



NEIGHBORHOODS SERVICES  
DEPARTMENT - AREA TWO

CITY OF SACRAMENTO  
CALIFORNIA

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June 10, 2005

City Council  
Sacramento, California

Honorable Members in Session:

**SUBJECT: STATUS REPORT ON DRAFT NEIGHBORHOOD LIVABILITY INDEX**

**LOCATION AND COUNCIL DISTRICT:** Citywide

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Provide staff with input on the drafting of the Neighborhood Livability Index that the Mayor and City Council will formally consider in late July or early August.

**CONTACT PERSON:** Richard Ramirez, Assistant City Manager, 808-5704  
Derrick Lim, Neighborhood Services Area Director, 808-2260

**FOR COUNCIL MEETING OF:** June 21, 2005

**SUMMARY:**

The City of Sacramento adopted a Strategic Plan in February 2005. One of the three-year goals in the strategic plan calls for the introduction of a draft Neighborhood Livability Index for City Council review by July 31, 2005. This report is a status or "check-in" on the development of a draft neighborhood livability index.

The definition of livability, or quality of life, is defined and measured in a myriad of ways depending on a community's experience and environmental setting. A review of the literature on the subject shows a tendency to use five to nine major categories to define livability and 24 to 119 indicators to measure those categories. Independent or scholarly research on the subject of livability and creating indexes for tracking livability at the

neighborhood level appears to be limited. In short, there is not a uniform definition on "livability".

The challenge for the City of Sacramento is three fold: 1.) to determine how it wants to define **Neighborhood** Livability; 2.) to determine what **indicators** are important to measure neighborhood livability; and 3.) to establish a **benchmark or rating** for determining whether the City is meeting or exceeding expectations, moving in a positive direction, or showing lack of progress that requires corrective action.

This "check-in" report focuses on items 1) and 2) above, and seeks input from the Mayor and City Council on the Council's expectations for the July/August Report back to make sure staff is headed in the right direction relevant to developing a neighborhood livability index.

#### **COMMITTEE/COMMISSION ACTION:**

None at this time.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

##### **Other Cities**

Cities and regional bodies across the nation are engaged in the principles of livability, community well being, and quality of life issues. A cursory review of the literature reveals several examples.

The Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance (BNIA) uses 82 indicators to define seven core vital signs (housing and community development, children and family health safety and well-being, workforce and economic development, sanitation, urban environment and transit, education and youth, neighborhood action and sense of community). Each vital sign has a vision and intended result.

Jacksonville Florida's Community Council produces a Quality of Life Progress Report utilizing 119 indicators clustered into nine broad categories (educational excellence, vibrant economy, preserving the environment, social well being and harmony, arts culture and recreation, healthy community, responsive government, moving around efficiently, safety). Their report is used to identify progress and unmet needs.

Minnesota produces Metro Trend Watch for the seven county Twin Cities area. Twenty-four indicators are measured over six broad categories (good start in life, school success, school demographics, affordable housing, economic opportunities, safety from crime). Minnesota believes greater overall progress can be achieved when it can bridge the gap among groups that are faring below the average.

## **Sacramento Region**

Closer to home in the greater Sacramento area, the Great Valley Center, Local Government Commission, Sacramento Area Council of Government, and Valley Vision have also engaged in major initiatives to define, discuss, and assess, livability.

The Great Valley Center in Modesto takes a regional approach with indicators to assess community well-being in the central valley. Twenty-four indicators are used to assess five major categories (citizenship, safety and social support, community participation, community organizations, youth engagement). The data is used to recommend broad strategies for improving the area's well-being.

The Local Government Commission takes a principled planning approach to defining a livable community - mixed-used development, compact development, slow interconnected traffic calmed streets, pedestrian scale design, transit oriented and transit adjacent development, mix of housing types. The unmet challenge is identifying the indicators, which define and measure these livability principles.

Valley Vision includes the Sacramento Area Council of Governments. Their interest is in 43 indicators that shed light on eight major categories (economy, education, health, family well-being and public safety, civic vitality, land use and housing, transportation and mobility, environment). The intent of Valley Vision's Quality of Life Report is to raise issues needing regional involvement and attention.

## **City of Sacramento**

Since 1996 the City Manager's Office has commissioned a customer service survey every two years. The purpose of the survey included feedback from residents regarding their overall satisfaction with City programs and services, public perception of conditions in Sacramento, and major issues needing to be addressed in the future. Although the survey does not explicitly use the words neighborhood livability, it appears aspects of the next customer service survey due in 2006 could be modified or incorporated into the neighborhood livability initiative.

