



City Council Report

Date: March 23, 2017
To: City Council
Through: Natalie Lewis, Deputy City Manager
Ruth Giese, Community Services Director
From: Elizabeth Morales, Housing and Community Development Director
Subject: Love Your Neighborhood (LYN) Project Update
District 4

Purpose and Recommendation

To provide City Council with an overview of the Love Your Neighborhood Program and update on the progress of the program.

Background

In May 2016, City Council approved Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) projects and activities that would be implemented during fiscal year 16/17. One of the activities was Transforming Neighborhoods, which is now known as Love Your Neighborhood (LYN). The designated Mesa neighborhood (Robson to Extension and Main to Broadway) was selected by using a data-driven, decision-making model, to determine areas that are exhibiting signs of distress and deterioration. The data used in the analysis included code violations, graffiti, vacancy of residential and commercial structures, and crime rates. The selected neighborhood has 136 single-family homes, of which 73 are owner occupied, and 211 multifamily units.

The City Council approved \$417,000 to the LYN program to fund exterior rehabilitation, Love Your Block small projects, small business improvements, and neighborhood outreach, training and education. In addition, \$325,000 was set aside in the Owner Rehabilitation program for the LYN residents that need more extensive rehabilitation which would include both interior and exterior rehab.

There are both short- and long-term goals of the LYN program. In the short-term, the goal is to

1. Inspire creative problem-solving, action, pride, and buy-in of neighborhood residents and businesses
2. Deliver neighborhood beautification, visual improvement for homes, businesses, public space, and public infrastructure
3. Measure short-term program outputs (i.e. # of households involved, rehab projects completed, existing City resource investment results)

For the long-term goals, staff is committed to:

1. Identify measures and variables that have impact on blight index
2. Track variables from blight index on a semi-annual basis
3. Ongoing communication and annual contact with residents to identify new issues and needs in neighborhood which City can assist

If successful over the long-term, residents would not only benefit from resources being invested in their area during the program year, but also will be empowered and will gain knowledge about how to maintain and build on the quality and strength of their neighborhood over time.

Discussion

The LYN project is approximately eight months old with numerous accomplishments and lessons learned in this short time period. Staff has conducted outreach, numerous door-to-door visits, neighborhood meetings, and diverse volunteer projects that both engage and provide residents with information and resources regarding the LYN project. The Community Services Department has worked tirelessly to identify potential residents who could qualify for the rehabilitation assistance, with six currently in process of review and eligibility.

Other City departments have provided valuable input and resources as well. Recently, Fire and Medical inspected and installed smoke detectors in approximately 30% of the homes in this neighborhood with over 30 volunteers. Other departments who are actively involved include Transportation, Engineering, Code Enforcement, Building Safety, Police, and Solid Waste.

It is through the volunteer projects that we have been able to energize excitement and make visible improvements to the neighborhood. Projects have included a veteran's mural at the American Legion, yard and alley cleanups, curb address painting, and coordinating clean sweep and appliance disposal. In total, we have had 142 volunteers assist us with these projects.

There are key lessons that we have learned since starting this pilot program.

1. Program development involved additional time on how to utilize federal funds and meet the requirements
2. Engaging neighborhood and garnering commitment requires building trust through repeated contact and messaging.
3. Residents require significant assistance with application process for rehabilitation assistance

Based on the lessons learned, Staff will seek qualified organizations who can provide the engagement and coordination to assist residents through the process of receiving assistance.

Fiscal Impact

Funding for the pilot program is primarily Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding from FY 16/17.