

STAFF REPORT

Lancaster Redevelopment Agency

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9/11/07
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Date: September 11, 2007

To: Mayor Hearn and Agency Board Members

From: Elizabeth Brubaker, Housing & Neighborhood Revitalization Director

Subject: **Introduction to the Strong Neighborhood Initiative**

Recommendation:

Receive presentation.

Financial Impact:

Strong Neighborhood Initiative funds were approved in the Fiscal Year 2007-08 Budget for Parks, Recreation and Arts, Special Events - \$58,920; Public Works, Looking Good Lancaster - \$30,000; Public Safety, Neighborhood Watch & Business Programs - \$500,000; and Housing & Neighborhood Revitalization, additional Section 8 Investigators - \$120,000.

Background

The Strong Neighborhood Initiative began initially in 2005 with the City Council approving the 2020 Vision for Lancaster. The City Council set several goals for the City based on several themes: Public Safety, Growth and Development, Jobs and Economic Vitality, Housing and Neighborhoods, Leisure Services, Health and Human Services, City Financial Health, City Services and Infrastructure, Regional Cooperation and City Values. Following are the goals to implement the 2020 Vision based on the subject themes: revise and adopt a General Plan and specific master plans that recognize community needs and their distance from the urban core; build sustainability into the maintenance of infrastructure; provide opportunities for culture and leisure; reduce crime; create neighborhood watch programs in every neighborhood; improve the quality of life and property; provide opportunities for community participation; build, preserve and support a strong community; enhance programs to promote job creation and revitalize the local economy; create a job/housing balance. The Strong Neighborhood Initiative is the method to achieve these goals for the City of Lancaster.

Introduction

The Strong Neighborhood Initiative is an evolving, dynamic and enduring process designed to address the transformation of neighborhoods over time throughout the City of Lancaster.

The Strong Neighborhood Initiative is a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to address the current and potential decline of Lancaster neighborhoods utilizing the departments of Planning, Public Works, Parks, Recreation and Arts, Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization, Economic

Development and Redevelopment, Los Angeles County Sheriff, Los Angeles County Fire and the other contract services provided by the County to prevent crime, remove and deter blight, and provide necessary services to create sustainable neighborhoods within the city.

The goals of the Strong Neighborhood Initiative are to reverse the pattern of deterioration, recapture the sense of place that once existed, increase the livability and vitality of the neighborhoods, and rekindle sense of pride among residents.

The goals of the Strong Neighborhood Initiative will be accomplished through the expertise of each department within the City of Lancaster and the County of Los Angeles. Following is a list of items to accomplish the preliminary goals of the Strong Neighborhood Initiative.

Planning

- The Zoning section of the Lancaster Municipal Code will be amended to eliminate issues that contribute to the creation of blight in the subject neighborhoods.
- Specific changes should be considered within the Zoning Ordinance of the Lancaster Municipal Code, or through separately established design guidelines.

Public Works

- The City through its Public Works Department and Street Maintenance Division should coordinate its schedule for constructing certain capital improvements relative to the repair and reconditioning of any damaged public improvements.
- Depending on the quality and condition of the target area streets, the scheduling of repaving and/or resurfacing by Public Works should be coordinated wherever possible with other neighborhood improvements being performed.

Parks, Recreation and Arts

- The need for added security within the parks especially in the lower income areas.
- Evaluation of the feasibility of neighborhood-based programs.

Public Safety Services

To address public safety issues there should be an emphasis placed on identifying what the City can do.

- Maximize intervention and prevention strategies based upon the Best Practices Initiative.
- Prevention, intervention, regulation, suppression and intervention strategies are supportive of and integral to the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative.

Economic Development

- Improve the jobs/housing imbalance by encouraging new businesses with high paying jobs to locate in Lancaster.
- Initiate workforce development programs with coordination between the business community, Lancaster High Schools, Antelope Valley College, and the Lancaster University Center.
- Establish school based programs that include work ethics training, job shadowing, internships and skills development.

Housing & Neighborhood Revitalization

- Implement geographic targeting program focusing enforcement, housing and community building resources on specific areas within the city and object targeting focusing enforcement, housing and community building resources on particular violations.
- Community Needs Assessment will be conducted through a survey, to create a formal assessment of the neighborhoods, to assist staff and the residents decide what issues need attention in the neighborhood.

Social Services

- Complete a survey of the social service providers of the Antelope Valley to determine existing gaps to providing social services to the citizens of Lancaster.
- City staff, county staff, school staff, social service provider staff and the citizens of Lancaster will work together to create a plan to provide a complete continuum of care for social service programs that will meet the needs of the citizens of Lancaster.

Education

- City of Lancaster will become engaged in working with the school district officials and community partnership to improve public schools by investing in young people through placing public education high on the community of Lancaster's list of priorities.
- The City will continue with its education partners to grow the Lancaster University Center by encouraging our youth to seek careers in science and engineering.