

7. Strategic Plan 2005-2010

General

The City of St. Joseph's goals and objectives for the five-year period, July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2010, were developed through brainstorming sessions with the City Council-appointed Consolidated Plan Committee. The group convened at locations in the northside, southside, mid-town, and east side to gather information from neighborhood residents on their housing and non-housing community development needs.

The brainstorming sessions at the neighborhood level, coupled with input from social service and housing providers, identified opportunities for empowering residents of St. Joseph's distressed neighborhoods to improve their quality of life and ultimately create a more progressive and attractive St. Joseph.

Establishing priorities is difficult when it is known that all housing related needs have personal and often profound effects on the health, safety, and well-being of particular segments of the population. Employment and jobs are also issues that need to be addressed to improve the community. The ability to accomplish these priorities is dependent upon the availability of financial support and the willingness of residents, and the public and private sectors, to partner with the City of St. Joseph to accomplish common goals for the betterment of the community.

The Strategic Plan identifies what the City of St. Joseph proposes to accomplish by the year 2010 to address the housing and community development needs identified in the preceding sections of the Consolidated Plan. The City of St. Joseph developed priority needs, goals, objectives and outcomes from input received during meetings with the citizen committee, neighborhood residents, and non-profits.

The City of St. Joseph developed the priority housing needs based on data in the needs assessment section of the Consolidated Plan and from information provided by individuals and community organizations that are experienced in the various program areas.

Housing needs and concerns the citizens committee brought to the discussion table include:

- ❑ Instill pride in neighborhoods and challenge residents to help themselves and their neighbors by becoming involved in neighborhood organizations. Develop a “Neighbor Helping Neighbor” program.
- ❑ Increase affordable rental opportunities for families that desire to live in south St. Joseph.
- ❑ Eliminate substandard housing through rehabilitation and/or demolition efforts.
- ❑ Provide Homebuyer Education programs for individuals interested in becoming homeowners.
- ❑ Provide Tenant/Landlord Training on rights and responsibilities.
- ❑ Provide homebuyer assistance and opportunities for low/mod income people to purchase homes at affordable interest rates. Develop a consortium of financial entities willing to provide homebuyer loans to low income individuals. Use CDBG and HOME funds to leverage other resources.
- ❑ Increase volunteerism and willingness of organizations and social groups to assist the elderly and low-income families with home improvements.
- ❑ Provide organized activities for latchkey children during after school hours and summer vacation.
- ❑ Establish job incubator program.
- ❑ Provide incentives to develop vacant lots and return them to the tax rolls.
- ❑ Construct affordable housing for large families and non-traditional households.
- ❑ Provide incentives to entice landlords to improve rental property.
- ❑ Promote legislation to “speed up” demolition process.

Priority Housing Needs

After the Consolidated Plan Committee met with residents of the various sections of the community, committee members re-convened to consolidate their ideas and group them by priority need. Housing was first addressed:

1. Affordable Homeownership Opportunities
2. Affordable Rental Opportunities
3. Homebuyer Education
4. Increase the availability of housing (rental and owner) for large families.
5. Demolition of Dangerous Buildings -- Historic Preservation
6. Use CDBG funds to buy down interest rates to make homeownership affordable.
7. Lender Consortium
8. Emergency assistance.
9. Targeted use of funds to make an impact

Priority Non-Housing Community Development Needs

The Consolidated Plan Committee agrees St. Joseph's non-housing community development needs are numerous and asked the City of St. Joseph to continue past commitments for utilizing all available resources to accomplish them. They identified the following non-housing priorities:

1. Recreational activities for youth; need additional community centers.
2. Nutrition programs for the elderly and children
3. Health Issues, including medical and dental care, mental health counseling, drug and alcohol.

4. Job Creation
5. Neighborhood initiatives and infrastructure improvements, revitalization of Downtown St. Joseph and adaptive re-use and enhancement of riverfront.
6. Public Services, including affordable child care; recreational opportunities, health and medical care for the indigent, mental health counseling, food for the hungry, opportunities for economically disadvantaged children and those with developmental disabilities.
7. Empower youth by establishing a youth council to advise City Council, and become involved in clean-up and other projects.

Geographic Priorities for Investment

St. Joseph's geographic priorities for investment are based on the needs of low to moderate-income residential areas and older commercial areas in and adjacent to the Central Business District or Downtown St. Joseph.

