

Chapter 5: Recommendations & Solutions

Introduction

The recommendations in this report focus on creating efficiencies for Neighborhood Services and therefore outline the steps for redefining and restructuring programs and services delivered by staff. This work was completed in response to the City's Scope of Work and to better support the goals and objectives of the Neighborhood Empowerment Initiative. The focus of the Neighborhood Empowerment Initiative is to create and sustain *Strong Neighborhoods*, with an emphasis on building partnerships motivated to collaboratively problem-solve and develop solutions that benefit a broad representation of the community. These steps begin with the need to build a solid foundation for community involvement citywide. The City should build this foundation by creating awareness of its existing values and operating principles, and expanding those to include public involvement (See appendix I for City Council's Mission and Values). To further this effort, Neighborhood Services should work collaboratively with its internal and external key stakeholders to redefine its mission statement. These efforts should be done in concert with relocating Neighborhood Services within city government to the City Manager's office. The programs, services and staff resources recommended by JLA within this chapter should be implemented to maximize existing programs and establish new programs to address identified challenges and needs based on the values and mission statement.

Many of the community members interviewed during the assessment felt that conflicts resulting from interactions between neighborhoods and the City could be resolved if city directors, managers and staff followed consistent processes for involving the public. Internally, some city staff members expressed a need for a citywide public involvement policy and planning process that city staff could realistically apply when working with the neighborhoods and the broader community. Establishing awareness of the City's values and operating principles, and building on them, will help establish shared expectations for both community members and city staff.

Expanding the City's values and operating principles to include public involvement is also supported by the City Council Neighborhood Empowerment Initiative Goal. This document lists "Enhancing effective public engagement activities" as a key objective.

The values and operating principles should guide Neighborhood Services in redefining its mission, function and customers. Many of the people who participated in the sidewalk surveys are unaware of Neighborhood Services. If they were familiar with the office, they were unclear about its function. City department staff echoed this latter point. According to many of the people interviewed, a number of city employees are unclear about how Neighborhood Services fits within the City's governance structure or how it supports other city departments.

Figure 5.1: Core Value Triangle Diagram



An updated mission statement should meet the needs of the customers that Neighborhood Services serves. After identifying its customers, the City is in a better position to develop new programming and strengthen existing programs to meet the needs of those customers. Logically, after programming is determined, the next step is to articulate expertise and staffing needed to create and manage those programs successfully.

The recommendations are laid out in this organizational framework:

1. Values, Operating Principles and Mission
2. Organizational Location and Target Customers
3. Programming
4. Staffing
5. Communications
6. Policy and Procedures

Core Values and Mission

RECOMMENDATION 1: Re-evaluate and Enhance the City's Existing Values and Operating Principles to Improve Public Involvement Processes

All city employees should understand the City's values and operating principles when communicating with and involving neighborhood associations and the broader community (see appendix J). Re-evaluating and enhancing the City's values and operating principles will provide consistency, create shared expectations and instill more community trust in city government. These values will help guide city staff when planning for community involvement as part of a long-range planning process, capital improvement project, programs or events.

The City's current mission statement for Neighborhood Associations, adopted by City Council in May 1999: To build community at the neighborhood level and improve the livability of the City's neighborhoods

The Neighborhood Services' manager should set the stage for this task and facilitate City executives and staff in evaluating and updating the City's Values and Operating Principles to implement coordinated and consistent public involvement processes citywide. The manager should frame this as a collaborative process with outcomes to be approved by the City Manager.

Input received during the assessment process, examples in "best practices" research and the Neighborhood Empowerment Initiative Action Plan provide a number of key points for the City to consider when revising its Values and Operating Principles:

- Proactively support and assist neighborhood, business and community organizations in broadening community involvement
- Incorporate targeted outreach to hard-to-reach stakeholders - renters, non-English-speaking residents, business owners, families and minorities - into public involvement plans
- Develop and use both traditional and non-traditional communication methodologies to involve and inform the broader community
- Promote two-way communication, information sharing, community organizing and partnerships between neighborhood associations and local organizations and agencies
- Involve and communicate with neighborhood associations, non-profit organizations, business groups and all potentially impacted individuals as early as possible about city projects, programs, opportunities and initiatives
- Facilitate community empowerment through coordinated, responsive community building, training and funding opportunities

- Ensure that all communications include a feedback loop to explain how public input was considered and incorporated into the final decision or project
- Promote community identity and safe, sustainable and accessible neighborhoods
- Recognize the value of volunteerism to the City and the community as a whole

After the City has refined its Values and Operating Principles to include public involvement, Neighborhood Services should take the lead in communicating this information to internal and external stakeholders, as well as to the broader Eugene community. This report recommends a number of communication tools that would be useful in disseminating this information.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Update Neighborhood Services’ Mission and Role

Having a clearly articulated mission will significantly improve city employees and the community’s understanding about Neighborhood Services’ role and function. The Neighborhood Services manager should convene program staff, neighborhood leaders and the City Manager to clarify the role or function of Neighborhood Services. Once the function and organizational structure have been agreed on, the team should revisit and revise Neighborhood Services’ current mission statement to support and reflect the City Values and Neighborhood Services’ role within the City.

“The mission statement of Neighborhood Services is not good and it needs to be improved. This should be revisited as a separate process following the assessment with involvement from neighborhood associations and the NLC. This could be a relevant part of moving and restructuring the program to a different department.”

Neighborhood representative

Organizational Location and Target Customers

RECOMMENDATION 3: Move Neighborhood Services to the City Manager’s Office

“Neighborhood Services being in Planning is not serving the entire City Organization.”

City staff representative

Moving Neighborhood Services to the City Manager’s office will accomplish both citywide and community wide needs that exist for expanded service and enhanced communication and collaboration between the City, neighborhoods, local agencies and the community at large.

