

Lenovo 3000 N100 Notebook
with Virus Recovery Button.

Save now

\$899 \$799
(after mail-in rebate)

New World. New Thinking.™



Lenovo 3000 N100 with Intel®
Centrino® Duo Mobile Technology
(select models only)

lenovo.



California | Local News

Print E-mail story Most e-mailed Change text size

Nosy Nitpicker, or a Needed Enforcer of Neighborhood Values?

A Santa Ana man who reports his Latino neighbors for city code violations says he's just trying to raise property values. Some view his actions as part of a culture clash.

By Jennifer Delson, Times Staff Writer
June 20, 2006

How you view the recent news about a Santa Ana man who pleaded guilty to selling cars from his house may depend on which side of South Broadway you live on.

On the east side, Tim Rush says he's "ecstatic, and doing a jig."

ADVERTISEMENT

Stretch out in Economy Plus.
United Economy Plus.
More legroom than any other U.S. airline.

UNITED
Economy Plus

Learn more now

For more than a year, Rush had regularly complained to city officials about problem neighbors, particularly Pedro Reyes Rios, whom he nicknamed the "Cal Worthington of South Broadway." Reyes was selling cars parked on the street and in his yard.

"A man's home is his castle," said Rush, 51. "I shouldn't have to be infringed upon by people selling cars, refrigerators and corn on the cob, plus people playing ranchera music at all hours of the day."

On the west side of South Broadway, Reyes and other residents are annoyed with Rush and his stream of complaints, which some view as racially motivated. Some see him as a meddler, an outsider who complains about people and customs

he doesn't understand. One neighbor wonders if he's just lonely.

The congested street in the heart of this heavily immigrant city forms an odd divide between the sensibilities of a white man driven to bring suburban order to the street and his mostly Latino neighbors who feel their lifestyle is under siege.

The neighborhood skirmish, say those who study land use issues, is typical of the tension that erupts in densely packed communities in Southern California, where cultures collide.

"The small issues are a sign of a bigger question about how do people with different lifestyles

More California News

- L.A. Mayor Sees Progress in Bid to Control Schools
- Freed Man Gives Lesson on False Confessions
- Free the Press From Corporate Profiteers
- Anaheim Again Discourages Low-Cost Housing Project
- Irvine Rejects Cell Antennas; Sprint Appeals

Most Viewed Most E-mailed

latimes.com on the Move

- E-MAIL:** News sent directly to you.
- RSS:** Pick the topics, create your page.
- WIRELESS:** L.A. Times any time, anywhere on your mobile device.
- PODCASTS:** Tune in to The Times.

ADVERTISEMENT

- [Food](#)
- [Car Culture](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Crossword, Sudoku](#)
- [All Sections](#)
- [Corrections](#)

- [Buy, Sell & More](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [Cars](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Apartments](#)
- [Personals](#)
- [Deals at Local Stores](#)
- [Coupons](#)
- [Newspaper Ads](#)

[Place an Ad](#)

- [Member Services](#)
- [Sign Up](#)
- [Log In](#)
- [Help](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [L.A. Times Archives](#)

- [HOME DELIVERY](#)
- [Customer Support](#)
- [Subscribe to L.A. Times](#)



[Local Ads](#) [Buy a link](#)

get along," said Kris Day, an associate planning professor at UC Irvine. "In the end, it's not just about code enforcement. It's about negotiating the priorities of people who come from different places."

Conflict between Rush and most of his neighbors goes beyond the bootleg car lot. Rush has filed a string of complaints to the city — 300 telephone calls in 24 months — about abandoned cars, illegal additions, garage conversions and music being played too loudly.

He says he's not motivated by his neighbors' ethnicity but by a desire to improve his neighborhood and raise property values.

Neighbors in the Wilshire Square Neighborhood Assn., who know Rush because of his long community involvement, applaud his efforts on South Broadway.

Rush "has every right to go after anything that will make that a better street," said Evangeline Gawronski, a community activist who lives three blocks from Rush. "He's trying to make sure that people abide by the law so everyone can live comfortably."

At City Hall, Rush has received acclaim for his persistence. Officials say they need more vigilance by residents, because inspectors are spread thin.

Rush "got my cellphone number and kept calling me," said Bruce Dunhams, the city's lead code enforcement official. "He's passionate about the city, and I know he's trying to do something to help."

But most of Rush's neighbors are less than understanding about his campaign.

Jorge Mendez, a gardener who lives three doors away, sums up the feelings of many of his neighbors.

Rush is "watching us all the time. Before he came, no one here had any problems," Mendez said. "I don't understand why he is like this. Is it because we are Latinos or what?"

Kathi Lapworth, one of the few white residents in the neighborhood, said Rush didn't understand that this section of Santa Ana would never look like Irvine, a master-planned community.

"I don't dislike him, but he just doesn't understand," she said. "He's one guy living in a house, and he doesn't seem to get the fact that there are houses here with more than one family living in them."

