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Construction Starts on Top Neighborhood Priorities ***Edenvale/Great Oaks to get new neighborhood centers as part of City's*** ***Strong Neighborhoods***

San José –Mayor Ron Gonzales and Councilmember Forrest Williams will join the Edenvale and Great Oaks neighborhoods to celebrate the start of construction on two neighborhood centers tomorrow, **Saturday, May 1 at 11 a.m.** starting at Stipe Elementary School and concluding at Edenvale Elementary School. The construction of these facilities topped the neighborhoods' list as priority projects as part of the City's Strong Neighborhoods Initiative (SNI).

“By working together, the community will have two new centers that provide much needed services identified by local families and a centralized meeting place for the neighborhood,” said Mayor Ron Gonzales. “This is what the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative is all about.”

The Edenvale Roundtable Community Association (ERCA) and the Great Oaks Neighborhood Association (GONA) joined forces to create one neighborhood voice, known as the Edenvale/Great Oaks Plan Implementation Coalition (EGOPIC). EGOPIC serves as the SNI Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC) with the focus on completing projects identified in their neighborhood.

“The Strong Neighborhoods Initiative has provided us with an opportunity and the resources to fulfill a long-standing promise to address the needs of these neighborhoods,” said District Two Councilmember Forrest Williams. “We partnered with the schools and the community to create a strong network of support for our families, children, and the neighborhood.”

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This South San José neighborhood has a long history of leadership. It is one of a handful of communities that began dreaming about their ideal community in 1997 through the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy before it was updated and merged into an SNI area.

“I am ecstatic, it’s been a long haul,” said Tami Moore, Vice President of EGOPIC and ERCA. “This is one more thing we accomplished as a group, as a community.”

The two new neighborhood centers are a welcomed reprieve to the diverse residents in this community. On any given day, over 100 families are served at the existing decade old ERCA portable located on the grounds of Edenvale Elementary School.

“For our community, the centers signify a home. Our community’s home, one that will open so many more doors. We have a community center, but nothing compared to what we will have,” said Moore.

The current 1,920-square-foot building with a bathroom and tiny kitchen is home to eight social programs and five community groups. Services offered include a food bank, a clothes closet, and a holiday help program. Nutrition, Head Start, Restorative Justice and Migrant Education programs also operate from the same space.

At night, the center provides meeting space for Alanon, the South San Jose Soccer League, the Edenvale Parent Faculty Association, the Girl Scouts and the Edenvale Roundtable Community Association.

In the GONA neighborhood to the north, there is no existing center. The neighborhood association meets at Stipe Elementary School. All this will change in the fall of 2004. GONA residents will be able to hold regular meetings in their own center and ERCA residents will feel comfortable, not cramped, when they visit their center for services.

“Once open, we will partner with existing and new community groups to offer outreach services,” said David Sommers, President of GONA. “In the evening we plan to have community groups meet, Adult Education Classes and in the day, the school may want to use the center. We plan to make it an open center for all.”

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EGOPIC envisioned neighborhood hubs where community development activities and other community services would strengthen and support the neighborhood associations and residents. Their vision has become a reality through a strong partnership between EGOPIC, the Oak Grove School District, the City of San José Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) and the San Jose Redevelopment Agency (SJRA).

The GONA and ERCA centers will be constructed on the grounds of Stipe and Edenvale Elementary Schools, respectively. The 960 square-foot GONA and 1,960 square-foot ERCA modular neighborhood centers will each include a multi-purpose room, kitchen, office space, restrooms and patio areas.

Funding for the \$453,000 ERCA and \$225,000 GONA facilities was provided by the San Jose Redevelopment Agency and grants from Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services, Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy. The construction of both facilities is expected to be complete by October of this year.

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