

# NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION PLANNING TOOLS

**Objective:**

To help an organization initiate a neighborhood revitalization

**Intended Use:**

To use when planning a neighborhood revitalization

**Audience:**

- These tools are used by the partnership that is overseeing the neighborhood revitalization.

**Outcomes:**

- An appropriate target neighborhood will be selected
- A strong partnership will be established to direct the work
- Increased accountability among the partners

**Context:**

It is not easy to launch a revitalization project to improve the quality of life in challenged neighborhoods. It is essential to build a partnership whose members work toward a shared vision of change. It is also important to introduce the process to neighborhood residents, establishing an atmosphere of trust with the partners. These tools will help get the work started on firm ground and maintain momentum to completion.

There are many models of neighborhood revitalization in use today. This model was developed by Vallejo Fighting Back Partnership and has been successfully used by them.

A neighborhood revitalization project takes 12 to 18 months of intensive work. It takes a strong partnership consisting of individuals and organizational representatives who share an interest in improving neighborhoods. The members of the partnership need to include those who reflect community development interests, crime and safety interests, resident concerns and family support and social services. This partnership will be responsible for selecting a target neighborhood to begin the revitalization work.

The first tool in this section is a list of potential partners and the roles they might play.

The second tool is a list of criteria for selecting a target neighborhood for revitalization. Additional criteria will be unique to each community.

The third tool is a template for a letter of notification to be sent to all the residents and property owners in the selected neighborhood. The letter is important because it provides information about who is involved in the process and what the residents can expect from the work.

The final tool is an example of a time line of activities related to this work. While the sequence of activities can be adjusted somewhat to suit a particular community, the outline here has been shown to be successful in neighborhoods throughout the country.

## The Process

### Building Partnerships

Neighborhood revitalization generally works best if the core group, or “Core Team,” consists of representatives from key local organizations that have, as part of their mission statement, a shared commitment to:

*Improve the neighborhood environment:*

- Code Enforcement
- Building Department
- Housing organizations such as NeighborWorks or the city/county housing department
- Law Enforcement
- Fire Department
- Sanitation Department
- Chamber of Commerce

*Build neighborhood support structures:*

- Neighborhood associations
- Crime Watch groups (police/sheriff)
- Local community organizing groups

*Strengthen families:*

- Head Start or other early education organizations
- Substance abuse and mental health treatment organizations
- Family Resource Centers
- Schools
- Representatives from the religious community

These are examples of the range of organizations that could participate in implementing a neighborhood revitalization project.

### Selecting the Neighborhood

What should the Core Team look for in a possible target area? Some of the key criteria are:

- Where do your partner organizations have established relationships with families that might jump-start the relationship-building in a neighborhood?
- Where is there a high level of police calls for service? Families will work to make neighborhoods safer on behalf of their children.
- Which neighborhoods have a significant degree of physical deterioration? Improving the look of a neighborhood can be a powerful incentive for residents.
- What is the ratio of owner-occupied to rental housing in the possible target neighborhoods?

Both home owners and tenants have a stake in improving their neighborhood.

- Is there any pre-existing resident leadership in possible target areas?
- Are there nearby alcohol outlets (liquor stores, bars, etc) that impact the neighborhood?
- If a specific area is selected for revitalization, will it stimulate improvements in nearby areas? Will other neighborhoods pick up the concept and run with it?
- What resources does the Core Team have available? This will influence how many blocks or housing units can be included in the revitalization.

### Neighborhood Notification

Prior to the selection of a neighborhood, it is important for the Core Team to walk around and get a feel for it. How bad are the problems? Are there assets to build on? Are the residents open to neighborhood improvement? If the team spends time in potential neighborhoods, many residents will have an idea that something is in the works. Many will welcome the presence of the team members. Others will be less inviting.