"That changes a lot of things about parking and the way a neighborhood is."

Two years ago, Rush, a longtime city resident who trains real estate agents for a living, bought a home on the fringe of Wilshire Square because, at \$439,000, it was one he could afford in Santa Ana after his divorce.

The neighbors on his new street were almost entirely working-class Latinos. Once the homes of middle-class families of three and four people, the houses now are occupied by as many as 10 people each. This is not remarkable in Santa Ana, where the median household size is 4.6 people, the largest for any U.S. city with a population of more than 100,000, according to census data.

**NEW
YAMAHA
PIANO
PROMOTION**

**NO
DOWN
PAYMENTS**

**NO
MONTHLY
PAYMENTS**

**NO
INTEREST
UNTIL 2007**

For directions or information, call **1-800-22-PIANO**

DENNIS HAGERTY'S
KEYBOARD CONCEPTS
KeyboardConcepts.com

When Rush moved into his home, he brought the possessions of an upper-middle-class professional. Collections of cigarette lighters, cufflinks and walking sticks, cherry antique furniture, 2,500 books and 100 suits. He stuck a martini weathervane on the roof.

No one on the block came to welcome him, and Rush did not go out to ingratiate himself with the mostly Spanish-speaking neighbors.

Within a week, Rush began reporting code violations around him.

"Even as seasoned as I am, I was, and am, overwhelmed," Rush says of the code violations on South Broadway.

Often, he would call police about noise late at night, as he stood on his porch having a cigar and a glass of Johnnie Walker Black Label.

Rush called about four inoperable vehicles in a backyard abutting his yard. The city contacted an out-of-town homeowner, who arrived from Texas and removed them.

Rush objected to graffiti on the walls of a garage that he could see from his back porch, and the owners were forced to paint it over.

He called animal control officials about a barking dog. After more than a dozen calls, the barking stopped.

He told code enforcement officials that a neighbor had illegally built a driveway in the frontyard, and city officials required the neighbor to replace the lawn.

More than two dozen times, he reported to police loud music playing at 8 a.m. on Sundays at a house three doors away. The music has stopped.

And time and time again, he complained about Reyes, who could be seen from Rush's living room showing cars parked on the streets to buyers.

Earlier this year, responding to a criminal citation issued by the city, Reyes pleaded guilty to selling used cars and repairing them in and around his property, said City Atty. Joseph Fletcher.

Neighbors said they hadn't known about Reyes' pleading, but they had noticed with pleasure fewer cars on the street.

When they learned that Rush's complaints had stopped the car sales, several gave him kudos.

Latinos "have a tendency not to complain. We don't think anything comes of it, we're too busy working, and we don't want to meddle," said Nelson Rodriguez, 30. "We had tried to ask [Reyes] to move those cars, and nothing happened."

Still, for many in the neighborhood, Rush is a curiosity. They can't figure out why he lives alone in a house or why he flies a U.S. flag on a street where many people aren't even U.S. citizens.

Lorena Mendez, a mother of two toddlers who lives with four other family members, imagines Rush is distraught — not over loud music and illegal additions, but over being alone.

"He feels bitter about his own life," she hypothesized. "He is trying to reach out, to connect with

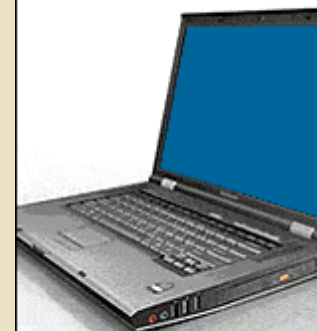


lenovo.
Lenovo 3000
N100 Notebook
with Virus
Recovery Button.

~~\$899~~ **\$799**
(after mail-in rebate)

 **Save now**

New World.
New Thinking.™



Lenovo 3000 N100
with Intel® Centrino®
Duo Mobile Technology
(select models only)

other people, even though he's doing it in a strange way."

For Rush, the recent victory over the used-car lot was a signal to continue his mission. He wants to report cases of graffiti, overcrowded apartments and illegal parking.

"There's plenty of targets for me to set my sights on. I want to continue to improve the neighborhood," Rush said. "Even though they're cursing me now, they will thank me in the end. I just want them to live normally, not in garages, with their cars on their lawns.

"I don't think it's a lot to ask. Property values will go up. They will see."

Reyes, a cook, sees it differently. "No one likes him here," he said. "He wants to change Santa Ana. He bought a house here. That doesn't give him the right to boss people around and tell them how to live."

MOST E-MAILED

- [Koreatown, 24/7](#)
- [Home Sales Slowdown Could Settle In for a Stay](#)
- [A Hollywood Player Who Owns the Game](#)

More California News

- [L.A. Mayor Sees Progress in Bid to Control Schools](#)
- [Freed Man Gives Lesson on False Confessions](#)
- [Free the Press From Corporate Profiteers](#)