Based on best practices research, including model programs in Vancouver, Washington, and San Jose, California, plus comments from stakeholder interviews with neighborhood association members, local agencies and city staff, the benefits of placing Neighborhood Services under the purview of the City Manager’s office outweigh the status quo. Neighborhood Services should be organized within the newly created Sustainability, Access and

Equity (SAE) division in the City Manager’s office. This division also includes the City’s Human Rights, Sustainability and Diversity programs. This change in reporting structure will:

- Reinforce Neighborhood Services’ role as a resource for all city departments, neighborhood association leaders and Eugene residents. Many neighborhood leaders expressed distrust regarding city planners and managers’ perceived bias in supporting infill development, reducing sprawl, or advocating for developers.
- Create alignment and synergy with other community-based programming, such as Community Relations, Human Rights, Diversity and Sustainability. These other programs could provide additional resources for outreach and communications. For example, Diversity program staff could help develop minority outreach tools and cross-fertilization with Human Rights would help to uncover the issues that neighborhoods face, helping them to generate more diverse participation and empower residents. This organization would be similar to the Community Services Division in Raleigh, North Carolina.
- Encourage synergy with the Sustainability program, a link that many respondents in the online and sidewalk surveys identified as a point of interest.
- Streamline and promote consistency in public outreach and involvement citywide.
- Serve as resource for city departments planning and implementing community outreach and involvement.
- Initiate citywide tools for interpretation and translation to non-English speaking residents. Alignment with Human Rights, Diversity and Community Relations programs will support and strengthen this effort.
- Broaden Neighborhood Services’ scope for programming, training, outreach and issues affecting neighborhoods. In addition to planning and land use, other issues and interests include sustainability, parks, public safety, transportation, public arts, environmental stewardship and public works.

“Human Rights, Diversity and Neighborhood Service programs do have a critical linkage with the community in common.”
Local agency representative

Figure 5.2 below highlights the staffing organizational structure associated with shift:

Figure 5.2 Recommended Neighborhood Services Staffing Organizational Chart



It will take time and collaboration by all staff within this newly created division to align missions and roles, with new concepts and fresh ideas as value-added results.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Establish a three-pronged approach to community organizing

Currently Neighborhood Services serves two customer groups: neighborhood associations and city departments. Services to these two groups are primarily geographically-based. This approach potentially discounts the needs and concerns of the broader community, particularly diverse populations *who do not define their communities in geographic terms* or cannot participate due to language or cultural barriers. More importantly, the City may miss out on the benefits of involving people with different perspectives, priorities and ideas. For example, the first priority for populations that define themselves by ethnicity, age or religion may be how a city action impacts a group of people who live in different areas of the City, rather than how the action will impact a specific neighborhood.

“I volunteer with Huerto de la Familia and the community garden in Churchill Neighborhood.”

Online Survey respondent

“I am involved in the Mayor’s West Eugene Collaborative Chamber of Commerce.”

Online Survey respondent

The premise of expanding Neighborhood Services’ customer focus, and therefore the City’s, is to engage all Eugene residents in civic life and give them a voice in public decision making. Eugene residents are passionately involved in a variety of community organizations, including neighborhood associations, to promote community issues such as livability, sustainability, the environment, health and education. Because of this, broader communication and outreach between the community at large, the City and neighborhood associations should stimulate interest and involvement in city activities and projects. Ultimately, increased outreach to the broader community would also stimulate more awareness and interest by residents to investigate their local neighborhood associations.

Increasing Involvement in Neighborhood Associations:

A consistent theme in the stakeholder interviews with representatives from community and business organizations and local agencies was the missed opportunities to create partnerships and two-way communication between neighborhood associations and these stakeholder groups. In addition, many of the organization leaders offered creative ideas for broadening involvement in neighborhood associations, improving neighborhood livability and increasing communication.

As part of the online survey, more than 112 people unaffiliated with neighborhood associations provided personal anecdotes and ideas for drawing in new people to neighborhood activities. Respondents’ comments emphasized the need for reframing neighborhood association agendas around “interests” rather than “issues”, organizing social community-building and providing innovative ways for people to participate and provide input other than to attend evening meetings.