## **Draft Neighborhood Livability Index**

Since a template specific to neighborhood livability is not available, staff took all of the above information into account plus feedback from operating departments in proposing the following draft neighborhood livability index for the Council's consideration and direction to staff (Attachment A). The intent is to define neighborhood livability in readily identifiable language the majority of stakeholders can relate to, yet be meaningful, descriptive, valued, and most importantly easily measurable with existing data.

In addition, the index envisioned should not be bureaucratic or unwieldy. The index should be readily usable not only by the City, but also by health care providers, school districts, non-profits, community based organizations, and neighborhood associations as a means of working together to enhance the City's neighborhoods, the foundation of any City.

Staff is proposing neighborhood livability as defined by the following indicators: Attractiveness, Health and Safety, Vibrancy, Diversity, and Connectedness.

Attractiveness relates to the curb appeal or neighborhood image. Is the neighborhood neat, clean, and well maintained? Does the neighborhood have good schools and public green space? Do the trees have mature canopies? Are the medians landscaped?

Health and Safety refers to public health and safety. Are child abuse and neglect referrals on the decline? What is the traffic level of service at key intersections? Are more streetlights needed as a tool to address public safety? Do neighborhood residents feel safe?

Vibrancy relates to neighborhood pride. Are there neighborhood events and clean-ups? How much infill development is occurring? Are property values increasing? Are youth and adults engaged in recreational programs?

Diversity covers a range of socioeconomic data – e.g., ethnicity, age, sex, household income, education, language, housing type, proximity to goods and services, etc.

Connectedness refers to neighborhood involvement and civic participation. One measure could be the number of neighborhood associations in the city. Another measure might include the number of residents who serve on city boards and commissions, or the number of graduates from the City Management and City Planning academies.

Taken as a whole, these five major categories and their indicators can serve as a starting point for crafting the City's neighborhood livability index.

#### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

No financial considerations are associated with this report.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

This report concerns administrative activities that will not have any significant effect on the environment and that do not constitute a "project" as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) {CEQA Guidelines Sections 15601(b)(3); 15378(b)}.

**POLICY CONSIDERATIONS:**

The development of a draft Neighborhood Livability Index is consistent with implementation of the City of Sacramento's Strategic Plan and Council's vision for Sacramento to be the most livable city in America.

**ESBD CONSIDERATIONS:**

No goods or services are being purchased with this report.

Respectfully submitted,



Derrick Lim  
Neighborhood Services Area Director

**RECOMMENDATION APPROVED:**



ROBERT P. THOMAS  
City Manager

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Attachment A: Draft Neighborhood Livability Index

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Draft Neighborhood Livability Index		
Component	Description	Possible Indicators
Attractiveness	The curb appeal or image of a neighborhood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Days house is on the market before resale</li> <li>• Public green space per population</li> <li>• Landscaped medians (per acre)</li> <li>• Neighborhood Identity Signs</li> <li>• School test scores</li> <li>• Sidewalks and trails (linear feet)</li> <li>• Trees planted and percent of canopy coverage</li> </ul>
Health & Safety	Public health and safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child abuse and neglect referrals</li> <li>• Intersection levels of service</li> <li>• Homeless population</li> <li>• Neighborhood Watch</li> <li>• Perception of the neighborhood on being safe</li> <li>• School attendance</li> <li>• Streetlights (number &amp; location)</li> <li>• Per cent decrease / increase in property crimes per 1,000 population as compared to 2,000</li> <li>• Per cent decrease/ increase in violent crimes per 1,000 population as compared to 2,000</li> </ul>

Vibrancy	Neighborhood pride.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing starts</li> <li>• Infill development</li> <li>• Neighborhood clean-ups</li> <li>• Neighborhood events</li> <li>• Increase in property values</li> <li>• Remodel permits (value and number)</li> <li>• Youth / adult sports programs (city, community non profit)</li> </ul>
Diversity	Socioeconomic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business licenses</li> <li>• Census demographics: household income, education, ethnicity, language, age</li> <li>• Fair share (e.g. social services, affordable housing)</li> <li>• Housing type and ownership</li> <li>• Shopping convenience (proximity to goods and services)</li> </ul>
Connectedness	Neighborhood involvement. Civic participation. Adults and youth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board and Commission membership</li> <li>• City customer service survey (biannual)</li> <li>• Graduates of CMA and CPA</li> <li>• Library card holders</li> <li>• Neighborhood Associations</li> <li>• Neighborhood Response Team</li> <li>• Parent Teacher Associations</li> <li>• Schools with City joint use agreements</li> <li>• Volunteer hours with City</li> </ul>