Once the decision has been made, the Core Team should formally advise the residents that their neighborhood has been selected for revitalization. The third tool is a sample of letters to be sent to residents notifying them of the selection of their neighborhood. These letters can be modified to fit a particular community. They should be sent to home owners and tenants, as well as property owners who may live elsewhere.

Landlords are very important to the success of the revitalization process.

### Developing a Time Line of Activities

After the partnership has chosen a revitalization neighborhood, the implementation time line form should be distributed to team members. During the process of reviewing the steps associated with the work, a shared understanding of appropriate time lines for each step will emerge and partner tasks will solidify. Once dates have been agreed upon they should be recorded on the form and will serve as touch points to be used to track progress.

It is likely that dates will need to be modified as the work progresses, as neighborhood work rarely unfolds in predictable ways. Still, the time line ensures that no steps are overlooked. When multiple organizations, agencies and individuals are all working together on a neighborhood revitalization plan, tracking the progress of the many pieces is essential.



**POINTERS:**

- Add to the list of criteria for neighborhood selection as necessary, but don't overcomplicate the process
- Use the time line to track progress
- Make sure all partners have a role in the work
- Be flexible with the timeline as work progress
- Be prepared to revise it as needed.



## KEY PARTNERS AND ROLES FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION PROCESS (PARTIAL LIST)

- *Police Department*  
Securing neighborhoods, training
- *Head Start and other early childhood programs*  
Access to families, community-building and family support activities
- *Family Resource Center*  
Services for families
- *Neighborhood Associations*  
Guiding and shaping community action
- *Code Enforcement*  
Problem abatement in neighborhoods
- *Building Department*  
Enforcement of health and safety standards for rental property
- *Fire Department*  
Weed abatement, hazardous waste removal
- *Local garbage collection service*
- *Faith Community*  
Service delivery for families, person power for clean-ups
- *Neighborhood Housing Organizations*  
First time homebuyer opportunities
- *Chamber of Commerce*  
Jobs programs, person power for neighborhood clean-ups
- *Social Service Organizations and Providers*  
Network of needed services for individuals and families in neighborhoods
- *Local School Representative*  
Meeting space, coordinated services for families, community awareness

## POSSIBLE CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF A NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION TARGET AREA

**A target area can range from one to six blocks in size. The Team considers the following criteria for selecting:**

- *High level of crime and violence*  
Does the location have problems with crime and violence? Do neighbors report being afraid when walking in the neighborhood? Are there police calls for service in the area?
- *Significant level of physical distress*  
Does the neighborhood show signs of deterioration and blight? Are there abandoned vehicles on streets or lawns? Is there trash in vacant lots? Are residences in need of significant repair?
- *Number of Head Start Families in area*  
Where do the Head Start families live? Is there an intersection between where these families live and some of the other criteria? Are there other families participating in early education programs in the community living in areas that require attention? If so, where?
- *Level of neighborhood organization*  
Is there an existing neighborhood group in place in the neighborhood? How about a neighborhood watch program, either active or dormant? Are there informal leaders in the neighborhood who are interested in seeing improvement and have influence with other residents in the area?
- *Role of alcohol outlets*  
Are there bars, liquor stores or grocery stores selling alcohol in the immediate area that appear to be negatively affecting the neighborhood? If so these businesses will require attention.
- *Ratio of owner occupied vs. rental properties*  
What is the ratio of owners to renters in the neighborhood? Generally having some home ownership increases the likelihood that the revitalization will take root and grow. A ratio of 70% rentals to 30% owner occupied is a good place to begin. But this work can be done with 100% rentals if necessary.
- *Resources available to the Team*  
This approach is dependent on a partnership with a shared vision and commitment to participate in the activities over 12-18 months. It is difficult to work in more than two neighborhood revitalization areas, at the same time. And even two require significant partner resources to ensure success.
- *Stimulation of similar resident-driven projects in nearby areas*  
This work stimulates interest from residents in nearby blocks that may or may not be as challenged as the one selected to work in. To the extent this can be anticipated and support can be provided for a more resident-driven set of activities then positive changes can occur in surrounding areas. This increases the likelihood of success in the target neighborhood.