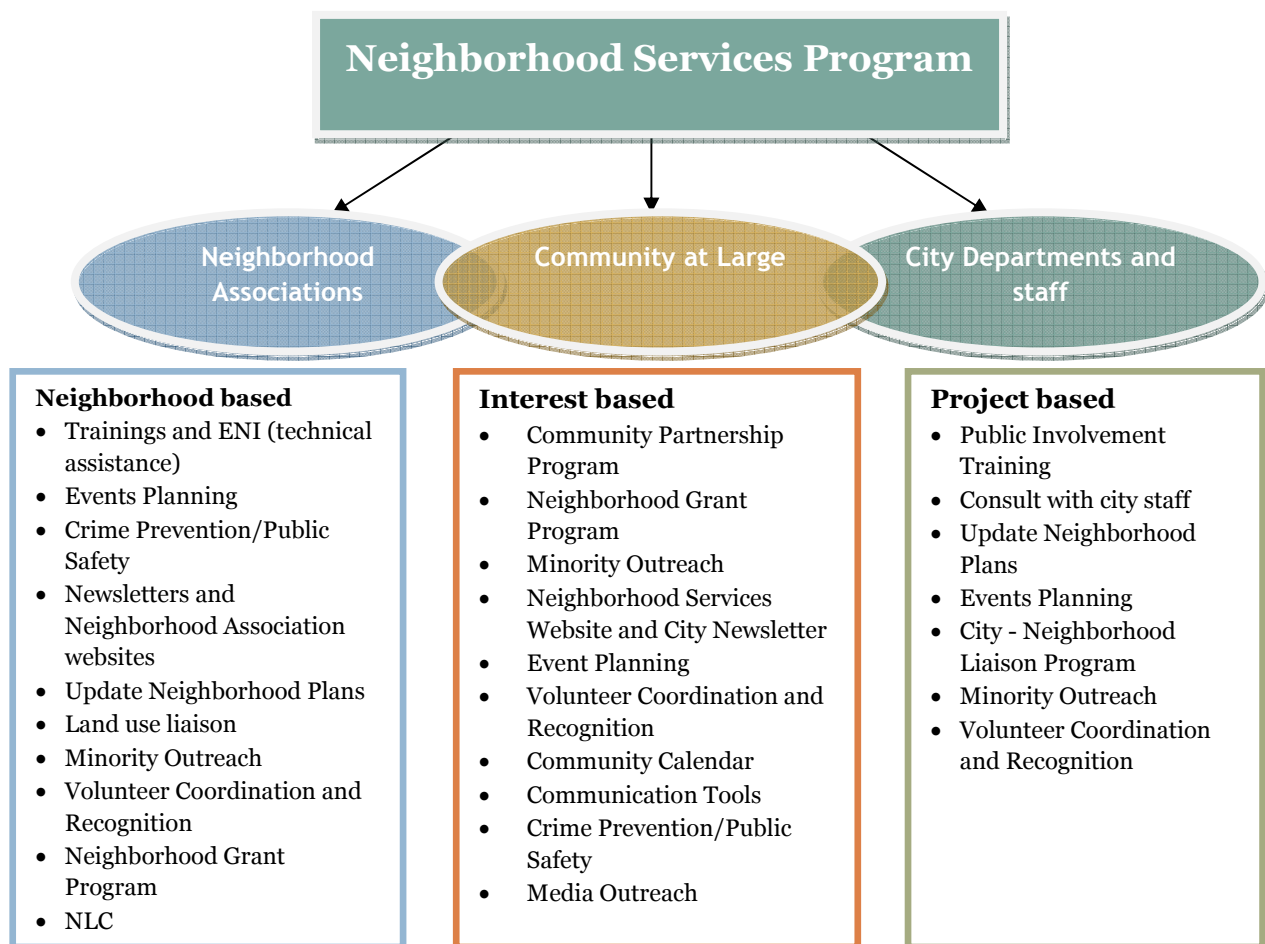
This proposed three-pronged approach is based on model programs profiled in this report; most all of the other model programs have a broader customer focus than solely those who participated in neighborhood associations.

To effectively address the proposed public involvement Values and Operating Principles, the Neighborhood Empowerment Action Plan and the challenges identified above, Neighborhood Services should expand its mission and role to serve three categories of customers (See figure 5.3 below):

1. City departments and staff
2. Neighborhood Associations
3. Community At Large

These three customer groups naturally overlap. For example, city employees and city council members also live in Eugene neighborhoods. Neighborhood association members volunteer with other community groups. Residents not affiliated with neighborhood associations donate their time and resources to other community organizations. Many of these community organizations have service areas in multiple neighborhoods or span the entire city. Consequently, services to these three groups overlap as well.

Figure 5.3: Neighborhood Services Three Pronged Approach



Customer Group #1: Neighborhood Associations

The focus would be on neighborhood associations and the Neighborhood Leaders Council, mirroring many of the programs and tasks that Neighborhood Services currently provides, such as:

- Sponsoring neighborhood improvement projects and social events;
- Providing a forum to identify, discuss and resolve neighborhood issues;
- Establishing two-way communication between neighborhoods and the City, and between neighborhoods and other external agencies;
- Educating neighbors on issues, public process, City services, and elections, and;
- Identifying and trouble-shooting Neighborhood Association's concerns regarding issues such as land use, transportation, public safety and social services.
- Providing financial and technical support for publishing neighborhood association newsletters.
- Providing financial and technical support for neighborhood improvement projects through the neighborhood matching grant program.
- Coordinating and participating in Neighborhood Leaders Council meetings.

Customer Group#2: City Departments

The nature of Neighborhood Services' work is primarily project-related, where staff serves as an advisor to city staff from the various departments, including Planning, Parks, Police and Public Works. Currently, Neighborhood Services staff work with project staff to develop and implement public communication and involvement plans and apply best practices.

In figure 5.3 above, Neighborhood Services would provide additional services to this customer group in the form of training for city employees and coordination with those city employees tasked with Neighborhood Liaison responsibilities. Training topics would include public involvement planning, minority outreach and presentation skills.

Customer Group #3: Community at Large (NEW)

This new category of customers would include everyone and anyone who was interested in or is potentially impacted by city projects, program and decisions. Serving this broader community, which is not currently a primary customer for Neighborhood Services, will require maximizing and enhancing existing programs as well as establishing new programs that also will benefit city departments and neighborhood association members. Ideas for new programming that would generate broader community involvement and awareness include, but are not limited to the following:

- Training for the general public on city services and functions, similar to a “City University” or the “Citizen Participation Leadership Institute” in Raleigh, North Carolina.
- Training for City Staff/Liaisons for public involvement planning.
- Community building and multi-generational, family-friendly events to promote neighbor-to-neighbor networking and community learning.
- A citywide clearinghouse of techniques and tools for outreach to minority populations and non-English speaking residents. Alignment with the Sustainability, Access and Equity Team would help further this goal through collaboration with Human Rights and Diversity program staff.

This recommendation would address City Council’s Neighborhood Empowerment Action Plan Goal calling for enhancing effective public engagement activities through involvement from the broader community, including under-represented populations.

See figure 5.4 below for a graphic representation of the proposed Neighborhood Services staff delivery of services through a three-pronged approach. The diagram demonstrates the roles and responsibilities proposed for staff, including how each function is interrelated with each customer group.