The City of St. Joseph continues to support Neighborhood Partners' efforts to revitalize the Midtown Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area and encourages ongoing investment in new affordable infill housing and rehabilitation of owner-occupied and rental housing units.

St. Joseph envisions creating sustainable employment and business opportunities by linking people, organizations and ideas to bring forth the best possible opportunities for everyone. We will create the guidelines to broaden employment opportunities, stabilize neighborhoods and support the basic needs of families and individuals.

Five Year Strategy, Goals and Objectives

Affordable Housing Opportunities:

Increase opportunities for low and moderate-income households to become and remain homeowners.

- ❑ Rehabilitate and upgrade the existing housing stock to alleviate identified conditions of slum and blight and provide additional housing opportunities for very low and low to moderate-income renter and owner households.
- ❑ Enable homeowners to stay in their homes by providing grants and low interest loans for urgent repairs.
- ❑ Enable low- to moderate-income families to buy their first home.

Increase the supply of affordable rental housing units for extremely low and low-income families, individuals, and especially for large families.

- ❑ Provide gap financing to for-profit and non-profit developers of rental units.
- ❑ Provide incentives to entice owners to improve the condition of rental units affordable to lower income families.

Increase the range of housing options and related services for the homeless, elderly, disabled and other special needs populations.

- ❑ Contribute to operating support for emergency shelters
- ❑ Prevent homelessness and help families and individuals move out of emergency shelters and into transitional housing or permanent housing.
- ❑ Assist families and individuals threatened with the loss of housing due to evictions, foreclosure, or non-payment of utilities.
- ❑ Provide essential services, linkage programs and other housing-related activities which help families locate, secure and move into permanent housing or pay housing-

related arrearages that are contributing to a family's homeless or "at risk homeless" situation.

Ensure equal access to housing.

- ❑ Update the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing and develop a Fair Housing Action Plan to address the identified impediments.
- ❑ Implement outreach, education and information programs and activities.

Meet the comprehensive health needs of low and moderate-income residents.

- ❑ Reduce the number of children with elevated blood levels of lead.
- ❑ Reduce the number of homes and apartments with dangerous amounts of lead.

Neighborhood and Target Area Revitalization Goals:

Foster healthy lifestyles and enhance the livability and quality of life for residents of low-income inner-city residential areas.

- ❑ Increase homeownership in inner City and target neighborhoods.
- ❑ Enable residents to play a greater role in community leadership, self-help, advocacy and development issues.
- ❑ Preserve and promote the character and assets of neighborhoods and target areas.
- ❑ Make St. Joseph neighborhoods safer places in which to live, work, and raise a family.
- ❑ Create Neighborhood Opportunity Centers that connect residents to opportunities including development of the center, and serve as a gathering place for volunteer efforts, health screenings, recreation, social, and community activities for neighborhood youth and adults.

Eliminate Slums and Blighting Conditions:

- ❑ Provide incentives to preserve historically significant residential structures.
- ❑ Improve Downtown St. Joseph, King Hill Avenue, Frederick Avenue, and St. Joseph Avenue corridors by eliminating blighting influences and providing incentives to empower property owners to improve the appearance of their properties.
- ❑ Promote preservation of historic and architecturally significant properties by providing technical assistance and guidance to the community relating to historic preservation, compliance with *The Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, and facilitating the Historic Preservation Loan and Façade Improvement Programs.
- ❑ Create a cleaner community through repair and securing or demolition of structurally unsafe and abandoned structures.

Public Services:

Provide appropriate public services to assist lower income persons and agencies to meet client needs.

- ❑ Provide affordable childcare, education, social and recreational opportunities and services for at-risk children and teens.
- ❑ Improve the dental health of very low-income individuals by providing dental care and hygienist services.
- ❑ Improve the mental health and coping skills of low to moderate- income individuals through counseling and provide intensive day treatment services for young children with serious emotional disturbances.
- ❑ Meet the nutrition needs of hungry families, the homeless, the elderly and physically impaired individuals who are homebound.
- ❑ Provide opportunities for adolescents to obtain substance abuse rehabilitation
- ❑ Provide advocacy and services to children and adults who are developmentally delayed.

Economic Development/Job Creation Opportunities:

Stimulate redevelopment and reinvestment in Downtown St. Joseph and the Riverfront.

