

Market Creek Plaza: Resident Participation in Store Development

Market Creek Plaza in the Diamond Neighborhood of San Diego provides another example of the community benefits that can accompany grocery store development. Around a third of residents in this area have incomes of less than \$20,000 a year, and 30 percent of residents do not have access to a car. The Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation (JCNI), an operating foundation dedicated to neighborhood strengthening and community building, has committed to invest all of its resources into the Diamond Neighborhoods until it spends or transfers all its assets, in less than 20 years. JCNI purchased 10 acres of land for Market Creek Plaza, a commercial real estate project that is being designed, built, and will ultimately be owned by community residents. Food 4 Less, which opened in January 2001, was selected by the community as the anchor tenant for the development, and was the first major grocery store in the area in thirty years. Sixty-nine percent of the construction contracts for the plaza were awarded to local minority-owned enterprises, and 91 percent of initial Food 4 Less employees were hired from the community in a process run jointly with the United Food and Commercial Workers union. Additional stores built in the plaza include ethnic restaurants, a fitness center, a bank, and a gift shop featuring crafts of local residents from many cultures. Residents will eventually own a new community foundation and a property development business as a result of JCNI's investments and ongoing efforts to promote "resident ownership of neighborhood change."