Figure 5.4: Neighborhood Services Staff/Programming Chart



Staffing Key:

- Program Service Manager
- Program Assistant
- Neighborhood Liaison
- Public Service Officer

RECOMMENDATION 5: Develop New Name for Neighborhood Services

To reflect the expanded customer service function of Neighborhood Services, the division manager, program manager and staff should develop a list of possible new names for the program. This list should be vetted internally with the City Manager and executive directors to ensure that it is aligned with the City's Values and Operating Principles and reflects the program's mission statement and programming. The name should also reflect the Neighborhood Empowerment Action Plan's focus, which is to build strong neighborhoods by developing community leadership and working collaboratively with residents to achieve delivery of city services and neighborhood priorities.

The new name should reflect Neighborhood Services' proposed alignment with community service-oriented programs (Sustainability, Access and Equity Team) and its three customer groups (neighborhoods, city departments and the broader public).

Programming for Target Customers

This section lists the programming recommendations for the three target customer groups. The chart above (figure 54 categorizes existing programs and recommended new programs by the customer groups to be served. As the chart shows, many of the programs stretch across the chart, showing that many programs would provide services to all three customer groups, i.e. minority outreach, event planning and training.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Establish a Neighborhood Liaison Program

“Neighborhood liaisons are every neighborhood's ‘inside connection’ to city information and resources.”

City of Bellevue website

Input from interviews with neighborhood representatives and city staff indicated a need for improved two-way communication between neighborhood associations and the City. People from both stakeholder groups pointed out that neighborhood association meeting reports written and distributed by the former Neighborhood Services manager were useful and should be reinstated in some fashion.

To create a consistent and reliable feedback loop and promote better communication among city staff, elected officials and neighborhood association members, many other cities, such as

Bellevue and Vancouver, Washington, have established a Neighborhood Liaison Program. Neighborhood liaisons are city employees who are managers and supervisors specifically appointed by the City Manager to be responsible for and accountable to a city-recognized neighborhood association. Liaisons would facilitate ongoing communication with the City Manager and other department staff regarding neighborhood initiatives, which would address the current lack of a consistent feedback loop.

“The relationship between the City and neighborhoods is valuable and it needs to be strengthened. Not enough city staff are aware of neighborhood associations' role and value to citizen involvement.”

Neighborhood representative

The Neighborhood Liaison program will create efficiencies for Neighborhood Services by providing information and referral resources to neighborhood associations as well as providing another conduit for communicating neighborhood needs to decision-makers. This program will help address the Neighborhood Empowerment Action Plan Goal of focusing service delivery to better meet neighborhood-identified needs and priorities.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Increase neighborhood association training opportunities

To address the disparity among the 19 neighborhood associations in the areas of leadership, governance, rate of participation and outreach capacity, Neighborhood Services will need to expand its range of training topics to address:

- New electronic communication tools, e.g. blogs, e-newsletters, online survey and podcasts
- Meeting Management
- Event Planning
- Community Organizing
- Outreach to Minority Groups
- Creation of Online Surveys
- Newsletter Layout and Design
- Website Design and Navigation
- Neighborhood Non-profit through the Eugene Neighbors Inc.
- Fundraising and Grant Writing
- Sustainability
- Land Use
- How to access city decision-makers and influence decisions
- Asset-Based Community Building
- Neighborhood Planning
- Conflict Resolution

“Neighborhood leaders need community organizing training. They need to identify the gaps and learn tools for addressing them.”

Neighborhood representative

Recommended topics address issues raised by respondents in the community sidewalk and online surveys regarding barriers to participating in their neighborhood association. Needs identified by survey respondents included effective meeting management, improved notification about meetings, reducing conflict driven agendas, issue or interest identification and family-friendly neighborhood and volunteer activities.

This recommendation is based on input from a number of neighborhood association representatives who participated in interviews and responded to the online survey. This advances the recommendation from the Neighborhood Empowerment Initiative Action Plan to support neighborhood involvement by empowering all neighborhood associations. It also draws on best practices from Bellevue, Washington, and Raleigh, North Carolina, both of which support robust neighborhood leadership training and community education programs.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Continue funding for the Neighborhood Matching Grant Program

The Neighborhood Matching Grant program was identified through interviews with most stakeholder groups as an asset to neighborhood associations, residents and community groups. It is credited with promoting neighborhood improvements and providing a solution-based community building opportunity. This would be a worthwhile program for the City to continue due to the positive feedback received by stakeholder groups and based on best practices research. Neighborhood Services should continue broad community outreach, including, but not limited to posting notices in the local newspaper, and pitching stories to local media representatives to highlight successes from past grant recipients. In the future, staff should consider partnering with local community and business organizations to post announcements on their websites and newsletters to promote the program. Other private sponsorship (funding) sources could be pursued to supplement funding as well.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Implement Neighborhood-based Planning

To support the Neighborhood Empowerment Action Plan Goal of focusing service delivery to better meet neighborhood-identified needs and priorities, Neighborhood Services should implement a Neighborhood Action Planning Program similar to the model programs in Vancouver, Washington, and Madison, Wisconsin. This program would increase community participation, inspire community building and promote neighborhood identity. Neighborhood association members could communicate to the City their desires and priorities for their neighborhoods through the development and adoption of a neighborhood plan.

In addition, neighborhood associations could generate community interest in neighborhood activities by initiating neighborhood-based plans with assistance provided by Neighborhood Services. Residents could participate in a number of activities focused on gathering community input and priorities to be included in a neighborhood plan. This would provide a sense of empowerment and ownership among residents who, based on input received in the online survey and community sidewalk survey, are not participating due to lack of topics of interest on neighborhood association agendas.

Neighborhood plans would also provide a framework with which the City and neighborhood residents could better understand the vision, goals and priorities for each neighborhood association. City department staff, residents, representatives from community organizations and local agencies could participate in areas of interest and work collaboratively with neighborhood associations to implement action items identified in the plans.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Formally Recognize the Neighborhood Leaders Council

Stakeholder interviews with city staff and neighborhood representatives indicated a lack of communication between the City and the NLC and between the NLC and neighborhood association members. Some city staff interviewed said that they did not clearly understand NLC’s role. Neighborhood association members who are not directly involved with the NLC, were either unaware of the group or its role. One of the goals in the Neighborhood Empowerment Action Plan calls for evaluating the existing structure of the NLC and its status as an “ad hoc” group.

