

Strong Neighborhoods Initiative

frequently asked questions

1. **What is the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative (SNI)?**

The Strong Neighborhoods Initiative is a partnership of the community, City of San José, and the San Jose Redevelopment Agency to build clean, safe, and attractive neighborhoods with independent and capable neighborhood organizations.

2. **Who determines the boundaries for SNI?**

The San Jose Redevelopment Agency Board/City Council approved the final boundaries for the 19 individual SNI areas. With the development of the Neighborhood Improvement Plan for each SNI area, a SNI Planning Area was formed based on community input. The eventual Redevelopment Project Area boundary that was established is smaller than the Planning Survey Area.

3. **Why was my neighborhood chosen to be a part of SNI?**

The Redevelopment Agency Board/City Council selected neighborhoods based on an assessment of existing needs and when requested for inclusion by organizations in those neighborhoods.

4. **What is the Project Advisory Committee (PAC)?**

The SNI Project Area Committee was established in January 2002 for a period of three years to fulfill legal requirements and to serve as an advisory body for the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative process, especially on matters relating to implementing the SNI Redevelopment Plan. At the end of the three years, the Redevelopment Project Area Committee expired, but the Board/Council voted to appoint the members of the original PAC to a Strong Neighborhoods Initiative Project Advisory Committee (PAC). The Project Advisory Committee was originally set to sunset at the end of June 2007, but the Council recently acted to extend the PAC through March 2008.

5. **What is the role of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC)?**

The Project Advisory Committee is a 27-member committee whose primary role is to advise the Mayor, City Council and Redevelopment Agency Board on matters relating to implementation of the SNI Redevelopment Plan and policy issues affecting neighborhoods. The PAC is also an important part of the neighborhood process as the Neighborhood Advisory Committees (NAC) implement their Neighborhood Improvement Plans.

Strong Neighborhoods Initiative: Frequently Asked Questions

5. **What is the role of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC)? [continued]**

The PAC's work plan includes:

- Developing neighborhood investment strategies, including grants and fundraising;
- Encouragement and support of volunteers;
- Building the capacity of neighborhood leaders and organizations; and
- Providing feedback to the Council and Agency on policy issues affecting neighborhoods.

PAC meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of every month from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the San Jose City Hall in rooms W118 and W119. For more information, please call Jose A. Villarreal at (408) 535-8508.

6. **What is the Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC)?**

There are currently 19 NACs. NACs are made up of approximately 12 to 25 members, including property owners and tenants, representatives from neighborhood associations, businesses, the faith community, schools and other community stakeholders. They represent the strength and diversity of each neighborhood. The NACs initially participated in an extensive planning exercise spanning 12-24 months to develop Neighborhood Improvement Plans. The approval of the 19 plans by the San Jose Planning Commission and San Jose City Council/Redevelopment Agency Board signified SNI's transition from planning into implementation. NACs, now referred to as Neighborhood Action Coalitions, partner closely with City and Agency staff to implement priority projects within their plans.

7. **Who decides how much money will be distributed to each neighborhood?**

The plans and priorities developed by the NACs are used to guide budget decisions by the San Jose Redevelopment Agency Board.

8. **What is the difference between the plans that the NACs are working on and the SNI Redevelopment Area Plan that the PAC is considering?**

Each NAC has developed a Neighborhood Improvement Plan that articulates the neighborhood's vision, existing environmental conditions, and demographics. The plan also includes a list of "top-ten" priorities and a detailed implementation action agenda with project liaisons from the community and lead departments. These plans exist independently of the SNI Redevelopment Area Plan.

The SNI Redevelopment Area Plan, approved in June 2002, establishes the authority for the Redevelopment Agency to operate in a specific geographic area, and it enables the Agency to implement programs and projects to eliminate blighting conditions.

9. **How many projects have been completed in SNI areas?**

Over one hundred and twenty capital priority projects have been completed, totalling \$54 million of San Jose Redevelopment Agency investment.

Strong Neighborhoods Initiative: Frequently Asked Questions

10. What are the benefits of being in the SNI Redevelopment Project Area?

The adoption of the SNI Redevelopment Project Area has enabled the San Jose Redevelopment Agency to implement neighborhood priorities to achieve cleaner, safer and more attractive neighborhoods.

11. Can Redevelopment funds be spent in unincorporated areas (areas not annexed by the City)?

Yes. Redevelopment funds can be spent in any area where a Redevelopment Project Area exists. There are, however, no unincorporated areas in the SNI Redevelopment Project Area.

12. Will my property taxes increase due to the adoption of a Redevelopment Plan and creation of a Redevelopment Project Area?

The Redevelopment Agency does not have the power to tax. When a Redevelopment Project Area is adopted, there is no additional tax placed on property.

13. How does a project begin?

The NAC identifies a project as a top priority in their plan. A team of residents and City and Agency staff develops a work plan to implement the project. The work plan typically includes identification of funding, location, design, and construction.

14. If a project requires land acquisition, how does this happen?

If the City or Agency already owns the land, the land can be used immediately for a project. If the land is privately held, the City or Agency negotiates the purchase of the property with the support of the local NAC. As a matter of adopted policy, the Agency will not use eminent domain for the acquisition of a single-family, owner-occupied residence. Eminent domain can be a tool to implement neighborhood plans and priorities. However, after five years of SNI, the Agency has not used eminent domain.

15. What is eminent domain, and how is it used?

Eminent domain allows public agencies to acquire property at fair market value for a public purpose whether or not the property is for sale. Eminent domain proceedings are only used as a last resort after all other attempts to acquire the property through negotiations have failed.

The Progress Report on the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative Five-Year Implementation Plan adopted in June 2006 specified that the Agency is committed to not using its powers of eminent domain over single-family owner-occupied residential properties in the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative areas. By including this language in the ordinance adopting the Agency's eminent domain program, the Council is codifying that commitment as requested by the SNI PAC in its attached letter to the Council dated June 1, 2006.

For additional information, please contact the City of San José Strong Neighborhoods Initiative at (408) 535-3500 or visit www.strongneighborhoods.org.