

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

Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) is a federal interagency collaboration that aims to build the foundation for economic transformation by increasing the capacity of Fresno city government to implement the Mayor's plans for revitalization and economic development. As of August 2012, we have made progress in advancing the City's goals in our focus 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. On August 2 the US Department of Transportation announced it will provide \$1 million for the pre-construction phase, which includes preliminary engineering.

- SC2 identified a non-federal resource and helped the City of Fresno develop a project selected by the

American Architectural Foundation's Sustainable Cities Design Academy. A Fresno public-private team developed strategies to increase utilization of the **Mariposa Corridor**, which connects the proposed Fresno **high speed rail station** with downtown's **Fulton Mall** and a planned Bus Rapid Transit station.

- GSA negotiated a lease on behalf of the Social Security Administration to locate to Downtown Fresno. The new

15-year lease in the **Fulton Mall** will create an influx of about 4,300 patrons per month in the heart of the City's historic district when the agency moves in this fall.

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. On July 23 the US 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

- 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.

- SC2 provided technical assistance to the City to develop a proposal to study the feasibility of expanding Fresno's **value-added food sector** by developing an existing industrial area into a food business cluster.

- SC2 and the City are working with several local food systems groups to coordinate efforts and develop **food hub** projects, such as a public market and kitchen incubator, that support the City's revitalization goals.

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Business Development

- Mayor Ashley Swearingin kicked off the current class of the SBA "e200" initiative designed to help increase growth opportunities for **Fresno small businesses**. SBA is paying the tuition of 17 local small business owners to take this highly acclaimed executive “mini-MBA” program.
- Small Business Administration, Minority Business Development Agency, and General Services Administration have 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 has 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.
- The SC2 team convened over 30 stakeholders and provided technical assistance to maximize **high speed rail planning** in Fresno and leverage existing resources. The SC2 team has organized, facilitated, and coordinated multiple concurrent Fresno planning efforts that will affect, and be affected by high speed rail planning.

Neighborhood Revitalization

- SC2 provided technical assistance to develop a strategy to expand neighborhood revitalization efforts, like those piloted in Fresno's **Lowell Neighborhood**, to up to five additional Fresno neighborhoods and helped bring together 13 public sector, non-profit, and philanthropic partners to collaborate on the strategy. On August 2, the White House Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative announced it will support expansion into two of these neighborhoods through its Building Neighborhood Capacity Program.
- Due to the combined efforts of the Economic Development Corporation serving Fresno County, SC2, and the City of Fresno, a project was developed to secure an Americorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) Team in Fresno. The 8-member NCCC Team worked on neighborhood revitalization activities such as planting street trees and building a community garden in the **Lowell Neighborhood** for four weeks.

Homelessness

- SC2 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.