1. **Cover Sheet Information**

* **Case Study Title – Neighborhood *Enhancement Program: Transforming Communities/Building Partnerships***
* **Case Study Category – Partnerships**
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1. **Synopsis**

The words “collaboration,” “transformation,” and “results-oriented partnerships” all capture the essence of the City of Cincinnati’s Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP).This 90-day neighborhood based strategy focuses on targeted initiatives that address specific neighborhood quality of life issues related to an overlay and analysis of building code violations, vacant buildings, disorder and drug calls for Police service and drug arrests, as well as incidence of graffiti, junk autos, litter and weeds. City services were integrated to include personnel costs and the Neighborhood Enhancement Program to improve quality of life by maximizing public resources, leveraging private investment, creating a physical and economic “ripple effect”, improving safety, and reducing blight.

The NEP is implemented in two neighborhoods per year, one in the spring and the other in the fall via a three-prong approach of enforcement, enhancement, and sustainability. The impetus for the City Manager to implement the NEP resulted from careful data analysis by City departments working together to resolve particular issues within the same neighborhood with limited resources. Statistics showed certain geographic areas where the strategic deployment of staff time, equipment, and other materials could reduce crime and improve an individual neighborhood’s quality of life. The City Manager realized departments could not solely deploy resources in a vacuum without a better understanding of the day-to-day obstacles residents and other stakeholders were facing to combat neighborhood ills. He directed each City department to designate staff to solicit input and commitment as team members and in neighborhoods warranting immediate attention. Anchor institutions, other public agencies and the business community were also recruited to participate in these NEP efforts. The City proactively engaged those targeted neighborhoods through ongoing stakeholder sessions designed to outline priorities, goals, shared expectations and accountability, action steps, and timely reporting to be completed during and after the 90-day focus period.

Data has proven that, through focused, integrated and concentrated city service delivery and community redevelopment efforts, partners (City departments, residents, and community organizations) seek to create a physical and economic “ripple effect” in the neighborhoods surrounding the focus area to build and sustain investor confidence; affect real and visible physical improvements of the area; reduce the number of vacated buildings and increase homeownership; reduce crime; increase property values; strengthen neighborhood business districts; and increase resident’s community pride and self sufficiency.

**Implementation**

While all City departments have a presence in NEP, data collection by certain departments is the crux of the strategy. For example, crime statistics collected by the Cincinnati Police Department (CPD) are crucial to helping with public safety endeavors. CPD’s analysis pinpoints precisely where the areas of high crime are in a neighborhood down to individual blocks. That research is linked to community mobilization strategies such as District Five’s derivative of “Take Back Our Streets” which was used in the Northside neighborhood. As part of the Northside NEP, the increased presence of the police and community helped to reduce crime activities and build confidence in that community for a longer-term recruitment of volunteers.

The maintenance of quality housing stock which positively impacts property values in neighborhoods requires ongoing attention. The City’s Department of Community Development has a Property Maintenance Concentrated Code Enforcement Division that deploys inspectors in the field to manage heavy caseloads across the City’s fifty-two neighborhoods. However, participation by citizens during the NEP enables the Code Inspectors to target properties using a two-fold process of complaint-driven data collection and on-site inspections during the 90-day blitz.

Still another example of why NEP’s public private partnership is so vital is visible through the activities of the quasi-City department and nonprofit organization, Keep Cincinnati Beautiful (KCB). In 2009, KCB began to address Cincinnati’s property vacancy issues through its Future Blooms program. Through this effort, once blighted buildings and lots are chosen, based on location and site visits, the potential workload is inventoried and permission forms are sent to property owners detailing the benefits of Future Blooms. The program also provides an economic benefit and job training component. Specifically, professional artists and architects are employed to paint "fool the eye" application of doors, windows, flower boxes, and awnings on boarded up doors and windows of abandoned buildings. The program also contracts landscape experts to clean, grade and green vacant lots. In the spring or fall, trees are planted and a signature fence is placed strategically on the lot to show ownership. Maintenance of lots are performed by a workforce crew supplied by LawnLife, a program that takes young men coming out of the Juvenile Justice system and gives them meaningful work and skills they can use to obtain employment in the private sector. Research has shown an area that is cleaned and well maintained reduces crime and provides more interest in positive use. Future Bloom’s Return on Investment provides high-impact and low-cost solutions to helping to maintain safety and property values.

