1+
Further Suggested Reading

"Power to the People; Whether the issue is safety or beautification, residents are finding strength in numbers." Los Angeles Times. 2005, 23 May 1999 A1

<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=17993106&sid=1&Fmt=3&clientld=27896&RQT=309&VName=PQD>

"Vacant Lots are Getting Makeover Treatment in Long Beach Project Neighborhoods:


<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=142678306&sid=1&Fmt=3&clientld=27896&RQT=309&VName=PQD>