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NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES
DEPARTMENT

CITY OF SACRAMENTO
CALIFORNIA

1231 I STREET
SUITE 400
SACRAMENTO, CA
95814-2977

PH 916-264-5200
FAX 916-264-7643

January 6, 1994

City Council Work Group and
Neighborhood and Public Safety Issues Committee
Sacramento, California

Honorable Members in Session:

SUBJECT: Public Access and Siting of Neighborhood Services Staff

LOCATION AND COUNCIL DISTRICT: City-wide

RECOMMENDATION:

This report is for your review and comment. It presents preliminary ideas related to improving access to and responsiveness of Neighborhood Services Department staff for service delivery. The report is intended to elicit Council and community comments on this matter. Subsequent input from the community will be sought prior to recommendations being presented to the full City Council.

CONTACT PERSON:

Bina Lefkovitz, Interim Director, 264-5704

FOR THE COMMITTEE MEETING OF: January 6, 1993

SUMMARY:

This report discusses efforts to increase public access to city services and proposes a draft concept and outline of an initial strategy for achieving this goal as it relates to the siting of Neighborhood Services area teams. The report is for review and comment at this time.

BACKGROUND:

The guiding principle behind the formation of the Neighborhood Services Department was to form interdisciplinary, geographically-based teams of staff which are prepared to work with local residents, City Council Members and other agencies toward the provision of comprehensive city services and more effective neighborhood corrective action where such action is warranted. The new department, with its four geographic teams, is designed to provide more responsive and coordinated service delivery to the neighborhoods. A primary goal being to improve public accessibility both in terms of ease of access to city services and responsiveness of the city to inquiries from the public. The goal of accessibility has been intrinsic to the formation of the department during the past 6 months.

Efforts to address public access include numerous public meetings and meetings with neighborhood representatives relative to development of the boundaries for service delivery, number of service areas, characteristics of area team managers, the recruitment and selection process for the area team managers.

Another element of public access is the communication process that allows access to and input into the 'system'. One component of this is being addressed within the development of the Citizen Participation plan. A major demand of this plan is examining ways to improve communication with the public and staff on neighborhood concerns. Another is developing a public response system to improve responsiveness and accountability in responding to citizen inquiries. Another component is the idea of locating of Neighborhood Services area team staff within the four regions.

The practice of decentralizing staff to provide closer linkage to the community can be observed through the development of police substations, the development of community centers, and more recently the development of 'resource centers' such as the one on Stockton Boulevard that had a recent groundbreaking and in Del Paso Heights at the old Firestation. These 'resource centers' will contain police, community based organizations and other city staff. Another example, are the 'social service models' being undertaken by the County.

The concept therefore is not new. With respect to siting of Neighborhood Services Department staff the primary question is whether such siting would improve public access to the staff or increase responsiveness. (It should be noted that the parks and recreation staff are already decentralized at various locations throughout the city. Also, traffic staff, code enforcement staff and building inspections staff currently carry out their duties in a decentralized manner throughout the city. Some of the decentralization has occurred for operational efficiency and others for linkages with the community. Primarily though, these staff are in the field anyway, irrespective of where their 'office' location may be. Each area team can begin to answer this question as it meets with service area neighborhood groups to discuss neighborhood issues and concerns. Each area needs to have the flexibility to develop a strategy to respond to the unique needs of that area.

Additionally, there are a myriad of organizational, logistical and budget issues that would need to be considered in order to achieve 'area' offices. These issues include:

Impact on internal communications or effectiveness particularly at a critical time in the Neighborhood Services department where new team relationships are attempting to be forged. Physical proximity of the staff within the teams will be very important in the early years, as people build new working relationships.

Housing and storage of files. Certain staff (i.e. Dangerous Buildings, nuisance abatement, traffic engineering and to some extent redevelopment and city planning staff) are reliant on files shared with staff from building inspections, public works, planning and SHRA. The usage of these 'shared' files or information pieces are quite frequent, making it inefficient to have these staff sited in neighborhood based offices on a regular basis. The Neighborhood Services Transition Team is just beginning to understand these file issues, and believes over time with the proper technology or new information systems this hurdle can be overcome. It is, however, a real operational issue that will require some analysis.

Other logistical concerns, particularly for the 'inspection' type staff are the issues of housing, storage and sharing of city equipment between decentralized teams.