December 10, 2000

Dear Resident,

Your neighborhood has been selected to participate in a project called “The Vallejo Neighborhood Revitalization Program.” Numerous agencies and organizations, including Vallejo Fighting Back Partnership, Vallejo Police Department, Vallejo Fire Department, Vallejo Code Enforcement, Vallejo Neighborhood Housing Services, Vallejo Neighborhoods Improvement Program, members of the faith community, community residents and other interested groups have come together to help residents develop solutions to problems that contribute to alcohol and drug related crime and violence as well as other issues that may detract from the quality of life in a neighborhood. Parts of the program include a neighborhood clean-up, code enforcement, weed removal, home improvement, increasing the availability of social services and increased neighborhood cohesion and organization.

For this project to succeed we need your help. In the other areas of the city where this effort has been implemented, the success has rested with the participation of the residents and their willingness to become active participants in solving any problems that may exist. We will assist you in this process and bring the resources that the City of Vallejo has at its disposal and the expertise of various non-profit agencies in the areas of information and referral, community organization and alcohol and drugs. The work is exciting and rewarding and will lead to a safer and improved environment for the adults and children alike who live nearby

In the near future, members of the Revitalization Program team will be going door to door to meet you and further describe the project, how it works and the many resources available including property maintenance grants, paint grants and low interest home improvement loans. We look forward to talking with you and determining how we might work together for the betterment of your neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Nimat Shakoor-Grantham  
Vallejo Code Enforcement

Reggi Garcia  
Vallejo Police Dept.

Michael Sparks  
Fighting Back Partnership

Diciembre 10, 2000

Estimado Residente,

Su vecindario ha sido elegido para participar en un proyecto llamado "Revitalización de Vecindarios de Vallejo." Algunas agencias y organizaciones, incluyendo Vallejo Fighting Back Partnership, Vallejo Police Department, Vallejo Fire Department, Vallejo Code Enforcement, Vallejo Neighborhood Housing Services, Vallejo Neighborhoods Improvement Program, miembros de la comunidad religiosa, residentes y otros grupos interesados, se han unido para ayudar a los vecinos a buscar soluciones a problemas relacionados con crímenes y violencia provocados por el alcohol y las drogas así como también otros problemas que afectan la calidad de vida en un barrio. Partes del programa incluye una limpieza comunitaria, arrancar la mala yerba, mejorar la apariencia de las casas, aumento en los servicios sociales comunitarios así como también el aumentar la organización y unificación de la comunidad.

Para que este proyecto sea exitoso necesitamos de su ayuda. En otros barrios de la ciudad donde este esfuerzo ha sido implementado, el éxito ha dependido de la participación activa de los residentes y su deseo de involucrarse en la búsqueda de soluciones a problemas que podrían existir. Nosotros vamos a ayudarle en este proceso y vamos a traer recursos que la Ciudad de Vallejo tiene a sus disposición así como la experiencia de varias organizaciones sin fines de lucro en las áreas de información y referencia, organización comunitaria y soluciones para el abuso de alcohol y drogas. El trabajo es interesante y da mucha satisfacción ya va a proveer un ambiente seguro y mejor no solo para los adultos sino también para los niños del vecindario.

Muy pronto, miembros del equipo de la Operación Revitalización van a ir de puerta en puerta para ponerse en contacto con Uds. y describir en detalle el programa, como trabaja y los diferentes recursos a su disposición incluyendo préstamos para reparaciones, fondos para pintar caas y préstamos a bajo interés para mejoras. Nos pondremos en contacto para ver de que manera podemos trabajar juntos y mejorar su comunidad.

Sinceramente,

Nimat Shakoor-Grantham  
Vallejo Code Enforcement

Reggi Garcia  
Vallejo Police Dept.

Michael Sparks  
Fighting Back Partnership

# NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION TIMELINE