**Results**

The fourteenth NEP blitz will begin in August 2012. The direct correlation between the identification of data-driven issues coupled with an intentional on-the-ground problem-solving methodology has lead to the NEP’s success. Since 2007, Code Enforcement inspected over 12,000 buildings and issued orders to correct violations on 6949 Buildings in the NEP areas.  To-date, 4046 cases are closed with correction of 8092 violations. The estimated value of the corrections is $3.9 million.  The number of blighted buildings demolished in the NEP neighborhoods is 302 for an investment of $3.8 million. Since 2009, 420 buildings have been beautified through Future Blooms, and since 2010, 110 lots have been stabilized. Blight has been reduced in the target areas by 14%, crime has dropped 24% and the amount of litter being picked up in the community has dropped 27%. These results create economic opportunity and change the whole look in areas that have a high percentage of low and moderate income people living around blighted properties.

The most important long-term benefit of NEP collaborations is that they identify and develop neighborhood assets that transform neighborhoods throughout the city. One of the key elements of the NEP is sustainability of efforts and continued partnerships on other initiatives. by building on the community momentum already in place and leveraging City, public and private resources, NEP has jumpstarted opportunities for long-term neighborhood revitalization and reinvestment.

The following elements make the Neighborhood Enhancement Program’s success replicable in any community:

* City’s willingness to target geographical areas using a combined City and community team approach that maximizes public and private resources and that measures progress and RESULTS
* Data-driven assessment of needs, assets and opportunities in neighborhoods
* Strong, hands-on community engagement that promotes autonomy of community leaders to identify project priorities, recruit volunteers and fundraise to accomplish goals
* Ongoing transparency, increased communication, meetings and reporting among all stakeholders
* Identifying and maximizing private investments while showcasing visual improvements and impact

Since 2008 the NEP won six awards for excellence in public private partnerships, being nationally recognized by Neighborhoods USA as the *2008 National Program of the Year*, recipient of the Ohio Conference of Community Development ‘s *President’s Award* and locally by the Community Development Corporations Association of Greater Cincinnati for the *Most Outstanding Collaborative Effort*. Further, in 2009, the NEP won the Ohio City Managers Association’s (OCMA) *Program Excellence in Community Partnership* followed by being a National Finalist in the category of Community Development in the National Development Council’s 2009 Academy. Also, the NEP won a Keep America Beautiful award in 2009 placing second place in the nation.

1. **PRESENTATION STYLE**

This is a combination of power point, news coverage videos and interactive dialogue with the audience.

**Interview Notes:**

**Challenge, Solution and Innovative Qualities – 52 neighborhoods, city government budget cuts resulting with limited resources, needed to be strategic about quality of life issues in neighborhoods. Addressing the challenge through a data-driven model (ie. blight index, crime hotspots) provides a picture of neighborhoods that could benefit from a coordinated effort. Go in as one coordinated unit from the city government as well as a wide cross section of community partners to come into the neighborhood and “get to work.” Working with the 14th neighborhood, have been conducting this process for 4 years. Innovative qualities is the model itself, the model to create an “all hands on deck” as a coordinated unit to serve the neighborhood. Data allows us to chart everything on a map the picture becomes very clear. Build on assets that are in the neighborhood. Creates a lasting relationship with the departments and helps to create a laser like focus.**

**Transferability – team thinks it could work based according to scale. Have a how-to manual that could be modified.**

**Results and Lessons Learned – two neighborhoods per year. Conduct 30, 60, 90, and one year reports on progress of the neighborhoods. Then follow-up over time. Galvanize the base within the neighborhood for sustained momentum to pay attention to the neighborhood. Builds on itself. Lots of media attention.**

**Presentation – team presentation, but need to give more thought to how they will present at TLG. Videos and news footage.**