“Providing coordination for the NLC is valuable. This group provides an opportunity for cross fertilization of information between neighborhood leaders.”

Neighborhood leader

Considering the significant amount of city resources dedicated to the NLC, the City should formally recognize the group and continue to provide staff support at meetings. Staff who attend the meetings should provide a written report to the City Manager and Executive leadership on topics of interest and issues raised by neighborhood association leaders. This will improve two-way communication and establish a feedback loop among the NLC, neighborhood associations and the City.

Formalization of the NLC and communicating its role to the City and neighborhood members will create a shared understanding between city staff and neighborhood associations. The NLC should ensure that its meetings are accessible and provide an effective venue for the City, the community and local agencies to communicate information that impacts all neighborhoods. Consistent city staff presence at NLC meetings will help to close the feedback loop with neighborhood associations. Participating in the NLC should serve as an information resource for both new and seasoned neighborhood leaders through mentoring, cross-fertilization of information and sharing success stories.

The NLC may need to review and revise its operating policies and procedures to effectively represent the role it wants plays in relation to the City, including how agendas are set and members are appointed. The NLC shouldn’t operate as other City appointed boards and committees, rather, the membership should work in conjunction with the City to set the agenda and establish it’s Action Plan.

The City should also consider making the NLC Charter and Action Plan available online, including an online comment form for staff and the public to provide feedback to the NLC.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Establish a Community Partnership Program

Community leaders from local non profits and business groups, as well as managers from local agencies emphasized the importance and benefits of promoting collaboration among each other. Several neighborhood association members echoed this opportunity when they recalled community events, such as the public art program and park clean-up events, as improving neighborhood involvement and livability.

To take advantage of this untapped resource, Neighborhood Services would need to create and manage a Community Partnership Program. The primary goal of the program would be to match up the needs and goals of neighborhood associations and residents with the mission and resources of local non-profit organizations and regional utilities and agencies. Neighborhood Services would facilitate bringing the two entities together to develop common goals and scope partnership opportunities.

The program would also address some challenges identified in stakeholder interviews and the online and sidewalk surveys:

- Local non-profit organizations, utilities and government agencies have resources and information that neighborhood residents need or would take advantage of if made available. Examples include energy efficiency assistance and food assistance programs.
- Organizations can partner with neighborhood associations to design and coordinate volunteer events, such as park clean-ups, adopt-a-stop programs, bike safety classes and distribution of food to low-income residents.
- Many of these organizations would like to partner with neighborhood associations to help host or participate in social events that are family friendly, promote cross cultural sharing, encourage neighbors to talk to one another and provide information about their services and projects.
- Representatives from these organizations are interested in contributing articles and announcements to neighborhood association newsletters to increase awareness about their services and volunteer opportunities.

A key component of this program would involve sharing the information Neighborhood Services has compiled about the demographics of individual neighborhoods and residents and making it available to neighborhood associations and local organizations. Information relating to residents' ages, incomes and ethnicity; size or type of households; or native language would be useful information to neighborhood association leaders to design better outreach methods to broaden or diversify involvement. It would also be useful information for community organizations to target their resources where there is need and interest.

The City may wish to consider a stronger partnership with the University of Oregon similar to the Community Liaison program that exists in Fort Collins, Colorado. Collaborative opportunities with the University of Oregon could include involving interns in community organizing, training and technology-based communication initiatives.

The implementation of this recommendation would raise awareness and promote partnerships with Eugene organizations that have not been tapped to meet some of the needs identified in the assessment, such as Eugene Neighbors Inc. and Community Mediation Services.

RECOMMENDATION 12: Expand Crime Prevention and Public Safety Programs

Public safety and crime prevention were identified by Eugene residents as high priorities in both the online and community sidewalk surveys (see appendices C and D). The Neighborhood Empowerment Initiative Action Plan calls for collaboration with neighborhood associations to define their role in neighborhood-based community policing strategy as identified in the Police Strategic plan.

To address these community priorities, Neighborhood Services should partner with the Eugene Police Department and expand the current Neighborhood Watch program. This will raise awareness and create a more comprehensive crime prevention program that includes coordination between the Eugene Police Department, neighborhoods, businesses and the non-profit community. This could be facilitated by Neighborhood Services through the City Neighborhood Liaison Program, the Community Partnership Program and possibly through the creation of a Community Involvement Committee.

Crime Prevention and Public Safety programs in Vancouver, Washington, and Portland, Oregon, are good models to consider.

RECOMMENDATION 13: Expand Volunteer Coordination and Recognition Efforts

“There is a volunteer effort to fill potholes and seal cracks in neighborhood streets. This improves the relationship between the City and the community and saves the City money.”

Neighborhood representative

Based on best practices research and input received through stakeholder interviews with neighborhood representatives, Neighborhood Services should serve a strong supporting role to city departments, such as the Eugene Police Department to help promote volunteerism and recognize the contribution those efforts make in improving community livability.

Neighborhood Services should implement a volunteer recognition program that promotes contributions made in the community by residents, businesses, non-profits, etc. Staff might consider non-traditional forms of recognition, such as sending honored volunteers to conferences, workshops or trainings as the City’s ambassador.

Model volunteer recognition programs in Raleigh, North Carolina (Neighborhood Recognition Awards), and Vancouver, Washington, (Vancouver Sparkles), and Portland, Oregon (Spirit of Portland) are good examples to reference.

