

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Fresno, California



Accomplishments: White House Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) Initiative – through December 2012



Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) is a federal interagency collaboration that aims to build the foundation for economic transformation by aligning federal resources and increasing the capacity of Fresno city government to implement the City's plans for economic growth and revitalization. As of December 2012, we have made progress in advancing the City's goals in the following areas:

Downtown Revitalization

- SC2 is supporting the City's goal to reconnect an 18-square-block street grid in Downtown Fresno near the proposed site of the high speed rail station and the **Fulton Pedestrian Mall** - Fresno's historical Main Street. SC2 provided technical assistance and is facilitating environmental review coordination between the City of Fresno and the State of California's Transportation Department. In August 2012 the US Department of Transportation announced it will provide \$1 million for the pre-construction phase.
- Helped identify philanthropic funding and organize a 2-day tour in September 2012 of San Francisco Bay Area **innovative food organizations** for a Fresno public-private delegation. The tour is informing efforts in Fresno to explore a downtown public market, kitchen incubator, and community gardening.
- Funded, managed, and delivered a report on opportunities for City to more deeply engage **local anchors**, such as educational and medical institutions, in the revitalization of Downtown. SC2 and the City are working to implement many of the report's recommendations and fund a second technical assistance contract to support the City's efforts to identify strategies to increase infill development.

Transportation

- SC2 is working closely with the City to advance its first proposed **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)** line. More than \$38 million of federal funding is now programmed for the project. In July 2012 the Department of Transportation selected Fresno to receive \$2.45 million in Bus Livability funding to better connect the future downtown BRT line to Downtown. Early engagement by the SC2 team also resulted in the proposed BRT line being rerouted through the heart of downtown, so as to directly touch the **Fulton Mall** and other key downtown sites.

Economic Development & Innovation

- Provided technical assistance to the City to develop a project to study the feasibility of expanding Fresno's **value-added food sector** by developing an existing industrial area into a food business cluster. The feasibility study was funded by Department of Commerce in August 2012.
- SC2, through Department of Agriculture and Department of Energy, is partnering with the Fresno CIO on **long-term regional economic development**. Action is being taken to ensure that the City benefits from economic activity, such as an agriculture tech cluster, that broadband infrastructure development may spark. We are also facilitating technology transfer from national laboratories to innovative businesses.
- Fresno was selected for the **IBM Smarter Cities** challenge program, which provides the expertise of IBM employees on a pro bono basis. SC2 identified this philanthropic resource for the City, provided technical assistance on several of the potential projects, and is helping develop the work plan.

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- Two **SC2 Fellows** started their 2-year assignments with the Downtown Fresno Partnership in September 2012. They are coordinating downtown business assistance, reaching out to anchor institutions, and organizing and expanding downtown events.

Business Development

- Graduated 12 local **small business** owners from Small Business Administration's 2012 "e200" Emerging Leaders class. SBA paid the tuition of the local small business owners to take this highly acclaimed executive "mini-MBA" program designed to help increase growth opportunities for Fresno small businesses. The program will again be offered in 2013 to 15 business owners due to SC2.
- Small Business Administration, Minority Business Development Agency, and General Services Administration partnered to design workshops and outreach events to encourage **greater access for local firms** to federal contracting and entrepreneurial programs. High Speed Rail contracting opportunities have been a priority.

High Speed Rail

- **High Speed Rail** will make Downtown Fresno a focal point in the region and help re-establish Fresno's downtown as the urban and economic hub of the San Joaquin Valley. SC2 provided intensive technical assistance to inform the City's development of the **Station Area Plan**, which will function as a City strategy, policy and planning document, as well as a public information tool for the developer community and the community at large.

Neighborhood Revitalization

- Provided technical assistance to develop a strategy to expand neighborhood revitalization efforts, like those piloted in Fresno's Lowell Neighborhood, to additional Fresno neighborhoods and helped bring together 13 public sector, non-profit, and philanthropic partners to collaborate on the strategy. In August 2012 the White House Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative announced it would support expansion into two neighborhoods through the **Building Neighborhood Capacity Program**.
- Secured an 8-member AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps Team to work on neighborhood revitalization activities such as planting street trees and building a community garden in Fresno's **Lowell Neighborhood** for four weeks.

Homelessness

- Leveraged Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) resources to enter into two technical assistance contracts to strengthen the **local capacity** of homeless housing and service providers. In conjunction with the contracts, HHS completed a comprehensive assessment of the Fresno area homeless housing and services systems, which will lay the foundation for additional interagency coordination and resources with Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Interagency Council on Homelessness.
- The federal government and its Interagency Council on Homelessness are leveraging SC2's work in Fresno and designating Fresno as one of 10 **Priority Communities** for federal resources that will help end homelessness.