

THE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF THE CITY OF SAN JOSE

MEMORANDUM

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR, CITY COUNCIL, AND REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY	FROM: HARRY S. MAVROGENES DEBRA FIGONE
SUBJECT: SEE BELOW	DATE: JULY 29, 2010

SUBJECT: STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE:  
SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

REASON FOR SUPPLEMENTAL

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide additional information on the Strong Neighborhoods Business Plan Update.

THE CONTEXT:

For the last ten years, the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative (SNI) has connected thousands of neighbors to each other to build social capital within neighborhoods. During this same time over \$104 million of Redevelopment funds and \$32 million of City funds have been invested as part of Strong Neighborhoods to improve the physical capital and services in those neighborhoods with new lighting, streetscapes, new or upgraded parks, community centers, sewers, housing rehab, enhanced code enforcement.

Given the harsh reality of the current economic recession, this approach is no longer sustainable. In the last 12 months:

- \$30 million in redevelopment funds budgeted for Strong Neighborhoods have been moved out to future years, leaving just \$1.4 million in new capital funding this fiscal year.
- Redevelopment and City funding for City services supporting Strong Neighborhoods, including code enforcement, housing rehabilitation, and traffic calming has been significantly reduced.
- In the Strong Neighborhoods team, 16 staff members were proposed to be eliminated, including the entire staff of the Neighborhood Development Center.

By tapping into reserves and other strategies, the City Council was able to restore 4 positions for a two-year period, but the organization today has 12 fewer people than it did in the last fiscal year.

#### A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION:

In response to this dramatic shift in resources, Strong Neighborhoods staff at the Redevelopment Agency and City convened a series of community conversations with neighborhood leaders to answer the question, "What is most important for building strong neighborhoods?" After six months of conversation with over 140 neighborhood leaders and staff, the answer was to update the Strong Neighborhoods business plan City-wide and focus on four key goals:

- 1) Removing barriers to neighborhood action across the City,
- 2) Stabilizing neighborhoods in crisis,
- 3) Mobilizing neighborhood action City-wide, and
- 4) Connecting resources to priorities.

As a result of this conversation, staff recommends refocusing the Strong Neighborhoods program in alignment with these four goals consistent with amended City/Agency Cooperation Agreements and City and Agency Capital and Operating Budgets respectively. This responds directly to neighborhood leader's priorities and creates a vehicle for collaborating with them to create the most meaningful change possible with the limited resources available.

Without this realignment, the smaller Strong Neighborhoods team will not be as effective since there are few capital projects to deliver. Leaving the organization as it is currently structured would mean extremely reduced City-wide presence, an inability to focus resources on neighborhoods most in need and availability of adequate staff in some neighborhoods.

#### STABILIZING NEIGHBORHOODS IN CRISIS:

During the community conversation, leaders called our attention to the fact that some neighborhoods have higher need and have also been hit harder by the economic recession. The decision to prioritize organizing work in these high need neighborhoods is based on the same logic that guides the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force (MGPTF), focusing resources where intervention can make the difference.

Neighborhoods of focus will be identified based on City-wide data including: code violations, graffiti, MGPTF gang hot-spots, violent crime, unemployment, and foreclosures. Once the neighborhoods are selected, staff will redeploy into field offices to work with these individual neighborhoods and the surrounding Neighborhood Action Coalitions as appropriate. This will maintain a strong connection to existing Neighborhood Action Centers and will engage a broader network of neighborhood leaders. This broader connection is vital to supporting high need neighborhoods.

The work in these neighborhoods will be in alignment with the MGPTF and in collaboration with a Neighborhood Solutions Team including Code Enforcement, Anti-Graffiti, Youth Services, Housing, County services, nonprofit service providers and others. The outcome sought by these Neighborhood Solutions Teams is a clean, safe and engaged neighborhood. The Neighborhood Solutions Teams will not be completely fixed to one location and will have the ability to add or shift among neighborhoods to respond to changes in circumstance.

#### MOBILIZING NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION:

Throughout the community conversation, many leaders expressed a desire to focus their efforts on mobilizing their own neighbors to take action on small scale projects such as dumpster days, neighborhood watch, street tree trimming, graffiti removal, dealing with negligent landlords and similar efforts. They were equally clear that they needed the support of each other, resources and ongoing training to mobilize neighborhood action.

The recommended structure would double the staff of the Neighborhood Development Center to support neighborhood leaders City-wide. The support provided to residents would include: enhanced leadership training and coaching, access to resources such as small grants and tools (e.g., shovels for clean-ups), and networking and improved communication using technology and social media. One of the key outcomes of this approach is to seek out and engage new leaders across the City in action within their own communities.

An emphasis will be placed on neighbor to neighbor connection and problem solving. An example of this is the Neighborhoods Commission, supported by Strong Neighborhoods staff, which is working on both changing policies that hamper neighborhood action and on increasing the sharing of information and lessons learned among neighbors.

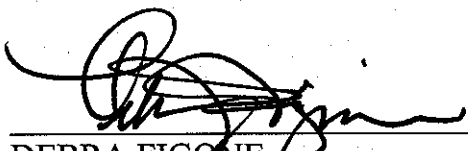
PICTURE OF SUCCESS:

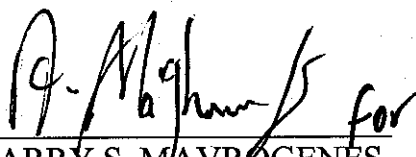
The success of this new approach will be measured by results on the ground. Within the neighborhoods of highest need, success over the next two years will be measured by the number of engaged residents whose actions have resulted in visibly cleaner and perceptibly safer neighborhoods. Similarly, across the City, the success in mobilizing neighborhood action will be measured by increasing numbers of engaged citizens who have the skills to lead and have taken action to improve their community. The Strong Neighborhoods Business Plan update sets out a framework for achieving these results and building social capital within and among San Jose's neighborhoods.

The final measure of success is our ability to sustain and grow this network of leaders over the long term, which true community development requires. This will require identifying and aligning reliable sources of funding to support ongoing neighborhood action and community changes.

CEQA

Not a project.

  
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DEBRA FIGONE  
City Manager

  
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HARRY S. MAVROGENES  
Executive Director