Staffing and Organizational Structure

RECOMMENDATION 14: Move Public Service Officer to Neighborhood Services

Feedback from the online and community sidewalk surveys and stakeholder interviews indicated a greater need for communication from City government to other departments, neighborhood associations and the broader community. One of the medium to high priority goals of the Neighborhood Empowerment Action Plan is to enhance communications between neighborhood associations, the City, elected officials and other government agencies.

Shifting the Public Service Officer, currently under the purview of the Community Relations Director, to Neighborhood Services will establish a point person to focus on communications for Neighborhood Services' three customer groups: City/city department staff, neighborhood associations and the community at large. The role of this person would be to oversee Neighborhood Services-related communications, including the Neighborhood Services' websites, neighborhood newsletters, media management and online surveys. This person should also work collaboratively with the Community Relations Director to provide input on the content and format of the City's website and the City Council Newsletter. This shift will address additional staff needs, facilitate increased efficiencies and improve coordination among city departments and neighborhood associations for media and community outreach.

RECOMMENDATION 15: Assign Environmental Justice issues to Human Rights Office

Environmental justice issues – e.g. inequitable environmental burdens experienced by groups such as racial minorities, women or residents of economically disadvantaged areas - are affecting some of Eugene's neighborhoods, such as Trainsong and River Road. However, the serious issues affecting residents and their neighborhoods may require intensive City intervention and assistance, to supplement community organizing efforts. In some cases, forming an active neighborhood association could be unrealistic at this point in time. For this reason, formally placing environmental justice issues with the Human Rights Program will provide the expertise, network and resources needed to address the underlying livability issues affecting these areas. Once addressed, Human Rights program staff could work collaboratively with Neighborhood Services and local residents to establish a newly organized neighborhood association.

RECOMMENDATION 16: Coordinate Minority Outreach with Diversity Office

Interviews with stakeholder groups indicated that there is a need for coordinated communication processes and procedures to reach diverse populations within the Eugene community. Many of these populations are difficult to reach as they do not define their communities in geographic terms. Fortunately, many of these under-represented groups have created effective grassroots organizations to engage their members in civic life.

To address this need, Neighborhood Services should assign a staff person to coordinate directly with the newly formed Diversity Office to improve outreach to these populations on behalf of the City and neighborhood associations. The Diversity Office is currently undergoing a strategic planning process through the University of Oregon. Therefore, its mission, function and programs are not yet clear. However, in the interim, Neighborhood Services should tap into this resource to discuss how the City and neighborhood associations can improve their outreach efforts.

The City should revisit this recommendation to see if there are additional opportunities to streamline functions or combine positions once the Diversity Office’s strategic planning process has been completed.

Communication

Enhanced communication is a goal of the Neighborhood Empowerment Action Plan. The need for improving existing communication tools and developing innovative electronic-based methods was also communicated in the sidewalk and online surveys, internal and external interviews and best practices research. JLA’s review of the City and Neighborhood Services’ websites and newsletters underscored the NEI goal. Improved communications resolves a number of identified needs:

- Broaden and diversify involvement in neighborhood associations
- Create and promote partnerships between community and business organizations and neighborhood associations
- Inform residents unaffiliated with neighborhood associations about recreational activities, social and family friendly events and volunteer opportunities

“Getting information out to neighborhood leaders and prospective leaders about how the program [Neighborhood Services] works and how to access government is a most valuable service.”

Neighborhood representative

Respondents from the online and sidewalk surveys offered a variety of ideas to broaden involvement and improve communication with residents who are not currently involved with their neighborhood association. Some of these ideas are detailed below as formal recommendations:

- Create “New Resident Welcome Packet” that includes information about how to get involved in local neighborhood associations and what services Neighborhood Services provides to residents. The model Program in Fort Collins, Colorado, provides “Welcome Bags” for new residents.
- Assign Neighborhood Association greeters for the meetings and to reach out to new residents at their homes.
- Host regularly scheduled neighborhood tours, sponsored by Neighborhood Services and local neighborhood associations. Develop topics for each tour, post schedule in neighborhood association newsletter.
- Host family-friendly events and activities in the local park or school; Co-sponsor volunteer events

- Expand the reach of neighborhood association newsletters by providing electronic versions that can be sent via email, posted on neighborhood association websites and forwarded on to other interested residents. Electronic versions would supplement hard copies.
- Provide childcare or childcare stipends to residents attending neighborhood association meetings. Model program in Portland, Oregon – Office of Neighborhood Involvement
- Host online community forums.

RECOMMENDATION 17: Partner with Neighborhood Associations to host online surveys

To address feedback from online and community sidewalk surveys suggesting that neighborhood association meeting agendas didn't include topics of interest to some respondents, Neighborhood Services should assist individual neighborhood associations in hosting an annual online survey to identify issues of interest to residents. Neighborhood Services could dovetail this survey with a neighborhood-planning process to record neighborhood priorities over the longer term.

While having neighborhood meeting agendas mainly centered on conflict has drawn large crowds in some neighborhoods, most people not involved in their neighborhood associations were interested in seeing positive-focused agenda, such as community building, livability, sustainability and event planning.

To capitalize on this task and support addressing annual performance measures, Neighborhood Services could use the surveys to collect input on whether neighborhood associations and Neighborhood Services are meeting residents' needs, and request suggestions for improvement when applicable.

RECOMMENDATION 18: Serve as a resource for Event Planning

This recommendation is a culmination of ideas suggested by respondents from the online and sidewalk surveys, anecdotes from interviews with neighborhood association leaders and representatives from non-profit organizations and local agencies, and best practices from model programs in Raleigh, North Carolina, and Fort Collins, Colorado.

This recommendation has four focus areas:

1. Partner with community organizations to help organize and promote volunteer opportunities to improve community livability. Lead staff should work closely with Community Partnership Program point person to coordinate collaborative efforts.
2. Consult with city department staff to help coordinate project-related events, i.e. open houses, charettes, community forums and site tours.