Budget issues would also be of key concern. Staff will begin the process of inventorying existing public spaces within communities to ascertain availability for Neighborhood Services staff to co-locate in these facilities. We would hope to use existing public space. Ideally, staff would want to look at locating in spaces that leverage the services of other entities in the community. There are several questions that need to be considered. Will siting staff in the community improve access and responsiveness to services? If so, which staff should be sited in the community to best meet this objective? Does it make sense to have only four area offices and will such offices really be serving the neighborhoods given the size of the areas (i.e. will someone in Land Park be inclined to come to an area office if it was in Meadowview) or would a better strategy be one of having space available for designated staff in existing sites throughout the areas, be they schools, community centers, or sites where community based organizations are housed.

Finally, the concept of full service mini-city halls or more full service community centers may be a long term goal that makes sense to have in each service area. This concept may become of a reality of other city departments decentralize and if we find that such services are desired in the community. The areas need to retain the flexibility to respond to the various needs of their communities in meeting the objective of public access. Once again, the budget implications of such a policy would also need close scrutiny.

Additionally, based on previous citizen comments, we believe that providing more public meeting space both for community groups to hold meetings and for Neighborhood Services Department staff to meet with community members in their neighborhoods would be of benefit.

Staff will inventory potential resource space available for use by city staff and the community for meetings. Sites could include traditional community centers or less traditional spaces such as firehouse bays, county/SHRA owned facilities, schools or other public sector spaces or spaces used by community based organizations. As a first phase, this approach would

- 1) provide increased meeting space to the community;
- 2) provide the opportunity for area team members to spend time in various parts of the service areas (some teams may determine that there is a need to hold set office hours in various places throughout the service areas).

The following provides an update on department activities and proposed timeline for resolving the office locating staff:

November

- . Area managers job class created and area boundaries adopted

December

- . Area Manager recruitment begins
- . Staff assigned to area teams. Community participation task force begins meeting.

January

- . Weekly team meetings begin in order to acquaint staff on the teams, begin developing working relationships with team members, between teams and with the community.
- . Begin developing inventory of resource sites for meeting and office space.
- . Neighborhood and Public Safety Issues Committee and City Council Work Group hear update on the Public Response Project and ideas about locating of staff.
- . Community input sought on these matters in January.

February

- . Decision regarding primary location of staff so that logistics can be worked out by the time the area managers are hired.

March

- . Area team managers hired and begin working

June

- . Each service area identifies resource sites from inventory to assist in community meeting needs and determine if set office hours in the areas will be required, which staff will have office hours, or if as needed meetings with staff in neighborhood identified meeting spaces is more practical.
- . Area teams and community evaluate the effectiveness of the meeting spaces and access to staff and determine if further siting of staff in neighborhoods is necessary and fiscally feasible.

FINANCIAL

Costs for locating staff under this concept would be kept to a minimum. The full costs for siting of staff will be assessed after receiving City Council and community input on the subject.

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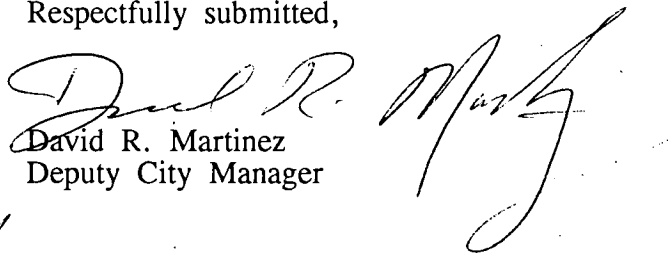
POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The objective of increasing neighborhood access to staff and staff responsiveness to neighborhoods can be met in a number of ways. Locating staff in neighborhood offices is one of many ways to meet this objective. This report is intended to elicit Council and Committee input on the need to immediately locate staff in area offices in order to meet this objective, or whether there are alternative ways to meet this objective.

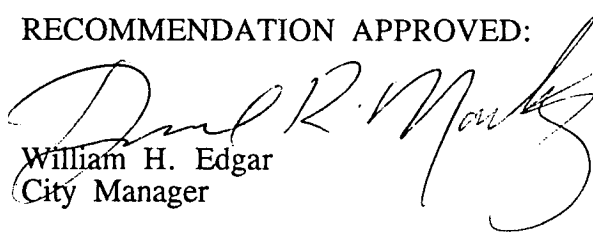
MBE/WBE

No impact.

Respectfully submitted,


David R. Martinez
Deputy City Manager

RECOMMENDATION APPROVED:


for: William H. Edgar
City Manager