- ❑ Revitalize and enhance the community image of Downtown St. Joseph and foster economic development opportunities by attracting redevelopment and reinvestment.
- ❑ Create innovative and affordable opportunities for housing by encouraging upper-floor conversions to residential uses.
- ❑ Provide incentives for business expansion and stabilization in order to expand employment opportunities for low to moderate-income persons.
- ❑ Create a riverfront environment that reflects the historic significance of St. Joseph and stimulates economic development through the creation of new recreation, tourism and job opportunities.

Enhance the community image and foster redevelopment and reinvestment in the Brownsfield industrial areas south of the Central Business District.

- ❑ Make the land south of St. Joseph's historic downtown marketable for redevelopment by determining the extent of contamination, developing a cleanup and mitigation plan for sites with confirmed environmental issues, and initiating a community-oriented economic redevelopment strategy that will return the former commercial and industrial sites into productive uses.
- ❑ Attract redevelopment and reinvestment through infrastructure improvements, elimination of vacant and dilapidated properties, and other aesthetic enhancements.

Create a competitive business environment in low-income and targeted areas that generates employment opportunities, attracts new business and consumer services.

- ❑ Foster the development of small businesses and micro-enterprises that generate new employment opportunities for low -to moderate-income persons.

Administration:

- ❑ Build the capacity of community-based organizations to better address neighborhood needs.
- ❑ Provide funding for administrative costs associated with the planning, administration and monitoring of the St. Joseph Consolidated Plan.

Lead-based paint hazards:

The St. Joseph Public Health Clinic at Patee Hall will continue to offer, contingent upon the availability of funding, programs to educate residents of the older, more hazard prone, areas of the City on the health dangers of lead and will encourage screening of children for elevated blood-lead levels.

The City of St. Joseph will continue to identify and eliminate lead based paint hazards in conjunction with its programs which rehabilitate housing stock owned and occupied by low- to moderate-income families and individuals and during the rehabilitation of rental housing units.

The City of St. Joseph has initiated a Lead Safe Homes Program in conjunction with the St. Joseph Health Department.

Anti-poverty strategy:

More than 9% of St. Joseph's families experience poverty. The 2000 U.S. Census determined 13% of St. Joseph's population had incomes below the poverty level. Of the 9,022 individuals living in poverty, 15.5% were under the age of 18 years, and 9.8% were age 65 years and older.

St. Joseph continues to experience workforce reductions. Each layoff or reduction in workforce overburdens the social service providers that must deal with the multiplicity of extenuating problems caused by the reductions in workforce. The effect of unemployment causes strain on families, uncertainties about financial obligations, loss of health care and other company benefits, and concerns whether the worker and family will be able to remain in the community. Many of the workers and their families have no alternative other than contacting one or more of the social service agencies to plea for assistance.

The St. Joseph community helps idled workers through the State of Missouri's *Worker Reentry Program* by assisting the permanently laid off workers prepare for and find a new job. Phases of the Missouri *Worker Reentry Program* include counseling, assessment and testing, and educational help. Through counseling, the worker is guided through such obstacles to re-employment as accepting the loss of the job, financial obligations, loss of health care, family problems and strong attachment to the community. Assessment and testing helps match the worker's present levels of education, experience and skills to qualifications with different occupations. Educational help in obtaining a General Equivalency Degree or in brushing up on basic education skills, or in obtaining new skills is also provided. Assistance with childcare costs is also available.

Assistance to the newly unemployed and other very low-income St. Joseph residents is provided by many agencies. The Social Welfare Board provides medical and dental care to the indigent; other medical services are provided by the City's Public Health Clinic at Patee Hall. Inter/Serv, Catholic Charities, Community Action Partnership, and AFL/CIO Community Services and many other agencies counsel and advocate for the low- income families and individuals. They provide rent or mortgage assistance, utility assistance, counseling, food and clothing. Their services are available to all very low-income individuals and families, if funds remain available.

The St. Joseph Chamber of Commerce continues to market St. Joseph to industries considering relocation or expansions in new communities. The Riverboat gaming operation and a revived emphasis on the tourism market has created new jobs in the St. Joseph community.

The City of St. Joseph will attempt to produce and preserve affordable housing by continuing rehabilitation programs that improve living conditions for low to moderate-income owner households and convert deteriorated houses into decent, safe, and affordable housing opportunities for very low and low-income renters. The City of St. Joseph will continue to make CDBG assistance available so the providers of social services can continue to expand their programs to address the needs of the individuals and families who try to exist on a poverty level income.