3. Serve as the City’s resource to organize and host citywide events, i.e. roundtables, town halls and community resource fairs. Neighborhood Services should provide outreach to neighborhood associations and the broader community to promote these types of opportunities.
4. Assist neighborhood association leaders to plan neighborhood-based events that promote communication between neighbors, neighborhood improvement, public safety and community cohesion and pride. Events might include block parties, picnics, music in the park, asset building and neighborhood clean ups.

Centralizing this function will ensure that opportunities to promote events are streamlined and provide event planning expertise. Neighborhood Services can ensure that all city-sponsored events incorporate best practices and “lessons learned.” Examples: Advising on outreach to hard-to-reach stakeholders, making certain important partners are aware of the event and are brought into the loop, ensuring event sites are wheelchair accessible, providing transit information for meetings, and keeping sustainability in mind when providing refreshments and preparing project displays.

“Annual picnics have been successful with 200 to 300 people in attendance. We host them in the neighborhood park, with live music, which is a good draw. Parks and Recreation sends staff to provide kid activities. Gets people involved. Our neighborhood association hosts an information booth at the events”

Neighborhood representative

RECOMMENDATION 19: Streamline Production and Distribution of Neighborhood Newsletters

To implement needed efficiencies and support the Neighborhood Empowerment Action Plan goal of increasing support for neighborhood association newsletters in both electronic and printed forms, Neighborhood Services should assist neighborhood association newsletter editors to develop neighborhood newsletters independently by:

1. Expanding the reach of newsletters by providing e-newsletter formats online in addition to printed copies distributed to residents. This will reduce paper consumption, mailing costs and staff time/labor. The online publication can be forwarded to city leaders and staff to notify them about neighborhood agendas and meeting dates. In addition, residents will be able to forward e-newsletters to friends, colleagues and other organizations.
2. Providing biannual training to newsletter editors on newsletter layout, graphics, editing and RSS (rich site summary)

Neighborhood Services currently provides a .45 FTE staff person to support newsletter layout, production and mailing. Annual budget for neighborhood newsletters for FY2009 is \$145,663, approximately \$1.86 per residential address.

Feed access. Training would also show editors how to create e-newsletters and post them on a neighborhood association website.

3. Establishing an Online Neighborhood Newsletter Toolbox with newsletter templates, printing policies and procedures, best practices reference guide, an archive of previous newsletters, information on current City and community initiatives, links to city staff directory, map of the city, City of Eugene census data, and frequently asked questions (FAQ) on city programs, budgets and projects. The model programs in Vancouver, Washington, and Fort Collins, Colorado, can provide guidance in creating this resource.
4. Creating an additional RSS Feed in the Online Neighborhood Newsletter Toolbox for city department staff, community and business organizations, regional utilities and agencies to post announcements for upcoming events, projects and volunteer opportunities. This format will deliver regularly updated web content to newsletter editors via an email alert when new content is posted.
5. Posting contact information for all neighborhood association editors so city department staff and representatives from community and business organizations can contact newsletter editors directly.

This recommendation will enhance a current strength of Neighborhood Services and neighborhood associations, incorporate suggestions from survey respondents to improve this communication tool, reduce the City and neighborhoods' carbon footprint, and streamline staff time and paper resources.

RECOMMENDATION 20: Improve City's Website and Increase Accessibility

The City's website was a topic that arose throughout the assessment process during interviews and through the online survey. In JLA's review, the City's website was found to be difficult to navigate and lacked a welcoming and eye-catching format. Use of new technology and more dynamic formatting could increase the level of use the City's website receives; in-turn making it a more effective communication tool for providing vital information to the community. As a result, the following recommendations for improvement should be considered by the City of Eugene:

- Add movie/video clip on front page from recent event or interview with a neighbor or neighborhood leader, and/or city manager. Animate the page, make it more dynamic.
- Make the community calendar a scrolling constant on the City of Eugene and/or Neighborhood Services' home page. This is usually what people are looking for when they go to the page.
- Include head shots of Neighborhood Services staff – more human face to a bureaucratic government.

- Provide a department and city staff directory on the City’s homepage and/or Neighborhood Services’ home page
- Website content on some neighborhood association websites may be disenfranchising others from participating either through list-serves that only involve a small group, lack of information about identified issues, no contact information for current neighborhood association leaders or even a lack of information about upcoming neighborhood meetings.
- Contract a website consultant to conduct a review of all neighborhood association websites. The review should include recommended guidelines and requirements for all neighborhood association websites, such as:
 - Posted neighborhood association meeting summaries
 - Neighborhood history and demographics (census data)
 - Map of neighborhood identifying local landmarks such as, parks and schools
 - Contact information and photos of neighborhood association leaders
 - Electronic version of the newsletters
 - A business and services directory
 - Local bus schedule
 - Scrolling event calendar
 - Contacts for local government
- Provide links to bylaws and other technical information, rather than putting information on front page. The City should pursue a grant for this consultant service.
- Consider having the neighborhood association websites open to public comment rather than just comment from “neighborhood association members”, i.e. River Road website

RECOMMENDATION 21: Enhance and expand the City’s online Community Calendar

To support other programs and services outlined in this section, Neighborhood Services should augment the City’s online community calendar to include other community programs such as those offered by Eugene Water & Electric Board, Lane Transit District and the Eugene Chamber of Commerce. Neighborhood Services could circulate monthly a calendar submission form through the *Eugene Register Guard*, other media outlets, an online submission form and the City’s neighborhood list-serve to all interested parties. This would raise awareness for partnering opportunities and increase community involvement. Neighborhood associations could submit other events in addition to their regular meeting schedule.

The calendar could be posted as a scrolling list on home pages for both the City and Neighborhood Services.

