

Strong Neighborhoods Business Plan Update:

The original Strong Neighborhoods Business Plan adopted in 2004 set an ambitious course for change in the neighborhoods. The last ten years have seen an enormous investment in the social capital in these neighborhoods. There are now neighborhood action coalitions of informed and involved neighborhood leaders across diverse communities. Dozens of new neighborhood associations and groups have been created. New neighborhood business associations have been organized. Residents have volunteered to remove graffiti, plant trees, and clean up their neighborhoods. They are now actively involved in the decisions that affect the quality of life and their communities.

By any measure, the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative has accomplished much of what it initially set out to achieve. However, the economic recession has hit these same neighborhoods hard, resulting in high unemployment, foreclosures, evictions, and an increased need for support and services of all kinds. The same economic recession has cut into the ability of local government to meet these increased needs. Redevelopment Agency resources that funded capital projects have been reduced by a massive State take and lower local tax revenues. The City's general fund budget shortfall means fewer services, not more. The County also struggles to close a budget gap, while still maintaining the safety-net services for those most in need.

For the SNI to remain effective in its mission of transforming neighborhoods, it must transform itself. Over the past five months over 130 neighborhood leaders and staff have come together as one and set out a course for the future of the SNI and to update the 2004 Business Plan. In the face of budget cuts and an ongoing deficit it is clear that neighborhood leaders and staff remain deeply committed to positive change in our community and that the Strong Neighborhoods' mission is far from being done, and is more relevant than ever.

It is also clear that neighbors cannot succeed alone. As we listened to neighborhood leaders and staff, we heard that success will require:

- ❑ The creation of a flexible, field-based team that has the staff, technology, and capacity to pull together police, code enforcement, housing rehabilitation, anti-graffiti and other services in a focused effort to support neighborhoods most in need.
- ❑ Continued access to funds and resources from the Redevelopment Agency, the Community Development Block Grant program and other new partners to implement priority projects and spur neighborhood action.
- ❑ Renewed commitment to supporting a strong, capable, network of neighborhood leaders and providing them the tools and training they need to take action.

Out of these discussions with neighbors, staff and partners, four core goals of the Strong Neighborhoods Business Plan Update emerged:

- ❑ Removing barriers to neighborhood action,
- ❑ Stabilizing neighborhoods in crisis,
- ❑ Supporting neighborhood action, and
- ❑ Connecting resources to priorities.

This business plan update will refocus Strong Neighborhoods on the accomplishment of these four goals.