RECOMMENDATION 22: Expand outreach with local media

Neighborhood Services, in partnership with the Community Relations Director, should pursue a monthly insert or paid advertisement with the *Eugene Register Guard* and other local media venues spotlighting neighborhood associations and their activities, publicizing the City's Matching Grant Program and distributing a community calendar of events.

Policies and Procedures

The following policies and procedures are recommended for further assessment following the City's consideration of this report.

RECOMMENDATION 23: Review and consider updating the Neighborhood Organization Recognition Policy (NORP)

“Updating the NORP and the model charter would confirm the expectations and working agreements between the neighborhood associations, Council and the City Organization.”

NEI Action Plan

The Neighborhood Organization Recognition Policy (NORP) may need to be updated when the City revises Neighborhood Services' mission and role. The NORP should establish awareness of the role of Neighborhood Services, neighborhood associations and City government. Procedures should be established for accountability and mutual responsibilities for both the City and neighborhood associations.

During stakeholder interviews, many people expressed concern regarding the lack of governance and requirements for neighborhood associations. Review and revision of NORP is a separate process from this report and should involve neighborhood associations and city staff, possibly the Neighborhood Empowerment Initiative Committee. In the interim, Neighborhood Services should post existing policies on its website.

The ordinance established for neighborhood associations by the City of Vancouver, Washington provides a good model.

RECOMMENDATION 24: Review and consider revising the City's policy regulating the size of neighborhood associations

Eugene's City Council adopted guidelines for neighborhood boundaries in 2000. The guidelines reflect the work of a committee that included representatives from neighborhood associations and Neighborhood Services. Among other things, these guidelines address the size parameters for neighborhood associations: not less than 300 units and no more than eight percent (8%) of the total residential addresses for Eugene. When these guidelines were drafted, eight percent (8%) of Eugene's population was equivalent to approximately 5,000 households. Eugene's population has grown; as of December 2008, eight percent (8%) of the population is equivalent to 5,840 households.

Based on this policy, four of the City's 19 neighborhood associations currently exceed the size parameters:

1. **Southeast Neighbors** – 6,099 residential addresses or 8.36% of Eugene's population
2. **Santa Clara Community Organization** – 7,566 residential addresses or 10.36% of Eugene's population.
3. **Active Bethel Citizens** – 9096 residential addresses or 12.46% of Eugene's population.
4. **Cal Young Neighborhood** – 10371 residential address or 14.21% of Eugene's population.

The Scope of Work of this assessment report did not include an evaluation of neighborhood associations, with the exception of asking questions regarding barriers to participation. The size of neighborhood associations did not come up in the context of this examination; however, a more thorough review directed at this subject could reveal more specific results. This additional review should include delving deeper into the level of disparity that exists between the neighborhood associations listed above and those of much smaller size, including a cross comparison of neighborhood programs in other cities of similar size to Eugene. At the time of this assessment, it is not clear whether a nexus exists between the level of effectiveness of a neighborhood association and a neighborhood's size. There are neighborhood associations in Eugene that are smaller in population, but have also struggled with leadership and organization and vice versa.

Consideration should be given to the policies and procedures that exist in similar programs across the county, including the following examples:

1. **Salem, Oregon** – Council/Manager form of government, population of 152,290 and 19 neighborhood associations.
2. **Tacoma, Washington** – Council/Manager form of government, population of 202,700 and 8 neighborhood associations.
3. **Vancouver, Washington** – Council/Manager form of government, population of 160,000 and 63 neighborhood associations.
4. **Bellevue, Washington** – Council/Manager form of government, population of 120,000 and 80 neighborhood associations.
5. **Fort Collins, Colorado** – Council/Manager form of government, population of 131,200 and nearly 100 unofficial neighborhood associations (they are not required to register).
6. **Springfield, Massachusetts** – Strong Mayor form of government, population of 149,900 and 17 neighborhood districts.

7. **Hampton, Virginia** – Council/Manager form of government, population of 146,500 and 45 active neighborhood associations (25 non-active).
8. **Syracuse, NY** – Strong Mayor form of government, population of 139,000 and approximately 26 neighborhood associations (associations are not required to register with the City).
9. **Sioux Falls, South Dakota** – Strong Mayor form of government, population of 151,500 and 15 neighborhood associations.
10. **Springfield, Missouri** – Council/Manager form of government, population of 154,800 and 16 neighborhood associations.
11. **Dayton, Ohio** – Council/Manager form of government, population of 155,500 and 65 neighborhood associations.
12. **Overland Park, Kansas** – Council/Manager form of government, population of 169,400 and 33 neighborhood groups (24 are active).

Evaluation of the NORP should include consideration of policies and procedures for neighborhood associations to form, establish and adjust their own boundaries through a grassroots effort. Neighborhood boundaries should follow natural geographic divisions with consideration given to issues of concern, Council and school districts, neighborhood and sub-area plans, census tracts, major highways, open space, etc. City staff should consider the policies in place for other programs in cities similar to Eugene, such as those listed above. If requested, JLA could perform an extended review of this subject through a new Scope of Work and budget/contract amendment.

Conclusion

These recommendations provide a foundation for Neighborhood Services to move forward by preserving and enhancing some services and creating new programs on a priority basis. The next chapter outlines an implementation plan for staff to consider.

The solutions recommended by JLA address challenges and needs that have been determined following a thorough assessment process, research of best practices and a review of the Neighborhood Empowerment Initiative Action plan. The Neighborhood Empowerment Initiative Action Plan includes a number of goals that were not a part of the City's scope of work for this report. These goals will need further analysis and coordinated community outreach as described above. Some of the goals not directly addressed in this assessment and report are #12 Increase Density in Neighborhoods Thoughtfully, #13 Preserve Residential Zoning, #16 Make Parks Safer, and #18 Ensure Safe Routes for Walkers.

Ongoing collaboration with the community, neighborhood associations and city departments will be essential to implement these recommendations successfully.